

 55. Revolutionary *Corridos*  
(1917, 1919)\*

The earlier discussion regarding *corridos* (ballads) serves as context for consideration of revolutionary *corridos* (Source 51). The *corridos* included in this selection record two very different historic events from the era of the Mexican Revolution: the Constitutional Convention of 1916–1917 and the murder of Emiliano Zapata. How might our perspective on these events change by reading these *corridos*? What sort of tone does each *corrido* set, and how might that tone contribute to a certain perspective on national events?

**Fragment of "The Corrido of the Constitutional  
Congress of Querétaro" (1917)**

Now Venustiano Carranza  
has got his convention delegates  
to straighten up the laws  
that he will give to the people.

Come on, sweetie, let's go!  
Put on your purple sandals,  
let's go to Iturbide theater, an'  
you'll see the delegates.

\*Higinio Vazquez Santa Ana, *Canciones, cantares, y corridos mexicanos*, segundo tomo (Mexico: Imprenta M. Leon Sánchez, 1931), pp. 237–240, 247–248. Translated by the editors.

Let them talk, insult each other, and shout,  
Down and up they'll go,  
and he who brings the most *pinole* [sugar candy]  
will be the one to swallow the most spit.

And even if they all get upset  
and speak of Constitution,  
those that are here are not everyone,  
nor are all the important ones here.

I say to the congressmen:  
Do not fight so continuously  
And instead of becoming a Congressional representative  
end up with something done.

Come on, woman, and I'll buy for you  
your little *guichol rebozo* [shawl].  
You will hear the delegates  
air their dirty laundry.

There is a little of everything in the Congress,  
as they say in Saltillo, a little chile, pork, and sweets,  
and also *picadillo* [minced meat].

Everyone has some gift,  
as the priest says.  
Some the gift of gab,  
others that of stubbornness.

Amaya, who is president,  
shouts at them: Sons of *huarache*!  
I fought for the North  
before any of you no-good people!

And the lawyer Cañete  
tells him: Listen, president,  
I am going to donate my laws  
So that you might know how to treat the people. . . .

\**Huarache* is a sandal. Here the word is less important for what it means than to allow the *corrido* to play on the phrase "sons of bitches."

And here the singing ends,  
 These verses so common.  
 Long live Venustiano;  
 Long live the delegates!

### "The Death of Emiliano Zapata" (1919)

Listen, dear sirs, to the corrido relating  
 a sad event;  
 For in Chinameca, thinking he was safe,  
 Zapata, the great insurgent was killed.

April of nineteen hundred  
 nineteen, will remain  
 in the memory  
 of the *campesino* [rural worker]  
 like a stain on history.

Bells of Villa Ayala,  
 Why do you ring so sorrowfully?  
 —It is that Zapata has died  
 and Zapata was a brave man.

The good Emiliano who loved the poor  
 Wanted to give them freedom;  
 for this the Indians of all villages,  
 with him went to fight.

From Cuautla to Amecameca,  
 Matamoros and el Ajusco,  
 The recruits of  
 Don Porfirio they had the pleasure to encounter.

*Trinitaria* [wild pansies] of the fields  
 on the plains of Morelos,  
 if you ask for Zapata,  
 they will say that he already ascended to the heavens.

Zapata said to Don Pancho Madero,  
 when Madero was already governing:  
 —If you don't give lands, you will see the Indians  
 once again take up the battle.

He stood up to Mister Madero,  
 To Huerta and Carranza,  
 For they did not want to carry out  
 His manifesto, the Plan de Ayala.

Run, run, little rabbit,  
 Go tell your brothers:  
 Mister Zapata, the bane of the tyrants,  
 has already died.

Riding with elegance on his cinnamon-colored mare,  
 he was a *charro* [horseman] to admire;  
 And in bringing down a bull,  
 And pulling down the bull by the tail was the strength  
 of a top horseman.

Play a tune from the lowlands  
 on the *charanga* [brass band].  
 A bull is rolling in the sand,  
 Because Zapata is one of the good ones.

A frog in a small puddle  
 Sings in his serenade:  
 —Where was there a better *charro*  
 than my General Zapata?

With lots of enthusiasm the people applaud  
 And even the little girls agreed  
 That Zapata the chief and his generals  
 Do good wherever they go.

With a *jaripeo* [rodeo] they celebrated  
 His victory in the scuffle  
 and among his fellow southerners,  
 that he is a *charro*, no one denies.

En route to Huehuetoca  
 thus a bird inquired  
 —Traveler, what did they do  
 with the famous leader?

He was born among the poor, lived among the poor,  
and it was for them he fought.

—I don't want riches, I don't want honors—,  
he said to all.

In the siege of Jojutla

One of the elders said:

—Bring General García,  
so that he [will] accompany me to the front.

In the shade of a guava tree

Two crickets sang:

—Mister Zapata, terror of the *gachupines* [derogatory word for  
European-born Spaniards],  
has already died!

When the scuffle has ended

pardon the prisoners,

heal the wounded,

and to the poor, give them money.

Little star that at night

hangs from far off peaks,

where is our leader Zapata

who was the punishment of the rich?

—When I have died—he says to a subaltern—

you will tell the boys:

with weapon in hand you will defend your *ejidos* [communally held land]

like a man should.

He says to his loyal assistant

when they went about in the hills:

while I am alive, the Indians

will be the owners of their land.

Sweet-smelling little poppy

from the hills of Guerrero,

you will never again see

the famous fighter.

With great sorrow he says to his old lady:

—I feel beaten down,

so everyone should rest, I am the wanderer

Like a bird without a nest.

Generals come and go,

They say to calm us;

and not able to do good by him,

they made a plan to deceive him.

Sing, sing little sparrow,

in your melodious song tell:

General Zapata fell

By the hands of traitors.

Don Pablo González orders Guajardo

to act as if he surrendered,

and upon his arrival at camp

shoot Zapata with their guns.

Guajardo says to Zapata:

I and my troops surrender;

in Chinameca I await you,

and we will have a drink.

Turbulent little stream,

What did that carnation tell you?

—He says that Zapata has not died,

and he will return.

## Central Themes

Indigenous people, state formation, popular culture, land and labor

## Suggested Reading

Brunk, Samuel. *The Posthumous Career of Emiliano Zapata: Myth, Memory, and Mexico's Twentieth Century*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008.

Hart, John Mason. *The Coming and Process of the Mexican Revolution*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.

Knight, Alan. *The Mexican Revolution*. vols. 1 and 2. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986.

Simmons, Merle E. *The Mexican Corrido as a Source for Interpretive Study of Mexico, 1870–1950*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1957.