

# **Liberal Revolution or Elitist Revision?**

Positivist Reform and Historical Liberalization in Reforma Guatemala, 1830-1885

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*Hay, pues, grandísima diferencia entre el sectario y el historiador; y la hay aún mayor entre el primero y el filósofo. La revolución de 1871 ha sido un acontecimiento juzgado hasta ahora por el espíritu de secta. No se ha querido hacer en él la luz desapasionada e imparcialmente.*<sup>1</sup>

— E. Martínez Sobral

Writing two years after the end of the Guatemalan Revolution of 1871—in which a Liberal coalition ousted president Vicente Cerna, ending a roughly thirty-year period of Conservative rule—Mexican diplomat and historian Federico Larraínzar praised the achievements of the Guatemalan Liberal government that emerged in the wake of the revolution. In the closing lines of his historical account of the political history of Guatemala Larraínzar states, “Freedom governs the people, lifts them from servitude, gives them rights, strengthens their dignity, and rejuvenates them with its munificent doctrines... Such is the freedom that we [Liberals] conceived, hoping it will shine across America to fulfill its providential mission.”<sup>2</sup> Larraínzar’s gaudy praise of the triumph of classical liberalism departs from the historically common characterization of nineteenth-century political history in Guatemala as a power struggle between traditional Conservatives and Liberals. Larraínzar lends credence to the claim by E. Martínez Sobral that historians in the nineteenth century, unwilling to be impartial, judged the Revolution of 1871 “in the sectarian spirit.”<sup>3</sup>

As a government official of the Reforma in Mexico, Larraínzar’s efforts to characterize the revolutionary government in Guatemala’s Reforma as a crowning achievement of freedom

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<sup>1</sup> ‘There is a very great difference between the sectarian and the historian; and an even greater difference between the former and the philosopher. The Revolution of 1871 is an event the up to this point has only been judged in the sectarian spirit. No one has been willing shed light on it impartially.’ This is my English translation of a quotation from E. Martínez Sobral, “Dos Palabras,” in Mariano Zeceña, *La revolución de 1871 y sus caudillos* (Guatemala City: Editorial “Jose de Pined Ibarra,” Ministerio de Educación, 1971), 10.

<sup>2</sup> Federico Larraínzar, *La revolución de Guatemala* (Mexico: Valle Hermanos, Impresores, 1873), 149. This translated quotation and any subsequent translations in this paper are mine unless otherwise noted.

<sup>3</sup> E. Martínez Sobral, “Dos palabras,” in Zeceña, *La revolución de 1871*, 10.

and Pan-American liberalism exemplify a scholarly trend in the historical accounts of late nineteenth-century Liberal elites in Latin America that perpetuated the myth of a binary political battle for the soul of the region—a myth whose remnants can be seen in the historiography decades later.<sup>4</sup> Numerous nineteenth-century Latin American historical works recorded the history of the Liberal Revolution of 1871, and the Reforma government up to 1885, in a way that heightened the importance of these political transformations in relation to the history of Latin American liberalism in the hemisphere. Larraínzar's *La revolución de Guatemala* is just an example, if a prominent one, of these accounts.<sup>5</sup>

This paper studies these early works of historical literature in tandem with the official government newspapers of Guatemala from before and after the Revolution of 1871 to examine how closely Guatemalan government discourse and policy match their representation in contemporary historical accounts. Through this approach I detail the foundational characteristics and development of liberal political ideology and revolution in Guatemala from the end of the Conservative period through the death of the figurehead of the Revolution of 1871 and subsequent Reforma regime, Justo Rufino Barrios, in 1885. In doing so, the paper situates the content of contemporary historical accounts of the revolution and its aftermath (such as that of Larraínzar) within the broader changes in the currents of liberal ideology in nineteenth-century Guatemala.

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<sup>4</sup> For examples of the remnants of the early characterization of the events of nineteenth-century Central America as products of a binary political battle, see Ralph Lee Woodward, *Rafael Carrera and the Emergence of the Republic of Guatemala, 1821-1871* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008), 26–27, 54–55, 457–464; Jesus Julian Amurrio Gonzalez, *El positivismo en Guatemala*, Estudios Universitarios, Vol. 16 (Guatemala: Imprenta Universitaria de la Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala, 1970), 205–210; Frederick Stirton Weaver, “Reform and (Counter) Revolution in Post-Independence Guatemala: Liberalism, Conservatism, and Postmodern Controversies,” *Latin American Perspectives* 26, no. 2 (March 1999): 132–134.

<sup>5</sup> Larraínzar, *La revolución de Guatemala*.

Through this comparative analysis, this paper argues that the earliest historical accounts of these transformations, written by Liberal political elites, intentionally misconstrued the narratives of the Revolution of 1871 and the Reforma in an effort to construct a newly imagined liberal identity for the Guatemalan state in the aftermath of the revolution. These purportedly biased narratives, the paper also argues, were part of a broader effort that Latin American elites undertook as they attempted to reconstruct the history of liberalism and its revolutions in Latin America. Secondly, this paper argues that the revolution did not only lack a classically liberal ideological foundation, but also, that positivism began to drive the Revolution and the Reforma regime almost from the start, citing legislation and government rhetoric to show its presence in reforms and political discourse prior to the mid 1880s. This paper, thus, offers this contribution to a larger body literature that discusses how, following the fall of the United Provinces of Central America and the 1839 establishment of the Conservative regime, traditional liberalism and colonial conservatism in Guatemala faded away in lieu of a more pragmatic political alliance. Organized by sociopolitical elites and the planter class on the basis of economic liberalization, positivist social policies, and conservative political institutions, this alliance began to take shape during the Conservative regime and cemented its power with the Revolution of 1871 and the Reforma.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> “Liberalism,” as I use it in this paper, refers to the political ideology rooted in the promotion of an international free market based on comparative advantage and the establishment of secular democratic republics founded on personal freedoms and universal equality. For more on classical liberalism, see Razeen Sally, *Classical Liberalism and International Economic Order: Studies in Theory and Intellectual History* (London: Routledge, 2002). Also, I use the term “conservatism,” to talk about a political ideology in nineteenth-century Latin America advocating for maintenance of colonial institutions; a state monopoly economy; legal privileges for the elite, the military, and the church; and monarchical or authoritarian governance without universal freedoms. For more information on positivism, see John Stuart Mill, *Auguste Comte and Positivism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1961). For a more detailed explanation of positivism and its specific application in Latin America, see Jesus Julian Amurrio González, *El positivismo en Guatemala*, Estudios Universitarios, Vol. 16 (Guatemala: Imprenta Universitaria de la Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala, 1970).

### *The Dilemma of Nineteenth-Century Central America*

First and secondhand historical accounts of Central American political transformations during the nineteenth century were written either during or shortly after most of the key political revolutions that took place on the isthmus from independence until the end of the nineteenth century. These sources tell a history that narrates a process of liberalization of the political, economic, and social realms of the isthmus. Their authors, primarily liberal-minded historians, politicians, and intellectuals hailing from Mexico, Guatemala, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua, represented a new class of second-generation Liberals that sought to link the new pragmatically conservative liberalism with the lofty idealism of its reformist predecessor. Through their historical accounts of political revolutions, economic transformations, and social reorganizations—that the ideological struggle between Liberals and Conservatives on the isthmus produced—these Liberal writers labored to construct a triumphant narrative. In this narrative, they overlooked the permanent establishment of conservative, undemocratic, and positivist institutions within the fabric of Central American societies, especially in Guatemala.

The salient political and intellectual transformations in Guatemala from independence to the triumph of the Liberal forces, led by Miguel García Granados and Justo Rufino Barrios, in the Revolution of 1871 form the foundation for understanding the history of liberalism and the political and economic landscape in not only Guatemala, but all of Central America. Liberal triumph in 1871 and the subsequent Reforma regime of Barrios served as the defining capstones of the ideological and political transformations of the period by establishing a unique liberal military dictatorship.

Larraínzar, late nineteenth-century Guatemalan historian, Mariano Zeceña, and Guatemalan government publications from the early twentieth century portrayed this dictatorship—which persisted under Barrios until 1885—and its political program as a triumphant success of classical liberalism.<sup>7</sup> While the historiography from the mid-twentieth century forward has examined the conservative, authoritarian, and elitist elements that underpinned the Revolution of 1871, their nineteenth-century historical predecessors dismiss that narrative, citing the Revolution as the ultimate culmination of the vision of the Liberal heroes of independence and federation.<sup>8</sup> Despite this recent consensus in characterizing the revolutionary program, some twentieth-century historians have diminished impact of positivism on the revolutionary program until the mid 1880s, while others have signaled the beginning of its influence far earlier.<sup>9</sup> More generally, however, twentieth-century historians have formed a growing consensus that the coalition that supported the Revolution of 1871 formed out of a pragmatic alliance between new generation

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<sup>7</sup> Larraínzar, *La revolución de Guatemala*, 139–149; Zeceña, *La revolución de 1871*, 106–115; *La revolución del 71 y la reforma constitucional* (Guatemala: Tipografía Nacional, 1900), 33, 44. The accounts of Larraínzar and Zeceña, the government publication previously referenced in this note, and the work by Montúfar referenced later, see Lorenzo Montúfar, *Reseña histórica de Centro-América*, 7 vols. (Guatemala: Tipografía de “El Progreso,” 1878–1887), function as primary accounts of the events discussed in this paper due to their largely firsthand observations of the events relevant to this paper and direct participation in the writing of the period’s early historiography.

<sup>8</sup> For recent perspectives, see Frederick Stirton Weaver, “Reform and (Counter) Revolution in Post-Independence Guatemala: Liberalism, Conservatism, and Postmodern Controversies,” *Latin American Perspectives* 26, no. 2 (March 1999): 129–158; Lowell Gudmundson and Héctor Lindo-Fuentes, *Central America, 1812-1871: Liberalism Before Liberal Reform* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1995); Wayne M. Clegern, *Origins of Liberal Dictatorship in Central America: Guatemala, 1865-1873* (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1994); Thomas R. Herrick, *Desarrollo económico y político de Guatemala durante el periodo de Justo Rufino Barrios*, trans. Rafael Piedra-Santa Arandi, Editorial Universitaria de Guatemala, Vol. 4 (Guatemala: Imprenta Universitaria de la Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala, 1974); David McCreery, *Development and the State in Reforma Guatemala, 1871-1885*, Papers in International Studies - Latin America Series 10 (Athens: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1983); Ralph Lee Woodward, *Rafael Carrera and the Emergence of the Republic of Guatemala, 1821-1871* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008). For nineteenth-century perspectives, see Zeceña, *La revolución de 1871*, 51–55; Lorenzo Montúfar, *Reseña histórica de Centro-América*, vol. 6, 7 vols. (Guatemala: Tipografía de “El Progreso,” 1887) 222–227, 261; Larraínzar, *La revolución de Guatemala*, 12, 137–138.

<sup>9</sup> Some work by a Guatemalan historian has diminished the impact of positivism on the revolutionary program of the Guatemalan Reforma, see González, *El positivismo en Guatemala*. Recent work of several North American historians has contradicted these claims to varying degrees, see Weaver, “Reform and (Counter) Revolution;” Gudmundson and Lindo-Fuentes, *Central America, 1812-1871*; Clegern, *Origins of Liberal Dictatorship*; Herrick, *Desarrollo*; McCreery, *Development and the State*; Woodward, *Rafael Carrera*.

Liberals and increasingly liberalized Conservative business interests that incorporated former Conservative elites into the expanded elite class of the new Liberal regime.<sup>10</sup> Situating the historical contributions of this paper within these larger discussions the sociopolitical transformations of nineteenth-century Guatemala requires review of their beginnings at the time of independence.

### *Central American Independence and Federation*

From 1810-1820 the Spanish colonies in Central America, contained within the Kingdom of Guatemala, began to push for independence from Spain during a period when the Spanish government at home was seeing its own changes, and colonies across Latin America fought for their independence.<sup>11</sup> El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Guatemala formalized this independence movement in 1821 with the signing of the Act of Independence of Central America at a congress of municipally elected *criollo* officials in Guatemala City.<sup>12</sup> With this act, the former colonies of Central America nominally liberated themselves from Spanish rule without any military conflict; Spain acquiesced due to the economic insignificance of the region and their focus on retaining South America with their thinning resources following the end of

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<sup>10</sup> Various works have established the makeup of the Liberal coalition of the Revolution of 1871, see Clegern, *Origins of Liberal Dictatorship*; Woodward, *Rafael Carrera*; Herrick, *Desarrollo*. Consensus about the fate of the former Conservative elites has been reached among most prominent historians of the field, see Clegern, *Origins of Liberal Dictatorship*; Herrick, *Desarrollo*; Weaver, "Reform and (Counter) Revolution"; McCreery, *Development and the State*; Gudmundson and Lindo-Fuentes, *Central America, 1812-1871*.

<sup>11</sup> The Kingdom of Guatemala was a subsection of the viceroyalty of New Spain that encompassed most of the territory of modern-day El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Guatemala with Guatemala City as the colonial capital. The Kingdom's governors were royal appointees after 1542 and reported directly to the Council of Indies in Spain. For further information on the Kingdom of Guatemala and its independence, see Jordana Dym, *From Sovereign Villages to National States: City, State, and Federation in Central America, 1759-1839* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006).

<sup>12</sup> Alberto Herrarte, *Documentos de la Unión Centroamericana* (Guatemala: Editorial del Ministerio de Educación Pública, 1956), 4-5. The term "*criollo*" refers to white Spaniards born in the Americas. They held an elite position in the racialized social society hierarchy—the *castas*—of the Spanish colonies in the Americas but were lower than the Spaniards born in Spain or the *peninsulares*.

French occupation. The newly independent states of Central America, however, quickly discovered that their divided populations, lack of national identities, and both regional and municipal autonomy would result in far more bloodshed than a war of independence against Spain would have inflicted. Shortly prior to independence, a combination of economic woes within the Spanish Empire, the relocation of the colonial capital to Guatemala City, and a slew of natural disasters throughout the region laid the groundwork for a crisis in the Kingdom of Guatemala which angered the provinces and ignited the separatist ideas that would lead to violent conflict upon independence.<sup>13</sup>

As such, the first two years of independence saw conflict break out on the isthmus as a product of deeply ingrained colonial animosities. Fierce disagreements between the former colonial capital of Guatemala City and the provincial capitals in El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica, and Nicaragua in tandem with the many grievances with provincial capitals held by rural municipalities led to widespread armed conflicts between the new states and civil conflict within them. After this short period of regional infighting and a brief annexation of several Central American nations into Agustín de Iturbide's Mexican Empire, the nations of Central America convened the National Constituent Assembly in 1823 with representatives from all five countries of the former Kingdom of Guatemala.<sup>14</sup> The National Constituent Assembly declared the total independence of all five states from Spain and Mexico on July 1, 1823, and then began work on a federal constitution that could settle regional differences.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Woodward, *Rafael Carrera*, 14–15. The natural disasters in the region included an earthquake that rocked Guatemala City in 1773, a regional typhus epidemic from 1770-1775, a series of earthquakes and volcanic eruptions in El Salvador in 1787, a serious earthquake in Honduras in 1809, a regional yellow fever epidemic in 1809, and a devastating invasion of locusts between 1799 and 1805.

<sup>14</sup> Dym, *From Sovereign Villages to National States*, 193.

<sup>15</sup> Herrarte, *Documentos de La Unión Centroamericana*, 6–10.

With the liberal Spanish Constitution of 1812 and the United States Constitution as models, the Liberal-dominated assembly wrote and ratified a constitution in 1824, establishing the United Provinces of Central America on a federal system similar to the United States under a Liberal president, Manuel José Arce, from El Salvador.<sup>16</sup> In some sense the Central American states succeeded in the writing and ratification of the federal constitution due to the way it created, what Honduran historian Mario Argueta praised as, a compromise between Liberals and Conservatives and the powers of Guatemala and the provinces.<sup>17</sup> Despite these landmark achievements of the document, as Jordana Dym points out, the assembly chose to ignore the grievances and suggestions of major municipalities throughout the isthmus and formed the federation before regional delegates unanimously decided on the number and borders of member states.<sup>18</sup> This contested decision sparked tensions within the federation that would spell conflict for the reformist Liberals in charge of the federal and several state governments, especially in Guatemala.

### *Failure of Federation and Reformist Liberalism in Guatemala*

Following several tumultuous years of ideological and regional disagreement in the federation during Manuel Jose Arce's presidency, a fervent Liberal idealist, Francisco Morazán, won the presidency in 1830 and initiated a reform movement in the state of Guatemala in collaboration with its reformist Liberal governor, Mariano Gálvez. Morazán and Gálvez sought to implement a reform movement based on classical liberalism that would lead to a capitalist

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<sup>16</sup> Mario Argueta, *La primera generación liberal: fallas y aciertos (1829-1842)* (Tegucigalpa: Banco Central de Honduras, 1999), 31.

<sup>17</sup> Argueta, *La primera generación liberal*, 21.

<sup>18</sup> Dym, *From Sovereign Villages to National States*, 200.

revolution in Guatemala, initiate a process of modernization and foreign investment, and incorporate the indigenous populations into this new modern state. This movement included reforms that imposed a head tax on every citizen; taxed landowners and commerce to fund government projects; secularized government, public life, marriage, and schools; removed tariffs and trade restrictions to promote foreign investment; and exposed indigenous communal lands to purchase.<sup>19</sup>

By 1837, the unpopularity of these reforms among the country's majority poor, rural, and illiterate indigenous populations—who had no interest in participating in the civilizing reforms of the Guatemalan Liberal elites in the capital—led to resistance and the need to implement them with military force.<sup>20</sup> The tipping point of dissatisfaction with the reforms of Mariano Gálvez came with his expulsion of religious orders and implementation of the Livingston Codes—which replaced the former colonial judicial laws and practices.<sup>21</sup> By passing these reforms Gálvez repealed the policy of the paternal protection of indigenous communities and forcefully pushed them to engage in new social and political institutions; in doing this, Gálvez provoked much of the indigenous population of the country into open revolt against his policies. At this juncture, as historian Ralph Lee Woodward determined, the amount of military force needed to enact the liberal reforms appeared to oppose the liberal ideal of liberty.<sup>22</sup>

As Gálvez's unpopular reforms sparked indigenous revolt across the country, the Guatemalan Liberals began to fracture, opening the door for the formation of an opposition

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<sup>19</sup> Woodward, *Rafael Carrera*, 49–52; Argueta, *La primera generación liberal*, 57.

<sup>20</sup> Woodward, *Rafael Carrera*, 49–54.

<sup>21</sup> Woodward, *Rafael Carrera*, 65.

<sup>22</sup> Jordana Dym, “The Republic of Guatemala: Stitching Together a New Country,” in *New Countries: Capitalism, Revolutions, and Nations in the Americas, 1750-1870*, ed. John Tutino (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 299.

coalition held together by ladino caudillo Rafael Carrera.<sup>23</sup> By initiating such an overwhelming tide of indigenous resistance, which Carrera consolidated under his control, Gálvez catalyzed a fracturing of the Guatemalan Liberal Party born out of stark disagreement over how to respond to the indigenous revolt.<sup>24</sup> As the Liberal Party fractured, a Conservative coalition formed, composed of the Catholic Church, the Guatemalan Conservative Party—consisting mostly of colonial elites—and Rafael Carrera’s indigenous-ladino alliance. Attempts by Gálvez and factions of the Guatemalan Liberal elite to placate Carrera and his new Conservative allies proved unsuccessful, and Carrera captured Guatemala City in April of 1839 effectively ending Liberal rule in Guatemala for the next thirty years.<sup>25</sup> At that juncture it had become clear that the Liberal reform program failed to account for the colonial customs, lack of education, racial divisions, and regionalism present in post-independence Guatemala—a failure that discredited liberalism throughout Guatemala and facilitated the formation of Carrera’s coalition.

Larraínzar, Zeceña, and, Liberal Guatemalan historian and politician, Lorenzo Montúfar, lamented the failure of early reformist Liberals in their attempts to implement their vision of modernizing reform in Guatemala, but all coincide in faulting the early movement for its idealism and impatience which lead to its inability to adapt the nature of their program to the fragmented colonial society they tried to reform.<sup>26</sup> Carrera’s victory and Guatemala’s subsequent secession from the federation signaled the beginning of the end for the political domination of

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<sup>23</sup> The term “*ladino*” was the Guatemalan term for people of mixed European-indigenous descent and indigenous people who lived outside of indigenous communities or whose community of origin no longer existed. It was used instead of the word “*mestizo*,” which was used throughout the majority of Latin America, and these ladinos held a slightly higher social status than the indigenous populations which was increased after 1871. For more on ladinos, see Carol A. Smith, “Origins of the National Question in Guatemala: A Hypothesis,” in *Guatemalan Indians and the State: 1540 to 1988*, ed. Carol A. Smith (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 72–95.

<sup>24</sup> Montúfar, *Reseña histórica de Centro-América*, 6: 241; Woodward, *Rafael Carrera*, 70.

<sup>25</sup> Woodward, *Rafael Carrera*, 96.

<sup>26</sup> Zeceña, *La revolución de 1871*, 20, 28; Larraínzar, *La revolución de Guatemala*, 12–15; Lorenzo Montúfar, *Discursos del Doctor Lorenzo Montúfar* (Guatemala City: Los Talleres Sanchez & De Guise, 1923), 116–117.

reformist liberalism in Guatemala, replacing it with a Conservative-indigenous coalition led by Carrera which had garnered the support of the Church and much of the ladino population as well. Carrera and his coalition garnered support and destroyed opposition by establishing order domestically and asserting that the broken federation and Liberal reform efforts both promoted anarchy and subverted the national interests of Guatemala based on illusions of progress.<sup>27</sup>

### *Liberalism and Liberal Change Under Conservative Rule*

During the reign of Rafael Carrera after 1850, and the reign of his successor, Vicente Cerna, from 1865-1871, Guatemala underwent a number of changes that led to the implementation of liberal economic policies and the reconfiguring of Conservative and Liberal ideologies in the direction of a pragmatic alliance between the two factions. When tracing the changes under Conservative rule in Guatemala, the executive decrees from 1839 that established the government that lasted until the Constitutive Act of 1851 appear as the first examples of the introduction of liberal political ideas. In the presidential decree establishing the rights of the state and its inhabitants, the Conservative dictatorship guarantees the rights to life, liberty, property, free speech, free press, and arms—provided that they are not exercised in violation of other laws.<sup>28</sup> While not bestowing overwhelming civil guarantees, this decree exhibits a tendency towards liberal political ideas which are almost equal in scope to those purported forty years later in the Constitution of 1879. Similarly, in 1870, the Chamber of Representatives emitted a message to president Cerna pushing for the reform of civil and penal legislation in order to

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<sup>27</sup> Rafael Carrera, *Manifiesto del EXMO. Señor Presidente del Estado de Guatemala* (Guatemala City: Imprenta de La Paz, 1847), 5–7, 13.

<sup>28</sup> K. H. Silvert, *Study in Government: Guatemala*, ed. Robert Wauchope (New Orleans: Middle American Research Institute, 1954), 149–151. This work contains a collection of all Guatemalan constitutions, constitutive acts, constitutive decrees, and constitutional amendments from independence to the present translated into English.

harmonize it with the ideas and customs of the present era.<sup>29</sup> This message, despite not materializing into legislation, marked the continued rise of liberal political ideas in a starkly Conservative legislative body.

More prominent than these modestly liberal political ideas, liberal economic changes played an important part in the scientific modernization program of the Conservative regime. In the early 1850s and into the 1860s Guatemala began to see cochineal—their primary export—fall in value. As a result, the Conservative regime, in cooperation with the *Consulado de Comercio* and the liberal sanctuary *Sociedad Económica*, began to offer free seedlings, production bonuses, and tax breaks to stimulate the production of coffee across the country.<sup>30</sup> In addition to this effort in agricultural diversification, the Conservative regime consistently directed the *Consulado* to expand transportation, communication, and commercial infrastructure in order to facilitate trade and infrastructural modernization. The crowning achievements of these *Consulado* efforts were a permanent metal wharf in San José and the establishment of a telegraph line in 1868.<sup>31</sup>

Cerna, however, did not limit his program of modernization to stimulating agricultural exports and improving the infrastructure of trade. During his rule, the government passed a new

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<sup>29</sup> *Gaceta de Guatemala* (Guatemala City, Guatemala) XVI, no. 96, Dec. 22, 1870. The *Gaceta de Guatemala* was the official government newspaper in Guatemala the began in the colonial period and ceased publishing in 1871 after being replaced by *El Guatemalteco*. From this point forward, this newspaper will be cited as *Gaceta* followed the volume number—in roman numerals—the issue number, and the issue date. These citations will largely not carry page numbers because most daily issues were only four pages long, but, if they do, it will follow after the issue date.

<sup>30</sup> *Gaceta* XIV, no. 38, Aug. 9, 1864; *Gaceta* XV, no. 4, Jan. 29, 1866; Julio Castellanos Cambranes, *Coffee and Peasants: The Origins of the Modern Plantation Economy in Guatemala, 1853-1897* (Stockholm: Institute of Latin American Studies, 1985), 41–44; Woodward, *Class Privilege*, 49–51. The *Consulado de Comercio* was a semi-governmental guild of merchants, landowners, and distributors from the colonial area that received funding for the government to implement economic projects and policies. For more on the *Consulado*, see Woodward, *Class Privilege*. The *Sociedad Económica* was an organization of merchants, partially funded by the government, that served as a bastion of liberal economic ideas and worked on projects to diversify agriculture and modernize industry, agriculture, and legislation.

<sup>31</sup> *Gaceta* XV, no. 5, Feb. 7, 1866; *Gaceta* XVI, no. 26, July 27, 1869; *Gaceta* XVII, no. 21, May 28, 1871; *Gaceta* XVI, no. 44, Nov 30, 1869; Clegern, *Origins of Liberal Dictatorship*, 46–50.

Monetary Law in 1870 that worked to remove old colonial coins from circulation and converted Guatemala to a single metal currency system that matched the monetary conditions in Europe and the US in order to facilitate trade and the ease of monetary exchange.<sup>32</sup> Cerna's administrations paired that law with a publicly commissioned project by the Sociedad Económica, led by a known Liberal, Marco A. Soto, in which he detailed the flaws of the property and real estate laws in the country and presented a liberalized reform plan for the system.<sup>33</sup> Despite the failure to implement this system due to the fall of Cerna's government, it represents, along with the other previously mentioned reforms, the changing ideological currents within the Conservative Guatemala City elite which were emblematic of greater shifts in ideological primacy throughout the country.

More broadly, the liberal policy changes enacted by the Conservative regime, especially those implemented closer to its fall, demonstrate the changing ideological currents that had begun to sweep through Guatemala and reconfigure the political leanings of much of the country. The expansion of export agriculture, especially that of coffee, had begun to give rise to a large ladino planter class in the western highlands of Guatemala and a ladino middle class of artisans and commercial workers in the capital and municipalities.<sup>34</sup> Coffee's continued expansion also led to further encroachment and pressure on indigenous communal lands despite the Conservative regime's public commitment to protect their communities.<sup>35</sup> During the later years of the Conservative regime, Larraínzar pointed out that by his observation, these commercial and agricultural classes, along with many formerly Conservative business interests began to see the

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<sup>32</sup> *Gaceta* XVI, no. 86, Oct. 15, 1870.

<sup>33</sup> *Gaceta* XVI, no. 67, May 9, 1870; Herrick, *Desarrollo*, 38.

<sup>34</sup> Gudmundson and Lindo-Fuentes, *Central America, 1812-1871*, 121–127.

<sup>35</sup> David McCreery, *Rural Guatemala, 1760-1940* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 163–168.

utility of liberalizing the social and economic policies of the country.<sup>36</sup> In the same way that this new generation of Conservatives began to support liberal policies, as both Ralph Lee Woodward and Frederick Stirton Weaver have concluded, in the latter part of Conservative rule Guatemalan Liberals had become far more moderate, shedding much of the idealism and civilizing ideas of the reformist Liberals like Mariano Gálvez and aligning their interests more closely with those of the new generation of increasingly liberal-minded Conservatives.<sup>37</sup>

Through this converging of ideological intentions during that last ten years of Conservative rule, Guatemala saw the beginnings of a pragmatic alliance between many liberals and Conservatives based on the mutual benefits of a liberalized economy and a conservative state. A new generation of Liberals learned from their predecessors' failure to produce a coherent ideology of reform that the masses would support and moved their focus to consolidating the growing coffee planter class as the base of a party that had less genuine interest in the needs of the masses, but more in those of the economic elites. This new Liberal project, backed by planter resources and new Conservative allies, soon came to fruition in the Revolution of 1871 and ended Vicente Cerna's Conservative rule at the hands of Miguel García Granados and Justo Rufino Barrios.

### *The Revolution of 1871*

Shortly after the Revolution of 1871, Larraínzar and Zeceña portrayed the conflict as an inevitable reaction to the suppression of progress and a part of a broader liberal resurgence in the Americas which prompted aid for the revolution from the United States, Mexico, and liberal

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<sup>36</sup> Larraínzar, *La revolución de Guatemala*, 43.

<sup>37</sup> Woodward, *Rafael Carrera*, 455; Weaver, "Reform and (Counter) Revolution," 146.

governments in Central America like Costa Rica.<sup>38</sup> While this may be true, this depiction fails to express how the failure of colonial-minded conservatism and the conversion of many of its followers to a more pragmatic brand of liberalism—which had grown increasingly popular in Central America—played far larger roles in bringing down the Cerna regime than the simple inevitability of progress.

The victory of the Revolution of 1871 and its subsequent installation of the Reforma regime consolidated the growing power of a new moderate Liberal coalition. This coalition consisted of ladinos, coffee planters, former Conservative elites involved in the expansion of export agriculture, the growing commercial middle class, the formerly Conservative business class of the capital, the moderate Liberals of the Conservative period led by Miguel García Granados, the radical Liberals led by Justo Rufino Barrios, and large portions of the indigenous population.<sup>39</sup> Interestingly, they secured rather significant indigenous support—despite their previous opposition to Liberal efforts—through their promises to both reform the disproportionate tax system that hurt the poor and abolish the state *aguardiente* monopoly which ladinos abused to exploit indigenous communities.<sup>40</sup> With this impressive coalition, Justo Rufino Barrios and Miguel García Granados successfully achieved the goals of the previous short-lived Liberal resurgence of 1848, unseating a Conservative regime that had grown weak and riddled with contradictions as it tried to hold on to the privileges and authority of the colonial elite in the

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<sup>38</sup> Zeceña, *La revolución de 1871*, 53; Larraínzar, *La revolución de Guatemala*, 114–120.

<sup>39</sup> Larraínzar, *La revolución de Guatemala*, 121–122; Zeceña, *La revolución de 1871*, 69; Herrick, *Desarrollo*, 35; Cambranes, *Coffee and Peasants*, 110–115; Clegern, *Origins of Liberal Dictatorship*, 112–115.

<sup>40</sup> Miguel García Granados, “El manifiesto del General Don Miguel García Granados,” in Zeceña, *La revolución de 1871*, 58. The term “*aguardiente*” means liquor, and, besides a brief cessation during Liberal rule in the 1830s, the Guatemalan government had maintained a state monopoly on liquor sales and production. This monopoly disproportionately harmed indigenous communities and ladinos frequently worked in this monopolized industry within indigenous communities leading to tensions—especially because there was a prohibition on indigenous people working in the industry.

face of a burgeoning coalition of Liberals hellbent on expanding the agricultural export economy to reap the benefits of worldwide capitalism.<sup>41</sup>

Nevertheless, following the signing of their revolutionary pact, the Acta de Patrizca, and their subsequent victorious march into Guatemala City in mid-1871, Miguel García Granados and Justo Rufino Barrios found themselves at odds over what the new system of government in Guatemala should look like. On one side stood Granados who possessed a dearth of experience as a career legislator and supported a moderate Liberal government—labelled an aristocratic republic by his son years later—with an equal division of powers that would faithfully execute the laws and uphold the civil guarantees and liberties of all citizens.<sup>42</sup> On the other side stood Barrios and his faction of Los Altos coffee planter radicals who favored a centralized executive and a government founded on direct intervention to expand export agriculture and the protection of commercial and property rights over the rights of the individual.<sup>43</sup> Granados had the first opportunity to implement the more moderate reforms of his faction of Liberals when he served as the provisional president of Guatemala, wielding supreme authority until 1873. He managed to convene a Constitutional Assembly in December of 1871, but Barrios and his faction had enough support to reject the ratification of the two traditionally liberal documents they produced.<sup>44</sup> By 1873, Granados started to lose control of the government and the radicals gained

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<sup>41</sup> *El Guatemalteco* (Guatemala City, Guatemala) 3, no. 30, Sep. 24, 1874. *El Guatemalteco* was the official government newspaper of Guatemala starting in 1873. From this point forward, this newspaper will be cited as *El Guatemalteco* followed by the volume number, the issue number, and the issue date. For reference, the issues from 1873-1877 were contained in volumes that were numbered as series 1-7 and then jumping to 11-12 in mid-1877. Starting in 1878 the volumes were labelled by year starting with year 5 as roman numeral V. As such, the volume numbers for issues from 1873-1877 will be noted by numbers 1-7 and 11-12, and the volume numbers for issues from 1878 onward will be noted with roman numerals beginning with V for 1878 and continuing up by one for each subsequent year. These citations will largely not carry page numbers because most daily issues were only four pages long, but, if they do, it will follow after the issue date.

<sup>42</sup> Granados, “El manifiesto,” 57-59; Zeceña, *La revolución de 1871*, 117-123; Herrick, *Desarrollo*, 52-59, 121-124.

<sup>43</sup> Zeceña, *La revolución de 1871*, 117-123; Herrick, *Desarrollo*, 52-59, 121-124.

<sup>44</sup> Herrick, *Desarrollo*, 53-63.

increased influence which allowed for the election of Barrios as president in 1873.<sup>45</sup> His election marked a move away from traditional liberalism towards state-driven development of a proto-capitalist economy at the expense of democratic government and civil liberties as he wielded supreme executive authority with the support of a powerful and professionalized military that had served as the foundation of the former Conservative regime in Guatemala.

### *La Reforma*

Once Barrios took over the presidency in 1873 he began a reform movement—La Reforma—that focused on the liberalization of economic policies through the direct intervention of the state; secularizing the state and education; and modernizing, but still maintaining, several crucial conservative institutions like the military, a distinct class of political and economic elites, and an authoritarian dictatorship. In essence he constructed what historian Wayne Clegern has dubbed a “liberal dictatorship,” that realistically contained a sparing number of liberal elements in lieu of far more conservative features that were emblematic of the new wave of positivist elitist liberalism that Barrios and his supporters subscribed to.<sup>46</sup> Under the direction of this new liberal idea, Barrios implemented a vast program of economic reform based on expanding plantation-based export agriculture, increasing foreign investment and immigration, and restructuring the labor system in Guatemala. The Ministry of Development functioned as the primary authority in Barrios’ program to stimulate export agriculture and commerce through direct intervention in the economy. The Ministry of Development arranged for the sale of idle

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<sup>45</sup> Herrick, *Desarrollo*, 52–63, 335–348.

<sup>46</sup> Clegern, *Origins of Liberal Dictatorship*, 146; González, *El positivismo en Guatemala*, 210; *El Guatemalteco* 6, no. 107, Feb. 9, 1877; *El Guatemalteco* V, no. 188, Sep. 20, 1878. These two newspaper issues make direct references to principles of positivism as important to the sociopolitical foundation for national progress.

lands; instituted tax bonuses related to agricultural products such as coffee, sugar, cotton, and rubber in order to incentivize their production; and oversaw a comprehensive project to expand and improve the transportation infrastructure throughout the country in order to better facilitate agricultural exports.<sup>47</sup> In combination with these efforts, throughout the course of his rule from 1873-1885, Barrios introduced a reformed monetary system and updated fiscal, tax, and commercial codes which rewrote the colonial era laws and regulations that had long complicated the purchase, sale, and titling of land and stymied the benefits that the government and producers received from international trade.<sup>48</sup> In similar modernizing manner, Barrios relaxed the formerly restrictive immigration laws of the country, created an easy path to citizenship for foreign nationals, and founded the Immigration Society which was a government organization that would organize and incentivize foreign immigration to stimulate economic growth.<sup>49</sup> Lastly, Barrios issued various decrees establishing a system of mandatory labor based on vagrancy and debt coercion which forcefully mobilized the indigenous majority to work on transportation infrastructure and provide agricultural labor for planters, primarily coffee planters; these decrees utilized conservative colonial era policies to create a labor system similar to the debt peonage established by Benito Juárez during the Mexican Reforma that began in 1856.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> *El Guatemalteco* 1, no. 1, Feb. 18, 1873; *El Guatemalteco* 1, no. 5, Mar. 22, 1873; *El Guatemalteco* 2, no. 13, Apr. 10, 1874; *El Guatemalteco* 2, no. 15, Apr. 25, 1874; *El Guatemalteco* 7, no. 119, May 7, 1877; *El Guatemalteco* 7, no. 136, Sep. 11, 1877; *El Guatemalteco* V, no. 186, Sep. 12, 1878; *El Guatemalteco* V, no. 192, Oct. 17, 1878. These selected issues contain decrees, policies, promotions, and official commentary on some of the key efforts of the Ministry of Development from 1873-1878.

<sup>48</sup> *El Guatemalteco* 7, no. 140, Oct. 5, 1877; *El Guatemalteco* 12, no. 149, Nov. 22, 1877; *El Guatemalteco* V, no. 165, Mar. 16, 1878; *El Guatemalteco* V, no. 172, May 4, 1878; *El Guatemalteco* V, no. 173, May 14, 1878; *El Guatemalteco* IX, no. 401, June 16, 1882. These issues contain decrees, potential plans, and official commentary on the reforms of the financial and real estate legal codes.

<sup>49</sup> *El Guatemalteco* 12, no. 145, Nov. 7, 1877; *El Guatemalteco* V, no. 183, Aug. 24, 1878.

<sup>50</sup> *El Guatemalteco* 3, no. 34, Nov. 7, 1874; *El Guatemalteco* 7, no. 119, May 7, 1877; *El Guatemalteco* 7, no. 133, Aug. 20, 1877; *El Guatemalteco* 11, no. 143, Oct. 26, 1877; *El Guatemalteco* V, no. 189, Sep. 26, 1878. These issues contain important decrees and directives from the national government detailing the systems of forced labor. On the parallels with the Mexican Reforma, see Herrick, *Desarrollo*, 131–134.

Despite certain criticisms of Barrios' program from oppositional figures, especially with regards to forced labor, the basic results of his economic program were undeniable; the value of exports in 1870 sat around 2.5 million pesos, but after twelve years of the Reforma the total value of exports in 1883 was up to 5.7 million pesos.<sup>51</sup> At the same time, even when taking their effectiveness into account, an examination of the slew of economic reforms Barrios implemented reveals that despite their focus on the liberal idea of promoting production and exports, their use of heavy-handed state authority and direct government intervention in the market actually defied the classically liberal tenets purported by early reformers like Mariano Gálvez and Francisco Morazán and more closely followed the ideas of Latin American positivism.<sup>52</sup>

Barrios' reform program also exhibited elements of a fusion of new era liberalism and Latin American positivism through his secularization of the state and implementation of public education founded on the civilization of the masses and the development of industrious and patriotic citizens. Barrios initiated his anticlerical reform in true liberal fashion under Granados and cemented it upon taking power by decreeing freedom of religion in 1873 and both nationalizing church property and expelling all religious orders in 1874; he subsequently enshrined this secularization in the Constitution.<sup>53</sup> In like manner, Barrios rolled out his program of education reform in three parts: beginning with a decree in 1875 establishing secularized public education; followed by a decree in 1877 adding complementary reform; and finishing with another decree in 1880 guaranteeing freedom of education, mandating primary school, and

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<sup>51</sup> Herrick, *Desarrollo*, 239.

<sup>52</sup> For more on the specific characteristics of Latin American positivism, see González, *El positivismo en Guatemala*, 50–55.

<sup>53</sup> The anticlerical decrees were officially published in *El Guatemalteco* 1, no. 5, Mar. 22, 1873; *El Guatemalteco* 2, no. 5, Feb. 17, 1874. For secularization of the state in the Constitution of 1879, see Silvert, *Study in Government*, 165–166.

reforming the curriculum and structure of the education system.<sup>54</sup> The framers of the Constitution of 1879 also guaranteed mandatory, secular, and gratuitous primary school in the document.<sup>55</sup> Barrios finished his reform in 1882 with the capstone of the Reforma education program, the Organic and Regulatory Law of Public Instruction.<sup>56</sup>

Through these reforms, Barrios constructed a system of public education that, according to his 1880 decree, would “form citizens with sufficient knowledge and morality to be worthy of their republican and free society and instill the ideas of liberty, equality, fraternity, order, progress, Central American union, patriotism, and love of work.”<sup>57</sup> In establishing a secularized state and a public education system founded on the positivist tenets of order, progress, and industriousness, Barrios illuminated the clear liberal-positivist duality that defined the Reforma.

This fusion of liberalism and positivism also appears in the manner in which Barrios maintained the dominance of a sociopolitical elite in Guatemala throughout his regime, which was only a mild departure from the colonial elite of the Conservative period. Due to the expansion of export agriculture throughout the country, Barrios constructed a new class of economic and political elites who wielded significant influence and privilege similar to the colonial elites of the Conservative era. These planter and commercial elites, some whom had held the same status under Conservative rule and others who recently found their way into this status, funded the Revolution of 1871 in order to establish a government that could reform economic and labor policy to incentivize exports, expand transportation infrastructure, and

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<sup>54</sup> *El Guatemalteco* 7, no. 125, June 27, 1877; *El Guatemalteco* 7, no. 127, July 9, 1877; *El Guatemalteco* VII, no. 260, Jan. 1, 1880. These issues contain the decrees on education.

<sup>55</sup> For public education in the Constitution, see Silvert, *Study in Government*, 165.

<sup>56</sup> González, *El positivismo en Guatemala*, 90.

<sup>57</sup> “Secretaría de la Instrucción Pública, Decreto 253,” *El Guatemalteco* VII, no. 260, Jan. 1, 1880, 1.

mobilize the indigenous majority to work on their plantations.<sup>58</sup> Barrios was one of these elites, owning a coffee plantation in the western highlands himself; as such, he served as the perfect leader by conforming all government policy to the benefit of the new expanded class of elites.<sup>59</sup> Demonstrating this extreme political influence of the planter class, the official government newspaper, *El Guatemalteco*, on several occasions defended their forced labor policies—citing the needs of the planters—published a letter of gratitude from a group of planters regarding the expansion of forced labor, and even had to publicly apologize for misinformation about a potential new tax on coffee, reaffirming the vital importance of coffee planters in the country’s success.<sup>60</sup>

Barrios did not limit the maintenance of conservative institutions to the establishment of a new elite; his government controlled the political sphere by forgoing liberal ideas of democratic republican government by establishing an authoritarian military dictatorship that restricted civil liberties. After ruling as a provisional dictator from 1873-1879, Barrios convened a Constitutional Assembly that quickly produced and ratified the Constitution of 1879. This document, while appearing to establish a liberal republican government on the surface, contained several clauses weakening liberties and allowing for the consolidation of executive power. The new Constitution, despite arranging a seemingly proper division of powers, contained two articles, Article 54 and Article 77, which enabled the legislature to delegate legislative power to

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<sup>58</sup> For elites’ support and goals for the Revolution of 1871 and Reforma government, see McCreery, *Development and the State*, 40–42; Cambranes, *Coffee and Peasants*, 279; Steven Palmer, “Central American Union or Guatemalan Republic? The National Question in Liberal Guatemala, 1871-1885,” *The Americas* 49, no. 4 (April 1993): 515–517.

<sup>59</sup> McCreery, *Development and the State*, 40–42; Cambranes, *Coffee and Peasants*, 279; Palmer, “Central American Union,” 515–517.

<sup>60</sup> For the statement of the coffee tax, see *El Guatemalteco* 3, no. 31, Oct. 6, 1874. For the defense of forced labor, see “Sección Editorial,” *El Guatemalteco* 7, no. 119, May 7, 1877, 4. For the letter of gratitude, see *El Guatemalteco* 7, no. 128, July 13, 1877, 3.

the executive and established the right of the executive “to issue the Ordinances and regulations which may be necessary to facilitate and assure the execution of the law in all branches of the Administration.”<sup>61</sup> On top of this, the Constitution qualified almost all civil guarantees with their adherence to secondary laws, gave the executive extensive powers to suppress civil liberties, allowed for the conferring of emergency powers to the executive, arranged for the executive appointment of departmental governors, and gave the executive total authority to subvert municipal government.<sup>62</sup> In essence, the Constitution of 1879 fell short in its attempts to create a republican democracy based on liberal ideas and left a constitutional window open for Barrios, and all of his successors the establish themselves as authoritarian dictators.

In order to support the supreme authority of the executive and implement its policies, Barrios modernized the already formidable military and established it as an elite loyal client of the president. Barrios inherited a government that had ruled for thirty years with the support of an elite and loyal military; as a result, he worked to modernize it and affirm its complete loyalty to the president. Through the implementation of a new military code, the addition of new military by-laws, the creation of military academies for officers, and initiating a complete plan for the modernization, expansion, and professional training of the military Barrios overhauled the institution.<sup>63</sup> In combination with this reform, Barrios also formed a division of the military, the Civil Guard, that served as the president’s private security and police force to do his bidding.<sup>64</sup> This reconstruction of the military established a modernized, expansive, well-disciplined, and

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<sup>61</sup> The quotation comes from Silvert, *Study in Government*, 168–172.

<sup>62</sup> See Articles 16–28, 38–39, 52, and 94–98 in Silvert, *Study in Government*, 165–166, 168, 173.

<sup>63</sup> *El Guatemalteco* 2, no. 6, Feb. 21, 1874; *El Guatemalteco* 2, no. 18, May 24, 1874; *El Guatemalteco* 7, no. 132, Aug. 11, 1877; *El Guatemalteco* VI, no. 212, Feb. 27, 1879. These issues contain the government-published decrees, policies, announcements, and official commentary on the major changes to the military under Barrios.

<sup>64</sup> *El Guatemalteco* 7, no. 119, May 7, 1877; *El Guatemalteco* 7, no. 122, May 31, 1877.

loyal army that served as the foundation of the supreme authority of the president and continued to be a political institution of force—just as it had been under Conservative rule.<sup>65</sup>

A recognition of the conservative nature of the institutions and positivist ideals driving Barrios' government and the Revolution of 1871 contradicts any claims at defining this period, and the Reforma and its policies, as shining examples of classical liberalism in Guatemala or Central America as a whole. Interestingly enough, the Barrios regime expressed this same sentiment in an 1877 editorial section of their official government newspaper, *El Guatemalteco*. In this article the government explains that democratic institutions and universal suffrage seen in the United States were incompatible with the uneducated population of Guatemala.<sup>66</sup> The same article dismisses the utility of *laissez faire* economic policies due to the lack of individual initiative in the majority of Guatemalans and, instead, advocates for direct intervention of the government to stimulate economic growth.<sup>67</sup> Despite this clear expression of a positivist government program and the conservative reality of many Reforma institutions, nineteenth-century historians like Federico Larraínzar and Mariano Zeceña, in collaboration with government publications from the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, attempted to portray the classically liberal nature of the regime.<sup>68</sup> Their misconstrued accounts were part of Central American elite's efforts to promote and embrace the supposed unparalleled success of liberalism and modernization in Guatemala and greater Central America.

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<sup>65</sup> *El Guatemalteco* VII, no. 299, Aug. 5, 1880; *El Guatemalteco* IX, no. 401, June 16, 1882; *El Guatemalteco* X, no. 427, Jan. 8, 1883. In the first two issues the military makes public expressions of readiness and loyalty to Barrios and the support of his government. The third issue contains a message of gratitude from Barrios to the military for their service, attitude, and support of the Reforma project.

<sup>66</sup> "Sección Editorial," *El Guatemalteco* 6, no. 107, Feb. 9, 1877, 2.

<sup>67</sup> "Sección Editorial," *El Guatemalteco* 6, no. 107, Feb. 9, 1877, 2.

<sup>68</sup> Larraínzar, *La revolución de Guatemala*, 139–149; Zeceña, *La revolución de 1871*, 106–115; *El Guatemalteco* VII, no. 370, Nov. 28, 1881; *La revolución del 71 y la reforma constitucional*, 33, 44.

### *Indigenous Peoples and the Creation of the Reforma State*

While the Revolution of 1871 and the Reforma were elitist projects by definition, they permanently redefined the relationship of the indigenous majority with the state—which had been in flux since independence. Beginning with federation and peaking with the Reforma, a series of transformations within the socioeconomic structure of Guatemala redefined indigeneity, racial status, and national identity which fundamentally altered the social, political, and economic status of Guatemala's indigenous population. These transformations broke up many indigenous communities and reconfigured their relations with the state by forcibly putting indigenous peoples under the control of a strengthened state bureaucracy as client citizens and expanding state military control over their lives. This directly subverted any surge of popular indigenous rebellion against the Reforma state, which had been so overwhelming against their reformist Liberal predecessors several decades earlier. The Reforma government consolidated the growing forces expanding export agriculture, economic and political liberalization, ladino-indigenous conflict, and the elite-based positivist ideology of second-generation Liberals into a new national state. This Reforma state further promoted these societal transformations that had started affecting the indigenous way of life as early as 1830 and institutionalized them in their creation of an elite ladino planter state which cemented the client role of indigenous people as debt peons for coerced agricultural labor.

Positivist Liberal politicians viewed indigenous people in a way that was fundamentally different from their Liberal predecessors from federation and former colonial government officials. They sought to do away with the paternally protected existence of indigenous communities from colonial rule and had doubly moved on from the assimilation program of early Liberals that sought to integrate the indigenous majority into the nation as citizens through

education and political participation. Instead they viewed the indigenous populations as distinct from the new Guatemalan state, and an obstacle for progress, putting them at the status of subordinate clients of a new ladino state in way that did away with previous attempts to protect or integrate them.<sup>69</sup>

During the colonial period, the indigenous majority of what would later become independent Guatemala lived rather autonomously in a largely separate existence the Spanish colonizers. This sheltered colonial condition was quite distinct from what they would face under independent Liberal rule. Due to the moderate success of royal restrictions on the exploitation of indigenous populations and the lack of labor-intensive profitable industries in colonial Guatemala, the indigenous populations' contact with the Spanish came mostly through providing yearly tribute to the crown in the form of specie, crops, and temporary public works labor.<sup>70</sup> Beyond that, their main contact remained largely limited to the realm of local Catholic priests who sought to convert them.<sup>71</sup> As Central America burst on to the scene of American independence in 1821, the large indigenous populations in Guatemala remained in this paternally protected state of the colonial era; with the formation of the United Provinces of Central America, however, this would change very quickly.

As previously discussed, the elections of Francisco Morazán to the federal presidency of Central America and Mariano Gálvez to the governorship of Guatemala in 1830 marked the

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<sup>69</sup> For the perspectives of positivist liberal accounts, see Zeceña, *La revolución de 1871*, 15–16; Larrainzar, *La revolución de Guatemala*, 9–10; *La revolución del 71 y la reforma constitucional*, 37–39. For the perspectives of the Reforma government, see "Sección Editorial: Sobre la ley de los trabajadores," *El Guatemalteco* 7, no. 119, May 7, 1877, 4; "Sección Editorial: La Revolución de 1871," *El Guatemalteco* 7, no. 128, July 13, 1877, 3–4; "Sección Editorial: Civilización de los indígenas," *El Guatemalteco* VI, no. 242, Sep. 15, 1879, 2. For further discussion on the positivist liberal perception of indigenous populations by twentieth-century Guatemalan historians, see Gonzalez, *El positivismo en Guatemala*, 48, 60; Cambranes, *Coffee and Peasants*, 70, 115, 159, 189.

<sup>70</sup> Christopher H. Lutz and W. George Lovell, "Core and Periphery in Colonial Guatemala," in *Guatemalan Indians and the State*, 48–49.

<sup>71</sup> McCreery, *Rural Guatemala*, 130–131.

beginning of an experiment of the unapologetic implementation of an imported liberal ideology on to the social, economic, and political institutions of Guatemala. With Morazán's support, Galvez initiated a series of reforms stripping protections from indigenous communal ejidos in order to facilitate their titling or sale as part of a broader effort to promote commercial development through land ownership.<sup>72</sup> Given the opportunity to exploit the vague limits of indigenous communal lands and the new state push to title property, ladino squatters began to encroach on indigenous ejidos by settling on and titling ambiguously titled communal land.<sup>73</sup> They would frequently follow the legal long-term rental process of ejido land, but then later claim ownership; the government usually sided with indigenous communities in the early- to mid-nineteenth century in these clear violations of the law, but the trend then began to shift the other way.<sup>74</sup> These broad changes to the protected status of indigenous lands initiated a process of encroachment on their communal land and state formation on elite terms with ladinos at the forefront.

These changes obviously sparked rather significant popular indigenous resistance which, in some cases like the community opposition to the passing of the Law of November 1837, resulted in the Liberal state bending to indigenous resistance.<sup>75</sup> On the whole, however, these pockets of indigenous resistance were minor in comparison to the popular revolt sparked by the

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<sup>72</sup> Woodward, *Rafael Carrera*, 45–55; McCreery, *Rural Guatemala*, 60–61; Dym, “The Republic of Guatemala,” 298; René Reeves, *Ladinos with Ladinos, Indians with Indians Land, Labor, and Regional Ethnic Conflict in the Making of Guatemala* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 44.

<sup>73</sup> Reeves, *Ladinos with Ladinos*, 35, 43–45. The word “*ejido*” in nineteenth-century Guatemala referred generally to the frequently vast communal lands belonging to the indigenous communities in Guatemala. These lands varied in use including use as communal grazing land, areas of food cultivation for the community, land for commodity production for sale to benefit the community, and occasional family renting of plots if they were in need. For more on *ejidos*, see McCreery, *Rural Guatemala*, 49–84, 236–264.

<sup>74</sup> David McCreery, “State Power, Indigenous Communities, and Land in Nineteenth-Century Guatemala, 1820–1920,” in *Guatemalan Indians and the State*, 98–100; Reeves, *Ladinos with Ladinos*, 53–56.

<sup>75</sup> Reeves, *Ladinos with Ladinos*, 51.

passing of Mariano Galvez's famous Livingston Codes in the mid 1830s. These justice system reforms did away with the colonial legacy of a separate legal system for indigenous people and forcefully incorporated their participation in a new justice system with Spanish language requirements, trial by jury, and submission to the direct authority of criollo and ladino judicial officials.<sup>76</sup> Guatemalan Liberals viewed these reforms as a natural step in conforming their government to liberal ideals of equality of all citizens before the law, however, the indigenous populations viewed it as a further step towards eroding their separate and protected existence that they had grown accustomed to during centuries of colonial rule.<sup>77</sup> In attempting to implement these radical reforms rooted in a foreign political ideology, the Guatemalan Liberals upended a system of indigenous and ladino state relations that had stood for centuries. The result of this was the formation of a cross-class and cross-ethnic ladino-indigenous coalition in a landmark and historically isolated demonstration of mass popular uprising in Guatemala which ended with their ladino leader, Rafael Carrera, as president and the fall of Gálvez, his Liberal government, and the federation.<sup>78</sup> Despite this mass popular rejection of the Liberal reform program, however, the influence of the growing agricultural export economy and the primacy of the ladino state had already found significant purchase in the fabric of Guatemalan society and would continue to grow during the Conservative period.

Rafael Carrera, a ladino caudillo who rose to power on the back of a massive popular uprising by indigenous and ladino populations alike, defined Conservative rule—beginning in 1839 and continuing essentially uninterrupted until the triumph of the Revolution of 1871. In the eyes of many historians, his rule exhibited a distinctly more pro-indigenous outlook that stalled

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<sup>76</sup> Gudmundson and Lindo-Fuentes, *Central America, 1812-1871*, 104–109.

<sup>77</sup> Dym, "The Republic of Guatemala," 302; Weaver, "Reform and (Counter) Revolution," 139.

<sup>78</sup> Smith, "Origins of the National Question in Guatemala," 79–82.

the efforts of Liberal reformers to privatize their communal lands for export agriculture, utilize their population as cheap forced labor, and assimilate them into a new ladino state.<sup>79</sup> While to some extent these claims do hold true—as evidenced in Carrera’s reimplementation of colonial judicial practices for indigenous peoples, public intervention on their behalf in high profile land disputes, and protection of them from forced agricultural labor—his rule did not prevent the continued transformation of the relationship between the indigenous majority and the Guatemalan state.<sup>80</sup> His public demonstrations in favor of paternal protection of indigenous populations and his partial reversal of Liberal reforms did offer some protection, but they failed to stem the continued seizure of communal lands by the increasing number of ladinos migrating to indigenous communities to take advantage of an expanding export agriculture economy based on coffee production.<sup>81</sup> Additionally, his temporary reimplementation of protections reverted indigenous peoples to dependents of the state which left them more vulnerable to the growing threat of a new positivist-leaning liberalism more interested in exploiting the indigenous populations than incorporating them into the new Guatemalan state.<sup>82</sup>

It was this new positivist liberalism that catalyzed the formation of the revolutionary coalition of both Conservative and Liberal elites and the ladinos which capitalized on their new shared vision for an elite-ladino state founded on the centralization of authority and forced incorporation of the indigenous populations into an increasingly liberalized agro-export

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<sup>79</sup> Several major historians of nineteenth-century Guatemala argue that the indigenous populations were far better off under Rafael Carrera, see Smith, “Origins of the National Question in Guatemala;” Ralph Lee Woodward, “Changes in the Nineteenth-Century Guatemalan State and Its Indian Policies,” in *Guatemalan Indians and the State*, 52–71; Arturo Taracena, “Estado de Los Altos, indígenas y régimen conservador: Guatemala, 1838-1851,” *Anuario de Estudios Centroamericanos* 19, no. 1 (1993): 37–53; McCreery, “State Power, Indigenous Communities, and Land in Nineteenth-Century Guatemala, 1820-1920.”

<sup>80</sup> Silvert, *Study in Government*, 148; Woodward, “Changes in the Nineteenth-Century Guatemalan State,” 67–68; Smith, “Origins of the National Question in Guatemala,” 82–83.

<sup>81</sup> Reeves, *Ladinos with Ladinos*, 58; Taracena, “Estado de Los Altos,” 38, 45, 50.

<sup>82</sup> Weaver, “Reform and (Counter) Revolution,” 145.

economy. While this coalition did garner some indigenous support as they drew closer to victory, and the failing Cerna regime grew more repressive, on the whole they had abandoned the notion of incorporating the indigenous population of Guatemala into their new state through democratic appeal.

The victory of this coalition in the Revolution of 1871 and the subsequent construction of a new Guatemalan state during the Reforma cemented several transformations that had already been coming to fruition during Conservative rule. Led by Justo Rufino Barrios, the Reforma Liberals created what David McCreery called a “planter state” in which the expansion of coffee production for export came at the expense of indigenous communal lands and institutionalized coercion of their populations into agricultural labor.<sup>83</sup> In achieving these aims, the Reforma government distinguished the ladinos as socially and economically above the members of corporate indigenous communities. By creating spaces for ladinos to work as labor recruiters for coffee plantations, local and regional officials in the expanded state bureaucracy, business owners in new communities of indigenous agricultural laborers, and officers in the military the government program of the Reforma redefined the socio-political status of ladinos.<sup>84</sup> They elevated them above the indigenous populations and made them the intermediaries between state and the indigenous communities. In doing this they created an expansive and powerful elite-ladino state that projected state power through military force and an expanded state bureaucracy to drive the agro-export economy and coerce much of the indigenous majority into the status of landless debt peons.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Palmer, “Central American Union,” 514–515.

<sup>84</sup> Smith, “Origins of the National Question in Guatemala,” 85–88.

<sup>85</sup> McCreery, *Rural Guatemala*, 176–179.

Despite facing this outright institutionalized exploitation by the Guatemalan state, however, the indigenous populations of Guatemala did not resist the Reforma Liberal reforms through massive popular rebellion like they had done in the 1830s. While this lack of popular revolt could appear to indicate a basic level of acceptance among the indigenous populations, by the late 1870s and early 1880s there were several clear differences between the two sets of circumstances that prevented mass revolt. Most importantly, recent scholarship has better revealed that while the loss of significant communal lands did occur in the coffee zones of Guatemala during the Reforma, this process was a slow one that had begun under Conservative rule and accelerated during the Reforma.<sup>86</sup> Additionally, the Reforma Liberals intentionally avoided taking unnecessary land from indigenous communities in order to prevent outright rebellion and to allow indigenous farmers to grow food crops to feed the nation.<sup>87</sup> By mitigating the speed and extent of land seizures, the Reforma Liberals avoided provoking immediate outright rebellion that could unify indigenous communities.

Most corporate indigenous communities in nineteenth-century Guatemala, contrary to the assumptions of earlier historians, did not act together in unison.<sup>88</sup> These communities had their own internal conflicts, local goals, and external conflicts with other indigenous communities that stalled massive popular rebellion. Due to this lack of indigenous unity, the softened tactics of Reforma Liberals, and the general expansion of state power through a far-reaching bureaucracy and increasingly large and professionalized military, massive popular rebellion to the establishment of the Reforma state never materialized. That is not to say that indigenous peoples

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<sup>86</sup> Reeves, *Ladinos with Ladinos*, 39–42; McCreery, *Rural Guatemala*, 242–243.

<sup>87</sup> McCreery, *Rural Guatemala*, 250.

<sup>88</sup> Carol A. Smith, “Social Relations in Guatemala over Time and Space,” in *Guatemalan Indians and the State*, 18–22.

did not engage in smaller scale efforts at rebellion and institutional resistance, because they did, but no large-scale resistance came to fruition.<sup>89</sup>

As such, the new national state that second-generation Liberals had envisioned became reality during the Guatemalan Reforma. They rewrote the constitution and institutionalized the subjugation of indigenous populations as secondary citizens, perpetuating an elite-ladino state for the remainder of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. By solidifying this sociopolitical reality, however, the Reforma Liberals closed the door on the democratic incorporation of the indigenous populations into the Guatemalan state and national identity for the foreseeable future, opting instead to form a socially divided state and identity. Ultimately, this decision to abandon the inclusion of the indigenous majority of Guatemala in the new Liberal state extended this exclusion into the foundation of the nineteenth century's historical record.

### *Elite Preference in the Inception of the Historical Record*

The earliest historical accounts of the transformative events of the nineteenth century that permanently institutionalized the elite-ladino positivist state of the Guatemalan Reforma under the auspices of second-generation liberalism implicitly reflected the lack of indigenous incorporation into the state. Lorenzo Montúfar wrote one of the most comprehensive and prominent accounts by these early Central American historians with his *Reseña histórica de Centro-América* (published by volume beginning in 1878 and ending in 1887). Montúfar was a Liberal Guatemala City elite and career nineteenth-century Central American politician. He received a law degree from the University of San Carlos in Guatemala City, and then went on to be an active member of the opposition Liberal Party under Carrera until he had to flee to Costa

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<sup>89</sup> McCreery, *Rural Guatemala*, 104–106, 257.

Rica in 1845. There he served two times as the Minister of Foreign Affairs and helped secure the support of Costa Rica's Liberal government for the Revolution of 1871.<sup>90</sup> Following the success of the revolution, he served as the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Education for much of Justo Rufino Barrios' rule but eventually became a critic of the regime when Barrios tried to annex El Salvador into a new Central American union by force.<sup>91</sup>

In his account, Montúfar blames the failure of the first Liberal experiment under Gálvez on the "artisans and masses," meaning ladinos and indigenous people, that he saw as having gained so much from Gálvez but still brought about his fall.<sup>92</sup> By blaming the failure of their imported reform movement on the masses, Montúfar signals the clear elite preference in which he and other elite Liberals viewed the state. He expands on this characterization of building a new Guatemalan state as an elite project in his explanations of the massive need to restructure the social structure and education systems of the Conservative period in order to save Guatemala.<sup>93</sup> In painting the protected social status and colonial education system for indigenous populations under Carrera as requiring massive overhaul to fix the Guatemalan state—when the indigenous and ladino masses popularly rebelled for their return—Montúfar highlights the conception among Liberal political elites that the indigenous majority would not have an equal role in the Reforma state.

Montúfar was not the only Guatemalan historian involved in dismissing the role of the indigenous majority in the new Guatemalan state; he was joined by Mariano Zeceña. Zeceña, a nineteenth-century Guatemalan historian, published his account of the Revolution of 1871 in

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<sup>90</sup> Larráinzar, *La revolución de Guatemala*, 116.

<sup>91</sup> *El Guatemalteco* IX, no. 414, Sep. 15, 1882; *El Guatemalteco* IX, no. 415, Sep. 27, 1882; Palmer, "Central American Union," 519.

<sup>92</sup> Lorenzo Montúfar, *Reseña histórica de Centro-América*, vol. 3, 7 vols. (Guatemala: Tipografía de "El Progreso," 1879), 89.

<sup>93</sup> Montúfar, *Reseña histórica de Centro-América*, 6: 290, 297.

1897, and tried to present what he thought to be a balanced analysis of the history of Guatemala in the nineteenth century.<sup>94</sup> Despite his expressed impartial intentions, he wrote that the people rejected Gálvez's Liberal project—in his words, “one of the purest glories of this country”—because they were ignorant and lacked the ability to understand the reform program.<sup>95</sup> Later in his account, he reveals his criticisms of the Revolution of 1871, but praises its ability to pull the nation out of a colonial state and on to the path towards sociopolitical perfection.<sup>96</sup> While he clearly understood some of the issues with both Liberal reform projects, he dismisses the validity of the popular rejection of Gálvez's liberal reforms by citing their ignorance, and indicates that the Reforma put the state on a course towards further political and social progress. This distinct partiality towards the projects of the Liberal elite that excluded the indigenous population from the new Guatemalan state sheds light on the historical erasure of the indigenous majority by early historians like Zeceña.

This elite preference by early historians was not limited to those from Guatemala, however, it extended to historians across Central America. Mexican historian Federico Larraínzar engaged in this regional effort with his account of the Revolution, *La revolución de Guatemala*, published in 1873. Larraínzar was born in Chiapas, Mexico and studied in the United States and Europe during his youth. During his later life he worked as a diplomat, military officer, and historian.<sup>97</sup> At one point, his military and diplomatic career brought him to Guatemala in the early 1860s where he served as colonel in Rafael Carrera's army during the campaign against the expansionist aims of El Salvador.<sup>98</sup> Despite Larraínzar's ardent support for

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<sup>94</sup> Zeceña, *La revolución de 1871*, 7–8.

<sup>95</sup> Zeceña, *La revolución de 1871*, 51–52.

<sup>96</sup> Zeceña, *La revolución de 1871*, 114–115.

<sup>97</sup> Federico Larraínzar, *Carta sobre los últimos sucesos de Centro-América* (Mexico: Imprenta Literaria, 1864), 3–4.

<sup>98</sup> Larraínzar, *Carta sobre los últimos sucesos de Centro-América*, 7–8.

Carrera during this campaign, noting their close friendship and his admiration for his military abilities and orderly governance of Guatemala in his *Carta sobre los últimos sucesos de Centro-América*, his later account fails to acknowledge the struggles and participation of the indigenous populations in the events he so closely followed and took part in.<sup>99</sup> His 150-page account of the Revolution of 1871 mentions the word “*indígenas*” one single time.<sup>100</sup> Likewise, in contrast to his previous praise of the Carrera regime, his account paints an apocalyptic picture of the state of Guatemala by the end of his rule which neglects mentioning Carrera’s improved protection of indigenous populations compared to the Liberal governments of Guatemala.<sup>101</sup> He couples this deletion of indigenous people from his account with constant references to Liberal political elites as “learned men” and “men of progress” that would rebuild Guatemala on the foundation of liberal ideas.<sup>102</sup> By ignoring the reality of indigenous participation in this history—especially from someone who befriended Carrera and fought beside the indigenous masses—Larraínzar starkly delineates the solitarily elite focus of the early historical record of nineteenth-century Guatemala.

### *Historical Liberalization of Guatemala’s Nineteenth Century*

Authors like Larraínzar, Zeceña, and Lorenzo Montúfar and government publications that recount the events of the Revolution of 1871 and the Reforma have also played a unique role in defining the ideological nature of these events. By painting the Revolution and its subsequent

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<sup>99</sup> Larraínzar, *Carta sobre los últimos sucesos de Centro-América*, 6, 41.

<sup>100</sup> Larraínzar, *La revolución de Guatemala*, 86. The word “*indígenas*” means indigenous people and was one of the commonly used words in nineteenth-century and twentieth-century Latin America—along with “*indios*,” meaning Indians.

<sup>101</sup> Larraínzar, *La revolución de Guatemala*, 37.

<sup>102</sup> Larraínzar, *La revolución de Guatemala*, 106, 111, 118, 144.

reforms as crowning achievements of the Liberal movement born out of Central American federation this class of writers intended to affirm Liberal triumph in Guatemala as an integral piece of the greater political transformation of Latin America in the nineteenth century. Analysis of some of these early works written by Guatemalan and Mexican historians illuminates the larger narrative they tried to maintain through their accounts and the stakes they had in propping up a narrative that current historiography has debunked.

Beginning with Larraínzar, he published his *La revolución de Guatemala* shortly after the Revolution ended in 1873. Larraínzar focused on portraying the incumbent Conservative regime in Guatemala as one of tyranny and intentional suppression of progress. He notes that the Conservative regime acted intentionally “with its deeply-rooted abuses” and “program of hate towards all reform” in order to devest the people of political power, “making impossible the sowing of democracy.”<sup>103</sup> On this basis he presented the Revolution of 1871 as not only a popularly supported Liberal victory but also a triumph of liberty that he hoped would “shine across America to fulfill its providential mission.”<sup>104</sup> This mission, in his account, would be fulfilled by emulating the success of liberal government in the United States.<sup>105</sup> The liberal bias and mis-portrayal of the foundations of the Revolution of 1871 by Larraínzar, speak to a larger narrative of the triumph of liberalism that many Latin American historians from the late-nineteenth century attempted to construct. Due to Larraínzar’s background as a diplomat and historian from Reforma Mexico, one can understand his stake in portraying the Revolution of 1871 as a success for liberty and liberalism because of its deep connections with the similar supposedly liberal government he supported in Mexico. Likewise, his espousal of the tenets of

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<sup>103</sup> Larraínzar, *La revolución de Guatemala*, 106.

<sup>104</sup> Larraínzar, *La revolución de Guatemala*, 149.

<sup>105</sup> Larraínzar, *La revolución de Guatemala*, 110.

division of powers, democratic government, and liberty as the cornerstones of liberal government illustrates a sentiment that the governments of the Mexican and Guatemalan Reformas tried to emulate despite the undemocratic, elitist, and positivist reality of their respective governments.<sup>106</sup> This ardent support, however, departs from his earlier support and praises of Carrera and his regime, indicating a clear closing of elite ranks around the new-generation liberalism of the Guatemalan Reforma.

Mariano Zeceña's history of the Revolution of 1871 followed a similar, if slightly more critical, direction than Larraínzar through its portrayal of the achievements of the Liberals. While his history did condemn some of the undemocratic developments that emerged within the Reforma government, Zeceña praised their achievements in social reform and asserted that the Revolution of 1871, the Reforma, and the Constitution of 1879 cleared a path forward for the expansion of liberty and democracy in Guatemala.<sup>107</sup> Moreover, in contrast to his assertion in the introduction of his account that he sought to present a balanced and fair portrayal of the Revolution, he ends the book with a section fawning over its leaders, calling Granados "a man of extraordinary fortitude that nearly lives up to Lafayette" and referring to Barrios as the personification of the "nation, its parties, and its institutions."<sup>108</sup> Zeceña's work, like Larraínzar's, is another attempt at propping up the broader narrative of the revolution as a triumph of liberalism that played a role in bringing liberty, not just to Guatemala, but Central America and Latin America as a whole.

In like manner, Lorenzo Montúfar, despite eventually becoming a critic of the Barrios regime, engaged in promoting a similar Pan-American liberal narrative in his seven-volume

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<sup>106</sup> *La revolución del 71 y la reforma constitucional*, 139–149.

<sup>107</sup> Zeceña, *La revolución de 1871*, 106–115.

<sup>108</sup> Zeceña, *La revolución de 1871*, 7–8, 117–123.

work, *Reseña histórica de Centro-América*.<sup>109</sup> Montúfar wrote this compendium of the history of Central America, with a focus on Guatemala, from federation until the Revolution of 1871. Similar to Larraínzar, he characterized the Conservative regime of Guatemala “a darkness that covered the land” until the Revolution of 1871.<sup>110</sup> Additionally, he praised the ideals and conviction of the heroes of reformist liberalism like José Francisco Barrundía and Mariano Gálvez and lamented the fracturing of Liberal solidarity and Central American union during the reformist Liberal period which opened the door for the Conservative reaction.<sup>111</sup> Montúfar constructed this narrative of the political transformations in Guatemala in an attempt to promote a broader story of the triumph of liberty and liberalism across Latin America with the United States as a model—a vision he frequently espoused in his speeches as a member of the Constituent Assemblies of Guatemala in 1876 and 1879.<sup>112</sup> Moreover, Montúfar published his history of Central America under the direction and funding of the Barrios government as a part of an effort by the government to stimulate the proliferation of a liberal history of Guatemala that also included funding and sending literature to the new Biblioteca Bolívar in 1882.<sup>113</sup> Government efforts to maintain the image of liberty and Liberal triumph surrounding the Revolution of 1871 and the Reforma continued far after that, seen in the publishing of *La revolución del 71 y la reforma constitucional* in 1900 in which the government fiercely defended the success of the revolution in response to a public criticism of the Constitution of 1879 by a leading law professor in the country.<sup>114</sup> In this defense, the publication affirmed the liberality of

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<sup>109</sup> *El Guatemalteco* IX, no. 414, Sep. 15, 1882; *El Guatemalteco* IX, no. 415, Sep. 27, 1882. These issues contain various sections discussing the criticisms by Montúfar of the Barrios regime and the conflict that ensued.

<sup>110</sup> Montúfar, *Reseña histórica de Centro-América*, 6: 224.

<sup>111</sup> Montúfar, *Reseña histórica de Centro-América*, 6: 222–224.

<sup>112</sup> Montúfar, *Discursos del Doctor Lorenzo Montúfar*, 5–8, 30–33, 116–117.

<sup>113</sup> *El Guatemalteco* IX, no. 412, Sep. 7, 1882; Palmer, “Central American Union,” 520–521.

<sup>114</sup> *La revolución del 71 y la reforma constitucional*, 3–7.

the Constitution of 1879 and argues that “it is our bond of national union and nobody should be bold enough to dishonor it.”<sup>115</sup>

Ultimately, the combination of these government-promoted and private efforts to construct the Revolution of 1871 and the Reforma in the image of liberal success and the expansion of liberty demonstrate a clear trend in Latin American scholarly writing from the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries in which authors and governments promoted a broader narrative of the triumph of liberalism, democracy, and liberty throughout Latin America. The emphasis the Reforma government placed on promoting the triumph of liberty and civilization that was the Pan-American liberal movement appeared clearly not only in these histories but also in their newspapers as well.<sup>116</sup> Efforts such as these speak to a wider project in which a second generation of Liberals in Central America utilized scholarly works to construct a revised narrative—ignoring the role of the indigenous majority—of the increasingly elitist and positivist political revolutions that took place in the region during the nineteenth century.<sup>117</sup>

### *Conclusion*

From the federation to the end of Barrios’ rule in 1885, Guatemala and Central America as a whole underwent a number of ideological shifts that defined the changing nature of politics in the region throughout the nineteenth century. Following the fall of Francisco Morazán and Mariano Gálvez and the federation with them, the currents of reformist liberalism mostly faded away under the domination of a new Conservative coalition led by Rafael Carrera. During the

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<sup>115</sup> *La revolución del 71 y la reforma constitucional*, 33.

<sup>116</sup> *El Guatemalteco* 1, no. 35, Sep. 13, 1873; *El Guatemalteco* 6, no. 75, May 3, 1876; *El Guatemalteco* 7, no. 112, Mar. 22, 1877; *El Guatemalteco* V, no. 187, Sep. 15, 1878; *El Guatemalteco* VI, no. 242, Sep. 15, 1879.

<sup>117</sup> For further discussion about the construction of the early historical record by elite historians in nineteenth-century Latin America, see Burns, *The Poverty of Progress*.

Carrera and Cerna regimes, Guatemala began to see the expansion of its export agriculture and with it the rise of an increasingly powerful ladino planter class and a burgeoning commercial middle class. These rising new groups began to form the basis of a second generation of Liberals less concerned with the idealist civilizing reforms of the federation period and more focused on the liberalization of the economy to increase benefits for the new commercial elite. This second generation of Liberals, led by Miguel García Granados and Justo Rufino Barrios, overthrew the Conservative Cerna regime and ended Conservative domination on the isthmus as a whole. Barrios' reform government that followed the revolution became increasingly characterized by its authoritarianism and reforms of the rising positivist tendency that had recently arrived in Latin America, seen on display in Mexico under Porfirio Díaz.<sup>118</sup>

With respect to the reforms put into place and the Constitution of 1879 that Barrios and his government ratified, it becomes clear that the ideology behind their political program displayed significant positivist influences and the permanence of conservative institutions like the military and the dictatorship. Due to this ideological foundation, his program and the Constitution lacked classically liberal ideas, besides those only in name in the Constitution and the economic advances only whose outcomes, not methods of implementation, could be considered successes of liberalism. This divergence from the liberal agenda by the Reforma government did not occur by accident but represented a clear convergence of a more conservative and pragmatic liberalism that had developed under thirty years of Conservative domination and the rising tide of positivist thinking in Guatemala. A salient product of this ideological convergence came in the formation of a liberal dictatorship founded on the deeply rooted authority and control of the military and an expanded elite—which had been the pillars of

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<sup>118</sup> González, *El positivismo en Guatemala*, 43–50.

the previous Conservative regime that proved capable of maintaining order throughout the country and the isthmus at large while also solidifying the national identity of Guatemala.

Throughout the course of this economic, social, and political transformation of Guatemala the indigenous populations, which represented the majority of the country, played crucial roles as they also watched their centuries-old protected colonial way of life unravel over the course of several decades. The Liberal reformers of federation under Morazán and Gálvez tried to rapidly impose an ambitious plan of indigenous incorporation into a Liberal Guatemalan state which they wholeheartedly rejected in popular rebellion. This resistance in favor of the status quo brought about the Conservative reaction, under the leadership of Carrera, which sought to mitigate the speed of liberal change in Guatemala. While this temporarily helped protect indigenous communities, their land, and their separate way of life, the forces of capitalism and second-generation positivist liberalism continued to erode their protected condition. Erosion turned to destruction with the Revolution of 1871, and the subsequent Reforma institutionalized an elite-ladino state that forcefully incorporated much of the indigenous populations into the newly-defined nation as landless indebted peons and nonparticipants in the political life or national identity of the country.

Using Guatemala's revolution and Liberal regime and their portrayal in early historical literature as a case study has yielded some insight into the role of written history in characterizing the political transformations of Latin America. The government-funded and ideologically-driven efforts to construct a liberal and democratic image of the Reforma government speak to the key role that elite historical actors have had in rewriting the histories of political revolutions in Guatemala. This literature sought not only to erase indigenous peoples and the failures of Liberal Guatemalan governments and leaders but to promote a revised

narrative that could open the door for increased commercial investment and better relations with the United States and major European powers. On a broader level, witnessing this trend in Guatemala opens a window to understanding how a specific group of Liberal writers, intent on reconstructing the political narratives of nineteenth-century Latin America, influenced the histories of political transformations throughout Central America and Latin America as a whole.<sup>119</sup> Future research will be able to establish detailed connections between these revised liberal accounts and the Liberal regimes of Central America during the nineteenth century. Doubly, this research will provide important insights into the relationship between the rise of positivism and the transformation of the national role of indigenous populations in Guatemala.

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<sup>119</sup> For further discussion of the pan-Latin American elite effort to write these biased histories, see Burns, *The Poverty of Progress*, 35–50.

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