

A Hero of the Mexican Revolution:

An Examination of the Character of Pancho Villa (1878-1923) Until 1914

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Greysen Herbert

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Introduction

The 1910 Presidential Election in Mexico kept the incumbent President, Porfirio Díaz, in power, and sparked a revolution that lasted for roughly ten years (1910-1920). His policies were largely unpopular, and he was disliked by a growing number of Mexicans. His opponent, Francisco Madero, lost through election fraud, and subsequently started the Mexican Revolution. He attracted thousands of revolutionaries to his cause. Among the most notable revolutionaries was a man named Pancho Villa, a gunslinger who wanted to use his talents for fighting to further Madero's revolution.

Villa's personality changed over the years, especially after he became a commander in Madero's army. However, this change in character may have been fashioned by Villa himself, in order to differentiate his life as a commander from his life as an outlaw, as well as to define himself as an outlaw rather than a bandit. The distinction between a bandit and an outlaw is thin. Bandits are generally looked down upon by the entire community, roam the countryside, and work only for their benefit. An outlaw is a criminal only to the government and works for the benefit of their community. Villa sought to become an outlaw through his actions. The goal of this paper is to explore Pancho Villa as a character that he created, and to view his actions as performative for this character. This character is defined by three key components: gunslinging, being an outlaw, and defending his honor.

Creating the Character

Pancho Villa, born as Doroteo Arango in the Mexican state of Durango in 1878, was a self-fashioned character developed by Arango in 1902. Originally, this character was used to hide his identity as a bandit from the state of Chihuahua. Arango had committed two major

crimes in the state, both in 1901. The first crime was his theft of two donkeys and their cargo. This resulted in an arrest in January of 1901, and nearly a transfer to the local *rurales*, or rural police. This transfer did not occur, as a local judge named Pablo Valenzuela ordered that Arango stay in the custody of the local government. A theory behind why Valenzuela did this is that he was acquainted with Arango, and may have bought stolen cattle from him.¹ In March, this judge released Arango, for lack of evidence. Only four days later, Arango was arrested again for assaulting a man and stealing two guns that the man had. This arrest led to Arango being conscripted to the army in a practice known as the *leva*, which is involuntary service for criminals and other citizens in Mexico.

Arango served in the army for a year, after which he deserted. He deemed Durango too dangerous for him to return. Thus, he went to the state north of Durango, Chihuahua. Here, Arango attempted to start a life of work as a mason and a butcher. However, he was shortly discovered as a bandit by one of the local *rurales*. Arango understood then that his name would only bring trouble, and changed it to Francisco Pancho Villa. There is no consensus on how he chose this name, but it is believed that he may be the illegitimate grandson of Jesús Villa. This is the most likely explanation, as his brothers also changed their names to Villa. However, Villa did not continue this life as a butcher. He soon became a bodyguard for foreign corporations that needed protection for various cargoes. Villa was an optimal choice for these companies, as he was proficient with a gun, knew the land in Chihuahua, and was an honest man. Villa, at one point, carried as much as 700,000 pesos at one time, and all were accounted for on delivery.² This is the first piece of Villa's character: a gunslinger at heart, who is willing to defend others at

¹ Friedrich Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*. 64.

² Katz, 69.

the risk of his own life. This allowed him to break away from his past as a bandit, and to allow his actions to create his character.

Next, he became a cattle rustler in Chihuahua. After his brief time as a mason, butcher, and hired gun, one may wonder why Villa would return to a life of banditry and danger. Villa's rustling of cattle was actually seen as a positive among the common people of Chihuahua, as it was seen as a return to the traditional rights of the people.³ Some of these traditional rights included: scavenging public lands for firewood, hunting, claiming stray cattle, and settling disputes outside of the law in often violent ways. These rights had only recently been stripped away by reforms that President Díaz had imposed, with the selling of public lands and an increase of the exportation of stray cattle. In the eyes of Villa, he was fighting for these traditions through his work. Villa's actions as a cattle rustler became a large part of his character, as he advocated for social reform and for a return to traditional land rights. By putting his life on the line for these ideas, Villa garnered the respect of Chihuahua's citizens, and helped to further the development of his character as an outlaw.⁴

The State of Chihuahua (1750-1900)

Pancho Villa's story revolves around the state of Chihuahua, in northern Mexico. While he was not raised in Chihuahua, he spent most of his adult life in the state. In the formation of his character, the history of Chihuahua is crucial, as the people in this state had a tradition of opposition to the Díaz regime. Often, *chihuahuenses*⁵ were forced off their lands, had their

³ Katz, 70.

⁴ Katz, 71.

⁵ People from Chihuahua call themselves "chihuahuenses," and I will use that terminology to talk about them.

voting rights restricted or eliminated, or were under threat by *hacendados*⁶ or the *rurales*. Seeing the suffering *chihuahuenses* endured, Villa's character began to be shaped around defending the traditions and rights of those around him. Chihuahua had long been a frontier, with a tradition of independence and conflict with *indio* raiders.⁷

In the 1750's, Spanish Chihuahua faced issues around *indio* raiders, specifically from the Apache Nation.⁸ This prompted the Spanish government to establish fortified settlements in the area, with armed settlers and *indios* being given land and being exempt from paying taxes for 10 years in exchange for service in these settlements. These settlers became an effective fighting force, capable of fighting off the Apaches. By 1800, the Apaches had halted raiding, as they could not easily defeat the settlers in Chihuahua and the Spanish crown allowed them to settle near Spanish towns to supply them with food, clothing, and alcohol. This allowed for a brief period of peace between the settlers and the Apaches, but this ended around 1830, when the new Mexican government stopped providing supplies to the Apaches. They began raiding again, but the settlers of these military colonies and free villages were able to hold their lands, while other *haciendas* could not survive the raids. This early period created a tradition of warfare and self-reliance for these settlers.⁹

However, as the Mexican-American war began (1846-1848), the citizens of Chihuahua were unable to contain the dual tides of both *indio* raiders and American soldiers. As a result, the settlers here opted to avoid fighting Americans, in favor of defending only their lands from raiders. American soldiers would not attack, as they saw an empty, barren land with few settlements. They simply marched through the state and did not attack any of the larger towns, as

⁶ "Hacendados" were people who owned haciendas, which were large properties that could be used for farming, mining, industry, and production of other goods.

⁷ I choose to refer to the indigenous people of Mexico as "indios" in order to respect their own traditions, as the native peoples of Mexico prefer to refer to themselves as such.

⁸ Katz, 12.

⁹ Katz, 12.

these areas did not resist occupation. Chihuahua was a mere stepping stone for the American army and the people of Chihuahua accepted this in order to focus on the raiding *indios*. At the same time, the state experienced a consolidation of population, as settlers would sometimes flee their properties to escape raids. The Apaches began to increase the amount and intensity of raids, since the United States was focused more on defending against Mexico and less on killing any raiders. This allowed the Apaches to send more raiders to an already weakened northern Mexico and to overwhelm the military colonies. After the war ended, raids returned to a normal level, but Chihuahua did not create new settlements for nearly twenty years.

Beginning in the 1860s, the Mexican government established new military colonies to combat Apache raids. These new colonies consisted of a mix of settlers from already existing colonies and new settlers, which spread the military tradition of Chihuahua to more settlements. Around the same time, Chihuahua elected Luis Terrazas as governor of the state. Terrazas was an *hacendado* in the state and sought wealth for his family and friends. Most of his policies focused on claiming more land for his family or defending his already held lands. Terrazas established new programs to help fight the Apaches, such as taking tax money that was meant for the federal government and using it to pay militias to fight the Apaches.¹⁰ This policy gave protection to many of the larger *haciendas*, which were owned by Terrazas. These militias did not typically defend military colonies, thus creating cracks in the relationship between the settlers and the *chihuahuense* government. Also during his tenure as governor, Terrazas bought many of the abandoned *haciendas* in the state, or blackmailed rivals into selling him their *haciendas*. While he was a hero in the eyes of the people for his assault on the Apache raiders, he was building an empire within the state. However, when Porfirio Díaz overthrew Lerdo de Tejada in 1876, he removed Terrazas from the governorship for siding with Lerdo.

¹⁰ Katz, 14.

After the removal of Terrazas, the state of Chihuahua underwent a period of industrialization, with railroads being built throughout the state. This allowed for faster troop movements to squash any potential rebellions in the area, as well as the export of cattle and other materials out of the state. Cattle became the primary export of Chihuahua during this period. These railroads linked to central Mexico and the United States, which resulted in an economic boom for Chihuahua. In 1886, the last Apache leader, Geronimo, was captured. This ended raids in the state and allowed the economic boom that was occurring to prosper without the potential for disruption by raids.

With the defeat of the Apaches, the military colonists and free villagers were seen as burdens to the wealthy *hacendados* of Chihuahua.¹¹ These free villagers were a class of armed, free people who worked their own lands. In Chihuahua, there were large tracts of unowned lands, which were free for anyone to graze cattle or to collect wood. However, in the 1880s, the Mexican government sold or gave away the land in large chunks, with most purchases going to *hacendados* and Europeans, with the hope of bringing in European colonists and increasing productivity for these lands. This prevented *rancheros* and free villagers from using these lands, which increased social tensions in Chihuahua between *rancheros* and *hacendados*.¹² Along with this, free villagers lost the ability to hunt wild game, as all public lands were closed and sold, which increased the struggles of these people. This made it easier for *hacendados* to have a steady supply of able-bodied workers, as many of these people progressively lost their lands. These now landless villagers either had to work for *hacendados* or leave the state to find land elsewhere.

¹¹ Katz, 16.

¹² “Rancheros” were people that worked on ranches. They were typically the owners of the ranch or a relative of the owner.

In 1891, the state government of Chihuahua changed voting laws, stating that mayors would no longer be elected, but appointed by the state governor. This further limited the rights of free villagers. However, it did not spark violence, yet. That same year, many mines across the state were closed or reduced their labor force due to an economic crisis and new tariffs from the United States. This further increased the struggles of free villagers and forced many to begin working for *hacendados*.

These factors contributed to an uprising in Chihuahua (1891-1892) that embarrassed the federal government and led to the removal of the sitting governor, Lauro Carrillo. In the village of Tomochi, tensions began to flare when an outsider was appointed as the mayor of the 200-person village. The mayor, Juan Chávez, violated the lands of the villages by grazing without permission, forcing the villagers to work for him, and rerouting the annual silver transport, which insulted the honor of the villagers. They lodged a complaint against him to the governor, which led to the mayor declaring the villagers to be in revolt. The federal government, believing that the villagers may attack the silver transport, sent a small unit of 50 soldiers to Tomochi. The villagers engaged in a small skirmish, leading to their retreat to the mountains. Throughout their rebellion, the villagers defeated several contingents of federal soldiers, utilizing better weapons than the federal soldiers had. The final assault by the federal government resulted in the deaths of all men in the village, and most women and children were killed. The government used 1,200 soldiers in this battle, against fewer than 100 men. This rebellion sparked the belief that one of the mountain people of Chihuahua were worth ten federal soldiers, which influenced soldiers during the Revolution nearly twenty years after this revolt.¹³

In 1905, an additional land reform law was enacted. This new law placed land disputes in the hands of state governors, rather than the federal government, and allowed for outsiders to

¹³ Katz, 22-25.

purchase village lands, rather than sell these lands to villagers. When these laws were enacted, the people of Chihuahua tried to appeal to the Secretary of Development, who refused to do anything to address their concerns. With this, the free villagers of Chihuahua lost all access to the lands they had worked for centuries and were forced to leave or work for *hacendados*.¹⁴

Villa as the Myth

As the Mexican Revolution broke out in 1910, Villa quickly became involved in Revolutionary activities. His first action was an attack on the *hacienda* of Talamantes, a large *hacienda* in the Jiménez district of Chihuahua. 22 men had raided the estate, searching for money. Prior to this raid, Villa had been contacted by Abraham González, a local *jefe*.¹⁵ González served Francisco Madero, the opponent of President Díaz in the 1910 election, and was trying to start a revolution against the Porfiriato.

The meeting between González and Villa was undertaken at night, to avoid the suspicion of local authorities. Villa and another bandit arrived at González's office for the meeting, wearing *sarapes*¹⁶ over their faces. When González arrived, he greeted the pair, and reached into his back pocket for the key to his office and to get matches for an oil lamp. As he struck a match, he saw two pistols pointed at his head, as Villa and his companion had seen him reach into his pocket, and assumed that he was revealing a weapon. Don González assured them that he was no threat and welcomed them into his office. The content of this meeting was not recorded, but González is believed to have taught Villa about Mexican history, which compelled Villa to fight for Madero in Chihuahua. He was the only bandit to have been recruited by González. The most likely explanation for González to recruit Villa is that the two had known each other prior to the

¹⁴ Katz, 30.

¹⁵ A boss or powerful leader.

¹⁶ Colorful shawl or cloak worn in Mexico.

Revolution and González believed Villa to be an honest man. The pair may have even exported cattle from Mexico together, which would only prove Villa's trustworthiness to González.¹⁷

Villa's raid on the *hacienda* of Talamantes was used to gather funds to pay revolutionaries that served under his command. Following this, he had to conduct another raid on the *hacienda* of Chavarría for additional funds, horses and supplies for his fourteen soldiers.¹⁸ His small unit then met up with a larger unit, commanded by Cástulo Herrera. The group from this point on was commanded by Herrera, with Villa acting as a sergeant to maintain discipline and keep morale up.

Herrera's unit occupied San Andrés, a former military colony, with no resistance on November 21. Later that day, the unit received news that federal troops were approaching San Andrés on a train. Villa took a small group of men to wait for their arrival at the railway station near San Andrés and when the soldiers disembarked, the revolutionaries fired upon them. The surviving *federales* retreated from the station, and the group celebrated their first victory over federal troops. While it was a small victory, it boosted morale and increased the number of volunteers in the unit, which soon reached 325 men. While this is not a large number for a fighting force, these recruits were older than 35, as they were typically heads of households.¹⁹ These men were fighting for a cause that they knew would benefit their families and their *machismo* required them to go themselves, rather than to send a son or other male family member. While the unit was small, their morale was unbreakable, as these men needed to fight for their families, rather than for personal glory.

The unit earned an additional victory at the battle of El Tecolote, where 40 revolutionaries defeated 700 *federales* by using deception in the form of sombreros placed on top

¹⁷ Katz, 73.

¹⁸ Katz, 76.

¹⁹ Katz, 103.

of a nearby hill to make the *federales* believe they were being flanked. At this battle, Villa commanded the 40 revolutionaries, while Herrera remained at camp. The 40 men were sent to scout out the state capital, Ciudad Chihuahua. When they encountered the *federales*, Villa sent one of his men to call for reinforcements, but these never came. This formed a schism among Villa and Herrera, resulting in the unit splitting in December of 1910.²⁰

By March 1911, Villa had grown his unit to include 700 soldiers, each with horses and ammunition. Over the span of four months (December through March), Villa's reputation as a cunning and skilled strategist developed. Additionally, myths about him began to appear. These included his ability to turn into a dog to harass enemy combatants and the ability to turn into a desert plant to evade capture.²¹ These myths developed among the Revolutionaries and among *indios* in Chihuahua. As Villa achieved further victories, his reputation developed further. He became known as a "wraith of the desert" or the "shadow of the desert."²² Around the end of March, Villa's unit arrived at Francisco Madero's camp at Bustillos, but his reputation preceded his arrival.

Villa as The General

At the time of Villa's arrival, Madero's encampment was swarming with nervous soldiers and fresh supplies. Madero's army was eager, having won several battles at various locations prior to their arrival at Ciudad Juárez in early April, 1911.²³ These soldiers were experienced with fighting, and held the belief that if Ciudad Juárez fell, the fighting could come to an end. This hope kept their internal flames alive during the month-long siege, during which little

²⁰ Katz, 77.

²¹ Haldeen Braddy, "Pancho Villa, Folk Hero of the Mexican Border," *Western Folklore* 7, no. 4 (October, 1948): 350.

²² Braddy, 354.

²³ Madero's army will be referred to as the *Maderistas*.

fighting actually occurred. Madero had negotiated a cease-fire as the siege began, which would end on May 7, a month later. During this time, Madero attempted to end the revolution, but could not come to an agreement with the Porfiriato. Negotiations broke down, and the *Maderistas* waited impatiently for the cease-fire to end, or for the *federales* to break it.

As May began, the *Maderistas* began hearing reports of incoming *federale* reinforcements. The soldiers encamped outside the city became demoralized, as they had done nothing during the siege, and were ready to leave. They had arrived in great spirits, and had even gained recruits in the early days of the siege. The *Maderistas* became uncertain of their position, and discussions were held of a retreat to the south to avoid any incoming *federales*. Along with this, they were running out of supplies, as their supply trains had to be stopped before they could be captured by *federales*.

Villa, pictured below, is at Madero's encampment with an unknown man. Villa is the direct commander of 700 men, and the executive officer of the rest. His men had arrived with him to Madero's army, and they remained under his direct command. The rest of the army was headed by Pascual Orozco, with Villa as his executive officer. He knew that a retreat south would further demoralize his men, and would bring morale to the *federales*. In Villa's face, one can see his anger and displeasure with the conditions of the camp and with Madero's inaction. Villa was familiar with all of his men, and treated them as friends. He knew and understood their feelings of resentment towards the current situation. The families of his men were suffering, as many had traveled with the army to Ciudad Juárez. Now, the trains had stopped, and they could not easily escape. If a retreat was made, the army would have been slowed by the civilian caravan traveling with them. The survival of the *Maderistas* depended on the fall of Ciudad Juárez, and Villa was

aware of this. He understood warfare better than Madero did, and knew that any retreat would end in disaster.²⁴

Villa made his decision, along with his commanding officer, Pascual Orozco. They decided to disobey Madero about avoiding fighting, and found an officer that would give the order to fire on the city. This image was taken days before their plan was instituted, which was on May 8, and Villa already looked prepared for the coming battle. His horse was equipped with his rifle and a rope, ready to go at any moment. His Mexican *charro* saddle, which has a wider seat, larger horn, and is better for mountainous terrain, was always with him, in the case that he needed to ride into the mountains. With his men in mind, he kept them at the ready as well. His demeanor before the coming battle can be seen in his eyes, as mentioned previously.

²⁴ Katz, 78.



Image one, (Above: Pancho Villa is photographed on his horse).

Villa and Madero

In March 1911, Villa and Madero met for the first time, as Villa's unit arrived at Madero's camp. The pair did not interact often, as Villa was subordinate to Pascual Orozco, a general in the *Maderistas*. He held the rank of lieutenant colonel upon his arrival to Madero's camp. However, Villa was a trusted commander in Madero's army, and shortly became Orozco's lieutenant. Villa and Orozco worked closely during the Battle of Ciudad Juárez (April 7 to May 10, 1911), where Villa had his first major encounter with Madero.²⁵

Ciudad Juárez was a key city within Chihuahua; it was the second largest city in the state, and was the location for border crossings into El Paso in the United States. It also contained a major rail center between the US-Mexico border, with two rails extending from the city. Madero wanted this city as his capital to legitimize his rule with the U.S. by engaging in trade directly across the border, and it was more easily defensible than other cities in Chihuahua. With the U.S. at the back of the city, attackers had to be wary of stray bullets into El Paso, and they could only attack from three sides of the city. In a pinch, the defenders could cross into El Paso and escape obliteration. However, this also hindered Madero's assault on the city. Madero initiated a siege on Ciudad Juárez to avoid any international crisis and to avoid losing the lives of his men. The federal troops within the city, commanded by General Navarro, were well entrenched and Madero was aware of this. Any assault on the garrison would result in huge casualties for either side, so he decided to prohibit supplies and communications with the federal government. However, as days passed, Madero's soldiers became bored, and rumors of approaching federal troops began to spread. Madero was in negotiations with Porifian authorities, but had not come to a compromise. Orozco and Villa were nervous of the incoming *federales* reinforcements, so they were going to order some of their men to fire upon the city, which would result in the rest of

²⁵ Katz, 111.

the army firing. At the same time, they would sneak into El Paso to avoid Madero. They were defying him, but they did not want to have to do that openly. If they were unreachable, Madero could not issue new orders to them. On the morning of May 8th, the battle began.²⁶

As more men began firing, Madero tried to order his soldiers to stop to no avail. He could not send his orders to stop firing fast enough, as his senior officers could not be found to follow the orders. He sent a messenger to Navarro, asking his men to stop firing. Madero's thought was that if the *federales* stopped firing, his army would follow suit. Navarro did order a ceasefire, but Madero's forces continued firing. At this point, his forces began to storm the city, using axes to cut through adobe houses to avoid being caught out in the open.²⁷ Villa and Orozco rejoined the fighting, with Orozco leading his troops along the river to avoid firing towards American citizens, who were watching the battle on a nearby hill. Fighting continued for two days, until General Navarro surrendered on May 10.

Madero did not punish Orozco nor Villa for their insubordination, likely because he was unaware that they had disobeyed his orders. However, the following day, Orozco and Villa openly rebelled against Madero. He did not allow Navarro to be court martialed. Most of the *Maderistas*, Orozco and Villa included, wanted Navarro dead because he had executed *Maderista* prisoners. The pair created a plan of action: Orozco would confront Madero, and if Madero would not surrender Navarro, Villa and his soldiers would disarm Madero's guard. The plan was nearly executed, but Madero was able to calm down Orozco. Orozco wanted to execute Navarro, but Madero convinced him to stop his act of rebellion. Neither man was punished for their actions. In fact, after the plan was halted, witnesses stated that Villa begged for Madero's forgiveness, on his knees and in tears.²⁸ Madero freely gave his forgiveness, and did not judge

²⁶ Katz, 108.

²⁷ Katz, 110.

²⁸ Katz, 112.

Villa for his emotional response. However, Villa's courage was evident to Madero, and he earned Madero's respect.

After the battle of Ciudad Juárez, President Díaz entered into negotiations with Madero. The terms of the Treaty of Ciudad Juárez (1911) prevented the federal army from being disbanded or reformed and forced Díaz to resign as President, with Secretary of Foreign Affairs Francisco León de la Barra becoming interim President until an election could be held. Therefore, most Porfiriato officials would remain, except for the highest ranking ones.²⁹

In November of 1911, the general election was held with Madero winning. But Villa and Madero did not maintain contact during his presidency. Villa and his men were disbanded on the orders of Madero, and he returned to Chihuahua to try to start life as a civilian. This did not last long, as a rebellion broke out in Chihuahua in March 1912, nearly a year after the Battle of Ciudad Juárez. The leader of this rebellion was Pascual Orozco, Madero's former general, who felt slighted because Madero would not give the revolutionaries the land that they had taken during the rebellion. Madero's plan was to buy those lands from the owners, and then distribute those lands to the revolutionaries. His failure to surrender the land they had taken led Orozco to rebellion.³⁰

Villa returned to service at the request of Abraham González, one of his mentors who had influenced him to join the *Maderistas*.³¹ At the beginning of Orozco's revolt, Villa gathered his own troops and led a campaign against his former general. He saw moderate success when compared with the *federales* in Chihuahua. They had been defeated consistently by Orozco's forces, which eventually led to the suicide of their commander, José González Salas.³² President

²⁹ Katz, 117.

³⁰ Katz, 154.

³¹ Katz, 156.

³² Katz, 157.

Madero noticed Villa's continued victories against the rebels, and sent a letter of congratulations to him. "I can assure you that apart from the legitimate satisfaction that you must feel in serving a just cause and being loyal to me, I shall see to it that you are rewarded for the services that you have rendered the republic."³³ Madero, in the same letter, asked for Villa to join forces with the *federales* in Chihuahua.

He joined forces with the federal army, which was commanded by General Victoriano Huerta. The joint forces made short work of Orozco, wounding him and forcing him to flee to the US. Huerta wanted to earn Villa's loyalty, and thus gave him the honorary rank of brigadier general while he served with the army. However, Villa did not pledge any loyalties to Huerta, which led to Huerta accusing Villa of stealing a horse and of being a bandit. Villa refuted these charges, and struck Huerta for these accusations. Huerta ordered his execution, which was nearly carried out. However, two of Madero's brothers that were working with Huerta stalled the execution until Madero could send a telegraph, stopping the execution, which saved Villa's life.

Villa's honor was directly challenged by Huerta, and Villa played upon his accusations as a bandit by striking Huerta. These accusations are incredibly offensive to people from Chihuahua, as bandits are not regarded as heroes, but as criminals. Villa's character was born in Chihuahua, and thus would have taken offense to these claims. Even though it nearly led to his death, striking Huerta was an act for Villa, to truly portray his character as walking the line between being a bandit and an outlaw.

However, Madero ordered for Villa to be placed in prison. During this time, he was tutored by various revolutionaries on how to read and write, and he learned that there would be a coup attempt by Huerta. Villa escaped prison on December 25, 1912, and fled to the US. Once he arrived in the US, he attempted to alert Madero of the upcoming coup, but the message was

³³ Katz, 162.

never delivered. Madero was killed less than a month after Villa arrived in the US, on February 22, 1913. Villa soon returned to Mexico in April to fight the new “President,” Victoriano Huerta.

Madero’s order to spare Villa’s life led him to develop a sense of loyalty to Madero. But Villa also had motives to become close with the politician. Madero had wealth, and was supported politically by most of the country before the revolution began. Villa was still trying to make a name for himself, and joined the *Maderistas* to elevate his status in the future. By aligning with the revolutionaries, Villa’s status was elevated militarily, as he became a commander and later general of the *Maderistas*. After Madero became President, Villa was able to work closely with González in Chihuahua, further cementing his reputation among the people of Chihuahua.

Villa’s Honor

Following the battle of Ciudad Juárez, President Díaz entered into negotiations with Madero. The terms of the Treaty of Ciudad Juárez (1911) were: the federal army would retain the same generals, Díaz would resign as President with Secretary of Foreign Affairs Barra becoming interim President, and 14 governors would be replaced. Díaz would have influence over who would become the new provisional governors, as well as approving of a new cabinet for Barra. The terms of the treaty did not sit well with Villa, as it left the Porfiriato mostly intact. At a banquet, he openly professed his belief in the faults of this treaty to Madero and his guests. He believed that the treaty would ultimately bring about Madero’s demise, and that it would result in struggles for Mexico. In response, Madero stated “You’re a barbarian, Pancho. Sit down, sit down.”³⁴

³⁴ Katz, 117.

Nevertheless, Madero respected Villa for his forthrightness, even when it embarrassed him. Being raised in a wealthy family, Madero was used to being treated as a patriarch, and did not expect to be challenged or contradicted from those below him. Villa, however, was performing for Madero and his guests. He was portraying himself as an *honest* barbarian, and needed Madero to recognize that. Part of Villa's character is to be brutally honest, which helps him to dissociate with banditry. If he was seen as an honest man, his record as a bandit would become the legend of an outlaw.

While this incident seems foolish, especially since it may have embarrassed Madero, Villa's *machismo* would not allow him to say nothing. His performance required speaking out against Madero, in order to solidify his honest character. As an outlaw, he was honest in his actions, in order to separate himself from a barbarian.

The *machismo* of Pancho Villa is based heavily on the cultural *machismo* of Mexico. He needed to be an honest man, even though he was seen as a bandit. He was also tough, leading his men from the front for every battle. Being tough was of the utmost importance for *machismo*. However, Villa would not always portray his toughness, and in fact had a soft heart. There are several instances where Villa weeps, rejecting his tough facade and embracing his emotions. One of these times is at Madero's funeral. In the second image below, Villa is at Madero's funeral, weeping.

Villa had to mourn the man that had saved his life. On the day of the funeral, Villa hung up his common uniform, which he wore for other official events, opting instead for a sweater to match the temperatures of Mexico City in February. He came prepared, bearing a handkerchief to wipe his tears. His hair is messy, likely from wearing a hat before his arrival at the funeral.

Part of Villa's character is his high sense of honor. When someone wrongs him or breaks social norms in some way, Villa seeks revenge. There are a few times where this is evident, including when Villa nearly overthrows Madero in order to execute General Navarro and after Madero was assassinated. He swiftly returned to Mexico from his exile in the US, and raised a new army to fight against Huerta. While this was not his fight, he decided to join it to honor his mentor.

Madero had been a mentor and friend to Villa. He had taken care of him after the Revolution, paying him for his service and providing him with some land and protections in Chihuahua. Madero was the last man Villa followed during the Revolution, and he believed that only Madero could have changed Mexico. With his death, Villa realized that Mexico was doomed, and he returned to fight its new "President," Victoriano Huerta.



Image two, (Pancho Villa at Madero's Funeral).

Conclusion

Pancho Villa was a character created by Doroteo Arango and his actions as this character were performative. Villa was not a man who could sit out of a fight if he believed one side was worth fighting for. From joining Madero's revolution, to fighting against Orozco and eventually Huerta, Villa would always stand for his beliefs. The character of Pancho Villa is defined by three key components: gunslinging, being an outlaw, and defending his honor.

As a gunslinger, Villa earned his fame through his service with foreign companies, and through his military service. His skill with a gun made him formidable on the battlefield, and helped his legend to grow beyond the *Maderistas*. He was always fighting alongside his men, never leading from the rear. This earned him respect and loyalty from them and they continued to serve him throughout the revolution. His military service included taking money from banks and corporations to pay his soldiers, who had never been paid so lucratively before. He did not care what the government thought of him, but he needed his community to love him. His status as an outlaw helped to improve his reputation in Chihuahua.

The people of Chihuahua approved of Villa's outlawry, as he fought for their traditional rights. The *Porfiriato* had stripped these rights from Chihuahua and Villa used his skill as an outlaw to defend these rights. This often came in the form of raiding large *haciendas* or robbing trains containing money and goods bound for wealthy corporations. When the revolution began, he continued his actions as an outlaw while he was a general. This helped to fund his unit and to bring morale for his men.

Villa's honor was of the utmost importance for his character. He needed to ensure that he did everything in an honorable way, whether that is through brutal honesty or through tears and emotion. He believed in the traditions of the people of Chihuahua and fought to defend these

rights. While he was not a native *chihuahuense*, he wanted to defend their time honored traditions from the *Porfiriato*. Villa, through all his outlawry, was an honorable man who lived up to his beliefs and did what he felt was right.

Appendix

The Hacienda and the Bandit

Haciendas were estates owned by wealthy individuals, known as *hacendados*. These estates may include, but are not limited to: farms, ranches, mines, plantations, or factories. Depending on the region, size of an estate, and the wealth of an *hacendado*, an *hacienda* may have several of these industries within its borders. A large *hacienda* brought immense wealth to its owner, who would then expand either the land they owned or increase the amount of industries. Both of these expansions would continue to increase the wealth of an *hacendado*.

Workers on these *haciendas* were typically landless, indebted, and residents of the *hacienda*. However, this is not the case for all workers. There are three types defined by Alan Knight: “resident workers, temporary workers, and sharecroppers.”³⁵ Most of the workers were residents of the *hacienda*, and these workers lived in quarters near the main house of the *hacendado*. Workers would tend to fields, feed animals, work in the mines, or work in the factories on the *hacienda*. Temporary workers would be brought in to work when production was increased, such as during planting and harvesting season, or if there was an increased demand for metals from mines.

Workers and the *hacendado* over them had a patriarchal relationship, especially in the early days of the *hacienda*. The *hacendado* was regarded as a “father-figure,” and it was an honor to work for them, or for them to take the daughter of a worker as a bride.³⁶ However, this attitude had faded by 1910, as the protection that *hacendados* offered from raiding Apaches had diminished with the defeat of Geronimo.³⁷ By this point, workers became less enthusiastic to work, and were more likely to engage in bandit activities to earn a living. The *hacendado*, however, kept the same attitude towards their workers. Their fatherly attitude towards their workers extended from their sense of *machismo*, or their sense of manliness and possession.³⁸ These men ensured that many of their workers would be indebted to them, in order to keep a constant workforce that had no opportunities to leave. In essence, *hacendados* owned their workers to secure *machismo*, which dictated that they must “possess by force or deceit” to gain their wealth.³⁹

While *haciendas* contained mostly poor workers, there was a class of workers known as sharecroppers or *rancheros*. Sharecroppers would be hired to lead workers on an *hacienda*, and they were paid better than the wage-laborers on the *hacienda*. *Rancheros* were landowners who managed their own small ranches, alongside their families and some hired ranch hands. *Rancheros* held more political power than poor workers, but less than the *hacendados* of their region. They are not generally regarded as predatory towards the lands of others, and were mostly concerned with making a living, rather than making a profit, as *hacendados* are. While they did have *machismo*, it was mostly in the pursuit of defending their possessions and family, rather than a display of status. *Hacendados* would display their *machismo* to show their status as a local *jefe*, or boss, as well as their status as an *hacienda* owner.

Haciendas and ranches were typically separated by several miles of hilly or mountainous terrain, and thus had to supply their own defenders. Their defenders were typically poorly

³⁵ *The Mexican Revolution, vol. 1: Porfirians, Liberals, and Peasants* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 85.

³⁶ Knight, *Volume 1*, 85.

³⁷ Friedrich Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa* (California: Stanford University Press, 1998), 16-17.

³⁸ Knight, *Volume 1*, 29.

³⁹ Knight, *Volume 1*, 29.

equipped and untrained, or had nothing tying them to the defense of the land outside of money. This led to consistent robberies by bandits in areas with open space and plentiful *haciendas*. They would generally steal cattle, supplies, or pesos. In response, the Porfirian government used *rurales*, horse-mounted police that would hunt bandits in the countryside.⁴⁰ They were generally unavailable when an *hacienda* was raided, but would hunt known bandits after they raid. In this way, the risks of raiding escalated, and became a more dangerous practice due to the after effects of a raid for a bandit.

However, towards 1910, *rurales* were much less effective than they initially were. Many *rurales* were old, out of shape, or disinterested in actually performing their duties.⁴¹ They had become a corrupt version of their initial organization, with many leading officers seeking wealth and political appointments, rather than patrolling the countryside. When the Revolution finally began in 1910, they failed to properly perform their duties, and ultimately did nothing to actually stop the Revolution.

The enemies of the *rurales*, bandits came from the working class of *haciendas*. Bandits took experiences of oppression and used those as a driving force towards crime. Specifically in Durango, bandits would raid wealthy *haciendas*, rob trains, and commit stagecoach robberies against wealthier people who had ventured into the countryside.⁴²

Bandits had a rough time fighting the *rurales*, and would usually move in gangs in order to avoid being outnumbered. If they were caught in a gunfight, having as many guns as possible against well-armed *rurales* would usually balance the playing field. However, if bandits were able to move fast enough, they could escape most *rurales*, as they had become complacent by 1910.⁴³ Alongside this, many bandits would establish positive relations with both local officials and the lower classes in an area. For example, Heraclio Bernal would routinely pay for anything he needed when within a town, which kept him safe from discovery if *rurales* came to the town searching for him.⁴⁴ The people would keep him safe by avoiding revealing any details about his location, or if he had even been in the town. He generally only robbed stagecoaches, trains, and mines, which meant that he was stealing from the wealthy *hacendados*, rather than the workers of these industries. He also maintained good relations with important politicians and *jefes* of the regions he operated in, Sinaloa and Durango. They could lower bounties on his head, or even eliminate bounties. However, on a federal level, this did not protect Bernal.

As mentioned with Bernal, most bandits would not rob the lower and middle classes. *Rancheros* were generally safe, as they did not have much wealth in the first place, nor anything of value to offer bandits. Larger *haciendas* were always targets, but bandits would cause terror more often than they would kill workers. Through this, they could show their *machismo*, but avoid harming those who could not provide them with any wealth. However, when it came to women, the bandits *machismo* indicated that they had to be “womanizers,” meaning that women could be kidnapped, raped, or bargained for by bandits.

The *machismo* of a bandit was one of their most important qualities. *Machismo* was used to indicate one's manliness, and could be used to elevate social status. If someone was a fighting man, or an honorable man, that became part of their social status. *Machismo* requires the person to be willing to fight, willing to steal, and willing to kill to earn their keep. Diplomacy was less

⁴⁰ Knight, *Volume 1*, 32.

⁴¹ Knight, *Volume 1*, 34-35.

⁴² Katz, 4-5.

⁴³ Knight, *Volume 1*, 34-35.

⁴⁴ Katz, 66.

than encouraged among bandits, and most resorted to outright violence, as a result of *machismo*. Bandits, *jefes*, *hacendados*, *rurales*, and political figures all needed *machismo* to show off their leadership qualities and strength to those around them. For bandits, their *machismo* lay in their raids and self-defense against *rurales*. If they can perform both of these actions successfully, they will be deemed a good leader.

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