

THE TESORERÍA GENERAL DEL ESTADO NOTES OF THE EJÉRCITO LIBERTADOR

By: J.D. "Dave" Watson R-162

A very rare and very strange group of notes is appended to the Tesorería General del Estado issues of General Francisco Villa. They were first cataloged by Duane D. Douglas, et al, in The Complete Catalog of Mexican Paper Money, Krause Publications, Iola, WI, 1982, as MI-CHI-34 (1 peso), MI-CHI-35 (2 pesos), and MI-CHI-36 (10 pesos). They are currently cataloged in the Standard Catalog of World Paper Money, Specialized Issues, Volume 1, Eighth Edition, Krause Publications, Iola, WI, 1998, as P-S 559 (1 peso), P-S 560 (2 pesos), and P-S 561 (10 pesos).



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All three denominations exhibit a blue underprint that is similar to that used on the Tesorería General del Estado 10 pesos notes (MI-CHI-22 / P-S 555). Although the front plate of the note bears a resemblance to the front plate of the genuine Tesorería General del Estado 10 pesos note, it has several features that seem to indicate that it was not prepared by the General Treasury in Chihuahua.

- 1) The frame enclosing the body of the note appears to be continuous. Genuine notes of Chihuahua exhibit the same double-lined black border between the outer "leaf" pattern the body of the note, but have gaps at the corners of these borders.¹ These notes do not have gaps.
- 2) There are no commas following the words "Tesorero General del Estado" at the bottom left, or "Interventor" at the bottom right above the signatures. Genuine notes from the Chihuahua treasury always have commas following these words.²

- 3) There are no abbreviations ("Num." or "No.") preceding the serial numbers, left or right.
- 4) The genuine signature of "S. Vargas hijo" at the bottom left is always preceded by a dot before the "S", above the line formed by the base of the signature. This dot is not apparent on this plate.³
- 5) The plate lacks an imprint from the Treasury at Chihuahua and is quite crude. All of these "defects" are typical of counterfeit notes of this issue and almost certainly indicate that the plate was not prepared at the General Treasury at Chihuahua. This does not necessarily mean that this small group of denominations is counterfeit. Plates may have been prepared elsewhere with the approval of General Villa and the Treasury.
- (6) The treasury seal at the center appears, at first glance to be the seal of the Treasury of Chihuahua, but it exhibits several characteristics that are not found on the genuine seal.



Genuine Seal



2 pesos Seal

- (a) Note that the genuine seal has three lobes on the left half of the nopal cactus on which the eagle is standing. The 2 pesos seal has an indistinct, almost-triangular lobe at the left.
- (b) The genuine seal shows the tail of the serpent extending to the left, between the cactus and the left wing of the eagle, while the 2 pesos seal does not.
- (c) The genuine seal shows the serpent with its mouth closed and tongue protruding. The 2 pesos seal shows the serpent with its mouth open.

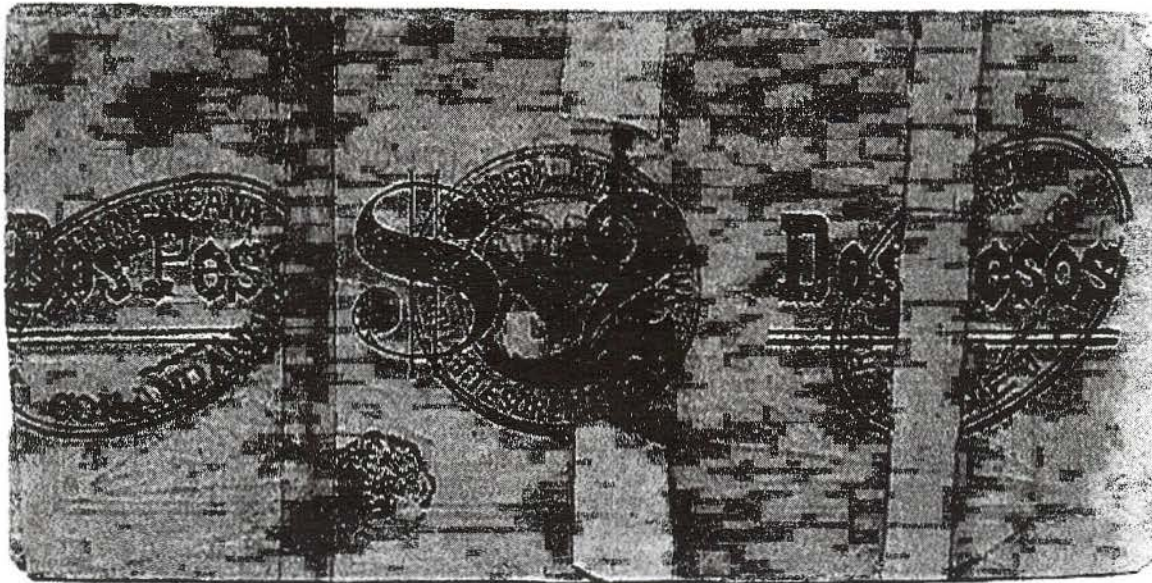


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It is on the back of the note that several possible clues to its origin are found. The back of the note bears three stamps: At left - REPUBLICA MEXICANA - EJÉRCITO LIBERTADOR - COMMANDANCIA; At center - TESORERÍA GENERAL - ESTADO LIBRE Y SOBERANO DE CHIHUAHUA; At right - REPUBLICA MEXICANA - EJÉRCITO LIBERTADOR - BRIGADA PACHECO - DETALL.

Most intriguing are the stamps to the left and right of the central seal. Having searched the known military units of the Mexican Revolution, I found only one organization which used the appellation EJÉRCITO LIBERTADOR - the army of General Emiliano Zapata. Further research indicates that Zapata's EJÉRCITO LIBERTADOR DEL SUR included a BRIGADA PACHECO, commanded by General Francisco Pacheco of Huitzilac, Morelos.⁴ Questions arise. Why would a general of Zapata's Liberating Army issue Villista notes? And, if he did issue Villista notes, was it with the approval of General Francisco Villa? The answer may lie in the events that followed the Convention of Aguascalientes in November 1914.

Although the revolution of First Chief, Venustiano Carranza had been victorious, and all revolutionary chieftains had ceased hostilities, many questioned Carranza's approach to establishing the revolutionary government. Carranza attempted to solidify his position with a convention of "selected" commanders at Mexico City in early October 1914. His intentional exclusion of Generals Villa and Zapata irked the other generals to such an extent that Carranza's convention failed. To the First Chief's surprise, the "selected commanders" called for a convention at Aguascalientes where all major commanders of the revolution would be represented. The Convention of Aguascalientes would determine the future political structure of Mexico.

Carranza sent representatives to the convention, but refused to recognize its authority or actions. The result was the establishment of a Conventionist Government of Mexico in direct opposition to Carranza and his Constitutionalist government. The military chiefs "chose up sides" and civil war swept Mexico once again.

Conventionist President Eulalio Gutiérrez named General Francisco Villa Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the Convention. General Zapata and his Liberating Army aligned under the Conventionist banner. Thus, Villa became nominal commander Zapata's army. The two generals jointly occupied Mexico City in December 1914. When they met, Villa went to great lengths to assure Zapata that he (Zapata), alone, would continue to command his Liberating Army, and the two seemed to develop a genuine friendship. Their subordinates, however, immediately began to maneuver for individual power, destroying the cooperation between the two armies within only a few months.

On January 16, 1915, Roque González-Garza, a close associate of Villa's, assumed the office of President of the Conventionist government. On January 23, he invalidated all Carranza currency. This act caused an immediate shortage of circulating currency throughout central and south Mexico and upset Zapata considerably.⁵ In May 1915, President González-Garza appointed General Francisco Pacheco, commander of Zapata's BRIGADA PACHECO, Minister of War, indicating the President's trust in Pacheco, and by extension the trust of General Villa. The appointment caused General Zapata to question Pacheco's loyalty to the Liberating Army.⁶ By late 1915, Pacheco was feeling Zapata's lack of confidence in him, and insisted to the general that he was still a loyal member of the Liberating Army. His protestations of loyalty only served to make Zapata more suspicious of him.⁷

On March 13, 1916, Pacheco withdrew his forces from Huitzilac and Cuernavaca, leaving the area open to occupation by Carranza's Constitutionlists. General Zapata was appalled and went, personally, to see what Pacheco was up to. On March 27, General Pacheco presented General Zapata with a written description of his plan. He would take a strong column and, moving to the north, encircle Carranza's army. Once in position, he would attack and destroy them from the rear. Such a move would take Pacheco and his men completely out of General Zapata's control. The plan made the general very suspicious. Either Pacheco was crazy or he planned to defect – perhaps to Villa, or even to Carranza. Having lost confidence in Pacheco, Zapata agreed to his execution. Within a few days Pacheco was taken prisoner by Zapatista soldiers and killed.⁸

My hypothesis of the appearance of this strange and rare issue is as follows:

- 1) The notes were produced at the request of General Pacheco, with the knowledge and approval of President Roque Gonzalez-Garza, and hence with the inferred approval of General Villa. Pacheco's position as Minister of War had made him a trusted lieutenant of the president.
- 2) General Pacheco intended their use solely within the area of influence of his Brigada Pacheco, i.e. Huitzilac, Cuernavaca and environs.
- 3) They probably appeared sometime between late January 1915 and October 1915.
- 4) The notes were most likely produced and printed in the city of Cuernavaca, Morelos.
- 5) They were an unintended source of suspicion on the part of General Zapata, thus their period of production was probably short. Many examples may have been destroyed, as General Pacheco tried to assure Zapata of his loyalty. A short production period and destruction of extant notes would account for their rarity.

Perhaps further research into these curious issues will clarify their proper place in the history of the Mexican Revolution.

END NOTES:

¹ Periódico Oficial, Chihuahua, 22 March 1914, Aviso

² Telegram from Jesús Ramos, El Tesorero General del Estado de Chihuahua, 30 January 1915.

³ Periodico Oficial, Guanajuato, 10 December 1914.

⁴ Brunk, Samuel. ¡Emiliano Zapata! – Revolution and Betrayal in Mexico. University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 1995, p.84

⁵ Brunk, Samuel. Op. Cit. pp. 160-161.

⁶ Brunk, Samuel. Op. Cit. p. 172

⁷ Brunk, Samuel. Op. Cit. p.187

⁸ Brunk, Samuel. Op. Cit. pp. 188-189

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