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ALFRED MARSTON TOZZER

1877—1954

A Biographical Memoir by
HERBERT JOSEPH SPINDEN

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Biographical Memoir

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LET TOZZER BE KNOWN, first of all, as the expounder of basic anthropology, the one whose teaching helped keep intact the master science of mankind. During long fruitful years at Harvard he emphasized that needed unity, as overspecialization on every hand threatened the disintegration of gregarious psychology. For himself Tozzler played no favorites, not even asking unusual consideration for the Maya and their culminating civilization of pre-Columbian America. As an organizer and administrator of Central American exploration and research, he had his finger in every project-pie, and a word of encouragement for every field worker. Uncompromising in loyalty to his country and to his profession, he was, nevertheless, a considerate internationalist, keeping abreast of changing opinion, but always aware of pilot stars and essential continuities.

Born at Lynn, Massachusetts, July 4, 1877, he was the son of Samuel Clarence Tozzler and Caroline Blanchard (Marston) Tozzler. After graduation from the Classical High School at Lynn, he entered Harvard College, receiving the degrees of A.B. in 1900, A.M. in 1901, and Ph.D. in 1904. In 1913 he married Margaret Tenney Castle of Honolulu, Hawaiian Islands. Of their two daughters, Ann died young. Joan was mother of their five grandchildren, namely, Phillip, Tozzler, Ann, and Joan Spaulding, and Susan Lincoln. Alfred Tozzler was elected to the National Academy of Sciences in 1942. He died October 4, 1954, at Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Tozzer's first anthropological field work was in California and Arizona among the Wintun and Navajo Indians, conventionally in linguistics and sociology. He turned in 1902 to the Maya field largely through Charles P. Bowditch, who, along with Stephen Salisbury and Edward H. Thompson, was furthering Maya exploration as a Central American Committee, operating independently for the Peabody Museum at Harvard. Such exploration had become important in 1840, when John Lloyd Stephens presented the Maya to the world as an astonishing example of high civilization in America with inscriptions to be deciphered, art to be explained, and a blood-and-culture tradition to be respected, since it surged in new republics.

One hope of young Tozzer's New England sponsors was that he might retrieve surviving knowledge of Maya writing either in Yucatan among historically known capitals, or, perhaps, among surviving Indians living near forest-covered ruins of great magnificence on the borderlands of Guatemala and Mexico. While little information on writing was forthcoming, Tozzer collected myths and observed ceremonies which really did establish significant contacts with the past. The Lancandone refugees deposited their copal incense burners in ancient temples, and the more favorably situated nations of Yucatan made similar offerings for good winds in connection with burning and planting. In the Usumacinta valley Tozzer visited ruins recently found and photographed by Teobert Maler for the same Central American Committee and was successful in finding the important ruin of Tzendales and one or two lesser sites through questioning mahogany cutters.

In later years, Tozzer went exploring, with Raymond Merwin as his companion, over forest trails in Peten. In 1910 and 1911 they mapped the great ruin of Tikal and the lesser one of Nakum, the first to complete Maler's report. More important still, they found Holmul with its temple sepulcher and sumptuous funeral pottery. This discovery now furnishes a key to a long-continued confusion in archeological history, namely, between Maya First Empire re-

mains which prevail at Copan, Palenque, and Tikal, and those of a much later Toltec occupation. Tozzer never visited Uaxactun, where Group E is now revealed as Toltec of the twelfth century A.D., although most of that city's remains and its long sequence of dated monuments, running from the first to the seventh century, are products of the Great Theocracy.

The Maya continuity of civilizing ideas rests upon mathematics and astronomy as exact sciences, rather than upon hieroglyphic symbols, interesting though they may be. Tozzer never concentrated on special features of architecture, epigraphy, ceramics, etc., of the Maya, but he articulated the essential facts for many students, starting them on fruitful quests. Therein lies the secret of his fundamental service. He simply integrated and when controversy arose between divergent systems of chronology he sought a neutral corner. His idea was, I think, to give each school of thought a chance to prove its case even when cholera rose and collars wilted.

The difference between Maya and Toltec in the total record is the great determinant. A stumbling block for historians has been, from Stephen's time, the Toltec Preamble which back-dates the occupation of Chichen by the Itza. This sun-worshipping group sought a nativist precedence over the Xiu group with an adopted Maya cult of the Planet Venus idealized as the Plumed Serpent.

Historical digests of Yucatan refer to the Itza frequently and are misnamed Maya Chronicles unless that term is meant to apply to a mixed people. The Itza themselves were Toltecs, but finally were expelled as undesirable, while the Xiu group were amenable. The Maya theocrats were god-impersonators. The Maya day count, a plug-in on astronomical sequences, was accepted by the Xiu, as can be shown, but the Itza seem to have used calendar years quite differently. In his annotated edition of *Landa*, Tozzer discusses many aspects of the Maya-Toltec problem with its many pitfalls. One thing to be noted is that he did not confuse peoples. In his *Toltec Architect of Chichen Itza* (1922) and in *Maya and Toltec Figures at Chichen Itza* (1930), this fact comes out clearly to his

credit. He shows in the second paper that the victims of human sacrifice depicted on gold plates taken from the Cenote of Sacrifice were Mayas and that their physically different executioners were Toltecs.

If I abbreviate the list of offices and commitments held by Tozzer, it is only to save space for a more careful documentation of his principle of unification. At Harvard he was an instructor in 1904; Assistant Professor in 1912; Associate Professor in 1920; Professor of Anthropology in 1921; John E. Hudson Professor of Archeology in 1947. His administrative posts within the University followed the same advancing pattern and emphasized his role on policy and on the affairs of the Peabody Museum and Radcliffe College. He held posts in many professional organizations. In 1914, on leave of absence, he directed the International School of Archeology in Mexico. During the First and Second World Wars, Tozzer was deeply engaged in the emergency training of reserve officers at Harvard. He became a Captain in the Air Service in 1917, then President of the Air Service Examining Boards in Denver and San Francisco. In the Second World War he ran the Honolulu Office of Strategic Services, supervising radio broadcasts to eastern Asia and Indonesia. Previous studies in race mixture in the Hawaiian Islands had revealed to him that the people of Okinawa were a repressed ethnic group, many members of which had come to Hawaii before the war, and were dependably democratic.

Tozzer's synthesizing mind built the simplicity of his teaching upon circumstances of his own early training and upon the Peabody Museum's wealth of archeological and ethnological source materials. In spite of textbook schooling and the new field work methods already introduced from Germany, Tozzer remained to the end a product of his own experiences in contact learning. Simply, he refused to be drawn into the abstractions of analyses, preferring to work with facts in matrices of reality and with persons having warm enthusiasms.

This I know because I was privileged to take Tozzer's Anthro-

pology 9 in 1905, its first year, and to assist as a teaching fellow during the first three years of his Anthropology 1. Previously good George Will and I had signed up for Roland Dixon's Anthropology 5 on Indians, mostly because we needed free afternoons for canoeing up the Charles! We did know Indians, though, and the next summer found us digging up a Mandan village in North Dakota with two other classmates. As a graduate student, loving art as vital expression in all its forms, I found the poverty of Old World neolithic pottery most depressing as screened by prevailing German scholarship. So I turned to Maya art with its meanings and social purposes still free from sovereign decisions. As I now see it, Frederic Putnam's insight into the meanings of design in America reinforced Tozzer's social approach, while the esthetic sensitivities of Denman Ross, Le Baron Briggs, Chester Greenough, and others who personalized dynamic humanism were like planets pulling in alignment across the open spaces.

Tozzer taught with documents of art, and Putnam should be recognized as a builder in America of educational facilities for contact teaching, first in the Peabody Museum in Cambridge, then in Chicago, with his Hall of Anthropology at the Great Columbian Exposition, which took the world by storm. He was a pupil of imaginative Louis Agassiz, who evolved the Glacial Theory. He belonged to a legion of inductive thinkers who have demonstrated that man will not accept finality, insisting, instead, that emanations from creative minds will reassert themselves in culture.

The Maya civilization, which Alfred Tozzer studied in its basic relationships to other social evidence, bids fair to instrument through concrete dynamic observations universalized by synchronization, a wiser economy than now obtains. Man needs a gregarious enjoyment of life through sympathetic intercourse. Today repair is needed where selfish abrogations violate integrity. The entire record of human evolution, physical, cultural, and spiritual, needs enlightened scrutiny. One of Alfred Tozzer's last letters stated: "I am not pleased

by the new trends—here in sociology, new terms, new theories—the very same thing has come into archeology, etc.”

But vital continuities will again be recognized. Meanwhile Alfred Tozzer, like another mason, wrote bravely on the stones of his palace: “After me cometh a builder; tell him I too have known.”

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

- Am. Acad. Arts Sci. Proc. = American Academy of Arts and Sciences Proceedings
 Am. Anthro. = American Anthropologist
 Am. Antiq. Soc. Proc. = American Antiquarian Society Proceedings
 Am. J. Arch. = American Journal of Archeology
 Art Arch. = Art and Archaeology
 Bur. Am. Ethnol. Smith. Inst. Bull. = Bureau of American Ethnology of the Smithsonian Institution, Bulletin
 Harvard Univ. Gaz. = Harvard University Gazette
 Int. Cong. Amer. Proc. = International Congress of Americanists Proceedings
 J. Am. Folk. = Journal of American Folk-Lore
 Mass. Hist. Soc. Proc. = Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings
 Mem. Peabody Mus. = Memoirs of the Peabody Museum
 Mus. Fine Arts Bull. = Museum of Fine Arts Bulletin
 Nat. Acad. Sci. Biogr. Mem. = National Academy of Sciences Biographical Memoirs
 Nat. Hist. = Natural History
 N. Y. Times Mag. = New York Times Magazine
 Pa. Peabody Mus. = Papers of the Peabody Museum
 R. I. Sch. Des. Bul. = Rhode Island School of Design Bulletin
 Smith. Inst. Ann. Rept. = Smithsonian Institution Annual Report

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