

Monuments and Promise: Maya Ruins and the Death of Felipe Carrillo Puerto

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In our ruined temples the ghosts of my people wait.

—Felipe Carrillo Puerto, speaking at Chichén Itzá (Gruening, “The Mexican Renaissance”, 528).

Abstract

In 1923 the peripheral state of Yucatán saw an unusual confluence of personalities and interests. The new governor, Felipe Carrillo Puerto, was putting a radical socialist experiment into practice, while trying to impress upon the Maya *campesinato* the glories of their underrespected heritage. The liberal New York magazine *Survey Graphic* was putting together a special issue that would highlight that experiment. The local upper classes were awakening to the possibilities of cultural tourism. US archaeologists were beginning a major investigation and restoration project at the Maya city of Chichén Itzá. A Californian woman journalist was accompanying the archaeologists, in the process both learning about earlier US depredations at Chichén Itzá and falling in love with the new governor. This paper disentangles these threads in the interest of illuminating a key moment of cultural production in the American periphery.

Key words: Felipe Carrillo Puerto; Alma Reed; Frank Tannenbaum; Maya; archaeology; Mexican Revolution; Yucatán

On Thursday February 15, 1923, a group of some of the most distinguished US archaeologists of the day visited the ruined Maya city of Uxmal on the Yucatán peninsula, accompanied by various local dignitaries and a journalist from the *New York Times*. Their host and guide was the man who knew most about the city, the state governor, Felipe Carrillo Puerto. Within a year, a US archaeological project would be firmly established in Yucatán, the governor and journalist would have become engaged to be married, US looting of Mexican patrimony would have hit the headlines, and the governor would have been assassinated—and shortly afterwards hailed as the promise of Mexico’s future. This essay teases out the relationships between these events, an intricate tapestry of socialist politics, scientific investigation, international theft, cross-cultural romance, revolutionary uprising, and the defense of entrenched financial interests. The resulting cultural production of note includes a

memoir written by the journalist, which was published more than eighty years after the events here described and a set of photographs documenting the socialist experiment. The argument here is that the intertwining of stories usually told separately serves to illuminate what has previously remained in shadow. In particular, it casts light on one of the most striking and yet enigmatic photographs of the period, one chosen by the liberal intelligentsia of New York to symbolize the promise to the world offered in the early 1920s by a social revolution in the “peripheral” space of the Yucatan peninsula. I will start by saying something, in turn, about the two groups, US archaeologists and local dignitaries, and the two individuals, the governor and the journalist, before coming back in more detail to the events of 1923.

The Archaeologists

The archaeologists visiting Uxmal belonged to a new organization called the Archaeological Institute of Yucatan (AIY), announced in New York and Mexico City in late October 1922 (“Plan”). The driving force behind the AIY was the Carnegie Institution, which had several years earlier approved a project at Chichén Itzá, which had then been delayed by the arrival of the Mexican Revolution in Yucatán. Since the Mexican government had not yet approved the Carnegie project, the scoping visit did not officially carry the Carnegie title. However, the presence of the head of that body, John C. Merriam, and its leading trustee, William Barclay Parsons, made its purpose clear.

The Carnegie project constituted the second stage of US Maya archaeology. The first stage had been dominated by a group that the Mexican historian Guillermo Palacios has called “the Bostonians” because most were born and raised in the greater Boston area, and their institutional location was the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard. Frederic Ward Putnam had overseen operations as the first professor of ethnology at Harvard from 1887, with funding for the Maya research coming from Stephen Salisbury III, a wealthy businessman and president of the Worcester National Bank, and Charles P. Bowditch, a financial trust manager and enthusiastic decipherer of Maya epigraphy. However, Edward H. Thompson had done much of the work on the ground. While studying engineering at Worcester Free Institute of Industrial Science, and never having been to Mexico, Thompson wrote an article (1879) claiming that the Maya cities might prove that the lost continent of Atlantis was not a myth. Salisbury paid attention and, a few years later, when these Bostonian gentlemen finally decided to send a local man into the field, they identified Thompson as an ideal candidate. He clearly had an interest—if at this stage theoretical—in the Maya; as an engineer, he could properly excavate, though he might need training in archaeological niceties; as Worcester

born and bred, he was by definition reliable; having studied at an institute of science, he was educated, which was useful, but not a Harvard man, and therefore controllable by his social and intellectual superiors; or so they all thought.

In its early years, the Peabody Museum (established 1866) had struggled to establish an identity. Collections were bought in Europe and amateur archaeologists and relic hunters were supported, but Harvard was sniffy, Putnam—who had no academic credentials—was cautious, and financial support was hard to come by. The nub of the problem, as Curtis Hinsley suggests, is that the ancient remains of North America—shell-heaps and earth mounds—were of limited public interest, while their makers, presumably the ancestors of the “savage” Indians still struggling for survival in various parts of the USA, were regarded with distaste by the high-minded brahmins of Boston, who thought that archaeology was properly practiced in places like Crete and Egypt. The Yucatán, however, had similarly impressive and aesthetically pleasing structures to those Mediterranean sites, with added mystery and romance—as well as the benefits of being relatively close and not previously studied. , and with its artifacts more easily available.

Once based in Yucatán, Thompson made valuable surveys of the Maya sites of Labna and Xkichmook, as well as evolving a new method of making molds using a mixture of paper pulp, local fibers, and plaster, a technique he employed to fabricate the huge casts of Maya portals that were one of the highlights of the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Soon thereafter, he purchased the site of Chichén Itzá and rebuilt the adjacent hacienda as his home. Periodically, somebody from Harvard would check up on him. In the winter of 1901-1902, the promising young student Alfred Tozzer arrived, and despite his scathing comments on Thompson’s lack of professionalism, he was deeply impressed by the jade and gold objects that Thompson had started dredging up from the so-called *cenote sagrado*. These were beginning to make their way back to the Peabody Museum, smuggled in consular bags or tourist steamer trunks.

In those opening years of the twentieth century Mayan studies seemed to be progressing well at Harvard. The *cenote sagrado* kept churning out objects. Putnam had taught Tozzer, who had served his apprenticeship in Yucatán and was beginning himself to teach. One of Tozzer’s students was the brilliant Sylvanus G. Morley, regarded as the heir apparent. In early 1907, Morley had made his first field trip to Yucatán, staying with Thompson, assisting with the dredging, and taking his share of the resulting treasure back to Cambridge—a rite of passage which assured his acceptance into the masonry of Harvard Mayanists. Except, things did not quite work out that way. Having offended Charles

Bowditch by pre-empting his analysis of the Maya site at Naranjo, in Guatemala, Morley was cast aside (Thompson 1964).

The expansion of the Carnegie Institution (CI), therefore, arrived at exactly the right moment. Morley's pitch for the repair and excavation of Chichén Itzá sought to break with Bostonian practice and establish a working relationship with the Revolutionary government based on the determination that "originals should in all justice remain in the custody of the Mexican nation" (81). When Morley was finally given the official nod by the CI in December 1913, it was clear that the political situation in Mexico would have to calm down before the project could even seek Mexican approval. Only in 1922, with the testy relationship between the USA and Mexico beginning to improve (though with as yet no US diplomatic recognition of the government of Álvaro Obregón), and with the situation in Yucatán now stable, did the Carnegie trustees decide to visit Yucatán in the hope for informal discussions with the various Mexican stakeholders. Hence, the founding of that Archaeological Institute of Yucatan, an umbrella organization involving archaeologists and wealthy sponsors interested in promoting research into the Maya cities.

By the time the AIY was formed, the Bostonian adventure was effectively over. Salisbury, Putnam, and Bowditch were all dead, although Alfred Tozzer was still patiently working in Harvard on the objects that Edward Thompson had dredged up, and Thompson himself was still in place at the Hacienda Chichen. In a show of unity, most of the leading US Mayanists joined the AIY, along with a sprinkling of the great and the good and the very rich—Charles D. Orth, Edward L. Doheny, Minor C. Keith, John B. Stetson Jr, Allison V. Armour (sisal, oil, bananas, hats, grain). William Barclay Parsons—the country's leading engineer and an enthusiastic amateur Mayanist—was the driving force, though the "elected" president was R. A. C. Smith, another millionaire businessman with extensive Caribbean interests. Another member, John F. Barry, was the editor of the New York journal *Commercial Mexico*. Representing Mexico were the eternal survivor, Rafael de Zayas Enríquez, and—probably the crucial figure—Felipe G. Cantón Pantón, a leading light in the developing Yucatecan tourist industry.

The Local Dignitaries

Yucatán had itself always been something of an outlier as far as Mexico was concerned, difficult to access from the rest of the country, often separatist in tendency, and subject to the vicious Caste War of 1847 that had never been completely terminated. Not much would grow in large parts of the peninsula, but agave thrived in the dry limestone soil of the northwest. As such, when US demand

grew for henequen (*Agave fourcroydes*), from the fiber of which binder-twine was made, a machine was developed to replace the traditional hand-stripping, and the state's finances boomed—or at least those of the thirty or so *henequeneros* who owned the largest plantations, the *casta divina* as they were known (Evans).

By the late nineteenth century Yucatán had become what Gilbert M. Joseph calls “a de facto slave society” (*Revolution* 29). Indebted peons labored in slave-like conditions, living in barracks, guarded back and forth to the henequen *planteles*, whipped into submission, and bought and sold by the planters. While there were some free villages, the majority of the Maya *campesinos* lived isolated on plantations operated on industrial lines, much like the earlier cotton plantations in the US South, although arguably in even worse conditions. Cowed by overwhelming police power and extensive use of corporal punishment, they were difficult for reformers or revolutionists to even reach, so careful were the *henequeneros* to keep strangers away.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, the journalist John Kenneth Turner had travelled the country undercover to report on these truly barbarous conditions: the first chapter of his book was called, without compromise, “The Slaves of Yucatán”. The *henequeneros* carefully avoided the word “slavery,” but Turner established the presence of the institution by determining the price he would have to pay to buy a man, which was sufficient proof. With no incentive to work, the peons had to be whipped, it was explained to Turner by Felipe G. Cantón: “It is necessary to whip them—oh, yes, very necessary, he told me, with a smile, for there is no other way to make them do what you wish. What other means is there of enforcing the discipline of the farm? If we did not whip them, they would do nothing” (24).

Through its own underhand dealings, the International Harvester Company (IHC) purchased the entirety of Yucatán's henequen at a price that the IHC could itself fix, having provided the credit to underwrite the industry's rapid growth. With production costs minimal and demand for binder-twine soaring in the agricultural heartlands of the USA, the *casta divina* turned Mérida from a dusty provincial backwater into the most modern city in Mexico. By 1910, seven-eighths of the state's population was involved in some aspect of the henequen industry, which had its own transport infrastructure, connecting plantations to Mérida and to the port of Progreso, while the rest of the state had practically none.

Initially, the Mexican Revolution had little impact in Yucatán. Presidents came and went; the *henequeneros* carried on making money. Venustiano Carranza was the first Revolutionary president to try to bring Yucatán under federal control, his general, Salvador Alvarado, eventually routing separatist

forces. A man with a mission, the autodidact Alvarado, with his eyes on the presidency and the state treasury overflowing, introduced ambitious social and political reforms (Franz, Savarino, “El regado”, Osten). Forced labor was abolished; a Comisión Reguladora del Mercado de Henequén was established to control the marketing of the state’s major asset; schools and libraries were built across the state; and government employment was opened to women. What had been the most backward state in Mexico was now in the Revolutionary vanguard. Alvarado called himself a socialist—though in the pre-1917 sense of a liberal modernizer. Apart from the *casta divina* (and the church), nobody in Yucatán objected too much. The smaller *henequeneros* benefitted from more favorable lines of credit and so were largely in favor of the Reguladora. Even members of the *casta divina* were in no danger of actually losing their properties since, as far as Alvarado was concerned, any agrarian reform in Yucatán had to exclude *henequales*—he had no intention of killing the goose that was laying ever-increasing numbers of golden eggs. At most, larger plantations might be pared down and some *ejidal* land restored to despoiled pueblos. He found himself restraining his advisers, who wanted more land redistribution, while coming under criticism from Carranza, who was rowing back hard on Revolutionary promises of serious agrarian reform.

One of Alvarado’s chief advisers was Felipe Carrillo Puerto, born in Motul, with experience as a small *ranchero*, and fluent in the Maya language, having lived in close proximity to indigenous communities, all of which gave him considerable local credibility that most other creole politicians could not match. After short spells in a number of jobs, and some time in Morelos with Zapata, Carrillo Puerto had returned to Yucatán to work for Alvarado as a rural organizer (*agente de propaganda*) and then as one of the leaders of the Departamento de Cooperativas, travelling extensively throughout the region. In March 1917, he moved to centralize the *ligas de resistencia*, powerful sub-committees of the Socialist Party of Yucatán (PSY) that he controlled and through which he attempted to bring the Maya into the political process. Under his leadership, the PSY consolidated its influence throughout the state by fair means and foul.¹ The ferocity of the Caste War, still fresh in the minds of many in 1917, would certainly have fueled elite resistance to Carrillo Puerto’s activities.

With the new Mexican constitution finally active, civilian elections took place in 1917. Alvarado wanted to remain as governor but he had not been resident in the state long enough to qualify and Carranza refused to bend the rules, perhaps chary of Alvarado’s growing popularity. Furthermore, the state’s revolutionary coalition broke down when henequen prices plummeted after the end of the First World War. Socialist hegemony in the state was destroyed—as much by Carranza as by the forces of Yucatecan reaction: members of the PSY were persecuted, its buildings vandalized,

its treasuries looted, and its members assassinated. Carrillo Puerto was forced to flee to New Orleans and then New York. Finally, back in Mexico City he began to seriously contemplate the possibility of Yucatecan independence (Beals).

Don Felipe had not done his short-term prospects any good by coming out in favor of Obregón well in advance of the 1920 presidential elections, but in the end he had backed the right horse. With Carranza trying to impose his own candidate, the Sonoran triangle of Obregón, Plutarco Elías Calles, and Adolfo de la Huerta rebelled, and Carranza fled and was killed. Meanwhile, De la Huerta temporarily took the presidency in advance of the national elections, in which, in Yucatán, the PSY swept back into power. Manuel Berzunza became governor, with Carrillo Puerto playing a role in national politics as a federal deputy, giving him the opportunity to establish friendships in the capital with rising figures such as José Vasconcelos and Ramón P. de Negri. Subsequently, Carrillo Puerto easily won the November 1921 gubernatorial elections, becoming governor in February 1922. Thus began the genuinely *socialist* stage of the Yucatecan experiment, at the center of which was the building of roads to the ancient Maya cities.

Since John Lloyd Stephens's books in the 1840s, the Mayan sites, especially Chichén Itzá and Uxmal, had been visited by a few independent travelers, but land transportation was limited to horseback and a bone-shattering contraption called a *volante* and, in the absence of hotels, visitors were dependent on the hospitality of neighboring planters. After a hesitant start at the beginning of the century, a renewed impetus towards tourism in the early 1920s was the direct result of that disastrous fall in the price of henequen. Having become accustomed to lives of extravagant luxury when demand went through the roof, the *casta divina* was now looking to diversify. Felipe G. Cantón—who used the Progreso-New York steamship line like ordinary commuters use the bus—had recently been involved in the founding of two Yucatecan organizations (as well as belonging to the international AIY). La Compañía Impulsora del Turismo a las Ruinas de Yucatán S.A. was constituted on May 7, 1921 by the architect Manuel Amábilis Domínguez to encourage archaeological tourism (“Programa”). Then in 1922, Cantón was instrumental in the establishment (and became president) of the Asociación Conservadora de Monumentos Arqueológicos de Yucatán (ACMAY), alongside the new governor Carrillo Puerto (as honorary president), the longtime US resident in Mérida, June F. James, and other plantation owners and businessmen, including Edward H. Thompson and Francisco Gómez Rul (fig. 1).



Figure 1 The founding of the ACMAY in 1922. Felipe Carrillo Puerto is seated, in the white suit. Felipe G. Cantón Pachón is immediately on his left.

The Governor

Felipe Carrillo Puerto laid out his gubernatorial program at the second *congreso obrero* in Izamal in August 1921, delivering his opening address in Maya, and speaking the language of class struggle (*Segundo congreso* 16-19). Carrillo Puerto's power base lay in the countryside where political organization was hard going. Traditional Maya society had been severely dislocated by the plantation system, breaking its cultural ties with the epic past, and the large estates dominated life through intensive repression. Workplaces were settlements, not communities, with different groups deliberately mixed in order to minimize resistance. There was no possibility of contact with potential urban allies, particularly since Yucatán's urban proletariat rarely had rural roots. Carrillo Puerto always stressed that the *campesinos* should organize and arm themselves rather than putting their faith in leaders, but this was easier said than done. Accepting their faith in him, buttressed by his claims of descent from the

sixteenth-century rebel leader, Nachi Cocom, which were seemingly based on no more solid evidence than a family background in Sotuta, the ancient *cacicazgo* of the Cocomes, and somewhat belied by his six-foot stature, green eyes, and classically-sculpted profile.² Under the new governor, great stress was laid on the development of Maya ethnic pride through weekly cultural events (*lunes rojos*). Eventually, the *ligas* did begin to penetrate the haciendas; and the most prominent chiefs of the scattered *rebeldes* in the south-east were invited at government expense to Mérida, where they recognized *Sucím Felipe* as their friend and protector, ensuring peace on the frontier (Joseph, *Revolution* 253-54). Additionally, local editions were commissioned of the great Maya books *Chilam Balam* and *Popul Vuh*.

Carrillo Puerto distributed *ejidos* to all major pueblos, greatly expanding the program begun under Berzunza: a new distribution was celebrated every week (*jueves agrarios*), usually in person by the governor, and agricultural cooperatives were encouraged (Joseph, *Revolution* 237-38, 245). However, despite the influence on him of his time with Zapata, Carrillo Puerto recognized that the *campesinos* were now not so much peasants as rural wage earners. His ultimate aim, though, was to expropriate the henequen plantations as they were, turning them into worker-owned co-operatives. In 1922-1923, however, when even small amounts of the land of large *henequeneros* were expropriated for redistribution as *ejidos*, these grants were usually overturned on appeal by the federal government, indicating that Carrillo Puerto's major planned initiative was not fully supported by Obregón, who also proved unwilling to arm the *campesinos* of Yucatán with modern rifles (Savarino Roggero and Pérez de Sarmiento 169).

Although clearly further to the left than Alvarado, and newly garnished with terminology drawn from a reading of Marx and events in Russia, Carrillo Puerto remained a pragmatist: in Yucatán there was little option. He made tactical alliances with local caciques in order to maintain his control of the state. The Reguladora was renamed the Comisión Exportadora with *hacendado* and financial wizard Tomás Castellanos Acevedo as its head, one of several "reactionaries" whom Carrillo Puerto appointed, a decision he defended in a conversation with the journalist Alma Reed, as she recalls in *Peregrina* (288-89). Another such appointee was Felipe G. Cantón, who advised on the development of a tourist industry. In late 1922, prices edged up and it looked as if the henequen industry might be turning a corner. Nonetheless, the *casta divina* remained apprehensive, and the local press was uniformly hostile to the governor, in most cases mendaciously so.

Notwithstanding these circumstances, Carrillo Puerto's achievements were substantial during his short time in office. He managed to resuscitate La Industrial (Alvarado's failed attempt to develop a local industry) and to sponsor the establishment of other cordage plants; he revolutionized workers'

rights through a new *código de trabajo*; he founded the Universidad Nacional del Sureste, enthusiastically participating in José Vasconcelos's plan for a whole string of new regional universities; he introduced a revised school curriculum and established hundreds of new schools (Carey 152-3, 149). He also built a substantial number of roads, an archetypally “modern” project, but one that Felipe saw in almost mystical terms as connecting the past with the future.

For US visitors, it was often the cultural and social refinements that caught the eye. Prison reform was a particular obsession (Felipe had had some personal experience): he introduced a regime in which there were no locked cells, mail censorship was abolished, and weekly conjugal visits were encouraged. Divorce became at the request of either party, with safeguards for children; and the mobilization of working-class women was actively encouraged, with Felipe's sister, Elvia, and Elena Torres Cuéllar prominent, proselytizing about birth control. Suddenly, Yucatán, on the margins of the continent, appeared to be more modern than New York.

After being beyond the pale in the early years of the Revolution, by 1922 Yucatán had become the avant-garde in terms of its educational and social policies, at the top of the places for US progressives to visit, with Carrillo Puerto's charisma a huge drawing card. Ernest Gruening, for example, travelled widely in Mexico, but the place he most wanted to see was Yucatán, which he did in the company of his old friend, Charley Ervin, who had recently completed a stint as editor of the Socialist newspaper *New York Call*. Ervin remembered Yucatán as a secular utopia (120-24).

As for his association with Cantón and ACMAY, this was not a marriage made in heaven for Felipe, but it was a marriage. Until 1915, the *casta divina* could—had they then desired—have used state finance to construct the roads necessary to take visitors from the nearest railroad stations to Chichén Itzá and Uxmal. Now they no longer controlled the state finances and were dependent on a man whom they roundly despised. However, in this one instance, their interests coincided. Carrillo Puerto had a deep and genuine interest in the ruined cities and a strong sense of the role they could play in instilling pride among the Maya *campesinos*. He also understood that tourism could be a new lifeline for the struggling economy of Yucatán, which he needed to be strong in order to finance his ambitious social reforms. Everybody was on the same page; but just on this one page, not the rest of the book.

The Journalist

Working at the *San Francisco Call*, Alma Reed made her name in 1921 as a champion of human rights through her defense of Simón Ruiz, a seventeen-year old undocumented Mexican worker sentenced

to death after being advised by his state-appointed lawyer to plead guilty to the murder of a foreman, whom he had shot under threats from an older worker dismissed by the foreman (May). A non-English speaker, Ruiz had not even understood until a few days earlier that he was about to be hanged. Given her working proficiency in Spanish, Reed had been able to get Ruiz's side of the story and, after a lengthy campaign, the California state law was amended to increase the age at which the death penalty could be exacted from fourteen to eighteen and Ruiz's sentence was commuted. The story attracted the attention of the Mexican press and then government. With Obregón keen to normalize relations with the USA, he quickly invited Reed to visit Mexico as his guest, which she did in September 1922. She was booked into a suite at the Hotel Regis, was chauffeured to various official events, and had lunch with the president and his wife at Chapultepec Castle. She could draw on one prior acquaintance: Ramón P. de Negri, whom she had known when he was Mexican Consul General in San Francisco, was now the powerful Minister of Agriculture, in charge of land reform and rural education. Reed took full advantage of her three-month stay in Mexico, traveling with Manuel Gamio and his team of archaeological experts on their field survey of Oaxaca, climbing to the heights of Monte Albán, where he officially launched the study.³ Alongside her research in the National Archives, she read Gamio's very recently published *La población del valle de Teotihuacán*. With José Vasconcelos as her guide, she visited the National Preparatory School where José Clemente Orozco was painting his frescos: Orozco introduced her to his painter friends at the Casa de Azulejos. Withal, she had time for long bohemian evenings in the studio Dr. Atl (Gerardo Murillo) shared with his lover Nahui Olin (Carmen Mondragón) in the remains of the Convento de La Merced, which he was in the process of repairing. The culminating event of her visit was the emotional public funeral of Ricardo Flores Magón, who had died in Leavenworth Penitentiary on November 21, and whose body was received in a four-hour procession through Mexico City. Flores Magón had denounced all the compromises that had marked the Revolution, but he was received in death as a national hero (Lomnitz 500-07). After the Ruiz case gave her nationwide publicity, Reed had been contracted by Adolph S. Ochs to write feature articles on Mexican life for the *New York Times* magazine during her visit to Mexico. They appeared without a byline, but one of them was probably her report on the founding of the AIY ("Plan").

Like many of her generation, Reed was aware of what in *Peregrina* she calls "promptings" that "had been steadily if unconsciously drawing me southward since young girlhood" (80). She says it was her father's experience as a mining engineer in various parts of Mexico that had influenced her initially through his warm regard for the people. Then, just as interventionists urged Woodrow Wilson to send the US military into Mexico to protect US investments, the Californian chapter of the "Red Scare" of

1919 saw increased resentment towards Mexicans working in the Bay area, arousing Reed's interest and sympathy. Working alongside her father's employees in the Chutes—an amusement park—she picked up a serviceable knowledge of Spanish, and was therefore more than ready to jump at the opportunities that Obregón and Ochs provided for her.

February 1923

In *Peregrina*, Reed recalls the six-day voyage from New York to Progreso. On board the *SS Mexico*, she met a number of important Mexican figures, including Roberto Casas Alatríste, who worked in public finance, and Luis G. Molina, nephew of Olegario Molina Solís, a powerful *hacendado*. Between them, these new acquaintances ensured that Reed arrived in Yucatán well primed by a range of different views. When the AIY party arrived in Mérida on Wednesday, February 14, they were met by Carrillo Puerto's English-speaking representative, Manuel Cirerol Sansores, and whisked straight to the headquarters of the Liga Central, which the Governor used as his office. Her first description of Felipe Carrillo Puerto is “a man of exceptional magnetism and rare physical beauty” (105). It was love at first sight. Some of the AIY visitors were put up in private homes, with Alma staying in the house of Felipe G. Cantón, which dates back to 1644. The Mansión Mérida was the first two-story home in the Yucatán and was restored by Cantón early in the twentieth century.⁴ It was only later that Alma made the connection that her soft-spoken and cultivated host was the *henequenero* who had openly admitted to Turner that whipping was the only way to maintain productivity (151).

On the night of Saturday, February 17, the party travelled on the overnight train to Dzitas. Morley, Carrillo Puerto, and José Reygadas Vertiz, head of the federal Departamento de Monumentos, sat in the observation car discussing the details of the Carnegie project. “The visit to Chichén Itzá, we all understood”, Alma writes,

was in the nature of a preliminary survey. There would be no definite decisions until after the recommendations had been turned in to Washington, probably in late autumn. But at this point no member of the party imagined any occurrence that could hinder the realization of Carnegie's proposed long-range project. (189)

Carrillo Puerto and Edward Thompson showed the visitors around the site. Then, during the siesta hour after lunch, Thompson approached Alma, who was writing up her notes, and complimented her attention to duty, lowered his voice, moved his chair closer and “asked if I would like to have an exclusive story on ‘the greatest archaeological adventure of the New World’” (201). The previous day—though news could hardly have reached them—Tutankhamun's tomb had been unsealed. For

some time, Yucatán had been touted as the Egypt of the New World. Now, clearly, this was going to be the story that would underline that claim. Just not today, Thompson said: “I do not wish to talk before these Carnegie and Peabody people,” already distancing himself from the institutional archaeologists (201). He was sure that Felipe would arrange another visit for her: “I’ve observed that he’s anxious to do anything you may ask” (202). It was probably that obvious.

On Thursday, February 22, Alma returned to Chichén Itzá to hear Edward Thompson’s story. As he led her along the causeway, she recalls, he painted a dramatic picture of beautiful virgins being thrown into the *cenote sagrado* accompanied by precious jewels and treasured ornaments. Thompson told Alma his own story of ridicule and discouragement before the eventual triumph when his dredging equipment produced a trove of gold and jade objects. The confessional element in the story was clear: “All this treasure, Don Eduardo admitted to me, was then in the Peabody Museum, having been sent there via the U.S. consular mail pouch” (218). Alma was, she writes, careful not to mention Thompson’s confession to any of the archaeologists, “fearing that the secret so closely guarded for a quarter of a century might leak out” (266) before her account was published. In other words, she was naïve enough to imagine that the archaeologists—all with Harvard associations—did not know exactly what had been going on.

The boat home stopped briefly in Havana, giving Alma time to cable the *New York Times* editor with a teaser for her story. This appeared, without byline, on March 2, as a “Special Cable”, datelined Havana, under the headline “Great Maya Find of Relics Revealed”, and the sub-head “Priceless Discoveries Kept Secret Ten Years Are Made Known to Science” (3). Keen to ascertain the exact truth behind Thompson’s story, Alma made arrangements to visit Cambridge with Roberto Casas Alatraste just three days after she reached New York. Arriving unannounced at the Peabody Museum and—surprise, surprise—“not finding the salvaged material on public display,” they asked permission to inspect it. “None too willingly, and only after considerable delay and argument, were we led to an upper-floor storage room where, in rows of glass-covered cases, we found the enormous collection exactly as the discoverer had described it to me” (267). Finally, in early April, Alma’s *New York Times* articles provided the full story. True to her promise, Alma presented it from Thompson’s perspective, making full use of Don Eduardo’s own words.

In *Peregrina*, Reed plays up the impact of her article, claiming that the repercussions from the confession were felt in the US Congress and the Mexican courts (268). In fact, nobody in the USA seems to have thought there was anything peculiar in an enterprising US adventurer smuggling Maya artifacts back to a Cambridge museum, and any reaction in Mexico was quickly smothered by the

growing wrangle over who would succeed Obregón—a wrangle that led to the rebellion that claimed the life of Felipe Carrillo Puerto. But it seems as if Edward Thompson really did want to confess, and the next ear he bent was that of one of his most loyal friends and sponsors, T. A. Willard, whose book *The City of the Sacred Well* contained extensive quotations ventriloquizing Thompson, drawing—according to Willard—on the tales with which Thompson would regale his visitors. Unfortunately, as a result of Willard’s book, which contained an estimate of the financial value of Thompson’s findings, the Mexican government—no longer able to turn a blind eye—seized the hacienda and charged Thompson with theft and illegal exportation of archaeological patrimony (“Mexico”).⁵ He fled the country, never to return, spending his remaining years lecturing about his finds, always introduced as “Thompson of Yucatán.”⁶ In a civil case, he was sued for more than a million pesos, with the Peabody Museum and Harvard University named as accomplices. The criminal case lapsed when Thompson died in 1935, and eight years later, the civil case was dismissed in the Mexican Supreme Court.⁷

Alma Reed seemed peculiarly unaware of the possible impact of her article about Thompson on her new love. Carrillo Puerto had shown considerable diplomatic skill in weaving together an alliance of interests involving the CI, some wealthy local *hacendados*, and the peninsula’s Maya community. As the *eminence grise* of Chichén Itzá, Thompson had a key role to play in this alliance, acting as guide and interpreter at least until the Carnegie investigations were up and running. To be outed as a smuggler, betraying the country where he had made his home, risked souring US-Mexican relationships and jeopardizing the whole archaeological project in which Carrillo Puerto had such a deep personal investment. Alma seems to have taken the journalistic view that a scoop is a scoop and paid no heed to any larger—indeed possibly personal—consequences. The day that Alma interviewed Thompson she and Felipe had travelled together on the train to Dzitas, and he picked her up from the Hacienda Chichen in the late afternoon. Did he not ask her about what Thompson had told her? If so, what were his reactions? How much did he know of what had been going on?

Finally, on July 3, 1923, the Mexican government awarded the Carnegie Institution a ten-year permit (later extended another 10 years) to conduct extensive excavation and restoration of Chichén Itzá, which eventually began on January 1, 1924. The proposal had been welcomed by the Governor of Yucatán, Felipe Carrillo Puerto, and approved by the Dirección de Antropología (headed by Manuel Gamio), in addition to the Subsecretaría de Educación (Ramón P. de Negri), all three of them contributors to a special issue of the *Survey Graphic* magazine about Mexico being compiled that summer.

Summer 1923: Frank Tannenbaum

The stabilization of the Mexican Revolution under Obregón allowed the US journal *Survey Graphic* and its editor Paul Kellogg to fulfill plans for a special issue that would take the pulse of the country's cultural renaissance. Guest editor, the dynamic Frank Tannenbaum, had followed early books on prison conditions and the labor movement with an incisive analysis of racial matters in the US South, convincing Kellogg that Tannenbaum had the chops to pull off the organization of this issue on Mexico, a country in which Tannenbaum had a growing interest but little expertise (Maier and Weatherhead; Whitfield). The two of them first discussed the possibilities at the Civic Club in New York in November 1921. There were no written commitments at this stage, but when Tannenbaum left with his wife Esther for Puerto Rico and then Mexico in April 1922, Kellogg gave him credentials from *The Survey* to carry (Kellogg, Letters; Hale). Tannenbaum was shocked by the poverty he saw in Mexico and horrified by the attitudes of his fellow-countrymen ("They are a disgrace to the U.S."), but he was also invigorated by the trip across the country, helped by a free rail-pass. As he wrote to his brother, Louis: "This is a wonderful country. It is the country of the future" (1).

Once the Bucareli Agreement of August 1923 had provided assurances for US oil firms that land already acquired would not be nationalized, the USA gave diplomatic recognition to the Mexican government at the end of that month. Kellogg acted quickly, immediately commissioning the special issue, which could now report enthusiastically about social, cultural, and artistic developments in Mexico in the full expectation that they would continue after the transfer of power in the elections of autumn 1924, with Obregón set to be succeeded by his friend and colleague Plutarco Elías Calles.

With a preliminary outline of the Mexico special issue in front of them, Kellogg and Tannenbaum finally arrived at an agreement at a meeting on September 17, 1923, in which Tannenbaum was appointed "special editorial commissioner." He would spend three months in Mexico, with \$1200 provided by *Survey Graphic*, as Kellogg wrote on October 27: "While the outline of the Number indicates clearly its main lines and the people from whom we shall expect you to secure manuscripts, the thing is fluid and you are to make your decisions in the field as the work develops" (1). He gives just one example: "If you can get a special article on Yucatán by Carrillo, do so" (1). Kellogg needed his program finalized at least three months in advance, so the timetable was crucial: Tannenbaum would return with the manuscripts, already edited in Mexico and so in publishable form: "The scheme of the issue is to get the Mexicans themselves to interpret themselves; but this is a delicate process of interpretation and we must count on you to edit and re-write and develop the

articles so that they will be a living force to the mind of the American reader.” (1) With his instructions in his pocket, Tannenbaum set off on his second trip to Mexico, this time without his wife.

Tannenbaum headed straight for Yucatán, which he had visited briefly with Esther the year before. When he wrote to Kellogg in the middle of October, it was to announce that because of the lack of boat service to Veracruz he would have to stay three weeks rather than two, but this was not a complaint—for he too had fallen under the spell of Felipe Carrillo Puerto:

There is no other place in Mexico as interesting or significant as Yucatan ... The Indian with his Mayan language, his communal notions of land ownership, his great love of music and dancing, his old traditional art forms—all of this has come to front again. Strangely enough it has come to the fore in the name of Socialism ... And Felipe Carrillo the governor is the father of it all—a blessed soul who is both prophet and magician and who is loved by the Indians as no one ever was loved in Yucatan before. It will be difficult for me to write about Felipe in restrained terms. I know nothing like him.⁸ (Oct. 14, 1)

Carrillo Puerto has promised an article and, Tannenbaum reported, has tons of photographs. Once in Mexico City, Tannenbaum provided an update on Carrillo Puerto, who

instead of giving me an article wrote me a long letter. I have taken this letter and expanded it by putting into it all of the things he said to me verbally and am sending it to him for signature. If he does not sign it we can use it as an interview with him—it is a very interesting story. (Oct. 30, 1)

From the welter of information Tannenbaum provided in this letter, what really animated Kellogg was the account of Yucatán. His letter had given the editor “more than anything I’ve ever read, a warm sense of reality as to communal Yucatan. We should surely make it one of the big features of our Mexican Number”; and an article by Carrillo Puerto himself “will be a ten-strike” (Oct. 27, 1). Those pins duly toppled when Carrillo Puerto did indeed sign off on Tannenbaum’s interpretation of his Yucatecan project:

me alegra muchísimo que hubieras interpretado tan bien todo lo que nosotros estamos haciendo. Tu artículo está no solamente sugestivo, sino muy interesante, y no me figuraba que fueras tan perspicaz para divinar y comprender todo lo que nosotros hemos podido hacer en tan poco tiempo aquí en Yucatán en favor del proletariado. (Nov. 19, 1)⁹

The gringo was clearly smarter than he looked.

With the contents of the *Survey Graphic* special issue just about determined, everything nearly went pear-shaped when the Sonoran triangle—supposed guarantors of stability—fractured in spectacular fashion with the revolt of Adolfo de la Huerta against Obregón’s choice of Calles as his successor (Brush). The colors of the *Survey Graphic* were, however, firmly nailed to the mast of its Mexican state caravel despite the desperate loss in the rebellion of one of its main contributors.

Summer 1923: Alma Reed

Alma was chary of making things difficult for Felipe: his divorce had not yet been finalized and she knew that conservative *meridano* society would disapprove of any liaison. Her boss at the *New York Times*, however, now regarded her as their Mexican expert and wanted her to go to Mexico City to interview Obregón, Calles, and Vasconcelos. She reached Progreso on Wednesday, July 11, Manuel Cirerol showing up at the side of the ship by Felipe’s request, with a letter and a string orchestra. The letter announced that Felipe would sail for Veracruz and arrive at the capital the following week, after the celebration for the opening of the road from Dzitas to Chichén Itzá.

In many ways, this road opening was the culmination of Carrillo Puerto’s governorship. Alongside the early excavations of the sites, a new historical interpretation of the Maya had been developed, featuring heroic resistance to Spanish incursion, centuries of oppression, and a rediscovery of ethnic identity in socialism. Pilgrimages to the great Maya cities were encouraged, and Carrillo Puerto himself had visited as many Maya sites as possible, even in the most remote parts of the state. Pitting the heroic Maya against the Spanish conquest played into modern politics too, with many of the *henequeneros* either Spanish immigrants or proud of their descent from conquistador families.

The road from Dzitas to Chichén Itzá was built in double-quick time through the deployment of communal work details. Thomas Gann reports a plaque at the entrance to Chichén Itzá erected to mark the opening of the road: “Siendo Gobernador del Estado El. C. Felipe Carrillo Puerto se inaugura esta carretera, Dzitas—Chichén Itzá. La liga albañiles de Yuc: tributa de admiración a los artífices mayas por la obra grandiosa de sus monumentos, julio 14, 1923” (79).¹⁰ This road-opening coincided with a ten-day festival for which thousands of Maya were brought from all over the peninsula, most of whom had never seen Chichén Itzá before. Ancient dances, music, and drama were recreated. Speeches were delivered by local dignitaries, including Felipe G. Cantón, before the governor spoke, in Maya, about “los gloriosos monumentos de aquella raza que alcanzó tantos adelantos en el camino de la civilización” (Comisionado de Prensa, quoted in Savarino, “El legado” 43-44). In a letter to José Ingenieros, the widely-admired Argentine socialist, Carrillo Puerto

explained the significance of this road in terms of helping to instill pride in the Maya campesinos for the achievements of their ancestors:

Y por eso la carretera de Chichén-Itzá, más que una mejora material, representa para mí un puente sociológico tendido entre el pasado esplendoroso de los mayas y las condiciones actuales de sus descendientes. Ese puente conducirá a los veneros del resurgimiento que anhelamos, para el mejor afianzamiento de las reformas socialistas. (36-37)

Meanwhile, in Mexico City, reinstalled at the Regis, Alma was disturbed by the changed atmosphere, noticing the lobby filled with “unmistakable adventurers” (*Peregrina* 67) in conversation with uniformed Mexican Army officers. What she could not have known at the time, she writes, is that the hotel owner, Rodolfo Montes, was a close confidant of Adolfo de la Huerta and that the hotel was being used to plot the rebellion that would break out in December. (*Peregrina* 67). One wonders whether Felipe noticed anything when he went to meet Alma there. They were engaged the day after he arrived and spent a month of what she describes as his “annual leave” (*Peregrina* 67) together in the city, with visits to Xochimilco and Teotihuacan, and with elaborate dinners arranged by Obregón and De la Huerta.

Felipe returned to Mérida in late August to prepare for September’s Eighth Mexican Press Congress, which Alma would attend as a delegate. When Felipe met the arriving journalists at Progreso on September 1, he read a telegram announcing the recognition of the Mexican government by the USA. It seemed like a new leaf was being turned. In the one brief report that Alma filed on the conference she underlined the journalists’ support for “an intensive campaign for the enforcement of the agrarian laws and for carrying out a complete agrarian program throughout the republic. Speakers urging the immediate division of the land in all Mexican states were vigorously applauded” (Sep. 6, 1923).

This was clearly a radical gathering, with Felipe in the forefront, taking all the delegates to Chichén Itzá the following day. Some journalists, Alma reported (Sep. 15, 1923) stayed on after the conference for consultations with Felipe. In response, the *henequeneros* planted their own story in the *New York Times* about the decline of their industry under socialist mismanagement (“Yucatan Socialism”). Alma then stayed another month in Mérida, helping arrange the Villa Aurora, which would be their home after the wedding, set for January in San Francisco, and eventually leaving Yucatán in early October.

The Assassination

Felipe Carrillo Puerto's support for Calles was long-standing, but offered seemingly from a position of some strength: he undoubtedly expected Calles in return to give the green light to further land expropriation in Yucatán. It was now that Felipe made his most radical move: agrarian legislation enacted between November 28 and December 4, 1923

established legal precedents for a mandatory redistribution of henequen's future profits to the workers; the expropriation of entire haciendas, including henequen plantations; and the collective ownership and operation of these economic units by the workers. (Joseph, *Revolution* 260).

This was the first serious threat to the property of the *casta divina*. However, Carrillo Puerto had also been warning for some time about the dangers of military rebellion in the southeast and, since Obregón and Calles had ignored his constant pleas for arms supplies, there was little he could do when the situation deteriorated dramatically in early December. The roots of the *delahuertista* revolt lay in the deadlocked gubernatorial election in San Luis Potosí between the Partido Nacional Agrarista, whose candidate was supported by Calles, and Jorge Prieto Laurens, the founder of the increasingly powerful Partido Nacional Cooperatista (PNC). As the state descended into chaos and violence, Obregón attempted to remain neutral, ordering federal troops to disarm the warring factions. Flexing his muscles, Prieto Laurens pressured De la Huerta to become the PNC's presidential candidate. Persuaded that with their support he might be able to defeat Calles, De la Huerta resigned from Obregón's cabinet in September and accepted the PNC's nomination, receiving backing from politicians and generals across the political spectrum who opposed Calles for a variety of reasons. As tensions grew, the rebellion properly began when De la Huerta and Prieto Laurens fled on December 4 to Veracruz, where the garrison commander was a keen rebel. When the garrison in Mérida also rebelled, Carrillo Puerto had no option but to flee the city.

The story of Felipe Carrillo Puerto's flight from Mérida, his eventual capture near Holbox on December 21, 1923, and the ensuing "trial" and execution in Mérida in the early morning of January 3, 1924, is undisputed in outline, but has been subject to myth-making on a grand scale. Carrillo Puerto was abandoned by all but his most loyal supporters before his (probable) betrayal, capture, and death, accompanied by his eleven remaining comrades. Awkward questions were left in the margins, not least whether Obregón and Calles had folded their arms when the life of the man with the fastest-growing popular reputation in the country was under threat. Toward the end of 1923 there had been rumors that Carrillo Puerto might be contemplating his own run for the presidency.

News of Carrillo Puerto's killing reached New York in a scandalous piece of reporting on January 6, 1924 ("Yucatan Radicals"). As well as mistaking the city and misspelling his name, it announced that, as governor, he had transformed Yucatán into a "Communist State," and that, when De la Huerta rebelled, the citizens of Yucatán arose and Carrillo Puerto absconded with the contents of the state treasury. This tissue of lies was challenged by a letter the following week, which called Carrillo Puerto a "remarkable man, the most progressive, far-seeing, and humane statesman in this hemisphere", concluding "Everyone loved Felipe, as he was affectionately known, except a few whose inordinate gains and power he had curtailed" (Nelson). Frank Tannenbaum wrote to Carleton Beals that Felipe's murder was "a greater loss than of any other person in Mexico could possibly be" (1). Ernest Gruening struck the same note in the title of his obituary: "The Assassination of Mexico's Ablest Statesman". He talked about the governor's "guileless faith, even in the land-holding group, which, with but few exceptions, had pretended to support him and the Federal régime" (737). The epithet immediately associated with Carrillo Puerto after his death was "martyr." The following month Alma Reed wrote a touching tribute in a Yucatecan journal that called him "el glorioso mártir", quoting his last letter to her, where he wrote that "no nací para esta época ni para esta tierra llenos de ambiciosos y de inhumanos," just as Christ was not born for his, she added ("Felipe", 20). The new state administration made appointments: the key position of manager of the Henequen Export Commission went to Felipe G. Cantón (Carey 184), but little was achieved before the rebellion collapsed in early April, Obregón taking Mérida unopposed. By the time the *Survey Graphic* special issue appeared at the beginning of May, entitled "Mexico: A Promise," order had been restored, but where the "promise" had stood, there was a huge gaping hole.

The provisional governor and the military commander were the two men who drove the process that led to the killings. But just *why* Carrillo Puerto was executed and who was *ultimately* responsible are still matters of lively discussion in Yucatán today. The *casta divina* clearly saw Carrillo Puerto as a threat to their interests, though the class dynamics are not easy to disentangle. The Carrillo Puerto family was perfectly respectable: provincial, petit bourgeois, but not wealthy. However, they had marital entanglements with their betters. Felipe himself had courted severe family disapproval when in February 1898 he married María Isabel Palma, whose brother Pedro (scion of conservative *hacendados* in Motul) the family held responsible for the death of his wife, Felipe's sister Enriqueta. Felipe's younger brother, Benjamín, had recently married Pilar Díaz Bolio, daughter of a socially prominent Mérida family. Then, of course, there was Luis G. Molina, nephew of Olegario, whom Alma Reed had met on the *SS Mexico* travelling to Progreso in February 1923.¹¹ It was from Molina

that Alma learned the henequenero side of the story: the previous glory of Yucatán, the hopeless muddle of the Revolution, the “serious faults and shortcomings as well as destructive social and economic policies” of the man the *hacendados* called the red dragon with the green eyes. He warned her against the dragon’s wiles. She did not doubt Molina’s sincerity, Alma says, “but he did not deceive me” (78). Perhaps not, but he failed to mention to her that he was returning to Yucatán to court Felipe’s daughter, Gelitzli Illitia Carrillo Palma, whom he had met during her attendance at the Long Island academy for girls—as Alma only discovered on the return voyage (261). His criticisms of his future father-in-law were now rather milder, she reports, perhaps, one might speculate, because he was aware of the implications of Alma’s own romantic entanglement—which, if not cut short, would have led to Alma, ten years his junior, becoming his stepmother-in-law.

In *Peregrina*, Reed quotes the revelations of Howard S. Phillips, an English journalist who was working in 1923 for the *Chicago Daily News*.¹² He stayed in Mexico, marrying the Mexican businesswoman and art collector, Dolores Olmedo Patiño, and working as the editor of *Mexican Life*. Reed would have known him socially after she moved back to Mexico City in 1952 and began writing a daily column for the newspaper *Novedades*. Phillips never himself published the information he provided to Reed, apparently because he did not want to involve the country of his birth. There are several elements to Phillips’s story, all of which build on the assumption that Adolfo de la Huerta was being manipulated by other forces, with “outrage” at the Bucareli Agreement being used as a *casus belli*. A sharp observer, Ernest Gruening, said that De la Huerta’s throat would probably be cut “just as soon as his usefulness as a dummy to rally round had passed” (Letter to Carleton Beals). As a gesture of support to Obregón, the Huasteca Petroleum Company (owned by Edward Doheny, a member of the AIY) offered to advance fifty million pesos to the legitimate government against future taxes—clearly in recognition that the Bucareli Agreement had worked in favor of the US oil companies (Haber et al.). In line with the long-running contention in Mexico between US and British oil interests, the *delahuertista* rebellion was therefore supported by the Anglo-Dutch firm Royal Dutch Shell through its Mexican subsidiary, one of whose leading officials was De la Huerta’s close friend Rodolfo Montes, owner of the Regis Hotel, where Alma had sensed something brewing. The US government signaled its support for Obregón by allowing arms and ammunition sales while preventing purchases on De la Huerta’s behalf. The rebellion’s arms supply came via British Honduras, which meant that control of Yucatán was crucial to its success—and therefore Carrillo Puerto had to be removed. The final element in Phillips’s version is the one closest to home: the *hacendados* of Yucatán, whose interests

were severely threatened by the thought that Calles might be less inclined than Obregón to rein in Carrillo Puerto's recently announced determination to redistribute vast amounts of their land.

To what extent they fomented the rebellion as opposed to jumping on the bandwagon is unclear in Phillips's story, but James Carey concludes that: "Sifting through the evidence an objective researcher finds much to substantiate the conclusion that some members of the old *Casta Divina* took financial roles in the assassination of Felipe Carrillo Puerto" (180).¹³ One story has it that on December 10, Felipe gave a list of ten names to one of his secretaries and told him to warn them that he had been advised that they were meeting to plot an uprising and that he gave them twenty-four hours to leave the state (Orosa Díaz 72). Felipe G. Cantón was one of those named. A shared passion for Maya ruins was one thing; thousands of hectares of one's land was something else entirely. After the defeat of the rebellion, Obregón and Calles made sure that the *henequeneros* got their way: there was no more talk of land redistribution in Yucatán.

"Mexico: A Promise"

The Mexican government had fully co-operated with *Survey Graphic* on their special number, and so were well represented among the contributors: Calles, Vasconcelos, de Negri, Gamio. However, the particular US liberal fascination with Yucatán, heightened by Carrillo Puerto's assassination, tilted the issue towards that seeming periphery. Kellogg's opening description of Carrillo Puerto as "more loved by the people than any other man in Mexico" ("Gist") is a striking comment to make when Carrillo Puerto's essay follows one by and one about the outgoing and incoming presidents of the country.

The issue's iconography points in the same direction. The only authors whose pictures appear in the issue are Carrillo Puerto and Frank Tannenbaum—and Tannenbaum only appears, almost unrecognizably, in one small photograph alongside Carrillo Puerto, who himself appears in no fewer than six photographs, or perhaps seven. At the opening of the article in his name, there is a half-page picture of the "Monument erected in Yucatan by Felipe Carrillo to symbolize the rise of the Indian," unattributed, like all the others, but probably brought back by Frank Tannenbaum, gifts from the Governor's office. In this case, Felipe's tall figure can just be glimpsed in the background.¹⁴ The second picture, quarter-page, is a formal studio portrait, probably used as his campaign picture for the gubernatorial election: serious, well-dressed, mature, but with a half-smile on the lips, a lock of curl escaping his coiffure, the necktie not quite tight, a pen in the pocket to indicate a man of letters. In other words, a carefully composed picture completely recontextualized when looked at with the knowledge of his brutal assassination just three months before the special issue appeared, or as the

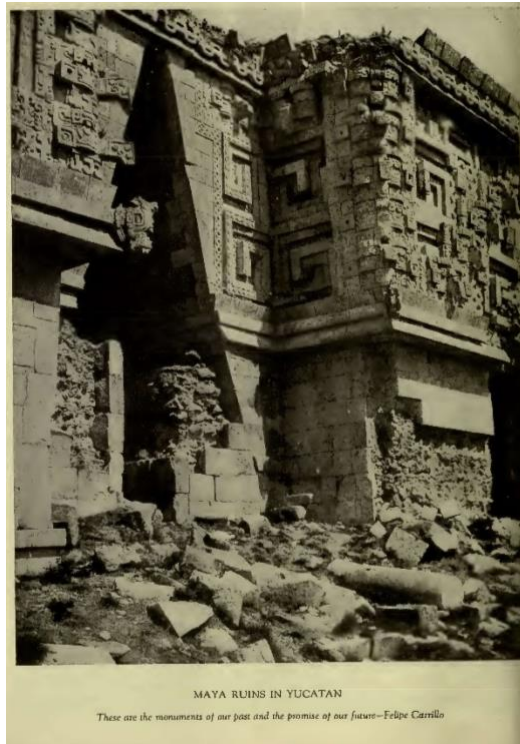


Figure 2

caption puts it, rather coldly, “killed in the recent rebellion.” The third picture is the quarter-page “Governor Carrillo opening a Liga de Resistencia office in Yucatan,” a couple of dozen people in a courtyard, Felipe visible only on account of his height. The smaller fourth picture is of Tannenbaum and Carrillo Puerto on horseback. The quarter-page “There were crowds wherever Felipe went” shows a couple of hundred people in some kind of procession, possibly one of the *jueves agrarios* to celebrate land redistribution, Felipe in the center.¹⁵ However, the most important of the photographs within the article does not show Carrillo Puerto at all, or not in any obvious way.

That key image is the full-page one, captioned “Maya Ruins in Yucatan,” and underneath “These are the monuments of our past and the promise of our future—Felipe Carrillo” (fig. 2), therefore embodying the title of

the special issue. In a number rich in graphic material, not least the pictures of Diego Rivera’s murals and Winold Reiss’s fine paintings, this black-and-white photograph arguably carries the most significance. The image is presented as generic—“Maya Ruins.” There is no indication of where exactly these ruins are, nor of who took the photograph. In fact, the ruin in question is the east arch of La Casa del Gobernador at Uxmal, the finest surviving example of the Puuc style of Maya architecture. Given that Carrillo Puerto was *gobernador* of Yucatán at the time the article was composed, the choice of image was surely not accidental. Next to Chichén Itzá, Uxmal was the most important site in the north of the state and one with which Carrillo Puerto was very familiar.

Outside interest in the Maya cities of the Yucatán had always been highly dependent on the circulation of images. Details of stonework and hieroglyphs were photographed to enable study; romantic vistas were composed for commercial purposes; ruination was emphasized to arouse concern or sponsorship for study and restoration; a focus on monumentality might underline the achievements of earlier generations of Maya. Photographs were of course available for uses not contemplated by the photographer. For scientific purposes contextualization is all-important but, in this instance, in the

special Mexico issue, the building and site are not specified because the photograph is intended as merely indicative.

It is unlikely that Carrillo Puerto chose the photograph. The selection of this particular image was probably Tannenbaum's, a photograph collected by him or donated to him on his autumn 1923 visit to Yucatán, though it was likely Paul Kellogg's decision to print it full-page. The photograph was taken by Raúl G. Cámara Zavala, one of Yucatán's earliest commercial photographers, who went on to work for the Carnegie Institution as its official photographer on their Chichén Itzá project.¹⁶ The almost identical photograph, seemingly taken on the same day, a few minutes earlier or later, is archived in the Fototeca Pedro Guerra in Mérida.¹⁷ This particular "Maya arch," as it is often labelled, had been photographed by all the major archaeological photographers who had visited Yucatán, but whereas their photographs tended either to emphasize the picturesque, or capture the detail of the hieroglyphs, or feature figures to indicate size, this particular photograph has an unusual starkness to it. Taken from ground level, it does not attempt to avoid the rubble in the foreground or to provide any sense of the full size of the building. Rather, it just captures a detail, a corner. There is strength and intelligence within the ruination; there is work to be done to restore the building; there is promise for the future.¹⁸

When the AIY party visited Uxmal on February 15, 1923, Vera Barry—wife of the editor of *Commercial Mexico*—made the suggestion that Felipe should establish La Casa del Gobernador as the summer state capitol since Uxmal was much cooler than Mérida between April and September. Alma decided that it was a logical suggestion:

For by every inherent right, it occurred to me, this was *his* building. With lines of unpretentious dignity like those of his own confident, clean-cut personality, above all, through connotations of belonging to the ages and to all mankind, the architectonic value of Uxmal's ancient Palace of the Governor tellingly interpreted the twentieth-century Socialist leader Felipe Carrillo Puerto. (144)

So it turns out that the full-page picture of "Maya Ruins" in the special issue was in fact yet another portrait of Yucatán's governor, perhaps the most telling one of all.

Notes

Warm thanks for ideas and encouragement to William Booth, Larry Desmond, Laura García Moreno, Susan Gillman, Luciana Martins, and Jak Peake.

¹ Founded as the Partido Socialista Obrero in June 1916, the first socialist party in Mexico, it became the PSY in 1917 and the Partido Socialista del Sureste in 1921. For a graphic account of the fully reciprocal violence, see Eiss.

² A fellow Yucatecan described him as “buen mozo, de tez blanca y ojos verdes, típico criollo de la península yucateca” (Castro Martínez 190). General assessments of Felipe Carrillo Puerto include Joseph 1980; Moreno Acevedo; Armstrong-Fumero 53-81; Fallaw; and Mantilla.

³ Reed is almost certainly the author of the anonymous report, “Mexicans”: see Reed 2007, 92.

⁴ That house is now the Mansión Mérida on the Park Hotel.

⁵ Reed confuses the reaction to T. A. Willard’s 1926 book with the relative lack of reaction to her 1923 article: see Schuessler 84.

⁶ For a full, sympathetic, and well-researched study of Thompson (albeit without references), see Albright.

⁷ When Spencer Burke was hired in 2008 by the Director of the Peabody Museum to investigate the questions at the heart of the dispute over the ownership of the artifacts, his report concluded that “there is a strong ethical case for repatriation. The records are clear: by removing the artifacts from Mexico, Thompson violated Mexican law, and did so knowingly. The Peabody’s reputation continues to be stained by its possession of these artifacts.” Three hundred and thirty-four artifacts were returned to Mexico in two tranches of exchanges during the 1960s and 1970s; an estimated 2,700 remain in the Peabody Museum.

⁸ Tannenbaum’s spelling is highly idiosyncratic; I’ve regularised it.

⁹ Because Carrillo Puerto wrote so little, and because this piece was published posthumously, it’s often been read as a kind of “last testament.” It’s important therefore to underline that, although Tannenbaum’s interpretation was given Felipe’s *imprimatur*, Carrillo Puerto did not actually write it.

¹⁰ On the making of the road, see Díaz Güémez and Cervera Fernández. The plaque survives (Albright 340-41).

¹¹ Reed mistakenly calls him Olegario’s grandson.

¹² Howard Sergius Phillips (1893-1972). Born in Manchester, he had worked as a travelling salesman in Texas before taking up journalism. His account is in Reed 312-14.

¹³ For Carey’s assessment of the evidence, 177-83. Felipe G. Cantón did not have much time to enjoy his role as manager of the Henequen Export Commission: within a couple of months, it was clear that the *delahuertista* regime was not going to survive in Yucatán and so, along with several other members of the *casta divina*, Cantón decamped to New Orleans on March 3, 1924, on the *SS Rajah*. On the ship’s manifest he described himself as ‘farmer.’

¹⁴ This monument is still in the plaza at Kanasín.

¹⁵ The five photographs are in Carrillo Puerto 138, 139, 141, and two at 142. He appears uncredited in a photograph in another essay.

¹⁶ Raúl G. Cámara Zavala (1892-1985) was the son of the influential lawyer, author, and philanthropist, Gonzalo Cámara Zavala; and had studied in New York (Ramírez Aznar). He established the Estudio Cámara in Mérida in 1924. A selection of his early photographs appears in *Arqueología del Mundo Maya*.

¹⁷ Fondo Raúl Cámara Zavala, clave: 7R05041, Fototeca Pedro Guerra, Facultad de Ciencias Antropológicas, Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán, Mérida. Both photographs were probably produced from 4 x 5-inch glass negatives.

¹⁸ For relevant analysis of the association between ruins and modernity, see Breglia 57-63 and, more generally, Beasley-Murray.

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