



Sylvanus Griswold Morley and Juan Martínez Hernández. (Photo by Giles G. Healey.)

## JUAN MARTÍNEZ HERNÁNDEZ

1866–1959

On the afternoon of March 15, 1959, I drove to Itzimná, on the outskirts of Mérida, Yucatán, the last of a long line of gringo students of Maya culture to make their way there to visit the Maya scholar, Juan Martínez Hernández. His home, simple in its modest setting of untended *quinta*, is not yet engulfed by growing Mérida. Patient *Zopilotes*, the rustle of wind-torn banana plants, and a pleasant air of “untidied-upness” contrast with the hurry and cacaphony of the center of Mérida or the opulent oleander and royal palms of the wealthier suburbs.

The mourners, for Don Juan had died the previous day, almost all in the Yucatecan dress of white trousers and white coat or *guayabera*, chatted in small groups on the veranda and in the *quinta*; in the *Capilla ardiente*, within, candles cast strange shadows on the tall crucifix and the tightly-shrouded figure before it. The life, just brought to a close, had spanned nearly a century. When Don Juan was born, Maximilian was still Emperor of Mexico; his early twenties were the teething years of Maya archaeology: Charnay was exploring Yucatán in search of Tula influences, Maudslay was at Chichén, and Eduardo Thompson was at Labná on Harvard’s first expedition to Middle America.

Juan Martínez was born in Mérida, December 31, 1866. He studied at San Ildefonso College, Mérida, and at Georgetown University. Much of his time was spent at his hacienda of San José Boxactún, close to the port of Telchac, and where Maya was surely more often on his lips than Spanish.

His Maya interests were first roused by his enjoyment of Stephens’ *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan*, and he was drawn at an early age to the study of the written Maya sources, where his fluency in modern Maya was, naturally, immensely useful. Ralph Roys has emphasized to me that the Martínez translation of the Chumayel

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creation story (published in 1913) before photos of the Motul dictionary were available was a remarkable achievement. Roys relates that when he first met Martínez, in 1921, he asked him how he had done it. Martínez spent the afternoon demonstrating how he broke polysyllabic words down into their parts, and, getting every meaning of each, selected those which best fitted the context, and rebuilt the whole word. Roys also spoke of the generous help Martínez gave him when he was preparing his translations. Over the years aid and comfort were freely given to many.

From 1913 to 1915 Martínez was inspector of archaeological monuments in Yucatán, but he resigned that position in favor of his son, Eduardo, on being appointed chief of the Department of Industry and Commerce by the Governor of Yucatán, General Salvador Alvarado. Martínez was deeply interested in the henequen industry. He had planted his hacienda with henequen and, as early as 1907, he founded *El Agricultor*, journal of the Cámara Agrícola de Yucatán. Finally, he was sent to New York as representative of the very important henequen price control commission. Ill health caused him to resign this important post.

The year 1926 witnessed publication of a spate of extremely important translations from the Maya and his *Paralelismo o entre los calendarios maya y azteca*. This revived the Goodman correlation of the Maya and Christian calendars, and was a turning point in Maya research. The search for astronomical proof of his arrangement was the subject of many of his later papers. In 1929, with the pecuniary aid of T. A. Willard, he published the Maya-Spanish part of the famed Motul dictionary and the extremely rare *Coronel Arte*. There was criticism of this, but typesetting was not all it might have been in the Yucatán of 30 years ago, and as quickly as Don Juan corrected one printer's error, another appeared in the resetting. Luckily few of these are of consequence, and the value of a printed edition far outweighs the importance of the errata.

Maya blood ran in the veins of this brilliant pioneer in the field of Maya research. I am deeply grateful to Margaret Currier, Antonio Canto López, Eduardo Martínez Cantón, and Ralph Roys for help in preparing this inadequate tribute to a man of high culture.

J. ERIC S. THOMPSON

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Ordenanzas de Don Diego García Palacios: traducción de un fragmento del Libro de Cacalch'en. MS. [These three items apparently were translated into Spanish by Martínez from transcripts by Adela C. Breton of the Maya originals in the Peabody Museum, Harvard University. The Spanish versions were then translated into English by Miss Breton. The three are together in the Peabody Museum Library, call number C.A. 6 B756m.]
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## AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY FELLOWSHIPS IN ANTHROPOLOGY

Two resident research fellowships, to be known as the *Ogden Mills Fellowships*, are to be awarded annually by the Department of Anthropology of the American Museum of Natural History, New York City. The fellowships are intended for anthropologists who might benefit by a year at the Museum, using the anthropological collections, the library, and other facilities of the Museum, or by working in conjunction with members of the curatorial staff. There is no specific limitation on the kind of anthropological research that may be done under these fellowships, but preference will be given to those applicants who can make use of the Museum's collections and archives (such as unpublished field notes, films, sound recordings) either in the elaboration of special studies or in connection with research they, or members of the curatorial staff, may have under way. It is not the intention to support field work by means of these fellowships, although it is possible that such activities may occasionally be included.

Candidates within their early post-doctoral years will be given preference, but otherwise there are no rigid requirements in terms of age, sex, degrees, or academic background. Applicants will be judged on the basis of their records and on the worthiness of their research aims. Selections will be made by the staff of the Department of Anthropology, and the right is reserved to withhold the award of fellowships in any given year. The period of the fellowships is for one year, beginning June 15; the stipend for each, \$5,000. First appointments will be made for the year 1960–61. Applications should include a full curriculum vitae, a letter describing the candidate's research aims, and supporting references, and should be addressed to Harry L. Shapiro, Department of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History, New York 24, N.Y. It is hoped that the 1960–61 fellows can be selected from applications received before March 1, 1960. Dates for receiving applications and making decisions on appointments will be adjusted in following years.

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