Departing from his original “Chicago” preoccupation with the urban “Mexican Problem,” Redfield took a different path. Elena Landázuri, a unique character who has not received enough scholarly attention, seems to have worked under Gamio at some point in the 1910s. Afterward she became Park’s student at the University of Chicago and got involved in the social work sponsored by Jane Addams at Hull House. Through Landázuri, Park and his family traveled to Mexico sometime in 1923. Redfield, who was Park’s son-in-law and a lawyer at the time, came along. The trip seems to have been a major inspiration for Redfield’s decision to pursue a Ph.D. investigating Chicago’s Mexicans. Unsatisfied with his findings, Redfield convinced his father in law of the scientific convenience of studying the bees, not at the flowers, but in the honeycomb. Thus taking advantage of his connections with Landázuri and Gamio, he made his way back to Mexico.

Apparently, it was Gamio who recommended Tepoztlán. It was an “Indian” community, yet still conveniently located near Mexico City. (After all, if one is to engage in participant observation, one need not be more participant than observer). During the research, the family stayed in the city while Redfield himself traveled back and forth between Mexico City and Tepoztlán. The town was indeed not a safe place in the 1920s. In fact, Park was constantly worried for the wellbeing of the Redfields, as we can see in their correspondence in both R. Park and R. Redfield collections. These letters are full of personal, political, and academic misgivings about the project. It seems that Park even contacted the U.S. consulate in an effort to protect the Redfields. Throughout this period, Park was becoming increasingly eminent as a sociologist and as Chicago faculty. Meanwhile, his Tepoztlán correspondence continued. Redfield sent long letters informing his father in law, “Pop,” about the family situation, local conflicts in Tepoztlán, and research difficulties. Redfield and Park; Mexico and the University of Chicago: this constellation would soon become an institution. Once
Redfield completed his Ph.D., Park recruited him as an assistant professor. There he would stay, becoming Dean of Social Science, remaining a Chicago faculty member until his death, in 1958.
Teopztlan, Hidalgo, Mexico
February 16, 1927

Dear Pop,

This morning Mom received from you a letter written just after Thanksgiving, a letter so full of interest in us and support for us, that I feel that I cannot help sitting down and writing to you, even if it is only a few words.

We are at last on the brink of our exploit, because tomorrow very early we intend to take all of us to go down to Tepoztlan together. We have boxes of supplies, the necessary beds and cooking utensils, a small kerosene stove and a charcoal brazier are up at the pueblo, and this afternoon I will check a suitcase and a small trunk to the railway station from which runs the little steep rocky path, about three miles in length, which is the road to Tepoztlan. Sr. Conde, the educated Indian, has promised to meet us with four horses. We shall make an unusual cavalcade.

So far this trip has been so much what I had for so long imagined it, that it sometimes feels like a repetition of an experience in some earlier avatar. There it all is, the difficulties and the interest, the minor sicknesses, the unavoidable expense, the weakness one feels at this altitude, the difficulty and delay in getting into the graces of the Tepoztcos, the innumerable problems involved in getting into the pueblo, these things which can make it possible for us to live there.

Lisa is recovering from an upset stomach; she is old enough to have resilience, and today she seems very well. The cold of long duration from...
American Consular Service

Mexico City, Mexico, January 14, 1927.

Mr. Robert Redfield,
Tepoztlán, Estado de Morelos.

Dear Sir:

I have received a visit today from Mrs. Robert Park, who tells me of your presence near El Parque, Tepoztlán, Morelos.

Mrs. Park has asked me to write to you concerning the advisability of your remaining where you are. I do not wish to write in any sense in an alarming way, but I think I may say to you privately that the situation in Mexico is extremely bad from many standpoints. It may be that we will go through the existing crisis without any real upheaval which might endanger the lives of foreigners. On the other hand I would consider it a part of prudence, if I were in your position, to place myself and family in some center where protection might be more easily afforded than in a remote district.

It is suggested that the next time you are in Mexico City you call at the Consulate General and make application for registration as an American citizen.

Yours very truly,

[Signature]

Alexander W. Reddell,
American Consul General.

Consul Letter to Redfield, Redfield papers.
It might have been convincing enough for Park and Redfield to kick-start Chicago’s involvement in rural Mexico, but the idea that Mexican immigrants in the U.S. came from Tepoztlán was patently false. It is unlikely that Gamio could ever have suggested such a thing. Having spent some time there, Redfield stated that Tepoztlán’s family organization was similar to that of Mexican immigrants to the U.S., but that it could not be seen as a place of origin for those who crossed the border. In any case, Redfield became the preeminent U.S. interpreter of indigenous Mexico in the first half of the twentieth century, as he presented Tepoztlán as the archetype of the racially and culturally homogenous small “community,” doggedly resisting the advance of westernization and modernization.

The University of Chicago Press was at the vanguard of this new trend, starting with Redfield’s now classic book: *Tepoztlan, a Mexican Village: A Study of Folk Life* (UCP, 1930). It was a condensation of science and U.S. common sense about the country. Its methodological and anthropological approach to Mexico flourished for many decades. “Community” studies became the new fashion, with Chicago-style anthropology and the UCP as its trailblazers. The UCP promoted its volumes on “community” at book shows: tomes by Elsie Parsons, Edward Spicer, and Charles Wisdom, as well as Robert Redfield, who further expanded on the topic in *The Little Community: Viewpoint for the Study of a Human Whole* (UCP, 1955).
Stuart Chase, an MIT economist and progressive social theorist, found in Redfield’s Tepoztlán a paradigm to discuss the dichotomy of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*—Tepoztlán vs. Chicago. His 1931 *Mexico, A Study of Two Americas* became a bestseller. The book contrasted Redfield’s Tepoztlán with Middletown, Indiana, whose rapid industrialization had been studied by Columbia sociologists Robert and Helen Lynd. Meanwhile, Berkeley economist Paul S. Taylor supplemented his *Mexican Labor in the United States* with the kind of study of “the bees in the honeycomb” Redfield had originally proposed: *A Spanish Mexican Community: Arandas in Jalisco* (University of California Press, 1933). The work had lot of the Chicago sociology—race, immigration, assimilation—and was sponsored, though Abbot recommendation, by a new agency, The Social Science
Research Council (SSRC), which through its founder, Chicago professor Charles E. Mirriam, was akin to the Chicago style of social science.

In sum, there were two sides to Chicago social science. On the one hand, the old concern with the urban and with conflicts arising from modernization. On the other, a new interest in rural, ethnically and culturally homogeneous “communities.” Two laboratories; two ideal types—and in both, Mexico was present. This perennial dualism of the social sciences led to a very specific conceptualization of the “Mexican problem” in the U.S: it was an issue of poor or nonexistent assimilation; of the constant reproduction and uncontrolled growth of an endlessly ethnic “community.” The “Mexican problem” was indeed a racial concept. And yet, it must be remembered that it was conceived in opposition to the racism of the old social science. In the Chicago school’s definition of assimilation and its failure, race did not depend on biological attributes—it was not a scientific truth. It was instead a product of prejudice, imagined as a sociological problem of the United States. This approach in turn came under fire in the 1970s, as the ideas and methods of a Burgess or a Redfield were questioned, first by Oscar Lewis, then as part anthropology’s political and epistemological self-criticism, ongoing for the last three decades. In the end, for all their problems, the Mexicos of Chicago social science made a significant impact on the way U.S. talked about its “Mexican problem.”

* Redfield’s papers constitute a true archaeological prospection of the history of anthropology, both in Mexico and the U.S. Scattered about this rich collection are clues, such as Redfield’s many contacts in Mexico, such as Gamio. But beyond him are other names, for example, the well-known “gringa” of Mexico City, Paca (Frances) Toor, director of the influential Mexico City-based periodical Mexican Folk-Ways, and a pioneer publicist who turned the Mexican Revolution into a commercial brand. In the papers we can also find Redfield’s
correspondence with informants and assistants who he recruited in Mexico following the scientific conception of fieldwork he developed in two books, *Chan Kom, A Maya Village* (Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1934) and *The Folk Culture of Yucatan* (UCP, 1941). These characters often left traces of their discontent with Redfield’s exotic fixation with the Tepoztecos. There was, for example, Sr. Conde, a Tepozteco who seems to have helped Redfield in Tepoztlán, who wrote to Redfield objecting to the labeling of Tepoztlán as exotic-traditional, a characterization the anthropologist had used in comments made to Mexico’s national media. Of all these clues, perhaps the most important one to be found in Redfield’s papers deal with his two illustrious students: Sol Tax (1907-1995) and Alfonso Villa Rojas (1897-1998).
September 25th, 1935

Dr. Robert Redfield,  
The Chicago University,  
Chicago, Illinois, U. S. A.

Dear Mr. Redfield:

I’ve been hard at work on the Chinese Kossen. I have been reading into it—haven’t finished it yet, but like it very much. It is, as you yourself said, much better than “Tepoztlan”, not that Tepoztlan is not good enough to stand on its own; it is! I am working on a special Yanqui number, and wish you would get someone to write a review for me for that number.

I have also received the Tarahumara book by Zingg and Sennett, which seems very well done to me. I should also like a review of that and wonder if you would care to write one for me.

And, now for a bit of personal news. I am going to New York, and on my way, plan to spend a week or so in and around Chicago, arriving there about 28th of October. I shall have to give some paid talks, in order to be able to make the trip, as the amount of pesos that one has to exchange for dollars are out of my sight just now; in fact I am too much in debt. So I am wondering if you could pull any strings for me anywhere in or out of the University.

I shall have slides and textiles, and should be willing to accept $50.00 as a fee. Mr. Wayne McMillen, one of your colleagues says that is not much, but for these hard times, it would be all right. He also suggested the Renaissance Society. Do you know anyone connect with it? Or does your own department do anything like that? Anything you can do without trouble, I shall appreciate very much.

With greetings to all of you and the new member of the family,

Sincerely yours,  
Frances Toor
F. Toor’s pamphlet, Mexican talks.
Sr. Conde’s letter to R. Redfield, Redfield Papers.

The papers of both Redfield and Sol Tax guard a vast correspondence, a true history of the discipline. They chart the transformation of a relationship between a teacher and his
pupil into one between equally eminent scholars in a field rife with polemics, changing paradigms, and huge egos. In these exchanges we can also observe that Villa Rojas as well as Tax remained faithful to their mentor until the end of their lives, despite moments of intellectual and personal tension. Other voices make themselves heard in this three-way conversation on Mexico and Guatemala between Redfield, Tax, and Villa Rojas: Gamio, F. Cooper-Cole, John Collier (influential chief of the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs during the New Deal), and with Collier’s wife, anthropologist Laura Thompson (1905-2000). This correspondence has been partially published in Robert A. Rubinstein’s Doing Fieldwork, the Correspondence of Robert Redfield and Sol Tax (Westview, 1991).

Tax originally came to the University of Chicago to study under Alfred Radcliffe-Brown, the anthropologist who—departing from Boas—developed a functionalist, synchronic approach to the study of traditional cultures. But in those years, Radcliffe-Brown left Chicago, just as Redfield was becoming increasingly prominent in the field as well as Dean at the University. Tax’s early work thus followed Redfield’s steps. Taking on Mexico’s southern neighbor, Tax tried to test Redfield’s idea of the “folk-urban” continuum in his first book, Penny Capitalism: A Guatemalan Indian Economy (Washington, D.C., U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1953, republished by the UCP in 1963). As it turns out, Tax failed to encounter Redfield’s idealized traditional types. Instead, he found the Indians to be pragmatic, individualistic, and profit-oriented. What a surprise. This was indeed cause for some tension between Redfield and Tax, but regardless, their careers remained closely linked. Tax had not engaged in a frontal assault on Redfield’s work, as Oscar Lewis would later do in his own Tepoztlán study.

In due time, Tax became a University of Chicago professor and an advocate of “action anthropology.” This latter notion was bound up with his so-called Fox Project: which consisted of studying Iowa Indians while aiding them in their adaptation to modern times.
The Tax-Redfield correspondence is shot through with preoccupation with issues of method, such as the role of informants and the very notion of fieldwork. There are also debates on issues such as Indian-Ladino differences in Mexico and Guatemala, and academic politics at the University, among other clues.

Unlike the Redfield-Tax correspondence, the exchanges between Villa Rojas and Redfield have not yet been published. Important clues may be found in Paul R. Sullivan´s *Unfinished Conversations: Mayas and foreigners between two wars*, (1989), and in Andrés Medina Hernández’s “Alfonso Villa Rojas: el etnólogo” (*Ciencia Ergo Sum*, July-October 2001). This vast correspondence details the fascinating story of conflict and cooperation in the gradual making of a Chicago-style scholar out of a rural teacher. Originally Redfield’s local informant, Villa Rojas became so indispensable that he ended up as co-author of the resulting book, *Chan Kom, a Maya Village* (UCP, 1934).

Redfield met Villa Rojas while doing fieldwork in Yucatán. Both got involved with the Carnegie Institute project in Yucatan, Chiapas, and Quintana Roo. Then in 1933 Redfield brought Villa Rojas to the University of Chicago so he could pursue a Ph.D. in anthropology. Villa Rojas became a devoted follower of the Chicago school of social science—though another important influence was Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942).

This archival clue is too rich to be succinctly summarized. Aside from its wealth of fieldwork photography, it includes a vast correspondence lasting between 1930 and Redfield’s death in 1958. It is a bilingual correspondence, with Villa Rojas writing in Spanish, and Redfield in English. (Oddly, there are a few typed English translations of Villa Rojas’s letters). This exchange deals with four main issues. First, Villa Rojas’s training, his course selection at Chicago, readings, research ideas; here Redfield is the mentor, while Villa Rojas is a Mexican student trying to navigate the University of Chicago’s mores and intellectual trends. Second, there is the research data they shared, linguistic interpretations,
ideas about their respective ethnographies in Yucatan, Chiapas, and Quintana Roo. Among these traces are descriptions of kinship, economic figures, translations from various Maya languages, contacts, and informants, clarifications of local products and habits, etc. In this regard, Villa Rojas appears very much the master, while Redfield cautiously picks his student’s brain. Third—as in the Tax-Redfield correspondence—there is a long dialogue on the meaning and ethos of fieldwork and on the development of scientific criteria for anthropological research. Fourth, the correspondence includes an exchange on the topic of Mexican academic, national, and local politics. In this conversation, Villa Rojas essentially worked as Redfield’s interpreter of Mexican “grilla” (nitty-gritty, ground-level political conflict) especially in the realm of indigenista policy and theory, which Villa Rojas disdained as unscientific and lacking in rigor. This was especially so by the late 1930s, when Villa Rojas would often tell Redfield about the “politización” of anthropology in Mexico by Marxist scholars and by the input of the official party’s “socialist” line. Finally, Villa Rojas’s letters display a very Chicago-style preoccupation—only partially shared by Redfield—with the philosophical status of social science: was a science of the social really possible? What kind of knowledge is anthropological knowledge?
Chicago, Enero 10 de 1928.

Dr. Robert Redfield.
Aqua Secunda.

Muy estimado amigo:

Me es grato decirle que por correo ordinario está
vendo ahora mismo otra parte de mi reporte; la nota sobre
talón y cáliz que aparece en la página 10, puede ser su-
primida si Ud. la crea innecesaria. Me escatén de llegar los
diagramas; a mediados de esta semana se les devolveré junto
con otras notas.

Por un error de mi parte, supuse que la Carnegie
me pagaría mi cursa en el presente “quarter”. Pasado en éste,
y necesitando varietamente algún dinero para poder inscribir-
me, le escribí el Sr. Valera la carta que aquí le adjunto y
cuya respuesta encontraría aquí también. Por crerlo correcto
le escribí una nota al Dr. Kidder informándole del caso; to-
davía no me llega su respuesta. De todos modos, en caso de
que Ud. pueda hacer algo para que se me mande algún dinero,
se lo habría de agradecer después, se me podrá descontar de mi
sueldo con 50 dólares cada vez. Para hacer el pago de mi
“tuition” me han concedido hasta el día 19 del actual. En esto
me ayudó mucho Miss Greeter y otra Secretaria igualmente amá-
ble.

Estoy tomando 3 cursos: uno de Lloyd Warner ("The Family")
y dos de Fred Eggan ("The American Indian" y "Social Organiza-
tion of the American Indian"); el primero es al que más me
interesa; lo malo es que se enseña en "down town" lo cual
me perjudica un poquito.

Deseo que Jimmy esté ya sin gripe y tan traveso
como siempre; recuerdos afectuosos para todos. Le incluyo
aquí los retratos tomados en Windy Pines; como vera, salieron
bien.

Su amigo de siempre

[Signature]

No encuentro la reglamenta del Sr.
Valera; en su escuela díjé que se lo comu-
nicaría al Dr. Kidder a su poco a
Washington en esta semana. La carta
fué breve amable y lógico.
Villa Rojas’s letters to Redfield. Redfield Papers.
The Villa Rojas-Redfield correspondence encapsulates a particular functionalist moment in Mexican anthropology, a mid-point in the transition between the old founding fathers of Mexican social science (Alfonso Caso, Manuel Gamio, Miguel Othón Mendizabal, José Vasconcelos) and the emergence of a new generation of Marxist or radical indigenista anthropologists (Rodolfo Stavenhagen, Arturo Warman, Ricardo Pozas, Guillermo Bonfil Batalla). It may be the case that, at a distance, Villa Rojas appears to be on the losing side of that equation, despite his devotion to a professional and disciplined social science, and despite his first-hand knowledge of local “communities.”

Early on, when Villa Rojas was studying in Chicago, he wrote letters to Redfield, who was in Mexico at the time, asking for course recommendations and seeking advice on other graduate school matters. But once Villa Rojas returned to Mexico, he began to report on the country’s unfavorable environment for Chicago-style social science. In 1935, he wrote to Redfield about his unpleasant encounters with Mexican social scientists. Miguel Othón de Mendizabal (1890-1945) berated U.S. anthropologists, saying that [the U.S. anthropologist] “no profundiza,” “no analiza con detenimiento, además de cómo su cultura es totalmente distinta a la nuestra, jamás podrá entendernos.” Villa Rojas told Redfield of his difficult meetings with Malinowski in Mexico City coffee shops and of the constant “grillas” in the Instituto Indigenista and in the Escuela de Antropología. By the time of the indigenista Congress of Pátzcuaro, in 1940, Villa Rojas had soured official indigenismo. It was too unscientific, too leftist. As he wrote to Redfield, Luis Chávez Orozco’s indigenismo was no more than a scientific “bluf.” This characterization is extremely telling of the kinds of conflicts faced by a Chicago scholar in Mexico:

“los hombres de estudio sólo sirven de pantalla para disimular las teorías comunistas de los dirigentes. En las sesiones privadas que precedieron al congreso indigenista de
Pátzcuaro, pude darme cuenta de que la inspiración teórica de Chávez Orozco venía de los escritos de José Carlos Mariátegui (. . .), joven comunista peruano, de vida bohemia y sin ningún entrenamiento científico. Causa asombro que sus escritos mediocres y sofistas hubiesen influido tanto en los indigenistas de aquí y Perú.”

Moreover, in 1939, Villa Rojas wrote to Redfield that in Mexico, sociology was practiced by “filósofos metafísicos” such as “Caso, Vasconcelos, Ramos, y los Españoles recién llegados” (José Gaos and Joaquim Xirau). Very different from “lo que se enseña en Chicago.” “No sé cómo es posible que estos sociólogos puedan estar tan desconectados de los investigadores norteamericanos. En cambio, están al corriente de las ideas procedentes de la sociología alemana.” This was because, “Entre los sociólogos oficiales,” “diletantes,” “se divirten jugando con las teorías de la personalidad,” sponsored by Edgar S. Brightman, Nikolai Berdiayev or Jacques Maritain. These ruminations must have been important to Redfield, as parts of them can be found in his papers, translated, typed, and labeled: “Extract of a letter written to Robert Redfield by a correspondent in Mexico City, February 28, 1941.”

Even more interestingly, Villa Rojas openly shared his ruminations on the status of science and philosophy in anthropology. He was up to date with contemporary philosophy of science, and contrasted it with accounts of epistemology of social science by Chicago professors, concluding, “cada día me siento más positivista y más materialista.” His Chicago-inspired criticism was directed against what he called Bergsonian accounts of science and official “socialist” indigenismo: “los filósofos son gentes mal ajustadas o inadaptadas a su ambiente y de psicología semejante a la de los day-dreamers,” they don’t search for the “verdades chiquitas” that scientists ought to seek.
Turning to quite another matter, I will write something about the present political situation here with reference to Indian affairs. In the first place a radical change has occurred in the manner of studying the native problem. The new chief of the Department of Native Affairs in Colonial Intero Caminos, who is a stout man with large mustache and an energetic disposition. His first declaration when he entered his position was that “true now on this department is through with demagoguery. We don’t want words, but deeds. We don’t want theorists, but practical men.” (attached in a newspaper clipping containing these statements.) As may be supposed the first “theorists” who went into the street were Hincoff and Borbolla. Now the “brains” of the department is Professor Angel Corso, who has always been opposed to Vendash’s project to revive the native languages. So that you may have an idea of this sentiment’s point of view I enclose an article he wrote. Although he knows nothing whatever about anthropology, “Professor Corso has very definite ideas; at least I like his ideas somewhat better than those of Vendash.

It is true that in the time of Chavez Urroz there was some effort to do things “scientific” but really this was simply “bluff”; the scholars only served as a screen to conceal the communistic theories of the bosses. In the private sessions which took place before the native Congress of February I could see that the theoretic inspiration of Chavez Urroz was derived from the writings of Jose Carlos Mariategui (1895-1930), a young Peruvian communist who lead a Bohemian life and who had no scientific training. It is to be regretted that his mediocre writings have influenced so much those both here and in Peru who are interested in native affairs.

From talks which I have from time to time with Hincoff I have learned of the antagonism which exists between certain teachers of the Institute of Anthropology. It is interesting to know that Cano tried to make Casse’s place by political maneuvering and failed; that Hincoff and Casse are now regarded as enemies, each denouncing the worth of the other; that if almost anybody should be substituted for Hincoff an director of the anthropology school all the other teachers would be happier and the school would go along better. There is much unfavorable comment upon Hincoff because of what occurred in Guatemala between him and Villarosa. In a word, trouble of this sort is plentiful and as you may see not much time is left to any real scientific work.

With sociology the case is no better. Here the sociologists are in the first place philosophers and concerned with metaphysical problems, such as speculation “if the atom consists of the solar system in miniature, or of a probably curve, or of an infinite rectangle, etc.” Please do not think I am exaggerating; it is only enough to mention the names of the leading sociologists here, Antonio Caso, Vasconcelos and

Redfield’s translation of one of Villa Rojas’s letter

* 

There is yet another clue to be found in the Redfield and Tax papers, one that needs to be succinctly explained. It has to do two historical contexts: the immediate aftermaths of the first and second World Wars. These were moments of reconstruction when people sought to lay
down the foundations of, as it were, better human scenarios. In the 1920s, the University of Chicago was a center for discussion for a better U.S. understanding of the world; In the years after 1945, it was a site for discussion of such post-Holocaust ideas as a world Constitution, and post-nationalist, post-racist forms of civic pride. Then again, University of Chicago scholars were of course part of the Cold War intellectual and academic consequences.

After World War I, the University of Chicago partook in the liberal-progressive concern with the consequences of isolationism, such as nativism, xenophobia, and the possible rise of fascism. There was also concern with the new balance of power in the face of Wilsonian calls for decolonization. The University thus began to open new forums to address these issues. For instance, in 1922 the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, a civic organization, partnered with the University for academic and public promotion of these concerns. The UCP records include traces of this partnership in its series on American foreign policy abroad. This is the origin of *American Policies Abroad: Mexico* (UCP, 1928), edited by J. Fred Rippy. This work had the credentials necessary to certify its liberal, “objective,” character: It was published by a prestigious University Press; its editor, Rippy (1892-1977) had been a Chicago professor specialized in Latin American diplomatic history; it contained contrasting national perspectives, back to back, with articles by the Mexican José Vasconcelos and the American Guy Stevens.
The NORMAN WAIT HARRIS LECTURES

1926

SOME MEXICAN PROBLEMS. By Moises Saenz and Herbert I. Priestley.

An outline of the program of the Mexican government and of the problems confronting Mexico.

ASPECTS OF MEXICAN CIVILIZATION. By José Vasconcelos and Manuel Gamio.

Mexican civilization in both its Latin-American and Indian aspects.

1925

ORIENTAL INTERPRETATIONS OF THE FAR EASTERN PROBLEM. By Count Michimasa Seyeshima and Dr. P. W. Kuo.

Count Seyeshima contributed three notable lectures: "The Political, Economic, and Social Aspects of Modern Japan"; "Japan's Policy in the Far East"; and "Japan's Relations with the United States."

Dr. Kuo's lectures are on the same subjects as they apply to China. Dr. Kuo is President of Southeastern University, Nanking, China, and one of the best-known educators in that country.


"China's Finances," "Extraterritoriality in China," and "Domestic Politics in China" are Mr. Woodhead's subjects. He is editor of the Peking and Tientsin Times and of the China Year Book, an Englishman of twenty years' residence in China.

Mr. Norton, business man, publicist, author, contributes one chapter on the Russians in the Far East; and Mr. Arnold, American Consul in China, discusses her economic resources.

1924

THE OCCIDENT AND THE ORIENT. By Sir Valentine Chirol.

Through his former position as director of the foreign department of the London Times, Sir Valentine Chirol has had a remarkable opportunity to study the changing relations of the East and West.

GERMANY IN TRANSITION. By Herbert Kraus.

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Rippy’s own piece for the volume was a history of U.S.-Mexico relations. It timidly explained past U.S. policy mistakes and attempts at intervention and saluted the arrival of the new ambassador, Dwight D. Morrow, and the policy changes that came with him. Gestures of goodwill abounded: while the Mexican Supreme Court ruled along the lines expected by U.S. oil companies, Charles Lindbergh in turn paid a visit to Mexico. For his own contribution, Vasconcelos predictably took the opportunity to blame Madero’s downfall on the U.S., displaying an unsuspected mastery of the English language in his invective: Huerta was a “bloodstained drunkard,” Carranza an “obscure personage,” who had an “undeniable incapacity for the task that chance had put into his hands.” Meanwhile, “Obregón gave up the glory of being a successful unrecognized president of Mexico in order to become a recognized ruler at a price that history may not judge worth paying.” As for Calles, he was a sell-out to U.S. interests. Meanwhile he used his knowledge of the United States to defend the Mexican Constitution of 1917: “Only our military weakness can explain the fact that we are singled out and accused of hating foreigners because we establish limitations to the right of foreigners to purchase our lands; and yet we are doing nothing else but copy American laws. Some even more drastic than ours do exist against the ownership of lands by foreigners in some states of the American union.” Small wonder then—as clippings kept by UCP show—that Ernest Gruening, writing for The Nation, did not recognize the book as a show of moderation and tolerance, reading it instead as proof of irreconcilable positions. But before the post-World War II consensus, if ephemeral, on antiracism, peace, and global Constitutions, the best clue about the Mexico-Chicago connection was a series of lectures on Mexico that took place in the summer of 1926 at the University of Chicago. They were delivered by Moisés Sáenz (1888-1941), then “subsecretario” of Education in the Calles government, and by distinguished historian and librarian at Berkeley, Herbert I. Priestley
(1875-1944) in what was known as the Third Institute on the Harris Foundation at the University of Chicago. In fact, the Norman Wait Harris Memorial Fund is today one of the University of Chicago’s oldest endowments, granted by the family of banker Norman Wait Harris with the stated purpose of helping Americans better understand other peoples of the world (http://internationalstudies.uchicago.edu/nwh). In the 1920s the lectures dealt with such important post-war topics as the future of U.K. imperialism, “oriental interpretations of the far Eastern problem,” “occidental interpretations of the Eastern problem,” or “Germany in transition.” The 1926 Harris lecture took on the subject following a decade of difficulties between both countries, and resulted in the publication of two volumes by UCP: Some Mexican problems, Lectures on the Harris foundation, 1926 by Moisés Sáenz and Herebert I. Priestly (UCP, 1926); and Aspects of Mexican Civilization, Lectures on the Harris Foundation, 1926 by José Vasconcelos and Manuel Gamio (UCP, 1926).

Sáenz came to Chicago as a visiting lecturer sponsored both by the University and by the Mexican consulate. As his piece in Some Mexican Problems attested, he came in a dual capacity: as propagandist for the Calles government in the context of tense diplomatic negotiations, and at the same time as a convinced admirer of Chicago social science. Sáenz was an educator, trained in Mexico and Columbia University. His educational philosophy was strongly influenced by John Dewey, as well as by protestant social thought. He combined these with a strong faith in science and its utility for national unity and for the incorporation of Mexico’s Indian population into a modern, liberal development. His goal was to get “the tempo of the Tahuantinsuyu synchronized with that of President Roosevelt.” (The Indian, Citizen of the Americas, Pan American Union, 1946).
In his lecture, he defended the Calles regime against the common U.S. attacks: “we have been called Bolsheviks, reds, socialists! It would be far nearer the truth to be simply called humanists.” And yet he praised Chicago social science, Dewey, and believed in the importance of these ideas for Mexico:

thirty years ago, your great philosopher and teacher John Dewey was giving in this very university a series of lectures describing to the parents the educational policies followed by him in the Experimental (sic) school closely connected with the
University of Chicago. John Dewey had gone to Mexico. He was first carried there by his pupils at Columbia; he went later in his book, School and Society is a book we know and love in Mexico. And now he is going there personally; when he gets to Mexico he will find his ideas at work in our schools” (Some Mexican Problems). Indeed, after his 1920s visit, Dewey saw Mexico as a laboratory where his ideas could be put to the test. He believed that his philosophy was being applied, proving its universalism and utility. Yet democracy, the most normative and universal dimension of his thought, was not included in the experiment. Dewey knew this but showed little concern, as if the formula of science-democracy were indeed only reproducible in its natural scenario, the United States.

Only partially translated—Vasconcelos’s chapter, “El evangelio del mestizo” (Istor, no. 25, Summer 2006)—Aspects of Mexican Civilization is an important document in Mexico’s intellectual history. Gamio’s contribution was a repetition of his belief in the incorporation of Indians into national development, peppered with criticisms of U.S. policies toward Mexico in the 1920s. (In 1926 Gamio was still hoping to serve Calles as unofficial intellectual representative of the regime in the world. This was before their falling out in 1928). Vasconcelos’s talk and visit had more lasting consequences. He became a visiting professor at the University in 1927, and hoped to stay for a longer period. Still, as Daniel Cosío Villegas suggested in his memoirs, he never prepared classes and he disliked U.S. students, who were in his mind beneath the level of a Mexican “preparatoriano” (D. Cosío Villegas, Memorias, 1976). Vasconcelos’s Harris lectures were part of a larger mood—his “hora del mestizó”—which as it turns out, was partly inspired by Chicago. It was a bizarre pro-mestizaje manifesto, proposing the overcoming of racial conflict by means of miscegenation. But while in previous tracts on the subject he sought to vindicate the “spiritual” superiority of Spain, in Chicago he predictably switched to a more “scientific” register: “If we observe human nature closely we find that hybridism in man, as well as in plants, tends to produce better types and tends to rejuvenate those that have become static.” Hence: “There is nothing left for us to do, but to follow the Spanish tradition of eliminating
the prejudice of color, the prejudice of race…” He was living in Chicago—South Side Chicago—when he wrote this. So even though he was arguing for a collaboration between races, he made a point of emphasizing that this was a necessary measure in order to avoid being “overwhelmed by the wave of the Negro, of the Indian, or the Asiatic” (*Aspects of Mexican Civilization*). Of course.

UCP records show that the Harris lecture books were read and reviewed by all those luminaries of the American left who were caught up in the moment’s enthusiasm for Mexico and its Revolution: Ernest Gruening, Carleton Beals, E. M. Simpson. Even that “old gringa” of Mexico, Katherine Anne Porter, contributed with her own ironic comments on academic liberal trends: “No unbiased opinions, liberalism has a bias of its own. The main virtue of the liberal temperament is its almost pious regard for facts, the wonder of the liberal temperament is that no amount of findings can upset its preconceived theories. Earth hath no sorrow that a firm mild course of popular education cannot cure.” She argued that the volumes were good propaganda for Mexico, albeit written by very boring men. “I only wish that these honest men and good investigators could manage to be half so entertaining as the liars and hotheads. There must be some way of making facts attractive! Why don’t these liberals find it?”

These books circulated among intellectuals in Mexico City, Chicago, and New York. Traces of their silent but vital interactions remain, for example in the old University of Chicago library card—as in that for Xavier Clavijero’s *History of Mexico*. A copy of the book was signed out at different times by characters in our story such as Manuel Bueno, José Vasconcelos, and Luis Leal.