

position and Cultural Characteristics." In *Heritage of Conquest*, edited by Sol Tax, pp. 17–20. Glencoe, Ill., 1952.

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CASO, ALFONSO (1896–1970), celebrated for his extraordinary intellectual drive and powerful leadership abilities in helping to found modern archaeological science, as well as Mexico's most significant anthropological institutions. The work of Alfonso Caso y Andrade introduced new methods in the study of pre-Hispanic Mesoamerican history, iconography, and archaeology; it also considered the nature and struggles of contemporary indigenous peoples. During his lifetime, Caso received many awards, honorary degrees, and expressions of appreciation for his innovative methods and ideas.

Caso was born into a family where ideas and critical thinking were encouraged. His father was an engineer and his older brother Antonio was a distinguished philosopher, whose ideas in post-Revolutionary Mexico had a powerful impact on the national debates about the nature and future of Mexican society. Alfonso married María Lombardo Toledano, with whom he had three children, Beatriz, Andres, and Eugenia. By the age of twenty-four, Alfonso had received his law degree from the National School of Jurisprudence of the Universidad Nacional de México with highest honors, and he began to publish essays and teach courses on epistemology, philosophy of law, and the arts. This systematic legal training would mark his aggressive archaeological and administrative work throughout his life.

While a young lawyer, Caso's interests met a turning point during a visit to the then-remote hilltop ceremonial center of Xochicalco in Mexico's state of Morelos. The art and architecture of Xochicalco fascinated him and turned his mind to the archaeological study of pre-Hispanic Mexico. While he continued to work in legal projects associated with Mexican banking and commercial institutions, he began a program of study at Mexico's Museo Nacional. There, he took classes in pre-Hispanic history, ethnology, and archaeology with such influential teachers as Eduard Seler, Hermann Beyer, and Manuel Gamio, with whom he often debated, posing alternative interpretations. At the age of twenty-nine, he obtained a master's degree in philosophy (with a specialty in archaeology) from the Escuela de Altos Estudios, again with highest honors; from that point, he dedicated himself to the knowledge of pre-Hispanic cultures and contemporary indigenous peoples. His rigorous methods of interpretation were evident in his first essay on *patolli* and other pre-Hispanic games, and it was clear to his colleagues and teachers that a powerful new professional voice had arrived.

One of the major debates of the time concerned the nature and causes of evolution in indigenous American, and especially Mexican, cultures. On one side was the conservative view that significant changes in the Americas only took place through cultural diffusion from the older, more advanced civilizations of Egypt, China, India, or other Old World peoples. The other side, backing independent invention, argued that New World peoples were not only separated in space and time from Old World cultural evolution but had also developed their own styles of complex cultures without significant outside stimulus. Caso argued intensely for independent invention and, throughout his career, focused on understanding cultural evolutionary stages, developments, and influences. He often reiterated his position that Mesoamerican peoples developed their own institutions, cultures, and civilizations. With this evolutionary problem and others in mind, he founded in 1927 the journal *Revista mexicana de estudios antropológicos*, which became a creative outlet for many researchers who began to devise studies and report on results about Mesoamerica as a whole, as well as specific sites, problems, and meanings.

Influenced by the work of his teachers Seler and Gamio, and deeply concerned about understanding the symbols of pre-Hispanic Mexico, Caso set out to revise the understanding of indigenous iconography. He wrote on Mexica sculpture ("El Teocalli de la Guerra Sagrada," 1927); on Zapotec stelae (*Las estelas zapotecas*, 1928); and embarked on a thorough interpretation of the codices ("Mapa de Teozacualco," 1949; "Mapa de Xochitepec," 1958; "Vindobonensis," 1953, and others). Concerned, as was Paul Kirchhoff, with developing a more inclusive overview of Mesoamerica, Caso came to appreciate and insist on the importance of the Oaxaca region—as a major cultural area, beside the Maya and the Mexica—in the evolution of pre-Hispanic cultures. His work on Zapotec stelae convinced him that Zapotec culture had undergone powerful transformations, from both internal and external social developments. His vision of Oaxaca as a major cultural area was completely vindicated by subsequent studies.

Caso's reputation as a leading archaeologist expanded in 1931, with his excavation at Monte Albán in Oaxaca, which led to the discovery of Tomb 7; there, an elite burial yielded extremely fine ritual objects. For the next six years, Caso as chief archaeologist and his close colleague Ignacio Bernal explored the monumental structures in the Great Plaza of Monte Albán—the tombs, palaces, and monuments with inscriptions and iconography. The archaeological team explored 180 tombs; careful analysis of tombs 7, 104, and 105, as well as the larger ceremonial center of Monte Albán, led to worldwide fame. There was a new appreciation of both Caso and

the royal lineages of the wider Oaxaca cultures, including those of the Zapotec and Mixtec peoples. Caso soon became the director of the Museo Nacional, and he was awarded his first honorary doctorate, *honoris causa*, from the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.

In 1936, Caso published his *La religión de los aztecas*, which initiated a series of books and articles in which he attempted a new understanding of the philosophical foundations and patterns of Aztec thought. This book was followed, for the next thirty years, by important essays on numerous topics, including the correlation of the Christian and Aztec calendars, the Toltec site of Tula, the Tarascan calendar, the Olmec cultural complex, various Mesoamerican codices and other calendars, human sacrifice, paradise in the murals of Teotihuacan, Indian identity, and a widely popular book in Spanish and English, *People of the Sun*. One of his most important contributions was his series of articles and debates with others about the history and nature of the Mesoamerican *tonalpohualli*, or "calendar"; he showed that its time depth reached at least as far back as Teotihuacan and, more significantly, that despite the variety of Mesoamerican calendars, they all shared the same basic religious, mathematical, and aesthetic principles.

When Lazaro Cardénas became president of Mexico in 1936, he recruited Caso to lead in the national efforts to stimulate economic growth and pride in the Mexican peasantry, an appreciation for indigenous cultures and arts, and a florescence of Mexican nationalism. Caso became instrumental in the reorganization of institutions dedicated to the invigoration of the anthropological sciences in Mexico and the creation of the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia. Both the Instituto Nacional and the Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia were founded under Caso's directorship in 1939–1940. Caso served as director until 1944. This experience stimulated him to study and protect the living Indian arts and communities of Mexico. Demands for his leadership, stimulated by his achievements and fame, resulted in his directorship of Enseñanza Superior e Investigación Científica de la Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP) in 1944. Almost immediately, he became the provisional rector of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México for six months, stepping down in March of 1945; he then became secretary of Bienes Nacionales e Inspección Administrativa that December. During the next four years, he received one award after another, including recognition in France, Great Britain, Ireland, and Mexico. In 1949, he founded the Instituto Nacional Indigenista, which he directed until his death, although he dedicated, in the words of Ignacio Bernal, "at least one day a week," to archaeology. The study and support of indigenous life and cultures absorbed the last two decades of his life.

Caso believed that the Indian peoples of Mexico had undergone intense discrimination in the post-Colonial period and had been painfully marginalized from the benefits of modernizing Mexico. He was a member of the Comisión Nacional de Libros de Texto Gratuito, and he worked to bring educational opportunities to indigenous communities, including the printing and free distribution of books and other educational material.

His long-awaited "El tesoro de Monte Alban" was published in 1969, and it described with clarity and emotion each one of the precious ritual objects and funerary architecture that had caused a worldwide sensation thirty years before. In 1970, just two weeks before his death, his *magnum opus* was published, entitled *Reyes y reinos de la Mixteca*. These two volumes represent more than forty years of research into the Mixtec writing found in codices, lienzos, and archives. In sum, Caso was a public intellectual who dominated, sometimes unfairly, the Mexican anthropological community between 1930 and 1960. Today's scholars consider his greatest contributions to have been his study of Zapotec tombs and writing; the interpretation of codices; the reconstruction of Mixtec dynastic history; his understanding of Mexica religion and iconography; and his work on the pre-Hispanic calendar. Caso is periodically eulogized as the founder of Mexico's most significant archaeological institutions and its anthropological sciences. As a symbol of his significance, his remains were reburied, in 1974, in the Rotunda of Illustrious Men in Mexico City.

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CASTAS PAINTINGS. The pictorial genre known as *castas* ("castes") is one of the most compelling artistic manifestations from the Colonial period. Most were created in eighteenth-century Mexico, although a few examples also survive from the Viceroyalty of Peru. These works depict the complex process of race mixing (*mestizaje*) among the three major groups in New Spain—Indian, Spanish, and African. Most *castas* paintings comprise sixteen scenes on separate canvases or copper plates, although occasionally the scenes are on a single, compartmentalized surface. Each scene portrays a man and a woman, with one or two of their progeny, accompanied by an inscription that identifies the race or racial mix depicted.

Castas paintings were created for the Spanish and the *criollos* (Spaniards born in the Americas). Early examples were commissioned as gifts to the king of Spain, and other sets were sent by viceroys to the Real Gabinete de Historia Natural (Royal Natural History Collection), founded in Madrid in 1771. The Spanish archbishop

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