



Philip Ainsworth Means

## PHILIP AINSWORTH MEANS, 1892–1944

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**I**N THE death of Philip Means the world has lost a unique and renowned scholar, a man first trained in anthropology who later became an outstanding historian of the New World, thus combining two approaches to knowledge.

Means was born in Boston on April 3, 1892, son of James and Helen Godell Farnsworth Means, both of whom died in 1921. His father was a pioneer in the science of aeronautics. His surviving brother, James Howard Means, is chief of medical services at the Massachusetts General Hospital. On April 18, 1934, Philip Means was married to Miss Louise Munroe, who thereafter accompanied him on his various journeys. Means died in Boston on November 24, 1944, and was buried in Pomfret, Connecticut.

Means attended Noble and Greenough's and Pomfret Schools. At Harvard he graduated with the degrees of A.B. (1915) and M.A. (1917). During his Harvard career he was greatly interested in English, Spanish, and French literature, but he specialized in anthropology. At this time he acquired the knowledge of languages which proved so useful to him subsequently. He also gained the insight into prehistory which distinguished his future publications on Peru and other fields. He was fortunate in attending Harvard during a golden epoch of great teachers who covered his intellectual interests, including Professors Dixon, Ford, Haskins, Hooton, Lord, Merriman, Rivera and Tozzer.

Means' field training started in 1914 when he left Harvard for eight months to accompany the famous expedition to Peru organized by Yale University and the National Geographic Society under the leadership of Dr. Hiram Bingham. He thus was able to visit the classical Inca cities in the vicinity of Cuzco, including Machu Picchu. He also acquired his lifelong love of Peru, which he thereafter referred to as his "segunda patria." His "cariño" for the land and its inhabitants was deep rooted.

In 1917–1918 and again in 1918–1919, Means visited Peru, working under the auspices of the U. S. National Museum, the Smithsonian Institution, and the American Geographic Society. At that time travel was vastly more difficult

than today, but he journeyed south to Bolivia and north to Piura and the Chira valley. He thus obtained an archaeological knowledge of the Peruvian littoral and mountains contemporaneously rivalled only by that of the late Dr. Max Uhle and Dr. Julio C. Tello.

In 1920, Means was appointed Director of the Museo Nacional (Sección de Arqueología) by President Leguía. This museum was then housed in the Palacio de la Exposición, later the Alcalde's office, now part of the Foreign Office. The setup was far from favorable, as the administration failed to provide funds. In spite of the backing of outstanding Peruvian friends and scholars, Means resigned in 1921 and returned to the United States.

The following years found Means in Europe as an Associate in Anthropology of the Peabody Museum, Harvard University (1921–1927). There he studied in various archives and thus came to know many famous European scholars. This period marks the change in his major interest from anthropology to history. It should be recorded, to show the scope of his studies, that he worked in London, Paris, Berlin, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Brussels, Genoa, Milan, Turin, Florence, Rome, Madrid, Barcelona, Valladolid, the Escorial, Córdoba, Seville, and elsewhere. He modestly stated afterwards that he had "acquired scientific data of great value." Returning from Europe in 1924, Means visited Mexico in 1925–1926, after which he again returned to Europe.

In 1929, Means settled in Pomfret, Connecticut, where, in 1937, he purchased a farm and converted the barn into a workroom and library. In Pomfret he wrote perhaps his best-known book, *Ancient Civilizations of the Andes* (1931), which was followed in the next year by *Fall of the Inca Empire and the Spanish Rule in Peru: 1530–1780*. The original idea behind these books was a trilogy carrying through from the dawn of knowledge to the republican epoch. The material, however, proved too vast and the period covered ends with the revolt under Tupac Amaru II, generally regarded as the forerunner of Latin American independence.

After his marriage in 1934, Means again went to Europe, principally to France and Belgium. He returned to Pomfret with new interests and,

in the following year, wrote *The Spanish Main*, in which he ably displayed the conflicting policies of European powers throughout the centuries in that area.

Since 1935, Means had been chiefly interested in pre-Columbian contacts between Europe and North America. As usual, he visited the places where original documents exist, including Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Iceland, and Belgium. The result of these studies is a book on the famous round tower at Newport, starting a controversy which can only be settled by archaeological investigations.

The scope of Means' work is best shown by the appended bibliography, which reflects his broad and changing interests. To this brief account of his life it should be added that he was a profound student of textile technique and published a number of erudite studies on Peruvian weaving, perhaps the most complex in the world. It should also be said that in his *Biblioteca Andina* he started for Peru a critical analysis of the basic historical writings on a pattern similar to that accomplished in Chile by the late José Toribio Medina. He also was the author of many book reviews.

Contemporary judgment on the worth of any man's work is probably without much value. One can say without prejudice, however, that Means' *Ancient Civilizations* now is the standard textbook on Inca society and promises to be so indefinitely. Fourteen years after publication of this work, the first questioning of his chronology has recently appeared.<sup>1</sup> The author of this, representing a younger and perhaps better-informed generation, remarks in appreciation of Means' studies, "No one except Means has been sufficiently interested in this aspect of Andean cultural history to master it." Great advances have been made in archaeological knowledge and technique during the past decade, and Means' picture of Peruvian

archaeology is now adequate only for the beginner.

Special mention also should be made of Means' translations of Spanish historical material into English, totalling six volumes. First came his *History of the Spanish Conquest of Yucatan and of the Itzas* (1917), one of his two publications dealing with the Maya. He also brought out translations of the Peruvian chroniclers Pedro Sancho (1917), Montesinos (1920), and Pedro Pizarro (two volumes in 1921). Finally he translated Elorza y Rada's account of the conquest of the Itzas (1930).

Among the many scientific societies to which Means belonged, the following may be listed: American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Institute of Andean Research, American Anthropological Association, American Antiquarian Society, Instituto Arqueológico de Cuzco, American Association for the Advancement of Science, Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, Connecticut Historical Society, Hakluyt Society, New York Historical Society, Mediaeval Academy of America, Academia Nacional de Historia (Quito), Société des Américanistes de Belgique, Société des Américanistes de Paris. In 1934 he was made an official of the Order of the Sun by the Peruvian Government.

Means is succinctly described in the *Providence Journal* as "an immense man from whom issued an alarmingly high-pitched voice and who exuded such energetic delight in life that merely to meet him was to have a memorable experience of charm, intelligence and vitality." His ardor for the exchange of ideas was inexhaustible, which led him into voluminous and erudite correspondence with friends, editors, and scholars—notably Sir John Frazer, Sir Clements R. Markham, and Capt. T. A. Joyce. He had definite opinions on many aspects of life and possessed a sharp and witty tongue to express them. At the same time, he was a loyal and cooperative friend and was always humble in the face of scholarship.

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