

## EDUARDO NOGUERA, 1896–1977



With the death of Eduardo Noguera, Mexican archaeology has lost one of its last great personalities, a man devoted to the knowledge of the past of his country for more than half a century, a pioneer and an authority in his field, a student as well as a scholar.

Eduardo Guadalupe Noguera Auza was born in Mexico City on March 1, 1896, the youngest of 4 children. Although his maternal grandfather was a stout “liberal” and even governor of the state of Zacatecas, young Eduardo received his first instruction at the Catholic Instituto Científico y Literario de San Francisco de Borja, better known as “Mascarones,” where Alfonso Caso had also attended school.

Following the trend of the time, Noguera went, in 1911, to Europe (in his case to Belgium), where he may well have met with his countryman, Rafael

García Granados, later a well-known historian. The sudden death of his father and the outbreak of World War I cut short Noguera’s first stay in Europe, and he returned to Mexico. By then he already had made the acquaintance of Manuel Gamio, Mexico’s foremost anthropologist, and when, in 1917, the government established the Dirección de Antropología, Gamio sent Noguera to Harvard where he attended classes for several years. In 1923 he went once more to Europe, now to the Ecole d’Anthropologie in Paris, to complete his studies. When he returned to Mexico he had acquired not only the best anthropological training then available but at the same time a complete command of French and English. Despite his many years of study, however, he never obtained higher degrees, nor did he care to seek them later. Well did he know that he did not need them: due to his profound knowledge and experience, he was always known to his students as “el maestro Noguera,” a master in his craft and science. Nor did he ever use nationalism to hide ignorance; without yielding to any pressures from outside or inside, he was respected by everybody.

While still engaged in his studies, Noguera began work in the field; in 1920 he dug the Aztec ruins of San Pedro de los Pinos, then an outskirt of the capital and now just one of her innumerable sections. A year later he went to the north of Mexico and explored Casas Grandes and Coyame, research which prompted his earliest (1921) archaeological publications in the Chihuahua Times: “The Cave at Coyame” and “The Ruins at Casas Grandes,” both in English.

During the early 1920s, with youthful optimism Noguera tried to combine archaeological knowledge with business, and he established a “Bureau of General Informations” (Industry, Commerce, History, Archaeology, Traveling, Communications). He also announced the sale of “reproductions of archaeological and artistic monuments.” Evidently all this was meant for American tourists, but during these years of internal Mexican strife they could hardly have been a great success; quite naturally in later years nothing is heard any more of Noguera’s commercial ventures.

In 1925 he was given the post of Jefe de Arqueólogos, a position he held until 1941. During these years he visited or excavated sites all over the country, either alone or in company with his colleagues. By then he had come to specialize in ceramics, a necessary handmaid of spectacular archaeology and for establishing cultural sequences, but nothing with which to gain fame and popular acclaim. He shunned publicity, and only insiders appreciated the value of his different ceramic studies such as those of Tizatlan, Teotihuacan, and Tenayuca during the 1920s and 1930s and of Xochicalco and Cholula in later years. Despite his many excavations, especially year

after year at Cholula and Xochicalco, he never “struck it rich”; as an excavator he was never rewarded by a spectacular find.

Quite naturally, Noguera strove early to give a synoptic picture of the ceramics of Mexico. His first essay was “*Algunas características de la cerámica de México*,” published in Paris in the *Journal de la Société des Américanistes* in 1930. It is mainly a typological study, based on the then available material in Mexico’s Museo Nacional de Arqueología e Historia, and was written prior to the appearance of Vaillant’s classic excavations and analysis at Zacatenco and Ticomán. Due to the basic information then available at the Museum, the study is limited to the pottery of Zapotecs, Mixtecs, Tarascans, Toltecs (in reality the ceramics of Teotihuacan), and Aztecs, including the related Tlaxcala-Cholula material. To understand the paper in retrospect, it is well to bear in mind that during the early 1930s one could go by car from Mexico City scarcely beyond Cuernavaca, Toluca, Pachuca, or Puebla. Nowadays paved highways crisscross the country, and one can travel thousands of miles from one extreme of the country to the other—for example from Cabo San Lucas, at the southern tip of the peninsula of Baja California, to Chetumal in Quintana Roo. Just as the material aspect of Mexico progressed so did the archaeological information: Noguera’s latest encyclopedic view of Mexican pottery, his “*La Cerámica arqueológica de Mesoamérica*” (1965) covers the entire country. It is based on a multitude of stratigraphic excavations, many performed by Noguera himself, but it is essentially a compendium of existing knowledge. The same expansion of information, but in the field of pre-Spanish architecture, can be seen by comparing I. Marquina’s earlier “*Estudio arquitectónico comparativo de los monumentos arqueológicos de México*” (1928) with his later “*Arquitectura Prehispánica*” (1951).

In 1941 Noguera was appointed director of the Museo Nacional de Arqueología e Historia, a post he held until 1946 when he was made director of Monumentos Prehispánicos at the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia. During a reshuffling of higher officers at the latter in 1956, Noguera was deprived of his directorship, and with his characteristic dignity he retired from the Instituto altogether. As happens so often, the maintenance of dignity and self-respect entailed economic hardship for Noguera, although he never complained about it. Yet he had to sell the greater part of his private library at a bargain price to the Universidad de San Luis Potosí. Finally, in 1961, the Universidad Nacional Autónoma came to his rescue. He had been professor there since 1937 for “*Estratigrafía y cerámica*” but now was made a full-time research member at the University’s own Instituto de Antropología.

Noguera was a prolific writer; for the specialist there were his reports on his excavations as well as studies on special subject matters. The ceramics of given sites naturally received major attention, but also he treated such selected topics as the representation of the owl at Teotihuacan, bricks as archaeological building material, pre-Spanish woodworking, and so on. For the nonspecialized reader, Noguera contributed a number of guide books (e.g., National Museum, Morelos, La Quemada, Chalchihuites) as well as papers and booklets in popular collections (e.g., *Cultura Arcaica*, *Cultura Tarasca*). Finally we ought to mention his semipopular articles designed to promote knowledge of Mexican sites among Mexicans as well as foreigners.

Eduardo Noguera was married to Da. Margarita Torres, from 1926 until she passed away in 1974, a loss from which he never really recovered, despite the care of his only daughter Luisa Margarita and his grandchildren.

Noguera was active literally to the last day of his life. On February 18 he went out as usual to the Instituto de Antropología on the University campus. He returned home at noon and complained of feeling uncomfortable; a few hours later he had met a peaceful death.

*Acknowledgments.* The information contained in Señor Wigberto Jiménez Moreno’s earlier obituary note on Eduardo Noguera, published in Vol. 23(1) of *Revista Mexicana de Estudios Antropológicos* has been particularly helpful for writing the present one. Noguera’s complete bibliography comprises more than 20 tightly written pages, which will be published in full by the *Instituto de Antropología de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma*. Moreover, part of it has been published already during Noguera’s lifetime in Volume 4 (Mexico 1940) and 33/34 (Mexico 1970/71) of *Boletín Bibliográfico de Antropología Americana*. Therefore I limit myself to a selected bibliography, citing only such titles as the specialized reader of Mexican archaeology might find

convenient to have at hand for quick reference. The photograph of Eduardo Noguera is reproduced here through the courtesy of the Sociedad Mexicana de Antropología.

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