

IN MEMORIAM

MARY G. HODGE

1946–1996

Mexican archaeology and ethnohistory are much diminished by the loss of Mary G. Hodge in the middle of her life and career. Her research, together with new and ongoing investigations by other archaeologists in the Basin of Mexico and in adjacent Morelos, Hidalgo, and the Toluca region initiated the first significant advance in Postclassic archaeology in central Mexico since the completion of the Basin of Mexico settlement-pattern surveys in the mid-1970s. Unusual in this era of increasing specialization, Mary's research on Aztec economic and political systems successfully combined original work in both ethnohistory (published and archival) and archaeology.

Mary Gottshall Hodge was born March 30, 1946, in Lansing, Michigan, the daughter of Mary Evans Gottshall and Russell Y. Gottshall. Both of her parents held advanced degrees in the biological sciences, and they encouraged Mary's analytical orientation, curiosity, and emphasis on precision. Her brother, Tim, recalls that Mary was an accomplished pianist, but her perfectionism made her childhood piano recitals "white-knuckle affairs."

After graduating from high school in Lansing, Mary attended Kalamazoo College in Michigan, graduating in 1968 with a Bachelor's degree in sociology and anthropology, although she had no plans at the time to pursue a career in anthropology. Mary met Michael Hodge at Kalamazoo College, and they were married June 16, 1970. To support them during Michael's graduate studies in literature at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Mary worked as a secretary in the Museum of Anthropology, which was then under the direction of the formidable James B. Griffin. After a few years, she shifted the focus of her efforts to editing the museum's publications (e.g., Ford et al. 1978). Her thorough understanding of the technical editing and production processes, excellent sense of style and organization, and ability to deal effectively with authors were later applied to her own papers and books.

University of Michigan faculty were so impressed by Mary that Joyce Marcus encouraged her to enroll in Marcus's course on Mesoamerican writing systems, which Mary took during her 1975 lunch hours. Mary focused on Aztecs and ethnohistory during the following term, and began the required sequence of graduate courses during fall 1976, effortlessly making the transition from staff to student. She went to Mexico for the first time in 1976 to visit Judith Nowack, who was surveying Palo Blanco phase sites in the Tehuacán Valley. Mary traveled to Mexico with Liz and Vince Brumfiel and was nearly overcome by the smog and congestion of Mexico City. However, with characteristic determination, she adapted and



later returned frequently to the city. In 1977, she participated in a survey of the Raisin River basin, Monroe County, Michigan, directed by Christopher Peebles. Two years later, she obtained her first excavation experience on Barbara Stark's project at El Bál-samo in southern Guatemala; unfortunately, her work was cut short by illness (Stark et al. 1981).

By 1980, under the guidance of Joyce Marcus, Mary was immersed in studies of Nahuatl and Spanish colonial documents in collections in the United States and Mexico. Her study of those documents formed the basis of her doctoral dissertation, *Aztec City-States*, completed in 1983 and published by the museum the following year (Hodge 1984). Before the 1970s, most studies of Aztec political systems focused on the Triple Alliance and the Mexica and their imperial capital, Tenochtitlan-Tlateloloco. Mary, however, turned her attention to the *altepetl*, or city-state, and compared the history and organization of five city-states in the Basin of Mexico. She recognized diversity both in *altepetl* organization and in the way that the city-states adapted to the imperial structure

1997). Her early work on Aztec politics relied primarily on ethnohistoric documents, but her last paper on the *altepetl*, “When is a City-State?” (revised shortly before her death), emphasized archaeological data supplemented by textual sources (Hodge 1997a).

Mary derived her first concrete ideas about Postclassic sociopolitical boundaries and economic relations from her dissertation research. Before she could begin new research to address these issues, however, she was faced with finding employment in one of anthropology’s worst job markets. To support herself and her husband, Mary held temporary teaching positions at the University of Michigan, Dearborn (1984), Williams College (1986–1987), and Bennington College (1987). Between teaching positions she served as Anthropology Consultant and Editor for the J. Paul Getty Trust’s Art History Information Program in Williamstown, Massachusetts (1985–1986). In 1987 she obtained a tenure-track position as an assistant professor of anthropology at the University of Houston, Clear Lake, where she was tenured and promoted to associate professor in 1993.

At the University of Houston, Clear Lake, Mary faced the combined challenge of teaching undergraduates and developing a research program without the assistance of graduate students or the facilities that are found at large research universities. Between 1990 and 1992 she established an archaeology laboratory at the university, in conjunction with excavations of prehistoric campsites at Armand Bayou, Texas, to train students. During the next decade, Mary launched a number of research initiatives and secured funding from the H. John Heinz III Charitable Fund, National Geographic Society, National Science Foundation, Texas Advanced Research Program, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research. In addition, she received fellowships from Dumbarton Oaks and the National Endowment for the Humanities. The amount of work she accomplished during those 10 years is remarkable.

To define more precisely Aztec sociopolitical boundaries, Mary collaborated with Leah Minc, whom she introduced to Aztec archaeology, to examine stylistic variations in Aztec decorated serving wares (black-on-orange and red wares) and their spatial distribution. They reanalyzed collections from Jeffrey Parsons’s and Richard Blanton’s earlier settlement-pattern surveys in the eastern and southern Basin of Mexico, and obtained exciting new results. At the outset of the project, many questioned the usefulness of those collections because of the unsystematic way they were collected, “but [Mary] proved me wrong many times over” (Michael Smith, personal communication 1997).

Despite the uniformity of Aztec pottery, Mary and Leah identified stylistic variations in decorated serving wares and defined spatial patterning in design motifs and types (Hodge and Minc 1990, 1991). They expanded their research on the Aztec political economy and, working first with James Blackman and later with Hector Neff, they applied instrumental neutron-activation analysis (INAA) to samples of Early and Late Aztec pottery and were able to relate particular stylistic variants to clay-source areas (Hodge 1992; Hodge et al. 1992, 1993; Hodge and Neff 1997; Minc 1994; Minc et al. 1994; Neff and Hodge 1997). This work—the first long-term effort to apply INAA to Aztec ceramics—successfully demonstrated that archaeological ceramics from the basin could be associated with clay-resource areas based on chemical characterization (see summary in Neff and Hodge 1997). It also revealed that both Early and Late Aztec ceramic production was multicentric.

To complement her studies of ceramics, Mary did fieldwork during 1992 at Chalco, an important city-state center in the southern

basin where a large pit had been excavated into a mounded area during the 1940s revealing a deep profile of urban occupation and an abundance of Aztec I ceramics. Her investigations at Chalco included excavations of test units into Mound 65; the stratigraphy and radiocarbon dates suggested that the Epi-Teotihuacan occupation and associated Coyotlatelco ceramics began by the early seventh century A.D., considerably earlier than the conventional starting dates (Hodge 1993a; Hodge, editor 1997; Parsons et al. 1996; see also Cowgill 1997).<sup>1</sup> The excavation of Mound 65 also led to the recovery of evidence of significant environmental changes, and in 1994 Mary collaborated with Charles Frederick and Carlos Córdova in a geoarchaeology project to study the depositional history of the Chalco area (Hodge et al. 1994; Hodge, editor 1997).

In a series of papers, Mary drew together the results of her ceramic studies, documentary research, and archaeological fieldwork, as well as earlier settlement-pattern data. She looked at sociopolitical boundaries, market exchange, and how they changed with the expansion of the Triple Alliance (Hodge 1992, 1993b, 1994a, 1996, 1997; Hodge et al. 1992, 1993; Neff and Hodge 1997). Mary used archaeological data to demonstrate the presence of Early Aztec city-states by A.D. 1100–1200 (some may be even older [Parsons et al. 1996]). The market areas for the decorated serving wares she studied, however, conform to neither a solar market pattern of individual city-states nor a regionally integrated market system. Rather, the pottery was marketed at the level of city-state confederations. With the expansion of the Triple Alliance, ceramic production at city-state capitals in the core of the basin, such as Chalco and Xaltocan, apparently declined in favor of agricultural production as Tenochtitlan became an important production center for decorated serving wares (Brumfiel and Hodge 1996; Hodge and Neff 1997; Neff and Hodge 1997). Those findings led Mary to emphasize the importance of politics in structuring exchange relations (Hodge 1996; Hodge et al. 1992).

The papers—especially “Politics Comprising the Aztec Core” (Hodge 1994a) and “When is a City-State?” (Hodge 1997a)—stand as models of the successful combination of ethnohistory and archaeology. They respect both documents and artifacts as independent, yet complementary, sources of data—each with inherent, but different, biases, and yielding important information. This successful combination of archaeology and ethnohistory—based on rigorous, technically proficient, original work carried out in both domains—has recently been rare in Mesoamerican archaeology. The example set by Mary, and her work with others, has encouraged greater collaboration between archaeologists and ethnohistorians—a change that is reflected in the books *Economies and Politics in the Aztec Realms*, co-edited with Michael Smith (Hodge and Smith 1994), and *Aztec Imperial Strategies*, coauthored with Frances Berdan, Richard Blanton, Elizabeth Hill Boone, Michael Smith, and Emily Umberger (Berdan et al. 1996).

Mary did not neglect teaching while building her research program. Robbie Brewington and Janet Montoya describe her classes as offering students the opportunity to learn from and share her knowledge. Those who took full advantage of the opportunity “gained [Mary’s] support, and she taught them how to think, to learn, and to ask and answer questions” (Robbie Brewington, per-

<sup>1</sup> Mary brought J. Michael Elam into the Chalco project to analyze obsidian artifacts, and questions that arose from hydration dates of a sample of those artifacts have prompted Elam and his colleagues to reexamine the theoretical assumptions and procedures currently used in obsidian-hydration dating (Anovitz et al. 1997).

sonal communication 1996). She willingly assisted students who demonstrated a sincere interest, but she set the same high standards for them that she did for herself and her colleagues. She was pleased and encouraging when students met those standards, but was disappointed when they did not. Mary made a tremendous personal and professional impact on students who worked closely with her.

Mary's life revolved around her work, but she never engaged in self-promotion—even though confident of her ideas and her scholarship. She was well respected for her collegiality, and she cultivated cordial relationships with both her Mexican and North American colleagues. Her quiet demeanor belied a good sense of humor and acumen about archaeology, the academy, and life in Texas. Mary was a well-rounded person; she read widely on topics from science fiction to Latin American magical realism. She and Michael were regular volleyball players during her fellowship at Dumbarton Oaks; she was also a favored guest at Casa González, a small private hotel in Mexico City.

Mary supported both herself and Michael for many years, and their life in Houston was difficult until Michael obtained a teaching position at Galveston College. Mary was guarded about her personal life. "She committed to personal friendships sparingly and slowly, but once given, she was a thoughtful and caring friend" (Janet Montoya, personal communication 1996).

The final year of Mary's life was one of professional rewards and personal tragedy. During a vacation in Michigan, Michael died suddenly of a heart attack on July 6, 1995. Mary returned to Houston and resumed work. In November, the Texas Higher Education Board awarded her grants to begin a three-year excavation project at Chalco. She was diagnosed with non-Hodgkins lymphoma that same month. She continued to work, despite her illness and the toll taken by chemotherapy. She organized a symposium to present the results of her Chalco investigations for the annual meeting of

the Society for American Archaeology and, although she was tired, traveled to New Orleans during April to chair the session. Also in April, the University of Houston, Clear Lake, acknowledged the significance of her research by giving Mary their Distinguished Fellowship Award in Research—the institution's highest honor recognizing exemplary research.

Although frustrated by the constant fatigue caused by her illness, Mary made a pallet by her computer so that she could continue to write and plan the upcoming field season at Chalco. At the time of her death, Mary was revising a review paper on Aztec archaeology for the *Journal of Archaeological Research* and editing a volume, *Place of Jade*, about her earlier investigations at Chalco. Mary was an unusually private person, and few people outside her family and immediate circle of colleagues and friends in Houston knew the details of her illness. Shortly after suffering a stroke, she died at St. Luke's Hospital in Houston, August 21, 1996, with her brother and close friends by her bedside.

Mary is survived by her mother, Mary Evans Gottshall, of Lansing, Michigan; her brother, Timothy Edward Gottshall, of Atlanta, Georgia; and her niece, Karin Marie Gottshall, of Chatham, New York. In her honor, family and friends established the University of Houston, Clear Lake, Mary Hodge Memorial Fund. Her family has also created a scholarship fund for students of archaeology at Kalamazoo College, and made contributions in Mary's name to the Center for the Education of Women, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Mary's legacy of careful research, teaching, and collegiality should not only be remembered, but also carried forward; she is missed as both colleague and friend.

DEBORAH L. NICHOLS  
JEFFREY R. PARSONS

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her ideas regarding the significance of Mary's research. Tom Charlton, Susan Evans, Charles Frederick, Leah Minc, Judith Nowack, Michael Smith, and Barbara Stark thoughtfully commented on Mary's research and their interactions with her. Joyce Marcus told of how Mary started taking courses with her at Michigan and discussed their personal friendship. Deborah Hodges lent her editorial talent. The photograph of Mary G. Hodge was taken by J. Pamela Photography, Houston, Texas.

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