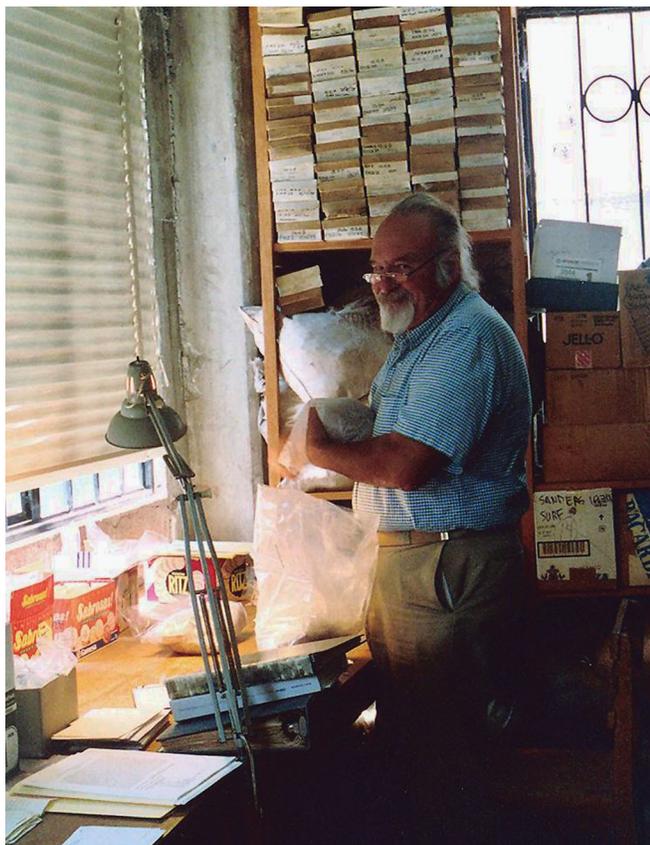


OBITUARY



*Tom Charlton in 2005, San Juan Teotihuacán, Mexico.
(Courtesy of Mary R. Hopkins)*

Thomas H. Charlton (1938–2010)

Thomas H. Charlton, Mesoamerican archaeologist and professor of anthropology at the University of Iowa, died suddenly on June 2, 2010, in Iowa City. He is best known for his work on the Aztecs and post-Conquest period archaeology. Tom was born on August 17, 1938, to Thomas Harry Charlton and Winnie (Taylor) Charlton in Scarborough, Ontario, Canada. His lifelong interest in history, the past, and its material manifestations began when he was an undergraduate at Victoria College of the University of Toronto during the late 1950s. He had his first experience in field archaeology when he participated in University of Toronto surveys and excavations in his native Ontario. Tom took a class on archaeological method and theory with William

Mayor-Oakes, who showed students some of the materials from a recently excavated saltmound on the shore of Lake Texcoco. Mayor-Oakes commented that the glazed wares “must be Aztec XXVI,” anticipating Tom’s own later work on saltwares and post-Conquest ceramics (1969a, 1972).

After receiving his B.A. in 1960, Tom went on to graduate school at Tulane University. His first field experience in Mesoamerica came in 1961, when he worked with William Bullard in Belize (then British Honduras). In 1963, he joined William Sanders’s Teotihuacan Valley Project in the Valley of Mexico. His 1966 doctoral dissertation, “Archaeological Settlement Patterns: An Interpretation,” incorporated field data from the Teotihuacan Valley, an area where much of his subsequent research would be focused. Jeffrey Parsons recalls that when he and Tom surveyed together in the Teotihuacan Valley during 1963 and 1964, Tom would often ponder about how it might be possible to reconstruct community structure from the archaeological remains underfoot.

After completing his dissertation, a faculty position at Grinnell College brought Tom to Iowa in 1966. A year later he joined the anthropology department at the University of Iowa, where he remained an active member for the rest of his life.

Tom’s research always stressed the integration of historical, ethnographic, and archaeological data. His early interests in ethnographic analogy are reflected in his studies of contemporary rural settlement and agriculture in the Teotihuacan Valley (1970). Tom’s dissertation research had made him aware of the lack of studies of post-Conquest settlement patterns (1969b). Because Spanish sources provide only limited details of rural settlements, Tom turned to archaeological methods, but this required that he develop knowledge of post-Conquest ceramics to identify and date sites. In doing so, he became one of the first anthropological archaeologists working in Mesoamerica to be concerned with the ceramic assemblages and settlement patterns of the historic Colonial period (1968). His demonstration that a number of late prehispanic pottery types persisted for several generations beyond initial European contact has proven fundamental in the ongoing study of the demographic and sociocultural impacts of Spanish imperial organization in Central Mexico (1968, 1969b, 1972, 1986). His 1972 monograph still stands as one of the most comprehensive studies of indigenous Colonial-period occupation in rural central Mexico.

In 1966, Tom initiated post-Conquest archaeology in the Teotihuacan Valley with a project of surveys and collections of Colonial and Republican sites in the Otumba area, and in 1969 he directed excavations north and south of Otumba. He saw historic archaeology as not just a source of new data but also fertile ground for testing archaeological theories (1972:1–2). His familiarity with historic sources also prompted an early interest in locating obsidian mines (Charlton and Spence 1983). Tom recognized that regional studies of trade and nonagricultural production were needed to complement the focus on agriculture and demography of the cultural ecological and evolutionary models used by archaeologists in the 1960s. In 1975, he undertook a novel survey of three trade routes leading out of the Otumba area and the northeastern Basin of Mexico, recording both prehispanic and post-Conquest sites (1978), in contrast to the usual practice of archaeologists in Mexico to focus exclusively on prehispanic remains.

In 1969, Tom met Cynthia Otis, when she was drawing profiles of pottery in the Iowa State Archaeologist's office. She subsequently took a class with him, then worked in his lab at the Casa Milagro in San Juan Teotihuacan in the summer of 1971. Tom invited Cynthia to participate in the 1975 Trade Route survey, and the following year they married. They had hoped to hold the ceremony on February 29 because it was a leap year, but that date fell on a Sunday and the Justice of the Peace resisted, and so they married on Saturday the 28. From that time on, Tom's field and laboratory research was carried out in partnership with Cynthia.

After the mid-1980s, Tom's early interests in rural communities extended to the urban center of Aztec Otumba. There, in collaboration with Deborah Nichols and Cynthia Otis Charlton, he codirected innovative investigations that have proven fundamental to the understanding of Late Postclassic urbanism in the Basin of Mexico (Charlton 2000; Nichols and Charlton 1997). Earlier, in the mid-1950s, Paul Tolstoy had made survey collections within the Aztec town site of Otumba. Then, in 1963, William Mather, a Penn State graduate student, surveyed and mapped the Otumba site as part of the Teotihuacan Valley Project, and it was he who first recognized substantial evidence of Aztec craft manufacturing there. Tom's subsequent surveys of Otumba during the post-Conquest and Trade Routes projects provided further evidence of workshops at the site.

In the summer of 1977, Tom visited Nichols's excavations of early floodwater irrigation canals at Sta. Clara Coatitlan near Ecatepec. Seeing the canal remains confirmed for Tom that similar features exposed in a road cut on the edge of Otumba were also irrigation canals. With funds provided by Sanders, Tom undertook excavations of the canals in 1977 and the following summer. Thus, Otumba offered evidence of two major dimensions of the Aztec economy: intensive agriculture and craft production. In a paper presented at the Society for American Archaeology meeting in 1981, Tom discussed the occupational history of the

Aztec city-state of Otumba and the role of craft production at Otumba, Tepeapulco, and Huexotla. The survey data suggested to him that the development of craft industries in the town paralleled Otumba's growth as a city-state center. Because Tom had not published his surveys and collections from Otumba, some were skeptical that the site could be a center of Aztec craft production, especially after Elizabeth Brumfiel's investigation at Huexotla had failed to find evidence of wards of craft specialists such as those that documentary sources described at Tenochtitlan—the imperial capital often was taken as the prototype of Aztec urbanism. However, Tom was confident of the significance of the surface findings at Otumba.

With collaborative grants from the National Science Foundation in 1987 and 1988, the Otumba Project made intensive surface collections of the Aztec town and several of its hinterland villages and excavated urban workshops, with the goal of examining the role of craft production and exchange in the development of Aztec city-states (Charlton et al. 1991, 1993, 2000; Nichols and Charlton 1996). Materials from the project were stored, along with Tom's other collections, at Arizona State University's facility in San Juan Teotihuacan, and analyses continued with support from the National Endowment for the Humanities. A subsequent NSF-sponsored project of materials analysis made possible additional radiocarbon dating and source studies using instrumental neutron-activation analysis (INAA) of obsidian and ceramics from Otumba and other Aztec sites in the eastern and northern Basin of Mexico, to place the Otumba findings in regional context (Charlton et al. 2008; Neff et al. 2000; Nichols and Charlton 1996). To date, Otumba has the largest number of documented craft workshops of any provincial Aztec center investigated by archaeologists. The Otumba project documented the household context of both urban and rural workshops—a pattern we now recognize as having been widespread in prehispanic Mesoamerica, as craft specialization developed from a household context. Aztec household workshops often employed techniques of mass production to manufacture large amounts of goods that were exchanged through hierarchical market and tribute systems. Some industries ceased after the Spanish conquest, such as the manufacture of obsidian lip plugs and ear spools, but Tom's work showed how other industries continued and adjusted to new consumers and new techniques.

In the early 1990s, Tom and Cynthia began collaborations with Mexican archaeologist Patricia Fournier García on prehispanic and Colonial materials from the Templo Mayor in Mexico City and Tlatelolco. Their years of collaboration yielded not only a number of studies of post-Conquest archaeology (e.g., Charlton et al. 2005a) but also a close personal friendship.

When in the field, Tom enjoyed visiting other projects, especially looking at their ceramic collections to build on his knowledge of Colonial and prehispanic pottery. Tom's fieldwork was aided by his many practical skills, including as

a licensed electrician and in automotive repair. These skills were also useful as Tom pursued his interest in restoring old MGs. He also had a deep affection for cats, especially strays and orphans in need of a home, and over the years a number of these animals immigrated from Mexico to Iowa with Tom and Cynthia. A favorite activity of Tom's was mountain climbing and, sometimes accompanied by his son, Thomas H. Charlton VI, he made several long hikes to the tops of Cerro Tlaloc and Popocatepetl on the eastern border of the Basin of Mexico.

Over the course of his career, Tom witnessed the increasing pace of destruction of archaeological sites in the Basin of Mexico. This prompted him and Cynthia to return to fieldwork on rural sites with a series of surveys and excavations of Teotihuacan-period villages north of the great city. They collaborated with Raúl García Chávez and Verónica Ortega on salvage excavations at the village site of San Bartolomé in the Teotihuacan Valley (Charlton et al. 2005b), where remains of Teotihuacan-style apartment compounds still survived.

At the time of his death, Tom was directing his annual University of Iowa field school in historic archaeology at Plum Grove, Iowa, where he had been working since 1974 while continuing analyses of materials from Mexico. After Tom's unexpected death, Cynthia took over closing down of the 2010 field season at Plum Grove and preparing the artifact collections for transfer from the University of Iowa to the office of the Iowa State Archaeologist. Tom's papers, including the field notes and records from his projects in Mexico, will at a later date be deposited at Tulane University, where future generations will benefit from Tom Charlton's important research on Aztec and post-Conquest archaeology.

Deborah L. Nichols *Department of Anthropology, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH 03755*

Jeffrey R. Parsons *Department of Anthropology and Curator of Latin America Archaeology at the Museum of Anthropology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48109*

NOTE

Acknowledgments. We thank Cynthia Otis Charlton for comments and information about Tom's life and work, as well as Patricia Fournier G. and Glenn Storey of the University of Iowa.

REFERENCES CITED

- Charlton, Cynthia Otis, Thomas H. Charlton, and Deborah L. Nichols
- 1993 Aztec Household-Based Craft Production: Archaeological Evidence from the City-State of Otumba, Mexico. *In Prehispanic Domestic Units in Western Mesoamerica: Studies in Household, Compound, and Residence.* Robert S. Santley and Kenneth G. Hirth, eds. Pp. 147–172. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.
- Charlton, Thomas H.
- 1966 Archaeological Settlement Patterns: An Interpretation. Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Anthropology, Tulane University.
- 1968 Post-Conquest Aztec Ceramics: Implications for Archaeological Interpretations. *Florida Anthropologist* 21:96–101.
- 1969a Texcoco, Fabric-Marked Pottery, Tlateles, and Salt-Making. *American Antiquity* 34(1):73–76.
- 1969b Ethnohistory and Archaeology: Post-Conquest Aztec Sites. *American Antiquity* 34(3):286–294.
- 1970 Contemporary Agriculture of the Valley. *In Teotihuacan Valley Final Report, vol. 1.* William T. Sanders, ed. Pp. 253–238. University Park, PA: Department of Anthropology, Pennsylvania State University.
- 1972 Post-Conquest Developments in the Teotihuacan Valley, Mexico, part 1: Excavations. Office of State Archaeologist report, 5. Iowa City: University of Iowa.
- 1978 Teotihuacan, Tepeapulco, and Obsidian Exploitation. *Science* 200(4347):1227–1236.
- 1986 Socioeconomic Dimensions of Urban-Rural Relations in the Colonial Period Basin of Mexico. *In Supplement to the Handbook of Middle American Indians, Ethnohistory.* Ronald Spores, ed. Pp. 122–133. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- 2000 The Aztecs and Their Contemporaries: The Central and Eastern Mexican Highlands. *In Cambridge History of the Native Peoples of the Americas, vol. II: Mesoamerica—Part 1.* Richard E. W. Adams and Murdo J. McLeod, eds. Pp. 500–557. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Charlton, Thomas H., Cynthia Otis Charlton, and Patricia Fournier-García
- 2005a The Basin of Mexico A.D., 1450–1620: Archaeological Dimensions. *In The Postclassic to Spanish Era Transition in Mesoamerica: Archaeological Perspectives.* Susan Kepecs and Rani T. Alexander, eds. Pp. 49–65. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
- Charlton, Thomas H., Cynthia L. Otis Charlton, Deborah L. Nichols, and Hector Neff
- 2008 Aztec Otumba, A.D. 1200–1600: Patterns of the Production, Distribution, and Consumption of Ceramic Products. *In Pottery Economics in Mesoamerica.* Christopher A. Pool and George J. Bey III, eds. Pp. 237–266. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- Charlton, Thomas H., Raul García Chávez, Cynthia Otis Charlton, Verónica Ortega Cabrera, David Andrade Olivera, and Teresa Palomares Rodríguez
- 2005b Salvamento arqueológico reciente en el Valle de Teotihuacan, Sitio TC-83; San Bartolomé, el Algo [Recent salvage archaeology in the Teotihuacan Valley, Site TC-38, San Bartolomé]. *In Arquitectura y urbanismo: Pasado y presente de los espacios en Teotihuacan, Memorias de la Tercera Mesa Redonda de Teotihuacan [Architecture and urbanism: Past and present spaces in Teotihuacan, Third Teotihuacan Roundtable]* María Elena Ruíz and Jesús Toerres Peralta, eds. Pp. 343–371. Mexico, DF: INAH.
- Charlton, Thomas H., Deborah L. Nichols, and Cynthia Otis Charlton

- 1991 Aztec Craft Production and Specialization: Archaeological Evidence from the City-State of Otumba, Mexico. *World Archaeology* 23(1):98–114.
- 2000 Otumba and Its Neighbors: Ex oriente lux. *Ancient Mesoamerica* 11(2):247–265.
- Charlton, Thomas H., and Michael W. Spence
- 1983 Obsidian Exploitation and Civilization in the Basin of Mexico. *In Mining and Mining Techniques in Ancient Mesoamerica*. Phil C. Weigand and Gretchen Gwynne, eds. Pp. 7–86. Stony Brook: State University of New York.
- Neff, Hector, Michael D. Glascock, Thomas H. Charlton, Cynthia Otis Charlton, and Deborah L. Nichols
- 2000 Provenience Investigation of Ceramics and Obsidian from Otumba. *Ancient Mesoamerica* 11(2):207–322.
- Nichols, Deborah L., and Thomas H. Charlton
- 1996 The Postclassic Occupation at Otumba: A Chronological Assessment. *Ancient Mesoamerica* 7(2):231–244.
- Nichols, Deborah L., and Thomas H. Charlton, eds.
- 1997 *The Archaeology of City-States*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.