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Anthropology's Organization Man: Reflections on Frederick Webb Hodge, 1864-1956

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“Terrible nightmare. Were the oysters to blame? Falling over precipices and facing
revolvers all night and hollowing to the top of my voice (at least so the porter tells me).”1
Thus 22-year-old Frederick Webb Hodge recorded the night of December 5, 1886, on the
train from Baltimore to Rochester to meet up with Frank Hamilton Cushing for the first
time. The next day he traveled on to the Cushing family homestead in Albion, on the
western edge of New York, where he met Cushing and his wife Emily, her sister Maggie
Magill, and three Zuni Indians. Less than a week later, Cushing’s enterprise, the “Hemenway
Southwestern Archaeological Expedition,” departed from Albion for Arizona Territory, with
Hodge employed as Cushing’s personal secretary. Although he had no way of knowing it at
the time, the Hemenway Expedition of the next three years was to become Hodge’s
introduction to anthropological fieldwork and the American Southwest, as well as the
foundation of a long life at the institutional center of twentieth-century American
anthropology. It also taught him the risks of life on the edge in America, and the danger of
falling over personal and professional “precipices.”

Fred Hodge (1864-1956) was blessed with nearly a century of life. Born in Plymouth,
England, toward the end of the American Civil War, Hodge migrated with his family to the
postwar United States as a boy. At a young age he learned office skills that would be of great
use in the emerging world of Gilded Age business and government, and went on— after the
Hemenway Expedition—to a remarkable career at the Smithsonian’s Bureau of American
Ethnology (1889-1917), George Heye’s Museum of the American Indian (1918-1930), and
the Southwest Museum in Los Angeles (1930-1956). One of six children born of Emily
Webb and Edwin Hodge, from childhood Fred was a man in the middle, surrounded and
protected much of his life by circles of family, friends, and fellow workers. He became the
quintessential organization man, building a reputation for evenhandedness and balance—in
contrast to the brilliant but erratic Cushing, his anthropological mentor and brother-in-

Encouraged by his father (who had a minor clerical position with the U. S. Postal
Service), Hodge initially left school at age fourteen in 1878 to begin clerking for Henry N.
Copp, local Washington publisher of a newsletter, Copp’s Land Owner. Copp’s publication
tracked the disposition of the western public lands by the Department of the Interior and the
General Land Office, providing vital information to individual and corporate investors in the
evigorously and deeply corrupt western land market of the Gilded Age. Hodge came of age,
that is, at the very moment and in the political epicenter of the tumultuous trade in trans-
Mississippi real estate that so appalled such political critics as Henry and Charles Francis
Adams.3 But while critics like the Adams brothers stood by helplessly as the postwar
stampede for the public domain created vast new fortunes in astonishingly brief time, Hodge
saw the lobbying and marketing from close range in downtown Washington. He stayed with Copp for five formative years, familiarizing himself with the legal and bureaucratic world of Washington while learning a great deal about editing, proofreading, and publishing on tight deadlines. During nighttimes, he returned to school at Arlington Academy, and then began the "scientific course" of study at Columbian College (now George Washington University), where he concentrated on topographic mapping—with the specific hope of joining the new (1879) U.S. Geological Survey as a field topographer. But it was his unusual, valued skill as stenographer rather than scientist that finally landed Hodge a position in the exciting young survey of the Western territories:

Stenographers were scarce in Washington at that time [1884], so they were exempt from civil service [tests]. The Civil Service Commission had been established in 1883. I heard that there was a position open in the Geological Survey. So I went over to see about it and received a temporary appointment by Mr. J. Stanley Brown, who had been the private secretary to President Garfield up to the time he was killed. Then he was given this position in the Geological Survey in charge of what was known as the Miscellaneous Division, which handled correspondence and was a sort of little grab-bag of various information that might be called upon. I entered in '84. I remember Stanley Brown testing my stenography. I hadn't made a stenographic line for more than a year, but I managed to get away with the very simple letters he dictated. And so evidently he was satisfied, because I got the appointment at the munificent salary of $75 a month, which was a lot of money.

Hodge's words, spoken in the mid-1950s toward the end of his life, recalled his first working days in government science. They evoke several significant conditions of the changing world of male work of his youth which deeply influenced his own style. As the new industrial economy took hold in the last quarter of the century, an obvious gap also grew between the ideology of independent and productive labor—centered on the image of the self-made, economically (and hence politically) independent man—and the reality of industrial and corporate work, in which most men were wage or salaried employees of others through their working lives, and could expect to become little more. Indeed, the rapid growth of labor organizations after the crippling, murderous class warfare that began with the economic depression of 1873-77 was a sign of altered circumstances, lowered expectations, and seething anger among the mass of workers. But while capital-labor conflict has understandably held much of our historical attention, the quieter interiors of male office work also profoundly affected countless lives. The emerging world of office work, with which the young Hodge already had some familiarity, was comprised largely of male, hierarchical relationships characterized by differential statuses and deferential behaviors. As Alan Trachtenberg has pointed out, while post-Civil War America was "dominated by images of personal power, of force, determination, the will to prevail," the actual structures of American business and finance emerging at the time "aimed to diminish risk" by promoting regularity and predictability in the business cycle and commercial relations. Consequently, "organization and administration emerged as major virtues, along with obedience and loyalty." On all levels, American society seemed to experience what historian Robert Wiebe some years ago characterized as a "Search for Order." By the same token, while the pre-Civil War world in which fathers and sons had worked in close proximity and in various relations of mentoring and apprenticeship was unquestionably
disappearing from American life, new forms of paternal and filial relationships began to characterize the embryonic corporate structures of industry, government, and science. The new organizational search for order built upon familiar father-son and brother-brother attitudes and terminology. For instance, Joseph Henry and Spencer Fullerton Baird, the first two heads of the Smithsonian Institution (1846-1887), took under their wings a series of young men—Alaskan explorer Robert Kennicott, museum administrator George Brown Goode, and Frank Cushing, among others—whom they called their "sons in science" and who lived for various lengths of time in the towers of the Smithsonian's original sandstone "castle." Similarly, John Wesley Powell proceeded to fill both the Geological Survey and the Bureau of Ethnology with trusted companions of his exploring days, and promising young men—W.J. McGee, William Henry Holmes, James Mooney—in field and office.9 As E. Anthony Rotundo has emphasized in his important study of American masculinity, *American Manhood*, these were more than working relationships: for the many who remained unmarried for lengthy periods, but also for those men with wives and families, work was a social world that extended well beyond the workplace. Furthermore, as Rotundo explains, the male work environment required maintaining "a judicious balance between cooperation and competition":

Men in the marketplace engaged in endless small competitions—for business, for advancement, or in the playful, competitive testing of wits that formed a cornerstone of male sociability. These constant competitive tests resulted in continuous judgments by peers that, more than anything else, determined a man's status in his profession. A man had to make his own way, looking after his needs in a world of shifting alliances, yet each participant was an individual actor who needed the help of other actors in pursuit of his own good.10

Competitive sociability and self-interested cooperation: for all of its historical invisibility, the new male world of office relations was neither static nor secure, and it helped a great deal to have a patron or superior with one's interest at heart. Hodge's first stenographic position at the Geological Survey in 1884 placed him in close physical proximity and collaboration with James C. Pilling, whose intimate relationship as secretary to Powell approached alter ego status—and may have served as an early model for Hodge's own relationship to Cushing. Powell's words at Pilling's death in 1895 convey a sense of the depth of their friendship and mutual dependence:

Through many of the years of active life James and I were associated, in the office and in the field. Field work led us into the wilderness of mountain and canyon, of forest and desert, away from the comforts and conveniences of civilization, where life itself was preserved by a constant struggle. In all this experience my boon companion never failed nor faltered, always doing more than his share in the struggle for existence necessary to fill life with joy. He never rested from his labor when labor could be of value; he never lost courage, and courage was always in demand.11

Powell's statement of friendship suggests the world of Victorian male values he and his Washington confrères inhabited: the struggle for existence leading to a joyful, fulfilling life; the contrast and connection between "field" and "office" ("wilderness" and "civilization"), the constant need for courageous labor, the lasting loyalty of true comrades-
in-arms. These were powerful images and male values carried over from the early metaphors and formative experiences of wartime to the structures of civilian peacetime, and from outdoor expeditions to interior workplaces. Pilling sat outside Powell's office door for years, functioning as gatekeeper, secretary, loyal supporter, “boon companion.” To be sure, for those who prized flamboyance over plodding accomplishment, an early bureaucrat like Pilling could seem a terrible bore, or worse; the brilliant Clarence King, who disliked Pilling as much as he admired Powell, once advised a friend: “If you want to do Powell a true service, poison Pilling. On the whole shoot him; poison won't act on his system. . . . You remember that in Tucson, Arizona, he was bitten on the privates by a scorpion. The latter fell dead.” The Barthebys and Fillings may have been legion in America by the end of the century, but there was little charisma in stenography.

Hodge was twenty-two when he traveled to Albion to join the Hemenway enterprise in late 1886. His boss was only six years older, but since 1879 Cushing had lived a remarkable and highly publicized five years at Zuni pueblo, married Emily Magill, published pathbreaking work in ethnography through the Bureau of Ethnology, and organized a visionary, privately funded archaeological expedition. By all standard measures of the time except two—fatherhood and home ownership—Cushing had grown to manhood. Hodge, by contrast, still stood in the stage of prolonged youth, a slow transition from boyhood to manhood that was not uncommon in the uncertain economy of industrializing America. From the outset their relationship on the Expedition took on a filial character, with Cushing in the role of elder brother and mentor and Hodge assuming a supportive, learning, but also increasingly essential position—not only as amanuensis but as intimate and collaborator of the brilliant but frail Cushing.

It is fascinating to trace this development and to perceive the changes in Hodge’s thinking and behavior as the Expedition unfolded—and then unraveled. In the first eight months of 1887 the core relationships of the Expedition, including the Hodge-Cushing dialectic, were established. In this remarkable, often frenetic period the principal figures of the Expedition traveled across the continent to the Southwest, outfitted and moved themselves by train, horse and wagon to the Salt-Gila River valley, set up “Camp Hemenway” on the outskirts of pioneer Phoenix and Mesa, Arizona, and began the exciting first phase of excavations. This promising period was disrupted, however, by the collapse of Cushing’s health—he had long suffered from diverticulitis and tapeworm—in the late summer, and his decision to seek medical help and recovery in San Francisco and San Diego. Cushing left for California in late September with Emily and Margaret; they stayed there for three months, leaving Hodge and Charles A. Garlick, topographer and field manager, in charge of the Expedition’s fieldwork in the Arizona desert. By the end of 1887, then, Hodge had already undergone a transition from novice field secretary to a position of major responsibility for the Expedition.

Hodge’s situation was complicated further by the fact that he and Maggie—the Expedition artist and Cushing’s sister-in-law—had fallen seriously in love. At their initial meeting in Albion, Hodge had recorded his “first impressions” of her: “lively, brim full of fun, fond of a joke, good talker, splendid company . . . I am of the opinion that I shall like her very much” (Hodge Diary, 8 December 1886). In their desert camp by Valentine’s Day, 1887, Maggie fashioned him a “Roses are Red” Valentine, and he thought to himself: “Even in this wild country Cupid shoots his darts, does he!” (14 February 1887). By early summer
she was painting his portrait under an isolated mesquite bower, and he was reverting to the privacy of shorthand in his diary (17 June 1887). Her extended absence in California with Frank and Emily, and his unclear, shared authority with Garlick for the Expedition’s work thus created both tension and opportunity for Hodge, as he communicated regularly with both Cushing in California and the Expedition board in Boston— as well as overseeing a field crew, ordering supplies, and learning how to draw site plats of the excavations.

For Hodge and the Expedition this was a critical period, for now the young stenographer began to play the roles of interlocutor, translator, and central communicator that were to become his familiar strengths in American anthropology as it institutionalized in the coming decades. Hodge must have begun to appreciate as well the ease with which serious misunderstandings can occur in structures where authority is unclear, relationships are highly personal, and communication is distended, difficult, or infrequent. He saw, too, the importance of clear, precise, non-metaphorical language, shorn of flowery visions and promises— especially where financial investment is concerned and material results are expected.

In all these respects, of course, his counter-example was Cushing himself. The pattern of Cushing’s life— before, during, and after the Hemenway Expedition— would never fit the requisites and expectations of organizational life. Indeed, the Hemenway Expedition was a highly personalized undertaking: it took root in the shared enthusiasms and personal visions of Cushing and Mary Hemenway, not surprisingly, as his health failed and the Expedition faltered in 1888 and 1889, Cushing’s first inclination was always to circumvent the Expedition’s board of directors in order to re-establish that personal contact and “understanding” with the patron of his enterprise. Similarly, Cushing enjoyed special personal relationships with Baird and Powell at the Smithsonian, and subsequently with philanthropist Phoebe Hearst, who sponsored his last work in Florida in the mid-1890s.

By early 1888 Hodge was seeing at close range the benefits and drawbacks of Cushing’s operational style: rhetorical flourishes, wide-ranging and imaginative leaps, heights of ambition and promise, depths of sickness and physical prostration— all under the sights of an increasingly restive and demanding board of directors 2500 miles away. With Cushing’s return from California, the first six months of 1888 saw a new energy in the Expedition camp, with a constant file of visitors, helpers, and hangers-on and a steadily expanding set of research questions possibly linking the Salt River “ancestors” to Peru as well as to Zuni— at least in Cushing’s eyes. In May, however, Cushing again departed for California with the Magill sisters, once again leaving Hodge and Garlick— this time to close up camp in the Salt River valley and move operations to Zuni. Three months later, in August, Cushing and the women arrived in Zuni, but stayed only until mid-October, when Cushing left for the East Coast to defend the Expedition in person and to lobby for setting aside Casa Grande as a national monument. As before, Hodge and Garlick were left to continue excavations outside Zuni pueblo. But at this point the board of directors had lost patience and faith in the enterprise, and in January 1889, Hodge and Garlick closed down the field operations. Hodge resigned in March. Cushing was fired as director of the Hemenway Expedition in June, and Harvard zoologist Jesse W. Fewkes took his place. Cushing spent the next three years in desperate poverty, illness, and humiliation. In June, 1889, Hodge was hired as “assistant ethnologist” at the Bureau of Ethnology— a position that Cushing had arranged for him. With Cushing’s blessing, he and Maggie were married two years later.
Hodge built his anthropological career gradually and carefully in the 1890s. Relying initially on his brother-in-law's knowledge and generosity, Hodge put together a series of modest articles on southwestern archaeology, historical relations, and ethnography that drew partly on the questions that had inspired Cushing's expedition: early Spanish encounters and possible continuities among the prehistoric, protohistoric and historic peoples of the Southwest. Powell, in accord with his conviction that the first step in a new science is control of the terminological field, since 1879 had been fitfully pursuing a "Synonymy" or "Cyclopedia" of Indian names and identities; over the years he assigned virtually every member of the staff to this foundational but seemingly endless task. Hodge soon took over the project, thereby becoming the center of a widespread network of communication across the country. Over the following decade he laboriously edited and wrote hundreds of entries in what would become the *Handbook of Indians North of Mexico* (1907, 1910). Powell had envisioned the *Handbook* as the essential basis for all future work in North American anthropology— and a key justification to Congress for continued funding of his Washington Bureau. Powell did not live to see its completion, but as the project now finally grew toward fulfillment, it elevated Hodge as a player in the anthropological community at precisely the moment that rapid and significant institutional changes were occurring in the young field: the growth of new university/museum complexes, the beginning of a national journal, and the emergence of anthropology as a locus of professional identity based upon graduate training.

In a period of sometimes fierce personal and institutional rivalries, Hodge soon enjoyed the reputation of being reliably non-partisan. For example, while Cushing detested Fewkes as "an utterly incompetent judge of Ethnologic data"— and worse, the man who had succeeded him in Hemenway favor— by the mid-nineties, Hodge and Fewkes had become collaborators on Southwestern work, traveling together during several field seasons as Fewkes established Smithsonian archaeology in the region and Hodge returned to familiar scenes. It was a revealing relationship. In part, they were simply useful to one another, since each was anxious to establish his scientific credentials on fairly slim foundations; but more importantly, Hodge and Fewkes also shared a professional style that emphasized incremental growth in scientific reputation through frequent, small-scale publications of closely "factual" observations and data. To critics— of which Fewkes had many, Hodge few— these might have amounted to plodding and unimaginative, even derivative careers, but the practice had the merit that the genius of the explosive and erratic Cushing lacked: predictable, steady productivity. From an institutional perspective this brought its own rewards: Hodge rose steadily in the ranks of Washington anthropology— in the Bureau and its Smithsonian parent— even as that center of anthropology was declining in national importance. After he produced the long-awaited, two-volume *Handbook* in 1910, Hodge succeeded William Henry Holmes as head of the BAE; in turn, Fewkes succeeded Hodge in 1918, and stayed on until 1928.

Although the individual stories are too involved to include here, Hodge also maintained warm friendships with other major figures in Southwestern anthropology, including Charles Lummis, Adolph Bandelier, and Edgar Lee Hewett. Hodge and Bandelier had met on the Hemenway Expedition— famously sharing a bed their first night together in Albuquerque, but not getting much sleep, it appears— and after Bandelier's death in 1914, Hodge befriended his widow, Fanny, for many years when they were both living in New
York. Hodge's support for Hewett's 1910 field school in New Mexico came at a time of ferocious attacks by Franz Boas and Alfred Tozzer on Hewett's professionalism, and thus was deeply appreciated. Charles Lummis was an especially close, life-long friend who founded the Southwest Museum, which Hodge directed for the last 25 years of his life. Hodge shared with each of these men a wealth of stories and memories—he was by all accounts a fine storyteller and raconteur—centering on two things: a romantic vision of the Hispanic and Native Southwest; and the adventures of a generation of young men from the East Coast who trekked and camped through the region in the last years of the century, preparing it for scientific and tourist consumption.

When Hodge moved to New York City to join George Heye's promising and well-funded new Museum of the American Indian in 1918 he was more than fifty years old, and yet much of his life still lay ahead of him—more than a decade with Heye, including the seasons of the Hawikuh project near Zuni, and nearly twenty-five years as director of the Southwest Museum. Like Mary Hemenway and Phoebe Hearst at various points in Cushing's career, George Heye and Harmon W. Hendricks became Hodge's patrons in Hodge's effort to return to Zuni archaeology, and it is difficult not to view the Hawikuh excavations of the Hendricks-Hodge Expedition (1917-1923) as Hodge's final, multi-year tribute to Cushing, as he returned to the last scene of their Hemenway fieldwork and attempted to recapture prehistoric and protohistoric Zuni. The deep irony of Hodge's Hawikuh lies in the fact that, while ungenerously criticizing Cushing's failure to publish his Hemenway work, Hodge lived four decades beyond his own Hawikuh work but, like his former brother-in-law and mentor, never published a report.

Hodge's long career, from novice days with Cushing on the Hemenway Expedition to the long final years among the arts and museum community of Pasadena, provides us insight into his own evolving personality and its functional fit with the institutional and structural needs of American anthropology as the emerging profession endured its own tensions and transitions, especially in the first quarter of the last century. His ability to maintain a balance and a central, largely neutral position enabled Hodge to serve an often unappreciated and historically invisible role as interlocutor and institutional middle-man. A likeable and social and inherently cautious person, Hodge worked within established frameworks, translating, editing, constantly communicating, quietly moving things, and himself, forward.

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1 F. W. Hodge Diary, Book 1, 5 December 1886. Hodge-Cushing Papers, Southwest Museum, Los Angeles.

2 Hodge to Hrdlicka, 1 June 1928, Papers of Ales Hrdlicka, Correspondence 1909-1945, Box 18, National Anthropological Archives.

3 See Chapters of Erie (1871), a harsh critique of Washington corruption in the post-Civil War years; for a recent account of the Adams brothers' postwar politics see Garry Wills, Henry Adams and the Making of America (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2005): 72-86.

5 Ibid., pp. 10-11. Powell and Garfield, fellow Union veterans, had been close friends throughout the seventies; after the President’s assassination in 1881, Powell found a position for Brown in his new government survey.


7 Trachtenberg, 84.


13 Hinsley, The Smithsonian and the American Indian, 164-67. Powell developed similar relationships with Henry Weatherbee Henshaw and WJ McGee in the Bureau of Ethnology, and viewed them with equal fondness and interdependence. Ibid., 162-64 and 231-61.


19 Considering his own predicament, Cushing was admirably kind and generous with Hodge, answering his numerous questions patiently and fully, never asking for credit in publication, and consistently encouraging Hodge's career aspirations: "I want to tell you, my dear Hodge, how well I think of this piece of writing of yours," Cushing wrote of an early effort in 1891: "It is temperate, smooth, remarkably accurate. . . . You must go on with the writing you speak of. And I will repeat here my offer of every assistant I can give, in addition to my prediction of your entire success." Cushing to Hodge, 5 June 1891, Cushing Letter Books 7: 248-50, Huntington Free Library, Bronx, New York.


21 Ibid., 97-175.


25 "Bandelier and I finally found lodgment in the second story of an adobe bunk-house [the Girard House], and as we shared the only bed, we became well acquainted in a trice, for Bandelier immediately and literally kicked me out of bed, calling me a 'damned scrub,' which was my pet name forever after." Hodge quoted in Charles H. Lange, Carroll L. Riley, and Elizabeth M. Lange, ed., The Southwestern Journals of Adolf F. Bandelier, 1885-1888 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1975): 470.

26 Snead, Ruins and Rivals, 141-147.

RECENT DISSERTATIONS


RECENT BIBLIOGRAPHY

[Occasionally, readers call our attention to errors in the entries, usually of a minor typographical character. Under the pressure of getting HAN out, some proofreading errors occasionally slip by. For these we offer a blanket apology, but will not normally attempt corrections. We call attention to the listings in the Bulletin of the History of Archaeology, the entries in the annual bibliographies of Isis, and those in the Bulletin d'information de la SFHSH (Société française pour l'histoire des sciences de l'homme)—each of which takes information from HAN, as we do from them. We welcome and encourage bibliographic suggestions from our readers.]


