Archaeologists have long been intrigued with relationships between Mesoamerica and the southwestern United States (for an overview of this subject, see Cordell 1997; McGuire 1993; Willcox 1986). Emil Haury’s (1945, 1976) studies at Snaketown, Arizona, highlighted interactions between the Hohokam Culture and western Mexico, particularly the Chupícuaro Culture. J. Charles Kelley (1966) later identified shared iconographic elements of Hohokam and Chalchihuites ceramics (see also Braniff 1995).

Recent archaeological investigations in Michoacán and the Sierra Madre Occidental have allowed us to confirm and expand these hypotheses. They have also introduced new elements to our understanding of interactions between the ancient Purépecha (Tarascan) and Chalchihuites cultures, as well as these groups’ mutual
participation in establishing a long-lasting bridge with southwestern communities. (Purépecha is the name applied to the indigenous group that inhabits the central portion of Michoacán and is also the name of their language. Since the colonial period, these people have also been referred to as the Tarascans.) Finally, these investigations have revealed what these Mesoamericans received as a result of their contacts with far northern lands. They indicate that this bridge should be viewed as one of mutual cultural involvement rather than of unidirectional Mesoamerican influence, as usually perceived (e.g., see Kelley 1986 and Schroeder 1966; for a critical review of this unilateral diffusion interpretation, see McGuire 1980).

The contraction of the Mesoamerican northern frontier hundreds of miles to the south in the ninth century A.D. involved the return of the Uacusecha (a group of the ancient Purépecha) and the Chalchihuites (ancestors of the historic Toltec Chichimec; see Hers 1989a) to their respective ancestral lands. In the Relación de Michoacán, the Uacusecha are identified as the noble lineage that led the groups that returned from the north and founded the Tarascan Empire. (Uacusecha means “Eagle Knights” in the Purépecha language.) Our recent studies support the early hypotheses of Jesse Walter Fewkes (1893), Konrad Preuss (1998), and Eduard Seler (1998), who recognized a kindred relationship among peoples seemingly unrelated in time and space: the ancient Mexica, the modern Cora, Huichol, and Mexicanero of the Sierra Madre Occidental, and the Pueblo Indians of the southwestern United States (Figure 17.1).

Recent archaeological investigations have led to three important conclusions. First, they have allowed us to identify the Mesoamerican actors in this northern epic or saga. In the case of Michoacán, we are talking about a group of the ancient Purépecha known as the Uacusecha. In the case of the bearers of Chalchihuites Culture, we are dealing with the ancestors of the historic Toltec Chichimec, when they still occupied the legendary lands of Chicomoztoc. Second, we now believe the respective destinies of these groups were intertwined within the confines of the Sierra Madre Occidental and that together they explored the faraway lands of the Southwest. Finally, we acknowledge the contributions of ancient Southwest cultures to these northern Mesoamericans.

To summarize our hypotheses, we present a table divided horizontally into three sections (Figure 17.2). The upper row of this table is devoted to the long Purépecha history. Based on recent investigations in the Zacapu region (the north-central part of the state of Michoacán), we accord a much greater time depth to Purépecha history than traditionally granted. The middle row of the chart represents Mesoamerican expansion in the southern half of the western Sierra Madre, corresponding to the modern states of Jalisco, Zacatecas, and Durango. This gave way to the Chalchihuites Culture of the Toltec Chichimec, which, together with other peoples, founded Tula in the ninth century. The bottom row relates to the immense territory of Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, and Utah, which shares many common features. Our southwestern research focuses primarily on the Hohokam core area during the Colonial and Sedentary periods.
Vertically, the table is divided into three major chronological stages. These are separated by two periods of considerable change, the first occurring in the sixth century, the second in the ninth century. The curved path of footprints represents an ancient bridge of shared influences between Mesoamerica and the ancient U.S. Southwest, an intricate universe of ideas and beliefs expressed through rituals and images. This bridge is somewhat analogous to the colonial Camino Real, except that the former was not sponsored by a dominant power and led to the Salt–Gila
Figure 17.2. Cultures and chronological stages discussed in the text. Horizontal lines demarcate the Purépecha, the Chalchihiutes or Toltec Chichimec, and cultures of the southwestern United States. Vertical lines define periods before and after circa A.D. 550 (left) and A.D. 850 (right). Loma Alta-phase drawings by Françoise Bagot, except for the plate drawing, from Lumholtz (1981:418). The two figurines are by Veronica Hernández. The potsherd from La Quemada is redrawn from Jiménez Betts and Darling (2000:fig. 10-10). The Hohokam elements are taken from Haury (1976). The chac mool figures from Tula and Ihuatzio are Ignacio Cabral’s drawings from Gendrop (1970: figs. 190, 231). The Betatakin image was digitalized from Noble (1981:58). All remaining drawings are the work of the authors.
The Purépecha of the Loma Alta Phase
Our story begins in Michoacán at the beginning of the long Purépecha sequence, which is marked by three major stages (Michelet 1992). The first, the Loma Alta phase (100 B.C.–A.D. 550/600), was characterized by excellent artistic achievements—particularly in ceramics, sculpture, and architecture—and a distinctive funerary complex. In ancient West Mexico, this phase was contemporaneous with the well-known Shaft Tomb and Guachimontones complexes. The second stage, the Lupe phase (A.D. 600–850), evinced a total break with this ancient tradition. The third stage, represented by the Palacio and Milpillas phases (A.D. 950–1450), is marked by a period of resettlement, the presence of northern elements, and a deliberate will to reconnect with the past. As we shall see, this latter stage coincided with the return of the Uacusecha people and culminated in the rise of the Tarascan Empire, later destroyed by the fierce Nuño Beltran de Guzmán.

The Loma Alta phase was defined at the site of Loma Alta, a funerary island and important ceremonial center located in the middle of Zacapu Lake, which
was artificially drained about 1900. An important feature of this initial phase is the distinctive iconographic repertoire used to decorate polychrome ceramics. This figurative tradition was inherited from the Chupicuaro-Morales tradition (300–100 B.C.; see Braniff 1998) and reached its artistic peak during the Loma Alta phase. It was never surpassed in terms of its technical elaboration, its painters’ virtuosity, or its diversity of more than forty represented motifs. This style, which constituted an artistic language full of rich symbolic meaning, suddenly appeared in Chalchihuites and Hohokam ceramics around A.D. 600, the same time it disappeared from Michoacán at the end of the Loma Alta phase.

Loma Alta ceremonialism is eloquently represented by an exceptional discovery made at the site, a set of forty sculptures placed in a four meter–diameter pit in the middle of an altar (Figures 17.3 and 17.4). These stone images belong to a vast pan-Mesoamerican sculptural tradition but particularly resemble ones found in the Chalchihuites area. The sculptures, many of which were ritually broken or “killed” prior to burial, were deposited during a solemn ritual that marked the dramatic end of this period but also clearly expressed the will to break away from the image cult (Carot 1997, in press). This break can also be seen in the sudden abandonment of all figurative expression in painted ceramics during the subsequent Lupe phase.
Within this set of sculptures, two different traditions can be distinguished. The first group, executed in delicate and detailed carving, represents a great diversity of deities, including some of the most important figures in the Mesoamerican pantheon. One recognizes the old god of fire, Curicaueri, who is identical to contemporaneous Teotihuacán representations of the same god, Huehueteotl. One also finds Tlaloc, the rain god, with his goggled eyes and incised teeth. Other statues represent unique images, such as the unusual naked figure of a bearer (mecapalero) who carries a jar on his back and various phallic sculptures, one of which is anthropomorphized.

The second sculptural tradition is indicative of a true stone cult. More than half of the buried sculptures are stones selected for their original shapes, which evoke natural forms such as fish, snakes, a coyote, a dog, a wing, a half moon, or a human leg. The stones are barely retouched, and only certain elements, such as eyes or teeth, were added to emphasize that they are sculptures, not just simple stones. This ancient cult gains additional relevance and meaning when one recalls that for the Tarascans and Coras, those peculiar shaped stones represented the ancestors (Corona Nuñez 1957; Lumholtz 1981). Zacapu means “place of many rocks, place of origin,” and, as we shall discuss, those groups that had gone north later returned to Zacapu. That is, they came back to the place their ancestors had left centuries before, to their place of origin, where their history began.

Another feature of the Loma Alta phase is its unusual repertoire of funerary practices involving the secondary treatment of burials. These include cremating bones, grinding the ashes to dust, whitening the ashes with lime, and placing the ashes in urns. Ceramic offerings originally associated with these burials were ritually broken, and some sherds were used as secondary offerings when the urns were deposited. Notably, the closest similarities that have been found to such practices are again with the Hohokam Culture. Two urns containing contents similar to those from Loma Alta were also found at the Hervideros site in Durango, Mexico. Other distinctive rituals of the Loma Alta phase include flesh-removing practices, dismemberment, sacrifice by cardiectomy (removal of the heart), and what appears to be a cult of head trophies, a trait that appears centuries later among the Chalchihuities (Carot 2005; Hers 1989a; Pereira 1996, 1999).

This phase is also characterized by monumental architecture. In the middle of the ceremonial island of Loma Alta was constructed a monumental 60 m × 40 m rectangular platform with a sunken patio 24 meters square and 2 meters deep, contemporaneous with those from the neighboring state of Guanajuato. Two other important ceremonial structures are known from the site: a circular enclosure 26 meters in diameter and an unusual semi-subterranean structure 5 meters square with a fire pit at the center. This latter structure, referred to as the Fire God House, is the first pithouse reported in the region or elsewhere in Mesoamerica. With its slab-lined sunken walls and central square fire pit, it resembles pithouses of the southwestern United States. Curiously, this structure can also be compared to the tukipa, the sacred ceremonial place of the Huichols.
Another important discovery at the site was an exceptional ritual vessel that combines the visual language of Teotihuacán with a local technique, the so-called Cheran-style stripped investment (Holien 1977). In this technique, often confused with pseudo-cloisonné, the motifs are incised through layers of different-colored clay surfaces (Figure 17.5). This vessel offers persuasive testimony of the presence of Teotihuacán ceremonialism in the early traditions of the Purépecha and suggests the training of Purépecha scholars at Teotihuacán. The vessel depicts a human figure wearing the paraphernalia of a Teotihuacán priest, most notably the dorsal disc, or tezcacuitlapilli, a power insignia par excellence. This insignia endured for centuries not only in Michoacán (Noguera 1944; Pereira 1999) but also in the Chalchihuites Culture, the southwestern United States, at Tula and related Chichén Itzá, and even later at Paquimé. At Teotihuacán, cultural interaction with the Purépecha is demonstrated by the presence of objects from the West, particularly Cheran-style pottery vessels, placed as offerings in some burials (Carot 2005; Gómez 2002).
THE INCIPIENT CHALCHIHUITES: THE CANUTILLO PHASE

About A.D. 100, when the Morales (Guanajuato) and Loma Alta (Michoacán) phases were developing, the Mesoamerican frontier underwent its first great expansion northward in three wide swaths extending toward the northeast in the Sierra Gorda and the Potosí Plateau, toward the central north (the modern states of Guanajuato and Querétaro), and toward the northwest. This expansion followed the same U-shaped curve that marks the courses of the Lerma-Santiago rivers to the west and the Moctezuma-Pánuco rivers to the east and is a product of the arid conditions of the central plateau (Braniff et al. 2001:fig. 3). The northwestern zone, in which we are most interested here, was the territory of the so-called Chalchihuites Culture. In its initial Canutillo phase (ca. A.D. 50–550, based on radiocarbon dates from Kelley and the Cerro del Huistle site [Hers 1989a:fig. 3]), the Chalchihuites Culture flourished and extended along the eastern flank of the Sierra Madre Occidental between the Grande de Santiago and the Mezquital rivers, an area that corresponds to the modern states of Zacatecas and Jalisco. In essence, this culture seems to have originated as a colonizing movement.

The place or places of origin of the peoples who participated in this journey are still to be resolved, as are the reasons that drove them to abandon the land of their ancestors and explore and conquer new territories. It is probably no coincidence that this first great Mesoamerican expansion occurred at a time when the central valleys were experiencing major territorial resettlements and deep cultural transformations as a result of the eruptions of the volcanoes Popocatepetl and Xitle and the rise of Teotihuacán as a major ceremonial center (as witnessed by its monumental pyramids during the Tzacualli phase).

The archaeological evidence, including the presence of tripod vessels of composed silhouette and incised decoration, points to the central valleys as a source for the participants’ origin. One also recognizes in some geometric motifs an inheritance from the Chupícuaro Culture and elements of the succeeding Morales phase in Guanajuato. Finally, a certain style of resist-decorated pottery is very similar to that found in the Jalisco Heights.

Following this initial stage, the essential traits of the culture prevailed, including the splitting off of the great majority of the population into small villages. Paradoxically, this dispersal was marked by a surprising unity, reflected archaeologically by a settlement pattern dominated by defensive systems and the presence of common architectural forms or ceramic types, among other aspects. One of the most powerful factors underlying this unity seems to have been the presence of great pan-regional sanctuaries, such as the one at La Quemada. Another aspect of the culture that is particularly relevant to our argument is the deliberate iconophobia characterized by a complete absence of figurative elements that prevailed during the initial Canutillo phase. Instead, all decoration was reduced to geometric motifs, dominated by the stepped scroll (xicacolihqui).
THE U.S. SOUTHWEST PRIOR TO A.D. 600

By this time, some communities of the U.S. Southwest had been in contact with southern peoples for centuries. Although these contacts are still far from adequately understood, the remarkable linguistic unity of the Uto-Aztecan languages suggests millennia of population movements and cultural transformations (Hill 1992; Hill and Hays-Gilpin 1999; Valiñas Coalla 2000). The corn-bean-squash triad, introduced into the Southwest from Mesoamerica sometime prior to the beginning of the first millennium B.C. (Cordell 1997:124–126), also supports southern connections. Relatively little is known, however, about the peoples who occupied the immense territory between the U.S. Southwest and Nuclear Mesoamerica during these remote times. All we do know is that they did not participate in the Mesoamerican world. Much remains to be learned about Mesoamerican influences on southwestern ceramics during the initial phases of the Hohokam, Mogollon, and Basketmaker-Pueblo cultures, prior to the Chalchihuites’ expansion into Durango.

As these investigations develop, rock art offers a particularly eloquent source of information. It provides our earliest indication of exchange networks between northwestern Mexico and the southwestern United States—or, as we refer to this region here, the Northwest—long before the Toltec-Purépecha journey north (Hers cited in Braniff et al. 2001:66).

THE SIXTH-CENTURY DISRUPTION

During the second half of the sixth century A.D., dramatic events marked the end of the Teotihuacán world. These events must have affected the entire Mesoamerican universe, particularly in the realm of ideas. As noted earlier, the ancestors of the Purépecha were one of the groups in contact with, and under the religious sway of, the grand metropolis of Teotihuacán. These ties were shaken by profound transformations and internal disruptions, including the rise of a triumphant religious iconoclastic movement, which probably led to the migration or expulsion of those who refused to forsake their sacred images. These migrants traveled toward the land of the Chalchihuites, where they profoundly influenced local religious conceptions and attitudes toward images. It was at this time that the Chalchihuites, following a long period of iconophobia and strictly geometric art, initiated a new phase of intense figurative creativity. Here we focus on two developments: evidence for a religious disruption in the Purépecha world between the Loma Alta and Lupe phases (ca. A.D. 550) and the appearance of Purépecha elements among the Chalchihuites of the Alta Vista phase (ca. A.D. 550–850).

The Purépecha Disruption

We have noted that a major closing ceremony took place on the Loma Alta island, at which time ancient sacred stone images were ritually broken and placed in
a pit in the middle of an altar, together with the previously mentioned Purépecha-
Teotihuacán ritual vessel. This disruption, both real and symbolic, corresponded to
the end of the Loma Alta tradition and a figurative language that had flourished
for centuries. Evidence of this disruption is reflected in the architecture, when all
the structures, including the great sunken patio, were completely filled and sealed.
This period coincided with a climatic phenomenon that lowered the level of Zacapu
Lake. As new areas of land emerged, they were immediately occupied, as evident at
the ceremonial and funerary site of Guadalupe, built on a low butte that emerged
at the same time, three kilometers south of the site of Loma Alta.

Despite these disruptions, the Loma Alta site and its surroundings continued
to be used. The ceremonial center grew eastward as fill accumulated in areas where
the surrounding marsh had dried up. At the same time, at the foot of the island a
well was “killed” by placing at its bottom, before filling and sealing it, an arrange-
ment of stones and offerings of ritually broken water-jar necks and painted and
incised ceramics. One of these ceramics, decorated in a negative technique with
a bird-beaked and feathered-body aquatic serpent, bears an ancient image of the
Bird-Serpent, which recurs throughout the history of this Northwest region (Fig-
ure 17.6). This motif also resembles the pan-Pueblo plumed water-serpent deities,
Paalóloqangw of the Hopi (Whiteley 1998:193), Kolowisi of the Zuni, and Awanyuw of
the Tewa.

Thus a number of elements provide evidence of major changes and disrup-
tions in both the cultural and climatic realms. During the succeeding Lupe phase,
those Purépecha people who remained in the region abruptly transitioned from a
centuries-old figurative design system to an austere period of image rejection, which
coincided with the appearance of elements related to the art of war (Pereira 1999).

The Intertwined Destinies of the Chalchihuites and the
Purépecha-Uacusecha

The Loma Alta ideology did not disappear. Rather, its images and rituals
moved north. At the site of La Quemada, recently discovered ceramics provide evi-
dence of ties between Chalchihuites and Purépecha-Uacusecha groups. Ceramists
at La Quemada employed a Purépecha technology, including a negative polychrome technique, that was distinct from the older local Chalchihuites negative technique, no longer in use by the sixth century. La Quemada ceramics are also decorated with mixed motifs from Loma Alta and Chalchihuites iconographies (Braniff et al. 2001:247, fig. 3).

The fact that such an eloquent fusion of ritual visual languages occurred at La Quemada, the largest of the Chalchihuites sanctuaries, is not surprising. (For additional discussion of the La Quemada site and its place in Chalchihuites Culture, see Hers 1998, 2002, 2005.) Purépecha migrants, defenders of an ideology expressed through a vivid corpus of images, were apparently well received by the La Quemada faithful. In fact, at the time of the Purépecha disruption (ca. A.D. 550), the Chalchihuites community was undergoing a period of spiritual innovation, evidenced by the flourishing of figurative art following centuries of a strictly geometric tradition. In regional centers as well as humble villages, decorated ceramic types were revived. Through the use of diverse techniques practiced since earlier times, an original iconographic corpus began to flourish (Kelley and Kelley 1971). A new figurative style of rock art also echoed the same corpus of images (Hers 2001).

Negative polychrome ceramic plates that strongly express this religious Purépecha-Chalchihuites symbiosis have been found only at La Quemada, but additional evidence of this symbiosis can be seen within the confines of the north. The most obvious element is the mythological human-serpent figure, which emanated from Loma Alta art and appeared in Chalchihuites iconography, where it became one of its predominant designs (Figure 17.7).

Other probable testimony of the Purépecha Culture’s contribution to the Chalchihuites is found in the Sierra del Nayar (the southern part of the Sierra Madre Occidental). Here, two chac mool sculptures flanked a temple stairway at the Cerro del Huistle, a small Chalchihuites site we will return to later. This chac mool figure appears linked to a northern oracle tradition, yet a Purépecha signature is reflected in the curious combination of different techniques used to carve the sacred image. In the first example (Figure 17.4c), the stone carving, although crude, clearly depicts the typical reclining chac mool posture as well as two actions typically attributed to his character: the receiving of offerings on his body, now transformed into a ceremonial table, and the opening of his mouth to transmit the divine word. In the second example (Figure 17.4d), the native stone of the sculpture is nearly untouched, and the natural shape barely alludes to the same figure of the chac mool. With just a few strokes, the general square form was modified to evoke the bent body and erect head of the chac mool. What we consider the neck was carved by abrasion to distinguish the head as the most active part of the figure, as if the intention was not to impose upon the surface a precise form but rather to liberate the force or being already present in the stone. Thus at the entrance to this small temple are two different conceptions of the same sacred image existing side-by-side. As discussed earlier, this is similar to the two sets of sculptures buried at the Loma Alta altar.
The Purépecha’s presence seems to have had an additional impact on these northerners’ lives. A short time after the flourishing of figurative art, beginning in A.D. 600, the Chalchihuites people experienced profound changes: they again embarked on their ancestors’ march northward and colonized hundreds of square kilometers of Durango’s Sierra Madre Occidental, considerably extending their territory to the high Conchos River Basin (Barbot and Punzo 1997; Berrojalbiz in press a and b; Hers 2005; Hers and Soto 1995; Hers, Soto, and Polaco 1998; Punzo Diaz in press a and b; Tsukada in press; for a discussion of the impact of the Teotihuacán population diaspora on Mesoamerican expansion in Durango, see Flores, Hers, and Porcayo in press). Accompanying the Chalchihuites on this great epic were Purépecha migrants. This helps explain the presence of a distinctive funerary ritual at Hervideros, one of the major Chalchihuites sites in Durango, where the Tepehuanes and Santiago rivers meet in the high Nazas Basin. Here were found urns
filled with finely ground ashes, similar to the cremation urns found at Loma Alta in its initial phase, as described earlier.

Much remains to be understood about interactions between the Purépecha and Chalchihuites, but we now have greater insight concerning one aspect of their common history: how they joined forces to colonize the Durango mountain range and establish strong bonds with territories even farther north, in Arizona and New Mexico, during the seventh to ninth centuries A.D.

**THE NORTHERN ROAD**

Once again, a comparison can be made with colonial history. Just as post-conquest Nahuatl and Tarascan communities participated in the Spanish colonization of northern New Spain without loss of their respective identities, so, many centuries earlier, did the Chalchihuites and the Uacusecha-Purépecha come into contact with far northwestern communities without losing aspects of their respective cultures. In the following discussion, we first identify certain recognizable Purépecha and Chalchihuites elements in the pre-Hispanic cultures of the U.S. Southwest, then examine some elements that moved in the opposite direction into the Mesoamerican region. Finally, we suggest some ways in which the nature of these cultural interactions can be understood.

The seventh century in the U.S. Southwest was marked by the emergence of localized architectural and ceramic traditions that archaeologists refer to as the Hohokam, Mogollon, and Anasazi or Ancestral Pueblo. As relationships intensified among northern Mesoamerican and southwestern communities between A.D. 600 and 850, it is likely that the older trails were used again, the same ones traveled long before. As a number of authors have noted (e.g., Haury 1976; Kelley 1966; Kelly 1943; Nelson 1986; Schroeder 1966), it is among the Hohokam Culture that these contacts with Mesoamerican groups are most evident. Much of this evidence is based on the pioneering excavations at Snaketown (Gladwin et al. 1965; Haury 1976), the Grewe site (Woodward 1931), and Hodges Ruin (Kelly 1978). Since then, Hohokam archaeology has expanded considerably (Crown 1991; Doyel 1991). However, until now, those sites have produced the most relevant collections to document the Mesoamerican connection (McGuire 1993:100).

**Purépecha Iconography and Rituality among the Hohokam**

Evidence of Hohokam and Mesoamerican cultural relationships, principally with the Chupícuaro tradition, was first identified by Emil Haury (1976) and later substantiated by Beatriz Braniff (1995) on the basis of materials from the Morales phase. Now we are better able to specify the nature and chronology of these ties. These interactions did not occur directly with the Chupícuaro but through the intermediary of the Loma Alta tradition, the immediate inheritor of the Chupícuaro-Morales tradition.
The influence of the old Purépecha iconography on Hohokam Culture is striking. Of the forty motifs identified from Loma Alta, twenty-six are present in Hohokam ceramics, compared with only fourteen in the Chalchihuites corpus (Carot 2001; see also Teague 1998:178, fig. 8.3). Furthermore, this repertoire was expressed with the same mastery as seen in the Loma Alta style, using swift and sure strokes and painting in a schematic but expressive manner. The designs are displayed on the interiors or exteriors of the ceramics, sometimes both, and appear in free arrangement, friezes, or quartered composition, as in the old Chupícuaro ceramics. In some cases, a single figure fills the entire space.

Among the animal designs, one can identify aquatic birds with open wings and large beaks, ducks or geese, serpents and caimans, deer, and squirrels. The human figures generally appear as lines of dancers, each with well-marked body movements and frequently schematized in simple undulated and vertical linear silhouette. This unique manner of depicting the dance is characteristic of both the Loma Alta style and Hohokam ceramics and rock art (Bostwick 2002). Among the geometric designs, the stepped scroll, or xicalcoliuhqui, prevails. It is also very common in Chalchihuites and Hohokam iconography, as pointed out by Braniff (1995) in her important study of northern iconography. We have already noted the similarities between certain funerary customs of the Purépecha and Hohokam, including cremation and the breaking of offerings. We also recall the unique case of the sunken Fire God House from the ceremonial architecture at Loma Alta and its resemblance to southwestern pithouse forms.

The Chalchihuites and the Hohokam

It has long been proposed that the fourfold division of the interior decoration of Hohokam ceramic plates was inherited from the Chalchihuites. This inheritance involved not only particular motifs (Kelley 1966:102) but also a true Mesoamerican cosmovision, with gods and colors associated with each of the cardinal directions. Additional evidence of this relationship is seen in the mirrors with mosaics (Carot 2005; Woodward 1941) and the so-called pseudo-cloisonné decoration (Hers 1983). The strong similarities between anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines the Chalchihuites inherited from the ancient Morales phase can be underscored here as well.

Another Hohokam element widely considered to have originated in Mesoamerica is the ball game—its general conception, not the particular floor plan of the ballcourts. In this respect, investigations recently conducted in Durango have confirmed the importance of this practice, as expressed by the presence of numerous small ballcourts at major sites and in the most humble villages (Berrojalbiz 2005, in press b; Hers 1989b, in press c; Kelley 1991). Additionally, copper bells appeared early among the Chalchihuites, by the seventh or eighth century (Hers 1990), and from the ninth century onward were emblematic of trade relations between the Southwest and Mesoamerica.
The Flute Player Route

The most innovative aspect of our study of Mesoamerican and southwestern relationships pertains to the contribution of the U.S. Southwest to Mesoamerica, which has been little considered. Earlier studies of this cultural bridge incorrectly viewed it as a unilateral movement of influences from south to north. In the rock art of the Sierra Madre Occidental, however, we can clearly see what these Meso-americans received from their far northern neighbors. In this respect, the image of the flute player stands out as a symbol par excellence of economic and ritual relations between these widespread communities. We now know that this versatile figure is found in rock art from the Grand Canyon to the Lerma-Santiago Basin. Over this wide territory, the flute player’s music was heard and his heroic deeds commemorated.

This character, popularly but erroneously referred to today as Kokopelli (Hers 2001, in press b; Malotki 2000), appears in the U.S. Southwest during the sixth century. He is found in the lively scenes of Hohokam ceramics and rock art, as well as in the territory of the northern Ancestral Pueblo Culture. A.D. 600 was a time of great social fluidity and interaction, when iconography expressed alliances in ethnically diversified settlements. This was also when this well-known figure appeared in diverse forms in the Pueblo rock art style (Cordell 1997:249). About this same time, the flute player and other important southwestern motifs were carved and painted in many places along the Sierra Madre Occidental. Thus just as the Chalchihuites and Purépecha made themselves present in the far north in the context of Hohokam cultural florescence and the beginnings of Pueblo Culture, so too did the ancestors of the Pueblo Indians leave their mark in northern Mesoamerican lands.

What was the nature of this interrelationship? To answer this question, we must reopen a debate that has been trapped between two sterile extremes: isolationism versus a centralizing view of a radiating Mesoamerica. The isolationist tendency, which ignores the possible impacts of Mesoamerican cultures on the Southwest, seems to correspond to a defensive attitude, as if recognizing the importance of this impact would undermine the relevance of the achievements of southwestern communities. This view also seems to reflect a certain ignorance of Mesoamerican archaeology in the southwestern academic world, comparable only to the ignorance that prevails among Mesoamericanists relative to the Southwest.

Contrasting with this isolationist view are numerous interpretations based on an image of Nuclear Mesoamerica as a civilizing force that radiated toward simpler northern populations, creating pale copies of their southern prototypes in an area subject to the needs of the great centers of civilization. From Charles Di Peso’s diffusionist interpretations for Paquimé to the more recent world system model applied to the Greater Northwest, this centralism obscures the already scarce information we have about the people who interacted with the ancient Southwest—the Chalchihuites peoples of northern Mesoamerica. Chalchihuites iconography itself suffers from this centralist prejudice because it is usually presented as a product of
illiterate artists who copied models from the Mesoamerican pantheon, albeit poorly (see, for example, Kelley and Kelley 1971:31).

The origin of the problem lies in a view that considers the Mesoamerican universe profoundly different from that of the U.S. Southwest, a world of pyramids and palaces associated with societies marked by social, economic, political, and religious elites that ruled over large cities and developed state formations versus essentially egalitarian rural communities in the peripheral regions. But another Mesoamerica existed as well, the northern one, which shared many of its religious values, cosmovisions, traditions, and techniques with Nuclear Mesoamerica but lacked its great cities and states. The main limitations to sociopolitical state formation were its vast and sparsely populated territory, which was continually expanding and threatened by war—both wars of resistance and latent harassment from local non-Mesoamerican groups and threats from nomads who occupied the bordering lands in the arid east. Internal conflicts must have been constant in a society of colonizers in which warriors held the prevailing status.

The importance of warfare is reflected throughout the Chalchihuites territory by the presence of diverse defensive systems, strictly adapted to the topography of each locale. Such systems were responses not to the dangers of territorial conquest but to the threat of sudden and fatal attacks directed toward plundering and a quest for captives, some destined for ritual sacrifice (Hers 1989a:chapter 4). Under such circumstances, the coercive force of any potential elite would find its power drastically diminished if it were deemed incapable of efficiently protecting its subjects. Thus it is not surprising that even the major sites have failed to produce evidence of a highly differentiated elite, in terms of either funerary apparel or residential space. Nor has any kind of territorial supremacy been documented at a regional scale beyond the narrow spatial limits of immediate protection.\(^7\)

Diverse Chalchihuites communities developed forms of sociopolitical and economic organization that were essentially egalitarian but certainly not simple, based more on the force of consensus than of coercion and structured according to lineage hierarchies and their alliances within the same settlements and at a regional level. Viewed in this perspective, the Chalchihuites world would have been as complex and difficult for outsiders to comprehend as, for example, historic Hopi society. At all levels, Chalchihuites life was marked by a tension between alliances within each settlement or region and by hierarchical segmentation organized by delimited kinship units and religious or military societies. This tension between unity and segmentation was eloquently expressed in the architecture and rock art. Indeed, residential spaces were clearly segmented around patios or familial courts. In rock art, the recurring aspect was the abundance, in the same locations, of social-marker shields, each one unique, as if to say “we are here together, but we respect our differences.”

The Chalchihuites therefore shared essential traits with ancient southwestern communities. They developed an “egalitarianism” that is difficult to comprehend from our Western reality, one that defies the simplicity of our categories, for example,
for the great Hohokam irrigation networks or the monumental constructions of the Chaco world. The cultures of northern Mesoamerica and the ancient Southwest were continually at the mercy of precarious agriculture in difficult and unpredictable climatic conditions. It was the strength of their social ties that allowed them to defy the region’s territorial immensity and maintain unity at some level despite migrations, colonizing expansions, and the hazards of wars and droughts.

Had the distance between Nuclear Mesoamerica and the Southwest not been so great or the intermediate territories not been colonized by the Chalchihuites, the relationships between both universes would have been very different and closer to models proposed in the past, which emphasized their deep disparities. Nevertheless, a great spatial interval still remains to be documented in the modern states of Chihuahua and Sonora, between the northernmost Chalchihuites communities located at the southern limit of the high Conchos Basin (for example, the site of Loma San Gabriel on the Florido River) and Hohokam, Mogollon, and northern Ancestral Pueblo lands. As has recently occurred in Durango, it is expected that future investigations, particularly rock art research, will reveal evidence of the routes by which people, ideas, and goods traveled through Chihuahua and Sonora (see Guevara Sánchez, Chapter 18).

Chalchihuites rock art testifies to what this far northern territory might have signified to northern Mesoamericans. By studying the distributions of these rock art sites, spaced twenty or thirty kilometers apart, we can document the daily stages of the journeys along the route. In addition to the flute player, the rock art of northwestern Mexico and the U.S. Southwest shares other motifs, including women with the characteristic Pueblo butterfly hairdo, whose presence at sites in Durango may indicate that women also participated in these expeditions (Braniff et al. 2001:245–248). Representations of “exotic” animals such as the buffalo and pronghorn enabled travelers to evoke their faraway lands, where heroes undertook great deeds as merchants, explorers, pilgrims, and warriors.

The bow and arrow must have been one of the most significant technological contributions of the ancient Southwest to the Chalchihuites; the weapon is later known and depicted in Nuclear Mesoamerica by Chichimec archers. The image of the archer is present in Hohokam ceramics during the period that concerns us here (Haury 1976:figs. 12.87, 12.92). The Chalchihuites also adopted this theme in their rock art, recording their new acquisition (Figure 17.8).

In the Chapalagana Basin of the southern Sierra Madre Occidental, at a site with engravings associated with the occupation of the Cerro del Huistle, we find even richer evidence of what the north may have meant to those who visited this sanctuary. Before we examine this evidence, recall that the Huistlenians were representative of areas in which Chalchihuites settlements did not grow beyond the level of villages and hamlets but who nevertheless were able to organize their defenses in an autonomous way. Yet despite the apparent simplicity of their material culture, they did not live an isolated existence. Without depending on any regional center for their security, they participated in extensive exchange networks for valuable goods,
including marine shells, green amazonite, turquoise, and copper bells. In their ceramics, lithic industry, and architectural materials and forms, they demonstrated a thorough participation in the Chalchihuites Culture (Hers 1992, 1998, 2005).

On the side of a long cliff covered by hundreds of motifs, the Huistlenians selected an isolated panel to summarize their history in the north, grouping three scenes and incorporating an irregularity in the rock’s surface. At the lower end of the panel, three individuals walk in a line upstream, toward the north. This is the Mesoamerican convention for migration. It is probable that the Huistlenians participated in the great territorial expansion that occurred around A.D. 600 in Durango’s Sierra Madre, as part of a Chalchihuites colonizing movement from the southern part of their territory 400 kilometers to the north. In the middle of the rock panel, a principal figure, wearing a headdress and holding a dart or cane, subdues another figure by the head in a conventional gesture of conquest. We know warriors played an important role in many aspects of Chalchihuites life and that warfare found its religious justification in human sacrifice. Above this conquest scene, a narrow cornice interrupts the smooth rock surface, spanning its entire width. We believe that when this panel was composed, the artists intentionally included this natural irregularity in their discourse. Indeed, had they wished to exclude it, there would have been sufficient space below to compose the three scenes without recourse to a scaffold. This inclusion of natural elements in the composition is a common aspect of Chalchihuites rock art and that of many other cultures. The convention was probably used here to distinguish the two lesser scenes, with their apparently historic content, from the personage who dominates the panel to underscore his non-mundane character or the different space of his actions.

Above the transverse line, we recognize the flute player. Perhaps the panel can be translated in this way: “We migrated to the north, we conquered, and in this
manner, we got to know the flute player world.” Obviously, there are many questions about this story. Nevertheless, the rock art panel suggests the importance the Huistlenians attributed to their adventures in the far north and their participation in the mythic and ritual universe associated with the flute player. Studies of Chalchihuites rock art now in progress, including documentation of the diverse forms in which the flute player appears, will allow us to better understand the significance of the flute player to the Chalchihuites. For now, the fact that this versatile figure was shared by so many communities over such immense distances and across so many centuries evokes the mythical character of Poseyemu-Montezuma-Jesus, so distinctive of the Pueblo world (Parmentier 1979).

Various hypotheses can be proposed to explain such intense contacts between these remote areas: commerce in precious goods, such as green stones (amazonite, turquoise); pilgrimages to large sanctuaries, such as those of La Quemada or Cruz de la Boquilla (near Sombrerete, Zacatecas), where a network of causeways seems to have channeled the flow and ritual movements of the faithful; expeditions to sacred places, such as those that mark the extensive sacred geography of the modern Huichol; war adventures; migrations. But the data are still missing to establish accurate hypotheses. Whatever happened, we do know that beyond its diversity, the sociopolitical and religious organization of these peoples was connected through the ancient trails of the Greater Northwest and shared a central element: a force capable of resisting considerable territorial resettlement. This force proved vital to the Chalchihuites in the face of dramatic circumstances that marked the ninth century.

THE NINTH-CENTURY DISRUPTION
Wars, starvation, droughts? The reasons behind the generalized contraction of the northern Mesoamerican frontier in the ninth century to the limits that prevailed in the sixteenth century are still debated. About A.D. 850, much of the Chalchihuites territory in the modern states of Zacatecas and Jalisco was abandoned. Some of the population may have gone to the north to the Sierra Madre of Durango, where a Chalchihuites enclave persisted for some time. Others may have taken refuge in the mountain range known today as the Great Nayar. Others went south, back toward their original ancestral lands (Braniff and Hers 1998; Carot 2005; Hers 2002).

Historical sources from the sixteenth century preserve the memory of these migrations when the so-called Chicomeztquenses, or natives of Chicomeztoc, abandoned the north and resettled among peoples who had not participated in the colonization and loss of this area. These historical references are distorted by a confusion that has prevailed until now concerning these northern immigrants. Commonly, all Chichimec groups have been viewed as nomadic non-Mesoamerican tribes, similar to those who dominated the north from the thirteenth century and violently resisted Spanish conquest. This point of view, however, ignores recent progress in northern Mesoamerican archaeology, which allows us to differentiate between nomadic Chichimecs and Mesoamerican ones, those people who left the
north, who are referred to in the sources as Chicomoztoc (Seven Caves) for their place of origin.

When they returned to the south, not all of these northern Mesoamericans were well received. Their arrival marked significant changes. Among the various Chichimec groups who emerged from the northern Chicomoztoc, two stand out in the tradition transmitted by Sahagún’s informants: the Toltec Chichimec and the Michoaques, the latter referred to as the Uacusecha in the Relación de Michoacán. These groups have also been documented by recent archaeological investigations.

Similar phenomena occurred in both cases. From the north came the bow-and-arrow peoples, strongly organized warriors ready to adapt to migration and take over new territories, migrants able to impose their way of worshipping the gods with human sacrifices and tzompantli, or skull racks. These people built singular cloisters and gathered warrior assemblies through rituals ordered by the celestial bodies. Their oracles were held in great esteem, including one character, sculptured in the chac mool form, who received the offerings of the faithful and expressed through his mouth the divine will. In this way, the fates of both groups were repeatedly intertwined, first during their epic adventure in the far northern lands of the ancient Southwest and later during their reincorporation into Nuclear Mesoamerica.

THE SOUTHWARD RETURN OF THE NORTHERN MESOAMERICANS

As we have pointed out, the return of the northerners described by Indian informants in historical sources is recognized archaeologically by a suite of coherent elements related to religious and military power: the chac mool, the hall cloister, and the tzompantli. Significantly, both the Uacusecha and the Toltec Chichimec expressed this same complex of ritual elements. (For a synthesis of this northern legacy, see Hers 2002:53.) Furthermore, in both cases the figure of the flute player has recently been recognized, tangible evidence of the inheritance these northerners preserved from their heroic deeds in the Greater Northwest (Hernández Díaz 2006).

The return of the Toltec Chichimec took place in the Tula region, where other groups of northerners from the central north (the modern states of Querétaro and Guanajuato) had migrated long before. For this reason, while the multiethnic city of Tula flourished under the rule of the Toltec Chichimec warriors, its northern inheritance was diverse and decisive in its power equilibrium. It is in this perspective that Tula’s attempts to recover parts of the lost north by establishing precarious settlements in Querétaro, Guanajuato, and San Luis Potosí can be understood (Braniff et al. 2001:106–112; Braniff and Hers 1998).

Two or three centuries after the northward migration of the Uacusecha, the return of these northern peoples seems to have occurred in several stages and various regions. From the Lerma corridor to the Zacapu region, archaeological evidence documents a group of powerful and strongly organized immigrants who intruded on southern lands and began occupying different areas until their return to the region from whence their ancestors had departed in the sixth century A.D. At San Antonio
Carupó and Nogales on the south slope of the Lerma corridor, they established new settlements and raised ceremonial constructions with the innovative hall-cloister form related to Chalchihuites architecture (Faugère-Kalfon 1996; Pereira, Migeon, and Michelet 2005). By the tenth century they had returned to the Zacapu region and founded the first settlement at the edge of the Zacapu Basin during the Palacio phase. Later, during the Milpillas phase, as large establishments flourished amid the barren and well-protected badlands of the Zacapu region, they undertook rituals that underscored their faraway origins in Michoacán (Carot 2001:131). This effort to reveal their roots and return to their origins is eloquently expressed in the famous negatively decorated polychrome Tarascan ceramics, which mimic those of the old Loma Alta phase, so well imitated that they have produced chronological confusion among archaeologists (Carot 2005; Caso 1930). Finally, these northerners established themselves in Purépecha country, where they created a powerful state, the so-called Tarascan Empire, that soon opposed the Mexica Empire. The Relación de Michoacán identifies these people as Chichimecs (in other words, northerners) but also clearly recognizes them as affiliated with local inhabitants. Indeed, these sources emphasize that the newcomers, the Uacusecha or Eagle Knights, shared the same Purépecha language and pantheon as those who had remained in Michoacán (Franco Mendoza 2000).

THE NORTH IN THE LAST CENTURIES BEFORE THE SPANISH ARRIVAL

About the time the Chicomoztoc peoples arrived in Nuclear Mesoamerica and consolidated their political power, the Hohokam tradition with its Mesoamerican legacy evolved on its own, reaching its greatest achievements and influencing the flourishing Classic Mimbres art. Through this intermediary, Mesoamerican heritage from the first millennium persisted into Casas Grandes world imagery (Brody 2004:81–86; Moulard 2002:185–197).

By about the eleventh century, new contributions from the U.S. Southwest appeared in the Chalchihuites enclave in Durango. Among these developments, the cliff dwellings are the most evident, dispersed throughout the Sierra Madre in diverse forms and with varying functions (Lazalde 1984, 1987; Punzo in press a; Hers in press a). At the same time, this enclave, isolated for a while from the south and abandoned by the northern Mesoamericans, reestablished its bonds with Nuclear Mesomerica through the coastal route. Indeed, between A.D. 950 and 1250 in the coastal plain, the Aztatlán expansion occurred, moving the Mesoamerican frontier hundreds of kilometers to the north, from the Piaxtla to the Fuerte rivers. As such, this coastal route was consolidated long before it was traveled by the first Spanish expeditions to the lands of Cibola.

Meanwhile, in the Southwest the so-called Chaco Phenomenon occurred, characterized by the splendor of its constructions and its network of roads extending throughout the territory. Echoes of the old bonds with the Chalchihuites can be
recognized in the esteem for copper bells and turquoise held by the participants in this complicated political and religious system. Pilgrimages seem to have played a central role in this formidable integration system (Cordell cited in Braniff et al. 2001:102). It is reminiscent of the great pan-regional sanctuary at La Quemada, also marked by an extended grid of causeways (Nelson 1995).

Toward the thirteenth century, considerable changes occurred in the Greater North, both in Mexico and the U.S. Southwest. The inland route was disrupted when the Tepehuanes, originating from Sonoran lands, occupied the eastern valleys of the Durango mountain range formerly abandoned by the Mesoamericans (Berrojalbiz 2005, in press a and b). On the Pacific Coast another Mesoamerican retreat took place, and Culiacán became the last great urban center along this coastal route. Meanwhile, high in the Sierra Madre of Durango, the Acazees and the Xiximes, who later confronted the Spaniards and were drastically decimated, are considered the descendants of the Chalchihuites Culture (Punzo 1999, in press a).

In the U.S. Southwest another great cultural and territorial resettlement took place, which constitutes the roots of the historic Pueblos and the O’Odham. The so-called Southwest Regional Cult focused on agricultural fertility rituals and addressed the integrative needs of communities facing migration and ethnic division (Crown 1994). Eventually, this gave way to a flourishing figurative style in ceramics and mural painting (e.g., Hibben 1975:9–66) in which motifs appear that were originally Mesoamerican and were later introduced into the Southwest (Crown 1994:217–225; see also Weigand 2004). The Mesoamerican origins of these motifs can be precisely identified. The majority appear in Chalchihuites rock art, dated between A.D. 600 and 850 (Hers 2005), and include the famous horned serpent, which later appears in the rock art of Chaco Canyon in the Southwest (Crown 1994:220).

To the south in Paquimé, the memory of the Toltec warriors is recognizable in the tezcatlalapilli, or dorsal copper shields, similar to those carried by Tula warrior figures known as the Atlantes, and in the series of human skulls suspended for exhibition. By this time, the bond uniting the Southwest and Mesoamerica no longer passed through the inland Chalchihuites road. Rather, the prevailing route was now the coastal road dominated by the city of Culiacán, which led inland north to Paquimé.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Relationships between the U.S. Southwest and Mexico were not developed by the great state formations of Teotihuacán, Tula, or Tenochtitlán but rather through the mediations of diverse communities of northern Mesoamerica. Like the ancestors of the Pueblo Indians, these communities developed a sociopolitical and economic organization that was essentially rural and egalitarian, based on maize agriculture in lands constantly threatened by the adversities of drought. Their complex religious and ceremonial lives enabled them to preserve their identities across an immense
territory, the boundaries of which fluctuated according to the hazards of war and migrations and within which sacred geography and great pilgrimages played a predominant role.

A century ago, some of the great pioneers in anthropology recognized affinities between the ancient Mexica, the inhabitants of the Great Nayar, and the Pueblo Indians. A century later, archaeology is able to confirm these astute observations and document the long history of the Northwest, when the Toltec Chichimec and the Uacusecha crossed destinies in the Chalchihuites territory of the Sierra Madre Occidental and developed strong bonds in the faraway lands of Arizona and New Mexico. This remote epic did not entirely disappear, as these peoples inherited in many ways the cultural legacy of the northerners.

At the time of the conquest, the Mexicas (Aztecs) were proud to have originated from Chicomoztoc and saw themselves as descendants of the Toltec Chichimec. Despite many differences between the Mexicas and their mythical ancestors, they preserved in their religious life essential elements of their northern roots. As we pointed out in our introduction, comparisons of the ancient Mexicas and modern Huichols, Coras, and Mexicaneros by Eduard Seler and Konrad Preuss that seemed so audacious at first are now supported by a historical basis that can be traced back to the northern Chalchihuites. Indeed, these people inherited a similar Toltec Chichimec background.

Except in the case of the Mexica, a deep misunderstanding of the northern epic we have synthesized here still prevails. Indeed, in an obvious reference to their Toltec Chichimec ancestry, the Mexica chose the north side of the principal pyramid to erect the Casa de las Aguilas (House of the Eagle Knights) at the center of the most sacred place in Tenochtitlán. The layout and decoration of this singular construction follow the model of the Toltec Chichimec cloister, found, for example, at La Quemada and Tula. Symmetrically, on the south side of the pyramid they constructed a temple inspired by the Teotihuacán model. In this way, the Mexica expressed the complex cultural confluence characterizing the origins of their world.

After centuries of conquest among peoples who best resisted and defended their own cultures, other descendants of the long history reconstructed here also stand out: the modern Cora, Huichol, and Mexicanero communities of the Sierra Madre Occidental and the Pueblo Indians of Arizona and New Mexico, particularly the Hopi. Certain Chalchihuites sculptures eloquently reveal the legacy of this ancient shared history, such as the anthropomorphic phallus carrying a vulva on its neck, similar to images about the underworld referenced in Hopi and Huichol traditions (Aedo 2003). (For another recent essay that convincingly compares the Chalchihuites, Huichol, and Pueblo worlds and demonstrates how the theme of southwestern U.S.–Mesoamerican relations can be revitalized, see Faba and Fauconnier in press.). Centuries ago, the precious green stones and copper bells and the paths of the legendary flute player were largely usurped by the routes of gold, silver, and the cross. Because of their deep roots in a common past, however, the ways of the Northwest are still alive and in constant transformation.
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NOTES

1. The Michoacán and Loma Alta projects were conducted between 1983 and the present by the Centre Français d’Etudes Mexicaines et Centraméricaines (CEMCA), with funding from the Ministère des Affaires Etrangères and the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique and with the collaboration of the Subdirección de Laboratorios y Apoyo Académico of the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH) and the Instituto de Investigaciones Antropológicas of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM). For publications resulting from this work, see Carot (1998, 2000, 2001, 2005).

2. The Hervideros project was conducted between 1993 and the present by the Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas of UNAM, with funding from the Consejo Nacional para la Ciencia y la Tecnología (the 0451-H9108 and 3286-H9308 projects), and the Dirección de Asuntos del Personal Académico (Project IN402494) of UNAM, in collaboration with the Instituto de Investigaciones Antropológicas (UNAM), CEMCA, and the Subdirección de Laboratorios y Apoyo Académico of INAH. For a publication resulting from this work, see Hers (2005).

3. See Hers (cited in Braniff et al. 2001:113, note 1; in press c) for reasons we consider the hypothesis of an intermediate Loma San Gabriel Culture in the Sierra Madre of Durango untenable.

4. Although the term “Ancestral Pueblo” is often used as a synonym for the Anasazi Culture, this disregards the multiple ancestral origins of modern Pueblo groups (Brody 2004: xiv), including Hohokam cultural affiliation (McGuire 1993:99).

5. Kelley (1966:98, 109) associated the four directions with a fire god, a sun god, twin war gods associated with a Quetzalcoatl concept, and a rain/fertility cult. His hypotheses were partially upheld in a later ceramics study (Kelley and Kelley 1971). Although that publication is a major source of information, a more systematic study of Chalchihuites iconography is still needed, one less tied to the idea that this culture is merely a pale reflection of Nuclear Mesoamerican models.

6. For example, Phil Weigand (2001) interprets the Chalchihuites as intermediaries between a valued raw material—turquoise—in the Southwest and the needs of the elite in Nuclear Mesoamerica. Recent archaeological fieldwork in Durango raises serious doubts about this hypothetical turquoise route (Hers cited in Braniff et al. 2001:125–130).

7. Ben Nelson (1995) believes La Quemada was supported by an extremely reduced rural population forced to raise the citadel’s monumental constructions through the coercive and brutal force exercised by the local nobility, which was sustained by human sacrifice. The role of human sacrifice can be interpreted in a totally different way, however, such as a privileged way to channel and control warrior violence in societies lacking state coercive force, as masterfully studied by René Girard (1983). It is in this sense that the tzompantli, or skull racks, of the small Huistle village are interpreted (Hers 1989a).

8. Françoise Fauconnier is preparing a monograph on the Las Adjuntas rock art site (Faba and Fauconnier in press).

9. This attitude of Tarascan ceramists toward the art of their ancestors can be compared with the revival of Classic Mimbres art by the elite of Casas Grandes as a way to assert affiliation with prestigious ancestors (Moulard 2005:73).
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10. These numerous constructions in rocky shallow caves, often located in the least accessible cliffs, lack the characteristic T-shaped doorways so common in the Southwest and adopted by the inhabitants of the Chihuahua mountain range associated with Paquimé.

11. The Aztec people in their original lands of Aztlan in northwestern Mesoamerica should not be confused with the Mexicas of the Aztec Empire. The first group played some part in the history synthesized here. The participation of the second in the history of the Southwest would be an anachronism (McGuire 1980).

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