Classic to Postclassic in Highland Central Mexico

Ceramic evidence increasingly suggests continuity, despite settlement changes and political upheaval.

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When it was possible to assert that the political center of the Toltecs of central Mexican, pre-Spanish legendary history was represented by the great Classic period site of Teotihuacan, the 8th-century abandonment of that enormous city presented no real problem in understanding the cultural continuity of central Mexico—for the Toltecs were known from that same legendary history to be the source of the dynastic leadership of later central Mexican states, including those of the Aztecs (*1*).

But 30 years ago, painstaking historical and archeological research linked those Toltecs convincingly to the Postclassic archeological site at Tula, Hidalgo; thus the nature of their relationship to the builders of the earlier and greater city at Teotihuacan was thrown into the limbo of prehistory, and the nature of the transition from Classic to Postclassic was called into question (*2*). Since then, that transition has been conceived of as a sort of prehistoric dead space in which a substantial ethnic replacement occurred, or as a period in which developing Tula Toltec power was sufficient to overthrow the ethnically unidentified Teotihuacan predecessor (*3–6*).

The impression of discontinuity is encouraged by the occurrence of stylistic changes in pottery, in architecture, and in artistic representation. But it is obvious that the basic patterns of art, of religion, and of technology that were evident during the Classic were continued into the Postclassic period; the recognition of this fact resulted in parallel attempts to show how that continuity was (or might have been) maintained in spite of stylistic changes or even ethnic replacement (*6, 7*).

Within the past 10 years, some suggestions of continuity have been made specifically on the basis of ceramic evidence (*4, 8–10*). We will further this particular discussion by summarizing what has recently become known of certain ceramic complexes of the valleys of Mexico and Puebla-Tlaxcala. The sites that will be considered are located in Fig. 1; the periods of occupation that are pertinent to this discussion are indicated in Fig. 2.

Valley of Mexico

Following a substantial and earlier Preclassic occupation in the Valley of Teotihuacan (a northeastern tributary of the Valley of Mexico), the first sizable settlement of the specific area that was to become the Classic city of Teotihuacan occurred in the Patlachique phase (or Prototeotihuacan) (*11*) of the late Preclassic period. The beginning of this phase has been dated around 100 B.C. by some students, and about 200 years earlier by others (*12*). With major building beginning in the succeeding Tzacualli phase (Teotihuacan I and I-a), the city rose to its maximum population during the Xolalpan phase (Teotihuacan III and III-a), when it is estimated to have had on the order of 125,000 inhabitants (*13*).

With the succeeding Metepec phase (Teotihuacan IV), however, the population dropped significantly, although the total area inhabited at some time during the phase decreased only slightly (*3*). By or at the end of the phase, the city was virtually abandoned, leaving only a few small centers of the Oxtotipac phase (Protocoyotlatelco). The dating of this phase is tentatively agreed to be in the neighborhood of A.D. 800. This is followed by the Xometla phase (Coyotlatelco), a time in which the site was completely abandoned as a center, and by the Mazapan phase (Tolteca), which is usually considered to mark the ascendancy of Tula, during which Teotihuacan itself remained abandoned.

The cause of death of the great city has been interpreted in different ways. The earlier inference drawn by members of some research teams—the Teotihuacan Mapping Project and the Teotihuacan Valley Project—was that the city was destroyed, presumably by outsiders affiliated with Tula, at the end of the Metepec phase, and was immediately abandoned (*3*; *4*, p. 188). Nevertheless, some of these people also argued that there was a definite continuity in ceramic tradition between the Metepec and Oxtotipac phases, and even between them and the succeeding Xometla phase (*4*, p. 122; *8*; *10*); recently, the part played by internal collapse has come to be more heavily emphasized (*14*).

The conclusion reached by workers of the Proyecto Teotihuacán, who in the first half of the 1960's were excavating and reconstructing buildings along the northern portion of the Avenue of the Dead in the heart of the ceremonial center (*15*), was that the center itself had been deliberately destroyed by fire at the end of the Xolalpan phase or at the very beginning of the Metepec phase (*16*). Although there was evidence of the violent destruction of the central ceremonial edifices at that time, no convincing ceramic evidence of the presence of outsiders has been found; it thus was concluded that the destruction was internally engineered. According to this view, after the center was destroyed the palaces on the periphery of the city continued to function (through the Metepec phase), while the city itself was gradually depopulated and buried offerings in the now-ruined temples were systematically looted by the remnant Teotihuacanos themselves (*17*, p. 60). Ceramics of the succeeding Oxtotipac phase were found above the sod layer that covered the ruined buildings of the center.

The Cerro Portezuelo site represents an occupation from Classic Teotihuacan to late Aztec times that has been divided into four phases (*9*). Material of

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phase I was not abundant and consisted of recognizable but relatively unelaborate Teotihuacan Classic types. Phase II was approximately contemporaneous with the Oxtotipac and Xometla phases of Teotihuacan and had much in common with them; there was a significant increase in population over phase I (*9*, *18*), and a number of ceremonial structures were built. Phase III, also represented by a substantial population but for which no ceremonial structures are known, may be assigned with confidence to the Tula complex. Phase IV was of the Aztec period and thus beyond consideration here.

The Cerro Tenayo site apparently contained a single occupation by makers of pottery in the Coyotlatelco style; indeed, because of the amount of that pottery represented, it is possibly the most pure "Coyotlatelco" site that has been described. A part of the complex, however, were vessels of more Classic Teotihuacan appearance (*19*). Occupational details are not known.

Other sites have yielded material which suggests that the transitional complexes are found there. One of these sites is Azcapotzalco, which has a complicated history of occupation. It has been subjected to a number of relatively small-scale surveys and tests, some of which have produced collections that are thought to represent a Teotihuacan Classic occupation; but it is clear that later materials also appear, including pottery in the Coyotlatelco style (*1*, *20*, *21*). Another such area is in the vicinity of the convent at Culhuacan, where materials of a complex that we think was transitional and similar to that of Cerro Tenayo were found apparently mixed with Classic ceramics (*22*). In neither of these cases is the stratigraphic information sufficient to permit nice distinctions, and about all that can be said is that the reported materials do not contradict our present formulation.

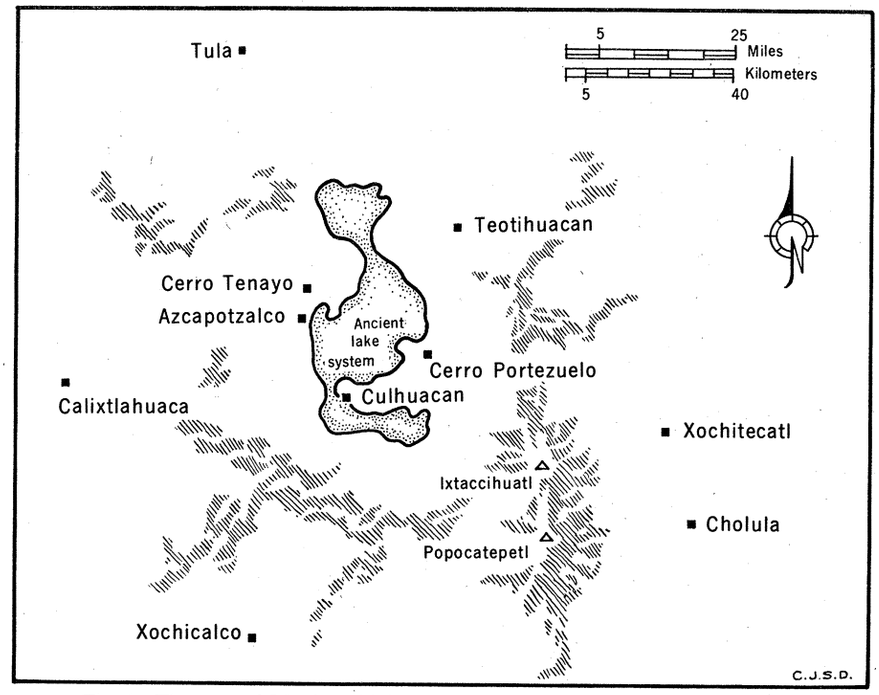

Fig. 1. The central Mexican highlands, showing sites mentioned in the text.

The Valley of Puebla-Tlaxcala

Because work at the Cholula site is largely confined to the Great Pyramid, relatively little information is available for the early settlement as a whole (*23*). The earliest known occupation of the space that was later occupied by the Great Pyramid occurred in the Middle Preclassic, when the area was apparently on the shore of a lake fed by springs that still supply water in the vicinity. The first known structure, now deep in the heart of the pyramid, was of the Late Preclassic period (*24*). No structures have been found for the succeeding Cholula I phase, but substantial construction occurred in Cholula II and continued through phases II-a, III, and III-a.

Although the polychrome ceramics of Cholula I are somewhat different from those of the contemporary Tzacualli phase (Teotihuacan I and I-a) of Teotihuacan, the ceramics of phases Cholula II through III-a are much more clearly Teotihuacanoid, and correspond to those of phases Miccaotli (Teotihuacan II) through Xolalpan (Teotihuacan III and III-a) of Teotihuacan. Yet, while almost all of this pottery is recognizable to one familiar with that from Teotihuacan, it by no means constitutes an identical assemblage. Lacking entirely at Cholula are frescoed vessels and *candeleros*; lacking not quite entirely are Tlaloc effigy vessels (found in only one phase), polished redware, and most of the red-on-buff of Teotihuacan. The famous Classic ware of reddish paste, termed thin orange, appears in its usual oxidized aspect, but it also occurs painted red or smudged black. Present in overwhelming numbers are dark brown and black pan-shaped bowls —flat bottomed with flaring walls, and frequently with nubbin supports. Although some of the familiar tripod vases have been found, no covers have appeared. In all, the Classic complex at Cholula is a rather darkly lugubrious and impoverished version of Teotihuacan, in which the lacks are not made up for by any noticeably vital local tradition (*25*).

No construction other than a possible single plaster floor is known for the succeeding Cholula IV phase, which is represented by a sparse collection of ceramics recovered in large part from a single stratigraphic cut 12 by 24 meters in extent. These ceramics, analogous in an impoverished way to those of the Metepec phase (Teotihuacan IV) of Teotihuacan, were mixed in a layer of sod above buildings dated ceramically to Cholula III-a (*26*). It seems clear that the Great Pyramid was largely deserted during this time, a provocative parallel to similar events at Teotihuacan, although occurring earlier than the complete abandonment of that site.

The cause of the disuse of the Great Pyramid is uncertain. There is no evidence of wholesale destruction of buildings of Cholula III-a, but water-laid deposits against some buildings of this phase give evidence that, by Cholula IV, there was at least minor flooding. Indeed, during Cholula III-a, some facades had been dismantled and the stone used in constructing drains and buttresses apparently designed to shore up major structures. Presumably this was necessary because of a rise in the

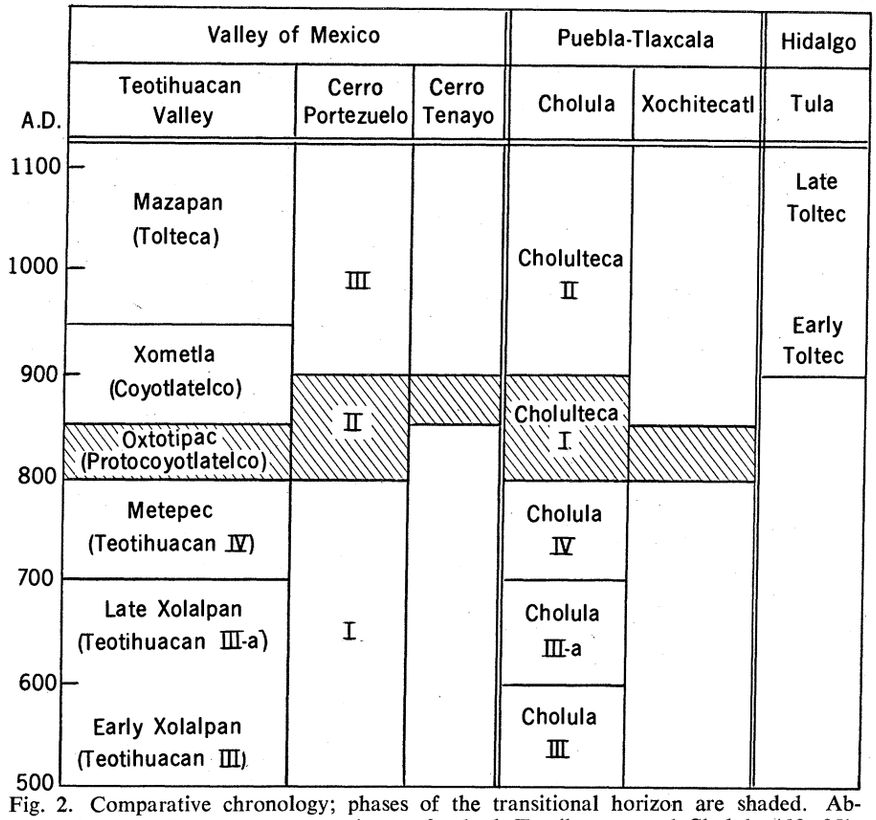

Fig. 2. Comparative chronology; phases of the transitional horizon are shaded. Absolute dates are based on recent estimates for both Teotihuacan and Cholula (*12, 25*).

water level of the lake that must have been next to the growing pyramid. Although it had disappeared by the late 16th century, this lake is still recalled in the oral tradition (*27*). It is not known if the flooding was extensive enough to have been the cause of the abandonment of the Great Pyramid. It is even less certain whether the entire Cholula vicinity was effectively abandoned at this time. Ceramics assignable to Cholula IV were recovered in a pit sunk in the Capilla Real, a part of the 16th-century church complex near the plaza of the present Cholula. Thus it is not now possible to conclude that there was any period without at least some occupation.

At the Great Pyramid, ceramics of the succeeding phase, Cholulteca I, are more abundant, and it is concluded that the site was occupied more heavily; other evidence suggests that this later occupation included people who were physically somewhat different from those of earlier times. Constructions of some sort were undertaken again in the next phase, Cholulteca II, which was rich in ceramics similar to those called "Aztec I" at Culhuacan in the Valley of Mexico, and at least scattered building continued into Cholulteca III, the time of the famous Cholula polychrome. This last phase is represented at the pyramid by enormous quantities of pottery from fill and burial lots. But by at least some time in that last phase, the Great Pyramid was again abandoned as an active temple, for the Spaniards found it fallen into decay when they arrived. This time, however, it is clear that the area in the vicinity of the pyramid continued to be heavily occupied, and burials were deposited in the earth of the pyramid itself, a practice that continued into Colonial times.

At Xochitecatl, a small mound in the central patio yielded about 2000 sherds from the fill and a spectacular set of offerings—both burial and other—that included whole pots and about 200 figurines (*28*). Sherds of the mound fill reveal no convincing indications of significant horizontal or vertical differences in types, and, although typologically varied, the ceramics in thin section reveal no evidence in temper or paste of multiple sources. Furthermore, not only do different offerings share figurine types, but some different offerings contain figurines made from the same mold. The assemblage is thus taken to be the deposition of a single, short period of time. We conclude, on comparative grounds, that it is related to the Cholulteca I phase at Cholula, to the Oxtotipac (Protocoyotlatelco) of Teotihuacan, and to phase II from Cerro Portezuelo.

Hidalgo

The major occupation at Tula marks the end of the period of time under examination. Although the sequence there has been said to be divisible into two subperiods or phases (*29*), for our purposes it seems unnecessary to treat it as other than a single assemblage representing the full development of the early Postclassic period in the area in which the Toltecs held sway.

Other Areas

Nearby valleys contain the remains of centers that were undoubtedly important in the period discussed here, but reports on them are not comprehensive enough to provide the information necessary for full discussion. One of these is Xochicalco in Morelos. There the surrounding valley has yielded evidence of a sequence of occupation that began in the Middle Preclassic period, and early Classic material has been reported from the hilltop site itself. Although some archeologists have denied a Classic dating for the center, those who have studied it more recently are inclined to accept that dating, and it now appears likely that the principal structures pertain to two periods, one contemporary with the Metepec phase of Teotihuacan, the other slightly later (*4*, p. 185; *30*). Another center is Calixtlahuaca in the Valley of Toluca, where early remains include ceramics of both Preclassic and Teotihuacan Classic, followed by material termed Matlatzinca, which endures through the Postclassic (*31*).

Ceramics

The appearance of selected ceramic elements in the sites and phases under discussion is indicated in Fig. 3. Most of the forms referred to are indicated in Fig. 4. We have tried to eliminate characteristics that appear in all of these phases, whatever their significance

may be in distinguishing these phases from those still earlier or still later or those geographically distant. We have also tried to eliminate traits that appear in too few of the phases to allow for a significant overlap. Some of the elements we have used are in fact ceramic types, some are better termed wares, some are vessel shapes, and some are traits of manufacturing technique or decoration. However, for our purposes, they all seem to be of some discriminatory significance. Undoubtedly other characteristics, both of decorative and of utility pottery, would be similarly useful, but the relatively limited information available for some of the collections militated against the expansion of the list. Blocks of major attribute clusters are indicated in Fig. 3.

Classic

The Metepec phase (Teotihuacan IV) continues the Classic Teotihuacan ceramic tradition, although it is somewhat more impoverished than earlier phases. Monochromes appear in tones from dark brown to tan, or in reddish yellow. Bichromes include only red-on-light-brown or red-on-tan. Forms include bowl-shaped incense burners with bowl-shaped covers, three-pronged burners believed to be stoves, cylindrical tripod vases with apron covers, two-holed *candeleros, floreros* (in this case with annular support but without a handle), bowls in hemispherical form and those with flat bottoms and flaring sides, flat griddle plates, or *comales*, without pronounced rims, and effigy pots representing the god Tlaloc. Spindle-whorls have appeared. Thin orange ware is present, but its most common form, a hemispherical bowl with annular support, occurs in locally made brown to orange wares. Decorative techniques include pre- and post-fire engraving, relief carving, post-fire zonal scraping, stick trailing, and dry fresco; new techniques are seal impressing, and pre- and post-fire punctation. Thin orange ritual jars may be decorated with painted red disks. Red-on-buff bichromes include relatively simple painted designs on vessel exteriors or on the interiors of bowls; these designs consist of lines of dots between solid bands of color, of concentric circles, or of bands on the rims of bowls (*32*).

In the small sample of the contemporary Cholula IV phase, all local ware is monochrome, in black to light brown. Forms include a number of restricted and unrestricted bowls, with or without nubbin supports; flat-bottomed, flaring-sided, pan-shaped bowls without supports; ring-based bowls in brown to orange plainware; tub-like incense burners; and flat griddles with upturned rims. Not present, although known to have existed earlier at Cholula, are burners with three prongs around the rim (thought to be cookstoves), tripod vases, *floreros*, and Tlaloc effigy pots. Decorative techniques include both pre- and post-fire engraving, stamping, and carving. Whole pots are limited to a very few stick-polished, black, restricted bowls, with unrestricted bowl-like covers, that held cremation burials. Thin orange is sparsely represented in sherds. Although this material is scanty at the Great Pyramid, it provides at least meager evidence that this late Teotihuacanoid complex was present in the Valley of Puebla-Tlaxcala.

All elements of both Metepec and Cholula IV shown in Fig. 3 are inherited from earlier in the Classic, except for the form called "local ware annular-base bowl," which appears as an imitation of the traditional thin orange shape.

The Transition

The group of phases forming the transitional horizon is characterized by Teotihuacan-derived vessels of a presumably ritual nature, including *floreros* with both annular base and vertical handles; small flat-bottomed bowls with incised, scraped, carved, or stamped surface decoration, often in motifs known from the Metepec phase of Teotihuacan; and Tlaloc effigy vessels, generally in unpolished clay. Also present, and typologically identical to products of the preceding Classic, are hemispherical bowls with annular supports. However, this set of Teotihuacanoid vessels is now associated with some elements that are peculiar to the transitional horizon and that may be taken as markers of it: round-bottomed plates, often with solid tripod nubbin supports, generally of stick-polished but unslipped clay, and often painted in red in simple angular or cursive designs; griddles with well-differentiated rims that rise to form a high sidewall for the plate; flat-bottomed bowls or plates with sides that slant outward and with vertically set, hollow supports, either in red-on-buff or with incised decoration; restricted bowls with solid tripod supports; utility jars with vertical handles placed high at the neck; and figurines with representations of a certain form of dental mutilation (the actual mutilations were found in burials at one site), in which the four upper incisors are filed to produce a single T-shaped outline. Also present are elements that will tend to persist throughout the Postclassic: the frying pan–shaped censer, the trough ladle, the hourglass-shaped incense burner, vessel handles made of strands of clay twisted like ropes, and hard-firing orange paste. Not yet present are varieties of that later widespread trade-ware, plumbate.

We distinguish, within the transitional horizon, two variants, complex A and complex B (Fig. 3). Of the two phases placed in complex A, Cholulteca I deposits have not produced the Teotihuacan-derived *florero*, and the presence in them of the other Teotihuacan-like vessels was of uncertain validity. An earlier study at Cholula (*33*) seemed to indicate that Cholula polychrome began to be manufactured at this time, but recent work indicates that it was not made until the Cholulteca III phase. Complex A appears to be confined to the Valley of Puebla-Tlaxcala.

The phases placed in complex B contain, in addition to the elements mentioned so far, examples of the highly polished red-on-buff and red-on-white ware in the mature and distinctive style known as Coyotlatelco, which, in spite of earlier indications, does not seem to be a significant and consistent part of any well-sampled phase from the Puebla-Tlaxcala area (*34*). Of the phases assigned to this complex, only Cerro Portezuelo II has produced the *florero* with vertical handle and annular support. Both Oxtotipac and Cerro Portezuelo II have, in addition, unrestricted bowls with a distinctive, ridge-like, basal Z-angle, generally in thin, dark ware. Thus complex B is distinguished from complex A primarily by the presence of the Coyotlatelco style, and secondarily by the Z-angle vessel form; in these, complex B can be said to depart somewhat further from the late Classic predecessor than does complex A. Complex B seems to be restricted to the Valley of Mexico.

Yet at this point it must be noted that, within complex B, the collection from Cerro Tenayo is distinctive both

in the absence of that basal Z-angle vessel and in the domination, in terms of absolute numbers, of Coyotlatelco vessels. An assemblage with these same characteristics is possibly present at the convent area of Culhuacan, as mentioned previously. An examination of the Xometla (Coyotlatelco) column in Fig. 3 suggests that this phase might also be drawn upon to create a third complex in the transitional horizon, one probably somewhat later than the other two. As we now understand the Xometla phase, however—from samples that leave something to be desired—it includes both San Juan plumbate and elements of the Tula complex, such as the grater, or *molcajete*, and it lacks certain necessary attributes of the transitional horizon (Fig. 3). For the present, therefore, we formally limit the transitional horizon in the Valley of Mexico to a single complex, although with the expectation that the unit will eventually be found to be too inclusive.

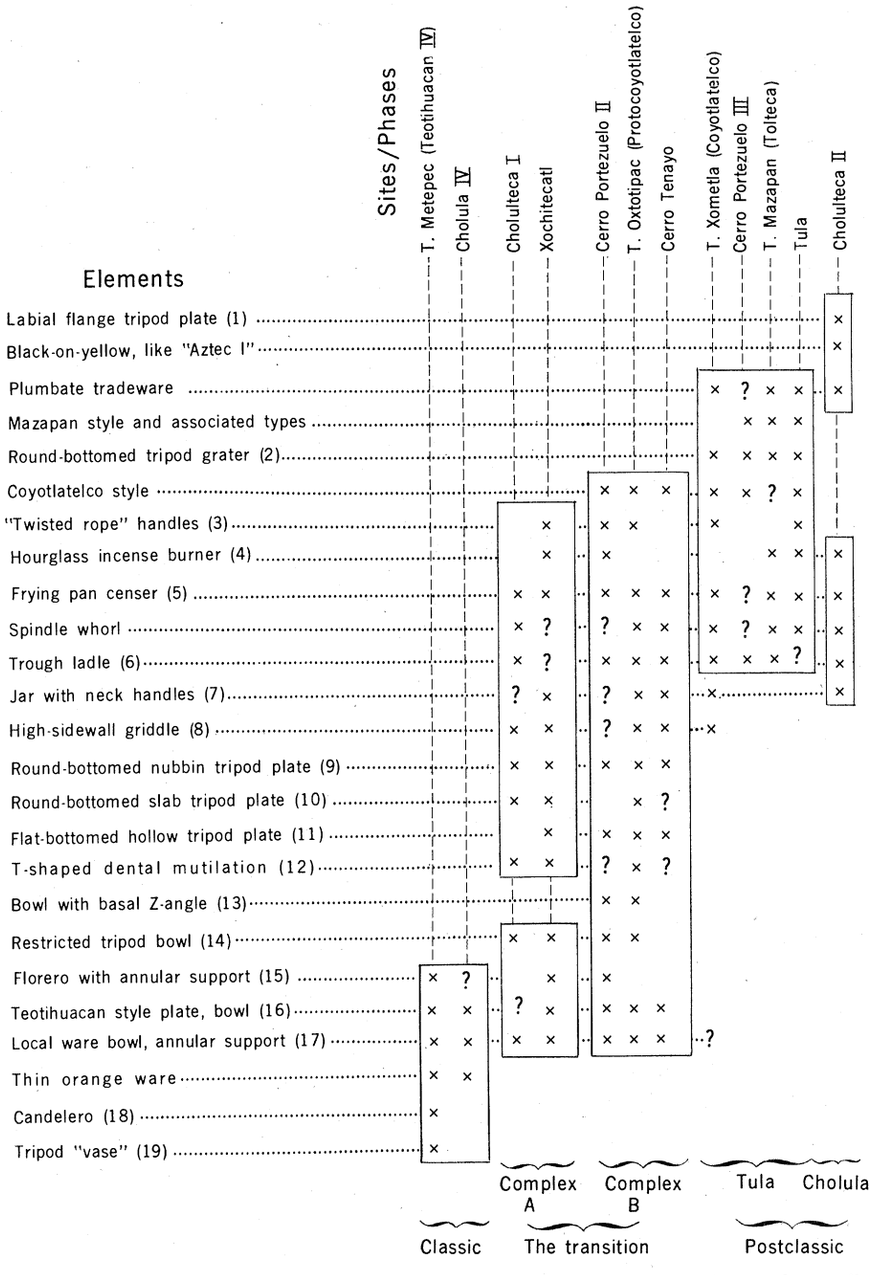

Fig. 3. Summary of ceramic complexes. Numbers in parentheses refer to forms illustrated in Fig. 4. Blanks indicate fairly well-attested absences. Question marks are used where an apparent absence is thought to be questionable either because of the nature of the sample or the nature of the available information. (*T.* is an abbreviation for Teotihuacan.)

Postclassic

The Postclassic block includes phases that are part of the Tula complex, on the one hand, and the phase known as Cholulteca II, on the other.

Monochromes of the Tula ceramic assemblage include those called *blanco levantado* (Tula watercolored) and *naranja a brochazos* (Tula orange and red orange) (*35*). Bichromes include red-on-buff in the Mazapan style, characterized by multiple-brush, wavy lines on a generally unpolished and unslipped ground; some in the Coyotlatelco style; and others. Forms include flat-bottomed plates with incurving or outcurving walls, without supports; tripod bowls with rounded bottoms and outward-thrusting, hollow tripod supports, often with internal grater striations; hourglass-shaped incense burners with a Tlaloc face on the side; small *florero*-like vessels with ring base, vertical rope-like handle, and a Tlaloc face opposite the handle; flat griddles with small loop handles on opposing edges; and trough ladles. Techniques include engraving, seal impression, and a revival of painting al fresco. Particularly characteristic of the earlier portion of the occupation at Tula are vessels in the Coyotlatelco style; characteristic of the later portion of the occupation are *naranja a brochazos* and seal impressions. Most other attributes, including pottery in the Mazapan style, occur throughout. During excavation, plumbate tradeware was found in all but the single deepest level of stratigraphic cuts; with due respect for sample error, it may thus be considered a practical indicator of contemporaneity with the occupation at Tula.

The phases grouped with Tula in Fig. 3 seem to us to partake of the same ceramic complex (as much as could be expected in view of sampling difficulties and of a relative lack of published information), although it is possible that the Xometla (Coyotlatelco) phase should pertain instead to the transitional horizon.

Certain forms of the transitional horizon of the Valley of Puebla-Tlaxcala continue in Cholulteca II—the frying pan–shaped censer, trough ladle, hourglass-shaped incense burner, and short-necked jar with vertical handles high at the neck. The stick-polished, hard orange ware has become a more smoothly burnished yellow-orange background for the most characteristic ceramic, which is painted in narrow black

(occasionally red) lines, often overpolished, and is in a style similar to "Aztec I." Although plates with solid tripod supports continue to appear, the most characteristic shape is a plate with a broadly everted lip on hollow, cylindrical tripod supports. Inner bases of plates are often stamped to produce a dubious grater. Tradewares include plumbate and a few types from the Tula complex such as *blanco levantado*, an occasional sherd of Mazapan red-on-buff, and Tula-style tripod graters. A very similar assemblage may be represented at some levels at Culhuacan (*22*). From this time on, if not from the previous phase, Cholula proceeded along a developmental path that diverged from the path taken by the people of Tula and the Valley of Mexico.

Sources of Change

Despite the order inherent both in their alphabetical labels and in their seriation in Fig. 3, the differences between the two complexes in the transitional horizon are, we consider, the result primarily of geographical, rather than of temporal, factors. Even if complex A should be earlier than complex B, and even if the former should be eventually found in the Valley of Mexico, the evidence thus far would indicate that, by the time of development of the Coyotlatelco style and the Z-angle form, the Valley of Mexico was diverging from the Valley of Puebla-Tlaxcala, where those crucial attributes of complex B never appear.

Considering the two complexes together, there is no problem in accounting for the *floreros* and other vessels of the Teotihuacanoid style, including those bowls with annular supports made of local clays. The simple bowls in red-on-buff to red-on-brown, with cursive or simple angular designs on well-polished and often unslipped clay, may possibly be derived from Classic prototypes: of 21 forms of polished and burnished ware recognized in the Metepec phase of Teotihuacan, 9 appear in red-on-tan or red-on-brown (*32*). Indeed, the red-on-buff open bowls of the transitional horizon, with paint frequently polished over to cause blurring of edges, would be classed with earlier Teotihuacan ceramics [as San Martin red-on-buff, in one terminology (*21*)], particularly when sherds are too small to indicate clearly the form of the vessel. The high-sidewall comal is not a surprising development from the flat griddles of the Teotihuacan Classic, and the hollow-legged, flat-based plates appear to be a version of some considerably larger, hollow-legged basins of the Metepec phase. T-shaped dental mutilation is not known to have been widespread earlier at Teotihuacan, but one such tooth has been reported from excavations there, and the pattern appears during the Preclassic in at least one site in the Valley of Mexico—earlier there than elsewhere in the country (*36*).

This leaves the frying pan–shaped censer, the trough ladle, and the hourglass-shaped incense burner. Yet all of these are known from the central highlands in the Preclassic. An incense burner of similar form appears in the

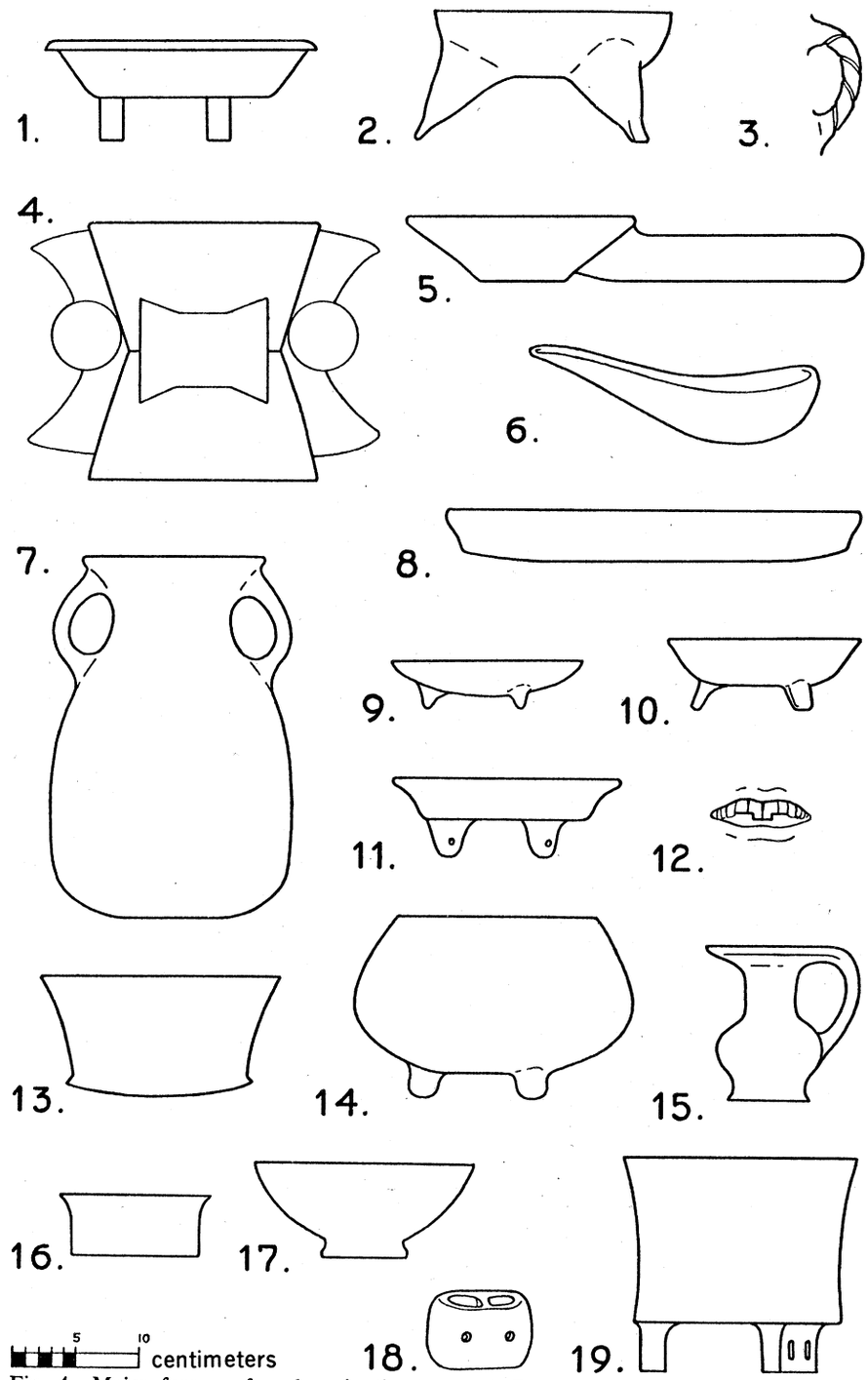

Fig. 4. Major forms referred to in the text and Fig. 3, drawn from actual examples in various collections discussed. Tripod vessels are oriented so that the leg on the left is shown in full profile.

Tzacualli phase (Teotihuacan I and I-a), and, indeed, burners of one shape or other—including those in which an hourglass-shaped pot is incorporated as the bottom element in a burner with a complicated superstructure—appear throughout the Classic of Teotihuacan; the trough ladle was found at Gualupita and is known from the Late Preclassic at Cholula; frying pan–shaped censers appeared at Ticoman and Zacatenco and were even reported to have lasted throughout the Classic at El Risco (*37*).

This problem has been discussed before: traits known to have existed in the Preclassic disappear during the Classic and reappear after the decline of Teotihuacan. Recent surface surveys of areas of highland central Mexico have revealed a relative lack of sites of clear Teotihuacan affiliation, aside from the Teotihuacan Valley and a very few major urban centers (*18, 38*). It therefore is not inconceivable that some traits should have been reintroduced to the centers from rural areas after the dissolution of Teotihuacan political power and the lessening of what is presumed to be its hieratic influence [parallel arguments have been made by others (*21, 39*)].

To account completely for the content of complex B, the elements yet to be explained are the Z-angle vessels and the Coyotlatelco style itself. The first of these may represent the influence of Xochicalco, where similar forms were present in a phase probably coeval with the final occupation of Teotihuacan; the same Xochicalco complex is thought to contain trough ladles and frying pan–shaped censers as well (*40*).

The development of the Coyotlatelco style, on the other hand, is a problem that a study considerably longer than ours and specifically devoted to description and analysis of the style failed to resolve (*19*). Differing explanations have been given in the past. One is that it represents a development from the highly polished, but generally less formally precise, red-on-buff wares of the Teotihuacan Classic. The other is that it is an import, perhaps representing the initial incursions by people from Tula (*4*, p. 181; *6*, p. 207; *19*).

We have differing opinions on the development of this style. One of us (F.M.) is inclined to see the style as an importation from the north by way of such sites as those recently excavated in Guanajuato, which yielded red-on-buff pottery from pre-plumbate levels that are thought to be contemporary with Classic Teotihuacan (*41*). Cerro Tenayo, with its Coyotlatelco riches, may have been an early way station. The sense of intrusion at this time is heightened by the appearance in Cholulteca I of a three-part zonal arrangement of design in red-on-buff (which may well indicate connections to the north), by changes in the forms of ceramic vessels at the beginning of the transitional horizon at Cholula, and by the physical anthropological evidence that the populations of the Cholula IV and Cholulteca I phases were morphologically somewhat distinct from one another.

Obviously such a conclusion is strengthened by the still more direct evidence for drastic population shifts at the time: Teotihuacan was abandoned, Cholula was to some extent reoccupied, and major influxes of population occurred at Xochitecatl and Cerro Portezuelo (and perhaps at Cerro Tenayo and Culhuacan). Additional evidence for population adjustments in this period is reported from surface surveys (*18*) and is forthcoming from excavations now in progress (*42*). Clearly there was population disruption and political upheaval.

The other of us (D.E.D.) prefers the parsimony of seeing the Coyotlatelco style as more nearly a development from Teotihuacan ceramics or even from a simple and cursive style like that of the red-on-buff of complex A in the transitional horizon. The local development of the more complicated style of ceramic painting is, after all, a relatively modest inventive step and is in accord with the notion that the Coyotlatelco component at Tula is a direct heritage from the Valley of Mexico (*6*, p. 207; *29*).

In this latter view, the entire development of the complexes of the transitional horizon is understandable on a local level, given the elimination of Teotihuacan as a political-religious entity, the resulting resurgence of nonurban practices, and the increase of contact both with the surviving center of Xochicalco in Morelos and any red-on-buff pot painters to the north. This is not to say that continuity of residence was maintained, for clearly it was not; and it is easier to suggest that Cholulteca I was a development of something more like Metepec at Teotihuacan, than like the ephemeral Cholula IV. An influx to Puebla from the Valley of Mexico, furthermore, might account for any change observed in the physical characteristics of the Cholula population.

In the Postclassic at Cholula, the derivation of the Cholulteca II phase from its immediate predecessor poses no problems. Virtually all vessel forms continue, while the red-on-polished-natural-clay of Cholulteca I is largely replaced by a black-on-burnished-natural-clay; the yellowish paste of Cholulteca II is foreshadowed in the hard orange ware of its predecessor.

At Tula, the problem is more complicated. Although it is conceivable that the Mazapan style developed from something like that of Coyotlatelco and, hence, was a purely local development, the legendary historical accounts that draw the ancestral Toltecs south to central Mexico are sufficiently cogent to cause both of us to consider the possibility of an influx of outsiders and to await the results of research in the north and west, to see if ancestors of the makers of Mazapan ceramics are revealed. Although some workers to the northwest have been inclined to see their area as behind, rather than ahead of, the central highlands (*43*), research in Guanajuato has revealed a complex containing red-on-unpolished-buff ware decorated by means of well-balanced arrangements of parallel lines, together with a utility ware apparently related to the *blanco levantado* of the Tula complex; several lines of evidence suggest that this pre-plumbate assemblage should be dated to a Classic horizon—that is, to a time no later than that of Metepec or Teotihuacan IV (*41*).

Nevertheless, even with an outside component provisionally accepted, the nature of the Tula complex as a whole reveals an unmistakable continuity with the earlier transitional horizon in the central highlands. Evidence now at hand from Teotihuacan itself, from Cerro Portezuelo, Cholula, Xochitecatl, and Cerro Tenayo, make it clear that one does not have to strain to find either the path of this continuity or the source of the major patterns of the culture.

Conclusion

The data and argument we have presented converge on three points.

1) With the decline and abandonment of Teotihuacan by the end of the Metepec phase (Teotihuacan IV), the valleys of Mexico and of Puebla-Tlax-

cala witnessed the development of a ceramic culture that was represented, on the one hand, by obvious Teotihuacan derivations in presumably ritual ware and possible Teotihuacan derivations in simpler pottery of red-on-buff, and, on the other hand, by elements that seem to represent a resurgence of Preclassic characteristics. Whether the development is explained through a measure of outside influence or as a local phenomenon, the direct derivation of a substantial portion of the complex from Classic Teotihuacan is unmistakable. This transitional horizon predated the arrival of plumbate tradeware in highland central Mexico.

2) The transitional horizon coincided with (and no doubt was an integral part of) an alteration of Classic settlement patterns so drastic that it must bespeak political disruption. Nevertheless, there is no evidence that the Postclassic center of Tula represented a significant force in the highlands at that time. There is no evidence that the center of Cholula, which may even have been substantially abandoned during the previous period, was able to exert any force at this juncture; it appears more likely that Cholula was largely reoccupied *after* the abandonment of Teotihuacan. There is no direct evidence of domination by Xochicalco or any other known major foreign center, although some ceramic traits suggest that relatively minor influences may have emanated from Xochicalco; unfortunately, the state of research at that center does not permit a determination at this time. Thus the most reasonable view on the basis of present evidence is that the abandonment of Teotihuacan was not the direct result of the strength of another centralized power, although some outside populations may have been involved in a minor way. Whatever the proximate cause, however, it is now clear that the abandonment of Teotihuacan led to a period of Balkanization in which no single center, or pair of centers, were dominant in the highlands.

3) The transitional horizon saw the immediate development of a cultural distinction between the Valley of Mexico and the Valley of Puebla-Tlaxcala, a distinction in which differential degrees of outside cultural influence may have played a part. This distinction was magnified in the early Postclassic, with the rising power of Tula on the west and of Cholula on the east, and Balkanization ended with the growth of empire.

References and Notes

1. See, for example, G. C. Vaillant, *Amer. Anthropol.* **40**, 535 (1938).
2. W. Jiménez M., *Rev. Mex. Estud. Antropol.* **5** (Nos. 2–3), 79 (1941); J. Acosta, *ibid.* **4**, (No. 3), 172 (1940). See E. Palacios, *ibid.* **5**, (Nos. 2–3), 113 (1941) for a different view. The term "Classic" as used here refers to the time in the central highlands that ended with the effective abandonment of the major Classic center at Teotihuacan by the end of the Metepec phase. The term "Postclassic" refers in particular to the time after the beginning of the Toltec-dominated period that endured until the Spanish conquest. The transition, then, is from the abandonment of Teotihuacan to the establishment of Tula as a major power. The term Classic is sometimes used differently, to refer to a period of Mesoamerica-wide time from A.D. 300 to 900; if the term were used in that way here, the transition would be late in the Classic period.
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5. I. Bernal, *Tenochtitlán en una Isla* (Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico, D.F., 1959), pp. 63–73.
6. R. Piña Chan, *Una Visión del México Prehispánico* (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico, D.F., 1967).
7. W. Jiménez M., in *Ancient Oaxaca*, J. Paddock, Ed. (Stanford Univ. Press, Stanford, Calif., 1966), pp. 49–55; but compare (*29*).
8. J. A. Bennyhoff, in *Teotihuacán, Onceava Mesa Redonda, 1966* (Sociedad Mexicana de Antropología, Mexico, D.F., 1967), p. 19.
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11. The research drawn on here is chiefly that of three recent programs: the Teotihuacan Mapping Project (*3*, *12*); the Teotihuacan Valley Project (*4*, *10*); the Proyecto Teotihuacán of the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (*15*, *16*, *17*), with which one of us (F.M.) was associated. Differing phase terminology was used by the projects; that of the Proyecto Teotihuacán is given in parentheses (*17*, pp. 58–59).
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16. J. R. Acosta, in *Teotihuacán, Onceava Mesa Redonda, 1966* (Sociedad Mexicana de Antropología, Mexico, D.F., 1967), p. 45.
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21. P. Tolstoy, *Trans. Amer. Philos. Soc.* **48** (Part 5), 1.
22. L. Sejourné, *Arqueología del Valle de México I, Culhuacán* (Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico, D.F., 1970), pp. 31–35.
23. Information here is chiefly from work by the Proyecto Cholula of the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, which from 1966 to 1970 excavated and reconstructed at the main pyramid of the site, and with which one of us (F.M.) was associated from 1968 to 1970. See I. Marquina, *Proyecto Cholula* (Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico, D.F., 1970). The phase designations are modifications of those used earlier (*33*).
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25. F. Muller, in *Proyecto Cholula*, I. Marquina, coordinator (Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico, D.F., 1970), p. 129.
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27. M. Olivera and C. Reyes, *An. Inst. Nac. Antropol. Hist.*, Epoca 7, **1**, 246 (1969).
28. This site was tested in late 1969 by a party sponsored by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft and led by B. Spranz; see B. Spranz, *Comun. Proyecto Puebla-Tlaxcala* No. 1, 37 (1970). A description of the finds has not yet been published. Ceramics from the fill were analyzed by one of us (D.E.D.), unpublished data (1970).
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37. G. C. Vaillant, *Anthropol. Pap. Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist.* **32** (part 1), 47 (1930) and *ibid.* (part 2), 394, plate 80 (1931); ——— and S. B. Vaillant, *ibid.* **35** (part 1), 95, figure 28k (1934); W. J. Mayer-Oakes, *Proc. Amer. Philos. Soc.* **103**, 332 (1959).
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40. Unpublished analysis by one of us (F.M.); see also (*30*).
41. B. Braniff de O., unpublished data (1966). Braniff's argument parallels that of one of us (F.M.).
42. For example, work by Michael and Elizabeth Snow at Huapalcalco, near Tulancingo, Hidalgo, is revealing indications of a population influx and heavy occupation during the transitional horizon.
43. For example, J. C. Kelley and H. D. Winters, *Amer. Antiquity* **25**, 547 (1960).

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