Prologue

Júpiter Martínez Ramírez is originally from Morelia, Michoacán. After his first year of study in the History Department at the University of Morelia, he moved to Mexico City. In 1994 he completed the coursework for his degree in Archaeology at the Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia (ENAH), and at the beginning of 1996 he went to Sonora to work on the Trincheras archaeological project, under the aegis of the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (Centro INAH-Sonora) and the State University of New York at Binghamton (SUNY).

His book *Heading into the Desert: Tales of an Archaeologist in Sonora at the Turn of Twenty-First Century* invites the reader to embark on a journey of about 500 km (310 miles) through the northern part of the state, traveling in a straight line from the watershed of the mountain range that serves as the border between the states of Sonora and Chihuahua, beginning at Las Cuevas Ranch,[1] in the municipality of Bavispe, and ending at El Pinacate y Gran Desierto de Altar Biosphere Reserve,[2] in Puerto Peñasco, Plutarco Elías Calles, and San Luis Río Colorado. The route includes some of the valleys along the Bavispe, Moctezuma, Sonora, and San Miguel Rivers, as well as streams and rivers flowing into the basin of the Magdalena and Altar Rivers, which join to form the Asunción River in the semidesert plains.

It is an enlightening experience for those who know some or all of these places, and for those who haven't yet had the chance to travel this route, it is an unforgettable one—in terms of both the geography and the pre-Hispanic and colonial history of this northern part of Mexico.

Describing their descent through the mountains, Martínez mentions how useful it is to have four-wheel drive. The reader should bear in mind that the Centro INAH-Sonora received its first 4WD truck in 1996—twenty-three years after the center's founding (in 1973). Since the people in charge of bids and vehicle purchases in our institution live in Mexico City, they've rarely had to travel the dirt roads and mountain paths or the deserts of Mexican territory. They have no idea what they're missing! A second 4WD vehicle

1. Where I assisted Martínez in 2009 and 2010.
2. I was able to attend the dedicatory ceremony for the Reserve on the evening of June 10, 1993, in the northern part of Cerro Prieto in Puerto Peñasco. From the gulf one could admire, to the northeast, the peaks of El Pinacate. Also present were the anthropologist Alejandro Aguilar Zeleny, who was at that time was the director of the Centro INAH-Sonora, and representatives of the Tohono O'odham peoples of Arizona and Sonora.

was assigned to us in 2005, but it didn't make it to Sonora until February 2006, thanks to the insistence of one of the archaeologists, who even covered the delivery costs. "There's no money to bring it from Mexico City," the authorities kept repeating. The first truck,[3] the one that arrived at the Centro INAH-Sonora in 1996, came from a group of autos that had been decommissioned at the border by the Ministry of Finance and redistributed on gratuitous loan through the PROCEDE Program.[4] We asked the lawyers from the Institute, who had traveled from Mexico City, to let us choose the vehicle we were to receive. Martínez, one of the members of the PROCEDE program team, was in charge of the selection. At first he was leaning toward a green Chevrolet pickup with polarized windows and chrome rims. "Why not the blue Dodge pickup?" I suggested, to which he replied, "It's really ugly... it looks like it's split in two, and the paint's coming off the truck bed." "Yes," I said, "but it's the only one of the lot that has four-wheel drive,[5] and in Sonora you're going to need that—plus it's got all-terrain tires." *Taconudas*, as they're commonly called, are the best tires for mountain roads. He knew that I always made sure to get them for the pickups used by the Centro INAH-Sonora. Ever since I bought my Ford F-250 4 x 4 in 2001 I've used all-terrain tires, proven to be the best-designed for these roads. Now I'm gratified to read that Martínez gives these essential items an appreciative nod in all his stories.

On our first visits to the communities, in 1997, Martínez and I, with our colleagues Mayela Pastrana and Valerio Paredes, were supposed to give a presentation about the PROCEDE program, using a Kodak carousel slide projector. But in the mountains there were tiny clusters of houses with no electricity; their lighting came from oil lamps or gas. It was in Agua Fría, as I recall, in the municipality of Bacerac, that thanks to the loan of a gas-powered generator the community was able to learn about the PROCEDE archaeologists' work; the outside wall of a rural primary school became the screen for our slide show.[6] There, under the shelter of tall pine trees, we had "movie night" in Agua Fría.

3. Which we fondly recall as "El Procede."

4. The acronym for "Programa de certificación de los derechos ejidales" (Ejido Rights Certification Program—*ejidos* being communal lands), a program instituted by the Federal government on behalf of agrarian communities and ejidos to regularize social property. The primary goal was to give legal confirmation of land tenancy by granting certificates for parcels or for common use rights (or both, as applicable), as well as land titles for persons who held such rights within agrarian groups that approved and requested their legalization. The institutions directly responsible for carrying out this program were the Secretaría de la Reforma Agraria (SRA), the Procuraduría Agraria (PA), the Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática (INEGI), the Registro Agrario Nacional (RAN), and the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH).

5. Four-wheel drive (4WD) means that the engine sends power to all four wheels. There are two options: high range (4H) and low range (4L). The first makes it possible to drive on land or snow at normal speeds; the second engages a gear that provides greater traction but a lower maximum speed.

6. The children were on vacation at the time, and the residents kindly let us use the school for our campaign.

Subsequently Martínez became involved in other projects, such as The Archaeological Investigation of the Bavispe and San Bernardino Valleys in Sonora, where he took part in field surveys between April and May 1998 and excavations in May and June 2001.

Also in 2001, on the project The Production of Architectural Artifacts: An Analysis of Cliff Dwellings in the Sierra Madre Occidental, Northwestern Sonora, Mexico, I had the opportunity to accompany the project's director, Elizabeth Bagwell, together with César Villalobos and, once again, Júpiter Martínez. In August, other volunteers and I went to work for ten days in Cueva Bringas, located in Los Taraises Ranch. One evening the stream Los Chales had risen so high that we pitched our tents by the side of the road and waited more than eighteen hours for the waters to recede, which didn't happen. After converting the pickup practically into an amphibian, we decided to forge ahead. We were able to cross with no problem, thanks to the driver of another pickup who warned us to keep accelerating as we neared the other bank, because the current was carving out a dip. I remember that he had one passenger, a poor woman who was screaming, "I don't want to cross the stream, I don't want to!"—but luckily for her, the vehicle made it across just fine, since the current was flowing in their direction.

There are many stories about our journeys on horseback as well. Sooner or later, all of us working on archaeological surveys end up needing to use this mode of transport, as do those who chart the routes for the Federal Electricity Commission's transmission tower lines before paths or roads can be built that might affect the archaeological patrimony. Although many rough dirt roads were made in the twentieth century, there are still regions in Sonora with little access. Sometimes you have to travel more than six hours to check out a single spot, or spend the whole day on horseback locating and inventorying archaeological sites. It's a wearing task, especially for those who haven't ridden before.[7]

Walking is even worse, whether in the mountains or in the desert. It's the most difficult task you'll have to confront. Nonetheless, I remember that some of my archaeology teachers at ENAH would aptly quote Pedro Armillas,[8] who used to say, "Archaeology is done by walking." Once I walked through the mountains, between the Yaqui River and the town of Tepache, from 6 p.m. to 2 a.m. I came to a small ranch where I had to ask for assistance to make it to the next town, which was still 12 km (7.5 miles) away. But Martínez has outdone me with his story about Puerto Libertad, in the Sonoran Desert, when his truck got stuck in sand and he had to walk from dusk through most of the night, covering a distance of 52 km (32 miles) in nine hours.

7. There are always home remedies such as talcum powder or creams to treat chafing that results from a long ride; if that doesn't do the trick, you take painkillers.

8. Pedro Armillas García, INAH archaeologist who studied Mesoamerican cultures between 1950 and 1970. He is known for his fieldwork and excavations in various Mexican sites, particularly in central and northern Mexico.

He also raises the possibility of practicing underwater archaeology in Sonora when he mentions his experiences in the region of La Serrana and the location of pre-Hispanic sites in the Opata region (the Opata people had already become mixed by the beginning of the twentieth century, if not earlier), in villages nestled in the parallel valleys of central, eastern, and northeastern Sonora—in particular his boat crossing on the Plutarco Elías Calles Dam,[9] better known to Sonorans as El Novillo Dam, whose creation flooded the Batuc Valley and the town of the same name, as well as the communities of Tepupa and Suaqui.

Martínez has worked in historical archaeology as well, spending several seasons exploring and excavating the former Mission Cocóspera, in the municipality of Imuris, which was the subject of his thesis, "Cocóspera, sombras de adobe: Estudio arqueológico del Templo de la Misión de Nuestra Señora del Pilar y Santiago de Cocóspera, Sonora" (Cocóspera, Shadows of Adobe: Archaeological Study of the Church at Mission Nuestra Señora del Pilar y Santiago de Cocóspera, Sonora). As a member of his exam committee, I listened attentively to his thesis defense in March 2004. Later, in 2006, he took part in excavations at Mission Nuestra Señora de los Dolores de Cósari, the first Pimería Alta mission founded by the Jesuit Father Eusebio Francisco Kino in 1687.

Martínez includes a funny anecdote about the archaeological site La Playa, which he assumed would be on the coast, unaware that some of the rural folk in the Trincheras and Caborca region use the term *playa* (and also *playita*) for land that has been stripped of vegetation by erosion or deforestation.

In his final reflections, I think Martínez is overly modest in saying he realizes that there's more Sonoran territory for him to experience and learn about. On the other hand, it's true that he had few opportunities to travel and work in the southern and southwestern parts of the state, which is why he says little about this region, today inhabited by Yoeme (Yaqui) and Yoreme (Mayo) groups in the valleys, Makurawe (Guarijíos) in the Sierra de Álamos, and O'ob (Pima Bajo) in the Yécora hills. But I'm sure he'll make it there soon, and in a future book he'll delight us with new stories and experiences.

I'm also sure that Martínez had many more tales than the present book could hold, but I encourage you, dear reader, to enjoy the ones that he shares with us here, and in doing so learn what we know today about the archaeology of central and northern Sonora.

9. The hydroelectric project was conceived toward 1955, when Ignacio Soto was governor of Sonora (1949–1955); construction work formally began in May 1958, as part of President Adolfo López Mateos's plan of providing electricity throughout the nation. The dam was completed in 1962. In its day it was one of the most important hydraulic works in the country for generating electricity.

I'd like to close by recalling the words of our friend and mentor Jaime Litvak King:[10] "Archaeology is the most fun thing you can do with your pants on."

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10. Jaime Litvak King was born in Mexico City on December 10, 1933, and died on October 2, 2006. He graduated in Archaeology at ENAH in 1963 and obtained a master's in Anthropological Science at UNAM. In 1970 he completed his doctorate in Anthropology, also at UNAM. He was a promoter of Industrial Archaeology and a pioneer in computing as applied to this discipline in Mexico; he also served as director of the Instituto de Investigaciones Antropológicas at UNAM in 1973. His book *Todas las piedras tienen 2000 años* (All Stones Are Two Thousand Years Old), published in 1986 by Editorial Trillas, offers an excellent introduction to archaeology. One of Litvak King's little-known accomplishments was his coordination of rescue squads and a fatality information base at the University Medical Center in the aftermath of the 1985 Mexico City earthquake. The Federal government recognized his humanitarian work with the September 19 Honor of Heroic Valor. Jaime Litvak was both a generous teacher and a great humanist.