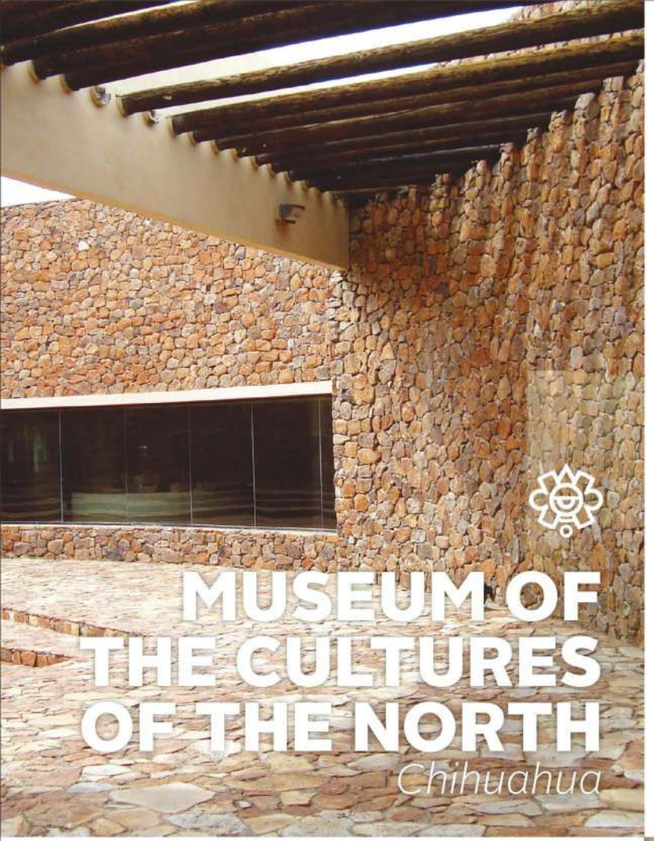


MUSEUM OF THE CULTURES OF THE NORTH

Chihuahua

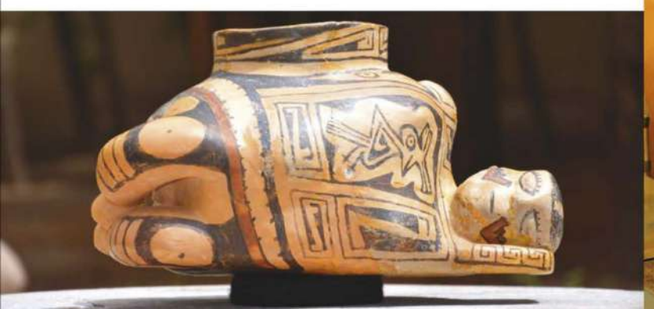
/ MAIN ATTRACTION

Sleeping Woman

Made of clay, it has an anthropomorphic design, showing notched bands and animal shapes on her breasts. It dates to about AD 700–800, the Late Classic period. This piece depicts a woman in a reclining position, one of the most beautiful human representations preserved from Paquimé.

Where to see it?

In niche no. 2 at the end of Room 1.



/ HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The Museum of the Cultures of the North was inaugurated on February 26, 1996. It houses one of the most beautiful archaeological collections from ancient Mexico, discovered during excavations at Paquimé and other major archaeological sites in the region of Northern Mexico and the Southwest of the United States known as the Gran Chichimeca. An impressive variety of different cultures arose in this vast territory and archaeologists have studied the similarities and distinctive qualities of their material culture to understand their social and ritual lives.

Paquimé has a shared background and relations with other cultures in the area. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, with the support of the Amerind Foundation, the archaeologist Charles Di Peso conducted excavations in the archaeological zone, where he found numerous objects suggesting the importance of the site. In fact, Paquimé is the most important in the region.

For more than three decades the objects found there were looted, kept in storage, or at best were exhibited in other museums, until in 1993. That is when, through the National Archaeological Fund, plans began for a museum that would show the complexity and richness of Paquimé and the cultures of the Gran Chichimeca, as well as the historical evolution of the area.

Conceived as a landscape architecture project designed by the architect Mario Schjetnan, the museum is integrated into the local environment. Terraces and embankments house the species of the botanical gardens of the great Chihuahua desert. Endowed with strong symbolism, the design reinterprets and is inspired by the ceremonial mound of Paquimé, reflecting the harmony of stone, earth, and sky of this monumental archaeological zone. The building has a contemporary design, partially buried with a circular construction, large interior patios and windows, and with tonalities and textures in harmony with the desert landscape. This architectural project won the International Critics Award at the Buenos Aires Architecture Biennial in Argentina in 1992.





/ COLLECTIONS

The display offers a panorama of the Gran Chichimeca, the territory of Northern cultures and the Mesoamerican mosaic of cultures. It covers the following topics: the arrival of man on the American continent and the way of life of nomadic populations; the background and development of adobe communities surrounding the complexity of Paquimé, detailing the city's buildings and impressive hydraulic engineering; the skill of artisans who worked stone, shell, bone, copper, and clay; and the delicacy of designs on vessels, necklaces, bracelets, ornaments, fetishes, and buildings. This material diversity attests not only to the intense religious and commercial interactions of Paquimé with the cultures of the American Southwest and Mesoamerica, but also to the sensitivity and talent of the inhabitants of this settlement. Finally, the exhibition documents the city's decline and the arrival of conquerors and missionaries. The importance of the discourse resides in the emphasis on the cultural relations between Mesoamerica and the U.S. Southwest. A broader cultural vision is presented here than the traditional focus on a single site or a single culture, as most INAH site museums have been conceived; this explains the name of the Museum of the Cultures of the North, which received the INAH "Miguel Covarrubias" award for its contribution.

/ HOW TO GET THERE

To get there from Chihuahua by the toll highway to Ciudad Juarez take the turnoff to Ojo Laguna in the direction of Flores Magón-Nvo. Casas Grandes or from Ciudad Juarez take the "libre" (no toll) Palomas-Ascension-Janos-Nuevo Casas Grandes highway, both about 3 hours away.

/ HOURS

Tuesday to Sunday 9:00 am to 5:00 pm

/ SERVICES

Educational services, wheelchairs, and temporary expositions are offered. The building has a space for educational services, restrooms, parking, cafeteria, and museum shop.

/ $ ADMISSION

According to the Federal Fees Act, admission is free for students, teachers, and seniors with a valid ID, children under 13 and disabled people. Sundays: free admission for Mexicans and foreign residents.

/ PHOTOGRAPHY

For the use of any device to make videos, visitors must pay a fee. Non-professional photography, without the use of tripods, is free of charge and must be done without a flash.

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CULTURA
SECRETARÍA DE CULTURA

INAH



/ HIGHLIGHTS

- The most important museum in northern Mexico and south of the United States,
- 1996 — It opened its doors on February 26, 1996.
- The building was designed by the architect Mario Schjetnan.
- 1992 — The architectural project won the International Critics Award at the Buenos Aires Architecture Biennial in Argentina in 1992.
- In the late 1950s and early 1960s, with the support of the Amerind Foundation, archaeologist Charles Di Peso carried out excavations at Paquimé, where he found objects that attest to the importance of the city and its inhabitants.

/EXHIBITIONS

There are three rooms distributed as follows:

- Room 1

To the right is the space exhibiting Ancient Times (30,000 BC to AD 100) on the first settlers in the region and their hunting-gathering practices. Fossils of large mammals and a collection of artifacts illustrate life in those early years. A video presents rock art at different locations in the desert cultures.

(Take a moment to visit the Patio of the Desert to explore a display on the earliest distillers of *sotol* cane alcohol. Pots, tubes and other artifacts used in the process were manufactured with the same plant).

Returning to the hall, there is a map of the earliest cultural areas of the Gran Chichimeca divided into four regions: Mogollon, O'odham, Seri, and Anazasi.

With the emergence of the first settlements and the beginning of maize agriculture, the history of the adobe villages began (AD 700–1200). The site of Convento consisted of a group of early villages in the region possessing semi-underground houses with circular and oval plans organized around a larger building, the community house, which served as a civic-religious center. During this period domestic pottery was quite simple, but other pieces were textured and decorated; they used metal and shell to make jewelry. Funeral traditions did not include offerings until AD 900, at about the time the Paquimé tradition began. This culture can be divided into two major periods: its beginning and early development from 700 to 1200, and its rise as a great city from 1200 to the end of the 15th century. By later times, the architecture showed changes and constructions were no longer partially underground, but were elevated.

Further on, notice the map of the villages with the archaeological zones known today. Of particular interest is the complex cultural organization that took place in Chaco Canyon and neighboring areas in northern New Mexico. Chaco is a group of towns located along a canyon, where Bonito village is noteworthy. Its architecture stands out for its stone walls, interspersed with a large number of "kivas," which were round spaces that served (and continue to serve) as communal religious and sacred spaces.

A number of pottery styles have been identified, such as the white with black lines of the Anazasi culture and Mimbre ceramics, which are also known for their bold decoration. At the back, the model of Mesa Verde shows the complex constructions built in huge caves characteristic of another one of the main communities in the region known as the Pueblo people.

The model of Paquimé in the center of the room recreates the city at the time of its maximum splendor. What stands out is the superb technology developed by this culture for water management. At the sides of the model, three interactive systems offer detailed information on different aspects of city life, time periods, and residential, civil, and religious architecture.

Beside the model of Mesa Verde, the display focuses on the system of water use, the key to survival in the desert. The illustrations explain the distribution of spring basins and the technology used. Display cases exhibit models with designs reconstructing the domestic distribution of water.

In the hallway leading to the next room there are niches with magnificent pieces of pottery with anthropomorphic motifs, and metal and shell jewelry. These works evoke the inhabitants, their society, gods, rites and art, such as the cult of the scarlet macaw, which they derived from rulers further south in Mesoamerica. The window offers a fabulous view of the Patio of the Canyon, the guiding axis of the building where the landscape culminates in Moctezuma Hill and its round pre-Hispanic watchtower.

The individual display cases highlight the fine design and craftsmanship of Paquimé polychrome pottery, the city's maximum cultural expression.

/ The museum is of special significance for including a number of unique pieces and for belonging to a site declared UNESCO World Heritage in 1998.



ESSENTIALS

- A *Room 1*
- B *Room 2*
- C *Room 3*

1 Ticket office
2 Vestibule
3 Patio of the Desert
4 Model
5 Patio of the Canyon
6 Maintenance workshop
7 Display workshop
8 Collection storerooms
9 Patio of the Forest
10 Central patio
11 Cafeteria
12 Shop
13 Research
14 Educational services
15 Administration
16 Director's Office
17 Auditorium



- Room 2

This space focuses on daily life in Paquimé. The space is dominated by large glass display cases featuring raw materials; the cases on the sides show different artisans and their production: potters and their clay, with techniques, designs, uses and functions; stone workers, who skillfully carved a variety of sculptures, ceremonial objects, tools, utensils, and other objects; highly imaginative shell workers who created decorative and ritual pieces; metalworkers and their large and small objects and jewelry in copper; bone craftsmen who carved decorative and useful objects from the bone of different animals; miners and weavers, knowledgeable about the properties of each mineral and each plant; carpenters and masons with their construction tools; finally, traders, the masters of commerce, the vocation of the city, where material evidence attests to complex trade relations between the Gran Chichimeca and Mesoamerica.

- Room 3

When the Spaniards reached Paquimé, it had been abandoned for some time. History in the northern zones differs from that of the south. Founding missions was a form of ideological conquest and "the sword and the cross" represented colonial intrusion, a period marked by ongoing indigenous revolts of peoples that were not subjugated, but exterminated. A small video room offers a synthesis of regional history, from the colonial period to the twentieth century.

There is a model of the mission of San Antonio de Padua, near Casa Grandes, and an old map showing early routes and settlements, along with the exhibition of period pieces such as weapons. In the central part there is a set of historical pieces from the north, especially tools for mining, livestock, and agriculture.

From the vestibule you can access the Central Patio to go to the second floor composed of terraces and a great lookout where you can take in the natural surroundings of Casas Grandes and enjoy a magnificent view of Paquimé. Go down the ramp and start the tour of the archaeological zone.

