Introduction

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The contributions to this section on “The South” represent four key areas of current interest and research intensity. There is a truly extraordinary amount of fieldwork being conducted in the Titicaca Basin on both the Peruvian and Bolivian sides of the lake and its culturally affiliated areas in far south coastal Peru and neighboring Chile (e.g., Uribe and Agüero 2002; Goldstein 2003, 2005; Williams and Nash 2002). There is also a resurgence of interest in Wari now that Ayacucho is again safe for fieldwork (e.g., Cook and Glowacki 2003; Isbell 2004c; Isbell and Cook 2002; Isbell and Knobloch this volume; Leoni this volume; Ochatoma and Cabrera 2002; Perez 2002). Nasca culture of the south coast of Peru, one of the first of the “ancient Peruvian civilizations” to be identified by late 19th and early 20th century archaeologists (see, e.g., Uhle 1914), has seen consistent attention since the mid-1980s, although in the form of small projects (e.g., Carmichael 1988; Massey 1986; Proulx 1999; Reindel and Isla 2001, this volume; Schreiber 1999; Schreiber and Lancho Rojas 2003; Silverman 1993, 2002; Vaughn 2004) that nevertheless have achieved important breakthroughs and a new synthesis (Silverman and Proulx 2002). Arguably, Inca archaeology offers the greatest interpretive opportunities because of the huge areal extent of this empire, generally good preservation of its sites, and availability of ethnohistorical source material (see, e.g., Bray 2003a, b; Bauer 1992, 1998, 2004; Bauer and Stanish 2001; D’Altroy 1992, 2002; Kaulicke et al. 2002; Malpass 1993).

Long avoided because of grueling field conditions, some two decades of intensive fieldwork in the Titicaca Basin have greatly expanded our understanding of a spectacular example of complex society, recently proposed as an independent case study in pristine state formation (see Stanish 2001). Of particular interest is the shifting axis of power from the southern basin to the northern basin and back again, as seen in the rise of the Chiripa (Hastorf 1999), Pucara (Karen Mohr Chávez 1988a, 1988b; Sergio Chávez 2002; Conklin 1985; Franquemont 1986; Klarich 2005; Mujica 1987; Rowe and Brandel 1970; Young-Sanchez 2004), and Tiwanaku (e.g., Bermann 1994; Janusek 2004; Kolata 1993) spheres of influences and control. It is not unreasonable to consider Inca Cuzco as the most distant of the Basin’s outlier territories.
Attention initially focused on economy and subsistence in the seemingly inhospitable altiplano. This brought to light a little-known system of wetlands cultivation—raised field agriculture—and instigated significant contemporary investment in the technology as a solution to problems of modern poverty. But serious question continues to loom over this research regarding the real productivity of raised field farming, its susceptibility to climatic variables, and explanation of the failure of initially heavily subsidized modern development programs (Erickson 1988a, 2000; Kolata 1993, 2004; Stanish 2003). Equally heated discussion concerns the causes and processes by which the Tiwanaku empire disintegrated, involving an ongoing debate regarding environmental degradation/climate change, within the context of a poorly understood chronology for dating Tiwanaku’s apogee (Abbott et al. 1997; Erickson 1999; Binford and Kolata 1996; Binford et al. 1997; Brownman 1981, 1985; Erickson 1999; Isbell 2004b, Isbell and Burkholder 2002; Kolata 1993, 2003; Kolata et al. 2000). Lamentably, there has been virtually no fieldwork follow-up to John Hyslop’s pioneering study of the post-Tiwanku polities in the northern basin (Hyslop 1977a, b, 1979; also see Lumbreras 1974a; outside the Titicaca Basin proper see Stanish 1992 for a discussion of the Lupaqa relationship to Moquegua).

Wari studies are experiencing an exciting renewal following the terrorism-necessitated premature closure of William H. Isbell’s 1970s project at the Huari urbán center (see Isbell and McEwan 1991). Since the mid 90s attention has focused on Conchopata, second city of the Huari heartland, as it was being obliterated by construction in the modern departmental capital of Ayacucho. Significantly, Conchopata has long been recognized as having the most Tiwanaku-like art north of the Titicaca Basin, and new excavations have revealed unknown representations in associational contexts that fill in critical gaps in the expansive spatial and temporal distribution of Tiwanakoid iconography (Cook 2004; Isbell 2001, 2004a; Isbell and Cook 2002; Knobloch 2000; Ochatoma and Cabrera 2001a, 2001b, 2002). For the first time, it is possible to revise and reconstruct Wari chronology, and use its fine stylistic sequence, along with radiocarbon dates, to recast relationships throughout Wari’s far-flung sphere of religious, commercial, and political interaction. Isbell and Knobloch (this volume) propose an important but preliminary evaluation of cultural relations that imply that the Tiwanakoid style was not invented at and diffused from a precocious center in the south altiplano, but was the result of complex, multicultural interactions among peoples as distant as Ayacucho in central Peru and San Pedro de Atacama in central Chile. Much more is to be learned, but we can begin to recognize a complex process, perhaps with roots in Chavin, that embraced the entirety of the southern Andes, much of which was, until now, considered to be occupied by culturally marginal peoples.

Previously known almost exclusively from a brief discussion by Lumbreras (1974b, c, 1981), Leoni’s (this volume) new excavations at Ñawinpukyo yield important new data on Huarpá, the Early Intermediate Period archaeological culture that is temporally and culturally antecedent to Wari. Leoni’s data suggest that public communal rituals played a central role in Huarpá society and that some degree of social differentiation existed at Ñawinpukyo, the largest and most important of