CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The figurines under consideration in this study were recovered in excavations at a site located at the end of the East Avenue in the Hacienda Metepec Mound Group, Teotihuacan (Millon, Drewitt, and Cowgill 1973, map 82, site 9:N1E7), part of the "outer" city (R. Millon 1976: 212) (Map 1 and Plate 1). They were mixed in the fill of a destroyed building. The figurines represent a long time span, from the Tzacualli through the Coyotlatelco phases.[1] There is no clear association with architecture or other archaeological features which might indicate figurine function. The mixture of the figurines in the fill precludes the establishment of a chronological sequence by strata. Some general remarks about these, and other Teotihuacan figurines based on studies by archaeologists, are necessary to bring some order to an apparent chaos.

The figurines found at site 9:N1E7[2] are made of terracotta, and with a few exceptions are solid and small, that is, the unbroken piece could be held in the palm of the hand. Some figurines have been found at Teotihuacan made of material other than baked clay, e.g., green stone (Rubín de la Borbolla 1947: Figs. 1, 15) and obsidian (Millon, Drewitt, and Bennyhoff 1965: 24, Figs. 37-40). Perhaps perishable materials were used of which there is no longer any trace. The green stone and obsidian

figurines were found in ceremonial contexts. Because only figurines of terracotta were recovered at site 9:N1E7, this study deals exclusively with figurines made of that material.[3]

There are recognizable Teotihuacan figurine types. The works of Gamio (1922), Noguera (1935a, 1962, 1965), Linné (1934, 1942), and Séjourné (1966a) are mong the publications with the most extensive illustrations of figurines recovered at Teotihuacan. Artes de México (1965) has photographs of many Teotihuacan style figurines. They formed part of a private collection, and the publication gives no sure provenience. Several types are contemporaneous in the various phases; on the other hand, change is seen in technique of manufacture, styles change or evolve from phase to phase. But within the known figurine corpus there is a general Teotihuacan stylistic tradition.

The number of figurines produced at Teotihuacan must have been staggering. Séjourné (1966a: 14) recovered 15,886 figurine fragments at Yayahuala and 6,581 from Tetitla for a total of 22,467. The results of other archaeological work stress the great number of figurines, but give no absolute counts: "vast quantities of figurines and parts of figurines" (Linné 1942: 166-167), "little clay figurines which throughout the life of Teotihuacan were made in such great quantities" (Kidder, Jennings, and Shook 1946: 256), and "las figurillas que aparecen por millares" (Wicke 1954: 118). By comparison, the number of Teotihuacan figurines found in areas outside the Valley is small. Only a few of the pertinent archaeological reports may be cited here. Seler (1915: Pl. XX) illustrates forty heads from Jalapazco. Linné (1942) illustrates seven figurines from Calpulalpan (Figs. 99-105), and eighteen

from Las Colinas (Figs. 130-145, 147-148), but in Linné's cases, not all figurines found are illustrated (1942: 57, 69). Williams (1974: 36) found five Teotihuacan heads at the Los Altos site in West Mexico. These examples, if even approximately representative of Teotihuacan figurine counts from areas outside the Valley, show very few figurines compared with the thousands at Yayahuala and Tetitla, or even with the 248 fragments recovered at site 9:N1E7. Whereas some raw materials and finished products are thought to have been energetically imported or traded (for example, foreign wares including Thin Orange, obsidian, and shell), figurines seem generally to have been produced and used locally, and do not appear to have been important trade items.

Some figurines seem to have been manufactured in workshops (R. Millon 1974: 355), and it is not unlikely that in the large and commercially important ancient city they were traded in a central marketplace, but concrete proof for this is lacking. Whether the figurines were made at the place where they are eventually recovered, or elsewhere in the city, must for now remain uncertain. It seems likely that the figurines from the excavation at site 9:N1E7 were associated with the occupants of that site, or the neighborhood. The evidence for this assumption is discussed below (pp. 24-27).

The vast quantities of figurines reported from Teotihuacan might be an indication that they were associated with a great many people. The archaeological context for most figurines is ambiguous at best; certainly this is true for the pieces excavated at site 9:N1E7. Some figurines undoubtedly had some ritual connotation because a few were

found in ceremonial context (Linné 1934: 62, 1942: 166: Rubín de la Borbolla 1947; Séjourné 1966a: 240). Excavations of residences produce domestic items such as culinary ware, as well as figurines (Wicke 1954: 118), so it may have been that most figurines were associated with household activities, and, by logical extension, with a large part of the Teotihuacan population.

Previous Studies

The establishment of the Teotihuacan chronology was one of the most important steps toward understanding Teotihuacan's history and its culture. Work in the 1880s by Batres (1887) was continued in the early 20th century by Boas (1912), Seler (1915), Tozzer (1921), Gamio (1922), Noguera (1935a), and Vaillant (1938). Excavations by Linné (1934, 1942) and Armillas (1944, 1950) substantially added to the knowledge of the phases. In the 1960s the INAH began Proyecto Teotihuacan with the reconstruction of the ceremonial center (Bernal 1963). During the same period, the Teotihuacan Mapping Project produced information on the limits of the ancient city, population density, chronology, and a detailed map (Millon, Drewitt, and Cowgill 1973). Archaeological work still continues, sponsored by both the INAH and the Teotihuacan Mapping Project.

More specific studies that focus on figurines have been summarized by Carmen Cook de Leonard (1965). Among the studies described, four are particularly relevant to this thesis: those of Gamio (1922), Seler

(1915), Noguera (1935a, 1962, 1965), and von Winning (1958), each of which employs a different approach in analysis of the material.

Gamio recognized an evolution in figurine style, and postulated the migration of a group of outsiders "of the Teotihuacan culture" (1922: 181) into the Teotihuacan Valley. According to this theory, "archaic" figurines, of the period now known as Teotihuacan I, were made by the people living in the Valley, and the "intermediate" or transition style was the result of the two peoples living side by side. Both archaic and intermediate figurines were hand modelled. Gamio's "normal Teotihuacan" type is the moulded as well as hand modelled-moulded (mixed) technique of manufacture. These figurines represent a continuation of style and maturation of Teotihuacan art.

Seler (1915: 443) suggested possible connections between the peoples of the Teotihuacan culture and those of other regions of Mexico by looking at stylistic similarities of their respective cultural remains. Noguera (1965: 92-95) established a figurine chronology based on material recovered from his excavations as well as from other sources. His classification continues in use.

Studies in areas of figurine style more specific than Noguera's have aided in classification. For example, von Winning's (1958) analysis of figurines with movable joints, or puppets, called attention to stylistic details within this figurine group. This type of figurine is common at Teotihuacan although the bulk of von Winning's material came from Azcapotzalco.

A study carried out since Cook de Leonard's article was published is that of Warren Barbour (1975), whose material came from five excavations of the Teotihuacan Mapping Project. He correlates the figurines with Rattray's (1973) analysis of associated ceramics.

Growth of the City and Social Organization

René Millon's work has particularly pointed up the growth of the city and the development of its social organization (1967; 1973). The city grew from 30,000 inhabitants or more in the Tzacualli phase to between 50,000 and 60,000 by the Miccaotli phase, and increased to a maximum of about 200,000 when the city was at its height in Early Xolalpan (R. Millon 1967: 123; 1973: 54). The area expanded from 6 to 20 square kilometers during the Tzacualli phase, and remained the same for the duration of the life of the city (R. Millon 1973: 52, 54). The surrounding rural area declined in numbers of inhabitants in the early phases (R. Millon 1967: 123; Sanders, Parsons, and Santley 1979: 106), as if the importance of Teotihuacan as a political and religious center drew the population of the hinterland into the city. There was a slight drop in population at Teotihuacan during the Metepec phase, but rural areas were not repopulated (R. Millon 1973: 59).

Monumental architecture lined the Street of the Dead, which

was laid out on a north-south axis. By the Miccaotli phase, both the Pyramid of the Sun and the Pyramid of the Moon had been built as well as the Ciudadela, and possibly the Temple of Quetzalcoatl (R. Millon 1973: 55). A tradition for public religious ceremonies was probably well established by the first century, as attested by the Pyramid of the Sun. Political leaders were probably few, but extremely powerful (R. Millon 1967: 121). Some may have had residences made largely of imperishable material on the inside of the Ciudadela or in front of the Pyramid of the Sun. Most of the populace lived in dwellings made of impermanent building materials until the Tlamimilolpa phase, when stone-walled apartment compounds began to be used as the common type of Teotihuacan residence (R. Millon 1973: 56).

The people who lived in each compound may have been related by kinship or lineage, to make up some sort of "corporate group" (R. Millon 1967: 121). These social groups lived and worked in the apartment compounds, especially the craft specialists, sharing economic activities as well as rituals (R. Millon 1973: 23, 40, 222). Craft specialization developed and became increasingly widespread as the population grew.

Most patterns of Teotihuacan social and political organization which were laid down in the Tlamimilolpa phase continued in the Xolalpan. People continued to live in apartment compounds. Monumental architecture was extended along the Street of the Dead (Bernal 1963).

The period of Teotihuacán expansion to outlying areas in Mesoamerica during the Tlamimilolpa phase, and the importance of these external relations solidified during the Xolalpan (R. Millon 1973: 59). Evidence of Teotihuacan presence is seen, for example, at Matacapan, Kaminaljuyú, and Tikal in architecture, stone carving, and decorative elements on pottery (Valenzuela 1945; Kidder, Jennings, and Shook 1946: 42-45, 218-240; W. Coe 1967: 102).

For Covarrubias, the Xolalpan phase is a continuation from the Tlamimilolpa of the same ideas, "but more elaborated and with a decided maturity of the arts, which show a tendency from then on toward greater conventionalization and fossilization" (1957: 137). Xolalpan ceramic types show "a direct and rapid outgrowth of the Late Tlamimilolpa," and whereas the Metepec phase shows continuity from the Xolalpan, there was a "general decline in finished and artistic expression (Bennyhoff 1966: 26). On the one hand the Xolalpan phase is seen in many respects as a period of continuity, and on the other as one of change, with the switch from hand modelling to moulding figurines as one of the diagnostic characteristics. That the decline of the city in the Metepec phase was gradual is seen in the ceramics (Bennyhoff 1966: 27), and in the population distribution (Cowgill 1974: 394).

Teotihuacan Ceremonial Art and the Figurines

An analysis of the general style of Teotihuacan figurines compared

with other forms of Teotihuacan representational art might be helpful in interpreting what kind of information figurines were intended to convey. Wicke (1954) points up the distinction between public ceremonial art, what he refers to as "elite" art, and figurines, or "folk" art. Elite art forms are associated with monumental architecture, murals, decorated vases, etc. Some motifs on figurines reflect similar motifs of elite art, and according to Wicke (1954: 117) are the origins of some figurine styles. His examples deal with the Tetitla murals and figurines of Period III, but this same distinction might be applied to art forms of other Teotihuacan phases as well. Whether ritual use of the figurines reflected public ceremony itself is, of course, unknown.

Complexes of symbols have been identified in murals and on decorated vessels (von Winning 1947a, 1947b, 1948; Kubler 1967; Miller 1973; C. Millon 1973; Pasztory 1974), and some of the elements of these complexes are seen on figurines. In a few cases, stylistic elements on figurines in this collection are similar to those in ceremonial art; therefore, inferences may be made about the symbolic meaning of some of the figurines in their ancient context.

According to Caso, Teotihuacan art is neither realistic nor abstract, but symbolic and hierarchic, and fundamentally religious in character (1966: 249-250). Combinations of iconographic elements or "image clusters" (Pasztory 1972: 147) are liturgical rather than narrative (Kubler 1967: 5). Few image clusters are found on figurines,

especially when most are broken and eroded; but it is important to consider together all the stylistic elements which remain on each of the figurines.

The Problem of Figurine Function

The overriding question which arises from a study of Teotihuacan figurines is what meaning they held for the Teotihuacanos themselves. The most obvious implications of this question will probably never be known: why figurines were made, who made them, who used them, if figurine types were allowed for only certain individuals or groups of people by the elite of the Teotihuacan hierarchy, or if anyone could make and use them. The recognizable Teotihuacan figurine stylistic tradition and the repetition of stylistic motifs on many figurines would seem to indicate that some sort of information was expressed by and for the Teotihuacanos.

Several studies of figurine function are based on information in chronicles and from ethnographic analogy (Heyden 1973; Lee 1969). To apply present-day ethnographic evidence, or even documented Aztec information, to a study of a culture which disappeared hundreds of years ago would be to assume that traditions remained static. Such analogies could suggest the possibility of similarities of practice, but furnish no proof (Paddock 1969: 29).

Cases of figurine function in Mesoamerica include curing and

witchcraft, fertility rites, burial goods, cult images, toys, and musical instruments (Lee 1969; Paddock 1969). Some may have been broken intentionally (Lee 1969: 63; Stocker, personal communication). There has been no suggestion, nor is one being made here, that figurines were solely decorative items. It is likely that they had a variety of uses through time (Lee 1969: 65).

Given Teotihuacan's stratified social organization (R. Millon 1981: 212), individual or group status was probably important to the Teotihuacanos. Studies by Becker (1975) and Heyden (1976) suggest that style of headdress indicated rank or status of the individual or group in Teotihuacan society. This might represent a more "secular" as opposed to "religious" aspect of Teotihuacan culture, although the distinction may have been meaningless for the Teotihuacanos.

The difference is pointed up here because some figurines were made in the likenesses of gods as they are recognized by their characteristics in the Aztec pantheon. Linné (1934: 119) and Séjourné (1966a: 274-277) identify three of these gods (old god, Xipe, Tlaloc) in figurine form from their respective excavations, but they are not found in the burials and caches they reported.

Objectives and Method

Few firm conclusions may be drawn about a group of 248 figurines for which there is no clear archaeological context to indicate chronology

or activity areas. However, some inferences may be made about Teotihuacan culture by viewing the figurine styles and motifs as symbols which were understood by the Teotihuacanos. From the time the residents of the city began to think of themselves as Teotihuacanos, they must have shared concepts on which group identity was based. Art forms in general, and figurines in particular, contain symbols which the community may have recognized and accepted as uniquely of Teotihuacan, and which served to reinforce the cohesiveness of the group.

It is possible that certain types of figurines, or motifs, were associated either with various groups throughout the city, or with neighborhoods. The figurines from 9:N1E7 are in no way representative of the entire Teotihuacan repertory; a glance through the Séjourné figurine volume (1966a) shows that many figurine styles and motifs found in other areas of Teotihuacan were absent at 9:N1E7. One of the purposes of this study is to call attention to the location of the site itself. It is probably significant that these figurines, and not others, were recovered there. It is suggested that some motifs might be indicative of regional differences of symbols used by the occupants of various sites at Teotihuacan and its environs.

In order to put the figurines from site 9:N1E7 into the broader context of Teotihuacan iconography, this study focusses on figurine style, that is, the general configuration and decoration of the figurine, and motif, a single element of decoration. Comparison may then

be made with similar iconographic elements in Teotihuacan ceremonial art forms, and with other figurines.

Some figurines wear headdresses and clothing, and a few of these personages have been identified as priests (Kubler 1967: 10). Articles of clothing such as robes and quechquemitls are shown in detail on figurines. Since the quechquemitl is traditionally worn only by females in Mesoamerica, and if it is assumed that the tradition goes back to Teotihuacan days, then torso fragments showing this garment may be identified as female forms. Further association of clothing with headdress or hair style may identify personages or deities with similar attributes on vases or murals. In other cases, figurines have no stylistic counterparts in elite art and may be compared only with other figurines, if at all.

Some faces appear to be more realistic than others which have exotic head shapes or facial features. These may not have been intended to represent individuals, but archetypal ideals. There is a great deal of overlapping of symbols in Teotihuacan iconography, and some of these elements are found both on realistic heads and those which have been identified as deities. Cases of overlapping motifs are noted, but should not be interpreted as patterns seen in all Teotihuacan figurine iconography.

Evolution and continuity of figurine styles are considered against the framework of Noguera's (1935a, 1962, 1965) chronological order of hand modelled and Classic moulded figurines, and Rattray's

(1966) study of Coyotlatelco figurines. Changes in style and technique of manufacture of the figurines may be measured against Millon's synthesis of the growth and development of the ancient city of Teotihuacan (1973) and its social organization (1967, 1976).

The data are presented in a descriptive and catalogue format. Chapter II deals with the excavation of the site, the stratigraphic pits, and the distribution of the figurines. Plans of the distribution of figurines (excluding stratigraphic pit and surface material), drawn on transparent acetate pages, demonstrate where the pieces were located in each layer (pp. 238-241). Details of the methods of hand modelling and moulding figurines, and what is known of the moulding process itself, are discussed in Chapter III. Technique of manufacture is relevant to the chronology on which the figurine classification is based, although shapes and decorative motifs are used for further grouping of the figurines into types. The method of the typology and the reasons for arranging the figurines in this particular sequence are explained in Chapter IV.

In Chapter V stylistic traits of 9:N1E7 figurines are compared with ceremonial art and with other figurines seen in publications. Not all the 9:N1E7 figurines are included in this section as many are too eroded and broken, and little detail remains to make comparisons possible. Some problems of chronology are discussed in Chapters IV and V.

The quantity of figurines, neither an unmanageably large number nor too few to be relevant, offered the opportunity of presenting the data in several ways. All the figurines are described in Appendix I in order to point out details which may not be clear in the photographs. Appendix II is the list of figurine types and their corresponding figure numbers. Appendix III lists the number of figurines in each general category,[4] the percentages based on the total of 248 pieces. Provenience and measurements are given in Appendix IV. Each figurine was marked with a small find or bag number during field work. Bag numbers are underlined, small find numbers are not. Surface material is labeled as such. The distribution plans may be checked against provenience information of pit, layer, and square. The figurines were measured in centimeters in three dimensions (except limbs, two dimensions). The heads were measured for thickness (profile) at the nose area; otherwise no specific anatomical portion of the figurine was used as a point of measurement.

Appendices V and VI are designed to be used in conjunction with the distribution plans. Appendix V gives percentages of figurines of each general category by layer, excluding the stratigraphic pits. Appendix VI lists the AMOUNT and the percentage of figurines recovered in each layer except in the stratigraphic pits.

Appendix VII is the range of colors based on the Munsell Soil Chart. Figurines were selected from a few general categories to demonstrate lightest, mid-range and darkest colors. Color of paint is included for Coyotlatelco figurines.

The particular importance of this study lies in the fact that the figurines were recovered in archaeological context from a single excavation, and while giving no clear chronological sequence, they may be studied in conjunction with other cultural remains. A drawback to many previous studies has been the lack of associated ceramics. Because there are relatively few figurines (248), conscious selectivity has been kept to a minimum. This approach would have been impossibly unwieldy if the collection had numbered in the thousands, or even several hundreds. All the figurine fragments are included in the classification and illustrated by photographs. No material was brought in from the surrounding area to make the collection more comprehensive. Perhaps the greatest contribution of this kind of study is to provide comparative material which might aid others in future archaeological investigations of Teotihuacan figurines.

NOTES

1. Six Aztec pieces were recovered. They are included in the classification, the distribution plans, and the illustrations, but no interpretation of their presence at the site is attempted because the Teotihuacan Valley was "a politically marginal area" during the Aztec period (Parsons 1972: 81).

2. The formal name for the site of excavation is the Hacienda Metepec Mound Group, but "Site 9:N1E7" is adopted here as a shorthand term. It would be cumbersome to refer constantly to the "Hacienda Metepec Mound Group" figurines, and to abbreviate "HMMG" figurines seems too informal.

3. All the figurines are made of Teotihuacan Valley paste. Dr. Rattray was most kind and helpful in making this identification (personal communication, 1981).

4. General category (hand modelled human heads, hand modelled animal heads, hand modelled torsos, etc.) is the term used throughout the manuscript as the basic division of figurines.