

CHAPTER II

THE SITE AND THE EXCAVATION

Excavation of the Compound

The excavation of the Hacienda Metepec Mound Group took place during February, March, and April, 1979, and was sponsored by the Instituto de Investigaciones Antropológicas, Universidad Autónoma Nacional de México, and was directed by Dr. Evelyn Rattray.

The site, located at the extreme end of the East Avenue (Map 1 and Plate 1), is in a present-day nopal field. An unexcavated pyramid stands immediately to the west. It is the only mound in the area that has not been leveled. Previous studies had been carried out by the Teotihuacan Mapping Project under the direction of René Millon. The data recovered show a strong Coyotlatelco occupation and what were thought to be Classic Teotihuacan period obsidian workshops.

Field work of the present project was begun by making an intensive surface collection in areas 1, 4, 7, and 9 of N1E7. When 9 was chosen as the site of excavation, it was surveyed and a 25 square meter pit staked out, 5 meters on each side, oriented to Teotihuacan

north. The ground was cleared of weeds, rocks, and other loose debris. This process was repeated each time a new pit was staked out. All figurines from the first surface collection and from the intense ground clearing are considered together as surface finds, and each was marked with the corresponding site number. Once excavation got underway, figurines and other unusual items were bagged separately, numbered, and labeled as small finds. Occasionally pieces were unidentified and bagged with the sherds. They were later separated from the sherds, but retained the sherd bag number. In Appendix IV (Provenience and Measurements of Figurines), the bag numbers are underlined to distinguish figurines bagged with sherds from the small finds. Small find numbers are not underlined.

Within the first week of excavation a concrete floor was uncovered at 50 cm below the line used to measure depths from the surface, and during the ensuing weeks other architectural features emerged. It was soon evident that a large building lay underground (Plates 2 and 4). Excavation proceeded beyond the original 5 x 5 meter square in all directions. (See Plan of Excavation at 9:N1E7 for final limits of the area.) This original area was designated as W1N1, gridded into 1 meter squares which in turn were lettered north to south and numbered west to east. At the southern end of the concrete floor which had begun in W1N1 two steps were found leading down to a second concrete floor (Plate 3). The director decided to look for the continuation of the lower concrete floor, and to this end W1S2 was staked out and excavation begun on March 12, 1979. Three strati-

graphic pits were later dug to bedrock in W2N1, W1N2, and W1S2 (Plan of the Excavation).

Although the outer limits of the building were not found, the excavated area revealed the remains of a Zacuala-like palace, aligned to Teotihuacan north (Rattray 1980: 5). The Northern Complex or Portico had at one time been roofed, as demonstrated by broken walls and columns which may be seen in Plates 2 and 4. The steps leading down to the south, or lower, courtyard are broad, extending east to west across the width of the floor (Plate 5). No architectural features showed up in the Southern Courtyard. In the last days of field work a few meters were excavated even farther south (E1S3), revealing a stone wall that defined the limits of the patio to the south. A higher concrete floor appeared in this area but no connecting steps were found.

Apparently the building had been burned. Great amounts of burnt clay and carbonized wood, obviously remains of the fallen roof in the Northern Complex, were mixed in the rubble and lay on the concrete floor. (Dr. Rattray has not yet received the results of radiocarbon tests.) Many dressed stones which seem to have been used in construction covered the floors. Lajas (thin, flat stones used in Teotihuacan construction) and an occasional bit of painted stucco were found in the rubble.

Layer 1, the upper 10 cm, had been recently disturbed by plowing. Layer 2, relatively free of stones, is composed of 20 cm of

hard-packed earth. The rocks appear in layer 3. Layer 4 corresponds to the few cm of dirt just on top of the floor, and layer 5 is the floor itself. Some of the layers were subdivided to maintain a tighter control of the ceramics. Because the floor of the Southern Courtyard is some 50 cm lower than that of the Northern Complex, the layers have more subdivisions in the south (see profile and symbol chart.) For the purposes of this study, the excavated area will be considered in three parts: 1) the Northern Complex, 2) the Southern Courtyard (Plate 3), and 3) the Area of the Steps. Within the third area the greatest percentage of the cultural material was found. Obsidian and ceramics were especially dense in the third and fourth layers, and were distributed throughout the area. On and in front of this step area, large deposits of obsidian flakes were located (Plates 4 and 5). The deposits were approximately 20 cm deep, measuring from 60 cm to 80 cm below the surface line. Both ceramics and obsidian were concentrated in this area and at that depth. Ceramics and figurines of various Teotihuacan phases were mixed in with the rubble.

In the stratigraphic pits, below the floors of the Classic building which Coyotlatelco peoples are believed to have inhabited, we found two to three earlier building phases. The earliest occupation, just above bedrock, was revealed in two stratigraphic pits, W2N1 and W1N2. It pertains to the Late Tlamimilolpa phase, but with much admixture of earlier Miccaotli and Early Tlamimilolpa phase ceramics,

suggesting that an occupation of these phases occurred in the vicinity and was the source of the early figurines used in this study. In Late Tlamimilolpa times a standard Teotihuacan apartment compound was built here. Our stratigraphy showed a major rebuilding in the Xolalpan phase with a change of floor plan and still another renovation in the Metepec phase. Dr. Rattray's conclusion is that the evidence suggests Coyotlatelco people lived here on the ruins of the Classic Period building, and worked obsidian, if not on the steps, then nearby in the Courtyard (1980: 18).

The Stratigraphic Pits

Stratigraphic pit 1 was put down in W2N1, squares C3, C4, D3, D4 (see Plan of the Excavation) through concrete floor 1 of a room to the west of the main portico, and revealed two earlier periods of construction. Concrete floor 1 is layer 5 in the stratigraphy, and the latest construction of the North Complex. According to Dr. Rattray (1980: 11-12), rubble made up layers 6, 7, 7a, 7b, and 7c, all of which constituted a single fill for the foundation of concrete floor 1. Ceramics from these levels are of the Metepec phase. Layer 8 is the floor of an earlier building, probably constructed during the Late Xolalpan phase. Associated architectural elements are steps which face east, and a column. Ceramics from layers 8 and 8a are largely Late Tlamimilolpa and Early Xolalpan; however, Late Xolalpan is the latest phase represented in these layers. The lowest layers, 9 and

9a, contained material of the Early and Late Tlamimilolpa phases, the earliest period of construction and occupation on this site (Rattray 1980: 11-12).

A total of 9 figurines were recovered in stratigraphic pit 1 from layers 7b, 7c, 8, and 9. The following list gives the figure numbers, the layers from which the figurines were recovered, and the phase names of the latest ceramics found in each layer.

<u>Figure No.</u>	<u>Layer</u>	<u>Phase</u>
98	7b	Meteppec
40	7c	Meteppec
127b	7c	Meteppec
130k	8	Late Xolalpan
99	8	Late Xolalpan
126	8	Late Xolalpan
127a	8	Late Xolalpan
44	9	Late Tlamimilolpa
12	9	Late Tlamimilolpa

Five figurines were recovered in stratigraphic pit 2 (WIN2, squares C3 and C4), three from layer 9 and two from layer 12. Three periods of occupation were found in this pit. Layer 9 is a concrete floor, and 9a is the fill underneath it. Late Xolalpan is the latest phase of ceramics in these layers. Ceramics found in the lowest layer (12) are a mixture of Tzacualli, Miccaotli, and Early and Late Tlamimilolpa (Rattray 1980: 13). The following list, like the previous one, gives figure numbers, layers, and phases.

<u>Figure</u>	<u>Layer</u>	<u>Phase</u>
13	9	Late Xolalpan
127p	9	Late Xolalpan
129q	9	Late Xolalpan
127o	12	Late Tlamimilolpa
129p	12	Late Tlamimilolpa

Stratigraphic pit 3 contained no figurines.

Distribution of the Figurines

No chronology could be established from the ceramics found between concrete floor 1 and the surface. All were mixed in the fill of the destroyed building. However, the plans (pp. 238-241) may provide a basis for further research in figurine distribution in excavations where activity areas are not clearly defined in archaeological context.

One implication of the distribution study bears directly on the stylistic analysis of figurines. In order to draw conclusions about regional stylistic differences of the figurines within the Teotihuacan Valley and its environs (between site 9:N1E7 and Azcapotzalco, for instance), it must first be established that some people who lived on the site or in the neighborhood did indeed use these figurines in some capacity.

The presence of figurines which represent a long time span may be explained by the various levels of construction seen in the stratigraphic pits and the associated ceramics. It is likely that dirt

hauled in from the surrounding area to level the floors contained figurines and other cultural debris. Metepec figurines are contemporaneous with the structure of concrete floor 1, and Coyotlatelco figurines of a later occupation.

What is not easily explained is how Tzacualli through Late Xolalpan figurines (and other ceramic material) came to rest above and on a Metepec floor. Generally at Teotihuacan, ceramics and other artifacts found on the surface indicate that similar kinds of material will be found underground in the same area (Cowgill 1974: 367). He reasons that "a good deal of the fill for each new phase of a building was re-used fill from superseded building phases, which might belong to the same structure, or, presumably, might well be partly from refuse from other structures in the vicinity. All this means that a considerable proportion of the older artifacts and ceramics, incorporated originally in the fill of some early structure, has since been re-incorporated into fill for later structures, and given a good chance of finding its way to the surface" (1974: 367). He finds it unlikely that "much material (was carried) more than a few hundred feet from where it was used" (1974: 368). And so might figurines of several earlier phases be found together above the Metepec floor, which was the latest construction made of permanent building material, perhaps finding their way to the surface.

The plan of layers 1 and 2 shows that the figurines were distributed fairly evenly throughout the excavated area, probably the result of plowing. However, in layers 3-6¹, much of the ceramic material was clustered

along the area of the steps and in the Southern Courtyard (Plates 3, 4, and 5) around dense concentrations of obsidian debitage.

Schiffer (1972, 1976) has formulated hypotheses and even laws which aim to explain and predict primary and secondary deposition of artifacts, and how they pass from stages of manufacture through use and discard to finally be unearthed by archaeologists. These laws account for human as well as natural activity which produce the archaeological record. He defined cultural formation processes, or c-transforms, as laws which are "necessary to relate the past qualitative, quantitative, spatial, and associated attributes of materials in systemic context to materials deposited in the culture system" (1976: 14). Noncultural transforms, or n-transforms, "are processes such as wind, water, rodent activity, and chemical action" which "cause post-depositional changes in site and artifact morphology" (Schiffer 1976: 15), and which "incorporate laws of other sciences, such as chemistry, physics, and geology" (Schiffer 1972: 156). Schiffer's comments call attention to the need to distinguish between deposition of artifacts through c-transforms, and random scattering due to n-transforms.

There is the strong probability of an association of figurines with the people who occupied the structure at site 9:N1E7 during the Metepec phase because of the high concentration of Metepec ceramics in this area noted from the Teotihuacan Mapping Project surface survey. A high Metepec count was found "notably in the mound group in N1E7 where a concentration of Metepec material led to the recognition

and naming of the phase in the 1960s" (Cowgill 1974: 394). Unfortunately, deposition by c-transforms of traditionally recognized Metepec figurines cannot be determined.

The Coyotlatelco people of this area had the last opportunity of disturbing artifacts of previous occupations. The deposits of grey obsidian, presumably from the Otumba source, are associated with the Coyotlatelco occupation (Rattray 1980: 18). An analysis of the obsidian is not the purpose of this study, but it must be noted that the discrete deposits suggest results of obsidian working of at least a single occupation, if not a very short time within the occupation. The dense concentrations of obsidian debitage might be the result of primary or secondary depositions. It is possible that the obsidian was worked in another area, and the flakes thrown away as garbage in the area of the steps and the Southern Courtyard. However, obsidian flakes were also mixed in the jumble with ceramic artifacts which suggests a slow accumulation of debris. Because the figurines were recovered around the deposits, and not in them, one might conclude that the disposal of obsidian in deposits and the mixture of figurines in the fill were not simultaneous.

Explanation of the Distribution Plans

Because the purpose of the distribution plans is to show the location of the figurines within the excavated area above concrete floor 1, only 177 of the total number of 248 figurines in the collection are shown on the plans. Fifty-four figurines were picked up from the surface before the site had been surveyed and placed in the context of Millon's

map, and while clearing the surface of each new pit. Surface material information is found in Appendices V and VI. Obviously, none of the figurines from the stratigraphic pits appear on the plans.

Exact provenience was recorded for almost every figurine. Unfortunately, in a few cases some information is lacking in the field notes. Figs. 90 and 162 have pit and square numbers, but the layer numbers were not recorded. Worse still, there is no information at all for Fig. 24. Therefore, these three pieces are not included in the distribution study.

The following list shows how the number of figurines is broken down:

Number of figurines used in the plans. . . .	177
Number of figurines from the surface. . . .	54
Number of figurines from strat pits. . . .	14
Number of figurines without provenience. . . .	3

Total number of figurines.	248

Toward the end of the field work, some layers were taken down together so that work could proceed as quickly, but as carefully, as possible. This was particularly true in the southern part of the site. Individual squares and layers had been excavated separately in part of the pit and no information was lost by later combining squares and layers except the exact location of some figurines. As a result, some

figurines have a provenience of more than one square or one layer. Occasionally three or four squares were excavated and the material bagged together. When the figurine is from one layer in several squares, its symbol is put on the map as close as possible to the center of those squares. For example, Fig. 20, layers 1 and 2, pit W1S2, has provenience from squares A2, B2, A3, and B3, and so its symbol is placed at the conjunction of those squares.

Other figurines, for example Fig. 154, have provenience of several layers, from all squares excavated together. In these cases, when only the pit number is certain, the symbol for the figurine is put on the plan in the upper left hand corner of square A1 of the pit. This process continues clockwise around the pit, using every other empty square, and spiralling inwards to the center of the pit. This method was chosen to avoid artificial clustering of symbols on the plans. Of course, the result is, in itself, an artificial picture of the distribution, but considered to be the lesser of evils.

The figurines taken from several layers which were excavated at one time (Figs. 19 and 22, for example) are shown on the plans and in Appendices V and VI as belonging to the layer closest to the surface. Subdivisions within the layers are ignored in this study.

Material from layers 1 and 2, the upper plowed 30 cm, was usually bagged together; therefore, the figurines from these layers are also combined on one plan. Layers 3, 4, and 5 are discussed in the section on excavation of the site. Figurines from layers 5 and 6 are combined on one plan because all material was directly on the floor. Layer 6

is an artificial layer used only in the area of the steps to tighten control of the ceramics, and contained only six figurines.

Colors and shapes of the symbols are shown in the key to the plans. Some of the symbols are smaller than others in order to accommodate several of them in a single square. The general irregularity of the symbols is due entirely to my lack of expertise in draftsmanship.

NOTES

1. Layer 6 was used only on the floor in the area of the steps.
Its function is explained on page 30.