

Mesoamerican Figurines: The Cholula Perspective

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Background

Geography

The present day city and archaeological site of Cholula is located in the state of Puebla, Mexico. Puebla is situated in the center of the Mesoamerican culture area, making it an important area for exchange and interaction between the north and south, and the east and west (Plunket and Uruñuela 2005:90). There are several areas with which it could have easily interacted, these include; the Basin of Mexico, the Gulf Coast, the Tehuacán Valley and the Mixteca Baja (McCafferty 2000: 342), all important culture areas. It is located a mere 100 km from the site of Teotihuacán (McCafferty 2001: 281).

Situated in the Puebla/ Tlaxcala valley, east of the Basin of Mexico, Cholula is located on a fertile alluvial plain (McCafferty 2000A: 342), which would have been ideal for agricultural pursuits. In the past the area would have supported harvests of maguey, chillies, and most importantly beans and maize. The area and its people enjoyed an abundance of water due to the snow-capped mountains surrounding the valley. This in turn allowed for irrigation of crops, even during the dry season (McCafferty 2001: 282). In pre-contact times there appears to have once been a marshy area that may have supported *chinampa* style agriculture. The marsh would have most likely attracted waterfowl (McCafferty 2000A: 342), that could then have been exploited by the local people. The site was also located on a bed of clay (Bonfil Batalla 1973 cited in McCafferty 2000A:342), which enabled ceramic production and was also used in modern brick production. Unlike these other resources, suitable building material appears to have

been lacking in Cholula. Due to its location on an alluvial plain, the nearest source of building material would be approximately 50 km away (Sergio Suárez Cruz in McCafferty ?: 233)

Archaeology in Cholula

Cholula continues to be an archaeological site that has been denied its rightful attention, often being overshadowed by other better known ancient cities such as Teotihuacán, Tula and of course Tenochtitlan (McCafferty 2000A:341). Many consider Cholula to have been secondary to these other great centers; however others would like to believe it was competitive and possibly equal to the more famous cities of its time. This topic of debate has been especially discussed, pertaining to the relationship between Cholula and Teotihuacán, during the Classic Period, during its collapse, and the subsequent Epiclassic period.

Cholula has been investigated archaeologically for the past 100 years. A large number of the archaeological excavations that have been undertaken in Cholula have consisted of salvage work, done in conjunction with the development of the modern city (Plunket and Uruñuela 2005: 101). An exception to this has been the work done by Ignacio Marquina and others from “El Proyecto Cholula”, Eduardo Noguera in the 1950’s, and Geoffrey McCafferty in the 1980’s and primarily the 1990’s. There has been a concentrated effort put forth toward the upkeep of the Great Pyramid and its surrounding buildings and plazas. However, due to the location of the present day city and its associated buildings and colonial structures, little of the ancient city has been thoroughly excavated. Serious

excavations have been hampered by the destruction of archaeological materials due to colonial and modern constructions in the city (Marquina 1970: 33).

The Great Pyramid

Excavations of the Great Pyramid conducted by Ignacio Marquina and others lead to a huge gain in knowledge about the Great Pyramid and its construction phases. The first stage of excavation consisted of digging tunnels into the pyramid in order to delimit older constructions. By 1956 8,000m of tunnels had been dug (Marquina 1970: 33), and in 1966 a new exploration of the pyramid began, this time with more emphasis on surrounding structures (Marquina 1970: 33).

By volume The Great Pyramid is the largest man-made structure in pre-contact Mesoamerica, and is also considered the “oldest continuously used ceremonial structure in the Americas” (McCafferty 2001: 281). It is located 2,200m above sea level (Marquina 1970:35) on the alluvial plain. The Great Pyramid was built directly over a spring, which still runs out from under the east side of the pyramid and is in use in the form of a well in modern times (McCafferty 2000A: 342). The spring may in fact be an important aspect in the location of the pyramid. Ancient Mesoamericans believed that springs were tied to the underworld and building a “man-made mountain” atop such a spring would have enabled contact with both the underworld and the heavens. The pyramid itself is oriented 24°-26° north of west (Marquina 1970: 36); this means that it is facing the setting sun at the summer solstice. This orientation is in direct contrast with the predominant orientation of

Teotihuacán its affiliated sites (McCafferty 2000A: 345), which suggests that they may have differed in their “cosmological principles” (McCafferty 2001: 287).

It appears that the construction of the Great Pyramid, the *Tlachihualtepetl* or “man made mountain” as it was called during the Spanish Conquest (McCafferty 2001: 381), began in the Terminal Formative Period, when Cholula would have differed little from other small settlements in the area (McCafferty 2000A: 342). In fact other sites such as Acatepec, Coronango, and Coapan were equal to Cholula during this time (García Cook and Merino Carrión 1987 cited in McCafferty 2001: 285). After approximately 200BC, with the first major phase of the pyramid taking place, Cholula began to differentiate itself from other centers in the area, and also began to dominate the smaller centers (McCafferty 2001: 285).

Formative Cholula appears to have been 2 square km in extent and had “monumental architecture located in at least three areas of the site” (McCafferty 1984, 1996 cited in McCafferty 2001: 285). McCafferty has proposed that the Great Pyramid was built in four major construction phases that span over 1,700 years of occupation of the site (McCafferty 2000A: 345). The first phase of The Great Pyramid was approximately 120m on a side and 17 m in height (Marquina 1970:36), the facade was decidedly Teotihuacano in style, including *talud/ tablero* style architecture (García Cook 1981 cited in McCafferty 2001: 287). The second phase of the pyramid measured 180m on a side and 35 m in height (Marquina 1970: 39). It was unique that it had stairways on all four sides (Margain 1971 cited in McCafferty 2001: 288), reminiscent of later pyramids such

as El Castillo from Chichén Itzá. On the northern side of the pyramid one stairway consisted of 52 steps, a reference to the 52 year cycle of the Mesoamerican calendar (McCafferty 2001: 288).

The third phase further expanded the pyramid; it was 350 m on a side and 65 m in height (Marquina 1970: 41). A similar *talud/ tablero* architecture to the first phase of construction is once again found on the facade of this phase (McCafferty 2001: 289). The pyramid is currently measured at 400m on a side and covers approximately 16 hectares (McCafferty 1996 cited in McCafferty 2001: 283). The current pyramid's height is obscured by the colonial church, *Virgen de los Remedios*, which was built on top of the pyramid.

The Great Pyramid is not the only vestige of ancient occupation of the city. Several other pyramids built during the Classic period can still be seen on the landscape (McCafferty 2000A: 347), however little work has been done to uncover these buildings. There has been a substantial amount of monumental architecture recorded from the Classic period, and the site has been estimated to have been home to 20,000 to 25,000 people (McCafferty 1996b cited in McCafferty 2000A: 347). During this period it appears that Cholula was influenced by Teotihuacán, however it also appears to have rejected many elements common to cities dominated by Teotihuacán. This rejection may signal that the Cholultecas were in opposition to Teotihuacán and wanted to assert their autonomy (McCafferty 2000A: 359).

The Classic to Postclassic Transition and the Olmeca-Xicallanca

An important aspect of Cholullan archaeology is the Classic to Postclassic transition and what occurred at Cholula during this time. The traditional interpretation of this time period stated that Cholula suffered in similar ways to Teotihuacán. It was believed to have been all but abandoned, with social upheaval and environmental catastrophes at the heart of its collapse. Recently, evidence of continuity has been discovered, and now many including McCafferty believes that Cholula continued into the Epiclassic as a major religious and economically significant site (McCafferty 2000A: 350). McCafferty does not deny that there were changes, especially seen in the material culture of the site, but instead proposes that there was a new ethnic group at the site, that may have brought a new religious order to the area (McCafferty 2000A: 350). This change, he believes is tied to the arrival of the Olmeca-Xicallanca (McCafferty 2000A: 351).

During this period there is evidence of both Maya and Gulf Coast influence at the site and this corresponds to the ethnohistoric record of the arrival of the Olmeca-Xicallanca (McCafferty 2000A: 351). This group is believed to have originated in the city of Xicalango, which was believed to be an important trading center, located in the heart of the Olmec area near Laguna de los Terminos (McCafferty ?: 223). This evidence shows a similarity with Cacaxtla, which has long been argued to have had significant Maya influence. The similarity has strengthened the idea that Cholula and Cacaxtla had a relationship with a group of possible merchants etc. from the Maya region (McVicker 1985 cited in McCafferty 2001: 295). This period is connected to the arrival of the

Quetzalcoatl cult at Cholula, and occurs at the same time as the final building phase of the Great Pyramid (McCafferty 2000A: 352).

The arrival of the Olmeca-Xicallanca historically was said to have resulted in a violent clash between the two cultures. This was between the new group from the Gulf Coast and the *quinametin*, or “giants”, who were believed to have been the builders of Teotihuacán and the current occupants of Cholula (McCafferty 1996B: 1). However McCafferty argues, with support from excavations undertaken on the northeast platform of the pyramid, that it was instead a “gradual integration of the two groups” (McCafferty ? : 221). The ceramics also support this idea, as a combination of Classic and Postclassic ceramics have been found together (McCafferty 1996). The interaction between highland and lowland groups eventually lead to an “international theme that developed into the Mixteca-Puebla stylistic tradition”, in later times (McCafferty 1994).

Along with the new construction on the Great Pyramid, the Patio of the Altars was also being constructed and used (McCafferty 2000A: 359), furthering the evidence that Cholula was in fact a thriving metropolis in contrast to its neighbour Teotihuacán. During this phase, unlike what had occurred in the Classic period, Cholula appears to have adopted features of the Teotihuacán canon of style, perhaps trying to gain the authority that Teotihuacán had once possessed (McCafferty 2000A: 359). McCafferty suggests that due to this ‘adoption of authority’ Cholula “emerged from the Classic period as the primary religious center of central Mexico” (McCafferty 2000A: 359).

The Tolteca-Chichimeca

The second immigration of a new ethnic group to Cholula occurred in the Postclassic period with the arrival of the Tolteca-Chichimeca (McCafferty 2000A: 352). The arrival of another group to this area, around 1200 A.D. caused another important and drastic cultural change at the site. The Tolteca-Chichimeca were tied to the legend of Quetzalcoatl and are believed to have originated in Tula. A clash between the Olmeca-Xicallanca and the Tolteca-Chichimeca resulted in a change in power and influence, as the Tolteca-Chichimeca overpowered the previous cultural order. An important change was the general abandonment of the Great Pyramid, and a new center of worship dedicated to Quetzalcoatl was created (McCafferty 2000A: 356). Other evidence from Cholula indicating that a violent conflict occurred at this time between two cultures, comes from the site of a residence (UA-1) located 2km from the pyramid. This residence appears to have been abruptly abandoned and evidence of warfare has been found (McCafferty 1992). It also appears that during this time Altars 1 and 3 were shattered at the Patio of the Altars (McCafferty 1996A: 310).

The new pyramid of Quetzalcoatl was located in the present day plaza of San Pedro, which is currently under the cathedral of San Gabriel on the eastern side of the square (Marquina 1970: 31). This temple became a site for pilgrimages from other areas of Mexico, illustrating Cholula's importance as a ceremonial center. According to Gabriel de Rojas in his *Descripción de Cholula* 1581 (cited in McCafferty 2000A: 357), many of the houses in Cholula were left vacant for visitors to occupy when they arrived in town to

worship. Gabriel Rojas also wrote that children were sacrificed to the rain god at an annual festival (Marquina 1970: 32).

The social structure of Postclassic Cholula consisted of two groups, one concentrated on religious affairs, while the other was concerned with the civic duties of the town. The *Aquiach* and the *Tlalchiach* were heads of the religious affairs of the town, mostly involved in the functioning of the Temple of Quetzalcoatl (McCafferty 2000A: 358). The town affairs were dealt with by a group of elders (McCafferty 2000A: 358) that decided upon aspects of the economy, as Cholula had now become an important commercial center, involving trade with the famous *Pochteca* (McCafferty 2000A: 358).

Unlike other cities in Mesoamerica, especially during the Epiclassic, Cholula did not appear to have participated in warfare to a very great extent (McCafferty 2000A: 358). It was mentioned as having participated in the “flowery wars” during the Postclassic, however no “conquest” monuments have been found to date in Cholula (McCafferty ? :221). In these flowery wars Cholula was allied to Huexotzinco and Tlaxcala, and it appears that it later allied itself with Tenochtitlan and betrayed their previous alliances. This would later lead to the problems it would encounter when faced once again with Tlaxcala during the Spanish conquest (McCafferty 2000B: 348). It appears that Cholula was less concerned with warfare and more concerned with religious and commercial supremacy. McCafferty goes as far as to suggest that Cholula was, “a neutral territory in the fringe of more ‘powerful’ states where merchants from even warring kingdoms could interact in safety” (McCafferty 2000A: 358-359). Perhaps like Teotihuacán, Cholula may

have “relied on religion and trade as the machinery of empire” (McCafferty 2000A: 359), therefore Cholula was able to be considered a power, despite of its lack of involvement in warfare. The various immigrations to, and subsequent domination by foreign groups proves that Cholula was not a strong military power.

The Spanish Conquest and the Cholula Massacre

The colonial period at Cholula was once again a powerful and violent conquest by a new ethnic group. The population of Cholula during this time would have been 30,000-50,000 people, which would have made it one of the largest cities in Mexico at the time (McCafferty 1996). In October of 1519, Hernán Cortés arrived in Cholula. This event would shortly lead to one of the greatest tragedies of the Spanish conquest (McCafferty 2000B : 347). Despite there being various stories on what occurred before and during the attack, it was undoubtedly a bloody day in the history of Cholula. Cortés allegedly was informed (possibly by his consort Malitzin) that the Cholultecas were planning an attack. He reacted by assembling the people of Cholula (in some accounts only the nobles and in other accounts the common people including women and children) and killing those present (McCafferty 2000B). This event was later named “The Cholula Massacre”.

In 1970 excavations were conducted within the plaza and cemetery of Cholula. Six-hundred and fifty skeletons were discovered, and although not all belonged to the massacre, only part of the patio has been excavated, and therefore the exact number of massacre victims remains unknown. The number of victims is however estimated to be in the thousands (McCafferty 2000B: 349). Despite this interesting time in Cholula’s history

few archaeological excavations and investigations have focused on this time period, preferring to focus on the Classic and Early Postclassic (McCafferty 2000B: 353). During the massacre it is believed that many of Cholula's religious idols and much of the architecture was destroyed (Olivera de V. 1970:217).

Later on during the colonialization of Mexico it is believed that, in their zealous to rid the city of prehispanic influence, the Spanish constructed churches and chapels where previously prehispanic temples had stood. These are commonly believed to total 365 (Olivera de V. 1970: 217). Cholula was finally replaced as the principal city in the area, especially concerning political and economic affairs, when the modern day city of Puebla was established in the 1530's (McCafferty 1996B: 3). Puebla is located 10km from Cholula, and continues to be hub of activity in the region.

Figurines

Introduction

Figurines are a common artifact produced in many early societies all over the world. This includes Mesoamerica, and the site studied here, Cholula. Figurines are representational in nature, and what they represented in the past has intrigued and confused archaeologists for years. The oldest known figurine in Mesoamerica was found at the site of Zohapilco in the Mexican Highlands. Like elsewhere in the world, figurines appear to precede the use of ceramics as utilitarian objects. A large number of these hand modeled figurines appear from 2200-300 B.C. (Tway 2004; 1), during the Middle Formative Period. The use of figurines continued even into the colonial period, despite the fact they often changed form and most likely changed meanings and use as well.

The first interpretations, for the most part arising out of the Old World, were concentrated on a fertility or mother cult, due to the fact that a high number of the figurines being found were female. However it is clear that not all figurines can be interpreted in this way and since then, although some aspects of these ideas continue to be used, a large number of other interpretations concerning specific assemblages have been proposed. These are often in keeping with knowledge of a specific site and what it may have meant on the whole in Mesoamerican culture.

Figurines “constitute the single most numerous artifact categories depicting the human form” (Scott 1993; 10). It has been suggested that due to the proliferation of figurines in comparison with most other artistic expressions, and their ubiquitous nature, they may be

one of the best ways in which we, as archaeologists, can document changes in culture. Despite the high numbers of figurines found at sites, they are often given little attention due to the difficulty inherent in their interpretation. However more and more archaeologists are paying attention to these miniature works of art. Interesting and often original interpretations have been put forth, especially since the introduction of postprocessualism in archaeology. These interpretations are often related to issues of social interactions, identity, and religion areas, that themselves have often been ignored.

Few figurines have been found with male genitalia, although they certainly do exist. Perhaps this choice by the artists, to ignore these anatomical features, (perhaps they were difficult to sculpt, or were prone to breakage) is the real reason that some many figurines are determined to be females or simply unsexed. It is only through the interpretations such as those of Marcus, Cyphers Guillén (which will be explained later in this chapter) and others that the reasons for the majority of figurines to represent females can be resolved. At this time, other than the fact that women give birth and differ from men in other ways, there is no obvious reason why women should make up the majority of figurines that can be sexed in the archaeological record.

Context

As any archaeologist knows, context is of key importance in the interpretation of all archaeological materials found. This being said, in the case of figurines, a secure context is often lacking. Many assemblages having been put together from various contexts and even time periods. This is of course the case with the figurines presented in this paper.

This lack of information that could definitely aid in the interpretation of figurines may in another way, enable the archaeologist to analyze and interpret the figurine in its own right. Without the influence of where a figurine was found etc., new theories such as those pertaining to embodiment and identity (which will be discussed in detail later in the paper) have been proposed. These are theories that have enabled the archaeologist to do these kinds of interpretations generally independent of contextual data.

Conversely when figurines are found in specific contexts, this information becomes invaluable and integral in the interpretation of meaning and use. In many instances figurines have been found in specific contexts and this has greatly influenced their interpretation. For example at Tres Zapotes they are generally found in mounds or burials, and at the site of Chiapa de Corzo figurines were found in plazas deposits. This, in turn, may represent public ceremonial use of figurines, unlike the household rituals which they are most often believed to have been part of. Oaxacan figurines have been documented in primary contexts in burials, scenes, and residences (Marcus 1998; 3); although at many sites they were also found in fill and middens, like the majority of figurines found. At the site of Chalcatzingo and Tlatilco they have been found with burials and were interpreted as offerings. At Teotihuacán most figurines were found in residential compounds (Barbour 1975; 12), although surveys around the city uncovered that figurines were found outside these boundaries where other pottery was not found (Barbour 1975; 13). During Aztec times, where good documentation of context has been possible, figurines appear to be concentrated in habitation rooms and courtyards, some of which contained steam baths (Brumfiel 1996; 471).

Two examples of figurines found in primary context will be discussed in order to elucidate how context has been used in the interpretation of figurines. At the site of Chalcatzingo the majority of the figurines were found in household contexts, especially where food production had taken place. This is evidenced by their association with hearths, braziers, domestic pottery and ground-stone objects (Cyphers Guillén 1993; 216). The highest concentration of figurines appears to be around hearths, coupled with ground stone tools, clearly placing them within a women's work area (Cyphers Guillén 1993; 217). The presence of figurines in domestic contexts and their association with women could either mean that women were producing the figurines or could mean that they were simply the ones using the figurines. Despite which interpretation is made, it is clear that figurines not only depicted females but were also connected to women on other levels of involvement. Also, at this site, a possible ritual location was found. It includes a small pit that has a high number of figurines along with stone carvings associated with it.

A second example is the hollow-baby figurine found at Etlatongo, Oaxaca. This figurine was found in another interesting context, one which also denotes a ritual function, although in this case its association with women is not clear. It appears it was part of an assemblage of ritual paraphernalia that was stored in a large bell-shaped pit. Other offerings were found in the pit as well, these may have been part of the same rituals as that of the hollow-baby or may have been placed as offerings when the pit was sealed (Blomster 1998; 321). Both of these contexts appear to support the ritual use of figurines, however in the case of Chalcatzingo the possibility that they were used as child play-

things exists. These other interpretations, primarily of figurine function, will be dealt with in the chapter titled “Theory and Interpretation”.

Production

Figurines have been made from a variety of materials including stone, speleothems, wood (although this is often difficult to find in the archaeological record), and perhaps other perishable materials such as cloth. The majority of figurines found, partially due to its state of preservation, are made of clay. Clay was probably chosen due to the cheapness of the material, because it is one of the easiest mediums to work with and mold, and its relative durability. Nearly all figurines in all areas of Mesoamerica were manufactured in the clay that was also used for the ceramics of the area in which they were manufactured.

Figurines were produced both by hand by a member(s) of the community, and in workshops, which after the Classic period most likely would have utilized molds. Molds were invented during the Late Xolalpan and Metepec phases at Teotihuacán, and soon became the only way figurines were made in vast quantities for the following thousand years in the Valley of Mexico (Barbour 1975; 141). Molds allow for a greater number of figurines to be produced and limit the amount of individualism that is expressed. Mold-made figurines of the Classic period appear to represent royal or noble individuals (Marcus 1998; 29) and are mass produced. They no longer represented ancestors of specific lineages. The “puppets” of Teotihuacán represent one of the first attempts at producing mold-made figurines (Barbour 1975; 27).

Workshops are defined in the basis of specific criterion by Barbour, this criterion are as follows; areas where large amounts of figurines are found, the presence of molds (which can only be applied to specific time periods and areas), the concentration of a single type of figurine (in order to ensure the accumulation of a large number of figurines in on place is representative of a certain time period only), and the last which he considers the most important criteria, the presence of distorted or deformed figurines, the results of mistakes (Barbour 1975; 119). These “mistakes” would accumulate at workshops since they would not be used in other contexts. Since craftsmen tend to work and live in the same place, we can infer that people living in these areas were probably associated with the manufacturing of figurines. It appears that at Teotihuacán a number of these workshops were also used to craft other products such as obsidian (Barbour 1975; 126).

Evidence for a workshop at Cholula has also been documented. This evidence includes; a large number of mold-made figurines, pigments, polishing tools, balls of prepared clay, and vitrified adobe blocks, although no molds were recovered (Uruñuela et al. 1996; 65). The presence of a workshop may indicate that the elite were in control of production, or at the very least there was specialization of this task. Another workshop has been identified by Cyphers Guillén at the site of Chalcatzingo. Here it appears that at least one of the workshops included the working of greenstone and iron ore as well as figurine production. Here the workshops were in association with elite residences and Cyphers Guillén has suggested that this may be interpreted as evidence of elite control of the production of figurines. If this were proven to be the case, it would be a very early example of this kind of production control. At the site of Teotihuacán there also appears

to be evidence that the elite, or certain lineages or groups were in control of the production of obsidian. This model can be inferred for the production of figurines as well. This control over the production of figurines means that not everyone was producing them, even though for example, if they were indeed for use in life-crisis ceremonies at Chalcatzingo, where everyone would have needed them. Other workshops have also been reported from such sites as Tlatelolco and Otumba from Aztec times (Brumfiel 1996; 470).

The question of who were the makers of figurines generally centers on the question of sex/ gender in Formative Period discussions, whereas in later periods the emphasis is on whether there was elite control of figurine production. Marcus believes figurines were made by women. Her evidence for this includes apparent first-hand knowledge of elaborate hairdos, the fact that they are often found in household contexts, and that when figurines are found in burials they are often found in higher numbers with women and very rarely with men, perhaps indicating these women had been figurine makers during their lives. There is evidence of figurines as burial goods for women in Oaxaca but she gives particular attention to burials from Tlatilco, where there is better evidence of this pattern and her theory (Marcus 1998 and Tway 2004; 114). She also states the total lack of figurines found in association with the Men's House as evidence of their affiliation with women. Further evidence that women made these figurines comes from the study of Tway. Some of her figurines were found with, fingerprints left on the soft clay. These fingerprints were examined according to the epidermal ridges and the breadths in order to

assign a sex to the makers. It was concluded that the makers had been women. This study however, was based on only four fingerprints (Tway 2004; 30).

There are many aspects of figurine analysis and use in Mesoamerica that are not dealt with here, but become apparent through other discussions on theory and interpretation for example. What does become clear however is that figurines, being a common and nearly ubiquitous archaeological material found at archaeological sites, are important in the overall interpretation of each site. They should not be ignored in spite of their possible ties to religion and other areas of inquiry, which some archaeologists have considered to be “epiphenomenal” (Binford 1971).

Theory and Interpretation

Introduction

The interpretation of figurines has in the past relied heavily on the imagination of the archaeologist rather than any material evidence or theoretical basis. This is not so much the fault of the archaeologist, but stems from the inherent ambiguities of figurine analysis, and the past paradigms that simply did not allow for these kinds of interpretations (Binford 1965). Today more and more archaeologists are paying attention to and electing to study aspects of the past that may be difficult to access through a simple analysis of material culture. Many of these archaeologists have arisen out of a reaction against processualism, or the “new archaeology” of the 1960’s and 1970’s, and consider themselves to be postprocessualists. Postprocessualism, having arisen out of some Marxist roots, has focused on aspects of the past such as religion, gender, social interactions and identity. In this chapter a quick review of difficulties in the interpretation of figurines assemblages will be discussed, a review of past interpretations will be mentioned and finally current theoretical frameworks will be discussed and their use in figurine analysis presented.

Difficulties

One of the major hindrances in the analysis of figurines is the relative lack of primary context in which the figurines are found, although some more recent excavations are slowly changing this past reality. Previously figurines were simply excavated and put in collections, or even when provenience was recorded, figurines were often found in secondary contexts. As discussed earlier, context is of primary importance in the

interpretation of figurines, especially when concerned with use and function. What the figurines actually represent is also difficult to ascertain due to the relatively crude manner in which many of these figurines are made, some with little anatomically or culturally affiliated features. Tway suggests (Tway 2004; 4) that difficulties also stem from the fact that these figurines are interpreted as having ritual functions. Tway believes that these rituals can never be fully reconstructed and their meaning can only truly be known by the ancient participants in these rituals. Although it is clear that no archaeologist will ever be able to fully understand the religious significance of past materials, today this pessimistic attitude is not held by all. More and more archaeologists despite the obvious difficulties in such interpretations are attempting to understand the religious and ritual significance of figurines.

Interpretation of the Fragmentary Nature of Figurines

A question that has long concerned archaeologists is why the majority of figurines found are found broken and that it is often impossible to reconstruct them, due to missing parts. In my own collection from Cholula the vast number of figurines consist of only the head and only a portion are bodies. I have not been able to fit any one head with a specific body; however the sample studied is extremely small. There are two major groups of participants in this discussion of figurine breakage, one group believes that figurines are inherently weak and this accounts for the broken figurine assemblage, while the other believes figurines are broken purposely as an end to the rituals in which they would have partaken.

Marcus believes that although some figurines certainly broke from accidents and inherent weaknesses that there is enough evidence to assume some had also been purposely broken or defaced (Marcus 1998; 25). She cites evidence of figurines which were found with their mouths battered in Guatemala, as obvious evidence of this practice. Tway also contends that the figurines were purposely broken. She cites that a number of stone figurines that have been found broken (which unlike the ceramic figurines would not have had any inherent weaknesses), and that even ceramic figurine's torsos have been found broken whereas the limbs are left intact (Tway 2004; 84). This is an unlikely result of accidental breakage. If the figurines had indeed been purposely broken Tway suggests it may have been to free the powers that had entered the figurine or to stop anyone else from taking control of these powers, or manipulating what belonged to certain groups of people (Tway 2004; 132). Sue Scott also agrees that the figurines were purposely broken; she believes this because if the figurines had been broken through the centuries then all parts of the figurines would be present in one location and one would be able to reconstruct them (Scott 1993; 11). However she neglects the idea that they could be broken during their "lifetime", and this could be why only parts of the figurines are found.

At the site of Chalcatzingo Grove argues that the figurines were purposely broken, that the heads were snapped off as a way of ending the ritual in which they had been used (Grove 1984; 28). His ideas appear to be supported by some evidence that monumental art at both Chalcatzingo and in the Gulf Coast appears to have been decapitated at some time and the heads are generally removed to and taken to another area (Grove 1984; 30).

The ritual decapitation of the figurines may have been done for similar reasons. These reasons include the “neutralization” of power of these individuals (if the figurines represented individuals) after their death, as to no longer influence the living (Grove 1984; 32).

The ideas of Cyphers Guillén vary greatly from those of Marcus, Tway, Scott and Grove. Her study also conducted at Chalcatzingo, has led her to believe that the majority of broken figurines do not represent a ritual in which they are purposely broken. Rather she believes that inherent flaws and weakness at areas such as the neck and other attachments, is the cause of the broken nature of figurines in the archaeological record (Cyphers Guillén 1993; 213). The lack of evidence of these “breaking” rituals is enough for her to decide to air on the side of caution concerning this aspect of figurine interpretation.

With the evidence presented here I believe that some of the broken figurines could simply have become broken as many other artifacts do, through the passage of time or accidentally by their users. However the possibility that figurines were ritually broken probably exists as well. Evidence of the Maya ritually killing pots that once held offerings etc., to release the power of spirit is well documented. That a figurine would be broken for the same reasons seem likely. The figurines from Cholula do not show evidence for ritual mutilation or purposeful breakage of the figurines, however nearly all are fragmentary, and the possibility that they were purposefully broken is not a ridiculous one. In accordance with what Cyphers Guillén believes, the majority of the Cholullan

figurines were broken off at the neck. Whether or not one believes that the figurines were purposely broken or had inherent weaknesses, one key fact is that they clearly had short life spans. This in part accounts for the high numbers found in some locations. Although the total numbers found must also reflect a certain level of ritual at each site.

Various Interpretations

Richard G. Lesure has developed a framework from which to interpret figurines, his ideas are based on four basic ways archaeologists can go about analyzing figurines; from four different perspectives. These include; the analysis of the objects (figurines) themselves, the archaeological context in which they are found, ethnographic resources for present day uses, and associated historical evidence from the areas in which they are found (Lesure 2002; 588/ Ucko 1962; 38). He suggests that one can recognize themes present in different assemblages of figurines by looking at positions, costumes, age etc. This in turn is a key aspect of the interpretation of identity, which will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

The functional use of figurines was probably different in every culture and may also have differed across time periods. The analysis of their form, unlike other utilitarian objects, leads to little interpretation of use. A number of functions are listed by Lesure and in the following segment explores some of these and postulates others. Lesure's list includes the use as; toys, amulets, teaching aides, objects of worship, votive images, vehicles of magic, curing aides, and tokens of economic or social relationships (Lesure 2002; 590).

Use wear analysis has also been undertaken in some studies, although the usefulness of this approach has yet to be determined.

Interpretations of figurines have for the most part been concentrated on the idea that they were used in rituals. This is a common occurrence in archaeology that when the function of an object is not apparent it is immediately relegated to the sphere of religion and ritual. Despite this somewhat cynical view, many interpretations related to figurine use have been proposed and in many cases the evidence appears to support such conclusions. The following is a short discussion of some of these interpretations that in many cases have been cited in relation to various assemblages.

The theory that figurines are tied to a fertility or mother cult, or in the very least represent goddesses, has been a theory appropriated from the Old World. The “Venus Figurines” of Europe had in the past been interpreted in this way. The proportionally high number of figurines that represent women throughout the world has lead many to support the idea of a mother goddess or a fertility cult. The variable areas and cultures involved in this interpretation, serves to weaken this idea. It is extremely unlikely that there was a cult or goddess that is represented in both the Old World and New World, although ideas of fertility and power over such things as human reproduction and even agricultural fecundity could be found in these various cultures. As Lesure notes “Female figurines have been seen as part of a “natural”, ahistorical religion”.

Lesure believes that this theory, although still somewhat popular in the Old World, has little worth and has become ignored as other interpretations take hold in Mesoamerica. The main reason for this being the fact that the Mesoamerican examples are not standard in their representation of women, rather many of them have costumes, ornamentation etc. Children and the elderly and men have also been discovered and clearly do not fit in with the ideas of a fertility cult (For examples of this interpretation in Mesoamerica, and other related topics of female figurines see: Cyphers Guillén 1993 and Marcus 1998).

David Grove believes that the figurines from Chalcatzingo represent individuals, in this case the rulers of this city. Grove believes that some of the figurines of Chalcatzingo are portraits of rulers and were used in ceremonies and rituals associated with the veneration of these rulers. He analyzes some of the better made figurines that he interprets as having faces and headdresses that represent specific individuals (Grove 1984; 28). Figurines as representing individuals, or at least different identities, have been proposed by Douglass W. Bailey as well. He denies that early agricultural societies had their primary concerns based on food procurement and fertility (Bailey 1994; 322), as most archaeologists assume. He believes that as societies become more complex individuals begin to stand out from the group, this is when portraiture would begin. Therefore his interpretations, although founded in the Old World, correspond with those of Grove, that important individuals would be depicted in the form of figurines.

Joyce Marcus studied figurines from Oaxaca and interpreted them as being part of the rituals associated with ancestor worship. (Marcus 1998; 17). She has studied uses of

figurines in ethnographic sources from various places in world and applies them to the figurines of Oaxaca. Ancestor rituals are undertaken to remain in contact with deceased relatives and to ensure they are satisfied and are fulfilling their duties to their children. She also suggests that more “recent” ancestors are the ones with whom the formative people of Oaxaca were communicating, through the use of figurines. These rituals would involve the “feeding” of the ancestors and would mostly be concerned with communication, concerning a variety of topics, with the ancestors. She explains the high numbers of figurines by the fact that figurines were probably discarded after their use and new figurines would have been made for the next ritual (Marcus 1998; 25).

More remote ancestors, and this only applies to men, were involved in different rituals which men were in control of and were no longer occurring within the household, but were moved to the Men’s House (Marcus 1998; 20). She uses this to explain why such a proportionally high number of figurines found are interpreted to be female. Males would have had different rituals done at the men’s house that may or may not have involved figurines. Due to the location of these figurines that were involved in ritual and through the use of ethnographic sources Marcus has concluded that women were the main players in the figurine associated with ancestor rituals (see also Brumfiel 1996 for discussion of reuse of figurines).

Studies done at the site of San Andrés, in Tabasco have yielded a high number of hand molded figurines. The study of these figurines has been undertaken by Tway and has resulted in an interpretation of how these figurines were used during the Formative

Period in this area. She interprets the figurines as being associated with ritual feasting that occurred at this site, a secondary site of La Venta (Tway 2004; 1). The bulk of the figurines from this site have been found in context with food service ceramics that appear to have been used during feasts. These feasts would have been a way to create and maintain social ties at the village and inter-village level, and perhaps even with the supernatural.

Naturalistic forms of figurines are known from the ethnographic record as having been used in curing rights in various places around the world. If this were the case in Mesoamerica it would be an undeniable evidence for the belief in animism, and that there were supernatural forces with which shamans were able to communicate (Tway 2004; 131). This idea of curing has even been applied to pregnancy by Billie Follensbee. She suggests that since some groups consider pregnancy an illness (due to morning sickness etc.), pregnant female figurines may have been produced to ensure a safe pregnancy and healthy recovery of the mother and child (Follensbee 2004 cited in Tway 2004; 132). She also believes that figurines that appear to represent people with diseases or illness would have been used in these curing rites as well. Protection may also be an interpretation for these figurines; they may have been carried as “good-luck charms”, or placed with the dead to ward off evil spirits. (See also Brumfiel 1996).

At Teotihuacán many of the mold-made figurines are interpreted to represent specific deities. Wide band headdresses and tied loops are believed to represent both Tlaloc and/or the feathered serpent (Barbour 1975; 134-135). Tlaloc is further identified by having “goggles”. Another example of deities being represented in figurine form are

found throughout the Valley of Mexico that appears to represent the goddess Xochiquetzal or Coatlicue, whom are both known to be goddesses of fertility, birth and healthy sex. Evidence for these figurines being representatives of these deities includes; their bare chests with looped headdresses that end in two projections, and the fact the figures are often represented holding children (Brumfiel 1996; 471). In the collection from Cholula figurines representing deities are also found. Some have been interpreted as Tlaloc and one other finely made figurine has been interpreted as the “old god” (see also; Tolstoy 1997 and Tway 2004).

There is unquestionable evidence that idols were used in ancient Mesoamerica, although these idols may not have always been made of clay. A study by James Brady has concluded that the Lacandon of Chiapas routinely used speleothems as a material to construct their idols. These idols were then “prayed” to and consulted (Brady et al. 1997; 733). Tway also states that figurines may have been used as idols and cites an example from the Yucatec Maya (Tway 2004; 126). These figurines/idols may have been placed on altars or in areas to which the indigenous people wished to bring power and luck, such as in fields of maize. Brumfiel also cites evidence that the Aztec were involved in the use of idols. This information comes directly from Spanish conquistadores (Brumfiel 1996; 471).

Ucko suggests that figurines may have been used to instruct children or adolescents as to their roles in society and even concerning what was expected of them at different ages (Ucko 1962; 46). Ucko makes another suggestion that has been used by other

archaeologists as well, that figurines were in fact toys for children. Evidence for the use of figurines as dolls was accumulated by Ucko and are as follows; “the use of clay for the manufacture of the figurines, the arm stumps of the figurines (since they would be fragile and children would break them), the lack of any ritual context or signs of divinity on the figurines, the size and portability of the figurines, the non-conformist figures as well as the representations of animals” (Ucko 1962; 47). Although this theory clearly fits in with something we today could understand, the use of figurines as toys, I do not believe that this, in itself, can explain the number and variety of figurines found, although I suppose in some ways it would explain the proliferation of female figurines.

Identity and Postprocessual Archaeology

The development of archaeology of identity arose out of the “plurality of postprocessual archaeology” (Meskell 2001; 194), many critics of processual archaeology believed that this theoretical framework denied human agency and did not enable the archaeologist to view the past as full of people and individuals, but rather simply a system with interrelated parts. The result was the development of postprocessualism.

Postprocessualists have also criticized earlier theories in that they adhere to ‘western ideas’ and do not allow for other possible ways to approach science and how the world is understood (Bernbeck and Pollock 1996; S138). Out of this discontentment flourished new ideas and with the emergence of feminism. These ideas would ultimately bring upon a new way of interpreting the archaeological record. For example the fertility cult interpretation of figurines has come under fire from the feminists. Even ideas that simply state that the proliferation of female imagery is associated with fertility are often

confronted by feminists who believe that these fertility theories mean that women are defined solely by what their bodies are able to do and have nothing to do with other ways they could be important actors within the society (Lesure 2002; 595).

The components of a persons or groups identity consist of interplay of a variety of aspects. These include; religion, gender, age, class, ethnicity etc. Some of these components such as sex, class or ethnicity may already be pre-described (embodied) when a person is born, many factors act on these components which make up that person's or group's identity (Meskell 2001; 188-189). Often in archaeological studies one aspect is considered in isolation of other factors that make up the whole of an individual's or group's identity. Although these investigations do lead to many important discoveries and contribute to a better understanding of the past, today more and more archaeologists are calling for a more comprehensive study of identity.

Figurines have a common subject of inquiry in the interpretation of identity in the past. This is due to their ubiquity in the material record and because their subject is people.

Rosemary A. Joyce explains,

“figurine studies have enjoyed a long history of explicit engagement with the practice of sexing, and of theorization, (however impoverished), about relations between material traces and the actual life experiences of categories of people and of individuals” (2004; 89).

Figurine assemblages were one of the first places feminist archaeologists looked to for representations of women (Conkey and Gero 1997; 415). Some interpretations arising out of this is an analysis of how figurines reflect how people in these societies saw themselves and represented important aspects of their culture. In his analysis of figurines from Chiapas, Mexico, Richard G. Lesure write that, “figurines appear to depict stereotyped social categories, the kinds of social categories represented and the ways in which there were distinguished might provide clues about the construction of social identities in these societies” (1997; 247).

A classic study of both gender and age was conducted by Ann Cyphers Guillén at the site of Chalcatzingo in Morelos, Mexico (1993). Her study involved an analysis of the figurine collection from the site (the Cantera phase), of which most were sexed as representing females. Her conclusion was that the figurines represented different life stages of females. Some were believed to be adolescents, others pregnant women, and some women of an older age. She then proposed a political interpretation of the figurines (along with a ritual use) that puts females in a position of power within the community. She writes,

“the individual female’s social position would have been closely intertwined with all symbols and activities associated with the life-cycle ceremonies when important social bonds are established and economic exchanges are initiated” (1993; 220).

She concluded that the female figurines represent an exchange system that would have been integral for the community and may have given the females in the society a higher status due to the importance of their life-cycles (1993; 221). In my opinion, although interesting, this interpretation once again postulates that the only way in which a female can gain power is through the acknowledgment of her reproductive capabilities, traditionally considered the only valuable asset a women has that men don't possess.

Another important aspect of identity studies is ethnicity. Meskell defines ethnicity as a concept that is related to the idea of kinship although at a larger scale (Meskell 2001; 190, Meskell and Preucel 2004; 128), that of a society. The exact definition of ethnicity has changed since its original use. In the past it has been used to describe cohesive cultures and even races. Many archaeologists now accept that ethnicity is nearly impossible to describe in accordance with a particular location, language, household organization etc., areas of study that in the past have been used to delimit ethnic groups. Díaz-Andreu and Lucy write that ethnicity was seen as “a self-ascribed identity” by some anthropologists and sociologists (2005; 6).

Unlike other aspects of culture, age is one of the few categories that is expected to change in the individuals lifetime (Lucy, 2005; 44). This fluidity is why age must be considered with other aspects of identity because age may determine how that individual sees him/herself in relation to other aspects of his/her identity. Clearly age affects how ones gender is understood (related to the sex of a woman for example whether she is pre-pubescent, able to become pregnant, and beyond the reproductive stage of her life).

Unlike our society where children play a relatively passive role, in Mesoamerica it

appears children were capable of “performing heavy labor, holding ceremonial or political offices and creating art (Ardren 2006; 5, see also Gilchrist 2004; 151), and should clearly be included in the interpretations made of specific sites and groups.

For the most part figurines appear to be ageless; many believe that figurines represent the members of the community that are seen as actively contributing to the group or society. They are therefore not the most appropriate area of inquiry for the investigation of age, although in some cases figurines do appear to represent the elderly or even children. One such figurine analyzed by Tway suggest it was representing an older woman due to the presence of drooping breasts (Tway 2004; 35), and another with large heavy breasts and a concavity in the lower abdomen (perhaps to represent she was past her child bearing years) has also been identified by Tway as being a figurine representing an older woman (Tway 2004; 75).

In his study of a figurine assemblage from coastal Chiapas, Mexico, Lesure was able to identify two groups of figurines and their respective ages (1997). The first group was considered to be adults in the prime of the life for their ability to do labor; this group consisted mostly of females. The second group appears to be older people (of both sexes) that wore masks and were involved in some kind of ritual activity. His interpretation was that the masked figurines of an older age demonstrated that once an older age was attained they were given a higher status within the religious community. And as explained by Landa earlier, sex appeared to make no difference at this age. Perhaps indicating females became more masculine (or androgynous?) as they lost their reproductive ability (see also Follensbee 2006).

Elizabeth Brumfiel's 1996 analysis of Aztec figurines attempts to demonstrate the relatedness of female subordination, the Aztec program of representing females as lesser than males, and the possible resistance to this ideological framework imposed on communities by the Aztec empire. In this study she was concerned with both group identity and social interactions of that time period. She illustrated that the Aztec religion showed females in a subordinate way, although earlier religion in small settlements had females positioned as equal to their male counterparts. Her analysis of figurines from several small communities showed that these communities continued their own belief system and did not adopt the views of the Aztecs. This was represented in the figurines, where equal or more female figurines were found from Aztec times than were found in earlier periods. Although the 'great tradition' was that of the Aztecs, the settlements continued their 'little tradition' which included the veneration of female powers. This was a way in which small communities were able to assert their identity and beliefs even under the oppression of the Aztec empire.

Embodiment, the idea that the human body is a reflection of society in which it exists and the individual itself has been explored in recent years. Díaz-Andreu wrote that "the body can be considered as one type of material culture on which social identities are primarily portrayed through dress, painting, tattoos, and decoration" (2005; 23). In an article titled "The Body Beautiful: Symbolism and Agency in the Social World" by Erica Reischer and Kathryn S. Koo, embodiment was thoroughly discussed. They identify "the body as a 'symbol' and the body as 'agent'" (Reischer and Koo, 2004; 297), based on this study

social identity was studied at the site of Santa Isabel, Nicaragua by McCafferty and McCafferty in 2006. In this study they compared the adornments on figurines with the material remains found from mortuary contexts. Their conclusion was that there was little correlation between adornments seen on the figurines and those found with skeletons, although this does not mean necessarily that the figurines do not represent the people of Santa Isabel. Although there is an obvious disconnection between these two areas in which identity is often sought. Perhaps the identity of these people lies somewhere between how they wish to be seen and how they actually lived. (see also Joyce 2005).

Clearly a theoretical framework and knowledge of how figurines have been interpreted in the past, in both Mesoamerica and elsewhere, and why these interpretations were formulated, is a necessary step in undertaking one's own analysis. This information has been seriously considered in my own interpretation of the Cholullan figurines. As stated earlier the context of the figurines studied is unknown, therefore ideas concerning identity are actively pursued, although it may not always prove fruitful. Knowledge of the role of Cholula is also considered as are the interpretation previously made by archaeologists working at the site.

Analysis of Cholullan Figurines

Documentation of Figurines

Figurines are often documented with reference to a number of aspects of their morphology, composition and style. These descriptions include the documentation of; color (the use of a Munsell color chart may be useful), dimensions, whether they were fired, whether they were handmade or mold-made, the type of clay and temper used, their general form (zoomorphic, anthropomorphic etc.), for anthropomorphic figurines what they represent such as limbs, torsos etc., decorations, and finally their gender (if anatomical or stylistic elements are present). Vaillant developed a typology to which most figurines in Mesoamerica can be categorized; this typology has been used in the description of Cholullan figurines. It involves a series of uppercase letters with numbers, which clearly illustrates the majority of figurines found in Mesoamerica, can be considered stereotypical. His typology has been considered by some as being confusing and hard to follow (Griffin 1971: 301), and clearly cannot deal with all the unique forms figurines may come in. The figurines analyzed herein were not categorized according to Vaillant's typology. Instead a quick description and an excel spreadsheet of various characteristics was compiled.

Basic Morphology

The figurine assemblage was categorized according to its most basic designations. These included; human heads (this category totaled 26 specimens), human bodies (5 specimens), human heads and bodies (4 specimens), and finally a zoomorphic category (12 specimens). These were in turn given their respective designations all followed by

numbers; heads (H), bodies (B), heads and bodies (BH), and zoomorphic (Z). Some general trends are immediately apparent, for example that the number of heads greatly outnumbers the number of bodies found, in that the number of heads is more than five times that of the bodies. Many of the heads did appear to have broken off a ceramic body, evidenced by breakage at the neck. Others however appear to have been a complete piece in itself, or quite possibly had been attached to a body made of a material other than ceramic (such as wood, or most probably cloth). Some examples of this latter category include; H 005, H 008, H 023 (a mask) and possibly some of the figurines identified as representing the god Tlaloc. Finally the majority of the figurines were solid, although a few zoomorphic figurines and one body and head specimen are hollow; this could be related to their function as musical instruments.

Sex

A thorough analysis of the sex of figurines was done by Billie Follensbee (cited in Tway 2004). In this study she tried to determine specific attributes relating to male and female representations. This may also be one of the most important interpretations made, as Tway states “By determining the gender of the figurines, we became aware of how the people (of San Andrés) distinguished the sexes in their imagery” (Tway 2004; 58). Aside from obvious anatomical features men are often recognized simply by the fact they do not have female features. In 2000, Billie Follensbee developed a method and described a number of traits she believed could aid in the determination of sex (Tway 2004; 36), especially pertaining to Olmec and Teotihuacano figurines. Her most basic categories consisted of natural forms (the way in which most females were represented), abstract

forms (possibly could be interpreted as males although the human form is slightly ignored in favor of specific shape) and grotesque forms (Tway 2004; 36). She then went on to describe anatomical characteristics and costumes that could determine the sex of the figurine.

Characteristics of female figurines classified by Follensbee includes; a pubic “Y” or triangle, breasts often represented with a “W” shape underneath, a waist that begins directly below the breasts, flaring hips, arms and legs which both taper from top to bottom, protruding abdomens, and well-defined buttocks with a “V” cleft in the middle (Tway 2004; 37). These figurines clearly fit into the naturalistic category, as it appears the artist’s preoccupation was in the representation of true human form. Some costume elements associated with females include “pubic flaps that cover the pubic area, short and low-slung skirts, or loincloth aprons with thin belts that are also low-slung, and occasionally beaded belts”, (Tway 2004; 37), *quechquemitls* which are also known as female costume in the Mexican Highlands and elsewhere (Barbour 1975; 28). In the study by Sue Scott, she identified female clothing as follows; a long skirt and *quechquemitl* which drapes to the front to end in a point, heads wrapped in a turban like manner, and ornamentation includes beaded necklaces and earspools (Scott 1993; 12). Hairdos are also a way to determine sex according to both Follensbee and Marcus.

In the collection analyzed by Follensbee she recognized the men as having more abstract torsos than those of the naturalistic females (Tway 2004; 50). She further defines the figurines as male according to other traits such as; they often wear more clothing

including wide belts worn high up on the waists, loincloths that wrap between the legs, vest-like shirts (this is represented by two vertical lines on the chest that may connote the shirt was open) or capes and hip cloths. These male figurines often have ornaments that include pectorals and earspools (Tway 2004; 51). The heads of the males may wear helmets and may even have evidence of facial hair (Tway 2004; 55). There are however , figurines that cannot be sexed, even with the use of a methodology as developed by Follensbee.. Peter J. Ucko suggests that these figurines may represent males, females, immature children or even more abstract ideas such as “humanity” (Ucko 1962; 42).

The sexing of the Cholullan figurines was attempted, by using aspects of dress, and anatomical features, somewhat aided by Follensbee’s descriptions, and general knowledge of dress and ornamentation (personal communication McCafferty 2007). Although few could be unequivocally assigned a sex, it appears that more of the heads represented males whereas the bodies were often sexed as female. This could be simply due to the fact that figurines are more likely to be assigned the sex of male if anatomical features such as breasts and a possibly protruding stomach are not present. The author readily recognizes this inherent bias, although features such as nose bars (typically male) and other factors were use in assigning the sex as being male. A second possibility is that bodies are more likely to be assigned the sex of female, due to the natural assumption that figurines represent some kind of relation to fertility and reproduction and therefore bodies are seen as implying this assumption. Or there is the possibility that this assumption is correct, that in the past, and possibly still held by some today, females were valued for their reproductive ability (and therefore their bodies are seen a representing this ability),

whereas men were more characterized by their heads and their bodies show little modulation because their importance is not reproductive.

Figurine studies show a proliferation of evidence for females being represented to a greater extent than men. This has been a basic assumption of figurine studies for many years, however more and more archaeologists are recognizing that this may not be the case in all assemblages and this basic assumption is not correct. In the case of the Cholullan figurines, there appears to be more males than females, this is in direct contrast with many other studies. Perhaps there is more of equality than was previously thought. The small number of samples suggests that this may not be the case and a larger sample would need to be accumulated and rigorously categorized beyond the scope of this paper.

Time Period

Another basic category applied to this assemblage was what time period they originated in and perhaps what culture. A problem with designating time periods to figurines is that in many cases figurines have been demonstrated to having been used in later time periods. Reuse has been well documented by Brumfiel in the Aztec Valley (Brumfiel 1996). Due to the lack of context for this study, reuse and issues of ancient Mesoamericans collecting older figurines purely out of curiosity, cannot be dealt with. Therefore it is being assumed that these figurines were found in their respective levels related to their respective time periods.

Although Cholula is known to have existed in the formative period, no figurines could be demonstrated to have originated in this period. Due to the simplicity and possible ambiguity of the some of the figurines (such as H 008, H 022, and H 024) they could possibly be designated to the formative period, although for lack of evidence and since they do not show obvious signs of the Classic period, they will be labeled Postclassic. The figurines that could be confidently assigned to belonging to the Classic period show what has been traditionally considered a Teotihuacán style. These figurines include the specimens; H 016, H 018, H 019, H 020, and H 026. The rest of the heads were designated to the Postclassic period. No attempt was made to designated time periods for the bodies or the zoomorphic figurines due to their ambiguity.

Paint and Paste

Many of the figurines were painted, although perhaps due to the deterioration of the paint the majority was left with simply the color of the paste that was used to create the figurine. The paste appeared to be the same for the majority of the figurines which was probably the same used to make the pottery found at Cholula. There were two exceptions where the paste was much redder than what was used for the majority of the figurines, these were; H 010 and Z 012.

The figurines that do show painting have what I considered monochrome paint, which consists of only one color. The majority of the time this one color was white, although black was also present on some of the figurines, which may be due to the firing process or post-depositional burning. The 'bodies' category had 3 out of 5 specimens that could

be considered monochrome painted, there was one polychrome specimen and one specimen without paint present. The 'heads and bodies' were half monochrome painted, had one specimen of polychrome painting and one specimen without paint. The 'heads' category was predominantly unpainted (18 of 26), although 7 were monochrome painted and 1 was polychrome painted. Finally the 'zoomorphic category had 3 monochrome painted, 1 polychrome painted and 8 without paint. One interesting aspect of the zoomorphic category was that 2 out of 3 monkeys identified were painted in white.

The specimens recognized as having polychrome paint were analyzed in order to find commonalities between the four specimens, each belonging to a separate category (B 006, BH 001, and H 015). In the case of all three anthropomorphic examples the polychrome paint was used to detail ornamentation on headdress or costume. The figurines were no better made than other figurines, and actually appear less detailed in form, where the painting of detail may have made up for this lack of detail. In the case of the zoomorphic figurine, Z 009, the specimen appears to represent a frog. This frog is poorly made and the detailing appears to emphasize the oddness of the subject by highlighting its already huge and bulbous eyes with large black pupils. Paint was clearly used to emphasize important features, especially those that were not present in the clay itself. It is very probably that a large number of the figurine did have paint when first created, but through the years this has deteriorated leaving over half of the specimens without any trace of paint.

Moldmade or Handmade

As previously discussed during the Classic period, moldmade figurines came to predominate the figurines made, especially in large numbers. Despite this, there are several figurines in this study that have been recognized as having been made by hand. These designations were made on the basis of their form, moldmade figurines tending to have a flat back, and may have standard features. Therefore the figurines recognized as being rounded were designated as been handmade. These specimens include; B 001, BH 001, BH 002, BH 003, BH 004, Z 001, Z 002, Z 003, Z 005, Z 007, Z 009, Z 010, Z 011, Z 012, H 003, H 005, H 006, H 008, H 019, and H 020. Some interesting trends become apparent. The entire category of bodies and heads is considered to be handmade, this is probably due to the difficulty in producing an entire figurine from a mold and some kind of handmade element must be present.

Similarly the zoomorphic category was predominated by handmade figurines. This is probably due to the fact that when depicting an animal, unlike a human, the face is not the only important aspect. This is due in part to the location of eyes on some species, and the importance in detailing attributes such as ears, that may be vital in the animal being recognizable. Finally the head category has a large number of handmade figurines, although in this case it does not predominate the category, in fact the majority of the figurine heads have flat and non-descript back of heads. The moldmade figurines certainly dominate the figurines designated as originating in the Postclassic period. However two of the figurines recognized as having traditional Teotihuacán style are believed to have been handmade. This may mean that they were earlier examples of this

style, perhaps even originating from Cholula (see discussion on Teotihuacán and Cholula interaction in Chapter “Interactions with other Important Cities). Another example of a more rounded figurine head is H 005, the figurine head that is believed to have been made by Gulf Coast peoples. This designation is in part founded on the assumption that the Gulf Coast artistic tradition is generally more rounded, circular and few sharp angles. The somewhat ‘mayoid’ features of this figurine also gives credit to this interpretation.

Position of the Figurines

The positions of the figurines have long been analyzed in hopes of understanding roles and status. Most consider seated figurines to connote people of higher authority and possibly higher status. Standing positions are therefore believed to represent common people, although some standing figurines appear to have been heavily ornamented which would appear to mean they were of higher status. Tway suggests that perhaps this canon needs some modification and that a standing position may actually mean the person represented is younger, although this directly ties back to the idea of authority and status, since older individuals tend to have higher levels of both authority and status.

Lisa Overholtzer completed a study of position and its relation to dominance by males on a large number of Aztec figurines (Overholtzer 2005). Although this is clearly a worthy pursuit, due to the fragmentary nature of this assemblage, an analysis concerning this aspect of figurine morphology is not possible. The few examples of seated figures are B 001 and B 006, both believed to represent females. Due to the association between higher status people and being represented as seated, this could indicate that females were able

to achieve a high status in Cholula, however other females are represented as standing such as B 002 and B003. These standing figures however would not have been able to be free-standing, this means they would need to be propped up against something or held by an individual. This is not a particular feature of Cholullan figurines, Tway states that figurines were too top-heavy and had too small of feet to stand up in most cases (2004; 32).

Figurines from the Codex Borgia

Unique Postclassic figurines have been found at the site of Cholula and other areas within the state of Puebla and Tlaxcala. Their function has been interpreted through the use of the Codex Borgia. The Codex Borgia is a Postclassic codex in the Mixteca-Puebla style with unknown origin. Since these figurines are found in Cholula, Uruñuela et al. believes this is good evidence for the Codex Borgia to have its origin in this area (Uruñuela et al. 1996; 63). These figurines are described as representing deities (Tlaloc appears the most often), but have a particular shape, they have “an elaborate face and headdress set upon a plain trapezoidal pedestal” (Uruñuela et al. 1996; 65). They appear to be drinking vessels, although due to the placement of the handle and other morphological details they could not have actually functioned in this manner. Therefore they are considered to be purely symbolic and may simply be conveying a ritual idea that is present in the codex. They were probably part of the costume of an important personage; they appear in the codex with this function with a priest (dressed as Tlaloc) who holds a Tlaloc figurine of this fashion. These figurines appear to have once been painted, which would have added

further detail. Without the aid of an external source, the Codex Borgia, these figurines may have continued to lack a proper interpretation.

Although not in cup form, some of the Tlaloc representations in this assemblage do appear to have had a handle attached to the back part of the figurine. These include the specimens designated H 009 and H 012. H 009 also has paint present in white, which is another aspect identified by Uruñuela et al. In both cases these heads have places on the back where handles appear to have broken off, the subject matter clearly identifies them with what Uruñuela et al. have identified as figurines represented in the Codex Borgia. Another interesting figurine connected to this idea of decoration and or being held by important religious figures etc., is the specimen H 007. This figurine is quite large, as are the other figurines with handles, in the past clearly had handles attached to the back, although it does not represent Tlaloc. As far as this author can determine it does not represent a specific deity, although it may still belong to this category and in fact may represent an important personage.

Zoomorphic Figurines

In most assemblages of figurines zoomorphic representations are found, although they are generally only a small percentage of the entire assemblage. Three percent of the San Andrés collection was zoomorphic figurines (Tway 2004, 92). At this site duck effigies have been found in relatively high numbers (Tway 2004; 66). Due to their contexts Tway has interpreted these zoomorphic figurines as also having had a ritual use, primarily as offerings to supernatural powers, perhaps heavily associated with water, caves and blood

sacrifice (Tway 2004;100). At Teotihuacán articulated or puppet zoomorphic figurines have also been found, these often come in the form of monkeys, felines, dogs and birds (Barbour 1975; 20). During the domination of the Aztecs, a larger number of animals appear in the form of figurines, these animals include some that have previously been present in great numbers (monkeys, birds) and forms that had previously been in low numbers if at all (rabbits, coyotes, toads and mountain lions) (Brumfiel 1996; 471).

At the site of Chalcatzingo a number of zoomorphic figurines have been found in association with female figurines (Cyphers Guillén 1993; 216). The most common animal represented is the dog; its tie with women may come from the fact that dogs were a primary source of protein at this time at Chalcatzingo. In Oaxaca the majority of zoomorphic figurines are of dogs and birds (Marcus 1998; 21). Dogs were not only a common foodstuff for ancient Mesoamericans they were also often associated with death; they are often mentioned as escorts of the dead. Birds are routinely considered supernatural beings due to their ability to fly, especially water birds which are able to live on land, in the air and in water.

The collection of zoomorphic figurines from Cholula is quite large in comparison to the whole of the assemblage. Twelve figurines, mostly heads (and one paw), were catalogued, and the majority were assigned a specific animal type, although two were left undetermined. The most common animal depicted was of the canine family. These however came in a variety of forms. One appears to represent a coyote Z 012, which may indicate it is from a latter time period, due the subject matter, due to its pointed and

elongated nose and ears. Another is in the form of a large mask, Z 008, with eyes that have been cut away. This canine face is nearly completely painted in white, and has many grooves that may represent facial expression and/ or fur; the face is not aggressive but shows a rather passive expression. The last two figurines that represent canines are both finely detailed; these are Z 001 and Z 002. Both are quite small, and appear to have been broken off of a ceramic body. However in the case of Z 002, it may have been broken off of a musical instrument due to the band present at its neck and the general form of the neck. The idea that this figurine was tied to music or noise is further supported by the fact that its mouth is open. Figurines molded with an open mouth are often cited as being in the act of speaking or singing, and this could in turn be the case for this canine figurine as well.

The other common category depicted in the zoomorphic figurines is monkeys. There are three such examples of this animal type; Z 003, Z 004 and Z 005. These figurines are also quite finely made and clearly represent monkeys, although they have some unique features. Z 004 and Z 005 both have crests on the top of their heads, perhaps indicating a specific species of primates. They also appear to have somewhat anthropomorphic features; clearly ancient Mesoamericans recognized the similarity between primates and themselves. Although monkeys clearly did not live in the general vicinity of Cholula, they were a pan-Mesoamerican symbol and animal present in many ideological aspects of society.

Finally, as stated in the introduction, Cholula once appeared to have been home to a marshy area and its associated wildlife. The figurines Z 006 and Z009 have been cautiously described as representing a duck and a frog. If these figurines are in fact related to these animal types it may indicate that the people of Cholula recognized the importance of their water resource and perhaps even venerated such animals.

Other studies of Cholullan Figurines

In 1954 Eduardo Noguera published an article on figurines found in the pyramid of Cholula (Noguera 1954: 36). He identified the find of figurines and broken pottery as representing a cache and not a burial due to the lack of bone. The figurines were dated to the Classic period due to their association with Teotihuacán pottery and characteristics that tied them to Teotihuacán style of figurines. He identified the god Ehecatl in some of the figurines (Noguera 1954:36), and identified the majority of figurines as being related to religious activity (Noguera 1954:39) without further explication. He then goes on to describe various ‘types’ he recognizes. His typology does not appear to correspond to any of the figurines described in this study, therefore it will not be discussed further.

Florencia Müller is another archaeologist who has examined some figurines from Cholula during the 1970’s, although her focus was more on the ceramics from the site. Looking at her pictures and drawings of figurines, along with the somewhat ambiguous descriptions I was able to identify some similarities between her figurines and the ones analyzed herein. First, and as to be expected, she discovered various examples of figurines in what is traditionally considered Teotihuacan style, that are similar to mine.

More interestingly is the example she has labeled as Cholula IV No. A (Müller 1978: 136-137). This figurine head appears to be nearly identical to that of mine labeled H 011, although this association is based on a drawing. Her designation become more important due to the fact she believes that she was able to assign secure dates to various types, her date for Cholula IV is A.D. 700 to 900 (Müller 1978: 140). If H 011 proves to be the same type this enables to assume such a date for it as well. She further identifies this figurine head as representing Xipototec, which implies the same for the figurine H 011.

McCafferty also described and interpreted some figurines found in Cholula during work that would later become his PHD dissertation (1992). His work was done on a residential site of UA-1, here he described the figurines as being “an abundant artifact class” (McCafferty 1992: 504). Three-hundred and eighty-nine figurines were found in associations with many aspects of the residential complex including; the floors, middens, well and in mixed fill in deposits (McCafferty 1992: 506). Like the assemblage studied herein, the majority of the figurines were anthropomorphic (most were also fragmentary), and a large number of zoomorphic figurines were also discovered (consisting of dogs, birds and monkeys).

He recognizes that some figurines were certainly used in ritual; however he suggests a second possibility, that they were used as toys (McCafferty 1992: 505). He basis this hypothesis that Cholula figurines; 1) are found in relatively high numbers throughout the site, without any major concentrations (except on the porches which may simply indicate

that the figurines were swept outside), 2) in room 3, which was recognized as having an altar and was probably the main room used in domestic activity, there was a relative lack of figurines found, and 3) there were figurines from numerous time periods found in “single component contexts”, where he suggests “children collected *caritas* (“little faces”) from adjoining fields and brought them home to play with” (McCafferty 1954: 506).

Looking at his assemblage it is clear many of the figurines found at UA-1 correspond with figurines in this study. Most obvious are the figurines associated with Teotihuacán and UA-1 #9161, which is a Tlaloc representation with a broken handle. The face of UA-1 #9873 appears to be nearly identical with the figurine identified here as H 001. A nearly identical figurine to UA-1 #10412 is identified here as H 010. A monkey head with a crest was also found and identified as UA-1 #11840. The headless body UA-1 # 11283, appears to nearly correspond with the figurines labeled BH 002, it almost appears as though these two specimens could be joined to form a complete figurine. Clearly there are a good number of figurines from this study that have corresponding representatives in the collections studied by McCafferty in 1992, especially when the size of this assemblage is taken into account. Perhaps a new typology, incorporating types identified by Noguera and other would be beneficial in creating a typology specific to Cholula.

A puzzling aspect of the figurines that represent deities from Cholula is the lack of Quetzalcoatl figurines, although Noguera does recognize a figurine representing Ehecatl. The rain god Tlaloc appears the most often, despite the fact that Quetzalcoatl was

considered the patron god of Cholula, especially in later periods. McCafferty suggests (McCafferty 2003: 15) that this might illustrate the difference between domestic ritual (small tradition) where figurines would have predominated, and the state religion (big tradition where images of Quetzalcoatl and monumental architecture would have predominated).

Some aspects of figurine morphology cannot be accurately described due to the form of the figurines, and the inherent difficulties in depicting certain aspects. For example, hands are rarely represented, and stumps are common (Tway 2004; 87). This may be due to the difficulty in shaping such details or that they would be easily broken even if they were shaped. What we may consider important to represent may not have been the same as what was important to ancient Mesoamericans, and therefore their emphasis on certain features, especially headdress and the head in general, may in fact indicate some of their views, especially according to the social realm of existence.

Pilgrimage

Cholula has been recognized from colonial times as being an important pilgrimage site. There is evidence that the site may have functioned in much the same during the pre-contact period. This could be invaluable in the interpretation of why Cholula has a somewhat eclectic assemblage of figurines, and why figurines from outside sources have been uncovered. Stocker suggests that a site that yields an extremely high number of figurines could possibly be interpreted as a pilgrimage site. His example is the site of La Pintada, and he states; “I would also add that more than likely this site was a pilgrimage

center since no other site in Mesoamerica can so far compare to the density of figurines of La Pintada” (Stocker 1991: 156). Although the density of figurines at Cholula is unknown, it appears to be relatively high, and a thorough analysis of this aspect of the site could yield some interesting results.

In present-day Mexico, pilgrimage sites continue to be an important aspect of popular religion. Every year a pilgrimage to Cholula is undertaken, one of the largest in Mexico, to ask for help in curing, rain and help in fertility matters (McCafferty 2001: 304). The pilgrimage is to the church of the *Virgen de los Remedios*, which was placed on the top of the Great Pyramid during Colonial times. *La Virgen de los Remedios* was a perfect replacement for the old gods which were prayed to for help in issues of rain (Olivera de V. 1970:213). She also replaces the ideas of curing which would have been a fundamental concern for ancient Mesoamericans. Stocker believes that; “As with figurines, there are multiple functions for pilgrimage centers; however, there is a predominant one, and that is a petition to cure illness” (Stocker 1991: 156). This directly correlates pilgrimage sites and curing, in both the past and present.

Although the connection between Cholula as a pilgrimage site in modern times, with Cholula as a pilgrimage site in the past, with the associated figurine assemblages and the density of this artefact class is unknown, I believe this is a worthy area of study that could yield valuable information concerning Cholula’s religious role in the past and a possible function for the figurines found at the site.

Interactions with Other Important Cities

Introduction

The study by Tway at the site of San Andrés has concluded that through the analysis of figurines at certain sites one is able to ascertain trade, influence and domination and other possible interactions between sites. Stocker adds to this discussion by stating that, “the distribution of specific figurine styles must tell us ‘something’ about interaction or communication between groups which is probably not manifest by other artifacts” (Stocker 1991: 145). This is especially true of large sites that probably had their own figurine types. This type of analysis is done by analyzing similarities in the figurines between a range of sites and those with the greatest similarities are inferred to have been in greater contact in the past (Tway 2004; 14). Not only similarities are studied, but often distinctive figurine types from specific sites are found at foreign sites, this occurs largely when dealing with empires and cities with large spheres of influence.

Evidence of this ability to discover past contacts between a variety of sites through the analysis of their figurines assemblages comes from the study done by Scott on Teotihuacán and Lambityeco figurines. Unlike La Venta and San Andrés studied by Tway, where the sites were in close proximity. Teotihuacán and Lambityeco are much further apart, and their relationship therefore allows for a better understanding of how various cultures may have interacted in the past. Contact between these sites means long distance influence, although which way it flowed (perhaps both ways) is unknown. This is often the case, for example the diagnostically Teotihuacán figurines may have in fact been first produced elsewhere. But due to their association with the site, and since

Teotihuacán has received so much attention, they are inferred to show evidence of Teotihuacán's influence and dominance at others sites, although this is probably often the case.

Another study of interaction between sites is based on the site of Chalcatzingo and its surrounding sites. The styles of certain figurines have led Cyphers Guillén to infer that life-crisis ceremonies were the major use of figurines at the site and involved various communities. Her evidence for this is in the distribution of Chalcatzingo style figurines to other communities and to a lesser extent vice versa (Cyphers Guillén 1993; 214). At the site of Chalcatzingo cross-eyed figurines, along with other evidence has illustrated that these people were in contact or at least were influenced by the Olmec (Cyphers Guillén 1993; 215). Although Grove and Cyphers Guillén disagree on most aspects concerning the figurines of Chalcatzingo, they are in agreement that the C8 heads found outside of Chalcatzingo represent interactions with other areas (Grove 1984; 31).

Cholula being in the heart of Mesoamerican culture area, its longevity, and its various phases of different cultural influence and dominance, suggests it could be a site suitable to this type of analysis. Unlike other such studies however, Cholula is a large site and is being influenced while quite possible influencing other large sites. These interactions are very important in order to understand the history of Cholula, its respective place in Mesoamerican studies and the influence of other great ancient cities at this site at various times in the past. The major players in these spheres of influence studied here will be Teotihuacán, Tula and finally the Gulf Coast.

Teotihuacán

Teotihuacán figurines have been found at a host of sites and are identified by a number of attributes. Teotihuacán figurines are often found with earrings and it has been suggested by Nuttall that there is evidence these heads once had headdresses of a perishable nature. She also states that there are notches and lines that could have been made for attachments of clothing or other adornments (Nuttall 1886; 161). The expressionless faces of Teotihuacán figurines differ greatly from many examples from the Gulf Coast during this time period (Classic Period). However the headdresses represented on many of these figurines more than make up for the lack of detail in the face. Often the headdresses are of the same size of the head and are clearly what was focused upon by the artist. Scott believes that all Teotihuacán figurines were once painted; this would be done by first applying a white coat of paint that would be painted over with other colors that would have given the figurines much more detail and life (Scott 1993; 12), it is possible that faces with more expression could have been applied in the form of paint, although other examples of art from Teotihuacán does not suggest this was the case.

Barbour divides figurines into two basic categories within his collection of Teotihuacán style figurines; these are flat and cylindrical figurines (Barbour 1975; 15). These types also act as chronological markers since technologies change and so did the methods of production of figurines. Like overall shape, eye shape can also be used as a time marker in some assemblages of figurines. The figurines studied by Barbour had little to no decoration (although there is evidence they may have once been painted) and are simply believed to represent the general populous of Teotihuacán (Barbour 1975; 23), he also

believed they were used in “daily life” (Barbour 1975: 7-8). At Teotihuacán a figurine type known as the “dancers” has been documented. They are found in a standing position and appear to have cupped hands that may have enabled them to hold spears or other rod-like implements (Barbour 1975; 16). A number of articulated figurines have been from Teotihuacán, which are also present in Central Veracruz although these are much more elaborated (von Winning 1991: 63), examples of this type of figurine or any puppet type from Cholula has yet to be found.

As discussed in the background, connections between Teotihuacán and Cholula have been discussed and recognized for many years. How and on what level these two cities interacted has conversely been the subject of much debate. Do to the fact that Teotihuacán is better known, and has been subject to much more archaeological investigations, the general consensus has been that Cholula was influenced by Teotihuacán and may have even been part if its empire formation. Others, such as McCafferty, believe that Cholula was independent and although shared traits with Teotihuacán did not necessarily accept its dominance.

Cholula shares with Teotihuacán various features including architectural features such as *talud/ tablero* architecture, similarities in pottery and similarities in figurine styles.

However a very fundamental aspect of Cholula was how the city was oriented and this, as mentioned before, was not the same orientation as seen at Teotihuacán and various cities under its control (McCafferty 1996). This may illustrate that the mappá, or “worldview”, of these people was not the same as the Teotihuacanos. It has been suggested that the

Cholultecas may have been ethnically similar to the people living at Teotihuacán (McCafferty 1996A: 300) and may even have shared some aspects of the little tradition (McCafferty n.d.: 5), although their big tradition may have in fact differed greatly. Despite the evidence provided by the Teotihuacán style figurines at Cholula, other aspects and artifacts of the Teotihuacán domestic ritual do not appear at Cholula. Such defining characteristics as, *floreros*, *candelarios*, and the elaborate *incensarios* have not been found at Cholula, although they are an integral part of ritual at Teotihuacán (McCafferty n.d.: 6).

The relationship between Cholula and Teotihuacán may have changed through time as well. Perhaps as Cholula grew and gained more power as a religious center, it no longer felt it needed to ally itself with Teotihuacán. As Teotihuacán declined Cholula appears to have begun appropriating Teotihuacán style, not in order to aid Teotihuacán but rather to appropriate its power and prestige in order to benefit its own agenda. Teotihuacán and Cholula clearly interacted at some level, and due to their proximity, both geographically and culturally, they both must have felt the influence of the other.

Tula and Mazapan Figurines

Tula was a major city that arose out of the confusion of the Epiclassic period to come to dominate in the early Postclassic period between A.D. 950 and 1150. Tula grew out of the power vacuum left from the collapse/ decline of Teotihuacán. It appears to have been populated by predominantly Teotihuacanos, as they were leaving the once powerful city. As this decline was occurring at Teotihuacán a new figurine type emerged

at both this site and Tula, this was called “Coyotlatelco” figurines and ceramics (Edwards and Stocker 2001: 63). It does not appear that this figurine type was present as far south as Cholula, and therefore it appears that as Teotihuacán was collapsing few people were migrating to Cholula, rather they were populating the city of Tula.

Stocker believes that Tula was the center of Toltec culture, and that the next major figurines type to predominate Tula, Mazapan figurines, may actually have been invented there (Stocker 1991: 145). He further postulates that Mazapan figurines may have been “the most widespread of any New World figurine style”, and he believes he is able to trace the extent of the Toltec empire by delineating the extent of this figurine type in Mesoamerica. He believes that due to the ubiquitous nature of figurines, and their use in ritual that figurine styles should elucidate information on the extent of empires in Mesoamerica. Cholula has yet to yield a Mazapan figurine, although, “a single sherd of Mazapan Red-on-Buff was found on the patio (of the carved skulls)” (Cobean 1990 in McCafferty 1996A: 312). This therefore means that Cholula managed to stay an independent power in the face of the Toltec empire. Stocker admits that the majority of the evidence of the expansion of the Toltec empire through the distribution of Mazapan figurines comes from west and north of Tula (Stocker 1991: 150).

It appears that during the same time as Tula was expanding especially in the northwestern part of the basin, in the southern part Cholula was expanding and bring in rural populations and towns, which may have been politically aligned to Cholula (Edwards and Stocker 2001:61). Clearly this would have created a rivalry between the two powers, and

trying to remain distinct from their northern neighbours Cholultecas may have decided to reject stylistic characteristics of the Toltecs. This may be why despite Mazapan figurines being a common and widespread figurine type during the Epiclassic and Postclassic, they are not found at the site of Cholula.

Despite this wish/ need to remain separate from the Toltec empire, Cholula and Tula most likely participated in some trade interactions, especially in the scenario that Cholula was a merchant town for the *pochteca*. As suggested by Olivera, there is an architectural connection between Tula and Cholula. At Cholula there are the palaces with columns which are a trait commonly associated with Tula (or possibly Chichén Itzá) (Olivera 1970:213). Stylistic elements such as this may have been diffused into Cholula's culture without the people consciously appropriating a Toltec style. Clearly there was interaction between the two cities; this did not however lead to one dominating the other. Mazapan figurines would illustrate that some element of common domestic ritual was present between the two sites; this clearly remained distinct between the two cultures.

The Gulf Coast

The Olmeca-Xicallanca were believed to have originated from the Gulf Coast, and as illustrated earlier, these people had a profound affect on the culture, religion and ethnicity of Cholula at the end of the Classic Period. Therefore it should not be surprising to find aspects of Gulf Coast, and even Maya traits in the highlands, and specifically at Cholula. Some stylistic elements, such as on the Stelae found at Cholula, have distinctively Maya elements, and several sherds were found on the patio of the carved skulls that appeared to

have been imported from the Gulf Coast (McCafferty 1996A: 312). In this analysis of figurines there was one figurine that was described as having possible Gulf Coast influence or ties. This figurine was H 005, and was very obviously distinct from the other figurines studied.

Nagao states that “during and after the Middle classic period, extensive highland-lowland interaction led to considerable intermingling of stylistic and symbolic details (Nagao ? : 84). This can be seen at Cholula, and at another Classic and Epiclassic site, Cacaxtla. Cacaxtla is perhaps a more obvious example of Gulf Coast and Maya influence in the highlands, and may serve as an example of what occurred at Cholula as well. At Cacaxtla the major foreign stylistic force is the Southern Lowland Maya and its associated style (Nagao?: 88). Cholula and Cacaxtla have often been cited as having many similarities and Cacaxtla is mentioned as the capital of the Olmeca-Xicallanca (Muñoz Camargo 1892 in Nagao ? : 86), further tying it to Cholula ethnically. It has some similar architectural forms such as a sloping *talud*, that despite it being a Teotihuacán stylistic form, it more closely resembles the proportions found at Cholula (Nagao ? : 91). Nagao suggests that Cacaxtla may have tried to reject canons established by Teotihuacán and in fact search out ones that differed greatly (Nagao ? : 93). She recognizes the Maya style as being “the most antithetical to the Teotihuacán style” (Nagao ? : 98). Unlike Cholula, Cacaxtla was largely abandoned after the Epiclassic period.

Clearly there was interaction between the highlands and lowlands, how this was manifested in the highlands appear to be a mixing of Maya-like characteristics with those

found natively in the highlands. Nagao suggests that; “eclecticism in public monuments could express the diversity and extent of a site’s ties with other powers” (Nagao ? : 99), this appears to be the case with Cholula and its neighbours both near and far. Elements of Teotihuacán, Tula and the Gulf Coast appear in the monumental architecture along with the figurine assemblage. Although despite this evidence of interaction, issues of rejection, association and dominance between these sites is not so easily ascertained.

Conclusion

There has been much advancement in the study of figurines in past two decades, especially in the advancement of theory that is particularly suitable for the interpretation of ideology, ritual and identity. Despite this progress figurine studies tend to be lacking a specific methodology, although projects such as Follansbee's to standardize the interpretation of sex are helpful and recognize the need for a universal methodology. Vaillant and his classification scheme appears outdated, despite its usefulness in the Basin of Mexico.

Even the comparison of figurines between assemblages is held back by the fact that often pictures and catalogue sheets are not incorporated into an article. This inhibits any attempt to do cross cultural, or simply cross site studies into influence and trade. Stocker has proposed "a figurine data base using computer graphics to enable sharing of information" (Stocker and Lamb 1991: 139). This would enable an archaeologist studying figurines to access a database of pictures etc. that would allow them to see similarities and differences between figurines and therefore develop more conclusive and inclusive interpretations. An example for this need is apparent in the following quote from Edwards and Stocker; "We had hoped that information from Cholula might aid in our understanding (concerning extent of Mazapan figurines), but the illustrations in Noguera (1954) are so poor that we dare not make any statements at this time. Hopefully, we might see and study such a collection at some point in the future" (Edwards and Stocker 2001: 63-64).

Cholula itself merits further analysis, especially pertaining to its role as a pilgrimage site. As mentioned earlier there are inherent difficulties in excavating at this site, however hopefully in the future the history and relevance of Cholula will become known. This analysis of Cholullan figurines was based on less than 50 figurine fragments, and therefore can only provide a small amount of data to support the conclusions and possibilities presented in this paper. Despite this I believe that these figurines represent a multiethnic people, and the sites changing cultural and religious beliefs. And is valuable in connecting various aspects of the sites history, formation and importance as a ceremonial center.

Heads

H 001

Face appears quite flat (almost reminiscent of mask of Agamemnon), with fairly naturalistic features. Facial features are finely represented. Eyes almost appear closed (could indicate that the person represented is dead) and mouth is open, without teeth represented. Face is broken on all sides and a good portion of the left upper side is gone. Back of head is flat and non-descript.



H 002

Another flat head with upper right portion missing along with right ear. Eyes appear closed (indicative of death?) while mouth is open. Nose is pronounced and pointed. Ears are large and include ear spools. Large neck is seen which was clearly broken off of a body. Back of head is flat and non-descript.



H 003

Very small head, that appears to have once had a ceramic body. Is very grotesque and appears somewhat zoomorphic, although the ear spools clearly indicates it is human. Nose and mouth appear as a snout-like protrusion. Eyes are marked but consist of simple slits. A large portion of figurine is made up a broken headdress and a large ear spool on the right side. Back of head is broken and is somewhat rounded.



H 004

A Tlaloc figurine head, that appears to have broken off of its body. Large eyes and partially broken nose. Lower part of face is covered in vertical striations possibly representing fangs or a *bigote* “moustache”. Is entirely black. Back of head is flat and non-descript.



H 005

Very finely made head that does not appear to have been attached to body. Is polished and almost appears to be made of stone. Finely engraved facial features especially the furrows on the brow, and the eyelids. A thick, rounded band is located on the top of the head (headdress). Back of head consists of an attachment of clay which is unsculpted and has a hole. May have originated from the Gulf Coast.



H 006

Small head, very broken and eroded. Eyes are large sockets, nose appears broken. Face is dominated by wrinkles (represented by parallel lines on cheeks predominantly).



H 007

Large head, features are slightly difficult to make out. Right side is badly damaged. Large rectangular ear spool is seen on left side. Facial features appear static and somewhat naturalistic. Headdress is only partially present. Back of head has two broken off areas that may have been a handle or loop of ceramic, which may have meant it was held or used as decoration.



H 008

Head is tear-shaped (upside down). Eyes are simple depressions and the mouth is somewhat rectangular but similarly represented. Nose is either very flat or may have broken off. Is rounded and may have had a cloth body but does not appear to have had a ceramic body.



H 009

Very similar to H 004. Is a Tlaloc representation, appears to have had a handle on the back which has since broken off. Eyes are goggle-like and nose is broke, but appears triangular. Lower part of face consists of vertical lines that may represent fangs or a *bigote* “moustache”. Appears to have once been painted in white. Back of head other than handle is non-descript. Bottom and top of head broken off.



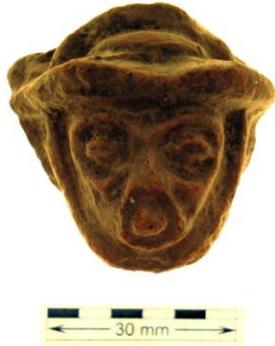
H 010

Is made from red paste and has white paint on about 30% of figurine. Has decorative features such as headdress, lip bar and ear spool, however all are badly damaged and difficult to describe. Nose is large in respect to other facial features. Back of head is flat and non-descript.



H 011

Head is small and quite detailed, however it is somewhat abstracted, and alien-like. A large bonnet-like headdress takes up approximately 50% of the figurine's mass. Eyes and mouth are represented by circles and no nose is detailed. Back of head is somewhat rounded although mostly non-descript.



H 012

Tlaloc figurine similar to H 004 and H 009, although in worse repair. Lower-right part of face is missing, although left side shows the distinctive vertical lines. Eyes each consist of two circles, nose appears broken. Back is non-descript other than a possible location for a handle attachment.



H 013

Head is small and larger painted in white paint. Appears to have hair that framed the sides and upper part of head. Nose is pronounced and nose and mouth protrude somewhat. Appears to have broken off of body from back of head, otherwise back is non-descript.



H 014

Head is in what is traditionally considered Teotihuacán style. Has very little detail, eyes are horizontal slits, nose is in low relief (may be broken off), mouth is barely discernible. Possibly has a headdress but is badly broken on top and bottom and especially upper-left portion. Back of head is flat and non-descript.



H 015

Painted mostly in white but appears to have orange paint as well. Top and upper-right portions of head are broken off. Large ear spool located on left side. Long thick neck is broken. Facial features are fairly even and static. Back of head is flat and non-descript.



H 016

Very similar in facial structure to H 014, in what is traditionally considered Teotihuacán style. Small and badly damaged, especially lower left and upper right portions. Has slit eyes and flat nose with nostrils, mouth is largely destroyed. Small part of headdress visible, possible ear spool on right side. Back of head is flat and non-descript.



H 017

Medium sized head, solid and broken off at neck. Is broken on upper right corner. Badly worn, most distinctive feature is lip bar. Back of head is flat and non-descript. Detail of headdress unknown, eyes are large and protrude from face.



H 018

Head in what is traditionally considered Teotihuacán style. Majority of figurines is made up of decoration, including; necklace made up of circles, large round ear spool and a non-descript headdress. Face a standard Teotihuacán style, little detail and small simple features. Back of head is flat and non-descript. Appears to have broken off of a body at the neck.



H 019

Head in what is traditionally considered Teotihuacán style. Very simply made, with slit eyes and little details for mouth and nose. Damaged, non-descript headdress. Appears to have broken off at neck, neck is located on the back of the figurine head. Back of head is somewhat molded but mostly non-descript.



H 020

Head in what is traditionally considered Teotihuacán style. Face is simply represented, large right ear and/ or ear spool present. Headdress is mostly non-descript however has a rectangular protrusion on front. Back of head is rounded but non-descript.



H 021

Large head with detailed face including eyes with eyelids and a mouth with clearly defined lips and a simple rectangular tooth in front of mouth. Ear spool visible on right side. Broken at neck, nose broken and left and upper part of figurine largely broken off. Back of head is indented but is non-descript.



H 022

Head is badly deteriorated. Facial features are in low relief and somewhat hard to make out. Large ear spool on left side, headdress is small and appears to have a double band. Back of head is flat and non-descript.



H 023

Mask with fine detail especially on eyes and nose. Eyes are cut out but have an eyelid and brow bone. Nose shows nostrils and is somewhat pointed. Face is broken off on left side and below the upper lip. Head appears to have some cranial deformation to elongate it. Back of head is somewhat indented although non-descript.



H 024

Upper portion of face includes a small, non-descript headdress. Eyes and brows are the most distinctive features and appear somewhat alien-like. Back of head is somewhat indented but non-descript. Is somewhat deteriorated.



H 025

Very detailed ornamentation including a headdress (has two ball-like protrusions on lower half and upper part has a square extension). Nose is large and pointed, eyes have eyelids and mouth is open and appears to show upper row of teeth. Neck is broken, extends towards the back, the back of the head is flat and non-descript.



H 026

Head in what is traditionally considered Teotihuacán style. Appears to have elongated head cranium. Large attachment on left side of head may represent ear spool. Face has little detail (although nose appears to have nostrils) and mouth is partially destroyed. Back of head is rounded but non-descript.



Bodies and Heads

BH 001

A human figure missing both arms beyond the shoulders and missing lower body below the waist. Has red and black paint, which are seen as decorations on the headdress/ or what may be cranial deformation. Headdress/ cranium is oval and measures approximately 1.5 cm. A small circular object is located at the top. Figure has a rectangular addition below the chin. Facial features are all cut out. Lower part of face protrudes.



BH 002

Appears to represent the “old goddess”. Very detailed especially in the face where the facial features are engraved and are shown in greater detail than most of the other figurines. Wrinkles are a prominent feature on the face. The clothing is also engraved and shows some evidence of having been painted red. Above the eyebrows is missing along with below the waist. The back of the figurine is featureless and it appears that a large lump of clay was attached to the back after the main part of the figurine was created.



BH 003

An anthropomorphic head attached to a “body” that consists of a hollow cylinder with no anatomical features. Appears to have once been painted white. Large nose and eyes that both protrude. One large ear on the right side. Non-descript headdress. May have cheekbones or helmet straps present. Two large holes are present on the body, however it does not appear to have functioned as a whistle.



BH 004

Figurines has large, circular, cut out eyes but is missing lower part of face, does not appear to have had ears. Arms are missing beyond shoulders, and legs below upper thighs. A large belt and loincloth are present perhaps representing a ballplayer’s uniform(?). Most likely represents a male. Back is largely not-descript. Possible clay attachment on the back-top of head?



Bodies

All are missing heads.

B 001

Seated (with legs extended in front) female body with protruding breasts and a poorly formed buttocks. No head is present and the arms are missing below the upper arm, the left leg is also missing. Painted entirely in black.



B 002

Poorly made figurine, appears to have once been painted entirely in white. Barely recognizable as a human form except for feet and possibly a protruding stomach (indicative of a pregnant female?), or possibly breasts. Back is not elaborated but shows the greatest amount of paint presently.



B 003

Legs and lower torso are present and are attached to a back “plate”, which appears to be left over from the molding process, although why it too was fired is unknown. Painted entirely in black. Figurine appears to have a belt that consists of two diamond shapes with circles inside of them, this is shown by engraving (or left by mold), this was probably part of a skirt which would indicate the figurine was female. The back plate that the figurine is attached to is not painted. Actually body of the figurine only measures 3.8cm X 3.6cm.



B 005

Figurine is dominated by decoration and clothing, including; a necklace with a large circular object and what appears to be a skirt. Arms are thin and are placed on the hips, a very protruding stomach is present; although no breasts are shown (could be part of necklace?). Back is completely non-descript. Probably originates from Classic period.



B 006

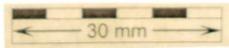
Seated figure with legs extended in front. Feet are shown but legs appear to be covered by long skirt. Appears to once have had a pendant on chest. Painted mostly in white with details on skirt/ dress shown in red and black. Left shoulder is shown, although arms are not longer present. Back is completely non-descript.



Zoomorphic Figurines

Z 001

Canine head with large, protruding snout. Eyes are punched, little other detail is shown. Back of head is mostly flat. Shows variation in color to the firing process or being burned after deposition.



Z 002

Canine, well made with detailing on face such as fur, nostrils and lips curled back in an aggressive gesture. Eyes are large and punched, mouth is open. Variation in color due to firing and/ or post-depositional burning. Neck extends to a band that appears to have once been attached to something, perhaps a musical instrument such as a flute.



Z 003

Monkey, very smooth and features are clearly shown, although somewhat simply detailed. Appears to have once been painted white. Long ears are shown, open smooth lips without teeth. Has a somewhat conical top of head, possibly representing hair. Eyes are very circular and are slightly convex. Appears to have once been attached to a body of either ceramic or perishable materials.



Z 004

Monkey with large crown (like rooster). Appears to have once been painted in white. Large circular eyes like previous specimen, although less finely made. Mouth and nose protrude. Back of head is non-descript although upper part appears to be somewhat hollowed out.



Z 005

Monkey with a similar crown to Z 004. Has slightly more human-like features. Eyes are engraved and have eyebrows, nose is partially broken off. Has large ears that appear as semi-spirals on either side of head. Back of head is mostly non-descript.



Z 006

Unknown animal species (possibly a duck), unpainted. Head appears to have once been attached to a body due to the long neck still visible. Eyes are oval and may show pupils, nose is extremely elongated, but doesn't appear snout-like. Mouth is elongated and unopened. Hairline is visible on forehead, however the back of the head is non-descript.



Z 007

Unknown animal with fierce expression. Eyes are simply slits (appear menacing) nose consists of an elongated part of face with two nostrils detailed as two puncture holes. Mouth consists of a number of puncture holes that may represent teeth. Appears to have once had ears although ears have now been broken off. Also may have had ceramic body, due to apparent breakage at neck.



Z 008

Large dog mask, that appears to have once been painted entirely in white, much of paint still visible. Grooves are shown to represent possible facial expression and fur. Eyes are holes surrounded by a raised brow bone. Nose is a moderately long snout that may have nostrils depicted. Mouth is difficult to see due to paint and the wearing down of the detailing, two holes (one does not go completely through the piece) are on either side of the mouth. Teeth may have been represented. Back of mask is completely non-descript.



Z 009

Possible frog face, with large bulbous eyes (measure approx 3cm in diameter) that have white paint but also have black pupils. Nose appears somewhat triangular and off center, the tip has been broken off. Mouth is a wide (appears open) slit that is also off center and may be somewhat broken. Does not appear to be broken off of a body.



Z 010

Possible paw of dog. No paint, detail of paw is shown by four vertical lines engraved to illustrate "toes". Appears to have been broken off a larger figurine. Appears to stand independent of support.



Z 011

Appears gargoyle- like, face is quite detailed including delineation of cheeks, and brow bones. Mouth is open and a tongue may be shown. Face is rounded although lower face is somewhat elongated. Has similar neck to Z 002 in that it appears to have attached/ fastened to a body possibly of another material, or possibly a musical instrument.



Z 012

Dog (possibly coyote?) with extremely elongated snout (1.3cm). Only one ear remains but it is large and quite pointed. Eyes are large and rounded. Mouth is long and unopened. Neck appears to have been attached to a ceramic body. Paste is redder than what is used for the majority of the figurines.



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