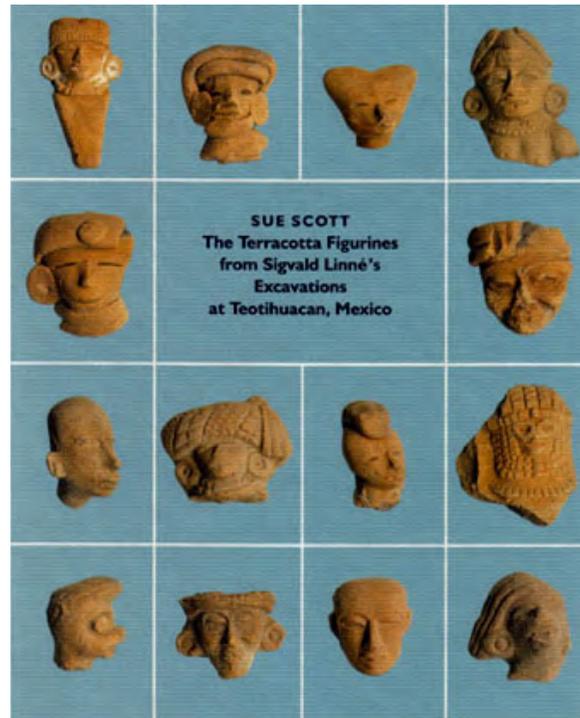


FAMSI © 2004: Sue Scott

The Terracotta Figurines from Sigvald Linné's Excavations at Teotihuacán, México



Research Year: 2000

Culture: Teotihuacán

Chronology: Early Classic

Location: Central Highlands, México

Site: Teotihuacán

Abstract

Teotihuacán is justly renowned as the first and largest urban phenomenon in Central Mexican Highlands. Equally remarkable is the seemingly limitless number of small terracotta figurines which were produced at the ancient city. The Teotihuacanos did not leave portraits of their leaders or any historic personage in ceremonial art forms, nor is there evidence of a formal writing system that would name them. Unlike their contemporaries to the south, the Zapotec and Maya with whom they were in contact for centuries, they seem mute on the subject of exploits and the people who would have been involved. In fact, as archaeological exploration and decipherment go on apace, the information imbalance between Teotihuacán and its southern neighbors is greater than

ever. It is ironic, and perhaps telling, that the void of recorded history at Teotihuacán is compensated by the multiplicity of human figures in the genre of terracotta figurines. It is highly likely that the Teotihuacanos did record events and picture their historic personages in material that has been destroyed through time. Nevertheless, the figurines provide the greatest amount of information about the people themselves.

Teotihuacán figurines have never received the scrutiny they deserve. In spite of the vast numbers of figurines and their association with households, they have been the most neglected and under-esteemed of all Teotihuacán artifact categories. Occasionally they are used in iconographic studies because many have elaborate clothing and headdresses with designs that seem to have symbolic meaning; but, with few exceptions, they are not the focal point.

Introduction

Figurines are mentioned inevitably in reports of early travelers and explorers, and a few are illustrated in more recent excavation reports, but to date there is a paucity of publications which demonstrate the wide range of variation. This work attempts to fill the gap partially by bringing together a large number of figurine photographs, and making comparisons in style and design with visual images in other media, and from other geographical areas.

There is a recognizable Teotihuacán figurine canon, but with seemingly endless variations. As figurines seem to be part of household ritual paraphernalia and because they occur in the thousands, they must have had a substantial cultural significance. The complete range of Teotihuacán figurine types may never be known. Each new excavation turns up some new element, and in spite of years of research throughout the literature and collections, one always finds surprises.

However broken, eroded, and humble the little figurines may seem, there is an enormous amount of information, albeit subtle, in the iconography. Much of the comparative material is found in regions far away from Teotihuacán, in culture zones that are known to have had ties with the Central Highlands, and where the iconographic themes are writ large. At Teotihuacán the corresponding images are mere suggestions, rather than statements.

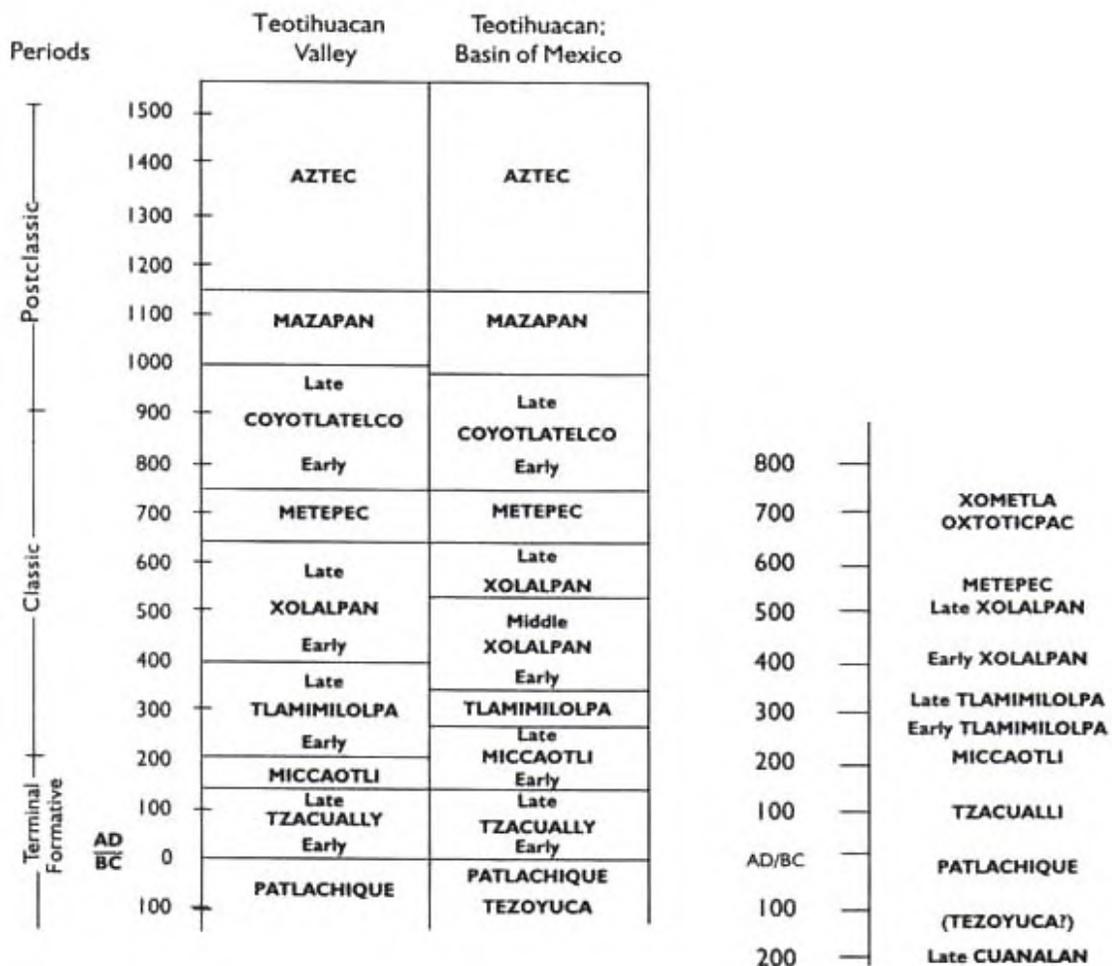
Since terracotta figurines are predominantly household items, their imagery, and even morphology, can provide insights to the residents, probably at the group or family level with a few examples that point to the individual. The household unit is a topic that is receiving renewed interest; until recently most archaeological endeavors were given over to Teotihuacán's monumental architecture, public panoply, and the layout of the city. The people who actually lived at Teotihuacán were overshadowed by the city they created.

This monograph grew out of research for my doctoral thesis (Scott 1994a) and deals primarily with the terracotta figurines from Linné's excavations which were in use during

the time when Teotihuacán was a flourishing city, or the 'Classic period'. The text is divided into three sections:

Part One (Chapters 1-2)

Chapter 1 introduces the reader to the physical environment of Teotihuacán, and puts Linné's work into the context of the history of archaeological investigations. *Chapter 2* includes a discussion of the tradition of figurine production and use, and the history of that specific facet of scholarly endeavor. The problem of the chronological sequence is explained. Most of the material was recovered in properly controlled excavations which receive a brief overview along with the database.



Teotihuacan Chronology Charts
 (left: after Rattray 1992: Table 1; right: after Cowgill 1996:329)

Part Two (Chapter 3)

Chapter 3 gives a detailed description of the figurine corpus, and is designed to be used with the accompanying set of 175 numbered Plates of approximately 1,400 figurines, almost all of which were recovered in controlled excavations. This long chapter is divided into subheadings following the chronology as it is known at this time, and is further organized by figurine categories. This information can be useful in laboratory or excavation settings where identification of broken and eroded fragments is otherwise difficult. The chapter provides references to comparative material, and interpretations are made when the evidence allows.

Examples:

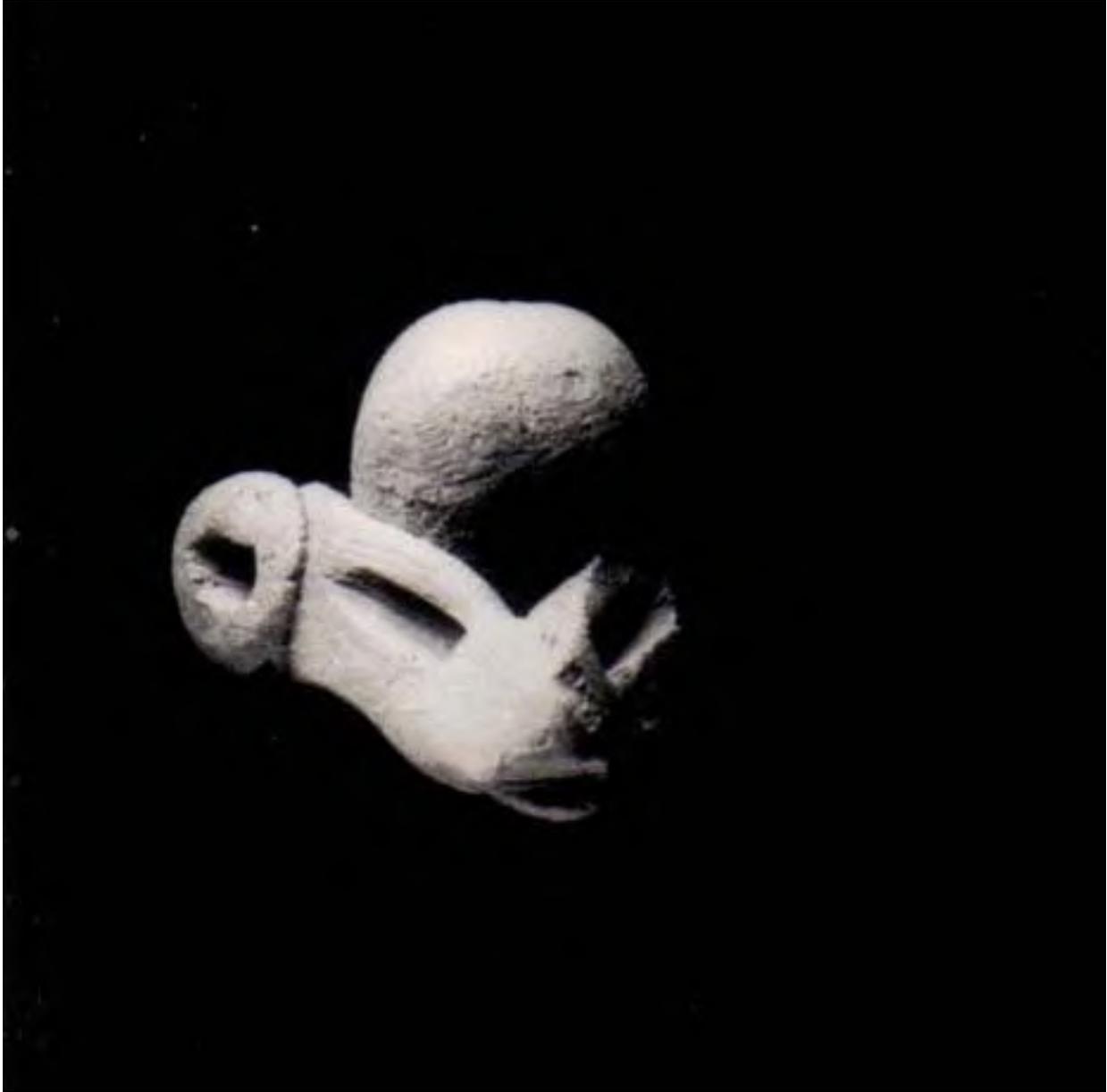


Plate 1 Figure b. Patlachique phase; heads and torsos; Xol 5126.



Plate 143 Figure a. Roundel headdress; Edin 1924.564 (actual height 9.6 cm).

Part Three (Chapters 4-8)

The format changes from description and identification of the figurines themselves to examination of iconographic themes found in various media, placing illustrations after each section as Figures. Because the figurine material in this corpus is largely from excavations, and for that reason are broken and eroded, I have added figurines from museum collections which are more intact and provide visual information to aid in identifying the more fragmentary pieces.

Chapters 4 through 7 are interpretative studies providing insights to the material culture of Teotihuacán. These topics were selected to demonstrate the abstract nature of Teotihuacán figurines and other small artifacts, and how they reflect major iconographic themes that are more elaborate and well-developed in other media, and from other geographic areas. I discuss how it is possible to recognize authentic figurines by analyzing a group of falsifications.

Concluding remarks and suggestions for future research comprise *Chapter 8*. There is no single overarching theme expressed by terracotta figurines, instead there are many ideas which express, *inter alia*, the combination of human/animal traits, a consistency of patterning in accoutrement suggesting affiliation with social groups, and even morphological characteristics which might refer to individual people. A large corpus of figurines is crucial for making these interpretations. Research, writing and compiling this manuscript has been a most gratifying experience, and I hope the results will bring readers a deeper understanding of the social environment of the residents of ancient Teotihuacán.

Acknowledgements

The National Museum of Ethnography expresses its sincere appreciation and gratitude to the Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc. (FAMSI), the Swedish Council for Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences (HSFR), and Magn. Bergvalls Stiftelse for their economic support, which made it possible to have Dr. Sue Scott's important research on the Teotihuacán terracotta figurines published in the Monograph Series of the museum. Dr Sue Scott's book includes 175 plates, each having several examples. This report includes a representative sampling of the figurines.



Plate 2. Tzacualli phase; heads, slit eyes; Xol 6721.



Plate 3. Tzacualli phase; full and partial figures, coffee bean eye; Xol 4551.

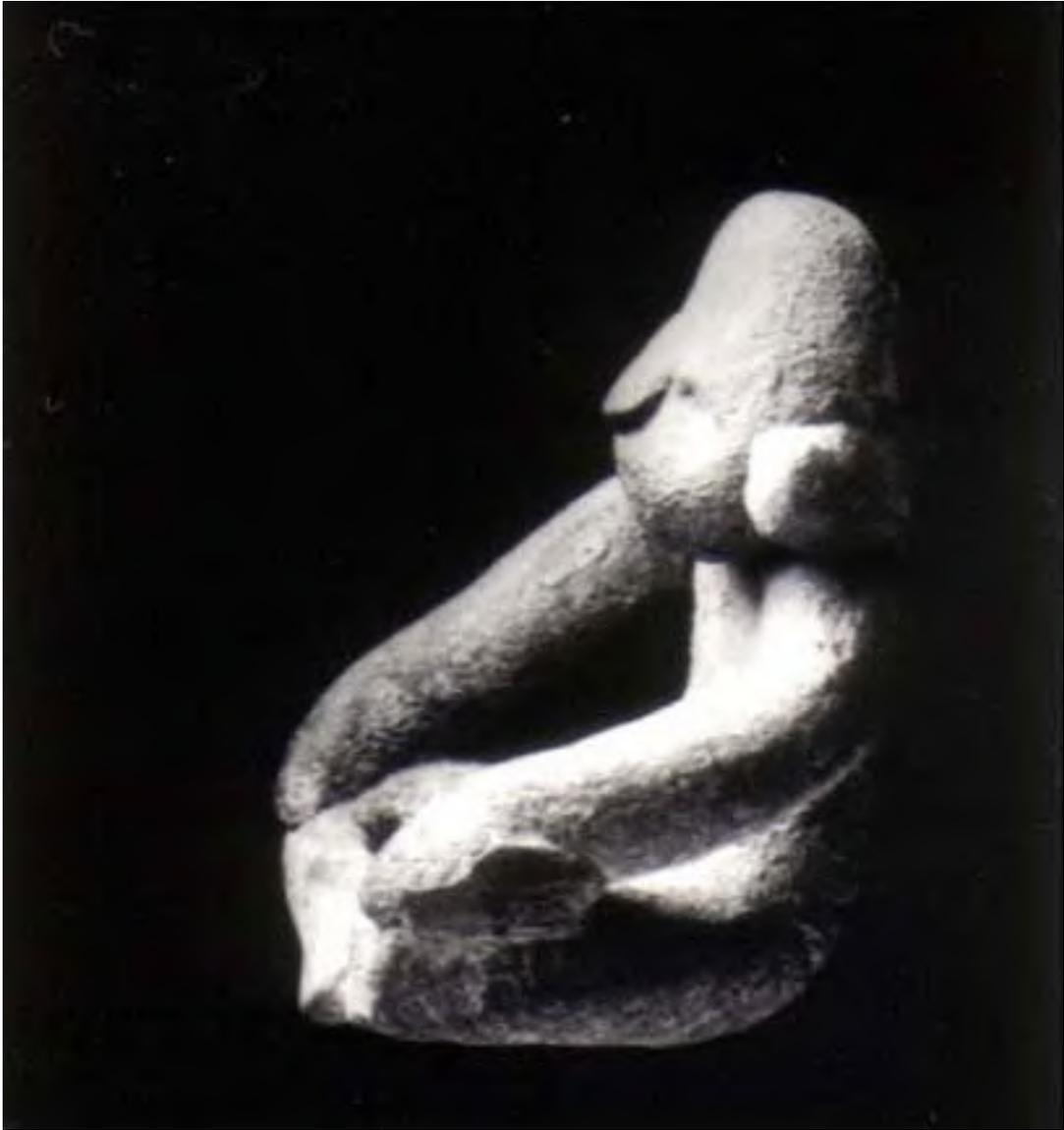


Plate 8. Nude torsos; bald heads, slit eyes; Xol 4825.



Plate 19. Heart-shaped heads; Xol 5846.

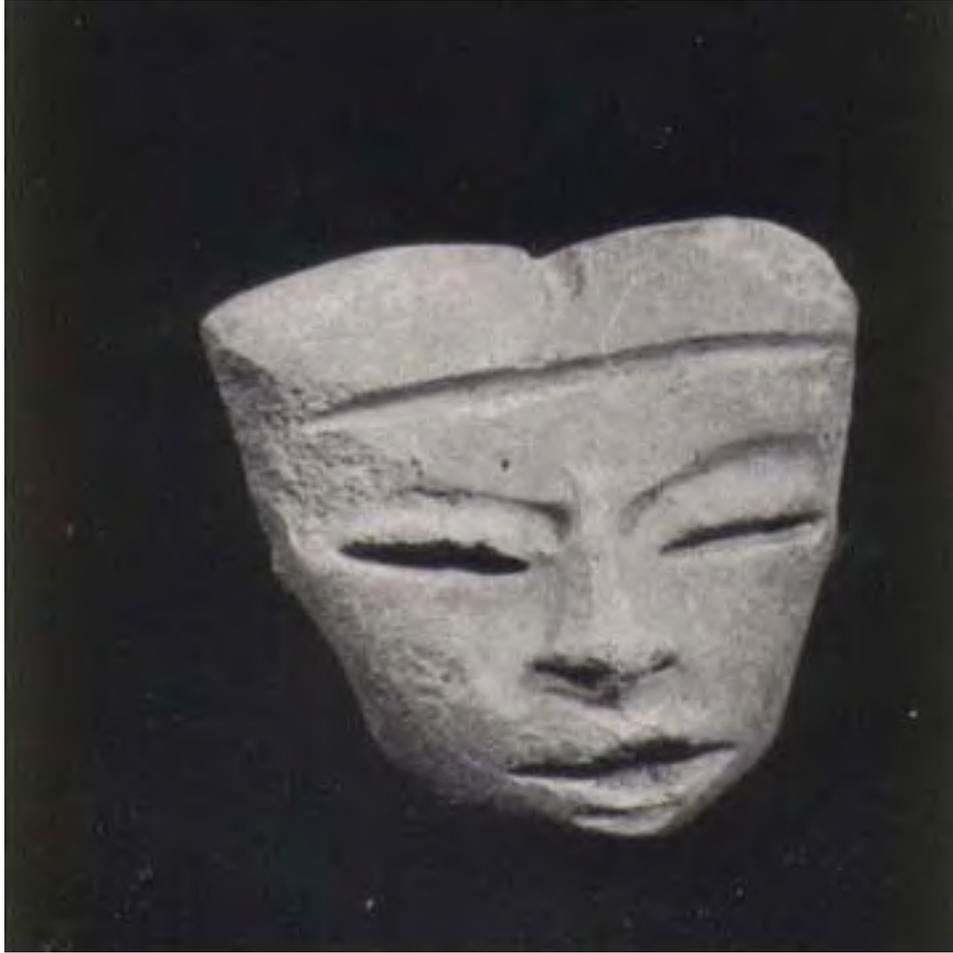


Plate 22. Notched heads; Xol 6277.



Plate 25. Wide-band headdress; LP 393.



Plate 51. Heads, masked face; LP 933.



Plate 65. Heads, heart-shaped and notched; Xol 4839.



Plate 67. Articulated torsos; caps, molds; Xol 5729.



Plate 71. Hollow articulated figurine from Tlamimilolpa burial 13, head and torso; Tlam 532 (actual height 8.7 cm).



Plate 74. Caps; triangular shape, wavy ridges, inset panel; Xol 3947.



Plate 81. Muscular torsos; simple belt/loincloth, associated heads; Edin 1924.557 (actual height 7.7 cm).



Plate 89. Upraised paw; corpulent torso; Berl IV Ca 42003.



Plate 90a. Elaborate belt/loincloth; Muni 26.45.5.



Plate 90b. Face pendant; Xol 6787.



Plate 91. Mowhawk hair; side tufts or locks; Tlam 344.



Plate 94. Chubby faces; bulging, closed eyes, tiara; Xol 6296.



Plate 97. Standing monkey figure; loincloth, tiara; Live 44.3.27.



Plate 106. Quechquemiti; females with and without infants; Berl IV Ca 23851 (actual height 10 cm).



Plate 129. Garmet decorations; 'manta' designs; Berl IV Ca 42001a (actual height 9 cm).



Plate 130. Figure recessed in frame; Berl IV Ca 41985a (actual height 12 cm).



Plate 136. Butterfly; Manc 0.6654.



Plate 143. Roundel headdress; Edin 1924.564 (actual height 9.6 cm).



Plate 148. Standing figure; Live 44.13.96 (actual height 14.2 cm).



Plate 150. Standing bird; Edin 1924.559.



Plate 155. Wrinkled faces; Xol 5591.



Plate 164. 'Tlaloc' plaques; not figurines; Xol 5075.



Plate 167. Animal; hand-molded; LP 396.

Abbreviations

Institutions and Societies

ICA	—	International Congress of Americanists
INAH	—	Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia
MANC	—	Manchester Museum, University of Manchester
MUNI	—	Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde, Munich
SEP	—	Secretaría de Educación Pública
SINH	—	National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.
SMA	—	Sociedad Mexicana de Antropología
UNAM	—	Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
WIEN	—	Museum für Völkerkunde, Vienna

Museums

AMNH	—	American Museum of Natural History, New York
BERL	—	Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin
BRIT	—	British Museum, Dept of Ethnography, London

BRUX — Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, Bruxelles
CAMB — University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge
EDIN — The Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh
GÖTE — Museum of Ethnography, Gothenburg
LIVE — National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside, Liverpool

Sites

CUAN — Cuanalan
HMET — Hacienda Metepec, Teotihuacán
LP — Las Palmas
TLAM — Tlamimilolpa
XOL — Xolalpan
I-II — Maquixco Bajo, Mounds I-II
III — Maquixco Bajo, Mound III
IV — Maquixco Bajo, Mound IV

To order The Terracotta Figurines from Sigvald Linné's Excavations at Teotihuacán, México, go to University of Pittsburgh Latin American Archaeology Publications at: <http://www.pitt.edu/~laap/publist/otherpub.html>.

Available in Europe from:
The National Museum of Ethnography
attention: AC Lagercrantz
Box 27140, S-102 52
Stockholm, Sweden
E-mail: ethnos@etnografiska.se

Report submitted 09/11/2001:
Sue Scott