

THE CHANGING RELATIONSHIPS OF THE MODELER TO HIS
MATERIAL IN CHINA AND THE VALLEY OF MEXICO
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE CLAY FIGURINES OF
THE TWO CULTURES PRODUCED DURING THE FIRST
MILLENNIUM OF THE CHRISTIAN ERA

by

DONALD KEITH MANION

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CHAPTER I

HAN MODELERS AND THE NEEDS OF BURIAL

CHINA - 207 B. C. - 220 A. D.

In a small upstairs gallery in the Museum of Art at the University of Oregon there is a wall case containing a group of statuettes of fired clay. In this group stands a comparatively small figure of a woman that is outstanding from its more ornate neighbors in its simplicity of rendering and direct expressiveness. (Fig. 1)

Passive and immobile in its frontal pose, bisymmetrically disposed, it is a frank statement devoid of enriching detail or the glamour of color, though traces of pigment still remain in the crevices to suggest what might have been its original glory. The figure is cloaked in a long, sweeping, kimono-like robe that flares out at the base to cover completely what would be the feet. Likewise, the full bell-shaped sleeves, solidly attached to the body in their entire length, engulf the folded hands as would a muff. The figure ascends, trunk-like, from the spreading hem in the simple sweeping lines of the garment, unbroken by ornament or detail, to culminate in the simple V at the neck. Only in the large, round face

rising from this V, with its blurred features suggested rather than defined, does realism show itself, and in this it is a generalized form with a universal rather than an individual quality. It is an expression of the characteristics of a human being reduced to its simplest terms rather than a realistic representation-agraphic characterization rather than an imitation of nature.

Stiff, though carefully refined and rhythmically organized, this figure is a true expression of the archaic in its flatness and linear treatment. Although it is free standing, the figure could hardly be called a work in the round. The very shallow depth, the two-dimensional treatment, and the flat surface modeling give the piece the character of a silhouette, so that it realizes its full import only from the front. It is not modeled in the strict sense. The form is used, rather, as a surface upon which is scribed a graphic representation in sweeping lines. Light and shade play no part in its aesthetic make-up. The rigid frontal position, with one side the exact counterpart of the other, is further evidence of this archaic ideal. The exaggeration of the head to denote its importance in the make-up of the figure follows a practice common in primitive art; that of showing rank and importance through size.¹ Lack of understanding and, perhaps, lack of

¹Ludwig Bachhofer, A Short History of Chinese Art (New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1946), p. 58.

interest in human anatomy is clearly indicated in the disregard for proportion in the figure and in the flow of one part of the body into another with little attempt to designate joints or cardinal points. This is further shown by the fact that the entire figure is draped, covering all parts of the body except that which is considered absolutely essential to expression and no attempt is made to indicate the form beneath the garment. This figurine is an expression of art in an early stage, yet in the piece are qualities that point to a distant ideal as yet unrealized. The simplicity of its rendering, the self-contained unity of its sweeping lines and clear outline give it an air of bigness and restraint that points to the classical.

Obviously made by pressing the damp clay into a two-piece mold--a back and a front--then joining the molded pieces together and smoothing over the juncture,¹ this little statuette is one of the large quantities of tomb figures, or "ming ch'i", manufactured by that process in China during the Han Dynasty (207 B.C.--220 A.D.).² In its elemental simplicity it not only embodies the qualities and characteristics of the figurines of Han, it is also the epitome of all Chinese sculpture of that time. This same flatness and sweeping linear

¹Carl Hentze, Chinese Tomb Figures (London: Edward Goldston, 1928), p. 77.

²Ibid., p. 77.

representation, this same sparseness of detail may be noted in the clay tiles from Hsianfu,¹ in the jade carving of that period, in the relief ornament on the shoulders of the wine jars of Western Han from Shensi,² in the large stone figures lining the spirit path at the tomb of General Ho Chu ping on the Wei River³ and in the Lion statues and relief carvings in the Wu tombs in Shantung.⁴ It is an expression of the groping transition from an art of planar ornamentation to a solid work having thickness as well as height and width.

It should be remembered that Chinese sculpture as such had its real commencement during this period of reconstruction and development.⁵ The sculptor's lot was that of a common workman without social distinction or prestige. Therefore, sculpture had been, in its essence, an auxiliary craft, its functions limited to accessory detail on utilitarian bronzes where animals and ogres served as feet, handles, or spouts, or were adapted in formalized relief bands or surface

¹Warren Cox, Pottery and Porcelain (New York: Crown Publishers, 1944), Vol. I, plate XIX.

²Ibid., pp. 77, 78.

³Osvald Siren, "Chinese Sculpture", Encyclopedia Britannica, 14th edition, Vol. V, p. 580.

⁴Ibid., p. 581.

⁵Sheldon Cheney, A World History of Art (New York: Viking Press, 1937), p. 248.

ornament on ceremonial vessels.¹ On these the human forms, like those of animals, were not realistic representations and were not intended as such but were treated as ornamental motifs and used with great freedom. To be sure, occasional small bronze figures were made as individual pieces, but these were rare and far from the rule. In fact, some bronze statuettes thought to have been made in earlier times than Han have now been relegated to more recent times in the light of new evidence on the styles of various periods.²

Therefore, the potter-sculptor, in his figurine of clay, was delving into something new and untried, something different in its principles of construction; namely, creating a work that stood alone, a complete thing in itself. It is little wonder that his first timid attempts should be linear and flat, that they should carry in themselves the inherent characteristics ingrained through centuries of subservience to the potter and the bronze maker.

However, as unfamiliar as the sculptor was with his new creation, the idea of tomb effigies was not new. The earliest tomb figures of clay known to exist at the present time were manufactured during the early Chou period³ and the fact that

¹Cheney, op. cit., pp. 254-255.

²Sirén, op. cit., p. 579.

³Bachhofer, op. cit., pp. 55-58.

the making of them was already a thriving business in Han times suggests that their manufacture had had either a phenomenal development or had been going on for some time. In any case, the practice of burying images in the tombs of the departed antedates the recorded history of China and the figurines of clay represented only a change of medium rather than the introduction of a new idea. In the time of Confucius, images of straw were buried in the tombs with the dead¹ and it is probable also that figures of wood and clay were used. This burial practice was an outgrowth of ancestor worship and was based on the concept that man's earth spirit lingered on after his death and required the same care as the man himself did in life.² The images of his household were placed in the tomb to minister to his needs and his amusement and to assure him his old occupations and familiar surroundings. It was believed that an image represented not only the outer form of a person or thing, but also its inner spirit and function³ and that the spirit of man might retain certain influence over his chattels after his death.⁴ It was a mark of filial piety for the son to place these images in the tomb of his father so

¹Oswald Siren, Early Chinese Sculpture, (London: Ernest Benn, Ltd. 1929-30), Vol. I, pp. 28-52.

²René Grousset, The Civilization of the East (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1934), III, p. 103.

³Siren, Early Chinese Sculpture, op. cit., p. 52.

⁴Ibid., p. 52.

that his holdings might be guided by the spirit of the man to whom he owed his inheritance.¹

In these tomb figures were represented not only the family of the deceased but also his concubines, his servants and all persons with whom he might come in contact in daily life - workmen, merchants, entertainers, musicians and dancers.² Included in this clay retinue was his livestock - his horses, oxen, goats and swine and the various inanimate things that were a part of his estate - the well, the pig sty, and the cow barn. More imaginative, less naturalistic creatures, such as guardians, demons and chimaeras, also found their way into the tomb array to protect the tomb and its contents and keep away evil spirits. In all, anything that could assure a well rounded and happy life after death for the departed was considered appropriate to accompany the dead.

In the process used in the manufacture of his figurines the sculptor also was working with something which was traditional. The casting of bronze in molds was extensively practiced under the feudal barons of the Shang Dynasty to make ceremonial and sacrificial vessels.³ China's Historical Record also mentions the creation of twelve colossal bronze figures in the time

¹Sirén, Early Chinese Sculpture, op. cit., p. 52.

²Grousset, op. cit., p. 104.

³Kenneth Latourette, A Short History of the Far East (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1946), p. 81.

of Shih Huang Ti, of the Ch'in period.¹ These were later melted down and made into coins, or were lost and no longer exist. As a more direct link, pottery itself, especially where decorated in relief, was pressed in molds during the Han period in a manner quite similar to the sculptor's own.²

In his medium, too, the sculptor was employing something that was familiar. The use and handling of clay as a constructive material was not new to him. He was well acquainted with its flexibility and plasticity and its facility in the translation of a fleeting impression, its resistance and response to his fingers, its fragility when dry. Well-built pottery of gray and buff clays had been made by his forebears at An-yang and Hou Kang in Honan and in the district of Tsinan in Shantung³ at least two and a half millennia before his time, and since the Chou period pottery had been one of the outstanding arts. The earlier bronzes, ornamental vessels as well as sculptured forms, also implied the expert use of clay modeling, since the original form for making the mold was no doubt modeled in that medium.

By way of materials the sculptor used those that he knew best, the clays that were in common use in the pottery of the day in his particular locality. Since neither pottery nor figurines bore a mark or inscription of any kind and since

¹Sirén, Encyclopedia Britannica, op. cit., p. 579.

²Cox, op. cit., p. 78.

³Ibid., pp. 20-21, 24.

both had a way of being moved about it is difficult to place definite traits to fixed localities. In the main, the clays of south China and the western provinces were red and buff iron-bearing clays that predominate in the wares of the Han period.¹ However, the gray clay that is associated with the North and some coastal areas, as at Yueh in Chekiang, was also in limited use as was a creamy white mixture of undetermined origin.² In their surface treatment the figurines followed three major trends - (a) They remained as they came from the biscuit firing without further adornment or finish. This practice was followed with many of the gray figurines.³ - (b) The biscuit-fired piece was painted with various colored pigments, predominantly reds, browns, greens, and black. Sometimes the figure was slipped with white clay to cover the raw terra cotta before it was fired, and thus to provide a better, smoother surface for the pigment.⁴ - (c) They were coated with an enamel glaze in either dark or light green. Since authorities agree that glaze was not used on the figurines of Han, although the alkaline glaze was known in China at that time,⁵ it is assumed that this green enamel was not a true glaze. It was less hard than a true glaze and was fired

¹Ibid., pp. 77-78, 98.

²Hentze, op. cit., pp. 78-79.

³Ibid., pp. 78-79.

⁴Cox, op. cit., plate XX; Hentze, op. cit. p. 57.

⁵Ibid., pp. 75-76.

at a very low temperature.¹ Since these various methods of finish follow, to some extent individual varieties of clay, they also may have a certain regional significance that is as yet not clear.

Aside from the aesthetic urge of the sculptor and his reaction to the hard, geometricized and highly ornamented bronzes of earlier times in his newly found freedom, the simplicity of the Han tomb figures and definitely their flatness of form was due, in some part, to more matter-of-fact things - their purpose and the manner in which they were made. As it has been stated, these figurines were created as images of work-a-day persons and things to be used by the spirit of the deceased as he had used them in life and, as such, were buried in the tomb with no intention that they would ever again be viewed by human eyes. To reopen a tomb would have been of the greatest sacrilege to a people so steeped in ancestor worship as were the Chinese.² This fact alone would lead the sculptor to generalize his forms rather than spend precious time and effort on useless detail that would neither be seen nor appreciated. Also, since the sculptor was thoroughly at home with the molding process and its inherent problems and since the figurines were reproduced in great numbers by that process it is only reasonable to assume that

¹Ibid., p. XIV.

²William King, "Pottery Figurines of the Tang Dynasty" International Studio, XCIX (Aug. 1931), p. 27.

simplicity and compactness of form was in order to facilitate the modeling of the original form and to aid in the making of the mold. Any introduction of projections or undercuts or separation of parts would entail a more complicated mold and magnify the possibilities of damage to both mold and reproduction and would also add to the amount of retouching necessary to finish the piece.

Though this female figurine is representative of the spirit of the art of Han and sums up those qualities and characteristics prevalent in the tomb figures of that period, needless to say, it is not a complete and invariable picture of that field of endeavor. Since no person of consequence was buried without them,¹ "ming ch'i" were made for rich and poor alike. They were turned out by workmen of all ranges of skill and aesthetic appreciation so that they varied from crudely fashioned dummies of little or no artistic value to works of art worthy of the name,² from highly conventionalized pieces to realistic works bordering on portraiture. Also, while a great many were finished by merely smoothing over the seams left by the mold, others were varied from the usual pattern by retouching some parts by hand, changing their contours and actions slightly from those of their brothers. In some rare cases

¹M. A. Banks, "More Chinese Tomb Figures", Rhode Island School of Design Bulletin, XXIII. (July, 1935), p. 40.

²Grousset, op. cit., p. 107.

higher type figurines were entirely modeled by hand,¹ either through the expressive urge of the sculptor or the affluence of his patron.

The Han Dynasty covered a period of more than four hundred years - time enough for an empire to rise and expire or an art epoch to develop and decline. It encompassed within its bounds of influence a vast territory of mountain chains, secluded valleys, and desert. Within this rugged terrain lived many heterogeneous groups - Mongols, Turks, Manchurians, Tibetans and Koreans - peoples of many backgrounds and customs.² Within its areas were thriving cosmopolitan cities enriched by commerce and contact with foreign lands; also, isolated communities that fed only upon their own traditions. Here, too, were fringe areas subject more to the influences of their outland neighbors than to those of their own country. It was these diversified elements that formed the spirit of Han - not a style but a summation of styles, not one impulse but a fusing of many to create a common theme.

¹Hentze, op. cit., p. 77.

²Edward Williams, A Short History of China (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1928), pp. 10-98.

CHAPTER II

THE FINDINGS AT EL ARBOLILLO

MEXICO 100 B. C. - 200 A. D.

At approximately the same time¹ that the Chinese sculptors of Han were molding their figurines to be entombed with the departed, other potter-sculptors on the other side of the earth were turning out little effigies of clay of their own in large quantities,² vastly different in concept, in purpose, and in method of manufacture. These were the Indians of the Valley of Mexico. Their figurines were made entirely by hand and by many sculptors, producing a wide variation of individualized pieces, yet through these ran a certain uniformity and kinship as though they were guided by a common urge.³

From the refuse heaps at El Arbolillo, on the west shore of Lake Texcoco, was excavated a little figurine, one of hundreds found there, that has the basic characteristics found in the figurines of that early culture. (Fig. 2) Now in the

¹George Vaillant, Aztecs of Mexico (Garden City: Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc. 1944), p. 46.

²Ibid., p. 33.

³Ibid., p. 39.

American Museum of Natural History, this figure, too, is female, and from it may be gleaned those qualities apparent in the changing panorama of styles and personalizations. Crude in its conception, it is short, dumpy and ill proportioned. Unclothed except for necklace, earplugs and a turban-like headdress, it is large of head with bulging eyes, protuberant lips, and a lump for a nose, Arms and legs are minimized. They are reduced to mere appendages, tapering at the ends without hands or feet. This figure, too, represents an expression of the archaic. In its assembled parts and piecemeal make-up is seen the same inarticulation and disregard for proportion that exists in the figurine of Han. Here, too, the great lack of anatomical knowledge or the skill to render it is quite apparent. The exaggerated head and headdress use emphasis through size to show their importance. Apparently, the arms and legs were considered of little importance to the total effect, and, having no elongated costume to cover them, the sculptor merely brought them to short termination. In some of its aspects, this Mexican figure differs from that of China. It has a roundness and voluptuousness that is counter to the Han figure, but, nevertheless, it is one-sided in its representation and intended to be judged only from the front. Also, in this one sees not the compact passiveness of the Han figurine, but an active expression that contains a romantic realism in its detail and in the wide spread of arms and legs, pointing to infinity.

Naive and child-like as it is in its manufacture, this effigy carries, also, a sense of smug confidence and freedom of expression that points to long experimentation with basic techniques. Unlike the craftsman of Han, this ancient Indian of Mexico had neither an extended and a rich background of working in bronze¹ nor the knowledge of reproducing objects by using a mold.² Neither did he have sculpture of the past in wood or stone to refer to.³ But, as did the Chinese sculptor, he drew on his knowledge from past experience in the craft of pottery that he knew. He, too, was no novice in the handling of his material. Long accustomed to building his sturdy pots by superimposing coil upon coil on a base of patted clay,⁴ creating the form as he went along, he proceeded to construct his figurine in the same methodical manner. Starting with a ball of clay for the torso, he pinched out a tongue-like projection to serve as a neck. Upon the front of this was applied the disc-shaped face. Then the legs and arms were rolled and attached. Little blobs of clay were rolled into shape and applied as eyes, nose, lips and ornamental accessories, and the head-dress was coiled over the head to cover the juncture of face

¹Ibid., p. 148.

²Ibid., p. 67.

³Ibid., p. 34.

⁴Clark Wissler, The American Indian (New York: Oxford University Press, 1922), pp. 69-70.

and neck. As he did with his pottery, he pinched on details, incised the final touches of eye-pupils and lip-line with stick or fingernail and set his work aside to dry without polishing or further attempt to hide the marks of his efforts. The product was then fired and painted in an ornamental style¹ to suit his fancy, as he was accustomed to do with his bowls. Unhampered by his process, the sculptor exercised great freedom in his work, varying the action and expression, changing or adding details as his notion dictated, unconsciously conforming to the limited restrictions of tribal styles and religious dictates.

These effigies, having been made by hand, show wide variation in attitude and action, in costume and ornamentation, and in spirit. No two are exactly alike. Also, they represent a wide range of skill in their execution, for these sculptors of Mexico were not specialized craftsmen but everyday workmen, the tillers of the soil. Among Indians, each family made its own pottery, both utilitarian and ceremonial, and it is not improbable that the family potter was also the family sculptor, turning out figurines, along with the ollas and bowls, for the family needs. It is also quite possible, though this is pure conjecture, that this sculptor of El Arbolillo was a woman, for the making of pottery was traditionally a woman's work among American tribes.

~~Wallant~~, op. cit., p. 34.

As did the early Chinese sculptor, the sculptor of Mexico used the clay near at hand - the same clay that was used in the making of the pottery. This was used as it came from the beds, coarse and unrefined,¹ with the probable removal of vegetable matter and the larger stones as they were located by sight or touch before and during the modeling process. Coarse sand or crushed rock was generally added² in the mixture to increase strength and minimize shrinking and cracking. At El Arbolillo and nearby Zacatenco this clay ranged in color when fired from buff to bay, or red-brown.³ Color variations in the pottery itself was obtained by the use of various slips or by reduced firing. In decorating his figurine the sculptor used a free hand and a limited palette of red, white and black.⁴ Some areas were painted in ornamental, abstract bands for pure adornment while in others, such as the eyebrows, eyeballs, lips and breasts, were touched up in color to add emphasis to the features and to the modeling.⁵

The figurines of El Arbolillo, with all their smugness and confidence of rendering, show also in their aggregate results

¹George Vaillant, Excavations at Ticoman (New York: American Museum of Natural History, 1931), p. 270.

²Wissler, op. cit., p. 71.

³Vaillant, Aztecs of Mexico, op. cit., p. 71.

⁴George Vaillant, Excavations at El Arbolillo (New York: American Museum of Natural History, 1935), p. 214.

⁵Ibid., p. 214.

a certain dissatisfaction on the part of their creator in his finished product, a frustration from attaining the desired effect through lack of technical facility to create that for which he strove. The struggle to improve is evidenced in the constant change, the incessant experimentation as figurine varied from figurine and style from style. The introduction of a new type from another area with some different method of treatment would cause the gradual degeneration of the old effigy style as the sculptor adopted the new and absorbed the changes that engrossed him.¹ The old figurine would become haphazardly done, flat and pancake-like. The usually carefully rendered detail would be only suggested or entirely eliminated and the effort would end in a grotesque or caricature as though all interest had gone.²

In the other crafts the early Mexican reflected, to a lesser degree, the same experimental urge that was shown in his figurines. In his pottery and tools of stone and bone was the same smug competence produced by a long period of development.³ Utility was his watchword. As long as his creations performed their functions properly he gave little thought to ornament or beauty of form.⁴ The grinding implements, the

¹Vaillant, Aztecs of Mexico, op. cit., p. 35.

²Ibid., p. 35.

³Vaillant, Excavations at El Arbolillo, op. cit., p. 233.

⁴Vaillant, Aztecs of Mexico, op. cit., p. 32.

mano and metate, made of porous, coarse grained lava rock were admirably suited for their purpose and remained unchanged for centuries.¹ Blades and scrapers of obsidian required little effort in making since any fragment had a keen edge automatically and minor retouching with an antler flaker would produce a superior tool. These, too, showed little change over the years.² The projectile points, also of obsidian, did gradually improve, perhaps because they required more care and skill in their manufacture and even slight defects made noticeable difference in their efficiency. In these the Indian learned that by notching the butts they could be fastened more securely to the shaft.³ The pottery was, by a large majority, of the utilitarian variety used in the preparation and serving of food and for storage.⁴ This was thick and sturdy and uninspired in its shape, and carried no decoration whatever. However, a variety of Black ware with feet was made by smothering the usual red clay in the firing, and on this designs were incised and inlaid with red paint. This ware varied over a period of time and echoed the changes in the

¹Ibid., p. 32.

²George Vaillant, Early Cultures of the Valley of Mexico (New York: American Museum of Natural History, 1935), pp. 297-298.

³Vaillant, Aztecs of Mexico., op. cit., p. 31.

⁴Ibid., p. 32

figurine styles.¹ Weavings, both in basketry and cloth were done at that time, but these have long since perished and cannot be judged. Only impressions and a fragment or two remain as evidence.² Occasional ornaments of jade and shell were found among the relics, but these were not of local material and were brought in by trade.³ Probably the early El Arbolillo had not as yet reached the place where he could devote much time and effort on things other than the necessities of life and religion.

The manufacture of figurines was not just a local idea of the Indians of El Arbolillo nor of their immediate neighbors. El Arbolillo has been used as an example because at the present time it represents the earliest Mexican cultural site yet found. Since, however, among the figurines and other artifacts of that site were found wares not of local manufacture yet of comparable nature and development, it is obvious that other centers were in existence at this same time but have not been as yet discovered. Also, from the materials from places representing later times it has been shown that the figurine cult was spread throughout the major part of Mexico and, although differing stylistically from region to region, it was more or less uniform in its development. From this can be deduced that El Arbolillo

¹Vaillant, Early Cultures, op. cit., p. 297.

²Vaillant, Aztecs of Mexico, op. cit., p. 32.

³Vaillant, Early Cultures, op. cit., p. 297.

was but one of many contemporaneous places of figurine manufacture.

The exact purpose of these effigies from El Arbolillo and Mexico as a whole is not definitely known. That they were of a religious nature has been fairly established in that all the later figurines, as such, were positively identified as gods by historical records in stone and scroll.¹ Many of these can be traced back to their prototypes in earlier times by peculiarities of costume, facial characteristics, or accoutrements. The fact that they were made in quantity over a widespread area and by different and apparently unrelated groups would also lend support to this idea. In times of religious pressure when all work of non-ecclesiastical nature was discontinued or kept to a minimum, the making of figurines still continued unabated.² These early figurines at El Arbolillo had one characteristic common to them all - they were female.³ This peculiarity, added to the fact that most early agricultural peoples worshipped an earth deity, a goddess of nourishment and fertility, could bring about but one conclusion - that these small effigies represented the counterpart of the Snake goddess of Crete or Hera of the Greeks - a Woman of Willendorf of the New World.

As to the special use of the figurines in the religious

¹Vaillant, Aztecs of Mexico, op. cit., p. 33.

²Ibid., p. 64.

³Ibid., p. 36.

ritual, even less is known. They were rarely found among the tomb furniture in the graves and, apparently, they were not temple idols, since, as far as archaeological evidence can show, this early people had neither temple nor central place of worship.¹ Possibly, they were images of the household or personal icons to insure a bounteous crop and good hunting and fishing, since the majority of the gods in the later pantheon served in this function. This theory is borne out moreover, by the great numbers of figurines that were made. Since the great majority of these have been found in the refuse heaps along with the corn husks and other discard and in a fragmentary condition,² it would lead to the conclusion that they were not valued in themselves. In some cases, the shattered figurines were found in such quantities as to suggest that they were deliberately broken and it was the practice in Toltec times at Azcapotzalco to throw clay figurines as well as dishes into a pit after a feast.³ So, to the Indian, the figurine was truly an effigy, an imitation, a replaceable visual image of little value that represented an intangible idea persisting continuously.

¹George Vaillant, "Patterns in Mexican Culture", The Maya and their Neighbors (New York: D. Appleton Century Co., Inc., 1940), p. 298.

²Vaillant, Aztecs of Mexico, op. cit., p. 33.

³Ibid., p. 63.

CHAPTER III

CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS

Though the clay figurines of China and Mexico had their beginnings at the same general time, it is not to be implied that the cultures of the two peoples also paralleled each other in their development.

The history of Han China, though lacking in some of its detail, is on the whole well recorded by the writers of that and previous times. The early history of the Indian of the Valley of Mexico, on the other hand, is mainly hypothetical, based on the translation of meager archaeological findings and postulation from that which is known of later Mexican cultures.

At the beginning of the Christian Era Chinese civilization had been long established and fixed in its developed form. Agriculture had been practiced for at least twenty-five hundred years,¹ and along with it came the breeding and use of domesticated animals. The horse, the ox, and the camel were employed as beasts of burden and sheep, goats, swine, dogs, and poultry were commonly raised throughout the country.²

¹Williams, op. cit., p. 45.

²Ibid., p. 46.

The Chinese farmer used the ox-drawn plow for tilling his land, grew wheat, millet, and rice as staple cereals and practiced horticulture. Irrigation, due to the foresight of Shih Huang Ti and his ministers, was in extensive use to reclaim arid land and to enrich existing farming areas.

The Mexican Indians, at that time, also were established in agriculture, but on a much simpler scale. They lived in permanent villages, practiced crop rotation, and cultivated maize and cotton.¹ They supplemented their diet with fish and game, with nuts and berries and other wild produce that they could gather. They had neither beast of burden nor the plow, but used the simple digging stick to plant their crops.² Their one domesticated animal, the dog, doubtlessly accompanied their forebears on their trek to this continent as a hunting animal and a source of food.³

In China, the acquaintance and use of the basic metals: gold, silver, copper, mercury, lead, and iron, was nearly as old as their agriculture. The alloys, bronze and steel, had been in common use in the manufacture of implements, weapons, and ornamental objects for centuries,⁴ and, at the time of Han,

¹Vaillant, Aztecs of Mexico, op. cit., pp. 28-29.

²Wissler, op. cit., p. 21.

³Ibid., pp. 28-30.

⁴Williams, op. cit., pp. 45-46.

mining was a booming industry and iron was a major foreign export to the countries to the west.

The Indian of this early time had no knowledge of metals, but used stone, bone, and wood for his weapons and tools - obsidian for points and knives, lava for grinding implements, bone for awls and flaking tools and wood for his atlatl, arrow shafts, and digging implements.¹ His ornamental pieces for both home and dress were fashioned from clay or shell.

As for weapons, the Chinese had not only the bow and arrow and steel-tipped spear, but the battle axe, shield, and horse-drawn chariot as well.² Warfare was a developed art in China and cavalry, as well as chariot-mounted archers, was in common use. The Indian had only his atlatl, or throwing stick and the spear with a stone point--he may have had, also, the bow and arrow, though this is not definitely known. However, since warfare was little known in sparsely populated Mexico, the early Indian had little use for elaborate equipage of that type and his simple weapons were used mainly for the hunt, and they proved adequate for their purpose.

By the time of the Han Dynasty the characteristic architecture of the Chinese was already developed. It ranged from hovels of earth, wicker, and thatch to sumptuous palaces and temples of masonry, brick and tile--from dwellings of one room

¹Vaillant, Aztecs of Mexico, op. cit., pp. 31-32.

²Williams, op. cit., p. 46.

to multi-roomed buildings surrounding a series of courts and gardens.¹ The El Arbolillocan, as far as is known, lived in his one contribution to architecture--a simple structure of wattle and daub.²

The feudal baronies of China had been established by Shun in the twenty-third century B.C. and even at that time government was highly evolved in form.³ It not only had a system of nobility, but also included a Premier and the Ministers of Education, Religion, Agriculture, Public Works, Justice, and Communications. In Ch'in times this feudal form was changed to an empire,⁴ but the old basic organization still remained intact. Nothing is known of the governmental practices of the early Indians⁵ but one can surmise that, since they lived as isolated groups in clustered villages, their governing body, be it shaman, head man or council of elders or all of these, was a local organization and simple in its structure and administration.

The Chinese not only had a written language and made bamboo books, they had libraries of the writings of their earlier great philosophers, poets and historians and the

¹Williams, op. cit., pp. 77-78.

²Vaillant, Aztecs of Mexico, op. cit., p. 29.

³Williams, op. cit., p. 47.

⁴Williams, op. cit., pp. 89-90.

⁵Vaillant, Aztecs of Mexico, op. cit., p. 38.

records of the various earlier clans.¹ Schools had long been established for training men in the sciences and for the services of the state.² The Mexican had no system of writing³ and consequently no written records. Their past history and philosophy was passed by word of mouth and died with the people themselves.

Both peoples carried on trade with outland settlements, but that of the Chinese was far more elaborate and extensive, both in the material and geographical sense. Having the camel and the horse for land travel made it comparatively easy to contact the neighboring Turks, Parthians, and Persians, and exchange their iron, furs, and silk for jewels, glass, woolens, and medicine.⁴ River craft and ocean going vessels and the mariner's compass opened up sea routes to the Roman Empire and the Syrian Coast.⁵ On the other hand, the trade of the El Arbolillocan was, in the bulk, local, judging by the artifacts found, and the articles from distant places were due to the pilgrim or occasional traveler from the south and west.⁶

The Chinese, along with their ancient ancestor worship,

¹Williams, op. cit., pp. 46, 107-108.

²Williams, op. cit., pp. 48-49.

³Vaillant, Aztecs of Mexico, op. cit., p. 3.

⁴Williams, op. cit., pp. 106-107.

⁵Williams, op. cit., pp. 106-107.

⁶Vaillant, Aztecs of Mexico, op. cit., p. 32.

had, too, a complex polytheistic religion that evolved around the Supreme God, Shang ti, and his ministers, the spirits of the North Star, the sun, the mountains, the seas, and the heroes of the State.¹ The worship of these was accompanied by instrumental or vocal music and solemn dancing. The philosophies of Confucius and of Lao Tzu and their transformation into Confucianism and Taoism, along with the introduction of Buddhism at the time of Han, filled out the complex religious structure of the Chinese, and it is and was the custom for families to subscribe to several of these at the same time.²

The ancient Indian, no doubt, had for centuries a religion in the form of nature worship and magic,³ but at the time that El Arbolillo first existed, this religion was taking on its first tangible form. In the clay effigy we see the first concrete evidence--the first monument--to this growing religion.

¹Williams, op. cit., pp. 50-51.

²Latourette, op. cit., p. 163.

³Vaillant, Aztecs of Mexico, op. cit., pp. 11-12.

CHAPTER IV

OUTSIDE INFLUENCES DURING WEI

CHINA 535 A. D.

In the centuries that followed the beginning of the Christian Era the way of life in China and the Valley of Mexico was subjected to many influences and changes as new ideas were introduced from foreign sources, as new materials and processes were discovered or imported and new peoples filtered in to become a part of the citizenry. These changes and influences left their impress upon the arts of the two countries and upon the figurines as they evolved through the years.

By the time the Tartars of the House of Toba had established the dynasty of Northern Wei and had held sway for a hundred and fifty years in the north, many important things had taken place in China. Buddhism, which had been introduced into China from Turkestan during the Han Period,¹ had received official recognition from Han Ming Ti² and was becoming firmly ensconced in both the north and the south.

¹Williams, op. cit., p. 106.

²Ibid., p. 106.

Taoism, in defense, had made its change from the philosophy of Lao Tzu to a religion of superstition and magic.¹ Paper had been invented,² giving impetus to the writing of literature and history and to the forming of important libraries. Glass had been introduced from Syria³ and was under development in Shansi. Foreign trade and travel had been greatly expanded to the west by the opening of sea routes to Rome and Mediterranean Europe and the extending of the land route in the north through Parthia to Persia, Greece, and Constantinople. With this expansion came an influx of foreigners in the interest of commerce and religion.⁴ All of these left their mark on the art of the time. Buddhism and the influence of India dominated sculpture, particularly in stone, as attested by the major works in cave temples in Shansi and Honan.⁵ The pagoda and the monastery became an integral part of the Chinese landscape⁶ and painting portrayed both the Buddhist saints and the legendary characters of Taoism.

Firmly fixed in the ancient beliefs of family worship and

¹Ibid., p. 108-109.

²Ibid., p. 107.

³Ibid., p. 109.

⁴Ibid., pp. 98-99, pp. 106-107, p. 111.

⁵Ibid., pp. 126-127.

⁶Ibid., pp. 127-128.

being more secular than other sculpture, the tomb figures were the least changed by the incoming influences. Yet, even in these the encroaching Buddhist art and the coming of the outlander were apparent in at least a superficial way in the costumes, attitudes, and racial characteristics. In general, however, the figurines were a developing continuation, an outgrowth of that which had been Han.¹ Their purpose was unchanged, the cast of characters, though more numerous, consisted of the same categories, and the materials were essentially those used in Han times. Changes had developed over the years, however. The sculptor had become considerably more sure of himself, more adept in the handling of his subject and materials. Most of the stiffness and flatness apparent in Han works were gone. Figures had more feeling for the third dimension; they were taller and slimmer and more austere, taking on a Gothic-like verticality (Fig. 3). The poses became more graceful, the expression more gracious. The figures evinced greater freedom in action; no longer were they straight frontal. They turned at the neck and waist and the arms were held from the body in a wide variety of attitudes. Facial expression became more pronounced and subtle. A most noticeable feature was the elaboration in the costume; the close fitting hairdress of Han had given way to horned mitras, truncated conic headdresses or tall hair arrangements in a

¹Sirén, Encyclopedia Britannica, op. cit., p. 582.

series of buns.¹ The robe was still long and full, hanging in straight folds, but now it was worn over a more elaborate undergarment that showed itself in the open front.² The muff-like sleeves were superseded by those with wide cuffs that hung in long straight folds.³ Also, the hands were exposed, sometimes holding objects. The feet had emerged and appeared in ornate shoes, sometimes pointed, sometimes three-lobed. This elaboration in costume and the care with which it was rendered, however, was accompanied by only a mild interest in the human form and its make-up. Articulation still left much to be desired. Distortions were quite evident in the various parts and features lacked structural depth. It was the ornate costume and its careful arrangement and rendering that intrigued the sculptor. Lines were still his major means of expression, though he handled them more skillfully to avoid the flat surface effect that pervaded Han work. Concave curves, hanging curves, diagonals, and parallel lines were employed to enliven the surface. More detail, clearly deferred, was used and the whole was carefully put together as a single composition--an ensemble of parts that attested to the increased skill of the sculptor of Wei.

¹Ibid., pp. 125-129.

²Sirén, Encyclopedia Britannica, op. cit., p. 582.

³Grousset, op. cit., p. 125.

Among the characters portrayed in the tomb figures of Northern Wei were all the traditional things that had appeared in the retinue during the Han period; the members of the household, workmen, tradesmen, entertainers, and the various animals and structures of daily life. But differences had died out in the changes of time. Human figures were now more prominent numerically and the animals that had been so plentiful in Han sculpture were relegated to a minority. Out-land people were represented, too, in increasing numbers;¹ merchants with definite Semitic features, warriors in Turco-Mongolian armor and costume, and the Tartar horseman on his Tartar horse. Men on horses had been depicted in the time of Han, too, in a minor degree, but in those there was little relationship between the rider and his bulky steed. It was as though they were made as separate ideas, then placed together, as they no doubt were. The rider of Northern Wei became a part of his slender, graceful horse, and the naturalistic poses of both man and horse reflected the superior horsemanship of the Toba Tartar.

The sculptor of Wei still used local clays in his work, but with the shift of the ruling people to the north and the emphasis on art in that area, the red terra cottas of Han had given way to clays of slate gray in most of the figurines.²

¹Grousset, op. cit., p. 128-129.

²Hentze, op. cit., p. 57.

The soft green enamel glaze was no longer employed, and the alkaline glaze was still absent from the tomb figure. In the bulk, the figures were finished with pigment colors over the fired piece,¹ but an occasional one was left with only the biscuit surface as finish. The pigments were richer and more varied in color, with gilt and blue now added to the earlier greens, reds, browns, and black. Slips, too, were employed with more diversity to enhance the figures, and in some cases the figures were coated with several of these to add color enrichment.

The majority of the figurines were still made with a mold, though handmade and hand-retouched figures were more plentiful than in Han. Along with his improvement in modeling skill, the sculptor was also becoming the master of his molding process. Figurines were larger and more detailed, and the varied actions in which they were posed implies a more complicated mold and more adept handling on the part of the workman. With the increase in size of the figures the sculptor had found that hollow pieces with walls of nearly the same thickness throughout withstood the strains of drying and firing to a much greater degree than solid ones and he employed this feature in his process.² The walls were still thick and inexpertly done, but the figures were, technically, a great improvement over the earlier solid ones.

¹Hentze, op. cit., p. 57.

²Cox, op. cit., pp. 111-112.

The aesthetic ideals of the sculptor were also changing as his skill improved. With the refinement of features and the increase in quantity and clarity of details came a certain amount of realism.

The simple, impersonal qualities of Han were being replaced by an expression that was more individual, both in action and detail. The sculptor was responding to the changes in his national life and the intrusions from the outside.

CHAPTER V

TICOMANOS' SEARCH FOR AN IDEAL

MEXICO, 300-500 A. D.

The figurines of El Arbolillo and the Early Middle Cultures of Mexico also passed through many style changes and variations in expression through the ensuing years as tradition succeeded tradition and style superseded style--the old degenerating as the new was gradually adopted. The sculptor, too, improved in his technical skill by the interchange of figurines from one section of the country to another and his struggle to increase his knowledge and ability is recorded in his successive figurines. One series, for instance, though more carelessly rendered, shows marked improvement in form and variation. Another succeeding style is more carefully done and the blobs of clay used in building the figure are now worked and smoothed into the general form to create a more unified result.¹ Apparently, this change was inspired by figurines from outside the Valley of Mexico in Morelos. Finally, toward the close of the early period a new figurine type introduced, presumably, from Vera Cruz, brought revolutionary changes to the sculptor and his work.

¹Vaillant, Aztecs of Mexico, op. cit., p. 35.

From this he learned that by sinking his little balls of clay into slots he could more accurately reproduce the features of the face and procure more natural contours.¹ He had succeeded in his experimentation in changing his early figurine of appliqué to one of plastic modeling with more unity, a more pleasing representation.

Finally, the people of this early culture disappeared, and with them their art styles, to be replaced by new tribes from Morelos and Pueblo to the south and east, with a more vitalized interest in the arts and the figurine cult.² These tribes, referred to as the Upper Middle Cultures, occupied the same general area in the Valley as did the earlier people and their best known village sites are at Ticoman near El Arbolillo and at Cuicuilco to the south on the west shore of Lake Xochimilco.³

Stylistically, although their work was entirely different from that of the preceding culture, it followed the same basic traditions and, had evolved, without doubt, through the same technical steps, and under the same influences as had that of their predecessors.⁴ These new peoples showed decided improvement in their way of life. They terraced their land to provide level building sites by filling earth behind walls of piled boulders and although they had a knowledge of dressing stone,

¹Ibid., pp. 34-35.

²Ibid., pp. 46-47.

³Ibid., pp. 38-39.

⁴Ibid., p. 38.

this was not apparent in this work.¹ Their architecture of perishable material has long since disappeared, leaving only a few fragments of imprinted clay as a basis for conjecture as to its style.

In their stone tools, these people showed advancement not only in superior workmanship but also in the wider variety of materials used.² Obsidian blades were longer and more finely flaked, arrowheads were improved in workmanship, more uniform in chipping and by using side notches, more easily and more securely attached to the shafts.³ Lava stone metates were now built with square legs and the close-grained quartz, quartzite, chalcedony, and chert were used in making pestles and pounders.⁴ Sculpture in stone was attempted in the creation of incense burners of lava and red pumice in the form of crude figures. In one of these is seen what is thought to be an early representation of Huehuetectli, the Old god, who was also portrayed in clay during this period.⁵

The pottery of these people contained many new ideas and improvements over the older types. The clay was still

¹Vaillant, Excavations at Ticoman, op. cit., p. 311.

²Ibid., p. 310.

³Ibid., pp. 307-308.

⁴Vaillant, Excavations at Ticoman, op. cit., pp. 307-308.

⁵Vaillant, Aztecs of Mexico, op. cit., p. 42.

the bay-brown variety of El Arbolillo,¹ but from this they created wide mouthed ollas with rounded bottoms and simple necks. Occasionally, a handle was attached to the neck or shoulders. Bowls with tripod legs came into being, at first stubby and shapeless but gradually changing to ornate forms.² Some of the leg forms were hollow and contained small pebbles or balls of clay to rattle as the bowl was handled.³ Other clay objects included ladles, incense burners, and ornaments for ears and nose. Ornamentation and finish of pottery were of prime interest and many experiments were conducted with this in mind. They incised designs, rubbing white paint into the lines; they experimented with negative painting, a process similar to that used in batik on cloth.⁴ Slips of dun and brown were used over plain ware and their decorated pieces ranged from plain white ware through a two-color one in red on yellow to polychrome bowls of several colors. Many of these were polished by rubbing with a stick or stone.⁵

As shown by shell and jade ornaments and pottery fragments of outside origin, trade was more extensive than before. Contact was still kept with Western Mexico and there was a

¹Vaillant, Excavations at Ticoman, op. cit., p. 270.

²Vaillant, Aztecs of Mexico, op. cit., p. 40.

³Ibid., p. 40.

⁴Ibid., p. 40.

⁵Vaillant, Excavations at Ticoman, op. cit., p. 269.

greater use made of shells from the Caribbean to the east.¹ Religion, too, had become more complex. New gods were added to the pantheon and the first evidence of a religious structure was erected at Cuicuilco. This structure was in the form of a large oval platform mound and, like the terrace walls, the sloping sides were faced with uncut boulders of lava. Surmounted upon this stands an altar of waterworn boulders and clay resting upon a boulder floor.²

The figurine cult showed the same advancement and complexity. To echo the growing religion, male figures, as well as female, were now manufactured, and definite attempts were made to define the various gods by specific details of costume or figure peculiarities. The same wide experimentation that was manifested in the work at El Arbolillo was still going on as the sculptor tried to elaborate his forms and bring them nearer to that which he sought. At times these attempts ended in grotesques rather than naturalistic figures.

At this time two distinct styles of figurines were being made, almost to the exclusion of all other styles. These represented either two different schools of thought or different trends followed by the same sculptor in his search for a better work. The figurines of the first type, such as the one from the American Museum of Natural History (Fig. 4), were very

¹Vaillant, Early Cultures, op. cit., p. 299.

²Byron Cummings, "Ruins of Cuicuilco May Revolutionize Our History of Ancient America", National Geographic Magazine, Vol. XLIV, (1923) pp. 203-220.

carefully assembled, and the pieces of clay knit together into a plastic whole with meticulously modeled details and features. These were then coated with white slip, touched up with red paint and polished over their entire surface with stick or smooth stone, as was done on the pottery of the time. This style represented the naturalistic approach, with a highly finished realism the sculptor's goal. The second style was an obvious return to the old method of building with small bits of clay (Fig. 5). Here the objective was elaboration in costume and decoration, with the figure, itself, playing only a secondary part in the composition. As could be expected, the exaggerated and ornate headdress and abstract painted decorations produced a conventionalized figure, a symbol rather than a natural form.

Both figurine styles carried much of the archaic qualities of the earlier figures. Lack of proportion, awkward action, and the exaggeration of parts were still quite prevalent. However, the freer, more varied actions and positions, the facility in which the clay was handled in forming a figure that was more unified and better related in its parts also indicated the sculptor's increased skill in modeling and a more critical observation of things around him.

Increased material and technical knowledge was apparent in the use of slip to improve the appearance of the figurines and in the burnishing process that he applied to it. Also, occasional large figurines from outlying areas were manu-

factured in hollow form,¹ showing that the Indian had found, as had the Chinese, that larger figures were more easily constructed in hollow form and distortion and breakage less likely in the drying and firing. Since most of the figurines were quite small, the hollowing of figures was neither common nor necessary. The sculptor was still applying the things he had learned from pottery to his figurines and he had gone ahead, but, as his continued experimentations showed, he still had not reached his objective.

¹Vaillant, Early Cultures, op. cit., p. 301.

CHAPTER VI

THE SPLENDOR OF T'ANG

CHINA, 680-730 A.D.

When Li Yuan, the Duke of T'ang, with the aid of the Turkish Khan, took over control of the government of China in 618 A.D. and founded the Dynasty of T'ang, he established what was to be known as the Golden Age of China. This was a period regarded by the Chinese as one of the most brilliant in their history.¹ Receiving its first real impetus under the tolerant and wise T'ai Tsung, son of Li Yuan, the China of T'ang reached its apex in the reign of Hsuan Tsung, or Ming Huang.² This was a time of internal peace and prosperity and it was at this time that the Empire reached its greatest expansion, even greater than that of Han. It ranged from Indo-China in the south to parts of Mongolia and Manchuria in the north. To the west it spread into the Tarim Valley and to the upper reaches of the Indus River.³ This expansion of the Empire brought on a corresponding growth in

¹Williams, op. cit., p. 137.

²Ibid., p. 147.

³Latourette, op. cit., pp. 123-124.

commerce and international relations that had never been attained before. China became the rival of the Arab Empire in being the richest and most powerful state on the globe.¹ Her influence was felt throughout the known world. Merchants filled the southern ports and crowded the northern land routes and people of all nationalities became a part of Chinese life. Under the tolerance of the T'ang rulers new religions came also² Manichaeism was brought in by the Turkish Uighurs, Zoroastrianism came with Persian refugees, Islam was introduced by the Arabs, and Christianity in the form of Nestorianism came in from Persia.³ All this brought about a cosmopolitan intimacy that made Ch'ang-an, the capital city in the Valley of the Wei, one of the largest and most enlightened cities in the world.⁴

The arts and literature flourished as old reserves and traditions were abandoned, and in the lavish court of Ming Huang and his concubine, Yang Kuei-fei, were found the great poets, Li Po, Tu Fu, and Po Chu'i, and the outstanding painter of the time, Wu Tao Tzu.⁵ Though the lowly maker of "ming ch'i" was not included in the life at court, he, at least, was blessed by the prosperity and extravagance of the times.

¹Ibid., pp. 138-139.

²Williams, op. cit., p. 139.

³Ibid., pp. 138-139.

⁴Williams, op. cit., p. 140.

⁵Ibid., pp. 149-150, pp. 156-158.

The tomb figure business prospered. Funeral processions became long and elaborate and the "ming ch'i" became large and ornate as ranking families vied with each other in honors to the dead.¹

As in the preceding period, the figurines were an outgrowth of those that had gone before--a summation of knowledge and skills of earlier times. They were a development of Han and Northern Wei, but the flat simplicity of Han, the elegant austerity and haughtiness of Wei had now been replaced by out-and-out realism--a realism so clearly defined as to be more lucid than nature herself (Fig. 6). What had been an art of line and plane was now a fully rounded, plastic, three-dimensional art. The stiffness that had pervaded Han figurines and had still prevailed in a lesser degree in those of Wei completely disappeared and in its place was an easy charm, an intimacy that reflected the mastery of the sculptor over his material and his extensive knowledge of his subjects. Body points were stressed to enhance the figure artistically as well as anatomically. Movement was balanced by counter-movement. The pose was free and relaxed. The costume, that had played so important a part in Wei times, was now simply rendered and made to reveal in its easy undulations the figure-form beneath it. Each part of the figure was clear in itself, yet it was related to and subordinated to the whole compo-

¹Hentze, op. cit., p. 80.

sition. Facial detail was still unimportant in the expression of the figure. Emphasis was placed, instead, on the animation of gesture and the rhythmic flow of action throughout the figure as a moving bond to unify the whole.

This freedom of expression in the figurines and the detailed way in which they were built necessitated a like change in the way in which they were made. The use of the mold was practically forgotten as the sculptor turned out figurines, both large and small, entirely modeled by hand.¹ The delicacy of detail and action and the complexity of the pose outgrew the limitations of the moulding process. Also, the constant demand for larger and more art-worthy pieces placed a premium on those that were handmade. Contributing to this desire to build by hand at the neglect of the mold was the fact, too, that the statuettes were becoming more and more appreciated for themselves as art objects and many that were intended for the tomb found their way into the homes and collections instead.²

Several changes had taken place in the way of materials at this time. The brown and gray terra cottas of the earlier periods were now relegated to minor works and in their place a finer pipe clay, introduced during the Sui Dynasty, came

¹Hentze, op. cit., p. 80.

²Cox, op. cit., p. 131.

into wide use.¹ This clay, near white in color, needed no additional slip to give it either finish or color and it was more adaptable to delicate modeling. Glazes, heretofore used only on pottery, now came into prominence on the figurines.² In the main, these glazes were brown and green in color, used sometimes together, sometimes separately and often they were mingled to form a mottled surface.³ Colored pigment was still used and generally the figures were glazed only in part, with the hands and faces left in the biscuit to be painted in more naturalistic colors.⁴ HOLLOWED figurines were the rule and again the finer clay and the increased skill of the workman brought about a superior work. The thick and lumpy walls of Wei had given way to those of the thinness and evenness of fine pottery.

The subjects rendered in the earlier periods still persisted in T'ang--all the workmen, servants and entertainers as well as musicians, performing on various instruments, dwarfs and acrobats. Sprinkled among these, too, and treated with the same easy familiarity, were numerous figures of Greeks, Tartars, Jews, Arabs, Persians, and Syrians to mirror the fact that it was no longer a Chinese China.

¹Cox, op. cit., p. 106.

²William King, "Pottery Figurines of the T'ang Dynasty", International Studio, XCIX (Aug. 1931) pp. 28-29.

³Ibid., pp. 28-29.

⁴King, op. cit., p. 28.

As the rule of Ming Huang represented the acme of an illustrious period in Chinese history so did it represent the beginning of the decline of this great era¹ and the eventual discontinuance of the clay tomb figure. As Ming Huang grew old he was unable to control his government and Empire, and in the face of rebellion, he abdicated in favor of his son. Within twelve years the population of China had dropped to nearly half and poverty and disease were rampant. The bankrupt government broke down. Severe taxes were levied, forced loans were made, and, although the Dynasty survived, it could never regain the glory of Ming Huang's reign.²

The decline of the clay "ming ch'i", though not so rapid, was, nevertheless, as decided as the fall of T'ang. Classicism persisted but with a difference. Modeling and action became exaggerated, the figure became more relaxed. Detail lost its clarity, and parts tended to merge as the sculptor, too, relaxed and became careless in his definition. Finally, the figurine art became an art of rote and rhetoric, an intellectual expression. It was a mere repetition of earlier works, without subtlety or grace or the power to move. All had been said; there was nothing more to express.

It may have been that clay statuettes were too costly for the poverty stricken Chinese, or, perhaps, that the aesthetic appeal of the figurines gave them such value that they rose

¹Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 153-155.

²*Ibid.*, p. 155.

above the burial practice. After the T'ang Dynasty wood superseded clay in the manufacture of tomb figures, and straw and paper effigies were burned at the graves to honor the fathers.

CHAPTER VII

UNITY AND HARMONY AT TEOTIHUACAN

MEXICO, 800-900 A. D.

The civilization of the Toltecs, the builders of Teotihuacan, was in its full development a far cry from the rudimentary life of the inhabitants of El Arbolillo and the other earlier Mexicans. Their culture became correspondingly more complex. Their cultural roots were laid in the same basic structure, however, and their development followed the same general patterns as that of the earlier tribes.¹ The early Toltecs were a part of the tribes that replaced the El Arbolilloans in the Valley of Mexico and the foundation of their culture was made up of elements drawn from the various groups of their time.² In fact, the Toltec Empire was a federation of those groups bonded together by common needs and a common religion. Like the China of T'ang, the Toltec Period represented a time of internal peace, of prosperity; a time of unified thought and action, and a time of high

¹Vaillant, Aztecs of Mexico, op. cit., p. 57, p. 59.

²John Thompson, Mexico Before Cortez, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933), pp. 17-19.

development that culminated in the Golden Age of Mexico.¹

At the time of the first great building period at Teotihuacan, during the reign of Mitl,² Toltec civilization had reached its peak of attainment. Agriculture was fully developed, with cotton, corn, squash, chili peppers, beans, and all the domesticated plants known to Mexico under cultivation.³ Their economy was so efficient that vast numbers of people could be spared from the everyday occupations of livelihood to devote their full time to religious duties and to the enormous task of building the ceremonial center.

During this building period the Empire reached its greatest expansion. It encompassed an area that extended from the southern part of Hidalgo, included all of the present Federal District, with extensions to the southeast and west into Puebla and Morelos.⁴ In keeping with this growth, commerce, also, made great advances. To facilitate and enrich the huge building program, raw materials and ornamental work were brought in from all corners of Mexico; shell from the coast of the Caribbean, turquoise from Vera Cruz, jade and pottery from Caxaca, and carvings and precious feathers from the Maya country.⁵

¹Thompson, op. cit., p. 17.

²Vaillant, Aztecs of Mexico, op. cit., pp. 54-55.

³Ibid., p. 51.

⁴Thompson, op. cit., p. 18.

⁵Ibid., pp. 18-19.

Religion had evolved from the simple nature worship based on one deity to a full fledged polytheism containing a lengthy hierarchy of important deities.¹ Of these the most important was Tloque Nahuaque, the Creator of the World, the Supreme God. Closely following him in importance came the Sun God and his wife, the Goddess of the Moon while others ranking high in the pantheon were Tlaloc, the Rain God; the Frog Goddess; the Butterfly Goddess, and Quetzalcoatl, the God of Learning and Bringer of Civilization. Huehuetectli, the Old God, who, next to the early fertility goddess, was the oldest in use was still a ranking member of the group.² To honor these gods, to reap their favor and placate their wrath was the dominant motive in the Toltecan life pattern. All actions from birth to death were governed by the gods and the religious ritual. To these gods were devoted all major architectural works and most of the arts and crafts. Teotihuacan, "where the gods dwell", in its entire plaster-paved seven square miles, was such a monument to religion,³ for all the structures there were used either in the ceremonies to the gods or for housing and training the numerous priests and religious workers. The laymen lived elsewhere in the simplest of dwellings. At Teotihuacan were erected huge pyramidal

¹Vaillant, Aztecs of Mexico, op. cit., p. 53.

²Ibid., pp. 52-53.

³Ibid., pp. 55-56.

structures, stepped and truncated, as platforms for temples. These pyramids were built of adobe brick, then faced with stone. This in turn, was covered with plaster in its entirety. Minor buildings, such as schools and living quarters, were built of either stone masonry or adobe.¹

Stone sculpture played an important role in the garnishment of these religious structures. It was used to ornament the impressive balustrades of the stairways and to enrich the surfaces of the stepped faces. It was outstanding, not as a realistic representation, but as work conventionalized and abstracted to take its proper place in the architectural scheme.² The Temple of Quetzalcoatl, at Teotihuacan, is an outstanding example of the best efforts of the Toltecs in this coordination of sculpture with architecture. On this, the undulating Plumed Serpent alternates with an abstracted Tlaloc to form a surface repeat on the facades--the serpent's body in relief, the protruding head, with eyes of polished obsidian, in the round. All the forms in their blocky make-up take on the character of the stone they are made of an echo the structure in its massive solidity.

Sculpture in stone was used in other ways than ornament for buildings, but it retained the religious theme, neverthe-

¹Vaillant, Aztecs of Mexico, op. cit., p. 61.

²Ibid., pp. 61-62.

less. Huge monolithic figures representing gods, were hewn from living stone,¹ and large stone incense burners, also in the form of gods, were made for ceremonial use, as well as many small carvings in jade, porphyry, and obsidian.

Large plastered wall areas, unbroken by openings, along with the familiarity in the use of plaster, induced another form of religious art expression--fresco painting.² This, like the other arts was religious in theme, depicting ceremonials to the gods, and, as in the sculpture, it was done in flat conventional forms to harmonize with the architecture. Elaborate examples of this form of art were in the Temple of Agriculture at Teotihuacan and in a Cholula Temple.

The crafts, too, had reached a high state of quality. The earlier efficient stone tools were hard to improve upon and showed little technical change, but now obsidian was used lavishly to fashion every type of cutting tool and was polished as inlays in large stone carvings.³ Weavers showed a high degree of skill and cotton was woven into cloths that ranged from that as thin as fine linen to that as thick as velvet.⁴ Pottery followed at first the pattern laid down by the earlier

¹Ibid., pp. 56-57.

²Vaillant, Aztecs of Mexico, op. cit., pp. 62-63.

³Ibid., pp. 57-58.

⁴Ibid., p. 51.

people, but later three-colored pottery was combined with the negative painting process to produce a four-color polychrome ware.¹ Finally, all pottery, with the exception of ceremonial vessels used in the religious ritual, became more simplified in both form and ornamentation, resolving into polished black and brown wares and wares painted in red or yellow. The religious vessels were also black or brown, decorated in champ-leve or intaglio or incision. Some vessels, too, were encrusted with frescoed plaster.²

The figurine cult had lost none of its importance in the religious scheme of the Toltecs and during their period of high achievement in art and architecture it matured to the highest artistic level attained in Mexican figurines. The early figures were very similar to those of Ticoman and other Upper Middle Culture people, passing through the same cycles of change and technical improvements,³ with realism in constant struggle with abstraction. As time passed and the pantheon of gods increased and became more fixed and defined, the figurines, echoing the other arts, became more formalized and simplified. Anatomy was reduced to bare essentials,⁴ although costumes

¹Ibid., p. 60.

²Ibid., p. 60.

³Ibid., p. 60.

⁴Ibid., p. 61.

were those of the day. Prominent gods were identifiable through conventions of costume or physical characteristics. Paint was used freely on both the face and the costume.

However, as the building period reached its zenith and the arts flourished to their full, the struggle between abstraction and realism in the figurines ceased. The two ways of working coalesced in perfect balance into a single style to create a form that was truly classic in its approach. As shown in the figurine head (Fig. 7) from the American Museum of Natural History, the planar simplicity of the earlier conventional figures blended with the softer, more detailed realistic characteristics, to create a figure that was direct and clearly defined, without excessive detail, but still retaining the more subtle, rounded contours of nature. Here was exacting workmanship to produce true proportions and anatomical relationships. Here, each part was clearly set out, yet each was in accord with the others and subordinate to the ensemble.

At first, these figures were entirely hand-made; then, to supply the demand, the mold came into use to produce carefully retouched duplicates that retained, as nearly as possible, all the inherent qualities of the originals.

Following a time of reconstruction of all the buildings at Teotihuacan, in which rubble largely replaced hewn stone, ornamentation was dispensed with and grandeur was sacrificed for haste. All the arts declined. The figurines lost their

aesthetic value as workmanship became slovenly and coarse. They degenerated into flat, one-sided talismans that were turned out from one-piece molds in large lots without retouching (Fig. 8).

Finally, due to religious revolt and crop failure resulting from deforestation of the surrounding lands, Teotihuacan itself declined and died as a cultural center. The Toltecs continued to carry on in other places, but the abandonment of Teotihuacan represented the breaking up of the Empire and the decay of the arts. The figurine cult survived in the civilizations that followed, but it had lost both its significance and its importance and consequently its power to become again a means of great expression.

CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

On the foregoing pages have been traced the pottery figurines of China and the Valley of Mexico as they developed through a period of over a thousand years; their comparatively crude early forms in the times of the Han Dynasty and El Arbolillo, their slow change as they evolved through the impetus of increased skill, new materials and processes, and outside stimuli, through the middle periods of Wei and Ticomán, and their full flowering and eventual decay during the T'ang in China and the high period of the Toltecs' civilization. On these pages also have been noted trends, political, economic and religious, that affected the cultures of the peoples and the courses of the figurine cults. In their overall pattern the figurines form an interesting study in comparison and contrast, in their purpose, their technical aspects, and their aesthetic ideals.

The pottery figurines, as such, represented only a minor variation in the complex cultural pattern of China. The cult of using figures in tombs had been going on in one form or another for centuries and the use of clay in their manufacture

constituted only a change of medium, a substitution of one material for another. While the use of clay and its advantages in plastic expression may have enhanced the figurines themselves and facilitated their aesthetic progress, it is doubtful that it made any decided differences in the figurine ritual or the practice of ancestor worship. Since effigies of wood and straw were used before those of clay and were used again when the pottery figures passed out of mode, it is probable that the practice of using tomb figures would have continued little changed had clay not been used at all. It may also be noted that the worship of one's ancestors and the great dead represented only one branch of the three basic rituals, Heaven, Earth, and Man, in a complex religious cult and that this cult although the oldest, was only one of several prevalent in China in Han times. Hence, the tomb figure of clay played a comparatively small part in the unfolding of China's civilization.

In Mexico, on the other hand, the figurines represented a basic root of the culture. They formed the first material expression of a growing religion that was to dominate the economy, the actions, and the very lives of the people that evolved it. As far as is known, these effigies had no predecessors in any material. They were the first sculpture, and clay, the first medium. They were not only the first physical manifestation of religion, but also the basic form of sculpture and, as such, figured prominently in the development of Mexican culture. It would be only a matter of wild

speculation to hazard what would have happened had the clay figurine not come into being. Religious progress and the arts, at least, would have been retarded for several centuries, or, perhaps, the whole civilization might have taken an entirely different course.

In their subject matter and intended purposes, the figurines depicted ideas that were the reverse of each other. Those of the Chinese represented, in the main, the earthly things; people, animals and everyday objects to be used by the spiritual part of man--the soul of the deceased for his comfort and well being. In Mexico, the figurines represented the spiritual, in the form of deities, to be used by the earthly part of man--the every day person, for his protection and welfare. The Chinese figures dealt in generalities--groups or classes of people; as, servants, tradesmen, horsemen, etc. The figurines of Mexico represented individuals, specific personages, a single god. The figurines of China were doomed to interment, never to be seen again, yet they were meant to serve to eternity; those of Mexico were in active use by the people about them, yet they served only for their short day, to be broken and discarded.

This difference in subject matter and the difference in the cultural backgrounds of the sculptors had much to do in the development of the figurines. The Chinese sculptor, in his work, followed a comparatively narrow and straight course, deviating only slightly as outside influences impressed him.

His route had been laid out. For him many problems had been solved in the production of the wealth of art that preceded him or were being fought out by artists at his side in other fields, the potter, the painter, the sculptor in stone. Also, he was creating things of every day life, things that he could see about him, ordinary people, like himself. He had only to look around him to find many of his answers. The Mexican Indian had none of these. His idol was the first beginning, the forefather of the arts, and though he progressed, it was in an erratic sort of way. He was creating his god for which he had no model. One can visualize in his little effigies moments of great indecision on the part of the sculptor as he pondered life and death, creation, man and other growing things for his answers, and as he retraced his steps to an earlier style to proceed again in the hope of catching something that he had missed in his previous attempts.

On the technical side, both peoples had much in common. They employed potter's clay of local origin as their medium and both applied techniques learned from the potter's craft. The same processes of manufacture, that of hand building and the mold, were used by both, though at opposite extremes of the development of the figurine cult and with somewhat different results. Since the use of the mold came only after the high classic period was reached in the Valley of Mexico, the figurines could be said to have developed entirely by the hand building process, and the mold and the slovenly workman-

ship that accompanied its use only hastened the decadence of the figurine art. On the other hand, the mold was an integral part of the evolution of the figurine in China and many of the characteristics taken on by the figures were derived from the limitations in its use. The mold was employed throughout the developmental periods only to be discarded just prior to the peak of achievement in the figurines. The practice of making the figures hollow was used much more extensively and consistently by the Chinese sculptor than the sculptor of Mexico. This was due, without doubt, to the comparative sizes of the figurines. While those of China averaged a foot or more in height and grew larger in later periods, those of Mexico were, in the main, under six inches. Hollow building was restricted to effigy vessels and to large figures from Gualupita, Morelos, that were exceptions both in size and artistic standards.

Color pigments were employed throughout the periods in both countries, the Chinese sculptor striving for naturalistic effects, the Mexican for abstract emphasis. The warm colors, red, brown, orange, and yellow, were used by both peoples while green, blue, and gilt was found mainly in the work of the Chinese. The use of slip, both to enhance their work and to provide a better working surface and finish, was common to both, though again it came into use much earlier in China than in Mexico. Glazes, employed by the Chinese on their figurines in the later periods, were not known in Mexico.

In their aesthetic ideals the sculptors of China and Mexico passed through the various phases of expression, starting with one form and ending with another, and, as they did in their processes of manufacture, each was a reversal of the other in many respects. Though both figurine styles were an archaic expression in their early stages and gradually changed to the classic at their zenith, each followed its own peculiar way in attaining its ideals. Without doubt, the processes they used, the technical skills they learned through the years, and a changing way of life had not a little to do with shaping these ideals.

The sculptor of Han China created his statuettes in a simple, compact way. Detail was limited and all parts were contained within a confining form without unnecessary projecting parts or outward motion. They were impersonal and passive, with naturalism entering into them in only a superficial way. In his sweeping lines and surface modeling, the sculptor reflected past art in bronze where ornamentation was applied to the surface and human and animal forms were intended only as ornamental motifs. In his simplicity of rendering and compactness of forms he catered to the limitations of the molding process that he used. In rendering his figures thus, he, too, was conforming to the other art of his time.

The El Arbolillocan, on the other hand, was an out-and-out realist. Having no art forms to follow, he patterned his effigy after the things about him. His work was intimate,

personal, and detailed. The process of hand building that he used allowed him wide latitude in his expression and his figures represented action and movement, and the various parts tended to lead out and away from the central form. The pointed arms and legs, the headdress piled high and the spreading action of the pose introduced something of the romantic that was restricted only by the clay and the artist's skill.

In the middle periods, at the time of Wei and Ticoman, the figurines showed evidence of changing ideals. In the Chinese statuettes, it was apparent in a greater freedom of movement, and a nearer approach to nature in the human figure. Old characteristics were still there but in a more lively and fluent manner. Limited movement and animation were coming in, the old static qualities disappearing. This change represented progress along the same general lines--improvements in skill and better understanding of the old basic forms.

The effigies of Mexico were also undergoing a change, but one that was more violent and more uncertain. It represented not a struggle along a single path, but a contest between two opposing principles. Realism vied with conventionalism. Naturalistic coloring was countered with geometric ornament. The two prevalent styles at Ticoman typified this struggle; the one in its striving for anatomical perfection and finish, the other in its formalized accoutrements and minimized figure. It was a struggle between naturalism versus abstraction.

Then, as the two figurine cults came to their climax at the time of T'ang and Teotihuacan, they had completed their metamorphosis. The simple, linear, and stiff figures of Han emerged as works of the full-grown classic. In their intimate, interrelated detail and counter-play of movement they were as true to nature as the sculptor would make them, yet clean-cut and closely studied in their clarity of expression. The stiff, flat passive figures of Han had evolved into figures that were relaxed, free-moving, and plastic.

The romantic little figures of El Arbolillo had developed into ones of classic reserve and impersonality. Gone were fussy detail and excess movement. The figurines of Teotihuacan were the ultimate blending of the realistic and the conventional into a serene unified whole that marked the peace from the earlier struggles.

To one following the clay figurines of China and Mexico as they evolved through time and associating each with its proper place in time and events in the history of its people, it is simple to see how these little effigies of clay, insignificant and unimportant as they are in themselves, reflect the spirit of their age and peoples in their progress.

The Han Dynasty marked a time of fundamental issues; the beginning of some, the rebirth and reformation of many others. These were big things--basic and unrefined, that were Empire wide and wider in their effect; things that did much in shaping the destiny of the later China. These things, the introduction

of Buddhism, the formation of Taoism, the rediscovery and revival of the classics of Confucius, the rebirth of education, the opening up of foreign intercourse and its attendant interchange of ideas, the invention of paper and, perhaps, porcelain--all were crude and necessarily simple in their beginning forms, all required time and contemplation to bring them to their more complex refinement. The tomb figure of clay marked, correspondingly, a beginning of true sculpture in the round and the first awakening interest in human and animal forms for themselves. It represented the rejuvenation of the burial customs and their greater glorification. It was an art form that most nearly expressed the true China for it was thoroughly grounded in ancient Chinese tradition and was the least changed by foreign art and ideas. In its broad simplicity of plane, its sweeping lines, its lack of the petty and non-essential the figure, too, was monumental, elemental.

Though little is known of the life and times at El Arbolillo, it would be a fairly safe conjecture to say that, like their potter-sculptor with his figurine, the people, too, were groping for an indefinable something that they were too inarticulate to grasp. It might have been a searching for security in or from the unknown--a religion. It might have been a searching for unattained modes of expression of what they saw and felt and thought--culture. Or, perhaps, it was a searching for something more earthly, as a new source of food or a better way of doing things. It might have been

all of these. Again, the El Arbolilloicans might have found themselves for the first time with a little leisure time on their hands from the hunting of food and the work in the fields, to devote to the satisfaction of the natural human urge to create. Life was, like the figurine, stark and raw and distorted, adorned with but few ornaments of pleasure. Whatever it was, one can be sure that it, too, was fundamental and a beginning, and as the sculptor searched and borrowed and discarded in the struggle to improve himself and his work, so did the people as a whole struggle, by trial and discard, to improve their lot.

By the time of the Northern Wei Dynasty in China the rudimentary patterns laid out in Han times were becoming well established and tending towards the same fixed course. Religious tenets were well grounded, governmental practices stabilized. New things were still being assimilated, new ideas still came from without; but they could only steer and not stop the existing trends. China was still Chinese in its thought and the Han basic structure was still in evidence under the newly acquired surfaces. Intrusive peoples and ideas were accepted with reluctance. They appeared in Chinese life, but were not of it. Yet there was a quickening of interest in the new as China became world conscious.

The "ming ch'i" of this period echoed the old, basic forms of Han in their adherence to the archaic linear definition and their still somewhat rigid positions. To them still

clung the surface treatment. They reflected, too, the reserve of China in their aloof austerity and the foreign inroads were marked in the characters that were made and in the outland costumes. This was apparent, too, in the unconscious taking on of Buddhistic rendering in drapery. They also mirrored the changing times in the awakening interest in movement and figure structure. They, too, were moving forward.

At Ticoman and other Upper Middle Culture settlements things, too, were on the move. There, however, the progress was more erratic, the trends more varied in their gyrations. Without the long and stable cultural background of China and without even the continuity of thought and pattern as tribe succeeded tribe, this fluctuation was natural. Nevertheless, progress persisted. Religion became richer and more complex in its pattern, more concrete, with the addition of ceremonial structures and gods became more numerous gods. Improved methods and skills were apparent in their economic structure and in their crafts. Order and system were emerging from the haphazard ways of El Arbolillo.

This variable, faltering progress was denoted in the clay effigies as they fluctuated between the naturalistic and the conventionalized, as they varied from the crude grotesque to the carefully rendered. But the beginning of real plastic unification and integration of parts indicated a forward development in knowledge and skill, as did the use of slip.

Finally, as the two cultures emerged into their full flowering during the reigns of Ming Huang of T'ang and Mitl and the Toltec Emperors, it was as though the struggle had ceased and the goal had been attained. Peace and internal harmony settled over both peoples as unity of effort brought prosperity and high achievement. The arts flourished and religion reached its fullest accord.

With the figurines did the struggle thus cease and harmony and prosperity prevail, as the sculptor seemed to find that for which he sought and to translate into his clay statuettes his own internal ease and peace. He, at last consolidated all that had been learned in the earlier times and combined them into a harmonious and unified whole.

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Museum of Art, University of Oregon

Figure 1

Han Tomb Figure.



'American Museum of Natural History

Figure 2

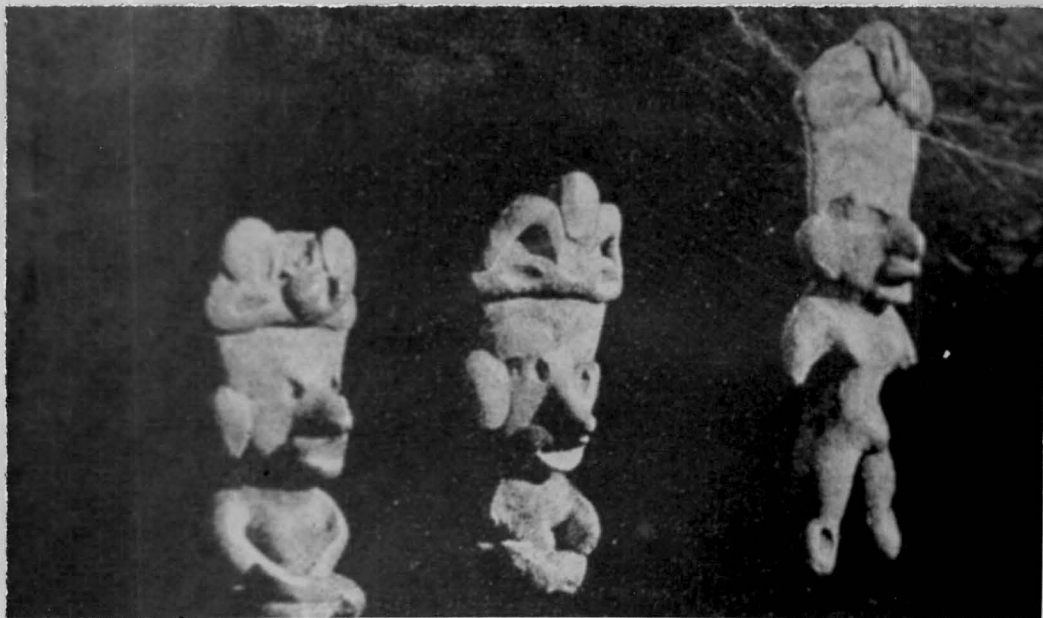
Effigy From El Arbolillo.



Warren E. Cox Collection

Figure 3

Northern Wei Figurine.



American Museum of Natural History

Figure 4

Figurines From Ticoman.



American Museum of Natural History

Figure 5

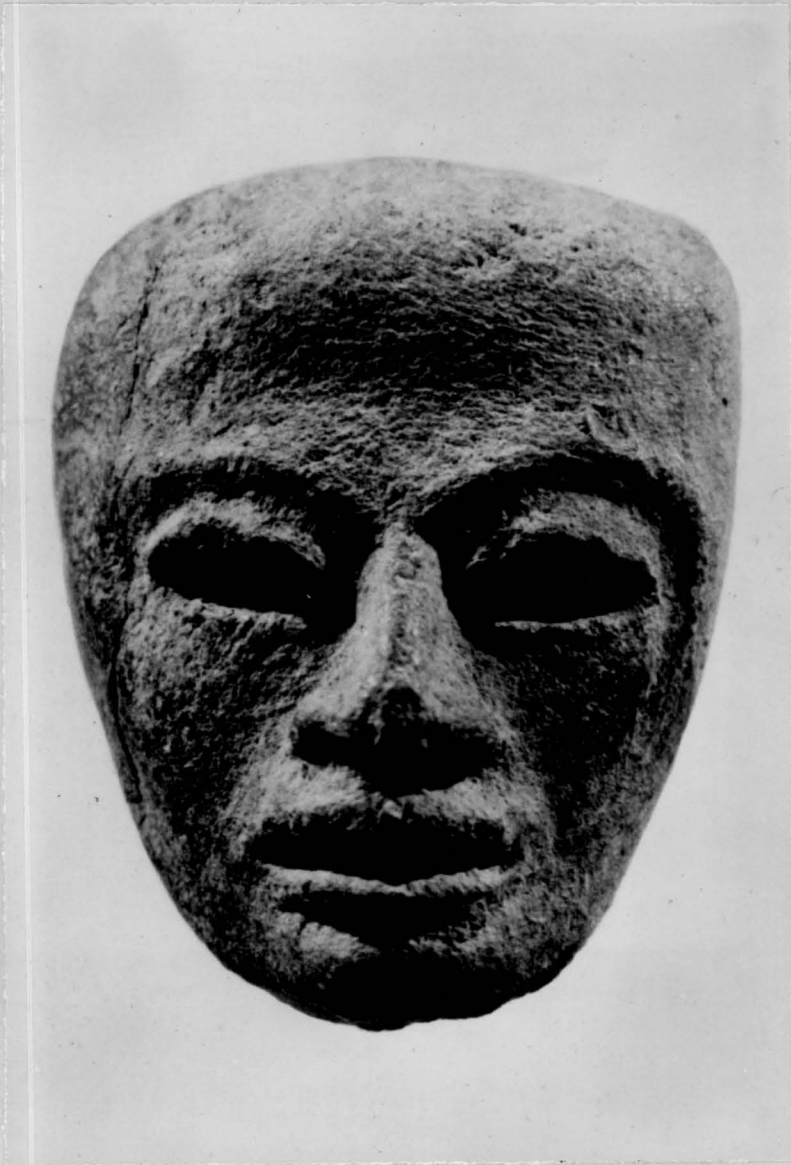
Upper Middle Culture Figures.



Cleveland Museum of Art

Figure 6

T'ang Figure.



American Museum of Natural History

Figure 7

Classic Teotihuacan Head.



American Museum of Natural History

Figure 8

Late Teotihuacan Heads.

Typed by:

Marian Helen Cade