

Appendix 4

Classic Period Figurines from the Valley of Oaxaca, Mexico

The foci of this appendix are the fired-clay figurines from the four Classic period (ca. 250–900 CE) sites in the Valley of Oaxaca, Mexico—Ejutla, El Palmillo, Lambityeco, and the Mitla Fortress (see chapter 2 for brief site descriptions)—where we have sequentially conducted excavations over three decades (see Figure 1.1), with permission from the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia of Mexico. Figurines are relatively abundant in our excavated ceramic collections, albeit in varying quantities and forms. We recovered fragments of ceramic figurines in all the houses and public spaces that we excavated at the four sites and coded them according to a consistent set of characteristics and attributes. Their representations are diverse, and they were manufactured through both molding and modeling. Most figurines are already broken when recovered, generally from secondary and tertiary contexts. Rather than focus exclusively on the small sample of complete figurines that we found in rare, intact, primary contexts, we organize and analyze figurine assemblages from the entirety of our excavated contexts, which, of course, includes mostly broken, discarded fragments. This more holistic investigation is a preliminary step to outlining key parameters of formal, contextual, and spatial variation in the Classic period, Valley of Oaxaca figurine complex.

Here we provide a general classification of the broad suite of Classic period figurines from the Valley of Oaxaca (this appendix is abridged and updated from Feinman and Nicholas 2019b). We present this classification scheme here as it is useful to contextualize the figurine assemblage from the excavations we implemented in Ejutla, and the original version of this appendix is published in a venue not readily accessible to researchers focused on prehispanic Mesoamerica. The figurines we report on come mostly from domestic contexts (both commoner and high-status households), but at Lambityeco we also excavated civic-ceremonial areas where public rituals took place. The figurines were recovered from a diverse range of contexts, including offerings, burials, pits filled with debris from ritual activities, domestic trash deposits, and construction fill. We do not have space to provide an in-depth description or analysis of the full extent of representational variability among the more than 7500 whole and fragmentary figurines in our collections or a detailed catalogue of the specific contexts in which they are found. Rather, we group the corpus of figurines into broad categories that feature suites of co-occurring attributes as an initial step to define basic spatial, contextual, and behavioral differences in figurine use (Table A4.1).

Table A4.1. Figurine and whistle categories and principal variants at four Classic period sites in the Valley of Oaxaca.

Categories and principal variants*	Lambityeco	Ejutla	Mitla Fortress	El Palmillo low status	El Palmillo high status	El Palmillo ballcourt
modeled animal	125	91	34	69	39	2
bird/owl	10	24	3	4	4	–
dog	101	13	26	52	19	1
other animal	14	54	5	13	16	1
miniature anthropomorph	135	110	58	112	90	5
miniature female	43	–	40	11	24	2
miniature warrior	10	20	4	6	6	–
miniature indeterminate	–	9	–	–	–	–
small modeled figure	82	81	14	95	60	3
female #1 (braided headdress)	213	217	26	17	23	1
braided headdress (head only)	35	54	6	8	9	1
decorated tunic	121	24	9	3	2	–
plain banded tunic	57	139	11	6	12	–
female #2 (intricate headdress)	405	4	6	6	7	–
decorated garment/arms extended	71	–	2	3	3	–
decorated garment/tunic/arms at side	136	–	–	–	–	–

(Continued)

Categories and principal variants*	Lambityeco	Ejutla	Mitla Fortress	El Palmillo low status	El Palmillo high status	El Palmillo ballcourt
decorated garment/tunic/arms crossed/on chest	85	4	–	2	1	–
intricate headdress (head only)	113	–	4	1	3	–
female #3 (small crossed arms)	127	2	13	3	2	–
male/warrior	370	417	138	62	110	16
cotton armor	91	58	41	25	35	6
feathered cape	39	9	14	5	12	5
feathered hood (head only)	59	50	19	9	15	1
helmet/turban headgear (head only)	58	108	31	9	13	2
indeterminate head or torso	12	–	3	1	1	–
loincloth	10	128	–	1	7	–
plain jacket	14	13	7	–	5	–
priest	15	39	12	4	13	–
tiered hood (head only)	34	12	6	7	8	2
trophy head	38	–	5	1	1	–
whistle (small)	209	50	74	12	29	1
bird whistle	–	–	–	2	–	–
buccal whistle	3	1	12	3	11	–
feathered headdress	144	37	61	7	14	1
whistle base	62	12	1	–	2	–
whistle (large globular)	2018	52	32	62	45	1
bird/bat/owl headdress	83	4	3	1	4	–
<i>fauces de serpiente</i>	237	10	7	3	–	–
feathered headdress	299	7	7	9	14	–
jaguar headdress	279	2	1	–	4	–
serpent head	29	3	1	1	1	–
whistle base	654	4	–	13	–	–
whistle head indeterminate	437	22	13	35	22	1
indeterminate anthropomorph	341	633	145	178	157	3

* does not include all indeterminate fragments.

We treat whistles as a subset of figurines (e.g., Lopiparo and Hendon 2009; Martínez López and Winter 1994; Triadan 2007), since representational sections of whistle fragments are not always possible to distinguish from other figurines. Some molded, flatback figurines have hollow attachments on the lower back torso that can be used as a support or as a whistle (Paddock 1983, 203), whereas others do not. The representational portions of some of these pieces are basically indistinguishable. Figurines and whistles are typically broken at the neck, so it can be a puzzle to link specific imagery from heads and torsos.

Most prior interpretations of Mesoamerican fired-clay figurines have stressed their roles in household ritual. Indeed, we found that most figurines were produced and utilized in domestic contexts, but other classes of figurines, especially certain whistles, were heavily used in public rituals enacted in association with civic-ceremonial structures.

A4.1. Background to Oaxaca Figurines

Fired-clay figurines and whistles have long been recognized as part of the archaeological ceramic complex from the prehispanic Valley of Oaxaca (Boos 1966; Caso and Bernal 1952; Caso et al. 1967; Feinman 2018). Early on it was noted that there were important differences between Formative figurines (ca. 1600 BC–200 CE) and Classic/Postclassic figurines (after ca. 250 CE). Most Formative period figurines in Oaxaca are small solid forms that were modeled by hand and include both anthropomorphic and, in lower quantities, zoomorphic representations (Drennan 1976; Marcus 1998). At that time, almost all the human forms are thought to represent females, while dogs, birds, and frogs are the most common animals (Blomster 2009, 124–31; Marcus 1998, 3; Martínez López and Winter 1994, 7). The human figures usually lack clothes and have an array of elaborate hairdos, a highly distinguishing feature (Marcus 1998, 31). Contextually, the figurines are mostly

associated with females, either placed in their burials or used in household ancestor rituals conducted by women (Marcus 1998, 2009b).

By the Classic period, mold-made figurines that represent both males and females became the dominant form in Oaxaca (e.g., Feinman 2018). In contrast to Formative figurines, Classic period figurines are usually clothed; they often wear decorated cotton garments and have elaborate headdresses (e.g., Caso and Bernal 1952, 293, 295; Martínez López and Winter 1994, 6–67). Feathers are often represented in both headdresses (e.g., Caso and Bernal 1952, 179, 309) and garments (e.g., Scott 1993, 20).

Classic period figurines are mostly known from the prehispanic capital city, Monte Albán (Caso et al. 1967; see also Bernal 1965; Caso and Bernal 1952; Kuttruff 1978; Martínez López and Winter 1994; Paddock 1966). In these earlier publications, figurines were mostly discussed through a culture historical lens as chronological or cultural markers (see also Sánchez Santiago and López Zárate 2017), with figurines from Monte Albán seen as typical for the entire valley. They also were thought to be representations of the supernatural, with specific figurine varieties identified as different goddesses (e.g., Caso and Bernal 1952; see also Boos 1966). These early discussions gave little consideration to spatial variation or to the significance of different contexts in which specific figurines were found.

Although intact deposits of complete figurines arranged in scenes naturally have received the greatest attention as a vantage to past ritual activities (Marcus 2009b, 2019), we believe that the large corpus of broken figurines recovered from other contexts can also provide useful information on how and where different broad categories of figurines and whistles were used and how variations in representations and use patterned across contexts and sites. For the Valley of Oaxaca, no prior study has analyzed a large corpus of figurines in conjunction with a consideration of distributional variation from a suite of contexts. Sue Scott (1993) defined a set of warrior figurines from several excavated palaces at Lambityeco, but the warriors in her study represent only one class of figurines that were analytically culled from a much larger assemblage.

A4.2. Classic Period Figurines in the Valley of Oaxaca

In developing our classification, we reviewed roughly contemporaneous assemblages of figurines that had been reported or published from other sites in the Valley of Oaxaca (see Figure 1.1). We excavated only in the civic-ceremonial core of Lambityeco, but other sources have reported on figurines from excavations in domestic areas (López Zárate 2016) and from the palaces north of the civic-ceremonial core of Lambityeco that were excavated by Paddock (Scott 1993). There also is a large assemblage of Classic period figurines from Macuilxochitl (Faulseit 2013; Faulseit et al. 2016; López Zárate 2016), located approximately 5 km northwest of Lambityeco. At that site,

there is evidence of figurine production on one excavated terrace (Faulseit et al. 2016), which includes figurine representations also present at Lambityeco. For Yagul, another archaeological settlement near Lambityeco, Bernal and Gamio's (1974) report on excavations in a palatial residence illustrates many figurines. Several publications report on figurines from Miahuatlán in the southern part of the Central Valleys of Oaxaca, just south of Ejutla (Brockington 1973; Markman 1981). A small assemblage of figurines from Jalieza, in the Valle Grande, are included in a report on excavations in domestic contexts at the site (Elson et al. 2010). A small subset of figurines from the region's primary center of Monte Albán (Blanton 1978) are published in several books (Boos 1966; Caso and Bernal 1952; Caso et al. 1967; Kuttruff 1978; López Martínez and Winter 1994), but the selective reporting and the somewhat spare accompanying information on context limit direct comparisons with samples from that key site. As relevant, we drew on these other works as we coded the figurines at each of these sites in line with the schema that we employed for the assemblages we excavated. In certain cases, the figurines that are reported in the available literature include more complete figurines that permit us to match the broken mold-made heads and torsos in our collections and visualize a more complete representation.

The molded figurines that dominate the Classic period assemblage in the Valley of Oaxaca were made using technology not previously employed before the Classic period; yet figurines modeled by hand continued to be made and used at that time, and they are not rare finds. In our analysis, we tried to expand our perspective on Classic period figurines and to start to understand if and how the use of the new molded forms differed from the modeled figurines of the Formative period.

Our approach is broadly similar to that of Lesure (1999), who considers figurines both as products and as ritual implements. We classify figurines in broad categories without making assumptions about the specific personages that are represented. Because we have a large assemblage with context, we can provide insight into spatial variation in figurine use. Why do some contexts have many more figurines than others? Is there site-specific or context-specific variation in figurine assemblages? Can we define communal (public ritual) instead of domestic use for some classes of figurines? Prehispanic Mesoamericans used music to communicate with the supernatural world (Houston 2006, 143; Sánchez Santiago 2005; Taube 2004, 78), and it was an integral part of ballgame ritual (Wyllie 2010, 216; Zender 2004). Are different sets of whistles used for making music in domestic rituals as opposed to the more public rituals associated with the Mesoamerican ballgame?

A4.3. Categories of Classic Period Figurines in the Valley of Oaxaca

Classic period figurines in the Valley of Oaxaca are diverse in form, size, representation, and production technique,

ranging from small, modeled animals and human figures to larger mold-made ones with flat backs that include females attired in a broad array of dress and headdress styles and males outfitted in a range of warrior garb. There also are large and small anthropomorphic whistles with modeled bodies and molded heads. We became aware of not only this diversity in form but also the dizzying array of variation in the expression of individual attributes as we excavated the four different sites and the number of figurines and whistles in our collections increased to more than 7500. The 2005 figurines and fragments from Ejutla include many wasters, and a number of the figurine molds we recovered match some of the more common figurine varieties at the site (see sections 7.1 and 7.7; Feinman and Nicholas 2004a, 175–76). Although we found figurine fragments in all houses and public spaces at El Palmillo, they were much less abundant than at Ejutla, with 1169 figurine fragments spread out over the eight houses and adjacent spaces. There were slightly more figurines in the upper palatial residences than in the lower houses. Evidence for figurine production was absent. Figurines were a bit more abundant on the three terraces at the Mitla Fortress (562) than on terraces at El Palmillo. There was minimal evidence for ceramic production, including for figurines. At Lambityeco, most of the material remains were associated with ritual activities. In addition to an abundance of large ollas and serving vessels that were used in feasting events administered by the resident priests of Mound 165, we recovered 3870 figurine and whistle fragments. The figurines and whistles were recovered from the residence and all the public spaces, including several features filled with figurine and whistle fragments that appear to be event-related discard.

To understand whole figurine assemblages, and not just figurines found in intact primary contexts, we knew that we could not just describe all the individual attributes of the figurines, or what Paddock (1983, 203) described as a “nearly endless” array of variability, and that we needed ways to organize and compare larger figurine assemblages from different contexts. To make sense of the wide variety of figurine forms and attributes, we decided it would be useful to group this tremendous diversity into a smaller set of broad categories that we could more easily examine across contexts and sites. This first classificatory step provides a way to define the parameters and general frequencies of the diverse forms of Classic period figurines and to investigate how and in what distinct contexts different figurines and whistles were most abundant.

Leaving aside the great diversity in the finer details of form and representation, we see in this assemblage eight major categories of Classic period figurines and whistles—animals, anthropomorphic miniatures, three distinct sets of females, male warriors, small whistles, and large globular whistles (see Table A4.1). Basically, size, production technique, and representation are the main criteria that we used to distinguish these categories. We base our gender assignments on prior studies of prehispanic figurines in

Oaxaca and elsewhere in Mesoamerica (Halperin 2014, 54; López Zárate 2014; Scott 1993; Serra Puche and Durand V. 1998; Stark et al. 1998, 19–20; Triadan 2007, 276–77) and on extensive discussions of Mesoamerican attire, including in late prehispanic codices (Anawalt 1981a, 1981b, 1985; Berdan and Anawalt 1997; Filloy Nadal 2017, figure 3; McCafferty and McCafferty 1996).

We identify three major categories of females but only one category for male warrior figurines; artifact sizes and broad styles of headdresses and garments tend to co-occur in female figurines, whereas the attribute-level variability in male figurines tends to be cross-cutting in ways that do not accord with the definition of discrete overarching categories. For each major category, we have also defined principal variants or subcategories that have specific attributes or imagery. Here we define the key elements of each category and describe the principal variants. At this stage, we gloss over the great idiosyncratic variability in the finer details, facial features, and minor size discrepancies, focusing on consistent, repetitive patterning in the representations of headgear and garments.

In our collections, from approximately half (Ejutla) to 90% (Lambityeco) of the figurines were sufficiently well preserved or complete enough to assign to one of the eight major categories. Those artifacts too fragmentary or eroded to code to a category are not considered further in this analysis. Overall, the modeled and miniature figurines are the most variable. Not unexpectedly, the larger molded figurines are more standardized in form and representation. Although our classification was developed principally on the large number of figurines in our collections, photographs and illustrations of Classic period figurines and whistles from elsewhere in the Valley of Oaxaca (Bernal and Gamio 1974; Boos 1966; Brockington 1973; Caso and Bernal 1952; Caso et al. 1967; Faulseit 2013; Faulseit et al. 2016; Kuttruff 1978; López Zárate 2016; Markman 1981; Martínez López and Winter 1994; Paddock 1966; Sánchez Santiago 2005; Scott 1993) helped inform and confirm the patterns we see in our collections. In some of those works (e.g., Elson et al. 2010), there are variants not present in our collections. Our classification is a pilot study to see if the variable distribution of broad categories of figurines in different contexts can help us understand different behaviors in the production and use of figurines. We intend it as a roadmap that others working at Classic period sites in the Valley of Oaxaca may find helpful for organizing their figurine assemblages, fully suspecting that a broader study of the full corpus of Classic period figurines from across the valley by us and, hopefully, others will foster refinements and additions to this classification.

A4.3.1. Animal Figurines

Most of the animal figurines are small, solid forms that have fully modeled torsos and heads on which facial features are formed through incision or the addition of

small appliques (Figure A4.1). Because they are modeled by hand, there is great variability in how different parts of the bodies are portrayed or emphasized. Dogs are most commonly represented (Figure A4.1 bottom; Martínez López and Winter 1994, 115, figure 92). For dogs, most facial details tend to be incised, although the eyes more typically are formed by adding a variety of small applique circles to the face.

Birds and other animals occur in lower numbers. Birdlike figures have incised or applied eyes on the sides of large modeled beaks (Figure A4.1 top). Some have features that appear to represent owls and bats. Other figures can be identified as frogs, opossums, jaguars, monkeys, bear cubs, and turtles (see also Fauseit 2013, 208; Martínez López and Winter 1994, 110, figure 87).

A4.3.2. Miniature Anthropomorphic Figurines

We include small modeled and molded figurines in this category (Figure A4.2; López Zárate 2016, 70, figure 3.9). Size is a key criterion. The small molded figurines, when complete, tend to be no more than 6–7 cm tall; there is a bit more range in the size of modeled figurines. As with the animals, there is considerable variability in the anthropomorphic modeled figures. Generally, they are simple, ranging from small bodies with crudely formed limbs to torsos with stump legs to simply a head with almost no body (Figure A4.2a–c). Facial features are typically incised, although the eyes may be applied. A few have breasts to identify them as female, but the intended sex often cannot be determined.

The small molded figurines can be divided into females and warriors. The females typically have braided headdresses and wear a *quechquémitl* (long triangular tunic, or *huipil*) (Figure A4.2d–f). The tunics may be plain or have a decorated border. Most of the figures wear some kind of jewelry around their necks. Their arms may be down at their sides or crossed over their chests. A few small molded figurines are warriors (Figure A4.2g–i). They typically wear some kind of helmet. Most of the torsos have loincloths.

A4.3.3. Female #1 (Braided Headdress)

Female figurines largely fall into two categories that we call female #1 and female #2, both of which may be as tall as 15–17 cm; a consistently smaller figurine with a tight set of attributes is female #3. The key characteristics of female #1 are a braided headdress, typically one braided band on the forehead, and a *quechquémitl* over a simple, long garment (Figure A4.3; Caso and Bernal 1952, 294, figure 446). These two features almost always co-occur in the more complete figurines that are not broken across the neck. Based on how the garments are displayed, there are two principal variants of female #1. Both variants have short arms at their sides below the tunic, a necklace of one or two strands of beads, and short, stump-like legs. Although there is variability in how the braids are displayed (how many strands, size of braid, and other details beyond the typically simple braid; Figure A4.3a–b), there is no one style of braided headdress that clearly goes with each broad garment variant. Compared to female #2, the imagery in the braided headdresses is much less complex.



Figure A4.1. Small modeled animal figurines. Top: Bird figurine (whistle) from El Palmillo (left) and two bird heads from Lambityeco (right). Bottom: dog figurines from Lambityeco.



Figure A4.2. Miniature anthropomorphic figurines. Modeled figurines from Ejutla (a), El Palmillo (b), and Lambityeco (c). Molded females from the Mitla Fortress (d), El Palmillo (e), and Lambityeco (f). Molded warriors from Lambityeco (g), El Palmillo (h), and the Mitla Fortress (i).

The first variant of female #1 wears a plain tunic over a long garment (Figure A4.3c–d). The notable characteristic is the lack of decoration beyond a beaded necklace. The tunic may have a defined border, but neither the border nor any other part of the tunic is decorated. The garment may have a basal band of variable width, but as with the tunic, there is no decoration. In most examples the garment does not have a belt. This variant of female #1 often has an appliqué back support.

The tunic and garment of the second variant of female #1 are decorated, but not very elaborately. The tunics may be adorned with a border panel of crude zigzag lines,

small *greca*-like motifs, or other simple design (Figure A4.3e–f). Most of the garments have a small belt with a herringbone pattern (possibly a rope) below the tip of the tunic; those that aren't belted typically have a basal border with simple decoration, either a series of horizontal parallel incised lines or short vertical lines that provide a beaded appearance. Only one example of this variant in our collections has a back support.

A4.3.4. Female #2 (Intricate Headdress)

The key characteristic of female #2 is a large, rounded headdress adorned with a complex set of intricate circular



Figure A4.3. Female #1 with braided headdresses and simple garments. Braided headdresses from Ejutla (a) and Lambityeco (b). Female variant with plain tunics and garments from Ejutla (c) and Lambityeco (d). Female variant with simply decorated tunics and garments from Lambityeco (e and f).

designs (Figure A4.4; Caso and Bernal 1952, 90, figure 445). There is considerable variability in the exact representations, which include multiple sets of small circles and short lines, concentric semicircular lines, or other serpentine elements. This juxtaposition of curvilinear imagery with circular orbs may encode information about the annual calendrical cycle (Feinman and Nicholas 2015; Solar et al. 2011), as prehispanic Mesoamerican mythic

beliefs envisioned a plumed serpent that carried the sun across the heavens (e.g., Taube 2015).

As with the intricate complexity of the headdresses, female #2's garments are more elaborately decorated than those of female #1. The former figure is typically also more heavily bejeweled. The design motifs in the headdresses are presented in a wide array of variations, but the basic



Figure A4.4. Female #2 heads with intricate headdresses from Lambityeco.

elements and form of this style of headdress are both consistent in form as well as component elements, and they are distinctive from the head attires worn by any other categories of figures. Because few figurines are complete when we find them, we can identify only a few variants of female #2 that tend to co-occur with specific torsos. The torsos more clearly fall into three principal variants. The first variant does not wear a quechquémitl; the figure's wide decorated belt encircles a garment that typically has a long basal fringe above stump legs (Figure A4.5 top). The figure is adorned with a large elaborate two- or three-strand necklace that covers the entire chest, and its short arms are extended out on both sides.

The second variant wears a short elaborately decorated quechquémitl above a garment with a decorated belt and basal fringe; it is also richly adorned in jewelry (Figure A4.5 center). Short arms hang down the side below the decorated border of the tunic. The third variant also wears a decorated tunic over a garment with a decorated belt, but the arms are crossed on the chest (Figure A4.5 bottom). The garment typically has fringe or other decorative elements on the base of the garment. The decorated quechquémitl may be asymmetrical, which is not characteristic of female #1. We do not have any examples of female #2 that have appliqued back supports.

A4.3.5. Female #3 (Small with Crossed Arms)

The third female is intermediate in size, usually between about 9 and 12 cm tall. This figurine category is more

standardized than the other two categories of females (Figure A4.6; Scott 1993, 18, figure 32). The figures are always thin and tabular; they have a simple, low, tightly braided headdress; their necks are adorned with a single strand of beads; their arms are crossed on their chests; and they wear a short quechquémitl with plain border that ends above a decorated band near the base of the garment.

A4.3.6. Male/Warrior Figurines

Male figurines are a diverse group with several broad variants of headgear and garments that do not appear to co-occur as consistently as they do for the females. There are few complete warrior figurines in our collections, but in the future, availability of a larger set of more complete warrior figurines may permit refinements. Most of the male figurines are costumed as warriors (Figure A4.7). Certain characteristics of warriors, such as those holding staffs and shields, are common representations and are not tied exclusively to a specific item of clothing or particular kind of headgear. Most warriors had small supports attached to back of the base of the torso. The attachments are hollow with a small hole that can be blown like a whistle (Sánchez Santiago and López Zárate 2017, figure 4.5; Paddock 1983, 203).

There are five principal variants for the torso and three main variants for headgear. The most common imagery on the torso is a textured garment that represents cotton armor (Figure A4.7a–d; López Zárate 2014; Scott 1993, figures 35–38). The garment is usually short, textured with small raised bumps, and the figure typically holds a



Figure A4.5. Female #2 torsos with decorated garments from Lambityeco.

round shield (variable in size and decoration) in one hand (usually left) and a long, narrow staff in the other (usually right). In contrast to the stump legs of the females, long legs extend below the garment; ballplayer imagery such as knee bands or leg armor is often visible on the legs (Halperin 2014, 63).

Another male variant wears a long cape comprising tiers of narrow feathers (Figure A4.7e–g; Scott 1993, figures 49–51). The cape may be closed or open down the middle

revealing a loincloth or other undergarment. The figure typically holds a small shield and long staff near the center of the torso. The arms are usually covered by the cape and not visible as they are in the warriors wearing cotton armor.

The distinguishing feature of a third variant of warrior is the presence of a loincloth and the absence of an upper garment (Figure A4.7h). The loincloths vary in length and elaboration but often have no decoration at all. Some



Figure A4.6. Female #3 small figurines with crossed arms from Lambityeco.

figures wear a necklace, others do not. Their arms usually hang down at their sides, but in a small subset they are bent and hold a large shield and a long staff.

A less common variant wears an untextured upper garment, with a seam or other adornment down the center, like a short jacket (Figure A4.7i–j; Scott 1993, figures 44–45). For these, a loincloth is sometimes present, but not always. All our examples hold a small shield in their left hand and a narrow staff in their right hand.

The final variant depicts what may be priests, wearing either a long robe or a large pleated skirt (Figure A4.8a–d; Scott 1993, figure 34). The robe is draped over the shoulders and covers a long garment; the arms of the individual stick out from the robe and may be clasped or just placed on the chest. The individual wearing the skirt is usually holding a circular object or orb on his abdomen above the pleated garment. One skirt-wearing male portrayed in select ceramic effigy vessels from the Late Classic period in the Valley of Oaxaca has been associated with the supernatural Xipe Totec (Scott 1993; Sellen 2003).

A small subset of warriors have a human trophy head hanging upside down on the chest, between the legs, or held in the hand by the hair (Figure A4.8e–f; López Zárate 2014, 239–40, figure 13; Moser 1973, figure 21;

Scott 1993, figures 46–48). Although they are most often associated with warriors wearing cotton armor, they are not exclusive to that variant; some examples of warriors wearing feathered capes or plain jackets also hold the trophy head in their hands or hang it around their necks.

The warrior headgear falls into three principal categories (see López Zárate 2014; Scott 1993). One variant includes a range of helmets and turban-like headdresses; the helmets may be simple or highly elaborated (Figure A4.8g–h). Another common variant wears a feathered hood (Figure A4.8i–j). The hood typically surrounds the face and has a tall tuft of feathers on the top of the hood. Less common but distinctive is a variant that wears a plain hood around the face, above which there are tiers of plain bands or disks and a tuft of feathers at the top (Figure A4.8k–l).

A4.3.7. *Small Whistles*

The entire torso of a small whistle is modeled so that the resonating hollow chamber is part of the figure and not an applied addition like the hollow supports of the warriors (Figure A4.9a; Sánchez Santiago and López Zárate 2017, figure 4.9). The body is narrow with a small hollow cavity near the base. The whistles stand on two small feet in the front of the torso and a small slab-like protrusion on the back below an opening that serves as the blow hole.



Figure A4.7. Male figurines. Warriors wearing cotton armor from Lambityeco (a), El Palmillo (b), the Mitla Fortress (c), and Ejutla (d). Warriors wearing feathered capes from Lambityeco (e), the Mitla Fortress (f), and El Palmillo (g). Warriors wearing only a loincloth from Ejutla (h). Warrior wearing plain jacket from the Mitla Fortress (i) and Lambityeco (j).



Figure A4.8. Male figurines. Possible priests from the Mitla Fortress (a), El Palmillo (b), Lambityeco (c) and Ejutla (d). Warriors with trophy heads from Lambityeco (e) and El Palmillo (f). Warriors wearing helmets from the Mitla Fortress (g) and Lambityeco (h); feathered hoods from Lambityeco (i) and the Mitla Fortress (j); tiered hoods from El Palmillo (k) and Lambityeco (l).



Figure A4.9. Small whistles. Complete bodies with blow holes from Lambityeco (a). Complete small whistles with feathered headdresses from the Mitla Fortress (b) and Lambityeco (c). Feathered headdress fragments from Lambityeco (d–e). Buccal whistles from Lambityeco (f), the Mitla Fortress (g), El Palmillo (h), and Ejutla (i).

The molded heads that are added to the modeled torsos are much more variable, although the headdresses typically consist of three lobes or sets of long, narrow, rayed feathers above a curving band or lappet with *fauces de serpiente* (jaws of snake) representations (Figures A4.9b–e). The headdresses are wide and large in comparison to the small

faces and torsos of the whistles. Two of the few complete small whistles in our collections are 14–15 cm tall.

We include in the small whistle category buccal whistles (Figure A4.9f–i; Sánchez Santiago 2014). These are rare. One long edge of these small rectangular plaque-like whistles



Figure A4.10. Large globular whistles from Lambityeco. Front and back with blow hole (a), whistle head with feathered headdress (b), headdresses with owl imagery (c), whistle heads with *fauces de serpiente* headdresses (d), and whistle headdresses with jaguar faces (e–f).

Table A4.2. Quantity and percentage of figurine/whistles in each broad category*.

Category	Ejutla	Mitla Fortress	El Palmillo low status	El Palmillo high status	El Palmillo ballcourt	Lambityeco
modeled animal	91	34	69	39	2	125
miniature anthropomorphic	110	58	112	90	5	135
female #1 (braided headdress)	217	26	17	23	1	213
female #2 (intricate headdress)	4	6	6	7	–	405
female #3 (small crossed arms)	2	13	3	2	–	127
male/warrior	417	138	62	110	16	370
whistle (small)	50	74	12	29	1	209
whistle (large globular)	52	32	62	45	1	2018
total	943	381	343	345	26	3602
modeled animal	9.7%	8.9%	20.2%	11.3%	7.7%	3.5%
miniature anthropomorphic	11.7%	15.2%	32.7%	26.1%	19.2%	3.7%
female #1 (braided headdress)	23.0%	6.8%	5.0%	6.7%	3.8%	5.9%
female #2 (intricate headdress)	0.4%	1.6%	1.8%	2.0%	–	11.2%
female #3 (small crossed arms)	0.2%	3.4%	0.9%	0.6%	–	3.5%
male/warrior	44.2%	36.2%	18.1%	31.9%	61.5%	10.3%
whistle (small)	5.3%	19.4%	3.5%	8.4%	3.8%	5.8%
whistle (large globular)	5.5%	8.4%	18.1%	13.0%	3.8%	56.0%

*percentages are based only on the number of figurines that could be classed to one of the eight categories.

is grooved, with a perforation on the edge that passes through the groove. There is often a second perforation near one of the ends, likely for stringing. Most of these whistles are made of ceramics, although a few in our collections were made of stone, including one from Ejutla. Although not a common artifact, these small whistles have been recovered from all four sites.

A4.3.8. Large Globular Whistles

These whistles have a large, globular, hollow body with a narrow neck into which a molded head has been inserted (Figure A4.10a; Martínez López and Winter 1994, figure 49; Sánchez Santiago 2005). Two fin-like vertical appliques are appended to the torso, one on each side in place of arms. The large whistles stand on two spike-like appliques at the base of the front of the body and a large slab-like tail on the back below the blow hole.

All of the headdresses have some kind of large feather representation, but several variants have additional imagery of bats/owls, snakes/jaws of snake, and jaguars. Within each of these principal variants is a wide range of portrayals of the animals. Whistles categorized as having a feathered headdress either have no animal representation beyond feathers or simply were too fragmentary to know (Figure A4.10b).

The bat or owl face is stylized in different manners but is usually placed above the figure's forehead in the center of the headdress (Figure A4.10c). There is typically a tuft of

feathers above the bird's face and feathers that fan out on either side.

Fauces de serpiente (jaws of snakes) representations are very common and variable, but they typically occur in a central cartouche in the headdress above the forehead of the figure (Figure A4.10d). In many of these whistles, there is some representation of a jaguar, often just the nose, above the cartouche. The cartouche is usually ensconced in or situated above sets of curving lappets that drape down the sides of the forehead, with large feathers above the lappets and surrounding the cartouche.

Jaguars are prominently displayed in another whistle headdress variant (Figure A4.10e–f). Typically, a complete jaguar face, snarling with teeth visible, sits in the center of the headdress above the forehead of the figure. There are large feathers to the sides and the top of the jaguar. The stylization of the jaguar face is variable, but one specific whistle headdress stands out for its large size and specific imagery. In this variant, the jaguar face is centered between a lappet that contains the symbol for 1 Jaguar on the left and a stylized snake face and reptilian eye on the right (Figure A4.10f). This is the largest headdress in our collections, with a width of 16 cm.

A4.4. Interpretation and Discussion

A central goal in broadly classifying the figurines in our collections and looking at contextual differences in their distribution is to elucidate behavioral patterns.

The excavated deposits that we exposed can be grouped into three principal contexts: domestic, production, and civic-ceremonial. The production-related context is still in a residential/domestic setting (Feinman 1999), but the nature of the artifacts and features vary considerably from other houses. At three of the sites we excavated in domestic areas: three commoner houses at the Mitla Fortress, one house of intermediate status at Ejutla, and three elite and five commoner houses at El Palmillo. A small ballcourt was attached to one of the elaborate residences at El Palmillo. At Lambityeco we excavated in the civic-ceremonial core of Lambityeco, in an area that includes a priest's residence (Feinman and Nicholas 2016b; Feinman et al. 2016) and a much larger ballcourt (Feinman and Nicholas 2019a). The residents of the Ejutla house were also involved in ceramic production, including figurines (Feinman 1999; Feinman and Nicholas 2004a). Because of these site-to-site differences, the figurine assemblages from the four sites are not entirely equivalent, and our interpretations should be considered preliminary.

Although most published literature for prehispanic Mesoamerica emphasizes the use of figurines in domestic rituals (e.g., Marcus 1998, 2009b; Triadan 2007), there is evidence that figurines were used in public ritual contexts during the Classic period (Halperin 2017; Vera Estrada and García Wiguerras 2014). By looking at the distribution of the broad categories of figurines in our sample, we can begin to identify differences in figurine use in domestic and public spaces, and also see how different the production context is from others.

We outline broad expectations for these three different contexts. In domestic areas, we would expect to find a higher proportion of modeled figurines than in civic-ceremonial areas. Modeled figurines were widely used in domestic contexts during the Formative period (Marcus 1998, 2009b). The modeled figurines could be made by people with less expertise, so we would expect them to be variable and well represented in houses. We also would expect higher proportions of small whistles than larger ones in domestic contexts.

Production contexts should be characterized not only by large quantities of figurines in general, but also by lopsided numbers of specific varieties of figurines. We also would expect other indicators of production, including wasters and molds. In civic-ceremonial contexts, we would expect to find lots of large whistles for making music in public ritual settings (Broda 1970, 210; Wyllie 2010; Zender 2004). The large figurine quantities should not be accompanied by indicators of production activities.

The figurine assemblages from the four sites basically conform to these general expectations. Small modeled animals and miniature anthropomorphic figurines are a much smaller component of the figurine assemblage in the civic-ceremonial core of Lambityeco than in the domestic contexts at the three other sites (Table A4.2).

These small figures were made for and apparently used mostly in household activities, sometimes placed in burials. Although small modeled dogs and modeled anthropomorphic figures are the most broadly distributed across domestic contexts and are found in each house (see Table A4.1), there is little consistency in which specific variant predominates at each site. The small molded anthropomorphic figurines also are variable but well represented at all sites.

We did note significant differences in the distribution of the three categories of females among the four sites. All three categories are present in much higher numbers at Lambityeco and are poorly represented in the domestic contexts that we excavated at El Palmillo and the Mitla Fortress. The only exception is the variant of female #1 who wears a plain tunic and garment, present at Ejutla (see Table A4.1). Most of the female #1 figurines at Lambityeco wear decorated tunics; there are many fewer with plain tunics. This pattern is reversed at Ejutla, where the female with plain tunic is the most abundant variety in the entire assemblage, and there are few female figurines in decorated tunics. Given the abundance of this female at Ejutla and several molds for braided headdresses (see Figure 7.16) recovered from the fill of ceramic firing features (Balkansky et al. 1997), this female variant appears to have been produced in Ejutla, which would account for its overrepresentation compared to the figurine assemblages at the other sites. There is a similar overabundance of a variant of female #2 at Macuilxochitl, where numerous molds for producing that specific variant were found during excavations on one residential terrace (Faulseit et al. 2016, 316). Fragments of this particular variant are present at Lambityeco, and it is possible that they were made at Macuilxochitl.

At Lambityeco, two of the female variants are tied to public ritual events (Feinman et al. 2016). On the platform and the plaza situated at the north side of the ballcourt in Lambityeco's civic-ceremonial core, we excavated two separate trash-filled pits where we found discrete sets of female figurines, each associated with only one of the pits. The different portrayal of the cotton garments, jewelry, and headdresses of these two females likely was significant. In the pit on the plaza, we recovered numerous fragments of a variant of female #2, all of which had the exact same intricate headdress of concentric serpentine lines (see Figure A4.4 top left) and/or were wearing precisely equivalent decorated garments with basal fringe, amplified by an elaborate necklace (see Figure A4.5 middle row left). Many of the fragments could be fit together, so that there was a minimum number of eight figurines. The other pit contained numerous fragments of a variant of female #1 wearing a simple braided headdress and a simply decorated quechquémitl (see Figure A4.3e). Again, the figurines had been broken before being deposited in the pit; we were able to refit many fragments for a minimum of 11 figurines. Examples of these figurines, though rare, are present in domestic contexts at the other sites we excavated; it is possible that although they were

made and stored in domestic areas, they were brought to public venues to be used in communal ritual events (e.g., Halperin 2017).

Female #3 is found with any frequency only at Lambityeco and is very rare at the other three sites. It also is rare or not present in all other published figurine assemblages in the valley (Bernal and Gamio 1974; Brockington 1973; Elson et al. 2010; Faulseit 2013; Faulseit et al. 2016; Markman 1981), including Monte Albán (Caso and Bernal 1952; Martínez López and Winter 1994). We did not recover any from intact ritual deposits, and proportionally this female category is more abundant in domestic areas at Lambityeco (López Zárte 2016) than in the civic-ceremonial area. These figurines appear to have been made at Lambityeco for largely local use in domestic ritual.

Although whistles are present at all four sites, there are differences in the distribution of small and large whistles. Small whistles are largely present in similar proportions, whereas large whistles are disproportionately abundant at Lambityeco, where they are more than half of the figurine assemblage, far more than at any other site. The small whistles generally appear to have been used in domestic rituals and the large whistles in public ones. Another important difference is the imagery in the headdresses of large whistles. *Fauces de serpiente* and bat/owl imagery are present on whistles at all sites; these representations are widely shared with other sites in the Valley of Oaxaca (Caso and Bernal 1952; Faulseit et al. 2016; Martínez López and Winter 1994). At Lambityeco, however, we recovered hundreds of large whistle headdresses that include prominent jaguar imagery; whistles with jaguar representations are rare elsewhere in the valley, even in reported assemblages from Monte Albán. The use of large whistles with jaguar headdresses may have been limited to specific public rituals in civic-ceremonial areas.

One particular variant of these whistles (1 Jaguar) combines prominent jaguar and snake imagery. Across Mesoamerica, the juxtaposition of jaguar-snake imagery is associated with the cycle of the Sun, renewal, and the ballgame (Barrios and Tokovinine 2005; Cohodas 1975). At Lambityeco, we recovered more than 100 whistle fragments with this specific jaguar headdress. In published assemblages to date, the only other site where this particular variant is present is nearby Macuilxochitl (Faulseit et al. 2016; López Zárte 2016), where there are fewer than a dozen, mostly small fragments, many of which were found on a terrace whose residents engaged in figurine production (Faulseit et al. 2016, 316). We found a set of 1 Jaguar whistles in the same pit on the north side of the ballcourt with the female #1 variant discussed above (see Figure A4.10f). Significantly, a large ceramic effigy jaguar was also placed at the base of the pit before it was ritually closed (Feinman et al. 2016).

Figurines also are present in the smaller ballcourt that we excavated at El Palmillo; however, that assemblage is markedly different (see Tables A4.1 and A4.2). We

excavated only a small part of that ballcourt, so the quantity of figurines recovered is not large. But of the 26 figurine fragments that were large enough to code, only one was a large, globular whistle fragment. Over 60% were molded warriors, most wearing cotton armor or feathered capes. Although most warrior figurines also served as whistles, their imagery does not match either the larger, globular whistles or the female figurines found in the pits adjacent to the Lambityeco ballcourt.

The ballcourt at Lambityeco was large, built earlier, and is located in the civic-ceremonial core of the site, like the main ballcourt at Monte Albán, whereas the smaller, later one at El Palmillo is ensconced between two elaborate residences just outside the site's public core (Feinman and Nicholas 2011a, 2019a). Toward the end of the Late Classic (ca. 800–900 CE), as Monte Albán began to decline, palaces became more central loci in local civic-ceremonial governance, and small ballcourts were often built adjacent to these high-status residences (Feinman and Nicholas 2011a, 2016a; Vera Estrada and García Wigueras 2014). Given the location and size of the ballcourt at El Palmillo and the presence of so many warrior figurines, the rituals enacted in these palace-linked courts likely carried a different meaning and message to a smaller number of specific attendees than at the earlier, larger ballcourts, such as at Lambityeco. In both cases, fired-clay figurines were integrated into nonresidential rituals, but seemingly for a different set of participants in distinct ways.

The spatial patterning of warrior figurines and differences in the distributions of specific warrior variants illustrate another axis of intraregional variation. Warrior figurines are relatively abundant at Classic period sites in eastern Tlaxcala and the southern part of the valley but are seemingly rare at Monte Albán. Even though certain representations in headgear and garment are widespread, the most common warrior variant in Ejutla and Miahuatlán simply wears a loincloth, whereas warriors in cotton armor and feathered capes are much more common at the Tlaxcala sites, including Lambityeco. Based on stratigraphic contexts, the warriors date slightly later in the sequence than most of the other Classic period figurine categories (Feinman and Nicholas 2015; Paddock 1983) and have been found to be more prevalent at sites distant from Monte Albán. The Mesoamerican ballgame has long been associated with militarism (e.g., Fox 1996; Kowalewski et al. 1991), and the presence of the later, smaller ballcourts adjacent to high-status residences, as at El Palmillo, may signal heightened intraregional competition at the end of the Classic period (Feinman and Nicholas 2016a). At that time, warrior and ballplayer figurines became more common across the region. If the presence of warrior figurines marks the breakaway of sites from Monte Albán's sphere of political hegemony after that central settlement began to decline at the end of the Classic period (Feinman and Nicholas 2016a, 54–56), then the observation that the warrior figurines in the southern part of the valley differ from those in the

east is not that surprising. As Monte Albán declined and its political coalition fragmented, the eastern edge of the Valley of Oaxaca may have been part of a different political interaction sphere than Ejutla in the south, as clearly was the case later in the prehispanic era (Feinman and Nicholas 2013). Accordingly, the conventions of figurine representation may have diversified between the two valley sectors.

A4.5. Synthetic Thoughts

Through this analysis of the figurine assemblages from four Classic period sites in the Valley of Oaxaca, we have illustrated the utility of examining broad sets of figurines from a variety of contexts. Large quantities of broken figurines recovered from secondary and tertiary contexts can yield new vantages and information on patterns of behaviors associated with figurine use, especially when large assemblages from domestic and public areas at numerous sites are examined holistically.

We have advanced broad categories to organize key axes of variability for Classic period figurines from the prehispanic Valley of Oaxaca and have illustrated how those classes pattern distinctively between different sites and contexts. The distributions of the various classes of figurines are the behavioral remnants of activities that were enacted in those different contexts and likely were deposited close to where they were used (e.g., Beck 2003). Distributions of discrete categories of figurines and their relative abundances serve to distinguish the figurine assemblages in domestic contexts from the assemblages in public ritual and production contexts. We have also documented patterned variation across regional space for certain classes of figurines, a line of investigation that should be pursued further in future analyses of figurines at other sites in the valley.

Even though the use of molds for making figurines developed during the Classic period, a significant number of figurines continued to be modeled by hand. It is now clear that these small hand-formed figurines remained in use, mainly for domestic rituals, as they had been employed for more than a millennium. The new molded figurines appear to have been made in larger quantities for somewhat different purposes. Molded figurines wore decorated garments and feathers, which seemingly encoded and conveyed new classes of information. In Mesoamerica, figurines have long been considered mainly as objects for domestic ritual. Although some varieties continued to be used in household rituals during the Classic period, others were used in ceremonial activities that were enacted in public spaces. Based on our findings, fired-clay objects were utilized and consumed in significant quantities during these nondomestic ritual activities.

This analysis is only the first stage in our analytical investigation focused on Classic period figurines from the Valley of Oaxaca. Our intent is to generate feedback

and encourage others to examine more holistically the production, use, discard, and diversity of figurines at other Oaxaca sites through a behavioral lens, rather than circumscribing discussion to the identification of potential representations or the enumeration of descriptive attributes. All those broken pieces of fired clay can be channeled to serve as an insightful vantage into the lives and activities of those who made and used them (Skibo 1999, 1). More specifically, this comparative examination has allowed us to outline several key general themes that transcend the fired-clay figures from any solitary site to the entire Central Valleys of Oaxaca. At the same time, precise details and particular representations varied in frequency across the same sample.

Appendix 5a

Broken Shell Categories at Ejutla by Genus

Bivalves					
Genus	Hinge	Margin	Wall fragment	Unidentified	Total
<i>Anadara</i>	5	30	6	47	88
<i>Anomia</i>	–	–	–	–	–
<i>Arca</i>	3	–	–	–	3
<i>Barbatia</i>	–	–	–	1	1
<i>Chama</i>	96	92	2	162	352
<i>Chione</i>	–	–	–	1	1
<i>Codakia</i>	–	1	–	–	1
<i>Donax</i>	–	1	–	–	1
<i>Glycymeris</i>	2	–	1	–	3
<i>Heterodonax</i>	–	–	–	–	–
<i>Lucina</i>	–	–	–	–	–
nacreous/ <i>Pinctada</i>	1754	21	16	3024	4815
<i>Ostrea</i>	–	1	2	2	5
<i>Pecten</i>	–	3	–	–	3
pelecypod UID	51	59	6	172	288
<i>Periglypta</i>	–	2	–	–	2
<i>Pinctada</i>	407	5	12	589	1013
<i>Pitar</i>	–	3	1	–	4
<i>Protothaca</i>	–	–	–	1	1
<i>Pteria</i>	1	–	–	–	1
<i>Semele</i>	1	–	–	–	1
<i>Solamen</i>	–	–	–	–	–
<i>Spondylus</i>	11	5	–	56	72
<i>Tellina</i>	–	2	–	–	2
<i>Tivela</i>	–	1	–	–	1
<i>Trachycardium</i>	1	1	1	5	8
Total bivalves	2332	227	47	4060	6666

Gastropods						
Genus	Columella	Spire	Margin	Wall fragment	Unidentified	Total
<i>Acmaea</i>	–	6	28	–	1	35
<i>Agaronia</i>	2	–	–	–	–	2
<i>Astraea</i>	–	–	5	–	–	5
<i>Calliostoma</i>	–	1	–	–	–	1
<i>Cancellaria</i>	–	2	–	–	–	2
<i>Cassis</i>	2	6	–	–	2	10
<i>Cerithidea</i>	–	–	–	–	1	1
<i>Cerithium</i>	–	–	–	–	–	–
<i>Conus</i>	1	1	–	–	–	2
<i>Cypraea</i>	–	–	2	–	–	2
<i>Ficus</i>	1	1	5	5	1	13

(Continued)