

THE FUNDACIÓN ALEMANA AND PROYECTO PUEBLA TLAXCALA

COMUNICACIONES PROYECTO PUEBLA TLAXCALA 12 (1975), 13 (1976).*

SUPLEMENTO COMUNICACIONES PROYECTO PUEBLA TLAXCALA 1, "Mapas estadísticos de México mediante equipo electrónico," edición preliminar, by I. SEELE AND F. WOLF (1976); 2, "La arqueología del sur-oeste de Tlaxcala," primera parte, by R. ABASCAL, P. DAVILA, P. J. SCHMIDT, AND D. Z. DE DAVILA (1976); 3, "El Proyecto Arqueológico Puebla-Tlaxcala," volumen uno, coordinated by ANGEL GARCÍA COOK (1976); 4, "Orientación de las pirámides en el altiplano mexicano," by FRANZ TICHY (1976).

Published by Fundación Alemana para la Investigación Científica, 22 Oriente 414, Puebla, Pue., México. Available on exchange.

In 1962, owing particularly to the efforts of the late Paul Kirchhoff—an anthropologist and ethnohistorian of German origin who settled in Mexico—a program of international cooperation in research was initiated; it has led to numerous publications, examples of which are under review here, and must lead to many more. In that year, the West German research foundation Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, or Fundación Alemana para la Investigación Científica, and various Mexican institutions such as the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH), the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, the Colegio de México, and the Instituto Politécnico, agreed to establish a joint, interdisciplinary program of studies of man and his surroundings to be concentrated particularly in the valley of Puebla-Tlaxcala, with its rich resources for both prehistory and history and with its varied natural landscape. There was thus formally initiated the Proyecto Puebla Tlaxcala, under the coordination of a special committee within the German foundation.

The field program was launched in 1963 with the commencement of an archaeological surface reconnaissance in an area of about 3,300 km² by a German archaeologist; this largely one-man effort was to continue, with a major interruption, until 1967, when it was ended unfinished due to the ill health of the researcher. In 1964 this pioneer was joined in the area by German specialists in history and geography, and by a second archaeologist who began intensive excavations at the Preclassic site of Totimehuacán, south of the city of Puebla. Later investigators have represented an expanding range of scholarship, including sociology, folklore, linguistics, climatology, paleontology, geomorphology, and so on. These young German researchers (of whom fifty-one had been involved by 1970), plus a strong scattering of Mexican investigators, have conducted a series of loosely coordinated projects with financial support from the Fundación Alemana. Although the area of focus has in some cases wandered

*Since this review was submitted for publication, our office has received *Comunicaciones Proyecto Puebla Tlaxcala* 14 (1977).—Ed.

from the Puebla-Tlaxcala region, the major emphasis has remained upon that valley surrounding the volcano Malinche, which includes substantially all of the modern state of Tlaxcala and the northwestern section of Puebla.

Systematic presentation of results began in 1968 with an introductory volume of short reports, *Berichte über begonnene und geplante Arbeiten*, edited by Franz Tichy and published by Franz Steiner Verlag of Wiesbaden in a new series titled *Das Mexico-Projekt der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft*. To date works in that series include thirteen additional volumes of relatively definitive monographic studies, four of which are devoted to various geosciences, four to historical topics, three to archaeology or ethnohistory, and two to ethnography, linguistics, and folklore; although predominantly in German (with Spanish abstracts), three of the more recent publications of the series are in Spanish.

The number of researchers grew, the mass of results began to accumulate, and the problem of maintaining an adequate dialogue with Mexican colleagues became evident. Thus, in 1970, the series *Comunicaciones* was inaugurated—irregular issues in inexpensive offset format, although often with extensive diagrams, photographs, and foldout maps, published once or twice a year from the permanent station now maintained by the Proyecto Puebla Tlaxcala in Puebla. These *Comunicaciones*, together with periodic seminars in Spanish held either in Puebla or Mexico City and open to any interested scholars, have constituted the major means of communication both for notices of work in progress and for preliminary results. In all, the published short papers—often very summary statements written at the completion of fieldwork before a German scholar returns to his institution abroad—have numbered more than 130: of these, more than a fourth are devoted to various geosciences—climatology, geomorphology, geology, hydrology, soils, etc.—and an equal number to archaeology and ethnohistory; about twenty are historical, dealing particularly with topics related to the Colonial epoch, including various population studies; these are followed in number by articles classifiable as cultural geography, folklore and social anthropology, physical anthropology, and demography.

In 1976 the publication program was again expanded to include supplements to *Comunicaciones*. Having a similar format, these irregular monographic *Suplementos* are avowedly designed to present works by collaborators of the Proyecto Puebla Tlaxcala of such scale that their inclusion in *Comunicaciones* is impracticable. To judge by introductory comments in one of them, the new series may serve also to bring out reports that exceed the number that can be published in Germany in the regular monograph series.

The two numbers of *Comunicaciones* under review here contain between them eighteen articles. Number 12 includes a brief note concerning decorative figures made by the placement of small pebbles in the mortar of certain Colonial buildings (H. J. Nickel), a history of land use in two river drainages in the Huejotzingo region (H. J. Prem), and a very brief discussion of some aspects of the sedimentary geology at Río Frío in the Sierra Nevada (E. Schonhals and G. Werner); the remaining five papers are on archaeological topics. Number 13 contains a note regarding murals at the Augustinian convent at Metztitlan in Hidalgo (E. W. Palm); two reports concerning, respectively, the soils and de-

forestation on Malinche volcano (G. Werner); a brief history of a small textile industry near Atlixco (K. Popp and K. Tyrakowski); and a descriptive statement regarding the geology of the high basin of Puebla-Tlaxcala (A. V. Erffa, W. Hilger, K. Knoblich, and R. Weyl); the remaining four papers are on archaeological topics, one of them an annotated bibliography of what is termed the Proyecto Arqueológico Puebla-Tlaxcala (A. García Cook).

Topics covered by the *Suplementos* are indicated roughly by their titles. *Suplemento 1* is a computer generated atlas of the Republic of Mexico, based largely on the 1970 census; 4 is a brief report on deviations from the cardinal directions of the orientations of some prehistoric and Colonial structures, especially in Puebla-Tlaxcala, with a discussion of possible astronomical reasons for them; 3 reports some activities of the Proyecto Arqueológico Puebla-Tlaxcala; and 2 deals with matters that are actually later developments based on those activities. Because this specific archaeological project has also generated a number of the papers in *Comunicaciones*, and because—indeed—of the substantial support given to archaeologists throughout the duration of the Proyecto Puebla Tlaxcala, it seems well to direct some additional attention to it.

As indicated earlier, field research under the German-financed program was initiated by an archaeological project, and was immediately followed by other archaeological efforts, most of which have concentrated on sites of the Preclassic period of Puebla-Tlaxcala, a time of considerable cultural florescence there. In 1971, the Mexican archaeologist Angel García Cook—according to introductory remarks by him in *Suplemento 3*—proposed to the Fundación Alemana a relatively long-term program of archaeological research to be directed by him. As conceived, the program would focus upon the entire Puebla-Tlaxcala region, as opposed to one or more particular sites, and would be based on an extensive surface reconnaissance supplemented by stratigraphic testing. With particular attention to settlement sizes and distribution, estimates of relative population through time, and topographic and other features indicative of past subsistence systems, this could lead to some understanding of the broad sweep of cultural evolution within the Puebla-Tlaxcala valley from the appearance of the first occupants to the coming of the Spaniards.

Approved for financing by the Fundación, the project was initiated in May of 1972 under joint auspices of the Fundación and INAH and was designated the Proyecto Arqueológico Puebla-Tlaxcala; it was staffed by Mexican professionals and supplemented by students of the Escuela Nacional de Antropología in Mexico City. By November 1974 the project could claim to have located 657 sites in an area of somewhat more than 4,000 km², and to have described the pre-Hispanic cultural development by means of seven sequential archaeological phases. Interpretations of the culture history of Puebla-Tlaxcala, as outlined in the annotated bibliography (*Comunicaciones 13*) of some of the plentiful publications of members of the Proyecto Arqueológico, include matters of sociopolitical organization—such as the degree of theocratic control through time—as well as more material considerations. Unfortunately, the evidence to support these higher order interpretations, as well as the specific evidence upon

which the definitions of phases and recognition of their distribution is based, has yet to be presented. The project terminated officially after three years, in May 1975.

In addition to the introduction, *Suplemento 3* also contains four reports related to a tomb of the Tenanyecac (early Classic) phase in which some striking ceramic representations of dogs were found: a general description of the tomb (A. García Cook, M. Arias M. G., and R. Abascal); a preliminary description of the skeletal remains (R. M. Peña Gómez); a discourse on dogs in pre-Hispanic art (E. Noguera); and a discussion of radiocarbon dates from the tomb that are concluded to date its use to within the first two centuries of the Christian era (A. García Cook). An additional paper contains a brief evolutionary conceptualization of the social importance of pottery-making in early communities in Puebla-Tlaxcala and, by extension, in Mesoamerica in general (R. Abascal).

Suplemento 2, although numbered earlier, is logically an extension of 3. In it, as a single unified paper, is presented a cultural sequence formulated by means of studies that developed out of the Proyecto Arqueológico Puebla-Tlaxcala and which is applicable to a subregion of the Puebla-Tlaxcala valley—highlands termed the Bloque Xochitecatl-Nativitas-Nopalucan, which lie between San Martín Texmelucan and Tlaxcala City. That sequence is described by means of archaeological phases that relate to, although differing in some significant terminological respects from, those presented earlier for the entire region by García Cook and his collaborators of the Proyecto Arqueológico (as contained in publications summarized in the annotated bibliography of *Comunicaciones 13*). Indeed, the relationships between the organization of this subregional information and that elsewhere presented by the Proyecto Arqueológico for Tlaxcala-Puebla as a whole is not at all clear. *Suplemento 2* culminates in the longest description thus far available of the discovery of some mural paintings, in excellent condition and with pronouncedly Mayan stylistic elements, made during unauthorized excavations by villagers at the terminal Classic (i.e., post-Teotihuacan) site of Cacaxtla, Tlaxcala. The major painting is reproduced with numerous half-tone photographs and a large line foldout. Apparently written before the room containing the paintings had been completely cleared, no mention is made of some additional paintings discovered in the same complex shortly afterward (illustrated in INAH *Boletín 16*, January–March 1976).

All of this contributes to the opinion that must be formed after any careful examination of these publications: they are absolutely indispensable to anyone seriously interested in the archaeology, geography, history, or post-Conquest native society of the central Mexican highlands. But the material is ultimately frustrating in that, with few exceptions (and there *are* a few of these), the information published in both the *Comunicaciones* and the *Suplementos* is so extremely preliminary. The overall quality is roughly that of the majority of papers presented at professional meetings: interesting, necessary, but well below the level of a definitive monograph or an article in a refereed journal.

Of course, not all results of Fundación-supported research in Mexico are reported in the several series mentioned here. This is evident from the lists that

periodically have appeared in *Comunicaciones* of publications by affiliated researchers, many of them in German journals; it may be that definitive results are often so made a matter of record. In any event, the interested scholar can only pray that the ends of so many interesting research efforts will someday, somehow, be reached, and that the results will somewhere be communicated.

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Author's postscript: It now appears that field research in most of the disciplines funded by the Fundación ceased with the calendar year 1978, as the result of a decision reinforced by, although not directly based upon, a new policy of INAH to make a direct financial levy against the field research budgets of German investigators. Some projects, particularly in geography, are expected to continue into 1979.