[illegible] but may be intended to hold the head in place, and the fact that the figures are tied to the platform with bands across the body. Weisman (*Pfizer Spectrum* 1965), by contrast, interprets these as "figures lying on primitive hospital beds." Lehmann (1951, 1953) had earlier suggested that they are sick persons being treated by shamans, whereas Morss (1952) holds that they represent infants lashed to cradleboards. These differences of opinion are typical of the problems encountered in attempting to arrive at solid, convincing explanations of the meaning, purpose, and function of many West Mexican mortuary ceramic pieces.

To cite another example: How are the Colima biomorphic figures (apart from the dogs) to be interpreted? Toscano suggested that the animal figures depicted the *nahual*, the "guardian spirit" or "companion animal" of the deceased. But some of the animals, especially the maritime ones, do not seem to qualify well for such a role, not to mention the problem of the group representations (especially pairs and trios of ducks; no. 173). Most are also vessels and may have contained foods and liquids placed in the mortuary chambers to accompany the deceased to the afterworld. Precisely why they represent these particular animals and birds, however, is obscure.

Other figures for which an interpretation based on ethnographic analogy might be suggested are the paired couples: a man and woman modeled as a single piece of ceramic sculpture, particularly characteristic of Nayarit (nos. 14, 18). In terms of our own culture patterns, these could be (and often are) interpreted as marriage scenes. Alternatively the pairs could well represent ritual performances of some kind. The man often holds what appears to be a rattle; the woman, a small bowl or cup in one hand with the other arm around the male figure. They may be scenes of a man singing and chanting, the woman holding an offering (or perhaps some narcotic to be taken by the man).

A separate issue is the identification and analysis of the many objects and appurtenances shown on the tomb figures. These include clothing, weapons, armor, pottery cups and vessels, musical instruments, and beads and ornaments.

Some of these accessories are modeled in the clay; others are depicted by painted representations. Archaeologists can inspect the collections from the sites to see if any have been found as artifacts and can gain fuller cultural information from them rather than relying only on simplified representations on the figures.

Von Winning (1974: 25–27) provides a comprehensive list of objects and adornments represented on the tomb figures and points out that even naked figures have at least one item of jewelry. Of his extensive list of accompaniments, what items have been found archaeologically? We do not expect to find perishable items such as garments, the bags carried by many figures, wooden objects, remains of food offerings, and the like (although had the tombs been excavated by trained archaeologists, we would expect that traces of many of these things might have been recovered). What remains in tombs and village sites of the same period are the imperishable items made of stone, bone, shell, and clay.

Of pottery, the tombs contain many vessels aside from the figures themselves, including some identical to the small bowls held by some of the tomb figures. Also found widely in West Mexico are pottery whistles, rattles, and flutes (Crossley-Holland 1980). Other musical instruments occurring with the figures and also found as archaeological specimens include bone rasps, turtle carapace rattles or drums, and shell trumpets (no. 45).

The warrior figures portray armor, shields, clubs, atlatls, and slings. None of these has been found archaeologically, and only the chipped stone points of weapons and the curved shell or ceramic pieces that served as atlatl finger loops have been recovered.

The personal adornments portrayed on the figures are represented by a considerable variety of shell ornaments: solid and ring-shaped earspools and shell objects used as nose clips or ornaments in the septum. Rods worn in the nose are also shown; these were probably made of bone, but no actual examples are known. Many shell beads, pendants, and ornaments have been recovered, some from the shaft-chamber tombs themselves and many from contemporaneous sites. Shell arm rings have also been found; these are generally classified as bracelets, although Von Winning (1974: 27) points out that they occur on the upper arms of the figurines.

It is curious that no earrings have been found among the many adornments that can be recognized in the archaeological record. Earspools, both solid and ring-shaped, are well represented in West Mexican archaeological collections, but earrings are not recognizable in existing collections, and so far as is known none has been found in any of the tombs. Both Nayarit and Jalisco-style tomb figures often show multiple rings along the edges of the ears (nos. 13–18, 82) and perforated earlobes occur sporad-

ically in several styles. Such perforations, and sometimes multiple perforations along the edge of the ear, constitute a stylistic feature common in northern South America, where figurines have been found with metal earrings in place. They are portrayed on the West Mexican tomb figures as small rolls of clay that are "clamped" to the ear, but this is probably a function of the difficulty of manufacturing fine details in clay.

The earrings may have been made of perishable material such as fiber or cordage, but this seems unlikely. An interesting possibility is that some of these multiple earrings might have been metal. We know of no metal objects of the antiquity we ascribe to the West Mexican shaft-chamber tomb figures, though metal was in common use in South America by that time. The oldest dated metal objects in West Mexico are placed at about A.D. 600–700, three to five centuries later than the dated shaft-chamber tomb figures, and a great abundance of metal artifacts is characteristic of the Postclassic after A.D. 900. Nevertheless the oldest metallurgy in Mesoamerica appears to occur in West Mexico, and this is one of the features convincingly attributed to an introduction from South America by sea (Mountjoy 1969). Furthermore, later contexts do yield a considerable number of small rings made of copper wire (Mountjoy and Torres 1985: 141).

Given that metal is the most obvious material to use for the earrings portrayed and that nothing else in the archaeological record could represent such earrings, the multiple earrings shown on West Mexican shaft-chamber tomb figures are intriguing indications of some interesting possibilities. First, the use of metal may be older in West Mexico than is now known. Second, some of the tomb figures may continue later than our present dating evidence would indicate. Neither possibility is proven; however, it would not be surprising to find one or both borne out when fuller information is acquired.

Unfortunately, the uncontrolled way in which most of the shaft-chamber tombs have been dug compounds the problem. It is the tomb figures that have market value, and looters rarely collect plain pottery vessels or other small objects that may be present. In the excavations at Amapa (Meighan 1976) hired diggers referred to the copper objects in the site as "wire" and would throw them away as valueless unless trained to look for and collect them. Hence even if copper earrings were present in the tombs, it is unlikely they would be observed or collected. Gold objects, of course, are another matter, but there are no indications that gold has ever been found in shaft-chamber tomb contexts, although both gold and silver artifacts are known from later periods in West Mexico (Mountjoy and Torres 1985: 154ff.; Kelly 1985). All the West Mexican objects of precious metals have been considered Postclassic in age, but it is clear that copper objects at least are found in earlier contexts.