**Indigenous America 1000 BCE- 1980 CE**

**TOPIC 5.1 Interactions Within and Across Cultures in Indigenous American Art**

**Art of the Indigenous Americas** emphasizes unity with the **natural world, spirituality, animal- based media**, and the creation of **aesthetic objects with a strong functional aspect**.

This unit introduces distinct cultural developments in:

* **Ancient Mesoamerica**
* **Ancient Central Andes**
* **Ancient America**
* **Native North America**

This reflects upon the art and art making of each different culture. Note the similarities and differences in the cultures, as well as in materials, processes, and techniques.

Art of the Indigenous Americas is among the world’s oldest artistic traditions. Although its roots lie in northern Asia, it developed independently between 10,000 BCE and 1492 CE, which marked the beginning of the European invasions.

Regions and cultures are referred to as the **Indigenous Americas** to signal the priority of First Nations cultural traditions over those of the colonizing and migrant peoples that have progressively taken over the American continents for the past 500 years.

**Categorization of the Art of Indigenous Americas**

Art of the Indigenous Americas is **categorized by geography and chronology** into the designations of **Ancient America** and **Native North America**.

**Ancient America** is the category used for art created before 1550 century, south of the current United States–Mexico border. This region is traditionally divided into three main areas of culture— **Mesoamerica, Central America\*, Andean South America.**

**Ancient Mesoamerica in Focus**

**Ancient Mesoamerica** encompassed what is now **Mexico**, from Mexico City southward. It also includes **Guatemala, Belize**, and western **Honduras**, from 15,000 BCE to 1521 CE. The time of the Mexica (Aztec) downfall.

General cultural similarities of ancient Mesoamerica include:

* Similar calendars
* Pyramidal stepped structures,
* Sites and buildings oriented in relation to sacred mountains and celestial phenomena.
* Highly valued green materials, such as jadeite and quetzal feathers.

**Cultures and Styles**

The styles from the various Mesoamerican cultures differed markedly.

Three major distinct cultures and styles of Ancient Mesoamerica (Middle America) were the **Olmec**, **Maya**, and Mexica, also known as **Aztec,** the empire that was dominated by the Mexica ethnic group.

The **Olmec culture** existed during the first millennium BCE, primarily in the Gulf Coast. **The Mayan culture** peaked during the first millennium CE in eastern Mesoamerica, the Yucatan Peninsula, Guatemala, Belize, and Honduras. The Mexica culture existed from 1428 to 1521 CE in the region of central Mexico, though subordinating most of Mesoamerica.

There were other important cultures including:

* **Teotihuacan**
* **Toltec**
* **West Mexican**
* **Mixtec**
* **Zapotec**

**Mesoamerican Sculptural Works**

Mesoamerican sculptural and two-dimensional art tended toward the figural, particularly in glorification of specific rulers. Mythical events were also depicted in a realistic, figural mode. Despite the naturalistic styles and anthropomorphic interpretations of subject matter, shamanic transformation, visions, and depiction of other cosmic realms appear prominently in Mesoamerican art.

**The Central Andes**

The ancient **Central Andes** comprised present-day southern **Ecuador, Peru, western Bolivia**, and northern **Chile**. General cultural similarities across the Andes included an emphasis on surviving and interacting with the **challenging environments, reciprocity, and cyclicality**, rather than individualism. There was a reverence for the **animal and plant worlds** as part of the practice of **shamanistic religion**.

As with ancient Mesoamerica, the Central Andes region was a seat of culture and art parallel to the “Old World” in antiquity, diversity, and sophistication. **Baskets** from this region have been found dating to as early as 8800 BCE, proving early peopling from Asia through the rest of the Americas was accomplished by Neolithic times.

**Chavín** and **Inka** were representative and distinct early and late cultures and styles. **Chavín** lived in the northern highlands with reach to the southern coast between 1200–500 BCE. While the **Inka** between 1438–1534 CE covered the entire Central Andes. Yet many other important, art producing cultures existed between them.

**Ecosystems and Environments**

Similarities within Central Andean cultures can be traced to the influence of three significantly distinct ecosystems in proximity. These were **the dominant Andes mountains**, and a **narrow desert coast**. In addition, there was the Amazon rain forest, the largest rainforest on the planet.

These environments play a central role in art. Materials were influenced, especially by the **prominence of camelid fiber and cotton textiles**.

**Working Together**

The political systems included coastal diversity, as well as highland impulses toward unification. Other factors include overall values in the form of reciprocity, asymmetrical dualism, and travel across long distances.

Accordingly, most Andean art seems to have been made by **collaborative groups**. The best known being the **Inka high-status *aclla****,* the empire’s most talented **women weavers**, who were kept cloistered.

**Gravesite Art**

Peoples of the Andes practiced the world’s earliest and most persistent **artificial mummification**, in many forms, from 5500 BCE onward. Almost all art became **grave goods** for use in the afterlife.

**Terrestrial and Non-Terrestrial Art**

Andean art tends to explore the **terrestrial** through **animal and plant imagery**, **mountain veneration**, **sculpting of nature** itself, and **organic integration of architecture** with the environment. It also concerns the **non-terrestrial** via **abstraction and orientation toward the afterlife** and the other realms of **the cosmos**. Shamanic visionary experience was a strong theme, especially featuring humans transforming into animal selves.

**Native North American Art**

**Native North America** denotes traditionally oriented cultures **north of the United States–Mexico border** from ancient times to the present, with an emphasis on the period from 1492 century to today. Native North America has many regional subunits, such as the **Northwest Coast, Southwest, Plains, and Eastern Woodlands.**

The various Native American groups may be seen to share larger ideas of **harmony with nature, oneness with animals, respect for elders, community cohesion, dream guidance, shamanic leadership**, and **participation in large rituals**, such as **potlatches** and **sun dances.**

**Post-contact art** not only reflects these long- standing values, but it is also concerned with the history of conflict within tribes and between indigenous people and the U.S. and Canadian governments.

Indians, Native Americans, North American Indians (in the United States), and First Nations (in Canada) are nonindigenous terms for the indigenous peoples. These people were inhabiting areas north of what is now the United States– Mexico border, from ancient times to the present. They did not have a collective name for themselves, being many different tribes and nations.

**Indigenous Influence on Invaders**

Mesoamerica has had an influence on its invaders and the world at large since the 16th century. Mesoamerica is the **origin** of many of the world’s staple foods— **chocolate, vanilla, tomatoes, avocados, and maize, known as corn.**

Mesoamericans discovered **rubber, invented the first ball game**, and included several matrilineal and matriarchal cultures. Recognition of the importance of this area in world history and art has lagged, but it increases as inclusiveness and multiculturalism grow in scholarship and popular consciousness.

**Artistic Impressions**

When Mexico was first discovered by Europe, gifts of Mexica art sent to Charles V alerted such artists as Albrecht Dürer to the unfamiliar but impressive media and images from the New World. Colonial artists preserved certain pre-Hispanic traditions both overtly and covertly in their art. After independence from Spain, in the early 19th century, the Aztec were claimed in nationalistic causes, and national museums were created to promote ancient art.

**Artistic Incorporation into Modern and Contemporary Art**

Twentieth-century muralists, such as **Diego Rivera**, overtly incorporated themes from the Mexica past. Twentieth-century European and American artists, such as Henry Moore and Frank Lloyd Wright, were strongly influenced by the sculpture and architecture of ancient Mesoamerica as well.

Being more distant geographically and aesthetically, Andean art was less well known to early modern Europe and current society than was Mesoamerican art. However, some key modern Euro- American artists, such as Paul Gauguin, Josef and Anni Albers, and Paul Klee, found inspiration in ancient Peruvian textiles and ceramics. Modern Latin American artists, such as **Joaquín Torres Garcia** of Uruguay, blended Inka art and architecture with modernist theory and style, exploring a common abstract vocabulary.

**People and Language**

Indigenous culture continues. More than seven million people speak Mayan languages today, and more than one million speak Nahuatl, the Aztec language. The European invasions prevailed beginning in 1534 CE, but indigenous descendants of ancient peoples remain. Eight to ten million people still speak Quechua, the Inka language.

**Maintaining Cultural Identity**

Although disease and genocide practiced by the European invaders and colonists reduced the Native American population by as much as 90 per cent, Native Americans today maintain their cultural identity and uphold modern versions of ancient traditions in addition to creating new art forms as part of the globalized contemporary art world. Because of the history of suppression and forced assimilation into white culture, the influence of Native North American art on modern U.S. and European art styles has been minimized. However, recent cultural revitalization of traditions and active contemporary artistic production by self-taught and academically trained artists keep Native American participation in global artistry alive.

Strains range from self-conscious revival of ancient arts, such as in Puebloan pottery, to cutting political commentary on racism and injustice. Centuries of interaction with colonial and migrant peoples means that some **imported materials like glass beads, machine-made cloth, and ribbon are now considered traditional**. Likewise, in subject matter, the **Spanish-introduced horse** has become a cultural and artistic staple, alongside the indigenous buffalo, raven, and bear.

European influence is inevitable but may be subtle. What is considered traditional is constantly changing. There is no singular, timeless, authentic Native American art, or practice.

**(5) 154.** **Mesa Verde cliff dwellings.**

Anasazi. 450-1300 CE. Anasazi.

**Learning Objective:** Anasazi domestic space

**Themes:**

Domestic space

Man vs. nature

Civic

Community

Architecture

Site-specific

**Mesa Verde cliff dwellings** located in **Montezuma County, Colorado**, are built into the side of a cliff and are made from **sandstone** from the canyon. Stone and mud mortar, along with wooden beams were used to help raise multiple stories.

These are not the only cliff dwellings but **the best-preserved examples of cliff dwellings.**

**Function**

These cliff dwellings were used as a domestic space and civic spaces or residential dwelling that were used for storage and ritual. They generally housed between 125 to 250 people.

Clans lived together for defence and support. Having homes set under the side of the cliff provided protection from sun and snow.

**The Set Up**

Cliff dwellings were known as **pueblos** (communal villages of flat-roofed structures that are made of stacked stone). **Each family had one room** and there were about 150 in total.

Some pueblos were **five to six stories tall.** The **top houses stored supplies**. Here it was cool, dry, out of the way, and only accessible by ladders.

**Kivas** or rounded and sunken rooms, with wood-beamed roofs, were situated across the site. There were 20 in total. These were meeting rooms for **civic and religious gatherings.**

**Context**

**Ancestral Puebloans** occupied this region from about 450 CE to 1300 CE.

**NOTE:** The dates that **AP provides** are the dates for which the Anasazi (tribe) occupied this area, NOT the dates of the construction of the site.

These communities were comprised of sedentary **farmers** who cultivated beans, squash, and corn.

From 450 – 1200s, farmers lived above the canyon and lived near their crops.

By the 13th century things changed. Farmers moved into the canyons and began to construct pueblos. This made things difficult as food and water had to be transported into the canyon, as the fields were now many miles away.

**Why did they move?** Did the cliffs provide protection from invaders? Did the canyon provide ceremonial or spiritual significance? Did the canyon provide significant protection from environmental elements?

The **cliffs were eventually abandoned** in 1300 CE. It is not clear as to why . Was there drought? A lack of resources, or violence? Or some combination?

**(5) 155.** **Yaxchilán.**

Maya. 725 CE. Maya.

**Learning Objective:** Maya religious/ political complex

**Themes:**

Politics

Propaganda

Power

Religion

Architecture

Civic

Rulers

Male-female relationships

Visions

Text and image

Ideal man

Ideal woman

Animals in art

Ceremony

Victory

**Yaxchilán** a structure made of **limestone** can be found in **Chiapas, Mexico.** It isalarge complex set upon the side of the Usumacinta River with many buildings that are sprinkled across the site.

Buildings are narrow, with three entryways into each. They are not intended to hold many people.

There are elaborate **roof-comb** roofs (a masonry “wall” that rises upwards above a building to give the impression that it is taller than it is). The exterior is decorated with **stucco.**

**Function**

* Civic space: religious; political; social
* Display of political power and legitimacy
  + Shield Jaguar displays prominence
  + Part of a political campaign by Bird Jaguar IV to secure his rulership because it was contested
  + Decorations were intended to advertise Bird Jaguar IV’s dynastic lineage and thus his right to rule
* Display of piety
  + Decorations show the gods in support and in the company of Bird Jaguar due to his great piety

**Content**

**Yaxchilán** is a large Maya center and complex covered with inscriptions and relief sculptures. It is comprised of temples and ball courts.

**SUB-IMAGE 1 (Structure 40)**

* + Shows Bird Jaguar towering over war captives accompanied by his parents
    - Emphasizes lineage
  + Building overlooks main plaza

**SUB-IMAGE 2 (Structure 33)**

* + Constructed by Bird Jaguar
  + Example of Maya Classical architecture
  + Incorporates many decorative friezes on undersides of lintels of Bird Jaguar
    - Bird Jaguar in fantastic royal clothing of a Maya ruler
    - Bird Jaguar plays game against enemies (Lord Jewelled Skull)
    - Bird Jaguar wins

**SUB-IMAGE 3 (Lintel 25 on Structure 23)**

Structure 23 is a **yotoot** (a palace building)

To understand Lintel 25, we must look at Lintel 24

* + *Lintel 24 (not included on AP)*
    - *Lady Xoc kneels in front of Shield Jaguar to begin the bloodletting ceremony.*
    - *She has already cut a long slit in the middle of her tongue.*
    - *Through this hole, she pulls a rope through. The rope has cactus thorns inserted through it, which will rip her tongue as she pulls it through and cause her to bleed profusely.*
    - *She will collect the blood in the bowl that sits on the ground.*

**Lintel 25**

* + - **Inscription** tells us this is October 20, 681: date of Shield Jaguar’s ascension to the throne
      * Text is written in mirror image which is highly unusual
      * Possible theory: perhaps this is because her vision is from the other side of existence
    - Lady Xoc has conducted the bloodletting ceremony and is now receiving a manifestation of a vision.
      * She holds a bowl of blood that she would have collected after it spilled from her mouth, and she gazes upward at the vision.
      * From the mouth of the serpent god Tlaloc comes a warrior who pops out carrying a shield and spear and this is Shield Jaguar.
        + This vision proves Shield Jaguar’s association with the gods, thus legitimizing his claims to power.

This image is **carved in high relief**, with carefully incised details is typical of Mayan artwork. It would have been originally painted.

Notice the **Mayan concept of beauty** with arching brows and indentation above nose pushed outward. Most wealthy Mayan families put their children in head braces to create this. Faces are long and narrow with full lips.

***Lintel 26 (not included on AP)***

* + - *Having proved the divinity of her husband, Lady Xoc dresses her husband for battle.*

**The Background Story**

Yaxchilan’s **ruling dynasty** rose in the 4th century CE. By the 8th century, the Mayan cultural and political Renaissance was led by **Shield Jaguar II**. He ruled for 60 years from 681-741 CE and commissioned this site as well as many sculptural works.

Shield Jaguar had a son **Bird Jaguar** with his second wife. Shield Jaguar chose Bird Jaguar to be the next ruler, even though he was not royal because he did not come from the first wife.

Then from 741 – 752 **Civil War** raged.

**Bird Jaguar** ruled from 752 – 768. He had difficulty being accepted by the Mayans because he **lacked royal status.** Therefore, many did not consider him the rightful heir to the throne. To legitimize his throne, he had decorative steles and reliefs added to Yaxchilan.

The City-state of Yaxchilan **collapsed in 9th century**.

**It’s a fact:** Maya writing was not fully deciphered until 1970s and 1980s

**Women and the Maya Court**

Women played **a prominent role** in the Maya court. They held positions as queens and mothers. Being a principal wife meant that you were believed to have particularly significant power and became part of the bloodletting ritual--- central to legitimizing kingship.

Digs in Structure 23 have found sharp objects for bloodletting with Lady Xoc’s name on them. It is assumed she is buried somewhere around the temple.

It was believed that when a member of the royal family shed his or her blood, a portal to the other world was opened allowing gods and spirits to pass through it. **Letting blood was a sign of sacrifice and piety** to acquire the favor of the gods. This helped to dedicate new buildings, legitimize kings, and commemorate births of children.

**Bloodletting for queens** was believed to grant significant visions. However, medically, these visions were **hallucinatory states** resulting from large amounts of blood loss.

**(5) 161. City of Machu Picchu.**

Inca. 1450-1540 CE. Inca.

**Learning Objective:** Inca palace

**Themes**

Domestic space

Architecture

Politics

Power

Status

Passage of time

Rulers

Religion

Man v. nature

**City of Machu Picchu** is in the **Central highlands of Peru.** Made of **granite** it measures roughly **530 by 200 meters.** Sitting on a sacred mountain 8000 feet up, it overlooks the Urubamba River.

The granite was left unpainted and fittedwith **stone masonry** techniques. Most structures were roofed with wood and thatch with straw and reeds.

There was **one doorway/gate** to access the site. This controlled movement and the view.

**Terraces** or flat gardens cut into the mountain side, were a common element of the Inca. This Increased arable land surface and allowed the Inca to be agricultural, even though there was no flat arable farmland available.

**Function**

**City of Machu Picchu** was built as a royal estate for the first Inka emperor, Pachacuti. The emperor only lived here for a maximum of six months per year. It was intended as a place where the Inca could entertain, perform religious ceremonies, and administer the empire.

The city represented an expression of power and status.

The ability to command people across the empire to construct this was an expression of the emperor’s power. The modification of the landscape by shaving the off top of the mountain, as well as the prediction of the sun, indicated he controlled nature. This legitimized his claim to the throne.

The site contained over 200 buildings in total with **housing for elites, army, and staff.** There were **religious shrines, fountains, baths, astronomies,** and **terraces**.

Most of the **high-status residential buildings** are in a cluster to the Northeast (right-hand side of main image). The **royal section** was separated on the Southwest side (the left-hand side of main image).

**SUB-IMAGE 1 (Observatory)**

The Observatory is adjacent to the royal residence (towers). It is composed of two main parts: an upper room with windows (likely symbolized the heavens) and a lower room with no windows (likely symbolized the underworld).

The windows in the upper room clearly reveal that they had been moved in the masonry. This may have been to position them to the most accurate placement to frame the summer solstice sunrise.

**SUB-IMAGE 2 (Intihuatana Stone)**

The term refers to the **“hitching post of the sun”**, as Inti means sun.

The carved boulder is in the ritual area of the site to the west of the main plaza. The stone’s name refers to the idea that it was used to track the passage of the sun throughout the year. Again, if the Inca ruler claimed to be a descendant of the sun, and he could track the sun, it would legitimize his claims that he had the right to rule.

**The Background Points**

* Not even excavated until 1911
* Location was approximately a three days’ walk from the Inca capital of Cusco
* Graves found on the site reveal a huge variety of people who lived and worked here.
* Inca rulers claimed to be descendants of the sun and therefore, they were considered gods on earth.

**(5) 163. Bandolier bag.**

Lenape (eastern Delaware) tribe. Beadwork on leather. Prairie Style.

**Learning Objective:** Native American bag

**Themes:**

Decorative arts

Cross-cultural

Status

Utilitarian

Appropriation

Materials with significance

**Museum:** Milwaukee Public Museum

**Bandolier bag** is a crafted bag made with **beadwork on leather**. It measures **2 feet by 1 foot and 6 inches**.

Thousands of tiny beads were strung together and then sewn onto the bag. **These glass beads are known as seed beads** and are prized for their brilliant color and tiny form.

The bag is also **decorated with silk ribbons** in yellow, blue, red, green, and orange. Each are various lengths.

**A thick strap** crossing from one edge of the bag to the other side allows it to rest over a person’s shoulder and sit on the hip

**A Utilitarian Function:**

* Original function: Used by French army to hold extra ammunition
* 2nd function: Used by French fur traders in the NW United States to hold extra ammunition
* Native American function: Worn as a cross-body bag mostly by men
  + Pockets weren’t necessarily used to hold objects.
  + More importantly, the design helped to express group identities and social status.

**Notes of Interest**

Each bag is unique, often large in size and decorated with a wide array of colorful beads and ribbons. The contrasting colors might symbolize sky versus the underworld. The four-pronged/pointed flowers or stars might indicate the four cardinal directions and a connection to the earth.

The Prairie Style uses colorful glass seed beads to make floral patterns.

**Context:**

* Due to the Indian Removal Act of 1830 (signed by President Andrew Jackson), many tribes were forcibly removed from these ancestral lands and relocated to Oklahoma and Wisconsin.
  + Lenape were one of those tribes.
* Tribes continued to create these bags however they were exposed to a variety of other Native American tribes that were not familiar with this art. A diffusion of design and style called Prairie Style evolved post 1830s (Midwest tribes: floral designs + Eastern tribes: seed beads and bags)
* Women created these bags.
* Cross-cultural influence: not only did the shape and style of bag come from Europeans, but the seed beads and silk ribbons were acquired from European traders.
  + Native Americans had never seen glass or brilliant color the way they saw them in the beads or ribbon.
  + Native Americans often traded land for beads/ribbons.
  + Europeans thought beads/ribbons were cheap and that they were getting better end of the deal.

**(5) (165) *Painted elk hide.***

Attributed to **Cotsiogo** (Cadzi Cody), Eastern Shoshone, Wind River Reservation, 1890 – 1900

**Learning Objective:** Native American hide painting

**Themes:**

Religion

Animals in art

Appropriation

Ceremony

Commercial

Interpretation of history

Materials with significance

***Painted elk hide***is a work **attributed to Cotsiogo (Cadzi Cody) from the Eastern Shoshone, Wind River Reservation, Wyoming**. It is made from **painted elk hide.**

**Cotsiogo (co SEE ko)**

In Native American art elk, deer and buffalo hides were traditionally used to minimize the waste of animals by using all the parts. Natural pigments were used such as red ochre or chalk. Any used synthetic paints and dyes were obtained from Euro-Americans.

The Imagery was done with **free-hand painting and some stenciling.** There is a sense of flattened and negative space. The work is stylized and in simple form with no modeling.

**Multipurpose Art**

Creations such as ***Painted elk hide*** were made for wall hangings and for robes, as well as being a sign of status. Hide paintings were traditional artworks for Plains Indians and depicted religious scenes, major events, tribal designs, or affiliations. The content would change depending on the audience.

Later these works were created for those interested in Native culture and life as well as tourists. Popular themes for these buyers include buffalo hunts, as well as Native Americans on horseback and in teepees.

Artmaking for Native Americans is a way of keeping traditions alive.

**Scenes of Celebration and Daily Life**

**Three Dances**

**Sun Dance** is an important, **sacred dance**. It surrounds a not-yet-raised buffalo head between two poles with an eagle above it. Dancers dance around the pole as a celebration of the renewal of life, earth, and people. It honors the Creator.

**Grass Dance** involves men dancing around poles to bless the land.

**Wolf Dance** is **a non-religious dance that celebrates warriors** on horses returning to camp. It is about the power and prestige of warriors.

**Scenes of daily life are shown**

* + Women rest near a fire
  + Men hunt for buffalo and some wear feathered war bonnets to depict bravery.
  + Two teepees represent the camp

**The Background Story**

The hide depicts past events and vibrancy of Native American life, rather than current reality. It shows them **hunting with bows and arrows**, but by the time this art was created, **they used rifles**, introduced by Euro-Americans. Additionally, Native Americans didn’t live out in plains, but they lived on reservations.

**Horses** are not native to North America. They had been introduced by the Spaniards and arrived in the Midwest via trade.

**Buffalo** were sacred. By the time Cotsiogo painted this, they had almost been entirely killed off.

Sadly, the **Sun Dance** had been outlawed by the US Government to compel the Native Americans to abandon their traditional ways.

**About the Artist**

During his life **Cotsiogo (1866-1912)** was placed on the Wind River Reservation. He was the son of Washakie, a renowned Shoshane leader. As one of the first commercial artists among his tribe. He enjoyed artistic pursuits as they satisfied his curiosity.

Although the Sun Dance was outlawed at the time, he likely added the images because he knew it was a subject that tourists were interested in. Yet, he modified it to include the Wolf Dance to avoid ramifications.

**TOPIC 5.2 Materials, Processes, and Techniques in Indigenous American Art**

Artistic traditions of the Indigenous Americas exhibit overarching traits and content that emphasizes unity with the natural world. There is a focus on the **five-direction**--north, south, east, west, and center. **Cosmic geometry** and **spirituality** based in visionary shamanism are other factors. High value is placed on **animal-based** media such as featherwork, bone carving, and hide painting.

Art relies on the incorporation of trade material **greenstones**, such as turquoise and jadeite. It also uses **shells**, such as the spiny oyster. In the case of Native North America, **imported beads**, **machine-made cloth**, and **glazes** are used. Stylistic focus is on the essence rather than the appearance of subjects. Creation of aesthetic objects that have a strong functional aspect, reference, or utility include vessels, grinding platforms, and pipes.

**In Andean Culture**

The necessity to interact with three disparate environments--mountains, desert coast, and rainforest-- in order to survive instilled in **Andean culture** and art an underlying emphasis on trade in exotic materials. A hierarchy of materials was based on availability and/ or requirement for collaboration to manipulate the materials.

**Featherwork, textiles, and greenstone** were most popular. Textiles were a primary medium and were extraordinarily well preserved on the desert coast, fulfilling key practical and artistic functions in the various environmental zones.

**Metalwork, bone, obsidian, and stone** weresometimes employed. **Ceramics** and **wood** were also sometimes used.

**Mesoamerican Architecture**

Mesoamerican pyramids began as early earthworks, changed to nine-level structures with single temples, and then later became structures with twin temples. Sacred sites were renovated and enlarged repeatedly over the centuries, resulting in acropolises and massive temples.

Architecture was mainly **stone post-and-lintel**, often faced with **relief sculpture and painted bright colors**, emphasizing large masses that sculpt outdoor space. Plazas were typical for large ritual gatherings. Elaborate burials and other underground installations to honor the role of the underworld were also found.

**Native American Art**

Native American art media includes:

* Earthworks
* Stone and adobe architecture
* Wood and bone carving
* Weaving and basketry
* Hide painting
* Ceramics
* Quillwork
* Beadwork

More recently artworks have included **painting on canvas** and other European-style media.

**Geometric patterning**, and **figures** that are mythic or shamanic often appear. **Animals** that are popular in Native American art include: **snakes, birds, bison, and horses**.

**(5) 158. Ruler’s feather headdress (probably of Motecuhzoma II).**

Mexica (Aztec). 1428-1520 CE. Mexica (Aztec).

**Learning Objective:** Aztec headdress

**Themes:**

Headdress

Status

Power

Rulers

Cross-cultural

Propaganda

Ceremony

Materials with significance

**Museum:** World Museum in Vienna, Austria

**Ruler’s feather headdress** (probably of Motecuhzoma II) is made from **feathers** (quetzal and cotinga) and **gold**. The work measures **3 feet 9 inches high.**

The **400 feathers** symbolize eternity in Aztec culture.

The **quetzal feathers** only come from the male bird which has two to three tail feathers. The bird is only found in Costa Rica. This is an indication of long-distance trade that Aztecs participated in. It may also be a sign of tribute gifts given to Aztecs.

Additional feathers come from the **cotinga bird** (blue feathers) and the red **snoonbill bird** (red feathers). Feathers are both iridescent and allow movement with a breeze or turning.

Leather straps attach the crown to the head of a wearer. There are also ornamentations made of **pure gold**.

**Function**

This head dress is a display of status and power by Motecuhzoma. It is part of a more elaborate costume that would have included earrings, tassels, and necklaces for rituals. The ruler would have had to walk up the steps of the Templo Mayor wearing these items. This displayed control over his own body and a superhuman strength and poise.

This work was sent by Spanish conquistador Cortes to HRE Charles V. It was meant not only to impress Charles V, but to encourage him to continue funding expeditions to the New World.

**Historical Context**

This headdress was likely worn by **Motecuhzoma II** who was **the last Aztec king**. He was captured, kept as a hostage, and killed by Spaniards. Cortes conquered the Aztecs by 1521.

This headdress is exceptional. It impressed the Europeans because at the time they had never seen anything like it.

**(5) 159.** **City of Cusco.**

Inca. Andesite. 1440 CE; convent added 1550-1560. Inca.

**Learning Objective**: Inca political/religious space

**Themes:**

Civic religion

Architecture

Appropriation

Politics

Power

Status

Place of worship

**City of Cusco** is located in **the central highlands, of Peru**, at an elevation of 11,200 feet. The city was designed to look like a miniature Inca empire.

**City of Cusco** is divided into two sections. The **north** is where the **upper class lived.** The word for north is **hanan.** The **south** part of the city or **hurin** was where the lower classes lived. The two sections were also further divided into quarters. This reflected the four corners of the empire. It takes on the shape of a puma/ jaguar, which is the royal animal of the Inca.

The **masonry** is special and unique to the region. Each individual stone is fitted uniquely to the one placed next to it. This results in blocks that have a varied number of sides. The goal is to keep each stone as true to its original shape as possible, but just flattened on the sides presented. This means the blocks were not going to be like bricks. Stones that are fitted this way allow for a small amount of movement. This is especially important in an earthquake-prone region. The modern city of Cusco is over a fault line.

**Function of the City of Cusco**

* Capital of the Inca empire
* Civic center: religious; political; marketplace
* Believed to be an **axis-mundi** (especially the temple of Qorikancha)
* Way for Inca rulers to display their power and their ability to shape and order their empire
  + Like the Forbidden City or Trajan’s Forum

**Content:**

* City-plan

**SUB-IMAGE 1 (Curved Inka Wall of Qorikancha and Church of Santo Domingo)**

* Located on the heart of the puma
* Qorikancha means “Golden House”
* Most sacred of all Inca temples/shrines (**axis-mundi**)
* Dedicated to the worship of the sun and sun god Inti
* Center of the empire (like the sun in the universe) and everything radiated outward from it

The **masonry technique** was even more time-consuming than normal Inca fitted stonework. Rather than fitting each stone together and creating an irregular-looking surface, each stone was **shaped into a rectangular block** and polished to a smooth finish.

The walls were then **covered in sheets of gold** to signify the shrine’s dedication to Inti. This

would have brilliantly reflected the sun’s rays and embodied the purpose of the building.

In front was a **sculpture garden** with reproductions of the world in miniature containing, people, animals, and plants.

**After the Spanish conquest**, Qorikancha was one of **many shrines turned into a Christian space**.

This was turned into the Church of Santo Domingo, named after Saint Dominic, the founder of Dominican order who emphasized conversions. It was built around and on top of the original shrine which was flattened except for one wall.

This symbolized appropriation and supremacy with the Spanish over the Inca and Christianity over the Inca religion. The new building was built in Spanish Baroque style, which was fashionable at the time.

**SUB-IMAGE 2 (Walls at Saqsa Waman)**

The **Walls at Saqsa Waman** walked down on the city of Cusco from the Northwest. The structure’s zig-zagging walls indicated its use as a fortress.

The **stones** were quarried and hauled into place using huge manpower. These were much larger than those used for streets and houses. This was defensive in function.

Francisco Pizarro was the Spaniard who conquered Inca.

Through his brother there is this description of the site. “*On the top of a hill, they had a very strong fort surrounded with masonry walls of stones and having two very high round towers. In the lower part of this wall, there were stones so large and thick that it seemed impossible that human hands could have set them in place. They were so close together and so well fitted that the point of a pin could not have been inserted into one of the joints.”*

**A Background History**

* **1438**: the Empire was founded by Pachacuti
* **1440**: the construction began
* **1532 – 1535**: Inca were conquered by Francisco Pizarro

**Rituals and Practices**

The most **important rituals and practices** occurred in this capital city. It was considered **a religious space.**

**Young women** were chosen from across the empire based on their virginity, beauty, nobility, and status to serve as **“chosen women”**. They prepared ritual food, maintained a sacred fire, wove garments for Inca rulers, made corn beer for rituals, served gods in shrines, and were given to Inca royalty or aristocrats in marriage.

**Young men** were brought to be educated and raised in Inca culture. They were indoctrinated into Inca culture since the empire was very vast and diverse. They became valuable advocates for Inca traditions.

**(5) 160. Maize cobs.**

**Inca. 1400-1533 CE. Inca.**

**Learning Objective:** Inca metalwork

**Themes:**

Offering

Religion

Ceremony

Nature

Propaganda

Materials with significance

Commemoration

**Museum:** Denver Art Museum

***Maize cobs*** is a work made from**sheet metal/repoussée, gold and silver.** The vegetable replica **measures 10 inches long.**

**Repoussé is a** French word meaning “to push back”. It is a type of sculptural technique where the **metal is beaten from the inside** to leave raised designs on the surface.

Here, Inca metalsmiths expertly combined silver and copper to mimic the internal and external components of actual corn. Inca were known for their metalwork practice. They excelled at it.

**Silver metal** was used for the corn. **Gold metal** was used for the husk. The life-sized husks are naturalistic in design.

**Function**

***Maize cobs*** would have been in the **Inca sculpture garden** outside of the Temple of Qorikancha. The garden was used three times a year for rituals related to sowing and harvesting maize. All of these objects acted as a display of the Inti (sun god’s) power, as well as an offering of thanks.

**The Art of Corn**

This work illustrates the **ripe ear of corn** breaking through its husk. It is still on the stalk but ready to be harvested. Individual kernels protrude.

**This Work in Context**

The garden contained **sculpted llamas, corn, flowers, and people**. All were life size, and all were made from gold and silver metal. The garden essentially became a narrative that the Inca empire told about themselves. It Illustrated their piety but also all the riches of the empire

After the Spaniards arrived in the Andes, the European invaders soon desired Inca gold and silver.

Some of the earliest Spanish chroniclers record the placement of a huge sculpture garden outside the Qorikancha. These Inca objects were looted in large quantities, and many were sent back to Spain. ***Maize cobs*** might have ended up as a gift to HRE Charles V. By 1534, his court records mention a gold maize stalk with three leaves and two ears of corn.

**Maize** is corn that is blue or red but not yellow. It also represents the most important crop to the Inca. It was used for food, beer, and clothing.

**(5) 162. All-T’oqapu tunic.**

**Inca. 1450-1540 CE. Inca.**

**Learning Objective:** Inca textile

**Themes:**

Textiles

Status

Politics

Power

Decorative arts

Rulers

Materials with significance

Propaganda

**Museum:** Dumbarton Oaks, Washington DC

**All-T’oqapu tunic** is made from **camelid fiber and cotton.** It measures **3 by 2.5 feet.** Weaving was usually done with a series of sturdy sticks upon which the **warp** (skeletal threads of the textile) was woven. There are 100 threads per centimeter.

**Cotton** grew well in the empire along the coast. It was made into a variety of colors.

**Camelids** (remember Camelid sacrum?) thrived in the highlands (llamas and alpaca are camelids)

These animal fibers are dyed more easily than plant fibers. Dyes used included cochineal red that comes from the bodies of small insects that live on cactus. It takes thousands to make even just a small amount of dye. Another color is indigo blue which comes from a flower. Both dyes are extremely expensive.

**Collecting, spinning, and dyeing fibers for a textile** represented a huge amount of work. This as well as weaving was completed by women.

It was traditional to try to make a **t’oqapu** tunic in one single piece if possible. This would indicate the skill of the weaver and would avoid cutting the cloth, which was believed to damage its spiritual power.

**Function**

* Symbolizes the power/status of an Inca ruler
* Social power: signifies ruler’s ability to command empire to produce this; chosen women sew
* Political power: signifies one ruler’s control over this vast territory
* Cultural power: signifies one ruler’s unification of these various clans and tribes
* Military power: one of the t’oqapu (black and white checkerboard pattern) symbolizes the Inca military; shows that the army is an extension of the Inca ruler
* Material power: control of resources and statement of the wealth of the Inca empire (expensive dyes, vast amounts of fabric)
* Religious power: ruler is dressed like Vairococha (based on creation myth)

**Content**

* **T’oqapu**: square geometric motifs that symbolize a particular noble family/clan/group (similar to a European family crest)
* **T’oqapu tunics** are only allowed to be worn by those of high rank
* An **all-t’oqapu** is only allowed to be worn by a ruler.
* It is a single piece of cloth, woven with slit in the center for the head to pass through (just like a poncho) with “sleeves” sewn along the side to close it up.

**Context**

* Refers to an important Inca creation myth Viracocha (god) after creating humans sent out all the different peoples with their ethnic patterns painted on their bodies to keep order over them
* Textiles were the other major Inca artistic production (as well as metal work)
* Textiles were produced by “chosen women” who were collected across the empire for their virginity, beauty, and status to weave fine cloth.

**(5) 166. *Black on black ceramic vessel.***

Maria Martinez and Julian Martinez. Mid-20th-century CE. Blackware ceramic.

**Learning Objective:** Native American pottery (revival)

**Themes:**

Decorative arts

Innovation

Ceramics

Materials with significance

Revival of tradition

Commercial

**Museum:** National Museum of Women in the Arts

***Black on black ceramic vessel*** crafted by **Maria Martinez and Julian Martinez** was created in **Tewa, Puebloan, and San Ildefonso Pueblo, New Mexico.**

All raw materials had to be gathered and processed carefully so the vessel could be fired properly.

They pioneered a style of **applying a matte-black design over polished-black**. By doing this they were able to recreate what ancestors had done before them.

**Making This Work**

* Take local iron rich clay
* Mix withpowder from shards of broken pots + volcanic ash + water
* Make shape of pot by hand, without a potter’s wheel
* Dry vessel
* Scrape, sand, smooth
* Cover with slip (clay + water)
* Slip is polished by rubbing a smooth stone over the surface to flatten the clay and create a shiny finish. A difficult and time-consuming process.
* Pot was painted with designs with an iron-rich solution by using iron ore or guaco, which is a wild plant.

**The Firing Process**

* Pots were dried, then **fired at high temperatures** to change brittle clay to ceramics
* No kilns used, but fire was hot enough it could be made with manure
* Smothering the fire with powdered manure during the firing removed the oxygen while retaining the heat and this resulted in a pot that was blackened with areas without slip turning shiny black, and areas with slip turning matte black
* Achieving the **deepest shades of black required about six firings.**

**Function**

This work was created to **revive traditions** of Puebloan pottery making in New Mexico. This also helped to **reframe Native pottery as fine art**, instead of promoting it as utilitarian. To aide this, she began to **sign her name** on the bottom of the pots. This made her name the brand, but it also denied the communal nature of the pot. However, she began to make more money per pot.

The buyers were those that had interest in **Native art**, mainly white Americans. Soon, she began to sell the pots to major art galleries.

**Content**

* **San Ildefonso** **style**: based on 12th-17th century Puebloan ceramic shards (based on Neolithic designs) that had recently been discovered in excavations
* Two design registers: one across the shoulder/body and one across the neck
* Elements are abstract, but are probably depicting natural motifs
* Shape, color, and design match the contemporary and geometric Art Deco movement, popular between the two WWs

**Historical Context**

Before the arrival of the railroad to this area in the 1880s, pots were used for food storage, cooking, and ceremonies. When inexpensive pots appeared along the railroad, Native practices declined. The introduction of tin and metal meant cheaper, easier to make, sturdier pots.

**About the Artists**

**Maria Martinez** is one of the best-known Native potters in part due to her connections with a larger, non-Native audience. She lived at the Pueblo of San Ildefonso from 1887 to 1980. This is located 20 miles north of Santa Fe.

She spoke Tewa, the language of the Pueblo culture. Martinez learned the ceramic techniques by watching potters from San Ildefonso. Also, she and her husband Julian were present at the excavations in their community. They drew designs that they found on pottery shards.

Making pottery had traditionally been a communal activity, where different steps in the process were shared. **Maria** formed the vessels by hand. Julian would decorate and paint the pots.

Traditionally, because making pots were communal, they were never signed.

**TOPIC 5.3 Purpose and Audience in Indigenous American Art**

What is called “art” is considered to have, contain, and transfer life force rather than simply represent an image. Art requires participation not passive viewing.

**The Mayan Artists**

Art was produced primarily in workshops, but certain individual artists’ styles have been identified particularly Maya. Some works of art were signed. Artists were typically elite specialists and, among the Maya, the second sons of royalty.

**Their Patrons and Audience**

Rulers were the major, but not the only, patrons. Audiences were both large, for calendrical rituals in plazas, and small, for gatherings of priests and nobles inside small temples atop pyramids. Some audiences were supernatural, such as the elaborate graves considered to be in the underworld.

**Functional Objects as Native American Art**

Many Native American artworks are **ritual objects to wear, carry, or use during special ceremonies** in front of large audiences. Functionality of the object is preferred. The more active a work of art, the more it is believed to contain and transfer life force and power.

**Artistic Practices**

Artistic practices included **workshops**, **apprentice-master** relationships, and, less often, **solitary art** making. Some arts were a **specialization by gender** such as **women weaving** and **men carving**.

**Patrons**

Patrons might be the tribal leaders, an elder, or a family member. Audiences mostly were the entire group, though some objects and performances were restricted by their sacred or political nature.

**Intellectual Pursuits**

Intellectual pursuits apparent in artistic expressions include the **observation of astronomy**, creation of **poetry**, **song**, and **dance.** The use of **medicine** for curing and divining is also included here.

**(5) 157. *Templo Mayor (Main Temple)***

Mexica (Aztec). 1375-1520 CE.

**Learning Objective:** Aztec religious complex

**Themes:**

Place of worship

Religion

Architecture

Offerings

Power

Violence

Passage of time

Ceremony

Cross-cultural

***Templo Mayor (Main Temple)*** is in **Tenochtitlan (modern Mexico City, Mexico). The main temple is made from stone,** while **volcanic stone** was used to form the **Coyolxauhqui Stone.** Meanwhile, **jadeite** was used to create the **Olmec-style mask** and **basalt for the Calendar Stone.**

The temple is like a ziggurat or stepped mastaba, with a double-wide staircase that leads to a plateau, and two smaller temples on top. It was expanded upon by many different rulers and continually enlarged. This has resulted in a complex system of rooms and chambers on the interior.

**Why was Templo Mayor Built?**

Temple Mayor was built to honor the gods Tlaloc and Huitzilopochli. Tlaloc was the god of water, rain, agriculture, and fertility. The Aztecs created the blue and white Northern temple for this god. Huitzilopochli was the god of warfare, fire, sun and sacrifice and the Southern temple of white and red was build for this god. Together, the gods symbolized “burning water” which connoted warfare.

The structure shows the Aztec belief that they could control and influence the cosmos. The spring and autumn equinox rise between the two temples. **Temple Mayor** was believed to be an axis mundi. It sat on the center of the four quadrants of the empire as a small version of the universe. It illustrated power, piety, and place of worship both daily and otherwise. It was the space where sacrifice occurred.

**SUB-IMAGE 1 Coyolxauhqui Stone**

This circular **stone, carved in low relief**, was **originally painted** and measures **11 feet across**. It represents the daughter of the maternal earth deity. The name means bells-on-her-face (golden bells decorate her cheeks). She is shown naked with sagging breasts and a stretched belly to indicate that she was a mother. She is also shown decapitated and dismembered.

The story is arranged in a pinwheel shape. Coyol’s mother Coatlicue becomes pregnant. Coyol is angry and with her 400 brothers, they attack Coatlicue. H emerges fully clothed and armed to defend his mother. He beheads Coyol and throws her body down a great mountain

This Parallels the Aztec cosmos. **Coatlicue (Earth)** gives birth to **H (sun)** who **kills Coyol by slicing her (moon)** while their **siblings (stars)** watch.

This stone is **located at the bottom of the staircase** of the Templo Mayor. By placing this at the bottom, the Aztecs made their temple parallel the mountain. Victims were sacrificed on the top. Then, their bodies were rolled down the staircase to fall atop the Coyol stone and to re-enact this myth. This was a powerful reminder to submit to Aztec authority.

**SUB-IMAGE 2 Calendar Stone**

The **Calendar Stone** is a round, monolithic, low relief sculptural work that measures **12 feet in diameter and weighs 24 tons**. It would have set on the ground or on a table.

This is **not a calendar**, but rather **it records the cosmos** as the Aztecs saw it. Priests used the calendar stone to **determine sacrificial periods**. It shows the authority, religiosity, and responsibility of the Aztecs to continue the cycle of time by continuing sacrifice.

It may have been the stone Aztec priests sacrificed victims on and placed in front of Huitzilopochli’s temple. In the Aztec creation story the gods called for human blood to repay the debt to the gods who sacrificed themselves to create humans. Therefore, human sacrifice was needed. The Aztecs had a cyclical world view in that time repeated and started over. The way to move forward was with sacrifice.

In the center we see Tlaltecuhtli the devouring earth god or Tonatiuh the sun god. The god is wearing earrings. The tongue is a sacrificial blade, and the hands hold a human heart.

Around the image is a sun shape that moves outward. The largest ray of sun points towards the cardinal directions. This is surrounded by a ring of 20 days – the basic unit of the Aztec calendar.

The cosmos was divided into four quadrants. So was Tenochtitlan and Templo Mayor. Other imagery represents different seasonal cycles and representations of gods/goddesses.

**Images of various eras**

* Current era is 5th (symbolized by the central face with four rectangles protruding outward): Called Movement
* Four rectangles show the previous eras
* Jaguar; Wind; Rain; Water shows the ways in which the eras ended
* This world is Movement; we will die by earthquakes; Aztec empire is surrounded by volcanoes and fault lines.

**SUB-IMAGE 3 Olmec-style mask**

This mask is made from jadeite, which is a hard, green stone. Minerally, it is slightly different than jade. The mask was not Aztec or made in Central Mexico but made 1,000 years earlier. It was brought here and was found in **Templo Mayor**, indicating its importance.

Art historians have a theory that it was probably worn around the neck during sacrifice and left at the temple for the gods. It was likely made by a group influenced by the Olmecs (Olmecs decline in 250 BCE or so). The Aztecs likely wanted to affiliate themselves with the Olmecs to draw a parallel between a great empire of the past (Olmecs) and a great empire now (Aztecs). This is just like how European kings constantly made associations between themselves and Roman emperors.

Thousands of objects have been found at the **Templo Mayor**. Some offerings demonstrated the Aztec’s awareness of the historical/cultural traditions of Mesoamerica.

**Context**

Originally, the city Tenochtitlan was established on an island in the middle of Lake Texcoco, which is now Mexico City. Between 1519-1521 it was conquered by the Spaniards. Then it was flattened to build Mexico City upon. This was completed as a sign of European supremacy. It was discovered during an excavation in Mexico City in 1978.

**Sacrifice** was a major theme among Aztec religion. There was a belief was that Huitzilopochli needed energy every day to raise the sun. This required daily sacrifice and the priests would ritually eat the heart to symbolize Huitzilopochli’s intake of the sacrifice. This was used for intimidation for enemies.

**(5) 164.** ***Transformation mask.***

Kwakwaka’wakw, Northwest coast of Canada. Late 19th century. CE.

**Learning Objective:** Native American mask

**Themes:**

Mask

Status

Deities

Animals in art

Religion

Cross-cultural

Ceremony

Technology

Ancestors

Materials with significance

**Museum:** Quai Branly Museum

The ***Transformation mask*** made by **the Kwakwaka’wakw,** in the **Northwest coast of Canada** is designed from **wood, paint, and string.** The wood chosen was **red cedar**, which was readily available, dense, and strong. The **red** color was linked to salmon, blood, sun, and fire, which were all considered sacred. **Traditional colors also included black, white, and green.**

This work was created prior to European contact and carved using hand tools and natural pigments. After European contact, practices changed. Masks were then carved using metal tools. Brighter and synthetic colors were introduced.

The style is referred to as **formline**. The word formline was coined in 1965 to describe the Northwest Coast visual culture. **Masks**, whether opened or closed, were **bilaterally symmetrical**. Here, there is a use of **undulating, calligraphic black line** and the eyes are ovoid shapes.

**How was this Mask Used?**

Masks were worn at **potlatch** or dance/ceremonies, which were performed by firelight and were used for special occasions to show birth, initiation, marriage, and death. They also aided to honor or interact with ancestors or spiritual beings as a **totem** or connection.

At the end of the dance, the mask was opened and it transforms into a different animal. During the potlatch, the dancer is transformed into the spirit represented on the mask.

Masks were part of story telling and were used to re-enact myths describing human origins. Humans were animals who shed their skins and danced to reveal human form. Only men who were initiated into the tribes could wear the mask.

Masks also were a show of social rank and a mark of status by asserting relationships with the spirit world. These objects also displayed the importance of a family or clan and were given as gifts to show wealth and high status.

**The Background Story**

The ***Transformation mask,*** would have been worn with a red cedar bark cloak. Masks were personal to the wearer and the wearer’s family. Figures depicted on them represent the dancer’s ancestral/spiritual counterparts

**A Closer Look at this Mask.**

* **Closed:**
  + Raven head (father’s clan)
    - Ravens are creator of physical world, bringer of light, tricksters (intellectual/secret knowledge but use it to play tricks on others)
* **Open:**
  + Human face and two snakes on each side (snakes: mother’s clan)
    - Snakes: associated with protection of warriors
    - Creation myth referenced with human face inside animal’s head

**Context**

* A 1,000-year-old tradition (9th - 19th c.)
* Introduction of Christianity and colonization of Canada and US affected masking
* Potlatches were banned in 1885 until 1951 by the Canadian government
  + Considered immoral by Christian missionaries who believed cannibalism occurred
  + Many masks were confiscated and destroyed

**TOPIC 5.4 Theories and Interpretations of Indigenous American Art**

Despite underlying similarities, there are key differences between the art of ancient America and Native North America with respect to its dating, environment, cultural continuity from antiquity to the present, and sources of information.

Colonization by different European groups (Catholic and Protestant) undergirds distinct modern political situations for Amerindian survivors. Persecution, genocide, and marginalization have shaped current identity and artistic expression.

**Reconstructing the Art and Culture of Ancient America**

**Archaeological excavation** of works of art, monuments, and cities/sites predating European invasion serves as the mainstay for reconstructing the art and culture of ancient America, although most surviving artworks were not scientifically extracted.

**Spanish chronicles** by invaders, friars, and colonists provide some information about monuments and artistic practices of the last independent indigenous peoples, such as the Inka, Mexica (also known as Aztecs), and Puebloans. These sources can be cautiously applied to earlier cultures’ basic values and approaches.

**Hieroglyphs** of the Mayas and Mexica illuminate text and image, and historical and artistic elements of those cultures. Ethnographic analogy highlights basic cultural continuities so that present traditional practices, myths, and religious beliefs may illuminate past artistic materials, creative processes, and iconography. Other disciplines, such as astronomy, botany, and zoology, help identify siting of cities and monuments, as well as native flora and fauna subject matter. Like all art historical research, work in these areas uses **iconographic and formal analyses of large numbers of artworks** and increasingly employs multidisciplinary collaboration.

**Native North American Sources**

Sources of information for Native North American art include **archaeological excavations** for precontact and colonial cultures, **written ethnohistoric documents**, **tribal history**, (both oral and written), modern artists’ **accounts and interviews**, and **museum records**.

Colonial and modern mistreatment of Native North Americans means that historical information sources may be highly contested. Divergent stories depend on whether native or non-native sources are used. Sometimes the stories converge in a positive way, as in Maria and Julian Martinez’s revival of ancient black-on-black ceramic techniques, which was encouraged by anthropologists.

**(5) 153. Chavín de Huántar.**

Chavín. 900-200 BCE. Chavín.

**Learning Objective:** Chavin religious complex

**Themes:**

Place of worship

Religion

Architecture

Pilgrimage

Hybrid

Deities

Status

Ceremony

Animals in art

Devotional object

Fertility

Site-specific

**Chavín de Huántar** is a **stone** (complex) in the **Andean highlands of Peru** and sits at an **elevation of 10,330 feet.**

**The site is important for three reasons:**

* It sits between eastern and western ranges of the Andes where the landscape moves from desert/beach to jungle, and it is seen as an important zone of transition.
* Located near the confluence of two rivers (Huachesca and Mosna) it is considered a spiritually powerful phenomenon.
* Also, as one of the most elevated sites it is closer to the divine.

**The temple complex is comprised of two buildings:**

**U-shaped Old Temple**

* Open to the east, where the sun rises
* Interior of temple was full of tunnels, called galleries
* Tunnels all existed in total darkness: no windows
* Many smaller tunnels acted as air passageways
* Tunnels, being made of stone, had perfect acoustics

**Rectangular New Temple**

* Also has a rectangular sunken court

**Function**

The temple site is **dedicated to Lanzon god**. This god ensured the harvest, fertility, and abundance was represented in the form of a stele. Lanzon was also known as the smiling god and is often represented smiling.

The temple became **a significant pilgrimage** site across the Chavin empire. The cultural effect of this pilgrimage site was that it became a melting pot of cultures, languages, and art forms. People from all over brought their styles to this site.

**SUB-IMAGE 1 (Lanzon Stela)**

Lanzon god is represented in the form of a stela. The notched shape wedge is over 15 feet tall.

Illustrated as a human-feline hybrid with eyes gazing upward, it has a feline mouth with great fangs.

The **left arm** is down, while the **right arm** raises up with claw-like nails. **Fangs and talons** are associated with the jaguar – the top predator in the Andes. **Eyebrows and hair** of the figure are rendered as snakes in reference to the passage of time.

This work depicts the Lanzon god using **contour rivalry.** Thisis a representational form that uses a complex and deliberately visually confusing style allowing the viewers to see what is there--- only if they know what to look for! This creates a barrier between believers who can see the true form and those who cannot.

The technique uses two images with shared parts or outlines. This was a common technique to delineate “true followers” from the masses.

Located deep within the Old Temple tunnels at the intersection of several galleries, this might have been erected before the building and then the building was built around it.

It is built between the ceiling and floor as to indicate its role as conduit between heaven and earth.

Lanzon means “great spear” or “great blade” in Spanish. This is a reference to the stone’s shape but also the shape of a digging stick used in traditional highland agriculture. No one knows the specifics of the rituals that unfolded in this site.

**SUB-IMAGE 2 (Relief sculpture at Chavin de Huantar)**

Multiple relief panels cover the site. The same iconography **(animal iconography)** and **contour rivalry** was used.

**SUB-IMAGE 3 (Nose ornament at Chavin de Huantar)**

The **serpent motif** is a common form of decoration across the site.

A **nose ornament** pinches or passes through the septum. This one is a clip on. Once on the nose the snakes lay on the cheeks. It was worn to indicate wealth, religion, and affiliation with the Lanzon cult.

**Metallurgy** is a main art form of the Chavin. The gold is formed by hammering and cutting. Gold was believed to transform the wearer. It was considered spiritually powerful. Elite men and women were buried with these.

**About the Chavin**

**Chavin** were a pre-Inca civilization **along the Andes in South America**. They lived in a very diverse, large area of the Andes.

The Chavin were very skilled in metallurgy and in particular, gold. Animals were often depicted into the imagery of deities.

**(5) 156.** **Great Serpent Mound.**

Mississippian (Eastern Woodlands). Earthwork/effigy mound. 1070 CE. Mississippian.

**Learning Objective:** Native American earthwork

**Themes:**

Animals in art

Passage of time

Earthwork

Nature

Site-specific

**Great Serpent Mound** is an earthwork/effigy mound located in **Adams County, southern Ohio**. It measures **1,348 feet long and 3 feet tall**.

**Earthwork** refers to mounds that are deliberately made into **decorative** or representational shapes and **made of earth**. The head is at the northeast. The tail is roughly located in the southwest. There are seven winding coils in between.

**Function**

Essentially, we are looking at a Native American version of Stonehenge. The head aligns with the summer solstice sunset or longest day of the year. Tail points to the winter solstice sunrise or shortest day of the year. The curves of the body parallel lunar phases.

Perhaps this was used to mark time or seasons. Maybe it was made to indicate when to plant and when to harvest. It also may have been used as a kind of compass in alignment with the Pole Star.

The size is significant and must have had some desire to impress or amaze. Consider other large works like *Bayeux Tapestry*, *Night Attack at Sanjo Palace*, *Trajan’s column*. The size shows time, intricacy, power, supremacy.

There were **no burials here**.

**Content**

This one depicts a serpent. Others are smaller but depict bears and deer. **Great Serpent Mound** is the largest serpent sculpture in the world.

The curled snake that has either an open mouth with wide jaw about to eat an egg, or a large, stylized eye. The egg by the head of the serpent is perhaps a representation of the sun. This might also symbolize a solar eclipse (eating the sun). The Shape of the serpent symbolizes the constellation Draco.

**Context**

Agriculture in the Midwest US region led to a population boom. Numerous mounds were made by Native American cultures who lived here. Many were destroyed as white American settlers expanded and Native Americans here did not have written records.

Baffled archaeologists point out the total shape can only be gathered from the air or a high vantage point, neither of which the Indians would have possessed. How exactly would Natives have appreciated it? Why make it so big?

Many native cultures in this region attributed supernatural powers to snakes or reptiles.