

Early Americas (before 1300, pre-contact)

EARLY ART OF NORTH AMERICA (EASTERN AND SOUTHWESTERN)

Key Ideas

- North America had pockets of larger urban areas developing along trading routes or rivers during the Neolithic era. Luxury objects were produced to support prestige and power of leaders. Burial practices included placing status objects in graves, to assist the person in the afterlife.
- Earthworks (mounds) were constructed by early cultures in eastern North America. These mounds were funerary or ceremonial, as well as sometimes defensive.
- Many North American cultures shared a common belief in the spiritual powers embodied in animals, landscape features, and plants, with great respect given to those individuals able to connect to those powers through trances and other rituals. Many cultures also value the concept of harmony, with “neighbors, land, and the cosmos” (Kampen O’Riley, 312).
- Southwestern cultures emphasize crop and water imagery.

TIMELINE for Eastern North America (compilation of Kampen O’Riley and Stokstad)

Archaic (3500-1000 BCE), Woodland (1000 BCE-1000 CE), and Mississippian (700-1500 CE)

Cultures: Spiro, Caddo

- *Birdstone*, Archaic period, slate, 1500-500 BCE (2001.163)
- *Earspools*, Spiro, (Mississippian era) 1100-1400 CE, limestone, shell, and copper (2001.28.1, 2)
- *Pair of gorgets*, Spiro, 1200-1350, shell (91.37.1,2)
- *Bottle and Jar*, Caddo, 1100-1300, ceramic (89.17 and 90.2.7)
- *Pipe*, Mississippian, c. 1200, stone (2004.118)

TIMELINE for Southwestern North America (from Kampen O’Riley)

Basketmaker (100 CE-700 CE) and Pueblo (700 to present) (southwestern North America)

Cultures: Hohokam, Mimbres, and Ancestral Puebloan

- *Pot (Olla)*, Ancient Puebloan, c. 1000-1300 (90.106)
- *Bowl*, Hohokam, clay and pigment, 900-1200 (2004.71)
- *Bowls*, Mimbres, ceramic and pigment, 1000-1150 (2014.97.4 and 2014.97.1)

Terms

Pre-Columbian: Before the arrival of Columbus.

Maize: Corn.

Effigy mound: Mound constructed in a shape of an animal (see Serpent Mound, p. 316 Kampen O’Riley).

Gorget: Ornament worn on the chest.

Kiva: Circular-shaped male council house.

Shaman: Individual able to transcend through ritual to the spirit world.

EARLY ART OF MESOAMERICA, PACIFIC COAST REGION, AND CENTRAL AMERICA (INCLUDING ISTHMUS REGION)

Key Ideas

- Development of large-scale urban areas, kingdoms, and empires is marked by monumental stone sculpture and architecture. Pyramid and plaza architecture allowed spectators to see religious ceremonies.
- Astronomy, complex calendrical systems, and sophisticated mathematics develop throughout Mesoamerica. The Maya invent a complete system of hieroglyphic writing.
- The Mesoamerican ballgame is more than a game, reflecting deep spiritual beliefs.
- Cultures are polytheistic. Belief exists in the afterlife and a spirit world, and blood/human sacrifice is seen as necessary for continued survival in Mesoamerica.

TIMELINE (general, for Maya. See textbook for each separate culture)

Preclassic: 1200 BCE to 250 CE

Classic: 250-900

Postclassic: 900 to c. 1520

Pacific Coast Region: Colima and Nayarit

- *Tripod vessel*, Colima, 300 BCE-CE 100, ceramic (92.85.20)
- *Dog*, Colima, 100-300, ceramic (99.57.3)
- *House group*, Nayarit, 200 BCE-CE 400, ceramic (47.2.37)
- *Figure (woman)*, Nayarit, 1st-2nd century, ceramic (47.2.30)

Mesoamerica: Olmec, Teotihuacan, Maya, and Veracruz

- *Mask*, Olmec (Mexico), 900- 300 BCE, jadeite and cinnabar (2002.127)
- *Standing male figure*, Olmec, 100 BCE-CE 100, serpentine, (73.44, not on view)
- *Hacha*, Veracruz, El Tajin, 600-900, stone (64.26)
- *Ballgame yoke*, Veracruz, El Tajin, 600-900 CE, stone (41.72)
- *Rattle in the form of a ballplayer*, Veracruz, El Tajin, 600-750, ceramic (47.2.9)
- *Maskette*, Maya, 550-900, jade (2004.104.1)
- *Chocolate pot*, Maya, 750, ceramic (97.92.6)
- *Plate*, Maya, 550-900, ceramic (97.92.4)
- *Vase with monkeys*, Maya, 450-700, ceramic (2000.195)
- *Serving vessel*, Maya, 600-900, ceramic (80.8a, b)

Central America and the Isthmus Region: Veraguas, Chorotega, and Guanacaste

- *Olla*, Chorotega, Ceramic, 300-799 (73.17)
- *Figure*, Chorotega, ceramic, 300-799 (73.16.3)
- *Tripod vessel*, Guanacaste, 1100-1200, ceramic (46.3.6)
- *Metates*, Costa Rica (no culture listed), 1-500, volcanic stone, (97.92.5 [not on view] and X95.12)
- *Breast plaque*, Veraguas, 800-1500, gold (53.2.5)
- *Pendant*, Veraguas, 800-1200, gold (63.34a, b)

Terms

Hacha: An ornament that attached to a ceremonial ballplayer yoke.

Metate: A grinding stone.

Autosacrifice: Giving your own blood.

Chacmool: A sculpture representing a fallen warrior.

Popol Vuh: Maya creation story.

Codex: A folded book, typically made of bark paper.

Stela: Freestanding slab of stone.

EARLY ART OF SOUTH AMERICA, THE ANDEAN REGION

Key Ideas

- Complex hierarchical societies with rich and varied artistic traditions, with especially sophisticated development of weaving (textiles).
- Development of monumental architecture.
- Religious significance given to the features and inhabitants of the natural environment (sun, stars, animals, birds, mountains, caves, rivers).
- Detailed observation and recording of astronomical phenomena.
- Cult of the dead (burial and belief in the afterlife).

TIMELINE for Andean region (from Kampen O'Riley)

Early Horizon: 1000-200 BCE

Early Intermediate: 200 BCE to 600 CE

Middle Horizon: 600 to 1000

Late Intermediate: 1000-1400

Cultures: Chavín, Paracas, Nazca, Chimú, and Moche

- *Stirrup vessels*, Chavín (Peru), 1400-500 BCE, ceramic, 77.59.5 and 2001.198.7 (not on view)
- *Double Spout Vessel*, Paracas (Peru), 900-200 BCE, ceramic and pigment (2002.58.2)
- *Fish*, Nazca, 100 BCE-CE 600, ceramic (44.3.59)
- *Fineline vessel with runners*, Moche, 400-600, ceramic (44.41.1)
- *Ear spools*, Chimú, 1150-1450, gold alloy, 43.4.1, 2

Terms

Warp: Vertical threads in a loom.

Weft: Horizontal threads in a loom

Geoglyph: Earth drawing.

Additional Resources

Here's the YouTube link to the complete documentary of Maria Martinez making pottery:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SkUGm87DE0k>

This is a wonderful online resource outlining some important points about Pre-Columbian objects, from Ball State University. Their collection has similar types of objects within our own Mia collection:

<https://cms.bsu.edu/>

[/media/WWW/DepartmentalContent/ArtMuseum/PDF/ArtCultureLatinAmericaWEB](https://cms.bsu.edu/media/WWW/DepartmentalContent/ArtMuseum/PDF/ArtCultureLatinAmericaWEB)

An online exhibition from the National Gallery of Art details the Courtly Art of the Ancient Maya:

<http://www.nga.gov/exhibitions/2004/maya/lifeatcourt.htm>

There was a great documentary done on the decoding of the Maya hieroglyphs:

Cracking the Code and *Breaking the Maya Code* (both the same story, but the *Cracking the Code* documentary is only one hour).