THE 250

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GUIDE TO

THE ART OF AP® ART HISTORY

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INDIGENOUS AMERICAS

AFRICA

WEST AND CENTRAL ASIA

Smarthistory guide to AP® Art History (volume four: 153-191)

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Smarthistory • Brooklyn

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Beth is co-founder and executive director of Smarthistory. Previously, she was dean of art and history at Khan Academy and director of digital learning at The Museum of Modern Art, where she started MoMA Courses Online and co-produced educational videos, websites and apps. Before joining MoMA, Beth was Associate Professor of art history and director of distance learning at the Fashion Institute of Technology where she taught both online and in the classroom. She has co-authored, with Dr. Steven Zucker, numerous articles on the future of education and the future of museums, topics she regularly addresses at conferences around the world. She received her Master's degree from the Courtauld Institute of Art in London, and her doctorate in Art History from the Graduate Center of the City University of New York.

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Indigenous Americas 1000 B.C.E.-1980 C.E.

153. Chavín de Huántar

Dr. Sarahh Scher

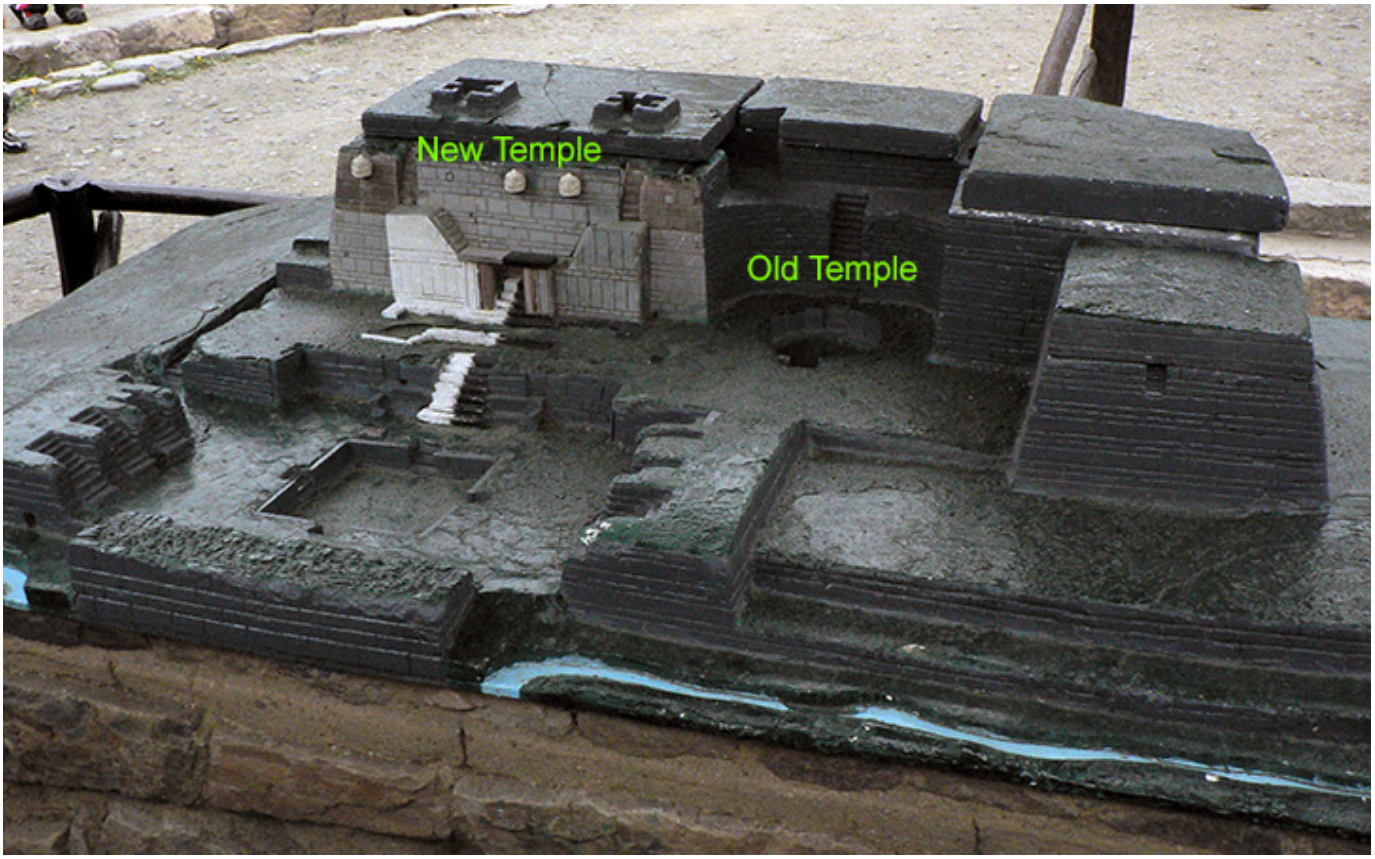
Archaeological site of Chavín de Huántar (photo: Sharon odb, <https://commons. wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chav%C3%ADn_de_Hu%C3%A1ntar.JPG> CC BY-SA 3.0)

Chavín de Huántar is an archaeological and cultural site in the Andean highlands of Peru. Once thought to be the birthplace of an ancient "mother culture," the modern understanding is more nuanced. The cultural expressions found at Chavín most likely did not originate in that place, but can be seen as coming into their full force there. The visual legacy of Chavín would persist long after the site's decline in approximately 200 B.C.E., with motifs and stylistic elements traveling to the southern highlands and to the coast. The location of Chavín seems to have helped make it a special place—the temple built there became an important pilgrimage site that drew people and their offerings from far and wide.

At 10,330 feet (3150 meters) in elevation, it sits between the eastern (Cordillera Negra—snowless) and western (Cordillera Blanca—snowy) ranges of the Andes, near two of the few mountain passes that allow passage between the desert coast to the west and the Amazon jungle to the east. It is also located near the confluence of the Huachesca and Mosna Rivers, a natural phenomenon of two joining into one that may have been seen as a spiritually powerful phenomenon.

Map showing location of Chavín de Huántar (Imagery ©2015 Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO, Landsat, Map Data ©2015 Google)

Over the course of 700 years, the site drew many worshipers to its temple who helped in spreading the artistic style of Chavín throughout highland and coastal Peru by transporting ceramics, textiles, and other portable objects back to their homes.



Model of the temple at Chavín de Huántar archaeological site. Peru, 900–200 B.C.E. (photo: Sarahh Scher, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

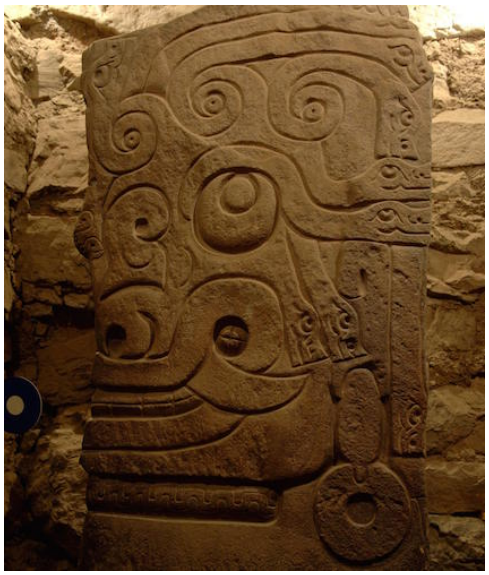
The temple complex that stands today is comprised of two building phases: the U-shaped Old Temple, built around 900 B.C.E., and the New Temple (built approximately 500 B.C.E.), which expanded the Old Temple and added a rectangular sunken court. The majority of the structures used roughly-shaped stones in many sizes to compose walls and floors. Finer smoothed stone was used for carved elements. From its first construction, the interior of the temple was riddled with a multitude of tunnels, called galleries. While some of the maze-like galleries are connected with each other, some are separate. The galleries all existed in darkness—there are no windows in them, although there are many smaller tunnels that allow for air to pass throughout the structure. Archaeologists are still studying the meaning and use of these galleries and vents, but exciting new explorations are examining the acoustics of these structures, and how they may have projected sounds from inside the temple to pilgrims in the plazas outside. It is possible that the whole building spoke with the voice of its god.

The god for whom the temple was constructed was represented in the Lanzón, a notched wedge-shaped stone over 15 feet tall, carved with the image of a supernatural being, and located deep within the Old Temple, intersecting several galleries.

Lanzón means “great spear” in Spanish, in reference to the stone’s shape, but a better comparison would be the shape of the digging stick used in traditional highland agriculture. That shape would seem to indicate that the deity’s power was ensuring successful planting and harvest.

Lanzón Stela, Building B, Chavín de Huántar (photo: Cyark, CC BY-SA 3.0) <http://archive.cyark.org/photograph-of-the-lanzon-stela-inside-building-b-1-media>

The Lanzón depicts a standing figure with large round eyes looking upward. Its mouth is also large, with bared teeth and protruding fangs. The figure's left hand rests pointing down, while the right is raised upward, encompassing the heavens and the earth. Both hands have long, talon-like fingernails. A carved channel runs from the top of the Lanzón to the figure's forehead, perhaps to receive liquid offerings poured from one of the intersecting galleries.



Detail of carving, Lanzón Stela, Building B, Chavín de Huántar (photo: Cyark, CC BY-SA 3.0)

Two key elements characterize the Lanzón deity: it is a mixture of human and animal features, and the representation favors a complex and visually confusing style. The fangs and talons most likely indicate associations with the jaguar and the caiman—apex predators from the jungle lowlands that are seen elsewhere in Chavín art and in Andean iconography. The eyebrows and hair of the figure have been rendered as snakes, making them read as both bodily features and animals.

Further visual complexities emerge in the animal heads that decorate the bottom of the figure's tunic, where two heads share a single fanged mouth. This technique, where two images share parts or outlines, is called contour rivalry, and in Chavín art it creates a visually complex style that is deliberately confusing, creating a barrier between believers who can see its true form and those outside the cult who cannot. While the Lanzón itself was hidden deep in the temple and probably only seen by priests, the same iconography and contour rivalry was used in Chavín art on the outside of the temple and in portable wares that have been found throughout Peru

Drawing of the Lanzon at Chavín de Huántar (Richard Burger and Luis Caballero)

Nose Ornament, c. 500-200 B.C.E., Peru, North Highlands, Chavín de Huántar, hammered and cut gold, 2.3 cm high (Cleveland Museum of Art)

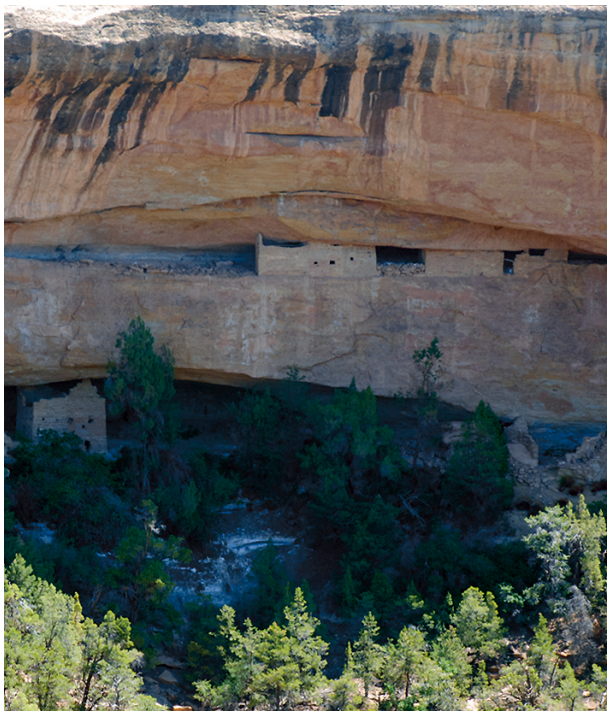
The serpent motif seen in the Lanzón is also visible in a nose ornament in the collection of the Cleveland Museum of Art (above). This kind of nose ornament, which pinches or passes through the septum, is a common form in the Andes. The two serpent heads flank right and left, with the same upward-looking eyes as the Lanzón. The swirling forms beneath them also evoke the sculpture's eye shape. An ornament like this would have been worn by an elite person to show not only their wealth and power but their allegiance to the Chavín religion. Metallurgy in the Americas first developed in South America before traveling north, and objects such as this that combine wealth and religion are among the earliest known examples. This particular piece was formed by hammering and cutting the gold, but Andean artists would develop other forming techniques over time.

154. Mesa Verde Cliff Dwellings

Dr. Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank

Wanted: stunning view

Imagine living in a home built into the side of a cliff. The Ancestral Puebloan peoples (formerly known as the Anasazi) did just that in some of the most remarkable structures still in existence today. Beginning after 1000-1100 C.E., they built more than 600 structures (mostly residential but also for storage and ritual) into the cliff faces of the Four Corners region of the United States (the southwestern corner of Colorado, northwestern corner of New Mexico, northeastern corner of Arizona, and the southeastern corner of Utah). The dwellings depicted here are located in what is today southwestern Colorado in the national park known as Mesa Verde ("verde" is Spanish for green and "mesa" literally means table in Spanish but here refers to the flat-topped mountains common in the southwest).



Cliff dwellings, Ancestral Puebloan, 450–1300 C.E., sandstone, Mesa Verde National Park, (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/seWDvo>

Ladder to Balcony House, Mesa Verde National Park (photo: Ken Lund, CC BY-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/8oGou6>

View of a canyon, Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado (photo: cfcheever, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/8umQL7>

The most famous residential sites date to the twelfth- and thirteenth centuries. The Ancestral Puebloans accessed these dwellings with retractable ladders, and if you are sure footed and not afraid of heights, you can still visit some of these sites in the same way today.

To access Mesa Verde National Park, you drive up to the plateau along a winding road. People come from around the world to marvel at the natural beauty of the area as well as the archaeological remains, making it a popular tourist destination.

The twelfth and thirteenth-century structures made of stone, mortar, and plaster remain the most intact. We often see traces of the people who constructed these buildings, such as hand or fingerprints in many of the mortar and plaster walls.

Ancestral Puebloans occupied the Mesa Verde region from about 450 C.E. to 1300 C.E. The inhabited region encompassed a far larger geographic area than is defined now by the national park, and included other residential sites like Hovenweep National Monument and Yellow Jacket Pueblo. Not everyone lived in cliff dwellings. Yellow Jacket Pueblo was also much larger than any site at Mesa Verde. It had 600–1200 rooms, and 700 people likely lived there. In contrast, only about 125 people lived in Cliff Palace (largest of the Mesa Verde sites), but the cliff dwellings are certainly among the best-preserved buildings from this time.

Cliff Palace, Ancestral Puebloan, 450–1300 C.E., sandstone, Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/rZMnZD>

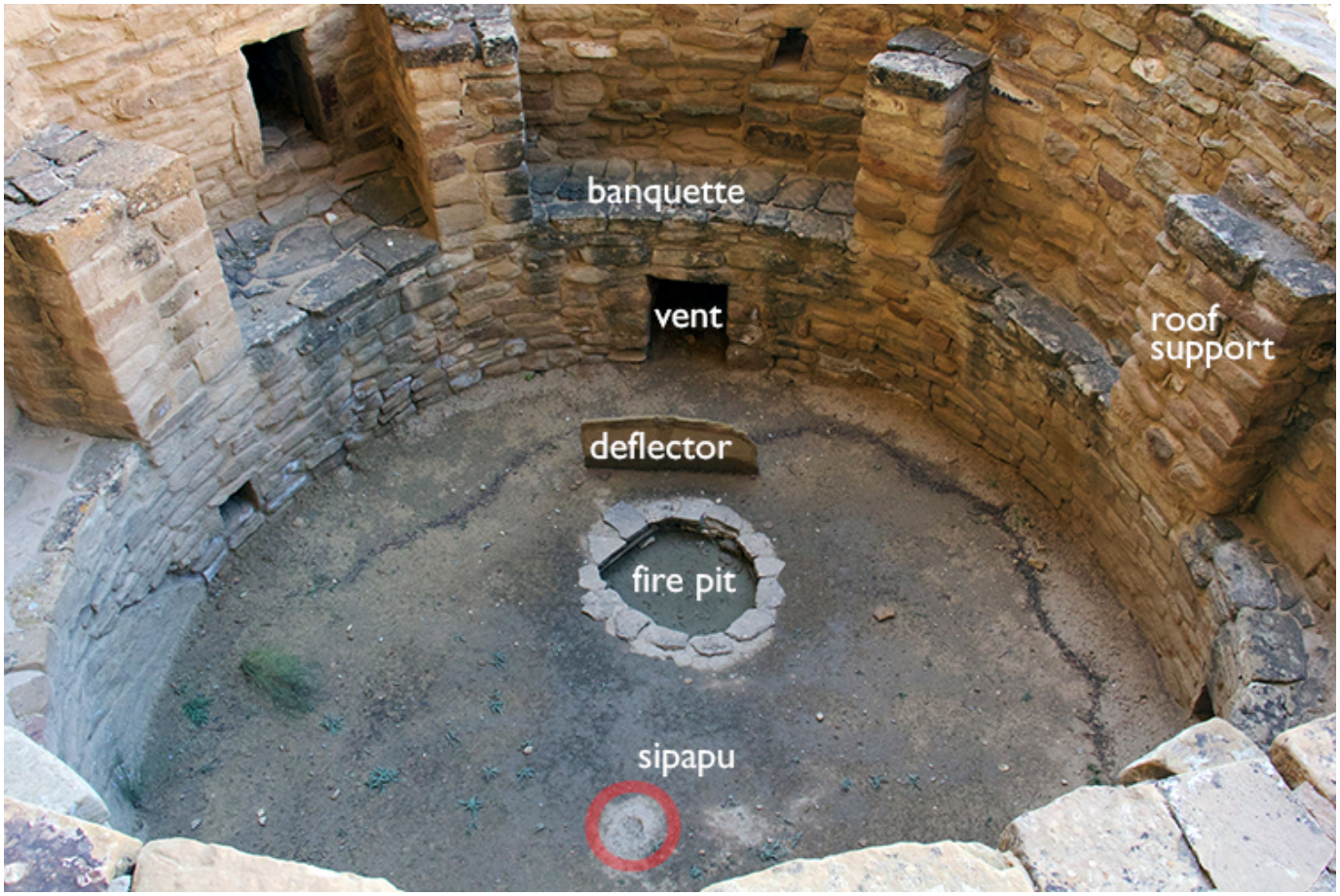
View of Cliff Palace structures, Mesa Verde (photo: Paul Middleton, Shadow Dancer Images, CC BY-NC 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/gzVwUW>

Cliff palace

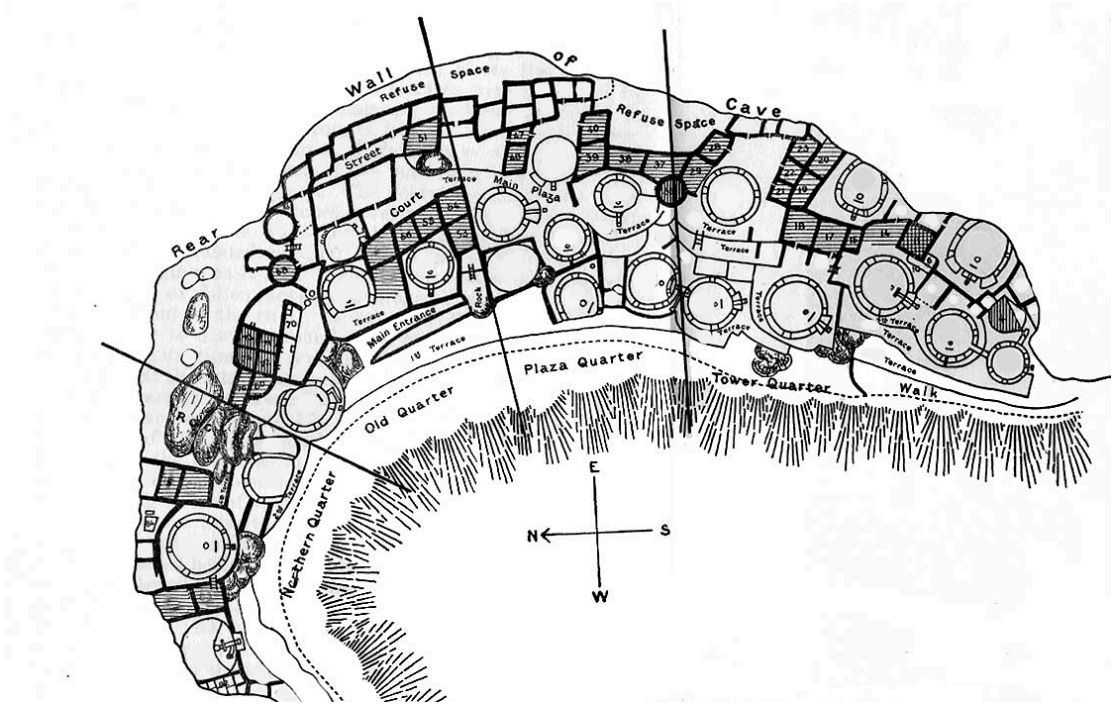
The largest of all the cliff dwellings, Cliff Palace, has about 150 rooms and more than twenty circular rooms. Due to its location, it was well protected from the elements. The buildings ranged from one to four stories, and some hit the natural stone "ceiling." To build these structures, people used stone and mud mortar, along with wooden beams adapted to the natural clefts in the cliff face. This building technique was a shift from earlier structures in the Mesa Verde area, which, prior to 1000 C.E., had been made primarily of adobe (bricks made of clay, sand and straw or sticks). These stone and mortar buildings, along with the decorative elements and objects found inside them, provide important insights into the lives of the Ancestral Puebloan people during the thirteenth century.

At sites like Cliff Palace, families lived in architectural units, organized around kivas (circular, subterranean rooms). A kiva typically had a wood-beamed roof held up by six engaged support columns made of masonry above a shelf-like banquette. Other typical features of a kiva include a firepit (or hearth), a ventilation shaft, a deflector (a low wall designed to prevent air drawn from the ventilation shaft from reaching the fire directly), and a *sipapu*, a small hole in the floor that is ceremonial in purpose. They developed from the pithouse, also a circular, subterranean room used as a living space.

Kivas continue to be used for ceremonies today by Puebloan peoples though not those within Mesa Verde National Park. In the past, these circular spaces were likely both ceremonial and residential. If you visit Cliff Palace, you will see the kivas without their roofs (see below), but in the past, they would have been covered, and the space around them would have functioned as a small plaza.



Kiva without a roof, Cliff Palace, Mesa Verde National Park (photo: Adam Lederer, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/gfGomV>



Cliff Palace plan with circular kivas (National Park Service)

Kiva at Spruce Tree House, Mesa Verde National Park (photo: Doug Kerr, CC BY-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/cGKoDS>

Connected rooms fanned out around these plazas, creating a housing unit. One room, typically facing onto the plaza, contained a hearth. Family members most likely gathered here. Other rooms located off the hearth were most likely storage rooms, with just enough of an opening to squeeze your arm through a hole to grab anything you might need. Cliff Palace also features some unusual structures, including a circular tower. Archaeologists are still uncertain as to the exact use of the tower.

Mural 30, Cliff Palace, Mesa Verde National Park (photo: National Park Service)

Painted murals

The builders of these structures plastered and

painted murals, although what remains today is fairly fragmentary. Some murals display geometric designs, while other murals represent animals and plants.

For example, Mural 30, on the third floor of a rectangular "tower" (more accurately a room block) at Cliff Palace, is painted red against a white wall. The mural includes geometric shapes that are thought to portray the landscape. It is similar to murals inside of other cliff dwellings including Spruce Tree House and Balcony House. Scholars have suggested that the red band at the bottom symbolizes the earth while the lighter portion of the wall symbolizes the sky. The top of the red band, then, forms a kind of horizon line that separates the two. We recognize what look like triangular peaks, perhaps mountains on the horizon line. The rectangular element in the sky might relate to clouds, rain or to the sun and moon. The dotted lines might represent cracks in the earth.

Mugs found at Mesa Verde (photo: by the author, Mesa Verde Museum)

The creators of the murals used paint produced from clay, organic materials, and minerals. For instance, the red color came from hematite (red ocher). The blue pigment could be turquoise or azurite, while black was often derived from charcoal. Along with the complex architecture and mural painting, the Ancestral Puebloan peoples produced black-on-white ceramics and turquoise and shell jewelry (goods were imported from afar including shell and other types of pottery). Many of these high-quality objects and their materials demonstrate the close relationship these people had to the landscape. Notice, for example, how the geometric designs on the mugs above appear similar to those in Mural 30 at Cliff Palace.

Why build here?

From 500–1300 C.E., Ancestral Puebloans who lived at Mesa Verde were sedentary farmers and cultivated beans, squash, and corn. Corn originally came from what is today Mexico at some point during the first millennium of the Common Era. Originally most farmers lived near their crops, but this shifted in the late 1100s when people began to live near sources of water, and often had to walk longer distances to their crops.

New Fire House, Masa Verde National Park (photo: Ken Lund, CC BY-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/8opqwt>

So why move up to the cliff alcoves at all, away from water and crops? Did the cliffs provide protection from invaders? Were they defensive or were there other issues at play? Did the rock ledges have a ceremonial or spiritual significance? They certainly provide shade and

protection from snow. Ultimately, we are left only with educated guesses—the exact reasons for building the cliff dwellings remain unknown to us.

Why were the cliffs abandoned?

The cliff dwellings at Mesa Verde were abandoned around 1300 C.E. After all the time and effort it took to build these beautiful dwellings, why did people leave the area? Cliff Palace was built in the twelfth century, why was it abandoned less than a hundred years later? These questions have not been answered conclusively, though it is likely that the migration from this area was due to either drought, lack of resources, violence or some combination of these. We know, for instance, that droughts occurred from 1276 to 1299. These dry periods likely caused a shortage of food and may have resulted in confrontations as resources became more scarce. The cliff dwellings remain, though, as compelling examples of how the Ancestral Puebloans literally carved their existence into the rocky landscape of today's southwestern United States.

154. Mesa Verde Cliff Dwellings

A CONVERSATION

Dr. Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank and Dr. Steven Zucker

This is a transcript of a conversation conducted at Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado.

Cliff Palace, Ancestral Puebloan, 12th century C.E., sandstone, Mesa Verde National Park, CO (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/rZEuQh>

Steven: Mesa Verde is one of the most spectacular archaeological sites in the world.

Lauren: It's the largest archaeological site in the United States. There are more than 4,300 sites and more than 600 cliff dwellings.

Steven: …which draws upwards to half a million visitors every year. The topography is spectacular—flat-topped mesas with deep, steep ravines and human settlements were built both on top of the mesas but also along the cliffs. We think this site was inhabited for centuries but ultimately it was abandoned.

Lauren: The Ancestral Puebloans who have lived at Mesa Verde are the ancestors of the Pueblo peoples that you find in the American Southwest today.

Steven: And there are certain continuities. Modern Puebloans are well known for their ceramics, for their basket weaving. These are traditions that we can trace back to these more ancient people.

Lauren: People who were living in Mesa Verde and in other parts of the Four Corners region; they were trading extensively with peoples, not just within the American Southwest region, but you find evidence for trade south into what is today Mexico, what we called back then "Mesoamerica."

Steven: This is so interesting because we think of the border between the United States and Mexico as a hard line, and we often differentiate peoples from Mesoamerica from Native North American peoples, but that border is political and modern and was not in existence. These Ancestral Puebloans built these extraordinary structures, full-scale cities.

Lauren: If we're talking about the cliff dwellings, they're set into the face of the cliff and they are built using stone but also mud and various other organic materials, but what this means is that people have to constantly maintain these types of structures.

Spruce Tree House, Ancestral Puebloan, 12th century C.E., sandstone, Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado (photo: Ken Luns, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/85Hzep>

Steven: Because although they're set within the cliff face, they are still exposed. Archaeologists believe that by the year 1300, most of these sites were abandoned, and there were various competing theories as to why this took place.

Lauren: Maybe there were problems with the weather that was forcing them to move, maybe it was water access. We're not entirely sure what caused people to abandon Mesa Verde. What we do know is that largely after 1300, most of these cliff dwellings are no longer in use, meaning that they are not being maintained.

Steven: Fast forward to the modern world and to modern tourism, and you have stressors on these structures that are not only the result of lack of maintenance, but now also heavy foot and vehicle traffic.

Lauren: Stabilization issues are some of the main problems facing the conservation and preservation of places like Cliff Palace. Many of these cliff dwellings don't have permanent foundations because they're set into the face of the cliff, and so with the heavy foot traffic, with extreme weather, particularly heat, that is affecting the site, as well as things like pollution, you have structures that are cracking or falling apart. At Cliff Palace, in 2011, one of the kivas collapsed, and as of 2015, because of dangerous rock falls, Spruce Tree House is no longer open to the public.

Spruce Tree House in 2009, Cliff Palace, Ancestral Puebloan, 12th century C.E., sandstone, Mesa Verde National Park, CO (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/85LHTU>

Steven: But tourism is only one part of the stress that Mesa Verde is facing. Forest fires have also posed a major environmental threat.

Lauren: Fires in the late 1990s and the early 2000s destroyed almost half of the park. Even though they were responsible for destroying various local flora and fauna, the fires did help to uncover a very large number of unknown sites. So the site is facing a lot of stressors. The rediscovery of Mesa Verde occurred in the late nineteenth century, when cattle ranchers discovered Mesa Verde in the winter. Now we

know that they were not the first people here, since it was abandoned.

Steven: And, of course, Native American peoples in the area knew about these structures.

Lauren: But what happened with these cattle ranchers is, they kicked off this desire for people who were interested in the past of this area, and the so-called "exploration" and "excavation" of Mesa Verde.

Steven: One could call that exploration a type of looting.

Lauren: People were stealing things, they were camping out in some of the dwellings. There was basically nothing in place to protect Mesa Verde. We know, for instance, in the late nineteenth century, there was someone who took artifacts and human remains back to Sweden, and this brings us back to the problems with some of the excavations or the looting that took place from the late-nineteenth century and into the twentieth century. There were people who stepped in to try to conserve and to prevent further damage, and one of the most important individuals for this was Jesse Walter Fewkes of the Smithsonian, who had done excavations in the American Southwest, and he was writing about the need to have some type of rules or legislature in place that would help to stop the destruction of places like Mesa Verde.

Cliff Palace, Ancestral Puebloan, 12th century C.E., sandstone, Mesa Verde National Park, CO (photo: Ken Luns, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/8ot4Mj>

Steven: But even as the dwellings themselves were being secured, archaeological excavations were continuing that were unearthing human remains that we now realize should have remained in place. In 1990, a law was passed that goes by the acronym NAGPRA.

Lauren: NAGPRA stands for the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.

Steven: And what that did is to give legal standing to the idea that museums and other cultural institutions that held Native American human remains should return those to communities that had some connection to those original peoples.

Lauren: There were also sacred objects, maybe objects that were not intended to ever be on display for certain peoples, ones that were intended to accompany the dead into the grave and what NAGPRA did was allow different groups, tribes, first nations to receive these objects and human remains and to rebury them properly.

Steven: The human remains were reburied in a private ceremony in 2006.

Lauren: And also grave goods that had been in collections were reburied in the ceremony, and it was over the course of 12 years and in association with 24 different tribes that all of these human remains and goods were collected to be reburied.

Steven: So Mesa Verde remains a tremendously popular tourist site, but it's also a land through which we can understand the difficulties of preserving a historical site that remains central to the culture, the history, and the interests of contemporary native communities.

Watch the video <https://youtu.be/ifY8gBIonAc>.

Cliff Palace, Ancestral Puebloan, 12th century C.E., sandstone, Mesa Verde National Park, CO (photo: Ron Cogswell, CC BY-2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/fAbQqB>

155. Yaxchilán lintel 25, structure 23

Dr. Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank

Near the Usumacinta River in Chiapas (photo: Daniel Mennerich, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/f5SsqG>

Floating down the Usumacinta River in southeastern Mexico and northwestern Guatemala, various Maya sites materialize out of the dense jungle, some rising above the canopy and others subsumed by a tangle of green growth. One such site is Yaxchilán (pronounced Yash-chee-LAN) located in Chiapas, Mexico (close to the border of Guatemala) between the famous Maya cities of Copán and Palenque. The site is host to an impressive number of structures and monuments—over 100—and is especially famous for its high-quality relief carvings.

Yaxchilán's ruling dynasty rose in the fourth century C.E., but its heyday followed several hundred years later (during what art historians call the Classic period), with Lord Shield Jaguar II who ruled for 60 years beginning in 681. He commissioned some of the most famous sculptural works at the site. His son and heir, Bird Jaguar IV, continued this tradition. Some of the most impressive Maya buildings and sculptures were created during this late-Classic period before the city-state collapsed in the ninth century.

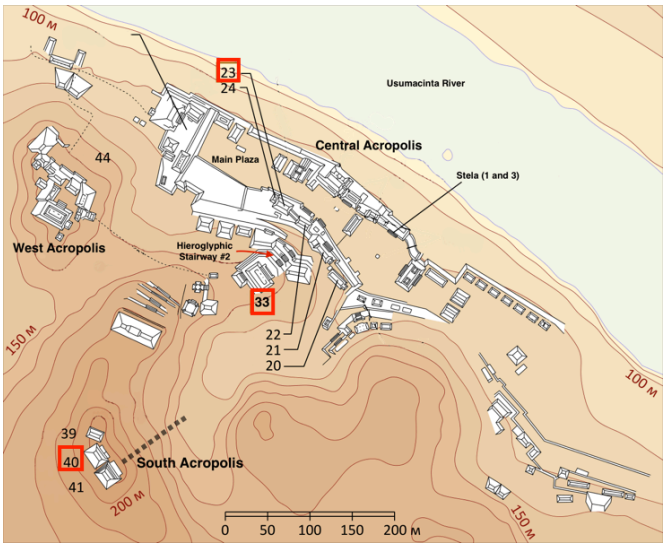
Map of Maya sites (source, CC BY-SA 3.0) <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Mayamap.png>

Structure 23: Royal Life and Power

Shield Jaguar II's commissions at Yaxchilán's central complex of buildings (called the Central Acropolis) include carved lintels <https://c1.staticflickr.com/1/544/19852482344_650de29053_b.jpg> (the beam at the top of a doorway), stairs faced with hieroglyphic writing, and stele (upright wood or stone slab monuments).

Some of the most famous lintels are those on Structure 23—a *yotoot*(palace building) showing Shield Jaguar II's wife, Lady K'abal Xook. Anyone entering Structure 23 would pass underneath the limestone lintels <https://c1.staticflickr.com/1/379/1879388 1605_cbc4c596d0_b. jpg> when entering the doorways; the lintels are thus situated in a liminal space between exterior and interior.

Before the construction of Structure 23, there was a hiatus in building at Yaxchilán for about 150 years. This building's construction is therefore important, and so too are the individuals it showcases. But why focus on Lady Xook rather than Shield Jaguar II exclusively? It might be that the ruler wanted to promote his lineage and power through his principal wife (who had more prestige than his other wives). Structure 23 is therefore important not only for advertising Shield Jaguar II's power, but also for highlighting the important role of royal women in Maya culture. Other relief sculptures, such as Lintel 45 on Structure 44 <https://c1.staticflickr.com/1/379/18793881605_cbc4c596d0_b.jpg>, show Shield Jaguar II with war captives to commemorate his victory in battles against rival city-states.



Map of Yaxchilán (source, CC BY-SA 4.0)

Three important lintels

The three lintels on Structure 23—known as lintels 24, 25, and 26—depict different ritual moments in the life of Lady Xook. While they appear to have been carved years apart from one another, they seem to show a narrative. Note: the monuments and objects uncovered at Yaxchilán are numbered in the order in which they were found—so Lintel 1 is not the oldest, but rather the first to be excavated by archaeologists.

Lintel 24

On Lintel 24, Lady Xook pulls a thorned cord through her tongue so that she can bleed onto paper that fills a basket <http://smarthistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/bloodbasket2. jpg> on the ground before her. She is engaged in bloodletting—the ritual shedding of blood. Her husband, Shield Jaguar II, holds a lit torch above her. The glyphs (writing) on the top note Lady Xook's titles, and mention that the events depicted occurred on 28 October 709 C.E.

Lintel 24, Structure 23, Yaxchilán (Maya) (The British Museum) (view a diagram of this relief and locate this relief on a map <https://www.peabody.harvard.edu/cmhi/detail.php?num=24&site=Yaxchilan&type=Lintel>)

Lady Xook pulls a thorned cord through her tongue (detail), Lintel 24, Structure 23, Yaxchilán (Maya) (The British Museum)

Lintel 25 & 26

Lintel 25 (below)—from the central doorway—also focuses on a bloodletting ritual carried out by Lady Xook. Bloodletting was a common ritual among elites and it is one of the most frequent subjects in Maya art. A ruler or other elites (including women), would let blood to honor and feed the gods, at the dedication ceremony of a building, when children were born, or other occasions. Rulers needed to shed blood in order to maintain order in the cosmos. The ruler was believed to be a descendent of the gods, and the act of bloodletting was of critical importance in maintaining their power and order in the community. Bloodletting was also an act related to rebirth and rejuvenation.

Lintel 25, Structure 23, Yaxchilán (Maya) (The British Museum) (view a diagram of this relief and locate this relief on a map <https://www.peabody.harvard.edu/cmhi/detail.php?num=25&site=Yaxchilan&type=Lintel>)

On Lintel 25 (below), the effects of bloodletting are on display. The loss of blood and the burning of incense produced hallucinations, which were desired in certain ritual contexts to access other realms. In this lintel, Lady Xook (in the lower right) kneels before a vision serpent, from whose mouth emerges a figure. Look closely at the detail below. Lady Xook holds a bowl in her left hand while she looks up towards the rising serpent. In addition to her patterned *huipil* (square-cut blouse), Lady Xook is festooned with a headdress, elaborate bracelets, earrings, and a necklace—likely made of jade. In the bowl are pieces of paper stained with her blood. She has likely burned the paper to allow the blood to ascend to the gods, and to bring about the vision serpent.

Lady Xook (detail), Lintel 25, Structure 23, Yaxchilán (Maya) (The British Museum)

In the image below, you can see that the figure emerging from the vision serpent's mouth is armed with a shield, spear and a war helmet. He, too, wears an elaborate headdress, a breastplate, and ear spools. The identity of this figure is debated; some scholars claim it is an ancestral figure while others believe it is Shield Jaguar II or perhaps even Lady Xook.

Figure emerges from the mouth of a vision serpent (detail), Lintel 25, Structure 23, Yaxchilán (Maya) (The British Museum)

A glyphic inscription (oddly, written backward) in the upper left corner of Lintel 25 notes the date of Shield Jaguar II's ascension to the throne in October 681. The image and the inscription both reinforce the reign of the ruler and his dynastic ties, in this case via his wife.

Lintel 26, Structure 23, Yaxchilán (Maya) represents Lady Xook helping to dress her husband for battle (Museo Nacional de Antropologia, Mexico) (view a diagram of this relief and locate this relief on a map <https://www.peabody.harvard.edu/cmhi/detail.php?num=26&site=Yaxchilan&type=Lintel#>)

Skilled carving

The lintels exemplify the skilled carving of Maya artists at Yaxchilán—and the Maya more generally. The scenes are carved in high relief with carefully incised details decorating the raised surfaces. A beautiful diamond pattern decorates Lady Xook's *huipil*, for instance, in Lintel 24.

Diamond pattern on Lady Xook's huipil (detail), Lintel 24, Structure 23, Yaxchilán (Maya) (The British Museum)

The contour and incised lines of the lintels possess a calligraphic quality as if they were drawn or painted rather than carved. Such careful attention to detail as well as the formal qualities of the line compared to other Maya sculptures, as well as vase painting and murals.

The Yaxchilán lintels were originally painted, although only traces remain, including red on Lady Xook's clothing and the brilliant Maya blue color on the background of Lintel 24.

Structures 33 and 40: Royal Dynasties and Legitimizing Rule

Also located within the Central Acropolis near Structure 23, Structure 33 (dedicated around 756 C.E.) is a wonderful example of Maya Classic architecture, particularly of the Usumacinta and Peten region or "style" as some would call it. It was most likely built by Bird Jaguar IV, who like his father Shield Jaguar II engaged in a series of building projects and commissioned various monuments as part of his campaign to legitimate his rule. Bird Jaguar ascended the throne ten years after his father died, suggesting that there was perhaps a conflict about who was to become Yaxchilán's ruler.

Structure 33, Yaxchilán (Maya) (photo: Graham Duggan, CC BY-ND 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/r2sA3R>

Structure 33 rests on the side of the main plaza, making it a focal point for the area. The building itself is narrow, only one vault deep, so it was not intended to hold many people. Three entryways punctuate the exterior—which is embellished with stucco ornamentation. An elaborate roof-comb (a masonary "wall" that rises upwards above a building to give the impression that it is taller than it actually is), arguably the most famous component of the temple, incorporates a decorative frieze, niches, and sculptural elements, including a sculpted human being in the central niche. It is possible that this is Bird Jaguar IV. Intricate latticework covers the symmetrical roof-comb and the building's overall style is reminiscent of buildings found at other important Classic Maya city-states like Palenque.

Like Structure 23, carved lintels form the underside of each of the doorways on Structure 33. Lintel 1 <http://smarthistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/lintel-1.jpg>, for example, shows Bird Jaguar festooned in the fantastic clothing of a Maya ruler. The other lintels show a similar concern with rulership. Lintel 2 displays Bird Jaguar and his son and heir, Chel Te' Chan K'inich (later known as Shield Jaguar IV), while another <http://smarthistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/lintel-3.jpg> depicts Bird Jaguar once again dressed in royal regalia.*

Hieroglyphic Stairway #2 leads up to the building. The top step of Structure 33 displays rulers, including Bird Jaguar IV and his father and grandfather playing the ballgame <http://smarthistory.org/the-mesoamerican-ballgame-and-a-classic-veracruz-yoke/> in a series of thirteen carved limestone blocks (today protected by an overhang and glass). They play against Yaxchilán enemies—such as Lord Jeweled Skull who Bird Jaguar defeats.

Structure 40

Bird Jaguar IV also had Structure 40 built as part of his political campaign to secure his rulership. Structure 40 (above) sits in the South Acropolis, flanked by two other structures. It displays the typical Yaxchilán architectural style—a rectangular vaulted building with a stuccoed roof comb. Like many other Yaxchilán buildings it had stele associated with it, such as Stela 11 <http://research.famsi.org/uploads/montgomery/hires/jm01600yaxst11b.jpg> that showed Bird Jaguar IV towering over war captives accompanied by his parents. The stela, like the buildings and other commissioned works, were intended to advertise Bird Jaguar IV's dynastic lineage and thus his right to rule.

*Source for line drawings <https://www.peabody.harvard.edu/cmhi/site.php?site=Yaxchilan>

Structure 40, Yaxchilán (Maya) (photo: Skylla UK, CC BY-NC-ND 2.5) <http://www.skylla.co.uk/travel/mexico/yaxchilan#nogo>

156. Great Serpent Mound

Dr. Katherine T. Brown

Fort Ancient Culture (?), Great Serpent Mound, c. 1070, Adams County, Ohio (photo: Eric Ewing, CC BY-SA 3.0) <https://tinyurl.com/y2pbk452>

A serpent 1300 feet long

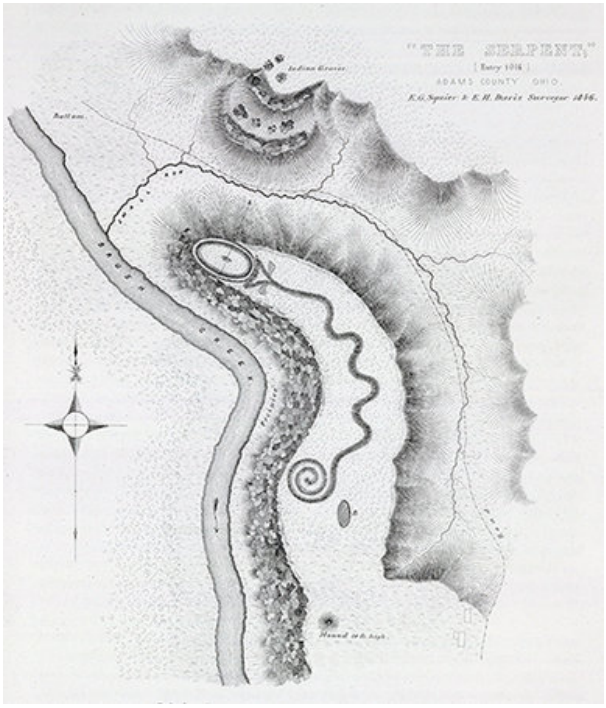
The Great Serpent Mound in rural, southwestern Ohio is the largest serpent effigy in the world. Numerous mounds were made by the ancient Native American cultures that flourished along the fertile valleys of the Mississippi, Ohio, Illinois, and Missouri Rivers a thousand years ago, though many were destroyed as farms spread across this region during the modern era. They invite us to contemplate the rich spiritual beliefs of the ancient Native American cultures that created them.

The Great Serpent Mound measures approximately 1,300 feet in length and ranges from one to three feet in height. The complex mound is both architectural and sculptural and was erected by settled peoples who cultivated maize, beans, and squash and who maintained a stratified society with an organized labor force but left no written records. Let's take a look at both aerial and close-up views that can help us understand the mound in relationship to its site and the possible intentions of its makers.

Supernatural powers?

The serpent is slightly crescent-shaped and

oriented such that the head is at the east and the tail at the west, with seven winding coils in between. The shape of the head perhaps invites the most speculation. Whereas some scholars read the oval shape as an enlarged eye, others see a hollow egg or even a frog about to be swallowed by wide, open jaws. But perhaps that lower jaw is an indication of appendages, such as small arms that might imply the creature is a lizard rather than a snake. Many native cultures in both North and Central America attributed supernatural powers to snakes or reptiles and included them in their spiritual practices. The native peoples of the Middle Ohio Valley in particular frequently created snake-shapes out of copper sheets.



Ephraim George Squier and E. H. Davis, "The Serpent;" entry 1014, Adams County Ohio. Pl. XXXV, Ancient monuments of the Mississippi Valley: comprising the results of extensive original surveys and explorations, Washington: Smithsonian institution, 1848

Aerial view of the Great Serpent Mound, c. 1070, Adams County, Ohio

The mound conforms to the natural topography of the site, which is a high plateau overlooking Ohio Brush Creek. In fact, the head of the creature approaches a steep, natural cliff above the creek. The unique geologic formations suggest that a meteor struck the site approximately 250-300 million years ago, causing folded bedrock underneath the mound.

Celestial hypotheses

Aspects of both the zoomorphic form and the unusual site have associations with astronomy worthy of our consideration. The head of the serpent aligns with the summer solstice sunset, and the tail points to the winter solstice sunrise. Could this mound have been used to mark time or seasons, perhaps indicating when to plant or harvest? Likewise, it has been suggested that the curves in the body of the snake parallel lunar phases, or alternatively align with the two solstices and two equinoxes.

View of tail, Fort Ancient Culture(?), Great Serpent Mound, c. 1070, Adams County, Ohio (photo: The Last Cookie, CC BY 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/4mdUPF>

Some have interpreted the egg or eye shape at the head to be a representation of the sun. Perhaps even the swallowing of the sun shape could document a solar eclipse. Another theory is that the shape of the serpent imitates the constellation Draco, with the Pole Star matching the placement of the first curve in the snake's torso from the head. Alignment with the Pole Star may indicate that the mound was used to determine true north and thus served as a kind of compass.

Of note also is the fact that Halley's Comet appeared in 1066, although the tail of the comet is characteristically straight rather than curved. Perhaps the mound served in part to mark this astronomical event or a similar phenomenon, such as light from a supernova. In a more comprehensive view, the serpent mount may represent a conglomerate of all celestial knowledge known by these native peoples in a single image.

Who built it?

Determining exactly which culture designed and built the effigy mound, and when, is a matter of ongoing inquiry. A broad answer may lie in viewing the work as being designed, built, and/or refurbished over an extended period of time by several indigenous groups. The leading theory is that the Fort Ancient Culture (1000-1650 C.E.) is principally responsible for the mound, having erected it in c. 1070 C.E. This mound-building society lived in the Ohio Valley and was influenced by the contemporary Mississippian culture (700-1550), whose urban center was located at Cahokia in Illinois. The rattlesnake was a common theme among the Mississippian culture, and thus it is possible that the Fort Ancient Culture appropriated this symbol from them (although there is no clear reference to a rattle to identify the species as such).

An alternative theory is that the Fort Ancient Culture refurbished the site c. 1070, reworking a preexisting mound built by the Adena Culture (c.1100 B.C.E.-200 C.E.) and/or the Hopewell Culture (c. 100 B.C.E.-550 C.E.). Whether the site was built by the Fort Ancient peoples, or by the earlier Adena or Hopewell Cultures, the mound is atypical. The mound contains no artifacts, and both the Fort Ancient and Adena groups typically buried objects inside their mounds. Although there are no graves found inside the Great Serpent Mound, there are burials found nearby, but none of them are the kinds of burials typical for the Fort Ancient culture and are more closely associated with Adena burial practices. Archaeological evidence does not support a burial purpose for the Great Serpent Mound.

Debate continues

Whether this impressive monument was used as a way to mark time, document a celestial event, act as a compass, serve as a guide to astrological patterns, or provide a place of worship to a supernatural snake god or goddess, we may never know with certainty. One scholar has recently suggested that the mound was a platform or base for totems or other

architectural structures that are no longer extant, perhaps removed by subsequent cultures. All to say, scholarly debate continues, based on on-going archaeological evidence and geological research. But without a doubt, the mound is singular and significant in its ability to provide tangible insights into the cosmology and rituals of the ancient Americas.

View of the Great Serpent Mound, 1070 (?), Adams County, Ohio (photo: Don Sniegowski, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/RZokKg>

157. Templo Mayor, Main Aztec temple

Dr. Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank

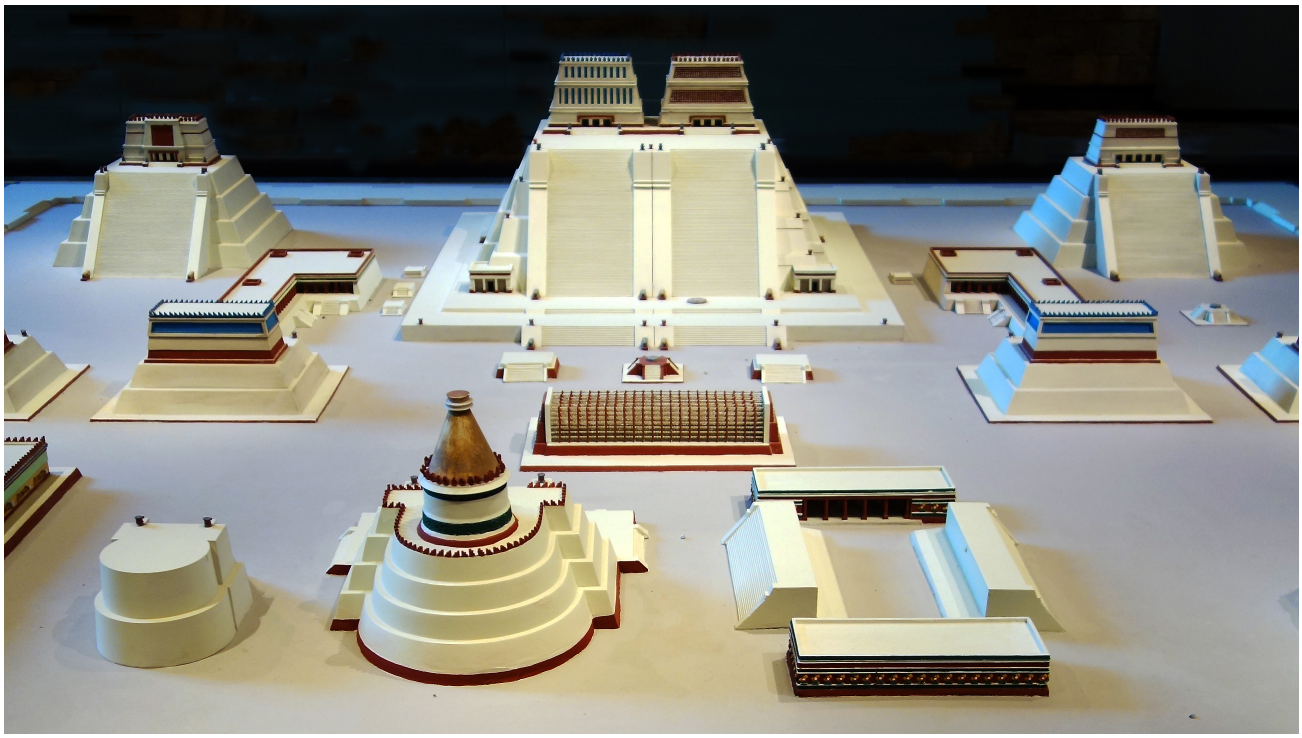
The Coyolxauhqui Stone, c. 1500. volcanic stone, found: Templo Mayor, Tenochtitlan (Museo del Templo Mayor, Mexico City) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/qF12rf>

View of the Templo Mayor excavations today in the center of what is now Mexico City (photo: Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank)

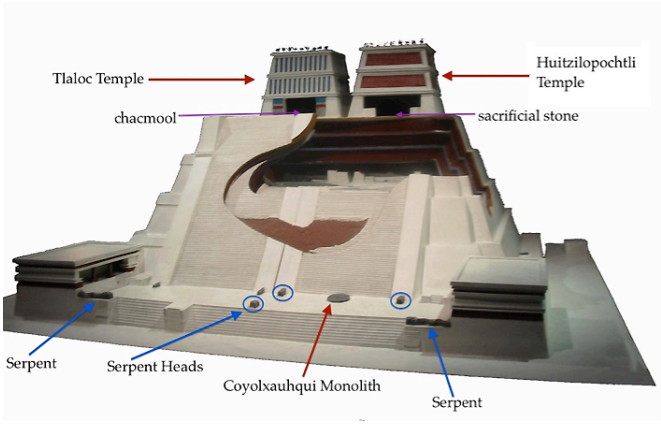
In 1978, electrical workers in Mexico City came across a remarkable discovery. While digging near the main plaza, they found a finely carved stone monolith that displayed a dismembered and decapitated woman. Immediately, they knew they found something special. Shortly thereafter, archaeologists realized that the monolith displayed the Mexica (Aztec)[1] goddess Coyolxauhqui, or Bells-Her-Cheeks, the sister of the Mexica's patron god, Huitzilopochtli (Hummingbird-Left), who killed his sister when she attempted to kill their mother. This monolith led to the discovery of the Templo Mayor, the main Mexica temple located in the sacred precinct of the former Mexica capital, known as Tenochtitlan (now Mexico City).

Map of Lake Texcoco, with Tenochtitlan (at left) Valley of Mexico, c. 1519 (created by Yavidaxiu, CC BY-SA 3.0) <https://tinyurl.com/y4f2mqs4>

The city of Tenochtitlan was established in 1325 on an island in the middle of Lake Texcoco (much of which has since been filled in to accommodate Mexico City which now exists on this site), and with the city's foundation, the original structure of the Templo Mayor was built. Between 1325 and 1519, the Templo Mayor was expanded, enlarged, and reconstructed during seven main building phases, which likely corresponded with different rulers, or tlatoani ("speaker"), taking office. Sometimes new construction was the result of environmental problems, such as flooding.



Model of the sacred precinct in Tenochtitlan (National Anthropological Museum, Mexico City) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/s5jjD6>



Templo Mayor (reconstruction), Tenochtitlan, 1375–1520 C.E.

Located in the sacred precinct at the heart of the city, the Templo Mayor was positioned at the center of the Mexica capital and thus the entire empire. The capital was also divided into four main quadrants, with the Templo Mayor at the center. This design reflects the Mexica cosmos, which was believed to be composed of four parts structured around the navel of the universe, or the *axis mundi*.

The Templo Mayor was approximately ninety feet high and covered in stucco. Two grand staircases accessed twin temples, which were dedicated to the deities Tlaloc and Huitzilopochti. Tlaloc was the deity of water and rain and was associated with agricultural fertility. Huitzilopochtli was the patron deity of the Mexica, and he was associated with warfare, fire, and the Sun.

Paired together on the Templo Mayor, the two deities symbolized the Mexica concept of atl-tlachinolli, or burnt water, which connoted warfare—the primary way in which the Mexica acquired their power and wealth.

Standard bearers (photo: Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank)

The Huitzilopochtli Temple

In the center of the Huitzilopochtli temple was a sacrificial stone. Near the top, standard-bearer figures decorated the stairs. They likely held paper banners and feathers. Serpent balustrades adorn the base of the temple of Huitzilopochtli, and two undulating serpents flank the stairs that led to the base of the Templo Mayor as well.

Snake balustrade and undulating serpent (photo: Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank)

But by far the most famous object decorating the Huiztilopochtli temple is the *Coyolxauhqui monolith*, found at the base of the stairs. Originally painted and carved in low

relief, the *Coyolxauhqui monolith* is approximately eleven feet in diameter and displays the female deity Coyolxauhqui, or Bells-on-her-face. Golden bells decorate her cheeks, feathers and balls of down adorn her hair, and she wears elaborate earrings, fanciful sandals and bracelets, and a serpent belt with a skull attached at the back. Monster faces are found at her joints, connecting her to other female deities—some of whom are associated with trouble and chaos. Otherwise, Coyolxauhqui is shown naked, with sagging breasts and a stretched belly to indicate that she was a mother. For the Mexica, nakedness was considered a form of humiliation and also defeat. She is also decapitated and dismembered. Her head and limbs are separated from her torso and are organized in a pinwheel shape. Pieces of bone stick out from her limbs.

The Coyolxauhqui Stone (detail), c. 1500. volcanic stone, found: Templo Mayor, Tenochtitlan (Museo Nacional de Antropología, Mexico City) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/rBU4Uw>

The monolith relates to an important myth: the birth of the Mexica patron deity, Huitzilopochtli. Apparently, Huitzilopochtli's mother, Coatlicue (Snakes-her-skirt), became pregnant one day from a piece of down that entered her skirt. Her daughter, Coyolxauhqui, became angry when she heard that her mother was pregnant, and together with her 400 brothers (called the Centzonhuitznahua) attacked their mother. At the moment of attack, Huitzilopochtli emerged, fully clothed and armed, to defend his mother on the mountain called Coatepec (Snake Mountain). Eventually, Huitzilopochtli defeated his sister, then beheaded her and threw her body down the mountain, at which point her body broke apart.

The monolith portrays the moment in the myth after Huitzilopochtli vanquished Coyolxauhqui and threw her body down the mountain. By placing this sculpture at the base of Huiztilopochtli's temple, the Mexica effectively transformed the temple into Coatepec. Many of the temple's decorations and sculptural program also support this identification. The snake balustrades and serpent heads identify the temple as a snake mountain, or Coatepec. It is possible that the standard-bearer figures recovered at the Templo Mayor symbolized Huitzilopochtli's 400 brothers.

Coyolxauhqui stone reconstruction with possible original colors (photo: miguelão, CC BY-SA 2.0) <https://tinyurl.com/y65k73m6>

Ritual performances that occurred at the Templo Mayor also support the idea that the temple symbolically represented Coatepec. For instance, the ritual of *Panquetzaliztli* (banner raising)

celebrated Huitzilopochtli's triumph over Coyolxauhqui and his 400 brothers. People offered gifts to the deity, danced and ate tamales. During the ritual, war captives who had been painted blue were killed on the sacrificial stone and then their bodies were rolled down the staircase to fall atop the *Coyolxauhqui monolith* to reenact the myth associated with Coatepec. For the enemies of the Mexica and those people the Mexica ruled over, this ritual was a powerful reminder to submit to Mexica authority. Clearly, the decorations and rituals associated with the Templo Mayor connoted the power of the Mexica empire and their patron deity, Huitzilopochtli.

The Tlaloc Temple

At the top center of the Tlaloc temple is a sculpture of a male figure on his back painted in blue and red. The figure holds a vessel on his abdomen likely to receive offerings. This type of sculpture is called a *chacmool*, and is older than the Mexica. It was associated with the rain god, in this case Tlaloc.

Chacmool on Tlaloc temple platform (photo (edited): Adriel A. Macedo Arroyo, CC BY-SA 3.0) <https://tinyurl.com/yy36c9rb>

At the base of the Tlaloc side of the temple, on the same axis as the chacmool, are stone sculptures of two frogs with their heads arched upwards. This is known as the Altar of the Frogs. The croaking of frogs was thought to herald the coming of the rainy season, and so they are connected to Tlaloc.

Altar of the Frogs (photo: Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank)

While Huiztilopochtli's temple symbolized Coatepec, Tlaloc's temple was likely intended to symbolize the Mountain of Sustenance, or Tonacatepetl. This fertile mountain produced high amounts of rain, thereby allowing crops to grow.

Offerings at the Templo Mayor

Over a hundred ritual caches or deposits containing thousands of objects have been found associated with the Templo Mayor. Some offerings contained items related to water, like coral, shells, crocodile skeletons, and vessels depicting Tlaloc. Other deposits related to warfare and sacrifice, containing items like human skull masks with obsidian blade tongues and noses and sacrificial knives. Many of these

offerings contain objects from faraway places—likely places from which the Mexica collected tribute. Some offerings demonstrate the Mexica's awareness of the historical and cultural traditions in Mesoamerica. For instance, they buried an Olmec mask made of jadeite, as well as others from Teotihuacan (a city northeast of modern-day Mexico City known for its huge monuments and dating roughly from the 1st century until the 7th century C.E.). The Olmec mask was made over a thousand years prior to the Mexica, and its burial in Templo Mayor suggests that the Mexica found it precious and perhaps historically significant.

Olmec-style mask, c. 1470, jadeite, offering 20, hornblende, 10.2 x 8.6 x 3.1 cm

The Templo Mayor today

After the Spanish Conquest in 1521, the Templo Mayor was destroyed, and what did survive remained buried. The stones were reused to build structures like the Cathedral in the newly founded capital of the Viceroyalty of New Spain (1521-1821). If you visit the Templo Mayor today, you can walk through the excavated site on platforms. The Templo Mayor museum contains those objects found at the site, including the recent discovery of the largest Mexica monolith showing the deity Tlaltecuhtli.

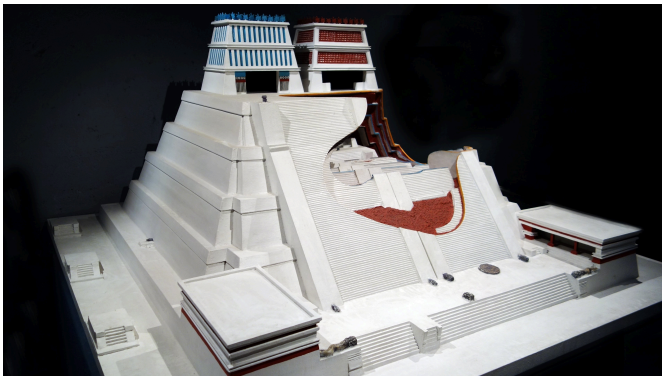
1. The Aztec referred to themselves as Mexica

157. Templo Mayor, Main Aztec temple

A CONVERSATION

Dr. Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank and Dr. Steven Zucker

This is a transcript of a conversation conducted on the Templo Mayor in Mexico City, Mexico.



Ruins of the Templo Mayor, reconstructed model, 1375-1520, Tenochtitlan, (Museo del Templo Mayor, Mexico City) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/rMVmqn>

Steven: We're standing in the middle of Mexico City in what was once the sacred precinct of the Aztecs. And we're looking at the ruins of the Templo Mayor, their main temple.

Lauren: When you are on-site at the Templo Mayor today, it can be a bit disorienting, because the temple itself is not complete anymore. It was destroyed and buried by the Spaniards with the conquest. And so what you see today are the remains of this temple.

Steven: We've just walked up this ramp that has taken us through layer after layer of seven building campaigns. These were undertaken by succeeding rulers. The previous temple would be filled over with dirt and stone rubble and then encased in a finished stone structure, a larger pyramid which would be then surfaced with stucco and brightly painted, and then decorated with an enormous number of sculptural forms.

Lauren: We get a good sense of how the Templo Mayor would have looked to the Spanish when they arrived here in 1519. The Templo Mayor was a twin temple, devoted to the Aztecs' two main deities: Huitzilopochtli, the god of war and a sun god, and the god Tlaloc, who was a rain and agricultural deity. So the Templo Mayor was part of this larger sacred precinct that included a variety of buildings, including temples to other important deities, like the feathered serpent deity Quetzalcoatl, or to the Sun disk, Tonatiuh. So when Hernán Cortés, the Spanish conquistador, arrived here in 1519, he and many of the men with him were incredibly impressed with what they were seeing. They were overwhelmed with the beauty of Tenochtitlan, or the Aztec capital city. One of the soldiers with Cortés wrote about his experiences. He says, "We saw so many cities and villages built in the water, and other great towns on dry land and

that straight and level causeway going towards Mexico, we were amazed, on account of the great towers and temples and buildings rising from the water. And all built of masonry, and some of our soldiers asked whether the things that we saw were not a dream."

Steven: So let's describe for just a moment what the Spanish must have seen when they first arrived. They saw a huge double staircase that rose steeply up, and then at the top a large platform, with twin temples on the top. In order to get to the temples, you would have passed by on the right a stone altar, and on the left, a sculptural figure that showed an individual on his back with a bowl over his belly.

Ruins of the Templo Mayor, chacmool, 1375-1520, Tenochtitlan, (Museo del Templo Mayor, Mexico City) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/rMM6Vq>

Lauren: This is what's called a *chacmool*, and both this individual and the sacrificial stone that you would have passed were likely used during many of the ritual ceremonies that took place during the monthly festivals. Unfortunately today, much of what was once the sacred precinct is underneath modern day Mexico City, underneath buildings that are still standing.

Steven: Such as the cathedral of the City of Mexico.

Lauren: And the Plaza Mayor or the Zócalo. All of these would have been part of the sacred precinct, or the area just immediately surrounding it.

View of the cathedral, Ruins of the Templo Mayor, 1375-1520, Tenochtitlan (Museo del Templo Mayor, Mexico City) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/rMM94J>

Steven: We've gone inside to look at reconstructions of the Templo Mayor. The temple was intentionally destroyed. It wasn't transformed the way that for instance, a Catholic church might be transformed into a protestant church. This is the actual destruction of the most sacred temple, in the most sacred part of the capital city of the Aztecs.

Lauren: Even though we have all these accounts written by Spaniards, who were commenting on how beautiful and amazing it was, they still razed much of the city—in particular, the sacred precinct. What we do find then is the building on top of many of these structures using the stones that had been part of these Aztec buildings.

Steven: The violence wasn't just perpetrated on the people and the buildings of Tenochtitlan, but on other kinds of symbols. For instance, sculptures were intentionally toppled, or buried.

Lauren: You have sculptures that are then recarved into columns. You have sculptures made by the Spaniards, for Christian purposes

that were clearly once Aztec sacred objects. So objects like Cuauhxicalli, receptacles for blood or various implements for sacrifice were sometimes transformed into baptismal fonts. If we look at the Metropolitan Cathedral, the main cathedral in the Zócalo in Mexico City, we know that some of the stones from the Templo Mayor were reused in its initial construction.

Steven: So this is a physical expression of the spiritual and political conquest. This needs to be understood within a broader context of the reconquest.

Lauren: The Reconquista, the reconquest in Spain, is when we're talking about Spaniards who are trying to reconquer the Iberian peninsula from Muslims. Who had taken over much of the peninsula in the eighth century. So the reconquest ends in 1492, shortly before their coming to the Americas and coming into contact with people like the Aztecs. You can see for instance the Great Mosque of Cordoba, with a Christian church built into the center of the building as this sign of both political and spiritual conquest.

Steven: But in that case, they left the great majority of the mosque, and simply built a church in the center. Here, we have almost a complete destruction of the sacred precinct.

Lauren: If you go to Mexico City today, you can see ongoing excavations of parts of what had been the sacred precinct. Mexico is very protective of its cultural heritage. You have organizations like INAH, who are responsible for these excavations and the protection of these important sites. And so, say a building is going to be taken down and something new built on top of it, or if they are constructing subway lines, INAH has the responsibility to send in archeologists to see if there is anything there that is part of this Meso-American cultural heritage.

Ruins of the Templo Mayor, 1375-1520, Tenochtitlan (Museo del Templo Mayor, Mexico City) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/rMNkTL>

Steven: New things are being discovered regularly, this awareness of the value of Mexico's cultural history goes back even to the colonial period. Where you have an increasing recognition of what was lost.

Lauren: During the colonial period you have Spaniards born in the Americas, known as *Americanos* or *Criollos*, Creoles. And as we're progressing throughout the colonial period, they're becoming increasingly interested in the Meso-American past as a way to separate themselves from Spaniards on the Iberian peninsula.

Steven: And then in the post-colonial period, after Mexico wins independence, we see this interest most visibly in the 1920s, in the 1930s, in the great mural paintings of artists like Diego Rivera. So modern Mexico City is a complex layering of modern and pre-colonial history. Imagine what we'll find in the future.

Watch the video<https://youtu.be/86zSgZWVkVk>.

157. a. The Coyolxauhqui Stone

A CONVERSATION

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank

This is a transcript of a conversation conducted in the Templo Mayor Museum in Mexico City, Mexico.

Coyolxauhqui Monolith (Aztec), c. 1500, volcanic stone, found Templo Mayor, Tenochtitlan, excavated 1978 (Museo del Templo Mayor, Mexico City) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/qF12rf>

Beth: We're in the Templo Mayor Museum, the museum dedicated to the main temple of the Aztecs here in Mexico City and we're looking at an enormous stone monolith of a figure who features prominently in Aztec mythology: Coyolxauhqui. Did I say that right?

Lauren: Pretty close! So this monolith was found actually at the base of the Huitzilopochtli side of the Templo Mayor. So Huitzilopochtli was the patron deity of the Aztecs, who was associated with warfare and the sun.

Beth: There were two temples on top of the platform. One dedicated to the war god, Huitzilopochtli and the other to Tlaloc and this was found on Huitzilopochtli side.

Lauren: It was found at the base of the stairs.

Beth: This was clearly an important subject for the Aztec people because as they enlarged the temple they buried previous versions of the same subject and redid it on top in the same location. So both the subject and the location went together.

Lauren: There are seven major building phases at the Templo Mayor and archeologists have found that with each phase, the same subject of this decapitated, dismembered, naked woman, Coyolxauhqui, was placed in the same location and repeated over and over.

Beth: When we look at her it's a little bit difficult to put together that she's dismembered but we can clearly see that she's got these scalloped shape where her neck is, indicating that she's been decapitated and we see that same scalloping at her shoulders and at her hip joints.

Lauren: This scalloping is in the sense of torn flesh, ripped flesh, which is indicating that she's been dismembered and decapitated. And if we look at the dismembered body parts, you can even see bones, protruding femurs are rising out the legs.

Beth: What happened to poor Coyolxauhqui?

Lauren: So this is actually a really unusual representation because you don't often see people who are ritually dismembered, decapitated and particularly not nude because nudity was problematic. So when this monolith was discovered in 1978 by electrical workers digging near the main plaza here in Mexico City, people were really excited because they were able to identify her based on a few key features. Not only that she's dismembered and decapitated but that the bells on her cheeks are telling us who she is, what her name is because Coyolxauhqui means "Bells Her Cheeks."

Beth: I'm gonna refer to her as Bells Her Cheeks from now on. She's got a feathered headdress on, she's got prominent ear spools, she's highly decorated and yet here she is, naked, splayed on the ground, dismembered.

Lauren: So what happens to Coyolxauhqui? This myth that I mentioned, this important Aztec myth actually relates to the birth of the patron god, Huitzilopochtli. What happens in the myth is that the mother of Huitzilopochtli, Coatlicue or "Snaky Skirt," was sweeping on top of Snake Mountain and a ball of feathers falls into her apron and she's miraculously impregnated. And her daughter, Bells Her Cheeks or Coyolxauhqui, becomes enraged and rallies her 400 brothers to storm Snake Mountain and kill their mother "Snaky Skirt" or Coatlicue. But before that happens, Huitzilopochtli, this patron god of the Aztecs springs fully armed to defend his mother from her death and he chops the head off his sister and throws her body off the mountain where it breaks into pieces and she lands at the base of the mountain.

Beth: We have that represented at the actual base of the temple, which the Aztecs thought of as a kind of symbolic representation of the mountain from which Bells Her Cheeks was thrown. This was once painted with bright colors, it would've been much easier to read and we would've seen it from a different orientation than the one we're looking at now.

Lauren: This would have been horizontal at the base of the stairs and it would have given this impression of this pinwheel composition, this chaotic movement, but it would've been much easier to pick out the various motifs with color. The background would've been red, to give the impression of a pool of blood and her body would've been painted in like a yellow color.

Beth: One of the things that I can pick out even without that paint now is a skull that would've been at her back, a snake belt around her waist. I can pick out rolls of flesh and breasts that hang down maybe indicating that she was a mother or an older woman perhaps.

Lauren: Yeah the rolls in her abdomen and the breasts are actually indications that she is a mother. She has these wonderful monster-faced joints that you see on a lot of other deities.

Beth: We have accounts that sacrifices were made at the temple and bodies were rolled from the top of the temple down on to the stone.

Lauren: The Aztecs had a very active ritual calendar and there's one monthly festival. The festival called Panquetzalitztli or the Raising of the Banners that was devoted to the reenactment of this myth of the events of Snake Mountain. During this particular festival, war captives would be killed at the top of the Huitzilopochtli side of the temple and they would be rolled

down the temple to reenact the killing of Bells Her Cheeks or Coyolxauhqui.

Reconstruction of Coyolxauhqui Monolith with color (Museo del Templo Mayor, Mexico City) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Watch the video<https://youtu.be/Z1rqLNz8Zo0>.

157.b. The Sun Stone (or Calendar Stone)

A CONVERSATION

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank

This is a transcript of a conversation conducted in the Museo Nacional de Antropología in Mexico City, Mexico.

The Sun Stone (or Calendar Stone), Aztec, reign of Moctezuma II (1502-20), discovered in 1790 at the southeastern edge of the Plaza Mayor (Zocalo) in Mexico City, stone (unfinished), 358 cm diameter x 98 cm depth (Museo Nacional de Antropología) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/rQFsGN>

Beth: We're in the National Anthropology Museum in Mexico City, looking at what is perhaps their most famous object, sometimes called the *Calendar Stone*, but more accurately called the *Sun Stone*.

Lauren: It's become the modern-day emblem of Mexican culture.

Beth: It looks like a sun. It's got a circular shape. It has rays emanating out. But in actuality, when you look closely it's an incredibly complicated object.

Lauren: This would have been originally painted, which would have helped pick out the motifs that you're seeing here.

Beth: It wouldn't have been up on the wall.

Lauren: No, it most likely would have been placed horizontally on the ground. As you see it was unfinished, cause there are protrusions of uncarved rock that we see on the top and to the left.

Beth: So in the center, let's start there. I see a rather gruesome looking face with deep-set eyes and a wide mouth, and on either side, hanging down, what looks like ear ornaments.

Lauren: He's wearing ear spools, and within that open mouth you see the tongue protruding out. That's actually an anthropomorphized sacrificial blade.

Beth: The ear spools were decorations that the Aztec elite would wear. So who is that?

Detail, the Sun Stone (or Calendar Stone), Aztec, reign of Moctezuma II (1502-20) (Museo Nacional de Antropología) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/rSRBJu>

Lauren: So this figure, this face, and if you look to the sides, you also see that he has clawed hands and he's holding something, possibly human hearts. There have been various interpretations of who this individual actually is, and most people identify him as the sun god, "Tonatiuh," which is the Nahuatl word for the sun god.

Beth: And Nahuatl is the name of the language spoken by the Nahua people, or the Aztecs.

Lauren: The Aztecs were part of this larger ethnic group of the Nahua.

Beth: So what this records, with this figure in the center, what the disc itself records is this origin of the cosmos as the Aztecs saw it.

Lauren: The stone relates to one of the main Aztec myths, essentially the creation of the various eras, or as they called them, suns. So what we're seeing here is a record, a cataclysmic history of previous eras, and then the current era, under which we live.

Beth: So the current era is actually the fifth era, according to this system.

Lauren: The fifth sun.

Beth: And yet the name of the fifth sun, the fifth era, is "4-movement," and we actually see that in the four square lobes that surround that center figure.

Lauren: That particular shape that it's forming is a sign for "ollin," which in Nahuatl means movement, and we also see these four dots surrounding this central figure, which gives us the name Four Movement, which is the title of the fifth sun, or the fifth era that we're living in right now.

Beth: Then, inside those squares or rectangular shapes that mean "4-movement," we see the names of the previous four suns.

Lauren: Exactly. So if we go from the top right and go counter-clockwise, the four eras are 4-Jaguar, 4-Wind, 4-Tlaloc, and then 4-Chalchiuhtlicue. The idea is that in the first era, it's death by jaguar, devoured by jaguars. In the second era, death by high winds. In the third era, death by rains of fire, and in the fourth era, death by water. The idea with the fifth sun is it's prophesizing that this current world in which we live is going to be death by earthquakes.

Beth: The city where we are and where this is from, the Aztec capital, is surrounded by volcanoes and a fault line.

Lauren: You have devastating earthquakes that happen here. Earthquakes were terrifying and so this is prophesizing how our current world is going to end.

Beth: We have this idea of sacrifice in the center with that face, and then we have this idea in Aztec mythology that this era that we're in was formed by two gods agreeing to sacrifice themselves.

Lauren: The sun is brought into creation by the gods sacrificing themselves, but at first, it was static, it couldn't move, and so then another god

had to sacrifice himself in order to put the sun in motion. Then the idea is that because the gods have killed themselves willingly, that we as humans need to be feeding them through offerings, and that could include things like animal sacrifice, piercing of our body to give blood, or human sacrifice.

Beth: We have, now, 20 glyphs or symbols, the 20 days, this basic unit of the Aztec calendar.

Lauren: And, outside of that band of calendrical dates we see the rays of the sun radiating outwards and you see that the largest ones are pointed in the four cardinal directions.

Beth: North, South, East, West.

Detail, the Sun Stone (or Calendar Stone), Aztec, reign of Moctezuma II (1502-20) (Museo Nacional de Antropología) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/rAojiJ>

Lauren: Their cosmos, or their universe was thought to be divided into four quadrants associated with these four cardinal directions.

Beth: Tenochtitlan, the city, the capital of the Aztec Empire, was divided also into four.

Lauren: Replicating that cosmological diagram of sorts.

Beth: If we look closely at the outside band, we can see two serpents whose heads meet at the bottom center, and from whose mouths emerge two faces.

Lauren: These are called fire serpents or, in Nahuatl, *xiuhcoatl*. They're associated with time, with the solar calendar, and, in some sources, as carrying sun across the sky.

Beth: So they, in a way, make time happen.

Lauren: Exactly. In terms of how we date this monument, there are a couple of other glyphs here that I just want to point out. Next to the date of 4-Wind, if we're going counter-clockwise, the royal insignia of Moctezuma II, and so we typically date this monument to the reign of that Aztec ruler. And across from the insignia of Moctezuma II, right next to that jaguar head for the date 4-Jaguar, we see a flint knife, one of the sacrificial blades, and next to it we see a single dot, which reads as a date glyph for 1 Flint. 1 Flint could be read in two different ways. Some people associate that particular date with the beginning of the era of the fifth sun.

Beth: So what we have is a sense of the structure and order of the universe for the Aztecs.

Lauren: This is an object that is very present in our contemporary moment, because it's become so well-known, and yet, most people, they're not aware of the really complicated messages being conveyed.

Watch the video<https://youtu.be/Zn03u3-U1fk>.

157. c. Olmec-style mask

A CONVERSATION

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank

This is a transcript of a conversation conducted in the Templo Mayor Museum in Mexico City, Mexico.

Olmec mask, c. 1200 – 400 B.C.E., jadeite, 4 x 3-3/8 x 1-1/4 inches found in offering 20 buried c. 1470 C.E. at the Aztec Templo Mayor (Museo del Templo Mayor, Mexico City) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/rkreb5>

Steven: We're in the museum of the Templo Mayor, the main Aztec temple in what is now Mexico City, looking at a small, green, stone sculpture of a human face. Although this was found buried as a kind of offering in the temple precinct, what we're looking at is something from a far older culture, older even than the Aztecs.

Lauren: This mask actually belonged to the Olmec culture, which started thriving somewhere between 1500 and 1200 B.C.E. So, more than 1500 years before the Aztecs, the Olmecs were thriving along the Gulf Coast of Mexico, not even Central Mexico, where the Aztecs are later building their capital city.

Steven: So this is distant both in terms of geography, but it's also really distant in terms of time. For the Aztecs, looking back to the Olmecs is something akin to us in the modern era looking back to the ancient Romans.

Lauren: This mask is not much bigger than the palm of my hand. It's a traditional Olmec mask, and it's made in this beautiful green stone. It's polished. It's a great example of Olmec features, like upturned lips, this almost-baby face, almond eyes, the cleft in the head. What's remarkable is that the Aztecs were actually collecting these objects, and then ritually burying them at certain points, and this object would've been one of many buried in a specific offering.

Steven: It shows us that the Aztecs had a reverence for the ancient cultures that came before them, that they were thinking historically.

Lauren: And that's true, not only that they were looking to the Olmec, the kind of "mother

culture" of Mesoamerica, but they were also looking to, say, the city of Teōtīhuacān and its inhabitants, that was flourishing hundreds and hundreds of years before the Aztec.

Steven: That's the city famous because of its enormous pyramids.

Avenue of the Dead, looking north to the Pyramid of the Moon, Teōtīhuacān (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/AhLK9o>

Lauren: And it was where the Aztecs thought the Fifth Era, or the Sun, was born, and they called it "The City of the Gods." That's what Teōtīhuacān means. As we look here around the galleries, we can see other masks that were buried in some of these offerings. They were taken from the city of Teōtīhuacān as well.

Steven: So the Aztecs were collecting objects from both Central Mexico, but also from quite a distance. They were importing materials from what is now the southwest of the United States. They were bringing objects up from the Yucatán. The divisions that we think of in the modern world did not exist in the same way.

Lauren: It's a great example, not only of their archaizing or their looking to the past, but also these vast trade networks throughout Mesoamerica.

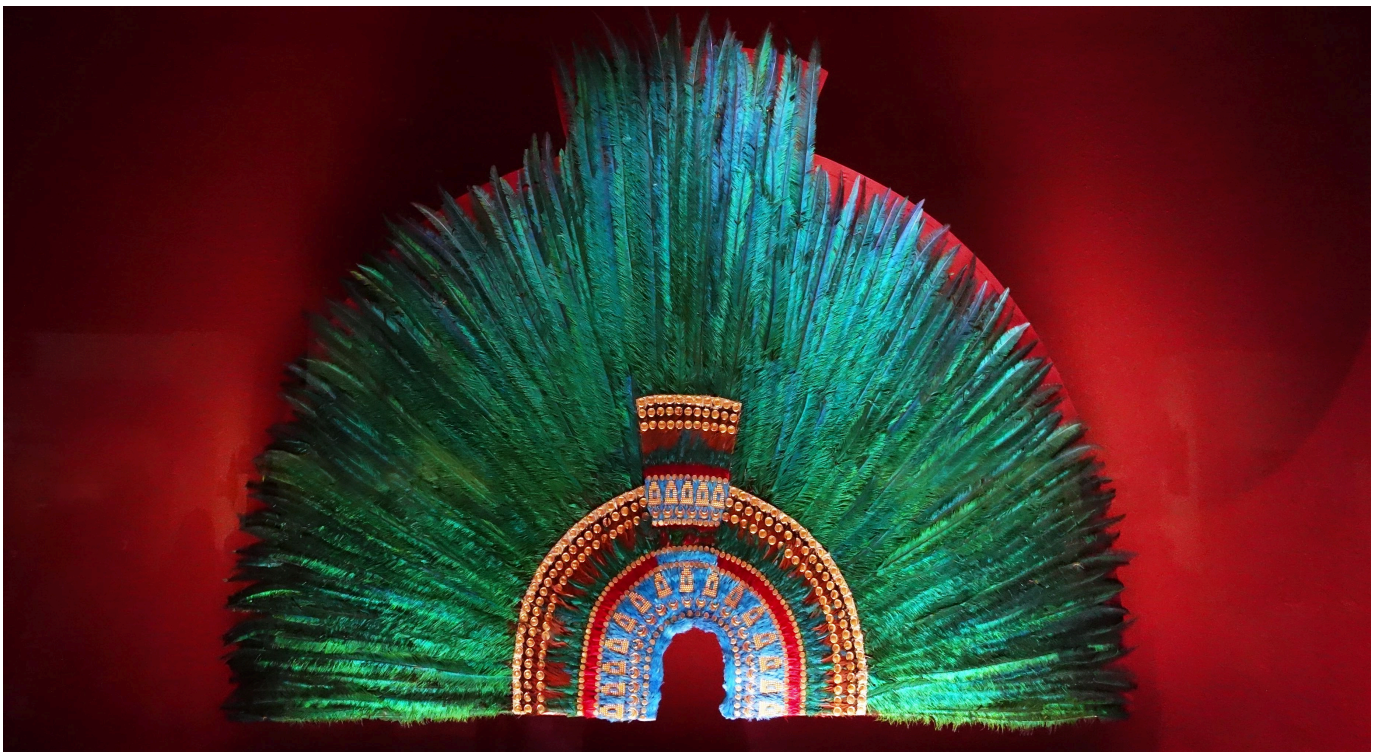
Watch the video<https://youtu.be/D9uJxXnDTU8>.

Olmec mask with viewer, c. 1200 – 400 B.C.E., jadeite, 4 x 3-3/8 x 1-1/4 in (Museo del Templo Mayor, Mexico City) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/qEZRzG>

158. Ruler's feather headdress (probably of Moctezuma II)

A CONVERSATION

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank



Feathered headdress, Aztec, reproduction (National Anthropology Museum, Mexico City) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/rzFNPm>

This is a transcript of a conversation conducted in front of a reproduction of the feathered headdress at the National Anthropology Museum, Mexico City.

Beth: We're in the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City, looking at an amazingly beautiful feathered headdress.

Lauren: This is a replica of a feathered headdress

that's currently in the museum in Vienna, sent to Europe by Hernán Cortés, the Spanish conquistador who defeated the Aztecs.

Beth: So, Cortés comes in with his army of Spanish soldiers, conquers the Aztec people, and is overwhelmed by the beauty of much of what he sees, especially these feathered objects, and sends a lot of them back to Spain to Charles V. I can see why he would send these objects back. There's nothing like it in Spain that I can think of.

Lauren: Even though this is a replica, it gives us a really good sense of what some of these feather objects would have looked like. You have these stunning quetzal tail feathers, which only come from the male quetzal, and we see so many of them, and usually, the bird only has two, three tail feathers. So these come from a lot of different quetzals, a kind of bird that you find in Central America. Places like Costa Rica. So what this is speaking to is the long-distance trade that's happening as well as tribute items that are sent back to the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán.

Male resplendent quetzal (photo: Ryan Acandee, CC BY 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/r2LhXd>

Beth: So the Aztecs have an empire with lots of cities that they've conquered, and what they exact from those cities is luxury goods, and that includes feathers, that includes textiles, cacao, shells, and they're all coming to the capital of the empire, which is actually here in what is present-day Mexico City, but was then Tenochtitlán. So the feathers we have to imagine as part of an entire costume, and as in so much Aztec art, we see not only the feather headdress, but we see paper ornaments, we see other kinds of elaborate aspects of costume that were part of rituals, part of performances.

Lauren: Costume was incredibly important to the Aztecs, as it was to many Mesoamerican cultures. And what's unfortunate for us is we're seeing this here as a static item. But imagine feathers with this beautiful iridescence, shimmering in the light and moving with the wind, and being danced and able to transform the ruler wearing this into something else entirely. If you see where you're supposed to place this on top of your head, and then you see the extent to which the feathers radiate outwards, it's almost like your identity becomes less important than what you're wearing.

Beth: You're completely subsumed by this costume.

Lauren: And besides these gorgeous quetzal feathers, what we have here are pure gold ornaments as well as other colors of feathers like a beautiful turquoise blue.

Beth: The people who made this lived in a special quarter of the capitol.

Detail, feathered headdress, Aztec, reproduction (National Anthropology Museum, Mexico City) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/rBSKkQ>

Lauren: They were called in Nahuatl (the language of the Aztecs) *amanteca*, or "feather workers," and they were highly regarded. After the Spanish conquest when people like Hernán Cortés, the Spanish conquistador, encountered objects like this, they were so impressed that this is actually a type of artistic production that doesn't cease with the conquest, but what we do see is a shift in the subject matter. Instead of say, making ritual headdresses like this, we see objects that display Christian iconography. Very close to the feathered headdress here in the museum, we see a replica of a chalice covering that is made of feathers, and if we're looking at the subject matter, it looks very Aztec. We see water glyphs, and what looks like a ray of fire and a strange kind of mouth, or symbols that are very unfamiliar to us, in other words, and this is the beginning of a reinterpretation of Christian iconography using Aztec glyphs.

Feathered chalice cover (reproduction), c.1540, feathers and bark, 28 cm in diameter (National Museum of Anthropology, Mexico City)

Beth: So we have a coming together of these two cultures, a hybrid art form. A chalice is something that we see in Christian rituals, it's the vessel that contained the wine that becomes the blood of Christ during Mass. So this coming together of these two very different cultures, but Aztec culture forced to become a Christian culture by the Spanish.

Watch the video<https://youtu.be/Q_Lp76ZkDE0>.

159. City of Cusco (Peru)

Dr. Sarahh Scher

The modern city of Cusco, overlooking the Plaza de Armas, Peru (photo: Michael and Kristine Senchyshyn, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

At the breath-taking elevation of 11,200 feet (roughly 3,400 m), the city of Cusco was not just the capital of Tawantinsuyu ("Land of the Four Quarters," the Inka name for their empire in their native language, Quechua). It was an *axis mundi*—the center of existence—and a reflection of Inka power. The city was divided into two sections, *hanan* (upper or high) and *hurin* (lower), which paralleled the social organization of Inka society into upper and lower moieties (social divisions). Cusco was further divided into quarters that reflected the four divisions of the empire, and people from those sections inhabited their respective quarters of the city. In this way, the city was a map in miniature of the entire Inka empire, and a way for the Inka rulers to explicitly display their power to shape and order that empire. Some scholars think that the city was deliberately laid out so that it was shaped like a puma, symbol of Inka might, but this is still under debate.

Twelve-sided stone, Cusco, c. 1440-1540 (photo: Sarahh Scher, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The masonry of Cusco displays an understanding of stones as being like people, in that many different ones may fit together if they are properly organized. Each individual stone was pecked with tools and fitted to the one next to it, with the result that blocks will have a varied number of sides, such as the famous Twelve-Sided stone in the walls of Hatun Rumiyoq Street. Some sides of each stone were

made to curve outward slightly, others to be slightly concave, so that the stones slotted together, while still allowing a small amount of movement. The ability to move a little was important in an area that is seismically active, protecting the walls from earthquakes.

The city hummed with activity, both secular and religious. Not only the Inka rulers and their nobles resided in Cusco. Local leaders from all sections of the empire also lived in Cusco—often compelled to do so as a means of controlling their home populations. Girls and young women were drawn from across the empire to the capital to serve as cloistered *acllas* ("chosen women"): to weave fine cloth for gods and nobles and to make corn beer (*chicha*) for religious rituals, to serve gods in shrines, and in some cases to be given to Inka favorites in marriage. Young men were also brought to Cusco to be educated and raised in the Inka culture. When they returned to their homes, they would be valuable advocates for Inka traditions and power. In addition to the Inka gods and ancestor mummies kept in the capital, there were also the captured gods of subject peoples, brought there as another means of controlling their followers.

Remains of the Qorikancha, Inka masonry below Spanish colonial construction of the church and monastery of Santo Domingo, Cusco, Peru, c. 1440 (photo: Sarahh Scher, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Qorikancha

At the heart of *hurin* Cusco was the Qorikancha ("Golden House"), the most sacred shrine of the Inka, dedicated to the worship of the sun. While the Inka had many gods, they claimed descent from the sun, whom they called Inti, and held the sun's worship above all others. The Qorikancha was the center point of the empire, and from it radiated imaginary lines, called *ceques*, which connected it to shrines throughout the Cusco valley. Rebecca Stone refers to the *ceques* as a "landscape calendar and cosmogram," as the shrines were also a marker of time, with different noble families tending to and holding rituals at the shrines around the *ceque* system throughout the year.

After the conquest, the Qorikancha was one of many Inka shrines turned into a Christian holy space. The monastery and church of Santo

Domingo were built around and on top of the original shrine, incorporating the old structure into the new one in a way that makes for a strange appearance today. Parts of the old temple are still visible, inside and out, alternating with Spanish Baroque architectural features.

The Qorikancha itself was renovated by the first emperor, Pachacuti Inka Yupanqui, after he had a mystical revelation that declared him a divine king. All of the doorways, windows, and wall niches of the Qorikancha were the distinctive Inka trapezoid shape, with doorways double-jambed to signify the importance of the building.

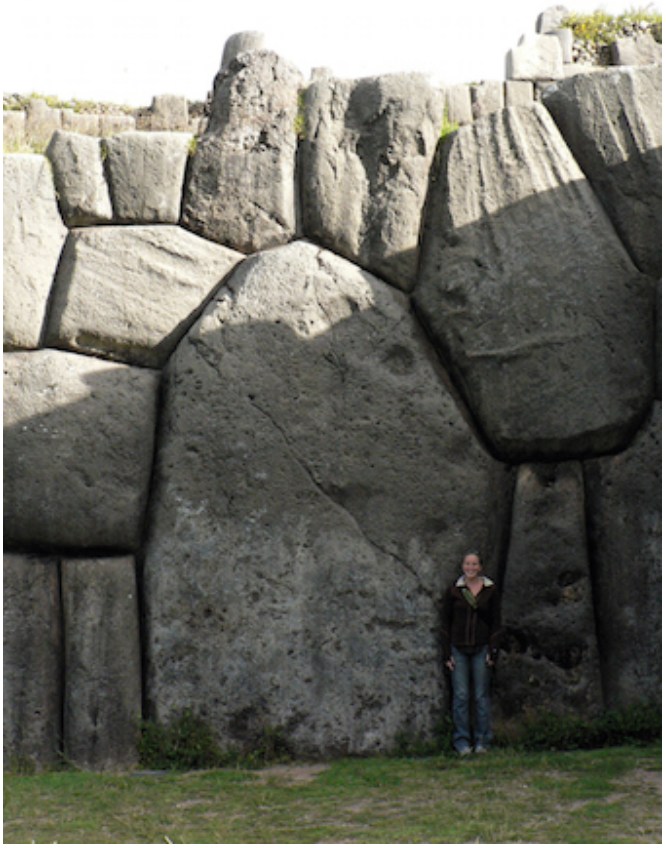
Double-jambed door, Qorikancha, Cusco, c. 1440-1540 (photo: Sarahh Scher, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The exceptionally fine masonry of the Qorikancha was reserved for the most important buildings since it was even more time-consuming than regular Inka stonework. Rather than fitting each stone together as an individual shape, creating an irregular-looking surface, here they were shaped into even courses of rectangular blocks and polished to a smooth finish. The walls were then covered in sheets of gold to signify the shrine's dedication to Inti and would have reflected the sun's rays with a blinding brilliance. But the spectacular, radiant exterior was not the apex of the building's wonders. Inside, a reproduction of the world in miniature took the shape of a garden made from gold, silver and jewels, with people, animals, and plants. The riches of the Qorikancha would be taken in the looting of the city following the Spanish conquest in 1532 and melted down for their precious materials.

Saqsa Wayman

Saqsa Wayman looks down on the city of Cusco from the northwest. The structure, with its zig-zagging walls, is described as a fortress, although there are still many questions as to how it functioned in that capacity, and the purpose of some of its features is debated. It is possible that it was never finished, or that parts of it were left incomplete at the time of conquest, as Jean-Pierre Protzen has proposed. The stones used to construct it were much larger than those used in the streets and houses of Cusco, as can be seen in the photo at left. The stones were quarried and hauled into place using considerable manpower, obtained through the *mit'a*, or labor tax, that all able-bodied people of the empire owed the Inka.

Saqsa Wayman, Cusco, Peru, c. 1440-1540 (photo: Sarahh Scher, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)



Saqsa Wayman, Cusco, Peru, c. 1440-1540 (photo: Sarahh Scher, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

160. Maize cobs, Inka (silver alloy)

Dr. Emily Engel

Maize cobs, Inka, c. 1440–1533, Sheet metal/repoussé, metal alloys, 25.7 x 6 x 9 cm (Ethnological Museum, Berlin) (photo: Claudia Obrocki, CC BY-NC-SA) <http://www.smb-digital.de>

A garden of gold and silver

Imagine a garden of miniature llamas, corn, flowers, and people all made of gold and silver. Such a garden existed in the courtyard in one of the most important Inka temples, the Qorikancha, in the capital city of Cusco. One of these beautiful metal objects is a gold-silver alloy corncob sculpture. It mimics the appearance of a ripe ear of corn breaking through its husk, still on the stalk but ready to be harvested. In this sculptural representation of maize (*Zea mays*), individual kernels of corn protrude from the cob that is nestled in jagged metallic leaves. Inka metalsmiths expertly combined silver and copper to mimic the internal and external components of actual corn. Hollow and delicate, the ears of corn on the stalk are life-sized.

While many ancient Andean art traditions favored abstract and geometric forms (such as the *All-T'oqapu Tunic*), Inka visual expression often incorporated more naturalistic forms in small-scale metal objects. This silver alloy

corncob sculpture is one example of this type of object.

After the Spaniards arrived in the Andes, the European invaders soon desired the gold and silver belonging to the Inka. Some of the earliest Spanish chroniclers record the placement of a garden composed of gold and silver objects among many of the offering and ritual spaces in the Qorikancha. Pedro de Cieza de León describes a golden garden in his 1554 account:

> In the month of October of the year of the Lord 1534 the Spaniards entered the city of Cuzco, head of the great empire of the Inkas, where their court was, as well as the solemn Temple of the Sun and their greatest marvels. The high priest abandoned the temple, where [the Spaniards] plundered the garden of gold and the sheep [llamas] and shepherds of this metal along with so much silver that it is unbelievable and precious stones, which, if they were collected, would be worth a city.[1]

Foreground, Ruins of the Qorikancha (the Convent of Santo Domingo above), Cusco, Peru (photo: Terry Feuerborn, CC BY-NC 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/baimRr>

Miniature gold llama figurine, Inka, 6.3 cm high, © Trustees of the British Museum

After the defeat of Inka leadership in the 1530s, Spanish royal agents set up colonies across the continent. They looted Inka objects in large quantities and sent many back to Spain. The silver corncob and stalk were likely part of the spoils captured in this raid. By 1534, the collections of the Spanish king Charles V included a gold maize stalk with three leaves and two ears of corn, similar to the one above. Royal inventories also describe gold and silver llamas, female figures, a lamb, and a male figure that purportedly originated in one of the most important Inka temples in the capital city of Cusco, the Qorikancha.

A compact version of the Inka cosmos

The life-size garden was a significant offering within the Qorikancha where it became part of a compact version of the cosmos controlled by the Inka state. It also represented the vast range of ecosystems encompassed by the empire and the most important agricultural products cultivated in them. The empire reached from the desert

coasts to over 6,000 feet above sea level. Plants and animals represented in the golden garden cannot grow and survive at every point in the empire, but only at specified altitudes. For example, maize grows up to a mid-range altitude, and llamas graze at the highest points of the empire. The metallic maize cobs would have represented one of the most important imperial foodstuffs, used for making the *chicha*(maize beer) consumed at political feasts, which cemented the obligations of local political leaders to the Inka state.

For centuries, an organized "vertical archipelago" system and terracing technologies allowed Andean people to obtain the foods and materials that they needed to survive from different elevations. The Inka adopted these systems, enhanced them, and exploited them on an imperial scale. The Qorikancha's garden asserted the natural world as a possession of the Inka at the same time it reinforced their divine right to rule across the Andes.

Gold capacocha figurine, Inka, 6 cm high, © Trustees of the British Museum.

The Inka commonly deployed small-scale naturalistic metallic offerings, like the silver alloy corncobs, in ritual practices that supported state religion and government. Offerings have been found across Inka territories. Besides corn, these offerings included small gold and silver human figurines ornamented with textiles that accompanied *qhapaq hucha*sacrifices at the furthest reaches of the empire. All these offerings acted as symbols of the supernatural origin of the Inkas in the Sun, and their control over the natural world as descendants from the most powerful deity.

1. Pedro Cieza de León, *The Discovery and Conquest of Peru: Chronicles of the New World Encounter*, ed. and trans. Alexandra Parma Cook and Noble David Cook (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998), 316–19.

161. City of Machu Picchu (Peru)

Dr. Sarahh Scher

Machu Picchu, Peru, c. 1450–1540 (photo: Sarahh Scher, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

A royal estate

Machu Picchu is often described as "mysterious," but in fact, a great deal is known about its construction and purpose. It was built as a royal estate for the first Inka emperor, Pachacuti Inka Yupanqui, in the middle of the fifteenth century, on a mountain saddle overlooking the Urubamba River (in modern day Peru). The location was approximately three days' walk from the Inka capital of Cusco, and nearly 3,000 feet lower in elevation (7,972 feet / 2,430 meters), with a pleasant climate. It was intended as a place where the Inka emperor and his family could host feasts, perform religious ceremonies, and administer the affairs of the empire, while also establishing a claim to land that would be owned by his lineage after his death. The site was chosen and situated for its relationship to the Andean landscape, including sightlines to other mountain peaks, called *apus*, which have long been considered ancestral deities throughout the Andes. The site contains housing for elites, retainers, and maintenance staff, religious shrines, fountains, and terraces, as well as carved rock outcrops, a signature element of Inka art.

Machu Picchu, Peru, c. 1450–1540, terraces can be seen to the left (photo: Max Reiser, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/EJRti>

Architecture

The site features architecture, from houses to terraces, built by carefully fitting individual stones against each other. Terraces were a common element of highland agriculture long before the Inka. They increased the arable land surface and reduced erosion by creating walled steps down the sides of steep mountains. Each step could then be planted with crops. Terracing took advantage of the landscape and provided some sustenance for the emperor and his entourage during his visits, as well as producing ritually-important maize crops. Further provisions came from the rich lands at the foot of the mountain peak, which were also beholden to Pachacuti and his family.

Stone channel drain, Machu Picchu, Peru, c. 1450–1540 (photo: Eduardo Zárate, CC BY-ND 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/6iT859>

Water management at the site was crucial, and throughout Machu Picchu, a system of stone channels drains water from rainfall and from a spring near the site. Some of the water was channeled to stone fountains. There are sixteen in all, descending in elevation through the site. The first in the series is placed outside the door of the emperor's compound. That fountain is constructed with walls that may have created a ritual bath for the emperor, connected to his duties as a sacred king who performed religious rituals.

The construction of the main buildings is typical of Inka elite architecture. The walls were built of stones that had been individually shaped to fit closely with one another, rather than being shaped into similar units. This was accomplished by a laborious process of pecking at the stones with tools, gradually shaping them so that each stone was uniquely nested against those around it. Each stone had some sides that protruded slightly, and some with slight concave faces, socketing the stones so that they held together, but allowed for earthquake-damping movement in this seismically active region. Outward faces were then worked smooth so that the walls resemble an intricate mosaic. Most structures were roofed with wood and thatch. Entryways were in the unique Inka shape of a trapezoid, rather than a rectangle. The trapezoid shape was also used for niches and windows in the walls of buildings. Buildings for people or activities of lower status were made using a rough construction technique that did not take the time to shape the stones.

Stone walls and trapezoid-shaped windows, Machu Picchu, Peru, c. 1450–1540 (photo: Jill /Blue Moonbeam Studio, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/pXqT67>

Population and social dynamics

The emperor and his retinue would only reside at Machu Picchu for part of the year. Most of the people who lived there permanently were *yanaconas* (retainers) and *mitimaes* (colonists obligated to move to their location). Graves at Machu Picchu have yielded evidence that many of the *yanaconas*there were craftspeople, including metalsmiths, who came from all over the empire. The ability to command people across the empire and to oblige them to work for the Inka nobility was an expression of imperial power. The buildings of Machu Picchu clearly show the social divisions of the site, with most of the high-status residential buildings in a cluster to the northeast. The emperor himself lived in a separate compound at the southwest of the site, indicating his unique status as the ruler. The Observatory was adjacent to the royal residence, emphasizing the relationship between the elites, religious ritual, and astronomical observation, including Pachacuti's claim as both a descendant of the sun (whom the Inka called *Inti*) and the sun himself.

One of the obligations of the royal family was performing rituals that sustained relationships with the supernatural forces that drove existence. The number of religious structures at Machu Picchu is high, indicating that Pachacuti and his lineage were heavily involved in the religious functioning of the empire, a task that underscored his right to rule.

The Observatory, seen from above, Machu Picchu, Peru, c. 1440-1540 (photo: Stephen Trever, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Observatory

Also called the Temple of the Sun, this building's purpose is echoed in its unique shape. It is composed of two main parts: an upper curved stone enclosure with windows and niches placed in it, and a cave beneath this structure with masonry additions that hold more niches. Modifications of the windows in the Observatory's upper walls indicate that they were used to calculate the June solstice, as well as the first morning rise of the constellation Pleiades and other important constellations. The cave beneath the enclosure may refer to the place of the underworld in Inka myth, making the Observatory a building that embodied cosmological thought as much as it facilitated astronomical observation.

Intihuatana

The Intihuatana ("hitching post of the sun") is

a carved boulder located in the ritual area of the site, to the west of the main plaza. Carved boulders were a part of the Inka relationship with the earth, and expressions of belief in a landscape inhabited by supernatural forces. Carved boulders of this type are found throughout the heart of the Inka empire. The stone's name refers to the idea that it was used to track the passage of the sun throughout the year, part of the reckoning of time used to determine when religious events would take place and similar to the Observatory.

Intihuatana, Machu Picchu, Peru, c. 1450–1540 (photo: Sarahh Scher, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Backstory

Due to its status as an important piece of both global and Peruvian heritage, Machu Picchu has recently become the focus of international attention with regard to both the repatriation of artifacts from the site, and preservation of the existing structures against environmental and human impact.

Covered by jungle and known only to locals since the sixteenth century, Machu Picchu was uncovered by Hiram Bingham III, a professor of South American history at Yale University, in 1911. In addition to the structures at the site, he and his team excavated thousands of artifacts, including ceramics, tools, jewelry and human bones, which he brought back to Yale under an agreement with the Peruvian government at the time. The agreement stipulated that the artifacts could be studied at Yale, with the provision that they could be requested and returned to Peru at any time. Since then, most of the objects have been housed at Yale' Peabody Museum.

Despite Peru's repeated demands for the objects' return over the last century, it took a U.S. federal court case and the intervention of Peru's president to finally secure their repatriation in 2010. According to the Peabody museum website,

> In a gesture of friendship and in recognition of the unique place that Machu Picchu has come to hold for the people of Cuzco and the Peruvian nation, Yale agreed to return to Peru materials excavated by Bingham at Machu Picchu in 1912. This was the basis of a diplomatic resolution of the dispute between Yale University and the Peruvian government. The agreement was formalized in a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Peru on November 23 2010, a second Memorandum of Understanding with the University of Cuzco (UNSAAC) on February 11, 2011, and the return from the Peabody Museum of materials from Machu Picchu in 2011 and 2012.

The agreement has resulted in ongoing research cooperation between Yale and UNSAAC, and is an example of how repatriation efforts can lead to new and fruitful opportunities for cooperation.

The site of Machu Picchu itself is also now the focus of governmental efforts, as authorities attempt to cope with the great numbers of visitors and their impact on the site, in addition to environmental and agricultural factors that threaten the integrity of the landscape. According to the UNESCO website,

> the Historic Sanctuary of Machu Picchu is among the greatest artistic, architectural and land use achievements anywhere and the most significant tangible legacy of the Inca civilization.…The strongly increasing number of visitors to the Historic Sanctuary of Machu Picchu must be matched by an adequate management regulating access.…The planning and organization of transportation and infrastructure construction, as well as the sanitary and safety conditions for both tourists and new residents attracted by tourism requires the creation of high quality and new long-term solutions, and is a significant ongoing concern.

The government of Peru recently instituted a ticketing system that caps the number of visitors and requires them to reserve and pay for daily time slots at the site. Still, UNESCO warns that

> Since the time of inscription consistent concerns have been expressed about ecosystem degradation through logging, firewood and commercial plant collection, poor waste management, poaching, agricultural encroachment…, introduced species and water pollution …, in addition from pressures derived from broader development in the region.… Continuous efforts are needed to comply with protected areas and other legislation and plans and prevent further degradation.

Given the number of agencies involved in planning and protecting Machu Picchu, UNESCO states, achieving an adequate master plan for the site is an ongoing challenge. Machu Picchu is only one of many such world heritage sites around the world that are dealing with the threats brought by increased visitation, and it points to the tensions between the need for everyone to enjoy and benefit from the experience of seeing these magnificent sites, and the need to preserve them for future generations.

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Backstory by Dr. Naraelle Hohensee

162. All-T'oqapu Tunic, Inka

Dr. Sarahh Scher

The Inka were masters of statecraft, forging an empire that at its height extended from modern Quito, Ecuador to Santiago, Chile. One of the engines that drove the empire was the exchange of high-status goods, which helped to secure the reciprocal but unequal economic and power relationships between the Inka and their subjects. Precious materials such as Spondylus shell from the warm waters of coastal Ecuador or gold from remote mountain mines were shaped into high-status objects. These were given to local leaders as part of a system of imposed obligations that gave the Inka the right to claim portions of local produce and labor as their due. Along with jewels, political feasts and gifts of finely-made textiles would also cement these unequal relationships.

Map, Inka Empire (adapted, CC BY-SA 3.0) <https://tinyurl.com/y5ofpn27>

All-T'oqapu Tunic, Inka, 1450–1540, camelid fiber and cotton, 90.2 x 77.15 cm (Dumbarton Oaks, Washington D.C.)

Textiles and their creation had been highly important in the Andes long before the Inka came to power in the mid fifteenth century—in fact, textile technologies were developed well before ceramics. Finely-made textiles from the best materials were objects of high status among nearly all Andean cultures, much more valuable than gold or gems. The *All-T'oqapu Tunic* is an example of the height of Andean textile fabrication and its centrality to Inka expressions of power.

Weaving on a backstrap loom, Diego Rivera, The Weaver, 1936, tempera and oil on canvas, 66 x 106.7 cm (Art Institute of Chicago)

The making of Andean textiles

Weaving in Andean cultures was usually done on backstrap looms made from a series of sturdy sticks supporting the warp, or skeletal threads, of the textile. A backstrap loom is tied to a post or tree at one end, while the other end is attached to a strap that passes around the back of the weaver. By leaning forward or tilting back, the weaver can adjust the tension on the warp threads as he or she passes the weft threads back and forth, creating the pattern that we see on the surface of the textile. By the time of the Inka, an incredible number of variations on this basic technique had created all kinds of textile patterns and weaves.

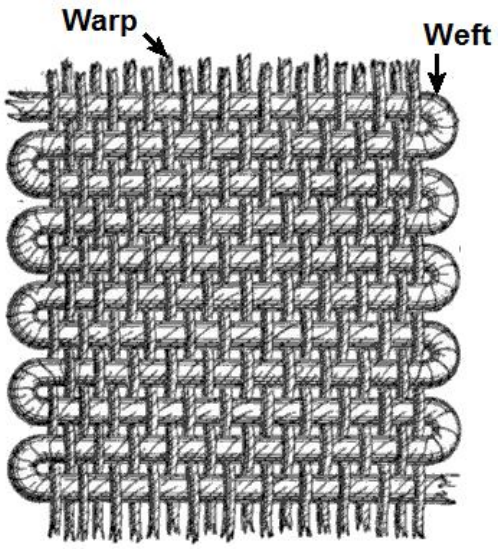


Diagram of warp and weft, (image, CC BY-SA 3.0) <https://tinyurl.com/y4pednbb>

Detail, All-T'oqapu Tunic, Inka, 1450–1540, camelid fiber and cotton, 90.2 x 77.15 cm (Dumbarton Oaks, Washington D.C.)

The two main fibers spun into the threads of the tunic came from cotton and camelids. Cotton plants grew well on the Andean coast, in a variety of natural colors. Camelids thrived in the highlands (this includes the wild guanacos and vicuña and their domesticated brethren, the llama and the alpaca). Most Andean camelid-fiber textiles were made with the silky wool of the alpaca. Animal fibers are more easily dyed than plant fibers, so when weavers wanted bright colors they most commonly used alpaca wool. The *All-T'oqapu Tunic* is made of dyed camelid wool warp over a cotton weft, a common combination for high-status textiles.

Collecting, spinning, and dyeing the fibers for a textile represented a huge amount of work from numerous people before a weaver even began their task. Some dyes, like cochineal red or indigo blue, were especially prized and reserved for high-status textiles. Cochineal dye comes from the bodies of small insects that live on cacti, and it takes thousands of them to make a small amount of dye. Indigo dyeing requires a high level of technical skill and a large investment in time. Red- and blue-dyed textiles were not only beautiful, but they also represented the apex of the resources needed to produce them and the social and political power that commanded those resources.

In the Inka empire, textiles were produced by a number of groups, but the finest cloth, called *qompi* in Quechua (the language of the Inkas), was produced by *acllas* ("chosen women"), women who were collected from across the empire and cloistered in buildings to weave fine cloth. The *acllas* also performed religious rituals, and made and served *chicha* (corn beer) at state feasts. These women spun, dyed, and wove fibers that were collected as part of the Inka taxation system. The textiles they produced were then given as royal gifts, worn by the royal household, or burned as a precious sacrifice to the sun god, Inti. The threads in the *All-T'oqapu Tunic* were spun so finely that there are approximately 100 threads per centimeter, making for a light, strong weave. It was traditional to weave garments in a single piece if possible, as cutting the cloth once it was off the loom would destroy its spirit existence (*camac*), which formed as it grew on the loom. The *All-T'oqapu Tunic* is a single piece of cloth,

woven with a slit in the center for the head to pass through, and folded over and sewn together along the sides with spaces left open as armholes.

Iconography

The decoration of the tunic is where its name derives from. T'oqapu are the square geometric motifs that make up the entirety of this tunic. These designs were only allowed to be worn by those of high rank in Inka society. Normally, an Inka tunic with t'oqapu on it would have a band or bands of the motif near the neck or at the waist. Individual t'oqapu designs appear to have been related to various peoples, places, and social roles within the Inka empire. Covering a single tunic with a large variety of t'oqapu, as seen in this example, likely makes it a royal tunic, and symbolizes the power of the Inka ruler (the Sapa Inka). The Sapa Inka's power is manifest in the tunic in several ways; firstly, its fine thread, expert weave, and bright colors signify his ability to command the taxation of the empire, access to luxury goods like rare and difficult dyes, and the weaving expertise of the acllas. Secondly, among the t'oqapu in the tunic is one pattern than contains a black and white checkerboard. This was the tunic pattern worn by the Inka army and shows the Sapa Inka's military might. Lastly, the collection of many patterns shows that the Sapa Inka (which means "unique Inka" in Quechua) was a special individual who held claim to all t'oqapu and therefore all the peoples and places of his empire. It is a statement of absolute dominion over the land, its people, and its resources manifested in an item that is typically Andean in its material and manufacture.

Detail, All-T'oqapu Tunic, Inka, 1450–1540, camelid fiber and cotton, 90.2 x 77.15 cm (Dumbarton Oaks, Washington D.C.)

163. Bandolier Bag, Winnebago (?)

Dr. Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank

Bandolier Bag (detail at right), 1880s, Winnebago (?), wool and cotton trade cloth, wool yarn, glass, metal, 34 1/2 x 12″ / 87.6 x 30.5 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

When looking at photographs of what we today call a Bandolier Bag (in the Ojibwe language they are called *Aazhooningwa'on*, or "worn across the shoulder"), it is nearly impossible to see the thousands of tiny beads strung together that decorate the bag's surface.[1] This is an object that invites close looking to fully appreciate the process by which colorful beads animate the bag, making a dazzling object and showcasing remarkable technical skill.

What is a Bandolier Bag?

Bandolier Bags are based on bags carried by European soldiers armed with rifles, who used the bags to store ammunition cartridges. While Bandolier Bags were made by different tribes and First Nations across the Great Lakes and Prairie regions, they differ in appearance. The stylistic differences are the result of personal preference as much contact with Europeans and Euro-Americans, goods acquired in trade, and travel.

The National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) in New York City has a wonderful example of a Bandolier Bag, most likely made by a Lenape artist (the Lenape are part of the Delaware tribe or First Nation, who lived along the Delaware River and parts of what is today New York State).[2]

Bandolier Bag, Lenape (Delaware tribe, Oklahoma), c. 1850 C.E., hide, cotton cloth, silk ribbon, glass beads, wool yarn, metal cones, 68 x 47 cm (National Museum of the American Indian, New York)

Bandolier Bags (like this one) are often large in size and decorated with a wide array of colorful beads and ribbons. They are worn as a cross-body bag, with a thick strap crossing a person's chest to allow it to rest on the hip.

The Eastern Woodlands (on the map above "Northeast" and "Southeast") extended roughly from the Atlantic Ocean to the eastern Great Plains, and from the Great Lakes region to the Gulf of Mexico (graphic: Nikater) <https://tinyurl.com/yyj29g6g>

Chief Cloud Wearing a Bandolier Bag (source: Wisconsin Historical Society <http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/museum/exhibits/p2p/red/impressions.asp>)

These bags were especially popular in the late nineteenth century in the Eastern or Woodlands region, which comprised parts of what is today Canada and the United States. The Woodlands area encompasses the Great Lakes Region and terrain east of the Mississippi River. This enormous geographic area has a long, complex history including the production of objects we today recognize as "art," that date back more than 4,000 years.

Bandolier Bags were created across this vast expanse of land, and the NMAI has examples from the Upper Great Lakes region and Oklahoma. Due to events and laws like the Indian Removal Act of 1830 (signed by President Andrew Jackson), the Lenape were forcibly removed from these ancestral lands and relocated to areas of Oklahoma, Wisconsin, and Ontario, Canada. Despite these traumatic relocations, tribes like the Lenape continued to create objects as they had in ancestral lands. Bandolier bags are one example of this continued artistic production.

Material and design

While men most commonly wore these bags, women created them. Initially, Bandolier Bags did not have a pocket, but were intended to complement men's ceremonial outfits. Men even wore more than one bag on occasion, dressing themselves in a rainbow of colors and patterns. Even those bags with pockets weren't necessarily always used to hold objects.

Women typically produced Bandolier Bags using trade cloth, made from cotton or wool. It is often possible to see the exposed unembroidered trade cloth underneath the cross-body strap. The NMAI bag uses animal hide in addition to the cotton cloth, combining materials that had long been used among these groups (animal hides) with new materials (cotton trade cloth).

Beads and other materials were embroidered on the trade cloth and hide. The tiny glass beads, called seed beads, were acquired from European traders, and they were prized for their brilliant colors. Glass beads replaced porcupine quillwork, which had a longstanding history in this area. Before the use of glass beads, porcupine quills were acquired (carefully!), softened and dyed. Once they were malleable enough to bend, the quills were woven onto the surfaces of objects (especially clothing or other cloth goods like bags). Quillwork required different working techniques than embroidering with beads, so people adopted new methods for decorating the surfaces of bags, clothing, and other goods.

Bandolier Bag (reverse), 1880s, Winnebago (?), wool and cotton trade cloth, wool yarn, glass, metal, 34 1/2 x 12″ / 87.6 x 30.5 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Bandolier Bag (detail), 1880s, Winnebago (?), wool and cotton trade cloth, wool yarn, glass, metal, 34 1/2 x 12″ / 87.6 x 30.5 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

In addition to glass beads, the NMAI bag is decorated with silk ribbons—also procured via trade with Europeans. Much like the glass beads, silk ribbons offered a new material with a greater variety of color choices. Looking at the NMAI bag, we can see that the artists attached strips of yellow, blue, red, and green ribbons, like tassels, to the ends of the straps, as well as longer orange ribbons that fall below the bottom of the bag. Before the introduction of ribbons, women would paint the surface of hides in addition to decorating the bags with quillwork. Ribbons afforded women the opportunity to produce more textural variation, and to expand the surface of the bags in new ways. Imagine wearing this bag: the bright colors would attract attention and the sparkle of the beads would reflect sunlight as the ribbons fluttered in the wind or moved as one walked.

Further animating the surface of the NMAI Bandolier Bag is a red wool fringe, capped with metal cones that attach to the bag's rectangular pouch. Like the ribbons and beads, the fringe and metal offered more colors and textures to the bag's surface.

Silk ribbons (detail), Bandolier Bag, Lenape (Delaware tribe, Oklahoma), c. 1850 C.E., hide, cotton cloth, silk ribbon, glass beads, wool yarn, metal cones, 68 x 47 cm (National Museum of the American Indian, New York)

Fringe (detail), Bandolier Bag, Lenape (Delaware tribe, Oklahoma), c. 1850 C.E., hide, cotton cloth, silk ribbon, glass beads, wool yarn, metal cones, 68 x 47 cm (National Museum of the American Indian, New York)

The designs on the bag are abstracted and symmetrical. White beads act as contour lines to help make the designs more visible to the naked eye. On the cross-body strap, we see a design that branches in four directions. Yet notice how the artist has actually made each side slightly different. The left portion of the strap displays

a light blue background, and the repeating form is more rounded, with softer edges. On the right side of the strap, the blue is darker, the framing pink and green are varied, and the repeating form displays more straight lines. The small size of seed beads allowed for more curvilinear designs than quillwork.

Strap (detail), Bandolier Bag, Lenape (Delaware tribe, Oklahoma), c. 1850 C.E., hide, cotton cloth, silk ribbon, glass beads, wool yarn, metal cones, 68 x 47 cm (National Museum of the American Indian, New York)

It is possible that the contrasting colors represent the Celestial/Sky and Underworld realms. The abstracted designs on the sash may also be read in relation to the cosmos because they branch into four directions, which might relate to the four cardinal directions (north, south, east, and west) and the division of the terrestrial (earthly) realm into four quadrants.

Prairie Style

The NMAI Bandolier Bag relates to a broader array of objects that demonstrate the Prairie Style. The artist of the NMAI Bandolier Bag borrowed from older Delaware traditions, as well as those of other native peoples after they were forcibly relocated. Another Bandolier bag in the NMAI collection (below), by an Anishnaabe artist, demonstrates the "Prairie Style" clearly in the upper section where a floral motif floats against a dark ground.

Bag, Anishnaabe (Chippewa/Ojibwe), c. 1870, Upper Great Lakes, wool, cotton cloth, and glass beads. 87 x 26 cm (National Museum of the American Indian, New York)

The Prairie Style used colorful glass beads fashioned in floral patterns. The patterns could be either naturalistic flowers or abstract floral designs. A Sac and Fox breechcloth in the NMAI collection is a clear example of the more abstract Prairie Style because the floral designs do not closely resemble flowers that you might see in nature (the Sacs or Sauks are an Eastern Woodlands group, the Fox tribe is closely related to them, and they are both centered in Oklahoma today, though there are Sac and Fox tribes in Iowa and Kansas as well).

The Prairie Style is the result of peoples coming into contact with one another, particularly in the wake of removal from their ancestral homelands. Floral forms, combined with the use of ribbons and colorful glass beads, not only attest to the transformations in artistic production but also testifies to the creativity of people as they adapted to new situations. Bandolier Bags, as well as other objects and clothing, helped to

express group identities and social status. In the wake of forced removals and threats to traditional ways of life, objects like the NMAI Bandolier Bag demonstrate the resilience and continued creativity of groups like the Lenape.

Sac and Fox man's breechcloth, c. 1880, Oklahoma, wool cloth, cotton, glass bead/beads, cotton thread, 135 x 45 cm (National Museum of the American Indian, New York)

Today

Bandolier Bags are still made and worn today—attesting to their rich and complex history and their continuing ceremonial and cultural functions. For example, when the NMAI opened a new museum in Washington, D.C., in 2004, Ojibwe men wore colorful Bandolier Bags during the opening festivities and ceremonies. Artists continue to innovate by creating new interpretations of Bandolier Bags. Maria Hupfield, who belongs to the Wasauksing First Nation in Ontario, Canada, and currently lives in Brooklyn, made a Bandolier Bag from gray felt—an industrial material transformed into something beautiful and historically significant.

1. Anishnaabe is the name for the ethnic group that comprises the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi First Nations around the Great Lakes. Due to relocations of the nineteenth century, many other groups like the Delaware and Dakota currently live on the same lands.

2. In the United States, it is more common to see the term "Native American," "Native," or "Indigenous," whereas "First Nations" used more frequently in Canada.

164. Transformation Mask

Dr. Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank

Kwakwaka'wakw artist, Eagle Mask open, late 19th c., from Alert Bay, Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada, cedar wood, feathers, sinew, cord, bird skin, hide, plant fibers, cotton, iron, pigments, 37 x 57 x 49 cm (American Museum of Natural History)

Transformation

Imagine a man standing before a large fire wearing the heavy eagle mask shown above and a long cedar bark costume on his body. He begins to dance, the firelight flickers and the feathers rustle as he moves about the room in front of hundreds of people. Now, imagine him pulling the string that opens the mask, he is transformed into something else entirely—what a powerful and dramatic moment!

Kwakwaka'wakw artist, Eagle Mask open, late 19th c., Canada (American Museum of Natural History)

A Transformation Mask at the Brooklyn Museum shows a Thunderbird, but when opened it reveals a human face flanked on either side by two lightning snakes called sisiutl, and with another bird below it and a small figure in black above it.

'Namgis artist (of the Kwakwaka'wakw), Thunderbird Mask closed, 19th c., from Alert Bay, Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada, cedar, pigment, leather, nails, metal plate, 78.7 x 114.3 x 119.4 cm open; 52.1 x 43.2 x 74.9 cm closed (Brooklyn Museum)

'Namgis artist (of the Kwakwaka'wakw), Thunderbird Mask open, 19th c., Canada (Brooklyn Museum)

A whale transformation mask, such as the one in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (below), gives the impression that the whale is swimming. The mouth opens and closes, the tail moves upwards and downwards, and the flippers extend outwards but also retract inwards.

Kwakwaka'wakw artist, Whale Mask, 19th c., from Alert Bay, Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada, cedar wood, cord, metal, leather, denim, pigments, 58 x 36.5 x 161.3 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Transformation masks, like those belonging to the Kwakwaka'wakw (pronounced Kwak-wak-ah-wak, a Pacific Northwest Coast indigenous people) and illustrated here, are worn during a potlatch, a ceremony where the host displayed his status, in part by giving away gifts to those in attendance. These masks were only one part of a costume that also included a cloak made of red cedar bark. During a potlatch, Kwakwaka'wakw dancers perform wearing the mask and costume. The masks conveyed social position (only those with a certain status could wear them) and also helped to portray a family's genealogy by displaying (family) crest symbols.

'Namgis artist (of the Kwakwaka'wakw), Thunderbird Mask open, 19th c., Canada (Brooklyn Museum) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/C8FisF>

The Kwakwaka'wakw

Masks are not the same across the First Nations of the Northwest Coastal areas; here we focus solely on Kwakwaka'wakw transformation masks.

The Kwakwaka'wakw ("Kwak'wala speaking tribes") are generally called Kwakiutl by non-Native peoples. They are one of many indigenous groups that live on the western coast of British Columbia, Canada. The mythology and cosmology of different Kwakwaka'wakw Nations (such as the Kwagu'ł (Kwakiutl) or 'Namgis) is extremely diverse, although there are commonalities. For instance, many groups

relate that deceased ancestors roamed the world, transforming themselves in the process (this might entail removing their animal skins or masks to reveal their human selves within).

Kwakwaka'wakw bands are arranged into four clans (Killer Whale, Eagle, Raven, and Wolf clans). The clans are divided into *numayn* (or *'na'mina*), which can be loosely translated as "group of fellows of the same kind" (essentially groups that shared a common ancestor). *Numayns* were responsible for safe-guarding crest symbols and for conveying their specific rights—which might include access to natural resources (like salmon fishing areas) and rights to sacred names and dances that related to a *numayn's* ancestor or the group's origins. The *numayn* were ranked, and typically only one person could fill a spot at any given moment in time. Each rank entailed specific rights, including ceremonial privileges—like the right to wear a mask such as the Brooklyn Museum's Thunderbird transformation mask. Animal transformation masks contained crests for a given *numayn*. Ancestral entities and supernatural forces temporarily embody dancers wearing these masks and other ceremonial regalia.

Animals and myths

Transformation Mask, Kwakiutl population, British Columbia, Canada, wood paint, graphite, cedar, cloth, string, 34 x 53 cm closed, 130 cm open (Quai Branly Museum). "This transformation mask opens into two sections. Closed, it represents a crow or an eagle; when spread out, a human face appears. It was associated with initiation rites that took place during the winter. During these ceremonies, both religious and theatrical, the spirit of the ancestors was supposed to enter into men."

Many myths relate moments of transformation often involving trickster supernaturals (a trickster is a god, goddess, spirit, man, woman, or anthropomorphic animal who exhibits a great degree of intellect or secret knowledge and uses it to play tricks or otherwise disobey normal rules and conventional behavior). Raven, for instance, is known as a consummate trickster—he often changes into other creatures and helps humans by providing them with a variety of useful things such as the sun, moon, fire, and salmon. Thunderbird (*Kwankwanxwalige'*), who was a mythical ancestor of the Kwakwaka'wakw, also figures prominently in mythology. He is believed to cause thunder when he beats his wings, and lightning comes from his eyes. He lives in the celestial realm, and he can remove his bird skin to assume human form.

Design and materials

The masks illustrated here display a variety of brightly colored surfaces filled with complex forms. These masks use elements of the formline style, a term coined in 1965 to describe the characteristics of Northwest Coast visual culture. The Brooklyn Museum mask provides a clear example of what constitutes the formline style. For instance, The Brooklyn Museum mask (when open) displays a color palette of mostly red, blue-green, and black, which is consistent with other formline objects like a Tlingit Raven Screen (a house partition screen) attributed to Kadyisdu.axch' (detail below). The masks, whether opened or closed, are bilaterally symmetrical. Typical of the formline style is the use of an undulating, calligraphic line. Also, note how the pupils of the eyes on the exterior of the Brooklyn Museum mask are ovoid shapes, similar to the figures and forms found on the

interior surfaces of many masks. This ovoid shape, along with s- and u-forms, are common features of the formline style.

Detail, Tlingit Raven Screen or Yéil X'eenh, attributed to Kadyisdu.axch', Tlingit, Kiks.ádi clan, active late 18th – early 19th century (Photo: Joe Mabel, CC BY-SA 3.0) <https://tinyurl.com/y3ojcdp5>

The American Museum of Natural History and Brooklyn Museum masks are carved of red cedar wood, an important and common material used for many Northwest Coast objects and buildings. Masks take months, sometimes years, to create. Because they are made of wood and other organic materials that quickly decay, most masks date to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (even though we know that the practice extends much farther into the past). In fact, the artistic style of many transformation masks it thought to have emerged over a thousand years ago.

With the introduction and enforcement of Christianity and as a result of colonization in the nineteenth century, masking practices changed among peoples of the Northwest Coast. Prior to contact with Russians, Europeans, and Euro-Americans, masks like the Brooklyn Museum's Thunderbird Transformation Mask, were not carved using metal tools. After iron tools were introduced along with other materials and equipment, masks demonstrate different carving techniques. Earlier masks used natural (plant and mineral based) pigments, post-contact, brighter and more durable synthetic colors were introduced. The open mask from the American Museum of Natural History, for example, displays bright red, yellow, and blue.

Ceremonies and potlatches

Masks passed between family members of a specific clan (they could be inherited or gifted). They were just one sign of a person's status and rank, which were important to demonstrate within Kwakwaka'wakw society—especially during a potlatch. Franz Boas, an anthropologist who worked in this area between 1885 and 1930, noted that "The acquisition of a high position and the maintenance of its dignity require correct marriages and wealth—wealth accumulated by industry and by loaning out property at interest—dissipated at the proper time, albeit with the understanding that each recipient of a gift has to return it with interest at a time when he is dissipating his wealth. This is the general principle underlying the potlatch…."[1]

Potlatches were banned in 1885 until the 1950s because they were considered immoral by Christian missionaries who believed cannibalism occurred (for its part, the Canadian Government thought potlatches hindered economic development because people ceased work during these ritual celebrations). With the prohibition of potlatches, many masks were confiscated. Those that weren't destroyed often made their way into museums or private collections. When the ban against potlatches was removed by the Canadian government, many First Nations have attempted to regain possession of the masks and other objects that had been taken from them. Potlatches are still practiced today among Northwest Coast peoples.

Edward S. Curtis, Kwakwaka'wakw potlatch, c. 1914

Editorial Note: In the United States, it is more common to see the term "Native American," "Native," or "Indigenous," whereas "First Nations" used more frequently in Canada.

165. Painted elk hide, attributed to Cotsiogo (Cadzi Cody)

Dr. Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank

Attributed to Cotsiogo, Hide Painting of the Sun Dance, c. 1890-1900, Eastern Shoshone (Wind River Reservation, WY), painted elk hide (Indian Arts Research Center, School for Advanced Research, Santa Fe, NM)

Animal hide painting

Painting on animal hides is a longstanding tradition of the Great Basin and Great Plains people of the United States, including the Kiowa, Lakota, Shoshone, Blackfeet, Crow, Dakota, and Osage. While the earliest surviving hide paintings date to around 1800, this tradition was undoubtedly practiced much earlier along with other forms of painting like petroglyphs (rock engravings).

Painting, in tandem with oral traditions, functioned to record history. Often artists like Cotsiogo (Eastern Shoshone; pronounced "co SEE ko"), who is also known by his Euro-American name, Cadzi Cody, painted on elk, deer, or buffalo hides using natural pigments like red ochre and chalk, and eventually paints and dyes obtained through trade. Usually, artists decorated the hides with geometric or figural motifs. By the later nineteenth century, certain hide artists like Cotsiogo began depicting subject matter that "affirmed native identity" and appealed to tourists. The imagery placed on the hide was likely done with a combination of free-hand painting and stenciling.

Attributed to Cotsiogo, Hide painting of the Sun Dance, c. 1890–1900, Eastern Shoshone, elk hide and pigment, approximately. 81 x 78 inches (Brooklyn Museum)

Men and women both painted on hides, but men usually produced the scenes on tipis (tepees), clothing, and shields. Many of these scenes celebrated battles and other biographical details. The Brooklyn Museum's hide painting by Cotsiogo may have functioned as a wall hanging and has also been classified as a robe.

Map with Wind River Reservation, Wyoming © Google Earth

The artist

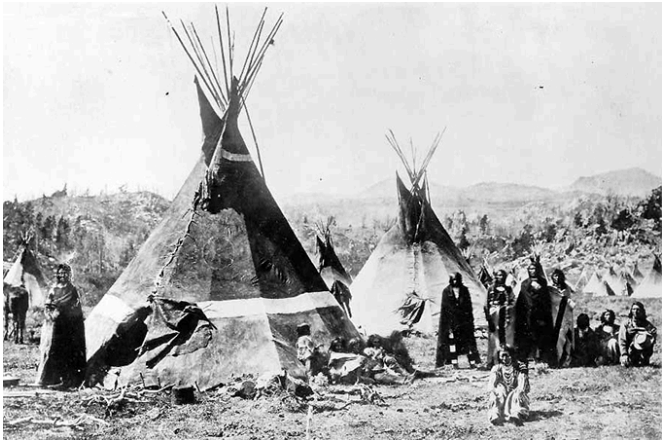
Cotsiogo (also Codsiogo, Katsikodi or Cadzi Cody), a member of the Eastern Shoshone tribe, painted many hides in addition to the two shown above. They represent his experiences during a period of immense change for the Shoshone people. During his lifetime, Cotsiogo was placed on the Wind River Reservation in central western Wyoming.

The Wind River Reservation is the size of Rhode Island and Delaware combined and had been established by the Fort Bridger Treaty of 1868. Prior to their placement on the Wind River Reservation, the Shoshone moved with the seasons and the availability of natural resources. Many Shoshone traversed the geographic regions we now call the Great Plains and Plateau regions.

Wind River Canyon, Wind River Indian Reservation, Wyoming (photo: J. Stephen Conn, CC BY-NC 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/6Sw9jM>

Cotsiogo likely created the Brooklyn Museum hide painting for Euro-American tourists who visited the reservation. It might explain why there is a scene of buffalo hunting, a scene which was thought to be desirable to tourists. Its production helped to support him after the Shoshone were moved to the reservation. With newly established trade markets and the influx of new materials, artists like Cotsiogo sometimes produced work that helped support themselves and their families.

Charles S. Baker and Eli Johnston, Portrait of Codsiogo (detail), before 1898, photograph (American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming) <http://digitalcollections.uwyo.edu/luna/servlet/s/1fxrma>



A Shoshone encampment in the Wind River Mountains, Wyoming, 1870 (photo: W. H. Jackson, Smithsonian Institution)

Subject matter

Cotsiogo's Brooklyn Museum hide painting combines history with the contemporary moment. It displays elements of several different dances, including the important and sacred Sun Dance and non-religious Wolf Dance (*tdsayuge* or *tásayùge*). The Sun Dance surrounds a not-yet-raised buffalo head between two poles (or a split tree), with an eagle above it. Men dressed in feather bustles and headdresses—not to be confused with feathered war bonnets—dance around the poles, which represents the Grass Dance. With their arms akimbo and their bodies bent, Cotsiogo shows these men in motion. Men participating in this sacred, social ceremony refrained from eating or drinking.

Sun and Wolf Dances (detail), Attributed to Cotsiogo, Hide painting of the Sun Dance, c. 1890–1900, Eastern Shoshone, elk hide and pigment, approximately 81 x 78″ (Brooklyn Museum)

The Sun Dance was intended to honor the Creator Deity for the earth's bounty and to ensure this bounty continued. It was a sacred ceremony that tourists and anthropologists often witnessed. However, the United States government deemed it unacceptable and forbid it. The U.S. government outlawed the Sun Dance until 1935, in an effort to compel Native Americans to abandon their traditional ways. Cotsiogo likely included references to the Sun Dance because he knew tourist consumers would find the scene attractive; but he modified the scene combining it with the acceptable Wolf

Dance, perhaps to avoid potential ramifications. The Wolf Dance eventually transformed into the Grass Dance which is performed today during pow wows (ceremonial gatherings).

Women rest near a fire (detail), Attributed to Cotsiogo, Hide painting of the Sun Dance, c. 1890–1900, Eastern Shoshone, elk hide and pigment, approximately 81 x 78″ (Brooklyn Museum)

The hide painting also shows activities of daily life. Surrounding the Sun Dance, women rest near a fire and more men on horses hunt buffaloes. Warriors on horses are also shown returning to camp, which was celebrated with the Wolf Dance. Two tipis represent the camp, with the warriors appearing between them. Some of the warriors wear feathered war bonnets made of eagle feathers. These headdresses communicated a warrior acted bravely in battle, and so they functioned as symbols of honor and power. Not just anyone could wear a feathered war bonnet!

Warriors returning to camp (detail), Attributed to Cotsiogo, Hide painting of the Sun Dance, c. 1890–1900, Eastern Shoshone, elk hide and pigment, approximately 81 x 78″ (Brooklyn Museum)

Cotsiogo shows the warriors hunting with bows and arrows while riding, but in reality Shoshone men had used rifles for some time. Horses were introduced to the Southwest by Spaniards. Horses made their way to some Plains nations through trade with others like the Ute, Navajo, and Apache. By the mid-eighteenth century, horses had become an important part of Plains culture.

Preparing a buffalo (detail), Attributed to Cotsiogo, Hide painting of the Sun Dance, c. 1890–1900, Eastern Shoshone, elk hide and pigment, approximately 81 x 78″ (Brooklyn Museum)

Buffaloes were sacred to the Plains people because the animals were essential to their livelihood. Some scenes display individuals

skinning buffaloes and separating the animals' body parts into piles. All parts of the buffalo were used, as it was considered a way of honoring this sacred animal. At the time Cotsiogo painted this hide, most buffalo had either been killed or displaced. Buffaloes had largely disappeared from this area by the 1880s. Cotsiogo's hide thus marks past events and deeds rather than events occurring at the time it was created.

Editor's note on the contemporary situation on the Wind River Reservation: According to *The New York Times*, the 14,000 current residents of the Wind River Reservation suffer a crime rate more than five times the national average, a life expectancy of only 49 years, and an unemployment rate that may be above 80 percent.

166. Maria and Julian Martínez, Black-on-black ceramic vessel

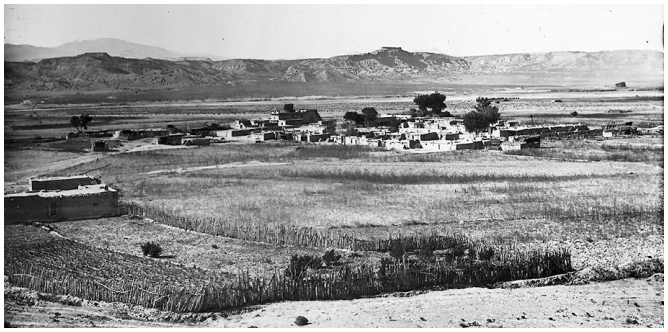
Dr. Suzanne Newman Fricke

Born Maria Antonia Montoya, Maria Martinez became one of the best-known Native potters of the twentieth century due to her excellence as a ceramist and her connections with a larger, predominantly non-Native audience. Though she lived at the Pueblo of San Ildefonso, about 20 miles north of Santa Fe, New Mexico, from her birth in 1887 until her death in 1980, her work and her life had a wide reaching importance to the Native art world by reframing Native ceramics as fine art. Before the arrival of the railroad to the area in the 1880s, pots were used in the Pueblos for food storage, cooking, and ceremonies. But with inexpensive pots appearing along the rail line, these practices were in decline. By the 1910s, Ms. Martinez found a way to continue the art by selling her pots to a non-Native audience where they were purchased as something beautiful to look at rather than as utilitarian objects.

Maria Martinez shown with physicist Enrico Fermi, c. 1948 (public domain; photo by U.S. Government employee made for U.S. Government)

Her mastery as a ceramist was noted in her village while she was still young. She learned the ceramic techniques that were used in the Southwest for several millennia by watching potters from San Ildefonso, especially her aunt Nicholasa as well as potters (including Margaret Tafoya from Santa Clara), from other nearby Pueblos. All the raw materials had to be gathered and processed carefully or the final vessel would not fire properly. The clay was found locally. To make the pottery stronger it had to be mixed with a temper made from sherds of broken pots that had been pounded into a powder or volcanic

ash. When mixed with water, the elasticity of the clay and the strength of the temper could be formed into different shapes, including a rounded pot (known as an *olla*) or a flat plate, using only the artist's hands as the potting wheel was not used. The dried vessel needed to be scraped, sanded, smoothed, then covered with a slip (a thin solution of clay and water). The slip was polished by rubbing a smooth stone over the surface to flatten the clay and create a shiny finish—a difficult and time-consuming process. Over the polished slip, the pot was covered with designs painted with an iron-rich solution using either pulverized iron ore or a reduction of wild plants called guaco. These would be dried but required a high temperature firing to change the brittle clay to hard ceramics. Even without kilns, the ceramists were able to create a fire hot enough to transform the pot by using manure.



John K. Hillers, San Ildefonso (detail), New Mexico, c. 1871 – 1907 (photo: Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, National Archives and Records Administration #523752<https://research.archives.gov/id/523752>)

Making ceramics in the Pueblo was considered a communal activity, where different steps in the process were often shared. The potters helped each other with arduous tasks such as mixing the paints and polishing the slip. Ms. Martinez would form the perfectly symmetrical vessels by hand and leave the decorating to others. Throughout her career, she worked with different family members, including her husband Julian, her son Adam and his wife Santana, and her son Popovi Da. As the pots moved into a fine art market, Ms. Martinez was encouraged to sign her name on the bottom of her pots. Though this denied the communal nature of the art, she began to do so as it resulted in more money per pot. To help other potters in the Pueblo, Ms. Martinez was known to have signed the pots of others, lending her name to help the community. Helping her Pueblo was of paramount importance to Ms. Martinez. She lived as a proper Pueblo woman, avoiding self-aggrandizement and insisting to scholars that she was just a wife and mother even as her reputation in the outside world increased.

Maria Martinez, Black-on-black ceramic vessel, c. 1939, blackware ceramic, 11 1/8 x 13″, Tewa, Puebloan, San Ildefonso Pueblo, New Mexico (National Museum of Women in the Arts)

Maria and Julian Martinez pioneered a style of applying a matte-black design over polished-black. Similar to the pot pictured here, the design was based on pottery sherds found on an Ancestral Pueblo dig site dating to the twelfth to seventeenth centuries at what is now known as Bandelier National Monument. The Martinezes worked at the site, with Julian helping the archaeologists at the dig and Maria helping at the campsite. Julian Martinez spent time drawing and painting the designs found on the walls and on the sherds of pottery into his notebooks, designs he later recreated on pots. In the 1910s, Maria and Julian worked together to recreate the black-on-black ware they found at the dig, experimenting with clay from different areas and using different firing techniques. Taking a cue from Santa Clara pots, they discovered that smothering the fire with powdered manure removed the oxygen while retaining the heat and resulted in a pot that was blackened. This resulted in a pot that was less hard and not entirely watertight, which worked for the new market that prized decorative use over utilitarian value. The areas that were burnished had a shiny black surface and the areas painted with guaco were matte designs based on natural phenomena, such as rain clouds, bird feathers, rows of planted corn, and the flow of rivers.

Detail, Maria Martinez, Black-on-black ceramic vessel, c. 1939, blackware ceramic, 11 1/8 x 13″, Tewa, Puebloan, San Ildefonso Pueblo, New Mexico (National Museum of Women in the Arts)

The olla pictured above features two design bands, one across the widest part of the pot and the other around the neck. The elements inside are abstract but suggest a bird in flight with rain clouds above, perhaps a prayer for rain that could be flown up to the sky. These designs are exaggerated due to the low rounded shapes of the pot, which are bulbous around the shoulder then narrow at the top. The shape, color, and designs fit the contemporary Art Deco movement, which was popular between the two World Wars and emphasized bold, geometric forms and colors. With its dramatic shape and the high polish of surface, this pot exemplifies Maria Martinez's skill in transforming a utilitarian object into a fine art.

The work of Maria Martinez marks an important point in the long history of Pueblo pottery. Ceramics from the Southwest trace a connection from the Ancestral Pueblo to the modern Pueblo eras. Given the absence of written records, tracing the changes in the shapes, materials, and designs on the long-lasting sherds found across the area allow scholars to see connections and innovations. Maria Martinez brought the distinctive Pueblo style into a wider context, allowing Native and non-Native audiences to appreciate the art form.

Africa 1100-1980 C.E.

167. Conical tower and circular wall of Great Zimbabwe

Dr. Nancy Demerdash-Fatemi

Aerial view of Great Zimbabwe's Great Enclosure and adjacent ruins, looking southeast (photo: Janice Bell, CC BY-SA 4.0)

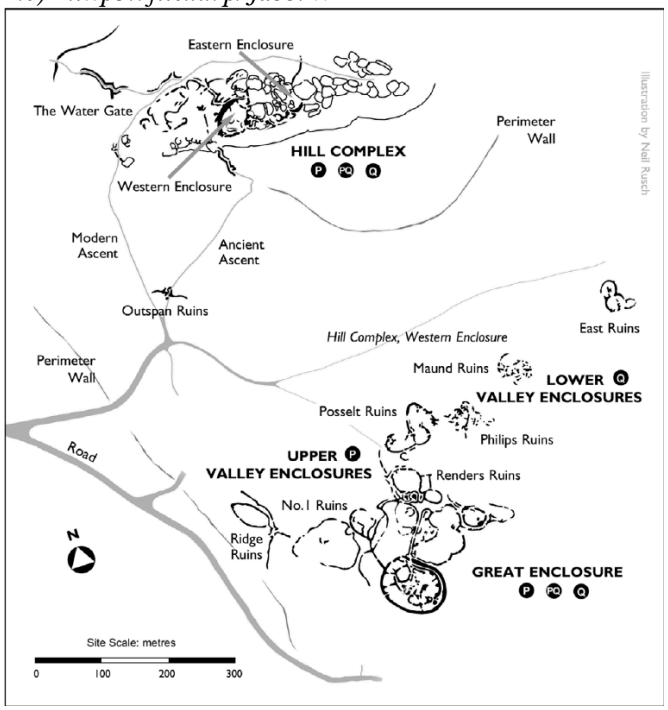
Great Zimbabwe has been described as "one of the most dramatic architectural landscapes in sub-Saharan Africa."[1] It is the largest stone complex in Africa built before the modern era, aside from the monumental architecture of ancient Egypt. The ruins that survive are a four-hour drive south of Zimbabwe's present-day capital of Harare. It was constructed between the 11th and 15th centuries and was continuously inhabited by the Shona peoples until about 1450 (the Shona are the largest ethnic group in Zimbabwe). But Great Zimbabwe was by no means a singular complex—at the site's cultural zenith, it is estimated that seven comparable states existed in this region.

The word "zimbabwe" translates from the Bantu language of the Shona to either "judicial center" or "ruler's court or house." A few individual zimbabwes (houses) have survived exposure to the elements over the centuries. Within these clay structures, excavations have revealed interior furnishings such as pot-stands, elevated surfaces for sleeping and sitting, as well as hearths. Taken together, the settlement encompasses a cluster of approximately 250 royal houses built of clay, which in addition to other multi-story clay and thatch homes would have supported as many as 20,000 inhabitants—a exceptional scale for a sub-Saharan settlement at this time.

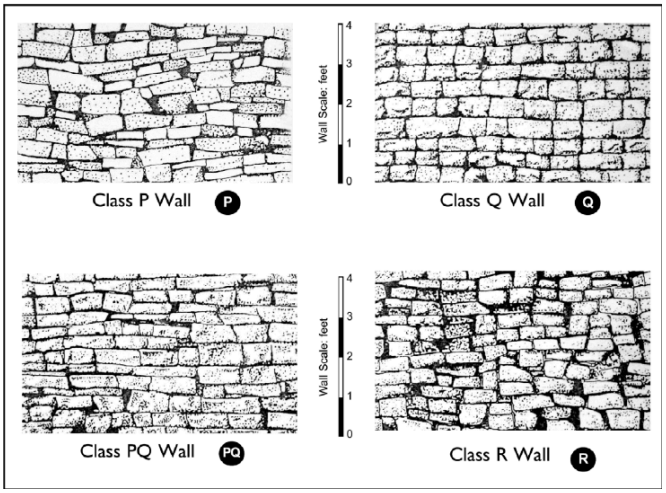
The stone constructions of Great Zimbabwe can be categorized into roughly three areas: the Hill

Ruin (on a rocky hilltop), the Great Enclosure, and the Valley Ruins. The Hill Ruin dates to approximately 1250 and incorporates a cave that remains a sacred site for the Shona peoples today. The cave once accommodated the residence of the ruler and his immediate family. The Hill Ruin also held a structure surrounded by 30-foot high walls and flanked by cylindrical towers and monoliths carved with elaborate geometric patterns.

Great Enclosure, Great Zimbabwe (photo: Mandy, CC BY 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/Jd33rW>



Site plan of Great Zimbabwe (modified from an original plan by National Museums and Monuments ofZimbabwe) from Shadreck Chirikure and Innocent Pikirayi, "Inside and outside the dry stone walls: Revisiting the material culture of Great Zimbabwe," Antiquity 82 (December 2015), pp. 976-993. The letters refer to the types of stone construction (see below).



Types of stone construction. <https://tinyurl.com/y2usz9zs>

Between two walls, Great Enclosure, Great Zimbabwe (photo: Mandy, CC BY 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/Jd4uMt>

The Great Enclosure was completed in approximately 1450, and it too is a walled structure punctuated with turrets and monoliths, emulating the form of the earlier Hill Ruin. The massive outer wall is 32 feet high in some places. Inside the Great Enclosure, a smaller wall parallels the exterior wall creating a tight passageway leading to large towers. Because the Great Enclosure shares many structural similarities with the Hill Ruin, one interpretation suggests that the Great Enclosure was built to accommodate a surplus population and its religious and administrative activities. Another theory posits that the Great Enclosure may have functioned as a site for religious rituals.

The third section of Great Zimbabwe, the Valley Ruins, include a number of structures that offer evidence that the site served as a hub for commercial exchange and long distance trade. Archaeologists have found porcelain fragments originating from China, beads crafted in southeast Asia, and copper ingots from trading centers along the Zambezi River and from Central African kingdoms.[2]

A monolithic soapstone sculpture <https://flic.kr/p/Jd3XnK> of a seated bird resting on atop a register of zigzags was unearthed here. The pronounced muscularity of the bird's breast and its defined talons suggest that this represents a bird of prey, and scholars have conjectured it could have been emblematic of the power of Shona kings as benefactors to their people and intercessors with their ancestors.

Conical Tower, Great Zimbabwe (photo: Mandy, CC BY 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/JZiV57>

Conical tower

All of the walls at Great Zimbabwe were constructed from granite hewn locally. While some theories suggest that the granite enclosures were built for defense, these walls likely had no military function. Many segments within the walls have gaps, interrupted arcs or elements that seem to run counter to needs of protection. The fact that the structures were built without the use of mortar to bind the stones together supports speculation that the site was not, in fact, intended for defense. Nevertheless, these enclosures symbolize the power and prestige of the rulers of Great Zimbabwe.

The conical tower of Great Zimbabwe is thought to have functioned as a granary. According to tradition, a Shona ruler shows his largess towards his subjects through his granary, often distributing grain as a symbol of his protection. Indeed, advancements in agricultural cultivation among Bantu-speaking peoples in sub-Saharan Africa transformed the pattern of life for many, including the Shona communities of present-day Zimbabwe.

Great Enclosure entrance (restored), Great Zimbabwe (photo: Mandy, CC BY 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/jHzq8S>

Wealth and trade

Archaeological debris indicate that the economy of Great Zimbabwe relied on the management of livestock. In fact, cattle may have allowed the Shona peoples to move from subsistence agriculture to mining and trade. Iron tools have been found on site, along with copper, and gold wire jewelry and ornaments. Great Zimbabwe is thought to have prospered, perhaps indirectly, from gold that was mined 25 miles from the city and that was transported to the Indian Ocean port at Sofala where it made its way by dhow (sailing vessels), up the coast, and by way of Kilwa Kisiwani <http://smarthistory.org/kilwa-kisiwani-tanzania/>, to the markets of Cairo.

By about 1500, however, Great Zimbabwe's political and economic influence waned. Speculations as to why this occurred point to the frequency of droughts and environmental fragility, though other theories stress that Great Zimbabwe might have experienced political skirmishes over political succession that interrupted trade, still other theories hypothesize disease that may have afflicted livestock.[3]

Great Zimbabwe stands as one of the most extensively developed centers in pre-colonial sub-Saharan Africa and stands as a testament to the organization, autonomy, and economic power of the Shona peoples. The site remains a potent symbol not only to the Shona, but for Zimbabweans more broadly. After gaining independence from the British, the nation formerly named after the British industrialist and imperialist, Cecil Rhodes, was renamed Zimbabwe.

Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) banknote featuring the conical tower at Great Zimbabwe, 1955 (The British Museum)

1. Webber Ndoro, *The Preservation of Great Zimbabwe: Your Monument, Our Shrine* (ICCROM, 2005), p. 16. <http://www.iccrom. org/ifrcdn/pdf/ICCROM_ICS04_Zimbabwe_en.pdf>

2. Peter Garlake, *Early Art and Architecture of Africa* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 153.

3. Garlake, 157.

168. Great Mosque of Djenné

Dr. Elisa Dainese and Dr. Naraelle Hohensee

Great Mosque of Djenné, Mali, 1907 (photo: Romel Jacinto, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/4dkRtL>

As one of the wonders of Africa, and one of the most unique religious buildings in the world, the Great Mosque of Djenné, in present-day Mali, is also the greatest achievement of Sudano-Sahelian architecture (Sudano-Sahelian refers to the Sudanian and Sahel grassland of West Africa). It is also the largest mud-built structure in the world. We experience its monumentality from afar as it dwarfs the city of Djenné. Imagine arriving at the towering mosque from the neighborhoods of low-rise adobe houses that comprise the city.

Djenné was founded between 800 and 1250 C.E., and it flourished as a great center of commerce, learning, and Islam, which had been practiced from the beginning of the 13th century. Soon thereafter, the Great Mosque became one of the most important buildings in town primarily because it became a political symbol for local residents and for colonial powers like the French who took control of Mali in 1892. Over the centuries, the Great Mosque has become the epicenter of the religious and cultural life of Mali, and the community of Djenné. It is also the site of a unique annual festival called the *Crepissage de la Grand Mosquée* (Plastering of the Great Mosque).

Great Mosque of Djenné, Mali, 1907 (photo: herr_hartmann, CC BY-NC 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/7kSpDt>

The Great Mosque that we see today is its third reconstruction, completed in 1907. According to legend, the original Great Mosque was probably erected in the 13th century, when King Koi Konboro—Djenné's twenty-sixth ruler and its first Muslim sultan (king)—decided to use local materials and traditional design techniques to

build a place of Muslim worship in town. King Konboro's successors and the town's rulers added two towers to the mosque and surrounded the main building with a wall. The mosque compound continued to expand over the centuries, and by the sixteenth century, popular accounts claimed half of Djenné's population could fit in the mosque's galleries.

The first Great Mosque and its reconstructions

Some of the earliest European writings on the first Great Mosque came from the French explorer René Caillié who wrote in detail about the structure in his travelogue *Journal d'un voyage a Temboctou et à Jenné* (*Journal of a Voyage to Timbuktu and Djenné*). Caillié traveled to Djenné in 1827, and he was the only European to see the monument before it fell into ruin. In his travelogue, he wrote that the building was already in bad repair from the lack of upkeep. In the Sahel—the transitional zone between the Sahara and the humid savannas to the south—adobe and mud buildings such as the Great Mosque require periodic and often annual re-plastering. If re-plastering does not occur, the exteriors of the structures melt in the rainy season. Based on Caillié's description, his visit likely coincided with a period when the mosque had not been re-plastered for several years, and multiple rainy seasons had probably washed away all the plaster and worn the mud-brick.

A second mosque built between 1834 and 1836 replaced the original and damaged building described by Caillié. We can see evidence of this construction in drawings by the French journalist Felix Dubois. In 1896, three years after the French conquest of the city, Dubois published a plan of the mosque based on his survey of the ruins.

"The Old Mosque Restored," from Félix Dubois, Timbuctoo the Mysterious (London: William Heinemann, 1897), pp. 157.

The structure drawn by Dubois (left) was more compact than the one that is seen today. Based on the drawings, the second construction of the Great Mosque was more massive than the first and defined by its weightiness. It also featured a series of low minaret towers and equidistant pillar supports.

The present and third iteration of the Great Mosque was completed in 1907, and some scholars argue that the French constructed it during their period of occupation of the city starting in 1892. However, no colonial documents support this theory. New scholarship supports the idea that the mason's guild of Djenné built the current mosque with the help of forced laborers from villages of adjacent regions, brought in by French colonial authorities. To accompany and motivate workers, musicians were provided who played drums and flutes. Workers included masons who mixed tons of mud, sand, rice-husks, and water and formed the bricks that shape the current structure.

Great Mosque of Djenné, Mali, 1907 (photo: un_photo, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/rB6KHw>

The Great Mosque today

The Great Mosque that we see today is rectilinear in plan and is partly enclosed by an exterior wall. An earthen roof covers the building, which is supported by monumental pillars.

Façade (detail), Great Mosque of Djenné, Mali, 1907 (photo: JM, CC BY 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/5y8dYv>

The roof has several holes covered by terra-cotta lids, which provide its interior spaces with fresh air even during the hottest days. The façade of the Great Mosque includes three minarets and a series of engaged columns that together create a rhythmic effect.

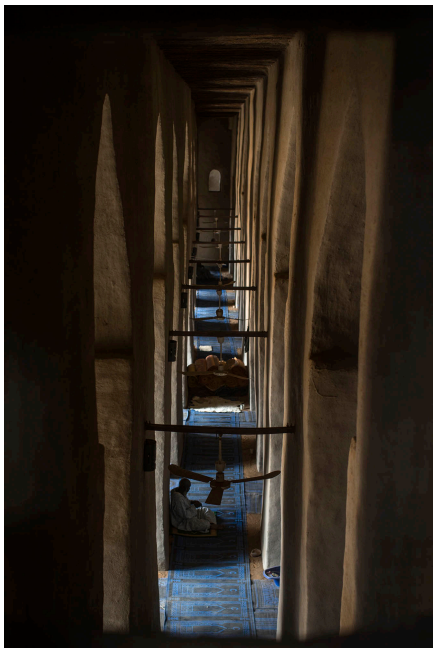
Roof (detail with ostrich egg), Great Mosque of Djenné, Mali, 1907 (photo: un_photo, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/rB6KHw>

At the top of the pillars are conical extensions with ostrich eggs placed at the very top—symbol of fertility and purity in the Malian region. Timber beams throughout the exterior are both decorative and structural. These elements also function as scaffolding for the re-plastering of the mosque during the annual festival of the *Crepissage*. Compared to images and descriptions of the previous buildings, the present Great Mosque includes several innovations such as a special court reserved for women and a principal entrance with earthen pillars, that signal the graves of two local religious leaders.

Re-plastering the Mosque

During the annual festival of the *Crepissage de la Grand Mosquée*, the entire city contributes to the re-plastering of the mosque's exterior by kneading into it a mud plaster made from a mixture of butter and fine clay from the alluvial soil of the nearby Niger and Bani Rivers. The men of the community usually take up the task of mixing the construction material. As in the past, musicians entertain them during their labors, while women provide water for the mixture. Elders also contribute through their presence on site, by sitting on terrace walls and giving advice. Mixing work and play, young boys sing, run, and dash everywhere.

Over the years Djenné's inhabitants have withstood repeated attempts to change the character of their exceptional mosque and the nature of the annual festival. For instance, some have tried to suppress the playing of music during the *Crepissage*, and foreign Muslim investors have also offered to rebuild the mosque in concrete and tile its current sand floor. Djenné's community has unrelentingly striven to maintain its cultural heritage and the unique character of the Great Mosque. In 1988, the tenacious effort led to the designation of the site and the entire town of Djenné as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.



Interior view, Great Mosque of Djenné, Mali, 1907 (photo: UN Mission in Mali, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/rDpPEj>

Backstory

The Great Mosque of Djenné is only one of many important monuments in the area known as the Djenné Circle, which also includes the archaeological sites of Djenné-Djeno, Hambarketolo, Tonomba and Kaniana. The region is known especially for its characteristic earthen architecture, which, as noted above, requires continuous upkeep by the local community.

Djenné's unique form of architecture also makes it particularly susceptible to environmental threats, especially flooding. The town is situated along a river, and in 2016, torrential rains led to massive floods that caused one historic sixteenth-century palace to collapse, and left the Great Mosque with significant cracks its pillars. Construction of new buildings on the archaeological sites and inadequate waste disposal infrastructure also present continual problems.

UNESCO and other agencies have supported the restoration of the riverbanks in Djenné to help prevent flooding, and the four archaeological sites have now gained official status as properties of the state, which shields

them from urban development. However, the conservation situation in Djenné remains fragile. Since the civil war in Northern Mali in 2012, the government has had limited bandwidth to deal with all of the various measures necessary to successfully protect, maintain, and monitor these sites. UNESCO has also noted a lack of funding from outside partners, who, according to the agency, have shown greater interest in Timbuktu, where terrorists vandalized several historic mausoleums and a mosque in 2012.

The current state of Djenné highlights the complex network of factors that affect world heritage: armed conflict and civil unrest, environmental threats, urban development, and lack of cooperation between agencies can all undermine the fate of monuments like the Great Mosque. Such circumstances remind us of the importance and the difficulty of conservation efforts not just in Djenné, but around the globe.

Sources:
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<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/08/22/extremist-pleads-guilty-to-terror-attack-on-timbuktus-mausoleums/>

Backstory by Dr. Naraelle Hohensee

169. Wall plaque, from Oba's palace

Greg Stuart and Dr. Naraelle Hohensee

Plaque: Equestrian Oba and Attendants, Edo peoples (Benin Kingdom), 1550–1680, brass, 19 7/16 x 16 1/2 x 4 1/2″ / 49.5 x 41.9 x 11.4 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Royal history rendered in brass

This remarkable brass plaque, dated between 1550-1680, depicts an Oba (or king) and his attendants from the Benin Empire—a powerful kingdom located in present-day Nigeria. We know that the central figure is an Oba because of his distinctive coral beaded regalia. Also, attendants hold shields above his head, either to protect him from attack or possibly from the hot, tropical sun. This was a privilege only afforded to an Oba.

The figures around him range in size, not because of their actual height or distance from the Oba, but rather due to their level of importance within the court. This convention of sizing human figures based on status is known as "hierarchic scale" and is found in artwork from cultures around the world and across time. The Oba would have traveled with a large cohort of attendants, warriors, servants, diplomats, chieftains, and priests.

The plaque originally hung alongside many others on posts throughout the palace of the Oba. The order of their placement on these posts would have told the history of the royal lineage of Benin's Obas, who traced their dynasty all the way back to Oranmiyan, whose son was the first Oba of Benin. However, the sequence of plaques is lost to us since they were long held in storage when found by Westerners in the nineteenth century. You may notice that the Oba rides sidesaddle on horseback, which would seem to indicate a connection to Oba Esigie (who ruled c. 1504-1550), the first Oba to travel by horse. However, without knowing the original order of the plaques, we will never know for certain

whether this was Esigie or a later Oba who emulated his brash new mode of travel.

Artists working in brass were organized under Esigie. Today, artists working in brass in Benin are part of a brass workers guild, and it was likely that previous generations would have also worked collectively. These artists created plaques and other sculptures using what is known as the "lost wax casting technique," in which, first, a more malleable wax version of the final brass work is made. It is then covered in clay and fired to harden the clay, removing the wax, which melts away in the process (hence the term, "lost wax"). Hot, molten liquid brass is then poured into the clay mold. As the brass cools, it hardens, and the clay is removed, revealing the finished plaque.

Crossing cultures: a record of trade

Almost every detail in this work speaks to the Benin Kingdom's mutually beneficial trade with Portugal, which first made contact with Benin in the late fifteenth century. The Portuguese received items like peppers, cloth, and stone beads from Benin, while Benin received—among other items—the coral that makes up the beads worn by the Oba, and even the brass that makes up this plaque in the form of manillas, or armbands, worn by the Portuguese, which would have been melted down as the raw material for this plaque.

Manilla, Benin Kingdom, Nigeria, 17th century (?). Brass, 24 x 26 x 8 cm (Museum für Völkerkunde Wein, coll. A. Maschmann)

Rosette shape and figure (detail), plaque: Equestrian Oba and Attendants, Edo peoples (Benin Kingdom), 1550–1680, brass, 19 7/16 x 16 1/2 x 4 1/2″ / 49.5 x 41.9 x 11.4 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

The rosette shapes that adorn the background of the plaque were possibly derived from Christian crosses brought by these European traders. Even the horse that the Oba rides was originally introduced to West Africa from across the sea. There is nothing quite like these plaques in all of Africa or Europe from this period, and some scholars speculate that they were created as a way of reconciling traditional African brass sculptural forms with the illustrated books and prints that may have been in the possession of European travelers.

Troubled Legacy

Trade began to decline with Portugal as the Portuguese empire waned in the eighteenth century. By the nineteenth century, Britain was seeking to make inroads with Benin as a new trading partner. However, this partnership was much less mutually beneficial and was marked with frequent tension. After increased

aggression from both nations, the British launched the Punitive Expedition of 1897, seizing the Oba's palace, burning down the city around it, killing many, and looting the royal court's vast stores of art and treasure.

British soldiers sit surrounded by Benin works of art during the British Punitive Expedition of 1897 (documentary photograph by Sir Harry Holdsworth Rawson)

We know that this plaque was one of the artworks looted in the siege because Norman Burrows, a known trafficker in stolen Benin objects, owned it briefly during this time. This act of looting perpetrated by the British was later condemned as a criminal and violent act of British imperialism and colonialism. As such, there are many who believe that objects such as this plaque should be returned to the people of Benin, who remain deeply connected to their history and cultural traditions. However, there are others who feel that these remarkable objects are part of the world's heritage and thus should remain in museum collections around the world as a testament to this artistically rich culture.

Backstory

A consortium of European museums called the "Benin Dialogue Group," formed in 2007, has been meeting with representatives from Nigeria to discuss issues around repatriation. Their hope is to establish a system of rotating loans of artworks to Benin City, though the security and guaranteed return of the objects is a point of ongoing discussion, set to continue at a conference in 2018.

The consortium includes representatives from the British Museum and Berlin's Humboldtforum, two of the institutions that hold the largest collections of objects from Benin. Other members of the group include museums in Cambridge, Vienna, Stockholm, Leiden, Leipzig and Dresden, Oxford, and Hamburg, and London. Museums in the United States and France, which also hold significant numbers of Benin artworks, have yet to become formally involved, though some, such as the Musée du Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac in Paris, have been approached directly with restitution claims from Nigeria.

The ongoing dialogue between museums and nations from which important objects, like those from Benin, were forcibly removed, highlights the complexities of the current, post-colonial world. Should formerly colonized areas be repaid for the damage inflicted on them by colonial powers? Who is responsible for doing so, and how? Who has the ethical right to the ownership, display, and preservation of these important pieces of cultural heritage? The formation of consortia like the Benin Dialogue Group is a significant first step towards resolving some of these thorny and pressing questions.

Backstory by Dr. Naraelle Hohensee

170. Sika dwa kofi (Golden Stool)

A CONVERSATION

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Peri Klemm

This is a conversation conducted in the galleries of the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.

The Golden Stool of Asante (Sika dwa kofi), 1700, Ghana (photo: © Frank Fournier, 1995)

Peri: We're at the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archeology and Anthropology talking about the Golden Stool. We're actually going to be looking at several different objects to make sense of this very important object that we don't have in a collection, it still exists in the Asante Nation in Ghana.

Beth: It was incredibly important to the Asante people that that object remained in their possession, but that's a story we'll come back to. Let's talk about its origin.

Peri: In the early 1700s, a man named Osei Tutu, an important king, was able to unify all the surrounding lands into a confederacy.

Beth: He created the nation of the Asante people.

Peri: The Golden Stool falls from the sky and lands in the lap of Osei Tutu.

Beth: So this is a miracle.

Peri: Absolutely. And this is a wooden stool covered in gold, which was said to have been made in the heavens. It's said to be the soul of the Asante nation, so it takes on the essence of the entire group. In the same way that we'll see a man's stool or a woman's stool can take on the essence of that person.

Beth: So in a way the stool is more important than any single king of the Asante people.

Peri: It is far more sacred than the Asantehene himself. In fact, the Golden Stool is always given its own stool or its own chair in which to sit next to the Asantehene, like we see in this picture.

Otumfuo Opoku Ware II, Asantehene, Ghana, with golden stool (photo: © Frank Fournier, 1995)

Beth: This is an area that is rich in gold and the gold comes to symbolize royalty for the Asante people.

Peri: They were in charge of the gold trade through North Africa. This was long before Europeans were even there. But also, gold is the color of royalty, so whether it's gold in the form of a textile color or it's the material of gold, it was reserved for royal use.

Beth: So let's look at the objects in this case that relate to the trading of gold.

Gold scale, brass, 5 cm diameter, Asante, Ghana (University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Peri: We have a scale, which shows how gold would have been weighed. And it would have been weighed with brass.

Beth: So you would use these on one side of the scale and measure out the gold on the other so that you knew you were measuring the accurate amount of gold.

Peri: What we find is a whole host of brass weights fashioned into very elaborate figures that depict almost every activity and every part of daily life.

Beth: So it's a really wonderful way to learn about the Asante people. We see two here that show images of the Asante king.

Gold weights with king under umbrellas, brass, Asante, Ghana (University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Peri: Both of these depict a group of figures gathered around a central umbrella. That umbrella is really important because underneath it we know is the Asantehene or an important chief.

Beth: So the umbrella was a way that you could identify the king in a crowd.

Peri: The king would also be wearing sandals. And we have a brass weight of just sandals depicted. And in that sense, we can understand that the king is divine. In other words, he is seen as an intermediary between the everyday lives of his people and the supernatural realm. He's there to harness the good powers of the supernatural to help his people.

Beth: He's between the heavens, below the umbrella, but he's above the earth, symbolized by the sandals that he wears.

Peri: So he's always sandwiched between the two.

Beth: In one of these gold weights we see the king surrounded by his retinue under an umbrella being carried in a palanquin.

Gold weights with king and palaquin, brass, Asante, Ghana (University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Peri: And surrounding him are his swordbearers. Swords are very important symbols of rule and they would have had gold handles.

Beth: And then we see next to it another image of the king, this time with his wife, with the queen.

Peri: Could be the queen mother, it could be his wife; there's an umbrella, and then two swordbearers in front of him. We also have other brass weights that just depict one figure and these relate to particular proverbs or stories about virtues. Here we get at this important part about Asante modes of communication. That is that you don't speak directly if you can you let art speak directly for you.

Beth: And you often speak in proverbs.

Peri: Yeah, so each one of these have messages if you understand this language, if you can decode it. You can know what the messages are.

Beth: So one of the ones in the case shows two crocodiles sharing one stomach.

Peri: And this double-headed crocodile has to do with the idea of family sharing a stomach. In other words, your essence, your connection, your belly is connected to your family—that's who nurtures you. So if you go off on your own, you're really not going to get very far in life.

Beth: And then we have a goat.

Peri: Or a ram, with these curved horns, and one proverb states that rams move back before they charge, so the idea is that you have thoughtful contemplation, you move away from what you're about to do to make sure it's the right path.

Gold weight in shape of ram, brass, 3.9 cm diameter, Asante, Ghana (University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology) <https://www.penn.museum/collections/object/259130>

Beth: So we're looking at these gold weights, and that brings us to another important part of the history of the Asante people: the continuing involvement of the British.

Peri: The British—certainly since the beginning of the early nineteenth century—were interested in securing a way to control gold in this area. And they named this area the "Gold Coast." The Asante, obviously, were not wanting to give up their control of this precious material, which had this royal significance.

Map of Africa showing Asante area in green.

Beth: In 1874, the British destroyed the Asante capital, took lots back to England, much of it remains in the British Museum collection today.

Peri: One of the objects of course that they really wanted to get their hands on was the Golden Stool. They first exiled Prempeh I, that was the Asantehene in the late 1800s.

Beth: The Asante people hid the Golden Stool.

Peri: The Golden Stool, which was obviously very important, in fact, more sacred than Prempeh I himself, was in the danger. And the British tried very hard to hunt it down.

Beth: The British governor said—and I'm reading here, from a record of what happened—he said, "Where is the Golden Stool? I am the representative of the paramount power. Why have you relegated me to this ordinary chair? Why did you not take the opportunity of my coming to bring the Golden Stool for me to sit upon?"

Peri: This was so offensive to the people of Ghana that a foreigner would come and demand their most precious and sacred object to sit on. This is not a stool *anyone* was allowed to sit on—in fact, it sat on its own stool. So Yaa Asantewaa, a queen mother, assembled all the soldiers she could find to fight against the British.

Beth: Now the Asante people were defeated, but the stool remained hidden.

Peri: The Asante were pretty successful in that they were allowed some autonomy. And by the 1920s, the British even agreed to allow Prempeh I to return, and there was a promise made that the Golden Stool would not be taken and the Golden Stool was allowed to come out of hiding. Men and women are gifted stools by their parents when they come of age, and the idea of stools is really central not just to kingship but to everyday people.

Cast brass seat, 7.4 cm, 111.4 g, Asante, Ghana (University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology) <https://www.penn.museum/collections/object/529270>

Peri: This brass weight, in this case, is a replica of what a man or woman would sit on, but made of wood. So a man or woman's everyday stool made for things like sitting and socializing, sitting and eating, sitting and working, it sounds very ordinary to us, but stools that one uses often take on their "sunsum." Sunsum is an Asante concept or traditional idea that your energy—it's like an aura—touches the things you use a lot. So in order to keep your sunsum intact, when you leave the room, traditionally, you would tip over your stool so that no one else would sit on it. They would know that that was not intended for you. In that sense, the Golden Stool is also kept turned on its side as we see in this photograph below.

Golden stool on tour in Ghana

Beth: So the gold weight tells us something about the importance of stools in the Asante culture, but also about a personal energy that over the course of our lives, the objects that we use become imbued with.

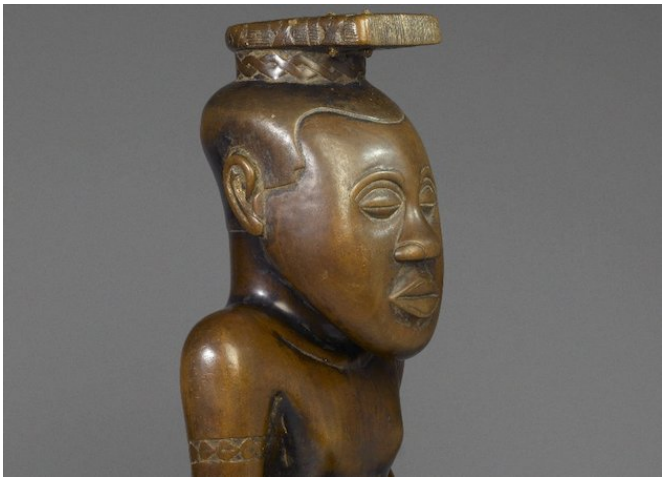
Peri: That helps us to understand why the Asante people say the Golden Stool is the soul of the Asante nation.

Watch the video <https://youtu.be/6bsWW4Ke_Hs>.

Beth and Peri viewing gold weights at the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

171. Ndop (portrait figure) of King Mishe miShyaang maMbul

Roger Arnold



Detail, Ndop Portrait of King Mishe miShyaang maMbul, c. 1760-80, wood and camwood powder, 19-1/2 x 7-5/8 x 8-5/8″ (Brooklyn Museum)

In all world cultures, artists honor remarkable leaders by creating lasting works of art in their honor. Historical leaders in the West, like Charlemagne and Alexander the Great were celebrated for their accomplishments during their lifetime and remembered through many works of art created to preserve their legacy. During the first half of the eighteenth century, the Kuba King Mishe miShyaang maMbul was celebrated throughout his kingdom for his generosity and for the great number of his loyal subjects. He was even the recipient of his own praise song. At the height of his reign in 1710, he commissioned an idealized portrait-statue called an *ndop*. With the commission of his *ndop*, Mishe miShyaang maMbul recorded his reign for posterity and solidified his accomplishments amongst the pantheon of his predecessors. The *ndop*that portrayed his likeness was eventually purchased by the Brooklyn Museum in 1961 and has been on view at the museum since that time. It was first collected in 1909 by a colonial minister in what was then the Belgian Congo, the European country's colony.

Ndop Portrait of King Mishe miShyaang maMbul, c.

1760-80, wood and camwood powder, 19-1/2 x 7-5/8 x 8-5/8″ (Brooklyn Museum)

Why are Mishe miShyaang maMbul and others commemorated in the arts of Africa largely unknown to us? Unlike in Euro-American contexts, history in Sub-Saharan Africa was not written down by members of cultural communities until colonialism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Instead of written records, oral narrative was the primary method for collective and personal histories to be passed down from one generation to the next. As these spoken histories were passed down, they were changed and adapted to reflect their times. The changing nature of oral narrative is like a highly complex game of telephone, where the words can be changed and often only the spirit of the original meaning is preserved.

Frontal view, Ndop Portrait of King Mishe miShyaang maMbul, c. 1760-80, wood and camwood powder, 19-1/2 x 7-5/8 x 8-5/8″ (Brooklyn Museum)

Before being purchased by Western collectors and museums, African sculptures served as important historical markers within their communities. The *ndop* sculptural record helps freeze a moment in time that would otherwise be transformed during its transmission from generation to generation. When we look at these sculptures in museums, it is important to remember that they were created about, and for, individuals. Since information and history was transferred orally in Africa, sculptural traditions like the *ndop* can help us gain insight into information about historical individuals and their cultural ideals.

The Kuba Artist

The Kuba live in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the southern fringes of the equatorial forest in an area bounded by two rivers called the Kasai and Sankuru. Over a period of three centuries of movement and exchange beginning in the seventeenth century, this loose confederacy of people formed into a durable kingdom. Since that time, the name "Kuba" largely refers to nineteen unique but related ethnic groups, all of which acknowledge the leadership of the same leader (*nyim*).

The Kuba are renowned for a dynamic artistic legacy across media. Historically, Kuba artists were professional woodcarvers, blacksmiths, and weavers who worked exclusively for the *nyim*. Kuba artists learned their art by becoming apprentices to others who were well-known and accomplished in their community. Similar to art traditions in other world cultures, the apprentices imitated or copied early pieces from their teachers until they were skilled enough to develop their own designs. Although the names of individual artists were not written down—and are not known to us today—artists were sought after by name and were important to the Kuba royal court and beyond.

Ndop Sculpture

The *ndop* statues might be the most revered of all Kuba art forms. The *ndop* (literally meaning "statue") are a genre of figurative wood sculpture that portrays important Kuba leaders throughout the eighteenth to twentieth centuries. Art historians believe that there are seven *ndop* statues of historical significance in Western museums. These seven are significant because the lives of the *nyim* they portray were celebrated in oral histories that were recorded and written down by early European visitors, so we know the most about them.

Ndop, wooden carving of King Shyaam aMbul aNgoong, from the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire), late 18th century, wood, 55 cm high (British Museum)

You can travel to the British Museum in England or the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Belgium to see *ndop*. *Ndop*sculptures that are on view at the British Museum were brought to Europe from Africa by Hungarian ethnographer Emil Torday. Torday and other early visitors to the Kuba court documented oral traditions related to artwork. Art historians have since tried to reconstruct and sort out these early accounts; they use the sculptures themselves to interpret precolonial Kuba history.

Ndop sculpture have rounded contours creating forms that define the head, shoulders, and stomach, and also feature a defined collarbone. While the relative naturalism may appear to have been informed by an artist's one-to-one observation of the *nyim*, *ndop* sculptures aren't exact likenesses; they are not actually created from direct observation. Instead, cultural conventions and visual precedents guide the artists in making the sculpture. The expression on the face, the position of the body, and the regalia were meant to faithfully represent the ideal of a king—but not an individual King. For example, the facial features of each statue follow sculpting conventions and do not represent features of a specific individual. All figures are sculpted using a one-to-three proportion—the head of the statue was sculpted to be one third the size of the total statue. Kuba artists emphasized the head because it was considered to be the seat of intelligence, a valued ideal.

Detail, Ndop Portrait of King Mishe miShyaang maMbul, c. 1760-80, wood and camwood powder, 19-1/2 x 7-5/8 x 8-5/8″ (Brooklyn Museum)

How are we able to identify each *ndop*, then? There are specific attributes that link each *ndop* to named individuals. All ndop

sculpture would feature a geometric motif and an emblem (*ibol*), chosen by the *nyim* when he was installed as a leader and commissioned his *ndop*.The geometric motif pattern and the ibol served as identifying symbols of his reign and was sculpted in prominent relief on the front of each base. The *ibol* is a signifier that gives the *ndop* its particular identity, making it clear who the sculpture portrays and what reign it represents. A drum with a severed hand is the *ibol* for Mishe miShyaang maMbul's reign, and that helps us identify the sculpture as his likeness.

Other styles or conventions that were followed by sculptors of *Ndop* can be found in royal regalia such as belts, armbands, bracelets, shoulder ornaments, and a unique projecting headdress, called a shody. The arms of each *ndop* extend vertically at either side of the torso, with the left hand grasping the handle of a ceremonial knife (*ikul*) and the right hand resting on the knee. Artists decorated the surface of the sculpture by carving representations of what was conventionally worn; the finely chiseled details correspond to objects that represent the prerogative and prestige of the *nyim*.

The *ndop* of Mishe miShyaang maMbul is part of a larger genre of figurative wood sculpture in Kuba art. These sculptures were commissioned by Kuba leaders or *nyim*to preserve their accomplishments for posterity. Because transmission of knowledge in this part of Africa is through oral narrative, names and histories of the past are often lost. The *ndop* sculptures serve as important markers of cultural ideals. They also reveal a chronological lineage through their visual signifiers.

172. Nkisi n'kondi (Power Figure)

Dr. Shawnya Harris

Power figure (Nkisi nkondi), Kongo peoples (Democratic Republic of the Congo) c. late 19th century, wood and metal, 36 x 18 1/2 x 14 1/4″ / 16/8 x 47 x 36.2 cm (Detroit Institute of Arts)

Divine protection

Sacred medicines and divine protection are central to the belief of the Kongo peoples (Democratic Republic of Congo). The Kongo believe that the great god, Ne Kongo, brought the first sacred medicine (or *nkisi*) down from heaven in an earthenware vessel set upon three stones or termite mounds.

A *nkisi* (plural: *minkisi*) is loosely translated as a "spirit" yet it is represented as a container of sacred substances which are activated by supernatural forces that can be summoned into the physical world. Visually, these *minkisi* can be as simple as pottery or vessels containing medicinal herbs and other elements determined to be beneficial in curing physical illness or alleviating social ills. In other instances *minkisi*can be represented as small bundles, shells, and carved wooden figures. *Minkisi* represent the ability to both 'contain' and 'release' spiritual forces which can have both positive and negative consequences on the community.

Nkisi nkondi

A fascinating example of a *nkisi* can be found in a power figure called *nkisi nkondi* (a power figure is a magical charm seemingly carved in the likeness of human being, meant to highlight its function in human affairs.). A *nkisi nkondi* can act as an oath taking image which is used to resolve verbal disputes or lawsuits *(mambu)* as well as an avenger (the term *nkondi* means 'hunter') or guardian if sorcery or any form of evil has been committed.

These *minkisi* are wooden figures representing a human or animal such as a dog (*nkisi kozo*) carved under the divine authority and in consultation with an *nganga* or spiritual specialist who activates these figures through chants, prayers and the preparation of sacred substances which are aimed at 'curing' physical, social or spiritual ailments.

Insertions

Nkisi nkondi figures are highly recognizable through an accumulation of pegs, blades, nails or other sharp objects inserted into its surface. Medicinal combinations called *bilongo* are sometimes stored in the head of the figure but frequently in the belly of the figure which is shielded by a piece of glass, mirror or other reflective surfaces. The glass represents the 'other world' inhabited by the spirits of the dead who can peer through and see potential enemies. Elements with a variety of purposes are contained within the *bilongo.* Seeds may be inserted to tell a spirit to replicate itself; *mpemba* or white soil deposits found near cemeteries represent and enlist support from the spiritual realm. Claws may incite the spirits to grasp something while stones may activate the spirits to pelt enemies or protect one from being pelted.

The insertions are driven into the figure by the *nganga* and represent the *mambu* and the type or degree of severity of an issue can be suggested through the material itself. A peg may refer to a matter being 'settled' whereas a nail, deeply inserted may represent a more serious offense such as murder. Prior to insertion, opposing parties or clients often lick the blades or nails, to seal the function or purpose of the *nkisi* through their saliva. If an oath is broken by one of the parties or evil befalls one of them, the *nkisi nkondi* will become activated to carry out its mission of destruction or divine protection.

Power Figure (Nkisi N'Kondi: Mangaaka), mid to late 19th century, wood, paint, metal, resin, ceramic, 46 7/16″ / 118 cm high, Democratic Republic of Congo (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Face (detail), Power Figure (Nkisi N'Kondi: Mangaaka), mid to late 19th century, wood, paint, metal, resin, ceramic, 46 7/16″ / 118 cm high, Democratic Republic of Congo (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Insertions (detail), Power Figure (Nkisi N'Kondi: Mangaaka), mid to late 19th century, wood, paint, metal, resin, ceramic, 46 7/16″ / 118 cm high, Democratic Republic of Congo (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Insertions (detail), Power Figure (Nkisi N'Kondi: Mangaaka), mid to late 19th century, wood, paint, metal, resin, ceramic, 46 7/16″ / 118 cm high, Democratic Republic of Congo (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Migrations

Europeans may have encountered these objects during expeditions to the Congo as early as the fifteenth century. However, several of these "fetish" objects, as they were often termed, were confiscated by missionaries in the late nineteenth century and were destroyed as evidence of sorcery or heathenism. Nevertheless, several were collected as objects of fascination and even as an object of study of Kongo culture. Kongo traditions such as those of the *nkisi nkondi*have survived over the centuries and migrated to the Americas and the Caribbean via Afro-Atlantic religious practices such as vodun, Palo Monte, and macumba. In Hollywood, these figures have morphed into objects of superstition such as New Orleans voodoo dolls covered with stick pins. Nonetheless, *minkisi* have left an indelible imprint as visually provocative figures of spiritual importance and protection.

172. Nkisi n'kondi (Power Figure)

A CONVERSATION

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Peri Klemm

This is a transcript of a conversation conducted in the galleries of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Power Figure: Male (Nkisi), 19th–mid-20th century, Kongo peoples, Democratic Republic of the Congo, wood, pigment, nails, cloth, beads, shells, arrows, leather, nuts, twine, 58.8 x 26 x 25.4 cm (Metropolitan Museum of Art) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/MB3u2Y>

Peri: We're at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and we're looking at a Kongo nkisi figure from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Beth: So the Congo is in Central Africa. It was a large kingdom that was founded in the fourteenth century, and over the centuries, eventually colonized by Belgium. When the Portuguese—who arrived in Africa in the late fifteenth century—saw these figures, nkisi, and also brought missionaries to Christianize the people of the Congo, they asked that these figures be burned.

Peri: The term "nkisi" refers to a spirit, but more specifically, medicine, and when I say medicine, I don't mean an aspirin, I mean the herbs and supplements that a healer would use to help someone on a physical but also on a spiritual, mental, and emotional level. The nganga is the ritual specialist among the Kongo in this period of time around the nineteenth century who would use nkisi figures to help his clients.

Beth: So the nganga would ask a sculptor to carve this, and then the nganga would use it over the course of a considerable amount of time, and over that time, this figure would accrue everything that we see on it, and all of this material is covering its abdomen where likely, although we can't see it, is a case for holding that spiritual medicine.

Peri: That spiritual center, the mooyo, the belly, is where you place the medicine or the materials, and it could be stone, it could be herbs, it could be paste and clays. The nganga would be mixing this formula together, placing it in the cavity in

the belly, and then covering it up so that it's completely sealed.

Beth: So the nganga would use this figure in several different ways. He could use it to heal a client who came to him, but he could also use it to record agreements and contracts, and also could activate it to go after evildoers.

Peri: As a witness, the nkisi really is there to honor contracts and agreements and oaths that are taken, and the nganga might take a strip of cloth and literally tie and bind that agreement together.

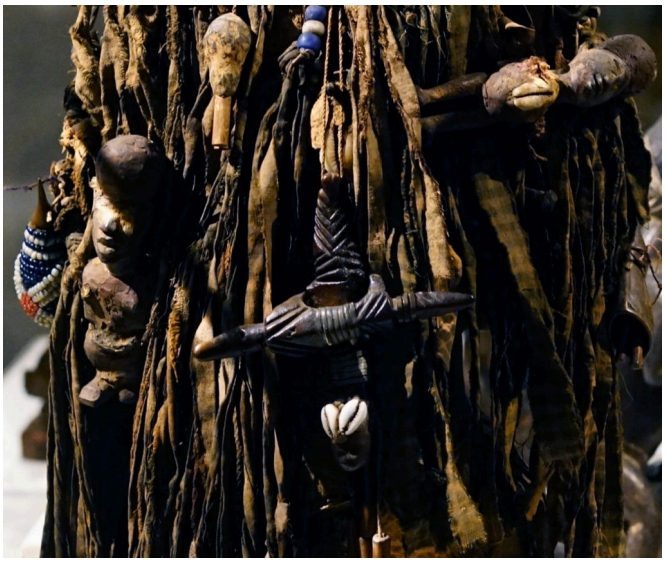
Beth: So each one of those knots that we're seeing is likely that.

Detail, Power Figure: Male (Nkisi), 19th–mid-20th century, Kongo peoples (Metropolitan Museum of Art) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/MVF3mD>

Detail, Power Figure: Male (Nkisi), 19th–mid-20th century, Kongo peoples (Metropolitan Museum of Art) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/MB3ufo>

Peri: And in order for the nkisi to do your bidding, that is to go after someone who broke an oath or did you wrong, you might use dog's teeth or elements of birds.

Beth: We see a sharp object that looks like it belonged to an animal, a bird, or a dog, that could do harm.



Detail, Power Figure: Male (Nkisi), 19th–mid-20th century, Kongo peoples (Metropolitan Museum of Art) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/MB3u2Y>

Peri: In order to activate this nkisi—because really it's just a piece of wood until it's activated with a spirit—the nganga would hammer nails into its skin, thereby calling attention to the nkisi to come and do its bidding.

Beth: So there are so many nails. It feels like this was used over decades.

Peri: It constantly looks different as the nganga works, and while we see it here encrusted, and crumbling, and full of lots of materials, what it's probably missing is the medicine that was in its abdomen originally because it's said that the medicine pouch is so central and so potent you would not sell this piece or let it fall into

the hands of anyone but the nganga with that present.

Beth: So likely it originally had legs, was able to stand, had a base. Those are not here. It's impossible to know exactly what those looked like, but the figure really is encrusted on all of its sides, but there's another example here at the Met where we can see more clearly the opening in the abdomen.

Insertions (detail), Power Figure (Nkisi N'Kondi: Mangaaka), mid to late 19th century, wood, paint, metal, resin, ceramic, 46 7/16″ / 118 cm high, Democratic Republic of Congo (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Peri: And we notice that the abdomen is hollow, so whatever was inside of it has been taken out, rendering it impotent.

Beth: We also see amulets. One of them is beaded. Another looks almost like a nut that's got some carving on the outside.

Peri: Seed pods, pieces of animal, carved figures, and the carved figures actually have something inside of their bellies.

Beth: And we seem to have two interlocking crocodiles.

Peri: We also have a bell on the side which is similar to the nails in that it can be rung to bring the nkisi spirit into this figure, and the nkisi would have been housed in the nganga's home in his shrine.

Beth: If I was a client, I would bring money or something to trade to the nganga who would do this work for me, either mark a contract or an agreement of some kind or right some sort of wrong for me.

Peri: And so the nganga also has to remember what each one of these nails and knots were for. The nkisi then becomes a wonderful historic, social document of a group of people who sought out help from their ritual specialist.

Watch the video <https://youtu.be/H9iy5TTALBQ>.

173. Female (Pwo) Mask (done)

A CONVERSATION

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Peri Klemm

This is a transcript of a conversation conducted in the galleries of the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Washington, D.C.

Female (pwo) mask, Chokwe peoples, Democratic Republic of Congo, early 20th century, wood, plant fiber, pigment, copper alloy, 39.1 cm high (Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Washington D.C.) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/vBaocy>

Peri: We're at the National Museum for African art and we're looking at a mask made by the Chokwe people in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Beth: This mask would have been danced by a male dancer even though we're looking at a mask that represents an ideal woman.

Peri: The masker, who's a man, and the carver, who's a man, would have made this to honor women, particularly women who were young and fertile and had successfully given birth.

Beth: There was an honor in Chokwe society given to those women, and this is also a culture that is matrilineal, that is the family line is passed down through the mother.

Peri: One of the reasons to dance this mask was not only to honor women who were at this stage in life but also to recognize the founding female ancestor of the Chokwe lineage.

Beth: It's made of wood that's very thin and difficult to carve. We see fiber and this elaborate hairstyle. We have to imagine the rest of the costume that would have been here when the mask was danced.

Peri: This would have been a tight-fitted bodystocking covered in raffia cloth. The dancer's groin area would be covered in a loincloth, and he'd be wearing wooden breasts.

Beth: We're using the word dance but from the descriptions, the dancer walked in a very graceful and stately way.

Peri: Chokwe women actually do dance like that,

it's very graceful and fluid and slow and respectful. When we say he's wearing a woman's face and he's wearing women's breasts, he's not impersonating a woman, he's really meant to honor women who have courageously gone through childbirth and retain this inner wisdom and beauty so beautifully articulated in the facial features.

Beth: We see that sense of calm in the face and the fact that her eyes are closed her mouth is closed suggests it is turning inward. She's not talking she doesn't need to talk, at this point in life she deserves respect. She doesn't have to open her eyes wide, she's already knowing.

Female (pwo) mask (detail), Chokwe peoples, Democratic Republic of Congo, early 20th century (Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Washington D.C.) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/vBaqMU>

Beth: The mask itself is a deep dark red which is probably created through a mixture of red earth and oil but there's white kalyan, or white powder, around her eyes and this whiteness is connected to the spiritual realm. In fact, her eyes are the most important part of the face their abstractly big, and it draws attention to the fact that she has the spiritual ability almost of second sight, that her power comes from being able to give birth. The face is very symmetrical, the chin comes to have narrower point, the broadest part of the face is by the eyes and ears, this wide forehead that is accentuated by the hairstyle.

Peri: We have these constant circles that are bisected by the lines of the mouth of the eyes. Then we also have the circle of the earring in the ear. This mask was obviously really loved. In fact, we can see a repair on one side of the face so that they could continue to use it we also have pounded dots around the eyes which further emphasizes their cylindrical nature but also suggests women's tattoo patterns. Women wore a whole host of different tattoo designs that had special references in special meaning.

Beth: The Chokwe people were little known until the earlier part of the twentieth century by Europeans.

Peri: Europeans—in particular Portuguese—didn't begin trading with the Chokwe until the early 1900s, and so they weren't documented in the way that other groups were. However, the Chokwe had been part of a larger kingdom from which they broke away. They had trading relations with many groups throughout Africa and so they certainly didn't exist in isolation.

Beth: There are about a million today in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Peri: As this mask shows us the ideal woman and ideal virtues her hairstyle would have been fashionable at the time so they could really see themselves in the mask when it was being performed for them.

Beth: So this is an ideal of womanhood in so many ways.

Watch the video <https://youtu.be/FN1qz8tp89g>.

Female (pwo) mask, Chokwe peoples, Democratic Republic of Congo, early 20th century (Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Washington D.C.) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/uWLcub>

174. Portrait mask (Mblo)

Dr. Peri Klemm

Owie Kimou, Portrait Mask (Mblo) of Moya Yanso, Baule peoples (Côte d'Ivoire), early 20th century C.E., wood, brass, pigment, 36.2 cm high (private collection)

The 400,000 Baule who live in central Côte d'Ivoire in West Africa have a rich carving tradition. Many sculpted figures and masks of the human form are utilized in personal shrines and in masquerade performances. This mask was part of a secular masquerade in the village of Kami in the early 1900s.

Masquerade

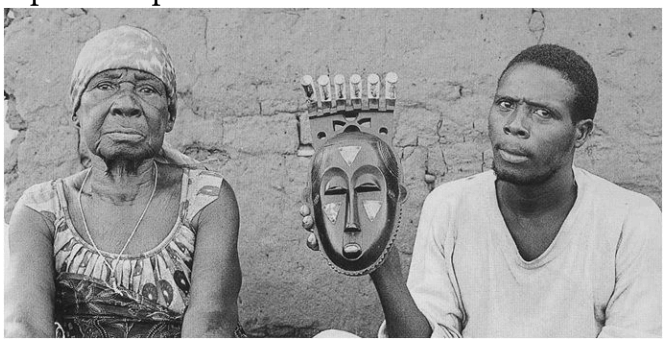
The Baule recognize two types of entertainment masks, *Goli* and *Mblo*. To perform a *Mblo* mask, like the one depicted, a masker in a cloth costume conceals his face with a small, wooden mask and dances for an audience accompanied by drummers, singers, dancers, and orators in a series of skits. In the village of Kami, the *Mblo* parodies and dances are referred to as *Gbagba*. When not in use, the *Gbagba*masks were kept out of sight so it is unusual that we get to see a mask displayed in this manner.

To the Baule, sculpture serves many functions and these can shift over time and within different contexts. The *Gbagba*masquerade is a form of entertainment no longer practiced in Kami since the 1980s, replaced today by newer masks and performance styles. What is known, however, is that masks like this one were not intended to be hung on a wall and appreciated, first and foremost, for their physical characteristics. Sculpture throughout West Africa has the power to act; to make things happen. A carving of a figure, for example, can be utilized by practitioners to communicate with ancestors and spirits. The physical presence of a mask can allow the invisible world to interact with and influence the visible world of humans.

Scholar Susan Vogel mentions that *Gbagba* could bring social relief at the end of a long day and respite from everyday chores. It allowed residents to socialize, mourn, celebrate, feast, and even, court.[1]

Moya Yanso

In the case of this *Gbagba* mask, Vogel tells us that it was meant to honor a respected member of Baule society. This mask is unusual. Most older African carving came into Western collections without information about the artist or subject, but in this case, both the carver and the sitter have been recorded. In the photograph below we see an older woman seated next to the portrait mask. She is Moya Yanso and this is her image carved by a well-known Baule artist, Owie Kimou. The man holding the mask is her stepson who danced this mask in a *Gbagba performance*. It was commissioned and originally worn by Kouame Ziarey, Moya Yanso's husband and later his sons. Revered as a great dancer, Moya Yanso accompanied the mask in performances throughout her adult life until she was no longer physically able. This portrait mask tradition came to end in the early 1980s with the decline of *Gbagba* and while entertainment masks continue, they are no longer carved to represent specific individuals.



Moya Yanso and her stepson holding the portrait mask, 1971

Portrait masks characteristically have an oval face with an elongated nose, small, open mouth, downcast slit eyes with projecting pieces that extend beyond the crest to suggest animal horns. Most also have scarification patterns at the temple and a high gloss patina. These stylistic attributes are actually a visual vocabulary that suggests what it means to be a good, honorable, respected, and beautiful person in Baule society. The half slit eyes and high forehead suggest modesty and wisdom respectively. The nasolabial fold depicted as a line between the sides of the nose to the outsides of the mouth and the beard-like projecting triangular patterns that extends from the bottom of the ears to the chin, suggest age. The triangular brass additions heighten the lustrous patina when danced in the sunlight, a suggestion of health.

An Ideal

The hairstyles of portrait masks are known to be quite realistic but other features, like the six projecting tubular pieces at the crown, are abstract. This is not a realistic representation of the woman in the photograph, rather, it suggests an idealized inner state of beauty and morality associated with Moya Yanso.

Notice that Moya Yanso's portrait mask is in the hands of her stepson in the photograph. Masking is the prerogative of men. While women attend masquerades as audience members and can perform with masked dancers, they do not wear or own masks themselves. The performers and makers of masks, as well as those who commission them, are always men.

Owie Kimou, Portrait Mask (Mblo) of Moya Yanso, Baule peoples (Côte d'Ivoire), early 20th century C.E., wood, brass, pigment, 36.2 cm high (private collection)

From West Africa to the Midwest

It is interesting to note the way in which African objects gather value in the West. This mask was acquired from the family of Moya Yanso in 1997 by a collector in Brussels, then sold to a French collector, and finally sold through the Sotheby's auction house in 1999 for 197,000 US dollars to a collector in Minneapolis. The mask has also been exhibited at the Yale University Art Gallery, the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Museum for African Art in New York. It is featured on the front cover of *Baule: African Art, Western Eyes*(1997) by Susan Vogel, who has written extensively on Baule art and first conducted fieldwork in Kami village in the 1960s.

For many collectors in the West, it is the formal properties of the mask that are alluring. Like the avant-garde artists in the early twentieth century who were looking for new stylistic avenues to represent the modern condition, collectors today value the abstract qualities of Baule art. Vogel aptly notes that "Baule believers first encounter the object's indwelling spiritual powers, or the metaphysical ideas it evokes, while the connoisseur begins with the visible forms, colors, textures—the artist's material creation."[2] Among the Baule up to the 1970s, this mask would remain hidden unless performed with musicians and dancers. To separate this mask from its masquerade is to give it new life as an aesthetic object.

[1] Susan M. Vogel, *Baule: African Art, Western Eyes*, New Haven, 1997, p. 140
[2] Vogel, p. 18

175. Bundu mask, Sande Society

A CONVERSATION

Dr. Peri Klemm and Dr. Steven Zucker

This is a transcript of a conversation conducted in the galleries of the Brooklyn Museum in New York.

Helmet Mask for Sande Society (Ndoli Jowei), Mende peoples, Nguabu Master (Moyamba district, Sierra Leone), late 19th-early 20th century, wood and pigment, 39.4 x 23.5 x 26 cm (Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, New York) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/Dm9v7a>

Steven: We're in the Brooklyn Museum and we're looking at one of several helmet masks for the Sande Society.

Peri: This is a Pan West African phenomenon where several different ethnic groups participated in this masquerade tradition.

Steven: The mask we're looking at would have been worn, not in front of the face, but on top of the head. But the person who wore it would have been obscured by raffia that would have hung down over the face.

Peri: But what really makes it really unique is it's the only masquerade tradition, that we know of, where women wore the mask.

Steven: Now, men would have made this mask, would have actually carved it. But the entire ritual was performed by, and for, women.

Peri: It was made to help young girls go through initiation. Young girls among many different ethnic groups, including the Mende, whose group made this particular mask, would have been taken from their everyday lives and their chores to a secluded area in the forest where they would be instructed on how to become good wives and good mothers by members of the Sande Society. And, again, this was a secret society that girls, all girls, were initiated into.

Steven: There's real symbolism in being taken from the village into this more dangerous place.

Peri: This was a liminal time for girls, and, in fact, their bodies would be anointed with white clay to make them dry and pasty and unattractive to suggest that they were not girls but hadn't yet

become women. So, it was outside of the realm of the village, where this could take place.

Steven: If we look at the mask, it's got a beautiful, deep black sheen. The surface is smooth and glistening and is in such contrast to that chalky, white.

Helmet Mask for Sande Society (Ndoli Jowei), Mende peoples, Nguabu Master (Moyamba district, Sierra Leone), late 19th-early 20th century, wood and pigment, 39.4 x 23.5 x 26 cm (Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, New York) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/Dm9vxR>

Peri: This black shininess is really the ideal. So what the artist has done, the carver, is create an image that suggests an inner quality or the inner morality that young girls should strive for. The mask becomes an ideal for the young girls to mimic in their adult lives.

Steven: Well, we see eyes that are largely closed and seem quite demure. We see a very small mouth and very petite ears.

Peri: These downcast eyes suggest that she should be reserved. The small mouth suggests she should keep her mouth closed and not gossip. Gossip being the most dangerous thing in a small society, in many cases. Then small ears so as not to listen to that gossip.

Steven: But probably most evident is this wildly elaborate hairstyle.

Helmet Mask for Sande Society (Ndoli Jowei), Mende peoples, Nguabu Master (Moyamba district, Sierra Leone), late 19th-early 20th century, wood and pigment, 39.4 x 23.5 x 26 cm (Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, New York) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/Dbzs4d>

Peri: The hairstyle is where the artist has room for play. So, we have that seriousness of the face, this high, glossy forehead, but then we have this elaborate coiffure. We don't know the symbolic meaning of all of these things. Many of this is learned as knowledge of that secret society.

Steven: This is not just historical. This is a continuing tradition.

Peri: Because of the civil war in Sierra Leone and surrounding countries, all sorts of conflicts, we don't know to what extent this tradition continues today.

Steven: One of the other most evident features are the rolls of fat under the chin.

Peri: The artist suggests that she is full-figured, that she has enough body fat to be able to bear children. She is expected, after initiation, to marry and have children. So this suggests an ideal, again. Also in seclusion, during initiation, is the only time a young girl is given really rich foods to eat and can enjoy time off. So it's intended to fatten her up a little bit too. The Sowei mask is thought to be a spirit. She comes from the bottoms of rivers and lakes.

Steven: Below her eyes, there are four lines on either side.

Peri: These are scarification marks and they're part of the ideal aesthetic for a young Mende woman. While all the girls are in seclusion, in that liminal space, not yet women but no longer girls, they're referred to as chrysalis, that is not quite the butterfly but no longer the caterpillar. That shape is also echoed in the shape of her neck. So, we have a multiplicity of meanings which are partly to do with the way scholars have studied them but also to do with the fact that girls are exposed to different knowledge at different times in their life when the Sande members feel that it's appropriate. While this mask is intended to instruct young girls about proper womanhood, it actually never speaks. It never says a word. So, this mask, silent, is able to teach young girls. The way in which that is done is through dance. So, the masks teach the girls particular dance movements and stories to those dances, telling girls, not only practical information on how to cook and raise kids, but also spiritual knowledge and information about their belief system.

Helmet Mask for Sande Society (Ndoli Jowei), Mende peoples, Nguabu Master (Moyamba district, Sierra Leone), late 19th-early 20th century, wood and pigment, 39.4 x 23.5 x 26 cm (Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, New York) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/Dm9vrt>

Steven: So the mask is this container of this very rich tradition. When we see it without its raffia, when we see it not worn, not part of this process of initiation, we're seeing it really as an aestheticized object in the western tradition. Very different from the way this would be understood in its original context.

Peri: Young women think of this as a spirit when it's danced with its raffia.

Steven: These masks would be used over and over again, but when they were not in the ritual, itself, it would not have that spiritual presence.

Peri: It would have been housed in an elder woman's home who is an official from the Sande Society, and it was quite fine for young initiates to see it. They wouldn't regard it as a spirit. They would regard it merely as a piece of wood because, again, it was not performing with its raffia costume and its attendants and musicians.

Watch the video<https://youtu.be/FN1qz8tp89g>.

176. Ikenga (shrine figure)

A CONVERSATION

Dr. Peri Klemm and Dr. Steven Zucker

This is a transcript of a conversation conducted in the galleries of the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.

Ikenga, Igbo Peoples, Nigeria, wood (University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/DiNCoY>

Steven: One of the large ethnic groups in what is now Niagara is Igbo. Among the Igbo in Northern Igboland is a tradition of creating what is known as an Ikenga.

Peri: Ikenga are carved wooden figures that have a human face with animal attributes. They can be small, a couple of inches. They can be very abstract, sometimes it's more naturalistic like the one we see at the Penn University Museum.

Steven: Likely made for a warrior. He's seated on a stool which is an important signifier of honor. He holds in his right hand, as all of Ikenga do, a sword. This is an expression of power, but in his left hand, this particular figure seems to hold a human head. That would be an expression of his warrior status. Maybe I shouldn't say they all hold a sword in the right hand, because some of the Ikenga are abstract and don't actually have arms.

Peri: So, if you were Igbo, you would know that the Ikenga stood for the power of the right hand, and it really wouldn't be necessary to depict it in the carving. In other words, that same concept in African art, that it's not so much about what it looks like, but rather the concept that the figure is trying to convey. The Ikenga were personal objects that suggested the achievement of their owners, and they could relate to that person's occupation, whether they were a hunter, a farmer, maybe they were an exceptional yam farmer. They could have been a smith, or they could be a university professor.

Steven: Once an Ikenga had been commissioned by a master carver, had been consecrated, it would enter into a shrine within the owners home.

Peri: The Ikenga is known as the place of

strength. So, it's a personal spirit of one's human achievements, one's ability, and it holds items that help the owner get things done. So yes, the power of the right hand is always emphasized. The right hand holds a sword, holds the ability to cut through things to get to what one wishes in life. The left hand can hold a whole host of things including the tusk of an elephant in the form of a trumpet, a head, or even a staff to suggest one's rank.

Ikenga, Igbo Peoples, Nigeria, wood (University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/CMC29n>

Steven: Let's take a close look at this particular object. We have rams horns that are almost as big as the entire body. They curl at the top, and they're decorated with these wonderful vertical and horizontal abstract forms.

Peri: There's a great saying among the Igbo that a ram fights with his head first. The idea that any action is taken first with the heads. The head is emphasized, the power, the aggression, the strength of the head in these rams horns. We'll notice that it has a lot of detailing on the sides, these pod-shaped forms with dots and lines incised into them, which seems to mirror what the figure has on the sides of his head.

Ikenga, Igbo Peoples, Nigeria, wood (University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/CU15hs>

Steven: You also see that there are decorative patterns that have been cut into the body, which are likely the representation of scarification of body decoration.

Peri: Typically, scarification found on the temple and also on the forehead suggested that the wear was a title holding member of Igbo society. So, this figure, who also has this pattering on his temple and on his horns seems to also suggest that high-rank.

Steven: So, this is not a portrait. We shouldn't think of it in that way, but it is a symbolic representation of the power or the authority and the accomplishment of the individual for whom this was made.

Peri: I'd like to think of it as a sacred diploma, something that you would hang in your office to remember the status that you've reached through hard work, through discipline, through the mastery of a craft.

Steven: I would love to have my own personal Ikenga.

Watch the video<https://youtu.be/kRikHc8U8zI>.

Ikenga, Igbo Peoples, Nigeria, wood (University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/CU15hs>

177. Lukasa (memory board)

Juliet Moss

Lukasa (memory board), Mbudye Society, Luba peoples, Democratic Republic of Congo, c. 19th to 20th century, wood, beads and metal

Performing history

While Europeans may open a history book to learn about their past, in the Luba Kingdom of the Democratic Republic of Congo, history was traditionally performed—not read. In fact, Luba royal history is not chronological and static as Westerners learn it. Rather, it is a dynamic oral narrative which reinforces the foundations upon which Luba kingship is established and supports the current leadership. This history is also used to interpret and judge contemporary situations.

Special objects known as *lukasa* (memory boards) are used by experts in the oral retelling of history in Luba culture. The recounting of the past is performative and includes dance and song. The master who has the skill and knowledge to read the *lukasa* will utilize it as a mnemonic device, touching and feeling the beads, shells, and pegs to recount history and solve current problems.

The Luba Kingdom of the Democratic Republic of Congo was a very powerful and influential presence from the sixteenth to the early twentieth centuries in central Africa. Their art highlights the roles that objects played in granting the holders the authority of kingship and royal power.

The Luba people are one of the Bantu peoples of Central Africa and the largest ethnic group in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Kingdom of the Luba arose in the Upemba Depression (a large marshy area comprising some fifty lakes) in what is now the southern Democratic Republic of Congo. The Luba had access to a wealth of natural resources including gold, ivory, and copper, but they also produced and traded a variety of goods such as pottery and wooden sculpture.

Lukasa

For the Luba people, kingship is sacred, and the elite Mbudye Society (whose members are considered "men of memory," and who have extensive religious training) use the *lukasa* to recount history in the context of spiritual rituals. Diviners (who have the power to predict the future) can also read the *lukasa*.

Each *lukasa* is different but small enough to hold in the left hand. The board is "read" by touching its surface with the right forefinger. The tactile qualities are apparent. The *lukasa* illustrated here is one of the oldest known examples, with carved geometric designs on the back and sides, and complex clusters of beads of various sizes whose colors have faded over time. The board is narrower at the center making it easy to hold.

The *lukasa* is typically arranged with large beads surrounded by smaller beads or a line of beads, the configuration of which dictates certain kinds of information. This information can be interpreted in a variety of ways and the expert might change his manner of delivery and his reading based upon his audience and assignment. The most important function of the *lukasa* was to serve as a memory aid that describes the myths surrounding the origins of the Luba empire, including recitation of the names of the royal Luba line.

178. Aka elephant mask

A CONVERSATION

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Peri Klemm

This is a transcript of a conversation conducted in the galleries of Brooklyn Museum in New York.

Elephant (Aka) Mask, Kuosi Society, Bamileke Peoples, Grassfields region of Cameroon, 20th century, cloth, beads, raffia, fiber, 146.7 x 52.1 x 29.2 cm (Brooklyn Museum) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/xeBQdd>

Steven: We're in the Brooklyn Museum looking at this magnificent beaded mask.

Peri: This mask is covered in beads. It was danced by the members of the Elephant Society, the Kuosi Society, in the Bamileke kingdom of Cameroon.

Steven: Cameroon is a country in central Africa but we're seeing this object hermetically sealed within plexiglass, in a museum, completely divorced from the way that it would have been used and understood in its original context.

Peri: This was a masquerade, which involved not just a mask, but a costume, performers musicians and attendants to bring this mask to life to do what it was really supposed to do in terms of honoring the king and bringing about social harmony.

Steven: So we should not be seeing it frozen, hung as if it was just a piece of cloth.

Elephant (Aka) Mask, Kuosi Society, Bamileke Peoples, Grassfields region of Cameroon, 20th century, cloth, beads, raffia, fiber, 146.7 x 52.1 x 29.2 cm (Brooklyn Museum) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/xhv8kk>

Peri: This object was obviously collected and has now a second life in this museum space. It's very hard for us to recontextualize its original use but we know from photographs that the Bamileke Society would wear these with a red feather headdress, a leopard skin pelt and a full-body costume. The leopard and the elephant were symbols of rule and powerful symbols for the Fon. The Fon was a divine king who could transform into the elephant and the leopard was thought to be an animal that could transform into a human so we have that connection between divine rule and the essence of these powerful animals.

Elephant (Aka) Mask (profile), Bamileke Peoples, 20th century, (Brooklyn Museum) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/wk51wn>

Steven: So the Bamileke that would have worn this would have been court officials, titleholders, warriors people that held themselves great power and in their association with the leopard and with the elephant would have expressed the power of the king, and in a sense the political stability of that hierarchical order.

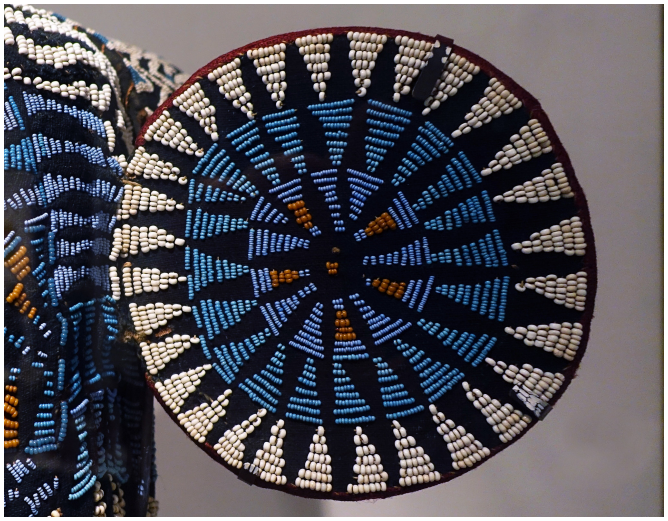
Peri: The Bamileke king, the Fon, allowed this society and only this one to dance the elephant mask and to wear leopard skin. They were entrusted with these symbols of authority and power. The main form in this beaded piece is the isosceles triangle, which relates to the patterning on the body of the leopard.

Steven: Highly stylized though as the entire mask is it's dazzling, and it has a kind of optical quality that is full of energy and dynamism.

Peri: Imagine when it's worn and danced and performed, it would be incredibly dynamic with all of these various materials and colors and shapes all brought together to suggest the power of that king.

Steven: In Cameroon today, the Bamileke still perform this ritual, now annually but instead of warriors performing it, there are powerful members of the society.

Watch the video<https://youtu.be/t-4O17cw9cw>.



Elephant (Aka) Mask (detail with ear), Bamileke Peoples, 20th century (Brooklyn Museum) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/xhv8kk>

179. Reliquary figure (byeri)

A CONVERSATION

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Peri Klemm

This is a transcript of a conversation conducted in the Brooklyn Museum in New York.

Reliquary Guardian Figure (Eyema-o-Byeri), Gabon, Fang peoples, mid 18th to mid 19th century, wood and iron, 58.4 cm high (Brooklyn Museum) (Brooklyn Museum) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/vpsg74>

Beth: We're here in the Brooklyn Museum, looking at a wooden sculpture, a figure that performed an important role, it guarded a reliquary.

Peri: This figure is almost a talisman, in that it was intended to ward off those that might harm the contents of that box. Or, as a warning to others who might come in contact with it and be harmed by it, like uninitiated men and women.

Beth: So, the contents of the box that this figure guarded were sacred and powerful.

Peri: They were usually the bones of important members of society, important ancestors, along with potent substances like beads that they may have owned and medicine.

Beth: So, who constituted a great man for the Fang people?

Peri: A very high-status noble person who had lived a long and good life. This would include lineage heads, clan heads, special warriors, even craftsmen who were exceptionally talented, as well as women who had borne lots of healthy children. It's believed that the Fang utilized these reliquary boxes with remains, rather than putting them into a more permanent cemetery because they had been nomadic or semi-nomadic. They were probably maintained by elder men in the community who would be in charge of putting them together and consulting them when there was some great decision to be made.

Beth: The figure has an elongated torso, a large rounded head, eyes that look down, a closed mouth, the arms are clasped together, but there's a sense of very powerful musculature. So, there's a balance between a figure that has a sense of

calm and contemplativeness and at the same time, real power and strength.

Peri: It's almost as though the figure has this coiled up energy, this vitality that's ready to spring forth if it was needed, but otherwise retains a very calm dignified appearance.

Beth: The top of the head is enlarged.

Reliquary Guardian Figure (Eyema-o-Byeri), Gabon, Fang peoples, mid 18th to mid 19th century, wood and iron, 58.4 cm high (Brooklyn Museum) (Brooklyn Museum) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Peri: For the Fang, we see an emphasis on the head, particularly the coiffeur, and the tubular nature of the limbs and the body. There's also an emphasis on the herniated belly button which is of course where the umbilical cord first gives life to humans just as this reliquary is guarding the remains of the deceased who have returned back into the spiritual world, waiting for rebirth. Beth: So, this particular figure is a male figure, but the Fang also made reliquary guardian figures who were female.

Peri: These figures also had a second life as puppets during young men's initiations. In other words, they were brought out to educate young men about their ancestors and help young men experience or be in the same place as the essence or the energy of their ancestors who really were the founding fathers, the lineage heads, of their ethnic group. While the face is very typically stylized, the hairstyle was popular when this object was actually made So, we have these three crests and kind of a ducktail in the back which is what Fang men at the time, high-status men, were wearing.

Beth: When we look at so much African art, we're looking at art that is not naturalistic and intentionally so. The purpose of the object was to express certain spiritual ideas and so we see abstraction. We see eyes that are reduced to half-circular shapes, the cheeks forming these diagonal lines and a kind of reduction to geometric shapes that art historians call abstraction. We can also note that in the limbs which are very cylindrical and rounded.

Peri: The artist could have very easily depicted a naturalistic looking figure, but they chose abstraction. This is a conceptual piece, it's about the idea of a reliquary, the idea of this guardian figure, rather than depicting an actual human or how they look in nature, which was not of interest to this Fang artist. The wonderful tension in this figure is the fact that he is suggesting one approach with honor and respect with eyes closed and patience. At the same time, he is suggesting his strength to ward off spirits or humans that may want to disrupt the contents of his box.

Watch the video <https://youtu.be/OS4Q5TN8oJU>.

180. Veranda post of enthroned king and senior wife (Opo Ogoga)

A CONVERSATION

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Peri Klemm

This is a transcript of a conversation conducted in the galleries of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.

Olowe of Ise, Veranda Post, before 1938 (Yoruba people, Nigeria), wood, pigment, 180.3 x 28.6 x 35.6 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/DbyGMy>

Steven: We're in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in their galleries devoted to the art of Africa. Looking at this large sculpture which was originally a veranda post. That is, it was this vertical sculpture originally intended to be among the structural posts of a palace porch.

Peri: This was created for a palace among the Yoruba in Nigeria by a well-known artist named Olowe of Ise. And Ise is a region in Southwestern Nigeria where this artist came from.

Steven: There are numerous royal objects that this artist produced. This particular sculpture at the Met, shows a mounted figure holding the attributes of a warrior, or perhaps a warrior king. Let's refer to him as a king, since he represents military power, the power of the enthroned king, and his rule.

Peri: Horses were introduced into this region, the Sahel, and to the Yoruba sometime in the tenth century.

Steven: In his left hand, the king holds a spear, this traditional instrument of power, but in his right hand he holds a pistol, a modern weapon. He is frontal, he is the largest figure, and he

completely outstrips the horse in terms of his scale.

Peri: He is the largest figure, and by far the most important, but the horse that he sits on, and the woman that the horse is resting on top of, are both necessary for his rule.

Steven: So it's not just a celebration of the king's power, the sculpture is also an expression of the source of his power. That his power is founded on the power of his community.

Peri: And there's the practical aspect, which is the cavalry that was used to win wars, the pistol, and the spear. And then there's the spiritual, which is represented by this woman who is completely nude except for a series of waist beads. Who kneels in supplication and support of this important king.

Steven: And one of the ways we know that her power is spiritual, is that among the Yoruba, a nude woman would be a representation of fertility.

Olowe of Ise, Veranda Post, before 1938 (Yoruba people, Nigeria), wood, pigment, 180.3 x 28.6 x 35.6 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/CMCSC2>

Peri: Here then, the king is suggesting that he can rely on, he can be supported by, this great potential to provide his community with fertile harvest with all that they need to have an abundant life.

Steven: But also the spiritual is represented by the bulging eyes, where we can still see a little bit of the original blue pigment. The idea that one can look into the spiritual realm.

Peri: Among the Yoruba, there are a series of masquerades, wooden structures donned by men, and a complimentary institution is spirit possession for women. So in some cases, bulging eyes suggest her ability to see into the other realm and take on this spirit to support her community.

Steven: And both of those figures share another characteristic: a gap in the middle of their top teeth. A sign of beauty.

Peri: The kneeling figure below is flanked by two attendants who are carved to angle out into our space. And each hold a bowl or a container that has been hollowed out on top of their heads. We want to walk around it, the way in which the figures are positioned beg to be encircled. While there were certainly court carvers prior to Olowe, he's really known for his ability to break out of the mold of frontality.

Steven: Architecture is generally rectilinear, and here the artist has preserved that at the very top where we see the strictly geometric, four-square post just above the king's head. But then as the sculpture moves downward, there is an increasing freedom in terms of direction.

Peri: Each figure, although very simplified and abstract with emphasis on the head, is also incredibly decorative. So there are embellishments on the man's vest, on the horse saddle, and on the hair.

Olowe of Ise, Veranda Post, before 1938 (Yoruba people, Nigeria), wood, pigment, 180.3 x 28.6 x 35.6 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/CoKfPg>

Steven: And many of those embellishments are actually rings that circulate around the figures, and invite us to walk around in a very deliberate way. We see that on the bridle of the horse's nose, we see it on the rings of the barrels that are being held by the attendants, and we see it on the waist beads of the woman below.

Watch the video<https://youtu.be/Yc9NJnx58Wg>.

West and Central Asia 500 B.C.E.-1980 C.E.

181. Petra, Jordan: Treasury and Great Temple

Dr. Elizabeth Macaulay-Lewis

So-called Treasury (Khazneh), Petra (Jordan), 2nd century C.E. (photo: Colin Tsoi, CC BY-ND 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/iHk7iK>

There is only one true way to experience Petra—the greatest city of the Nabataeans, a people who occupied the area from Sinai and Negev to northern Arabia in the west and as far north as southern Syria. On foot or mounted on a camel, one should leave the modern village of Wadi Musa in modern-day Jordan and enter the Siq, a narrow, curving canyon, that traders, explorers and travelers have been walking down since time immemorial (here's a short video of

the approach <https://www.flickr.com/photos/klvinci/3593217040>).

Stone carvings, camel caravans and betyls (the famous god blocks) set in niches, appear. But these elaborate carvings are merely a prelude to one's arrival into the heart of Petra, where the Treasury, or Khazneh, a monumental tomb, awaits to impress even the most jaded visitors. The natural, rich hues of Arabian light hit the remarkable façade, giving the Treasury its famed rose-red color.

Petra, the capital of the Nabataean Kingdom

Petra was the capital of the Nabataean Kingdom for most of its history until the Roman Emperor Trajan created the province of Arabia in 106 C.E., annexed the Nabataean kingdom, and moved the capital of this new province to Bosra (also spelt Bostra) in what is today modern southern Syria.

So-called Treasury (Khazneh), through the Siq, Petra (photo: Colin Tsoi, CC BY-ND 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/iHiSaP>

The Hellenistic period

The ancient sources inform us that the Nabataeans were great traders, who controlled the luxury trade in incense during the late Hellenistic and early Roman periods. The Hellenistic period stretches from the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C.E. to 31 B.C.E. when the Roman Empire emerged. It can also refer to artistic and cultural similarities in the eastern part of the Mediterranean, Egypt and the Middle East in this era. Petra, the rock-cut city of the Nabataeans, lay at the intersection of these rich trade routes. The great wealth that the Nabataeans amassed allowed them to create the spectacular architecture that so many admire in Petra today.

Nabataean trade routes (CC BY-SA 3.0) <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nabataeans#mediaviewer/File:NabateensRoutes.png>

So-called Treasury (Khazneh), Petra (Jordan), 2nd century C.E. (photo: Kyle Simourd, CC BY 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/6TqRxG>

181. a. Petra and The Treasury

Dr. Elizabeth Macaulay-Lewis

The so-called Treasury (Khazneh), of Petra (Jordan), 2nd century C.E. (photo: Richard White, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/49exYB>

The rock-cut façades are the iconic monuments of Petra. Of these, the most famous is the so-called Treasury (or Khazneh), which appeared in the film *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, as the final resting place of the Holy Grail.

The prominence of the tombs in the landscape led many early explorers and scholars to see Petra as a large necropolis (cemetery); however, archaeology has shown that Petra was a well-developed metropolis with all of the trappings of a Hellenistic city.

Tombs

The tomb facades draw upon a rich array of Hellenistic and Near Eastern architecture and, in this sense, their architecture reflects the diverse and different cultures with which the Nabataeans traded, interacted, and even intermarried (King Aretas IV's daughter was married to Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great, whose mother was also Nabataean). Many of the tombs contain niches or small chambers for burials, cut into the stone walls. No human remains have ever been found in any of the tombs, and the exact funerary practices of the Nabataeans remain unknown.

The dating of the tombs has proved difficult as there are almost no finds, such as coins and pottery, that enable archaeologists to date these tombs; a few inscriptions allow us to date some of the tombs at Petra, although at Egra, another Nabataean site (in modern Saudi Arabia), there are thirty-one dated tombs. Today scholars believe that the tombs were probably constructed when the Nabataeans were wealthiest between the second century B.C.E. and the early second century C.E. Archaeologists and art historians have identified a number styles for the tomb facades, but they all co-existed and cannot be used date the tombs. The few surviving inscriptions in Nabataean, Greek, and Latin tell us about the people who were buried in the tombs.

Tombs at Petra (Jordan) (photo: Dennis Jarvis, CC BY-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/8ik1mu>

Hellenistic in style

The Treasury's façade (24.9 meters wide x 38.77 meters high) most clearly embodies the Hellenistic style and reflects the influence of Alexandria, the greatest city in the Eastern Mediterranean at this time. Its architecture features a broken pediment and central tholos (a circular building) on the upper level; this architectural composition originated in Alexandria. Ornate Corinthian columns are used throughout. Above the broken pediments, the bases of two obelisks appear and stretch upwards into the rock.

The sculptural decoration also underscores a connection to the Hellenistic world. On the upper level, Amazons (bare-breasted) and Victories stand, flanking a central female figure (on the tholos), who is probably Isis-Tyche, a combination of the Egyptian Goddess, Isis, and Tyche, the Greek Goddess of good fortune. The lower level features the Greek twin gods, Castor and Pollux, the Dioscuri, who protected travelers and the dead on their journeys. There are other details from the artistic traditions of the Hellenistic world, including eagles, the symbols of royal Ptolemies, vines, vegetation, kantharoi (vase with large handles), and acroteria (architectural ornaments on a pediment). However, the tomb also features rosettes, a

design originally associated with the ancient Near East.

The Treasury (Khazneh), Petra (Jordan), 2nd century C.E. (photo: Packwood / Shand, CC BY 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/75oLF>

There are no inscriptions or ceramic evidence associated with the tomb that allows us to date it. Considering that it was located at the most important entrance to Petra through the Siq, it was probably a tomb for one of the Nabataean Kings. Aretas IV (reigned, 9 B.C.E. – 40 C.E.) is the most likely candidate, because he was the Nabataeans' most successful ruler, and many buildings were erected in Petra during his reign.

The treasury was exceptional for its figurative detail and ornate Hellenistic architectural orders; most tombs did not have figurative sculpture—a legacy of the Nabataean artistic tradition that was largely aniconic, or non-figurative. Many of the smaller tombs were less complex and also drew far less upon the artistic conventions of the Hellenistic world, suggesting that the Nabataeans combined the artistic traditions of the East and West in many different and unique ways.

It is a popular misconception that all of the rock-cut monuments, which number over 3,000, were all tombs. In fact, many of the other rock-cut monuments were living quarters or monumental dining rooms with interior benches. Of these, the Monastery (also known as ed-Deir) is most the famous. Even the large theater, constructed in the first century B.C.E., was cut into the rock of Petra.

Relief sculpture and acroteria (detail), The Treasury (Khazneh), Petra (present-day Jordan), 2nd century C.E. (photo: Richard White, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/49dPXU>

Much like the Treasury (discussed above), ed-Deir was not a monastery, but rather behind its façade was a monumental cella (the inner chamber of a temple) with a large area for dining with a cultic podium at the back. While no traces of decoration remain today, the room would have been plastered and painted. The façade again features a broken pediment around a central tholos, but its decoration is more abstract and less figurative than that of the Treasury. The column capitals are typically Nabataean, modeled on the Corinthian order, but abstracted. The façade features a Doric entablature, but rather than having figures in the metopes, roundels with no decoration appear. Thus, while the Monastery deploys many elements of Classical architecture, it does so in a unique way.

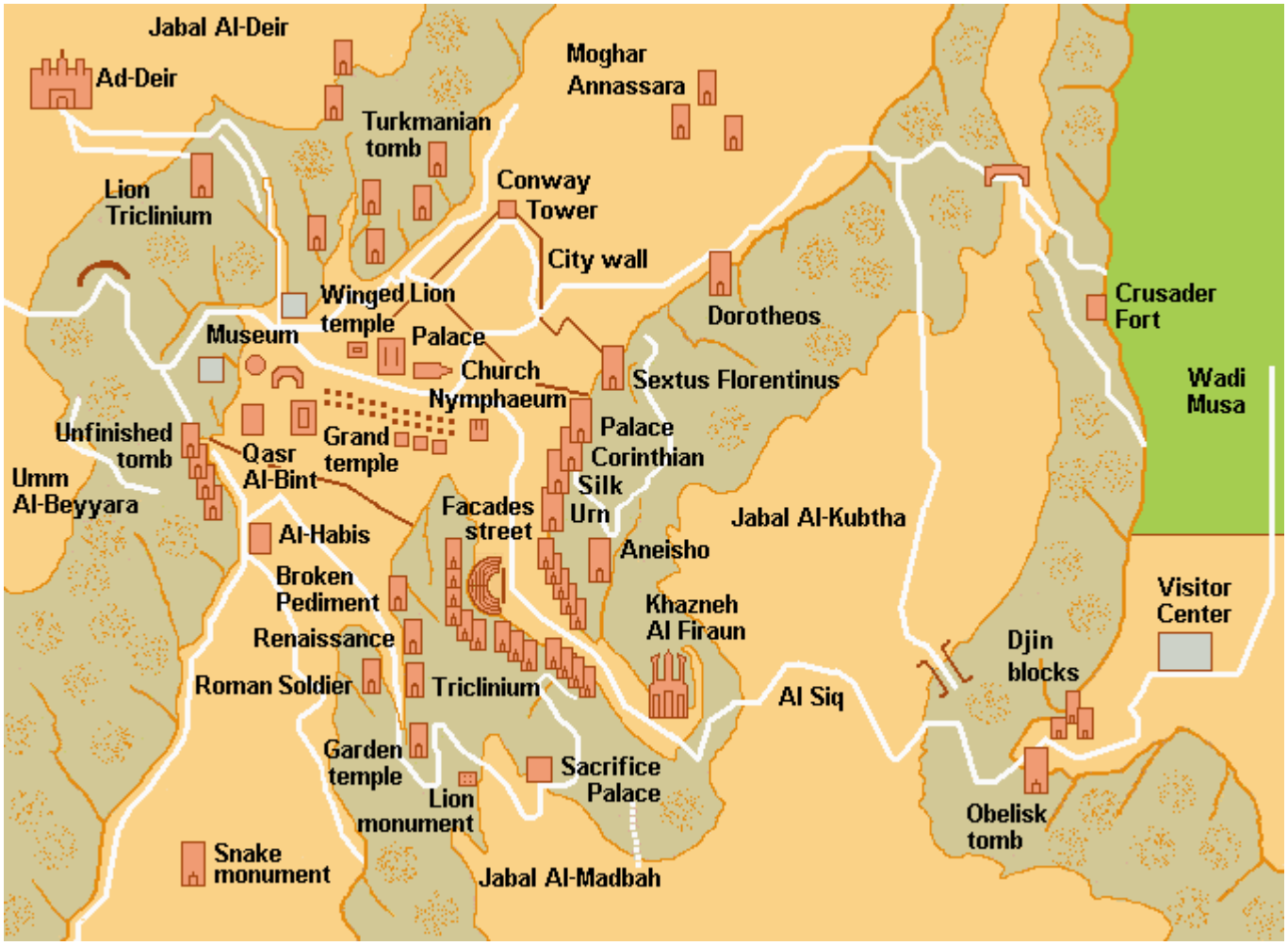
Additional resources:

Virtual tour of Petra from Google <https://www.google.com/maps/about/behind-the-scenes/streetview/treks/petra/>

The Nabataean Kingdom and Petra <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/naba/hd_naba.htm>

Unesco: Petra <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/326>

So-called Monastery, or ed-Deir, Petra (Jordan) (photo: April Rinne, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/6yu2mv>



Map of Petra (public domain) <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Petra#mediaviewer/File:Karta_Petra.PNG>

181. b. Petra and the Great Temple

Dr. Elizabeth Macaulay-Lewis

The great tombs and buildings of Petra

Petra was a well-developed city and contained many of the buildings and urban infrastructure that one would expect of a Hellenistic city. Recent archaeological work has radically

reshaped our understanding of downtown Petra. Most of Petra's great tombs and buildings were built before the Roman Empire annexed it in 106 C.E.

Theater, Petra (Jordan) (photo: Chris Armstrong, CC BY-ND 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/8A6orG

Petra had a large theater, which was probably built during the reign of Aretas IV (9 B.C.E. – 40 C.E.), as well as a monumental colonnaded street. Important buildings graced both sides of the Wadi. On the south side of the street was a nymphaeum (a shrine consecrated to water nymphs, often with a fountain) and a series of monumental spaces, which were once identified as markets. The so-called Lower Market has recently been excavated and shown to be a garden-pool complex. This stood adjacent to so-called Great Temple of Petra. Within the cella, or inner sanctuary room, of the Great Temple, a series of stone seats were discovered; this may suggest that the structure was not a temple, but an audience hall at least for part of its history.

So-called Great Temple, Petra (Jordan) (photo: Dennis Jarvis, CC BY-SA 2.0) <https://www.flickr.com/photos/archer10/2216884155>

Baths were also located in its vicinity. Opposite the so-called Great Temple is the Temple of the Winged Lions, from which a unique god block of a female goddess, was recovered. Column capitals at Petra are truly unique in part for their carvings of winged lions and elephants.

Just to the west, past a gate in a *temenos,* or sacred precinct, was the Qasr el-Bint, the most important temple in the city. It was also probably built under Aretas the IV, but we do not know to which gods the Qasr el-Bint was dedicated. Petra is also filled with more mundane architecture, including domestic residences, as well as the all-important water-catchment and storage systems that allowed life and agriculture to flourish here.

Qasr el-Bint, Petra (Jordan), c. 9 B.C.E.-40 C.E. (photo: Dennis Jarvis, CC BY-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/4nU7gx>

One of many Nabataean sites

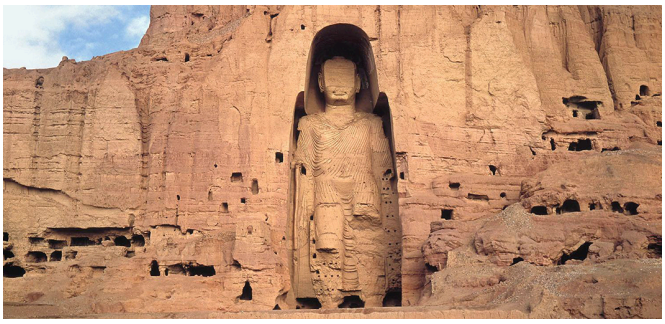
Petra is often seen in isolation; in fact, it was one of many Nabataean sites; the Nabataean lands stretched from the Sinai and Negev in the west, as far north as Damascus at one point, and as far south as Egra, modern-day Madain Saleh, in Northern Saudi Arabia, which also had numerous rock-cut tombs, amongst others. At Egra an inscription attests to the presence of a Roman Legion at the site, marking the city as the southern most boundary of the Roman Empire in the Antonine Era. Khirbet et-Tannur was a major sanctuary in central Jordan; many of its reliefs are in the Cincinnati Museum of Art today.

The Nabataeans took an active role in their architectural and artistic creations, drawing upon the artistic vocabulary of the Hellenistic world and the ancient Near East. Rather than slavishly copying either one of these traditions, the Nabataeans actively selected and adopted certain elements for their tombs, dining pavilions, and temples to suit their needs and purposes, on both the group and individual level. Indeed, the Treasury and the Monastery could only have been conceived of and executed in Petra.

Elephant-headed capital, limestone, Petra. Found in the triple colonnades of the Lower Tenemos (sacred district). The decoration from top to bottom consists of a plain band, egg and dart motif, and the cornice with a plain band with tripartite molding in a double wave. The corner decoration is an elephant head with fan-shaped ears.... Beneath the heads is an acanthus leaf extending downwards.... On the sides and resting on the elephant's forehead is an incurving scroll with floral motifs (from the label "Elephant-headed Capitals" in the Archaeological Museum, Petra) (photo: Guillaume Baviere, CC BY 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/9vzmWF>

182. Buddha, Bamiyan (Afghanistan)

Dr. Melody Rod-ari and Dr. Naraelle Hohensee



West Buddha surrounded by caves, c. 6th-7th C.E., stone, stucco, paint, 175 feet high, Bamiyan, Afghanistan, destroyed 2001 (photo: © Afghanistan Embassy) <http://afghanistanembassy.org.uk/english/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/standing_buddha_bamiyan.jpg>

Prior to their recent destruction, the sixth-to-seventh-century, rock-cut Buddha sculptures in the Bamiyan Valley of central Afghanistan were considered the largest in the world. Known collectively as the Bamiyan Buddhas, the two monumental sculptures have amazed both Buddhist and non-Buddhist visitors for more than a 1,000 years. Like many of the world's great ancient monuments, little is known about who commissioned the Bamiyan Buddhas or the sculptors who carved them. However, their very existence points to the importance of the Buddhist faith and the Bamiyan Valley during this period.

Buddhism along the Silk Route

Bamiyan is located between the Indian subcontinent (to the southeast) and Central Asia (to the north), which made it an important location close to one of the most important branches of the Silk Route. The Silk Route was an ancient series of linked trade routes that connected the East to the West and carried both material wealth and ideas. Bamiyan's central location along the Silk Route, along with its fertile plains amid harsh terrain, made it an ideal location for merchants and missionaries to stop during their travels. Many of the missionaries and merchants in this area during the middle of the first millennium were practitioners of the Buddhist faith. Buddhism had long been an important religion in the region, having been introduced during the early Kushan period.

Map showing Bamiyan and contemporary contiguous nation

Buddhism spread, in part, because it was not

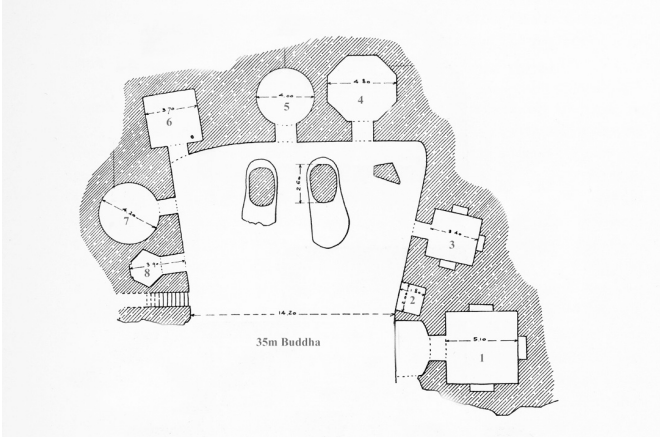
location specific. Believers did not need to worship at a particular temple or at a particular site as part of their practice. Worship could take place anywhere and at any time. This freedom resulted in the emergence of Buddhist cave architecture throughout Asia. Indeed, if one visits Bamiyan today, one will see nearly 1000 Buddhist caves carved along 1300 meters of a cliff face.[1] It is against this backdrop of carved caves that the two monumental Buddha images were carved.

Landscape and Archaeological Remains of the Bamiyan Valley (photo: © UNESCO/G. Gonzales Brigas) <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/208/gallery/>

Monumental Buddhas

Prior to their destruction in 2001, two monumental Buddha sculptures could be seen carved into the cliff facing the Bamiyan Valley. The larger of the two figures, located on the western end (on the right in the photo above), measured 175 feet in height. The art historian Susan Huntington has argued that it represented the Buddha Vairochana (the celestial or transcendent Buddha). The smaller of the two monumental statues, located to the east, depicted the Buddha Shakyamuni (Shakyamuni, also called Siddhārtha Gautama, is the historical Buddha who is believed to have lived sometime between the sixth and fourth centuries B.C.E.). This figure was also enormous and measured 120 feet in height.

Both images were carved into niches of the cliff side in high relief. The area near the heads of both Buddha figures and the area around the larger Buddha's feet were carved in the round, allowing worshippers to circumambulate. Circumambulation, which is the act of walking around an object such as a stupa (a reliquary mound) or an image of the Buddha, is a common practice in Buddhist worship.



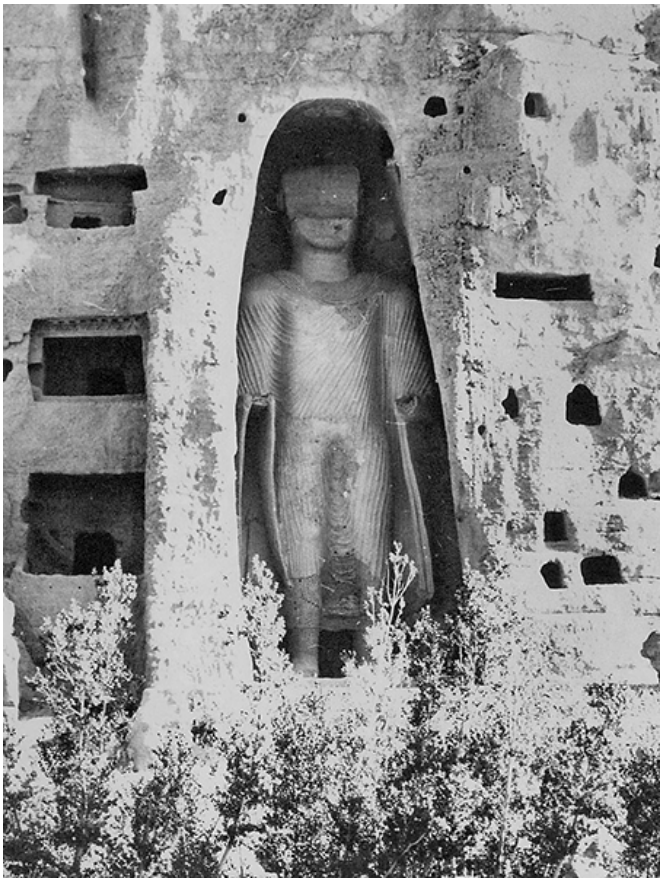
Plan of larger Buddha showing feet carved in the round and smaller cave chapels (Godard, Godard, and Hackin, Les Antiquites Bouddhiques de Bamiyan, Paris and Brussels: les Editions G. Van Oest, 1928, fig. 18

The two large Buddha images reflected the international environment of the Bamiyan Valley and were influenced by the art and cultures of India, Central Asia, and even ancient Greek culture. For example, both Buddhas wore flowing robes and have been described as having wavy curls of hair. This hairstyle and the flowing drapery are elements rooted in early Gandharan Buddhist imagery that combined Hellenistic Greek traditions of representation with Indian subject matter.[2]

East Buddha (detail with drapery in 1975), c. 6th-7th c C.E., stone, stucco, painted, 120 feet high, Bamiyan, Afghanistan, destroyed 2001 (photo: Pierre Le Bigot, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/ezoBje>

Much of what we know about the monumental Buddha sculptures comes from the Chinese monk Xuanzang (Hsuan-Tsang) who traveled to Bamiyan in 643 and documented his travels in the text The Great Tang Records of the Western Regions (Da Tang Xiyu Ji). As the earliest text describing the Buddha images, Xuanzang's writings provide us with remarkable descriptions of the sculptures and the vibrant communities that inhabited the region. He wrote:

> When merchants coming and going happen to witness visions of heavenly deities, whether as good omens or as predictions of disaster, they worship the deities to pray for blessedness. There are several tens of monasteries with several thousand monks, who follow the Hinayana teachings of the Lokottaravada school. To the northeast of the city, there is at a corner of the mountains a rock statue of the Buddha standing, one hundred forty or fifty feet in height, a dazzling golden color and adorned with brilliant gems. To the east there is a monastery built by a previous king of the country. To the east of the monastery there is a copper statue of the Buddha standing, more than one hundred feet tall. It was cast in separate pieces and then welded together into shape.[3]



East Buddha, c. 6th-7th c C.E., stone, stucco, painted, 120 feet high, Bamiyan, Afghanistan, destroyed 2001 (photo: © Dr. H. Crane)<https://tinyurl.com/p6v789f>

Xuanzang's descriptions of the Buddhas provide us great insight into not only what they might have looked like in the seventh century but also how they were engaged with the community around them. Perhaps most surprising to our modern experience with Buddha imagery is that the monumental rock-cut sculptures are described by Xuanzang as being adorned with metal, color, and gems—not stripped down as we often see them in museums and galleries.

Scholars agree that both images were covered in pigments of various hues so that they appeared to be made of metal and other materials, but that they were not cast entirely of "copper" as Xuanzang suggests of the smaller Buddha image.

However, scholars such as Deborah Klimburg-Salter have argued that both of the monumental Buddhas' faces were constructed of masks made of wood clad by a thin layer of brass, which were inserted onto ledges that appeared above the lower lips of both images.[4] Finbarr Barry Flood argues that the cuts to the faces were a later iconoclastic act (in this case, iconoclastic refers to a religious intolerance of images).[5]

While there is debate over the material and treatment of the Buddha's faces, we know that pigments were applied to the stucco that covered the stone surfaces of the sculptures. Stucco helped to even out the textured rock surface. One can imagine what a powerful impression these monumental Buddhas would have made on passersby and worshippers.

1. Takayasu Higuchi and Gina Barnes, "Bamiyan: Buddhist Cave Temples in Afghanistan," *World Archaeology* vol. 27., no. 2., *Buddhist Archaeology* (Oct., 1995), pp. 282-302.

2. Llewelyn Morgan, *Buddhas of Bamiyan: Wonders of the World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), p. 7.

3. Xuanzang, *The Great Tang Dynasty Record of the Western Regions*, translated Li Rongxi (Berkeley, CA: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 1996), p. 38.

4. Deborah Klimburg-Salter, *The Kingdom of Bamiyan: Buddhist Art and Culture of the Hindu Kush* (Naples and Rome: Instituto Universitario Orientale and Instituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1989), 87-92.

5. Finbarr Barry Flood, "Between Cult and Culture: Bamiyan, Islamic Iconoclasm, and the Museum," *Art Bulletin*, vol. LXXXIV, Number 4 (December 2002), p. 648.

West niche, c. 6th-7th c C.E., stone, stucco, paint, Bamiyan, Afghanistan, Buddha destroyed 2001 (photo: Carlos Ugarte, CC BY-NC 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/hgWGT>

Backstory

In 2001, Mullah Omar ordered Taliban forces to demolish the Bamiyan Buddhas. As reported in *The Guardian*, the destruction took several weeks, and the two figures "proved remarkably solid. Anti-aircraft guns had little effect, so the engineers placed anti-tank mines between their feet, then bored holes into their heads and packed them with dynamite." Only outlines of the figures and a few details now remain in place; fragments of them (including about 30% of the smaller Buddha) are piled nearby.

The Taliban's direction to destroy the Buddha images was motivated, in part, by the group's extreme iconoclastic campaign as well as their disdain for the fact that money from western countries was being spent on protecting the images while there was an intense and growing need for humanitarian aid in the

region. It was also unquestionably an act designed to gain global media attention, as video and photographs of the destruction circulated quickly and were seen all over the world.

Two women walk past the site of the Buddhas of Bamiyan, June, 2012 (photo: Sgt. Ken Scar, public domain) <https://tinyurl.com/y3qyp8qc>

Bamiyan is now listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site in Danger, and debates over how to restore the site connect to both national and international issues around what constitutes proper preservation, interpretation, and remembrance at former sites of violence. The questions that must now be answered about Bamiyan are: how do we preserve what is left at the site from further destruction or deterioration? How do we do so in a way that takes into account the needs and desires of the local, national, and international communities for whom this site holds meaning? And how do we properly memorialize the tragedy of the Buddhas' recent destruction?

The Taliban's claim that destroying the Buddha sculptures was an Islamic act is belied by the fact that Bamiyan had become predominantly Muslim by the tenth century and that the sculptures had up until 2001 remained largely intact. Distinct, non-Buddhist local traditions had grown up around the two sculptures, with a legend characterizing them as doomed lovers who had pledged to live out their commitment to one another by standing together in stone for eternity. "Local people had completely forgotten they were figures of the Buddha," said the head of historical monuments in Bamiyan province.

Scaffolding for reconstructing the Buddha of Bamiyan (photo: Tracy Hunter, CC BY 2.0) <https://tinyurl.com/y28fsfbm>

Preservation efforts by an international team have been ongoing since 2001. The porous sandstone that makes up the site makes it vulnerable to quick erosion, and the niches, the cliff face, and the surrounding caves have needed to be shored up with props and grouting to prevent collapse. There has also been an ongoing debate over how and whether to reconstruct parts of the site. One proposal, backed most heavily by the German arm of ICOMOS (the International Council on Monuments and Sites, an international organization that supports preservation and monument protection) supports using the original fragments along with new material to reconstruct the smaller Buddha figure. Other experts oppose this idea, saying that the niches

ought to be preserved as empty memorials to the sculptures' violent destruction, similar to other sites like the Genbaku dome in Hiroshima or the Gedächtniskirche in Berlin. In 2015, two Chinese documentary filmmakers used 3-D technology to project holograms of the Buddhas into their niches as a temporary monument to their loss, but no permanent solutions have yet been pursued. Work by a German ICOMOS team at Bamiyan was stopped in 2013 because it was suspected that they were already rebuilding the feet of the smaller Buddha from scratch, violating both an official 2011 decision to not rebuild the sculpture, as well as the terms of the international 1964 Venice Charter, which specifies that original material must be used in reconstructions.*

Recently, however, the government of Afghanistan has requested that the reconstruction of the smaller statue be undertaken, citing, among other reasons, the dire need for tourist income to Bamiyan. The Bamiyan area, one of the poorest in Afghanistan, is home to a distinct ethnic group, the Hazara, who resisted Taliban influence and have also long resented what they see as discrimination by the country's leaders in Kabul. However, how to reconstruct the Buddha figure is still the subject of debate. A UNESCO meeting of international experts in 2017 concluded that "any consideration of recovery and reconstruction should be based on thorough multi-disciplinary research and scientific analysis, to ensure an understanding of the structural, material and other characteristics of the damaged heritage property"—in other words, ample funding and time are needed in order to ensure that the work takes place in proper and ethical ways.

Mural in one of the newly-discovered grottoes (photo: Jerrye and Roy Klotz, MD, CC BY-SA 3.0) <https://tinyurl.com/y6j6lfld>

The destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas was a huge loss for our understanding of human history. However, even in darkness light has a way of emerging. Since their destruction, several new discoveries have been made near the sites of the Bamiyan Buddhas including the discovery of fragments of a 62-foot long reclining Buddha, as well as several caves with murals that may be the world's earliest examples of oil paint.

As the UNESCO 2017 report states, "the Bamiyan World Heritage property should be considered a place of collective identity and memory, particularly for the local communities; the archaeological remains cannot be separated from their natural and cultural landscape nor from local perspectives."

*Constance Wyndham, "Reconstructing Afghan Identity: Nation-building, International Relations, and the Safeguarding of Afghanistan's Buddhist Heritage," in *Museums, Heritage and International Development*, ed. Paul Basu and Wayne Modest (Routledge. 2014), p. 126

Backstory by Dr. Naraelle Hohensee

183. The Kaaba, Meccca (Saudi Arabia)

Dr. Elizabeth Macaulay-Lewis

The Kaaba, granite masonry, covered with silk curtain and calligraphy in gold and silver-wrapped thread, pre-Islamic monument, rededicated by Muhammad in 631-32 C.E., multiple renovations, Mecca, Saudi Arabia (photo: marviikad, CC BY-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/8nDZmV>

Prayer and pilgrimage

Pilgrimage to a holy site is a core principle of almost all faiths. The Kaaba, meaning cube in Arabic, is a square building, elegantly draped in a silk and cotton veil. Located in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, it is the holiest shrine in Islam.

In Islam, Muslims pray five times a day and after 624 C.E., these prayers were directed towards Mecca and the Kaaba rather than Jerusalem; this direction (or qibla in Arabic), is marked in all mosques and enables the faithful to know in what direction they should pray. The Qur'an established the direction of prayer.

All Muslims aspire to undertake the hajj, or the annual pilgrimage, to the Kaaba once in their life if they are able. Prayer five times a day and the hajj are two of the five pillars of Islam, the most fundamental principles of the faith.

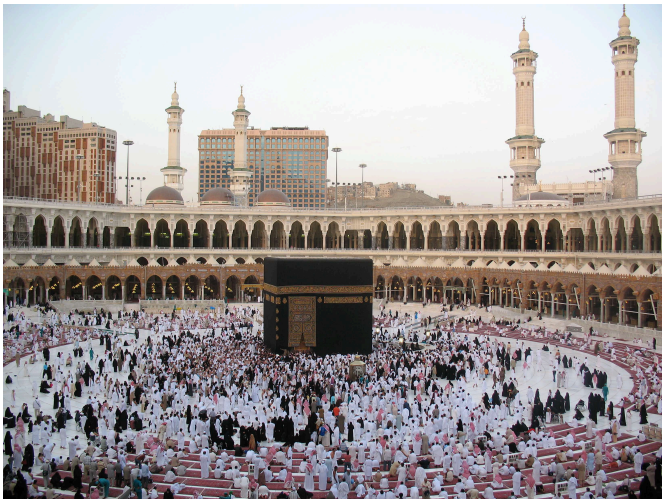
Upon arriving in Mecca, pilgrims gather in the courtyard of the Masjid al-Haram around the Kaaba. They then circumambulate (tawaf in Arabic) or walk around the Kaaba, during which they hope to kiss and touch the Black Stone (al-Hajar al-Aswad), embedded in the eastern corner of the Kaaba.

The history and form of the Kaaba

The Kaaba was a sanctuary in pre-Islamic times. Muslims believe that Abraham (known as Ibrahim in the Islamic tradition), and his son, Ismail, constructed the Kaaba. Tradition holds that it was originally a simple unroofed rectangular structure. The Quraysh tribe, who ruled Mecca, rebuilt the pre-Islamic Kaaba in c. 608 C.E. with alternating courses of masonry and wood. A door was raised above ground level to protect the shrine from intruders and floodwaters.

Muhammad was driven out of Mecca in 620 C.E. to Yathrib, which is now known as Medina. Upon his return to Mecca in 629/30 C.E., the shrine became the focal point for Muslim worship and pilgrimage. The pre-Islamic Kaaba housed the Black Stone and statues of pagan

gods. Muhammad reportedly cleansed the Kaaba of idols upon his victorious return to Mecca, returning the shrine to the monotheism of Ibrahim. The Black Stone is believed to have been given to Ibrahim by the angel Gabriel and is revered by Muslims. Muhammad made a final pilgrimage in 632 C.E., the year of his death, and thereby established the rites of pilgrimage.



View of pilgrims performing Tawaf (circumambulating) the Kaaba from the gate of Abdul Aziz (photo: marviikad, CC BY-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/66teWG>

Modifications

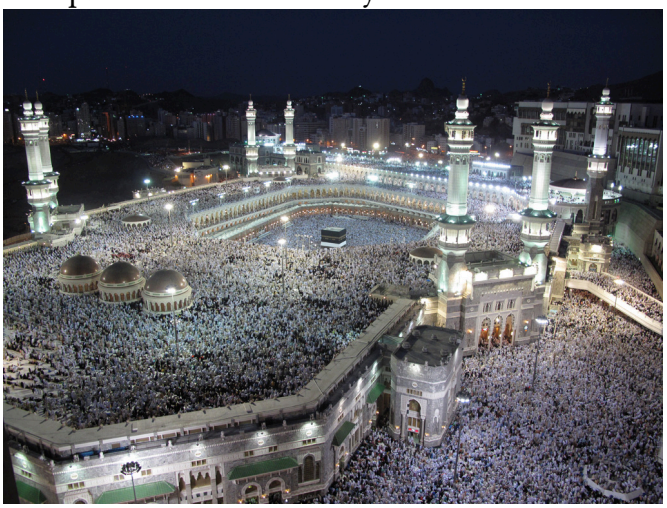
The Kaaba has been modified extensively throughout its history. The area around the Kaaba was expanded in order to accommodate the growing number of pilgrims by the second caliph, ‘Umar (ruled 634-44). The Caliph ‘Uthman (ruled 644-56) built the colonnades around the open plaza where the Kaaba stands and incorporated other important monuments into the sanctuary.

During the civil war between the caliph Abd al-Malik and Ibn Zubayr who controlled Mecca, the Kaaba was set on fire in 683 C.E. Reportedly, the Black Stone broke into three pieces and Ibn Zubayr reassembled it with silver. He rebuilt the Kaaba in wood and stone, following Ibrahim’s original dimensions and also paved the space around the Kaaba. After regaining control of Mecca, Abd al-Malik restored the part of the building that Muhammad is thought to have designed. None of these renovations can be confirmed through a study of the building or archaeological evidence; these changes are only outlined in later literary sources.

Reportedly under the Umayyad caliph al-Walid (ruled 705-15), the mosque that encloses the Kaaba was decorated with mosaics like those of the Dome of the Rock and the Great Mosque of Damascus. By the seventh century, the Kaaba was covered with kiswa, a black cloth that is replaced annually during the hajj.

Under the early Abbasid Caliphs (750-1250), the mosque around the Kaaba was expanded and modified several times. According to travel writers, such as the Ibn Jubayr, who saw the Kaaba in 1183, it retained the eighth century Abbasid form for several centuries. From 1269-1517, the Mamluks of Egypt controlled the Hijaz, the highlands in western Arabia where Mecca is located. Sultan Qaitbay (ruled 1468-96) built a madrasa (a religious school) against one side of the mosque. Under the Ottoman sultans, Süleyman I (ruled 1520-1566) and Selim II (ruled 1566-74), the complex was heavily renovated. In 1631, the Kaaba and the surrounding mosque were entirely rebuilt after floods had demolished them in the previous year. This mosque, which is what exists today, is composed of a large open space with colonnades on four sides and with seven minarets, the largest number of any mosque in the world. At the center of this large plaza sits the Kaaba, as well as many other holy buildings and monuments.

The last major modifications were carried out in the 1950s by the government of Saudi Arabia to accommodate the increasingly large number of pilgrims who come on the hajj. Today the mosque covers almost forty acres.



The Kaaba at al-Haram Mosque during night prayers, 2009 (photo: Al Jazeera English, CC BY-SA 2.0) <https://tinyurl.com/y29moxcw>

The Kaaba today

Today, the Kaaba is a cubical structure, unlike almost any other religious structure. It is fifteen meters tall and ten and a half meters on each side; its corners roughly align with the cardinal directions. The door of the Kaaba is now made of solid gold; it was added in 1982. The kiswa, a large cloth that covers the Kaaba, which used to be sent from Egypt with the hajj caravan,

today is made in Saudi Arabia. Until the advent of modern transportation, all pilgrims undertook the often dangerous hajj, or pilgrimage, to Mecca in a large caravan across the desert, leaving from Damascus, Cairo, or other major cities in Arabia, Yemen or Iraq.

The numerous changes to the Kaaba and its associated mosque serve as good reminder of how often buildings, even sacred ones, were renovated and remodeled either due to damage or to the changing needs of the community.

Only Muslims may visit the holy cities of Mecca and Medina today.

184. Jowo Rinpoche, enshrined in the Jokhang Temple

Dr. Melody Rod-ari

There are hundreds of thousands—if not millions—of images of the Buddha Shakyamuni that exist in the world today. Some are big, some are small, some are made of precious materials like gold, while others are carved of stone, cast from bronze, molded from plastic, painted on silk, or printed on paper. What makes one image of the Buddha Shakyamuni more sacred than an other? Is it its material composition, its age, its owner? Is it all of the above, or is it something else?

The Jowo Shakyamuni

The *Jowo Shakyamuni*, or *Jowo Rinpoche* (Rinpoche means "precious one" in the Tibetan language), is a larger than life-size image of the historical Buddha Shakyamuni housed in the Jokhang Temple in Lhasa, Tibet. Today, the Jowo Shakyamuni can be seen seated against a resplendent gold and bejeweled throne. The image itself is made of gilt metal—the effect is an image of gold hue with shocking blue hair.

Jowo Shakyamuni is seated with his legs in the lotus position or *padmasana*. His left hand is in the mudra (hand gesture) of meditation (*dhyana mudra*) and his right hand is in the gesture of "calling the earth to witness" (*bhumisparsha mudra*). Together, these postures signify the moment of the Buddha's enlightenment. He is shown wearing a thin monk's robe, which drapes over his body and covers his left shoulder. When dressed, *Jowo Shakyamuni* is presented with a magnificent jeweled crown and robes. Read more about Buddhism here and here.

The sculpture has undergone restoration and reconstruction over its history. The most recent of which took place after the Cultural Revolution <http://iis-db.stanford.edu/docs/115/CRintro.pdf>. It is not known what the image may have originally looked like in the seventh century when it was made; however, early texts describe the sculpture as being depicted in a similarly enlightened state (seated in *padmasana* with hands in *bhumisparsha mudra*). One of the main variations is described in an eleventh-century text titled the Vase-Shaped Pillar Testament—the earliest written description of the image—which states that a wrathful deity is seen protruding from the Buddha's neck.[1] No such wrathful deity can be seen today on the sculpture. Similarly, the resplendent crown and robes that the sculpture is seen wearing today are much later additions. Nonetheless, the continued restoration and veneration of the *Jowo Shakyamuni* over the course of its 1300-year history is a testament to its religious and cultural importance in Tibet.

Jowo Shakyamuni, Jokhang Temple, Lhasa, Tibet. Yarlung Dynasty, brought to Tibet in 641(?) Gilt metals with semiprecious stones, pearls, and paint; various offerings (photo: ziyi xu, CC BY-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/7hWhdc>

The most sacred Buddha image in Tibet

The *Jowo Shakyamuni* is considered the most sacred and important Buddha image in Tibet because it is believed to have been carved by the celestial architect Viswakarma in India during the lifetime of the Buddha Shakyamuni (sixth to fifth centuries B.C.E.). Texts such as the eleventh-century *Vase-Shaped Pillar Testament* suggest that the *Jowo Shakyamuni* was sculpted from a life portrait of the Buddha. The purpose of the statue's carving was to act as the Buddha's proxy after his *parinirvana*or departure from the world. The religious significance and sacred power of the *Jowo Shakyamuni*therefore comes from its actual likeness of the Buddha as well as its having been carved by Viswakarma. Such claims of likeness and celestial origins are not unique to the *Jowo Shakyamuni*—the Emerald Buddha in Thailand and the Seiryoji Buddha in Japan have almost identical origin stories.

Dating

While texts regarding the sculpture's origins and history would like us to believe that the *Jowo Shakyamuni*is the most accurate and thereby the earliest portrait of the Buddha, the sculpture in its original form was likely made sometime during the early to mid seventh-century C.E. The invention of the Buddha image in anthropomorphic (human) form dates to after the turn of the first century C.E. (circa early second century), with the advent of Mahayana Buddhism during the Kushan Dynasty. The purported date of the *Jowo Shakyamuni* to the time of the Buddha from the sixth to fifth centuries B.C.E. is not consistent with the development of Buddha imagery in the history of Buddhist art, nor does the actual sculpture conform to stylistic conventions of early Buddha images (read more about early images of Buddha here <http://smarthistory.org/aniconic-vs-iconic-depictions-of-the-buddha-in-india/>). More convincing is an early to mid seventh-century date of production for the Jowo Shakyamuni.

The earliest evidence for the sculpture dates to the seventh century when the Chinese princess, Wencheng Gongzhu, is said to have brought it to Tibet as part of her marriage dowry to emperor Songtsen Gampo in 641. This date also coincides with the foundation of Buddhism in Tibet. What this suggests is that while the Jowo Shakyamuni is not among the first images of the Buddha, its importance is not diminished as its appearance in Tibet coincides with the foundation of Buddhism in the country.

The Buddha in Lhasa

While the *Jowo Shakyamuni* is not a sculpted-from-life portrait of the Buddha, nor is it the earliest image of the Buddha, it nonetheless holds cultural and religious importance to those who worship the image as such. This is evidenced by its continued veneration, the dressing of the sculpture for special occasions and feeding of it as if it were the Buddha on earth. So what makes one image of the Buddha Shakyamuni more sacred than another? In

examining the *Jowo Shakyamuni*, it is the sculpture's purported direct linage to the Buddha, as well as the belief that it is the most accurate portrait of the Buddha Shakyamuni.

[1] There are multiple versions of the Vase-Shaped Pillar Testament.

185. Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem

Dr. Elizabeth Macaulay-Lewis

The Dome of the Rock (Qubbat al-Sakhra), Umayyad, stone masonry, wooden roof, decorated with glazed ceramic tile, mosaics, and gilt aluminum and bronze dome, 691-2, with multiple renovations, patron the Caliph Abd al-Malik, Jerusalem (photo: Brian Jeffery Beggerly, CC BY 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/CUmfK>

> The Dome of the Rock is a building of extraordinary beauty, solidity, elegance, and singularity of shape… Both outside and inside, the decoration is so magnificent and the workmanship so surpassing as to defy description. The greater part is covered with gold so that the eyes of one who gazes on its beauties are dazzled by its brilliance, now glowing like a mass of light, now flashing like lightning.
>
> —Ibn Battuta (fourteenth-century travel writer)

A glorious mystery

One of the most iconic images of the Middle East is undoubtedly the Dome of the Rock shimmering in the setting sun of Jerusalem. Sitting atop the Haram al-Sharif, the highest point in old Jerusalem, the Dome of the Rock's golden-color Dome and Turkish Faience tiles dominates the cityscape of Old Jerusalem and in the seventh century served as a testament to the power of the new faith of Islam. The Dome of the Rock is one of the earliest surviving buildings from the Islamic world. This remarkable building is not a mosque, as is commonly assumed and scholars still debate its original function and meaning.

Between the death of the prophet Muhammad in 632 and 691/2, when the Dome of the Rock was completed, there was intermittent warfare in Arabia and Holy Land around Jerusalem. The first Arab armies who emerged from the Arabian peninsula were focused on conquering and establishing an empire—not building.

Thus, the Dome of the Rock was one of the first Islamic buildings ever constructed. It was built between 685 and 691/2 by Abd al-Malik, probably the most important Umayyad caliph, as a religious focal point for his supporters, while he was fighting a civil war against Ibn Zubayr. When Abd al-Malik began construction on the Dome of the Rock, he did not have control of

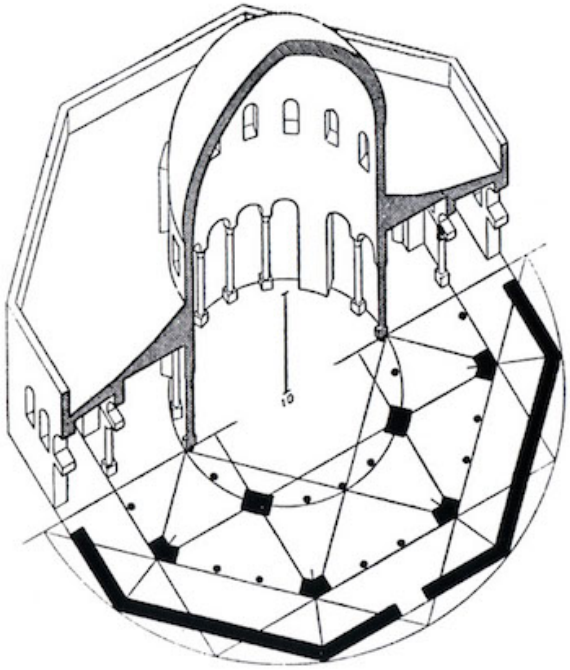
the Kaaba, the holiest shrine in Islam, which is located in Mecca.

The Dome is located on the Haram al-Sharif, an enormous open-air platform that now houses Al-Aqsa mosque, madrasas, and several other religious buildings. Few places are as holy for Christians, Jews, and Muslims as the Haram al-Sharif. It is the Temple Mount, the site of the Jewish second temple, which the Roman Emperor Titus destroyed in 70 C.E. while subduing the Jewish revolt; a Roman temple was later built on the site. The Temple Mount was abandoned in Late Antiquity.

Interior of the Dome of the Rock, 1915 (photo: Robert Smythe Hitchens, public domain)

The Rock in the Dome of the Rock

At the center of the Dome of the Rock sits a large rock, which is believed to be the location where Abraham was prepared to sacrifice his son Ismail (Isaac in the Judeo/Christian tradition). Today, Muslims believe that the Rock commemorates the night journey of Muhammad. One night the Angel Gabriel came to Muhammad while he slept near the Kaaba in Mecca and took him to al-Masjid al-Aqsa (the farthest mosque) in Jerusalem. From the Rock, Muhammad journeyed to heaven, where he met other prophets, such as Moses and Christ, witnessed paradise and hell and finally saw God enthroned and circumambulated by angels.



K.A.C. Creswell, Sectional axonometric view through dome, ©Creswell Archive, Ashmolean Museum, Image courtesy of Fine Arts Library, Harvard College Library

The Rock is enclosed by two ambulatories (in this case the aisles that circle the rock) and an octagonal exterior wall. The central colonnade (row of columns) was composed of four piers and twelve columns supporting a rounded drum that transitions into the two-layered dome more than 20 meters in diameter.

The colonnades are clad in marble on their lower registers, and their upper registers are adorned with exceptional mosaics. The ethereal interior atmosphere is a result of light that pours in from grilled windows located in the drum and exterior walls. Golden mosaics depicting jewels shimmer in this glittering light. Byzantine and Sassanian crowns in the midst of vegetal motifs are also visible.

The Byzantine Empire stood to the North and to

the West of the new Islamic Empire until 1453, when its capital, Constantinople, fell to the Ottoman Turks. To the East, the old Sasanian Empire of Persia imploded under pressure from the Arabs, but nevertheless provided winged crown motifs that can be found in the Dome of the Rock.

Mosaics

Wall and ceiling mosaics became very popular in Late Antiquity and adorn many Byzantine churches, including San Vitale in Ravenna and Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. Thus, the use of mosaics reflects an artistic tie to the world of Late Antiquity. Late Antiquity is a period from about 300-800, when the Classical world dissolves and the medieval period emerges.

Mosaic detail from the Dome of the Rock (public domain)

The mosaics in the Dome of the Rock contain no human figures or animals. While Islam does not prohibit the use of figurative art per se, it seems that in religious buildings, this proscription was upheld. Instead, we see vegetative scrolls and motifs, as well as vessels and winged crowns, which were worn by Sasanian kings. Thus, the iconography of the Dome of the Rock also includes the other major pre-Islamic civilization of the region, the Sasanian Empire, which the Arab armies had defeated.

A reference to burial places

The building enclosing the Rock also seems to take its form from the imperial mausolea (the burial places) of Roman emperors, such as Augustus or Hadrian. Its circular form and Dome also reference the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. The circular Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem was built to enclose the tomb of Christ. The Church of the Holy Sepulcher and the Dome of the Rock have domes that are almost identical in size; this suggests that the elevated position of the Dome of the Rock and the comparable size of its dome was a way that Muslims in the late eighth century proclaimed the superiority of their newly formed faith over Christians.

The inscription

The Dome of the Rock also contains an inscription, 240 meters long, that includes some of the earliest surviving examples of verses from the Qurʻan – in an architectural context or otherwise. The bismillah (in the name of God, the merciful and compassionate), the phrase that starts each verse of the Qu'ran, and the shahada, the Islamic confession of faith, which states that there is only one God and Muhammad is his prophet, are also included in the inscription. The inscription also refers to Mary and Christ and proclaim that Christ was not divine but a

prophet. Thus the inscription also proclaims some of the core values of the newly formed religion of Islam.

Below the Rock is a small chamber, whose purpose is not fully understood even to this day. For those who are fortunate enough to be able to enter the Dome of the Rock, the experience is moving, regardless of one's faith.

The Dome of the Rock (Qubbat al-Sakhra), Umayyad, 691-2, Jerusalem (photo: Dennis Jarvis, CC BY-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/UyMyZ9>

186. Great Mosque (Masjid-e Jameh), Isfahan

Dr. Radha Dalal

Courtyard, The Great Mosque or Masjid-e Jameh of Isfahan (photo: reibai, CC BY 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/atZkTs>

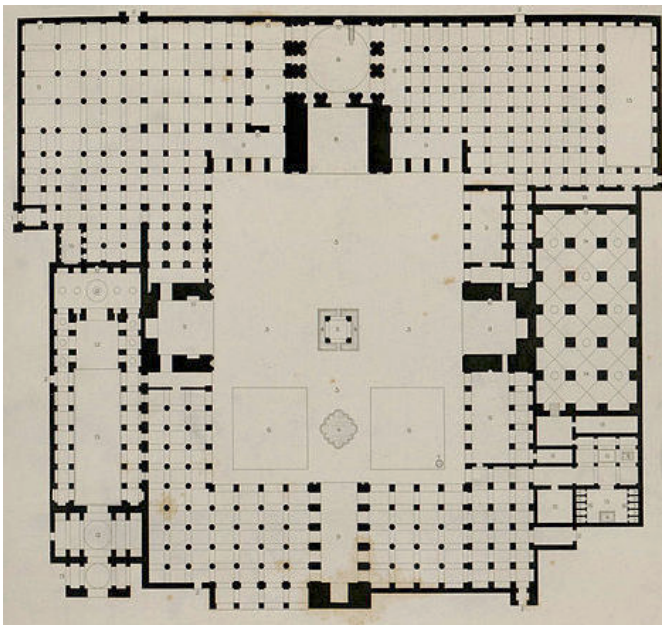
Most cities with sizable Muslim populations possess a primary congregational mosque. Diverse in design and dimensions, they can illustrate the style of the period or geographic region, the choices of the patron, and the expertise of the architect. Congregational mosques are often expanded in conjunction with the growth and needs of the *umma*, or Muslim community; however, it is uncommon for such expansion and modification to continue over a span of a thousand years. The Great Mosque of Isfahan in Iran is unique in this regard and thus enjoys a special place in the history of Islamic architecture. Its present configuration is the sum of building and decorating activities carried out from the eighth through the twentieth centuries.

It is an architectural documentary, visually embodying the political exigencies and aesthetic tastes of the great Islamic empires of Persia.

Another distinctive aspect of the mosque is its urban integration. Positioned at the center of the old city, the mosque shares walls with other buildings abutting its perimeter. Due to its immense size and its numerous entrances (all except one inaccessible now), it formed a pedestrian hub, connecting the arterial network of paths crisscrossing the city. Far from being an insular sacred monument, the mosque facilitated public mobility and commercial activity thus transcending its principal function as a place for prayer alone.

Street view of the Grand Bazaar of Isfahan with the Great Mosque dome in the distance (photo: Saif Alnuweiri, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/m7GQJF>

The mosque's core structure dates primarily from the eleventh-century when the Seljuk Turks established Isfahan as their capital. Additions and alterations were made during Il-Khanid, Timurid, Safavid, and Qajar rule. An earlier mosque with a single inner courtyard already existed on the current location. Under the reign of Malik Shah I (ruled 1072-1092) and his immediate successors, the mosque grew to its current four-iwan design. Indeed, the Great Mosque of Isfahan is considered the prototype for future four-iwan mosques (an iwan is a vaulted space that opens on one side to a courtyard).



Plan of the mosque from Monuments modernes de la Perse mesurés, dessinés et décrits, éd. Morel, 1867

Linking the four iwans at the center is a large courtyard open to the air, which provides a tranquil space from the hustle and bustle of the city. Brick piers and columns support the roofing system and allow prayer halls to extend away from this central courtyard on each side. Aerial photographs of the building provide an interesting view; the mosque's roof has the appearance of "bubble wrap" formed through the panoply of unusual but charming domes crowning its hypostyle interior.

Great Mosque, Isfahan, imagery ©2014 DigitalGlobe. Map data ©2014 Google

This simplicity of the earth-colored exterior belies the complexity of its internal decor. Dome soffits (undersides) are crafted in varied geometric designs and often include an oculus, a circular opening to the sky. Vaults, sometimes ribbed, offer lighting and ventilation to an otherwise dark space. Creative arrangement of bricks, intricate motifs in stucco, and sumptuous tile-work (later additions) harmonize the interior while simultaneously delighting the viewer at every turn. In this manner, movement within the mosque becomes a journey of discovery and a stroll across time.

View of the south iwan from the prayer hall (photo: Alan Cordova, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/mmZkXp>

Given its sprawling expanse, one can imagine how difficult it would be to locate the correct direction for prayer. The qibla iwan on the southern side of the courtyard solves this conundrum. It is the only one flanked by two cylindrical minarets and also serves as the entrance to one of two large, domed chambers within the mosque. Similar to its three counterparts, this iwan sports colorful tile decoration and muqarnas or traditional Islamic cusped niches. The domed interior was reserved for the use of the ruler and gives access to the main mihrab of the mosque.

Muqarnas, South Iwan (Photo: Fulvio Spada, CC BY-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/2W4g7A>

The second domed room lies on a longitudinal axis right across the double-arcaded courtyard. This opposite placement and varied decoration underscores the political enmity between the respective patrons; each dome vies for primacy through its position and architectural articulation. Nizam al-Mulk, vizier to Malik Shah I, commissioned the qibla dome in 1086. But a year later, he fell out of favor with the ruler and Taj al-Mulk, his nemesis, with support from female members of the court, quickly replaced him. The new vizier's dome (below), built in 1088, is smaller but considered a masterpiece of proportions.

When Shah Abbas I, a Safavid dynasty ruler, decided to move the capital of his empire from Qazvin to Isfahan in the late 16th-century, he

crafted a completely new imperial and mercantile center away from the old Seljuk city. While the new square and its adjoining buildings, renowned for their exquisite decorations, renewed Isfahan's prestige among the early modern cities of the world, the significance of the Seljuk mosque and its influence on the population was not forgotten. This link amongst the political, commercial, social, and religious activities is nowhere more emphasized than in the architectural layout of Isfahan's covered bazaar. Its massive brick vaulting and lengthy, sinuous route connects the Safavid center to the city's ancient heart, the Great Mosque of Isfahan.

Interior decoration of Taj-al-Mulk (north) dome (photo: Matt Werner, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/mmdvWJ>

187. Folio from a Qur’an

Alex Brey

Qu’ran fragment, in Arabic, before 911, vellum, MS M. 712, fols 19v-20r, 23 x 32 cm, possibly Iraq (The Morgan Library and Museum, New York)

The Qur’an: From recitation to book

The Qur’an is the sacred text of Islam, consisting of the divine revelation to the Prophet Muhammad in Arabic. Over the course of the first century and a half of Islam, the form of the manuscript was adapted to suit the dignity and splendor of this divine revelation. However, the word Qur’an, which means “recitation,” suggests that manuscripts were of secondary importance to oral tradition. In fact, the 114 *suras* (or chapters) of the Qur’an were compiled into a textual format, organized from longest to shortest, only after the death of Muhammad, although scholars still debate exactly when this might have occurred.

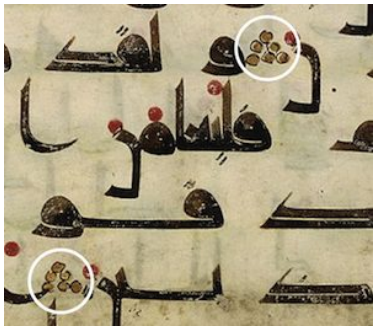
This two-page spread (or bifolium) of a Qur’an manuscript, which contains the beginning of *Surat Al-ʻAnkabut* (The Spider), is now in the collection of The Morgan Library and Museum in New York. Other folios that appear to be from the same Qur’an survive in the Chester Beatty Library (Dublin), the Topkapı Palace Museum and the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art (Istanbul), and the National Museum of Syria (Damascus). One page includes an inscription, which states that ʿAbd al-Munʿim Ibn Aḥmad donated the Qur’an to the Great Mosque of Damascus in 298 A.H. (July, 911 C.E.), although we do not know where or how long before this donation the manuscript was produced.

Qur’an fragment (detail), in Arabic, before 911, vellum, MS M.712, fols. 19v–20r, 23 x 32 cm, possibly Iraq (The Morgan Library and Museum, New York)

A roadmap for readers

The main text of the *mushaf* (pronounced muss-hoff), as manuscripts of the Qur’an are known, is written in brown ink. Arabic, the language of the divine word of Islam, is read from right to left. Several consonants share the same basic letterform, and these are usually distinguished from each other by lines or dots placed above or below the letter. Short vowels such as a, u, and i,

are not normally written in Arabic, but in order to avoid misreadings of such an important text, it quickly became standard to include vowels in the Qur'an. In this manuscript, these short vowels are marked with red circles positioned above, next to, or below the consonants, depending on the vowel.



Sura, Qu'ran fragment (detail), in Arabic, before 911, vellum, MS M.712, fols. 19v–20r, 23 x 32 cm, possibly Iraq (The Morgan Library and Museum, New York)

The title of each sura is written in gold ink, and surrounded by a rectangle, filled here with an undulating golden vine. Combined with a rounded palmette extending into the margin of the folio, it allows readers to quickly locate the beginning of each sura.

Because figural imagery such as human or animal forms was considered inappropriate for the ornamentation of sacred monuments and objects, artists relied on vegetal and geometric motifs when they decorated mosques and sacred manuscripts. Vines and palmettes like the ones that surround the sura heading here appear alone in sacred contexts, but they also accompanied animal and human forms in the secular decoration of palaces and textiles.

Sura title, Qur'an fragment (detail), in Arabic, before 911, vellum, MS M.712, fols. 19v–20r, 23 x 32 cm, possibly Iraq (The Morgan Library and Museum, New York)

Planning the proportions of the page

The art of producing a *mushaf* began well before a pen was ever dipped into ink. The dimensions of each page were calculated before the parchment was cut, and the text was carefully situated relative to the edges of the pages. Each page of costly parchment (or vellum) in this Qur'an is larger than a standard sheet of printer paper and contains only nine lines of calligraphy. These materials suggest both the dignity of the sacred text and the wealth of its patron, who was probably a member of the aristocratic elite.

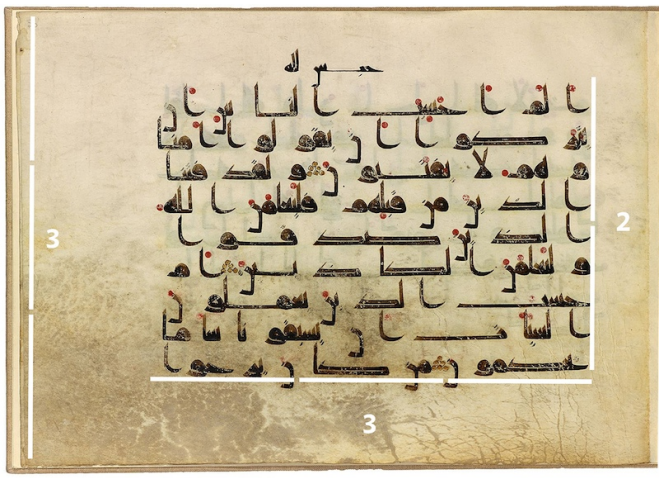


Diagram of proportions, Single folio, Qur'an fragment, in Arabic, before 911, possibly Iraq (The Morgan Library and Museum, New York)

In addition to the high quality and large quantity of materials used, the deliberate geometric planning of the page conveys the importance of the text that it contains. As in many of the *mushafs* produced between 750 and 1000 C.E., the pages of this manuscript are wider than they are tall.

The text-block of this manuscript has a height-to-width ratio of 2:3, and the width of the text-block is approximately equal to the height of the page. The height of each line of text was derived

from the first letter of the alphabet, *alif*, which was in turn derived from the width of the nib of the reed pen used by the calligraphers to write the text.

Interlines, Single folio, Qur'an fragment (detail), in Arabic, before 911, vellum, 23 x 32 cm, possibly Iraq (The Morgan Library and Museum, New York)

Each line was further divided into a set number of "interlines," which were used to determine the heights of various parts of individual letters. There is no ruling on the parchment, however, so scribes probably placed each sheet of the semi-transparent parchment on a board marked with horizontal guidelines as they wrote. Memorizing and producing the proportions of each pen stroke, however, must have been part of the training of every scribe.

Kufic script in folio from a Qur'an, c. 900-950 C.E., gold leaf, silver and ink on parchment with indigo, 28.5 x 37.5 cm, probably made in Tunisia, Qairawan (Los Angeles County Museum of Art)

Kufic script and the specialization of scribes

Writing in the tenth century C.E., the Abbasid court secretary Ibn Durustuyah noted that letters of the alphabet were written differently by Qur'anic scribes, professional secretaries, and other copyists. The calligraphic style used by these early scribes of the Qur'an is known today as Kufic. Only two or three of the more than 1300 fragments and manuscripts written in Kufic that survive contain non-Qur'anic content.

Kufic is not so much a single type of handwriting as it is a family of 17 related styles based on common principles, including a preference for strokes of relatively uniform thickness, short straight vertical lines and long horizontal lines, and a straight, horizontal baseline.

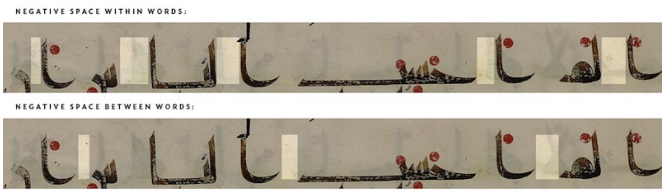
Various types of kufic were popular from the seventh century C.E. until the late tenth century C.E. Scribes used a wide reed pen dipped in ink to write. In some letters, the angle of the pen was adjusted as the scribe wrote in order to maintain an even thickness throughout the entire letterform but in others, the angle could be held constant in order to produce both very thick and very thin lines. Although letters and even entire words at first appear to consist of a single stroke of the pen, in fact, individual letters were often formed using multiple strokes.

Qur'an fragment (detail), in Arabic, before 911, vellum, 23

x 32 cm, possibly Iraq (The Morgan Library and Museum, New York)

The regularity and precision of the penmanship in the fragment from The Morgan Library reveals the skill of the scribes who produced it. Each of them deliberately imitated a single style in order to produce a unified finished product.

Scribes also had some freedom in composing a page. They could emphasize individual words and balance the widths of lines of different length by elongating certain letters horizontally (a technique known as *mashq*). They could also adjust the spacing between words and letters, and even split words between two lines, in order to balance positive and negative space across the page.



Graphic showing negative space, Qu'ran fragment (detail), in Arabic, before 911, vellum, 23 x 32 cm, possible Iraq (The Morgan Library and Museum, New York)

In this *mushaf*, the spaces between non-connecting characters within a word are as wide as the spaces that separate different words (sometimes even wider!). For readers unfamiliar with the text, it is therefore difficult to figure out which letters should be grouped together to form words. This deliberate obfuscation would have slowed down readers, and it suggests that anyone who read aloud from these manuscripts had probably already memorized the text of the Qur'an and used the lavish manuscript only as a kind of mnemonic device.

188. Basin (Baptistère de Saint Louis), Mohammed ibn al-Zain

A CONVERSATION

Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker

This is a transcript of a conversation conducted in the Louvre in Paris.

Mohammed ibn al-Zain, Basin (Baptistère de Saint Louis), c. 1320-40, brass inlaid with silver and gold, 22.2 x 50.2 cm, Egypt or Syria (Musée du Louvre) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/o2D6im>

Steven: We're in the magnificent new Islamic Art Galleries at the Louvre in Paris. We're looking at one of their treasures. It's an object that was used to baptize the children of the royal family of France for centuries but it wasn't originally a French object.

Beth: No, it actually comes from the area of Egypt and Syria and it dates to between 1320 and 1340.

Steven: It was created by Mamluk artisans. The Mamluks had been slave warriors and they had asserted their independence and had been able to rule in the countries that are today Egypt and Syria for several hundred years. During that period, they became known as extraordinary craftsmen. They were known especially for their textile work and for their metalwork. This is a premier example.

Beth: Normally, vessels like this would have large bands of calligraphy. This one doesn't. This one is filled with figures and animals and decorative patterning.

Steven: The only part that is not completely covered are the bottom few inches of the walls of the inside of the basin. Even the floor of the basin is completely covered. Let's start there.

Beth: There is a very abstract pattern there of sea animals.

Steven: These are very complex interconnected designs similar to tile work.

Beth: The basin is brass. It's got areas of silver and gold and black paste. I see eels in silver at the bottom.

Steven: Above that, we see first a continuous band of animals that parade around the inner wall and then a wide frieze of men on horseback interspersed by animals as well as medallions, figures that are clearly rulers, as well as coats of arms.

Mohammed ibn al-Zain, Basin (Baptistère de Saint Louis), c. 1320-40, brass inlaid with silver and gold, 22.2 x 50.2 cm, Egypt or Syria (Musée du Louvre) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/o2EoS9>

Beth: There are two rulers. They sit frontally. They both hold goblets. The figures in between seem to be hunting but also scenes of battle. We see limbs and we see a decapitated head so there's violence here.

Steven: The largest frieze is on the exterior.

Beth: There we see four figures in roundels. Each on horseback, slightly different. Two of them are hunting.

Steven: Another one is drawing his bow. Then the last seems to be processing, perhaps holding a club.

Beth: There are figures on either side of the roundels, sometimes four, sometimes five, all in procession toward the royal figures.

Steven: These figures are doing all kinds of interesting things. I'm looking at one, for example, that seems to be holding a leopard by a leash. Another seems to raise a goblet in one hand, perhaps in celebration and holding a vessel in the other. The figures are so dense that it actually takes time to be able to untangle the complex interwoven forms.

Beth: On the very bottom band, there are small roundels that carry Fleur-de-lis. The Fleur-de-lis is the symbol of the royal family of France. Interestingly, it was also associated with a Mamluk Sultan. Art historians think these may have been reworked when they came to France. There are other alterations that make us think that the person who commissioned this was not the person who it was ultimately delivered to.

Steven: As you mentioned before, generally we would expect to see Islamic inscriptions. That would have been very common but they're absent here. There's some speculation that this may have been made for somebody who was not a Muslim. Perhaps it was even made for export. Beth: The iconography is very complicated and art historians have not untangled it yet.

Steven: Look how rich the imagery is just under the rim. I can see a unicorn, an elephant. I can see a leopard, a camel, an antelope.

Mohammed ibn al-Zain, Basin (Baptistère de Saint Louis), c. 1320-40, brass inlaid with silver and gold, 22.2 x 50.2 cm, Egypt or Syria (Musée du Louvre) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/o2L7Zr>

Beth: All processing, all running, all jumping. There's such movement and energy not only in the decorative forms which move in and out but also in the figures.

Steven: There is a little bit of Arabic inscription, the signature of the artist. We can see that just under the rim.

Beth: Actually, he signed it six times, so maybe he was especially proud of it. His name was ibn al-Zain and actually, the Louvre has another work by this great Mamluk artist.

Watch the video<https://youtu.be/2IT6FcvBp_w>.

189. Bahram Gur Fights the Karg, folio from the Great Il-Khanid Shahnama

Jayne Yantz

Bahram Gur Fights the Karg (Horned Wolf), from the Great Mongol Shahnama, c. 1330-40, Iran, ink, colors, gold, and silver on paper, folio 41.5 x 30 cm (Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum <http://www.harvardartmuseums.org/art/169542>)

> As Bahram Gur's men faced the Karg, a monstrous horned wolf that had been terrorizing the countryside, they cried, "Your majesty, this is beyond any man's courage…tell Shangal this can't be done…."

Bahram Gur Fights the Karg is a book illumination depicting one of the many stories from the *Shahnama*, the Persian *Book of Kings*. Though this particular image was painted in the fourteenth century by artists in the Mongol court (the Mongols, who originated in central Asia, established an empire during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries that, at its height, stretched from the Pacific to the Mediterranean) in Persia (present-day Iran), the text of the *Shahnama* was composed by a poet named Firdawsi four hundred years earlier, around 1000 C.E. The *Shahnama* incorporates many older stories once told orally, chronicling the history of Persia before the arrival of Islam and celebrating the glories of the Persian past and its ancient heroes. The *Shahnama* is, in fact, still taught in Iranian schools today, and is considered to be Iran's national epic—to know or recite the stories of the *Shahnama* is to express pride in the country's glorious past. The illustration *Bahram Gur Fights the Karg* depicts one such story of the brave deeds of a Persian king, Bahram Gur, who singlehandedly defeated the monstrous Karg (horned wolf). It is much more than just an exciting tale, however; the

Mongol artists who created this work were fulfilling their patrons' strong desire to identify with the noble, virtuous, and powerful warrior-kings of ancient Persia.

Who was Bahram Gur and what is a Karg?

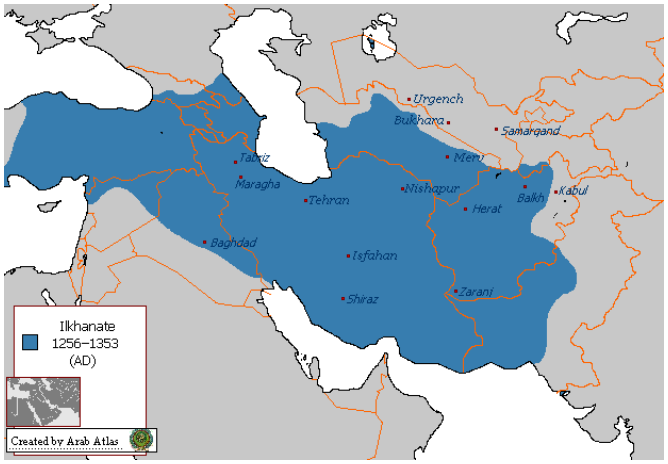
Bahram V was a king of the Sasanian Empire that ruled Persia from the third to the seventh century, just prior to the arrival of Islam. His nickname, Bahram Gur, refers to a "gur" or onager—a type of wild ass which is one of the world's fastest-running mammals. The word "gur" may also mean "swift." He was known as a great hunter of onagers, a favorite game animal in ancient Iran, and he was renowned for his talents in warfare, chivalry, and romance. On a trip to India, according to the *Shahnama*, the king of India, a ruler named Shangal, recognized Bahram Gur's abilities and sought his help in ridding the Indian countryside of the frightening and fierce Karg. Some translations of Firdawsi's work describe the Karg as a rhinoceros, some as a wolf, and some, as we find here in *Bahram Gur Fights the Karg*, as a combination of the two—a ferocious horned wolf. When Bahram Gur and his men found the lair and saw the beast, his men beseeched, "Your majesty, this is beyond any man's courage…tell Shangal this can't be done…." The hero, of course, went forward alone, first using his bow to weaken the Karg with arrows, then using his blade to cut off the Karg's head to present to Shangal.

Plate with a hunting scene from the tale of Bahram Gur and Azadeh , c. 5th century, Sasanian, silver, mercury gilding, 20.1 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York)

Bahram Gur Fights the Karg (Horned Wolf) (detail), from the Great Mongol Shahnama, c. 1330-40, Iran (Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum)

The Mongol court and the art of the book

The Sasanian empire fell in the seventh century, and it was not until well after this that the Mongols invaded Persia. They came from the eastern Asian plains, where open grasslands had encouraged a nomadic lifestyle of herding, horsemanship, and fierce warfare. They first became a serious force under the leadership of Genghis Khan in the early thirteenth century, and later, under his grandson Hulagu, the Mongols expanded their reach all the way to the Mediterranean.



Map of the Ilkhanid state, 1256-1353 (map: Ahmed Hafez)

Settled in Persia, the Mongols fostered the growth of cosmopolitan cities with rich courts and wealthy patrons who encouraged the arts

to flourish. The rule of Hulagu's dynasty, which lasted until 1335, is commonly known as the Ilkhanid period. Book illustration thrived under the Ilkhanids and became a major art form for both religious and secular texts. Since the Mongols began as, and largely remained, nomadic peoples (moving from place to place during the year to satisfy the needs of their herds), artworks tended to be small and portable. Their long nomadic history also meant that the Mongols developed strong oral traditions of storytelling, which gave them an appreciation for narrative art—especially manuscripts with paintings to accompany the stories. Illustrated manuscripts were also prestige items, created in very sumptuous formats suitable for kings, princes, and members of the court.

It was within this environment of lavish artistic book production that the manuscript depicting *Bahram Gur Fights the Karg* was created, probably in a court workshop. The artists who crafted it used silver and gold accents over ink and opaque watercolor. While we do not know the name of the patron, scholars suggest that it may have been the court vizier, a high-ranking official. The full page, or folio, is relatively large for a hand painted book, and because of its size, the manuscript is also referred to as the *Great Mongol Shahnama.* It was most likely a prestige item intended to express the owner's power and wealth, and it is the most luxurious of all the Ilkhanid painted books that survive. In its original form, scholars believe this complete manuscript probably comprised about 280 folios (pages) with 190 illustrations painted by several different artists, bound into two separate volumes. Today, however, only 57 folios are known to have survived. Like many other manuscripts, the *Great Mongol Shahnama* was taken apart by an early twentieth-century art dealer so that the pages could be sold separately.

The illumination as a stylistic blend

Six Horses, 13th–14th century, China, ink and color on paper, 47.1 x 647.1 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York)

This manuscript was likely completed at the Mongol court in Tabriz, a rich and cosmopolitan urban center (in what is today northern Iran). By the time the book was produced, the Mongols had settled into their role as refined rulers with international contacts, and their lands were secure enough to ensure the safe exchange of both goods and ideas throughout the empire. The increased availability of paper, invented in China in the eighth century, also encouraged the diffusion of artistic ideas. Consequently, Ilkhanid art had an international flavor. Landscape elements, for instance, often show influences from China, incorporating motifs seen on imported Chinese scrolls (above) and ceramics. In *Bahram Gur Fights the Karg*, the worn and twisted trees, overlapping forms that create spatial recession, rapidly brushed foreground vegetation, and a taste for asymmetry all suggest eastern Asian influences.

Bahram Gur Fights the Karg (Horned Wolf) (detail), from the Great Mongol Shahnama, c. 1330-40, Iran (Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum)

Local influences are also apparent: Persia had a long artistic tradition of depicting heroes, kings, and hunters riding horses over slain opponents. Bahram Gur is depicted in this tradition. Shown on horseback, he wears kingly garb, with a golden crown, luxurious garment, and an elegant gold and pearl earring visible in his right ear. But he is also clearly a warrior, holding a mace over his shoulder, and with a bow, sword, and arrows covered in a leopard skin hanging from his waist.

Bahram Gur Fights the Karg (Horned Wolf), from the Great Mongol Shahnama, c. 1330-40, Iran, ink, colors, gold, and silver on paper, folio 41.5 x 30 cm (Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum)

The result is a dynamic, energy-filled image with a monumental figure almost bursting out of the frame: Bahram Gur is cut off slightly at the top, trees and landscape details are truncated at the edges, and the horse is captured in mid-motion with one leg raised above the Karg. The Karg's head, very close to the viewer, is centrally placed and dripping blood, while the splayed length of the Karg's battered body pulls the viewer's eye toward the left. The focus returns to the hero, however, because a visual circuit is created around him. Our eyes travel along the horn of the Karg, to the continuous arc of the tree branch, and up to Bahram Gur, whose glance leads our eyes back down across the vegetation and the body of his horse.

The page surrounding *Bahram Gur Fights the Karg* is covered with calligraphy, but we do not know what originally appeared on the page adjoining the painting because the book pages

are dispersed today. Calligraphy is the most highly regarded form of Islamic art, and it can be highly stylized, showing off an artist's personal flare and skill. Ideals of beauty in Islamic culture draw on calligraphy's inherent harmony and balance, spacing, proportion and compositional evenness on the page, and these aesthetic values are also visible in the painting style of the Great Mongol *Shahnama*.

Old heroes for a new regime

There is a tradition within Islam that strongly discourages the visual representation of human or animal figures. In practice, however, figurative representations can very often be found in secular and private Islamic contexts, such as the Ilkhanid court, where it was acceptable—even desirable—to create splendid figurative artworks for private consumption.

Calligraphy (detail), Bahram Gur Fights the Karg (Horned Wolf), from the Great Mongol Shahnama, c. 1330-40, Iran (Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum)

This was true of the *Shahnama*, which was a favorite subject at the Mongol court, eagerly enjoyed by wealthy and sophisticated courtiers. The painters who illustrated the *Shahnama* were drawn to dramatic subjects such as battles or encounters with astonishing beasts such as the Karg. However, images like *Bahram Gur Fights the Karg* were not just meant as illustrations of simple, enjoyable fairy tales, but contained deeper meaning and significance for the Mongol nobility. Here, Bahram Gur symbolizes just rule and civilized society triumphing over chaos and disorder, represented by the Karg. In simple terms, this means good defeating evil, but it also implies that a good and stable social order is based upon kingship, and that warrior-kings like Bahram Gur are moral and courageous models to be emulated by the readers of the book. The *Shahnama* therefore also provided a teaching tool, subtly incorporating moral stories and illustrating desirable behaviors for future kings and nobles.

Bahram Gur Fights the Karg (Horned Wolf) (detail), from the Great Mongol Shahnama, c. 1330-40, Iran (Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum)

Many scholars also believe that the new Mongol rulers in Persia wanted to link themselves to the great heroes and kings of Persia's past, a link which would enhance their authority. The Mongols and the ancient Persians had a shared respect for the manly arts of fighting, hunting, feasting, and courtship, and it is not a coincidence that Bahram Gur rides a horse as he defeats the Karg: the story is Persian, but the hero is shown as a great Mongol horseman.

The *Shahnama* is filled with magical tales of courtly life, including kings and heroes who fight, hunt, and live life to the fullest, as illustrated in the story of *Bahram Gur Fights the Karg*. But the *Shahnama* is also somewhat fatalistic, presenting a hostile world filled with fierce foes like the Karg. The book even ends with the defeat of the

Persians by the Arabs. The stories, however, teach about the importance of courage and ethics while traveling through such a threatening world, and they provide guidance for readers confronting questions about death, love, honor and just rule.

190. The Court of Gayumars, folio from Shah Tahmasp's Shahnama

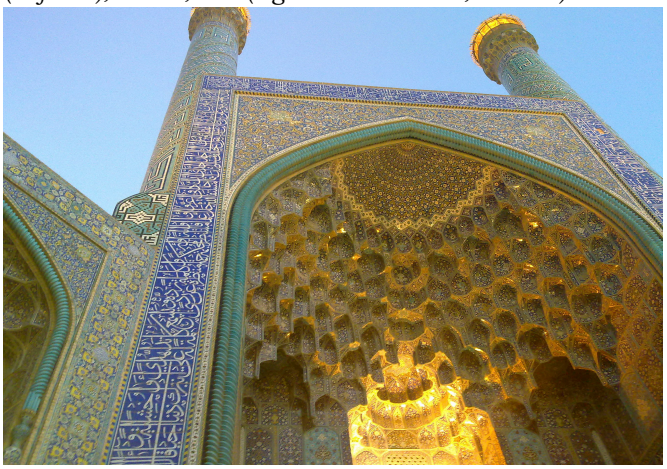
Dr. Nancy Demerdash-Fatemi

The Shahnama

This sumptuous page, *The Court of Gayumars* (also spelled Kayumars—see details below and large image here), comes from an illuminated manuscript (a hand-written book that usually includes lavish painted decorations, such as initials, borders and illustrations) of the Shahnama (Book of Kings)—an epic poem describing the history of kingship in Persia (what is now Iran). Because of its blending of painting styles from both Tabriz and Herat, its luminous pigments, fine detail, and complex imagery, this copy of the Shahnama stands out in the history of the artistic production in Central Asia.

The Shahnama was written by Abu al-Qāsim Ferdowsi around the year 1000 and is a masterful example of Persian poetry. The epic chronicles kings and heroes who pre-date the introduction of Islam to Persia as well as the human experiences of love, suffering, and death. The epic has been copied countless times—often with elaborate illustrations (see another example here).

Page, left, and detail, right: Sultan Muhammad, The Court of Gayumars, c.1522, 47 x 32 cm, opaque watercolor, ink, gold, silver on paper, folio 20v, Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp I (Safavid), Tabriz, Iran (Aga Khan Museum, Toronto)



The Imam Mosque (formerly Masjed-e Shah) was built

for a later Safavid ruler during the seventeenth century, Isfahan, Iran (photo: Ladsgroup, GNU Free Documentation License) <https://tinyurl.com/y66u2jv7>

Safavid patronage

This particular manuscript of the Shahnama was begun during the first years of the sixteenth century for the first Safavid dynastic ruler, Shah Ismail I, but was completed under the direction of his son, Shah Tahmasp I in the northern Persian city of Tabriz. The Safavid dynastic rulers claimed to descend from Sufi shaikhs (Sufism is a form of Islamic practice that seeks the perfection of worship and is often associated with ascetic spirituality)—mystical leaders from Ardabīl, in northwestern Iran. The name "Safavid" stems from one particular ancestral Sufi, named Shaykh Safi al-Din (literally translated as "purity of the religion"). Over a two-hundred-year span starting in 1501, the Safavids controlled large parts of what is today Iran and Azerbaijan. The Safavids actively commissioned the building of public architectural complexes such as mosques, and they were patrons of the arts of the book. In fact, manuscript illumination was central to Safavid royal patronage of the arts.

Depicting figures

It is often assumed that images that include human and animal figures, as seen in the detail below, are forbidden in Islam. Recent scholarship, however, highlights that throughout the history of Islam, there have been periods in which iconoclastic tendencies (iconoclasm literally means broken image, but refers here to an intolerance of visual depictions of humans and animals) waxed and waned.[1] That is to say, at specific moments and places, the representation of human or animal figures was tolerated to varying degrees.

Detail, Sultan Muhammad, The Court of Gayumars, c. 1522, 47 x 32 cm, opaque watercolor, ink, gold, silver on paper, folio 20v, Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp I (Safavid), Tabriz, Iran (Aga Khan Museum, Toronto)

There is a long figural tradition in Persia—even after the introduction of Islam—that is perhaps most evident in book illustration. It is also important to note that, unlike the neighboring Ottoman Empire to the west who were Sunni and in some ways more orthodox, the Safavids subscribed to the Shi'i (after the Prophet Muhammad died in 632, the Sunni/Shi'i schism developed—a result of competing claims over who was the rightful spiritual leader of the faith) sect of Islam.

Two centers of culture

Although it is widely recognized that the conventions of what is sometimes termed "classical"[2] Persianate painting had become established by the fourteenth century, it is in the reign of Shah Tahmasp I that we see the most dramatic advancements in illumination

and the arts of the book more generally.[3] His patronage of this specific art form is in part due to his own painting studies in Herat (in the western region of present-day Afghanistan) and Tabriz (in the northwestern region of present-day Iran), under Bihzad and Sultan Muhammad, respectively.[4] Both cities were major centers for the production of manuscript illuminations. While the entire manuscript of the *Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp I* consists of approximately 759 illustrated folios and 258 miniatures all produced over the span of several years,[5] this particular miniature is attributed to the workshop of Sultan Muhammad, according to Dust Muhammad, an artist and historian from this period.[6] In 1568, this lavish Shahnameh was given as a gift by Shah Tahmasp I to the Ottoman Sultan, Selim II.[7]

Nasta'liq (detail), Sultan Muhammad, The Court of Gayumars, c. 1522, 47 x 32 cm, opaque watercolor, ink, gold, silver on paper, folio 20v, Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp I (Safavid), Tabriz, Iran (Aga Khan Museum, Toronto)

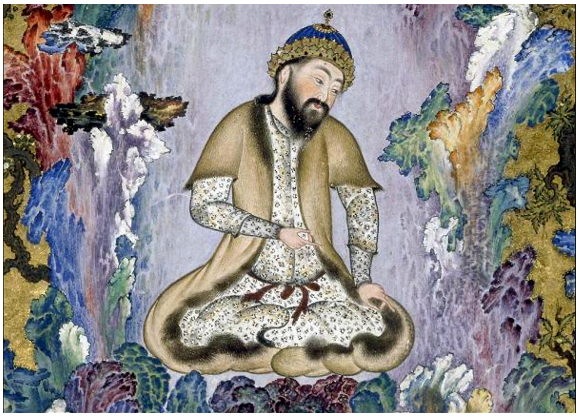
King of the world

There are several interpretive issues to keep in mind when analyzing Persianate paintings. As with many of the workshops of early modern West Asia, producing a page such as the Court of Gayumars often entailed the contributions of many artists. It is also important to remember that a miniature painting from an illuminated manuscript should not be thought of in isolation. The individual pages that we today find in museums, libraries, and private collections must be understood as but one sheet of a larger book—with its own history, conditions of production, and dispersion. To make matters even more complex, the relationship of text to image is rarely straightforward in Persianate manuscripts. Text and image, within these illuminations, do not always mirror each other.[8] Nevertheless, the framed calligraphic *nasta'liq* (hanging)—the Persian text at the top and bottom of the frame can be roughly translated as follows:

> When the sun reached the lamb constellation,[9] when the world became glorious,
> When the sun shined from the lamb constellation to rejuvenate the living beings entirely,
> It was then when Gayumars became the King of the World.
> He first built his residence in the mountains.
> His prosperity and his palace rose from the mountains, and he and his people wore leopard pelts.
> Cultivation began from him, and the garments and food were ample and fresh.[10]

Dense with detail

In this folio (page), we can see some parallels between the content of the calligraphic text and the painting itself. Seated in a cross-legged position, as if levitating within this richly vegetal and mountainous landscape, King Gayumars rises above his courtiers, who are gathered around at the base of the painting. According to legend, King Gayumars was the first king of Persia, and he ruled at a time when people clothed themselves exclusively in leopard pelts, as both the text and the represented subjects' speckled garments indicate.



King Gayumars (detail), Sultan Muhammad, The Court of Gayumars, c. 1522, 47 x 32 cm, opaque watercolor, ink, gold, silver on paper, folio 20v, Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp I (Safavid), Tabriz, Iran (Aga Khan Museum, Toronto).

Perched on cliffs beside the King are his son, Siyamak (left, standing), and grandson Hushang (right, seated).[11] Onlookers can be seen to surreptitiously peer out from the scraggly, blossoming branches onto King Gayumars from the upper left and right. The miniature's spatial composition is organized on a vertical axis with the mountain behind the king in the distance, and the garden below in the foreground. Nevertheless, there are multiple points of perspective, and perhaps even multiple moments in time—rendering a scene dense with details meant to absorb and enchant the viewer.

King Gayumars, Siyamak, and Hushang (detail), Sultan Muhammad, The Court of Gayumars, c. 1522, 47 x 32 cm, opaque watercolor, ink, gold, silver on paper, folio 20v, Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp I (Safavid), Tabriz, Iran (Aga Khan Museum, Toronto)

One might see stylistic similarities between the swirling blue-gray clouds floating overhead with pictorial representations in Chinese art; this is no coincidence. Persianate artists under the Safavids regularly incorporated visual motifs and techniques derived from Chinese sources.[12] While the intense pigments of the rocky terrain seem to fade into the lush and verdant animal-laden garden below, a gold sky canopies the scene from above. This piece—in all its density color, detail, and sheer exuberance—is a testament to the longstanding cultural reverence for Ferdowsi's epic tale and the unparalleled craftsmanship of both Sultan Muhammad and Shah Tahmasp's workshops.

Sutra Box with Dragons amid Clouds, c. 1403-24 (Yongle period, Ming dynasty), 14 x 12.7 x 40.6 cm, red lacquer with incised decoration inlaid with gold; damascened brass lock and key (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Notes

1. See Christiane Gruber, "Between Logos (Kalima) and Light (Nūr): Representations of the Prophet Muhammad in Islamic Painting," *Muqarnas* 16 (2009), pp. 229-260; Finbarr B. Flood, "Between Cult and Culture: Bamiyan, Islamic Iconoclasm, and the Museum," *The Art Bulletin* 84, 4 (December 2002), pp. 641-659; Christiane Gruber, "The Koran Does Not Forbid Images of the Prophet," *Newsweek* (January 9, 2015).

2. For a helpful analysis of the historiographic ascription of the term 'classical' to Persian painting and the cultural hierarchy that was established largely by scholar-collectors in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, see Christiane Gruber, "Questioning the 'Classical' in Persian Painting: Models and Problems of Definition," in the *Journal of Art Historiography* 6 (June 2012), pp. 1-25.

3. David J. Roxburgh, "Micrographia: Toward a Visual Logic of Persianate Painting," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 43 (Spring 2003), pp. 12-30.

4. Sheila Canby affirms Stuart Cary Welch's estimate that it took Sultan Muhammad and his workshop three years to complete the Court of Gayumars illustration. Sheila Canby, *The Golden Age of Persian Art, 1501-1722* (New York: Abrams, 2000), p. 51.

5. David J. Roxburgh, "On the Brink of Tragedy: The Court of Gayumars from Shah Tahmasp's Shahnama ('Book of Kings'), Sultan Muhammad," in Christopher Dell, ed., *What Makes a Masterpiece: Artists, Writers and Curators on the World's Greatest Works of Art* (London; New York: Thames & Hudson, 2010), pp. 182-185; 182. The text was subsequently possessed by Baron Edmund de Rothschild and then sold to Arthur A. Houghton Jr, who in turn sold pages of the book individually.

6. Roxburgh, "Micrographia: Toward a Visual Logic of Persianate Painting," p. 19. "In the Persianate painting, however, image follows afterword in a linear sequence; the text introduces and follows after the image, but it is not actually read when the image is being viewed…In the Persian book, the act of seeing is initiated by a process of remembering the narrative just told. Moreover, that text does not prepare the viewer for what will be seen in the painting."

7. This expression denotes the beginning of spring.

8. I am grateful to Dr. Alireza Fatemi for generously providing this translation.

9. Roxburgh, "On the Brink of Tragedy," p. 182.

191. The Ardabil Carpet

Dr. Elizabeth Macaulay-Lewis

Medallion Carpet, The Ardabil Carpet, Unknown artist (Maqsud Kashani is named on the carpet's inscription), Persian: Safavid Dynasty, silk warps and wefts with wool pile (25 million knots, 340 per sq. inch), 1539-40 C.E., Tabriz, Kashan, Isfahan or Kirman, Iran (Victoria and Albert Museum)

Old, beautiful and important

The Ardabil Carpet is exceptional; it is one of the world's oldest Islamic carpets, as well as one of the largest, most beautiful and historically important. It is not only stunning in its own right, but it is bound up with the history of one of the great political dynasties of Iran.

About carpets

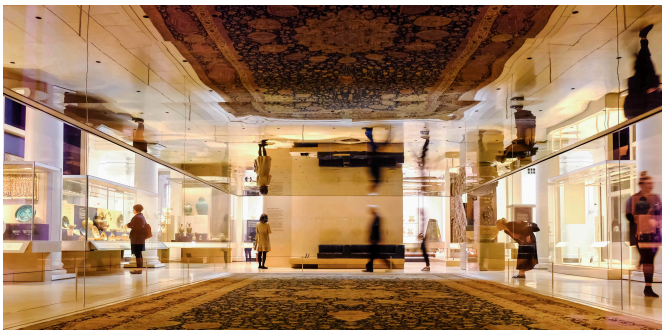
Carpets are among the most fundamental of

Islamic arts. Portable, typically made of silk and wools, carpets were traded and sold across the Islamic lands and beyond its boundaries to Europe and China. Those from Iran were highly prized. Carpets decorated the floors of mosques, shrines and homes, but they could also be hung on walls of houses to preserve warmth in the winter.

The Ardabil Carpet, Unknown artist, 1539-40 C.E., Iran (Victoria and Albert Museum)

Ardabil and a 14th-century saint

The carpet takes its name from the town of Ardabil in north-west Iran. Ardabil was the home to the shrine of the Sufi saint, Safi al-Din Ardabili, who died in 1334 (Sufism is Islamic mysticism). He was a Sufi leader who trained his followers in Islamic mystic practices. After his death, his following grew and his descendants became increasingly powerful. In 1501 one of his descendants, Shah Isma'il, seized power, united Iran, and established Shi'a Islam as the official religion. The dynasty he founded is known as the Safavids. Their rule, which lasted until 1722, was one of the most important periods for Islamic art, especially for textiles and for manuscripts.



The Ardabil Carpet with viewing mirror at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (photo: hey tiffany, CC BY-NC 2.0) <https://flic.kr/p/2gSXNew>

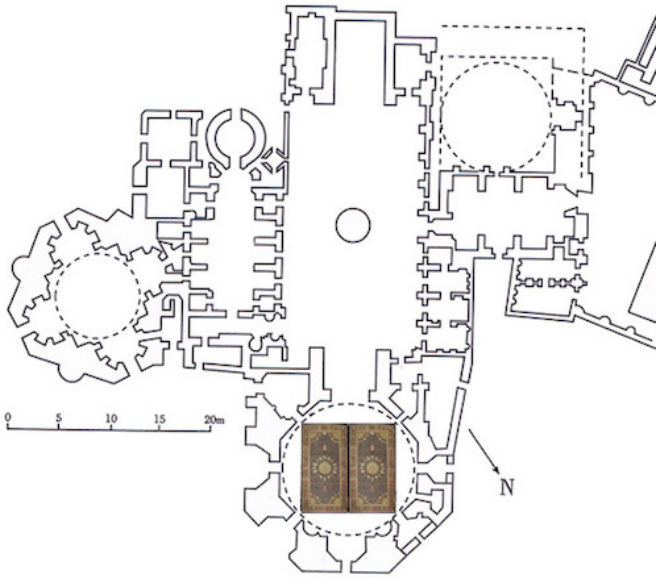
Made for a shrine

This carpet was one of a matching pair that was made for the shrine of Safi al-Din Ardabili when it was enlarged in the late 1530s. Today the Ardabil carpet dominates the main Islamic Art Gallery in the Victoria and Albert Museum in

London, while its twin is in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. The carpets were located side by side in the shrine.

The pile of the carpet is made from wool, rather than silk because it holds dye better. The knot-count of a carpet still directly impacts the value of carpets today; the more knots per square centimeter, the more detailed and elaborate the patterns can be. The dyes used to color the carpet are natural and include pomegranate rind and indigo. Up to ten weavers could have worked on the carpet at any given time. The Ardabil carpet has 340 knots per square inch (5300 knots per ten centimeters square). Today, a commercial rug averages 80-160 knots per square inch, meaning that the Ardabil carpet was highly detailed. Its high knot count allowed for the inclusion of an intricate design and pattern. It is not known whether the carpet was produced in a royal workshop, but there is evidence for court workshop in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Detail, Ardabil Carpet (Victoria and Albert Museum)



Plan of the shrine at Ardabil, showing where the carpets were situated (permission, Victoria and Albert Museum)

Design and pattern

The rich geometric patterns, vegetative scrolls, floral flourishes, so typical of Islamic art, reach a fever pitch in this remarkable carpet, encouraging the viewer to walk around and around, trying to absorb every detail of design.

That the design of the carpet was not arbitrary or piecemeal, but was well-organized and thoughtful can be seen throughout. Considering the immense size of the carpet—10.51m x 5.34m (34′ 6″ x 17′ 6″)—this is impressive. A central golden medallion dominates the carpet; it is surrounded by a ring of multi-colored, detailed ovals. Lamps appear to hang at either end.

Detail, Ardabil Carpet (Victoria and Albert Museum)

The carpet's border is made up of a frame with a series of cartouches (rectangular-shaped spaces for calligraphy), filled with decoration. The central medallion design is also echoed by the four corner-pieces.

Detail of lamp, Ardabil Carpet (Victoria and Albert Museum)

Art historians have debated the meaning of the two lamps that appear to hang from the medallion. They are of different sizes and some scholars have proposed that this was done to create a perspective effect, meaning that both lamps appear to be the same size when one sat next to the smaller lamp. Yet, there is no evidence for the use of this type of perspective in Iran in the 1530s, nor does this explain why the lamps were included. Perhaps they were included to mimic lamps found in mosques and shrines, helping the viewer to look deeply into the carpet below them and then above them, to the ceiling where similar lamps would have hung, creating visual unity within the shrine.

An inscription

The Ardabil Carpet includes a four-line inscription placed at one end. This short poem is vital for understanding who commissioned the carpet and the date of the carpet.

The first three lines of poetry reads:

> Except for thy threshold, there is no refuge for me in all the world.
> Except for this door there is no resting-place for my head.
> The work of the slave of the portal, Maqsud Kashani.

Maqsud was probably the court official charged with producing the carpets. By referring to himself as a slave, he may be presenting himself as a humble servant. The Persian word for a door can be used to denote a shrine or royal court, so this inscription may imply that the royal court patronized the shrine. The carpets would have probably taken four years to make.

The fourth line of the inscription is also important. It provides the date of the carpet,

AH 946. The Muslim calendar begins in the year 620 CE when Muhammad fled from Mecca to Medina; this year is known as the year of the Hijra or flight (in Latin anno hegirae). AH 946 is equivalent to 1539/40 CE (the lunar Muslim calendar does not exactly match the Gregorian Calendar, used in the west).

The design of the Ardabil carpet and its skillful execution is a testament to the great skill of the artisans at work in north-west Iran in the 1530s.

How the carpet came to the V&A

Many great treasures from around the world have legally made their way into the collections of western museums. Many objects were legally purchased by collectors and museums in the 19th and 20th centuries; however, many works of art are still illegally exported and sold. British visitors to the shrine in 1843 noted that at least one carpet was still in situ. Approximately thirty years or so later, an earthquake damaged the shrine, and the carpets were sold off.

Ziegler & Co., a Manchester firm involved in the carpet trade purchased the damaged carpets in Iran and "restored" them in the fashion typical of the late nineteenth century. Selections of one carpet were used to repair the other, resulting in a "complete" carpet and one lacking a border. Vincent Robinson and Co, a dealer based in London, put the larger carpet up for sale in 1892 and persuaded the V&A to purchase it for £2000 in March 1893.

The second carpet was secretly sold to an American collector, J.P. Getty, who donated it to the LA County Museum of Art in 1953. Unlike the carpet in the V&A, the carpet in LACMA is incomplete. Throughout the twentieth century, other pieces of the carpets have appeared on the art market for sale.

Detail, Ardabil Carpet (Victoria and Albert Museum)

Book cover design by Susan Zucker.

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