

## Ancient Americas – Free online sources

Essays on exhibiting the art and archaeology of the ancient Americas in museums, the history of the field, the term ‘pre-columbian’, and more: <https://online.ucpress.edu/lalvc/issue/1/1>

SBMA Art Matters lecture – Matthew Robb 11.7.19 – ‘Precolumbian MacGuffin in mid-century Los Angeles’ [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ug-gwsC7WC8&list=PLDNL-AkxbYwi1Qgwo\\_D65IEGAMP145u5j&index=3](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ug-gwsC7WC8&list=PLDNL-AkxbYwi1Qgwo_D65IEGAMP145u5j&index=3)

### *Maya*

Exploring the Maya world, Google Arts & Culture: <https://artsandculture.google.com/project/exploring-the-maya-world>

Essay: [https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/mayac/hd\\_mayac.htm](https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/mayac/hd_mayac.htm)

Podcast: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b072n5x3>

Maya Vase Research Project, LACMA: <https://unframed.lacma.org/2016/08/29/inside-story-seeing-maya-vessels-new-light>

Map of Mesoamerica: <http://ancientamericas.org/map/ancient-mexico>

### *Mixteca*

Information and links, Dallas Museum of Art: <https://collections.dma.org/essay/zemgvr2Q>

### *Nasca*

Essay on Nasca culture and map: [https://people.umass.edu/proulx/online\\_pubs/Nasca\\_Overview\\_Zurich.pdf](https://people.umass.edu/proulx/online_pubs/Nasca_Overview_Zurich.pdf)

Essay on ceramics: <http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/nazca/nasca-ceramics.pdf>

Essay on ceramics: [https://people.umass.edu/proulx/online\\_pubs/Nasca\\_Ceramic\\_Iconography\\_Overview.pdf](https://people.umass.edu/proulx/online_pubs/Nasca_Ceramic_Iconography_Overview.pdf)

### *Moche*

Introduction and map: <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-americas/south-america-early/moche-culture/a/moche-culture-an-introduction>

Essay on ceramics: [https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/moch/hd\\_moch.htm](https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/moch/hd_moch.htm)

Online lecture and other resources: <https://collections.dma.org/essay/woPxJD56>

Online exhibition at the Peabody Museum, Harvard: <https://www.peabody.harvard.edu/node/2473>

Online exhibition at the Fowler Museum, UCLA: <https://www.fowler.ucla.edu/exhibitions/intersections/collections/the-moche-painting-history/>

# Ancient Americas Bibliographies

## *Maya art and archaeology – compiled by Mary Miller for Oxford Bibliographies*

### Introduction

First documented in a comprehensive form in the 19th century, the art of the pre-hispanic Maya begins with painting, sculpture, and architecture in context by 600 BCE in the Peten of Guatemala, and, despite dramatic change through time, it continues with illustrated manuscripts and ritual performances until the Spanish invasion and conquest of the 16th century. Regional differences can be seen between the highlands of Chiapas and Guatemala and the lowlands that encompass the Mexican states of Chiapas, Tabasco, Yucatán, Campeche, and Quintana Roo, along with Belize, Guatemala, and the northern portions of Honduras and El Salvador, in many cases falling along ethnic lines of the over thirty Mayan languages. Maya cultural history is divided into the Middle Formative, Late Formative, Early Classic, Late Classic, Terminal Classic, Early Postclassic, and Late Postclassic. The abandonment of southern lowland Maya cities in the 9th century is known as the Classic Maya collapse; that abandonment, which left the 8th century as the final period of construction and thus more accessible to the 20th and 21st centuries, has privileged recovery and knowledge of the Late Classic Maya.

Particular attention should be directed to Maya architecture, characterized by massive and towering pyramids, sprawling palace compounds, and interlocking roads. Many freestanding pyramids hold tombs, although some form either actual or symbolic sites of astronomical observation, and a number of Maya palaces featured paintings within. Few wall paintings remain in situ today; far more paintings survive as fired ceramics executed in clay slip, particularly as tomb offerings during the 8th century CE. Maya sculptors made monumental sculpture as free-standing stelae of stone, often designed for veneration in plaza settings, along with carvings set as staircases, jambs, and lintels; stucco adornment was often applied as architectural ornament. Maya writing is its own art form, although it is also present and embedded in sculpture, painting, and ceramics. Particularly during the Late Classic period, Maya scribes developed florid calligraphic styles in painting and Maya sculptors executed complicated full-figure hieroglyphs. Once a commonplace, Maya screenfold books were burned by Spanish friars in the 16th century. Only four survive.

**Coe, Michael D., and Stephen Houston. *The Maya*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2015.**

Coe's general book on the Maya has long provided ample attention to Maya art; the new edition with Houston expands its coverage to extensive discoveries since 2000.

**Miller, Mary, and Megan O'Neil. *Maya Art and Architecture*. 2d ed. London: Thames & Hudson, 2014.**

The most complete overview of Maya art and architecture, with emphasis on new discoveries in the 2014 edition.

**Pillsbury, Joanne, Miriam Doutriaux, Reiko Iashihara-Brito, et al., eds. *Ancient Maya Art at Dumbarton Oaks*. Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2012.**

The focus on Dumbarton Oaks notwithstanding, this volume provides comprehensive overviews and interpretations of all classes of Maya art, from stone sculpture to jade to chert. Note particularly Taube's contributions on jade.

### Maya Architecture to 800 CE

Maya architecture begins c. 600 BCE, at the time of the first monumental architecture, generally at sites in northern Guatemala and coastal Belize. Over the course of the next 700–800 years, in Guatemala at El Mirador, in Belize at Cerros, and, particularly as documented by 1000 BCE, in Guatemala at Ceibal ([Inomata, et al. 2013](#)), the Maya built massive pyramids of new, clean fill, with giant heads of solar deities on the setbacks and framing stairs; adobe construction in the Guatemalan highlands has

generally been lost, but it is hypothesized for Kaminaljuyu. After some sort of rupture, many cities that had flourished during the Late Preclassic fell into ruin by the 3rd century CE, when hereditary kings began to build monumental cities in the rainforest of northern Guatemala and the southern Yucatán Peninsula. Tikal, Uaxactún, and Dzibanche, along with other sites, began to dominate the rainforest. Lords at Uaxactún built the first E-Group at the very beginning of the Early Classic, orienting a radial pyramid to three small shrines in order to mark equinoxes and solstices. During the 4th century, succeeding construction at the “Lost World” group, Tikal king Jaguar Paw ordered the construction of an early iteration of the Central Acropolis, making it a grand palace directly across from the North Acropolis, where individual, but clustered, free-standing pyramids housed royal tombs ([Harrison 2000](#)). What began as an ancestral, triadic grouping at A-V at Uaxactún became increasingly cut off from public view, as ancillary structures clustered around the core, as [Proskouriakoff 1978](#) graphically records. Copán made some of the most lavish temples of the 4th and 5th centuries, among them the elaborately stuccoed and painted Rosalila and Hunal, preserved deep within 8th-century Temple 16 ([Bell, et al. 2004](#)). Late Classic architecture and sculpture proliferated amid an explosion of wealth and population, at Palenque ([Stuart and Stuart 2008](#)), Piedras Negras ([O’Neil 2012](#)), Calakmul ([Martin and Grube 2008](#)), Toniná and Copan ([Fash 2001](#)), Yaxchilan, La Corona, and eventually, in the 8th century, once again at Tikal ([Harrison 2000](#)), and as assessed in [Houston 1998](#). Although not articulated by informative hieroglyphic inscriptions, the funerary pyramid for ancestor veneration, and the ranging palace construction flourished across the southern base of the Yucatán Peninsula, with novel juxtapositions of palace and pyramid, as noted in [Proskouriakoff 1978](#). [Roys 1934](#) is still authoritative on how the Maya engineered individual structures; [Abrams 1994](#) looks at the bigger picture of energetics. Ballcourts can be real or symbolic, as [Miller and Houston 1987](#) demonstrates.

#### Maya Architecture after 800 CE

The Classic Maya collapse took place during the 9th century; [Inomata, et al. 2017](#) provides the clearest account of the dating of this phenomenon. By the 9th century the glittering stone mosaic facades of Puuc cities provide evidence of powerful dynasts at many cities, Uxmal the largest of them all ([Kowalski 1987](#)). For the full range of Puuc architecture, see [Pollock 1980](#). [Plank 2004](#) has put palaces and inscriptions together from Yaxchilan to Chichen Itza, demonstrating less difference, rather than more. Ek Balam, in northern Yucatán, thrived in the 9th century ([Vargas de la Peña and Castillo Borges 2014](#)) before the new political order of Chichen Itza ([Garcia Moll and Cobos 2009](#), [Kristan-Graham and Kowalski 2011](#)) eclipsed all other cities of the Maya; [Braswell 2014](#) puts the vexed question of Chichen Itza’s dating in order. The subject of much renewed research, the walled city of Mayapan ([Masson, et al. 2006](#); [Milbrath and Peraza Lope 2003](#)) fell before the Spanish invasion, but the coastal cities of Tulum and Tancah were spotted by Columbus on his fourth voyage (see [Miller 1982](#)). In 1524, Hernán Cortés allied with the Cakchiquel of highland Guatemala at their city of Iximche’ to defeat the ruling Quiche Maya.

#### Maya Paintings

Discovered in 2001, the paintings of San Bartolo from c. 100 BCE have revealed a supernatural narrative characteristic of Mesoamerica, featuring a maize god with some Olmec features with four female attendants ([Saturno, et al. 2007](#)). A facing wall depicts five cosmic trees and companion male figures who draw copious blood from the penis. The style shows mastery of line and color, consistency, and a virtuosic calligraphic flair; no blue is used, a subject addressed in the thorough consideration of color in [Houston, et al. 2009](#). Early Classic artists painted walls in chambered tombs and palaces; the painted throne room of Uaxactún BXIII encompasses the most complex scene of the period, with processions and musicians, visitors in fancy dress, and, poignantly, women gathered around an empty throne ([Miller and O’Neil 2014](#)). [Miller and Brittenham 2013](#) considers all aspects of the Bonampak paintings. [Stone 1995](#) explores the Naj Tunich cave paintings; [Martin, et al. 2012](#) treats the 21st-century discovery of Calakmul paintings; for Xultun, see [Rossi, et al. 2015](#). The Mexican Proyecto de Pintura Mural continues to issue volumes of comprehensive documentation and study ([de la Fuente and Cicero 1995–](#)). [Coggins](#)

[and Shane 1984](#) publishes the paintings of the Upper Temple of the Jaguars of Chichen Itza; [Morris, et al. 1931](#) still provides the best color details of the paintings of the Temple of the Warriors. [Miller 1982](#) documents and explicates the paintings of Tulum and Tancah.

## Maya Ceramics

Early Maya potters in the Late Preclassic developed an elite form by coiling clay to create vessels supported by three or four mammiform feet, each with firing hole; the pots received colorful clay slip for adornment. [Coe and Kerr 1998](#), as well as [Fields and Reents-Budet 2005](#), consider the evolution to the Early Classic elite forms, along with meaning, particularly the lidded cache vessel, frequently anthropomorphic or zoomorphic. [Rice 2015](#) deals with the technical materiality. During the Early Classic, heavy basal flange bowls with thick lids gave way to lightweight cylinder vessels on tripod feet under the influence of Teotihuacan in the 4th century, and the cylinder form made continuous or repeated narrative scenes possible. Tripod vessel lids, known for their heavy knobs at Teotihuacan, took on anthropomorphic or zoomorphic form in the Maya region, among the earliest forms to be made with a mold among the Maya. Once the Maya ceramic workshop turned to the simple, usually footless, cylinder in the 7th century, the variety of forms simplified, even as the subject, style, and perhaps even purpose of finely painted ceramics simultaneously multiplied. The Early Colonial Popol Vuh is fundamental to understanding Maya iconography; consider the [Christenson 2008](#) translation; see also [Reents-Budet 1994](#) and [Chinchilla Mazariegos 2017](#) for Maya supernatural narrative. Many surviving cylinders held chocolate or maize drinks that were offered in the tomb with rich contents as a final use. Regional styles and workshops thrived, many of them narrative and capturing supernatural stories alongside those drawn from life. A black-on-cream style, frequently with a red rim, is known as the “codex style” since [Coe 1973](#); the “pink glyphs style” features not only a range of rose pigments, but also artist signatures ([Just 2012](#)). A carved style from Yucatán is known as Chocholá, based on a single find at a type site. Plates held tamales in the tomb; in some cases an upside-down plate covered the cranium of the deceased. Elaborate censer stands adorned the setbacks of Palenque pyramids, many featuring solar imagery ([Cuevas García 2004](#)). The decline of Maya cities after 800 CE simultaneously led to a decline in Maya ceramics, especially in their variety and subject matter; most figural fine orange ceramics, of Gulf Coast production, bear a limited repertory of molded or incised imagery. Other orange-paste vessels, some made in sets, are similar to examples from Isla de Sacrificios, an island off Veracruz, and, in this same era, the Maya acquired shiny plumbate vessels, many of which were made near the Mexico-Guatemala border and feature new vessel types in the form of animals and some supernatural beings.

**Chinchilla Mazariegos, Oswaldo. *Art and Myth of the Ancient Maya*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017.**

Principally using the imagery on Maya vases, the author reviews Maya supernatural narratives, with connections to contemporary belief.

**Reents-Budet, Dorie. *Painting the Maya Universe: Royal Ceramics of the Classic Period*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994.**

More than one hundred painted ceramic vessels, with particular attention to their texts, supernatural narratives, and the workshops in which they were made.

## Maya Sculpture, Monumental

[Proskouriakoff 1950](#) evaluates the style of establishes the free-standing and prismatic stone stela, adorned with a single human ruler on its front face, and the most typical form of Maya sculpture. Stone sculpture also comprises door lintels and jambs as well as round altars. As evidenced by discoveries noted in [Inomata, et al. 2013](#), the Maya may have first become aware of Olmec works in the Middle Preclassic, possibly including the stela. Most early efforts were later destroyed, yielding only fragments from the Preclassic in the lowlands. In the Late Preclassic, in the highlands of Guatemala and along the

Pacific slope, the Maya began to erect stone prisms, or stelae, many of which also included now-eroded texts with dates. The oldest in-situ Maya date is found at El Baúl, 37 CE; monuments at Kaminaljuyu, Takalik Abaj, Chalchuapa, and Izapa probably belong to this same period, many depicting human actors in supernatural guise. [Guernsey 2012](#) most recently documents the complex religious scenes recorded on stelae at Izapa, many accompanied by massive altars, some in the form of giant toads. Despite the efforts of [Spinden 1977](#) to argue for a historical interpretation of Maya sculpture, the human figures on Maya stelae were long misinterpreted as anonymous priestly figures; [Schele and Miller 1986](#) thoroughly dispenses with the last of such notions, underscoring the historical and historical-religious subject matter of Maya sculpture. [Houston 2018](#) focuses on the lives of young men, often as expressed on the stela itself. Most Classic sculptural studies are regional and often encompass the entire period; the work at many cities has yet to be addressed systematically. [Miller and Martin 2004](#) offers insights across the Maya region, with special attention to Palenque; see also [Coe and Houston 2015](#). [Robertson 1983–1991](#) provides comprehensive documentation. [Coggins 1975](#) remains the most complete work on Tikal. [Stuart 2000](#) documents the impact of the 4th-century invasion of Teotihuacan across the Maya region, with its greatest impact at Tikal. For Yaxchilan, [Tate 1992](#) is indispensable, as is [O’Neil 2012](#) for Piedras Negras. [Fash 2001](#) should be consulted for Copan sculptural programs, as well as for architecture; [Looper 2003](#) treats Quirigua. [Herring 2005](#) brings a theoretical perspective to the nature of facture and meaning. [Miller and O’Neil 2014](#) provides an extensive bibliography on Maya sculpture across all periods and materials.

### Maya Sculpture, Hand-Held

Hand-held Maya sculpture encompasses jades, shellwork, flint, figurines, and, at Chichen Itza, gold disks. Shell plays an important role, alongside other materials, in [Finamore and Houston 2010](#); jades and other portable objects, including figurines and shell, receive their due in [Pillsbury, et al. 2012](#) and [Martinez del Campo Lanz 2010](#) focuses on mosaic masks from Calakmul and elsewhere. [Houston 2014](#) asks fundamental questions of materiality. For Copan, [Agurcia Fasquelle, et al. 2016](#) identifies artists and explores meaning for the best-documented eccentric flints of the Maya. [Halperin 2014](#) provides a comprehensive overview of Maya figurines; [Freidel, et al. 2010](#) offers the first view of the twenty-three figurines excavated at Waka’. [Lowe and Sellen 2010](#) draws attention to the important Gimeno collection in Berlin in the 21st century; Jaina figurines are essential in most exhibition catalogues in this article: [Schele and Miller 1986](#), [Miller and Martin 2004](#), [Finamore and Houston 2010](#). Chichen Itza goldwork has received new consideration in [Pillsbury, et al. 2017](#).

### Hieroglyphic Inscriptions

What scholars have thought about Maya art has been shaped by hieroglyphic readings, starting with [Stephens 2010](#) (originally published 1841), who thought they would relate Maya history, although this view would be rejected, following [Thompson 1950](#), for over one hundred years. [Proskouriakoff 1960](#) and [Knorozov 1954](#) provide the breakthroughs, recounted in [Coe 1992](#), that would lead to the recognition of Maya hieroglyphic writing as a complete system, one that represented speech. [Stuart 1987](#) underpinned new patterns of decipherment, executed in [Houston, et al. 2006](#). Following on [Schele and Freidel 1990](#), the authors of [Martin and Grube 2008](#) pioneered a new generation of political interpretation of Maya inscriptions, critical to the understanding of power and disruption; see [Baron 2016](#) for a fresh consideration of Maya religious practice. [Tokovinine 2013](#) has returned to the “emblem glyph,” one of the first hieroglyphs whose meaning was deciphered. The scope of extraordinary calligraphy is considered in [Coe and Kerr 1998](#), but more work remains to be done. The four Maya books, each named after the city in which it resides (Dresden, Madrid, Paris, and now Mexico City), postdate the Classic period. For the Dresden, [Bricker and Bricker 2011](#) provides an exhaustive study of its Venus table. For the Madrid, see [Vail and Aveni 2009](#). [Coe, et al. 2015](#) examines every aspect of the manuscript formerly known as the Grolier Codex and now known as Códice of Mexico. [Chuchiak 2010](#) addresses the colonial condition of Maya writing.

## Mixteca art and archaeology – sections from articles in the Oxford bibliographies

### Pre-Hispanic Society

One of the main focal points of studies of pre-Hispanic societies in Oaxaca has been the origin and development of the state in Monte Albán. Since the 1930s, modern excavations by Alfonso Caso and Ignacio Bernal paved the way for large projects of investigations related to settlement patterns throughout the Valley of Oaxaca. Results of these projects have been published in synthetic works such as Blanton 1999 and Marcus and Flannery 1996. Whereas similar synthetic works of regional history during the so-called Postclassic period (1100–1521) have existed since the 1960s (for example, Spores 1967 and Whitecotton 1977), it is only recently that the application of modern historical, philological, and linguistic methods, as well as the accumulation of results from modern research, have made broad, integral views on the history of cultural groups and regions possible. Byland and Pohl 1994 presents a broad view of the Tilantongo Valley history based on both pictographic and archaeological sources, while Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2007 gives an in-depth overview of Mixtec history based on a profound analysis of the Mixtec codices. Similarly, van Doesburg and van Buren 1997 is the first attempt at synthesizing Coixtlahuaca history based on the study of pictorials and colonial alphabetic documents, and Oudijk 2000 integrates information from pictographic and alphabetic texts into a broad historical account of the three main Zapotec regions.

**Balkansky, Andrew K. “Oaxaca.”** In *The Cambridge World Prehistory. Vol. 2, East Asia and the Americas.* Edited by Colin Renfrew and Paul Bahn, 1026–1042. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014. Monte Alban and its interactions with other regions of Oaxaca, including urbanism and states in the highland Mixteca.

**Boone, Elizabeth Hill. *Stories in Red and Black: Pictorial Histories of the Aztecs and Mixtecs.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000.**

In this definitive, well-illustrated book, Boone treats in depth Aztec and Mixtec modes of recording history, analyzes the native practice of writing with images, studies ways in which the histories are structured, and identifies and discusses some of the different types of painted histories, including genealogies, *lienzos*, *tiras*, and annals.

**Boone, Elizabeth Hill, ed. *The Art and Iconography of Late Post-Classic Central Mexico: Proceedings of a Conference at Dumbarton Oaks, October 22 and 23, 1977.* Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Library & Research Collections, 1982.**

Contains essays by leading, internationally renowned scholars on a variety of aspects of Aztec visual culture, including architecture. Some articles are formal analyses, others iconographic studies. Two of the essays focus on the Mixteca-Puebla pictorial style and the Mixtec pictorial sub-style.

**Byland, Bruce E., and John M. D. Pohl. *In the Realm of 8 Deer: The Archaeology of the Mixtec Codices.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994.**

The first systematic project to relate the accounts contained in the Mixtec codices with results from archaeological surveys and toponymic registration in the field.

**Jansen, Maarten, and Gabina Aurora Pérez Jiménez. *Encounter with the Plumed Serpent: Drama and Power in the Heart of Mesoamerica.* Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2007.**

An impressive undertaking bringing together all information from the Mixtec codices into one historical account that is presented as a dramatic historiographical narrative. Considerable discussion exists about certain identifications, such as those of Monte Albán, Lord 4-Jaguar as Quetzalcoatl, and a military campaign of Lord 8-Deer to the Yucatan Peninsula.

**Joyce, Arthur A. 2011. *Mixtecs, Zapotecs, and Chatinos: Ancient Peoples of Southern Mexico*. New York: Wiley-Blackwell.**

This book is a general reader that focuses on the archaeological and contemporary cultures of the Mexican state of Oaxaca. Joyce focuses his writing on the highland Mixtecs and Zapotecs, and the lesser-known Chatinos who reside near the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. Its nine chapters follow these cultures from the rise of civilization through multiple rises and collapses and the Spanish conquest. The concluding chapter examines some of the recent theoretical trends in Oaxacan archaeology.

**Nicholson, H. B., and Eloise Quiñones Keber, eds. *Mixteca-Puebla: Discoveries and Research in Mesoamerican Art and Archaeology*. Culver City, CA: Labyrinthos, 1994.**

A follow-up on an ongoing discussion about the Mixteca-Puebla style and the meaning of its origin and existence. The fifteen essays that compose this book are quite specialized and at times difficult to read, but the issue of the Mixteca-Puebla style is central to the understanding of postclassic Mesoamerica, making the effort worthwhile.

**Perez Rodriguez, Veronica, and Kirk C. Anderson. 2013. *Terracing in the Mixteca Alta, Mexico: Cycles of resistance of an ancient land-use strategy*. *Human Ecology* 41:335–349.**

Agricultural terracing was and continues to be a common practice in the highlands and piedmonts of Mesoamerica. The authors here examine the history, science, practice, and benefits of terracing in the highlands of Oaxaca among the Mixtecs from the beginnings of agriculture to the present day. They also discuss the impact of European colonization, the North American Free Trade Agreement, and the introduction of new crops and technologies on the technique today.

**Rincón Mautner, Carlos. 2005. *Sacred caves and rituals from the northern Mixteca of Oaxaca, Mexico: New revelations*. In *In the maw of the earth monster: Mesoamerican ritual cave use*. Edited by James E. Brady and Keith M. Prufer, 117–152. Austin: Univ. of Texas Press.**

Using recent discoveries in the Mixteca Alta, Rincón outlines the archaeological evidence for cave rituals described by Spanish priests and indigenous codices. In Oaxaca, caves were used for a variety of ceremonies and served as an anchor for each of the pre-Hispanic and indigenous communities. He also documents a rich tradition of cave painting and archaeological discoveries tied to specific personages and events in Mixtec myths.

**Spores, Ronald. *The Mixtecs in Ancient and Colonial Times*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984.**

Classic study of Oaxacan indigenous colonial society that brings together archaeological and historical information in order to portray the historical developments of the Mixtec people over time.

**Spores, Ronald. *The Mixtec Kings and their People*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967.**

The classic study of pre-Hispanic Mixtec society. Although somewhat superseded in certain aspects by modern historical research, it continues to be one of the first references to this region and culture.

**Smith, Michael E., and Francis F. Berdan, eds. *The Postclassic Mesoamerican World*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2003.**

A continuation of the discussions about the origin and meaning of the Mixteca-Puebla style. Based on the idea of world systems, the authors of this volume set out to show how this style, which they divide into three distinct styles, was part of a process of cultural integration that involved most of Mesoamerica in the last centuries before the arrival of the Spaniards.

## Conquest

While there are no studies that specifically focus on the conquest of Oaxaca, recently the idea of a “Spanish” conquest has been questioned, and this has significant consequences for the Oaxacan culture area. As was discussed by various authors in Matthew and Oudijk 2008, the conquest of Mesoamerica was made possible by the structural participation of indigenous people, up to the point

where it may have been a continuation of pre-Hispanic sociohistorical patterns. This process is exemplified by such rulers as Don Gonzalo Mazatzin Moctezuma of Tepexi de la Seda, who conquered the Mixteca Baja and Alta in the name of the king of Spain without the participation of any Spaniard (see Oudijk and Restall 2007). Similarly, the people of Quauhquechollan allied themselves to Jorge de Alvarado on his military campaign in Guatemala, passing through Oaxaca, which was an event painted on a large cloth (see Asselbergs 2008). This new view on the conquest history has spurred new investigations.

### Colonial Society

Being a highly diversified culture area with once-extraordinary numbers of indigenous people, research into Oaxacan colonial history has been on the agenda of scholars for more than a century. The diversity has led to a microhistorical view, recognizing that historical processes often had very different consequences from region to region, or even from town to town. This explains why no Oaxacan colonial history textbook exists, although Romero Frizzi 1996 gets close to such a publication. Still, classic historical research has illuminated the colonial history of distinct regions such as the Valley of Oaxaca (see Taylor 1972), the Mixteca Alta (see Spores 1984), Oaxaca City, and the Sierra Norte (see both Chance 1978 and Chance 1989). The use of colonial documents written in indigenous languages is an aspect added over recent years to historical studies of New Spain, and Oaxaca is no exception to this rule (see Terraciano 2001), although a lot remains to be done. Others use any kind of source, from archaeological artifacts, Spanish documents, and pictographic texts to oral tradition, in a multidisciplinary approach to history (see Zeitlin 2005). Notwithstanding the importance of such regional studies, there is also space and documentation for very specific and detailed (almost personal) accounts of indigenous intermediaries (Yannakakis 2008).

**Terraciano, Kevin. *The Mixtecs of Colonial Oaxaca. Ñudzahui History, Sixteenth Through Eighteenth Centuries*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001.**

This could be called the modern version of Spores 1984, the classic book on Mixtec colonial society. Using a wide array of colonial documents, Terraciano gives a thorough overview of historical developments of indigenous culture—much of it based on the study of Mixtec texts.



## *Nasca art and archaeology – compiled by Donald A. Proulx for Oxford Bibliographies*

### Introduction

The Nasca culture emerged on the south coast of Peru during the Early Intermediate period, dating from about 100 BCE to 650 CE. Its heartland was in the Nazca Valley and the various tributaries comprising this drainage and in the Ica Valley to the north. Although the Nasca are best known for their colorful painted and modeled pottery and fine textiles, their artistic talents were also expressed on a wide variety of other media. Unlike the contemporary Moche on the north coast, the Nasca had a minimal knowledge of metallurgy. The only metal they worked was gold, which they fashioned into ornaments for use in sacred rituals. Other objects were made of shell, particularly of the genus *Spondylus*, or thorny oyster, that was imported from the warmer waters of coastal Ecuador. Gourds were used as containers and often were pyro-engraved with elaborate designs. The Nasca also had wooden artifacts, mostly utilitarian, but some of which were carved or decorated with various motifs. To complete the list of portable art, some artifacts of stone, bone, and cane are known. Nasca feather work, while illustrated in some books, appears to date mostly to later cultures and must be viewed with caution. Art is also expressed in the so-called “Nasca Lines” or geoglyphs, where giant representations of birds, animals, and other creatures were etched onto the floor of the desert, often covering several acres.

More recently, Nasca petroglyphs, or rock art, have been recorded displaying the same motifs found on the pottery and geoglyphs. Each of these art forms is discussed separately. The motifs portrayed in Nasca art fall into two basic categories: sacred and profane, or, in other words, religious and naturalistic. Many Nasca ceramics and textiles, for example, are replete with images of supernatural creatures, often combinations of human (anthropomorphic) and animal/bird/fish forms representing the powerful spirits or forces of the sky, earth, and sea. Research has shown that Nasca shamans used hallucinogenic drugs in religious rituals to intercede with or transform into these nature spirits. Some of the figures in the art may represent these shamans in the process of transformation; others may simply represent the nature spirits themselves. Other motifs include naturalistic representations of the world in which they lived. Birds of many species, plants, animals, reptiles, and fish, as well as objects (e.g., weapons, nets, clothing, jewelry), are common representations. Geometric designs are found on many media, such as ceramics, textiles, and feather work. (Note: Modern scholars prefer to use the spelling “Nasca” for the culture and “Nazca” for geographic references such as the Nazca Valley. However, the two spellings are interchangeable depending on the author or the age of the reference.)

### **Silverman, Helaine. *Ancient Peruvian Art: An Annotated Bibliography*. Reference Publication in Art History. New York: G. K. Hall, 1996.**

A comprehensive annotated bibliography of ancient Peruvian art sources, covering all cultures. Published in 1996, its coverage ends with that date, but it remains the best source on the topic.

Silverman, Helaine, and Donald A. Proulx. *The Nasca. Peoples of America*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002. Provides the most comprehensive description of ancient Nasca society, including sociopolitical organization, religion, architecture, settlement patterns, art (especially ceramics and iconography), headhunting and warfare, and the famous geoglyphs.

### Ceramics

Nasca art is best exemplified by the polychrome painted and modeled pottery that has come to represent this ancient Peruvian society. The Nasca culture developed directly out of the Paracas culture (ca. 800–100 BCE), distinguished by only minor changes in the manner in which the pottery was decorated. The Paracas people used post-fired resin paints, whereas the Nasca developed slip painting, which was applied to the vessels before firing and became fused to the surface. In all other

respects, Nasca culture was simply a continuation of Paracas. Many of the motifs on Nasca pottery had their origins in the Paracas culture.

### Discovery of the Style

The first-known Nasca ceramics appeared in Europe in 1842 but were unrecognized until 1898, when a descriptive report was published by Jules Hamy ([Hamy 1898](#)). Other ceramics collected by a Dr. Macedo became part of the collections of the Museum für Völkerkunde in Berlin. The first Nasca vessel to be illustrated is in [Hamy 1882](#). In the 1890s, a young German scholar, Max Uhle, saw several pieces of this beautiful polychrome pottery in the Berlin museum. When he began archaeological fieldwork in South America, he hoped to find the source of this unusual pottery. In 1901 he discovered a cemetery in the Ica Valley on the south coast of Peru that contained graves with these ceramics. Over the next few years he located more of this pottery in the Nazca Valley to the south of Ica. His “new-found style of Ica” was later recognized as the hallmark of a new culture that is now called Nasca, and Uhle is considered by many as the “discoverer” of this civilization. Uhle’s own account of his discovery was published in [Uhle 1914](#). [Joyce 1913](#) was the first publication to use the name “Nazca” for this new style. Uhle’s Nasca collections were deposited in the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley, where they were studied and illustrated by a number of scholars. [Kroeber, et al. 1924](#) is an account of the Nasca pieces from the Ica Valley, and [Gayton, et al. 1927](#) reports on the collection from the Nazca Valley. A description and illustration of the thirty-two Nasca gravelots excavated by Uhle in the Ica Valley is in [Proulx 1970](#).

### Classification and Chronology

The Nasca pottery collections excavated or purchased by Uhle between 1901 and 1905 and deposited in the Hearst Museum at the University of California, Berkeley, became the foundation for the chronological classification that is still used today. [Uhle 1913](#) is one of the first attempts at developing a chronological sequence for the south coast. [Kroeber, et al. 1924](#) and [Gayton, et al. 1927](#) are the first systematic studies of the Uhle collection, developing the first classification and chronological sequence of the ceramic style. [Kroeber 1956](#) is a later refinement of the author’s classification, before his colleague John Howland Rowe continued his work. Rowe’s student, Lawrence Dawson, using Uhle’s gravelots as units of contemporaneity, developed a nine-phase sequence based on similiary seriation (published in [Rowe 1960](#)) that was much more sophisticated than the sequence of Early, Middle, and Late Nasca in [Sawyer 1961](#). Rowe’s students further refined this chronology, with Donald Proulx ([Proulx 1968](#)) subdividing phases 3 and 4, Richard Roark ([Roark 1965](#)) investigating the beginning of the proliferous elements in phase 5, Steven Wegner subdividing phase 6, and Dorothy Menzel researching phases 7 to 9. [Blagg 1975](#) convincingly demonstrates that there were several contemporaneous substyles in phase 5. Although much of this sequence has withstood the test of time, some modifications have occurred. Phases 8 and 9 are now believed to date to the Middle Horizon when Wari influences affected the south coast. More importantly, it now seems that many of the phases overlap, especially phases 1 and 2. [Carmichael 2015](#) has demonstrated that characteristic traits used by Dawson to differentiate phases 1 and 2 actually overlap. It also appears that regional differences must be considered when examining the chronology, since each tributary has differences in their sequences. Obtaining absolute dates for the Nasca culture and its associated art style was not possible until radiocarbon dating was developed in the late 1940s. Prior to that, archaeologists and art historians had to depend on relative dating. In the early 21st century, we have access to a large number of samples that have been tested by increasingly more accurate radiocarbon dating techniques. In general, these have supported the earlier seriation sequence but have also provided highly accurate absolute dates. [Rowe 1965](#) is one of the earliest critiques of the methodology, while [Unkel and Kromer 2009](#) is one of the most recent.

### Technology

The Nasca produced a wide variety of ceramic forms. A discussion of these and a chart can be found in [Kroeber and Collier 1998](#) (figure 90) and [Proulx 2006](#) (figure 2.2). Construction techniques used by Nasca potters are best described in [Carmichael 1986](#) and [Carmichael 1998](#). Nasca pottery displayed up to fifteen colors on a single vessel; the identification of the mineral sources is best outlined in [Vaughn, et al. 2005](#), and the source of the clay in the making of the pottery is described in [Vaughn and Neff 2004](#). [Dawson 1964](#) is a seminal article on the technique of slip casting for the construction of the tubes for pan pipes although the validity of the slip casting technique has recently been disputed by [Gruszczynska-Ziolkowska 2016](#).

**Proulx, Donald A. *A Sourcebook of Nasca Ceramic Iconography: Reading a Culture through Its Art*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2006.**

Contains a brief description of Nasca pottery construction techniques and a chart illustrating the major pottery shapes for the entire sequence.

### Iconography

Iconography refers to the subject matter or meaning of art—the visual images, symbols, or modes of representation seen on the artifacts produced by a group of people. Each ancient society had its own subject matter and standardized rules (or canons) of depiction that distinguish them from other societies. The Nasca produced complex iconography that can be seen especially on their beautiful polychrome painted and modeled pottery and on their elaborate textiles. The motifs or themes range from naturalistic creatures (birds, animals, plants, etc.) to complex supernatural beings representing aspects of their religious beliefs and cosmic view. Scholars have been fascinated with these representations since the pottery was first brought to Europe in the 19th century. The following three subsections examine the historical (early) attempts to interpret the iconography; modern (since the 1970s) scholarship that has used archaeology, ethnography, art history, and mythology as guides; and examples of several specific motifs that have been studied by scholars.

### Studies of Specific Motifs

The motifs portrayed on Nasca ceramics range from naturalistic (birds, animals, plants, fish, etc.) to a myriad of supernatural creatures such as the Anthropomorphic Mythical Being, the Mythical Killer Whale, the Horrible Bird, and many others. It is this latter category that has been the focus of detailed studies. Scenes of ritual activity, while rare in Nasca art, have also been studied. [Allen 1981](#) focuses on the feline mouth mask, trophy heads, and the shift from naturalistic to proliferous motifs. [Carmichael 1992](#) concentrates on marine symbolism and the relationship of the Killer Whale, Spotted Cat, and trophy head motifs to water and fertility. [Carmichael 1994](#) argues that the Harvester motif represents the transformation from life to death. [Wolfe 1981](#) analyzes changes in the Spotted Cat and the Horrible Bird motifs. And recently [Carmichael 2016](#) has argued that the Nasca Anthropomorphic Mythical Being originated in the Paracas Oculate Being whose origins were in the Ocucaje Basin of the Ica Valley. The merging of these creatures resulted in the severed head cult (huayo), which became the major focus of Nasca religious beliefs.

**Allen, Catherine J. "The Nasca Creatures: Some Problems of Iconography." *Anthropology* 5.1 (1981): 43–70.**

An analysis of mythical creatures in Nasca iconography, and the concept that art is a self-contained symbolic system. Examines the change from the monumental to proliferous style of portrayal.

### Metal

Surprisingly, the only metal used by the Nasca was gold, in contrast to the contemporary Moche culture on the north coast, which produced some of the most complex metal objects in the ancient Andes. ([Orefici 2016](#) claims that in addition to gold, the Nasca manufactured artifacts from both silver and

copper[ however, the author does not authenticate this argument with any illustration or description of objects made of these materials). One of the earliest studies of gold artifacts on the south coast is in [Lothrop 1937](#). An early-21st-century analysis of Paracas and Nasca gold artifacts ([Schlosser, et al. 2009](#)) confirms that the gold was local and that any impurities were likely accidental. No artifacts made of copper or any other metals are known. [Stöllner 2009](#) argues that the gold is alluvial and that mining was not present in the Nasca period. Gold was used to make mouth masks, headbands, and other ritual objects worn by shamans impersonating supernatural creatures. The gold was beaten into very thin sheets, and designs were produced by embossing (*repoussé*), engraving, or etching. The most complex Nasca gold artifact known is a warrior figurine in the Ebnöter Collection, Schaffhausen, Germany ([Schlosser, et al. 2009](#), figure 24.1). Although somewhat dated, [Tushingham, et al. 1979](#) provides a useful summary of the techniques used by Andean metal smiths, but little specifically on the Nasca. [Schlosser, et al. 2009](#) argues that welding and soldering were used. Most pre-Columbian art books illustrate a few Nasca gold artifacts, but Paracas and Nasca gold ornaments are difficult to separate; [Lavalle 1986](#) has a nice selection. Other examples are in [Mujica Gallo 1967](#), but the collections from the Museo de Oro in Lima must be used with caution, since [Bruhns and Kelker 2010](#) (pp. 61–66) claims that 85 percent of the objects are fakes, and others have the wrong attribution.

### Geoglyphs (The Nasca Lines)

Among the major accomplishments of the Nasca was the construction of gigantic ground drawings, or geoglyphs, on the floor of the desert near their habitations. In this area of the south coast, the desert is covered by small stones that have oxidized over time, forming a thin crust of dark patina that contrasts with the lighter sand beneath. The Nasca made images of natural creatures (birds, monkey, spider) and supernatural beings (the mythical Killer Whale) by removing the oxidized stones to form the designs. The subjects of these “biomorphs” are identical to the motifs seen on Nasca pottery, except that these designs were constructed on a huge scale, with many of the creatures covering an area of several acres. [Hadingham 1987](#) has a nice comparison of the pottery iconography with the biomorphs. Other patterns consist of linear and geometric forms: huge trapezoids, spirals, and single and parallel lines running for kilometers across the desert. Scores of books have been written on the “Nasca Lines.” [Aveni 2000](#) presents one of the best overall summaries, and an earlier edited volume, [Aveni 1990](#), contains contributions by a number of scholars on their earlier research. Although her astronomical theory has been largely negated by more-recent research, Maria Reiche devoted her life to investigating the lines, and [Reiche 1985](#) and [Kern and Reiche 1974](#) contain some of the best illustrations and measurements of the designs. In respect to the art and its meaning, the early-21st-century work of Markus Reindel and his team is currently the best source (see [Reindel and Wagner 2009](#) and [Lambers 2006](#)). Chapter 7 in [Silverman and Proulx 2002](#) is also an excellent summary.

## *Moche art and archaeology – compiled by Margaret A. Jackson for Oxford bibliographies*

### Introduction

The Moche of the North Coast of Peru (c. 100–800 CE) are well known for having produced artworks of impressive technical virtuosity and complex figural imagery. Moche cultural remains are found throughout their coastal homelands, with works in the form of monumental pyramids and temple complexes extensively decorated with polychrome murals, elaborately modeled and painted ceramic vessels, elite tombs, sophisticated textiles, and metalwork. Yet despite abundant art and architecture, the Moche are essentially an “archaeological culture,” meaning that all interpretations depend heavily on archaeological findings to contextually anchor the group within the larger trajectory of Andean culture history. The only direct evidence of Moche is in the form of biological remains, material artifacts, and a rich corpus of visual imagery. This results in a bibliographic source list heavily infused with archaeological method and visual analysis. Interpretations typically depend on an interdisciplinary evidence derived from archaeological, ethnographic, ethnohistoric, linguistic, and art historical methods, and the interpretive literature for Moche often falls along disciplinary lines; most conclusions represent a synthesis of approaches. Broadly speaking, scholars of Moche art tend to focus on articulation of contextual parameters, such as architectural, social, and environmental factors, as well as the role of human agency in the creation of meaning and message, versus hermeneutic explorations of internal structures and meanings, graphic and formal analyses, semiotic relationships, symbolism, and iconology. No bibliography is definitive and multiple points of entry are possible for the interested reader. Many articles derive from larger collections of essays in edited volumes; the reader is encouraged to investigate those expanded works for additional essays on related material.

### General Overviews

Moche was never a unified empire, despite evidence for long standing political alliances; thus, it is incorrect to speak of Moche as if it were a monolithic culture. Instead, it appears the Moche were a collection of interdependent autonomous or semiautonomous polities, with numerous religious and urban centers located throughout North Coast valleys. Moche elites apparently shared religion and strategies of governance, and the people employed common subsistence methods for agriculture, fishing, and production of household goods. Work by Rafael Larco Hoyle ([Larco Hoyle 2001](#), originally published 1938–1939) stands as the earliest comprehensive attempt at an overall description of Moche as discrete cultural entity. Colonial sources support the idea of venerable lineage clans in the coastal valleys, with intermarriage among elites, competition for resources, occasional hostility or warfare, and varying degrees of cooperation for maintenance of irrigation systems. Several sources elaborate on these cultural systems in synthetic manner; [Castillo, et al. 2008](#), for example, presents overviews of political organization based on art and archaeology. Moche centers of political dominance seem to have shifted over time; [Shimada 1994](#) and [Bawden 1996](#) discuss case studies for later Moche sites, such as Pampa Grande and Galindo. Art and visual culture have played an unusually important role in interpretations of Moche culture, politics, and ideology; formal analyses and thematic overviews by [Benson 1972](#), [Donnan 1978](#), and [Hocquenghem 1987](#) opened the field for later works employing interdisciplinary approaches such as semasiography and narrative structure ([Jackson 2008](#); [Quilter 2011](#)).

**Bawden, Garth. *The Moche*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996.**

Synthesizing Moche studies ten years after the discovery of royal tombs at Sipan and asserting that the fundamental purpose of Moche artwork was to affirm and reinforce Moche elites' right to rule, the author's work on the developmental sequence of Moche culture is especially tuned to its final phases and the importance of the Moche Valley site of Galindo.

**Benson, Elizabeth. *The Worlds of the Moche*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012.**

Benson's reprisal of her earlier work but with benefit of four decades of additional data and discovery. She includes excellent photos of significant art and architecture with expanded explanation of familiar Moche artistic themes.

**Quilter, Jeffrey. *The Moche of Ancient Peru: Media and Messages*. Boston: Peabody Museum, Harvard, 2011.**

Well illustrated with mostly images of artworks in the Peabody Museum, this general introduction provides ready access to the current state of Moche studies, addressing the relationship between archaeology and interpretations of imagery.

## Iconography

The Moche developed an elaborate, systematized pictorial code, whose symbols had well-understood meanings that were used to communicate particular narratives, sets of ideas, and ideological constructs ([Jackson 2008](#)). Among the distinctive aspects of Moche art are the recurrence and continuity of specific pictorial images and motifs throughout the culture's long history, despite diverse media and geographic locations. Interpretations of Moche imagery have tended to focus on what is perceived as pictorial veracity, with scholars at first focusing on the most literal readings of the art, approaching it as if it presented snapshots of Moche life. Ultimately, Moche's many pictorial inconsistencies invited more nuanced consideration.

## Early Studies of Moche Art

In the colonial period, very little was known about the deep culture history of Andean people. The Incas shared oral histories about themselves, and several contemporaneous regional histories of non-Inca communities were chronicled, however, people or polities that occurred more than a few centuries before the colonial period were in many cases forgotten or left to the realm of myth. Originally labeled "Early Chimú" by researchers, Moche was thought to have been the direct predecessor of colonial, North Coast Chimú, although it was, even then, seen as stylistically and iconographically distinct ([Kutscher 1950](#); [Kutscher 1983](#); [Lehmann 1924](#)). Large collections of well-preserved ceramics allowed for basic descriptions ([Larco Hoyle 2001](#); [Tello 1938](#); [Wasserman-San Blas 1938](#)). Before the advent of detailed archaeological data and carbon-14 testing, these studies were used to create relative chronologies and typologies. Field studies such as that by [Strong and Evans 1952](#) represent useful applications of ceramic seriation as basis for cultural attribution based on "diagnostic" features of large cohorts of ceramics.

**Donnan, Christopher B. "The Thematic Approach to Moche Iconography." *Journal of Latin American Lore* 1.2 (1975): 147–162.**

The Thematic Approach, as first outlined by Donnan in this essay, works on the idea that Moche artists depicted a limited number of well-known social narratives, whose characters could be presented with greater or lesser degrees of complexity, but who, despite minor stylistic differences, all pertained to the same stories.

**Donnan, Christopher B., and Donna McClelland. *Moche Fineline Painting: Its Evolution and Its Artists*. Los Angeles: UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History, 1999.**

Based on many years of careful documentation and lavishly illustrated with drawings by Donna McClelland, this book uses a particular stylistic type, Moche Fineline painted ceramics, as a means of effecting content analysis, approaching questions of artistic authorship and hypothesizing change over time.

## Interpretations of Moche Pictorial Imagery

Despite a limited range of themes, Moche pictorial imagery presents a hugely complex repertory, sparking ferocious debate among scholars. Several key areas are presented here.

### Priests, Gods, and Warriors

Warriors, combat scenes, and images of captives are recurrent themes in Moche art. Referred to by some as the Warrior Narrative, the scenes of face-to-face confrontations, humiliation of prisoners, and images showing the ultimate fate of defeated warriors as sacrificial victims, are seen as a prelude to and part of the larger Sacrifice Narrative (Presentation Theme), as originally articulated by [Donnan 1978](#). Within the artwork—and notwithstanding any sort of political or territorial motivations—warfare is presented as occurring within an ideological, mythologized, or ritual framework and therefore linked to religious practice and supplication of supernatural beings. There is considerable disagreement over who and how many those deities were; their identities are elusive, given the apparent ease with which visual images are modified from one iteration to another and the ways in which principal characters are appended with various accoutrements. In some instances, victorious warriors take on supernatural attributes (such as fangs or other non-naturalistic traits), perhaps to indicate high political status and possibly to signal a degree of spirit empowerment. [Quilter 2008](#) points out that in actual practice, a relatively high degree of physical strength and aggression would be required to successfully capture an adversary. Depictions of so-called priestly figures are also generally ambiguous; in these, zoomorphic traits can become signifiers, and inanimate sometimes becomes animate. In many cases, narrative scenes point toward what are thought to have been actual events, carried out in real architectural space; analyses of step-platform pyramid motifs ([De Bock 2003](#)) and the Mountain Sacrifice scene (articulated by [Zighelboim 1995](#)) give insight on how these places were reduced to recognizable visual signs. Osteological evidence ([Bourget 2016](#); [Verano 2001](#)) supports the idea that human sacrifice occurred. Studies of the Huaca de La Luna temple shed further light on how such specialized architecture functioned ([Campana and Ricardo Morales 1997](#)). Warfare, warriors, the capture of prisoners destined for sacrifice, and their eventual dispatch by priests occupied a great deal of artistic energy. In some instances, realistic ceramic arts give an idea of who the high-status individuals might have been ([Donnan 2004](#)). In other cases, the visual vocabulary is densely compounded, warriors have animal features, captives may be shown as deer ([Donnan 1997](#)), or gods as fanged supernaturals ([Gölte 1994](#); [Giersz, et al. 2005](#)).

### Death, Sacrifice, and Ritual Practice

Death and regeneration are frequent themes in Moche art—indeed, colonial sources suggest that veneration of ancestors comprised a major part of Andean religious observation. Burials for Moche elites were lavish and funerary rites were, apparently, huge events, as demonstrated by numerous royal tombs and imagery such as that depicted in the Moche Burial Theme ([Donnan and McClelland 1979](#)). Burial rituals for the highest elites sometimes included additional individuals, who were killed or sacrificed so that they might accompany the deceased on the journey ([Arsenault 1993](#); [Bourget 2001](#)). These individuals appear in the artwork, as well as in tombs; scenes picturing the Dance of the Dead ([Hocquenghem 1987](#)) sometimes show happy processions of skeletal figures playing musical instruments. Sacrifice of war captives seems also to have been conceived within an ideological framework of death and regeneration. Even modest burials show concern for the continued life of the deceased in the afterworld through inclusion food, clothing and weaving and hunting implements. Some artworks show these events in realistic ways; others refer to them in very abstract terms. Visual reiteration of particularly important sacrificial and funerary events occasionally appear in monumental form, such as in the murals at Pañamarca ([Bonavía 1961](#); [Morales Gamarra 2003](#)); various aspects of the rituals were apparently singled out for visual elaboration ([Cordy-Collins 1992](#)).

### Sex and Phallic Imagery

Moche's vivid representations of living humans, animals, and skeletons engaged in sex has often been remarked. Authors' attitudes about the images tend to reflect the sexual attitudes of their times and their own personal biases. Interpretations range from seeing the sex scenes as depraved ([Posnansky 1925](#)) to symbolic of death and renewal ([Bergh 1993](#); [Bourget 2006](#); [Weismantel 2004](#)), humorous ([Larco Hoyle 1965](#)), or merely pragmatic ([Gebhard 1970](#)). Although no real consensus exists, the presence of highly exaggerated genitalia, ithyphallic skeletons, and so forth suggests that these images were not intended as straightforward depictions of ordinary sexual encounters.

### Recognizing Gender and Gender Identity

Several authors address the question of gender identification and identity in Moche society. Scholars initially associated particular suites of objects, such as weapons and weaving implements, and certain types of clothing, like long tunics, headdresses, and earspools, with male and female sex and gender roles (e.g., [Cole 2006](#); [Hocquenghem and Lyon 1980](#); [Scher 2012](#)). Assumptions about gender and gender identifiers have sometimes combined to allow insights into regional identities ([Cordy-Collins 2001](#)). Other scholars problematize the question itself, inquiring if the male/female binary is the only gender division recognizable in Moche art ([Klein and Quilter 2001](#)), in some cases, pointing to gender fluid iconography, where meanings may be related to status roles rather than to biological sex ([Williams 2006](#)). Are costume attributes in artwork to be trusted as unselfconscious social markers, or were artists deliberately employing them for their symbolic values?

### Archaeology, Material Culture, and Moche Society

The precise nature of Moche social organization remains speculative, despite an expansive growth of research. Although Moche rulers were very likely a hereditary class of elites—perhaps warrior-priests, as some scholars suggest ([Strong 1947](#))—Moche stratified society was considerably more multifaceted than such labels imply. Several distinct social roles or offices are recognizable in the archaeological record, including at least one extremely high-status office held by women ([Donnan and Castillo 1992](#)). Excavations have significantly increased our understanding of labor and occupational specialization. The artwork suggests that we should eventually find evidence of healers, mid-level elites, artisans, transporters, farmers, and fishermen. Collective survival depended on corporate works projects, such as canal maintenance, and in most cases, neighboring communities had no option but to develop and maintain working relationships. Long-standing corporate kin groups doubtlessly formed the basis for alliances and interconnections; associated political economies are suggested by archaeological analyses of material remains, cultigens, workshops, adobe manufacture, trade patterns, and a range of other indicia.

### Moche High-Status Tombs

Early Moche scholars debated whether Moche pictorialism should be interpreted as a mimetically accurate depiction of Moche life. In many regards, its images seem realistic, allowing ready association with quotidian matters. Yet it also retains a high proportion of scenes and images with fantastical creatures and embedded elements that could not possibly be real. It was not until a series of high-status Moche tombs came to light that it became clear that many of the personages depicted in Moche art corresponded to specific people or social roles that were acted out by particular individuals. In some cases, particular costumes and accoutrements associated with high-status individuals in tombs were shown to correspond to recurrent characters shown in artwork, most importantly, those shown in the Presentation Scene (also known as the Sacrifice Scene), as articulated by [Donnan 1978](#).



## Sipan, Lambayeque Valley

It is hard to overstate the impact of the royal tombs of Sipan upon Moche studies. Containing multiple individuals, accompanied by a hoard of spectacular art and personal possessions, these tombs revealed a level of wealth and status hierarchy previously unsuspected. Description and photos first appeared in National Geographic ([Alva 1988](#); [Alva 1990](#)) after a high-profile looting episode in the Lambayeque Valley. The occupant of the tomb was equated with Figure A of the Presentation Scene, based on his costume and possessions ([Donnan 1988](#)). Subsequent years of excavations led to multiple tombs ([Alva and Donnan 1993](#)) and the construction of an excellent museum in nearby Chiclayo, Peru.

## San Jose de Moro, Jequetepeque Valley

Less than five years after Sipan, archaeologists discovered high-status burials at San Jose de Moro, in the Jequetepeque Valley. Located one valley south of Lambayeque, the identification of yet another member of the elite cast of characters found in the Presentation Scene points to a shared social narrative or ideology. The group of tombs at San Jose de Moro correlate most closely to Figure C, a hunchback priestess ([Donnan and Castillo 1992](#), [Donnan and Castillo 1994](#), [Castillo, et al. 1994](#)). It is significant that the same cast of characters appears to have been meaningful in more than one location, and that at least one principal character was a high-status woman.

## Various Tombs

As work has advanced, it is apparent that high-status Moche individuals adopted specific social roles or public personae, which they manifested in the form of particular costume elements, jewelry and headdresses. One of the earliest recovered from controlled archaeological context was the Warrior Priest, in the Viru Valley ([Strong 1947](#)). Additional elite tombs have been found in the Chicama Valley ([Franco 2008](#)), Dos Cabezas ([Donnan 2007](#)), and the site of Ucupe ([Bourget 2014](#), [Atwood 2010](#)). Meaningful or symbolic iconography was keyed to status and identity, as Moche's high-status tombs make clear.

## Architecture

Moche's highly charged iconography operated within specialized built environments, keyed to religious and social practices. The continuance of Moche ideology depended heavily on agency and enacted ritual. Public architecture, and especially monumental structures like pyramids, stood as physical embodiments of social identity, symbolically located at the junctures of political power and religious practice. While extended archaeological investigations expand what is known about the built environment, studies of pictorial representation draw ready parallels to it. Clarification of architectural space has been a slow process. Over time, archaeologists working at major monuments, such as at Huaca Cao Viejo/El Brujo ([Franco and Vilela Puelles 2005](#); [Franco, et al. 2003](#); [Mujica, et al. 2007](#)) and Huaca de La Luna ([Uceda, et al. 2016](#); [Uceda and Tufinio 2003](#)), have made steady progress. The built environment is reflected in small arts, as [Donnan 1975](#), an investigation of miniatures, and [Wiersema 2015](#), a comparison of architectural structures and ceramic depictions, makes clear.

## Ceramic Arts

Moche ceramics bear a distinct, recognizable style, popular in museum collections worldwide. As part of an extremely long-lived artistic tradition in northern Peru, most of the major motifs and forms familiar to Moche derive from earlier epochs, albeit in stylistically distinct manifestations ([Donnan 1992](#)). Objects and images played a dynamic role in the maintenance and stability of social fabric, constituting an integral element of Moche's overall communication strategy. Their artistic consistency makes a range of

inquiries possible and provides a large iconographic sample for study. Lasting eight centuries or more, the Moche ceramic style was produced and maintained by very specific technological traditions. Controlled archaeological excavations allow for testing of assertions that were previously not possible due to the lack of provenance for most of the artwork. Sequences such as Moche Phases 1–5, originally seen by Larco Hoyle 2001 (vol. 2) as temporal indicators, are increasingly regarded as regional or spatial correlates. Excavations at Moche ceramic workshops allow us to understand many of the production and firing techniques used by Moche ceramists in the Moche Valley (Armas Asmad, et al. 1993; Bernier 2008), Chicama Valley (Attarian 1996; Jackson 2008; Russell and Jackson 2001) and Lambayeque Valley (Shimada 1998; Shimada 2001). Ceramic imagery generally followed well-established artistic conventions that changed very little over time. Iconographic standardization is increasingly evident in later periods, and mold use seems to have played an important part (Jackson 2002). Stylistic differences are also seen as possibly indicative of pressures exerted by local factors, peculiar to specific valleys or polities (Castillo and Jaime 2010). With such a distinctive artistic signature, and as the basis for so much of what we believe about Moche, it is perhaps not surprising that a significant portion of scholarly attention focuses on ceramic art and iconography.