

September 12th, 2013

Olmecs (1200-600 BC)

San Lorenzo (1200 BC)

La Venta (1000-600 BC)

First high Mesoamerican culture.

Teotihuacan (1-750)

Extremely widespread and influential.

Pilgrimage center that expanded into a city and was then abandoned due to a loss of resources.

Built according to the four cardinal directions.

Split into neighbourhoods that specialized in specific arts.

Location of first Mesoamerican palaces.

Lots of bulky, square-like sculptures.

El Tajín (500-1000)

Lots of ball game-related relics.

The Maya

Only Pre-Hispanic culture with a complete written language. It was based on phonetic symbols.

Very sophisticated calendar system.

Emphasis on rulers and warrior culture with blood sacrifice. Bloodletting was also a very popular ritual.

The ball game was meant to keep the cosmos, fertility, agriculture, etc. going. It appeared in every Mesoamerican culture. A lot of the time, the loser of the ball game was sacrificed.

Tikal was a Mayan city state. It was abandoned in the 9th century, but no other Maya centre was occupied for such a long period of time.

Aztecs:

Largest empire

Successors to the Toltecs.

Worshipped the hummingbird god Huitzilopochtli and Tlaloc.

Moved to an island and built Tenochtitlan.

Very large canal system that faces the four cardinal directions.

Mountain as object of worship was fundamental to spirituality. Outdoor worship was extremely popular, and usually took place in an atrium in front of the pyramid.

Quetzalcoatl and Tlaloc were important deities.

Mural painting was one of the main forms of representational art, but most of it is lost. It is usually religious.

Olmec Colossal Head

Most famous Olmec monuments.

Might have represented a ruler or ruler-priest.

Headdress represents a deity, resting on top of the head like a guardian angel.
Headdresses would later expand into much larger, more elaborate head-wear.

There are holes all over the heads because they were vandalized whenever the ruler fell out of favour.

Sculpture in the round was a very sophisticated technique in Mesoamerica. This, plus the high degree of naturalism, might signify a master-apprentice system. Shallower carvings represent weakness.

The lips' pout represents divinity.

Temple of the Sun

Represents a mountain in the vicinity.

Built on top of a cave or spring, which is the place of life and death.

Uses the talud/tablero style, in which the edges alternate between slopes and straight walls.

Only priests could climb to the top, where a shrine sat.

Dresden Codex

One of the few surviving codex. Many visiting friars burned everything they found.

Contained almanacs, history, poetry, etc.

Usually made out of deer skin or bark.

Pictorial and written content are extremely similar.

Entire Codex is available online.

Temple of the Great Jaguar

Much taller and narrower than the ones in Central Mexico because they were in the rainforest and stick up over the trees. The cone on the roof also served this purpose.

Also served as a tomb.

The small shrine on top would usually hold an image. This is where the ritual would take place.

Coronation Stone of Moctezuma II:

Moctezuma II was the second last ruler.

Typical style of Aztec carving, which later appears in the sculpture of the colonial period.

(Tequitui)

Covered in glyphs that tell you when he was crowned.

Bevelled, mosaic-like style.