
Clothing and necklaces of shell and human and canine mandibles in Teotihuacan (México)

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Résumé

The prehispanic native of Ancient Mexico has a narrow relation with the environment and the exploitation of fauna is a reflect of this relation. The most useful bone remains to elaborate artefacts were flat bones (scapula or parietal), long bones (tibia, femur, radius or metacarpus) or irregular bones (mandible). Both animal and human bones were used: human bones could be manipulated because they were the biggest bones in Mexico before the contact with the Hispanic world, but also because of different symbolic aspects.

In the city of Teotihuacan (dated from 1st century BC to 5th century AD) several archaeological findings related to the work of bone have been documented. In the Temple of Quetzalcoatl (Temple of Feathered Serpent), during the archaeological works of 1988 and 1989, directed by Ruben Cabrera, Saburo Sugiyama and George Cowgill, a series of burials were found being part of an offering. This offering contained eighty burials (individuals and multiples) located symmetrically to the fourth cardinal points, inside and outside the temple. It has been interpreted as an offering deposited in honour of the temple.

Likewise, during the archaeological works, mandibles of human and canines (dogs and coyotes) associated to the burials G4 and G5 were discovered. They were placed as clothing accompanied by beads with human teeth shape made on seashells. In this study we want to focus on the importance of their manufacture and the symbolism of teeth, mandibles and maxillae for Teotihuacan people.

Mots-Clés: Bone industry, seashells, human bones, Teotihuacan, offering

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