

Background Knowledge and Notes

The African Influence in Mexico, Brenda Hargrove

Lesson One

- ▶ The Olmecs, the "Mother Culture," flourished in the southern region of Mesoamerica during 1500-400BC
- ▶ Mesoamerica includes Mexico, parts of Honduras, parts of Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Belize
- ▶ "Olmec" is not the original name; called Olmec later



Monument # 1



Replica @ University
of Texas at Austin





Xalapa Museum (Veracruz)

First head found in 1938 by a Smithsonian ethnologist, Matthew Stirling



Personalities of Political Figures



All wore helmets



A mysterious culture

Used the number "0"
Had a calendar

CULTURA OLMECA

Difusión del estilo y los símbolos olmecas

El estilo olmeca se define con base en los rasgos faciales, en los símbolos y en el significado de las esculturas que proceden del área llamada "metropolitana" o "médica", en Veracruz, debido a que concentran el mayor número de monumentos de piedra. Tal estilo se establece entre 1200 y 600 a.C. Los rasgos y los símbolos que lo caracterizan se difunden de distintos museos, durante el florecimiento de los sitios metropolitanos, o en tiempos post-olmeca. La presencia olmeca, tan distante de sus tierras en la costa Veracruzana, da testimonio de la amplia difusión de la primera civilización y de la cultura más poderosa en el preclásico mesoamericano.



Imagen sobresaliente en el arte olmeca

Una de las imágenes más frecuentes en el arte olmeca de pequeño formato, en especial en hachas y mascarones, es la de un rostro que combina rasgos humanos, animales y fantásticos, a saber: labios curvados de comadreja, ojos, el labio superior vuelto hacia arriba, nariz plana y chuta; ojos oblicuos inclinados hacia adentro; cejas de "flama" o formadas por placas de forma sinuosa, frente hendida en Y al centro y oronas largas y angostas. Este rostro, que no tiene semejanza en la naturaleza se ha llamado "monstruo jaguar" o "jaguar humanizado", es distintivamente olmeca. Se han encontrado ejemplares con estos rasgos fundamentales en Veracruz, Tabasco, Oaxaca, Guerrero, Puebla, Morelos, el Estado de México y en el área maya hasta Centroamérica. Su amplia distribución revela la importancia de esta imagen; las diferencias de representación indican que se trata de distintos seres sobrenaturales de la religión olmeca.

2010/07/21

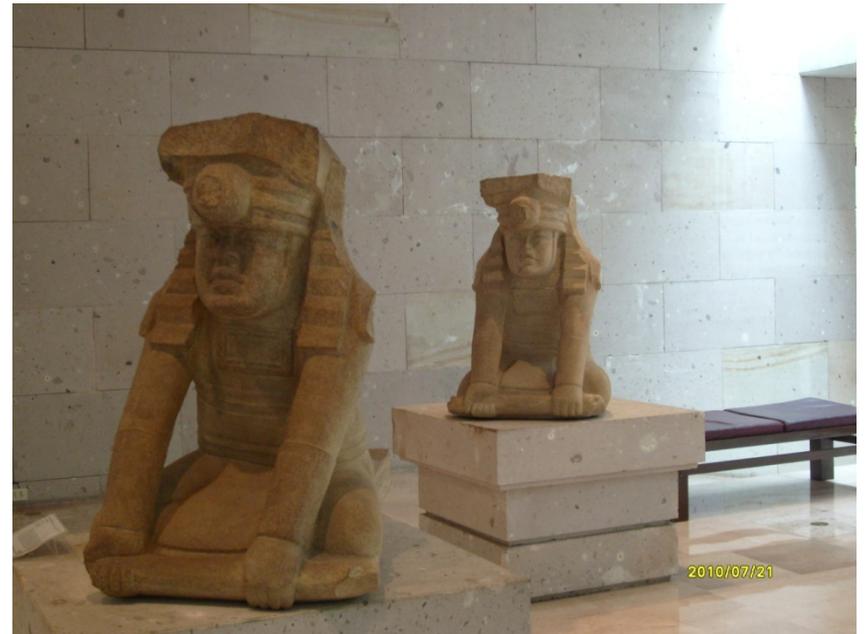


Hieroglyphs have not yet been deciphered

Stelae: tell the stories
of history



The Twins



The heads are made of volcanic rock



There are 14 found in all

- ▶ First, believed to have come from Africa; then maybe Mongolian
- ▶ Origin and disappearance not clear, but influenced later cultures across Mesoamerica



Xalapa, Veracruz
Museum of
Anthropology



2010/07/20





2010/07/21





2010/07/21



2010/07/21



2010/07/21





2010/07/21





Art denotes
harmony,
spiritual
force,
contemplation
without metal
tools

The Jaguar is
considered a
sacred animal

The serpent
is depicted in
art

Jade masks





2010/07/21





2010/07/21





2010/07/21



Lesson Two: Colonial Period

Over 250 million slaves brought to Mexico

Most intermarried into the culture



- ▶ Caste paintings illustrate 16 combinations of intermarriage (developed by the Spanish)
- ▶ Stereotypical representations



José de Ibarra, mulatto artist, helped to create caste paintings



Tzompantli—skulls of African slaves and other prisoners found



Tzompantli today (Mexico today)



Importation of Africans began in 1501, authorized by Spain

By 1793, the number of slaves had declined, but the majority had mixed with whites and Indians



Africans depicted as independence supporters

- ▶ Artists used comical elements to emphasize current events
- ▶ Juan Garrido, African, fought with Cortez to conquer Tenochtitlan, modern-day Mexico City



Juan Correa, mulatto artist who painted La Virgen de Guadalupe



The elements of indigenous people,
Spanish, Asian and African combined to
give life to a new multicultural and
multiethnic society in “New Spain”



Afro-Mexican—“La tercera raza”

- ▶ Began to be recognized in the 1960s
- ▶ Stereotypes, racist attitudes and discrimination remain
- ▶ Afro-Mexican prefer to be called “Cuban”
- ▶ African pride emerging
- ▶ African heritage celebrated through carnival
- ▶ Dances such as the Turtle Dance and Dance of the Devils performed



Lesson Three: Towns and Cities

Vincente Guerrero (1782-1831)



- ▶ Mulatto general who fought for Mexican independence
- ▶ State of Guerrero, Mexico named after him
- ▶ José Maria Morelos y Pavon, 1756-1815
- ▶ State of Morelos named after him



Resistance

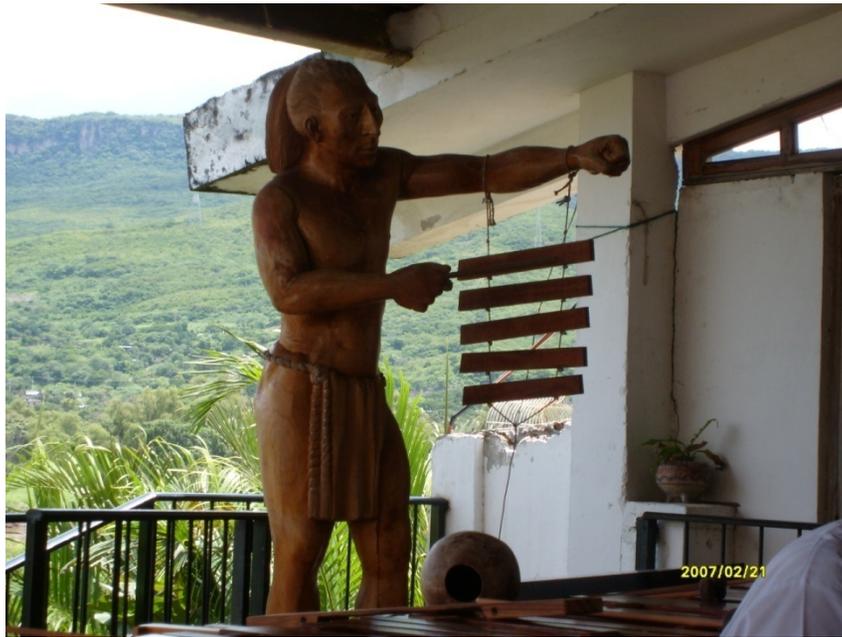
Yanga, Veracruz

- ▶ The town of Yanga, Veracruz, was named for the African Nanga
- ▶ It is the first independent town in Mexico
- ▶ "Palenques"—settlements established across the Americas by escaped Africans

Veracruz & Acapulco are the port cities where many slaves entered the country.

- ▶ Known for production of sugar cane
- ▶ Other towns with names of African origins—Costa Chica region west coast of Mexico, Mandinga, Cabo Verde, Congo, Mocambo, Mozambique

Lesson Four: Food, Music & Dance



- ▶ The marimba made by the Nandayapa family is a combination of African and Mayan.
- ▶ Africans brought their version of the instrument with gourds for resonators.





2007/02/21



- ▶ The resonators used by the Nandayapa family are made today from wood and pig intestines to vibrate the various sounds.
- ▶ Other instruments are cajón, quijada, jarana, bote, marimbol.

Coffee

- ▶ The Coffee Museum in Veracruz demonstrated how coffee is made.
 - ▶ The beans are picked when red (ripe); soaked, then roasted.
 - ▶ The instrument used to separate the beans first came from Africa.
-



Ballet Folklórico



- ▶ January 31 marks the celebration of the Candelaria Virgin. In the town of Tlacotalpan, stages are built in the main square where musicians and dancers of fandangos are presented.





- ▶ The Mojigangas are huge figures representing live characters and legends of the village. In the midst of it, Caribbean music is played with congas (drums) as in a Mardi Gras celebration parade.

Music

- ▶ La Negra Graciana, singer
- ▶ Performs "jarocho" style music with her family

Dance

- ▶ La Jarana
- ▶ There is an exuberant influence of the Caribbean found in the Yucatan.
- ▶ Other dances performed during festivals: Straw Bull Dance, Apache dance, Artesa Music Dance.



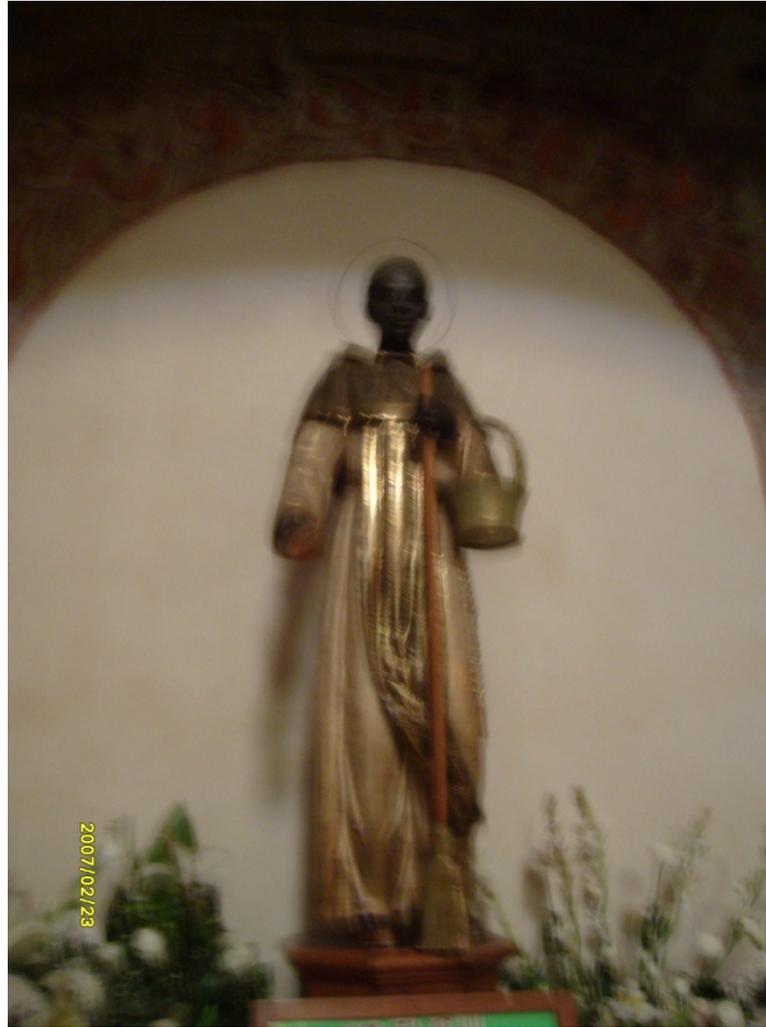
Saints



- ▶ Saint Benito del Palermo
- ▶ African ancestry



Saint Domingo in the San Miguel Church, Oaxaca was also African



▶ 1829—Mexico abolished slavery

▶ Black Seminoles and other Africans migrated to northern and other areas of Mexico from Florida and Texas

▶ Called "Mascogos"

▶ Juan Cavallo, African leader, helped to secure land grant in 1898.



-
- ▶ Thousands of escaped Africans traveled the Underground Railroad south to Mexico.
 - ▶ Mexican identity and unity negates race; focus on Mexico.
 - ▶ Elements of prejudicial attitudes are present in cartoon characters such as Memin Pinguin; public performances such as jarocho and other media.
 - ▶ European concept of beauty is the standard, similar to the United States.

Resources

- ▶ www.brendafaye-returntomexico.blogspot.com
 - ▶ www.weboaal.com
 - ▶ Beto Gomez (2005). *Hasta el ultimo trago... corazón!* (DVD).
 - ▶ Franklin, J. H. & Moss, A. A. (2000). *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans*. Boston, MA: McGraw Hill Company (pp. 57-58).
 - ▶ Mann, C. C. (2005). *1491: New Revelations of the Americas before Columbus*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf (pp. 204-213).
 - ▶ _____ (2005). *African Influences in Mexico: From Yanga to the Present*. Chicago, IL: Museum of Fine Arts.
-

