

## 2020-02-19 - Lecture 14

### 5.3 Ancient Mexico and Mesoamerica :: Pyramids & Sacrifice

- 1) Mesoamerica (middle America) people
  - **Olmec** - The ancient "Rubber People" that these other groups are linked to culturally (San Lorenzo, La Venta):
    - > **Teotihuacáanos** (Teotihuacán)
    - > **Zapotecs** (Monte Alban)
    - > **Mayans** (Tikal, Chichén Itzá, Uxmal, etc)
  - These cultures very different from European ones as they left **no evidence** of (1) written language, (2) knowledge of the wheel, (3) metallurgy (no metal-working tools)
- 2) Ancient **Olmecs** followed by **Zapotecs**
  - *Ancient Olmecs and Zapotecs* :: ritual, sacrifice, violence, hierarchy, renewal, violent contests in which loser was executed
  - **San Lorenzo** (ancient *Olmecs*) from about 1500-1200 BCE. Left the **Giant Carved Heads**
  - **La Venta** (ancient *Olmecs*) from about 900-400 BCE. **Giant Carved Heads, Radial Pyramids, and Ball Courts** (losers of the game were executed). The ballgame that was played used a heavy rubber ball and people often hurt if not killed.
  - Olmec's San Lorenzo disappeared about 1200 BCE most likely due to some sort of violent catastrophic occurrence, as something similar occurred in Europe.
  - **Monte Alban** (*Zapotecs*) in the region of Oaxaca (oh-AX-a-ca) from 500 BCE - 500 CE - ruins on mountaintop showing radial pyramid, ball courts, celestial arrangements, ritual sacrifice
- 3) **Teotihuacáanos** (*City of the Gods*)
  - **Teotihuacán** - city that spans 100 BCE - 200 CE. The most powerful and primal of their cities. Theocratic, hierarchical, sacrificial, violent... Ultimately gone by 550 CE.
  - **axis mundi** - long wide N-S avenue called the **Avenue of the Dead** (Miccaotli)
  - **Pyramid of the Moon** - one end of the axis (most important pyramid)
  - **Pyramid of the Sun** - cross axis (**although larger pyramid oriented to sunset on the Summer Solstice**). Pyramid of the Sun built over a massive cavern (origin of the earth) and oriented to the sun. Larger in base than Khufu's Pyramid but half the height.  
**Demonstrates a basic understanding of the Teotihuacano understanding of place in the universe.**
- 4) Building techniques of stepped pyramids of Mesoamerica
  - **Talud-Tablero** (study diagrams posted). Flat stones lock in the next course. *Talud* is the battered portion. *Tablero* is the platform portion that's locked-in with rubble and a type of concrete.
- 5) **Mayans**
  - Petén Region (Guatemala) - Major cities that fought each other: **Tikal** and **Calakmul**
  - About 100 BCE **Mayans** develop hydraulics, irrigation, canals, irrigation, terraces
  - Mayan population less dense than other Olmec cultures
  - Major rebuilding of Tikal in 695 CE due to defeat of Calakmul
  - Tikal's pyramids tall, layered in stacks, *thought of as mountains*
    - Top ornamental piece called the **roofcomb**
  - **Palenque** (pal-EN-que) king Pakal demurs to Tikal for political reasons
    - Palenque's palace and Pakal's tomb demonstrated corbeled vaults, and corbeled groin vaults, as well as carved **orthostats** telling narratives of their culture
  - **Petén Region** declines about 900 CE
- 6) Last **Mayans** shift to **Uxmal** and **Chichén Itzá** (**chi-CHEN-it-TZA**) out on the Yucatan Peninsula (Mexico)
  - Ultimately last Mayan city abandoned **950 CE**
  - **Most accurate pre-modern calendar**
  - At Chichén Itzá :: tall *radial pyramid*, sophisticated *observatory*, *Temple of Warriors* (Group of 1000 columns)