

ARTIFACT A

Olmec urban development was made possible by earlier advances in agriculture. The staples of Mesoamerican diet- corn, beans and squash- were domesticated by 3500BCE. The ability of farmers to produce dependable surpluses of these products enabled the first stages of craft specialization and social stratification.



ARTIFACT B

The Olmec were the likely originators of the ritual ball game that became an enduring part of Mesoamerican ceremonial life.



(mural from the Maya civilization)

ARTIFACT C

As religious and political elites emerged, they found ways to organize the population to dig irrigation and drainage canal, develop raised fields that could be farmed more intensively and construct the large scale religious and civic buildings that became the signature of Olmec civilization...

...These urban complexes were aligned with paths of certain stars, reflecting a strong belief in astronomical events. Since these centers had small permanent populations, the scale of construction suggests the ability of the Olmec elite to direct the labor of thousands of men and women from a broad region.

Archaeological evidence also suggests the existence of a class of merchants who maintained and exchanged with distant peoples and imported obsidian, jade, and pottery.

ARTIFACT D



ARTIFACT E

Among their other accomplishments, the ancient Mayas invented a calendar of remarkable accuracy and complexity. The Maya calendar was adopted by the other Mesoamerican nations, such as the Aztecs and the Toltec, which adopted the mechanics of the calendar unaltered but changed the names of the days of the week and the months.



ARTIFACT F

[The developments of agriculture and trade]... were accompanied by the evolution of reciprocal labor obligations that permitted the construction of roads, bridges, temples, palaces and large irrigation and drainage projects as well as textiles...The architectural signature of the Chavin was a large complex of multi-level platform made with packed earth or rubble faced with cut stone or adobe (sun dried brick made of clay and straw).

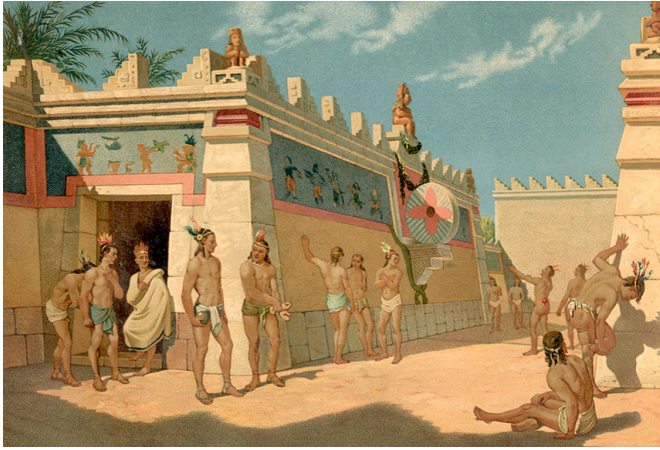
Small buildings used for ritual purposes or as elite residences were built on these platforms. Nearly all these buildings were decorated with relief carvings of serpents, condors, jaguars or human forms.



ARTIFACT G

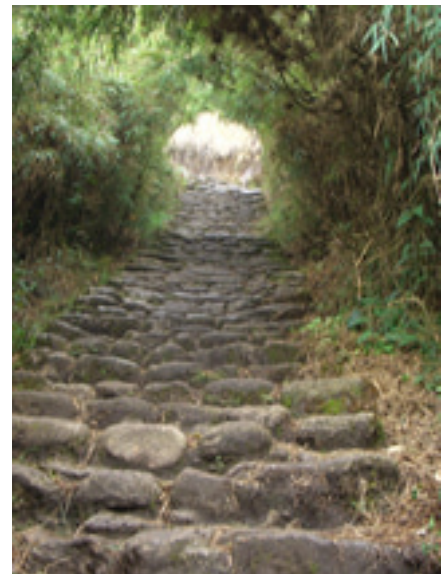
The goal of the Mayan ball game was to pass the ball around, without having it touch your hands, and then get the ball to pass through one of the rings. The winners of the game were treated as heroes and given a great feast. The penalty for losing a game was unusually harsh: death. The leader of the team who lost the game was killed. The game was like games and sports that people play today in a few ways:

- The players were working as a team to beat another team of players
- The goal was to get the ball through a hoop
- The goal was also NOT to touch the ball with one's hands, like soccer is today.
- Huge structures were built just for playing
- The games attracted very large numbers of people to watch
- Gambling on who would win was common



ARTIFACT H

The Inca road system was an essential part of the success of the Inca Empire. Including an estimated 14,000 miles in its extent, the Inca road was built for use in all kinds of climate, and intended to move people and goods--and armies when needed--across the length and breadth of the empire.



ARTIFACT I



This sculpture (on the left) of Aztec origin can be found on one of the narrow back streets in downtown San Antonio.

This sculpture (right) of Aztec goddess of life and death Coatlicue at the National Museum of Anthropology and History, in Mexico city.



ARTIFACT J

The best-known monuments of Olmec culture are colossal carved stone heads as large 11 feet. Sixteen heads have been found. Experts in Olmec archaeology believe the heads are portraits of individual rulers, warriors and ball players.



ARTIFACT K

Los Angeles Freeway system



Brooklyn Bridge, New York



ARTIFACT L

Mount Rushmore, South Dakota



ARTIFACT M

The Mars Exploration Rovers primary scientific goal is to search for and characterize a wide range of rocks and soils that hold clues to past water activity on Mars. The spacecraft are targeted to sites on opposite sides of Mars that appear to have been affected by liquid water in the past.

If water supports life then finding actual fossils on the Martian surface would, by implication, suggest that our universe is filled with life and probably intelligence as well.



Early American Civilizations: The Olmec and Chavin ~ Mother Civilizations

What is a mother civilization?

Directions: Fill in the chart below using the provided artifacts. Summarize descriptions of each artifact in the appropriate box (and parenthetically cite the document). Make thematic and topical connections between the artifacts to organized and analyze the historical information.

Olmec / Chavin	Mayan / Aztec / Inca	Contemporary (Today)