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Corn in Clay: Maize Paleoethnobotany in Pre-Columbian Art. By Mary W. Eubanks. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1999. xvi + 249 pp. Illustrations, maps, tables, bibliography, index. \$49.95 cloth.)

As Latin America's most important foodstuff, maize has played significant agricultural, medicinal, religious, and cultural roles for nearly four thousand years. From the Olmec and Chavín to Aztec and Inca cultures, most indigenous groups in the Americas have paid homage to corn deities. Today, maize remains the main subsistence crop for many Latin Americans. Through the study of ceramic representations of maize, Mary W. Eubank's new book, *Corn in Clay: Maize Paleoethnobotany in Pre-Columbian Art*, seeks to elucidate two pre-Columbian cultures, the Moche of Peru's north coast, and the Zapotecs of Mexico's Monte Albán.

The main purpose of Eubank's study is to identify a body of pre-Columbian pottery with maize depictions created by molds of real ears of corn. To that end, she examines hundreds of Moche effigy jars and Zapotec funerary urns, which she meticulously analyzes, catalogues, and photographs. She adds this documentation to the growing evidence demonstrating cultural contact between ancient Mexico and South America. Finally, the author seeks to expand the art historical understanding of these unusual and intriguing pottery specimens.

Most of the Moche jars can be linked to Ai-apaec, the fanged creator deity associated with maize and yucca. The Zapotec urns depict deity figures seated in cross-legged postures with elaborate headdresses, in which appear mold-made ears of corn. Eubanks connects the figures with the Zapotec god, Cocijo, a major deity associated with lightning and rain, as well as with other maize-complex deities.

These unusual recreations of corn, apparently unique in world cultures, appear at about the same time in both regions, *circa* 400-750 C.E. Due to Peru's long history of rendering molded fruits and vegetables in clay, Eubanks posits the abrupt appearance of mold-made maize at Monte Albán as evidence of contact between the two cultures. In fact, mold-made corn is but one trait of many, including trephination, or skull surgery, to surface suddenly at Classic Monte Albán and for which a South American origin can be determined. Thus, Eubanks posits Moche culture as the source for the Oaxacan maize representations. Her research adds to the growing information indicating contact between the two cultures.

Eubank's scientific data—measurements of ear length and diameter, plus kernel width, thickness, and row—is painstakingly analyzed. By entering the numbers into a statistical program that matched the measurements to known races of maize, she was able to identify specific types of corn recreated on the pottery. Ethnobotanists will find her scientific contributions valuable because most pre-Columbian maize remains are cobs, and very few

whole ears have survived. Her findings furnish new information on the evolution and distribution of maize.

Eubanks also endeavors to enrich understanding of the invention, development, use, decoration, subject matter, and iconography of maize ceramics. Her identification of fake Zapotec funerary urns makes a useful contribution to pre-Columbian art history. Additional research on art historical issues would be helpful. In particular, these mold-made maize ceramics raise fascinating questions about representation in pre-Columbian cultures. Why did Moche and Zapotec artists go to such lengths to represent realistic ears of corn? Were these molded maize representations believed to possess the powers associated with real corn or corn deities? What do these ceramics indicate about the power of representation and the status of artists in pre-Columbian cultures?

In closing, Eubank's book is meticulously researched, documented, and organized, and, as such, is a useful reference work on pre-Columbian maize. Her interdisciplinary work will be of interest to archeologists, botanists, art historians, and anthropologists. It provides provocative information on cultural contact and diffusion. Hopefully, others will be inspired to pursue further cultural and art historical studies.

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