

Anth 24: Arch MTP

Exercise 5: Mead Visit & Cognitive Archaeology

Due: Thursday, April 15th (emailed by 10am to eklarich@amherst.edu)

In this exercise, you will apply what you have learned in this week's readings on cognitive archaeology to discuss pre-Columbian pottery collections housed at the Mead Art Museum. The final product will be a 3 to 4 page essay to be emailed to me on April 15th.

Part I: Mastering terminology. First, discuss how Flannery & Marcus (1993) define "iconography" and some of the challenges to archaeologists who are interested in studying this subject "scientifically". Second, compare this to Renfrew & Bahn's (2009) treatment of iconography and the archaeology of religion in their chapter. Are there major differences in these two approaches? Do you find one approach to be more fruitful for thinking about ancient cognition?

Part II: Exploring Meaning: We are going to discuss three major themes today during our study of the Mead collections. Select one of these themes and compare how it is represented (or we think it is represented) on the north (Moche, Chimu) and south coast (Nasca) of Peru. Use your study sheets as a guide and refer to specific examples where appropriate.

Part III: Providing Context: We are going to discuss some of the ways that archaeologists and art historians "know what we know" about coastal Peruvian imagery from the Nasca, Moche, and Chimu cultures. In other words, I will fill in some basic context about where these vessels are typically found, how they were used, etc. to help us piece together their meaning in the past. For Part III, take the theme that you discussed in Part II and discuss what additional data sets you would need to consider in order to convince Flannery & Marcus that you not simply an "armchair archaeologist," but a "true scientist" in your study of ancient art.

Part IV: Art or Artifact? We often talk about art museums acquiring "art" and natural history museums collecting "artifacts". After this visit to the Mead and our discussions in class, how do you feel about this distinction? Just provide a few sentences on this.