

Southwest Introduction



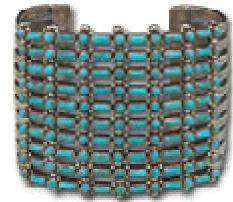
Acoma Jar



Martinez Pot



Dine Bracelet



Zuni Bracelet



Pima Basket



Dine
Wedding Basket



Tohono
O'odham Basket

It is impossible to think of people here without thinking of a particular mountain that they have a special relationship with. They look to it for all sorts of things; portents of weather immediately ahead, signs of winter they will have; they look to it for evergreens and eagle feathers which they use in dances, and for pigments and other materials to use for their ceremonies.

-Alfonso Ortiz, Tewa Pueblo

The traditions of the native people of the Southwest are deeply rooted in the land where their ancestors have lived for tens of thousands of years. This vast region - stretching from what today is southern Utah and Colorado, throughout New Mexico and Arizona, and south into Mexico - is the oldest known area of human habitation on the North American continent. In this land of desert and mountains native people gathered wild plants and cultivated their own crops. To compensate for much needed rainfall they constructed irrigation canals, some of which are still in use, in Arizona. They also established trade networks stretching from present-day Georgia through Central America.



Making Vessels

In the Southwest as in other areas, the preparation and storage of food required containers and vessels. Baskets have been woven for these purposes in the Southwest for 8,000 years. Pottery has been made for well over 2,000 years. People decorated these functional objects with images of their environment that were vital to them, like the sun that caused their crops to grow, and the clouds, which were the source of life-giving rain. The environment influenced not only the decoration of objects but also the order of many of the people's ceremonial and daily activities.

The Native People

Some Southwest groups of native people are known as Pueblo, from the Spanish word for town, because of the multi-unit adobe dwellings in which they lived. Today, many of the Pueblo people live much as their ancestors did along the Rio Grande River in New Mexico. The Hopituh (Hopi), who occupy the mesa country of northeastern Arizona and the Zuni, who live in west-central New Mexico,

are Pueblo people. The Akimel O'odham (Pima) and the Tohono O'odham (Papago) were traditionally farmers who lived on irrigated land along the Gila River in southern Arizona. While most of the Southwestern people trace their origin to the ancient inhabitants, the Diné (Navajo) and Inde (Apache) are relative newcomers who migrated from their homeland in northwestern Canada sometime around 1400.

Result of Contact

The Spanish were the first Europeans to occupy the Southwest in the 16th century. They introduced horses as well as livestock (sheep and cattle) and fruit orchards to the area. They also exploited the native people by using them as unpaid laborers, imposing different cultural practices on them, and encroaching on their lands. This resulted in a revolt in 1680, when the native Pueblo people drove out the Spanish, who did not regain control until 1694. From that time on, the Southwest was under the control of first Spain, then Mexico, and eventually the United States.

Through a combination of epidemic disease and the impact of Spanish control, Pueblo populations were reduced by two-thirds within two centuries following the arrival of the Spanish. The Diné (Navajo), who had assimilated some aspects of the Pueblo culture and depended upon them for trade, were eventually driven north by incoming settlers and forced to resort to raiding in order to survive. As more white settlers from the east arrived in the 19th century, the U.S. government took steps to halt the raiding. Under the leadership of Kit Carson, the army destroyed Diné crops and livestock, forcing the people to surrender. The Diné were imprisoned on a barren reservation at Bosque Redondo in New Mexico. Five years later, the Diné were reduced to such a small number that they no longer posed a threat and were consequently allowed to return to their homeland, which by then was surrounded by white settlements. Despite this history of oppression, the Diné nation is one of the largest of all American Indian nations today, numbering over 100,000 people.

The Southwest Today

Although the culture of the people of the Southwest was vastly disrupted by the arrival of Europeans, they have managed to retain many of the artistic traditions of their ancestors and to develop new skills. Pueblo potters of the Southwest initiated a revival of pottery in the early 20th century. Many contemporary Pueblo potters continue to make their pottery by the ancient coiling method. The weaving techniques of Diné women are largely unchanged since they learned the art from the Pueblo men centuries ago. From the earliest times, Diné people made jewelry from natural materials. After they learned silversmithing from Mexican artisans, they began to produce silver jewelry. A'shiwi (Zuni) and Hopituh (Hopi) artists learned the skill from Diné smiths. Native American artists of the Southwest today continue to create the arts for which they are famous.

Tribal Web Sites

Navajo tribal web site: <http://www.navajo.org/>

Hopi tribal web site: <http://www.hopi.nsn.us/>

Acoma Jar

KEY IDEAS

- Acoma potters are famous for their fine, thin-walled pots.
- Each Acoma pot is a different variation of lines, scrolls, and geometric shapes.

Introduction

Because the Acoma Pueblo is located on an isolated mesa, the Acoma tradition of pottery-making has changed very little from ancient times. The dark gray clay common to the region is very dense, permitting the potters to make strong, lightweight pottery with very thin walls.

How was it made?

Acoma potters mix their clay with ground-up bits of broken, fired pots. This prevents the new pot from cracking in the firing process. A pot is made by coiling clay in a circular manner and pinching the coils together, smoothing them to form the sides of the pot. The pot is hardened ("fired") in an open

fire. Once a pot is fired only a few elements are used to form designs—lines, scrolls, and geometric shapes—but there are endless variations so that every pot is different. Mixing iron ore with the beeweed plant makes a black paint. Paint is applied with a chewed yucca leaf to the surface of a pot that has been covered with thin white clay slip.

How was it used?

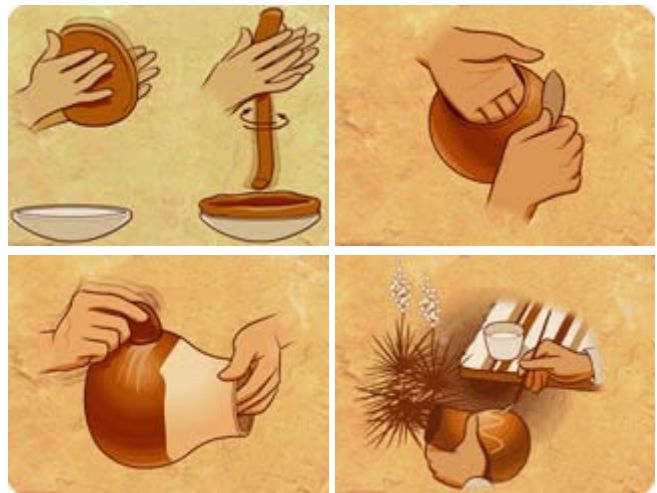
The shape of each Acoma pot provides a clue as to how it was used. This jar may have been made to sell to tourists, but its shape reflects a type of jar that was traditionally used for the storage or preparation of food.

Compare It

Compare these two Acoma jars. While both jars were made using the same techniques, different artists choose different variations of line, shape and colors to produce pottery that shares the Acoma style but differs as individual works of art.



Acoma Pueblo
Southwest region (United States)
Vessel, about 1880
Ceramic, pigment
Gift of the Hennepin County Historical Society 89.93



Illustrations featuring "coiling technique," "smoothing," "addition of slip & resmoothing," & "painting."



Acoma Pueblo
Southwest region (United States)
Ceramic jar, 19th century
polychromed earthenware
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Wayne H.
MacFarlane, The Minneapolis Institute
of Arts, 86.54

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Martinez Pot

KEY IDEAS

- Maria Martinez' pottery derives from forms of pottery made by the ancestors of Southwestern native people.
- Like other traditional potters of the Southwest, Maria Martinez used the hand-coiling method and fired her pots outdoors.

Introduction

Maria Martinez is one of the most famous artists of the Southwest. She and her husband, Julian, revived an ancient pottery tradition at San Ildefonso Pueblo in the early years of the 20th century. They were inspired by pottery found in the excavation of an ancient site. Upon seeing the ancient designs, Maria began to make pots and Julian painted them.



Maria Martinez
San Ildefonso Pueblo, 1886-1980
New Mexico, Southwest region (United States)
Bowl, early 20th century
Ceramic
Gift of Barbara L. Strom 86.94.1

Out of the silences of meditation come purity and power which eventually become apparent in our art: the many spirits which enter about us, in us, are transformed within us, moving from an endless past not gone, not dead, but with a threshold that is the present. From this time sense, for this experience deep within, our forms are created.

-Maria Martinez

How was it made?

Maria and Julian Martinez together created this style of Pueblo pottery. First the surface of the bowl was polished, then the area around the figure (the dull part) was painted with thinned red clay slip. A fire is built under and on top of the pots, reducing the oxygen around the pots and causes them to turn black. The polished portions look shiny and the area around the figure that was painted with slip looks dull.

Surface Designs

The horned water serpent that encircles the neck of this bowl is Avanyu. This figure is related to an ancient deity that was believed to have brought to humans the knowledge of art, science, and agriculture. The zig-zag shape near the serpent's mouth represents lightning. Julian adapted this design from others he found on ancient pottery shards.



Compare It

These two jars were made by Pueblo artists of the Southwest region of the United States, and share the same shape and size. But that is where their similarities end. The two vessels have decorations that are very different. The pot above, made by Maria and Julian Martinez of the San Ildefonso Pueblo, relies on variations in texture to allow the figures on the completely black pot to be seen. The pot to the right, made by an artist from the Acoma Pueblo, relies on variations in line for its decoration. Contrasting black lines on a white background make the complex design stand out.



Acoma Pueblo
Southwest region (United States)
Vessel, about 1880
Ceramic, pigment
Gift of the Hennepin County Historical Society
89.93

Diné Bracelet

KEY IDEAS

- This bracelet design expresses the Diné (Navajo) concept of beauty.
- The design of this bracelet is related to the Diné (Navajo) story of creation.

Introduction

The *Diné* (Navajo) are relative newcomers to the Southwest. They are believed to have migrated from Northwestern Canada to the Southwest around 1400. In their own language, they call themselves Diné (DEE-nay), which means "the people."

The underlying principle of the Diné people is the term *hozho* (HO-jzho), which means beauty. Walter Henry, a Diné (Navajo) man, created this bracelet according to the principle of *hozho*. In order to make an object of beauty, the maker had to be in a state of beauty himself. The Diné (Navajo) concept of beauty is expressed in an object by its sense of harmony, balance, and order. In the Diné story of creation, the earth was brought to order by a four-part division. The bracelet has a center symbolizing the place where the first Diné entered this world. The center rectangular bar and the leaves to either side point to the four directions of the sacred mountains of Diné (Navajo) lands.

Navajo tribal web site: <http://www.navajo.org/>

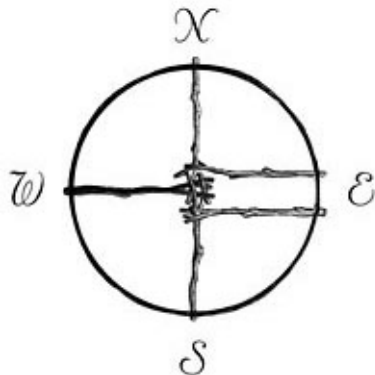
Balance & Harmony

In Diné (Navajo) thought, straight lines are associated with inactivity or maleness, while curved lines correspond to activity or femaleness. Each is a complement of the other and in the design of the bracelet they form a perfectly balanced whole. Balance and harmony are important parts of the Diné (Navajo) concept of *hozho*.

Navajo tribal web site: <http://www.navajo.org/>

Diné Hogans

The traditional home of the Diné (Navajo) was a structure made of tree bark, poles, and earth called a hogan. Many Diné (Navajo) continue to build and live in hogans today. Like the bracelet, the hogan is constructed according to *hozho*.



Imagine that you are looking down on a hogan with its roof removed. The hogan is of a circular shape divided into four sections by the supporting poles. The doorway (framed by double poles) faces to the east to welcome the morning sun. The other poles point to the west, north, and south; together the supporting poles point to the four sacred mountains of the Diné (Navajo) homeland.

Navajo tribal web site: <http://www.navajo.org/>



Walter Henry
Diné (Navajo)
Southwest region (United States)
Bracelet, about 1935
Silver
Bequest of Virginia Doneghy,
90.58.77



A Navajo hogan in Arizona

Zuni Bracelet

KEY IDEAS

- The Zuni learned silversmithing from their Diné (Navajo) neighbors.
- The Zuni gave greater emphasis to turquoise in their designs.

Introduction

The Zuni were Pueblo people who traded with the Diné (Navajo) and learned from them the art of making silver jewelry. The Zuni and the Diné (Navajo) developed their skills in very different ways. Both peoples use turquoise, but the Zuni use it in repetitive patterns that may cover the entire piece of jewelry. In this bracelet, silver serves only as the setting for the stones.

For the Zuni, turquoise contains the two colors that symbolize the essential elements of life - blue of water and green of plant growth.

Complex Design

The Zuni culture is based on a complex system of fifteen clans. The clans cut across all other social, political and religious groupings. This intricate Zuni bracelet expresses the complexity of Zuni culture. The delicate style of many small turquoise stones set into silver is called needlepoint.

Compare & Contrast

The Diné (Navajo) bracelet demonstrates harmony and simplicity in its design, while the Zuni bracelet design expresses complexity and multiplicity. Each bracelet reflects the belief system and culture of the people who made it.



Zuni
Southwest region (United States)
Bracelet, about 1950
Silver, Turquoise
Bequest of Virginia Doneghy, 90.58.55



Walter Henry,
Diné (Navajo)
Southwestern region (United States)
Bracelet, about 1935
Silver
Bequest of Virginia Doneghy
90.58.77

Pima Basket

KEY IDEAS

- Squash blossom designs like those on this basket are used in many variations in the Southwest.
- Pima people continue the tradition of basket weaving as a source of income.

Introduction

Many women of different tribes of the Southwest are accomplished at making beautiful baskets. Especially known for fine baskets are the Akimel O’odham (Pima) women. The Akimel O’odham people live on irrigated farms along the rivers in southern Arizona. Akimel O’odham women weave their baskets from the fibers of plants that grow along the rivers. The Spanish gave them the name Pima, but before contact with the Spanish they referred to themselves by a term meaning “river people.” They differ in both language and tradition from the Diné (Navajo) and the Pueblo people.

Navajo tribal web site: <http://www.navajo.org/>

Design

The design on this basket is called a squash-blossom design. A ball in the center connects to cone shapes, repeated five times to create the pattern. The squash-blossom design is woven in endless variations, from the five-blossom arrangement on this basket to very complex designs including 12 blossoms. The design was originally inspired by buttons on the trousers of Spanish soldiers. It also appears commonly as a form on jewelry.

Continuing Traditions

Toward the end of the 19th century the Gila River was diverted for use by non-Indians. The Akimel O’odham people, who counted on the river for survival, suffered poverty and starvation. By 1900 much of their traditional culture had disappeared except for basketry, which generated income. The few Akimel O’odham basket weavers who are active today are located on the Gila River Reservation in Arizona. They produce high-quality work in both traditional and contemporary designs.



Akimel O’odham (Pima)
Southwest region (United States)
Basket, 19th century
Plant fiber
The Ethel Morrison Van Derlip Fund 90.69.4



This photograph of a Pima home was taken by Edward S. Curtis around 1907. The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Ethel Morrison Van Derlip Fund, 74.41.11

Tohono O'odham Basket

KEY IDEAS

- Baskets have been made by Southwestern women for 8,000 years.
- Many Tohono O'odham Basket designs are produced in full-scale and miniature.

Introduction

Today, we have such a variety of pots and pans and other containers that it is amazing to realize that in the past, baskets served all of the food preparation and storage needs of some people. Baskets were the earliest handmade containers, and in the Southwest every basket was decorated. Today Tohono O'odham (Papago) women make more baskets than any other group in the Southwest. The Tohono O'odham are closely related to the Akimel O'odham (Pima) people, living just to the south of the Akimel O'odham (Pima) in Arizona. The two groups share many designs, which makes it difficult to distinguish their baskets from one another.

Basket Forms

Tohono O'odham Baskets represent the greatest variety of basket forms in the Southwest today. A favorite design includes human figures, seen on this covered basket, as well as an array of different animals. Many of the baskets made in full size are also produced in miniature size. This miniature basket measures only about three inches across.



Tohono O'odham (Papago)
Southwestern region (United States)
Miniature Basket, 20th century
Plant fiber
Gift of Mrs. C. C. Bovey, 42.18.130



Diné Wedding Basket

KEY IDEAS

- This basket was made to be used in a Diné (Navajo) wedding ceremony.
- The circular design of the basket relates to the Diné story of creation.

Introduction

This basket was used in a traditional Diné (Navajo) wedding ceremony. In the Diné (Navajo) creation story the first people emerged from the center of the earth. The circular design on the basket emphasizes the center, which represents that place. The black triangles probably symbolize mountains, and the red areas are rays of the sun.

Navajo tribal web site: <http://www.navajo.org/>

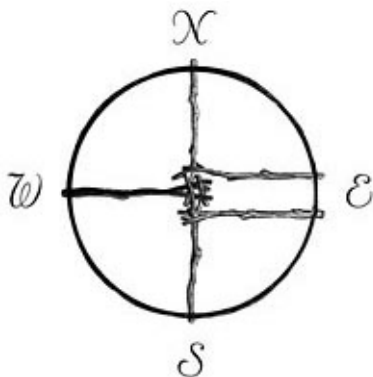
Wedding Ceremony

Before a Diné (Navajo) woman marries she prepares cornmeal of three colors: red for health, blue for happiness and white for wealth. During the Diné wedding ceremony a basket like this one is covered with the cornmeal and placed between the couple. The father of the bride draws a line with corn pollen, a symbol of fertility, across the colored cornmeal to indicate the four directions and draws a circle around the edge. The bride and groom eat from the four directions and the center of the basket, and the rest of the cornmeal is shared with the wedding guests. The last guest to eat from the basket receives it as a gift!

Navajo tribal web site: <http://www.navajo.org/>

Diné Hogans

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Imagine that you are looking down on a hogan with its roof removed. The hogan is a circle divided into four sections by the supporting poles. The doorway (framed by double poles) faces to the east to welcome the morning sun. If you look closely at the inner design of this basket, you see a break or pathway in the pattern. That pathway corresponds to the doorway of the hogan. The coiling on the basket ends at the pathway so it can be felt in the dark, allowing the basket to be turned to the east even if the pattern cannot be seen.

Navajo tribal web site: <http://www.navajo.org/>



Diné (Navajo)
Southwestern region (United States)
Basket, 20th century
Plant fiber
Gift of Mrs. C. C. Bovey 42.18.140



Red, Blue & White Cornmeal



A Navajo hogan in Arizona