

Skull. Height $4\frac{3}{4}$ " Width $6\frac{1}{2}$ ".
C. 1500. Stone with ~~the~~ plaster + Red paint.

Another skull very similar to this one sold at Sathelup's on _____. The somewhat Simian appearance should not distract us from the fact that this is a human skull. That it is representation of a human and not a deity maybe suggested by the empty eye sockets. There are many depictions of skulls with eyes which on occasion might allude to metempsychosis, Lord of the dead or the "vitality" of the death principle itself.

Just what were these individual skull carvings used for. What was their function? The feline skull and crossbones motifs frequently seen on the skirts of Earth Gods, Xukmelpitli Altars, and various platforms were also employed on Cernices (like the so-called pulque cups in this collection) and even on the vestments of priests, nobles and deities. But ^{significant} sculptures of skulls another purpose. The main meaning - that life is renewed through death (and sacrifice) - explains the presence of skulls and crossbones as decorative element, but individual carvings of skulls (many survive done in crystal, jade, obsidian and volcanic stones) may have served an additional function.

lagle
 Inne
 Cipote
 Coatl
 Cococo
 Cheute
 Cocomatl
 Cote
 Cote
 Arrival
 Teupatl
 Acatl
 Tachili
 Mayatl
 Xochitl
 Malinal
 Cuetzpalin
 Quiahuatl

Among the thirteen day signs of the Aztec Calendar is the day-sign ^{human} ~~fish~~ skull. Each ^{new} day sign was celebrated and honored as a deity ^{or} itself. It is not unthinkable then that many of the individual sculptures that we see of monkeys, eagles, snakes, jaguars, skulls etc. may represent the sacred days known by these names rendered into three dimensions for the purposes of worship.

This skull of Balconic Stone was
covered with a coating of red
pigment - perhaps cinnabar or red ochre.
And I have seen too many other
sculptures that which have remains of red
pigment on all their surfaces - even on
areas that we can infer from the Codexes
ought to be ^{white} painted a different color. Why is this?

One possible answer is that the color red, is the color of fresh blood, of vitality. We know that many cultures around the world including the Maya often painted the bodies or the bones of their dead with red pigment. We believe that this custom was a way of re-vitalizing the remains through sympathetic magic. It is possible then that Aztec sculptors would often ~~not~~ paint their sculptures with an undercoating of red paint to give "life" to the stone figures. The sculptures would then be over painted with their surface colors which over time have

Embossing

showing only the red undercoating. A similar
Custom of ^{Continued} ~~Gravelling~~ Stone statues with the life
force by inlaying a piece of jade on the
chest where the heart would be is well-known.
I also believe that red stone ~~of~~ was often
used - especially for sculptures of the
Corn and vegetable Goddess Chicomecoatl -
because it was thought to be ~~embossed~~ possess
of the life force.

Xipe
9½" h

The Serpent of Red Stone with a human face
emerging from its mouth. Teller-Carter
Height 8½" Reddish Stone. 11th-16 century