

A Novel Window into Maize Evolution

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Maize replicas on pottery from Oaxaca, Mexico and the North Coast of Peru are positive casts from molds made from actual ears. These unique botanical facsimiles have been systematically characterized by comparison to indigenous Latin American maize races. The presence of South American maize on Oaxacan urns and of Mexican maize on Peruvian vessels signals cultural contact between Mexico and Peru during the Classic period, 1800-1300 BP. The racial biodiversity depicted on Peruvian pottery suggests northern Peru was an important center of trade that extended from Chile throughout northern South America into Central America and Mexico.