

Polynesian art

The geographical information about the Pacific region is new to me. The reading states, "The Pacific Ocean is the greatest single geographical feature of our planet, which stands at sixty-four million square miles. The vast expanse of water is interrupted by numerous islands, countries, and continent, encompassing Japan, Taiwan, Ryukyu Islands, the Philippines, Sulawesi (Celebes), Borneo, the Malay Peninsula, and the Indonesian Archipelago, then toward New Guinea and Australia and New Zealand." The art of the Pacific Islands is as diverse as its people. Some of the early collections dated from 1769-1770. While linguistics has played an essential role in understanding the culture, it formed one of the most artistically diverse areas in the world. Tools for carving and the red dye ore were discovered in the New Guinea highlands. Seashells were used for ornaments, even to this day. Stone carvings were found dating back to two thousand years. Some figures with birds and humans head with an oiled dish from Fiji and carved mortar and pestle, ceramic pieces, some platters, dishes, and jars were richly decorated and stamped with geometric designs arranged in latitudinal bands from top to bottom (p.37). Green and his colleagues have demonstrated Oceanic Lapita pottery motifs were transmitted into historic times in the Polynesian art of tattooing, especially in canoeing and in the decoration of clothes. I learn that tattooing was not just for style but also their religion, deities, the dead, and regional culture or clans.

New Zealand is the only large island group in Polynesia, and it's the most varied geographically. The dominant group is the Maori. They were known for their incredible wood carvings, sennit plaiting, many styles of singing, dancing, tattooing, and other forms of body decoration. Their carvings in the bay of plenty- East coast persisted and evolved to become an expression of local

solidarity and integrity. Among some tribes, carved meeting houses and churches were authentic examples of art development in the 19th century. They were good at oratory and music. Their literary forms are classified into six categories. On p.101, some of their carvings are on display, such as the bird-head man and the flute. I did not know they were so good at the literary skills discussed in the reading. I am familiar with some of the dress pieces, like skirts, but I did not know how they were made. I learned it was by plaiting the material and using dye to create the colors. I was amazed to learn that some of these people in early civilization were so accurate with the geometrical calculating and rich culture. They were also great sea-fearers.