



Spindle Whorl

Date

ca. 1350-1521

Primary Maker

Aztec

Medium

pottery and slip paint

Description

Ceramic spindle whorls were used for spinning cotton and maguey fibers into thread. The thickness of the thread depended on the size and weight of the whorl: for thinner

cotton thread, smaller whorls were used with a small vessel to balance the spindle. These two examples are profusely decorated with floral and geometric motifs, which derive from the close association between spinning and Xochiquetzal, the Aztec goddess of flowers, who is also associated with birds. Because spinning and weaving were related to ideals of female identity in Aztec times, spindle whorls are especially relevant when interpreting gender identity and household economy in archaeological contexts.

Dimensions

Overall: 5/8 x 1 7/8 in. (1.6 x 4.8 cm)