

Kevin Quirós Canales Plastic Fantastic Summer 2021

What was there before plastic?

Amber



Roman Amber Dice. Aquileia, Central Italy. 1st -2nd century.

Ivory



Bracelet. Owo, Nigeria. 16th century.

Tortoise Shell



Victorian hair comb. 19th century.

Amber

- Fossilized resin of trees.
- Used for jewelry and decorative objects.
- Found mainly in the Baltic Sea and Dominican Republic.
- Aesthetic qualities, ease of carving and polishing.
- For ancient people, mysterious qualities:
 - Protecting the bearer
 - Warding of evil
 - Curing diseases



Roman perfume pot, depicting cupids and a panther. 100-120 CE.

Amber: Origin



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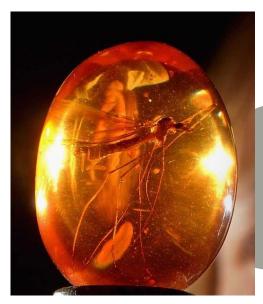
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Conifer resin.

Amber formed on trees. In Tractatus De lapidus, Ortus sanitatis (Mainz: Jacob Meydenbach, June 23, 1491)



Mosquito in amber resin that gave rise to the revival of dinosaurs. Jurassic Park.



Amber: Some Chemistry

- Natural resins (amber) = mixture of organic compounds: alcohols, ketones, carboxylic acids and most notably terpenes.
- Mainly diterpines.
- These components polymerize to give us the hardened resin = Amber!
- Resin that did not polymerize was softer, and as such could not last millions of years.

Diterpine resin acids in conifers

Amber: some uses

- Relatively soft
- Ideal to be cut and carved into beads and other jewelry items



Necklace from Archaic Greece. 600-480 BCE. Ancient Macedon.



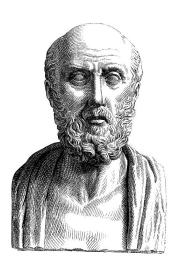
Modern Komboloi. Greece.



Amber: medicine?



Religious reformer Martin Luther carried amber for protection against kidney stones.



Hippocrates, father of medicine, used a mixture of crushed amber and honey to treat "dimming eyesight."

Amber: magic??????

Amber Associations

Chakras - Sacral Chakra, Solar Plexus Chakra, Throat Chakra

Zodiac - Leo, Aquarius

Planet - Sun *Element* - Fire

Typical colours - yellow, golden - transparent or translucent

Healing with Amber

- ♥ Romantic love ♥ Purification ♥ Cleansing ♥ Healing ♥ Energy ♥ Joy ♥ Enhances patience ♥ Draws negative energy from the body ♥ Balance ♥ Strength
- ♥ Spontaneity ♥ Wisdom ♥ Promotes good luck and success

Shop - Amber Jewellery & Gifts



Mother Of Pearl & Amber Bracelet £31.00



Baltic Amber Chip Healing Bar Necklace £20.00



Dark Baltic Amber Nugget Healing Pendant Necklace £16.00

Ivory



Ancestral shrines. Palace of the Oba, Benin City, Nigeria.

Walking stick carved from narwhal tusk. Once owned by Charles Darwin.

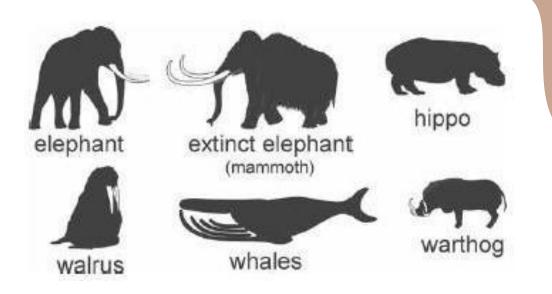
Ivory: Sources



Narwhal



Sperm whale



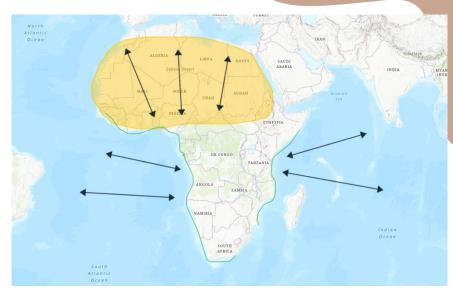
The elephant never tires carrying its tusks.

—Duala proverb from Cameroon refers to responsibility.

Ivory: pre-colonial trade

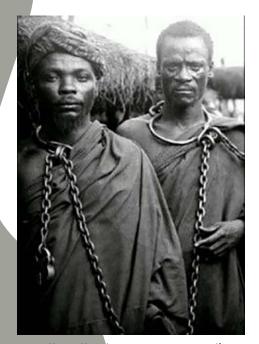
- Mostly within Africa
- Early Asian demand relied on internal trade from Eastern countries to Tanzania.





Ivory armband. KwaGandaganda (excavation site in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa). 9th century CE.

Ivory: Colonialism...



Maji Maji prisoners. Tanganyika.



Image from African Game Trails by Theodore Roosevelt, 1910.



Ivory traders. East Africa. 1880s/1890s.

Ivory: Uses



Bull Leaper. Figurine from the Palace of Knossos, Crete. 1500 BCE.



Ceremonial walrus ivory mask. From the Yupik in Alaska.

Tortoise Shell



Dolls' house of Petronella Oortman, 1686 – 1710, Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.



Tortoise shell ornament from Micronesia.

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