

Chapter 6: Early Societies in the Americas and Oceania

Early Societies of Mesoamerica

- Migration to North America = 15,000 years ago
- 1st Large wave of migrants = 13,000 B.C.E -- Across Bering Land Bridge (Siberia to Alaska)

The Olmecs:

- I. Early Agriculture in MesoAmerica : 8000 - 7000 B.C.E.
 - A. Region - (modern) Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador
 - B. Domestication of Animals - turkeys, small dogs
 - C. Crops - squash, manioc, beans, chili peppers, avocados, gourds, tomatoes
 - D. 4000 B.C.E - cultivate corn, agriculture spreads throughout MesoAmerica
- II. Ceremonial Centers :
 - A. Structures - Pyramids, temples, palaces
 - B. 1st Ceremonial Center - 1200 B.C.E. in San Lorenzo
 1. Location II : La Venta (800 - 400 B.C.E.)
 2. Location III : Tres Zapotes (400 - 100 B.C.E.)
- III. Olmec Society :
 - A. Authoritarian (in nature)
 - B. Ruling elites, Elite class lived in ceremonial centers, priests, artisans, merchants
 - C. Lower class - Laborers
- IV. Trade in Jade and Obsidian :
 - A. Traded small goods, formed from jade, for other imports throughout MesoAmerica societies
 - B. Largely influenced MesoAmerica - Through military and trade
 - C. Downfall - 400B.C.E - City is burned down, most likely from civil unrest

Heirs of the Olmecs: The Maya:

- After the Olmec's disappearance about 100 B.C.E, different societies started to rise in several Mesoamerican regions.
- Some of the societies evolved into great cities. They attracted large populations of permanent residents, started construction, maintained large markets, and provided as well as encouraged work.
- The Maya, which is now Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, and El Salvador created a remarkable region.
- The Maya organized themselves politically into scores of small city kingdoms.
- Kaninajuyu (a village of the Maya) was a ceremonial center that was considered a city and dominated the life of other communities in the region.
- The city of Kaninajuyu lost its influence when the political dominance fell under the much larger city, Teotihuacan.
- Maya cultivators raised cacao, a large bean that is valuable that the maya decided to use it for money.
- Tikal was the most important Maya political center, a wealthy and bustling city with a population approaching forty thousand.
- Maya kingdoms constantly fought against each other for the land that one possessed.
- The Maya people started to desert their cities because of the invasions by foreigners from Mexico, internal dissension and civil war, failure of the system of water control leading to diminished harvests, problems in the economy due to the destruction of forest, epidemic diseases, and earthquakes.

Maya Society and Religion:

- The Maya organized military forces and participated in religious rituals
- Traded: Exotic & Luxury goods, Animal Skins, Cacao Beans, Finely crafted works of Art.
- Generated several social classes: Artisans, Professionals architects, Large classes of peasants, and slaves.
- The Maya priest studied astronomy and mathematics, and they devised a sophisticated calendar and an elaborate writing system.
- The Maya created a calendar and had two kinds of years: A solar year & A ritual year.
- They had the “most flexible and sophisticated of all the early American systems of writing. The Maya script contained both ideographic elements (like Chinese characters) and symbols for syllables.”
- They wrote on paper made from beaten tree bark and on vellum made from deerskin. They also scribed different genres such as, history, poetry, myth, genealogical, administrative, and astronomical records.
- “The Popol Vuh” is a creation myth that explains that the gods had created humans out of maize and water, and the ingredients that became human flesh and blood.
- Bloodletting rituals: “The shedding of human blood, which the Maya believed would prompt the gods to send rain to water their crops of maize.” The Maya wanted to inhabit a world that creates and sustains by deities who expect honor and reverence from the human subjects.

Heirs of the Olmecs: Teotihuacan

Location - North highlands of Mexico

I. The City of Teotihuacan

A. 500 B.C.E - Large Agricultural Village

- B. 200 B.C.E - Pop. = 50,000 people
- C. 600 C.E. - Pop. = 200,000 people - Thriving metropolis, markets, residence, temples, neighborhoods, artisans, craftsmen, merchants
- D. 2 most prominent monuments = Colossal pyramids of the sun and moon, The pyramid of the sun (largest structure in MesoAmerica)

II. The Society of Teotihuacan

- A. Leaders - Priests, wealthy class
- B. Manufactured goods and traded to far away places, thus expanding their market
- C. One of the largest trading systems
- D. Artwork - Known for obsidian tools and orange pottery
- E. 500 C.E - Small military group, city has no walls (rely heavily on market rather than military power)

III. Cultural Traditions

- A. Built on Cultural foundations established by Olmecs
- B. Expanded Olmecs symbols into complete system of writing, wrote books, etc
- C. Religion - Earth god and rain god : practice sacrificial rituals

IV. Decline of Teotihuacan

- A. 500 C.E. - increasing military pressure from outside forces
- B. 650 C.E - period of decline
- C. Downfall - Burned down by invaders (monuments, books, artwork burned as well)

Early Societies of South America

12,000 BCE: Migrations across Central America and into South America began

8,000 BCE: Climate became increasingly warm and dry, introducing agriculture

1000 BCE: Central Andean region generated complex societies (similar to Mesoamerica's)

I. Early Andean Society and the Chavin Cult

Early societies did not make use of writing

A. Early Agriculture in South America

- Main food crops: beans, peanuts, sweet potatoes
- Domesticated animals (llamas/alpacas): provided meat and wool, sometimes served as pack animals
- Rich marine life: supplemented harvests and enabled complex societies
- 1800 BCE: constructed canals and irrigation systems for dry lands
- Built temples and pyramids in ceremonial centers

B. The Chavin Cult

1000 BCE: appeared in the central Andes

- Large temple complexes and elaborate works of art (influenced by agricultural people)
- Andean society became complex
- Weavers: intricate textiles
- Artisans: cotton-string fishnets
- Craftsmen: discovered metallurgy
- Vanished around 300 BCE

C. Early Cities

200 BCE: large cities emerged

- Population: exceeding 10,000
- Large public buildings and ceremonial plazas
- Extensive residential districts

II. Early Andean States: Mochica

A. Political and Economic Integration of the Andean Valleys

- Earliest states arose in valleys of the western side of mountains
- Coordinated irrigation systems for agriculture
- Established trade and exchanged networks to tie regions together
- Relied heavily on arms to introduce order and maintain stability

B. The Mochica State

- Base in valley of Moche River
- Dominated coasts and valleys of northern Peru during 300 to 700 CE
- Left evidence through art (pottery/ceramics)
- Difficult geographic barriers presented barriers for Mochica
- Climatic fluctuations brought a long series of severe droughts
- End of first millennium CE: Andean societies disappeared

Early Societies of Oceania

- Migrants entered at least by fifty thousand years before the present
- Arrived in watercraft
- Earliest inhabitants also migrated over land to small island groups
- Five thousand years ago seafaring people from southeast Asia visited the northern coast of New Guinea for trade
- During the following centuries the descendants sailed large canoes throughout the Pacific basin
- By the middle centuries of the first millennium c.e., established communities in habitable islands of the Pacific ocean

Early societies in Australia and New Guinea

- Migrants came before the cultivation of crops
- Lived by hunting and gathering
- Doraing people traveled back and forth between Australia and New Guinea
- Ten thousand years ago migrations ceased because of rising seas separating the two islands
- Both the Australia and New Guinea societies followed different paths
- Australia stayed hunter gatherers
- Nineteenth and twentieth centuries C.E.: Large number of Europeans established settler communities
- New Guinea people turned to agriculture
- 3000 B.C.E cultivation of Root crops: yams and taro
 - Keeping pigs and chickens spread rapidly throughout the island
- The early Hunter gathering people of Australia lived in small, mobile communities
 - Undertook seasonal migrations in of food
- Learn to exploit resources of ecological regions of Australia
- Plant food
 - Fruits, berries, roots, nuts, seeds, shoots, and green leaves

The Peopling of the Pacific Islands

- The first inhabitants of Australia/New Guinea also settled in the Bismark and Solomon island groups
 - It was easier to travel at the time because the sea was low around New Guinea and as a result, the trips were shorter

- Austronesian Migrations to Polynesia
 - Settlers had maritime technology and agricultural expertise
 - Settled in Pacific Ocean islands
 - Coastal settlements in New Guinea led to trade with Bismark/Solomon islands
 - 1500 BCE= Austronesian Mariners arrived in Vanuatu and New Caledonia; 1300 BCE= Fiji; 1000 BCE= Tonga and Samoa; During late centuries of first millennium=Tahiti and Marquesas; early centuries CE= Hawaii; 300 CE= Easter Island; 700 CE= New Zealand
 - Polynesia can be defined as the territory falling in the triangle with Hawaii; a collection of islands.
 - Micronesia includes small islands and atolls such as the Mariana, Caroline, and Marshall islands of the western Pacific.
 - The Lapita peoples were the earliest Austronesian migrants to sail out to the Pacific ocean and establish settlements in the Pacific islands.
 - It is unknown what they called themselves. The name “Lapita” comes from a beach in New Caledonia where the earliest recognizable Lapita artifacts were found.
 - Between 1500 BCE and 500 CE, the Lapita had a communication and exchange network that spanned 4,500 km from New Guinea to Samoa and Tonga.
 - They established agricultural villages where they had domesticated pigs and chickens. They planted crops such as yams, taro, bananas, and breadfruit and supplemented their diet with fish and seaweed.

- They soon killed off most large land animals and birds that were suitable for human consumption.
- They made pottery with stamped geometric designs. It was high quality obsidian. They traded this along with feathers, spouses, jewelry, and stone tools.
- Chiefly Political Organization
 - Lapita connection networks fell into disuse at about 500 CE, most likely due to their size: they had grown large enough to support themselves on their own without trade.
 - By the middle of the first millennium BCE, hierarchical chiefdoms in the Pacific Islands had been established.
 - Leadership was passed from a chief to an eldest son/close relatives, constituting an aristocracy.
 - Those dissatisfied with the government often built canoes and left to start their own settlements on uninhabited/lightly populated islands.
 - The spread of the Austronesian population came from small parties seeking fresh opportunities after leaving their native island.
 - Over time, the Lapita built chiefly societies in areas such as the Tonga, Samoa, and Hawaii island groups.
 - Ex: In Hawaii, military chiefs operated with priests, administrators, soldiers, and servants in ruling their districts which could range from a small portion of a single island to a group of islands.

- Chiefs would claim a portion of agricultural surplus or resources produced by their subjects.
- Chiefs would also negotiate with neighboring districts, lead public ritual observances, and oversee the irrigation systems that watered taro crops, an important plant that was crucial to the survival of Hawaiian society.
- Eventually, chiefs and their aristocrat classes became so powerful that they began to regard themselves as divine or semi-divine and that the law of the land prohibited commoners from even looking upon them.