

Early Societies in the Americas and Oceania

chapter 6

AP KEY CONCEPTS

1.3.I: Core and foundational civilizations developed in a variety of geographical and environmental settings where agriculture flourished, including Mesopotamia in the Tigris and Euphrates River Valleys, Egypt in the Nile River Valley, Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa in the Indus River Valley, Shang in the Yellow River or Huang He Valley, Olmecs in Mesoamerica, and Chavin in Andean South America.

1.3.II: The first states emerged within core civilizations in Mesopotamia and the Nile Valley.

1.3.III: Culture played a significant role in unifying states through laws, language, literature, religion, myths, and monumental art.

2.2.I: The number and size of key states and empires grew dramatically as rulers imposed political unity on areas where previously there had been competing states.

2.2.III: Unique social and economic dimensions developed in imperial societies in Afro-Eurasia and the Americas.

2.3.I: Land and water routes became the basis for interregional trade, communication, and exchange networks in the Eastern Hemisphere.

3.1.II: The movement of peoples caused environmental and linguistic effects.

3.1.IV: There was continued diffusion of crops and pathogens, including epidemic diseases like the bubonic plague, throughout the Eastern Hemisphere along the trade routes.

AP HISTORICAL THINKING

Using Evidence to Support an Argument Understand how cultural artifacts (architecture, urban planning, tools, luxury goods, art) are used to analyze otherwise unknown components

of American civilizations, especially when the lack of a decipherable written language hampers what historians know about Oceanic and early American societies.

Comparison Understand the common features of a “civilization” and be able to compare Olmec and Chavin characteristics with African, south Asian, east Asian, and Mesopotamian civilizations.

Contextualization Understand that even though the early Oceanic and American societies developed in unique ways when compared to those in Afro-Eurasia, there are many similarities between these societies and the ones found in Afro-Eurasia in this early period of AP World History.

AP CHAPTER FOCUS

Historians know less about early American complex societies than Eurasian and African ones, largely because of the lack of written languages and archaeological evidence. We do know, however, that humans migrated into North America about 15,000 years ago across the Bering land bridge that linked Siberia to Alaska, and gradually moved south and eastward. Humans were foragers as they migrated throughout the western hemisphere, and remained so in North America until the Common Era. Hunting, fishing, and foraging communities were somewhat small.

Complex civilizations in Mesoamerica (or Central America) and South America developed agricultural practices by ca. 7500 B.C.E., and they had established networks of villages by ca. 2000 B.C.E. Be sure to study the maps of the migration routes, and note that Asian seafarers go into both the Pacific and Indian oceans. Austronesian migrations through the Pacific offer a great comparison with the land-based migrations of the Indo-Europeans and the Bantu.

Early Societies of Mesoamerica

The Olmecs
Heirs of the Olmecs: The Maya
Maya Society and Religion
Heirs of the Olmecs: Teotihuacan

Early Societies of South America

Early Andean Society and the Chavin Cult
Early Andean States: Mochica

Early Societies of Oceania

Early Societies in Australia and New Guinea
The Peopling of the Pacific Islands

EYEWITNESS:

Chan Bahlum Spills Blood to Honor the Gods

In early September of the year 683 C.E., a Maya man named Chan Bahlum grasped a sharp obsidian knife and cut three deep slits into the skin of his penis. He inserted into each slit a strip of paper made from beaten tree bark to encourage a continuous flow of blood. The bloodletting observances were political and religious rituals, acts of deep piety performed as Chan Bahlum presided over funeral services for his recently deceased father, Pacal, king of the Maya city of Palenque in the Yucatan peninsula. The Maya believed that the shedding of royal blood was essential to the world's survival.



In this Maya mural from Bonampak in the southern part of modern Mexico, war captives prepare to be sacrificed by their captors.

Throughout Mesoamerica for a millennium and more, Maya, Maya rulers, their family members, and other peoples performed similar rituals—regularly spilling their blood by opening wounds with obsidian knives, stingray spines, or sharpened bones. Men commonly drew blood from the penis and women often drew from the tongue, and both occasionally also drew blood from earlobes, lips, or cheeks, sometimes increasing the flow by pulling long, thick cords through their wounds.

This shedding of blood was crucial to Maya rituals because of its association with rain and agriculture. According to Maya priests, the gods had shed their blood to water the earth and nourish crops of maize, and they expected human beings to honor them by imitating their sacrifice. By spilling human blood, the Maya hoped to appease the gods and ensure that life-giving waters would bring bountiful harvests to their fields.

Early societies in the Americas and Oceania developed independently and differed considerably from their counterparts in the eastern hemisphere. Human migrants reached both regions long after human groups had established populations in most other world regions. In fact, migrations to the Americas and Oceania represented some of the last episodes in the long process by which *Homo sapiens* established populations in all habitable parts of the world.

Human foragers reached the Americas, Australia, and New Guinea during the last ice age when glaciers locked up much of the earth's water, causing sea levels all over the world to decline precipitously—sometimes by as much as 300 meters (984 feet). For thousands of years, temporary land bridges linked regions that were separated by the seas both before and after the ice ages. One land bridge linked Siberia with Alaska. Another joined the continent of Australia with the island of New Guinea, while low sea levels also exposed large stretches of land connecting Sumatra, Java, and other Indonesian islands to the peninsula of Southeast Asia. The temporary land bridges enabled human migrants to walk to, or make short sea voyages to, previously unpopulated regions and start new communities.

Although oceans separated the Americas and Oceania from the eastern hemisphere and from each other, by no means did the early human inhabitants of the Americas and Oceania lead completely isolated lives. To the contrary, there were frequent and sometimes regular interactions between peoples of different societies within the Americas and within Oceania. Moreover, there was sporadic, but significant, contact between Asian peoples and Pacific islanders, and between Pacific islanders and native peoples of the Americas. Yet even as they dealt with peoples of other societies, the first inhabitants of the Americas and Oceania established distinctive societies of their own.

Human communities independently discovered agriculture in several regions of North America and South America, and migrants introduced cultivation to the inhabited Pacific islands. With agriculture came increasing populations, settlement in towns, specialized labor, formal political authorities, hierarchical social orders, long-distance trade, and organized religious traditions. Thus, like their counterparts in the eastern hemisphere, the earliest societies of the Americas and Oceania reflected a common human tendency toward the development of increasingly complex social structures.

EARLY SOCIETIES OF MESOAMERICA

Much is unclear about the early population of the Americas by human communities. The first large wave of migration from Siberia to Alaska probably took place about 13,000 B.C.E. But small numbers of migrants may have crossed the Bering land bridge earlier, and it is also possible that some migrants reached the western hemisphere by watercraft, sailing or drifting with the currents from northeast Asia down the west coast of North America. In the view of some scholars, it is also possible that some migrants crossed the Atlantic Ocean

and established communities on the eastern coast of North America. Several archaeological excavations at widely scattered sites in both North America and South America have yielded remains that scholars date to 15,000 B.C.E. or earlier, suggesting that at least a few human groups made their way to the Americas before the beginning of large-scale migration from Siberia. In any case, after 13,000 B.C.E. migrants arrived in large numbers, and they quickly populated all habitable regions of the western hemisphere. By 9500 B.C.E. they had reached the southernmost part of South America, more than 17,000 kilometers (10,566 miles) from the Bering land bridge.

The earliest human inhabitants of the Americas lived exclusively by hunting and gathering. Beginning about 8,000 B.C.E., however, it became increasingly difficult for them to

survive by foraging. Large game animals became scarce, partly because they did not adapt well to the rapidly warming climate and partly because of overhunting by expanding human communities. By 7500 B.C.E. many species of large animals in the Americas were well on the road to extinction. Some human communities relied on fish and small game to supplement foods that they gathered. Others turned to agriculture, and they gave rise to the first complex societies in the Americas.

The Olmecs

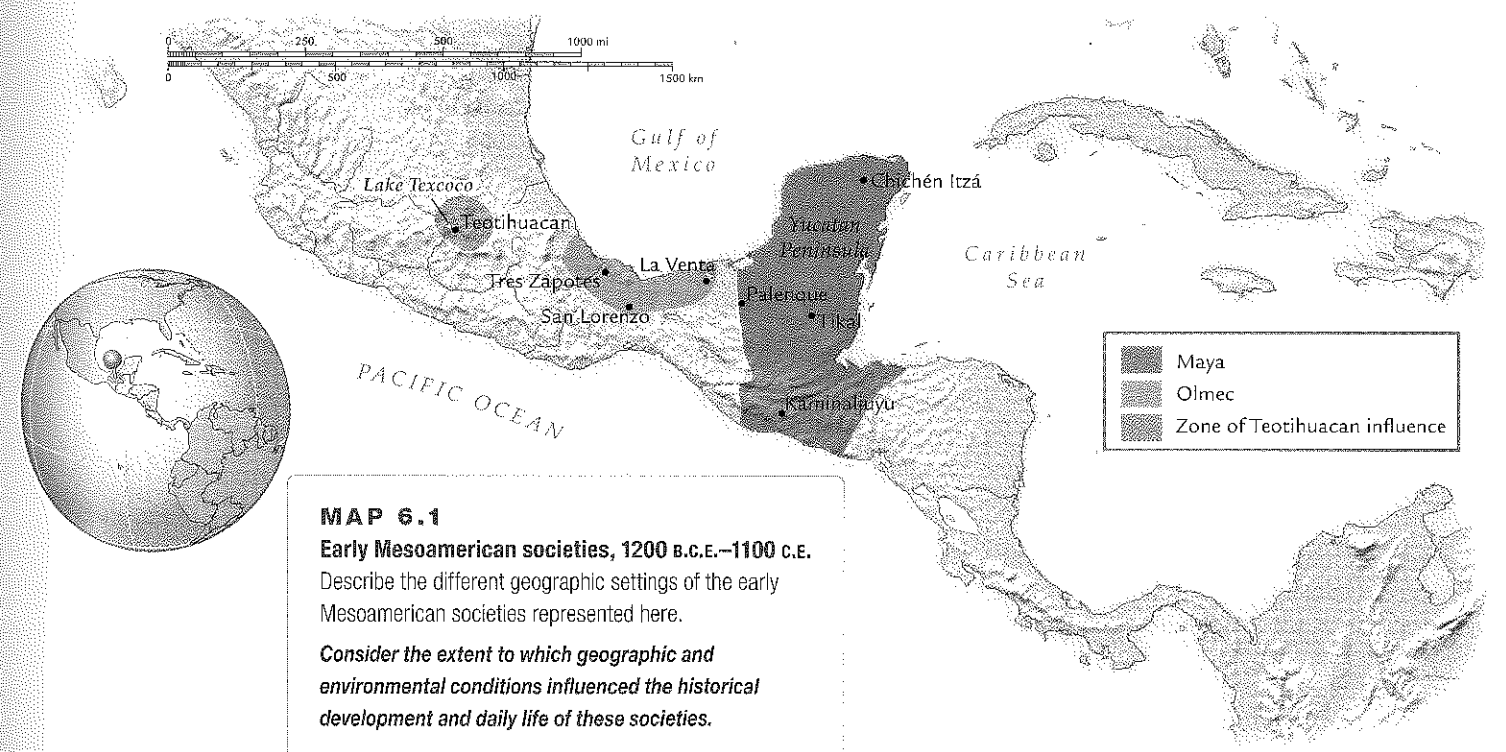
Early Agriculture in Mesoamerica By 8000 to 7000 B.C.E., the peoples of **Mesoamerica**—the region from the central portion of modern Mexico to Honduras and El Salvador—had begun to experiment with the cultivation of squashes, manioc, beans, chili peppers, avocados, and gourds. By 4000 B.C.E. they had discovered the agricultural potential of maize, which soon became the staple food of the region. Later they added tomatoes to the crops they cultivated. Agricultural villages appeared soon after 3000 B.C.E., and by 2000 B.C.E. agriculture had spread throughout Mesoamerica.

Early Mesoamerican peoples had a diet rich in cultivated foods, but they did not keep as many animals as their counterparts in the eastern hemisphere. Their domesticated animals included turkeys and small, barkless dogs, both of which they consumed as food. They had no cattle, sheep, goats, or swine, so far less animal protein was available to them than to their counterparts in the eastern hemisphere. In addition, most

large animals of the western hemisphere were not susceptible to domestication, so Mesoamericans were unable to harness the energy of animals such as horses and oxen that were prominent in the eastern hemisphere. Human laborers prepared fields for cultivation, and human porters carried trade goods on their backs. Mesoamericans had no need for wheeled vehicles, which would have been useful only if draft animals were available to pull them.

Ceremonial Centers Toward the end of the second millennium B.C.E., the tempo of Mesoamerican life quickened as elaborate ceremonial centers with monumental pyramids, temples, and palaces arose alongside the agricultural villages. The first of these centers were not cities like those of early societies in the eastern hemisphere. Permanent residents of the ceremonial centers included members of the ruling elite, priests, and a few artisans and craftsmen who tended to the needs of the ruling and priestly classes. Large numbers of people gathered in the ceremonial centers on special occasions to observe rituals or on market days to exchange goods, but most people then returned to their homes in neighboring villages and hamlets.

Olmecs: The “Rubber People” Agricultural villages and ceremonial centers arose in several regions of Mesoamerica. The earliest known and the most thoroughly studied of them appeared on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico, near the modern Mexican city of Veracruz, which emerged as the nerve center for Olmec society. Historians and archaeologists have



MAP 6.1

Early Mesoamerican societies, 1200 B.C.E.–1100 C.E.

Describe the different geographic settings of the early Mesoamerican societies represented here.

Consider the extent to which geographic and environmental conditions influenced the historical development and daily life of these societies.

Mesoamerica (mez-oh-uh-MER-i-kuh)



Colossal Olmec head carved from basalt rock between 1000 and 600 B.C.E. and discovered at La Venta. Olmecs carved similar heads for their ceremonial centers at San Lorenzo and Tres Zapotes. Why might Olmecs have taken the trouble to carve and move such massive sculptures?

systematically studied Olmec society only since the 1940s, and many questions about the Olmecs remain unanswered. Even their proper name is unknown: the term *Olmec* (meaning “rubber people”) did not come from the ancient people themselves, but derives instead from the rubber trees that flourish in the region they inhabited. Nevertheless, some of the basic features of Olmec society have become reasonably clear, and it is certain that Olmec cultural traditions influenced all complex societies of Mesoamerica until the arrival of European peoples in the sixteenth century C.E.

The first Olmec ceremonial center arose about 1200 B.C.E. on the site of the modern town of San Lorenzo, and it served as their capital for some four hundred years. When the influence of San Lorenzo waned, leadership passed to new ceremonial centers at La Venta (800–400 B.C.E.) and Tres Zapotes (400–100 B.C.E.). These sites defined the heartland of Olmec society, where agriculture produced rich harvests. The entire region receives abundant rainfall, so there was no need to build extensive systems of irrigation. Like the Harappans, however, the Olmecs constructed elaborate drainage systems to divert waters that otherwise might have flooded their fields or destroyed their settlements. Some Olmec drainage construction remains visible and effective today.

Olmec Society Olmec society was probably authoritarian in nature. Untold thousands of laborers participated in the construction of the ceremonial centers at San Lorenzo, La Venta, and Tres Zapotes. Each of the principal Olmec sites featured an elaborate complex of temples, pyramids, altars, stone sculptures, and tombs for rulers. Common subjects delivered a portion of their harvests for the maintenance of the

elite classes living in the ceremonial centers and provided labor for the various large-scale construction projects.

Indeed, common subjects labored regularly on behalf of the Olmec elite—not only in building drainage systems and ceremonial centers but also in providing appropriate artistic adornment for the capitals. The most distinctive artistic creations of the Olmecs were **colossal human heads**—possibly likenesses of rulers—sculpted from basalt rock. The largest of these sculptures stands 3 meters (almost 10 feet) tall and weighs some 20 tons. In the absence of draft animals and wheels, human laborers dragged enormous boulders from quarries, floated them on rafts to points near their destinations, dragged them to their intended sites, and then positioned them for the sculptors. The largest sculptures required the services of about one thousand laborers. Apart from the colossal heads, the Olmec capitals featured many other large stone sculptures and monumental buildings that required the services of laborers by the hundreds and thousands. Construction of the huge pyramid at La Venta, for example, required some eight hundred thousand man-days of labor.

Trade in Jade and Obsidian Olmec influence extended to much of the central and southern regions of modern Mexico and beyond that to modern Guatemala and El Salvador. The Olmecs spread their influence partly by military force, but trade was a prominent link between the Olmec heartland and the other regions of Mesoamerica. The Olmecs produced large numbers of decorative objects from jade, which they had to import. In the absence of any metal technology, they also made extensive use of obsidian from which they fashioned knives and axes with wickedly sharp cutting edges. Like jade, obsidian came to the Gulf Coast from distant regions in the interior of Mesoamerica. In exchange for the imports, the Olmecs traded small works of art fashioned from jade, basalt, or ceramics and perhaps also local products such as animal skins.

Among the many mysteries surrounding the Olmecs, one of the most perplexing concerns the decline and fall of their society. The Olmecs systematically destroyed their ceremonial centers at both San Lorenzo and La Venta and then deserted the sites. Archaeologists studying these sites found statues broken and buried, monuments defaced, and the capitals themselves burned. Although intruders may have ravaged the ceremonial centers, many scholars believe that the Olmecs deliberately destroyed their capitals, perhaps because of civil conflicts or doubts about the effectiveness and legitimacy of the ruling classes. In any case, by about 400 B.C.E. Olmec society had fallen on hard times, and soon thereafter societies in other parts of Mesoamerica eclipsed it altogether.

Nevertheless, Olmec traditions deeply influenced later Mesoamerican societies. Olmecs made astronomical observations and created a calendar to help them keep track of the seasons. They invented a system of writing, although unfortunately

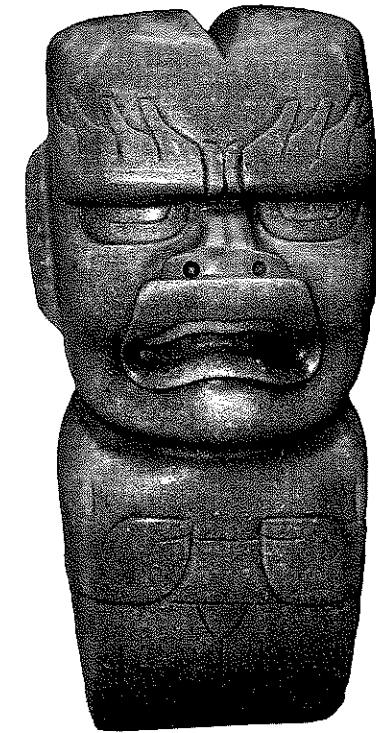
little of it survives beyond calendrical inscriptions. They also carried out rituals involving human sacrifice and invented a distinctive ball game. Later Mesoamerican peoples adopted all these Olmec traditions as well as their cultivation of maize and their construction of ceremonial centers with temple pyramids. The later and better-known societies of Mesoamerica stood largely on Olmec foundations.

Heirs of the Olmecs: The Maya

During the thousand years following the Olmecs’ disappearance about 100 B.C.E., complex societies arose in several Mesoamerican regions. Human population grew dramatically, and ceremonial centers cropped up at sites far removed from the Olmec heartland. Some of them evolved into genuine cities: they attracted large populations of permanent residents, embarked on ambitious programs of construction, maintained large markets, and encouraged increasing specialization of labor. Networks of long-distance trade linked the new urban centers and extended their influence to all parts of Mesoamerica. Within the cities themselves, priests devised written languages and compiled a body of astronomical knowledge. In short, Mesoamerican societies developed in a manner roughly parallel to their counterparts in the eastern hemisphere.

The Maya The earliest heirs of the Olmecs were the Maya, who created a remarkable society in the region now occupied by southern Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, and El Salvador. The highlands of Guatemala offer fertile soil and excellent conditions for agriculture. Permanent villages began to appear there during the third century B.C.E. The most prominent of them was **Kaminaljuyú**, located on the site of modern Guatemala City. Like the Olmec capitals, Kaminaljuyú was a ceremonial center rather than a true city, but it dominated the life of other communities in the region. Some twelve thousand to fifteen thousand laborers worked to build its temples, and its products traveled the trade routes as far as central Mexico. During the fourth century C.E., Kaminaljuyú fell under the economic and perhaps also the political dominance of the much larger city of **Teotihuacan** in central Mexico and lost much of its influence in Maya society.

After the fourth century, Maya society flourished mostly in the poorly drained Mesoamerican lowlands, where thin, tropical soils quickly lost their fertility. To enhance the agricultural potential of the region, the Maya built terraces



Olmec ceremonial axe head carved from jade about 800 to 400 B.C.E. Jaguar features, such as those depicted here, are prominent in Olmec art.

designed to trap silt carried by the numerous rivers passing through the lowlands. By artificially retaining rich earth, they dramatically increased the agricultural productivity of their lands. They harvested maize in abundance, and they also cultivated cotton from which they wove fine textiles highly prized both in their own society and by trading partners in other parts of Mesoamerica. Maya cultivators also raised cacao, the large bean that is the source of chocolate. Cacao was a precious commodity consumed mostly by nobles in Maya society. They whisked powdered cacao into water to create a stimulating beverage, and they sometimes even ate the bitter cacao beans as snacks. The product was so valuable that Maya used cacao beans as money.

Tikal From about 300 to 900 C.E., the Maya built more than eighty large ceremonial centers in the lowlands—all with pyramids, palaces, and temples—as well as numerous smaller settlements. Some of the larger centers attracted dense populations and evolved into genuine cities. Foremost among them was **Tikal**, the most important Maya political center between the fourth and the ninth centuries C.E. At its height, roughly 600 to 800 C.E., Tikal was a wealthy and bustling city with a population

approaching forty thousand. It boasted enormous paved plazas and scores of temples, pyramids, palaces, and public buildings. The Temple of the Giant Jaguar, a stepped pyramid rising sharply to a height of 47 meters (154 feet), dominated the skyline and represented Tikal’s control over the surrounding region, which had a population of about five hundred thousand.

The Maya organized themselves politically into scores of small city-kingdoms. Tikal was probably the largest, but Palenque and Chichén Itzá also were sizable states. The smaller kingdoms had populations between ten thousand and thirty thousand. Maya kings often bore menacing names such as Curl Snout, Smoking Frog, and Stormy Sky. Especially popular were names associated with the jaguar, the most dangerous predator of the Mesoamerican forests. Prominent Maya kings included Great Jaguar Paw, Shield Jaguar, Bird Jaguar, and Jaguar Penis (meaning the progenitor of other jaguar-kings).

Maya Warfare Dazzled by Maya architecture and sculpture, scholars of earlier generations thought these kingdoms

Kaminaljuyú (kah-mee-nawl-who-YOU)
Teotihuacan (tay-uh-tee-wah-KAHN)



Temple of the Giant Jaguar at Tikal, which served as funerary pyramid for Lord Cacao, a prominent Maya ruler of the late sixth and early seventh centuries C.E. Why might a Maya ruler want to associate himself with a jaguar?

were peaceful states that promoted artistic and scientific endeavors. Since the 1970s, however, historians and archaeologists have deciphered thousands of previously unreadable inscriptions that have dramatically transformed understanding of Maya politics. Combined with fresh archaeological discoveries, these sources make it clear that the Maya kingdoms fought constantly with one another. Victors generally destroyed the peoples they defeated and took over their ceremonial centers, but the purpose of Maya warfare was not so much to kill enemies as to capture them in hand-to-hand combat on the battlefield. Warriors won enormous prestige when they brought back important captives from neighboring kingdoms. They stripped captives of their fine dress and symbols of rank, and sometimes they kept high-ranking captives alive for years, displaying them as trophies. Ultimately, however, most captives ended their lives either as slaves or as sacrificial victims to Maya gods. High-ranking captives in particular often underwent ritual torture and sacrifice in public ceremonies on important occasions.

Chichén Itzá Bitter conflicts between small kingdoms were sources of constant tension in Maya society. Only about the ninth century C.E. did the state of **Chichén Itzá** in the northern Yucatan peninsula seek to dampen hostile instincts and

Chichén Itzá (chee-CHEN eet-SAH)

establish a larger political framework for Maya society. The rulers of Chichén Itzá preferred to absorb captives and integrate them into their own society rather than annihilate them or offer them up as sacrificial victims. Some captives refused the opportunity and went to their deaths as proud warriors, but many agreed to recognize the authority of Chichén Itzá and participate in the construction of a larger society. Between the ninth and eleventh centuries C.E., Chichén Itzá organized a loose empire that brought a measure of political stability to the northern Yucatan.

Maya Decline By about 800 C.E., however, most Maya populations had begun to desert their cities. Within a century Maya society was in full decline everywhere except the northern Yucatan, where Chichén Itzá continued to flourish. Historians have suggested many possible causes of the decline, including invasion by foreigners from Mexico, internal dissension and civil war, failure of the system of water control leading to diminished harvests and demographic collapse, ecological problems caused by destruction of the forests, the spread of epidemic diseases, and natural catastrophes such as earthquakes. Possibly several problems combined to destroy Maya society. It is likely that debilitating civil conflict and excessive siltation of agricultural terraces caused particularly difficult problems for the Maya. In any case, the population declined, the people abandoned their cities, and long-distance trade with central Mexico came to a halt. Meanwhile, the tropical jungles of the lowlands encroached upon human settlements and gradually smothered the cities, temples, pyramids, and monuments of a once-vibrant society.

Maya Society and Religion

Apart from the kings and ruling families, Maya society included a large class of priests who maintained an elaborate calendar and transmitted knowledge of writing, astronomy, and mathematics. A hereditary nobility owned most land and cooperated with the kings and priests by organizing military forces and participating in religious rituals. Maya merchants came from the ruling and noble classes. Their travels had strong political overtones, since they served not only as traders but also as ambassadors to neighboring lands and allied peoples. Moreover, they traded mostly in exotic and luxury goods, such as rare animal skins, cacao beans, and finely crafted works of art, which rulers coveted as signs of special status. Apart from the ruling and priestly elites, Maya society generated several other distinct social classes. Professional architects and sculptors oversaw construction of large monuments and public buildings. Artisans specialized in the production of pottery, tools, and cotton textiles. Large classes of peasants and slaves fed the entire society and provided physical labor for the construction of cities and monuments.

The Maya built upon the cultural achievements of their Olmec predecessors. Maya priests studied astronomy and



A vivid mural from a temple in the small Maya kingdom of Bonampak (in the southern part of modern Mexico) depicts warriors raiding a neighboring village to capture prisoners who will become sacrificial victims.

mathematics, and they devised both a sophisticated calendar and an elaborate system of writing. They understood the movements of heavenly bodies well enough to plot planetary cycles and predict eclipses of the sun and moon. They invented the concept of zero and used a symbol to represent zero mathematically, which facilitated their manipulation of large numbers. By combining their astronomical observations and mathematical reasoning, Maya priests calculated the length of the solar year at 365.242 days—about seventeen seconds shorter than the figure reached by modern astronomers.

The Maya Calendar Maya priests constructed the most elaborate calendar of the ancient Americas. Its complexity reflected a powerful urge to identify meaningful cycles of time and to understand human events in the context of those cycles. The Maya calendar interwove two kinds of year: a solar year of 365 days governed the agricultural cycle, and a ritual year of 260 days governed daily affairs by organizing time into twenty “months” of thirteen days apiece. The Maya believed that each day derived certain specific characteristics from its position in both the solar and the ritual calendar and that the combined attributes of each day would determine the fortune of activities undertaken on that day. It took fifty-two years for the two calendars to work through all possible combinations of days and return simultaneously to their respective starting points, so 18,980 different combinations of characteristics could influence the prospects of an

individual day. Maya priests carefully studied the various opportunities and dangers that would come together on a given day in hopes that they could determine which activities were safe to initiate. Apart from calculating the prospects of individual days, the Maya attributed especially great significance to the fifty-two-year periods in which the two calendars ran.

Maya Writing While building on the calendrical calculations of the Olmecs, the Maya also expanded upon their predecessors’ tradition of written inscriptions. In doing so they created 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. Scholars have begun to decipher this script only since the 1960s, and it has become clear that writing was just as important to the Maya as it was to early complex societies in the eastern hemisphere. Maya scribes wrote works of history, poetry, and myth, and they also kept genealogical, administrative, and

Reverberations of Urbanization and the Creation of Patriarchy

In Eurasia, there is abundant textual and material evidence that patriarchal systems developed over time in most urban areas and centralized states. Since scholars do not have as much textual evidence of patriarchy among the Maya, what kinds of material evidence would be most convincing of its existence: pictures of elites on stelae, ceramics, or other objects, or excavations of living and burial spaces?

Sources from the Past

The Creation of Humanity According to the Popol Vuh

The Popol Vuh, a Maya creation myth, describes how, after several failed attempts, the Maya gods finally created humans out of maize and water. The maize, along with many other delicious foods, including chocolate, was revealed to the gods by two animals and two birds. Human flesh was made from the maize, and water became the blood of humanity. The following excerpt from the myth concludes by naming the first four humans, describing them as “our first mothers and fathers.” The version of the work that survives today dates from the mid-sixteenth century, but it reflects beliefs of a much earlier era.

THIS, then, is the beginning of the conception of humanity, when that which would become the flesh of mankind was sought. Then spoke they who are called She Who Has Borne Children and He Who Has Begotten Sons, the Framer and the Shaper, Sovereign and Quetzal Serpent:

“The dawn approaches, and our work is not successfully completed. A provider and a sustainer have yet to appear—a child of light, a son of light. Humanity has yet to appear to populate the face of the earth,” they said.

Thus they gathered together and joined their thoughts in the darkness, in the night. They searched and they sifted. Here they thought and they pondered. Their thoughts came forth bright and clear. They discovered and established that which would become the flesh of humanity. This took place just a little before the appearance of the sun, moon, and stars above the heads of the Framer and the Shaper.

It was from within the places called Paxil and Cayala that the yellow ears of ripe maize and the white ears of ripe maize came.

THESE were the names of the animals that obtained their food—fox and coyote, parakeet and raven. Four, then, were the animals that revealed to them the yellow ears of maize and the white ears of maize. They came from Paxil and pointed out the path to get there.

Thus was found the food that would become the flesh of the newly framed and shaped people. Water was their blood. It became the blood of humanity. The ears of maize entered into

their flesh by means of She Who Has Borne Children and He Who Has Begotten Sons.

Thus they rejoiced over the discovery of that excellent mountain that was filled with delicious things, crowded with yellow ears of maize and white ears of maize. It was crowded as well with pataxte and chocolate, with countless zapotes and anonas, with jocotes and nances, with matasanos and honey. From within the places called Paxil and Cayala came the sweetest foods in the citadel. All the small foods and great foods were there, along with the small and great cultivated fields. The path was thus revealed by the animals.

The yellow ears of maize and the white ears of maize were then ground fine with nine grindings by Xmucane. Food entered their flesh, along with water to give them strength. Thus was created the fatness of their arms. The yellowness of humanity came to be when they were made by they who are called She Who Has Borne Children and He Who Has Begotten Sons, by Sovereign and Quetzal Serpent.

Thus their frame and shape were given expression by our first Mother and our first Father. Their flesh was merely yellow ears of maize and white ears of maize. Mere food were the legs and arms of humanity, of our first fathers. And so there were four who were made, and mere food was their flesh.

These are the names of the first people who were framed and shaped: the first person was Balam Quitze, the second was Balam Acab, the third was Mahucutah, and the fourth was Iqui Balam. These, then, were the names of our first mothers and fathers.

For Further Reflection

- To what extent does this account of human creation reflect the influences on Maya society of both agriculture and the untamed natural world?

Source: Allen J. Christenson, trans. *Popol Vuh. Sacred Book of the Quiché Maya People*, pp. 180–184.

astronomical records. Most Maya writing survives today in the form of inscriptions on temples and monuments, but scribes produced untold numbers of books written on paper made from beaten tree bark or on vellum made from deerskin. When Spanish conquerors and missionaries arrived in Maya lands in the sixteenth century C.E., however, they destroyed all the books they could find in hopes of undermining native religious beliefs.

Popol Vuh (paw-PawI VUH)

Today only four books of the ancient Maya survive, all dealing with astronomical and calendrical matters.

Maya Creation Myths Surviving inscriptions and other writings shed considerable light on Maya religious and cultural traditions. The **Popol Vuh**, a Maya creation myth, taught that the gods had created humans out of maize and water, the ingredients that became human flesh and blood. Thus Maya religious thought reflected the fundamental role of agriculture

in their society, much like religious thought in early complex societies of the eastern hemisphere. Maya priests also taught that the gods kept the world going and maintained the agricultural cycle in exchange for honors and sacrifices performed for them by humans.

Bloodletting Rituals The most important of those sacrifices involved the shedding of human blood, which the Maya believed would prompt the gods to send rain to water their crops of maize. Some **bloodletting rituals** centered on war captives. Before sacrificing the victims by decapitation, their captors cut off the ends of their fingers or lacerated their bodies so as to cause a copious flow of blood in honor of the gods. Yet the Maya did not look upon those rituals simply as opportunities to torture their enemies. The frequent and voluntary shedding of royal blood, as in the case of Chan Bahlum’s self-sacrifice at Palenque, testifies to the depth of Maya convictions that they inhabited a world created and sustained by deities who expected honor and reverence from their human subjects.

The Maya Ball Game Apart from the calendar and sacrificial rituals, the Maya also inherited a distinctive ball game from the Olmecs. The game sometimes pitted two men against each other, but it often involved teams of two to four members—mostly men, although there is evidence that women sometimes played the game as well. The object of the game was for players to score points by propelling a rubber ball through a ring or onto a marker without using their hands. The Maya used a ball about 20 centimeters (8 inches) in diameter. Made of solid baked rubber, the ball was both heavy and



In this stone relief sculpture, a Maya king from Yaxchilán (between Tikal and Palenque in the southern Yucatan peninsula) holds a torch over a woman from the royal family as she draws a thorn-studded rope through a hole in her tongue, so as to shed her blood in honor of the Maya gods.

hard—a blow to the head could easily cause a concussion—and players needed great dexterity and skill to maneuver it accurately using only their feet, legs, hips, torso, shoulders, or elbows. The game was extremely popular: almost all Maya ceremonial centers, towns, and cities had stone-paved courts on which players performed publicly.

The Maya played the ball game for several reasons. Sometimes individuals competed for sporting purposes, and sometimes players or spectators laid bets on the outcome of contests between professionals. The ball game figured also in Maya political affairs as a ritual that honored the conclusion of treaties. High-ranking captives often engaged in forced public competition in which the stakes were their very lives: losers became sacrificial victims and faced torture and execution immediately following the match. Alongside some ball courts were skull racks that bore the severed heads of losing players. Thus Maya concerns to please the gods by shedding human blood extended even to the realm of sport.

Heirs of the Olmecs: Teotihuacan

While the Maya flourished in the Mesoamerican lowlands, a different society arose to the north in the highlands of Mexico. For most of human history, the valley of central Mexico, situated some two kilometers (more than a mile) above sea level, was the site of several large lakes fed by the waters coming off the surrounding mountains. Most of the lakes have disappeared during the past two or three centuries as a result of environmental changes and deliberate draining of their waters. In earlier times, however, their abundant supplies of fish and waterfowl attracted human settlers. The lakes also served as sources of freshwater and as transportation routes linking communities situated on their shores.

The earliest settlers in the valley of Mexico did not build extensive irrigation systems, but they channeled some of the waters from the mountain streams into their fields and established a productive agricultural society. Expanding human population led to the congregation of people in cities and the emergence of a complex society in the Mesoamerican high-lands. The earliest center of

Thinking about TRADITIONS

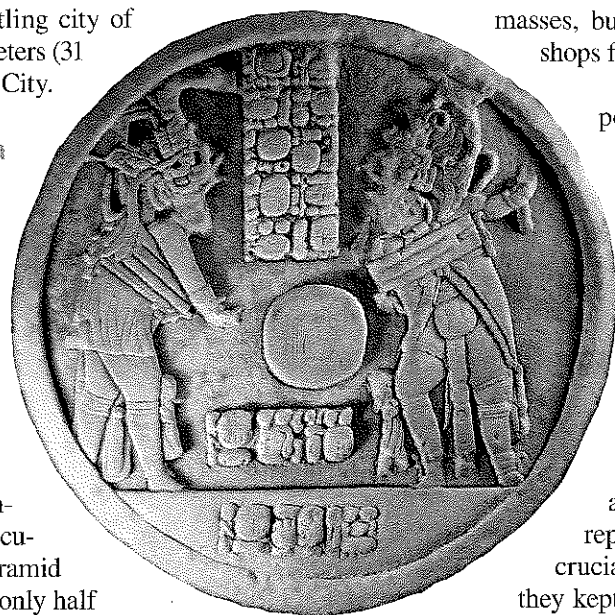
Agriculture and the Maya Way of Life

A productive agricultural economy was the foundation of Maya society. In many ways, Maya social and cultural traditions reflected the significance of agriculture to the Maya way of life. What roles did mathematics, astronomy, calendar making, religious beliefs, and even bloodletting rituals play in Maya agricultural society?

that society was the large and bustling city of Teotihuacan, located about 50 kilometers (31 miles) northeast of modern Mexico City.

The City of Teotihuacan

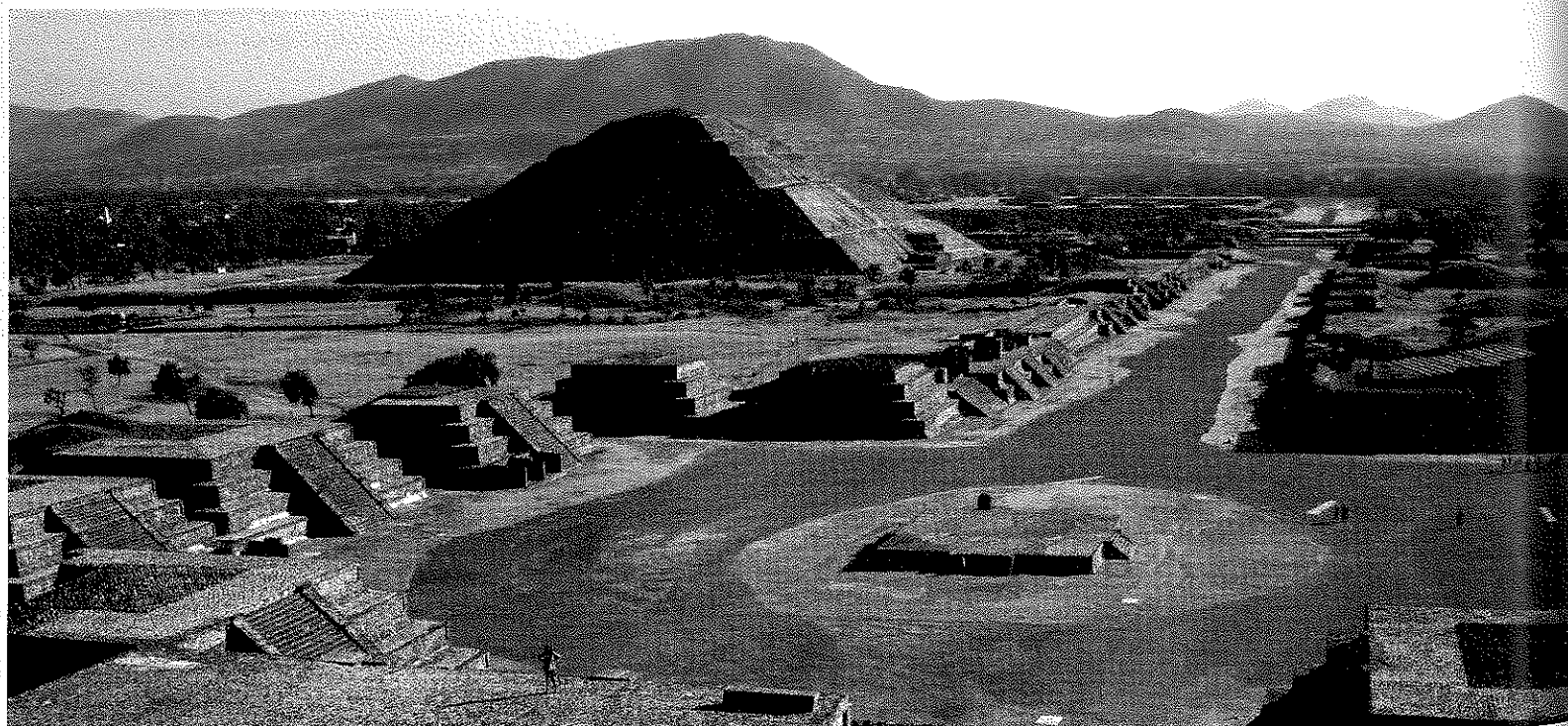
Teotihuacan was probably a large agricultural village by 500 B.C.E. It expanded rapidly after about 200 B.C.E., and by the end of the millennium its population approached fifty thousand. By the year 100 C.E., the city's two most prominent monuments, the colossal pyramids of the sun and the moon, dominated the skyline. The Pyramid of the Sun is the largest single structure in Mesoamerica. It occupies nearly as much space as the pyramid of Khufu in Egypt, though it stands only half as tall. At its high point, about 400 to 600 C.E., Teotihuacan was home to almost two hundred thousand inhabitants, a thriving metropolis with scores of temples, several palatial residences, neighborhoods with small apartments for the



A limestone altar carved in 796 C.E. depicts two Maya kings playing a ritual ball game to celebrate the negotiation of an agreement.

masses, busy markets, and hundreds of workshops for artisans and craftsmen.

The organization of a large urban population, along with the hinterland that supported it, required a recognized source of authority. Although Teotihuacan generated large numbers of books and records that perhaps would have shed light on the character of that authority, they unfortunately perished when the city itself declined. Paintings and murals suggest that Teotihuacan was a theocracy of sorts. Priests figure prominently in the works of art, and scholars interpret many figures as representations of deities. Priests were crucial to the survival of the society, since they kept the calendar and ensured that planting and harvesting took place at the appropriate seasons. Thus it would not have been unusual for them to govern Teotihuacan in the name of the gods, or at least to cooperate closely with a secular ruling class.



Aerial view of Teotihuacan, looking toward the Pyramid of the Moon (top center) from the Pyramid of the Sun (bottom left). Shops and residences occupied the spaces surrounding the main street and the pyramids.

The Society of Teotihuacan Apart from rulers and priests, Teotihuacan's population included cultivators, artisans, and merchants. Perhaps as many as two-thirds of the city's inhabitants worked during the day in fields surrounding Teotihuacan and returned to their small apartments in the city at night. Artisans of Teotihuacan were especially famous for their obsidian tools and fine orange pottery, and scholars have identified numerous workshops and stores where toolmakers and potters produced and marketed their goods within the city itself. The residents of Teotihuacan also participated in extensive trade and exchange networks. Professional merchants traded their products throughout Mesoamerica. Archaeologists have found numerous samples of the distinctive obsidian tools and orange pottery at sites far distant from Teotihuacan, from the region of modern Guatemala City in the south to Durango and beyond in the north.

Until about 500 C.E. there was little sign of military organization in Teotihuacan. The city did not have defensive walls, and works of art rarely depicted warriors. Yet the influence of Teotihuacan extended to much of modern Mexico and beyond. The Maya capital of Kaminaljuyú, for example, fell under the influence of Teotihuacan during the fourth century C.E. Although the rulers of Teotihuacan may have established colonies to protect their sources of obsidian and may have undertaken military expeditions to back up their authority throughout central Mexico, the city's influence apparently derived less from military might than from its ability to produce fine manufactured goods that appealed to consumers in distant markets.

Cultural Traditions Like the Maya, the residents of Teotihuacan built on cultural foundations established by the Olmecs. They played the ball game, adapted the Olmec calendar to their own uses, and expanded the Olmecs' graphic symbols into a complete system of writing. Unfortunately, only a few samples of their writing survive in stone carvings. Because their books have all perished, it is impossible to know exactly how they viewed the world and their place in it. Works of art suggest that they recognized an earth god and a rain god, and it is certain that they carried out human sacrifices during their religious rituals.

Decline of Teotihuacan Teotihuacan began to experience increasing military pressure from other peoples around 500 C.E. Works of art from this period frequently depicted eagles, jaguars, and coyotes—animals that Mesoamericans associated with fighting and military conquest. After about 650 C.E. Teotihuacan entered a period of decline. About the middle of the eighth century, invaders sacked and burned the city, destroying its books and monuments. After that catastrophe most residents deserted Teotihuacan, and the city slowly fell into ruin.

EARLY SOCIETIES OF SOUTH AMERICA

By about 12,000 B.C.E., hunting and gathering peoples had made their way across the narrow isthmus of Central America and into South America. Those who migrated into the region

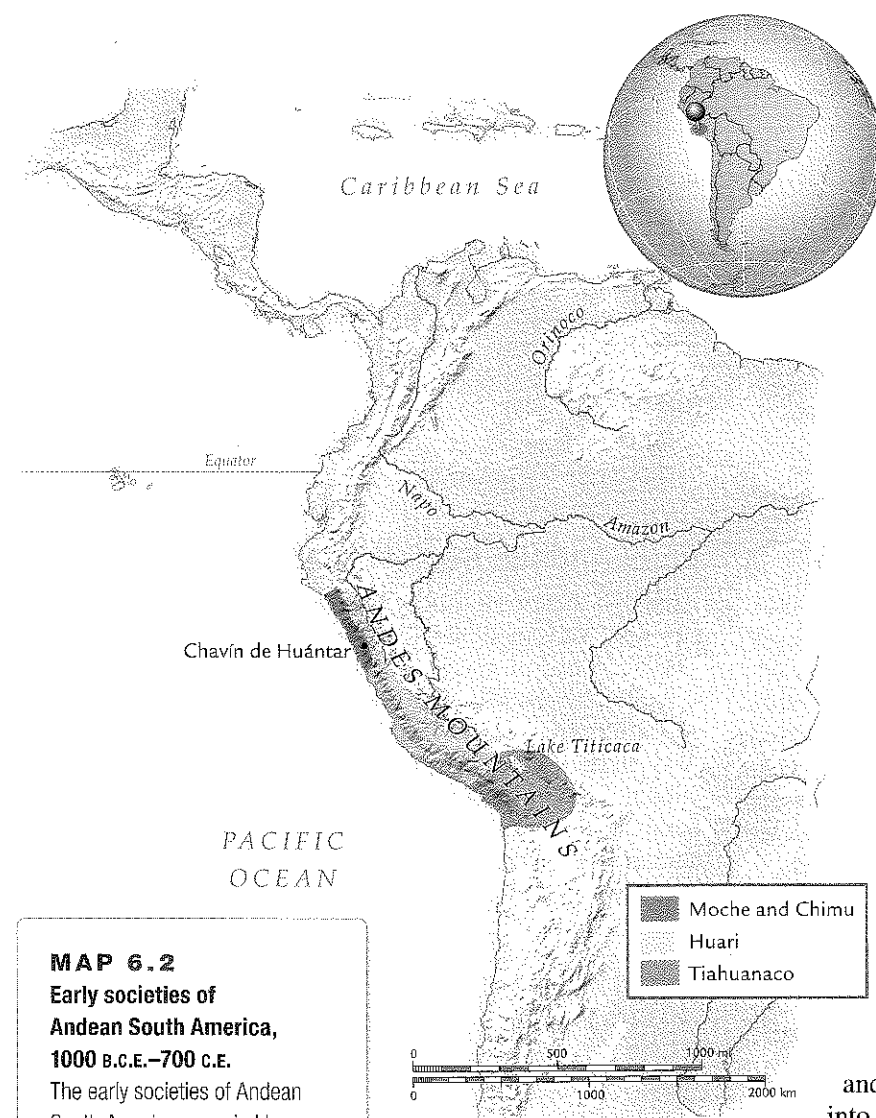
of the northern and central Andes mountains hunted deer, llama, alpaca, and other large animals. Both the mountainous highlands and the coastal regions below benefited from a cool and moist climate that provided natural harvests of squashes, gourds, and wild potatoes. Beginning about 8000 B.C.E., however, the climate of this whole region became increasingly warm and dry, and the changes placed pressure on natural food supplies. To maintain their numbers, the human communities of the region began to experiment with agriculture. Here, as elsewhere, agriculture encouraged population growth, the establishment of villages and cities, the building of states, and the elaboration of organized cultural traditions. During the centuries after 1000 B.C.E., the central Andean region generated complex societies parallel to those of Mesoamerica.

Early Andean Society and the Chavín Cult

Although they were exact contemporaries, early Mesoamerican and Andean societies developed largely independently. The heartland of early Andean society was the region now occupied by the states of Peru and Bolivia. Geography discouraged the establishment of communications between the Andean region and Mesoamerica. Neither the Andes Mountains nor the lowlands of modern Panama and Nicaragua offered an attractive highway linking the two regions. Several agricultural products and technologies diffused slowly from one area to the other: cultivation of maize and squashes spread from its Mesoamerican home to the central Andean region while Andean gold, silver, and copper metallurgy traveled north to Mesoamerica.

Geography conspired even against the establishment of communications within the central Andean region. Deep valleys crease the western flank of the Andes mountains, as rivers drain waters from the highlands to the Pacific Ocean, so transportation and communication between the valleys has always been difficult. Nevertheless, powerful Andean states sometimes overcame the difficulties and influenced human affairs as far away as modern Ecuador and Colombia to the north and northern Chile to the south.

Early Agriculture in South America Most of the early Andean heartland came under cultivation between 2500 and 2000 B.C.E., and permanent settlements dotted the coastal regions in particular. The earliest cultivators of the region relied on beans, peanuts, and sweet potatoes as their main food crops. Their most important domesticated animals were camel-like llamas and alpacas, which provided them with both meat and wool, and which also served as pack animals in some areas of the Andean highlands. They also cultivated cotton, which they used to make fishnets and textiles. The rich marine life of the Pacific Ocean supplemented agricultural harvests, enabling coastal peoples to build an increasingly complex society. Settlements probably appeared later in the Andean highlands than in the coastal regions, but many varieties



MAP 6.2

Early societies of Andean South America, 1000 B.C.E.–700 C.E.

The early societies of Andean South America occupied long, narrow territories between the Andes Mountains and the Pacific Ocean.

Why did these societies not occupy territories to the east?

of potato supported agricultural communities in the highlands after about 2000 B.C.E. By 1800 B.C.E. Andean peoples were constructing canals and irrigation systems to support cultivation on the dry lands at the mouths of the western Andean valleys. They also had begun to fashion distinctive styles of pottery and to build temples and pyramids in large ceremonial centers.

The Chavín Cult Shortly after the year 1000 B.C.E., a new spiritual belief appeared suddenly in the central Andes. The **Chavín cult**, which enjoyed enormous popularity during the period 900 to 800 B.C.E., spread through most of the territory

occupied by modern Peru and then vanished about 300 B.C.E. Unfortunately, no information survives to indicate the precise significance of the cult, nor even its proper name; scholars have named it after the modern town of Chavín de Huántar, one of the cult's most prominent sites. One theory suggests that the cult arose when maize became an important crop in South America. The capacity of maize to support large populations might well have served as the stimulus for the emergence of a cult designed to promote fertility and abundant harvests. In any case, the large temple complexes and elaborate works of art that accompanied the cult demonstrate its importance to those who honored it. Devotees produced intricate stone carvings representing their deities with the features of humans and wild animals such as jaguars, hawks, eagles, and snakes. The extensive distribution of the temples and carvings shows that the Chavín cult seized the imagination of agricultural peoples throughout the central Andean region.

During the era of the Chavín cult, Andean society became increasingly complex. Weavers produced elaborate and intricately designed textiles of both cotton and wool (from llamas and alpacas) using looms that they braced with straps around their backs. Artisans manufactured large, light, and strong fishnets from cotton string. Craftsmen experimented with minerals and discovered techniques of gold, silver, and copper metallurgy. They mostly fashioned metals into pieces of jewelry or other decorative items but also made small tools out of copper.

Early Cities There is no evidence to suggest that Chavín cultural and religious beliefs led to the establishment of a state or any organized political order. Indeed, they probably inspired the building of ceremonial centers rather than the making of true cities. As the population increased and society became more complex, however, cities began to appear shortly after the disappearance of the Chavín cult. Beginning about 200 B.C.E. large cities emerged at the modern-day sites of Huari, Pucara, and Tiahuanaco. Each of these early Andean cities had a population exceeding ten thousand, and each also featured large public buildings, ceremonial plazas, and extensive residential districts.

Early Andean States: Mochica

Political and Economic Integration of the Andean Valleys Along with cities there appeared regional states. The earliest Andean states arose in the many valleys on the



Many Mochica pots and jars portray human figures and often depict distinctive characteristics of individuals or typical scenes from daily life. This blackware effigy jar portrays a musician playing a conch shell trumpet.

western side of the mountains. These states emerged when conquerors unified the individual valleys and organized them into integrated societies. They coordinated the building of irrigation systems so that the lower valleys could support intensive agriculture, and they established trade and exchange networks that tied the highlands, the central valleys, and the coastal regions together. Each region contributed products to the larger economy of the valley: from the highlands came potatoes, llama meat, and alpaca wool; the central valleys supplied maize, beans, and squashes; and the coasts provided sweet potatoes, fish, and cotton.

This organization of the Andean valleys into integrated economic zones did not come about by accident. Builders of early Andean states worked deliberately and did not hesitate to use force to consolidate their domains. Surviving stone fortifications and warriors depicted in works of art testify that the early Andean states relied heavily on arms to introduce order and maintain stability in their small realms.

The Mochica State Because early Andean societies did not make use of writing, their beliefs, values, and ways of life remain largely unknown. One of the early Andean states, however, left a remarkable artistic legacy that allows a glimpse into the life of a society otherwise almost entirely lost. The **Mochica** state had its base in the valley of the Moche River, and it dominated the coasts and valleys of northern Peru during the period about 300 to 700 C.E. Mochica painting survives largely on pottery vessels, and it offers a

detailed and expressive depiction of early Andean society in all its variety.

Many Mochica ceramics take the form of portraits of individuals' heads. Others represent the major gods and the various subordinate deities and demons. Some of the most interesting depict scenes in the everyday life of the Mochica people: aristocrats embarking on a hunting party, warriors leading captives bound by ropes, women working in a textile factory under the careful eye of a supervisor, rulers receiving messengers or ambassadors from neighboring states, and beggars looking for handouts on a busy street. Even in the absence of writing, Mochica artists left abundant evidence of a complex society with considerable specialization of labor.

Mochica was only one of several large states that dominated the central Andean region during the first millennium C.E. Although they integrated the regional economies of the various Andean valleys, none of those early states was able to impose order on the entire region or even to dominate a portion of it for very long. The exceedingly difficult geographic barriers posed by the Andes mountains presented challenges that ancient technology and social organization simply could not meet. In addition, during the sixth and seventh centuries C.E., climatic fluctuations brought a long series of severe droughts to the Andean region. As a result, by the end of the first millennium C.E., Mochica and several other Andean societies had disappeared, and Andean society exhibited regional differences much sharper than those of Mesoamerica and early complex societies in the eastern hemisphere.

EARLY SOCIETIES OF OCEANIA

Human migrants entered Australia and New Guinea at least by fifty thousand years before the present, and possibly earlier than that. They arrived in watercraft—probably rafts, or perhaps canoes fitted with sails—but because of the low sea levels of that era, the migrants did not have to cross large stretches of open ocean. Those earliest inhabitants of **Oceania** also migrated—perhaps over land when sea levels were still low—to the Bismarcks, the Solomons, and other small island groups near New Guinea. Beginning about five thousand years ago, seafaring peoples from southeast Asia visited the northern coast of New Guinea for purposes of trade. Some of them settled there, but many others ventured farther and established communities in the island groups of the western Pacific Ocean. During the centuries that followed, their descendants sailed large, oceangoing canoes throughout the Pacific basin, and by the middle centuries of the first millennium C.E., they had established human communities in all the habitable islands of the Pacific Ocean.

Early Societies in Australia and New Guinea

Human migrants reached Australia and New Guinea long before any people had begun to cultivate crops or keep herds of

domesticated animals. Inevitably, then, the earliest inhabitants of Australia and New Guinea lived by hunting and gathering their food. For thousands of years, foraging peoples probably traveled back and forth between Australia and New Guinea. Those migrations ceased about ten thousand years ago when rising seas separated the two lands. After that time, human societies in Australia and New Guinea followed radically different paths. The aboriginal peoples of Australia maintained hunting and gathering societies until large numbers of Europeans established settler communities there in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries C.E. New Guinea peoples, however, turned to agriculture: beginning about 3000 B.C.E. the cultivation of root crops such as yams and taro and the keeping of pigs and chickens spread rapidly throughout the island.

Early Hunting and Gathering Societies in Australia

Like hunting and gathering peoples elsewhere, the aboriginal Australians lived in small, mobile communities that undertook seasonal migrations in search of food. Over the centuries, they learned to exploit the resources of the various ecological regions of Australia. Plant foods, including fruits, berries, roots, nuts, seeds, shoots, and green leaves, constituted the bulk of their diet. In the tropical region of Cape York in northern Australia, they consumed no fewer than 141 species of plants. Aboriginal peoples found abundant plant life even in the harsh desert regions of interior Australia. In the vicinity of modern Alice Springs in central Australia, for example, they included about 20 species of greens and 45 kinds of seeds and nuts in their diet. They also used at least 124 plants as medicines, ointments, and drugs. To supplement their plant-based diet, they used axes, spears, clubs, nets, lassos, snares, and boomerangs to bring down animals ranging in size from rats to giant kangaroos, which grew to a height of 3 meters (almost 10 feet), and to catch fish, waterfowl, and small birds.

Austronesian Peoples The earliest inhabitants of New Guinea foraged for food, like their neighbors to the south. About five thousand years ago, however, a process of social and economic change began to unfold in New Guinea. The agents of change were seafaring peoples from southeast Asia speaking Austronesian languages, whose modern linguistic relatives include Malayan, Indonesian, Filipino, Polynesian, and other Oceanic languages as well as the Malagasy language of Madagascar and the tongues spoken by the indigenous peoples of Taiwan and southern China. Austronesian-speaking peoples possessed remarkable seafaring skills. They sailed the open ocean in large canoes equipped with outriggers, which stabilized their craft and reduced the risks of long voyages. By paying close attention to winds, currents, stars, cloud formations, and other natural indicators, they learned how to find distant lands reliably and return home safely. Beginning about 3000 B.C.E. these mariners visited the northern coast of New Guinea, where they



Windjana figures (cloud and rain spirits) loom from a rock painting produced about twelve thousand years ago by inhabitants of the Chamberlain Gorge region in western Australia.

traded with the indigenous peoples and established their own communities.

Early Agriculture in New Guinea Austronesian seafarers came from societies that depended on the cultivation of root crops and the herding of animals. When they settled in New Guinea, they introduced yams, taro, pigs, and chickens to the island, and the indigenous peoples themselves soon began to cultivate crops and keep animals. Within a few centuries agriculture and herding had spread to all parts of New Guinea. Here, as in other lands, agriculture brought population growth and specialization of labor: after the change to agriculture, permanent settlements, pottery, and carefully crafted tools appeared throughout the island.

Separated from New Guinea only by the narrow Torres Strait, the aboriginal peoples of northern Australia knew about the cultivation of foodstuffs, since they had occasional dealings with traders from New Guinea. Agriculture even spread to the islands of the Torres Strait, but it did not take root in Australia until the arrival of European peoples in the late

eighteenth century C.E. Meanwhile, Austronesian-speaking peoples who introduced agriculture and herding to New Guinea sailed their outrigger canoes farther and established the first human settlements in the islands of the Pacific Ocean.

The Peopling of the Pacific Islands

The hunting and gathering peoples who first inhabited Australia and New Guinea also established a few settlements in the Bismarck and Solomon island groups east of New Guinea. They ventured to those islands during the era when the seas were low and sailing distances from New Guinea were consequently very short. They did not have the maritime technology, however, to sail far beyond the Solomons to the more distant islands in the Pacific Ocean. Even if they had, the small Pacific islands, with limited supplies of edible plants and animals, would not have supported communities of foragers.

Austronesian Migrations to Polynesia Austronesian-speaking peoples possessed a sophisticated maritime technology as well as agricultural expertise, and they established settlements in the islands of the Pacific Ocean. They sailed large, oceangoing canoes with twin hulls joined by a deck on which they carried supplies. When they found uninhabited lands, their food crops and domesticated animals enabled them to establish agricultural societies in the islands. Once they had established coastal settlements in New Guinea, Austronesian seafarers sailed easily to the Bismarck and Solomon islands, perhaps in the interests of trade. From there they undertook exploratory voyages that led them to previously unpopulated islands.

By about 1500 B.C.E. Austronesian mariners had arrived at Vanuatu (formerly called New Hebrides) and New Caledonia, by 1300 B.C.E. at Fiji, and by 1000 B.C.E. at Tonga and Samoa. During the late centuries of the first millennium B.C.E., they established settlements in Tahiti and the Marquesas. From there they launched ventures that took them to the most remote outposts of Polynesia—the territory



Austronesian mariners sailed double-hulled voyaging canoes much like those from Ra'iātea in the Society Islands, drawn in 1769 by an artist who accompanied Captain James Cook on his first voyage in the Pacific Ocean. How might the hulls, the sails, the deck, and other features of the canoe depicted here have facilitated travel and migration over the open ocean?

falling in the triangle with Hawai'i, Easter Island, and New Zealand at the points—which required them to sail over thousands of nautical miles of blue water. They reached the islands of Hawai'i in the early centuries C.E., Easter Island by 300 C.E., and the large islands of New Zealand by 700 C.E.

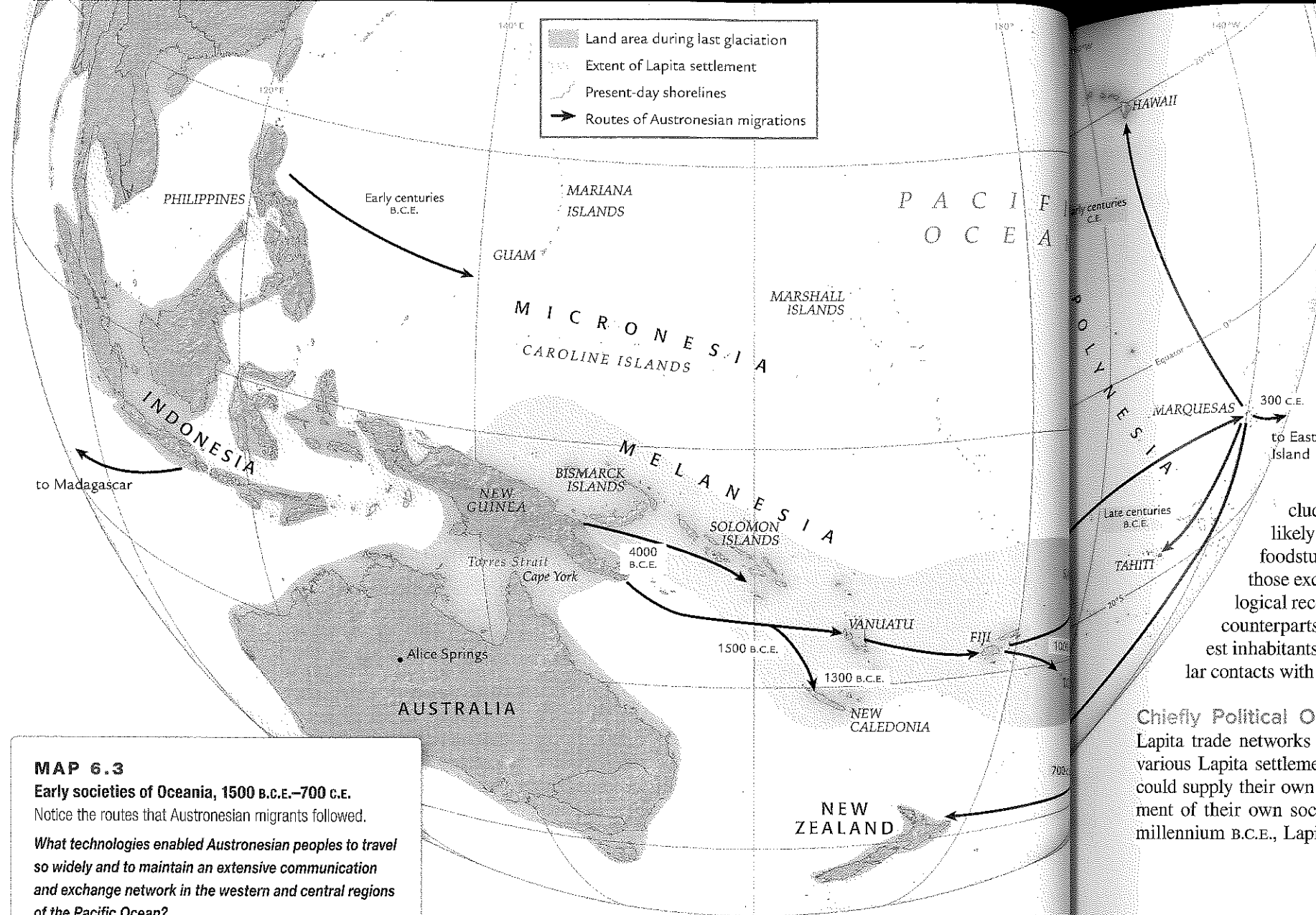
Austronesian Migrations to Micronesia and Madagascar While one branch of the Austronesian-speaking peoples populated the islands of Polynesia, other branches sailed in different directions. From the Philippines some ventured to the region of Micronesia, which includes

small islands and atolls such as the Mariana, Caroline, and Marshall islands of the western Pacific. Yet others looked west from their homelands in Indonesia, sailed throughout the Indian Ocean, and became the first human settlers of the large island of Madagascar off the east African coast. Malagasy, the principal language of modern-day Madagascar, is clearly identifiable as an Austronesian tongue.



This reconstructed Lapita pot discovered in New Caledonia features the distinctive stamped design characteristic of all Lapita pottery.

The Lapita Peoples The earliest Austronesian migrants to sail out into the Pacific Ocean and establish settlements in Pacific islands are known as the **Lapita** peoples.



MAP 6.3
Early societies of Oceania, 1500 B.C.E.–700 C.E.
 Notice the routes that Austronesian migrants followed.
What technologies enabled Austronesian peoples to travel so widely and to maintain an extensive communication and exchange network in the western and central regions of the Pacific Ocean?

No one knows what they called themselves: the name *Lapita* comes from a beach in New Caledonia where some of the earliest recognizable Lapita artifacts came to the attention of archaeologists. It is clear, however, that between about 1500 and 500 B.C.E., Lapita peoples maintained communication and exchange networks throughout a large region extending about 4,500 kilometers (2,800 miles) from New Guinea and the Bismarck Archipelago to Samoa and Tonga.

Wherever they settled, Lapita peoples established agricultural villages where they raised pigs and chickens and introduced the suite of crops they inherited from their Austronesian ancestors, including yams, taro, breadfruit, and bananas. They supplemented their crops and domesticated animals with fish and seaweed from nearby waters, and they soon killed off most of the large land animals and birds (some of which, in the

absence of natural predators, had evolved into flightless species) that were suitable for human consumption. They left abundant evidence of their presence in the form of their distinctive pottery decorated with stamped geometric designs.

Thinking about ENCOUNTERS

Human Migration to the Pacific Islands

The establishment of human communities in the Pacific islands was the last phase of the long process by which *Homo sapiens* populated the habitable regions of the earth. In all likelihood, the islands of New Zealand were the last sizable lands that humans reached. What combinations of technology and supplies were necessary for Austronesian mariners to sail to this remote Pacific island?

For about one thousand years, Lapita peoples maintained extensive networks of trade and communication across vast stretches of open ocean. Their agricultural settlements were largely self-sufficient, but they placed high value on some objects from distant islands. Their pottery was a principal item of long-distance exchange, as was high-quality obsidian, which they sometimes transported over thousands of kilometers, since it was available at only a few sites of Lapita settlement. Other trade items brought to light by archaeologists include shell jewelry and stone tools. It is likely that Lapita peoples also traded feathers, foodstuffs, and spouses, although evidence for those exchanges does not survive in the archaeological record. In any case, it is clear that like their counterparts in other regions of the world, the earliest inhabitants of the Pacific islands maintained regular contacts with peoples well beyond their societies.

Chiefly Political Organization After about 500 B.C.E. Lapita trade networks fell into disuse, probably because the various Lapita settlements had grown large enough that they could supply their own needs and concentrate on the development of their own societies. By the middle part of the first millennium B.C.E., Lapita and other Austronesian peoples had

established hierarchical chiefdoms in the Pacific islands. Leadership passed from a chief to his eldest son, and near relatives constituted a local aristocracy. Contests for power and influence between ambitious subordinates frequently caused tension and turmoil, but the possibility of migration offered an alternative to conflict. Dissatisfied or aggrieved parties often built voyaging canoes, recruited followers, and set sail with the intention of establishing new settlements in uninhabited or lightly populated islands. Indeed, the spread of Austronesian peoples throughout the Pacific islands came about partly because of population pressures and conflicts that encouraged small parties to seek fresh opportunities in more hospitable lands.

Over the longer term, descendants of Lapita peoples built strong, chiefly societies, particularly on large islands with relatively dense populations like those of the Tongan, Samoan, and Hawaiian groups. In Hawai'i, for example, militarily skilled chiefs cooperated closely with priests, administrators, soldiers, and servants in ruling their districts, which might include a portion of an island, an entire island, or even several islands. Chiefs and their retinues claimed a portion of the agricultural surplus produced by their subjects, and they sometimes required subjects to deliver additional products, such as fish, birds, or timber. Apart from organizing public life in their own districts, chiefs and their administrators vied with the ruling classes of neighboring districts, led public ritual observances, and oversaw irrigation systems that watered the taro plants that were crucial to the survival of Hawaiian society. Eventually, the chiefly and aristocratic classes became so entrenched and powerful that they regarded themselves as divine or semidivine, and the law of the land prohibited common subjects from even gazing directly at them.

CHRONOLOGY	
AMERICAS	
13,000 B.C.E.	Human migration to North America from Siberia
8000–7000 B.C.E.	Origins of agriculture in Mesoamerica
4000 B.C.E.	Origins of maize cultivation in Mesoamerica
3000 B.C.E.	Origins of agriculture in South America
1200–100 B.C.E.	Olmec society
1000–300 B.C.E.	Chavín cult
200 B.C.E.–750 C.E.	Teotihuacan society
300–1100 C.E.	Maya society
300–700 C.E.	Mochica society
OCEANIA	
60,000 B.C.E.	Human migration to Australia and New Guinea
3000 B.C.E.	Origins of agriculture in New Guinea
3000 B.C.E.	Austronesian migrations to New Guinea
1500–500 B.C.E.	Lapita society
1500 B.C.E.–700 C.E.	Austronesian migrations to Pacific islands

