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Chapter 7

Classical Era Variations:
Africa and the Americas

500 B.C.E.—1200 C.E.



CHAPTER LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- I am aware of classical civilizations that evolved outside of the more well-known civilizations of Eurasia
- I can explore the development of civilizations in Africa and the Americas
- I can consider the factors that make civilizations develop in some regions but not in others
- I understand the raise the possibility of complex civilizations without any recognizable centralized control



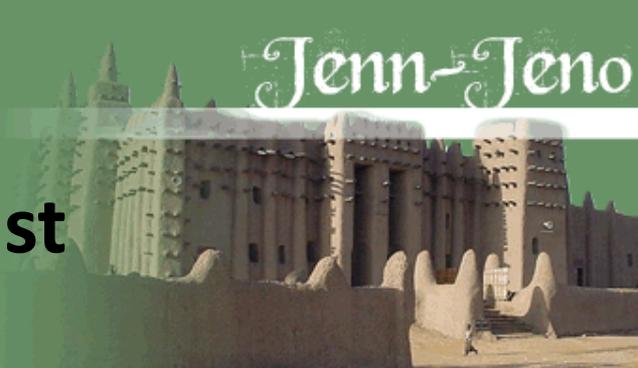
I. Opening Vignette

- A. Maya language and folkways still survive among about 6 million people.
- B. Classical-era civilizations aren't just Eurasian.
 - 1. the Americas: Maya and Moche
 - 2. Africa: Meroë, Axum, Niger River valley
- C. There are basic similarities in the development of human cultures everywhere.
 - 1. part of great process of human migration
 - 2. Agricultural Revolutions took place independently in Eurasia, Africa, and the Americas
 - 3. resultant development of civilizations
- D. The world's population at the beginning of the Common Era was about 250 million people.



I. Opening Vignette

- E. There were important differences between civilizations in different regions.
1. the Americas lacked nearly all animals suitable for domestication
 2. Africa imported previously domesticated sheep, goats, chickens, horses, camels
 3. metallurgy was less developed in the Americas
 4. writing
 - a. limited in the Americas to Mesoamerica; most highly developed among the Maya
 - b. in Africa, was confined to north and northeast
 5. fewer and smaller classical civilizations in the Americas and Africa

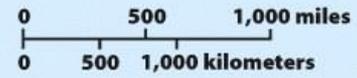


II. The African Northeast

- A. Africa had no common cultural identity in the classical era.
1. great environmental variation within the continent
 2. enormous size of the continent
 3. most distinctive: Africa is the most tropical of world's supercontinents
 - a. climate means poorer soils and less productive agriculture
 - b. more disease-carrying insects and parasites
 4. Africa also shaped by interaction with nearby Eurasia and Arabia
 - a. North Africa as part of the Roman Empire
 - b. Arabia as source of the domesticated camel



- Niger Valley Civilization
- Nubia/Meroë
- Axum
- Bantu
- San
- Trans-Saharan trade routes
- Coastal trade routes



Cape of Good Hope



II. The African Northeast

B. Meroë: Continuing a Nile Valley Civilization

1. Nubian civilization was almost as old as Egyptian civilization
 - a. constant interaction
 - b. remained a distinct civilization
2. with decline of Egypt, Nubian civilization came to focus on Meroë
3. ruled by an all-powerful sacred monarch (usually female)
4. city of Meroë had craft specialization
5. rural areas had combination of herding and farming
 - a. paid tribute to the ruler
 - b. farming was based on rainfall, not irrigation
 - c. therefore, population was less concentrated on the Nile, less directly controlled by the capital



II. The African Northeast

6. major long-distance trade was the source of much of wealth and military power

- a. had contact with the Mediterranean
- b. also traded to east and west by means of camel caravans
- c. less Egyptian influence than earlier times

7. decline of Meroë after 100 c.E.

- a. deforestation (too much wood used in iron industry)
- b. conquest in 340s c.E. by Axum
- c. penetration of Coptic Christianity; Christian dominance for 1,000 years
- d. penetration of Islam after about 1300



II. The African Northeast

C. Axum: The Making of a Christian Kingdom

1. Axum was located in present-day Eritrea and northern Ethiopia
2. kingdom's economic foundation was highly productive agriculture
 - a. plow-based farming (not reliant on hoe or digging stick like most of Africa)
 - b. high production of wheat, barley, millet, teff
3. substantial state emerged by about 50 c.E.
 - a. stimulated by Red Sea and Indian Ocean trade (port of Adulis)
 - b. commerce taxes were major source of state revenue

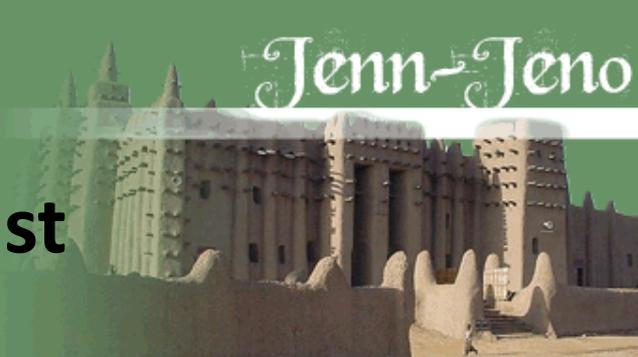


II. The African Northeast

4. capital city Axum (in the interior) was center of monumental building
 - a. huge stone obelisks (probably marked royal graves)
 - b. town language was Geez, written in South Arabian-derived script
 - c. most of rural populace spoke Agaw
 - d. capital exerted loose control, mostly collection of tribute
5. Christianity arrived in fourth century C.E.
 - a. King Ezana adopted Christianity about the time of Constantine
 - b. Coptic Christianity is still the religion of half the region







II. The African Northeast

6. fourth to sixth centuries c.e.: imperial expansion into Meroë and Yemen

a. reached gates of Mecca by 571

b. decline followed

c. revival of state several centuries later, but further south

7. both Meroë and Axum paralleled Eurasian developments and had direct contact with Mediterranean civilizations



III. Along the Niger River: Cities without States

- A. There was major urbanization along the middle stretches of the Niger River between 300 B.C.E. and 900 C.E.
 - 1. migration of peoples from the southern Sahara during long dry period
 - 2. but no evidence of a state structure, either imperial or city-state
 - 3. archeologists have not found evidence of despotic power, widespread war, or deep social inequality (like Indus Valley civilization)
- B. Cities like Jenne-jeno were clusters of economically specialized settlements.
 - 1. iron smelting was earliest and most prestigious occupation



III. Along the Niger River: Cities without States

2. villages of cotton weavers, potters, praise-singers (griots) grew around central towns

a. artisan communities became occupational castes

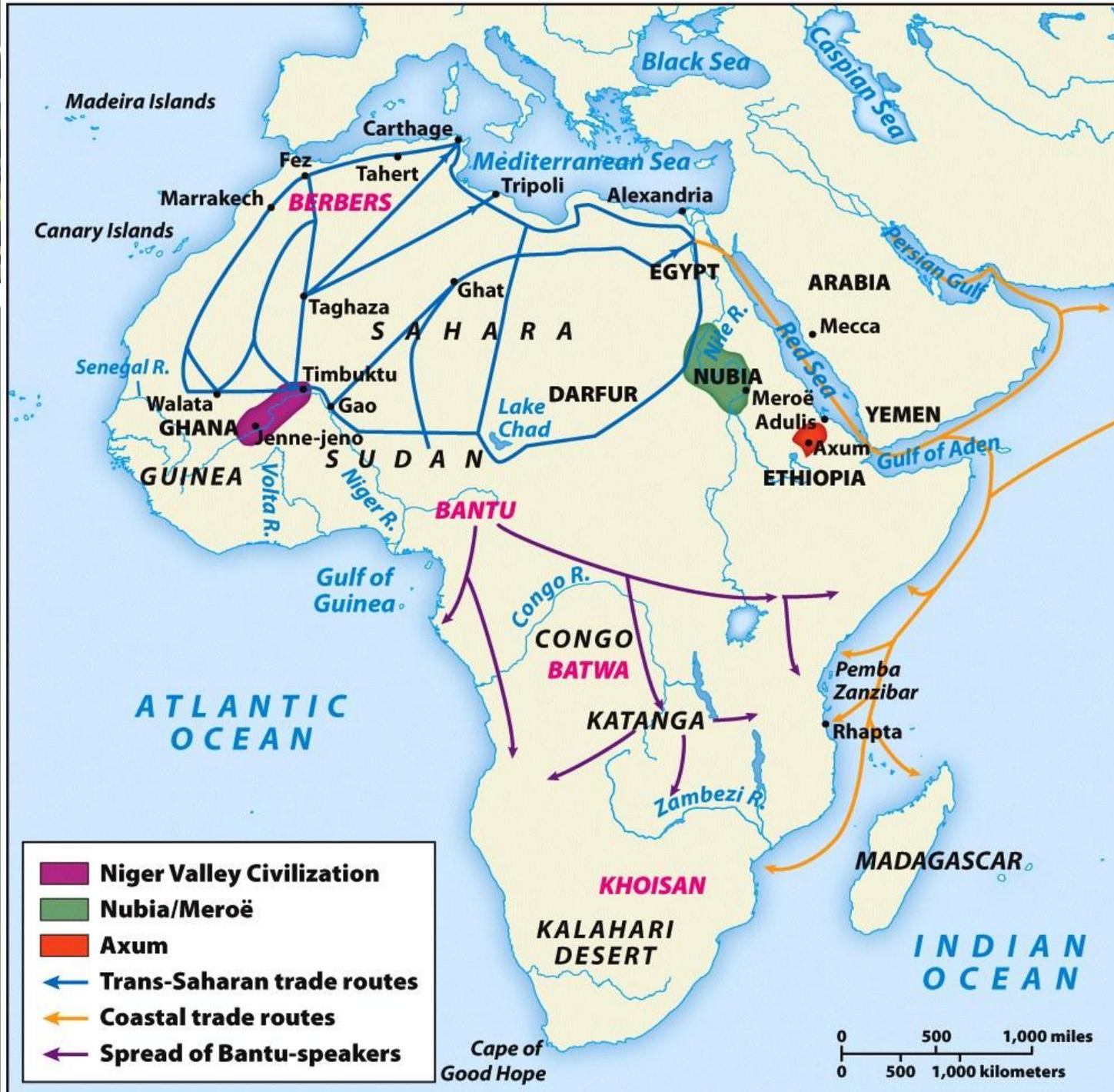
b. rural populace also specialized (fishing, rice cultivation, etc.)

C. The middle Niger cities were stimulated by a network of West African commerce.

D. Large-scale states emerged in West Africa in the second millennium C.E.

IV. South of the Equator: The World of Bantu Africa

- A. Movement of Bantu-speaking peoples into Africa south of equator
1. over time, 400 distinct Bantu languages developed
 2. by the first century C.E., Bantu agriculturalists occupied forest regions of equatorial Africa; some had probably reached East African coast
 3. spread to most of eastern and southern Africa
 4. the movement wasn't a conquest or self-conscious migration



-  Niger Valley Civilization
-  Nubia/Meroë
-  Axum
-  Trans-Saharan trade routes
-  Coastal trade routes
-  Spread of Bantu-speakers

0 500 1,000 miles
 0 500 1,000 kilometers

IV. South of the Equator: The World of Bantu Africa

B. Cultural Encounters

1. Bantu-speaking peoples interacted with established societies
2. most significant interaction: agricultural Bantu and gathering and hunting peoples
3. Bantu advantages
 - a. numbers: agriculture supports more people
 - b. disease: Bantu brought new diseases to people with little immunity
 - c. iron
 - d. gathering and hunting peoples were largely displaced, absorbed, eliminated

IV. South of the Equator: The World of Bantu Africa

4. survival of a few gathering and hunting peoples like the San to modern times
 - a. Bantu peoples have preserved some of the language and ways of people they displaced
 - b. the Batwa (Pygmy) people became “forest specialists” and interacted with the Bantu
5. Bantu culture changed because of encounter with different peoples
6. Bantu peoples spread their skills and culture through eastern and southern Africa

IV. South of the Equator: The World of Bantu Africa

C. Society and Religion

1. creation of many distinct societies and cultures in 500–1500 C.E.

- a. Kenya: decision making by kinship and age structures
- b. Zimbabwe and Lake Victoria region: larger kingdoms
- c. East African coast after 1000 C.E.: rival city-states
- d. development depended on large number of factors



IV. South of the Equator: The World of Bantu Africa

2. religion placed less emphasis on a remote high god and more on ancestral or nature spirits
 - a. sacrifices (especially cattle) to access power of dead ancestors
 - b. power of charms was activated by proper rituals
 - c. widespread belief in witches
 - d. diviners could access world of the supernatural
 - e. based on the notion of “continuous revelation”: new messages still come from the world beyond
 - f. no missionary impulse



V. Civilizations of Mesoamerica

- A. There was a lack of interaction with other major cultures, including with other cultures in the Americas.
 - 1. development without large domesticated animals or ironworking
 - 2. important civilizations developed in Mesoamerica and the Andes long before Aztec and Inca empires
 - 3. extraordinary diversity of Mesoamerican civilizations
 - a. shared an intensive agricultural technology
 - b. shared economies based on market exchange
 - c. similar religions
 - d. frequent interaction





V. Civilizations of Mesoamerica

B. The Maya: Writing and Warfare

1. Maya ceremonial centers developed as early as 2000 B.C.E. in present-day Guatemala and Yucatan
2. classical phase of Maya civilization: 250–900 c.E.
 - a. development of advanced mathematical system
 - b. elaborate calendars
 - c. creation of most elaborate writing system in the Americas
 - d. large amount of monumental architecture (temples, pyramids, palaces, public plazas)

Hieroglyphic text on the leftmost strip, including a prominent cartouche.

Top section of the second strip, featuring hieroglyphs and a large figure of a seated deity or royal figure.

Middle section of the second strip, containing hieroglyphs and a smaller figure of a seated deity.

Bottom section of the second strip, with hieroglyphs and a small figure of a seated deity.

Top section of the third strip, featuring hieroglyphs and a large figure of a seated deity.

Middle section of the third strip, containing hieroglyphs and a large figure of a seated deity.

Bottom section of the third strip, with hieroglyphs and a small figure of a seated deity.





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3. Maya economy
 - a. agriculture had large-scale human engineering (swamp drainage, terracing, water management system)
 - b. supported a substantial elite and artisan class



V. Civilizations of Mesoamerica

4. political system of city-states and regional kingdoms was highly fragmented

- a. frequent warfare; capture and sacrifice of prisoners
- b. densely populated urban and ceremonial centers
- c. no city-state ever succeeded in creating a unified empire

5. rapid collapse in the century after a long-term drought began in 840

- a. population dropped by at least 85 percent
- b. elements of Maya culture survived, but not the great cities
- c. reasons posited for the collapse:
 - i. extremely rapid population growth after 600 C.E. outstripped resources
 - ii. political disunity and rivalry prevented a coordinated response to climatic catastrophe
 - iii. warfare became more frequent



V. Civilizations of Mesoamerica

C. Teotihuacán: America's Greatest City

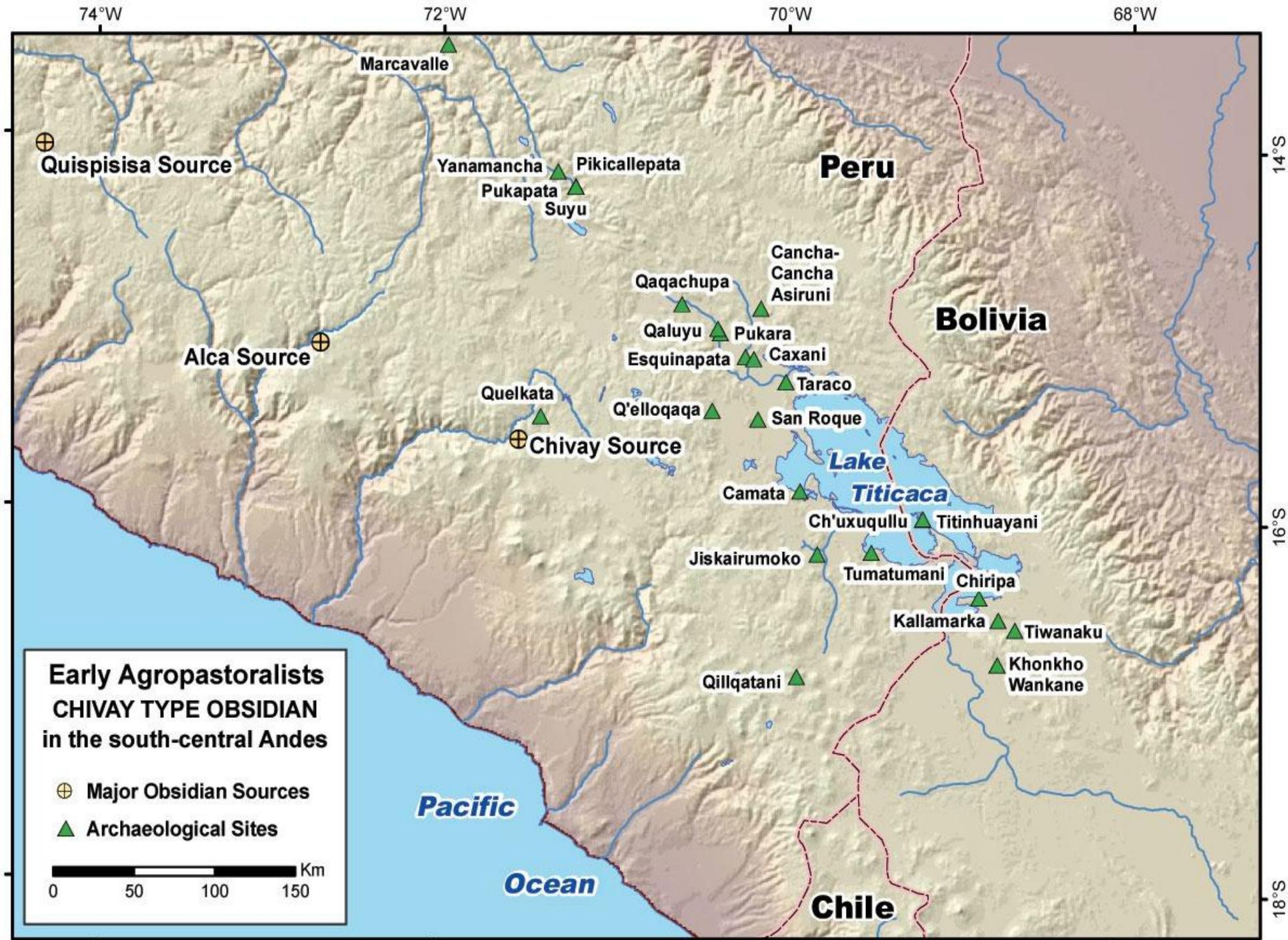
1. city was begun ca. 150 B.C.E.
2. by 550 C.E., population was 100,000–200,000
3. much about Teotihuacán is unknown
4. city was centrally planned on a gridlike pattern
5. specialized artisans
6. little evidence of rulers or of tradition of public inscriptions
7. deep influence on Mesoamerica, especially in 300–600 C.E.
 - a. directly administered perhaps 10,000 square miles
 - b. influence of Teotihuacán armies spread further
 - c. apparently also had diplomatic connections with other areas
 - d. trade
 - e. copying of Teotihuacán art and architecture
8. mysterious collapse ca. 650 C.E.
9. Aztecs named the place Teotihuacán: “city of the gods”

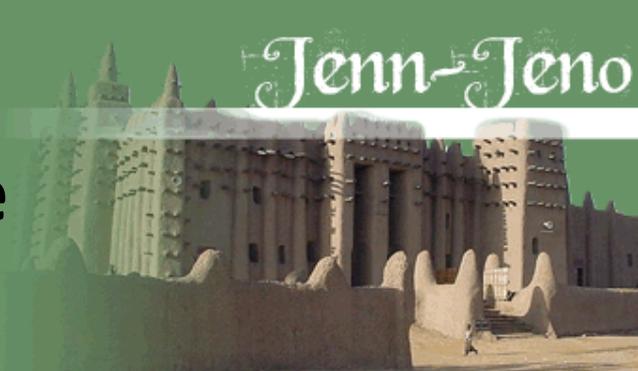




VI. Civilizations of the Andes

- A. The rich marine environment possessed an endless supply of seabirds and fish.
 - 1. most well-known civilization of the region was the Incas
 - 2. central Peruvian coast was home to one of the First Civilizations: Norte Chico
 - 3. classical era of Andean civilization is 1000 B.C.E.–1000 C.E.
- B. Chavín: A Pan-Andean Religious Movement
 - 1. numerous ceremonial centers uncovered, dating to 2000–1000 B.C.E.
 - 2. ca. 900 B.C.E., Chavín de Huántar became focus of a religious movement
 - a. Chavín de Huántar was well located along trade routes
 - b. elaborate temple complex
 - c. beliefs apparently drew on both desert region and rain forests
 - d. probably used hallucinogenic San Pedro cactus
 - 3. widespread imitation across Peru and beyond
 - 4. did not become an empire
 - 5. faded by 200 B.C.E.





VI. Civilizations of the Andes

C. Moche: A Regional Andean Civilization

1. flourished between about 100 and 800 c.E. along 250 miles of Peru's north coast
2. agriculture based on complex irrigation system
3. rule by warrior-priests
 - a. some lived on top of huge pyramids
 - b. rituals mediated between humans and gods
 - c. use of hallucinogenic drugs
 - d. human sacrifice
 - e. rulers had elaborate burials
4. superb craftsmanship of elite objects
5. ecological disruption in sixth century c.E. undermined the civilization
6. many other civilizations grew up in the Andes (Nazca, Huari, Chimú)



VII. North America in the Classical Era: From Chaco to Cahokia

- A. “Semi-sedentary” peoples were established in the eastern woodlands of North America, Central America, the Caribbean islands, and the Amazon basin.
- B. Pit Houses and Great Houses: The Ancestral Pueblo
 1. southwestern North America began maize cultivation in second millennium B.C.E.
 - a. only became the basis of settled agriculture ca. 600–800 c.E.
 - b. gradual adaptation of maize to desert environment
 2. establishment of permanent villages
 - a. pit houses in small settlements
 - b. by 900 c.E., many villages also had larger ceremonial structures (kivas)
 3. local trading networks, some long-distance exchange

VII. North America in the Classical Era: From Chaco to Cahokia

4. development of larger settlements (pueblos)
 - a. most spectacular was in Chaco canyon
 - b. largest “great house” or town (Pueblo Bonito) was five stories high with over 600 rooms
 - c. hundreds of roads radiated out from Chaco (were perhaps a sacred landscape)
 5. Chaco was a center for turquoise production
 6. warfare increased with extended drought after 1130
 7. great houses abandoned by 1200
- C. The Mound Builders of the Eastern Woodlands
1. Mississippi River valley: Agricultural Revolution by 2000 B.C.E.
 2. creation of societies marked by large earthen mounds
 - a. earliest built ca. 2000 B.C.E.
 - b. most elaborate of mound-building cultures (Hopewell culture) was established between 200 B.C.E. and 400 C.E.





VII. North America in the Classical Era: From Chaco to Cahokia

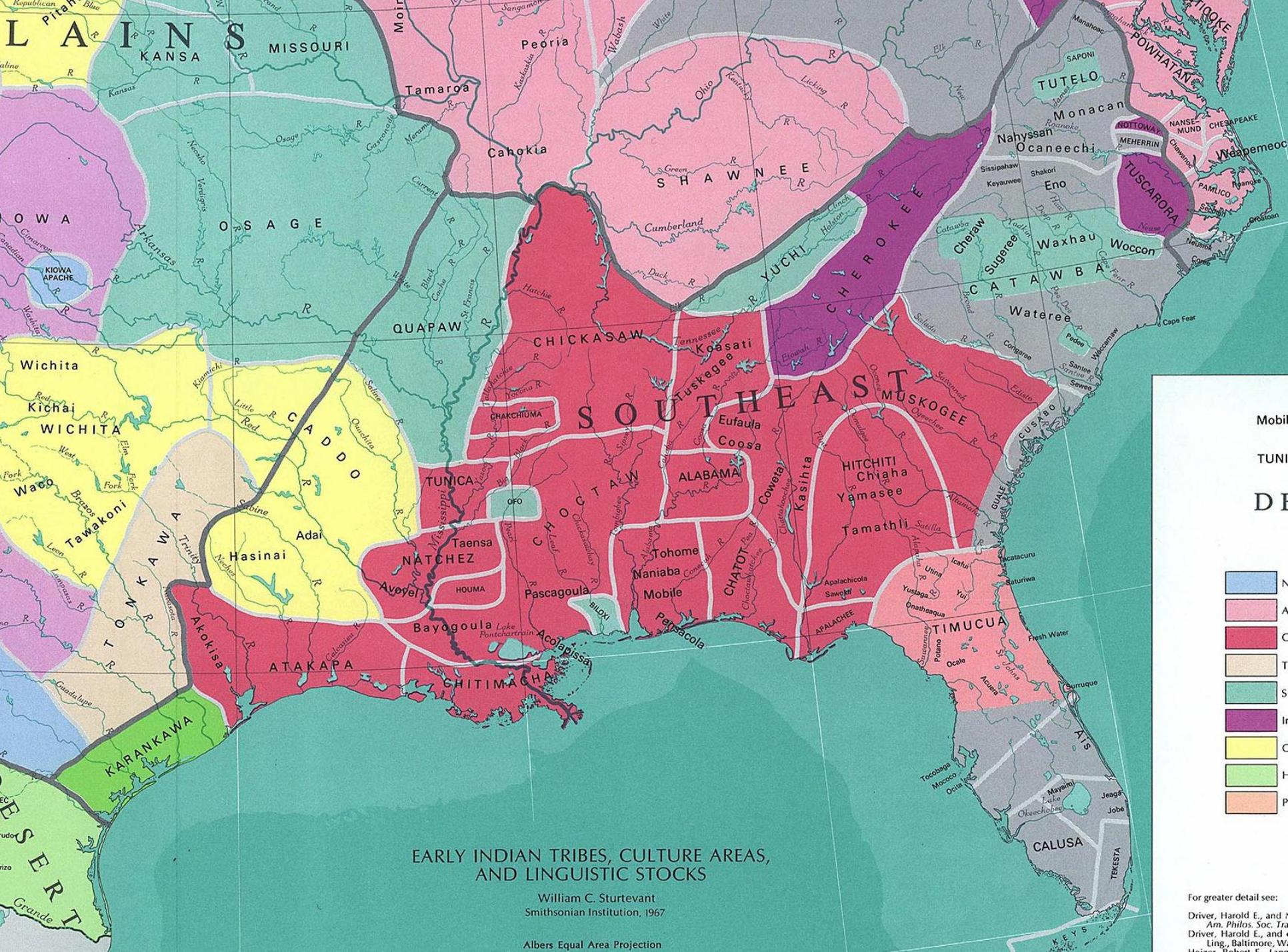
3. Hopewell: large burial mounds and geometric earthworks
 - a. many artifacts found in them—evidence of extensive trade
 - b. careful astronomical orientation
4. Cahokia (near present-day St. Louis, MO) flourished between 900 and 1250 c.e.
 - a. introduction of maize agriculture allowed larger population
 - b. central mound: terraced pyramid of four levels
 - c. community of about 10,000 people
 - d. widespread trade network
 - e. apparently had stratified class system
5. sixteenth-century Europeans encountered similar chiefdom among the Natchez in southwestern Mississippi
 - a. paramount chiefs (“Great Suns”) lived in luxury
 - b. clear social elite
 - c. but upper-class people were required to marry commoners
 - d. significant military capacity

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EARLY INDIAN TRIBES, CULTURE AREAS,
AND LINGUISTIC STOCKS

William C. Sturtevant
Smithsonian Institution, 1967

Albers Equal Area Projection

- Mobil
- TUNI
- DE
- N
- A
- C
- T
- S
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- C
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For greater detail see:
Driver, Harold E., and ...
Am. Philos. Soc. Tra
Driver, Harold E., and ...
Ling., Baltimore, and ...