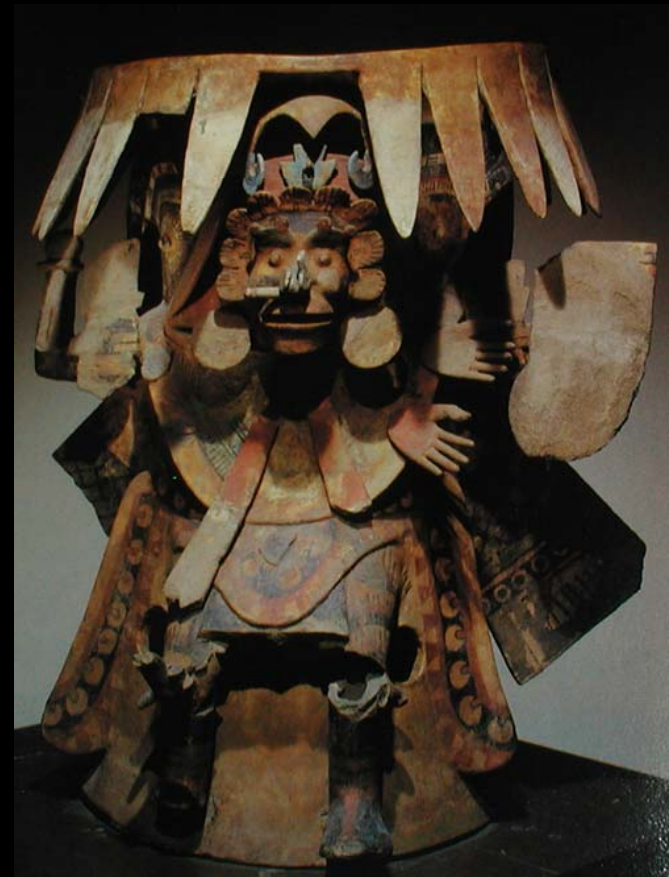




The Pre-contact Amerindian World

Aztec Temple Vessel

This earthenware vessel was used to burn copal resin, the sacred incense of all the Mesoamerican peoples. Copal smoke was considered the medium through which humans communicated with the gods.





The Pre-contact Amerindian World

Topics of Consideration

- I. Common Misconceptions
- II. What Fostered Misconceptions
- III. Historical Reassessment
- IV. Sedentary Imperial Societies
- V. Semi-Sedentary Societies
- VI. Nomadic Peoples





The Pre-contact Amerindian World

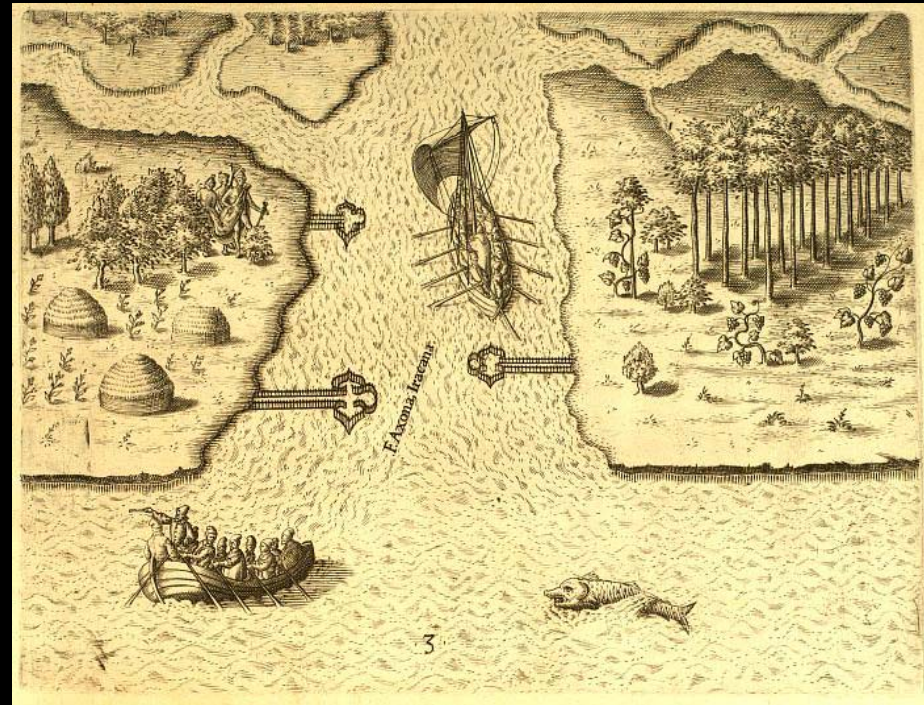
I. Common Misconceptions

A. The first and most pervasive misconception about the pre-contact Amerindian world concerns the land itself.

B. Many Europeans at the time, and many people today, believe that the Americas were a "virgin land" at the time of contact.

C. That there were few -- if any -- people in the Americas, and that those people were somehow "environmentally pure" -- that they did not manipulate their surroundings for their own good.

D. This is simply wrong.



The French discover St. Andrews Sound, Georgia.

By Johann Theodore de Bry Engraving 1591 | Plate IV.



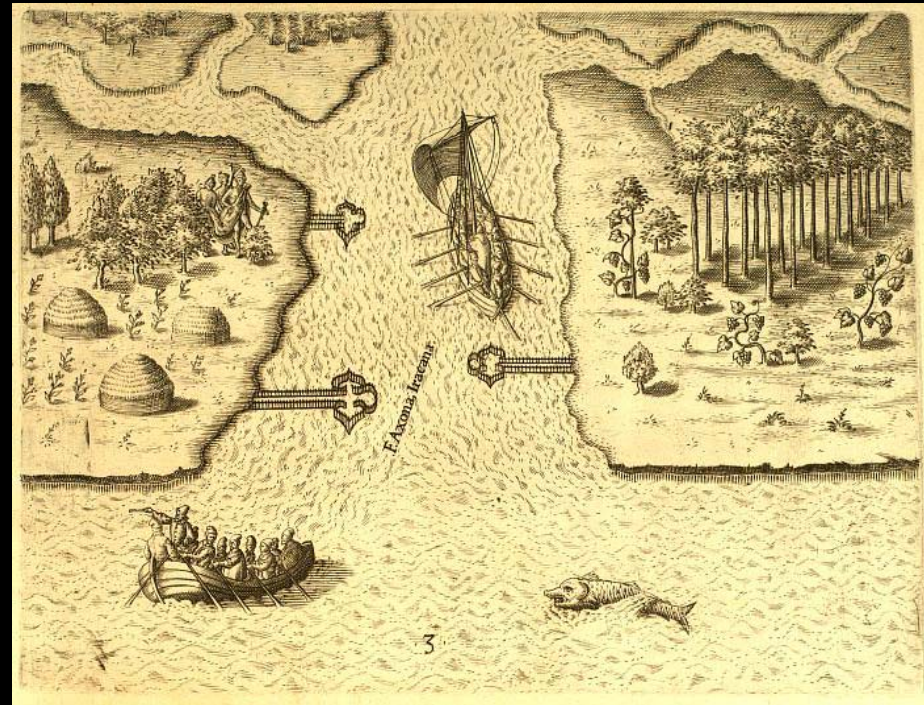
The Pre-contact Amerindian World

I. Common Misconceptions

E. People had lived in the Americas since at least 12,000 B.C.E., and they had been shaping their environment all that time.

F. By the time Europeans arrived in the western hemisphere in 1492, perhaps 100 million people inhabited the two American continents, with as many as 10 million living in North America.

G. More conservative figures are 70 million and 7 million.



The French discover St. Andrews Sound, Georgia.

By Johann Theodore de Bry Engraving 1591 | Plate IV.



The Pre-contact Amerindian World

I. Common Misconceptions

H. You certainly would not understand the size, variety, and complexity of Amerindian cultures by looking at images like the one to your right.

I. And, yet, these images are commonly used to depict “Indian America.”

J. Take a look at the highlighted images on the next slide.

K. What do you see?



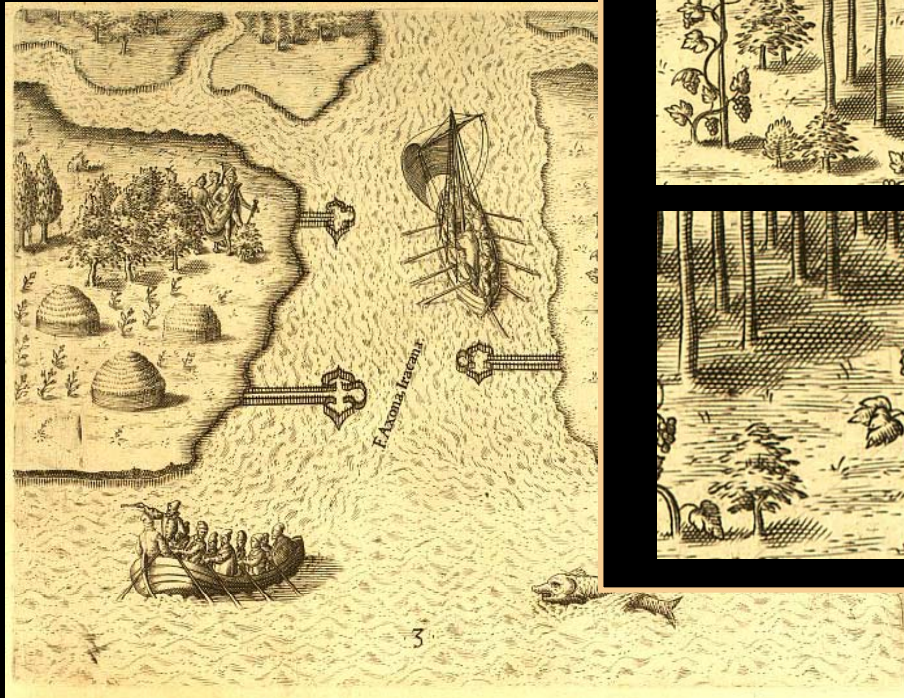
The French discover St. Andrews Sound, Georgia.

By Johann Theodore de Bry Engraving 1591 | Plate IV.



The Pre-contact Amerindian World

I. Common Misconceptions





The Pre-contact Amerindian World

I. Common Misconceptions

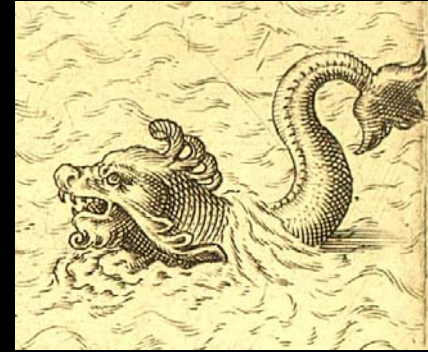
L. Where once a seemingly harmless image appeared, you now see close-up depictions of an Eden-like environment.

M. Few people live there.

N. Wild, great, mythical animals inhabit the place.

O. And, of course, there is the natural beauty. The open, park-like abundance of a “virgin land.”

P. Images like these helped shape the Americas in the European mind of the 16th and 17th centuries.





The Pre-contact Amerindian World

I. Common Misconceptions

Q. The second misconception is a more troubling one.

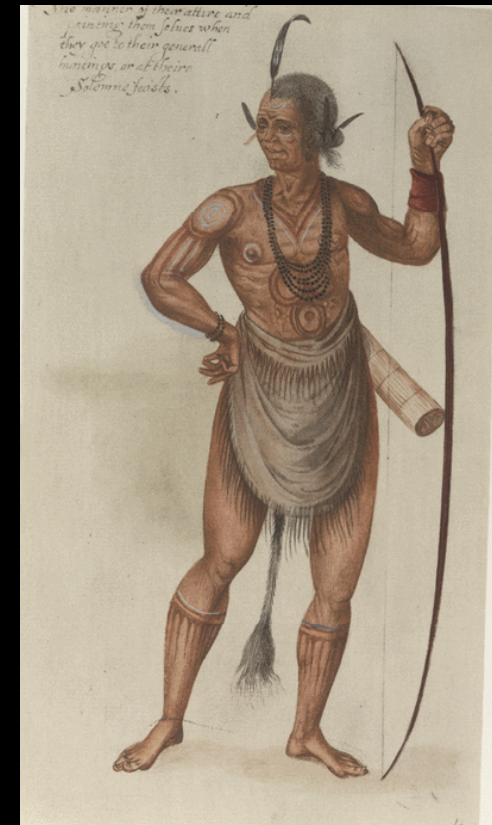
R. It is the term "Indians."

S. Columbus was the first person to use this word to describe the peoples of the western hemisphere.

T. He based the term on his belief that he had come to islands off the coast of India and China.

U. He was wrong not only in a geographical sense, but in a more complicated way as well.

V. The word "Indians" makes a generalization that cannot be made, since the peoples of the Americas did not -- and do not -- think of themselves as Indians, but as many different peoples.



Watercolor drawing "Indian in Body Paint" by John White (1585-1586).



The Pre-contact Amerindian World

II. What Fostered Misconceptions

A. Different experiences of the Neolithic Revolution in Eurasia and the Americas

B. Less population density in the Americas because of historic cultural differences and the spread of epidemic diseases.

C. Other reasons: the fact that Amerindians looked quite different than Europeans, the different tools and modes of agriculture, the different housing structures, the different modes of dress, the different ceremonial rites and practices.



Martin Pringe in North Virginia, 1603
Hand-colored engraving, c.1625.

Martin Pringe explored New England in 1603 for Bristol merchants and returned with sassafras and a bark canoe.



The Pre-contact Amerindian World

III. Historical Reassessment

Historical Reassessment of the Pre-Contact Amerindian World Focuses on the Diversity of Cultures

A. Sedentary Imperial Societies

Mesoamerica: Maya, Teotihuacán, Aztec

South America: Inca

North America: Cahokia

B. Semi-Sedentary Societies

Eastern Woodlands Culture Area

C. Nomadic Societies

Atlantic Northeast



Keet Seel Ruins | Navajo National Monument
Compare with the images already displayed.



The Pre-contact Amerindian World

IV. Sedentary Imperial Societies: Introduction

- A. 3,500 years ago sedentary agricultural communities emerged in Mesoamerica
- B. Food surplus = full-time craft specialists, transporters and traders, priests, and professional military men.
- C. Cities were not unusual. At least two cities with populations over 200,000 arose in Mexico.
- D. These societies also built monumental architecture – palaces, temples, pyramids, and government centers.
- E. Three major cultures:
 Classic Maya: 300 CE - 900 CE
 Teotihuacán: 150 CE - 650 CE
 Aztec: 1428 - 1521 CE





The Pre-contact Amerindian World

IV. Sedentary Imperial Societies: Mesoamerica - The Maya

A. The Maya never formed a single culture. Instead, between 300 CE and 900 CE, they developed a group of related cultures, something like city states, constantly either at war or in fragile alliances with each other.

B. Devotion to warfare may have been one of the causes of their collapse around 900 CE.

C. At the height of the Late Classic Period (600-900 CE), the total Maya population may have been as high as twenty million.

D. They were agriculturalists, but lived in towns, villages, and cities clustered around paved plazas dominated by high temples. (See the following slides for examples).



Maya | Tikal: Temple I | Construction c. 731 and 734 CE
Originally all surfaces covered with polished, white plaster.



Tikal: From a Distance



Tikal: A view from the Great Plaza



Modern Model of Tikal



Palanque: Palace



Palanque: Aerial View



Chichén Itzá: Aerial View of El Castillo



Chichén Itzá: Observatory



Chichén Itzá: Chac Mool and Serpent Columns at Temple of 1000 Warriors



The Pre-contact Amerindian World

IV. Sedentary Imperial Societies: Mesoamerica - Teotihuacán

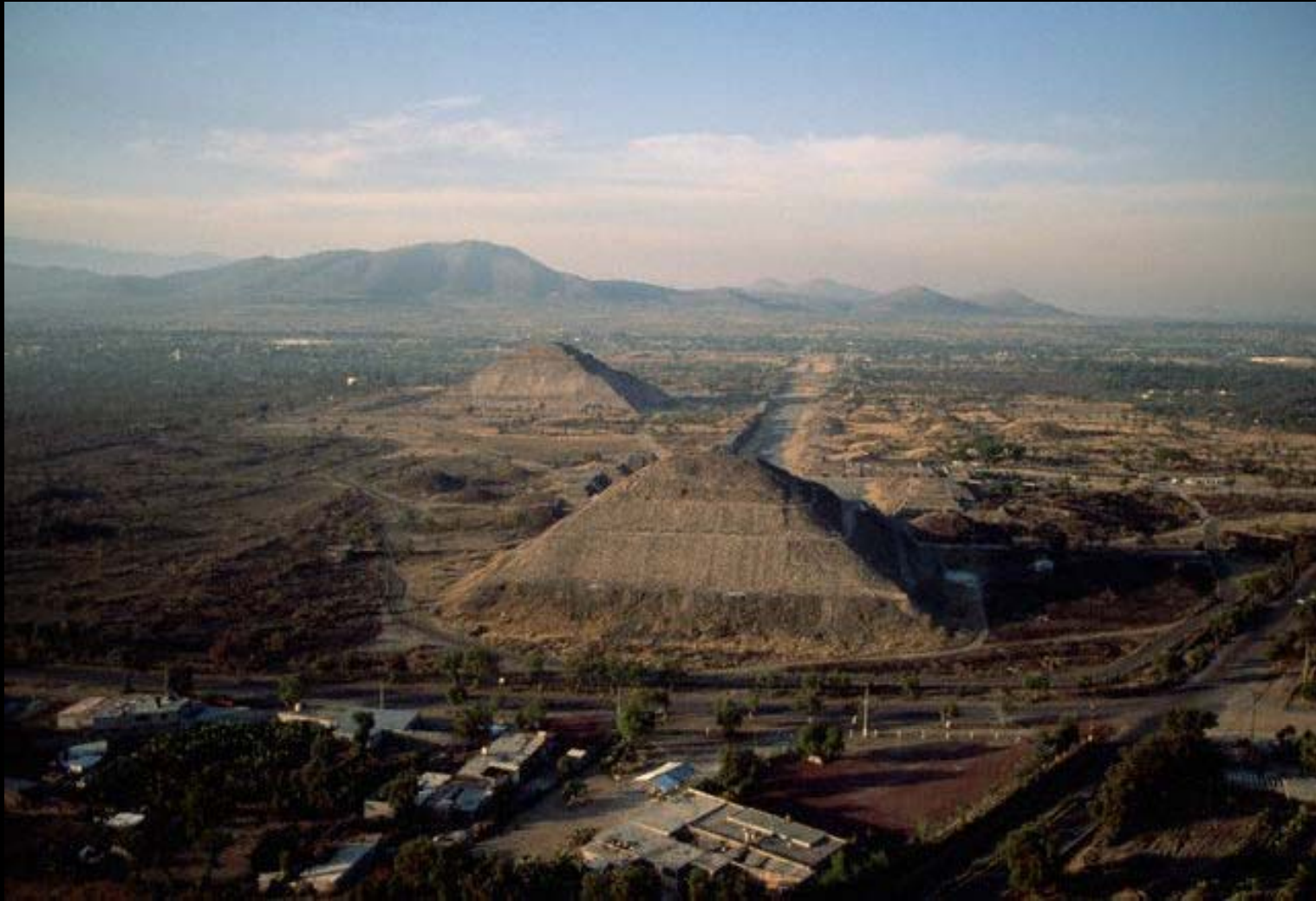
A. The civilization based at Teotihuacán (teh-oh-tee-wah-KAHN) thrived from more than 800 years between 150 BCE & 600 CE.

B. Teotihuacán contained dozens of temple complexes located over 20 square kilometers of territory.

C. Far more than a religious center, the city housed some 200,000 people, who lived in more than 2,200 residential compounds.



Temple of the Sun at Teotihuacán
<http://archaeology.la.asu.edu/teo/>



Teotihuacán: From a Distance



Teotihuacán: Avenue of the Dead



The Pre-contact Amerindian World

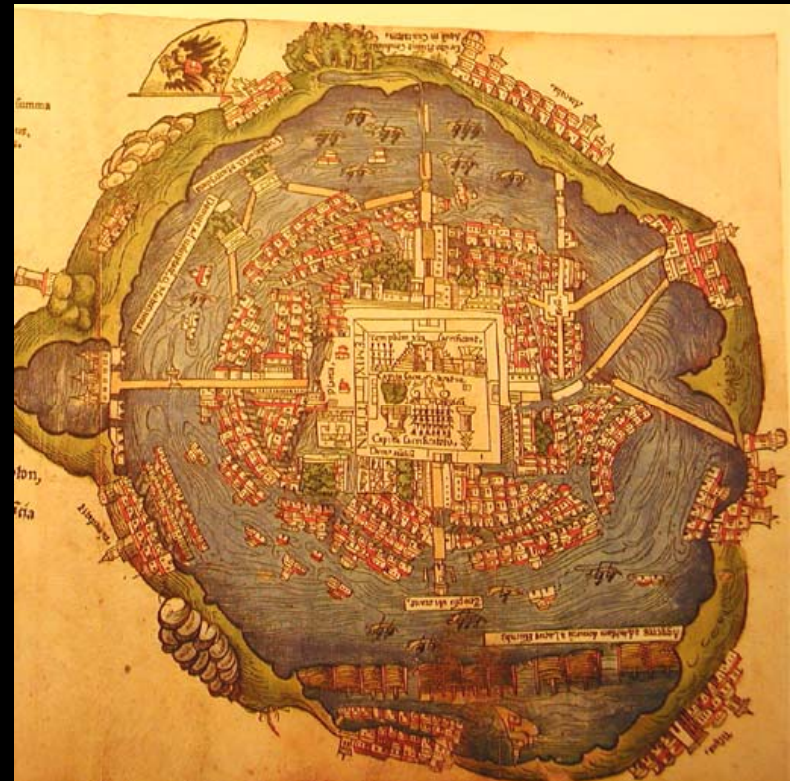
IV. Sedentary Imperial Societies: Mesoamerica - The Aztec

A. The Aztec built great cities and developed a complex social, political, and religious structure.

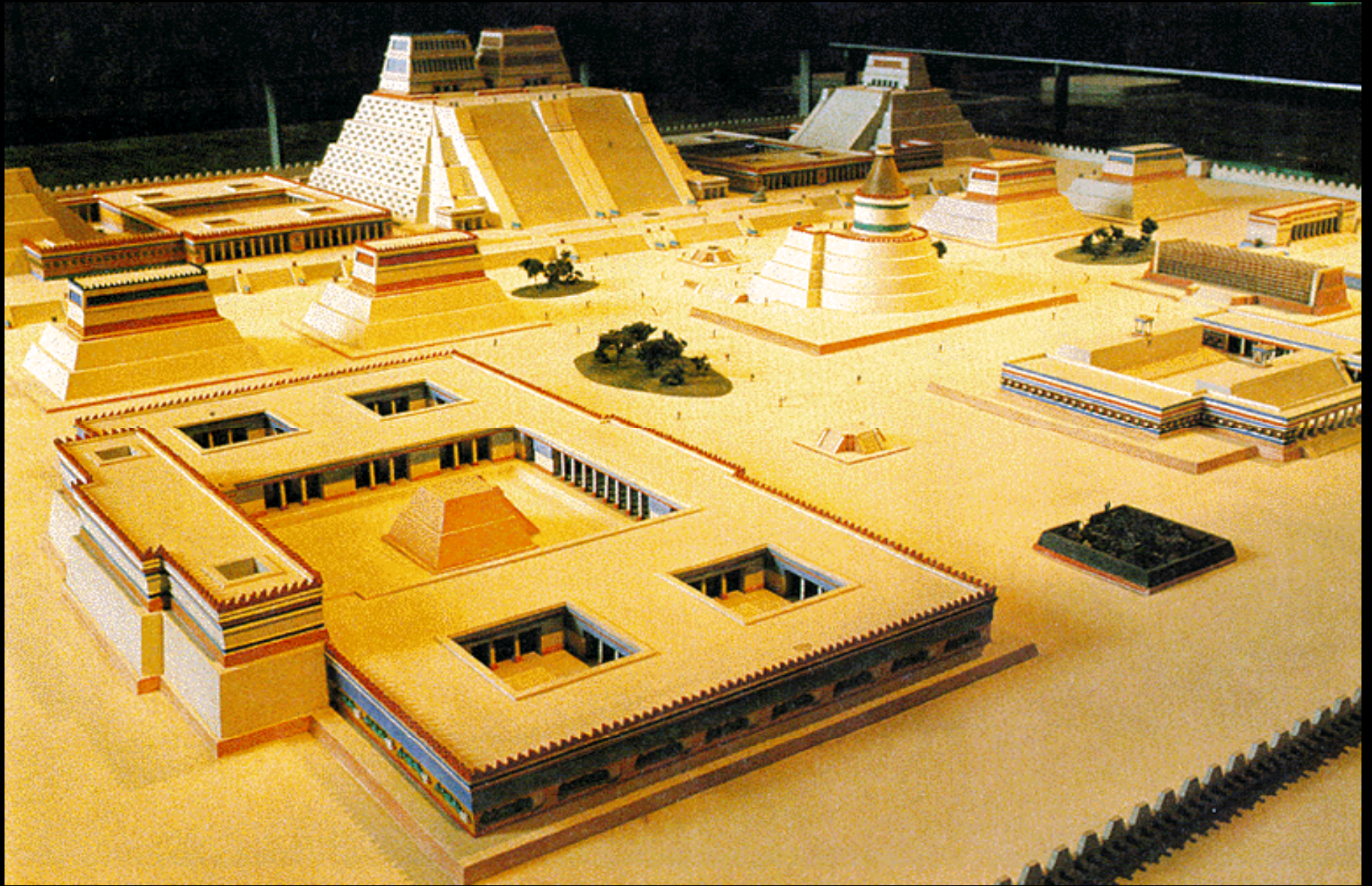
B. Their capital, Tenochtitlán, was located on the site of present-day Mexico City.

C. An elaborate metropolis built on islands and reclaimed marsh land, Tenochtitlán was home to more than 250,000 people – it was possibly the largest city in the world at the time of the Spanish conquest.

D. It featured a huge temple complex, a royal palace, and numerous canals.



Map of Tenochtitlán



Tenochtitlán Model: The Central Plaza with the Templo Mayor



Tenochtitlán: The Templo Mayor



Tenochtitlán's Skull Rack



The Pre-contact Amerindian World

IV. Sedentary Imperial Societies: Mesoamerica - General

A. The Aztec and other Mesoamerican peoples made significant changes to the environment in order to facilitate the growth of their society.

B. They cleared land to bring it under cultivation.

C. They terraced hills and mountainsides, dug canal systems, maintained intricate irrigation complexes, raised artificial fields alongside water sources, utilized decaying vegetation as fertilizer, and in lake regions, constructed fields along the shores just above the water line and used the currents to bring nutrients to the crops.



This 16th-century painting depicts farmers making a chinampa by laying sod on top of a frame of wood reeds.



The Pre-contact Amerindian World

IV. Sedentary Imperial Societies: Mesoamerica - General

D. The Aztec and other sedentary societies in Mesoamerica devised numerous scientific advances.

E. They developed highly accurate annual calendars that were at least as precise as those used by contemporary Europeans.

F. They made considerable use of numerical systems for accounting, trade, and scientific calculations.

G. They were skilled astronomers, who understood and graphically represented the movement of the moon, sun, and stars.

H. They developed symbolic representation systems and illustrated long scrolls (called codices) that had begun to approximate a writing system based on letters and syllables. [Note: this does not apply to the Inca]



The Codex Borbonicus, an Aztec sacred book, shows the god Quetzalcoatl, in the form of a green serpent devouring a man. The story may relate to the importance of human sacrifice in Aztec religion.



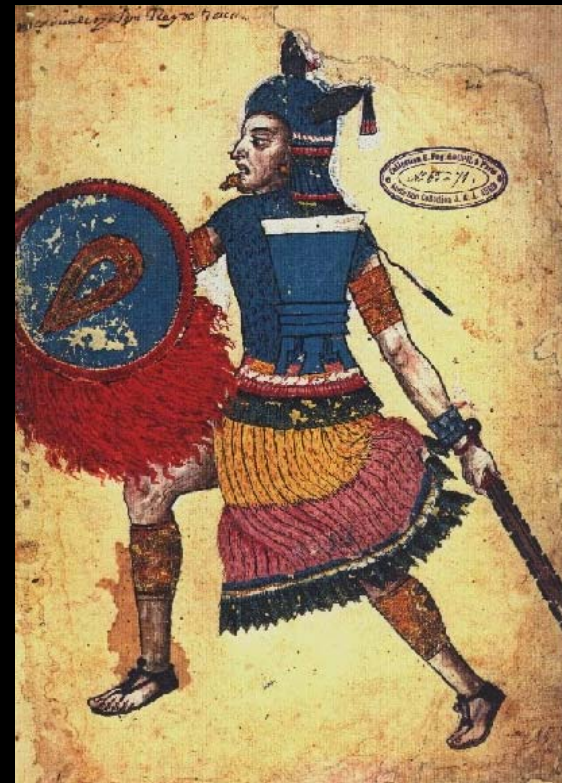
The Pre-contact Amerindian World

IV. Sedentary Imperial Societies: Mesoamerica - General

I. Monarchs governed the city-states that typified political organization in the ethnic provinces that dominated the sedentary agricultural zones.

J. Although these rulers presented themselves as absolute dictators, in fact, they relied substantially on support from their extended kinship groups.

K. Political elites routinely demanded labor service from their subjects to build infrastructure. This service was seen as reciprocal in nature. Rulers were expected to protect and sustain their people, while commoners were periodically called upon to help the ruler and greater society.



Nezahualcoyotl
Ruler of Texcoco, 1431-1472



The Pre-contact Amerindian World

IV. Sedentary Imperial Societies: Mesoamerica - General

- L. Rival ethnic states habitually launched military campaigns against one another.
- M. Commoners were expected to participate in the military campaigns as part of their service.
- N. Mesoamerican empires could amass enormous armies numbering in the tens of thousands.
- O. The approach to warfare stressed formal announcement of a campaign, quite limited use of battlefield tactics, the preservation of the opponent's cities, fields, and noncombatants, and the taking of captives rather than slaying the enemy.
- P. The basic weapon was a carved wooden club commonly imbedded with obsidian or flint.



Florentine Codex. Page IX, F, 5v



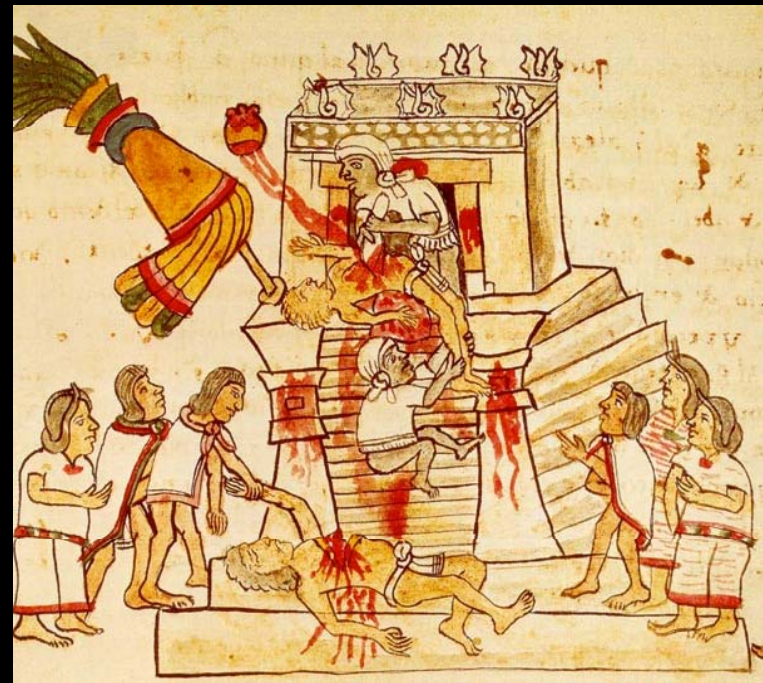
The Pre-contact Amerindian World

IV. Sedentary Imperial Societies: Mesoamerica - General

Q. As is well known, Mesoamerican peoples, like many others in the Americas practiced limited forms of human sacrifice, offering the lives of a few victims to their gods.

R. The Aztecs made human sacrifice the centerpiece of their worship to the sun god named Huizilopochtli. The annual number of victims may have been in the thousands.

S. This practice should not be confused with cannibalism, which was very limited both in the number of people who practiced it and the types of occasions on which it was permitted.



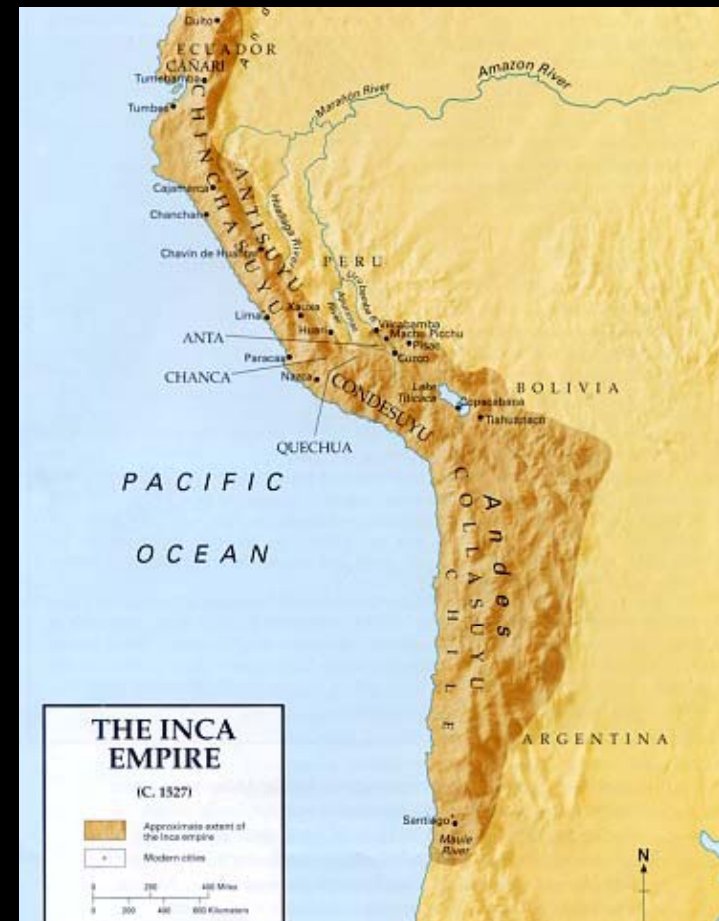
Aztec Sacrifice from the Duran Codex



The Pre-contact Amerindian World

IV. Sedentary Imperial Societies: South America - Inca

- A. The Inca Empire was a vast kingdom in the Andes Mountains that was created in the 15th century CE.
- B. The Incas built a wealthy and complex civilization that ruled 5 to 11 million people.
- C. The Incan Emperor eventually ruled over lands encompassing 350,000 square miles.
- D. The Empire was centered on the peaks of the Andes, but extended to the Pacific Coast and the Amazon basin.





The Pre-contact Amerindian World

IV. Sedentary Imperial Societies: South America - Inca

E. Inca society was strictly organized, from the emperor down to the peasants.

F. The emperor was believed to be descended from the sun god, Inti, and ruled with divine authority.

G. Below the emperor came the aristocracy.

H. For administrative purposes the empire was divided into regions known as the "four quarters of the world," with Cuzco – the capital – at its center.

I. A blood relative of the emperor served as governor of each quarter.



Pachacuti, Emperor of the Inca.



The Pre-contact Amerindian World

IV. Sedentary Imperial Societies: South America - Inca

J. Although the Incas had no system of writing, they did have a thorough record-keeping system.

K. The Inca government kept inventories of all the people, livestock, gold, land, crop harvests, armies, and projects of the empire by means of *quipus* (KEE-pooz), a series of knotted strings hung from a main top string.

L. The Incas encoded numerical data in the strings by varying the spacing of the knots and strings. The colors and kinds of string used were also significant in representing the type of information being recorded.



quipus



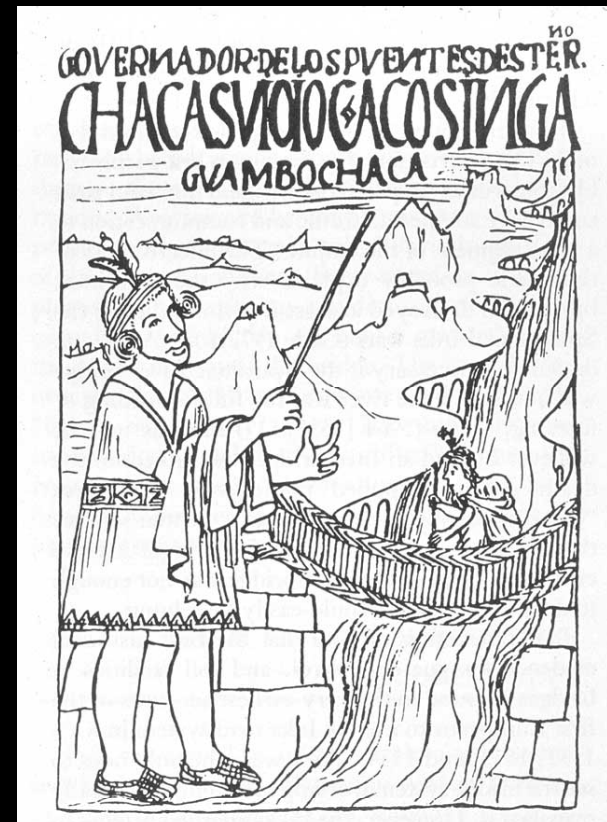
The Pre-contact Amerindian World

IV. Sedentary Imperial Societies: South America - Inca

M. The Incan Empire had a labor tax, which supported the building of forts, roads, and bridges, or the mining of metals and gems. It also allowed the emperor to raise large armies.

N. The Inca emperors built a 10,000-mile network of stone roads and suspension bridges to connect the empire.

O. To increase agricultural production, the government commissioned stone terraces in the Andean valleys.



Inca Bridge Official



Machu Picchu terrace



The Pre-contact Amerindian World

IV. Sedentary Imperial Societies: South America - Inca

P. The most impressive of the Incas' building projects were their temples, palaces, and fortresses.

Q. They built massive stone buildings, like the fortress at Sacsahuaman near Cuzco.

R. Cuzco itself was a marvel with the great Temple of the Sun almost entirely sheathed with gold plate.

S. The Temple of the Sun was once the most important temple of the Incas. When the Spanish conquered the Inca Empire, they used the Inca stonework to form the base of the Church of Santo Domingo.



Church of Santo Domingo | Built on the foundation of the Temple of the Sun in Cuzco



Sacsahuaman Fortress Ruins near Cuzco



Choquequirau - Ruins



Choquequirau – Plaza Ruins



Ingapirca Ruins



Machu Picchu Ruins



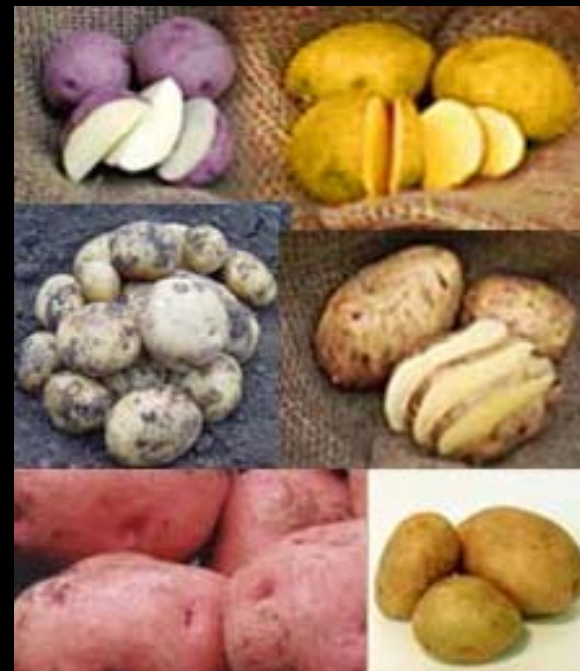
The Pre-contact Amerindian World

IV. Sedentary Imperial Societies: South America - Inca

U. Agriculture was the basis of the economy, producing almost all the foods in the Inca diet.

V. The inhabitants of the Andean region developed more than half the agricultural products that the world eats today. Among these are more than 20 varieties of corn; 240 varieties of potato; as well as one or more varieties of squash, beans, peppers, and peanuts.

W. The Incas also mined extensive deposits of gold and silver.



Potatoes



The Pre-contact Amerindian World

IV. Sedentary Imperial Societies: South America - Inca

X. The supreme god of the Incas was the creator god, Viracocha. The Incas also worshiped the sun god, Inti, from whom the royal family was believed to be descended, and a number of other nature gods that were vital to the success of their crops.

Y. The Incas also believed in an afterlife and worshiped the spirits of their ancestors. The bodies and tombs of the dead were treated as sacred items.

Z. The Inca state religion was highly formal, with a large number of priests to conduct its many rituals and ceremonies.



Statue of Viracocha



The Pre-contact Amerindian World

IV. Sedentary Imperial Societies: North America - Cahokia

A. No state-organized indigenous societies existed in North America when Europeans made their initial contacts in the sixteenth century.

B. Between 800-1500 CE, however, there had been a series of temple-mound builder cultures throughout the greater Mississippi River Valley.

C. These cultures were characterized by urban sites centered around temple platforms and massive mounds constructed over several decades.



Cahokia, in Southwestern Illinois



The Pre-contact Amerindian World

IV. Sedentary Imperial Societies: North America - Cahokia

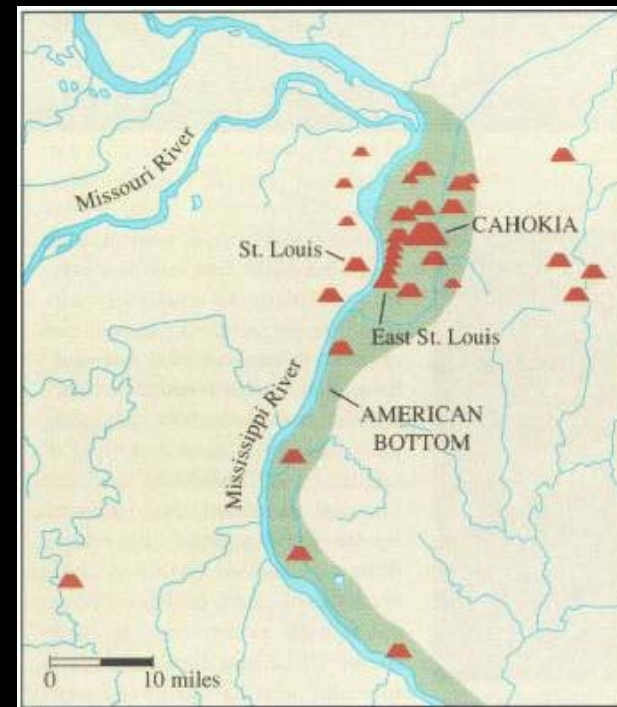
D. The city of Cahokia in southwestern Illinois thrived from 1050 to 1200 CE.

E. Population estimate -- 30,000.

F. This cultural center dominated 50 surrounding communities.

G. The introduction of new varieties of maize and beans from Mexico may have provided the means to grow.

H. Ultimately, poor sanitation and growing numbers may have led to the downfall of Cahokia.



Cahokia, in Southwestern Illinois



Cahokia: An Artists Recreation



The Pre-contact Amerindian World

V. Semi-Sedentary Society: Eastern Woodlands Culture Area

A. A Culture Area is defined by Anthropologist as a region with peoples sufficiently similar to discuss their: language types, subsistence patterns, housing structures, marriage customs, gender ways, and artistic motifs.

B. The Eastern Woodlands Culture Area, is defined as the area east of the Mississippi River, north of the Gulf of Mexico, west of the Atlantic of the St. Lawrence drainage basin.



Eastern Woodlands Culture Area



The Pre-contact Amerindian World

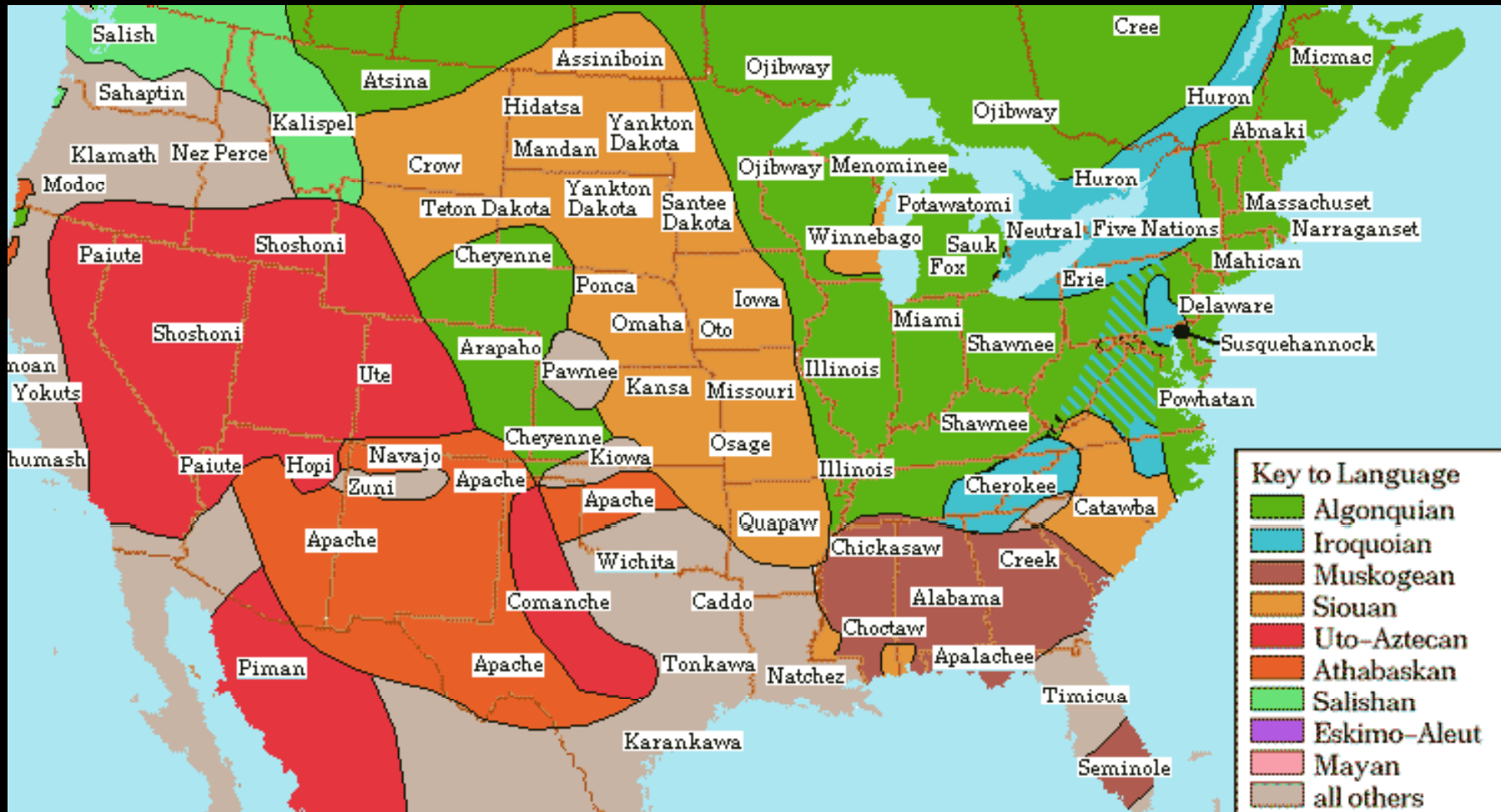
V. Semi-Sedentary Society: Eastern Woodlands Culture Area

A. Considerable diversity in language, with four language groups present, and different dialects within each group.

1. Algonquian
"New England" area
2. Iroquoian
Hudson River to Great Lakes
3. Muskogean
Southeastern
4. Siouan
Southeastern



Language Groups



Language Families – Full Map



The Pre-contact Amerindian World

V. Semi-Sedentary Society: Eastern Woodlands Culture Area

B. Subsistence patterns

1. By 2500 BCE farming: cultivated planting everywhere, diet supplemented by hunting
2. absence of iron tools
3. no plow; hoes made of shell, stone, or fishbone
4. no draft/domesticated animals
5. no irrigation
6. fertilizers rarely used
7. sea mammal hunting done by harpoon
8. Large animal hunting -- sling shot, spear, fire
9. Fishing -- hooks, nets, spears, traps
10. Cooking: boiling, earth oven, roasting, drying
11. Most evident crops: corn, beans, squash
12. Deer most frequent single animal genus eaten



INDIAN VILLAGE OF SECOTON (no. 38A, cf. pl. 135)



The Pre-contact Amerindian World

V. Semi-Sedentary Society: Eastern Woodlands Culture Area



COOKING IN A POT (no. 48A, cf. pl. 130 (b))

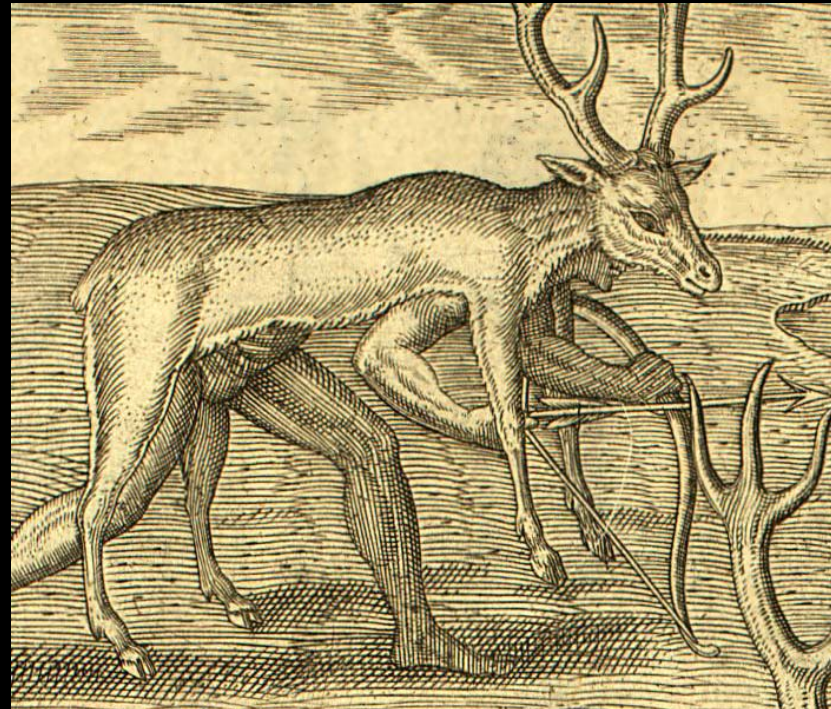


COOKING FISH (no. 49A, cf. pl. 130 (a))



The Pre-contact Amerindian World

V. Semi-Sedentary Society: Eastern Woodlands Culture Area





The Pre-contact Amerindian World

V. Semi-Sedentary Society: Eastern Woodlands Culture Area

C. Housing

1. Algonquin house built of bent poles and bark, with a hole in the top for smoke to escape. There are fires in all of the homes for warmth

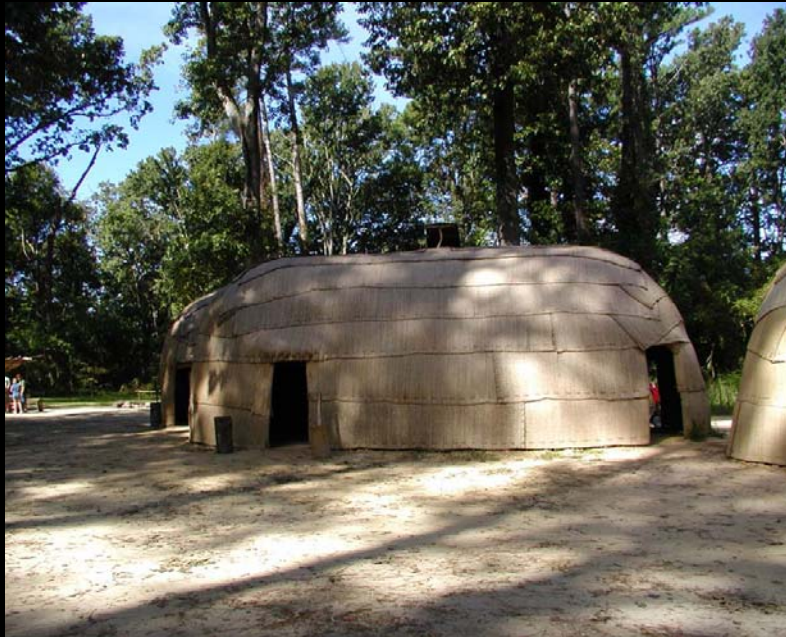
2. At the center of Iroquois society was the longhouse, a wooden structure eighteen feet wide, eighteen feet high, and sixty feet long. Central hall down the center – 6 to 10 ft. wide – on both sides were small booths where individual families lived.





The Pre-contact Amerindian World

V. Semi-Sedentary Society: Eastern Woodlands Culture Area



Algonquian House | Jamestown Settlement
Photo: Jeff Littlejohn

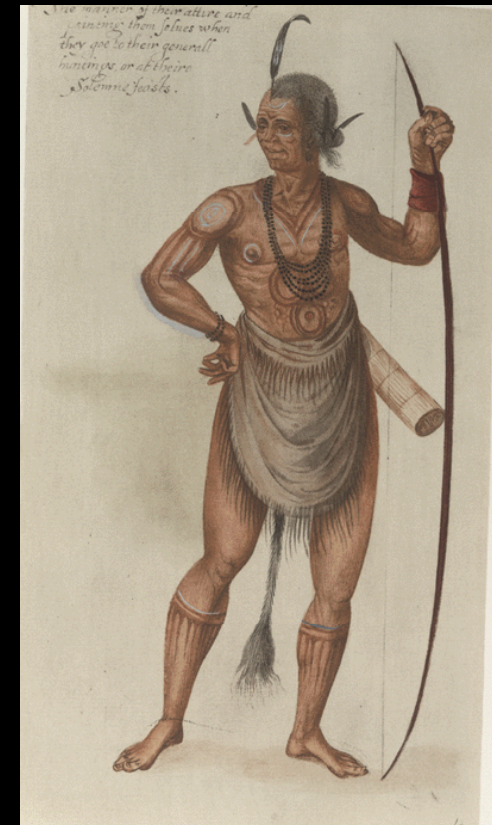


The Pre-contact Amerindian World

V. Semi-Sedentary Society: Eastern Woodlands Culture Area

D. Clothing

1. For the most part, furs were used for clothing.
2. In the South some plant materials were used.
3. Men wore a breech cloth, no shirt
4. Women wore a buckskin wraparound skirt, no shirt
5. Men sometimes wore moccasins, women rarely did
6. Women usually wore long hair
7. Men shaved head or wore scalp lock
8. Both sexes pierced their ears
9. Men tattooed their bodies:
pricked skin and pushed soot in for color



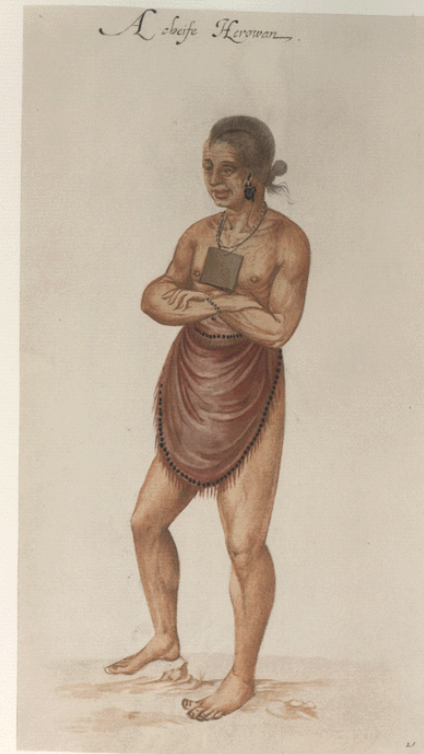


The Pre-contact Amerindian World

V. Semi-Sedentary Society: Eastern Woodlands Culture Area



INDIAN WOMAN AND BABY OF POMEIOOC (no. 37A, cf. pl. 127(a))



INDIAN ELDER OR CHIEF (no. 50A, cf. pl. 125 (b))

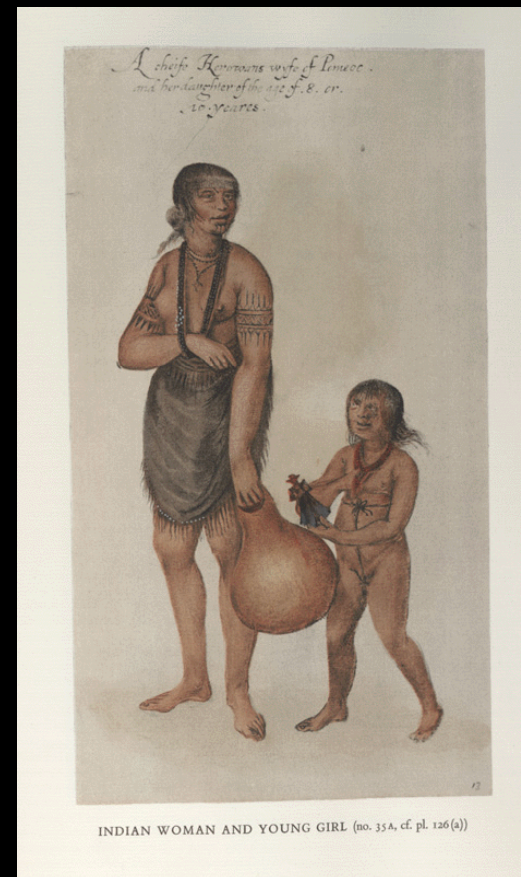


The Pre-contact Amerindian World

V. Semi-Sedentary Society: Eastern Woodlands Culture Area

E. Labor

1. Work was strictly gender defined
2. The male's duties entailed travel and "dangerous" work like hunting
3. The female's activities kept the women close to the settlement where they bore and raised children.



INDIAN WOMAN AND YOUNG GIRL (no. 35A, cf. pl. 126(a))



The Pre-contact Amerindian World

V. Semi-Sedentary Society: Eastern Woodlands Culture Area

G. Property Ownership

1. Ownership of property has three main aspects: a) privilege of use; b) privilege of disposal; c) privilege of destruction. Stages represent increasing control

2. Two types of property: a) real estate (like land and housing) which is permanent b) chattel property (like tools, weapons, and household items) which is movable.

3. Over the first type of property most individual Indians had the privilege of use. This type of ownership is called a usufruct right. The land of a tribe was generally held to be communal and no individual could sell or give it away.

4. Over the second type of property, most individual Indians had all three rights: use, disposal, and destruction.





The Pre-contact Amerindian World

V. Semi-Sedentary Society: Eastern Woodlands Culture Area

H. Trade

1. Amerindians did trade "Amongst themselves," said Roger Williams, "they trade their Corne, skins, Coates, Venison, Fish, etc" (Cronon, 92).

2. Trade took place within the village and also between villages. The inter-village trade was limited, however, to adjacent villages, and there was no entrepreneurial class specifically focused on the carrying trade within Indian society (Cronon, 92-93).

3. Trade was sometimes facilitated by wampum (marine shells), but was usually done by barter.





The Pre-contact Amerindian World

V. Semi-Sedentary Society: Eastern Woodlands Culture Area

I. Religion

1. Animism

2. Religion came from the close relationship Amerindians had with the earth and animals.

3. Life was based fundamentally on farming and hunting or fishing.

4. Amerindians were dependent on these resources for survival and came to spiritualize the hunt or the planting seasons.

5. For more on this important topic see Carolyn Merchant's *Ecological Revolutions*.





The Pre-contact Amerindian World

VI. Nomadic Peoples: North America Nomadic Peoples

Nomadic Peoples

Discuss William Cronon's
"Seasons of Want and Plenty"

