

Classical Era Variations: The Americas 500 BCE to 1200 CE

AP World History Notes
Chapter 7



Mesoamerica



- Meso = means middle
- Mesoamerica = stretches from central Mexico to northern Central America



The Maya



- Settled the Yucatan Peninsula of present-day Mexico
- Mayan ruins found throughout the area
- Not one unified empire → instead, a patchwork of city-states & kingdoms
 - But all city-states shared common language, culture, and so on
 - Like: Ancient Mesopotamia and Greece!





The Maya Area



Mayan Religion

- Religion = center of Mayan life
- Believed in 2 levels of existence: (1) the daily physical life they lived and (2) the “Otherworld,” a spiritual world of gods, the souls of ancestors, and other supernatural creatures
 - Actions on 1 level could affect things on the other level



Mayan Religion

- Mayan kings = BOTH political leaders AND spiritual leaders
 - Performed rituals and ceremonies to satisfy the gods
 - Huge temples and pyramids built where thousands could gather for special religious ceremonies and festivals





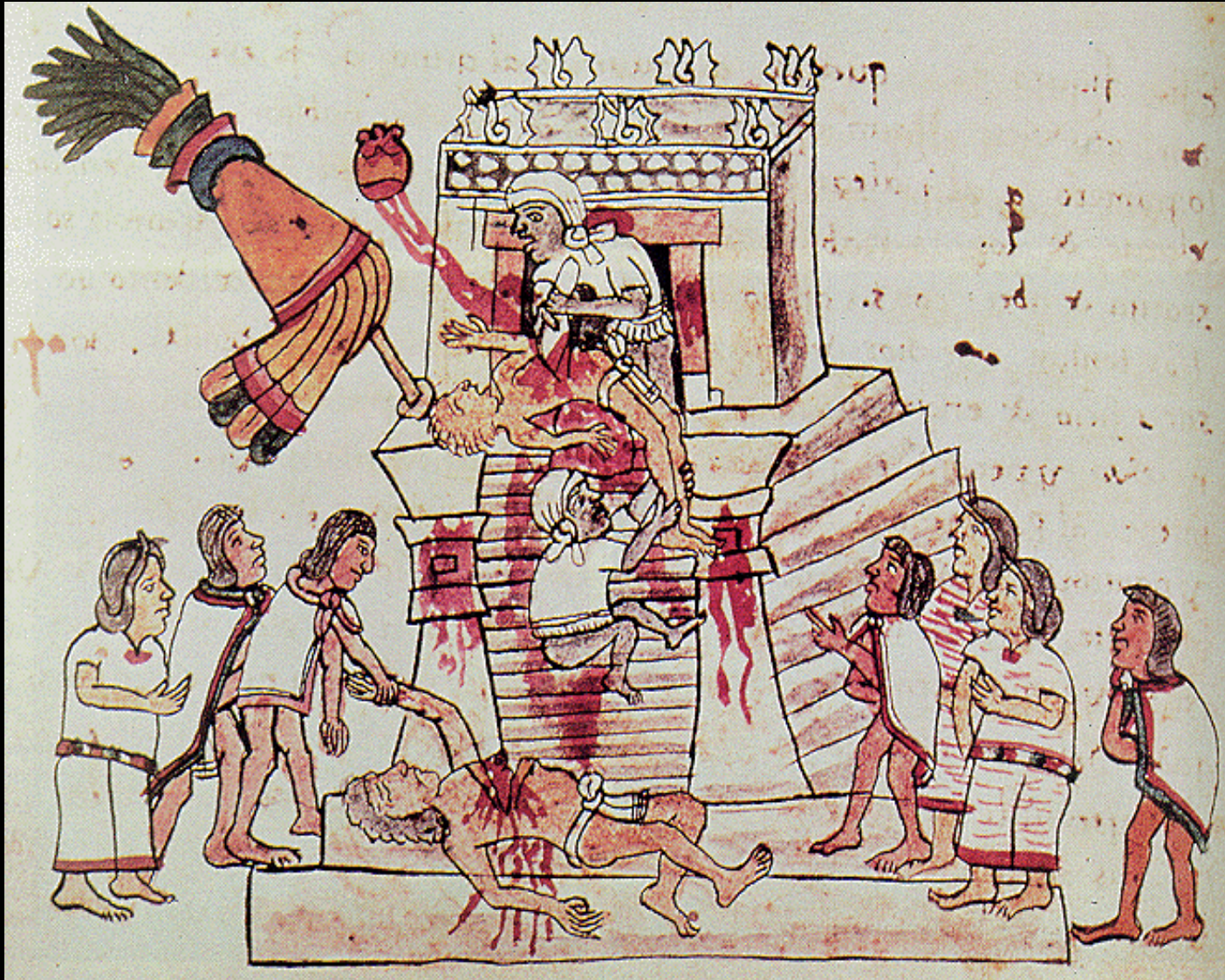
Mayan Religion

- Images on Mayan temples, sacred objects, and pottery = tell us a lot about their religion and their gods
- Human sacrifice and bloodletting rituals = HUGE part of religious ceremonies





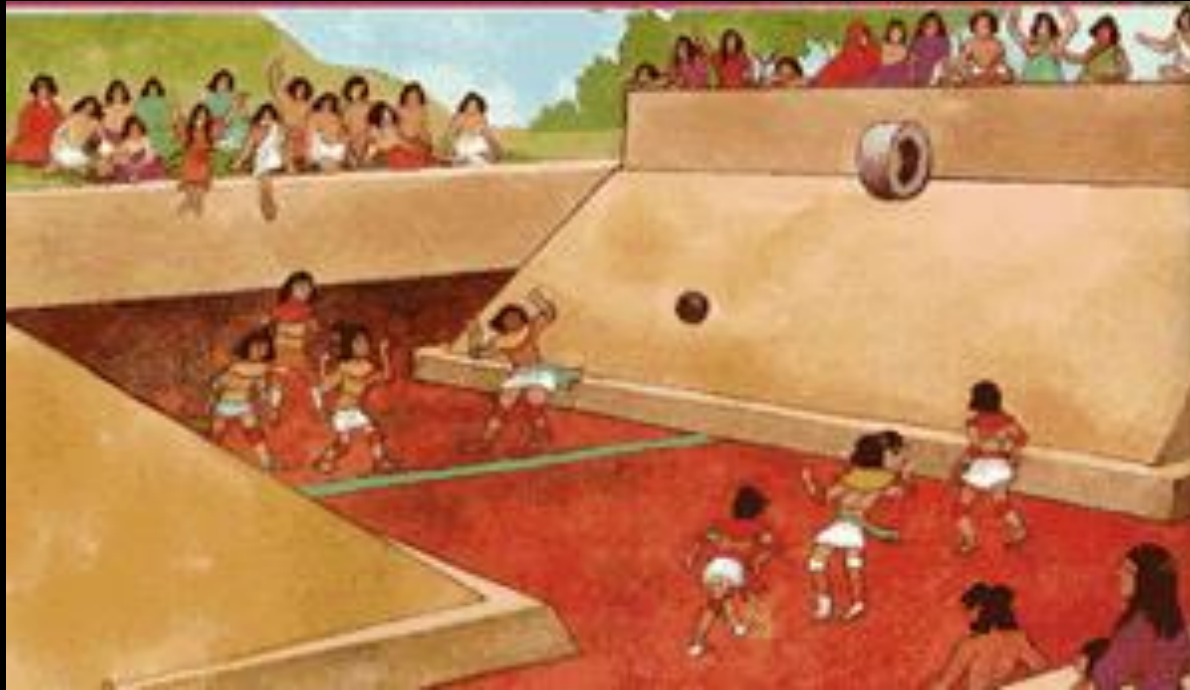




Mayan Religion

- Some ceremonies also included a ritual ball game = pok-a-tok → Rubber balls batted back and forth across a walled court
 - Symbolized back & forth struggle between this world and the next





Mayan Science

- Mayan priests = excellent mathematicians and astronomers
- Developed accurate calendars → used to predict eclipses, schedule religious ceremonies, and determine times to plant and harvest



Mayan Economy

- Economy = based on agriculture and trade
- Farmers grew: maize, beans, squash, pumpkins, chili peppers, tomatoes
- Farmers brought surplus crops to open markets → traded for cotton, jade, pottery, fish, deer meat, and salt



Mayan Economy

- Merchants traded throughout Mexico & Central America
 - Canoes used to trade along rivers
 - Goods carried by humans overland – no wheels yet; no large domesticated animals



Mayan Writing

- One of the first Native American cultures to develop a writing system
- Only within the past 25 years have we made any breakthroughs in translating Mayan writing
- Maya recorded: genealogy of their kings & royal families, mythology, history, ritual practices, and trade





CHAN
'sky'



WINIK
'person'



WITZ
'mountain'



K'IN
'sun'



B'ALAM
'jaguar'



K'AK'
'fire'



BAK
'bone'



WAY
'spirit'



JUUN
'hook'



JA'
'water'



AJAW
'lord'



MUYAL
'cloud'



IX
'woman'



CH'AM
'to grab'



K'UK'
'quartz'



CHAN
'snake'



CH'UL
'holy'



CHOK
'to scatter'



JAAB'
'war'



YAX
'blue/green'



PAKAL
'shield'



TOK
'filter'



NAJ
'house'



K'AL
'twenty'



Collapse of the Maya

- Unclear as to why the Maya collapsed
- Political disunity?
- Agricultural breakdown → from warfare? From over-farming?
- Long-term drought?
- Malnutrition, sickness, famine, high death rates
- Probably a combination of all of these factors



Teotihuacan

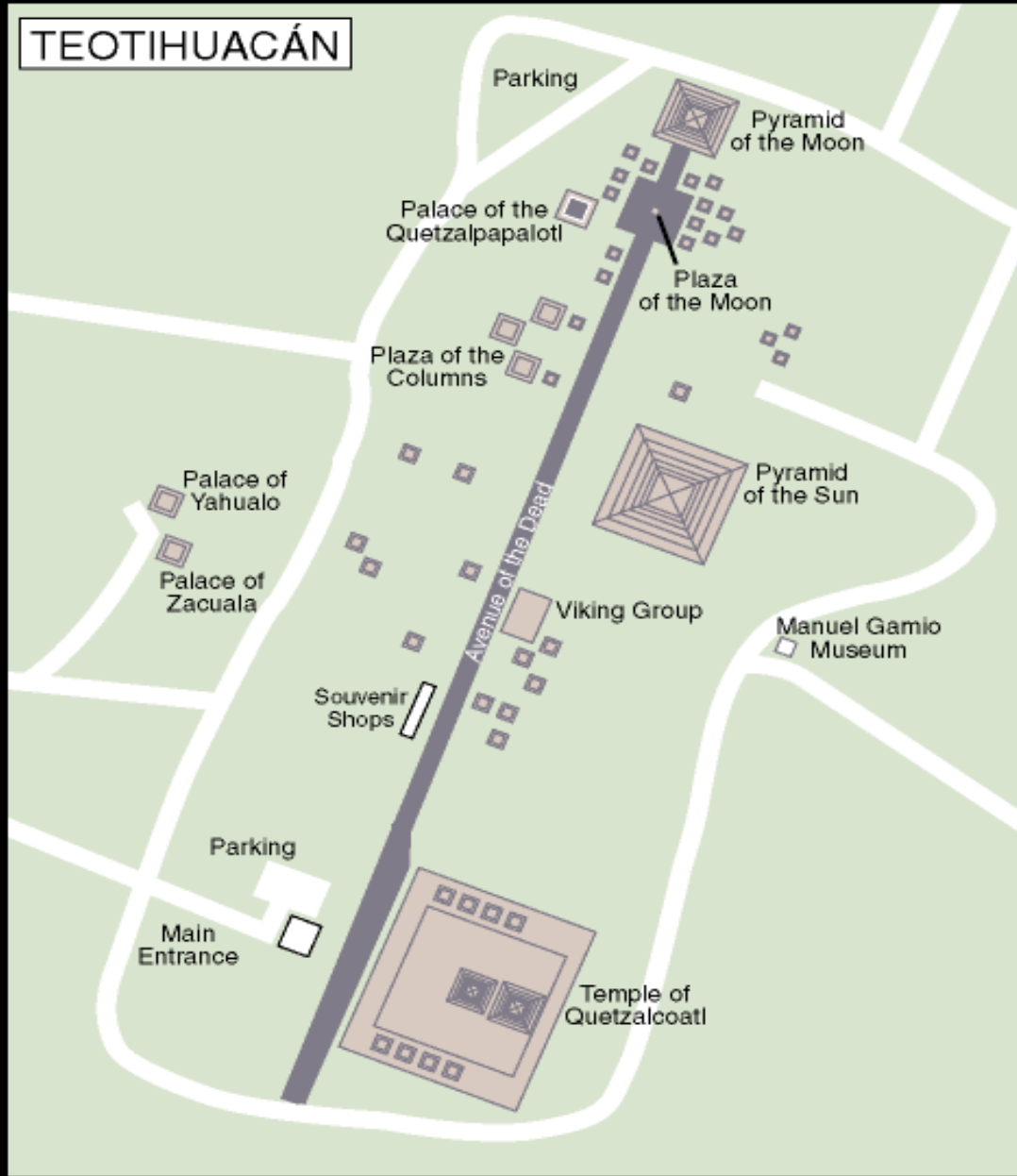


Teotihuacan

- Teotihuacan = northeast of present-day Mexico City
- Had about 200,000 people at its peak
- City laid out on a grid
- Found in excavations = 600 pyramids, 2000 apartment compounds, 500 workshop areas, and a huge marketplace



TEOTIHUACÁN





Teotihuacan

- Reason for collapse = unknown
- Probably declined when invaded by the **Toltec**



Civilizations of the Andes

- South America
- Along Pacific coast
- Andes themselves = towering mountain chain with many highland valleys



Classical Civilizations of the Andes
Chapter 7, *Ways of the World: A Brief Global History with Sources*, First Edition
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Chavin

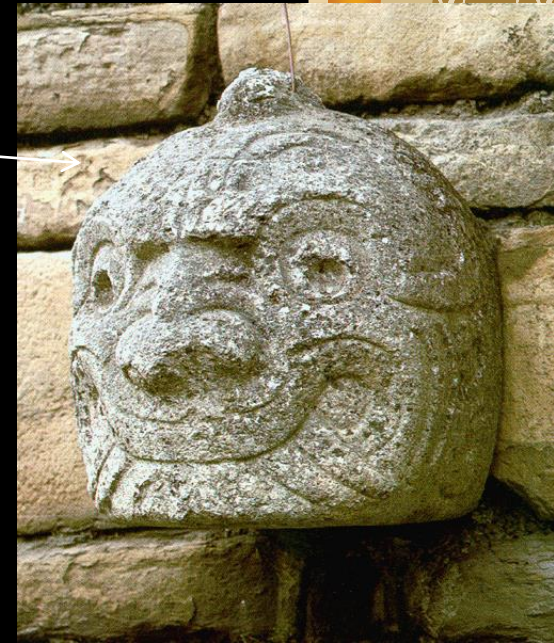
- Village called Chavin de Huantar
- Became the focus of a religious movement that swept throughout the Andes region



Chavin Religion

- Major deities = represented jaguars, crocodiles, and snakes
 - All animals native to the Amazon basin
- Shamans (priests) = used hallucinogenic cactus to connect to the supernatural world
- Religious imagery seen on pottery, sculptures, temple walls, textiles, etc.

Carved figure of half-human, half-feline deity



Moche

- Dominated a 250-mile stretch of Peru's coast
- Incorporated 13 river valleys
- Grew maize, beans, squash, and cotton
- Fishermen harvested anchovies from the Pacific



Moche Political System

- Governed by warrior-priests
 - Lived atop huge pyramids
 - Used hallucinogenic drugs to mediate between this world and that of the gods
 - Presided over sacrifice of human victims



Moche Artisans

- Metalworkers, potters, weavers, painters, etc.
- Face masks, animal figurines, and jewelry often plated in gold
- Images of daily life (of all classes) painted on ceramic pottery

