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!
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
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAYA SYMBOL</th>
<th>MAYA NAME</th>
<th>MAYA MEANING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>chan</td>
<td>WINIK</td>
<td>'sky'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chin</td>
<td>WITZ</td>
<td>'mountain'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kin</td>
<td>KIN</td>
<td>'sun'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>balam</td>
<td>B'ALAM</td>
<td>'jaguar'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hak</td>
<td>K'AK'</td>
<td>'fire'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eag</td>
<td>EAG</td>
<td>'honey'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>way</td>
<td>WAY</td>
<td>'spirit'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>juun</td>
<td>JUUN</td>
<td>'hook'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ja</td>
<td>JA'</td>
<td>'savelier'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jaw</td>
<td>AJAW</td>
<td>'lord'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ndjil</td>
<td>MUJAY</td>
<td>'cloud'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ixal</td>
<td>IX</td>
<td>'woman'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chan</td>
<td>CH'AN</td>
<td>'to grab'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k'uk</td>
<td>K'UK'</td>
<td>'quetzal'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chan</td>
<td>CHAN</td>
<td>'snake'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ch'il</td>
<td>CH'UL</td>
<td>'holy'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chok</td>
<td>CH'OK</td>
<td>'to scatter'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jaal</td>
<td>JAAR</td>
<td>'year'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yax</td>
<td>YAX</td>
<td>'blue/green'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pakal</td>
<td>PAKAL</td>
<td>'shield'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t'ok</td>
<td>T'OK</td>
<td>'film'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>naj</td>
<td>NAJ</td>
<td>'house'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k'al</td>
<td>K'AL</td>
<td>'twenty'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 = 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
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
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.
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