

Student Handout 3 -- World Zone Resources



The Americas:

Around 2000 BCE, the evolution of teosinte to maize [corn] was complete. This ushered in a new era of sedentism -- where people lived in stable villages. Teosinte is the ancestor of maize and bears tiny, edible fruits. Over thousands of years, the early hunter-gatherers of Mesoamerica selectively bred the most productive teosinte plants until they were large enough and fruitful enough to support a settled population.

Simple agricultural villages flourished in Mesoamerica's valleys and mountains. These villages lacked complex social structures and organized along purely egalitarian lines. Since these early peoples were no longer tribal nomads, they found themselves at the mercy of nature's forces. The success -- or failure -- of their harvests depended entirely upon environmental and climatic conditions.

The evolution of maize was accompanied by another major milestone in the evolution of Mesoamerican civilization: the use of fired ceramics [pottery]. The earliest reliably dated pottery of the region belongs to a tradition called Ocos. Ocos pottery originated from the Pacific coast of Chiapas and Guatemala. It has also been found across the continent from Veracruz to Honduras. It seems that trade and communication between settlements was already widespread at this time.

Around 1000 BCE, chiefdoms emerged with increasingly complex social structures. They included craft specialization and simple stratification. Surveys in Oaxaca, Mexico have revealed large residences probably belonging to the chief, as well as public ceremonial buildings. Similar research in coastal Chiapas -- the heart of Ocos culture -- also reveals the emergence of such chiefdoms.

Adapted from: <http://interamericana.co.uk/2009/08/the-early-formative-2000bc-1200bc/>

Earliest Urban Society in Americas Found at Peruvian Sites... Cities Occupied By 3000 B.C.

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Washington Post

Three river valleys that cross the windblown desert of coastal Peru were once home to the earliest urban society yet found in the Americas. Yesterday, archaeologists reported that they found a set of cities with ceremonial complexes -- complete with pyramids -- far more extensive than the first excavations suggested.

Researchers said recently completed radiocarbon tests at 13 large sites in Peru's Norte Chico region showed that the cities were occupied for 1,200 years. Evidence suggests that these were relatively sophisticated communities beginning around 3000 BCE, making the civilization as old as ancient Egypt's. The inhabitants probably grew cotton commercially and traded it to coastal communities for fish, the researchers said.

Researchers years ago identified a substantial prehistoric settlement along the coast, but the recent work in Norte Chico has focused on a larger number of inland mounds flanking the rivers emptying out of the Andes Mountains.

For several years, an archaeological team has excavated a site with six pyramids near the Norte Chico town of Caral. The team identified 20 large sites, each with at least one terraced pyramid and some with as many as seven.

"Anybody driving up the valleys is going to see them, but recognizing them as archaeological sites is challenging," one of the archaeologists, Dr. Haas said. "Many of the local people see them simply as hills." All together the sites could have supported more than 20,000 inhabitants.

Tests showed that the sites were inhabited between 3200 BCE and 1800 BCE. The sites also reflected the same unusual mix of primitive technology and sophisticated social organization noted several years ago during the Caral excavation.

"There are no ceramics, limited textiles, no metal and only the most primitive stone tools," Haas said. The evidence to date suggests that the contemporaneous societies in Egypt and Mesopotamia were far more technologically advanced.

Nevertheless, Haas said, the Norte Chico inhabitants were building pyramids as high as 60 feet on rectangular bases as long as 300 feet and as wide as 240 feet. Each center had a ceremonial circular plaza surrounded by stone pillars 6 to 12 feet tall.

"The technology isn't much, but the sites are substantial in size, and size counts," said archaeologist Brian S. Bauer of the University of Illinois at Chicago. "Size represents the amount of labor that can be organized, and given that people don't offer their labor freely, it reflects a social hierarchy or a concentration of power."

Masons used reed bags full of stones to fill out each level of the pyramid. Then they built a new structure on top, adding facing and stones to create a progression of terraces similar to those used much later by the Maya of Central America. The garbage heaps yielded huge numbers of anchovy and sardine bones as well as shellfish remains. However no bones of land animals or of the immense predatory fish that prowl the Humboldt Current were found.

All of these findings supported the early theory that the inland Norte Chico communities probably grew cotton and traded it for fish to coastal fishermen, who used the cotton to make nets. Bluefin tuna and other large Humboldt fish must be caught with hook and line in deep water off the coast.

Haas also noted that every site lies next to an irrigation canal, and that the garbage heaps contained "all kinds of organics." They include cotton fiber and residue of beans, chilis, avocados, guavas, squash, a podded tree fruit known today as pacay, and a stone fruit called lucuma.

"They have agriculture, and you never have to pull the [irrigation] water more than a kilometer," Haas said. "The reason we get the [population] explosion is because agriculture is easy here."

Bauer, however, said the absence of a staple food crop -- usually corn or potatoes in Andean countries -- suggested that the Norte Chico inhabitants were growing "industrial cotton" on a relatively large scale and maybe nothing else.

"In Mesopotamia, Egypt and China, you tend to think of cereal production -- rice or wheat," Bauer said. "That comes later in Peru." In Norte Chico, by contrast, "these people concentrated on the seashore. The Peruvian coast has one of the highest fish densities in the world."

Note: At this time in the Americas, people were using copper, gold, and silver to make jewelry and other such things, but they did not use metal for tools. In the Andes, people raised llamas and alpacas for their wool and as pack animals, but they did not develop large-scale pastoral nomadic cultures.

Sub-Saharan Africa:



3500 BCE

In Nubia (modern-day Sudan), wide grasslands gave rise to cattle-herding cultures. Throughout the rest of sub-Saharan Africa, small groups of hunter-gatherers, mostly related to modern day San bushmen and Pygmy peoples, live in small, temporary encampments. They follow their prey and forage for nuts, berries and other nutritious plants. Settlements of fishermen existed next to rivers and lakes.

2500 BCE

By this time, farming has spread to Nubia, reaching the southern limits for agriculture based on wheat and barley.

To the south of the Sahara, the cattle-herding populations range over a vast swathe of

territory, stretching from modern-day Sudan into West Africa. Hunter-gatherer peoples and fishermen, mostly related to today's Pygmies or San Bushmen, live on the rest of the continent.

1500 BCE

By this time, semi-nomadic populations of cattle herders occupied the vast lands stretching from the present-day Sudan into West Africa and down into East Africa. Probably by this date, however, a crucial breakthrough has been made. Somewhere within this huge territory the domestication of sorghum and millet has occurred. These cereals were much more difficult to domesticate than the wheat and barley which originated in western Asia. Yet, these cereals are suitable for tropical rainfall areas and will eventually become the staple crops throughout most of Africa. For now, however, populations of hunter-gatherers live throughout most of sub-Saharan Africa.

1000 BCE

Cattle-herding and farming gradually spread throughout western and central Africa. Around this time, some peoples in West Africa who live on the fringes of the rain forests begin to make the difficult transition to forest farming. This agriculture is based on a quite different set of crops than savannah agriculture. Forest agriculture focused on cultivating fruits and roots such as plantains and yams as the staples. Throughout the greater part of central and southern Africa, people remain hunter-gatherers and fishermen.

Oceania:



Find “Near Oceania” on the map above. This will help you understand the text that follows.

The Pacific was the first ocean to be explored and settled, and its history is one of voyages. New Zealand, isolated far to the south, was the last substantial land mass to be reached.

Water crossing by modern humans

People living in Near Oceania had highly developed artistic and linguistic abilities, similar to those living in Europe at that time. They also had the technological ability and motivation to cross expanses of water, land and space are characteristic of modern humans.

How they crossed is unclear, as no boats have been found. Adzes – a tool suitable for hollowing out logs - were not yet invented. But giant bamboo, ideal for rafts, grew in the region and people at this time had good knives. Rafts would have had to have been big enough to carry a viable breeding population of at least six women and their mates.

Island hopping

Large islands, many visible from one to the next, created a ‘voyaging corridor’ from mainland Asia to the end of the Solomon Islands in Near Oceania. The alternating north-west monsoon and south-east trade winds assisted travel back and forth along the corridor.

After 20,000 BCE, people traded in valuable stone, hunted terrestrial animals, and found the same seafood and edible plants as they migrated from island to island. But to the east, especially beyond New Guinea, there were fewer land animals available for hunting. There is evidence that some marsupials (mammals with pouches like kangaroos) were taken from New Guinea to smaller neighboring islands, where they were subsequently hunted. Trade in stone and the movement of these marsupial animals mark an increasing sophistication – people were bringing resources with them rather than travelling to the resources.

By 25,000 years ago, this first episode of human settlement in the Pacific was complete. The western Pacific then became a training ground for seafarers and navigators. After the climate began to warm some 10,000 years ago, the population grew, methods of plant cultivation were developed, and settlement patterns changed. Settlement of Remote Oceania was next to occur.

Around 1500 BCE a culture known as Lapita (ancestors of the Polynesians, including Māori) appeared in the Bismarck Archipelago in Near Oceania. Recent DNA analysis suggests that they originally came from islands in South-East Asia, and that there was some interbreeding with people already living in the Bismarcks.

The pottery of the Lapita people was similar in form to that of their forebears, but their decorative style was an innovation that emerged in the Bismarcks. The design included stylised faces, which were most elaborate during the early years of the migration and clearly carried cultural significance. This unique style was one of several traits referred to as the ‘Lapita cultural complex’.



Lapita pottery
fragment

Lapita in Remote Oceania

The Lapita were the first people to penetrate Remote Oceania. Between 1200 and 1000 BCE they spread rapidly from Melanesia to Fiji and West Polynesia, including Tonga and Samoa. Explorers and settlers travelled across an expanse of the western Pacific in only 5–10 generations. The picture we have is of a fairly small population travelling at speed.

When Lapita people migrated from Near Oceania, they left behind the disease of malaria. As a result the population increased, providing extra migrants for the voyaging frontier. They established a few permanent villages in each major island group. Some settled, while others journeyed on, but contact continued between communities on different islands. This migration was not driven by overcrowding, as there was land to spare. Rather, it is likely that social factors such as prestige or curiosity were an incentive to find new islands.

Lapita people lived in villages on small islands near large ones, or on the coast of larger islands. Some had houses that were built on poles over the water. As they travelled from island to island they transported plants for cultivation, including taro, yam, breadfruit, banana, and coconut. They also took domesticated pigs, dogs, and fowls. The Pacific rat (*Rattus exulans*) was either brought or came as a stowaway on the canoes. As bones of domesticated animals have proved hard to find in the Lapita sites of Fiji and West Polynesia, some researchers think that the earliest Lapita people to reach these eastern islands were foragers rather than gardeners, and that the food plants arrived later.

The migrants caught diverse seafoods with nets, spears, and hooks. The large numbers of native birds and animals on the new islands provided a reliable food supply in the early years, as the people established their economies. But many species, including large flightless birds, a land crocodile and giant iguana lizards, were defenseless against this new human predator, and soon became extinct.

Adapted from: <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/pacific-migrations/3>