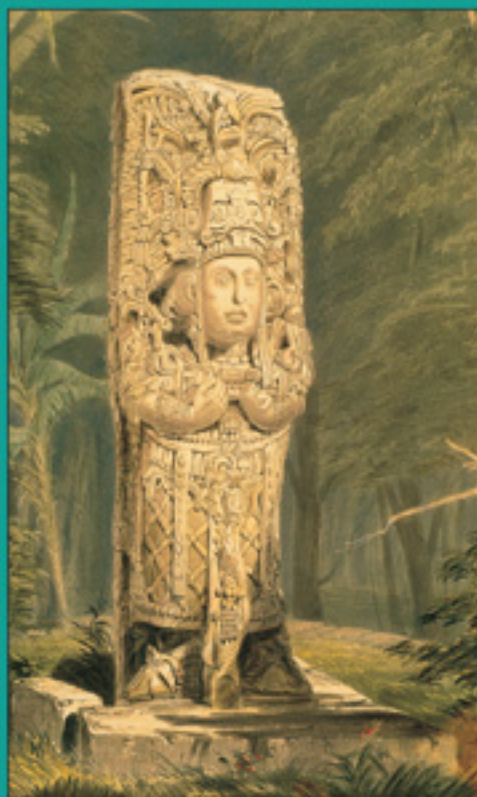


History
UNFOLDING

CIVILIZATIONS OF AFRICA AND THE AMERICAS



MindSparks
CHALLENGING STUDENTS TO THINK HISTORICALLY

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Introduction

Africa and the Americas Before the Modern Age

Africa and the Americas had little in common before the modern era brought them into direct contact with one another. What they did have in common was their separation from the huge Eurasian landmass where many other ancient civilizations arose and interacted, however indirectly.

What is remarkable about this is that, at only a slightly later date than in Eurasia, the same sorts of complex social organization began to appear in Africa and the Americas. Resting on a base of growing agricultural productivity, trade, cities, writing, art and architecture developed in Mesoamerica, along the line of the Andes in South America and in many parts of Africa, West Africa in particular. This fact suggests a worldwide evolution of social life arising out of factors that, perhaps, bind together all the members of the human species.

This booklet touches on just a few larger themes in this rich and varied story. It uses 12 visual displays to focus on these themes. Each lesson uses three visual displays to explore one broad topic. Briefly, the four lessons are as follows:

Out of the Eurasian Landmass

The maps and images here present an overview of the civilizations of both regions, and they focus attention on the special challenges faced by people building complex societies in Africa and the Americas.

Africa's Medieval Empires

A look at some of the art and artifacts of African civilizations from Mali and Timbuktu to Great Zimbabwe far to the south.

The Mayan Miracle

The focus here is on the early civilizations of Mesoamerica, the Mayan civilization in particular.

Incas and Aztecs

The Incas and Aztecs were both aggressive and warlike. But they were also impressive builders. The images focus both on their brutal rituals and practices and on their amazing accomplishments.

Using Photos, Cartoons, and Other Visuals to Teach History

Many textbooks are full of colorful visuals. However, all too often these visuals function primarily as window dressing. They make the text more entertaining, or at least more palatable. Only occasionally do the visuals in textbooks do more than offer simple pictorial reinforcement of ideas already presented in the text. In many cases, they pander to the visual orientation of the young while doing little to help young people master the challenges of the visual media that dominate their lives.

By way of contrast, our approach to using visual materials emphasizes their unique strengths as historical documents. The lessons in this booklet focus students on the visual symbols and metaphors in editorial cartoons, the dramatic qualities of certain photographs, the potential of many images to make abstract ideas more specific and concrete, the implicit biases and stereotypes in certain images, their emotional power, and their ability to invoke the spirit of a time and place. In the process, we make every effort to strengthen students' visual literacy skills in general, as well as their ability to think critically and engage in spirited but disciplined discussions.

How to Use This Booklet

The booklet is divided into four lessons, with three illustrations per lesson. Each lesson consists of the following:

A BACKGROUND INFORMATION SHEET This page provides brief summaries explaining the three illustrations on which the lesson is based and their relevance to the lesson's objectives.

DIGITAL IMAGES The booklet's PDF allows you to project the images for use in your class discussions.

DISCUSSION-ACTIVITY SHEETS

Each sheet displays one illustration. It includes a sequence of questions to help you plan an all-class discussion while using the projected images. The questions take students step by step through an analysis of the illustration. If you wish, you may reproduce these pages and hand them out. In addition to the discussion questions on the illustration itself, one or two follow-up activities are suggested. Some of these can be made into individual assignments. Others will work best as small-group or all-class activities.

OBJECTIVE

1. Students will better understand that the earliest civilizations of Africa and the Americas faced special challenges because of their separation from the great Eurasian landmass.

Out of the Eurasian Landmass

Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION**Illustration 1**

The more complex societies we call “civilizations” first appeared along major river systems in Egypt, Mesopotamia, the Indus Valley and the Yellow River in China. Aside from specific natural advantages, these river systems had something else in common. All are located in the temperate zones of the huge Eurasian landmass. Egypt is in Africa, it is true, but in the far northeast where it is directly connected to Eurasia and not separated from it by the Sahara Desert. The links between these Eurasian civilizations were indirect. Yet a cross-fertilization of ideas and skills did occur. For Sub-Saharan Africa and the Americas, the Sahara and the vast oceans made such cross-fertilization difficult or impossible. Yet in spite of this, complex civilizations did emerge in both places in the past.

Illustration 2

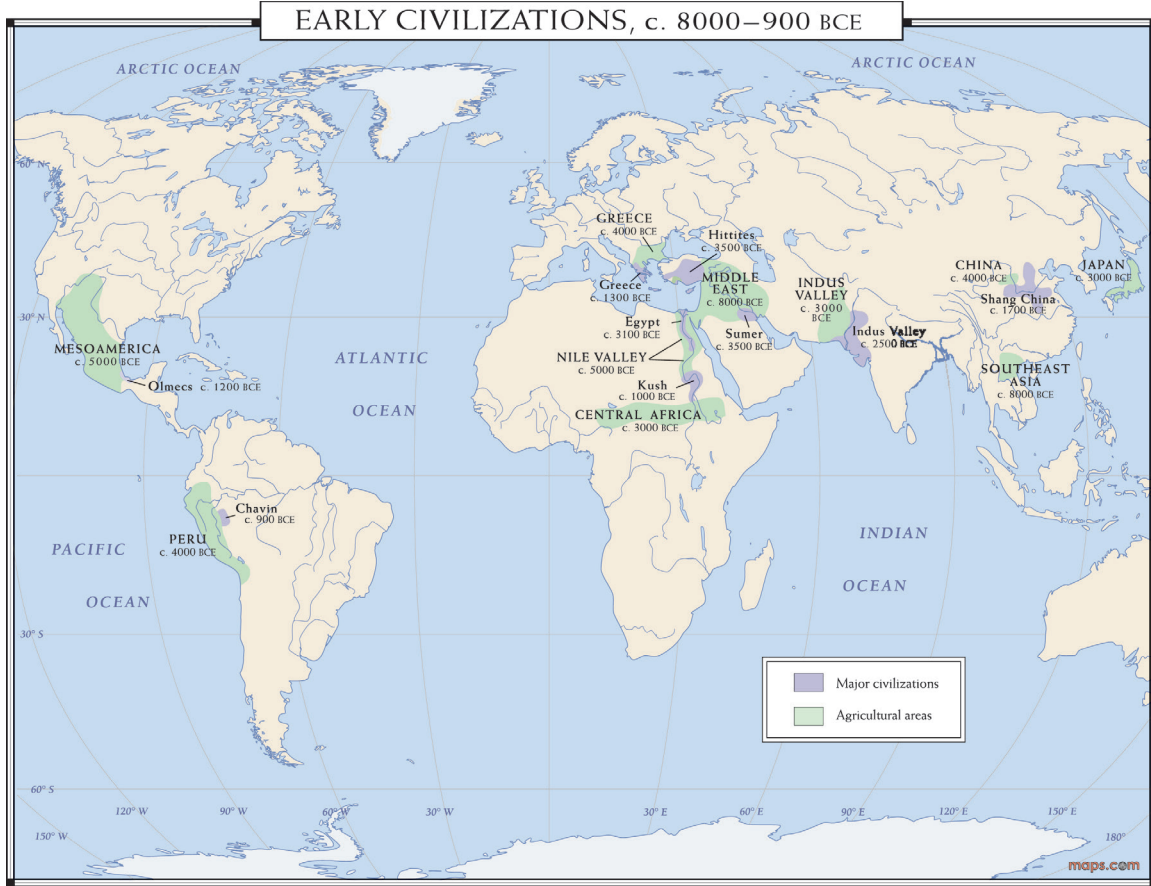
The Sahara did not isolate southern Africa forever. In the upper left here is the world’s largest mud mosque, built in the 14th century. It is not located in the heartlands of Islam in the Middle East. It is in Jenne on the southern edge of the Sahara. Jenne was a key city in ancient Mali, one of several medieval kingdoms that arose in Africa due to growing trade across the desert with Muslim merchants from North Africa and the Middle East. In the Americas meanwhile, encroaching jungles long hid evidence of the ancient civilizations that grew up there long ago, far from the Eurasian landmass. This illustration of a Mayan ruin testifies to the sophistication of those early American civilizations.

Illustration 3

Humanity first evolved on the African continent. And village-based tribes existed there for centuries. But as this map makes clear, more organized kingdoms also developed all over Africa. Some arose long before the time period covered by this map, mainly in the northeast where they were in contact with ancient Egypt. But from the 5th to the 15th centuries CE, many others emerged on the savannahs, vast grasslands just south of the Sahara, as the camel caravan trade with Muslim North Africa steadily expanded. A few kingdoms arose far to the south or along the East African coast. Again, as elsewhere, trade with the outside world was a key factor in this process.

Lesson 1—Out of the Eurasian Landmass

Illustration 1



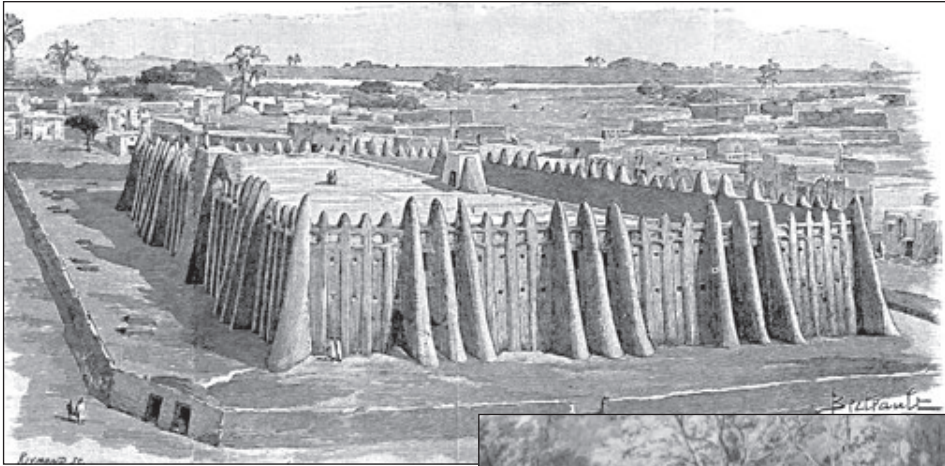
Discussing the Illustration

1. The word civilization is generally used for societies larger and more complex than a single village or a group of farming settlements. What generally do you think historians mean when they use the term civilization?
2. As this map shows, many of the earliest civilizations grew up on plains surrounding large rivers. Why do you suppose this was so?
3. Many of the earliest civilizations arose either in or next to the great Eurasian landmass. Can you name some of these civilizations? Why do you think so many of the earliest civilizations arose on that landmass?
4. As you can see, however, civilizations did arise in Africa and the Americas. What geographical and other factors might have made it harder for complex civilizations to arise outside of the Eurasian landmass?

Follow-up Activities

1. As in other places, rivers in Africa were also key geographical features in the rise of larger civilizations. Of particular importance was the Niger River. Learn more about it and the ancient cities that grew up near it or that depended on it in some way. Create a map and use it in a brief talk to the class.
2. **Small-group activity:** One great ancient civilization, Egypt, is somewhat of a link between the ancient Middle East, or West Asia, on the one hand, and Africa on the other. Egypt was also closely connected with two other ancient kingdoms not shown on this map, Nubia and Kush. Learn about all three of these civilizations and their connections to one another. Learn also about Egypt's trade and other ties with civilizations in Mesopotamia and the eastern Mediterranean. As a group, decide whether you think Egypt should be seen more as a civilization of the ancient Middle East or a civilization of Africa. Defend your decision in a talk to the class.

Illustration 2



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Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Discussing the Illustrations

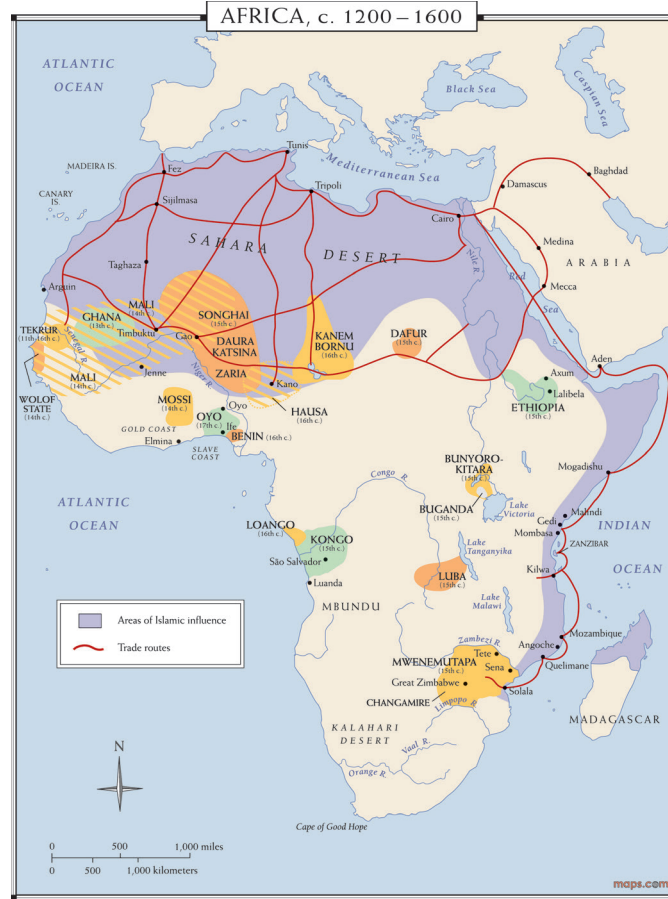
1. These two illustrations show that complex societies did arise in the past in Africa and the Americas. From studying these images, can you tell which shows a building in Africa and which in the Americas? Why did you choose as you did?
2. Why are such structures good evidence of a more complex society?
3. In the upper left is a mosque in ancient Mali. What is a mosque, and approximately where in Africa was Mali located?
4. The other structure is an ancient Mayan temple. Where in the Americas was the Mayan civilization centered? An artist with the group that discovered the site in the early 1800s did this drawing. How can you tell that the site is very old and that it has just been discovered? What else can you tell from this drawing about the natural setting in which the Mayan civilization developed?

Follow-up Activities

1. Learn more about the above mosque at Jenne. Find other illustrations of it if possible. Why is it significant? In what ways is it like or not like mosques in other Islamic lands? Draw your own map showing Jenne and the larger empire of which it was part when this mosque was built. Use what you learn in a small bulletin board display on Mali and the mosque at Jenne.
2. The man who drew the Mayan temple above was Frederick Catherwood. He and another man named John Lloyd Stephens were a team whose story is a fascinating one. This story can help you better understand the challenges and excitement of archaeological exploration and discovery. Learn more about the story of these two men and report to the class. Try to find other illustrations by Catherwood to use in your presentation.

Lesson 1—Out of the Eurasian Landmass

Illustration 3



© maps.com

Discussing the Illustration

1. This map shows kingdoms that arose in Africa around the time of Europe's Middle Ages. Many of them grew up along big rivers or at key points on major trading routes. How does the map help to make this clear?
2. There was little traffic on most of the land routes shown here until the camel came into use. Why? About when did camel caravans start crossing the Sahara on these trade routes?
3. The large shaded areas show where Islam spread in Africa. It is clear from the map that many of Africa's medieval kingdoms arose in or near the areas where Islam was spreading. Can you think of reasons why Islam might have aided the development of these more organized kingdoms?
4. As the map shows, Islam's influence spread down the coast of East Africa. Several city-states based on trade grew up there. What do you know about this trade, the key products traded and the other parts of the world with whom these city-states traded?

Follow-up Activity

1. **Small-group activity:** Look closely at the pattern of kingdoms and empires shown on this map in Sub-Saharan West Africa. Some, such as Mali or Songhai, are in the savannah, the vast grasslands just south of the Sahara Desert. Others, such as Oyo or Benin, are in what is tropical jungle along or near the coast of West Africa. Have half your group read more about some of the societies in or near the savannah, and half read about those along the coast in the tropical jungles. Have each member prepare a brief report on one society. Then as a group, report what you have learned to the class. However, organize your overall report in such a way as to answer this question: "What kind of relationship, if any, was there between the savannah kingdoms and those that were farther south in the jungle?"

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will better appreciate the variety of complex societies that arose in Africa around the time of Europe's Middle Ages.
2. Students will better understand the role Islam played in the growth of many of these African societies.

Africa's Medieval Empires

Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION**Illustration 1**

Like all the world's earliest civilizations, Africa's were based ultimately on the creative energy of its rural villages. These supplied the food surpluses as well as the weavers, potters, toolmakers and other artisans a more complex civilization needs. On the left, a 16th century drawing of West African craftsmen captures this reality. On this productive foundation, several larger empires arose. One that was quite remote was Zimbabwe. Ruins of its capital, known as Great Zimbabwe, appear on the right here. Far down in the interior of southern Africa, this city was still linked to the outside world by its gold-trading ties to East African coastal cities, which in turn traded via the Indian Ocean with Arabia and Asia.

Illustration 2

Before Islam or Christianity arrived, African religious beliefs varied enormously from one tribal society to the next. Most African peoples believed in a supreme deity and a range of lesser gods, along with the power of the souls of ancestors to help their living descendants. Masks such as the one on the left are a form of African religious art that still inspires admiration. So, too, do metal, terra cotta or wood sculptured heads such the one on the right. African masks were usually seen as embodying gods or ancestral figures and their spiritual powers during ritual ceremonies. The mask on the left is from the Bakota people of present-day Gabon.

Illustration 3

Most of the medieval African kingdoms (5th to 15th centuries CE) developed on the savanna on the southern edge of the Sahara. Camel caravans from North Africa headed for certain key trading towns in empires such as Ghana or Songhai. Perhaps the most famous city was Timbuktu in Mali. On the left, a caravan approaches Timbuktu from the north. The city itself is shown on the right. In Timbuktu, merchants exchanged African products from the region or from farther south, such as gold, ivory, hides, bananas, palm oil, as well as slaves, for iron tools and weapons, glass, textiles, horses or books. The Muslim merchants brought their religion, which was widely adopted. In time, mosques and Muslim schools made Timbuktu a great center of learning as well as of trade.

Lesson 2—Africa's Medieval Empires

Illustration 1



Stock Montage, Inc.



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Discussing the Illustrations

1. In the upper left is a 16th century drawing of artisans in an African village making pottery, weaving, and carving. To do all these things for itself, the village must also be able to produce an agricultural surplus. Can you explain why?
2. For a larger civilization to arise, it generally must be made up of productive villages of this sort, for it will surely depend on them. Can you explain why?
3. Larger civilizations might also develop and grow wealthy by trading valuable goods with other societies. That was certainly the case of Great Zimbabwe, whose ruins are shown on the right. Do you know where Great Zimbabwe was located?
4. Great Zimbabwe was inland in southern Africa. But gold deposits even farther inland helped it grow into an important link in a trading system that extended all the way to China. Can you explain how? What else do you know about Great Zimbabwe?

Follow-up Activities

1. Some scholars say agriculture may have begun in Africa in 5,000 BCE or earlier in what is today barren land deep in the Sahara Desert. Others say it began along the upper Nile river in what would later be ancient Egypt or Nubia. Similarly, experts are not sure when iron production developed in Africa. Try to find out what is and is not known about the origins of agriculture and iron making in Africa. Give a brief report to the class on what you learn.
2. Great Zimbabwe was linked in trade to the East African coastal cities. Learn more about one of these cities. Find out when it was first established. Learn more about its role in the Indian Ocean trading system. Find out in what ways, if any, it might have had trade dealings with Great Zimbabwe, either directly or indirectly. Address each of these issues in a brief essay on the history of the city you choose to study.

Illustration 2



Courtesy of the Library of Congress



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Discussing the Illustrations

1. The Bakota mask on the left is typical of a widespread tradition in Africa. Have you seen such African masks before? What is your first reaction to this mask and the wooden sculpture on the right?
2. Many people today view these masks as works of art. But to the Africans who made them they were religious objects with spiritual power. What do you know about traditional African religious beliefs and practices? How do you suppose masks of this sort might be used in religious rituals or ceremonies?
3. The mask on the right is made of metal. The sculpture on the right is made of wood. What sorts of things can objects like this teach you or suggest to you about the societies that produced them?

Follow-up Activities

1. **Small-group activity:** There are hundreds of different kinds of African masks. You can find illustrations of them on various Internet Web sites or in books in the library. You can also ask museums to help you. Collect illustrations of a large number of such masks. Write your own brief descriptions of the masks, the tribes they belonged to, and the use those tribes made of them. Display the illustrations and written accounts of the masks, and use colored string to connect each mask to its place of origin on a large map of Africa.
2. One writer says, "African masks were not just visual representations of gods or spirits. They actually were those gods or spirits, at least at certain moments during a ritual or ceremony." Learn more about the religious purposes of these and other examples of African art. Write a brief essay explaining the point this writer makes.

Lesson 2—Africa's Medieval Empires

Illustration 3



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Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Discussing the Illustrations

1. Both of these scenes are of what was perhaps the most famous city of all in the various medieval African kingdoms. It was a city known not only for its merchants and trading activities, but for its mosques and schools. Can you name it and the African empire of which it was a part?
2. The universities and scholars of Timbuktu dealt mainly with Islam and its religious and legal teachings. These teachings are all based on Islam's holy book and the sayings and practices of its prophet. Can you name this holy book and that prophet?
3. Merchants crossing the desert from North Africa brought Islam with them. Why do you suppose Islam's teachings appealed to the people and the rulers of the African kingdoms with whom these merchants traded?

Follow-up Activity

1. The illustration in the upper left shows a caravan approaching Timbuktu from the north. What goods might such a caravan be bringing to Timbuktu? What goods might it be preparing to get in return? Who would be leading the caravan? Who else would be in it? From where would the caravan have started? How would it have been provisioned? What stops would it have made along the way? What problems might it have encountered? Learn more about the camel caravans that crossed the Sahara to Timbuktu. Use what you learn to write a series of at least ten diary entries from the start to the finish of this trip to Timbuktu. Try to base as much detail as possible on what you actually learn about the caravan trade. If you can, find other relevant illustrations of caravans or the places in the desert your caravan passed. Use these with the diary entries in a bulletin board display titled "Destination Timbuktu."

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will better understand why several complex societies arose in Mesoamerica.
2. Students will better appreciate some key accomplishments of Mayan civilization.

The Mayan Miracle

Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION**Illustration 1**

Native American peoples began filtering into the Americas across the Bering Strait at least 10,000 or 15,000 years ago, possibly longer. They soon occupied most of the two huge continents, developed agriculture and began to evolve their own more complex civilizations. Some of these more complex societies developed in or near the Andes Mountains. But the area richest in the growth of these civilizations was Central America, or Mesoamerica, shown here. Based on the raising of maize and beans, instead of wheat or rice, and lacking that basic source of animal energy, the horse, the Olmec, Mayan, Aztec and other cultures of this region paralleled in many ways those in Mesopotamia, Egypt and other parts of Eurasia that had appeared at just a slightly earlier time.

Illustration 2

One of the most impressive Mesoamerican societies was that of the Mayans, whose greatest era lasted from around 300 BCE to 900 CE. These are Mayan artifacts from two key sites. On the left is another Frederick Catherwood drawing of a stone idol at Copan. On the right is a drawing based on a stone relief known as the "Tablet of the Slaves" which provides details on a king and a high official in the Mayan city-state of Palenque. The intricate designs on top of this illustration are examples of the written language the Mayans developed. It was a form of writing that combined pictograms and phonetic symbols, similar to written languages as they evolved in Sumer and Egypt.

Illustration 3

Here is a small portion of another Mayan document. It was preserved by Spanish conquerors and is called, in Latin, *Codex Tro-Cortesianus*, a document printed on paper made from fibers of the maguey plant. The figures here are various nature deities, including the corn god, center, and rain god, right. This is one of only three codices to have survived book burnings by the Spanish clergy in the 1500s. Others codices include astronomical data and Mayan mathematics used to fix calendar dates important in the Mayan religion. Mayan hieroglyphics were recorded on paper or carved on stone slabs, stairways, and pillars. They were used to record information about myths, rituals, historical events and rulers, farming, weather, astronomy and more.

Lesson 3—The Mayan Miracle

Illustration 1



© Maps.com

Discussing the Illustration

1. Many experts say humans only began to arrive in the Americas 10,000 or 15,000 years ago, or perhaps a little farther back than that. How do most experts think people first arrived here?
2. Native American peoples soon occupied most of the two huge continents. But only in a few places did they begin to evolve their own more complex civilizations. One of those regions is shown here. Where is it? Why do you think more complex societies were able to arise in this area?
3. The civilizations of Mesoamerica were based mainly on the cultivation of maize and beans, instead of wheat or rice. And they lacked horses. Why might this have made it harder for these societies to create the wealth needed to build a complex civilization?
4. As the map shows, the Olmecs were the first of the Mesoamerican civilizations. What do you know about them and the other societies mentioned on the map?

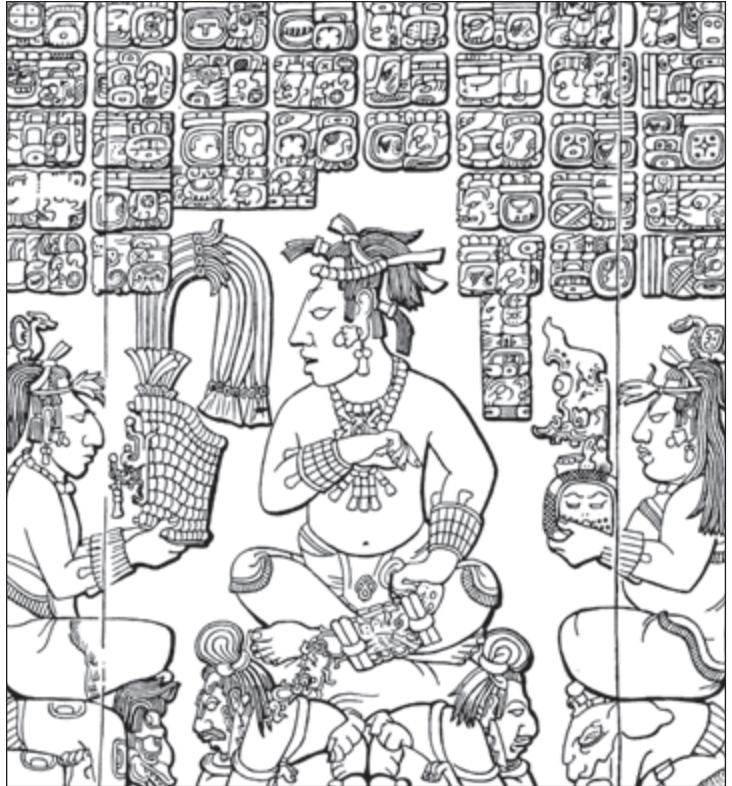
Follow-up Activities

1. Find as many illustrations of sites and artifacts as you can of the civilizations listed on this map. Make a copy of the map and use it as the central item of a bulletin board display to be titled “Mesoamerica in the Pre-Columbian Age.” Arrange your illustrations around the map and use string to connect them to the correct places on the map. Write brief paragraphs explaining the nature and purpose of the artifacts you choose for this display.
2. Why were so many complex societies able to develop in this part of the Americas? Try to learn more about the geographical features, the climate and the resources of this region. Create another map of Central America showing as many such features as you can learn about. Use your map in a brief talk about the different environments in this region and the advantages they gave to the people who lived here and developed these early American civilizations.

Illustration 2



Courtesy of the Library of Congress



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Discussing the Illustrations

1. These illustrations are of artifacts from two cities, Copan and Palenque. Both cities were part of a mysterious civilization centered on or near the Yucatan Peninsula. Its greatest era lasted from around 300 BCE to 900 CE. Can you name it?
2. On the left is a drawing of a stone idol at Copan. On the right is a drawing based on a stone relief known as the "Tablet of the Slaves." It contains information on a top official and a king of the Mayan city-state of Palenque. From what you know about the Mayans, can you explain how this information is provided on the tablet?
3. The Mayan written symbols on the top of the tablet are a form of hieroglyphics similar to those developed in ancient Sumer or Egypt. What are hieroglyphics? How are they like and not like the alphabet we use today?

Follow-up Activities

1. Mayan hieroglyphics use symbols that stand for whole words, syllables made up of consonant-vowel pairs and vowels alone. Learn more about this writing system. Find samples of various words and phrases and bring illustrations of them and their translations to class. See if you can find a way to write your own name using Mayan hieroglyphics. One Internet Web site that may help is:

<http://www.halfmoon.org/writing.html>

Share what you learn in a brief talk to the class using and illustrating various Mayan symbols and words.

2. In many places in the Mayan empire, mysterious ball courts can be found. They are rectangular spaces surrounded by walls with metal rings. The game involved driving a hard rubber ball through these rings. But this game was a religious ritual, and its outcome was far more dramatic than any sports event known today. Learn more about it and explain its significance to the rest of the class.

Illustration 3



Stock Montage, Inc

Discussing the Illustration

1. Here is a small part of another Mayan document with images and hieroglyphs. It was one of just three such documents out of many that were not destroyed by those who conquered Mesoamerica in the 1500s. Who were those conquerors?
2. The European Latin name for this document is *Codex Tro-Cortesianus*. It was printed on paper made from fibers of the maguey plant. The figures on the document are various nature deities, including the corn god, center, and the rain god, right. Why might deities connected to these two aspects of nature have been especially important to the Mayans?
3. Others codices include information on historical events and rulers, Mayan mathematics and astronomical data used to fix calendar dates. Why do you suppose these kinds of things were important enough to the Mayans to have been recorded and saved in this way?

Follow-up Activities

1. The entire *Codex Tro-Cortesianus* was at first thought to be two separate codices. Later, these two were identified as a single codex, and they were reunited in 1892. Two other codices exist, the *Dresden Codex* and the *Paris Codex*. Learn more about all of these codices. Find out how they came to be discovered and where they are now. Summarize the sorts of information in each codex. Report your findings to the class. If possible, find and show the class examples of pages from each codex.
2. The codices that still exist are the only ones to have survived book burnings by the Spanish clergy in the 1500s. Learn more about this burning of Mayan written documents, the reasons for it, and the reactions of the Mayans of the time to these acts of destruction. Write an account of what happened and share it in a discussion with the class.

OBJECTIVE

1. Students will better understand two of the last large and powerful civilizations of the Americas before the arrival of Spain.

Incas and Aztecs

Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**Illustration 1**

Far to the south of Mesoamerica, in and along the Andes Mountains, another series of complex civilizations arose many centuries ago. The Moche and Chimor civilizations rose and fell between 150 CE and 1450 CE. The mightiest of all of these Andes civilizations was that of the Incas. Starting from Cuzco, on the left here, the Inca created a vast empire extending from what is now southern Chile to the edge of Columbia. Based on the labor of peasants raising maize and potatoes, an efficient if ruthless state grew up. Forced labor was used to build a 25,000-mile system of roads, with rest stops and storage depots. It was used for official business and military movements. Without wheeled transportation, Inca officials used runners who could carry messages up to 140 miles in a day.

Illustration 2

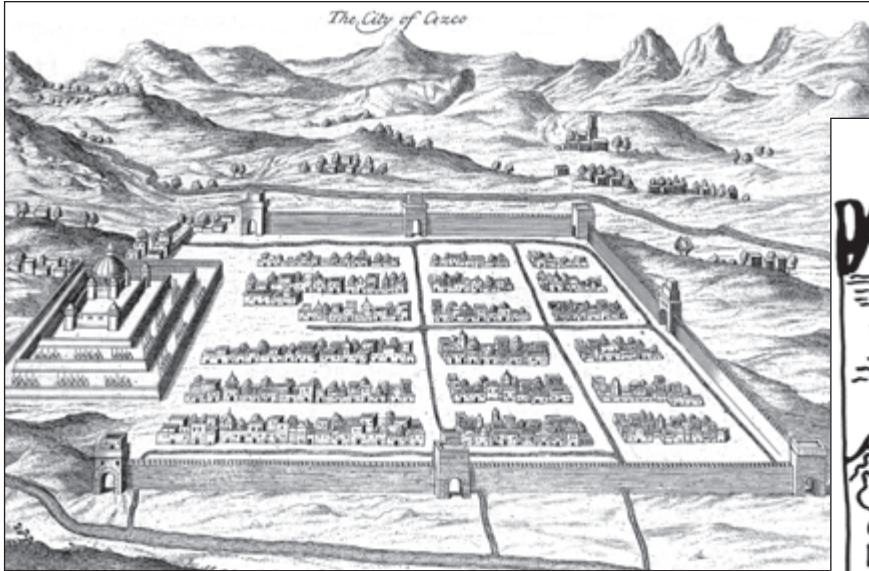
Around the time of the Incas, another civilization in Mesoamerica was reaching its peak. The Aztec city of Tenochtitlan was on an island in Lake Texcoco in the valley where Mexico City is located today. This illustration gives some sense of its size and magnificence. The central feature is a huge pyramid where sacrifices to the gods were performed. Causeways linked the city to other settlements across the lake. An aqueduct carried water from Chapultepec to the island. Other pyramids and temples lay all around, along with many homes and a great marketplace. Irrigation was used to grow crops, and “floating gardens,” areas of the lake filled in with soil and trees, added to agricultural wealth.

Illustration 3

The Inca rulers controlled an enormous centralized state. The Aztecs ruled more indirectly, taking tribute from otherwise independent lands. Both societies, however, used force ruthlessly. The “tribute” the Aztecs demanded included captives as well as goods. The captives were sacrificed in bloody ceremonies in which priests ripped out their hearts. The Aztecs believed this was necessary to appease their sun god and hold off the final destruction of the world. At times, hundreds would be sacrificed in this grizzly ceremony, illustrated here. As ruthless as the Aztecs and Incas were, however, they proved no match for the steel, gunpowder and horses of the Spanish conquerors of the early 1500s, or for the diseases the Spaniards unknowingly spread.

Lesson 4—Incas and Aztecs

Illustration 1



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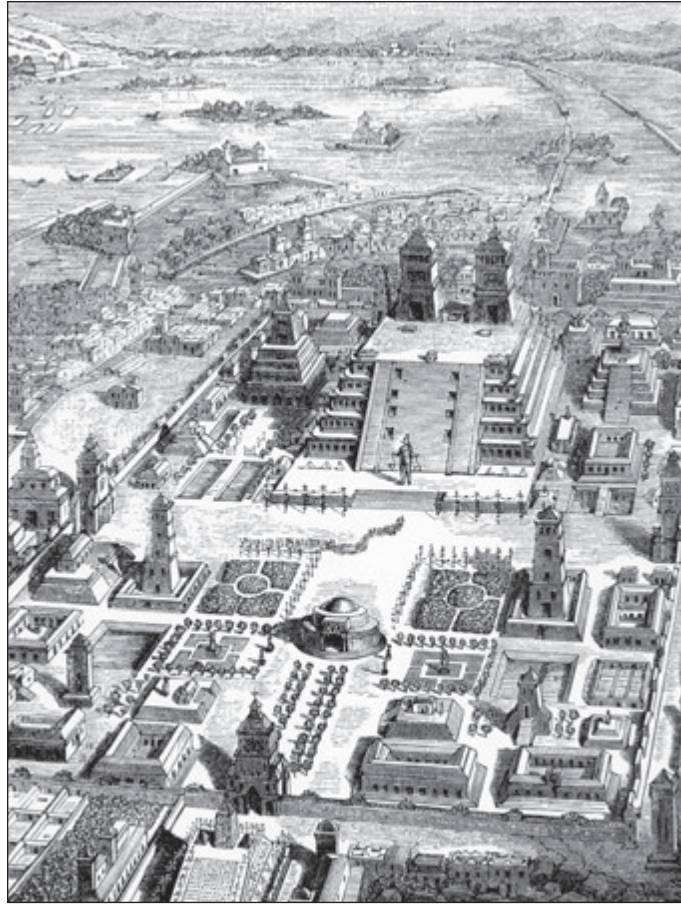
Discussing the Illustrations

1. Far to the south of Mesoamerica, in what is today Chile, Peru and Ecuador, another series of complex civilizations arose many centuries ago. In what ways was the natural setting there like or not like that of Mesoamerica? What aspects of this setting might have helped more complex civilizations to evolve?
2. First, the Moche and Chimor civilizations rose and fell in and near the Andes Mountains between 150 CE and 1450 CE. Then, the mightiest of all of these Andes civilizations appeared, starting from the city of Cuzco, shown on the left here. Can you name this civilization?
3. The Inca created a vast empire from what is now Chile to the edge of Columbia. As in Mesoamerica, it rested on the labor of millions of peasants growing maize, potatoes, and other crops. One factor in its success was its powerful and ruthless central state. Another was a remarkable transportation system. What do you know about this system?

Follow-up Activities

1. The city of Cuzco is high in the Andes. Learn more about it. Find out how it was founded, why it is located where it is, and how it grew as the Inca empire developed. Based on what you learn, give a brief talk to the class about the above illustration of Cuzco. Explain in what ways the illustration is accurate and what of importance, if anything, it leaves out.
2. **Small-group activity:** Little was known about the Moche civilization until fairly recently. Learn more about Moche. Try to find illustrations of metal, stone or ceramic artifacts from this civilization. Learn what you can about these. Obtain or make slides or overheads of them and organize them into a presentation. Your aim should be to give others in the class an idea of how this society grew, what it was like, and why its artifacts prove it was a highly advanced society.

Illustration 2



Stock Montage, Inc.

Discussing the Illustration

1. In the 1400s, around the time of the Incas, another civilization back in Mesoamerica was reaching its peak. This is an illustration of its great capitol city. Can you name this civilization and city?
2. The Aztec city of Tenochtitlan was on an island in Lake Texcoco in the valley where another large capitol city is located today. What city is that and of what nation is it the capitol?
3. The central feature of the city was the huge pyramid shown here. Can you explain what took place on top of this pyramid?
4. Causeways linked the city to other settlements across the lake. An aqueduct carried water onto the island. Irrigation was used to grow crops in areas near the city. Other farming was done on so-called "floating gardens." Can you guess what these were? What else do you know about the Aztecs and the city of Tenochtitlan?

Follow-up Activities

1. You can find a good description of Tenochtitlan in *The Conquest of New Spain*, by Bernal Diaz, who was with Hernando Cortes when he conquered the Aztecs in 1519. Read portions of this book and find descriptions of Tenochtitlan. Using the overhead of this illustration as a backdrop, prepare a reading of a few key passages from this account. Find passages that not only describe the Aztec city but that give the reader a good idea of what life was like in it.
2. Look for illustrations of various artifacts and structures in Tenochtitlan. Learn as much as you can about how the city was laid out. Based on what you learn, outline a tour you would have taken people on to show them this city if you had lived in it before the Spanish conquest. Share your outline and the illustrations you find in a talk to the class that takes them step by step through your entire tour.

Illustration 3



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Discussing the Illustration

1. The rulers of the Incas and the Aztecs were both quite warlike. However, while the Inca state was very centralized, Aztec rule was more decentralized. Can you explain what the difference is?
2. The Aztecs ruled indirectly, taking tribute from otherwise independent lands. The “tribute” included captives as well as goods. From this rather grizzly illustration and what you know of Aztec religious ceremonies, can you explain what happened to these captives and why?
3. Few ancient societies practiced human sacrifice to as great a degree as the Aztecs did, but many others did practice it. Why do you think this is so?
4. As ruthless as the Aztecs and Incas were, however, they proved no match for the Spanish conquerors, who arrived in the early 1500s and rapidly put an end to both civilizations. Why do you think the Spanish were able to conquer these two huge empires so quickly?

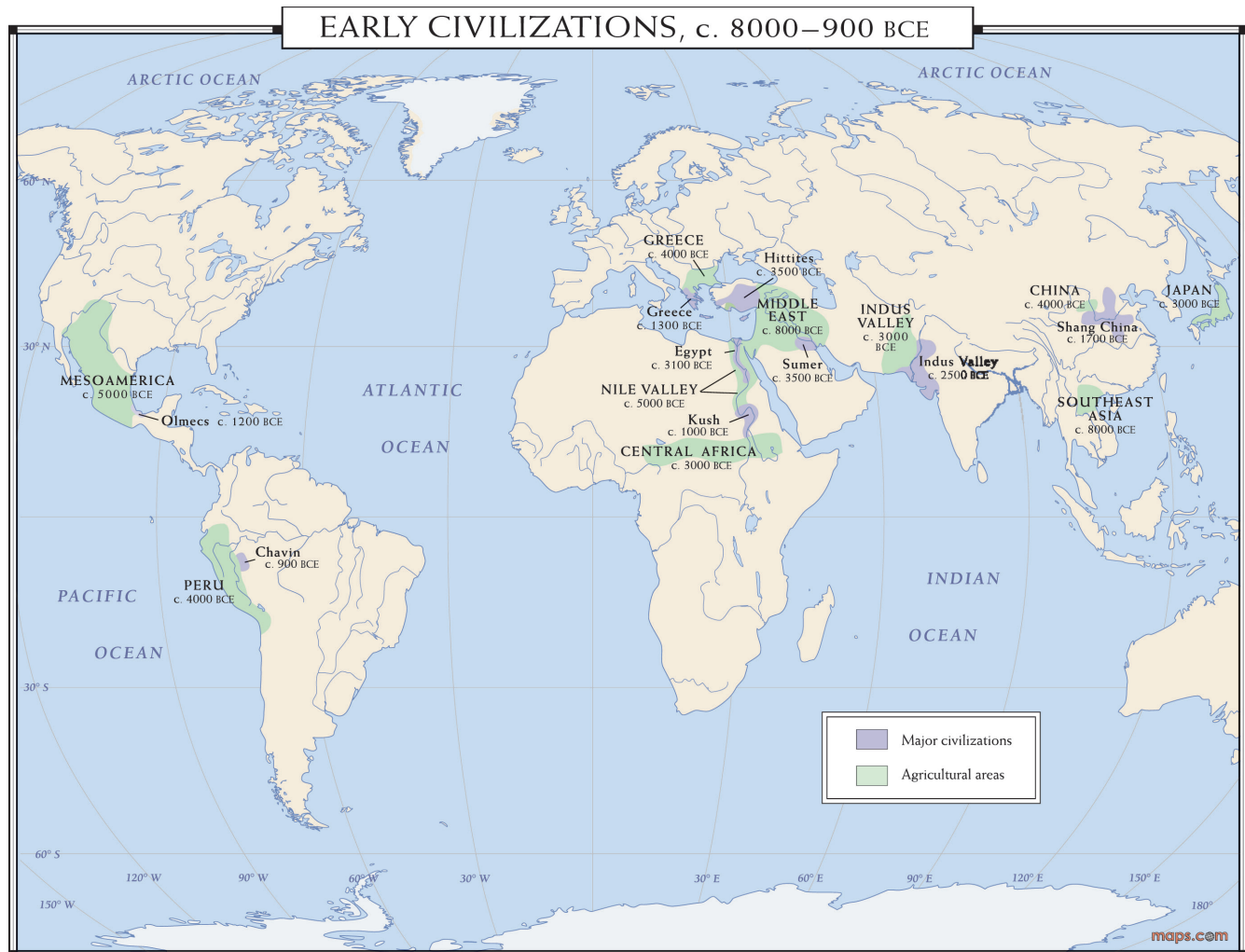
Follow-up Activities

1. Ritual sacrifice of humans to the gods was practiced by the Maya, the Moche, and other societies in Mesoamerica and the Andes. Learn more about this practice and how historians view it. From what you learn, decide for yourself if the reasons for it are the same, or similar, from one society to the next in the Americas. Write a brief essay on this practice in which you try to explain it and explain why it was commonly found among these civilizations of the Americas.
2. **Small-group activity:** Some people say we should not pass judgment on ancient societies for practices such as ritual human sacrifice. Others say we should make such judgments and that we can do so while still trying to understand what such practices meant to those who took part in them. Half of your group should prepare to defend one of these points of view and the other half should prepare to defend the other point of view. Hold a debate on this issue in front of the class.

Image Close-ups

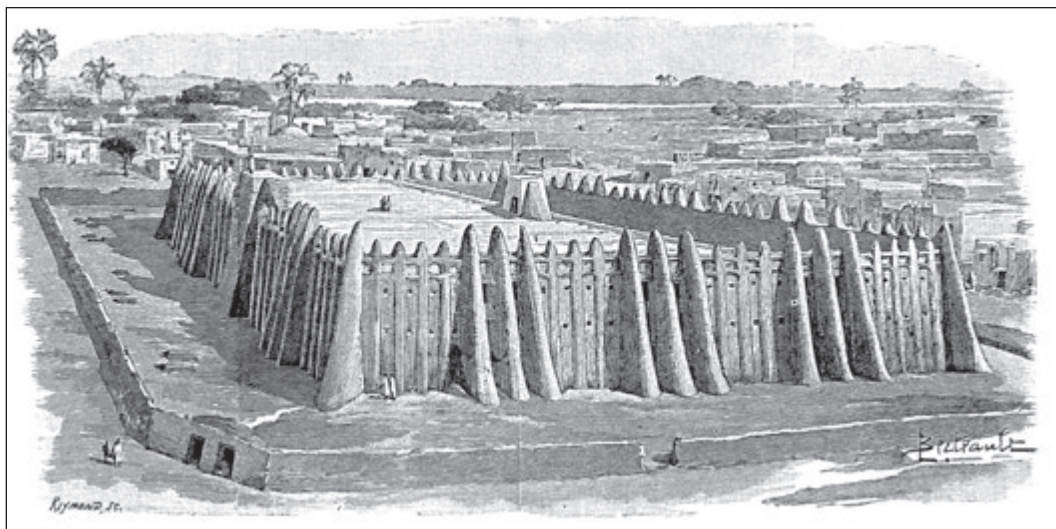
Out of the Eurasian Landmass

Illustration 1



Out of the Eurasian Landmass

Illustration 2



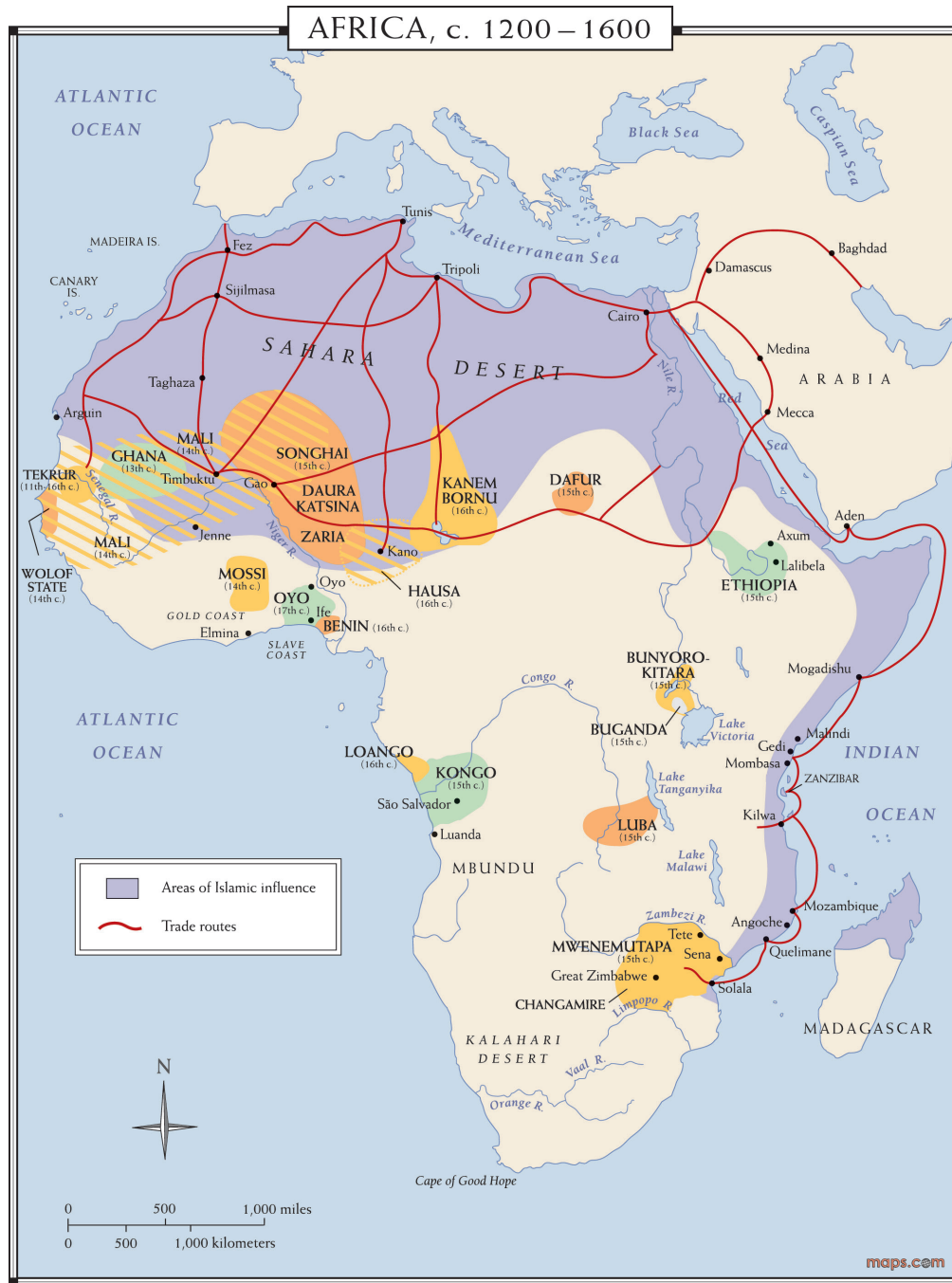
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Out of the Eurasian Landmass

Illustration 3



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Africa's Medieval Empires

Illustration 1



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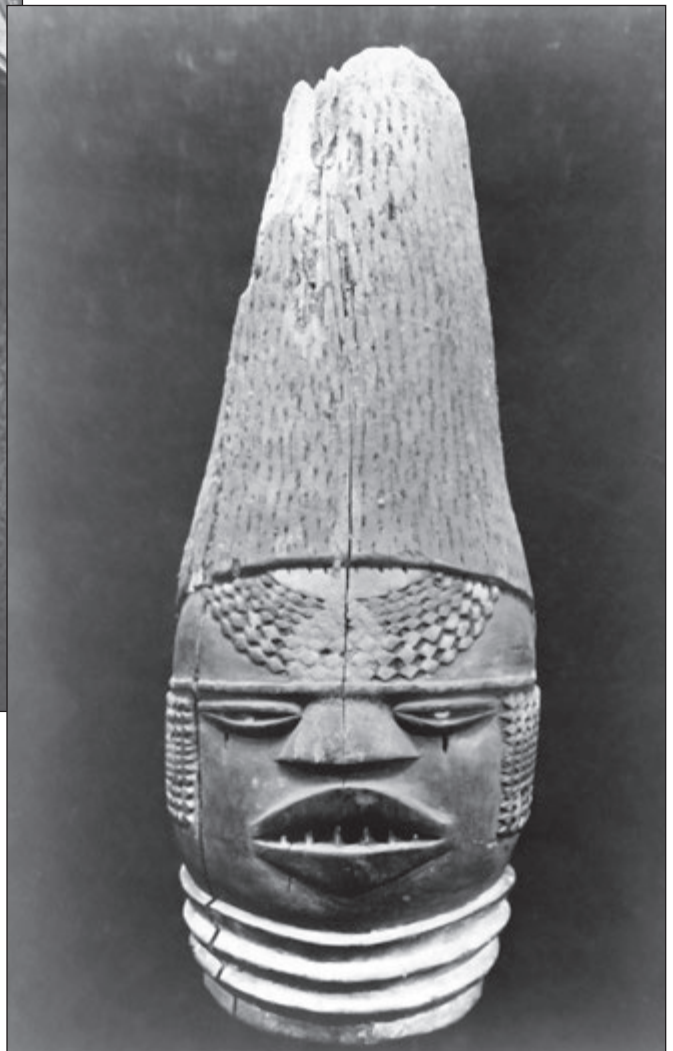
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Africa's Medieval Empires

Illustration 2



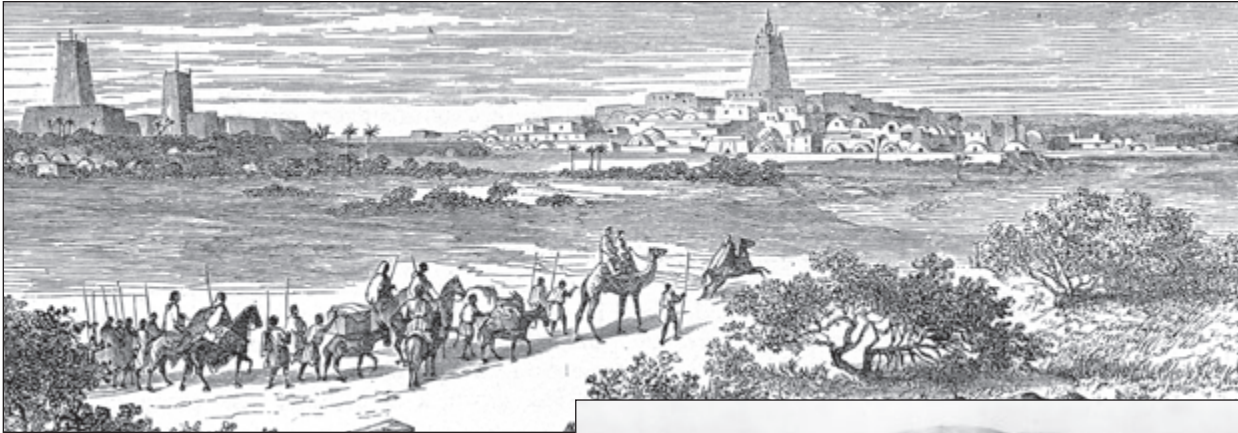
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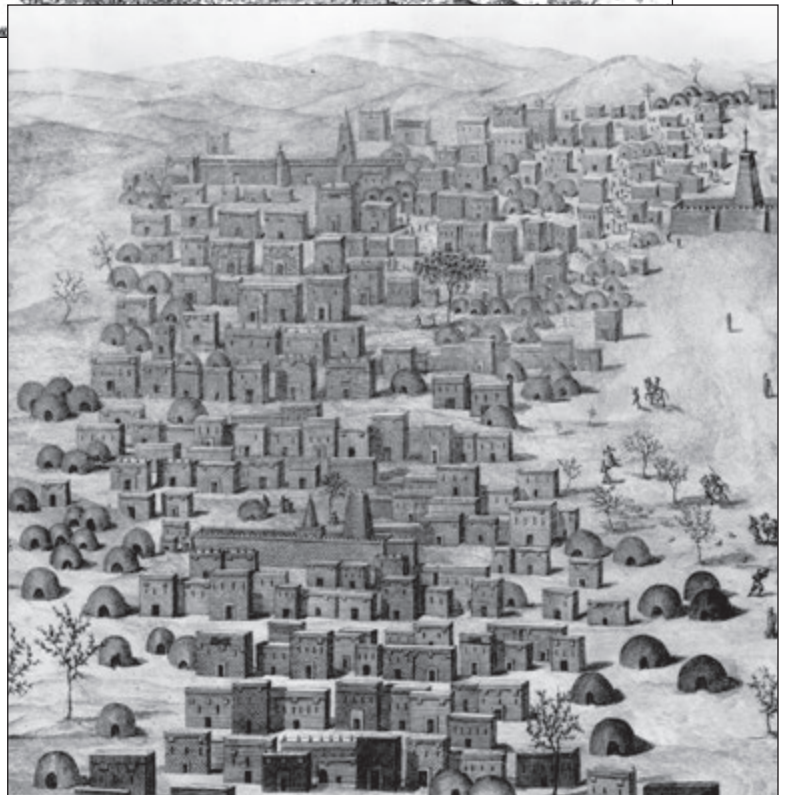
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Africa's Medieval Empires

Illustration 3



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The Mayan Miracle

Illustration 1



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The Mayan Miracle

Illustration 2



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The Mayan Miracle

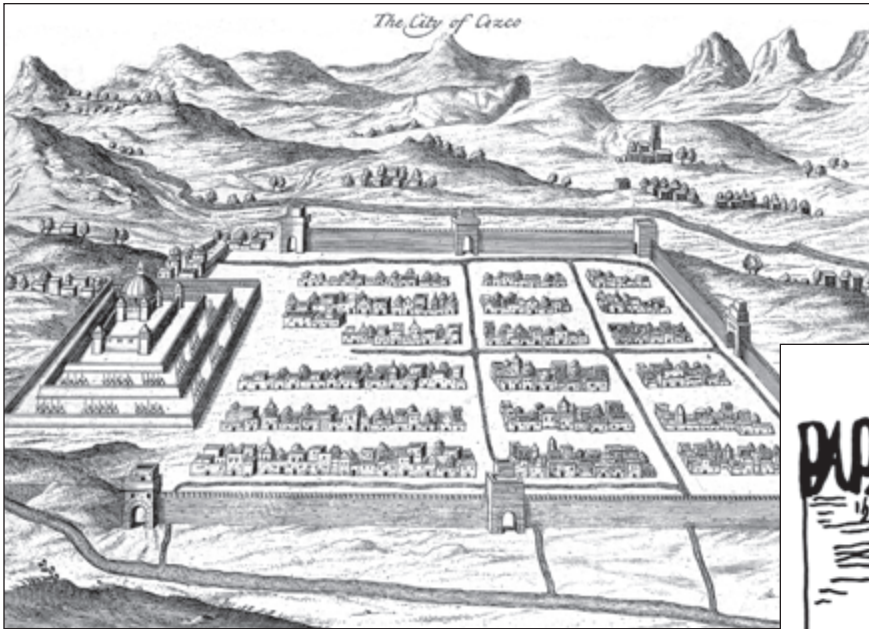
Illustration 3



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Incas and Aztecs

Illustration 1



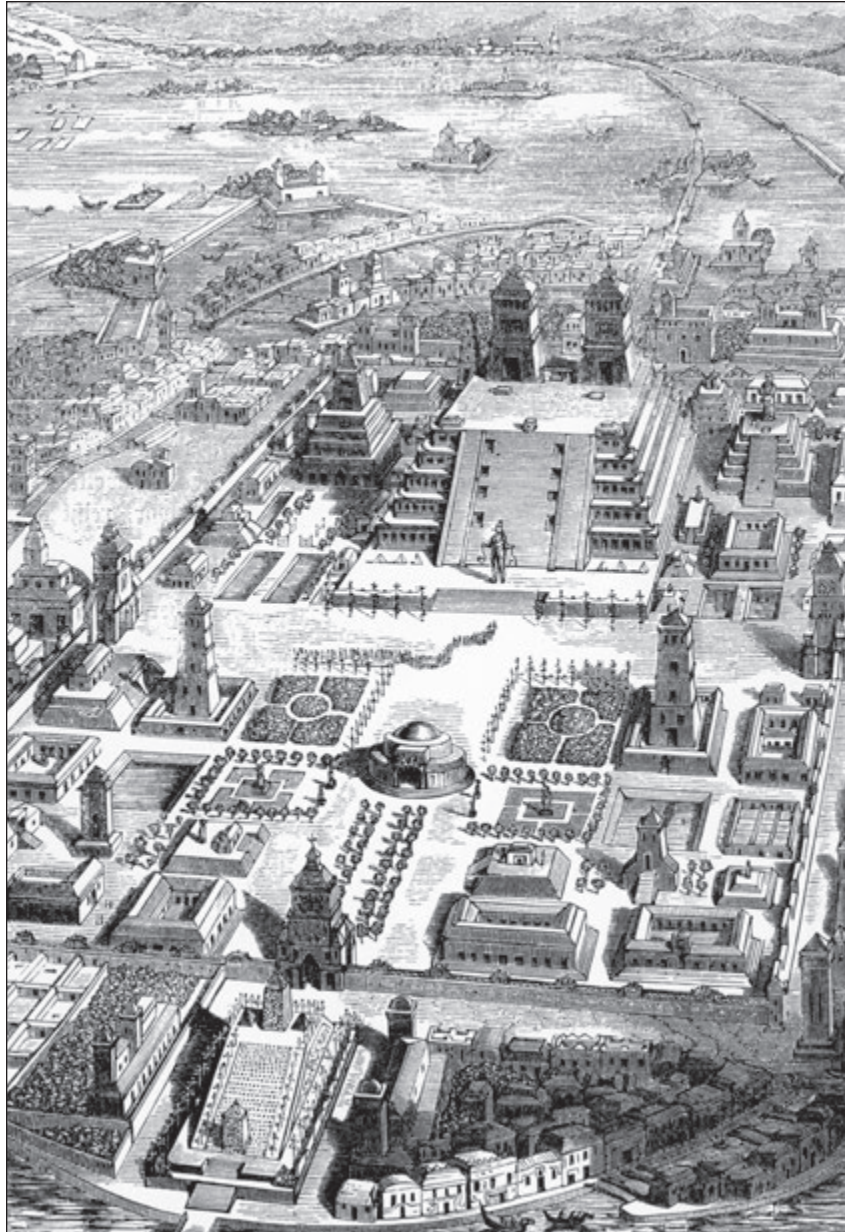
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Incas and Aztecs

Illustration 2



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Incas and Aztecs

Illustration 3



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