

# Pre-Columbian America

## The History of the USA. Lecture 1

1.

- The first Americans

# Theories of the settlement of America

- Chronological approaches:
  - The short chronology theory
  - The long chronology theory

# The short chronology theory

- The first movement beyond Alaska into the New World occurred no earlier than 15,000 – 17,000 years ago
- It was followed by successive waves of immigrants

# The long chronology theory

- The first group of people entered the Western hemisphere at a much earlier date, possibly 21,000–40,000 years ago
- Much later there was a mass secondary wave of immigrants

# Theories of the settlement of America

- Chronological approaches:
  - The short chronology theory
  - The long chronology theory
- Route models
  - Land bridge theory
  - Coastal, or “watercraft” theory

# The land bridge theory

- Also known as the Bering Strait Theory or Beringia theory
- Has been widely accepted since the 1930s
- Proposes that people migrated from Siberia into Alaska, tracking big game animal herds
- Big game hunters crossed the Bering Strait at least 12,000 years ago and could have eventually reached the southern tip of South America by 11,000 years ago

# Beringia

- Existed at the height of the Ice Age, between 34,000 and 30,000 B.C.
- A land bridge up to 1,500 km wide
- A moist and treeless tundra, covered with grasses and plant life, attracting the large animals

# Beringia



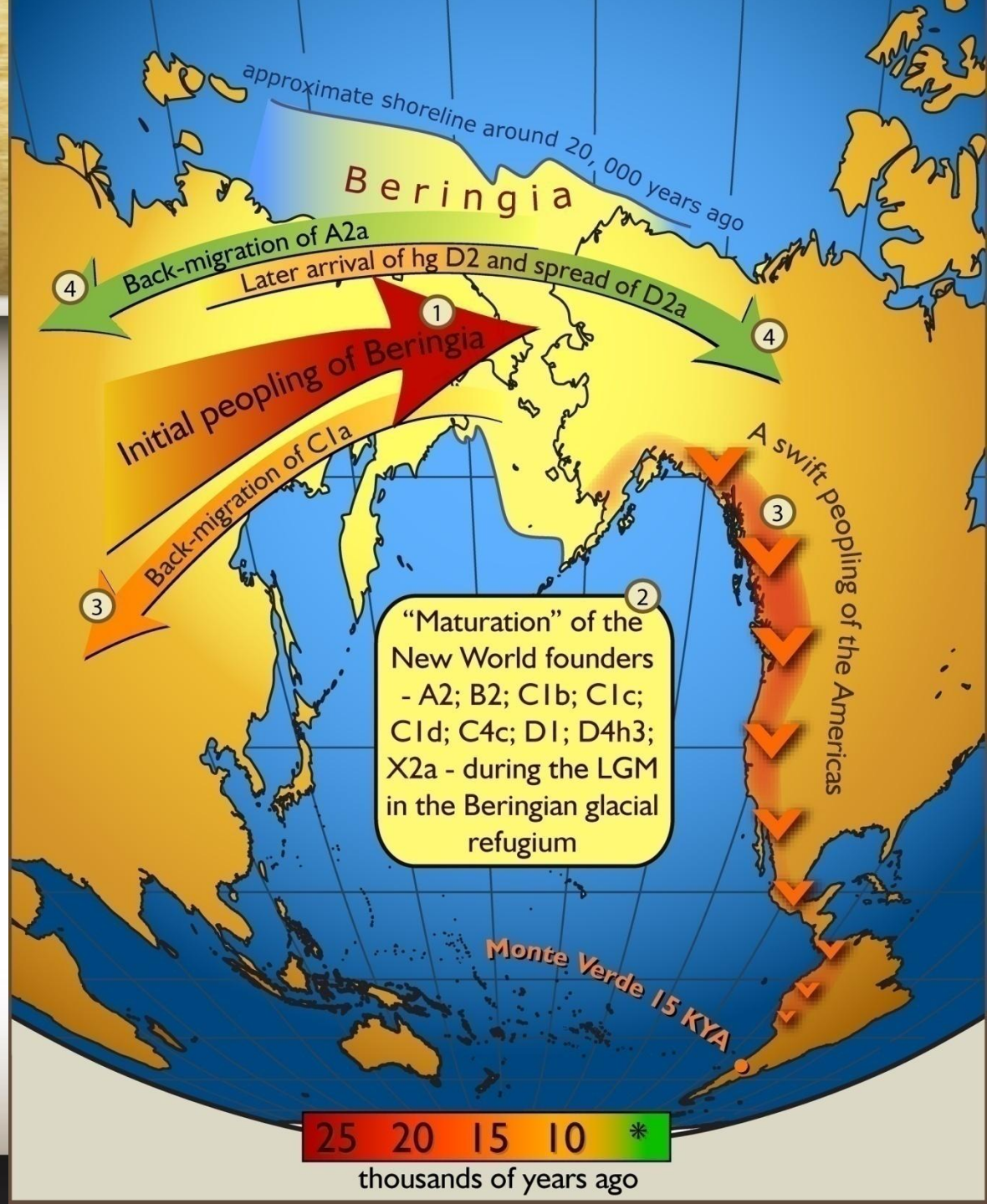
\*

50° 1' 30" N 159° 1' 30" W

# First people

- Came to Americas through Beringia
- They were isolated there from their ancestor populations in Asia for at least 5,000 years
- During the Late Glacial Maximum as the American glaciers blocking the way southward melted, these people began expanding to populate the Americas

# Migration of the first people to Americas



Current understanding of human migration to and throughout the Americas derives from advances in 4 interrelated disciplines:

- Archeology
  - Physical anthropology
  - DNA analysis
  - Linguistics.
- Explain, what all these branches of science deal with**

# The two main possible routes for “Beringian” people:

- Down the Pacific coast
- By way of an interior passage (Mackenzie Corridor) along the eastern flank of the Rocky Mountains

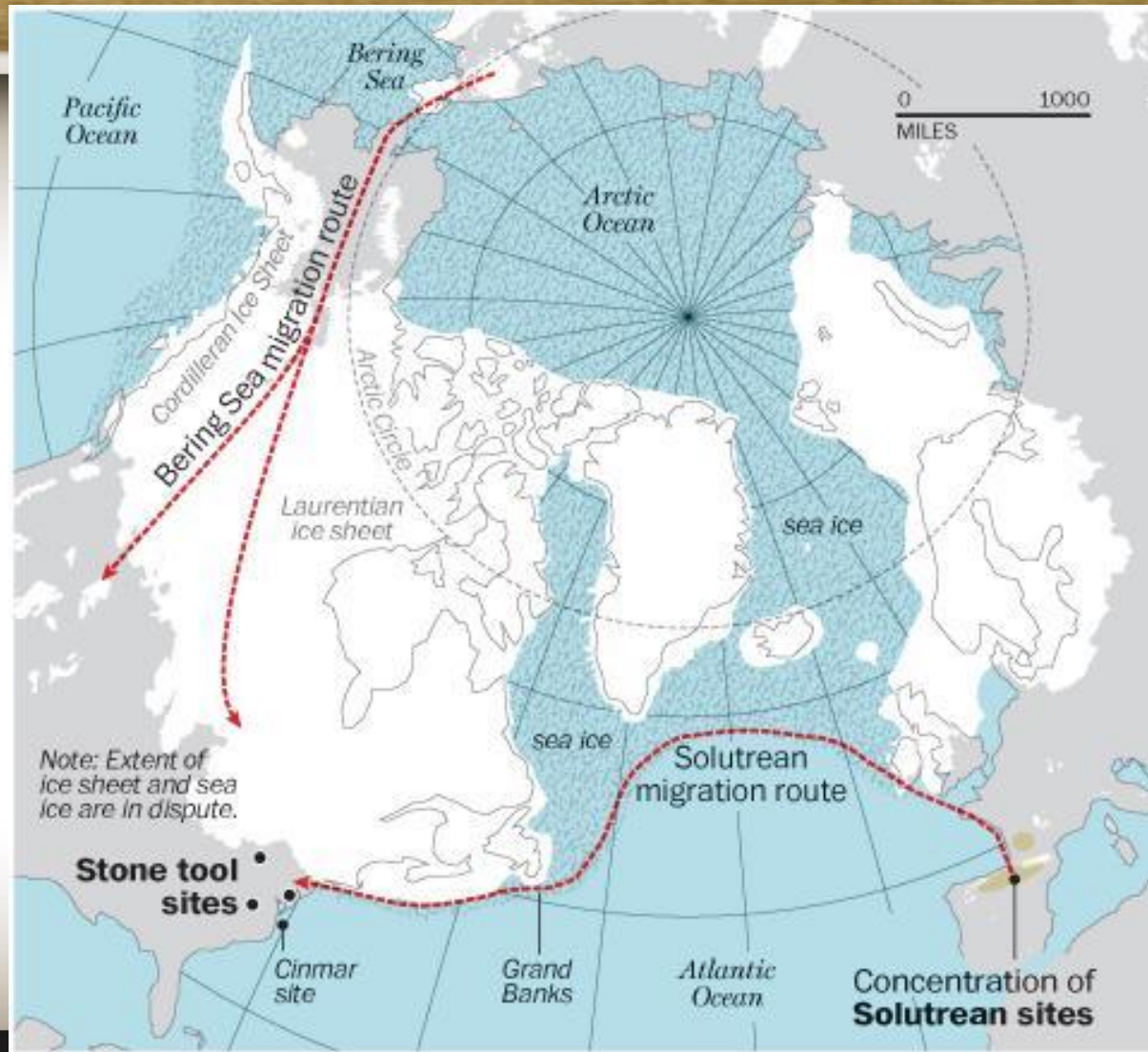
# The coastal (watercraft) theory

- People reached the Americas via water travel, following coastlines from northeast Asia into the Americas
- It's not exclusive of land-based migrations
- Helps to explain how early colonists reached areas extremely distant from the Bering Strait region (Monte Verde in southern Chile and Taima-Taima in western Venezuela)

# Watercraft subtheories

- People in boats followed the coastline from the Kurile Islands to Alaska down the coasts of North and South America as far as Chile
- Atlantic route hypothesis:
  - based on evidence which traces the origins to the a culture of Ice Age Western Europe
  - Ice Age Europeans migrated to North America by using skills similar to those possessed by the modern Eskimo-Aleut peoples and followed the edge of the ice sheet that spanned the Atlantic
  - is not largely accepted in the scientific world

# Atlantic route hypothesis



# Who were the first Americans?

- Common belief: descendants from northeast Asia (Siberia)
- New idea, based on new evidence: Southeast Asians (partly)
- Atlantic route hypothesis: Europeans (no DNA evidence)
- Most modern research (January 2012): descendants from Altai (Russia)

# The hypothetical Altai homeland of the American population



2.

# •The Ancient Population of the North America

# Evidence of early life in North America

- Little of it can be reliably dated before 12,000 B.C.
- A recent discovery of a hunting look-out in northern Alaska may date from that time
- The finely crafted spear points and items found near Clovis, New Mexico, etc. (throughout North and South America)
- SUMMARY: life was probably already well established in much of the Western Hemisphere by some time prior to 10,000 B.C.

# The Timeline of Early American History

- Paleo-Indian Period (18,000 BC - 8000 BC)
- Archaic Period (8000 BC - 1000 BC)
- Early Woodland Period (1000 - 1 BC)
- Middle Woodland Period (1–500 CE)
- Late Woodland Period (500–1000 CE)
- Mississippian cultures (1000 – 1500 CE)

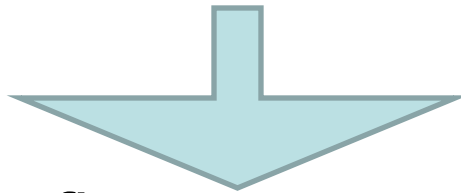
# Paleo-Indian Period

- Early Paleoamericans soon spread throughout the Americas
- They diversified into many hundreds of culturally distinct tribes
- Their population was presented by small, highly mobile bands consisting of approximately 20 to 50 members of an extended family
- They moved from place to place as preferred resources were depleted and new supplies were sought
- Were efficient hunters and carried a variety of tools

\*

# Early changes in life

- The mammoth began to die out and the bison took its place as a principal source of food and hides
- More and more species of large game vanished from overhunting or natural causes
- Plants, berries, and seeds became an increasingly important part of the early American diet



- Foraging and the first attempts at primitive agriculture appeared

# The spread of early civilization

- At about 8,000 B.C. native Americans in modern central Mexico cultivated corn, squash, and beans
- By 3,000 B.C., a primitive type of corn was being grown in the river valleys of New Mexico and Arizona
- Then the first signs of irrigation began to appear
- By 300 B.C., signs of early village life appear

\*

# Archaic period

- is characterized by subsistence economies supported through the exploitation of nuts, seeds, and shellfish
- multi-family dwellings in villages, which were used seasonally
- societies of hunter-gatherers
- Native American tribes traded with other tribes located in different regions

# Early Woodland period (1000–1 BC)

- Pottery and ceramic making are introduced
- Appearance of permanent settlements
- Elaborate burial practices
- Intensive collection growing of seed plants
- Differentiation in social organization, and specialized activities

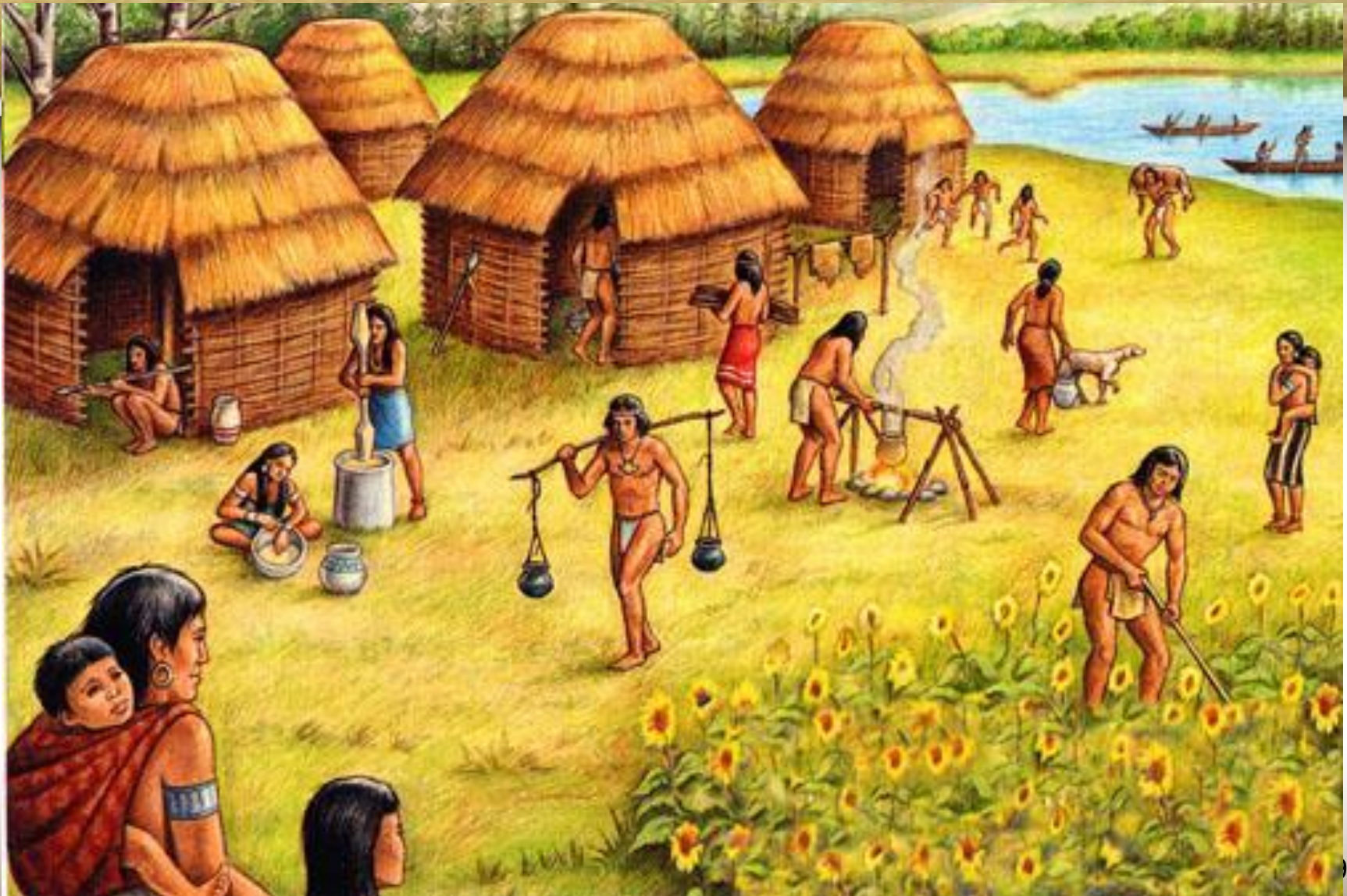
# Early population of the USA territory

- The first Native-American group to build mounds in what is now the United States - the **Adenans**
- Began constructing earthen burial sites and fortifications around 600 B.C.
- Area: Ohio, Indiana, West Virginia, Kentucky, and parts of Pennsylvania and New York
- Appear to have been absorbed or displaced by various groups collectively known as Hopewellians.

# An Adenan Mound



# An Adenan village



# Approximate area of Adenan cultures



# Hopewellians

- Existed from 200 BC to 500 AD
- Most important centers of their culture were found in southern Ohio
- Believed to be great traders
- Used and exchanged tools and materials across a wide region of hundreds of kilometers
- Were connected by a common network of trade routes - the Hopewell Exchange System

# The reasons for disappearing of Hopewellians

- The increase of population caused decline of trade & its replacement by local wars
- The efficiency of bows and arrows forced the tribes to break apart into smaller clans to better use local resources
- A colder climate may have affected food yields
- Agricultural technology became sophisticated enough that crop variation between clans lessened, thereby decreasing the need for trade.

# The late Woodland period

- Was a time of apparent population dispersal
- Construction of burial mounds decreased drastically
- Long-distance trade in exotic materials were disappearing
- Settlements became more numerous, but the size of each one (with exceptions) was smaller than their middle Woodland counterparts

# The Mississippians or Temple Mound culture

- The construction of large, truncated earthwork pyramid mounds
- Maize-based agriculture
- Widespread trade networks
- The development of the chiefdom, of institutionalized social inequality
- No writing system or stone architecture
- Worked naturally occurring metal deposits, did not smelt iron or practice bronze metallurgy.

# Cahokia /kə'houkiə/

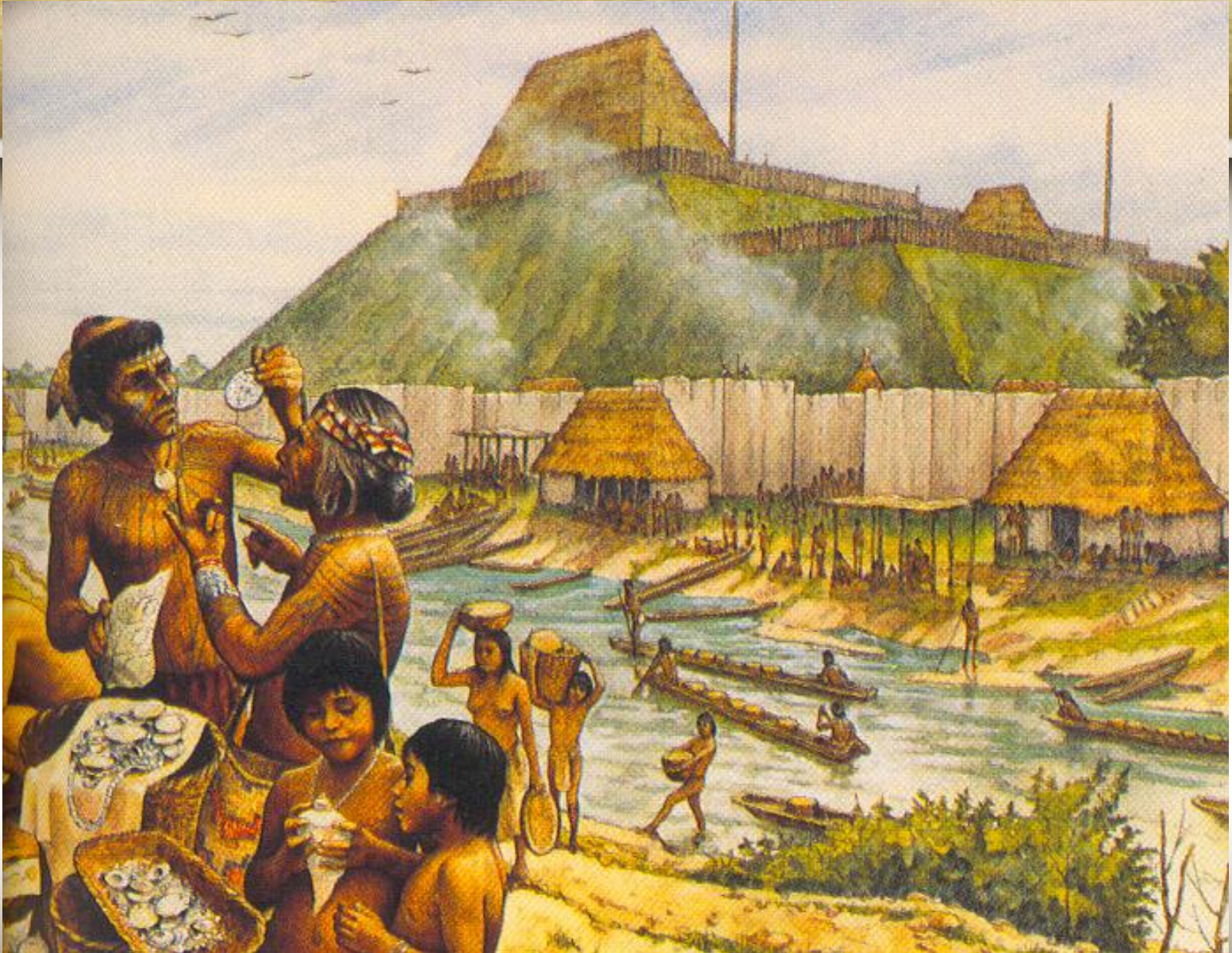
- Was located directly across the Mississippi River from modern St. Louis, Missouri
- The largest and most influential urban settlement in the Mississippian culture
- Existed between 600–1400 AD
- Its population in the 1200s was larger, than any European city of that time (London, paris)
- Its ancient population would not be surpassed by any city in the United States until 1800

# The reconstruction of the ancient city of Cahokia



\*

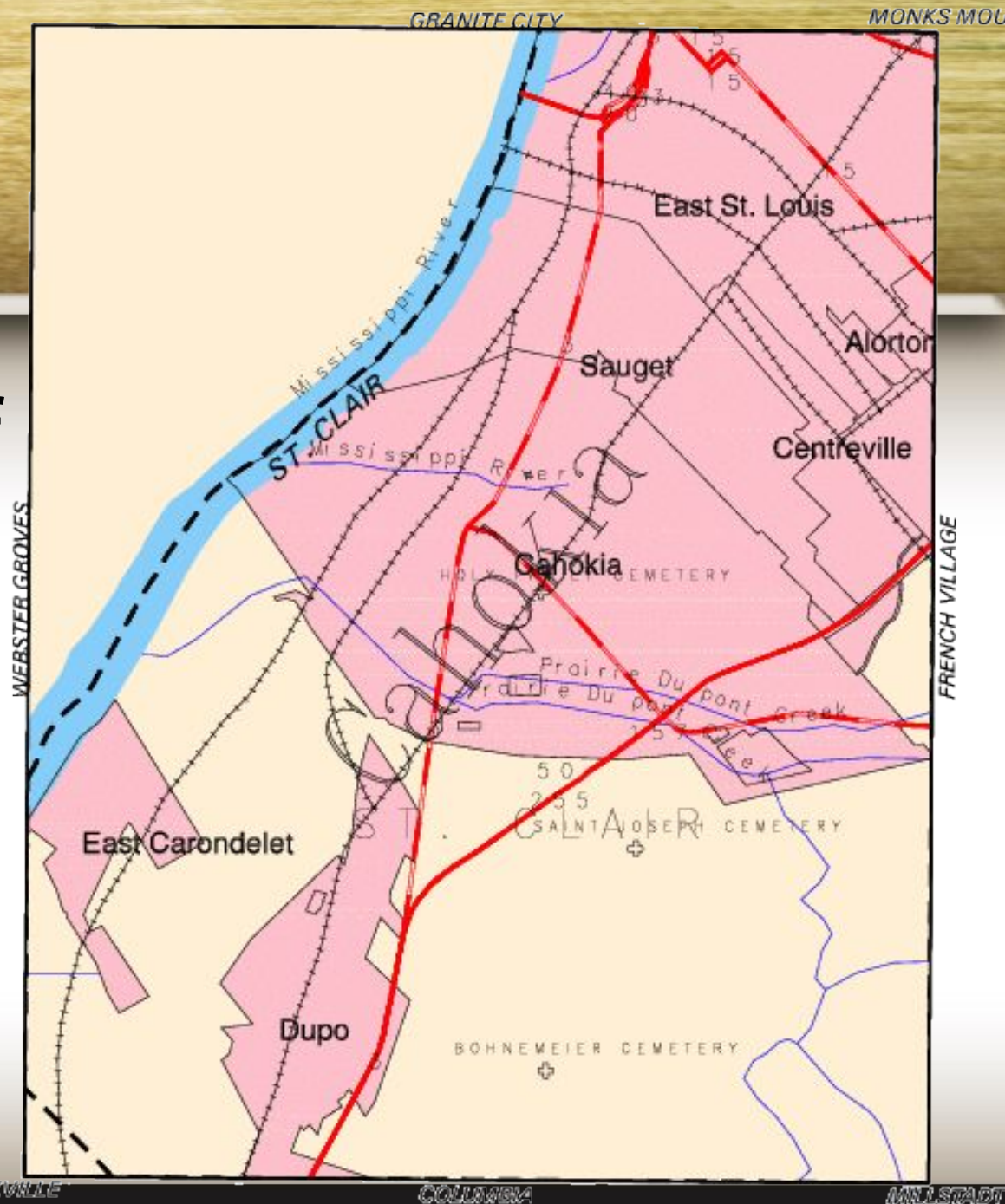
# Life in Cahokia



# Cahokian's Woodhenge



# The map of the ancient city of Cahokia



# A Cacokian Mound (reconstruction)



**3.**

**•Early Native  
American Tribes:  
their way of life,  
culture, crafts,  
agriculture.**

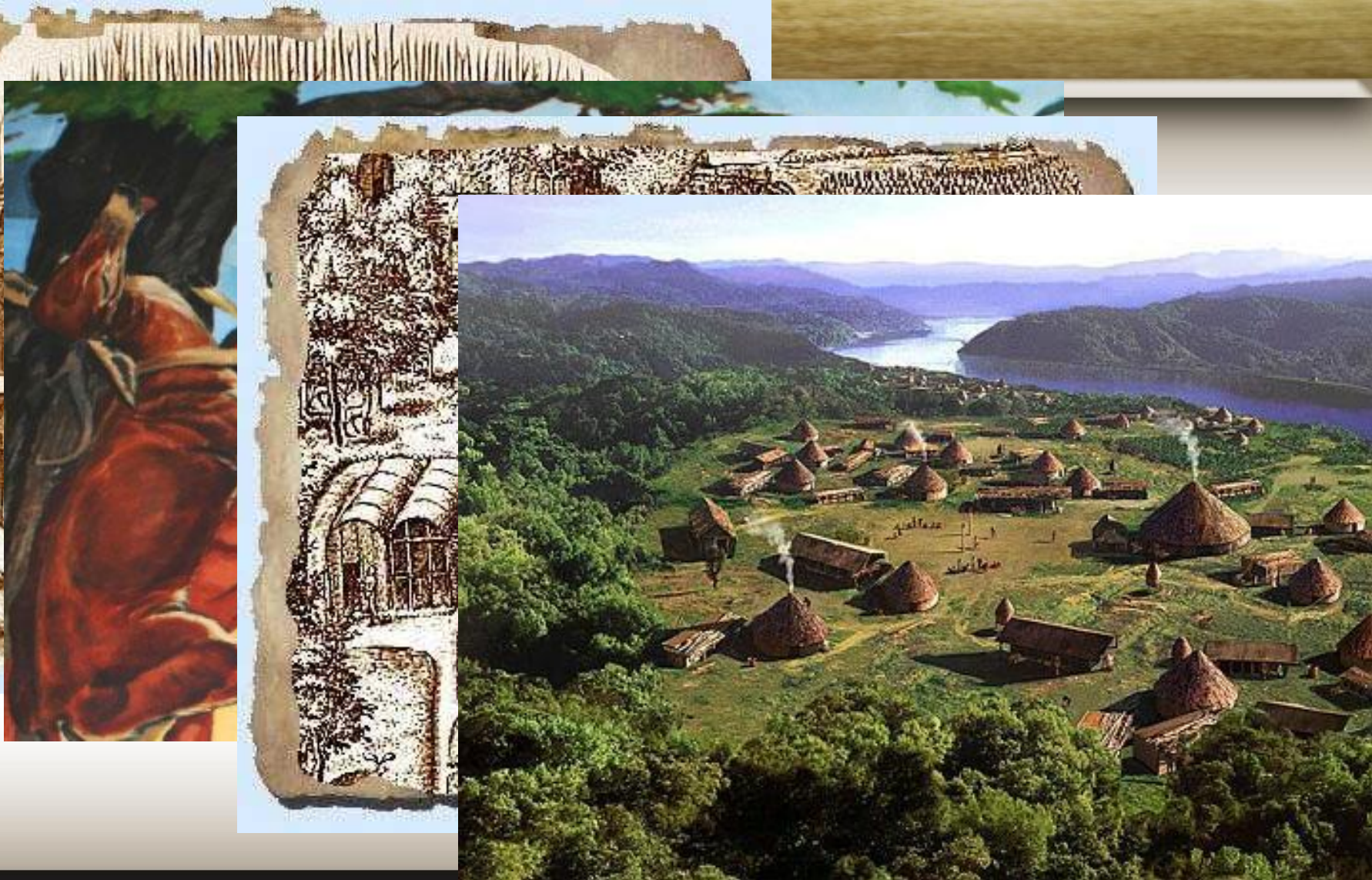
# Native Americans' environments

- The east side of the continent - woodlands, where they killed elk and deer
- The grass plains of the midwest, where they hunted to extinction the camel, mammoth and horse
- The desert regions of the southwest – here human existence depended on smaller animals and gathered seeds
- The Arctic north - there was very much more hunting than gathering, fish and seals were plentiful

# Early farming

- Were advanced and developed in Mississippi valley and Southwest
- Farming, village life spread up the east coast
- Fields are cleared from the woodlands for the planting of maize
- The rest of the continent - semi-nomadic existence. NO HORSE

# Early Native American Villages



\*

# Ancient pop-corn found in Peru



1 cm  
a.



1 cm  
b.



1 cm  
c.

# Some indigenous American agricultural products are now produced & used globally

- Tomato;
- Potato;
- Avocado;
- Peanuts;
- Cacao\* beans (used to make chocolate);
- Vanilla;
- Strawberry;
- Pineapple;
- Peppers (many species);
- Sunflower seeds;
- Rubber;
- Chicle (also known as chewing gum);
- Cotton;
- Tobacco;
- Coca (leaves chewed for energy and medicinal uses).

Maize (corn): maize, squash and beans form the indigenous triumvirate crop system known as the "three sisters";



# Squash (pumpkins, zucchini, butternut squash, others)



Pinto bean (Frijol pinto) ("painted/speckled" bean; nitrogen-fixer traditionally planted in conjunction with other "two sisters" to help condition soil)



# Cultural characteristic

- No single cultural trait unifying for all of the peoples of the Americas
- Several thousand distinct cultural patterns have existed
- Cultural practices have been mostly shared within geographical zones where otherwise unrelated peoples might adopt similar technologies and social organizations.

# Mesoamerica

- Millennia of coexistence and shared development between the peoples of the region
- Homogeneous culture with complex agricultural and social patterns

# North American Great Plains area

- Until the nineteenth century several different peoples shared traits of nomadic hunter-gatherers primarily based on buffalo hunting
- Within the Americas, dozens of larger and hundreds of smaller culture areas can be identified.

# Spiritual system

- No universal Native American religion or spiritual system
- A number of stories and legends, creation myths
- Shamans—traditional healers, ritualists, singers, mystics and both "Medicine Men" and "Medicine Women".
- Maintenance of a harmonious relationship with the spirit world
- Ceremonial acts, usually incorporating sandpainting.

# Sandpainting



\*

# Native American rituals



# Native American music in North America

- Almost entirely monophonic
- Often includes drumming but little other instrumentation, although flutes are played by individuals
- The tuning of these flutes is not precise and depends on the length of the wood used, but the finger holes are most often around a whole step apart and

# Native American flute Native American flute (+drums)

