



# The Mayan Civilization



# Before the Mayans

- Before the Mayans, a group of people called the Olmecs lived in Mesoamerica
  - Mesoamerica – “Middle” America
  - Stretches from central Mexico to Central America
- The Olmecs are best known for the large heads they carved from stone
- The Altiplano Indians are another group of people in Mesoamerica
  - The Altiplano are best known for the city of Teotihuacan

# Olmec – Carved Stone Heads

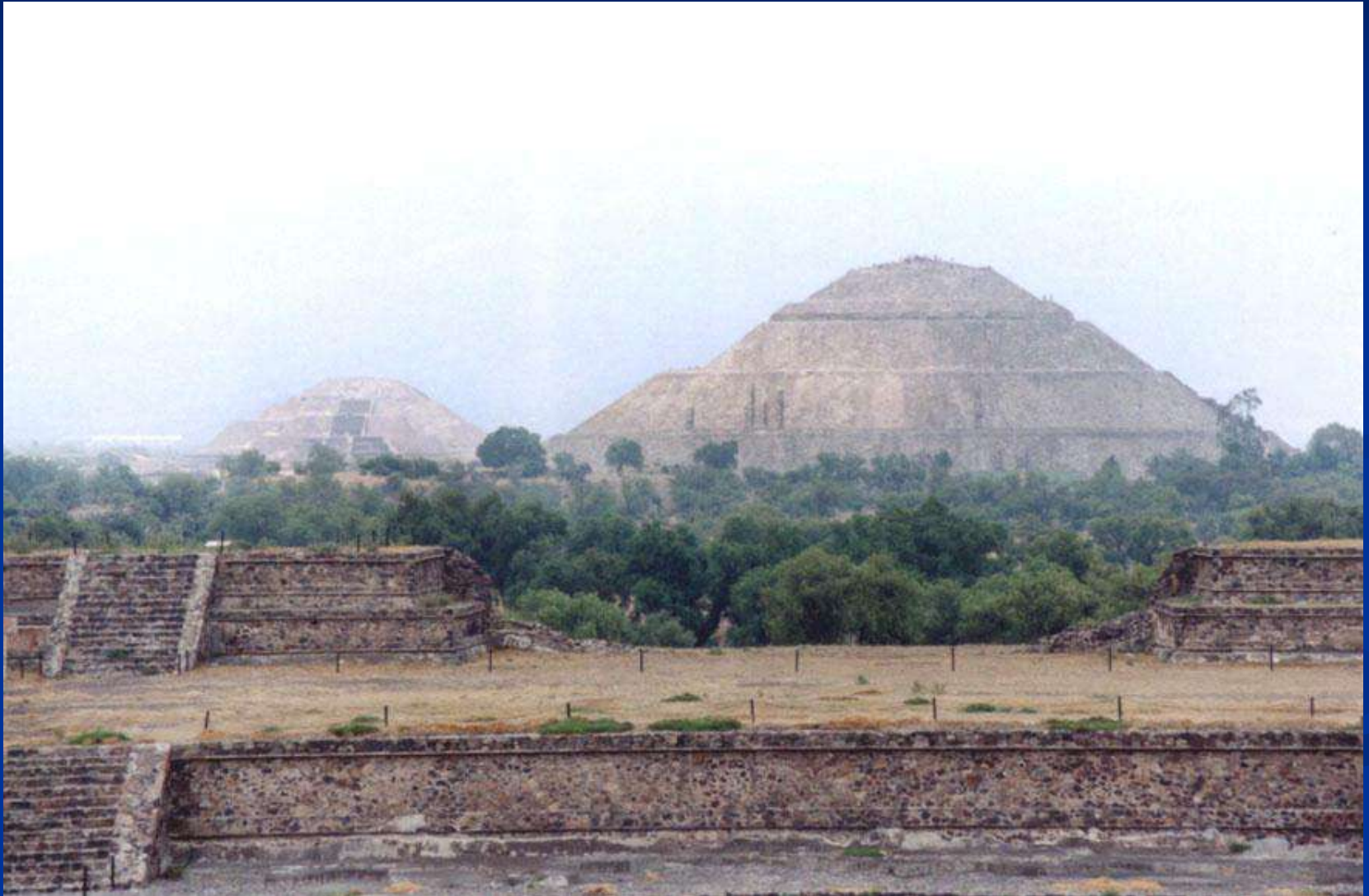




# Teotihuacan – Avenue of the Dead



# Pyramid of the Sun and Moon





# Geography of the Mayans

- 2000<sub>BCE</sub> – Mayans begin settling in Mesoamerica
  - Most of the area is forest, so they clear the land
- The Mayans plant a lot of maize
  - Maize - Corn
- The Mayans used resources from the forest to survive



# The Three Ages

- Mayan history is divided into three parts:
  - Pre-Classic Age (2000<sub>BCE</sub> – 200<sub>CE</sub>)
  - Classic Age (200<sub>CE</sub> – 900<sub>CE</sub>)
  - Post-Classic Age (900<sub>CE</sub> – 1500<sub>CE</sub>)
- Pre-Classic Age:
  - Mayan Civilization gets started
  - Not many advances
- Post-Classic Age:
  - Mayans abandon their cities and the civilization declines

# Mayan Villages



- Villages begin during the Pre-Classic Period
  - 2000<sub>BCE</sub> – 200<sub>CE</sub>
- Houses were made from wood and vines from forest
- Mayans lived in small villages that were isolated from each other
- Eventually, Mayans started to trade with each other
- 200<sub>CE</sub> – Large Mayan cities begin to appear



# The Classic Age

- **Mayan civilization flourishes during the Classic Age**
  - 200<sub>CE</sub> – 900<sub>CE</sub>
- **Over 40 large cities included in this civilization**
  - Large city = 60,000 people or more
- **Cities are actually city-states**
  - Each has its own government and king
  - All cities are separate from each other
  - No one united all the Mayan cities into one Empire



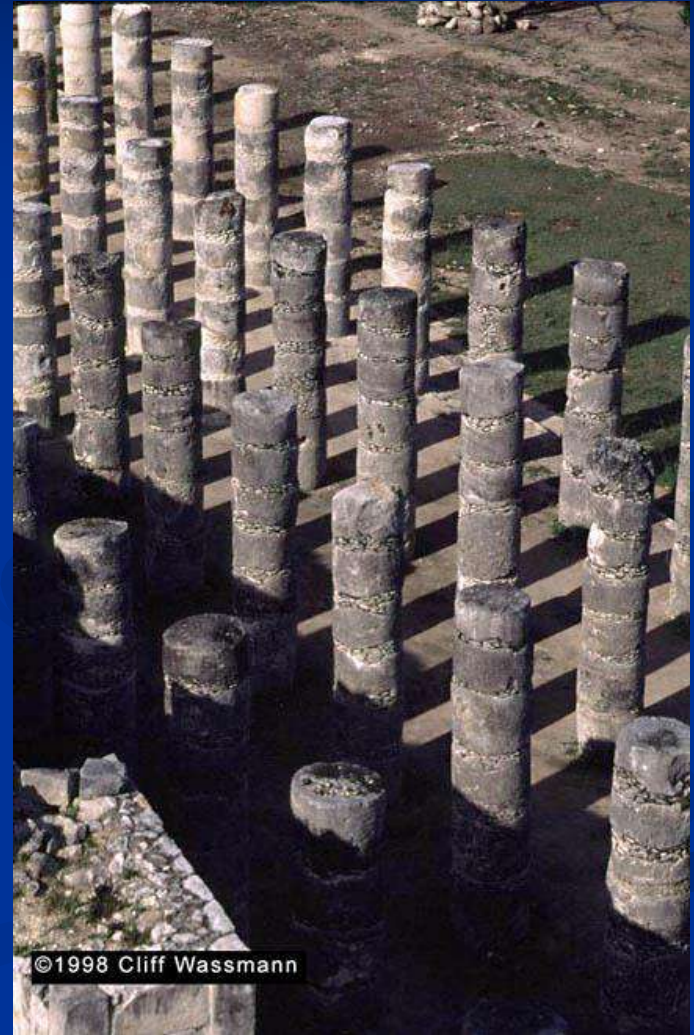


# Ancient Copan





# Court of Thousand Columns (Chichen Itza)





# The Classic Age

- Trade linked everyone together
  - Cotton, Cacao beans, feathers, obsidian, and jade
- Mayan cities are known for their buildings
  - Grand palaces, pyramids, and temples
  - Elaborate paintings and carvings
- Palenque – Palace of Pacal
  - Very popular ruler – ruled when he was 12 years old
  - Ruled for 50 years
  - His temple was built to record events of his life

# Palenque



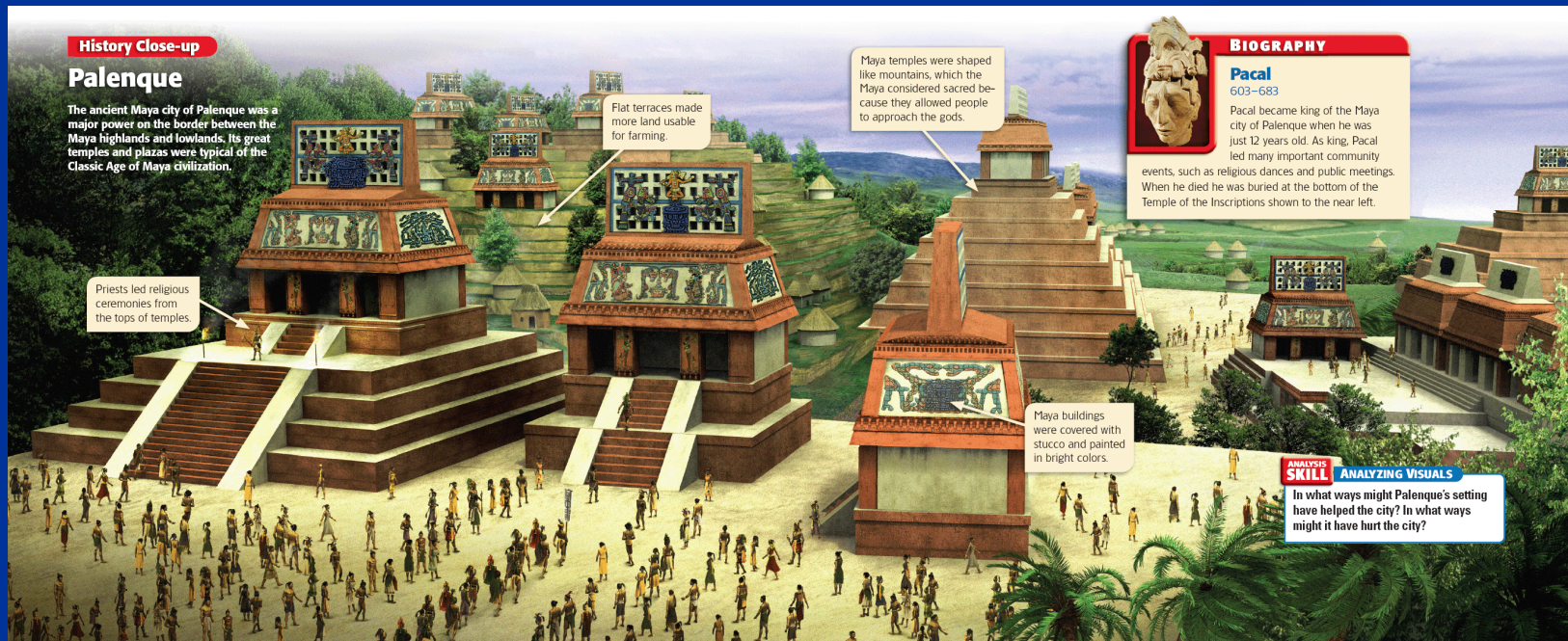






# The Classic Age

- Mayans often built canals and plazas for gathering
- Farmers terraced hillsides to grow more food
- They played a ball game similar to soccer and basketball



# Mayan Ball Game





# Temple of Jaguars (Chichen Itza)





# Mayan Society

- **Kings were in charge – highest class**
  - He was believed to be related to the gods
- **Priests, nobles, warriors – Upper class**
  - All the power in Mayan society was in top two classes
- **Farmers – lower class**
  - Women cared for children, cooked, and did weaving
  - Men farmed, hunted, and made tools
- **Lower class had to pay the upper class with crops**
  - Also had to help build buildings
- **If you were captured in war, you became a slave**

### A Maya King and His Court

The king and his court were the center of Maya government and religious life. This vase painting shows a Maya king relaxing with some of his servants. Kings enjoyed all the luxuries of Maya life, such as music, fine clothing and food, and even chocolate.

The king is gazing at this mirror, which the Maya believed held magical powers.

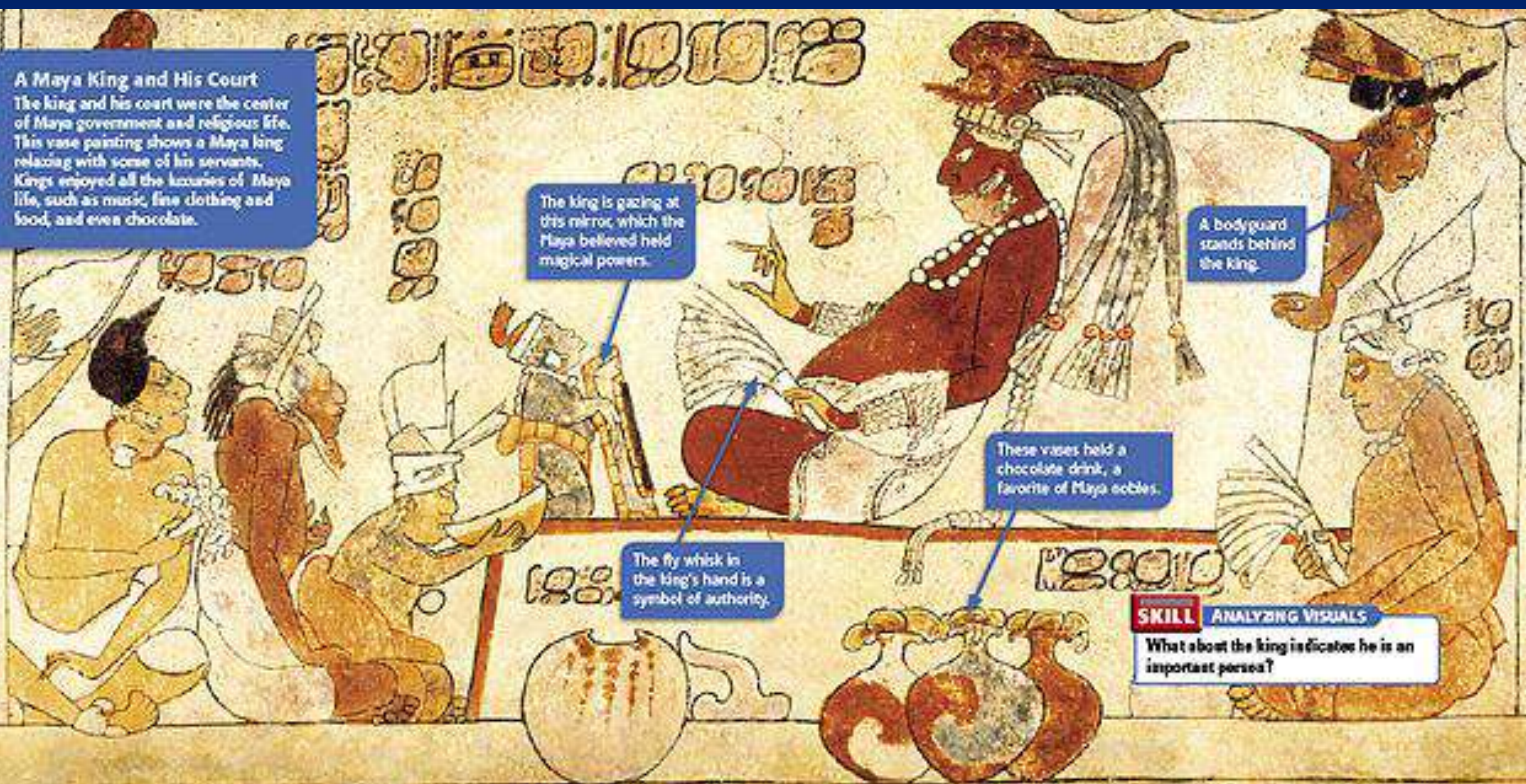
A bodyguard stands behind the king.

These vases held a chocolate drink, a favorite of Maya nobles.

The fly whisk in the king's hand is a symbol of authority.

#### **SKILL** ANALYZING VISUALS

What about the king indicates he is an important person?







# Mayan Religion

- Mayans were polytheistic
- Mayans believed they always had to please the gods
  - Keep the gods happy to prevent terrible things
- Gods needed blood for nourishment
  - And to prevent the end of the world
  - Blood offerings were made through body piercings
  - Blood offerings were made through human sacrifices
    - Prisoners were popular sacrificial victims



# Well of Sacrifice (Chichen Itza)



# Mayan Achievements



- Mayans built many observatories
  - Observatory – a building where people can study the sky
  - Believed that the stars would show the best time for religious festivals
- Developed two calendars
  - 260 days and 365 days
- Very skilled mathematicians
  - First people in Western Hemisphere to invent '0'

0	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19



# Chichen Itza – Observatory Tower



# Mayan Regular Calendar





# Mayan Achievements



## ■ Developed a writing system

- Similar to Egyptian hieroglyphics
- Carved writings on stone
- Wrote stories on bark paper books

## ■ Amazing art and architecture

- Temple-pyramids made out of stone
  - Decorated with jade and gold
- No metal tools for construction
  - Used obsidian



# Stela





# Paris Codex



# Codex - Codices





# Maya Temples as seen in *Star Wars IV: A New Hope*



# Decline of Mayan Civilization

- 900<sub>CE</sub> – Mayan civilization begins to decline
  - No more temples or grand buildings
  - People abandon the cities
- Why?
  - Common people rebel?
  - War?
  - Disease?
  - Natural Disaster?
  - Too many people, but not enough food?
- We don't know for sure now, but someday we might