Links:

Version 1 (not a story, but the first iteration of the graphs):
https://public.tableau.com/profile/nasir.sharaf#!/vizhome/Seshat_Data/HierarchicalComplexity

Final Version:
https://public.tableau.com/profile/nasir.sharaf#!/vizhome/Seshat_Data_Story/Story1

Summary:

This story attempts to condense some interesting findings from the Seshat database, a dataset created by researcher Peter Turchin to further the study of social complexity. This dataset collected hundreds of records across 30 Natural Geographic Areas (NGAs) with diverse variables ranging from currency use to Levels of military hierarchy. All of these variables are used to describe a polity as either simple or complex. I specifically observed several variables that seemed to counter our notions of what a complex or simple society was across money, religion and population.

Design:

Originally, I did not wish to include religion, it seemed it invite controversy. But the person I showed the original graphs to said that historically religion has played a much greater role than it does presently and to not include it was to introduce a blindspot in the study of social complexity. In this spirit, I added religion and was surprised to see that while complex societies in general had more levels of religious hierarchy, it was actually the simplest societies that had the most levels of religious hierarchy.

Feedback:

The religious aspect was most advocated for, although hierarchy was already represented. Another few factors that were not visualized but were asked included trade deals (there was no data on this), conquests (no data on this specifically, but there was military hierarchy), and legal and governmental structure. For the last one, legal and governmental structures, there is data that could be used to generate visualizations but I could not find a visualization that 1) looked appealing and 2) generated an insight. This may require more thinking to properly describe via tableau.

Resources:

The Seshat Database:
http://seshatdatabank.info/datasets/

Turchin P. et al. 2015. "Seshat: The Global History Databank." *Cliodynamics* 6(1): 77–107. https://doi.org/10.21237/C7clio6127917.

An interesting paper that informed this undertaking:
http://www.pnas.org/content/early/2017/12/20/1708800115.full

A book that inspired the delve into money/currency and complexity:
"Debt: the First 5000 Years" by David Graeber.
https://www.amazon.com/Debt-Updated-Expanded-First-Years/dp/1612194192/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1529966762&sr=8-1&keywords=debt+the+first+5000+years