Chapter 6: Settlement of the Americas and the Pacific Islands: 6-6 Chapter Review
Book Title: World Civilizations
Printed By: Colin Morris-Moncada (006279659@coyote.csusb.edu)


# 6-6 Chapter Review

## 6-6a Summary

Despite their isolation from other regions of the world, Native Americans proved to be as innovative and adaptive to changes and variations in their environments as the founders of other early civilizations we have covered in Unit I. In general, the peoples of the Western Hemisphere seem to have remained content to maintain a hunting-and-gathering way of life until the worldwide climatic changes that came at the end of the Ice Age encouraged them to turn to more intensive methods of assuring themselves of food supplies adequate to support their growing populations. As elsewhere, too, their strategy was two-pronged: technological and social.

First, technological advances meant intensified exploitation of available resources and innovations in their uses. This led to a growing dependence on the cultivation of plants traditionally gathered in their wild states to increase food supplies and, subsequently, on their actual domestication. (Animal domestication was minimal.) With these developments came new inventions to solve the problems of soil fertility, available farmland, water resources, and storage. These changes occurred earliest in parts of Central and South America where the natural environments were most austere, then spread inland and along a north-south axis to other regions. Native Americans of the eastern woodlands saw some innovation along these same lines, learning to cultivate a few native crops such as sunflowers and squashes, but such developments occurred later and at a slower rate than the development of agriculture in Mesoamerica and South America.

The second set of major advances consisted of the social strategies that were adopted to ensure that food supplies were adequate to feed larger populations. Here again one can discern early patterns of change that later (in the following period; see Unit II) assumed their “classical” forms. In this chapter and previous ones we learned that humans found ways of creating wider social networks of dependence as a strategy—a sort of “social insurance”—to organize food production and its distribution in order to fend off hunger in times of shortages. The appearance of settled village life reflects such developments. In places where technologies emerged that called for large forms of labor organization and where food surpluses existed, societies soon became hierarchical. New forms of authority appeared—usually hereditary, formal, and religious in nature. In Native America this appeared first among the Olmec and the Chavín

While Native Americans were settling the Western Hemisphere, Southeast Asians like the Lapita developed a civilization that combined husbandry of root crops with maritime technologies. They began a series of migrations that reached across the Indian Ocean as far as Madagascar and the islands of the western Pacific Ocean using platformed sailing

canoes and extraordinary navigation skills. In the first millennium of the Common Era, their Polynesian descendants continued their eastward march to the Hawaiian Islands, Easter Island, New Zealand, and, from all appearances, the western shores of South America.

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