INTRODUCTION TO MIDDLE AMERICA

DEFINING THE REALM
- MEXICO, CENTRAL AMERICA, CARIBBEAN ISLANDS

MAJOR GEOGRAPHIC QUALITIES
- FRAGMENTED - PHYSICALLY AND POLITICALLY
- DIVERSE CULTURALLY
- POVERTY IS ENDEMIC

REGIONS OF MIDDLE AMERICA
- MEXICO
- CENTRAL AMERICA
- GREATER ANTILLES
- LESSER ANTILLES
- CUBA
- HAITI
- DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
- PUERTO RICO
- JAMAICA

Countries of the Realm
- MEXICO CITY
- BELMOPAN
- GUATEMALA CITY
- TEGUCIGALPA
- SAN SALVADOR
- MANAGUA
- SAN JUAN
- PANAMA CITY
- HAVANA
- PORT AU PRINCE
- SANTO DOMINGO
- SAN JUAN
- KINGSTON

PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY
- LAND BRIDGE
- ARCHIPELAGO
- GREATER AND LESSER ANTILLES
- NATURAL HAZARDS
  - EARTHQUAKES
  - VOLCANOES
  - HURRICANES
WORLD TECTONIC PLATES

DISTRIBUTION OF EARTHQUAKES & VOLCANOES

WORLD HURRICANE TRACKS

CULTURE HEARTTH

MesoAmerican Hearths
Aztecs
Mayans

CULTURE HEARTS

- MAYA CIVILIZATION
  - 3000 BP
  - CLASSIC PERIOD 200-900 AD
  - HONDURAS, GUATEMALA, BELIZE, YUCATAN PENINSULA
  - THEOCRATIC STRUCTURE

- AZTEC CIVILIZATION
  - 1300 AD
  - VALLEY OF MEXICO
  - TENOCHTITLAN (>100,000 PEOPLE)

COLONIAL HERITAGE

- SPAIN
- FRANCE
- BRITAIN
THE LEGACY OF COLONIALISM

- Land was appropriated - colonial commercial interests
- Lands devoted to food crops for local consumption were converted to cash cropping for export
- Land Alienation induces:
  - Famine
  - Poverty
  - Migration
  - Little agricultural diversity

MAINLAND/RI MLAND FRAMEWORK

- MAINLAND
  - EURO-INDIAN INFLUENCE
  - GREATER ISOLATION
  - HACIENDA PREVAILED
- RI MLAND
  - EURO-AFRICAN INFLUENCE
  - HIGH ACCESSIBILITY
  - PLANTATION ECONOMY

MAINLAND vs RI MLAND

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>MAINLAND</th>
<th>RI MLAND</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Climate</td>
<td>greater isolation</td>
<td>greater accessibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physiography</td>
<td>altitudinal zonation</td>
<td>tropical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Euro/Indian</td>
<td>African-European</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>Mestizo</td>
<td>Mulatto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landholding Patterns</td>
<td>haciendas</td>
<td>plantation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HACIENDA vs PLANTATION

- HACIENDA
  - SPANISH INSTITUTION
  - NOT EFFICIENT BUT SOCIAL PRESTIGE
  - WORKERS LIVED ON THE LAND
- PLANTATION
  - NORTHERN EUROPEAN ORIGINS
  - EXPORT ORIENTED MONOCROPS
  - IMPORTED CAPITAL AND SKILLS
  - SEASONAL LABOR
  - EFFICIENCY IS KEY
MAQUILADORAS

- Initiated in the 1960s
- Today > 4,000 maquiladoras
- > 1.2 million employees
- Export the finished products
- Mostly foreign-owned (U.S., Japan)
- 80% of goods re-exported to U.S.
- Assemble imported, duty-free components/raw materials
- Tariffs limited to value added during assembly
Examples of Maquiladoras in Mexico

- 3 Day Blinds
- 20th Century Plastics
- Acer Peripherals
- Bali Company, Inc.
- Bayer Corp./Medsep
- BMW
- Canon Business Machines
- Casio Manufacturing
- Chrysler
- Daewoo
- Eastman Kodak/Verbatim
- Eberhard--Faber
- Eli Lilly Corporation
- Ericsson
- Fisher Price
- Ford
- Foster Grant Corporation
- General Electric
- JVC
- GM
- Hasbro
- Hewlett Packard
- Hitachi Home Electronics
- Honda
- Honeywell, Inc.
- Hughes Aircraft
- Hyundai Precision America
- IBM
- Matsushita
- Maxell Corporation
- Mercedes Benz
- Mitsubishi
- Motorola
- Nissan
- Philips
- Pioneer Speakers
- Samsonite Corporation
- Samsung
- Sanyo North America
- Sony Electronics
- Toshiba
- VW
- Xerox

MAQUILADORAS

Examples of Maquiladora products

- Assembly of Taps and Spouting Corks: 2%
- Chemical Products: 3%
- Assembly of Textile: 1%
- Electrical and Electronic Equipment: 1%
- Other Manufacturing: 15%
- Assembly of Office Machines: 3%
- Construction and Transportation Equipment: 7%
- General Assembly and Tools Products: 28%
- Assembly of Machine Tools: 11%
- Assembly of Textile: 2%
- Assembly of Rubber and Plastic Products: 4%
- Food Products: 3%

ADVANTAGES
- Mexico gains jobs.
- Foreign owners benefit from cheaper labor costs.

EFFECTS
- Regional development
- Development of an international growth corridor between Monterrey and Dallas - Fort Worth

NAFTA

- Effective 1 January 1994
- Established a trade agreement between Mexico, Canada and the US, which:
  - Reduced and regulated trade tariffs, barriers, and quotas between members
  - Standardized finance & service exchanges

MEXICO AND NAFTA

- Foremost, it promises a higher standard of living.
- NAFTA creates more jobs for Mexicans as US companies begin to invest more heavily in the Mexican market.
- Mexican exporters increase their sales to the US and Canada.
- Is that the entire story?
**WAGE RATES COMPARED**

Assemblers Skilled Labor

- Mexico: $1.55 vs. $2.87
- U.S.: $17.38 vs. $20.21

**U.S. TRADE WITH CANADA & MEXICO**

- Canada remains as the United States’ largest export market.
- Since 1977, Mexico has moved into second place (displacing Japan).
- 85% of all Mexican exports now go to the United States.
- 75% of Mexico’s imports originate in the United States.

**ALTI TUDINAL ZONATION**

Middle & South America’s Vertical Climate Zones

**THE TOURISM OPTION**

- Antigua and Barbuda
  - Direct contribution of 13% to GDP and affects growth in other sectors
- The Bahamas
  - Tourism alone provides 50% of GDP and directly or indirectly employs 40% of the population
- Cuba
  - Growing industry

**ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS**

- Tropical Deforestation
- 3.5 million acres of woodland in Central America disappear each year
  - Clearing of rural lands to accommodate meat production and export
  - Rapid logging of tropical woodlands to meet global demands for new housing, paper, and furniture
  - Population explosion: forests are cut to provide crop-raising space and firewood

**CULTURAL ASSESSMENT**

- Mexico: adult males are perceived to be healthier than females and children
- Belize: bones of spoiled fish are used to make a soup to cure illness from eating spoiled fish
- Cuba: witch doctors are important health care providers in rural areas
- Costa Rica: machismo society but women are viewed as morally and spiritually superior
- Cameroon: having body fat in women is considered to be healthy and sign of fertility
- Cuba: direct eye contact practiced and looking away may be interpreted as disrespect or dishonesty
- Jamaica: matrilineal society where it is not important for women to have a lifetime partner; therefore several different fathers may visit their children in one household
- Haiti: some believe that they must continue sexual intercourse during pregnancy to keep the birth canal lubricated and cold air should be avoided during this time
- Dominican Republic: traditional mothers may not wish to bathe, wash hair or have intercourse for 40 days following childbirth