



Latin America

(Central & Caribbean)



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CENTRAL AMERICA

Physical Geography of Middle America

- Land bridge – Isthmus
- Archipelago
- Natural Hazards

Isthmus

- **Land bridge**
 - a wider land connection between separate areas, over which animals and plants are able to cross and colonize new lands.

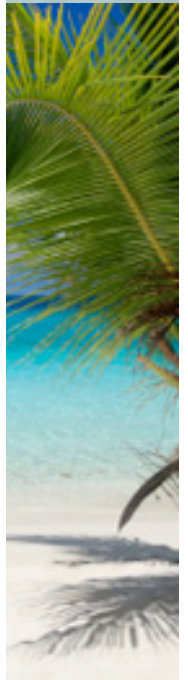


Panama Canal

- First attempt – French (1881 – 1889)
 - Bankrupt and abandoned.
- USA became interested.
 - Panama was owned by Columbia and wanted to be separated
 - USA provided money and troops to help with revolution.
 - At the same time, USA allowed Columbia troops stationed in Panama.
 - The next day, Panama declared independence.
- USA financed the building of Panama Canal.
 - Resulted in urbanization, transportation, and economic activities.
- By 1999, Panama was granted the control of the canal.



The Caribbean Islands



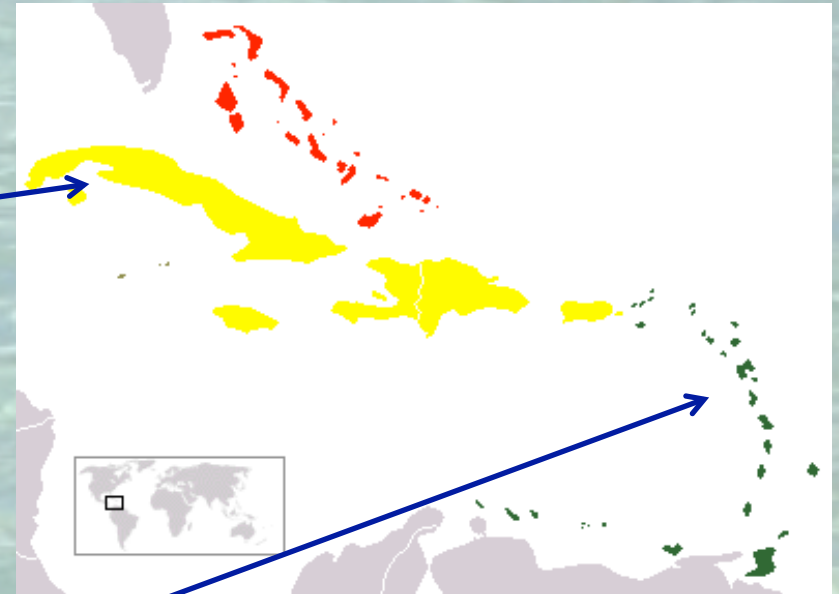
The Caribbean Islands

➤ Archipelago – group or chain of islands

▪ the Greater Antilles (yellow) – made up of continental rock, part of North America

- Cuba
- Jamaica
- Haiti/Dominican Republic
- Puerto Rico

▪ the Lesser Antilles (green) – made of young volcanic or **coral islands**



- formed by small organisms called polyps
- Polyps are the builders of coral protecting themselves by building small walls of limestone around their bodies.
- They live in small colonies, and over millions of years, these 'settlements' become reefs, and then turn into islands.

Central America

- Mountainous with small coastal plain



Natural Hazards

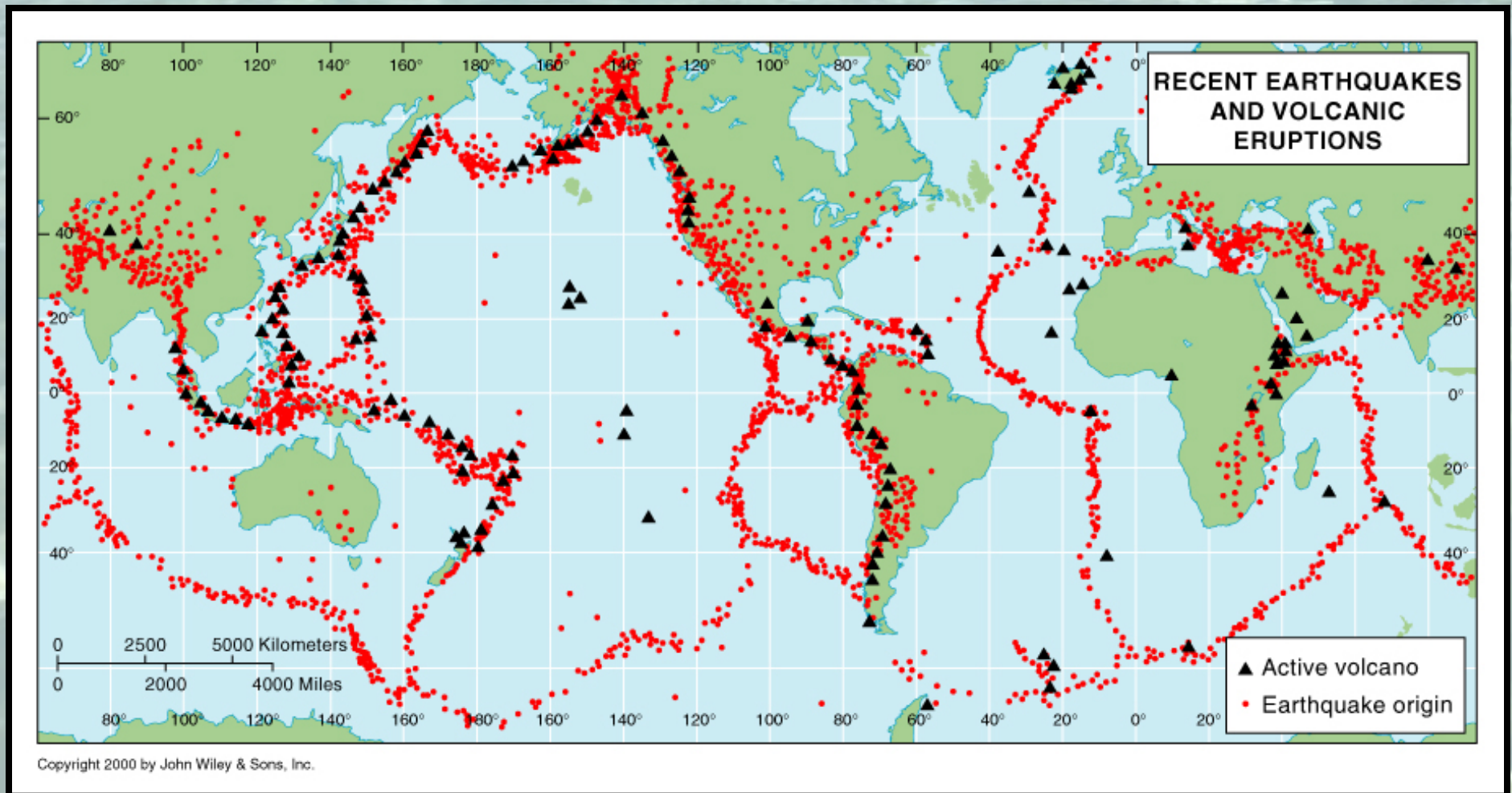
- Earthquakes
- Volcanoes
- Hurricanes



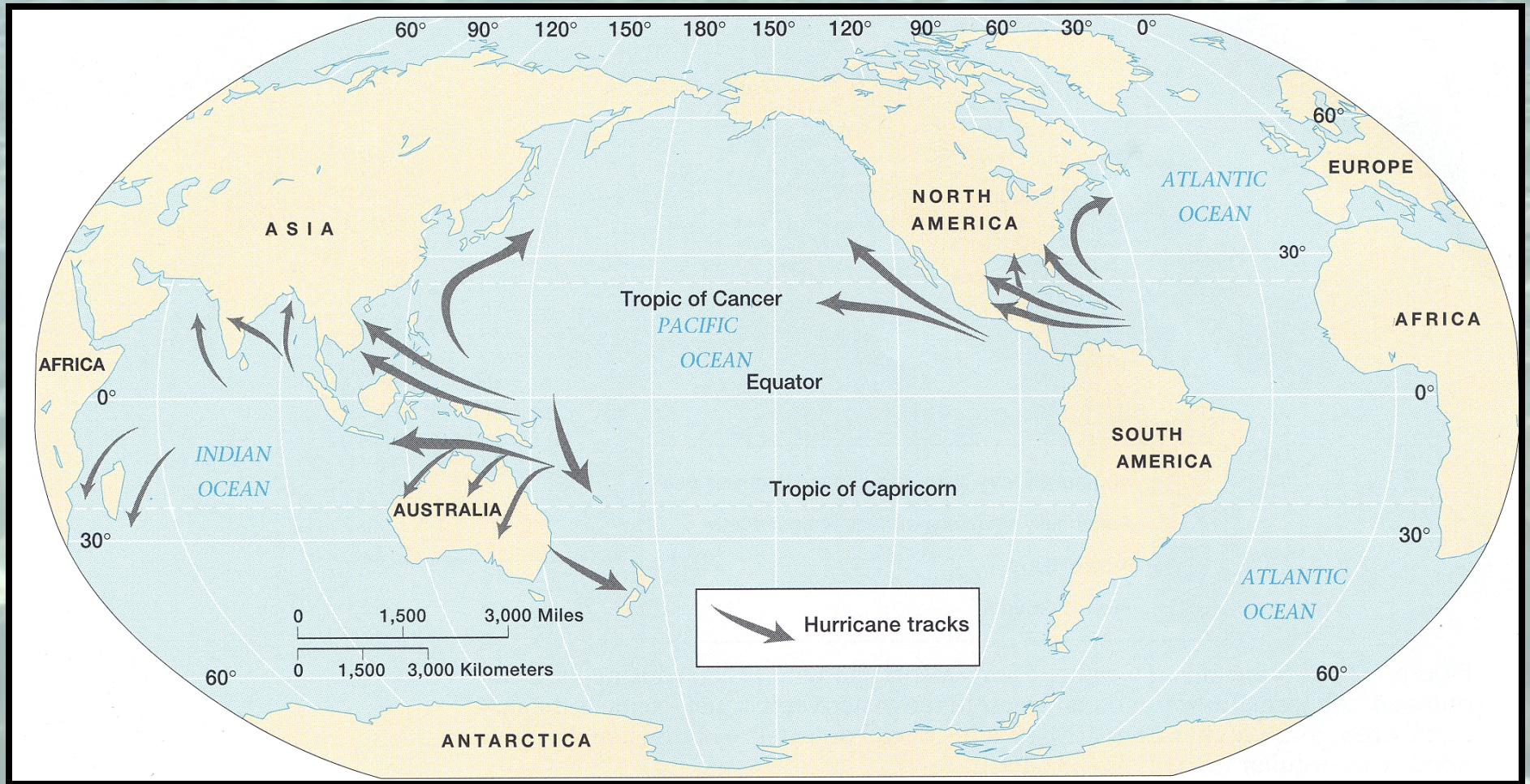
World Tectonic Plates



Distribution of Earthquakes and Volcanoes



World Hurricane Tracks



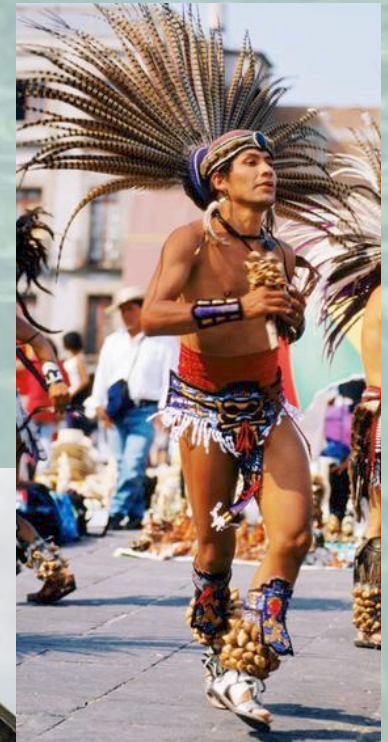
Culture Hearth

- Source areas from which started ideas, innovations, and ideologies that changed the world (farming, calendar, & writing system).

Hearths

Aztecs

Mayans



Mesoamerica

- **Culture Hearths**

- **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)



NATIVE AMERICAN LANGUAGES OF MIDDLE AMERICA



The Legacy of Colonialism

- Land was appropriated (taken) – colonial commercial interests

Why??

Very fertile soil
(volcanic islands)

- Lands devoted to food crops for local consumption (subsistence farming) were converted to cash cropping for export (i.e. sugar, banana, coconuts, cocoa, rice, cotton)

a type of farming which a family uses for themselves, leaving little or nothing to be marketed

- Land alienation induces:
 - Famine and poverty
 - Migration
 - Little agricultural diversity



COLONIAL SPHERES

The Caribbean Islands

➤ Ethnic Roots

- Original inhabitants ~ Indians (vanished)
- African Descent
 - European colonists needed workers.
 - Brought Africans to work as slaves.
 - Caribbean culture strongly influenced by its African roots. Ex. music
- Asian Immigrants
 - When slavery was abolished, workers were needed.
 - Asians came voluntarily to work in 19th century.



The Columbian Exchange



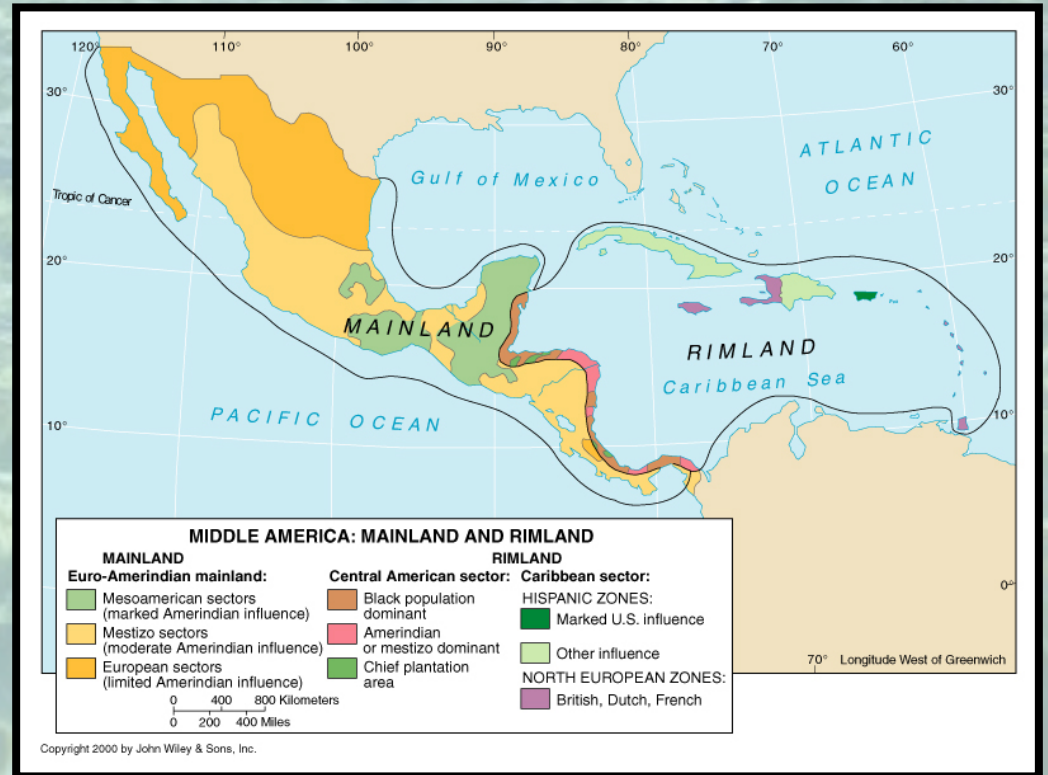
Mainland vs. Rimland

- Mainland

- Euro-Indian influence
- Greater isolation
- Hacienda prevailed

- Rimland

- Euro-African influence
- High accessibility
- Plantation economy



Mainland vs Rimland

	Mainland	Rimland
Location	Greater isolation	Greater accessibility
Climate	Altitudinal zonation	Tropical
Physiography	Mountains	Islands
Culture	Euro/Indians	Africans-Europeans
Race	Mestizo	Mulatto
Landholding Patterns	Haciendas	Plantations

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



Mary Lee Nolan

Agricultural Institutions

Plantation	Hacienda
Production for export	Domestic market
Single cash crop	Diversified crops
Seasonal employment	Year round jobs
Profit motive \$\$\$	Small plot of land
Market vulnerability	Self-sufficient

Economic Trends

- Agriculture- varies with elevation
- Industry
- Services
- Tourism
- Environmental Issues
 - Deforestation, Hurricane Damage

Tourism

- natural beauty
- draw tourists from all over the world
- hotels, airlines, and cruise ships owned by foreign corporation, not Caribbean islands
 - profits go to foreign owners
 - locals hired for unskilled jobs
 - poorly paid
 - laid off during off-season



Tourism: A Mixed Blessing?

- **Advantages**

- State and regional economic options
- A clean industry
- Educational

- **Disadvantages**

- Disjunctive development
- Degrades fragile environmental resources
- Inauthentic representations of native cultures

Environmental Concerns

- Tropical Deforestation
- 3 million acres of woodland in Central America disappear each year!



Causes of Tropical Deforestation

- 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
- What is the solution?

Current Event – Haiti Earthquake – 2010

■ Language? **French**

■ Ethnicity? **Euro-African**

■ What happened?
**Earthquake...Epicenter near
Port-au-Prince (capital)**

■ Who helped?
**Everyone in the world...
NOT just USA**

