



The story of corn:
Where does it come from?



The Maya Area



Teosinte - Corn's Ancestor

Zea mexicana



This tiny "corn" cob is 4 cm long. It is the seed pod of Teosinte, the ancient ancestor of modern corn.

Teosinte originated in Mexico and still grows wild in remote mountain areas of the Sierra Madre.



Evolution from the tiny single rowed cob of *Zea mexicana* to the large multiple rowed corn of today took place over thousands of years. Corn became the staple food that fueled the creation of the great Mesoamerican empires.



The people who constructed this 1500 year old Mayan temple at Xunantunich in Belize, revered corn and worshipped a corn god - Yum Kaax.

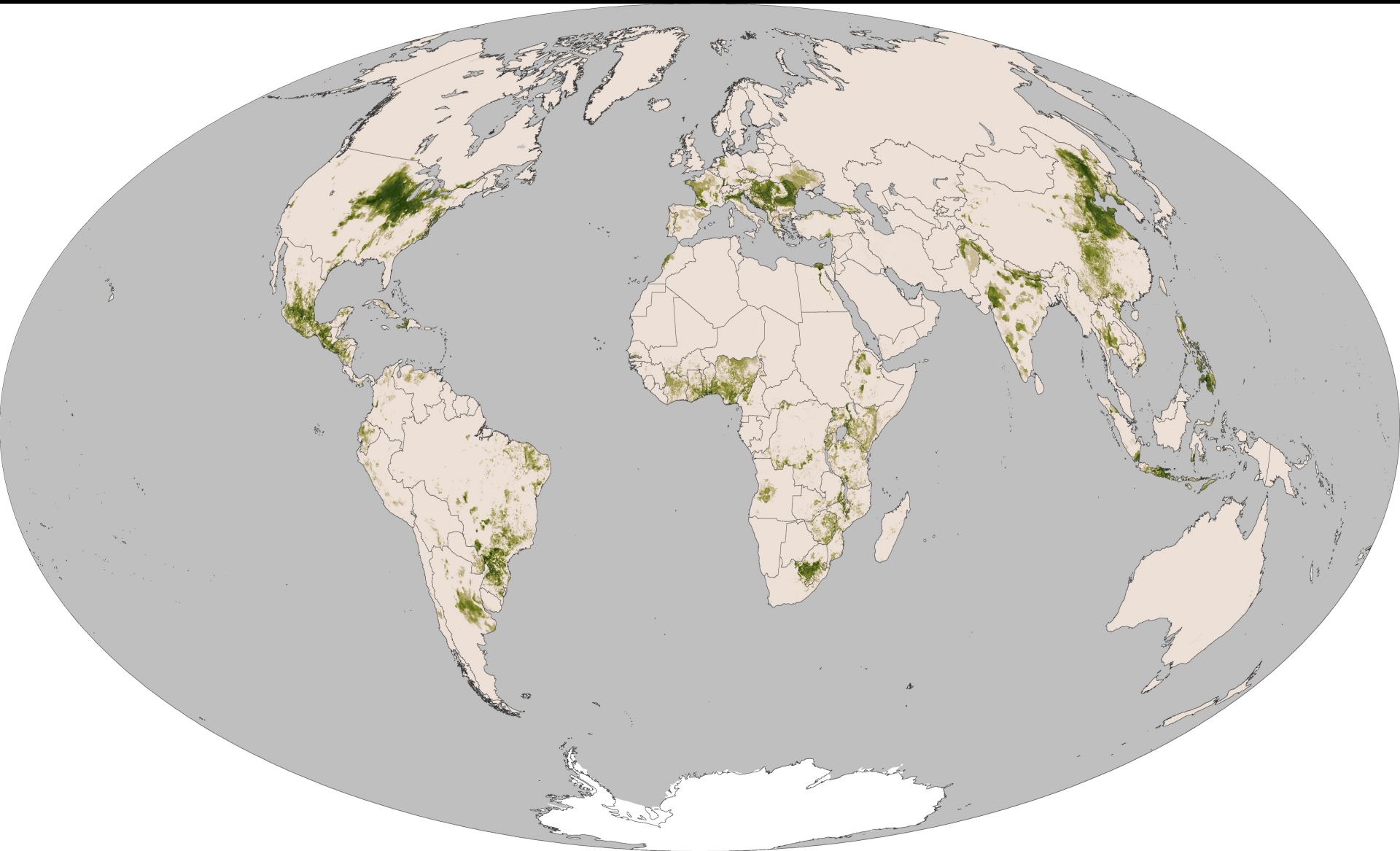
Jared Diamond in his book "Guns, Germs and Steel" makes the case that the great civilizations of Mesoamerica, the Maya and Aztecs, flourished because of these people's long relationship with corn - thousands of years of mutation and human selection that



catalyzed the evolution of Teosinte from a wild grass into modern corn.

North America







Teosinte



Modern Corn