

Climate Regions

If we were to embark on a trip up the Mississippi River, we would see a tremendous variety of climates. In Louisiana we would see hot, humid wetlands. The busy ports of Saint Louis are hot in summer and cold in winter, and the headwaters of the river in Minnesota have cool summers and frigid winters. Just as our country exhibits extremes in climate, so do many other countries and land areas. Latin American has a very diverse climatic pattern. It is dominated by two sharply contrasting features, the tropical lowlands and the mountainous regions, but these divisions can be further defined into eight distinct climates.

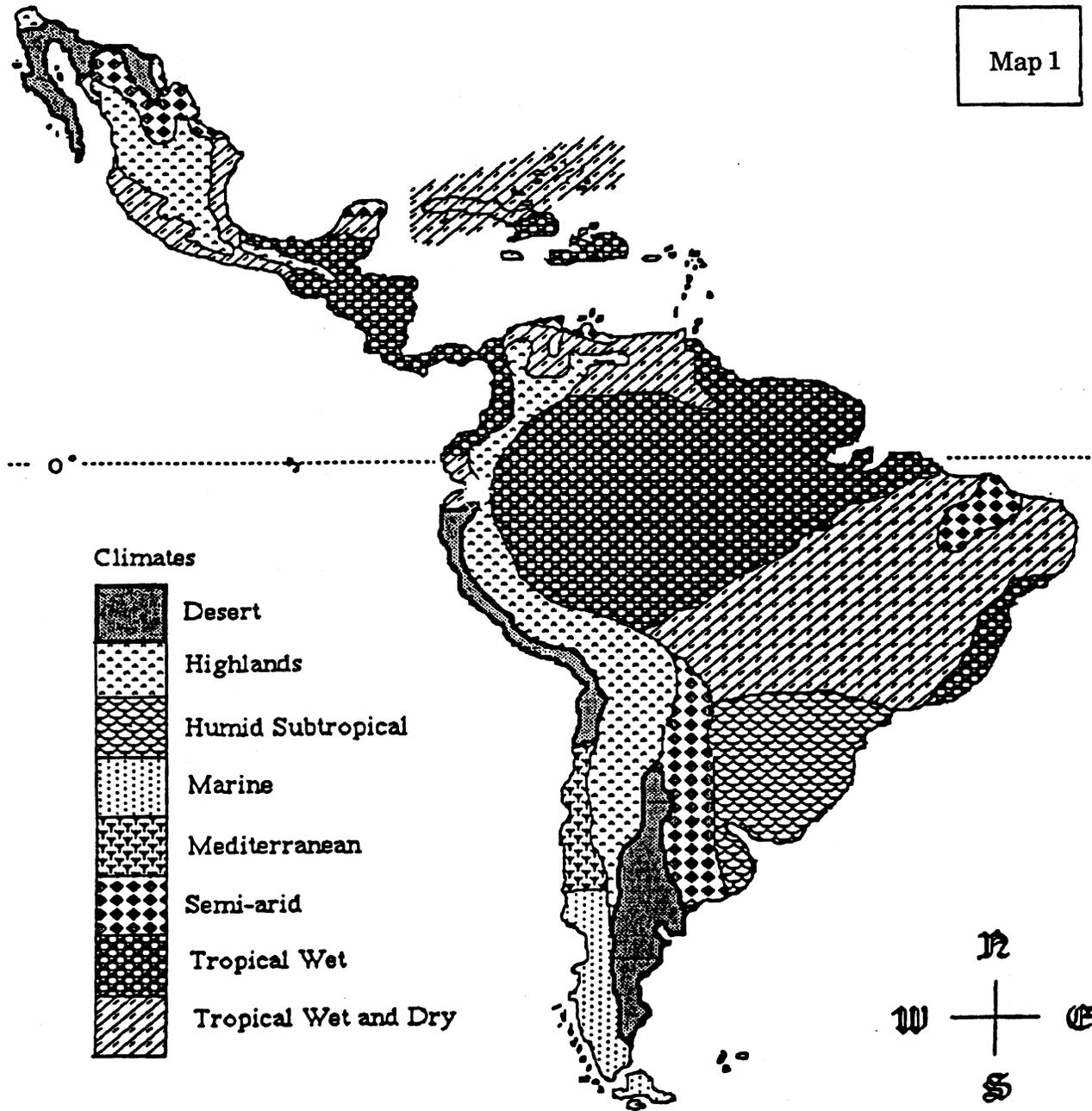
Many areas are dominated by tropical conditions. These tropical areas include the humid subtropical, tropical wet, and the tropical wet-and-dry climates. These climates cover the West

Indies, southern Mexico, most of Central America, parts of Colombia and Venezuela, and Guiana and Brazil. The lands have moderate to high levels of rainfall and are hot almost all year round. They have dense vegetation and produce mainly sugar cane, cacao, coffee, rice, and a variety of tropical fruits and nuts.

The mountainous regions—the Sierra Madres, the Central American highlands, and the Andes—are characterized by highland climates. These areas vary greatly in temperature and rainfall. Semi-arid conditions, which are important for livestock and ranching, are found in northern Mexico, Argentina, parts of Peru and Paraguay, and in northern Chile. Desert conditions also exist in parts of these areas. Central Chile has a coastal strip of Mediterranean climate, while its southern region has marine conditions.

LATIN AMERICAN CLIMATES

Map 1



Courtesy of:
Lisa J. Barczak of Tulane University, in conjunction with Ann Marie Marlow of the University of Wisconsin