

# Native Peoples of America, to 1500

**H**iwatha was in the depths of despair. For years his people, a group of five Native American nations known as the Iroquois, had engaged in a seemingly endless cycle of violence and revenge. Iroquois families, villages, and nations fought one another, and neighboring Indians attacked relentlessly. When Hiawatha tried to restore peace within his own Onondaga nation, an evil sorcerer caused the deaths of his seven beloved daughters. Grief-stricken, Hiawatha wandered alone into the forest. After several days, he experienced a series of visions. First he saw a flock of wild ducks fly up from the lake, taking the water with them. Hiawatha walked onto the dry lakebed, gathering the beautiful purple-and-white shells that lay there. He saw the shells, called wampum, as symbolic “words” of condolence that, when properly strung into belts and ceremonially presented, would soothe anyone’s grief, no matter how deep. Then he met a holy man named Deganawidah (the Peacemaker), who presented him with several wampum belts and spoke the appropriate words—one to dry his weeping eyes, another to open his ears to words of peace and reason, and a third to clear his throat so that he himself could once again speak peacefully and reasonably. Deganawidah and Hiawatha took the wampum to the five Iroquois nations. To each they introduced the ritual of condolence as a new message of peace. The Iroquois subsequently submerged their differences and created a council of chiefs

## CHAPTER OUTLINE

The First Americans,  
c. 13,000–2500 B.C.

Cultural Diversity,  
ca. 2500 B.C.–A.D. 1500

North American Peoples on the Eve  
of European Contact

and a confederacy based on the condolence ritual. Thus was born the powerful League of the Iroquois.

Although the story of Hiawatha and Deganawidah was retold by speakers through the generations but not written down until the late nineteenth century, it depicts a concrete event in American history. Archaeological findings corroborate the sequence of bloody warfare followed by peace, and date the league's origins at about A.D. 1400. Visionary Indian prophets continued to emerge among the Iroquois and other Native American peoples during the centuries after 1492. As with all of American history before Europeans brought their system of writing, archaeological evidence, oral traditions, and cultural patterns—examined critically—are our principal sources of evidence.

The founding of the League of the Iroquois represents one moment in a long history that began more than ten thousand years before Christopher Columbus reached America in 1492. It is also an example of the remarkable cultural diversity that had come to characterize the Western Hemisphere's indigenous peoples. Adapting to varied and changing environments, some Native Americans lived in small, mobile bands of hunter-gatherers. Others resided in seasonal or permanent villages where they grew crops, fished for salmon, or processed acorns. Still others lived in larger towns or even in cities. While the smallest bands were relatively egalitarian, in most societies leaders came from prominent families. In the largest societies, hereditary chiefs, kings, and emperors ruled far-flung peoples.

Underlying their diversity, Native Americans had much in common. First, they identified themselves primarily as members of multigenerational families rather than as individuals or (except in the very largest societies) subjects of governments. Second, most emphasized reciprocity and mutual obligation rather than coercion as means of maintaining harmony within and between communities. Third, they perceived the entire universe, including nature, as sacred. These core values arrived with the earliest Americans and persisted beyond the invasions of Europeans and their sharply contrasting ideas. Throughout their long history, Native Americans reinforced their commonalities through exchanges of material goods, new technologies, and religious ideas.

**This chapter will focus on three major questions:**

- How did the varied environments of the Western Hemisphere shape the emergence of a wide diversity of Native American cultures?
- What common values and practices did Native Americans share, despite their vast diversity?

## THE FIRST AMERICANS, C. 13,000–2500 B.C.

Precisely how and when the vast Western Hemisphere was first settled remains uncertain. Many Indians believe that their ancestors originated in the Americas, but most scientific theories point to the arrival of peoples from northeastern Asia during the last Ice Age (c. 33,000–10,500 B.C.), when land linked Siberia and Alaska. Thereafter, as the Ice Age waned and Earth's climate warmed, Native Americans (like their contemporaries in the Eastern Hemisphere) adapted to environments ranging from frigid to tropical. Though divided into small, widely scattered groups, they interacted through trade and travel. Over several thousand years, Indians learned from one another and developed ways of life that had much in common despite their diverse linguistic, ethnic, and historical backgrounds.

### Peopling New Worlds

Among several theories of the peopling of America, two predominate (see Map 1.1). One theory holds that Siberian hunters, pursuing game animals, crossed the expanse of land linking Asia with North America during the last Ice Age, arriving only around 10,500 B.C. According to this theory, the hunters made their way through a glacial corridor, dispersing themselves over much of the Western Hemisphere. There they discovered a hunter's paradise in which megafauna—giant mammoths, mastodons, horses, camels, bison, caribou, and moose—roamed, innocent of the ways of human predators. A second theory, based on recent archaeological finds, suggests that the first humans arrived much earlier by boat, following the then-continuous coast to Alaska and progressing southward. At various points along the way, groups stopped and either settled nearby or traveled inland to establish new homes. Coastal sites as far south as Monte Verde, in Chile, reveal evidence from about 10,500 B.C. of peoples who fed on marine life, birds, small mammals, and wild plants, as well as on the occasional mastodon. Most archaeologists and other scientists now conclude that the earliest Americans

arrived in multiple migrations by both these routes. In light of the most recent discoveries, it is probable that Americans had arrived by 13,000 B.C., if not earlier.

Most Native Americans are descended from the earliest migrants, but the ancestors of some came later, also from northeastern Asia. Peoples speaking a language

known as Athapaskan settled in Alaska and northwestern Canada in about 7000 B.C. Some Athapaskan speakers later migrated to the Southwest to form the Apaches and Navajos. After 3000 B.C., non-Indian Eskimos, or Inuits, and Aleuts began crossing the Bering Sea from Siberia to Alaska.

**MAP 1.1**  
**The Peopling of the Americas**

Scientists postulate two probable routes by which the earliest peoples reached America. By 9500 B.C., they had settled throughout the Western Hemisphere.



Native American oral traditions offer conflicting support for scientists' theories, depending on how the traditions are interpreted. Pueblos and Navajos in the Southwest tell how their forebears experienced perilous journeys through other worlds before emerging from underground in their present homelands, while the Iroquois trace their ancestry to a pregnant woman who fell from the "sky world." Among the Iroquois and other peoples, the original humans could not settle the water-covered planet until a diving bird or animal brought soil from the ocean bottom, creating an island on which they could walk. The Haida of British Columbia attribute rising seawaters to a "flood tide woman" whose work forced them to move inland to higher ground. Still other traditions recall large mammals, monsters, or "hairy people" with whom the first people shared Earth. Many Native Americans today insist that such accounts confirm that

their ancestors originated in the Western Hemisphere. However, other Indians note that the stories do not specify a place of origin and may well reflect the experiences of their ancestors as they journeyed from Asia, across water, ice, and unknown lands, and encountered large mammals before settling in their new homes. If not taken literally, they maintain, the traditions reinforce rather than contradict scientists' theories.

Paleo-Indians, as archaeologists call the earliest Americans, established the foundations of Native American life. Most Paleo-Indians appear to have traveled within well-defined hunting territories in bands consisting of several families and totaling about fifteen to fifty people. Men hunted, while women prepared food and cared for the children. Bands left their territories when traveling to quarries to obtain favored materials for making tools and spear points. There they encountered other bands, with whose members they exchanged ideas and goods, intermarried, and participated in religious ceremonies. These encounters enabled Paleo-Indians to develop a broad cultural life that transcended their small bands.

Around 9000 B.C. many species of megafauna, including mammoths, mastodons, horses, and giant bison, suddenly became extinct. Although scholars formerly believed that Paleo-Indian hunters killed off the large mammals, most now maintain that the mammals were doomed by the warming climate, which disrupted the food chain on which they depended. In other words, the extinction of big-game mammals was part of environmental changes associated with the end of the Ice Age. Among the major beneficiaries of these changes were human beings.

### Archaic Societies

After about 8000 B.C., peoples throughout the Americas began modifying their Paleo-Indian ways of life. The warming of Earth's atmosphere continued until about 4000 B.C., with far-reaching global effects. Sea levels rose, flooding low-lying coastal areas, while glacial runoff filled interior waterways. As the glaciers receded northward, so did the arctic and subarctic environments that had previously extended into what are now the lower forty-eight states of the United States. Treeless plains and evergreen forests gave way to deciduous forests in the East, grassland prairies on the Plains, and desert in much of the West. Grasslands in South America's Amazon River basin were replaced by a tropical rain forest. The immense range of flora and fauna with which we are familiar today emerged during this period.

Archaic peoples, as archeologists term Native Americans who flourished in these new environments, lived off the wider varieties of smaller mammals, fish, and wild plants that were now available. Using the resources of their environments more efficiently, communities required less land area and supported larger populations. Even peoples in the most extreme environments, such as deserts and the Arctic, while still traveling in small bands, now hunted smaller game and gathered wild plants. Indians in more temperate regions made even more drastic changes, with some residing in year-round villages. From about 3900 to 2800 B.C., for example, the 100 to 150 residents of a community near Kampsville, Illinois, obtained ample supplies of fish, mussels, deer and other mammals, birds, nuts, and seeds without leaving home.

Over time, Archaic Americans sharpened some distinctions between women's and men's roles. Men took responsibility for fishing as well as hunting, while women procured wild plant products. Gender roles are apparent in burials at Indian Knoll, in Kentucky, where tools relating to hunting, fishing, woodworking, and leatherworking were usually buried with men and those relating to cracking nuts and grinding seeds with women. Yet gender-specific distinctions did not apply to all activities, for objects used by religious healers were distributed equally between male and female graves.

Archaic Indians—women in most North American societies—honed their skills at harvesting wild plants. Through generations of close observation, they determined how to weed, prune, irrigate, transplant, burn, and otherwise manipulate their environments to favor plants that provided food and medicine. They also developed specialized tools for digging and grinding as well as more effective methods of drying and storing seeds. By 5000 B.C.—well before farming reached Europe—some Native American farmers were planting selected seeds for future harvesting.

The most sophisticated early plant cultivators lived in Mesoamerica (Mexico and Central America), particularly in the highland valleys of Tehuacan and Tamaulipas. Indians there cultivated squash, gourds, beans, chili peppers, and several species of fruits before 3000 B.C. At around this time, Tehuacan farmers began experimenting with a lowlands plant called teosinte. Some teosinte seeds grew in the mountain valleys, while others failed to grow. The successful seeds eventually evolved into a distinct but related species, called maize or corn. The earliest ears of maize were about the size of an adult human finger—much smaller than the corn we know today.

Maize agriculture quickly spread from Tehuacan. By 2500 B.C., Indians were growing it elsewhere in Mexico and Central America, in the Amazon River basin, and as far north as what is now New Mexico. Although maize itself was not yet grown elsewhere in North America, Indians cultivated squash and gourds in Missouri and Kentucky. Similarly, maize did not reach South America for several more centuries, but Andean peoples already cultivated potatoes; Amazonians grew manioc, a starchy root crop; and Pacific coastal dwellers harvested squash, beans, and peppers.

For a thousand years after plants were first domesticated, crops made up only a small part of Native Americans' diets. Meat, fish, and wild plants still predominated. Farming developed over many centuries before becoming any society's primary source of food.

## **CULTURAL DIVERSITY, C. 2500 B.C.–A.D. 1500**

After about 2500 B.C., many Native Americans moved beyond the ways of their Archaic forebears. The most far-reaching transformation occurred among peoples whose cultivated crops were their primary sources of food. Farming in some of these societies was so intensive that it radically changed the environment. Some nonfarming as well as farming societies transformed trade networks into extensive religious and political systems linking several—sometimes dozens of—local communities. Some of these groupings evolved into formal confederacies and even hierarchical states. In environments where food sources were few and widely scattered, mobile bands survived by hunting, fishing, and gathering.

### **Mesoamerica and South America**

As Mesoamerican farmers developed their methods, the quantity and quality of their crops increased. Annual production tripled at Tehuacan and Tamaulipas from 2500 to 2000 B.C., and selective breeding of maize resulted in larger ears. Farmers also planted beans alongside maize. The beans eaten released an amino acid, lysine, in the maize that further heightened its nutritional value. Higher yields and improved nutrition led some societies to center their lives around farming. Over the next eight centuries, maize-based farming societies spread throughout Mesoamerica.

After 2000 B.C., some Mesoamerican farming societies produced crop surpluses that they traded to less-populous, nonfarming neighbors. Expanding their trade contacts, a few of these societies established formal

exchange networks that enabled them to enjoy more wealth and power than their partners. After 1200 B.C., a few communities, such as those of the Olmecs in Mesoamerica (see Map 1.2) and Chavín de Huántar in the Andes (see Map 1.3), developed into large urban centers, subordinating smaller neighbors. Unlike earlier egalitarian societies, Indian cities were highly unequal, with thousands of residents dominated by a few wealthy elites and with hereditary rulers claiming kinship with religious deities. Laborers built elaborate religious temples and palaces, including the earliest pyramids in the Americas, and artisans created statues of the rulers and the gods.

Although the hereditary rulers exercised absolute power, their realms were limited to a few closely clustered communities. Anthropologists term such political societies chiefdoms, as opposed to states in which centralized, hierarchical power and institutions extend across broad spans of territory. Chiefdoms eventually emerged over much of the Americas, from the Miss-

issippi valley to the Amazon valley and the Andes Mountains. A few states arose in Mesoamerica after A.D. 1 and in South America after A.D. 500. Although men ruled most chiefdoms and states, women served as chiefs in some Andean societies until the Spanish arrived.

From capital cities with thousands of inhabitants, states centered at Monte Albán and Teotihuacán in Mesoamerica (see Map 1.2) and at Wari in the Andes (see Map 1.3) drafted soldiers and waged bloody wars of conquest. Bureaucrats administered state territories, collected taxes, and managed huge public works projects. Priests conducted ceremonies in enormous temples and presided over religious hierarchies extending throughout the states. The capital of the largest early state, Teotihuacán, was situated about fifty miles northeast of modern Mexico City and numbered about a hundred thousand people at the height of its power between the second and seventh centuries A.D. At its center was a complex of pyramids, the largest of which, the Sun

### MAP 1.2

#### Major Mesoamerican Cultures, c. 1000 B.C.–A.D.1519

The Aztecs consolidated earlier Mesoamerican cultural traditions. They were still expanding when invaded by Spain in 1519.



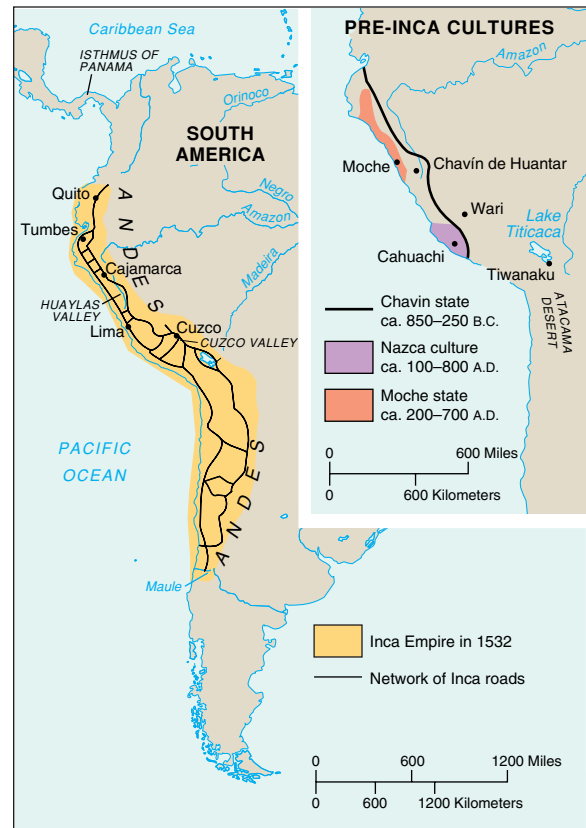
Pyramid, was about 1 million cubic meters in volume. Teotihuacán dominated the peoples of the valley of Mexico, and its trade networks extended over much of modern-day Mexico. Although Teotihuacán declined in the eighth century, it exercised enormous influence on the religion, government, and culture of its neighbors.

Teotihuacán's greatest influence was on the Maya, whose kingdom-states flourished from southern Mexico to Honduras between the seventh and fifteenth centuries. The Maya moved far beyond their predecessors in developing a calendar, a numerical system (which included the concept of zero), and a system of phonetic, hieroglyphic writing. Mayan scribes produced thousands of codices (singular, codex) in the form of pieces of bark paper glued into long, folded strips. The codices and other books recorded religious ceremonies, historical traditions, and astronomical observations.

Other powerful states flourished in Mesoamerica and South America until the fifteenth century, when two mighty empires arose to challenge them. The first was the empire of the Aztecs (known at the time as the Mexica), who had migrated from the north during the thirteenth century and settled on the shore of Lake Texcoco as subjects of the local inhabitants. Overthrowing their rulers in 1428, the Aztecs went on to conquer other cities around the lake and extended their domain to the Gulf Coast (see Map 1.2). The Aztec expansion took a bloody turn in the 1450s during a four-year drought, which the Aztecs interpreted as a sign that the gods, like themselves, were hungry. Aztec priests maintained that the only way to satisfy the gods was to serve them human blood and hearts. From then on, conquering Aztec warriors sought captives for sacrifice in order, as they believed, to nourish the gods.

A massive temple complex at the capital of Tenochtitlan formed the sacred center of the Aztec empire. The Great Temple consisted of two joined pyramids and was surrounded by several smaller pyramids and other buildings. Aztec culture reflected both Mesoamerican tradition and the multicultural character of the state. Most of the more than two hundred deities they honored originated with earlier and contemporary societies, including those they had subjugated. They based their system of writing on the one developed centuries before at Teotihuacán and their calendar on that of the Maya.

To support the nearly two hundred thousand people residing in and around Tenochtitlan, the Aztecs maximized their production of food. They drained swampy areas and added rich soil from the lake bottom to the *chinampas* (artificial islands) that formed. The highly fertile *chinampas* enabled Aztec farmers to supply the



**MAP 1.3**

**Major Andean Cultures, 900 B.C.–A.D. 1432**

Despite the challenges posed by the rugged Andes Mountains, native peoples there developed several complex societies and cultures, culminating in the Inca Empire.

urban population with food. Aztec engineers devised an elaborate irrigation system to provide fresh water for both people and crops.

The Aztecs collected taxes from subjects living within about a hundred miles of the capital. Conquered peoples farther away paid tribute, which replaced the free exchanges of goods they had formerly carried on with the Aztecs and other neighbors. Trade beyond the Aztec domain was conducted by *pochteca*, professional merchants who traveled in armed caravans. The *pochteca* sought salt, cacao, jewelry, feathers, jaguar pelts, cotton, and precious stones and metals, including gold and turquoise, the latter obtained from Indians in the American Southwest.

The Aztecs were still expanding in the early sixteenth century, but rebellions constantly flared within

their realm. They had surrounded and weakened, but not subjugated, one neighboring rival, while another blocked their westward expansion. Might the Aztecs have expanded still farther? We will never know because, seemingly from out of nowhere, Spanish *conquistadores* arrived in 1519 to alter forever the course of Mesoamerican history (see Chapter 2).

Meanwhile, another empire had arisen far to the south. From their sumptuous capital at Cuzco, the Inca people conquered and subordinated societies over much of the Andes and adjacent regions after 1438. One key to the Incas' expansion was their ability to produce and distribute a wide range of surplus crops, including maize, beans, potatoes, and meats. They constructed terraced irrigation systems for watering crops on uneven terrain, perfected freeze-drying and other preservation techniques, built vast storehouses, and constructed a vast network of roads and bridges. The Inca were still expanding when they were violently crushed in the sixteenth century by another, even more far-flung empire, the Spanish.

## The Southwest

The Southwest (including the modern American Southwest and most of northern Mexico) is a uniformly arid region with a variety of landscapes. Waters from rugged mountains and forested plateaus follow ancient channels through vast expanses of desert on their way to the gulfs of Mexico and California. The amount of water has fluctuated over time, depending on climatic conditions, but securing water has always been a challenge for southwestern peoples. Nevertheless, some of them augmented their supplies of water and became farmers.

Maize reached the Southwest via Mesoamerican trade links by about 2500 B.C. Yet full-time farming began only after 400 B.C., when the introduction of a more drought-resistant strain enabled some farmers to move from the highlands to drier lowlands. In the centuries that followed, southwestern populations rose, and Indian cultures were transformed. The two most influential new cultural traditions were the Hohokam and the Anasazi.

The Hohokam emerged during the third century B.C., when ancestors of the Pima and Tohono O'odham Indians began farming in the Gila and Salt River valleys of southern Arizona. Hohokam peoples built irrigation canals that enabled them to harvest two crops a year, an unprecedented feat in the arid environment. To construct and maintain their canals, the Hohokam organized large, coordinated work forces. They built perma-



ment towns, usually consisting of several hundred people. Although many towns remained independent, others joined confederations in which several towns were linked by canals. The central village in each confederation coordinated labor, trade, religion, and political life for all member communities.

Although a local creation, Hohokam culture drew extensively on Mesoamerican materials and ideas. From about the sixth century A.D., the large villages had ball courts and platform mounds similar to those in Mesoamerica at the time. Mesoamerican influence was also apparent in the creations of Hohokam artists, who worked in clay, stone, turquoise, and shell. Archaeologists have uncovered rubber balls, macaw feathers, cottonseeds, and copper bells from Mesoamerica at Hohokam sites.

The culture of the Anasazi, a Navajo term meaning ancient ones, originated during the first century B.C. in the Four Corners area where Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, and Utah meet. By around A.D. 700, the Anasazi people were harvesting crops, living in permanent villages, and making pottery. Thereafter, they expanded over a wide area and became the most powerful people in the Southwest.

One of the distinguishing characteristics of Anasazi culture was its architecture. Anasazi villages consisted of extensive complexes of attached apartments and storage rooms, along with kivas, partly underground struc-

tures in which men conducted religious ceremonies. To this day, Anasazi-style apartments and kivas are central features of Pueblo Indian architecture in the Southwest.

The height of Anasazi culture occurred between about 900 and 1150, during an unusually wet period in the Southwest. In Chaco Canyon, a cluster of twelve large towns forged a powerful confederation numbering about fifteen thousand people. A system of roads radiated from the canyon to satellite towns as far as sixty-five miles away. The roads were perfectly straight; their builders even carved out stairs or footholds on the sides of steep cliffs rather than go around them. By controlling rainwater runoff through small dams and terraces, the towns fed themselves as well as the satellites. The largest of the towns, Pueblo Bonito, had about twelve hundred inhabitants and was the home of two Great Kivas, each about fifty feet in diameter. People traveled over the roads from the satellites to Chaco Canyon's large kivas for religious ceremonies. The canyon was also a major trade center, importing and exporting a wide range of materials from and to Mesoamerica, the Great Plains, the Mississippi valley, and California.

The classic Anasazi culture, as manifested at Chaco Canyon, Mesa Verde in southwestern Colorado, and other sites, came to an end in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Although other factors contributed, the overriding cause of the Anasazi demise was drought. As has often happened in human history, an era of especially

abundant rainfall, which the Anasazi thought would last forever, abruptly ended. Without enough water, the highly concentrated inhabitants abandoned the great Anasazi centers, dispersing to form new, smaller pueblos. Their descendants would encounter Spanish colonizers three centuries later (see Chapter 2). Other concentrated communities, including the Hohokam, also dispersed when drought came. With farming peoples now clustered in the few areas with enough water, the drier lands of the Southwest attracted the nonfarming Apaches and Navajos, whose arrival at the end of the fourteenth century ended their long migration from the far north (mentioned above).

### The Eastern Woodlands

In contrast to the Southwest, the Eastern Woodlands—the vast expanse stretching from the Mississippi valley to the Atlantic Ocean—had abundant water. Water and deciduous forests provided Woodlands Indians with a rich variety of food sources, while the region's extensive river systems facilitated long-distance communication and travel. As a result, many eastern Indians established populous villages and complex confederations well before adopting full-time, maize-based farming.

By 1200 B.C., about five thousand people lived at Poverty Point on the lower Mississippi River. The town featured earthworks consisting of two large mounds and six concentric embankments, the outermost of which spanned more than half a mile in diameter. During the spring and autumn equinoxes, a person standing on the

larger mound could watch the sun rise directly over the village center. As in some Mesoamerican societies at the time, solar observations were the basis for religious beliefs and a calendar.

Poverty Point was the center of a much larger political and economic unit. The settlement imported large quantities of quartz, copper, obsidian, crystal, and other sacred materials from long distances for redistribution to nearby communities. These communities almost certainly supplied some of the labor for the earthworks. Poverty Point's general design and organization indicate Olmec influence from Mesoamerica (see above). Poverty Point flourished for about three centuries and then declined, for reasons unknown. Nevertheless, it foreshadowed later developments in the Eastern Woodlands.

A different kind of mound-building culture, called Adena, emerged in the Ohio valley around 400 B.C. Adena villages were smaller than Poverty Point, rarely exceeding four hundred inhabitants. But Adena people spread over a wide area and built hundreds of mounds, most of them containing graves. The treatment of Adena dead varied according to social or political status. Some corpses were cremated; others were placed in round clay basins; and still others were given elaborate tombs.

After 100 B.C. Adena culture evolved into a more complex and widespread culture known as Hopewell, which spread from the Ohio valley to the Illinois River valley. Some Hopewell centers contained two or three dozen mounds within enclosures of several square miles. The variety and quantity of goods buried with

members of the elite were also greater. Hopewell elites were buried with thousands of freshwater pearls or copper ornaments or with sheets of mica, quartz, or other sacred substances. Hopewell artisans fashioned fine ornaments and jewelry, which their owners wore in life and took to their graves. The raw materials for these objects originated in locales throughout America east of the Rockies. Through far-flung trade networks, Hopewell religious and technological influence spread to communities as far away as Wisconsin, Missouri, Florida, and New York. Although the great Hopewell centers were abandoned by about 600 (for reasons that are unclear), they had an enormous influence on subsequent developments in eastern North America.

The peoples of Poverty Point and the Adena and Hopewell cultures did little farming. Indian women in Kentucky and Missouri had cultivated small amounts of squash as early as 2500 B.C., and maize first appeared east of the Mississippi by 300 B.C.. But agriculture did not become a dietary mainstay for Woodlands people until between the seventh and twelfth centuries A.D., as women moved beyond gathering and minor cultivating activities to become the major producers of food.

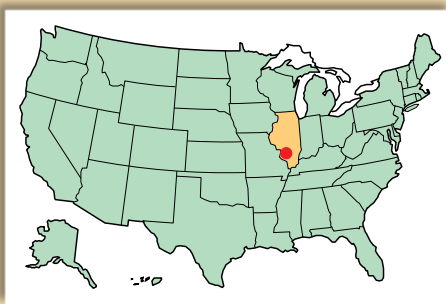
The first full-time farmers in the East lived on the floodplains of the Mississippi River and its major tributaries. Beginning around A.D. 700, they developed a new culture, called Mississippian. The volume of Mississippian craft production and long-distance trade

dwarfed that of the Adena and Hopewell peoples. As in Mesoamerica, Mississippian centers, numbering hundreds or even thousands of people, arose around open plazas. Large platform mounds adjoined the plazas, topped by sumptuous religious temples and the residences of chiefs and other elites. Religious ceremonies focused on the worship of the sun as the source of agricultural fertility. The people considered chiefs to be related to the sun. When a chief died, his wives and servants were killed so that they could accompany him in the afterlife. Largely in connection with their religious and funeral rituals, Mississippian artists produced highly sophisticated work in clay, stone, shell, copper, wood, and other materials.

After A.D. 900, Mississippian centers formed extensive networks based on river-borne trade and shared religious beliefs, each dominated by a single metropolis. The most powerful such system centered around Cahokia located near modern St. Louis (see *A Place in Time: Cahokia in 1200*).

For about two and a half centuries, Cahokia reigned supreme in the Mississippi valley. After A.D. 1200, however, Cahokia and other valley centers experienced shortages of food and other resources. As in the Southwest, densely concentrated societies had taxed a fragile environment with a fluctuating climate. One result was competition for suddenly scarce resources, which led to debilitating warfare and the undermining of Cahokia and

## Cahokia in 1200



Between the tenth and thirteenth centuries, a city of about twenty thousand people flourished near the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers. Called Cahokia, it filled more than 6 square miles and contained

more than 120 earthworks. At its center, a four-terraced structure called Monk's Mound covered 15 acres (more than the Great Pyramids of Egypt) and rose a hundred feet at its highest point. Surrounding the city, a 125-square-mile metropolitan area encompassed ten large towns and more than fifty farming villages. In addition, Cahokia dominated a vast network of commercial and political alliances extending over much of the American heartland.

Cahokia's beginnings lay in the seventh century A.D., as Native Americans in the East were shifting to farming as their primary means of procuring food. In search of better soil, several small villages moved to the low floodplain extending eastward from the Mississippi around what is now the Illinois side of greater St. Louis. Around A.D. 900, these villages began their transformation into a city with the construction of several mounds. Two centuries later, a stockade enclosed Monk's Mound and numerous other public structures, and most of the city's residents lived outside the walled precincts.

Cahokia was ideally situated for preeminence in mid-America. Its fertile land yielded surplus agricultural crops, which the women harvested, and the river provided rich supplies of fish and mussels. Game and wild plants abounded in nearby uplands. The city had ready access not only to the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers but also to the Ohio and Illinois Rivers, where Adena and Hopewell peoples had previously developed extensive trade networks based on shared religious beliefs. Cahokia and other Mississippian societies drew on Hopewell beliefs and new ideas from Mexico as they erected even more complex political, economic, and

religious institutions. By the twelfth century, some scholars believe, Cahokia was the capital of a potential nation-state.

Archaeology provides evidence of what Cahokians made and left in the ground as well as clues to their social structure, trade networks, and beliefs. Work gangs collected soil for the mounds with shovels made of wood and stone and carried the dirt in baskets to construction sites, often more than half a mile away. Much of the work force for this backbreaking labor undoubtedly was drawn from neighboring towns, which also contributed agricultural surpluses to feed specialized artisans and elites in the city. The artisans produced pottery, shell beads, copper ornaments, clothing, stone tools, and a range of other goods. Indians brought the raw materials for these objects from locations throughout eastern and central North America as tribute—payment by societies subordinated by Cahokia—or in return for the finished



products. The coordination of labor, trade, and other activities also required a sizable class of managers or overseers. Atop all these were the political and religious leaders, whose overpowering roles are confirmed by eighteenth-century French accounts of a similar society among the Natchez Indians near Louisiana.

Archaeologists also find evidence of social ranking at Cahokia in the treatment of the dead. Most people were buried in mass graves outside the city, but more prestigious commoners were placed in ridge-top mounds, and those of highest status in conical mounds. In the most remarkable mound, a man was laid out on a platform of twenty thousand beads made from shells originating in the Gulf of Mexico. He was surrounded by bushels of mica from the Appalachians, a sheet of rolled copper from Lake Superior, and quivers of arrows from communities throughout the Mississippi valley. This extraordinary man did not go to his grave alone. An adjacent pit contained the bodies of fifty young females in their late teens and early twenties; another held the remains of four men whose heads and hands were cut off; and a third included three men and three women. French witnesses describe how, when a Natchez ruler died, his wife, servants, guards, and others personally attached to him were killed so that they could accompany him in the afterlife. The people called this ruler the Great Sun to denote his position as an earthly representative of the sun, the central focus of Mississippian reli-

gion. This burial and others at Cahokia appear to be based on similar beliefs.

By 1200 Cahokia had reached its peak. During the century that followed, it declined in size and power, while other centers in the Southeast and Midwest surpassed it. Although the causes of this decline are not certain, the archaeological evidence provides clues. First, neighboring communities were straining to produce enough crops to feed themselves and the many Cahokians who did not grow their own food. Second, the city's demands for fuel and construction materials were seriously reducing the supply of wood in and around Cahokia. This depletion of the forests also deprived residents of the animals and wild plants on which they depended for food. Third, the strengthening of the stockade surrounding central Cahokia suggests that the elites were facing a military challenge from inside or outside the city, or both. Finally, the trade networks that formerly brought tribute to Cahokia and carried away the city's finished products had collapsed. Taken together, these trends indicate that a combination of environmental factors and resistance to centralized authority probably led to Cahokia's downfall. By the time the French explorer La Salle passed through in 1682 (see Chapter 3), Cahokia was a small village of Illinois Indians who, like other native peoples of the region, had abandoned Mississippian religious and political systems for the autonomous villages of their ancestors.

its allies. The survivors fled to the surrounding prairies and, in some cases, westward to the lower valleys of the Plains. By the fifteenth century, their descendants were living in villages linked by reciprocity rather than coercion. Mississippian chiefdoms and temple mound centers persisted in the Southeast, where Spanish explorers would later encounter them (see Chapter 2).

Despite Cahokia's decline, Mississippian culture profoundly affected Native Americans in the Eastern Woodlands. Mississippians spread new strains of maize and beans, along with techniques and tools for cultivating these crops, enabling women to weave agriculture into the fabric of village life. Only in some northerly areas was the growing season usually too short for maize (which required 120 frost-free days) to be a reliable crop.

Woodland peoples' slash-and-burn method of land management was environmentally sound and economically productive. Indian men systematically burned hardwood forests, eliminating the underbrush and forming open, parklike expanses. Although they occasionally lost control of a fire, so that it burned beyond their hunting territory, the damage was not lasting. Burned-over tracts favored the growth of grass and berry bushes that attracted a profusion of deer and other game. They then cleared fields so that women could plant corn, beans, and pumpkins in soil enriched by ash. After several years of abundant harvests, yields declined, and the Indians moved to another site to repeat the process. Ground cover eventually reclaimed the abandoned clearing, restoring fertility naturally, and the Indians could return.

## Nonfarming Societies

Outside the Southwest and the Eastern Woodlands, farming north of Mesoamerica was either impossible because of inhospitable environments or impractical because native peoples could obtain enough food from wild sources with less work. On the Northwest coast, from the Alaskan panhandle to northern California, and in the Columbia Plateau, Indians devoted brief periods of each year to catching salmon and other spawning fish. After drying the fish, they stored it in quantities sufficient to last the year. As a result, their seasonal movements gave way to a settled lifestyle in permanent villages. For example, the Makah Indians of Ozette, on Washington's Olympic Peninsula, pursued fish and sea mammals, including whales, while procuring shellfish, salmon and other river fish, land mammals, and wild plants.

By A.D. 1, most Northwest Coast villages numbered several hundred people who lived in multifamily houses built of cedar planks. Trade and warfare with interior groups strengthened the wealth and power of chiefs and other elites. Leading families displayed their power in elaborate totem poles depicting their descent from spiritual figures, and in potlaches—ceremonies in which they gave away or destroyed their material wealth. From the time of the earliest contacts, Europeans were amazed by the artistic and architectural achievements of the Northwest Coast Indians. “What must astonish most,” wrote a French explorer in 1791, “is to see painting everywhere, everywhere sculpture, among a nation of hunters.”

At about the same time, Native Americans on the coast and in the valleys of what is now California were clustering in villages of about a hundred people to coordinate the processing of acorns. After gathering millions of acorns from California's extensive oak groves each fall, the Indians ground them into meal, leached them of their bitter tannic acid, and then roasted, boiled, or baked the nuts prior to eating or storing them. Facing intense competition for acorns, California Indians combined their villages into chiefdoms and defended their territories. Chiefs conducted trade, diplomacy, war, and religious ceremonies. Along with other wild species, acorns enabled the Indians of California to prosper. As a Spanish friar arriving in California from Mexico in 1770 wrote, “This land exceeds all the preceding territory in fertility and abundance of things necessary for sustenance.”

Between the Eastern Woodlands and the Pacific coast, the Plains and deserts remained too dry to sup-

port large human settlements. Dividing the region are the Rocky Mountains, to the east of which lie the grasslands of the Great Plains, while to the west are several deserts of varying elevations that ecologists call the Great Basin. Except in the Southwest, Native Americans in this region remained in mobile hunting-gathering bands.

Plains Indian hunters pursued a variety of game animals, including antelope, deer, elk, and bear, but their favorite prey was buffalo, or bison, a smaller relative of the giant bison that had flourished before the arrival of humans. Buffalo provided Plains Indians with meat and with hides, from which they made clothing, bedding, portable houses (tipis), kettles, shields, and other items. They made tools from buffalo bones and containers and arrowheads from buffalo horns, and they used most other buffalo parts as well. Limited to travel by foot, Plains hunters stampeded herds of bison into small box canyons, easily killing the trapped animals, or over cliffs. Dozens, or occasionally hundreds, of buffalo would be killed. Since a single buffalo could provide two hundred to four hundred pounds of meat and a band had no means of preserving and storing most of it, the latter practice was especially wasteful. On the other hand, humans were so few in number that they had no significant impact on the bison population before the arrival of Europeans. There are no reliable estimates of the number of buffalo then roaming the Plains, but the earliest European observers were flabbergasted. One Spanish colonist, for example, witnessed a “multitude so great that it might be considered a falsehood by one who had not seen them.”

During and after the Mississippian era, groups of Eastern Woodlands Indians migrated to the lower river valleys of the Plains, where over time the rainfall had increased enough to support cultivated plants. In contrast to Native Americans already living on the Plains, such as the Blackfeet and the Crow, farming newcomers like the Mandans and Pawnees built year-round villages and permanent earth lodges. But they also hunted buffalo and other animals. (Many of the Plains Indians familiar today, such as the Sioux and Comanche, moved to the region only after Europeans had begun colonizing North America [see Chapter 4].)

As Indians elsewhere increased their food production, the Great Basin grew warmer and dryer, further limiting already scarce sources of foods. Ducks and other waterfowl on which Native Americans formerly feasted disappeared as marshlands dried up after 1200 B.C., and the number of buffalo and other game animals also dwindled. Great Basin Indians countered these

trends by relying more heavily on piñon nuts, which they harvested, stored, and ate in winter camps. Hunting improved after about A.D. 500, when Indians in the region adopted the bow and arrow.

In western Alaska, where the first Americans had appeared thousands of years earlier, Eskimos and Aleuts, carrying highly sophisticated tools and weapons from their Siberian homeland, arrived after 3000 B.C. Combining ivory, bone, and other materials, they fashioned harpoons and spears for the pursuit of sea mammals and—in the case of the Eskimos—caribou. Through continued contacts with Siberia, the Eskimos introduced the bow and arrow in North America. As they perfected their ways of living in the cold tundra environment, many Eskimos spread westward across upper Canada and to Greenland.

Long before the arrival of Columbus, some Eskimos and Indians made contact with Europeans and used some of their material goods. From about A.D. 1, Eskimos in western Alaska acquired European-made iron tools by way of Russia and Siberia. However, the tools were too few in number to affect Eskimo culture in any substantial way. Contacts between Native Americans and Europeans were more direct and sustained after about 980, when Norse expansionists from Scandinavia colonized parts of Greenland. The Greenland Norse hunted furs, obtained timber, and traded with Eskimo people on the eastern Canadian mainland. They also made several attempts,

beginning in about 1000, to colonize Vinland, as they called Newfoundland. The Vinland Norse initially exchanged metal goods for ivory with the local Beothuk Indians, but peaceful trade gave way to hostile encounters. Within a century, Beothuk resistance led the Norse to withdraw from Vinland. As a Norse leader, dying after losing a battle with some natives, put it, “There is fat around my belly! We have won a fine and fruitful country, but will hardly be allowed to enjoy it.” Although some Norse remained in Greenland as late as the 1480s, it was other Europeans who would enjoy, at the expense of native peoples, the fruits of a “New World.”

Although the peoples of the Western and Eastern Hemispheres developed entirely apart from one another, their histories are in many ways comparable. Yet environmental and other limitations prevented some features of Eurasian and African cultures from arising in the Americas. Most fundamental was the unavailability of animals that could have been domesticated (other than llamas in the Andes and dogs). Lacking cattle, sheep, and hogs, Native Americans relied on wild meat instead of producing their own. Without horses, they had no incentive to develop the wheel (although the Maya made children’s toys with wheels). There is no telling how American history might have unfolded in the absence of the European invasions that began in 1492.

## NORTH AMERICAN PEOPLES ON THE EVE OF EUROPEAN CONTACT

By A.D. 1500, native peoples had transformed the Americas into a dazzling array of cultures and societies (see Map 1.4). The Western Hemisphere numbered about 75 million people, most thickly clustered in urbanized areas of Mesoamerica and South America. But North America was no empty wasteland. Between 7 million and 10 million Indians lived north of Mesoamerica. They were unevenly distributed. As they had for thousands of years, small, mobile hunting bands peopled the Arctic, Subarctic, Great Basin, and much of the Plains. More sedentary societies based on fishing or gathering predominated along the Pacific coast, while village-based agriculture was typical in the Eastern Woodlands and the river valleys of the Southwest and Plains. Mississippian urban centers still prevailed in areas of the Southeast. All these peoples grouped themselves in several hundred

nations and tribes, and spoke hundreds of languages and dialects.

Despite the vast differences among Native Americans, much bound them together. Rooted in common practices, Indian societies were based on kinship, the norms of reciprocity, and communal use and control of resources. Trade facilitated the exchange not only of goods but also of technologies and ideas. Thus, the bow and arrow, ceramic pottery, and certain religious values and practices characterized Indians everywhere.

### Kinship and Gender

Like their Archaic forebears, Indian peoples north of the Mesoamerican states were bound together primarily by kinship. Ties among biological relatives created complex patterns of social obligation and interdependence, even in societies that did not expect spouses to be married forever. Customs regulating marriage varied considerably, but strict rules always prevailed. In most cultures, young people married in their teens, after winning social acceptance as adults and, generally, after a period of sexual experimentation. Sometimes male leaders took more than one wife, but nuclear families (a husband, a wife, and their biological children) never stood alone. Instead, they lived with one of the parents’ relatives in what social scientists call extended families.

In some Native American societies, such as the Iroquois, the extended families of women took precedence over those of men. Upon marriage, a new husband moved in with his wife’s extended family. The primary male authority figure in a child’s life was the mother’s oldest brother, not the father. In many respects, a husband and father was simply a guest of his wife’s family. Other Indian societies recognized men’s extended families as primary, and still others did not distinguish sharply between the status of female and male family lines.

Kinship was also the basis for armed conflict. Indian societies typically considered homicide a matter to be resolved by the extended families of the victim and the perpetrator. If the perpetrator’s family offered a gift that the victim’s family considered appropriate, the question was settled; if not, political leaders attempted to resolve the dispute. Otherwise, the victim’s family members and their supporters might seek to avenge the killing by armed retaliation. Such feuds could escalate into wars between communities. The potential for war rose when densely populated societies competed for scarce resources, as on the Northwest and California coasts,



and when centralized Mississippian societies used coercion to dominate trade networks. Yet Native American warfare generally remained minimal, with rivals seeking to humiliate one another and seize captives rather than inflict massive casualties or conquer land. A New

England officer, writing in the seventeenth century, described a battle between two Indian groups as “more for pastime than to conquer and subdue enemies.” He concluded that “they might fight seven years and not kill seven men.”

**MAP 1.4**  
**Locations of Selected Native American Peoples, A.D. 1500**

Today's Indian nations were well established in homelands across the continent when Europeans first arrived. Many would combine with others or move in later centuries, either voluntarily or because they were forced.



Women did most of the cultivating in farming societies except in the Southwest (where women and men shared the responsibility). With women producing the greater share of the food supply, some societies accorded them more power than did Europeans. Among the Iroquois, for example, women collectively owned the fields, distributed food, and played a decisive role in selecting chiefs. In New England, women often served as sachems, or political leaders.

### Spiritual and Social Values

Native American religions revolved around the conviction that all nature was alive, pulsating with spiritual power—*manitou* in the Algonquian languages, *orenda* in the Iroquoian, and *wakan* in the Siouan. A mysterious, awe-inspiring force that could affect human life for both good and evil, such power united all nature in an unbroken web. *Manitou* encompassed “every thing which they cannot comprehend,” reported Rhode Island’s Roger Williams. Native Americans endeavored to conciliate the spiritual forces in their world—living

things, rocks and water, sun and moon, even ghosts and witches. For example, Indian hunters prayed to the spirits of the animals they killed, thanking them for the gift of food.

Indians had several ways of gaining access to spiritual power. One was through dreams. Most Native Americans took very seriously the visions that came to them in sleep. Some also sought power through difficult physical ordeals. Young men in many societies gained recognition as adults through a vision quest—a solitary venture that entailed fasting and awaiting the appearance of a spirit who would endow them with special powers and sometimes, as in Hiawatha’s case, entrust them with a message of import for their people. Girls underwent rituals at the onset of menstruation to initiate them into the spiritual world from which female reproductive power flowed. Entire communities often practiced collective power-seeking rituals such as the Sun Dance, performed by Indians of the Plains and Great Basin.

Native Americans who had gained special religious powers assisted others in communicating with unseen

spirits. These medicine men and women were healers who used both medicinal plants and magical chants to cure illnesses. They also served as spiritual advisers and leaders, interpreting dreams, guiding vision quests, and conducting ceremonies. Chiefs claiming kinship with spiritual forces had to maintain respectful relations with these religious leaders to support their claims.

Native American societies demanded a strong degree of cooperation. From early childhood, Indians in most cultures learned to be accommodating and reserved—slow to reveal their own feelings until they could sense the feelings of others. Using physical punishment sparingly, if at all, Indians punished children psychologically, by public shaming. Communities sought unity through consensus rather than tolerating lasting divisions. Political leaders articulated slowly emerging agreements in dramatic oratory. The English colonizer John Smith noted that the most effective Native American leaders spoke “with vehemency and so great passions that they sweat till they drop and are so out of breath they scarce can speak.”

Native Americans reinforced cooperation with a strong sense of order. Custom, the demands of social conformity, and the rigors of nature strictly regulated life and people’s everyday affairs. Exacting familial or community revenge was a ritualized way of restoring order that had broken down. On the other hand, the failure of measures to restore order could bring the fearful consequences experienced by Hiawatha’s Iroquois—blind hatred, unending violence, and the most dreaded of evils, witchcraft. In fearing witchcraft, Native Americans resembled the Europeans and Africans they would encounter after 1492.

The principle of reciprocity, perfected in Archaic times, remained strong among Native Americans. Reciprocity involved mutual give-and-take, but its aim was not to ensure equality. Instead, societies based on reciprocity tried to maintain equilibrium and interdependence between individuals of unequal power and prestige. Even in the most complex societies, chiefs coordinated families’ uses of land and other resources, but never awarded these outright.

Most Indian leaders’ authority depended on the obligations they bestowed rather than on coercion. By distributing gifts, they obligated members of the community to support them and to accept their authority, however limited. The same principle applied to relations between societies. Powerful communities distributed gifts to weaker neighbors who reciprocated with tribute in the form of material goods and submission. A French

observer in early-seventeenth-century Canada clearly understood: “For the savages have that noble quality, that they give liberally, casting at the feet of him whom they will honor the present that they give him. But it is with hope to receive some reciprocal kindness, which is a kind of contract, which we call . . . ‘I give thee, to the end thou shouldst give me.’ ”

## CONCLUSION

When Europeans “discovered” America in 1492, they did not, as they thought, enter a static world of simple savages. For thousands of years, Native Americans had tapped the secrets of the land, sustaining themselves and flourishing in almost every environment. Native Americans transformed the landscape, as evidenced by their hunting camps, communities, and cornfields. But Indians never viewed these accomplishments as evidence of their ability to conquer nature. Rather, they saw themselves as participants in a natural and spiritual order that pervaded the universe, and their attitudes, as expressed in their religious practices, were gratitude and concern lest they violate that order.

These beliefs did not necessarily make all Native Americans careful conservationists. Plains hunters often killed more animals than they could eat; and eastern Indians sometimes burned more land than intended. But the effect of such acts were limited; Indians did not repeat them often enough to eliminate entire species. However, some Indians’ actions were more consequential. The decline of the great Anasazi and Mississippian centers resulted from excessive demands placed on their environments by large concentrations of people.

After 1500, a new attitude toward the land made itself felt in North America. “A people come from under the world, to take their world from them”—thus a Mannahoac Indian characterized the English who invaded his homeland to found Virginia. Certain that God had given Christians dominion over nature, European newcomers claimed vast expanses of territory for their crowned heads. They divided much of the land into plots, each to be owned by an individual or family and to be valued according to the wealth it produced. Over the ensuing centuries, they ignored and even belittled Native American strategies that allowed natural resources to renew themselves. The modern society that has arisen on the Indians’ ancient continent bears little resemblance to the world that Native Americans once knew.

**CHRONOLOGY 13,000 B.C.–A.D. 1500**

- c. 13,000 B.C.** People present in America.
- c. 10,500–9000 B.C.** Paleo-Indians established throughout Western Hemisphere.
- c. 9000 B.C.** Extinction of big-game mammals.
- c. 8000 B.C.** Earliest Archaic societies.
- c. 7000 B.C.** Athapaskan-speaking peoples enter North America.
- c. 5000 B.C.** First domesticated plants grown.
- c. 3000 B.C.** First maize grown in Mesoamerica.
- c. 3000–2000 B.C.** Eskimo and Aleut peoples enter North America from Siberia.
- c. 2500 B.C.** Archaic societies begin giving way to a more diverse range of cultures. First maize grown in North America.
- c. 1200 B.C.** First chiefdoms emerge.
- c. 1200–900 B.C.** Poverty Point flourishes in Louisiana.
- c. 400–100 B.C.** Adena culture flourishes in Ohio valley.
- c. 250 B.C.** Hohokam culture begins in Southwest.
- c. 100 B.C.** Anasazi culture begins in Southwest.
- c. 100 B.C.–A.D. 600** Hopewell culture thrives in Midwest.
- c. A.D. 1** Rise of chiefdoms on Northwest Coast and in California.
- c. 100–700** Teotihuacán flourishes in Mesoamerica.
- c. 600–1400** Mayan kingdoms flourish.
- c. 700** Mississippian culture begins. Anasazi expansion begins.
- c. 900** Urban center arises at Cahokia.
- c. 980** Norse arrive in Greenland.
- c. 1000–1100** Norse attempt to colonize Vinland (Newfoundland).
- c. 1200** Anasazi and Hohokam peoples disperse in Southwest.
- c. 1200–1400** Cahokia declines and inhabitants disperse.
- c. 1400** League of the Iroquois formed.
- 1428** Rise of Aztec Empire.
- 1438** Rise of Inca Empire.
- 1492** Christopher Columbus reaches Western Hemisphere.

**FOR FURTHER REFERENCE****READINGS**

*The Cambridge History of the Native Peoples of the Americas* (3 vols., 1996–2000). Volumes on North America, Mesoamerica, and South America, each containing authoritative essays by archaeologists and historians covering the entire expanse of Native American history.

Cheryl Claassen and Rosemary A. Joyce, eds., *Women in Prehistory: North America and Mesoamerica* (1997). Fourteen essays draw on and examine archaeological evidence of women's roles and gender identity in a range of Native American societies.

Thomas D. Dillehay, *The Settlement of the Americas: A New Prehistory* (2000). An excellent critical review of current scholarly debates on the earliest Americans.

Brian Fagan, *Ancient North America: The Archaeology of a Continent* (2000). A comprehensive introduction to the continent's history before Europeans' arrival.

William W. Fitzhugh and Elisabeth I. Ward, eds., *Vikings: The North Atlantic Saga* (2000). Thirty-one essays, along with hundreds of illustrations, cover virtually everything scholars now know about Norse colonization in the North Atlantic.

Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., *America in 1492: The World of the Indian Peoples Before the Arrival of Columbus* (1992). Highly readable regional and thematic essays on life in the Western Hemisphere on the eve of European contact.

Shepard Krech III, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (1999). A controversial, well-informed critique of the idea that Native Americans invariably lived in harmony with nature before Europeans arrived.

Lynda Norene Shaffer, *Native Americans Before 1492: The Moundbuilding Centers of the Eastern Woodlands* (1992). A thoughtful, readable interpretation of eastern mound-builders from Poverty Point to the Mississippians.

William C. Sturtevant, gen. ed., *Handbook of North American Indians* (20 vols. projected, 1978–). A reference work, still in progress, providing basic information on the history and culture of Native American societies, as well as surveys of regional archaeology and essays on topics of special interest.

Lawrence E. Sullivan, ed., *Native American Religions: North America* (1989). Essays focusing on religious life and expression throughout the continent.

## WEBSITES

### American Indian History and Related Issues

**<http://www.csulb.edu/projects/ais/index.html#north>**  
(American Indian Studies Program, California State University, Long Beach) Provides links to hundreds of sites relating to Native Americans before and after 1492.

### Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site

**<http://medinfo.wustl.edu/~mckinney/cahokia/cahokia.html>**  
(Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site, Collinsville, IL)  
An introduction to archaeology at Cahokia, with visitor information about the site of North America's earliest metropolis.

### Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center

**<http://www.mashantucket.com/index1.html>**  
(Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center, Mashantucket, CT) Includes discussion of the museum's ongoing archaeological research, an introduction to its collection of more than two thousand objects, and an online information resources catalog. Emphasis on northeastern Native Americans, especially in New England.

### Sipapu: The Anasazi Emergence into the Cyber World

**<http://sipapu.gsu.edu/>**  
(John Kantner, Department of Anthropology and Geography, Georgia State University, Atlanta) An excellent site that enables visitors to explore Anasazi structures as well as learn about the history of a major southwestern culture.