



CHAPTER ONE

A CONTINENT OF VILLAGES TO 1500

Painting of aerial view of Cahokia Mounds circa AD 1100-1450. By William K.jereminger. Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site



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Cahokia: Thirteenth-Century Life on the Mississippi

As the sun rose over the rich floodplain, the people of the riverbank city set about their daily tasks. Some went to shops where they manufactured tools, crafted pottery, worked metal, or fashioned ornamental jewelry—goods destined to be exchanged in the far corners of the continent. Others left their densely populated neighborhoods for the outlying countryside, where in the summer heat they worked the seemingly endless fields that fed the city. From almost any point people could see the great temple that rose from the center of their city—the temple where priests in splendid costumes acted out public rituals of death and renewal.

This thirteenth-century city was not in preindustrial Europe but in North America. It flourished long before the first European explorer arrived. Its residents lived and worked on the alluvial soil of the Mississippi River, across from present-day St. Louis, at a place archaeologists have named Cahokia. In its heyday, in the mid-1200s, Cahokia was an urban cluster of perhaps 30,000 people. Its farm fields were abundant with corn, beans, and pumpkins, crops no European had ever seen. The temple, a huge earthwork pyramid, covered fifteen acres at its base and rose as high as a ten-story building. On top were the sacred residences of chiefs and priests, who dressed in elaborate headdresses made from the plumage of American birds.

By the fourteenth century, Cahokia had been abandoned, but its great central temple mound and dozens of smaller ones in the surrounding area, as well as hundreds more throughout the Mississippi Valley, remained to puzzle the European immigrants who resettled the valley in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Treasure seekers plundered the mounds, and most were eventually dynamited and plowed under for farmland. Only a few were saved, inside parks or estates. Cahokia's central mound survived because in the nineteenth century its summit became the site of a monastery, now long gone.

The Europeans who first explored and excavated these mounds were convinced they were the ruins of a vanished civilization, but could not believe they were the work of Native Americans. The first comprehensive study of Cahokia, published in 1848 under the sponsorship of the Smithsonian Institution, noted that "the mound-builders were an agricultural people, considerably advanced in arts, manners, habits, and religion." But because "Indians were hunters averse to labor, and not known to have constructed any works approaching [the] skillfulness of design or [the] magnitude" of Cahokia, surely these wonders must have been constructed by a "lost race."

The Smithsonian scientists were wrong. Thanks to modern archaeology and anthropology we now know that it was the ancestors

of contemporary Native Americans who began to construct massive earthworks in the Mississippi Valley as early as 1300 B.C.E. (Before the Common Era) at a place called Poverty Point in Louisiana. The vast urban complex of Cahokia flourished from the tenth to the fourteenth century and at its height stretched six miles along the Mississippi. Its residents were not nomadic hunters but farmers, members of an agricultural society—which archaeologists call the Mississippian—that had developed highly productive techniques of cultivation. Hundreds of acres of crops fed the people of Cahokia, which was the most populated urban community north of the Valley of Mexico. Mississippian farmers constructed ingenious raised plots of land on which they heaped compost in wide ridges for improved drainage and protection from unseasonable frosts. To their square houses of wood and mud they attached pens in which they kept flocks of domesticated turkeys and, perhaps, small herds of young deer that they slaughtered for meat and hides. Cahokia was at the center of a long-distance trading system that linked it to Indian towns over a vast area. Cahokia's specialized artisans were renowned for the manufacture of high-quality flint hoes, exported throughout the Mississippi Valley. Copper came to the city from Lake Superior, mica from the southern Appalachians, conch shells from the Atlantic coast.

The archaeological evidence suggests that Cahokia was emerging as a state supported by tribute and taxation. Like the awe-inspiring public works of early urban societies in other parts of the world—the pyramids of ancient Egypt, the

acropolis of Athens—the great temple mound of Cahokia reflected the city's wealth and power. The great mound and other colossal public works at Cahokia were monuments of a society dominated by an elite class of priests and rulers. From their residences and temples atop the mound the city's elite could look down on their awe-struck subjects. There is no indication, however, that the Mississippian peoples had developed a system of writing that would permit us to glimpse their own version of their history.

As the words of the 1848 Smithsonian report on Cahokia make clear, the stereotypical view of Indians that emerged in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was that they all lived in isolated hunting bands. But the great variety of lifeways Indian peoples developed in their long occupation of North America belies this stereotype. All Native Americans lived in strong vibrant communities that ranged from small hunting bands to large agricultural cities like Cahokia and splendid imperial capitals like that of the Aztecs of Mexico. Before the coming of the Europeans, North America was, as one historian phrases it, "a continent of villages," a land with thousands of local communities. Over many centuries the Indian peoples of North America developed a

variety of community types, each with its own system of family and social organization, each integrated with its natural surroundings. The wonders of Cahokia are but one aspect of the little-understood history of the Indians of the Americas.



Key Topics

- The peopling of the Americas by migrants from Asia
- The adaptation of native cultures to the distinctive regions of North America
- The increase in complexity of many native societies following the development of farming
- The nature of Indian cultures in the three major regions of European invasion and settlement

SETTLING THE CONTINENT

"Why do you call us Indians?" a Massachusetts native complained to Puritan missionary John Eliot in 1646. More than a hundred years earlier, Christopher Columbus had mistaken the Arawaks of the Caribbean for the people of the East Indies and called them *Indios*. By the middle of the sixteenth century this Spanish word had passed into English as "Indians" and was widely used to refer to all the native peoples of the Americas. Today anthropologists often use the term "Amerindians," and many people prefer "Native Americans." But most indigenous Americans refer to themselves as "Indian people."

Who Are the Indian People?

At the time of their first contacts with Europeans, near the close of the fifteenth century, the native inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere represented more than 2,000 distinct cultures, spoke hundreds of different languages, and lived and worked in scores of different environments. Just as the term "European" includes such different peoples as the English, French, and Spanish, so "Indian" covers an enormous diversity of peoples. For example, the people of the mid-Atlantic coast called themselves *Lenni Lenape*, meaning "true men"; those of the northern Great Plains were *Lakota*, or "the allies"; and the hunters of the Southwest used the name *Dine* (pronounced "dee-nay"), meaning simply "the people." Interestingly, Europeans came to know these three groups by rather different names: the *Delawares* (from the principal river of the mid-Atlantic region), the *Sioux*, and the *Apaches* (both of which meant "enemy" in the language of a neighboring tribe).

Once Europeans realized that the Americas were in fact a "New World" rather than part of the Asian continent, they began debating how people might have moved there from Europe and Asia, where the Judeo-Christian Bible indicated human life had begun. Over the succeeding centuries writers proposed elaborate theories of transoceanic migrations that linked native Americans variously to ancient Greeks, Carthaginians, Tartars, Chinese, and Welsh; one theory even held they

were the survivors of the mythical Atlantis. Common to all these theories was a belief that the Americas had been populated for a few thousand years at most and that native American societies were the degenerate offspring of a far superior Old World culture.

A number of Spanish observers thought more deeply about the question of Indian origins. In 1590 Joseph de Acosta reasoned that because Old World animals were present in the Americas, they must have crossed by a land bridge that could have been used by humans as well. A few years later, Enrico Martín speculated that since no such land passage had been found between the Americas and Europe, it must exist in the unexplored far northwest of the continent, and thus the people using it must have been Asian. In the 1650s Bernabé Cobo, who had lived most of his life in the Caribbean, argued that the great variety of native American languages showed that Indian peoples must have lived on the continent for centuries. But, he continued, their physical similarities suggested that "it was doubtless one nation or family of men which passed to people this land." Here were the principal elements of the migration hypothesis: Indian peoples were descended from a common stock of Asian migrants, they arrived by way of a northwestern land passage, and they had experienced a long and independent history in the Americas.

Certainly no single physical type characterized all the native peoples of the Americas. Although most had straight, black hair and dark, almond-shaped eyes, their skin ranged in color from mahogany to light brown and few fit the "yellow men" or "redskin" descriptions given them by colonists and settlers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Indeed, it was only when Europeans compared Indian peoples with natives of other continents, such as Africans, that they seemed similar enough to be classified as a group.

Migration from Asia

The theory most widely held today is that the native American peoples moved to this hemisphere from Asia some 25,000 to 30,000 years ago—about the



V E R V I E W

ORIGINS OF SOME INDIAN TRIBAL NAMES

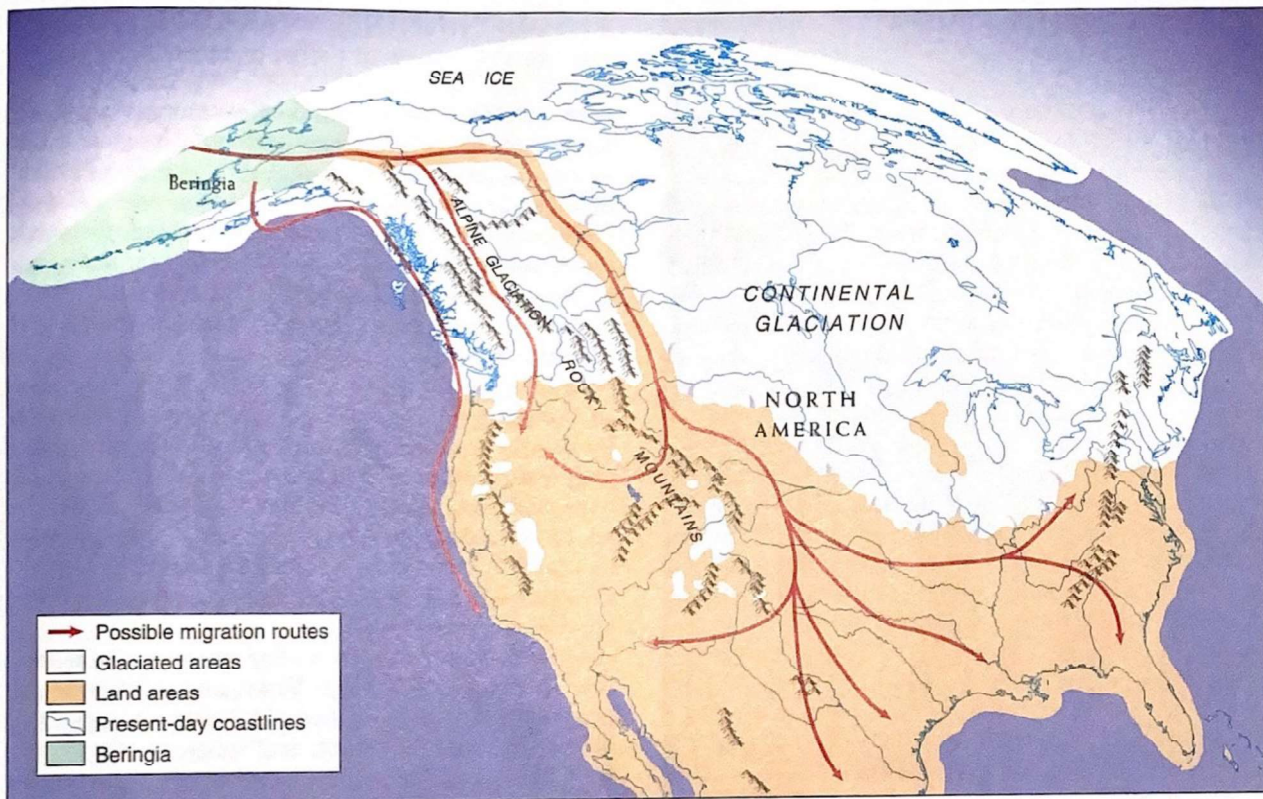
Cherokee	A corruption of the Choctaw <i>chiluk-ki</i> , meaning "cave people," an allusion to the many caves in the Cherokee homeland. The Cherokee called themselves <i>Ani-Yun-Wiya</i> , or "real people."
Cheyenne	From the Sioux <i>Sha-biyena</i> , "people of strange speech." The Cheyennes called themselves <i>Dzi-tsistas</i> , meaning "our people."
Hopi	A shortening of the Hopis' own name for themselves, <i>Hópitú</i> , which means "peaceful ones."
Mohawk	From the Algonquian <i>Mohawáúuck</i> , meaning "man-eaters." The Mohawks called themselves <i>Kaniengebaga</i> , "people of the place of the flint."
Pawnee	From the Pawnee term <i>pariki</i> , which describes a distinctive style of dressing the hair with paint and fat to make it stand erect like a horn. The Pawnees called themselves <i>Chabik-sichabiks</i> , "men of men."

time that Japan and the countries of Scandinavia were being settled. Evidence supporting this view includes a common dental pattern found among the most ancient human fossils in the Americas and those in northeastern Asia. The most distinctive marker of modern native American peoples is blood type, for although the vast majority have type O blood and a few have type A, almost none have type B. Because modern Asian populations exhibit all three blood types, scientists have postulated that migrations to the New World took place before the evolution of type B, which they believe occurred about 30,000 years ago. Studies of genetic evolution suggest that it took at least 20,000 years to evolve the variety of physical traits found among native American populations today. And modern linguists, agreeing essentially with Cobo's observation, cited earlier, estimate that it would require about 25,000 years to develop, from a common base, the nearly 500 distinct languages of the Americas.

At the time of the proposed migration from Asia to the Americas, the Northern Hemisphere was experiencing the Ice Age that characterized the geological epoch known as the Pleistocene. Huge glaciers locked up massive volumes of water, and sea levels were as much as 300 feet lower than they are today. Asia and North America were joined by a huge subcontinent of ice-free, treeless grassland, 750 miles wide from north to south. Geologists have named this area Beringia, from the Bering Straits. Summers there were warm, winters were cold, dry, and almost snowfree. This was a perfect environment for large mammals—mammoth and mastodon, bison, horse, reindeer, camel, and saiga (a goatlike antelope).

Beringia also attracted Stone Age hunter-gatherers who lived in small, nomadic bands and subsisted almost entirely on these animals. The animals provided them not only with food but with hides for clothing and shelter, dung for fuel, and bones for tools and weapons. Hunting bands were driven to expand their territories by the powerful force of their own population growth and the pressure it placed on local resources. Today's few remaining hunting-and-gathering peoples have an annual population growth rate of 0.5 percent, which would double their populations only every 140 years. Ancient Asian hunters, with seemingly limitless open country into which they could move, likely had growth rates that were much higher, and their expansion into new territory was correspondingly rapid. Following the big game, and accompanied by a husky-like species of dog, hunting bands gradually penetrated Beringia, moving as far east as the Yukon River basin of northern Canada.

Until recently most scientists dated the first migrations at about 15,000 years ago, but there is growing evidence that people were moving from Asia considerably earlier. Because much of Beringia was later submerged beneath rising seas, definitive archaeological evidence of migration from Asia is difficult to find. No fossil human bones have yet been uncovered there. But in 1966, field excavations in the Yukon basin uncovered what appeared to be fossilized bone tools estimated to be 27,000 years old. Fieldworkers found that these tools fit perfectly into their hands and had worn edges exactly where one would expect them to be. Later digs in the area produced the jawbones of several dogs estimated to be at least 30,000 years old. The most persuasive evidence for an earlier migration,



Migration Routes from Asia to America During the Ice Age, Asia and North America were joined where the Bering Straits are today, forming a migration route for hunting peoples. Either by boat along the coast, or through a narrow corridor between the huge northern glaciers, these migrants began making their way to the heartland of the continent as much as 30,000 years ago.

however, comes from the other end of the hemisphere, in South America. Archaeologists working at separate sites in the Amazon basin and in southern Chile in the early 1990s found striking evidence of human tool-making, house-building, and rock painting that date from at least 12,000 years ago. The ancestors of those peoples must have crossed Beringia many thousands of years before. The consensus today is that the migration from Asia probably began about 30,000 years ago.

Huge glaciers to the south of Beringia blocked passage during most of the last Ice Age, but occasionally a narrow land corridor opened up along the eastern base of the Rocky Mountains. As early as 25,000 years ago, hunting bands following this corridor south could have emerged onto the northern Great Plains—a hunter's paradise teeming with animals of great variety. Migrants probably also moved south in boats, following the Pacific coastline. Rapid population growth would have permitted these groups to populate the entire Western Hemisphere in a few thousand years. Remarkably, the oral traditions of many Indian peoples depict a long journey from a distant place of

origin to a new homeland. Europeans have recorded the Pima people of the Southwest singing this "Emergence Song":

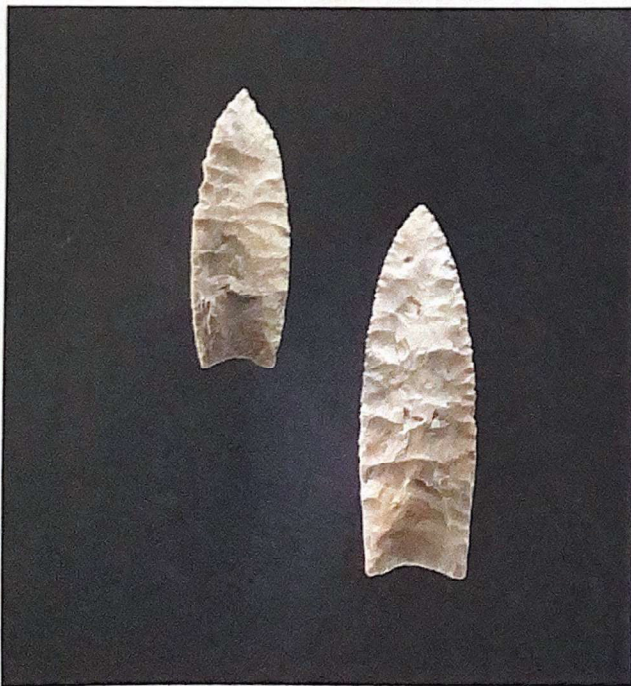
*This is the White Land, we arrive singing,
Headdresses waving in the breeze.
We have come! We have come!
The land trembles with our dancing and singing.*

Clovis: The First American Technology

The earliest tools found at North American archaeological sites, crude choppers and scrapers made of stone or bone, are similar to artifacts from the same period found in Europe or Asia. About 12,000 years ago, however, a much more sophisticated style of tool-making seems to have developed. Named after the site of its discovery in 1932, near Clovis, New Mexico, the Clovis tradition was a powerful new and more sophisticated technology, unlike anything found in the archaeology of the Old World. In the years since the initial discovery, archaeologists have unearthed Clovis artifacts at sites ranging from Montana to Mexico,

Nova Scotia to Arizona. All these finds date back to within one or two thousand years of one another, suggesting that Clovis spread quickly throughout the continent. This discovery has led, in turn, to speculation that the settlement of North America might then have been entering its final phase, as the continent filled with people. Scientists theorize that it was to feed their expanding populations that communities were driven to find a more efficient way to hunt and developed this greatly improved technology.

The evidence suggests that Clovis users were mobile peoples who traveled in communities numbering perhaps thirty to fifty individuals from several inter-related families. They returned to the same hunting camps year after year, migrating seasonally within territories of several hundred square miles. Near Delbert, Nova Scotia, archaeologists discovered the floors of ten tents arranged in a semicircle, their doors opening south to avoid the prevailing northerly winds. Both this camp and others found throughout the continent were placed so that they overlooked watering places that would attract game. Clovis blades have been excavated amid the remains of mammoth, camel, horse, giant armadillo, and sloth. Hunters apparently drove these animals into shallow bogs, killed them with spears, and butchered them on the spot.



These Clovis points are typical of thousands that archaeologists have found at sites all over the continent, dating from a period about 12,000 years ago. When inserted in a spear shaft, these three- to six-inch fluted points made effective weapons for hunting mammoth and other big game.

THE BEGINNING OF REGIONAL CULTURES

About 15,000 years ago a global warming trend began to alter the North American climate. The giant continental glaciers began to melt, a shift so pronounced by 8000 B.C.E. that it is used to mark the passing of the Pleistocene epoch. As the glaciers retreated, the northern latitudes were colonized by plants, animals, and humans. Meltwater created the lake and river systems of today and raised the level of the surrounding seas, flooding Beringia as well as vast stretches of the Atlantic and Gulf coasts and creating fertile tidal pools and offshore fishing banks. These monumental transformations produced new patterns of wind, rainfall, and temperature, reshaping the ecology of the entire continent and producing the distinct North American regions of today. The great integrating force of a single continental climate faded, and, with its passing, the continental Clovis culture fragmented into many different regional patterns.

Regions have ever since played an important role in American history. Variations in climate and geography combine to form the distinct regions of North America: the Arctic and Subarctic, the Northwest, the Great Plains, the Northeast, California, the Great Basin, the Southwest, the South, the Caribbean, and Mexico. Within these regions, human communities have had to adapt to nature, evolving their own ways of life. Indian peoples were the first in North America to embark on the long journey toward regionally distinct cultures, developing a wide variety of food sources to support their growing populations.

Hunting Traditions of the Plains and Forests

One of the most important effects of this massive climatological shift was the stress it placed on the big-game animals best suited to an Ice Age environment. The archaeological record details the extinction of thirty-two classes of large New World animals, including not only the mammoth and mastodon but the horse and camel, both of which evolved in America and then migrated to Asia across Beringia. It seems likely that lowered reproduction and survival rates of large animals forced hunting bands to intensify their efforts, and the combined effects of warmer climate and increased hunting eventually led to what some archaeologists have called the "Pleistocene Overkill."

As the other large-mammal populations declined, hunters on the Great Plains concentrated on the herds of American bison, more commonly called buffalo. To hunt these animals people needed a weapon they could throw quickly with great accuracy and velocity at fast-moving targets over distances of as much as a hundred yards. The Folsom technology, a

refinement of the Clovis tradition, featured points that were more delicate and lighter in weight, but deadlier.

Folsom points were named for the site of their first major excavation, at Folsom, New Mexico, where the tools uncovered were judged to be about 10,000 years old. In one dramatic find, a Folsom point was discovered embedded between the fossilized ribs of an ancient species of bison. Hunters probably hurled the lances to which these points were attached with wooden spear-throwers, achieving far greater velocity than they could with their arms alone. By 7000 B.C.E., Folsom had evolved into a technology that archaeologists call Plano, and the points are often found with grinding tools suitable for processing vegetable foods. This association indicates that peoples of the Great Plains were in the process of developing a varied diet.

Archaeological finds also suggest the growing complexity of early Indian communities. Folsom and Plano hunters frequently stampeded herds of bison or other animals into canyon traps or over cliffs. At one such kill site in southeastern Colorado, estimated to be 8,500 years old, archaeologists uncovered the remains of nearly 200 bison that had been slaughtered and then systematically butchered on a single occasion. This job would have required at least 150 men and women and a sophisticated division of labor, which in turn probably involved the cooperation of a number of communities. Taking food in such quantities indicates a knowledge of basic preservation techniques: these people must have been among the first to make jerky, or dried strips of meat, and pemmican, a mixture of dried meat, animal fat, and berries that can keep into the winter when stored in hide containers. These characteristic products of the Great Plains later became the staple foods of European fur traders in the North American West.

The passing of the Pleistocene epoch and the submergence of Beringia were preceded by a second wave of Beringia migrants—the Athapascans, or Na-Dene people. After entering North America they moved southeast from Alaska, following the melting glacier that had formerly blocked passage. From 7,000 to 4,000 years ago, they settled the forests of the continent's Northwest. Although they eventually adopted a technology for making weapons and tools similar to that of neighboring peoples, the Na-Dene maintained a separate cultural and linguistic identity. The ancestors of the Athapaskan-speaking Navajos and Apaches later migrated from this northern country, journeying across the Great Plains to the Southwest.

In a final migration from Asia that took place about 5,000 years ago, the Inupiat—more commonly known as Eskimos—and the Aleuts, other hunting peoples, crossed the flooded Bering Straits by boat.



When in 1927 archaeologists at Folsom, New Mexico, uncovered this dramatic example of a projectile point embedded in the ribs of a long-extinct species of bison it was the first proof that Indians had been in North America for many thousands of years.

The Eskimos colonized the polar coasts of the Arctic, the Aleuts the Aleutian Islands (later named for them) and the southern coast of Alaska.

Desert Culture in Western America

As the glaciers began to retreat, people developed new ways of finding food. During what archaeologists call the Archaic period (which corresponds to the late phases of the Stone Age in Eurasia and Africa), varying modes of subsistence evolved in different regions of North America. Between about 10,000 and 2,500 years ago, desert foraging began in the arid Great Basin, fishing along the Northwest coast of the Pacific, and hunting and gathering in the forests of the humid eastern half of the continent.

In the Great Basin of present-day Utah and Nevada the warming trend associated with the end of the Ice Age created a desert where once there had been enormous inland seas. Here, Indian people developed Desert Culture, a way of life based on the pursuit of small game and intensified foraging for plant foods. Small communities or bands of desert foragers migrated seasonally within a small range. They collected seeds,

History and the Land



The Regions of Native North America

Occupying more than a third of the continent, the United States is alone among the world's nations in encompassing all five general classes of global climate: tropical jungles, arid deserts and grasslands, temperate woodlands, subarctic forests, and frozen polar tundra.

The country also contains some of the world's largest lakes, most extensive grasslands, and mightiest rivers.

All peoples must adjust their diet, shelter, and other material aspects of their lives to the physical conditions of the world around them; thus a knowledge of the way in which geography and

fiber, and prickly pear from the yucca one season, then moved to highland mesas to gather grass seed, acorns, juniper berries, and piñon nuts, and next to mountain streams to spear and net fish. This strategy required considerable skill in handicrafts: fiber baskets for collecting, pitch-lined baskets for cooking, nets and traps, and stone grinders for processing seeds and nuts, as well as stone knives, hammers, and mauls.

Archaeologists know that desert foragers lived in caves and rock shelters, for their artifacts are found there today. In addition to stone tools these artifacts include objects of wood, hide, and fiber, wonderfully preserved for thousands of years in the dry climate. The Desert Culture persisted into the nineteenth century among modern Shoshoni and Ute communi-

ties. Although these people were once scornfully labeled "Diggers" because of their practice of gathering edible roots and were ridiculed for their "primitive" life ways, we now appreciate the very sophisticated adjustments they made to a harsh environment.

Descriptions of the culture of the modern Shoshonis suggest that the force of community was strong among the people of the desert. An emphasis on sharing and gift giving, the condemnation of hoarding, and the limitations posed by a nomadic lifestyle on the accumulation of material goods prevented individuals or families from acquiring excessive wealth. Thus, desert communities were characterized by general social equality. Decisions were made by consensus among the adults, and lead-



climate combine to form regions is a prerequisite to understanding the cultures of the peoples of America. Using the concept of "culture areas," anthropologists divide the continent into several fundamental regions, which have played an important role in the history of the continent for the past 10,000 years.

The Indian peoples of North America were first to develop distinct cultures suited to the regions in which they lived. Just as regions shaped the life-ways and history of Indian peoples, after the coming of the Europeans they nurtured the development of regional American cultures.

ership tended to be informal, based on achievement and reputation. The men of one band generally married women from another, and wives came to live with the people of their husbands, creating important linkages between groups that contributed to the sense of shared ethnic identity.

The innovative practices of the Desert Culture gradually spread from the Great Basin to the Great Plains and the Southwest, where foraging techniques began to supplement intensive hunting. About 6,000 years ago, archaeologists estimate, colonists from the Great Basin carried Desert Culture farther west to California. There, in the natural abundance of the valleys and coasts, Indian peoples developed an economy capable of supporting some of the densest popu-

lations and the first permanently settled communities in North America. Another dynamic center in the West developed along the Northwest Pacific coast, where native American communities developed a way of life based on the exploitation of abundant fish and sea mammals. This Old Cordilleran Culture became the basis for the historic cultures of the Plateau and Northwest, which also included densely populated sedentary communities.

Forest Efficiency

Similar trends were at work east of the Mississippi. Before European settlers destroyed countless acres of forest during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the whole of eastern North America was a vast wood-

land. Hardwoods grew in the north, southern pine in the south. The Winnebagos of the Great Lakes region sang of these forests:

*Pleasant it looked,
this newly created world.
Along the entire length and breadth
of the earth, our grandmother
extended the green reflection
of her covering
and the escaping odors
were pleasant to inhale.*

Archaic forest communities achieved a comfortable and secure life based on what archaeologists call “forest efficiency”—a sophisticated exploitation of their rich and diverse resources. Archaic Indian communities of the forest hunted small game and gathered seeds, nuts, roots, and other wild plant foods. They also developed the practice of burning the woodlands and prairies to stimulate the growth of berries, fruits, and edible roots. The resulting meadows and forest edge produced harvestable foods and attracted grazing animals, which were then hunted for their meat and hides. Another important resource was the abundant fish of the rivers.

Archaeological sites in the East suggest that during the late Archaic period community populations grew and settlements became increasingly permanent, providing convincing evidence of the viability of forest efficiency. The artifacts these people buried with their dead—axes, fishhooks, and animal bones with males, nut-cracking stones, beads, and pestles with females—reflect the different roles of men and women in their society.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF FARMING

The exploitation of a wide variety of food sources during the Archaic period eventually led many Indian people to develop and adopt the practice of farming. The dynamic center of this development in North America was the highlands of Mexico, from which the new technology spread north and east.

Mexico

At the end of the Stone Age, people in four different parts of the world developed farming systems, each based on a different crop: rice in Southeast Asia, wheat in West Asia, maize (or Indian corn) in Mexico, and potatoes in the Andean highlands of South America. In Mexico a great variety of other crops—most importantly beans and squash, but also tomatoes, peppers, avocados, cocoa (chocolate), and vanilla—supplemented maize. Today the two American staples—maize and potatoes—contribute more to the world's

food supply than do wheat and rice. These “miracle crops” fueled the expansion of European human and livestock populations in the three centuries after 1650. Without these and other New World crops such as tobacco, American cotton, and rubber—each the basis of important new industries and markets—the history of the modern world would have been far different.

Archaeological evidence suggests that plant cultivation in the highlands of central Mexico began about 5,000 years ago. Ancient Mexicans developed crops that responded well to human care and produced larger quantities of food in a limited space than did plants occurring naturally. Maize was particularly productive; over time it was adapted to a wide range of American climates, and farming spread throughout the temperate regions of North America.

As farming became increasingly important, it radically reshaped social life. Where a foraging society might require 100 square miles to support 100 people, a farming society required only one square mile. Population growth and the need for people to remain near their fields throughout the year led to the appearance of villages and permanent architecture and eventually to the emergence of large, densely settled communities like Cahokia. Autumn harvests had to be stored during winter months, and the storage and distribution of food had to be managed. The division of labor increased with the appearance of specialists like toolmakers, craftsmen, administrators, priests, and rulers as well as farmers and food processors. Ultimately, unequal access to wealth and power resulted in the emergence of classes.

By 1000 B.C.E., urban communities governed by permanent bureaucracies had begun to form in Mesoamerica, the region stretching from central Mexico to Central America. By the beginning of the first millennium C.E. (Common Era) highly productive farming was supporting complex urban civilizations in the Valley of Mexico (the location of present-day Mexico City), the Yucatan Peninsula, and other parts of Mesoamerica. Like many of the ancient civilizations of Asia and the Mediterranean, these Mesoamerican civilizations were characterized by the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of an elite class of priests and rulers, the construction of impressive temples and other public structures, and the development of systems of mathematics and astronomy, and several forms of hieroglyphic writing. The civilizations of Mesomerica were also marked by warfare between states and by terrifying public rituals of human sacrifice.

The great city of Teotihuacan in the Valley of Mexico, which emerged about 100 B.C.E., had a population of as many as 200,000 at the height of its power around C.E. 500. Teotihuacan's elite class of religious and political leaders controlled an elaborate state-sponsored trading system that stretched from present-day



Mesoamerican maize cultivation, as illustrated by an Aztec artist for the Florentine Codex, a book prepared a few years after the Spanish conquest. The peoples of Mesoamerica developed a greater variety of cultivated crops than those of any other region in the world, and their agricultural productivity helped sustain one of the world's great civilizations.

Arizona south to Central America and may have included coastal shipping connections with the pre-Inca civilizations of Peru. The city had a highly specialized division of labor. Artisans manufactured tools and produced textiles, stoneware, pottery, and obsidian blades; the bureaucratic elite collected taxes and tribute; farmers left the city every day to work the fields that fed its people; and armies of workers constructed such monumental edifices as the Pyramids of the Sun and Moon, which still dominate the city's ruins.

Teotihuacan began to decline in the sixth century, and by the eighth century it was mostly abandoned. A new empire, that of the Toltecs, dominated central Mexico from the tenth to the twelfth century. By the fourteenth century a people known as the Aztecs, migrants from the north, had settled in the Valley of Mexico and begun a dramatic expansion into a formidable imperial power (see Chapter 2).

The Mayan peoples of the Yucatan peninsula developed a group of competing city-states that flourished from about 300 B.C.E. until about C.E. 900. The achievements of the Mayans included Mesoamerica's most advanced writing and calendrical systems and a sophisticated knowledge of mathematics that included the concept of zero.

The Resisted Revolution

Historians once described the development of farming as the "Neolithic Revolution" (*neolithic* means "New, or Later, Stone Age"). They believed that agricultural communities offered such obvious advantages that neighboring peoples must have rushed to adopt this way of life. Societies that remained without a farming tradition must simply have been too "primitive" to achieve this breakthrough; vulnerability to fickle nature was the penalty for their ignorance. This interpretation was based on a scheme of social evolution that viewed human history as the story of technological progress, in which savage hunters gradually developed into civilized farmers.

But there is very little evidence to support the notion that such a "revolution" occurred during a short, critical period. The adoption of farming was a gradual process, one that required hundreds, even thousands of years. Moreover, ignorance of cultivation was never the reason that cultures failed to take up farming, for all hunter-gatherer peoples understand a great deal about plant reproduction. When the Menomini Indians of the northern forests of Wisconsin gathered wild rice, for example, they purposely allowed some of it to fall back into the water to ensure a crop for the next season, and Desert Paiutes of the Great Basin systematically irrigated stands of their favorite wild food sources.

The way today's remaining hunter-gatherers view the farming way of life is instructive. Foragers generally look upon their own method of getting food as vastly superior to any other. The food sources of desert gatherers, for example, are considerably more varied and higher in protein than those of desert farmers, whose diets concentrate almost exclusively on grains. Because foragers took advantage of natural diversity, they were also less vulnerable to climatological stress, although gathering communities frequently experienced periods of scarcity and hunger, unlike farming societies they were rarely devastated by famine. Foragers also point out that farming requires much more work. Why sweat all day in the fields producing tasteless corn, they argue, when in an hour or two one can gather enough sweet prickly pear to last a week? Indeed, rather than freeing men and women from the tyranny of nature, farming tied people to a work discipline unlike anything previously known in human history. Finally, foragers consider their migratory ways far more interesting than village life, which they claim is dull and monotonous, preferred only by those whose possessions are too cumbersome to move.

As the techniques of large-scale agriculture became available, cultures in different regions assessed its advantages and limitations. In California and the Pacific Northwest, acorn gathering or salmon fishing

made the cultivation of food crops seem a waste of time. In the Great Basin, several peoples attempted to farm, but without success. Before the invention of modern irrigation systems, which require sophisticated engineering, only the Archaic Desert Culture could prevail in this harsh environment. In the neighboring Southwest, however, farming resolved certain ecological dilemmas and transformed the way of life. Like the development of more sophisticated traditions of tool manufacture, farming represented another stage in the economic intensifications that kept populations and available resources in balance. It seems that where climate favored cultivation, people tended to adopt farming as a way of increasing the production of food, thus continuing the Archaic tradition of squeezing as much productivity as they could from their environment. But in a few areas farming resulted in a truly revolutionary transformation, pushing in the direction of an urban civilization like that of central Mexico or Cahokia on the banks of the Mississippi.

Increasing Social Complexity

Farming created the basis for much greater social complexity within Indian communities. Most important were elaborate systems of kinship. Greater population density prompted families to group themselves into clans responsible for different social, political, or ritual functions. These clans became an important mechanism for binding together the people of several communities into a tribe. A tribe, based on ethnic, linguistic, and territorial unity, was led by a leader or chief from an honored clan, who was often advised by councils of elders, all of whom were also clan leaders. In all likelihood, the city of Cahokia was governed by such a system. The tribal council sometimes arbitrated disputes between individuals or families, but most crimes—thrift, adultery, rape, murder—were avenged by the aggrieved kinship group itself.

The primary function of the ruling council was to supervise the economy—to see that the harvest was collected and stored and that the food stores were distributed to the clans. Differences in wealth—small by the standards of modern societies—could develop between the families of a farming tribe, but these inequalities were kept in check by a system of redistribution that followed the principles of sharing characteristic of foraging communities. Nowhere in North America did Indian cultures develop a concept of the private ownership of land. Invariably, land was a common resource of the people and thus worked collectively.

Indian communities practiced a rather strict division of labor by gender that in its details varied greatly from culture to culture. Among foraging peoples, hunting was generally the work of men,

whereas the gathering of food and the maintenance of home-base camps were the responsibility of women. This pattern probably originated during the early years of the Archaic period. But the development of farming disrupted these patterns. In Mexico, where communities became almost totally dependent on crops, both men and women worked in the fields. Where hunting remained important, the older division of labor continued, with women responsible for field work. In general, however, Indian patterns contrasted in important ways with the norms of colonizing Europeans, prompting much misunderstanding. When English colonists saw Indian women working in the cornfields, for example, they thought them greatly oppressed; Indians, on the other hand, thought colonial men who labored in the fields were performing "women's work."

In most North American Indian farming communities, women and men belonged to separate social groupings, each with its own rituals and lore. Membership in these societies was one of the most important elements of a person's identity. Marriage ties, on the other hand, were relatively weak, and in most Indian communities divorce was easy. The couple simply separated, the children almost always remaining with the mother. Indian women were free to determine the timing of reproduction as well as to use herbs to prevent pregnancy, induce abortion, or ease the pain of childbirth. The status and role of Indian women were strikingly different from European patterns, in which the rule of men over women and fathers over households was the norm.

Farming communities were far more complex than foraging communities, but they were also less stable. Growing populations demanded increasingly large surpluses of food, and this need frequently led to social conflict and warfare among farming communities. Moreover, farming systems were especially vulnerable to climatological disruptions such as drought, as well as to ecological crises of their own creation, such as soil depletion or erosion.

The Religions of Foragers and Farmers

The religions of Indian peoples were shaped primarily by the two great traditions of foraging and farming. The first, rooted deep in the Archaic past, is sometimes called the Hunting Tradition. This complex of beliefs centered in the relationship of hunters and prey and celebrated the existence of a "Master of Animals," often portrayed as the sacred bear. Associated with this tradition was the vision quest, a practice in which young men and women sought out personal protective spirits by going alone into the wilderness, exposing themselves to the elements, fasting, and inducing hallucinations and dreams. An individual who developed a special sensitivity to spiritual forces might



The creation of man and woman depicted on a pot (dated about C.E. 1000) from the ancient villages of the Mimbres River of southwestern New Mexico, the area of Mogollon culture. Mimbres pottery is renowned for its spirited artistry. Such artifacts were usually intended as grave goods, to honor the dead.

become a shaman—a “medicine” man or woman of the community. The Hunting Tradition was important throughout the continent but was strongest in the northern latitudes, where hunting played a prominent role in the economy.

With the northward spread of maize farming came a second religious complex, known as the Agrarian Tradition, which emphasized and celebrated the notion of fertility in ritual festivals marking the annual change of seasons. At Cahokia, archaeological evidence of posts used to mark the summer and winter solstices suggests that the Agrarian Tradition was honored there. Because this tradition was associated with the greater social complexity of the farming way of life, it was generally characterized by organized cults and priesthoods rather than by individualistic shamans. At its most elaborate, it featured a war-sacrifice-cannibalism ideology that glorified violence and included the ritual consumption of enemy flesh, a tradition whose origins may be related to those of the awe-inspiring sacrificial rituals performed by the priests and leaders of the Mesoamerican city-states.

Although religious beliefs were probably as distinctive as the local communities that held them, some combination of the Hunting and Agrarian traditions characterized most of the Indian cultures of North America. Natural and supernatural forces were thought to be inseparable, a system of belief called *panteism*; people were thought to share a basic kinship



Arizona State Museum, University of Arizona

Human figures dance on this characteristic piece of red-on-buff pottery of the Hohokams (dated about C.E. 1000). The Hohokams, located on the floodplain of the Gila River near present-day Phoenix, Arizona, were the first irrigation farmers of North America. The Pima and Papago people of Arizona may be descended from them.

with animals, plants, inanimate objects, and natural forces. Although many native religions recognized the existence of a paramount spiritual force, they were also generally polytheistic, with numerous gods and spirits.

The Earliest Farmers of the Southwest

Farming communities began to emerge in the arid Southwest during the first millenium B.C.E. Among the first to develop a settled farming way of life were the Mogollon people, who lived along what is today the southern Arizona–New Mexico border from around 250 B.C.E. to around C.E. 1450. Living along mountain ridges and near streams in permanent villages of ingenious pit houses well suited to the region's temperature extremes, these people used digging sticks to cultivate maize, beans, and squash. Some of the Mogollon pit structures may have been what Southwestern peoples today call *kivas*, which are used for community religious rituals.

From about C.E. 300 to 1500 the people of the Hohokam (“those who are gone,” in the language of the modern Pimas and Papagos of the area) culture flourished in the region along the floodplain of the Salt and Gila Rivers in southern Arizona. The Hohokams, who lived in agricultural villages, built and maintained the first irrigation system in America north of Mexico, channeling river water many miles to desert fields of maize, beans, squash, tobacco, and cotton. They made jewelry from shells and developed a process for etching shells with animal designs. They shared many traits with Mesoamerican civilization to the south, including platform mounds for religious ceremonies and large courts for ball playing. One thoroughly excavated Hohokam community site is a place the Pimas call Skoaquik, or Snaketown. Located near present-day Phoenix, Snaketown includes the



In Chaco Canyon, in northern New Mexico, lie the ruins of Pueblo Bonito, built in the twelfth century C.E. during the golden age of the Anasazis, an agricultural people who created a complex urban civilization amid the arid landscape of the Colorado Plateau. Until the invention of the modern construction techniques, Pueblo Bonito held the record as the world's largest apartment house.

remains of a hundred pit houses spread over 300 acres. The number and variety of goods from central Mexico uncovered at the site—rubber balls, mirrors of pyrite mosaics, copper bells, and fashionable ear ornaments—suggest that it may have housed a community of merchants who traded Mesoamerican manufactured goods for locally mined turquoise.

The Anasazis

The best-known farming culture of the Southwest is that of the Anasazis ("ancient outsiders," in the Navajo language), which developed around the first century C.E. several hundred miles to the north of the Hohokam communities in the Four Corners area, where today Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, and Colorado meet on the eastern portion of the great plateau of the Colorado River. Around 750, possibly in response to population pressure and an increasingly dry climate, the Anasazis

began a shift from pit-house villages to densely populated, multistoried apartment complexes called *pueblos* ("towns" in Spanish, for they were named by Spanish invaders). These complexes clustered around central plazas with circular underground *kivas*. The Anasazis grew high-yield varieties of maize in terraced fields irrigated by canals flowing from mountain catchment basins. To supplement this vegetable diet they hunted animals for their meat, using the bow and arrow that first appeared in the region about C.E. 500.

Anasazi culture extended over an area larger than California. The sites of more than 25,000 Anasazi communities are known in New Mexico alone. Only a few have been excavated, so there is much that archaeologists do not yet understand. The most prominent of the Anasazi centers was Pueblo Bonito in Chaco canyon. Completed in the twelfth century, this complex of 650 interconnected rooms is a monument to the golden age of the Anasazis. Hundreds of miles of arrow-straight roads and an interpueblo communication system consisting of mountaintop signaling stations connect Chaco Canyon to outlying sites, making it the center of a food distribution, trading, and ceremonial network.

During the thirteenth century, drought conditions in the Southwest worsened. Growing Anasazi populations redoubled their efforts to improve their production methods, building increasingly complex irrigation canals, dams, and terraced fields. Many large fields were mulched with small stones to retain moisture more effectively. But these measures were not sufficient. Scientific analysis of the varying size of the growth rings of ancient tree trunks reveals that between 1276 and 1293 there was a prolonged and devastating drought that must have resulted in repeated crop failures and eventual famine.

The Anasazis were confronted with an additional difficulty—the arrival of bands of Athapaskan migrants who for a thousand years or more had been gradually moving south from Subarctic regions. If the Athapascans were anything like their immediate descendants, the Navajos and the Apaches, they must have been fierce fighters. By the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the Athapascans were raiding Anasazi farming communities, taking food, goods, and possibly slaves. The dramatic Anasazi cliff dwellings at Mesa Verde, Colorado, constructed about this time, may have been built as a defense against these raiders. Gradually the Anasazis abandoned the Four Corners area altogether. Their movements have not yet been fully traced, but most seem to have resettled in communities along the Rio Grande, joining with local residents to form the Pueblo people of modern times.

Farmers of the Eastern Woodlands

Archaeologists date the beginning of the farming culture of eastern North America, known as Woodland,

from the first appearances of pottery in the region about 3,000 years ago. The Woodland culture was based on a sophisticated way of life that combined gathering and hunting with the cultivation of a few crops. People lived most of the year at permanent community sites but left them seasonally to take advantage of resources at different locations. Their crops included sunflowers and other locally domesticated plants. The discovery of clay pipes in archaeological excavations suggests that the early Woodlands people may also have cultivated tobacco, which was first domesticated in the Caribbean region.

Woodlands peoples began cultivating maize during the first millennium C.E., but even before then they had begun to adopt an increasingly settled existence and a more complex social organization in some regions. Between 1700 and 700 B.C.E. the people of the Poverty Point culture in the lower Mississippi Valley erected a remarkable site consisting of a series of concentric semicircular earth mounds covering an area about a mile square. The people of the Adena culture (the name is taken from a site on the upper Ohio River) occupied the Ohio River basin from present-day Indiana to Pennsylvania from before 1000 B.C.E. to about C.E. 250. They lived in permanent or semipermanent villages and built large burial mounds.

Between about 200 B.C.E. and fifth century C.E. the Hopewell people settled in the Mississippi-Ohio Valley. Hopewell communities were devoted to mortuary cults, in which the dead were honored through ceremony, display, and the construction of enormous and elaborate burial mounds. In support of this tradition, Hopewell chiefs mobilized an elaborate trade network that acquired obsidian from the Rocky Mountains, copper from the Great Lakes, mica from the Appalachians, and shells from the Gulf coast. Hopewell artisans converted these materials into distinctive and artistically sophisticated goods that played an important role in Hopewell trade and were buried with the dead in Hopewell graves.

Mississippian Society

The Hopewell culture collapsed in the fifth century, perhaps as a result of shifting climate patterns. Local communities continued to practice their late Archaic subsistence strategies,

but abandoned the expensive cultural displays demanded by the Hopewell mortuary cult. Following the collapse of Hopewell, however, several important innovations were introduced in the East. The bow and arrow, developed on the Great Plains, appeared east of the Mississippi about the seventh century, greatly increasing the efficiency of hunting. Also between 450 and 800, maize farming spread widely in the east. Indian farmers had developed a new variety of maize called Northern Flint, with large cobs and plentiful kernels that matured in a short enough time to make it suitable for cultivation in temperate northern latitudes. Also about this time a shift from digging sticks to flint hoes took place, further increasing the productive potential of maize farming.

It was on the basis of these innovations that, in the seventh or eighth century, the powerful new Mississippian culture arose. The Mississippians were master maize farmers who lived in permanent villages along the floodplain of the Mississippi River. Cahokia, the most important of these, was the urban heart of Mississippian America. Cahokia's dense urban center with its monumental temple, its residential neighborhoods, and its surrounding farmlands were mirrored in many other regional centers, each with thousands of residents. There were cities on the Arkansas River near Spiro, Oklahoma; on the Black Warrior River at Moundville, Alabama; at Hiwassee Island on the Tennessee River; and along the Etowah and Ocmulgee Rivers in Georgia. Like Cahokia, these centers of civilization were probably characterized by a sophisticated division of labor that



The Great Serpent Mound in southern Ohio, the shape of an uncoiling snake more than 1,300 feet long, is the largest effigy earthwork in the world. Monumental public works like these suggest the high degree of social organization of the Mississippian people.



Native North American Trade Networks, ca. C.E. 1400 By determining the places of origin of artifacts found at ancient sites, historians have devised a conjectural map of Indian trade networks. Among large regional centers and smaller local ones, trade connected Indian peoples of many different communities and regions.

included artisans, priests, and an elite class of rulers. The Great Serpent Mound, the largest effigy earthwork in the world, was constructed by Mississippian peoples in southern Ohio.

Linked by the vast water transportation system of the Mississippi and its many tributaries, these communities became the earliest city-states north of Mexico, hierarchical chiefdoms that extended political control over the farmers of the surrounding countryside. With continued population growth, these cities engaged in vigorous and probably violent competition for the limited space along the rivers. It may have been the need for more orderly ways of allocating territories that stimulated the evolution of political hierarchies. The tasks of preventing local conflict, storing large food surpluses, and redistributing foodstuffs from farmers to artisans and elites required a leadership class with the power to command. Mound-building and the use of tribute labor in the construction of other public works testified to the power the chiefs wielded from their sumptuous quarters atop the commanding mounds. If politics is defined as the orga-

nized contest for power among people and groups, then the Mississippians and the Anasazis were the first truly political societies north of Mexico.

Mississippian culture reached its height between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries C.E., the same period in which the Anasazis were constructing their desert cities. Both groups adapted the technology that was spreading northward from Mexico to their particular environments, both developed impressive artistic traditions, and their feats of engineering reflect the beginnings of science and technology. These were complex societies characterized by urbanism, social stratification, craft specialization, and regional trade. Except for a formal system of writing, they had all the traits of European and Asian civilizations.

The Politics of Warfare and Violence

The late thirteenth century marked the end of several hundred years of climatological conditions that were very favorable to maize farming and the beginning of a century and a half of cool, dry conditions.

Although the changes in climate in the Mississippi Valley were not as severe as those that devastated the Anasazi of the Southwest, over the long term they significantly lowered the potential of farming to support growing urban populations. Some archaeologists have suggested that this extended drought sharpened political conflict in both areas and greatly increased violence and social disorder.

Warfare among Indian peoples certainly predated the colonial era. Organized violence was probably rare among hunting bands, which could seldom muster the manpower for more than a small raid against an enemy. Certain hunting peoples, though, such as the southward-moving Athapascans, undoubtedly engaged in systematic raiding of settled farming communities. Warfare was also common among farming societies fighting to gain additional lands for cultivation. The first Europeans in what is now the South of the United States described highly organized combat among large tribal armies. The bow and arrow was a deadly weapon of war, and the practice of scalping seems to have originated among warring tribes, who believed one could capture a warrior's spirit by taking his hair. (During the period of colonial warfare, the practice of scalping spread widely among both European colonists and the Indian tribes of other regions.) Sculpted images of human sacrifice found at Mississippian sites suggest that these peoples, like the inhabitants of Mexican city-states, not only waged war but practiced human sacrifice and cannibalism.

The archaeological remains of Cahokia reveal that during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the people of that great city surrounded its central sections with a heavy log stockade. This defensive structure suggests that there may have been a great deal of violent warfare with other nearby communities. Indeed, the fourteenth century may have been a period of intense conflict and war among competing city-states throughout the valleys of the Mississippi, each based on the domination of farming countryside by metropolitan centers. Eventually conditions in the upper Mississippi Valley deteriorated so far that Cahokia and many other sites were abandoned altogether, and as the cities collapsed, people relocated in smaller, decentralized communities. Nevertheless, as we will see, among the peoples of the South, Mississippian patterns continued into the period of colonization.

NORTH AMERICA ON THE EVE OF COLONIZATION

The first Europeans to arrive in North America found a continent populated by more than 350 native soci-

eties speaking nearly as many distinct languages. Although anthropologists of the early twentieth century estimated that the population of the entire area north of Mexico was little more than a million, historians have now raised this estimate substantially.

The Indian Population of America

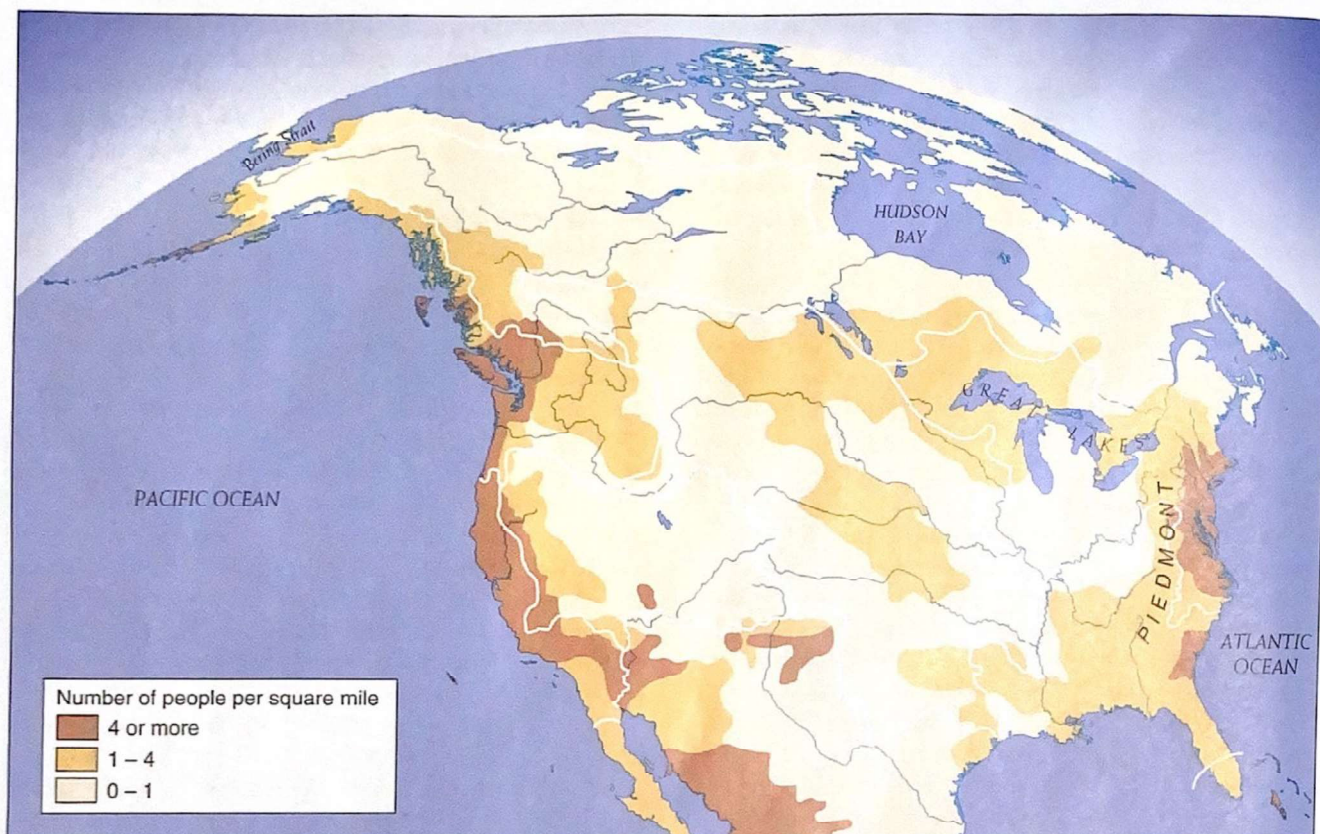
In determining the precolonial population of the Americas, today's historical demographers consider a number of factors—the population densities that different technological and economic systems could support, the archaeological evidence, the very earliest European accounts, and the estimated impact of epidemic diseases. (For a discussion of epidemics among Indian peoples, see Chapter 2.) Although estimates vary, most historians now believe that the population of America north of Mexico in the early sixteenth century numbered between 7 and 10 million. Moreover, probably another 25 million were concentrated in the complex societies of the Mexican highlands. Thus at the time of their first contact with European explorers and settlers, the peoples of the Western Hemisphere numbered some 60 to 70 million, about the same as Europe's population.

Population density in North America varied widely according to ways of life. Only scattered bands populated the Great Basin, the Great Plains, and Subarctic regions, but the Northwest and what is today California were densely settled because the foraging peoples of those areas maintained highly productive fishing and gathering economies. The Southwest, South, and Northeast contained the largest populations, and it was in these areas that European explorers, conquerors, and colonists first concentrated their efforts.

The Southwest

The single overwhelming fact of life in the Southwest is aridity. Summer rains average only ten to twenty inches annually, and on much of the dry desert cultivation is impossible. Several rivers, however, flow southward out of pine-covered mountain plateaus to the Gulf of Mexico and the Gulf of California. Narrow bands of green vegetation in parched sands of brown and red, they have made irrigation farming possible.

On the eve of European colonization, Indian farmers in the Southwest had been cultivating fields for nearly 3,000 years. In the floodplain of the Gila and Salt Rivers lived the Pimas and Papagos, descendants of the ancient Hohokams. Working small irrigated fields along the Colorado River and even on the floor of the Grand Canyon were the Yuman peoples. These desert farmers cultivated corn, beans, squash, sunflowers, and cotton, which they traded throughout the Southwest. They lived in dispersed



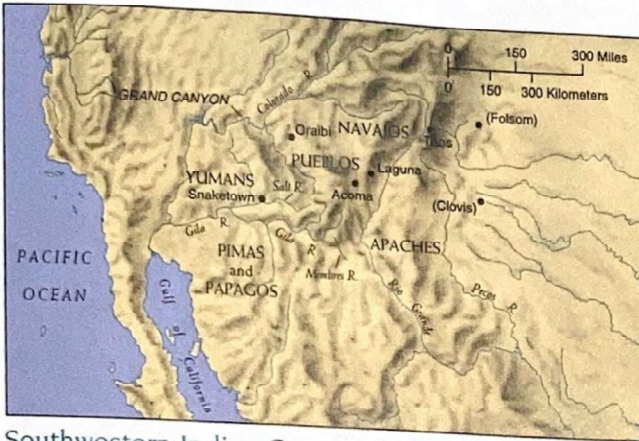
Indian Settlement before European Colonization Based on what is called the “carrying capacity” of different subsistence strategies—the population density they could support—historical demographers have mapped the hypothetical population density of Indian societies in the fifteenth century, before the era of European colonization. Populations were most dense in farming societies or in coastal areas with marine resources and least dense in extreme environments like the Great Basin.

settlements that the Spanish called *rancherías* (meaning “settlements”), which were separated by as much as a mile. That way, say the Pimas, people avoid getting on each other’s nerves. Rancherías were governed in general by councils of adult men whose decisions required unanimous consent, although a headman was chosen to manage the irrigation works. Ceremonies focused, appropriately, on rainmaking; one ritual required everyone to drink cactus wine until reaching a state of presumed purification that was thought to bring rain.

East of the Grand Canyon, in their unique dwellings of stacked, interconnected apartments, lived the Pueblo peoples, who inherited this architectural form, as well as their farming techniques and religious practices, from their Anasazi forebears. Although the many Pueblo peoples spoke several languages, as a group they shared a commitment to communal village life that differentiated them from the individualistic desert farmers. A strict communal code of behavior regulating personal conduct was enforced by the Pueblos through a maze of matriline-

al clans and secret religious societies; unique combinations of these clans and societies formed the governing systems of different Pueblo villages. Seasonal public ceremonies in the village squares featured colorful impersonations, with singing, chanting, and dancing, of ancestral sacred spirits called *kachinas*. “Clowns” mimicked in slapstick style those who did not conform to the communal ideal, pretending to eat dirt, for example, in front of the home of a person who kept an unclean house.

The Pueblos inhabit the oldest continuously occupied towns in the United States. The village of Oraibi, Arizona, dates from the twelfth century, when the Hopis (“peaceful ones”) founded it in the isolated central mesas of the Colorado Plateau. Using dry-farming methods and drought-resistant plants, these western Pueblo Indians produced rich harvests of corn and squash amid shifting sand dunes. On a mesa top about fifty miles southwest of present-day Albuquerque, New Mexico, Anasazi immigrants from Mesa Verde built Acoma, the “sky city,” in the late thirteenth century. The Pueblo people established approximately



Southwestern Indian Groups on the Eve of Colonization The Southwest was populated by desert farmers like the Pimas, Papagos, Yumans, and Pueblos, as well as by nomadic hunters and raiders like the Apaches and Navajos.

seventy other villages during the next two hundred years; fifty of these were still in existence in the seventeenth century when the Spanish founded Santa Fé, and two dozen survive today, including the large Indian towns of Laguna, Isleta, Santo Domingo, Jémez, San Felipe, and Taos (see the map on p. 52).

In the arid deserts and mountains surrounding these towns were bands of nomadic hunters, some of whom had lived in the region thousands of years. But there were also the Athapascans who, as we have seen, began arriving in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and who hunted and foraged, traded meat and medicinal herbs with farmers, and frequently raided and plundered these same villages and rancherias. Gradually, some of the Athapaskan people surrounding the Pueblo villages adopted their neighbors' farming and handicraft skills; these people were the Navajos. Others, who came to be known as the Apaches, were more heavily influenced by the hunting and gathering traditions of the Great Basin and Great Plains and remained nomadic.

The South

The South enjoys a mild, moist climate with short winters and long summers, ideal for farming. From the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, a broad fertile plain extends inland to the Piedmont, a plateau separating the coastal plains from the Appalachian Mountains. The transition between plateau and coastal plain is marked by the fall line, an area of rapids and waterfalls in the descending rivers. The upper courses of the waterways originating in the Appalachian highlands offered ample rich bottomland for farming, and the extensive forests, mostly of yellow pine, offered abundant animal resources. In the sixteenth century, large populations of Indian peoples farmed this rich land, fishing or hunting to supplement their diets. They lived in communities ranging from villages of

twenty or so dwellings to large towns of a thousand or more inhabitants.

Mississippian cultural patterns continued among the peoples of the South. They were organized into confederacies of farming towns, the most powerful living along the river floodplains. Because most of these groups were quickly decimated in the first years of European colonization, they are poorly documented. We know the most about the Natchez, farmers of the rich lands in the lower Mississippi delta who survived into the eighteenth century before being destroyed in a war with the French. Overseeing the Natchez was a ruler known as the Great Sun, who lived in royal splendor on a ceremonial mound in his village capital. When out among his subjects he was carried on a litter, the path before him swept by his retinue of servants and wives. Natchez society was class based. Noble families were represented on the Great Sun's council of advisers and appointed village peace and war chiefs. The majority of people, however, were a subordinate group known as the "Stinkards." Persistent territorial conflict with other confederacies elevated warfare to an honored status among the Natchez, and public torture and human sacrifice of enemies were commonplace. The Natchez give us our best glimpse at what life may have been like in ancient Cahokia.

The Indians of Florida also lived in sophisticated chiefdoms characterized by class systems, monarchs, and priests. Archaeological evidence implies that central towns dominated farmers in the countryside, demanding from them large quantities of maize, squash, and other cultivated plants grown on fields large enough to support populations numbering in the tens of thousands. As in the Natchez villages and the city of Cahokia, life in these Florida towns centered around the ceremonial mounds where the ruling families resided. Honored clans



Southern Indian Groups on the Eve of Colonization On the eve of colonization the Indian societies of the South shared many traits of the complex Mississippian farming culture.



The New Queen Being Taken to the King, engraved by Theodor de Bry in the sixteenth century from a drawing by Jacques le Moyne, an early French colonist of Florida. The communities of Florida were hierarchical, with classes and hereditary chiefs, some of whom were women. Here le Moyne depicted a "queen" being carried on an ornamental litter by men of rank.

lived in the plaza below, with ordinary people on the fringes of town and in the countryside.

Eventually, these chiefdoms proved highly vulnerable to conquest, but the looser confederacies of the interior were considerably more resilient. Among the latter the most prominent were the Choctaws of present-day Mississippi and Alabama, the Chickasaws in western Tennessee, and the Creeks of Georgia, each confederacy, including several dozen towns. On the mountain plateaus lived the Cherokees, who made up the single largest confederacy, of more than sixty towns. Farming was somewhat less important in the highlands than along the coast, hunting somewhat more so. There were no ruling classes or kings, and leaders were either women or men. Most peoples reckoned their descent matrilineally (that is, through their mothers, grandmothers, and so on), and at marriage husbands left the homes of their mothers to reside with the families of their wives. Women controlled household and village life and were influential as well in the

matrilineal clans that linked communities together. Councils of elderly men governed the confederacies but were joined by clan matrons for annual meetings at the central council house. These gatherings could last days or even weeks, since all clan members, male and female, were given the opportunity to speak.

All the peoples of the South farmed the same crops, hunted in the same kind of piney woods, and lived in similar villages. They celebrated a common round of agricultural festivals that brought clans together from surrounding communities. At the harvest festival, for example, people thoroughly cleaned their homes and villages. They fasted and purified themselves by consuming the "black drink," a vision-inducing libation made from roasted leaves of the cassina plant. They extinguished old fires, lit new ones, and then celebrated the new crop of sweet corn with dancing and other festivities. During the following days, villages, clans, and groups of men and women competed against each other in the ancient stick-and-ball game that the French

named lacrosse; in the evenings men and women played chunky, a gambling game.

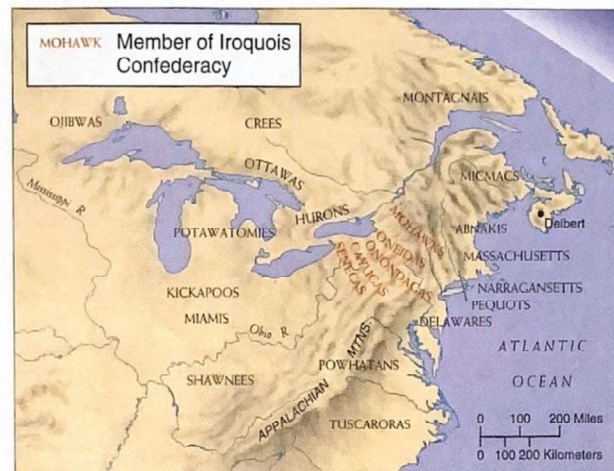
The Northeast

The Northeast, the colder sector of the eastern woodlands, has a varied geography of coastal plains and mountain highlands, great rivers, lakes, and valleys. After C.E. 500, cultivation became the main support of the Indian economy in those places where the growing season was long enough to bring a crop of corn to maturity. In such areas of the Northeast—along the coasts and in the river valleys—Indian populations were large and dense.

The Iroquois of present-day Ontario and upstate New York, who have lived in these areas for at least 4,500 years, were among the first northeastern peoples to adopt cultivation. As they shifted from primary reliance on fishing and hunting to maize farming, they apparently relocated their villages from river floodplains to hilltops. There Iroquois women produced crops of corn, beans, squash, and sunflowers sufficient to support fifty longhouses, each occupied by a large matrilineal, extended family. Some of those houses were truly long; archaeologists have excavated the foundations of 400-foot-long dwellings that may have housed dozens of families. Typically, these villages were surrounded by substantial wooden walls, clear evidence of intergroup conflict and warfare.

Population growth and the resulting intensification of farming in Iroquois country stimulated the development of chiefdoms there as elsewhere. By the fifteenth century several centers of population, each in a separate river system, had coalesced from east to west across upstate New York. These were the five Iroquois chiefdoms or “nations”: the Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, and Senecas. Iroquois oral histories collected during the nineteenth century recall this as a period of persistent violence, possibly the consequence of conflicts over territory.

Historians believe that the Iroquois founded a confederacy to control this violence. The confederacy outlawed warfare among the member nations and established regulated forms of gift exchange and payment to replace revenge. According to Iroquois oral history, Chief Deganawida—known as the lawgiver—founded the confederacy. It is said that he “blocked out the sun” as a demonstration of his powers; it may be that these events took place during the full solar eclipse that was visible in the Northeast in 1451. Deganawida’s message was proclaimed by his supporter, Hiawatha, a great orator, who convinced all the five Iroquois nations to join. As a model, the confederacy used the powerful metaphor of the longhouse; each nation, it was said, occupied



Northeastern Indian Groups on the Eve of Colonization The Indians of the Northeast were mostly village peoples. In the fifteenth century five Iroquois groups—the Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, and Senecas—joined together to form the Iroquois Five Nation Confederacy.

a separate hearth but acknowledged descent from a common mother. As in the longhouse, women played important roles in choosing the male leaders who would represent their lineages and chiefdom on the Iroquois council. The confederacy suppressed violence among its members but did not hesitate to encourage war against outside groups such as the neighboring Hurons or the Eries, who constructed defensive confederacies of their own at about the same time. The Iroquois Confederacy would become one of the most powerful contenders in the struggles among competing Indian and European forces during the colonial period.

The Iroquois spoke Iroquoian. The other major language group of the Northeast was Algonquian, whose speakers belonged to at least fifty distinct cultures. In contrast to the Iroquois, most Algonquian peoples were patrilineal. In general, they lived in less extensive dwellings and in smaller villages than the Iroquois, often without palisade fortifications. The Algonquian peoples north of the Great Lakes and in northern New England were hunters and foragers, organized into bands with loose ethnic affiliations. Several of these peoples, including the Micmacs, Crees, Montagnais, and Ojibwas (also known as Chippewas), were the first to become enmeshed in the early fur trade with European newcomers. Among the Algonquians of the Atlantic coast from present-day Massachusetts south to Virginia, as well as among those in the Ohio Valley, farming led to the development of settlements as densely populated as those of the Iroquois, although the abundance of coastal and riverine resources made

CHRONOLOGY

30,000–15,000 B.C.E.	First humans in the Americas	250 B.C.E.	Beginning of Mogollon culture in the Southwest
13,000 B.C.E.	Global warming trend begins	200 B.C.E.–C.E. 400	Hopewell culture flourishes
10,000 B.C.E.	Clovis technology	650	Bow and arrow, flint hoes, and Northern Flint corn in the Northeast
9000 B.C.E.	Extinction of big-game animals		
8000 B.C.E.	Beginning of the Archaic period	775–1150	Hohokam site of Snaketown reaches its greatest extent
7000 B.C.E.	First cultivation of plants in the Mexican highlands	1000	Tobacco in use throughout North America
5000 B.C.E.	Athapaskan migrations to America begin	1150	Founding of Hopi village of Oraibi, oldest continuously occupied town in the United States
4000 B.C.E.	First settled communities along the Pacific coast		
3000 B.C.E.	Inupiat and Aleut migrations begin	1200	High point of Mississippian and Anasazi cultures
1500–1000 B.C.E.	Maize and other Mexican crops introduced into the Southwest	1276	Severe drought begins in the Southwest
1000 B.C.E.	Beginning of Adena culture	1300	Arrival of Athapascans in the Southwest
	First urban communities in Mexico	1451	Founding of Iroquois Confederacy

the bow and arrow and the fishing spear as important to these people as the hoe.

Algonquian communities, although relatively autonomous from one another, also began to form confederacies during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Among these groupings were those of the Massachusetts, Narragansets, and Pequots of New England, the Delawares and the peoples of Powhatan's confederacy on the mid-Atlantic coast, and the Shawnees, Miamis, Kickapoos, and Potawatomis of the Ohio Valley.

CONCLUSION

Over the thousands of years that elapsed between the settlement of the North American continent and the

invasion of Europeans at the end of the fifteenth century, Indian peoples developed hundreds of distinctive cultures that were fine-tuned to the geographic and climatological possibilities and limitations of their homelands. In the northern forests they hunted game and perfected the art of processing furs and hides. Along the coasts and rivers they harvested the abundant runs of fish and learned to navigate the waters with sleek and graceful boats. In the arid Southwest they mastered irrigation farming and made the deserts bloom, while in the humid Southeast they mastered the large-scale production of crops that could sustain large cities with sophisticated political systems. North America was not a "virgin" continent, as so many of the Europeans believed. Indians had transformed the natural world, making it over into a human landscape.

"Columbus did not discover a new world," writes the historian J. H. Perry. "He established contact between two worlds, both already old." North America had a rich history, one that Europeans did not understand and later generations of Americans have too frequently ignored. The European

colonists who came to settle encountered thousands of Indian communities with deep roots and vibrant traditions. In the confrontation that followed, Indian communities viewed the colonists as invaders and called upon their traditions and their gods to help them defend their homelands.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. List the evidence for the hypothesis that the Americas were settled by migrants from Asia.
2. Discuss the impact of environmental change and human hunting on the big-game populations of North America.
3. Review the principal regions of the North American continent and the human adaptations that made social life possible in each of them.
4. Define the concept of "forest efficiency." How does it help to illuminate the major development of the Archaic period?
5. Why did the development of farming lead to increasing social complexity? Discuss the reasons why organized political activity began in farming societies.
6. What were the Hunting and Agrarian Traditions? In what ways did the religious beliefs of Indian peoples reflect their environmental adaptations?
7. What factors led to the organization of the Iroquois Confederacy?

DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTION

Directions: This exercise requires you to construct a valid essay that directly addresses the central issues of the following question. You will have to use facts from the documents provided and from the chapter to prove the position you take in your thesis statement.

Assemble and present proofs that the Native Americans of North America possessed a varied and diverse collection of cultures. Make certain that you present evidence in your essay regarding religious beliefs, social structure, and economic organization.

DOCUMENT A

Examine the map on page 16 of conjectured continental trade routes between all areas of North America.

- What evidence do scientists and historians have to suggest these complex trade networks?
- What evidence exists that cultural and agricultural artifacts such as the bow and arrow or maize cultivation moved eastward into the Eastern Woodlands?
- What artifacts were found in Mississippian mounds (see page 15) that proved trade connections with the Rocky Mountains, the Great Lakes, and the Gulf Coast?

Now look at the photo of Pueblo Bonito in Chaco Canyon on page 14. Pueblo Bonito was an Anasazi community.

- What evidence suggests that it was at the center of trade routes, food distribution routes, and perhaps traffic associated with ceremonial and religious activities?
- What evidence is found in Arizona of connections to the traders of Mesoamerica?
- Is this evidence of complex interconnections between varied cultures in North America?