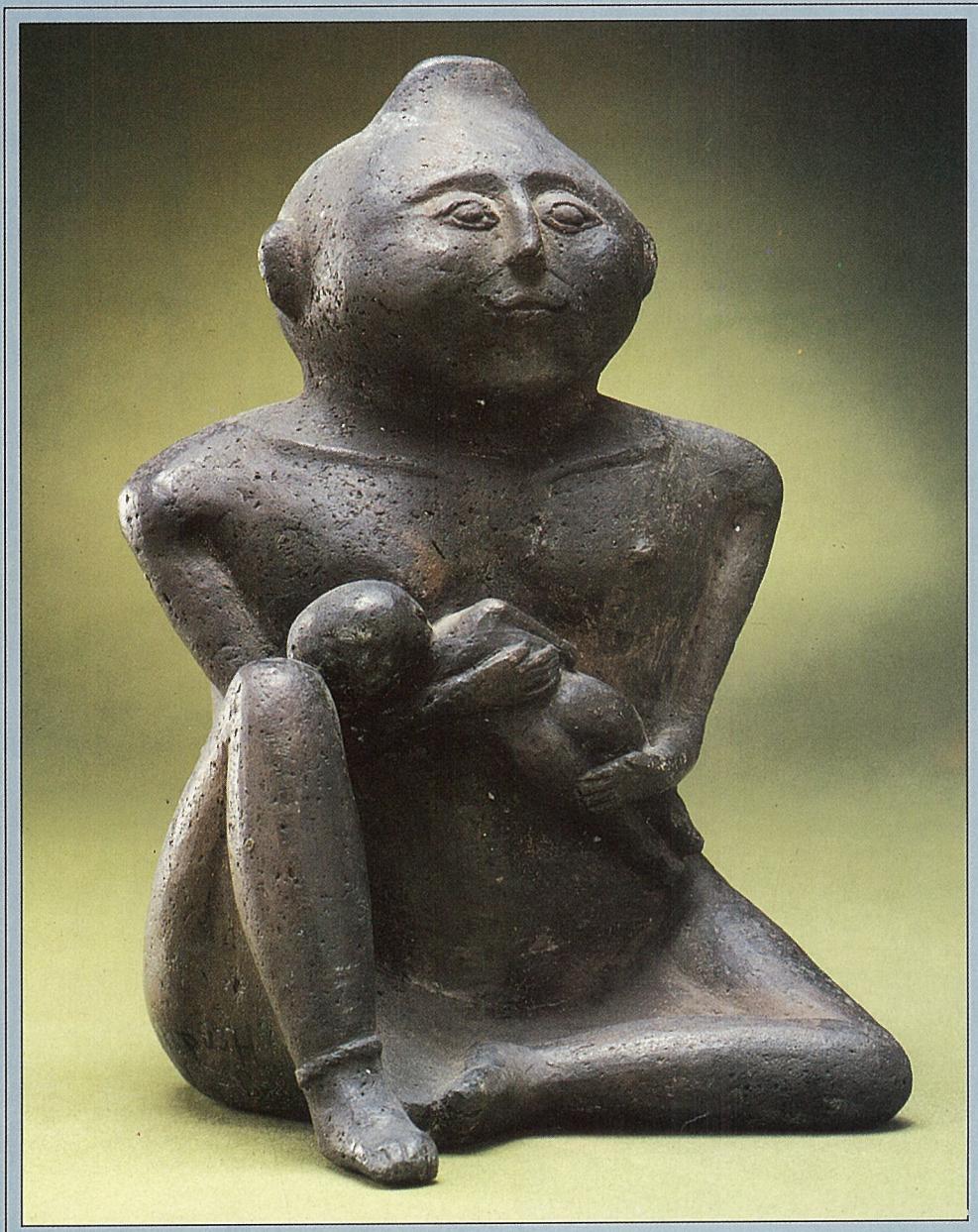
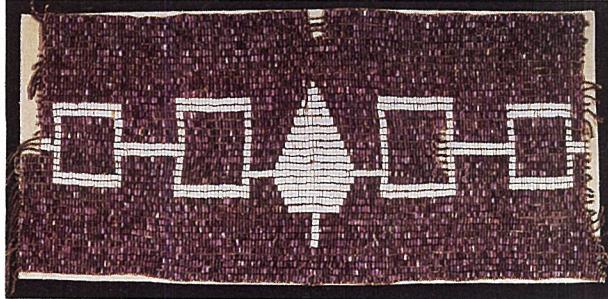


America Before Columbus

Nursing Mother, Prehistoric Mississippian Hooded Water Bottle, c. 1000–1400 A.D.



Hiawatha had known the depths of despair. For years his people, the group of Indian nations known as the Iroquois, had been beset by a destructive, seemingly endless cycle of violence and revenge. Families, villages, and nations fought one another, and neighboring Indians attacked relentlessly. When Hiawatha tried to restore peace among his own Onondaga people, an evil sorcerer who opposed peace caused the deaths of his seven beloved daughters. Grief-stricken and angry, Hiawatha wandered alone into the forest. After several days he reached the shore of a lake, where he experienced a series of visions. First he saw a flock of wild ducks suddenly fly up from the lake, taking the water with them. Hiawatha walked onto the dry lake bed, gathering and stringing the beautiful purple and white shells that lay there. He saw the shells, called wampum, as symbolic "words" of condolence that, when properly presented, would soothe grief, no matter how intense. Then he met a holy man named Degawanidah, who offered him the beads and spoke the appropriate words, one to dry his weeping eyes, another to open his ears to the words of peace and reason, a third to clear his throat so that he himself could once again speak peacefully and reasonably. Degawanidah and Hiawatha then 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 and a confederacy, based on the condolence ritual.

Thus was born the powerful League of the Iroquois.

Although it is an oral tradition couched in the language of supernatural religion, the story of Hiawatha and Degawanidah depicts a concrete event in American history. Archaeological evidence at Iroquois sites corroborates the sequence of bloody warfare followed by peace and dates the league's origins at some time between the late fourteenth and the mid-fifteenth century. As with all of American history before the arrival of Europeans and their system of writing, archaeological evidence and oral traditions, examined critically, are our principal sources of knowledge about the past. In this case the story refers to an event of importance not only for pre-Columbian history but for the period of European contact with Native Americans as well. Indeed, the Iroquois Confederacy was a significant diplomatic and military force throughout the colonial period and has inspired and intrigued many non-Indians down to the present, despite the fact that it was established prior to, and entirely independently of, the Europeans' arrival.

The founding of the League of the Iroquois marked just one moment in a long history that began more than ten thousand years before Christopher Columbus's first voyage. Over that time an indigenous American history unfolded, utterly separate from that of the Old World. Some native peoples eked out their existences in precarious environments, whereas others enjoyed affluence and prosperity; some lived in small bands, whereas

others lived in large cities; some believed that the first humans came from the sky, but others maintained that they originated underground. Wherever and however they lived and whatever they believed, native peoples together made North America a human habitat and gave it a history.

The First Americans

Like the slow but relentless shaping of the planet itself, the origins of the human species extend back to the mists of prehistoric time. More than 5 million years ago, direct human ancestors evolved in the temperate grasslands of Africa. Between three hundred thousand and one hundred thousand years ago, humans began migrating through much of the Old World. During the last glaciation, which geologists term Wisconsin, hunting bands pursuing large game animals moved from Central Asia into Siberia. Between forty thousand and fifteen thousand years ago, some of these bands began crossing the broad land bridge then connecting Siberia to Alaska. In so doing, they became the first Americans.

Most Native Americans are descended from these earliest migrants. A few, however, trace their lineage to later arrivals. About nine thousand years ago, Athapaskan-speaking peoples crossed the land bridge and spread over much of northern and western Canada and southern and central Alaska. Some of them later migrated southward to form the Apaches and Navajos in the Southwest, as well as smaller groups elsewhere. Eskimos and Aleuts began crossing the Bering Sea—which had submerged the land bridge—from Siberia between five thousand and four thousand years ago, and the Hawaiian Islands remained uninhabited until after A.D. 300.

The Peopling of North America

About 10,000 B.C. the Ice Age was nearing its end. Melting glaciers had opened up an ice-free corridor leading from Alaska to the northern Plains. Bands of hunters moved through this corridor, and others probably traveled south along the Pacific coast by boat. As they emerged from the glacier-covered north, they discovered a hunter's paradise. Giant



The First Americans

The arrow shows the “ice corridor” through which most ancestors of Native Americans passed before dispersing throughout the Western Hemisphere.

SOURCE: Dean R. Snow, *The Archaeology of North America* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1989).

mammoths, mastodons, horses, camels, bison, caribou, and moose, as well as smaller species roamed the continent innocent of the ways of human predators. So bountiful and accommodating was this new environment that the Paleo-Indians, as archaeologists call these hunters, fanned out and proliferated with astonishing speed. By 9000 B.C. descendants of the first Americans had dispersed throughout the Western Hemisphere.

Most Paleo-Indians dwelled in bands of about fifteen to fifty people. The men hunted; the women prepared the food and cared for the children. Members of a band lived together during the spring and summer and split into smaller groups of one or two families for the fall and winter. Although they moved constantly, they generally remained within



A Folsom Point

The Folsom point is the most common of the Paleo-Indian fluted spear points. This point is shown just as it was found, imbedded between two ribs of the extinct Bison taylori.

informally defined boundaries. An exception occurred when they traveled to favored quarries to obtain jasper or flint for making tools and spear points. At such sites they encountered other bands, whom they traded with and joined in religious ceremonies.

Even before leaving Alaska the Paleo-Indians had developed distinctly American ways. Their most characteristic innovation was their “fluted” points, so-called for their shape, which permitted fitting them on spears. Although fluted points have been found throughout the Western Hemisphere, none has been uncovered in Siberia. Around 9000 B.C. many of the big-game species such as the mammoths and mastodons became extinct. The effectiveness of the Paleo-Indian hunters may have contributed to this demise, but the animals were also doomed by the warming climate, which brought ecological changes that undermined the food chain on which they depended. In other words, the replacement of the big-game mammals by humans marked part of a larger process of ecological change associated with the end of the Ice Age.

Archaic Societies

The warming of the earth’s atmosphere continued until about 4000 B.C., with far-reaching effects on the North American continent. Sea levels rose, flooding shallow offshore areas, and glacial runoff in the interior filled the Great Lakes, the Mississippi River basin, and other waterways. As the glaciers receded northward, so did the arctic and subarctic environments that had previously extended far into what are now the “lower 48” 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. An immense range of flora and fauna, both on land and in the waters, came to characterize the American landscape. We are familiar with many of these same plants and animals today.

Just as the Paleo-Indians had flourished in settings south of the glaciers, so their descendants now prospered in the abundance and diversity of their new environments. Instead of focusing most of their food gathering on big game, these Archaic peoples, as archaeologists term native North Americans from c. 8000 B.C. to 1500 B.C., lived off wide varieties of smaller mammals, fish, and wild plants. As they used the resources of their environments more efficiently, their communities required less land area and could support larger populations. Although the size of populations and territories of hunting-gathering bands in the Great Basin and Southwest changed little from Paleo-Indian times, people in parts of the East and Midwest now resided in villages with larger populations for all or most of the year. For example, a year-round village that flourished near Kampsville, Illinois, from 3900 to 2800 B.C., supported 100 to 150 people. It could do so because the residents knew how and when to procure fish and mussels from local lakes, in addition to the deer and other mammals, birds, nuts, and seeds available in the surrounding area.

Archaic peoples diversified other aspects of their lives as well. Besides using many more varieties of stone, they utilized bone, shell, copper, horn, ivory, asphalt, clay, and leather to make such objects as tools, weapons, utensils, and ornaments. Although many of these materials were available locally, the Native Americans obtained others only through exchanges, both with neighbors and

through long-distance trade networks. Archaeological evidence gives some indication of the extent and importance of this long-distance trade. Obsidian from the Yellowstone region, copper from the Great Lakes, and marine shells from the coasts appear at sites hundreds and even thousands of miles from their points of origin. Archaic peoples, as well as Indians who encountered Europeans several millennia later, thought that such minerals contained supernatural power. A few large sites, among them Indian Knoll in western Kentucky, which dates to 2500–2000 B.C., evidently served as major centers of trade.

Trade networks were routes not only for materials but also for ideas about their uses. By means of these pathways, the techniques developed in one locale for making material objects, procuring food, or utilizing the medicinal properties of plants were carried over wide areas, transcending the narrow boundaries of community, language, and ethnicity. Out of such diffusions of ideas arose regional cultural patterns (see below). Trade also served to spread religious beliefs, as exemplified in ideas and practices relating to death. Human burials became more elaborate during the Archaic era as Native Americans in many regions buried the dead with their personal possessions as well as with objects fashioned from obsidian, copper, shell, and other highly valued substances. They often sprinkled the flexed corpses with bright red hematite, a source of iron, so that they resembled a baby at birth. Ideas of death as a kind of rebirth remained widespread in North America at the time Europeans began arriving many centuries later.

Archaic Americans did not distinguish among themselves on the basis of class or rank, or centralize political power in the hands of one person or a few individuals. However, the growing complexity of their diets and of their technologies led them to sharpen many of the distinctions between women's and men's roles. Men took responsibility for fishing as well as hunting, whereas women harvested and prepared the products of wild plants, including the grinding and milling of seeds. Men and women each made the tools needed for their tasks. In general, men's activities entailed travel, and women's activities kept them close to the village, where they bore and raised children. These role distinctions are apparent in the burials at Indian Knoll. Here the native people buried tools relating to hunting,

fishing, woodworking, and leatherworking largely or exclusively with the men and those relating to nut cracking and seed grinding with the women. Yet gender-specific distinctions by no means applied to all activities, for objects used by shamans, or religious healers, were distributed equally between male and female graves.

The Indians' Continent

By 1500 B.C. Indians in much of North America were shaping new ways of life and new institutions, transcending the Archaic cultures developed over the preceding millennia. Like most Archaic peoples, many in post-Archaic America remained in small bands consisting of a few families and continued to rely on combinations of hunting, fishing, and gathering. But others practiced more specialized methods of food production and more actively shaped their environments to their own needs. In the Southwest, the Southeast, and the Northeast the advent of agriculture and of large centers of trade and population marked a radical departure from Archaic patterns and from the foraging way of life still followed by Indians in other regions.

Despite the discrepancies emerging among native societies, the ties between them grew strong. Trade networks carrying goods and ideas over geographic distances and across linguistic, ethnic, and cultural divides continued to proliferate. As many natives turned to agriculture, they also adopted the bow and arrow and ceramic pottery as these innovations spread throughout the Americas, from the smallest bands to the largest cities. And Indians virtually everywhere retained their preferences for seasonal food procurement and for communities based on kinship, often abandoning or resisting more centralized systems that proved unworkable or oppressive.

The Northern and Western Perimeters

In western Alaska, where the first Americans had arrived thousands of years earlier, the post-Archaic period marked the beginning of a new, arctic way of life. The Eskimos and Aleuts had brought highly sophisticated tools and weapons from their Siberian homeland. Combining ivory, bone, and other



Culture Areas of Native Americans and Locations of Selected Tribes, A.D. 1500

“Culture area” is a convention enabling archaeologists and anthropologists to generalize about regional patterns among pre-Columbian Native American cultures.

materials, they fashioned harpoons and spears for the pursuit of sea mammals and—in the case of the Eskimos—caribou. Through their continued contacts with Siberia, the Eskimos were making and using the first bows and arrows, the first ceramic pottery, and the first pit houses (structures set partially below ground level) in the Americas by 1500 B.C. As they perfected their ways of living in the cold tundra regions of the far north, many Eskimos spread across upper Canada to the shores of Labrador, western Newfoundland, and Greenland.

Long before the arrival of Columbus, the Eskimos made contact with Europeans and used

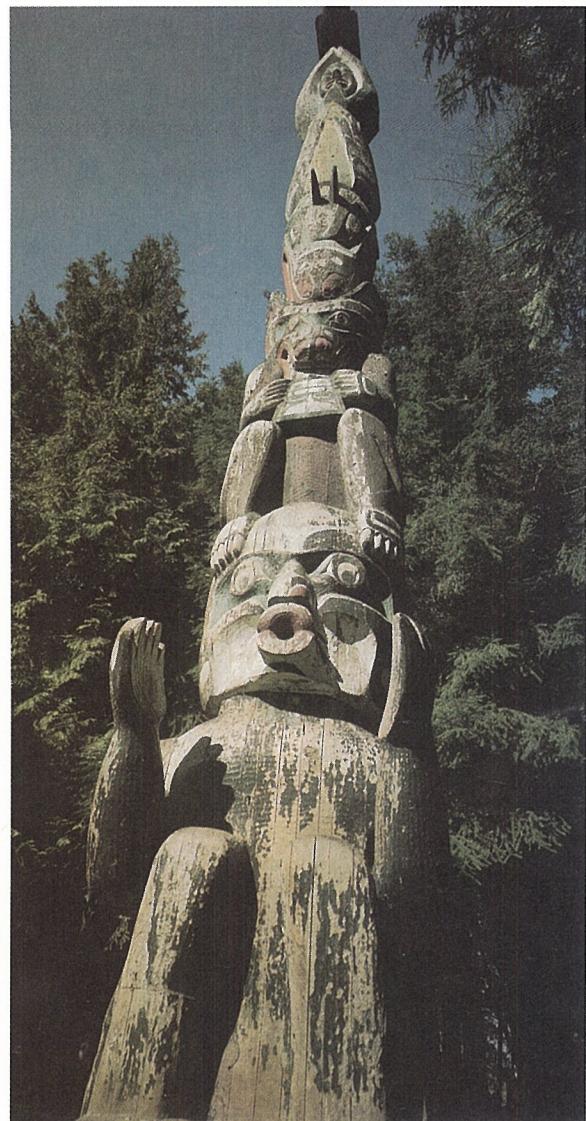
some of their material goods. From about A.D. 1, a few iron tools were reaching western Alaska by way of Russia and Siberia. However, they were too few in number to affect Eskimo culture in any substantial way. Contacts with Europeans were more direct and sustained in areas of Greenland, Newfoundland, and Labrador, where Norse people from Scandinavia attempted to colonize, beginning in the late tenth century A.D. The Norse exchanged metal goods for ivory with the Eskimos and with the Beothuk Indians near their settlement in Newfoundland. But peaceful trade gave way to hostile encounters. By the eleventh century the native

peoples' resistance to the newcomers' colonizing ambitions led the Norse to withdraw from Vinland, as they called Newfoundland. 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." Several more centuries would pass before Europeans would enjoy the fruits of the New World.

Along the Pacific coast, from Alaska to southern California, improvements in the production and storage of certain key foods enabled Indians to develop more settled ways of life. On the Northwest coast, from the Alaskan panhandle to northern California, and in the Columbia Plateau, natives devoted brief periods of each year to catching salmon and other spawning fish. After drying the fish, the Northwest Coast Indians stored it in quantities sufficient to last the year round. As a result, their seasonal movements gave way to a settled lifestyle in permanent villages consisting of cedar-plank houses. Plateau Indians constructed villages with pit houses where they ate salmon through the summer. They left the villages in spring and fall for hunting and gathering.

By A.D. 1 many villages on the Northwest coast numbered several hundred people. Trade and warfare with interior groups strengthened the power of chiefs and other leading figures, whose families were distinguished from those of commoners by their wealth and prestige. These leading families proclaimed their status most conspicuously in elaborate totem poles depicting supernatural beings supposedly linked to their ancestors and in potlatches, ceremonies in which they gave away or destroyed much of their material wealth. From the time of earliest contacts, Europeans were awestruck 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 as native peoples in the Northwest, Indians on the coast and in the interior valleys of what is now California became more settled. Residing in villages of about one hundred people, each established near large oak groves, they devoted extensive time and effort to processing acorns. After the fall harvest, the Indians ground the acorns into meal, leached them of their bitter



Northwest Coast Totem Pole

The most famous form of artistic expression among Northwest Coast Indians, totem poles served various purposes. Some advertised the genealogy and accomplishments of a clan, family, or individual. Others celebrated a successful potlatch. A few seem to have been intended to ridicule an enemy or simply to express the maker's whimsy and skill.

tannic acid, and then roasted, boiled, or baked the nuts prior to eating or storing them. In the face of intense competition for acorns, native Californians defined territorial boundaries more rigidly than elsewhere in pre-Columbian North America and combined several villages under the leadership of a single chief. The chiefs conducted trade, diplo-

macy, and religious ceremonies with neighboring groups and, when necessary, led their people in battle. Along with the resources of game, fish, and plants available to them, 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."

The end of the Archaic period is less noticeable in the Great Basin than almost anywhere else in North America. This region's warm, dry climate was almost as forbidding to humans as that of the frigid Arctic. Foraging bands continued to move over the area, depending primarily on hunting small mammals and harvesting seeds and piñon (pine) nuts. Little change occurred until about the fourteenth or fifteenth century A.D., when Paiute, Ute, and Shoshone Indians fanned over the Great Basin from their homeland in southeastern California, absorbing or displacing the earlier inhabitants. Although the newcomers' way of life was essentially the same as that of the older groups, their more efficient seed processing enabled them to support larger populations, which in turn occupied ever-larger territories.

The Hawaiian Islands were not part of indigenous North America but rather of Oceania. By 3000 B.C. the Austronesian peoples of Australia, New Guinea, and nearby smaller islands had developed agriculture and crafted pottery, tools and other objects of stone and shell, and giant outrigger canoes for voyaging on the high seas. About 1600 B.C. some Austronesians began settling the formerly uninhabited islands of the south Pacific, but only in the fourth century A.D. did voyagers from the Marquesas Islands reach Hawaii, the northern extremity of Polynesia.

For the next four hundred years, these first Hawaiians lived in self-sufficient communities, cultivating sweet potatoes, yams, and taro (whose starchy root they made into a fermented paste) and exploiting a rich variety of fish and shellfish. Each community distinguished sharply between commoners and chiefs. The latter included a paramount chief as well as various lesser rulers who could prove kinship with him. As in parts of North America, Hawaiian chiefs collected food and craft goods from subordinate communities and allies. Unlike their counterparts in North America, these



A Hawaiian Chief

This portrait was drawn by a member of Captain James Cook's expedition in 1778.

chiefs occasionally waged war for territorial conquest and the subjugation of other peoples.

When Europeans began arriving in Hawaii in the late eighteenth century, the islands numbered about four hundred thousand people, with communities averaging about two hundred individuals each. Thereafter European diseases had effects similar to those on the mainland: within half a century the native population plummeted to 130,000 and by 1890 to 40,000.

The Southwest

Although the peoples of the Northwest coast and California cultivated tobacco, they never farmed food-bearing plants. With their abundant food sources, they had little incentive to hazard the additional risks that agriculture would have entailed, especially in California, with its dry summers. However elsewhere in North America agriculture became central to Indian life. In the arid Southwest,

natives concentrated much of their communities' energy on irrigation in order to feed themselves by farming. In the humid Eastern Woodlands, on the other hand, plant cultivation came more easily. But in both regions, the advent of agriculture was a long, slow process that never entirely displaced other food-procuring activities.

New World farming began about 5000 B.C.—just as agriculture was being introduced to Europe from southwestern Asia—when Indians living in the Tehuacán Valley of central Mexico experimentally planted the seeds of certain wild plants they customarily harvested. Among these were squash, maize (corn), and eventually beans. Slowly, the techniques of plant domestication spread in all directions. The earliest North American evidence is at Bat Cave in western New Mexico, where archaeologists have found maize and squash remains dating to about 3500 B.C. Yet for thousands of years more, farming remained only a minor activity for hunter-gatherers in both Mexico and the Southwest. Substantial changes in southwestern life began only after 400 B.C., when the introduction (probably from Mexico) of a more drought-resistant strain of maize enabled the inhabitants to move from the highlands to the drier lowlands. In the centuries that followed, populations rose throughout the region, and native culture was 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 Papago Indians began farming in the Gila River and Salt River valleys of southern Arizona. Hohokam peoples built elaborate canal systems for irrigation that enabled them to harvest two crops per year, an astonishing achievement in such an arid environment. To construct and maintain their canals, the Hohokam people needed large, coordinated work forces. They built permanent villages, usually consisting of several hundred people. Although many such villages remained independent, others joined confederations in which several towns were linked by canals. The central village in each confederation coordinated labor, trade, and religious and political life for all the communities connected to it.

Essentially a local creation, Hohokam culture nevertheless drew extensively on materials and ideas from outside the Southwest. From about the sixth century A.D., the large villages had ball courts

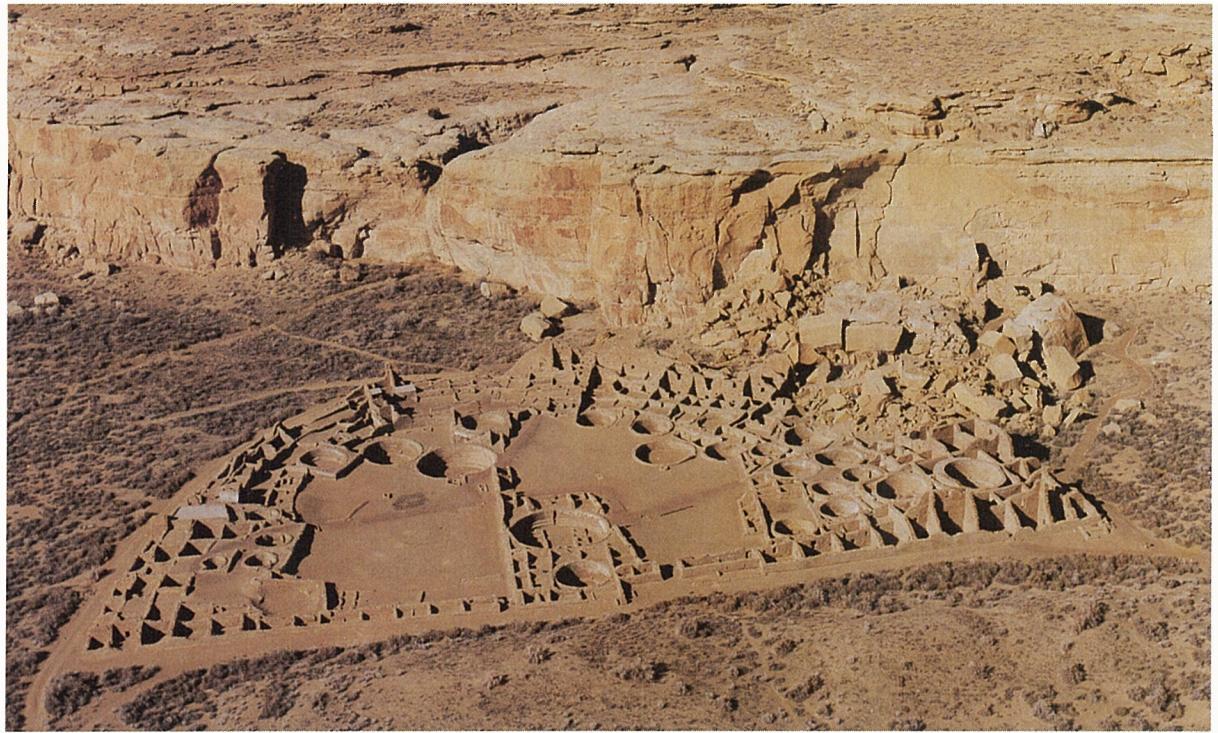
and platform mounds like those found throughout Mexico at the time. As in Mexico, ball games were major public events in Hohokam villages. Although no evidence of their rules survives, they probably resembled the Mexican game, in which play was rough, players could not use their hands, and the losers sacrificed some of their material possessions. Mexican influence was also apparent in the creations of Hohokam artists, who worked in clay, stone, turquoise, and shell. Archaeologists have unearthed such artifacts as rubber balls, macaw feathers, and copper bells among the Mexican items found at Hohokam sites. The native artists used seashells from California in pottery, as backing for turquoise mosaics, and as material for intricate etchings.

Among the last southwesterners to make farming the focus of their subsistence were a people known as the Anasazi, a Navajo term meaning "ancient ones." Their culture originated in the Four Corners area where Arizona, New Mexico, Colo-

Anasazi Cliffside Balcony House with Kiva, Mesa Verde, Colorado

Some Anasazi peoples, most notably those at Mesa Verde in southwestern Colorado, built their villages in cliffside caves.





Pueblo Bonito, Chaco Canyon

Pueblo Bonito illustrates the richness and grand scale of Anasazi architecture.

rado, and Utah meet. By the sixth century A.D., the Anasazi people were only beginning to harvest beans, live in permanent villages with pit houses, make pottery (although they had crafted elaborately coiled baskets for centuries), use the bow and arrow, and domesticate turkeys—practices already adopted by most of their southwestern neighbors. Yet over the next six centuries, these ancestors of the modern Pueblo Indians expanded over a wide region and became the most powerful people in the region. And while they traded with Indians in Mexico, California, and elsewhere, the Anasazis borrowed little in the way of artistic or cultural ideas. Instead their neighbors borrowed from them.

One of the distinguishing characteristics of Anasazi culture was its architecture. Early Anasazi houses were round, with walls of stone slabs or clay plaster and domed roofs of logs and mud, supported by four central posts. They also featured underground storage cists, ventilator shafts, and small holes in the floor known as *sipapus*. The Anasazis and modern Pueblos maintain that the first humans reached the earth from underground, following a long and tortuous journey through several underworlds. Symbolizing this journey, the si-

papu was a sacred place in each family's house. As village populations increased after the sixth century, often reaching one hundred or more houses, the Anasazis shifted to above-ground, rectangular apartments. However, they retained the form of the pit house in their *kivas*, round, partly underground structures in which the men held religious ceremonies. To this day Anasazi-style apartments and *kivas* are central features of Pueblo Indian architecture in the Southwest.

From the beginning of the tenth century to the middle of the twelfth, during an unusually wet period in the Southwest, the Anasazis expanded over much of what is today northern New Mexico and Arizona. The population of some villages grew to more than a thousand. In Chaco Canyon in present-day northwestern New Mexico, a cluster of twelve villages forged a powerful confederation numbering about fifteen thousand people. A system of roads radiated out of the canyon to satellite pueblos located as far as sixty-five miles away. These roads were perfectly straight; their builders even carved out stairs or footholds in the sides of steep cliffs rather than go around them. The largest of the villages, Pueblo Bonito, had about 1,200

inhabitants and was the home of two Great Kivas, each about fifty feet in diameter. People traveled from the outlying towns to Chaco Canyon for religious rituals. In addition, the canyon was the center of a turquoise industry that manufactured beads for trade with Mexico, and its pueblos supplied the outliers with food in times of drought. The ability of canyon residents to grow enough crops to feed themselves and others lay in their system of controlling rainwater runoff through small dams, terraces, and other devices.

The classic Anasazi culture, as manifested at Chaco Canyon, Mesa Verde in southwestern Colorado, Canyon de Chelly in northeastern Arizona, and other sites, came to an end in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Although Chaco Canyon's somewhat earlier collapse may have been triggered by a cutoff of its turquoise trade with Mexico, the overriding cause of the Anasazi demise was drought. Suddenly, the amount of available farmland was drastically reduced for a population that had grown rapidly during the preceding centuries. The great Anasazi centers were abandoned as the inhabitants dispersed. Most formed new pueblos on or near the upper Rio Grande, whereas others moved south to establish the Zuni and Hopi pueblos. Descendants of the Anasazis still inhabit many of these pueblos. Other large agricultural communities, such as those of 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 foraging Apaches and Navajos, whose arrival at the end of the fourteenth century ended their long migration from northwestern Canada.

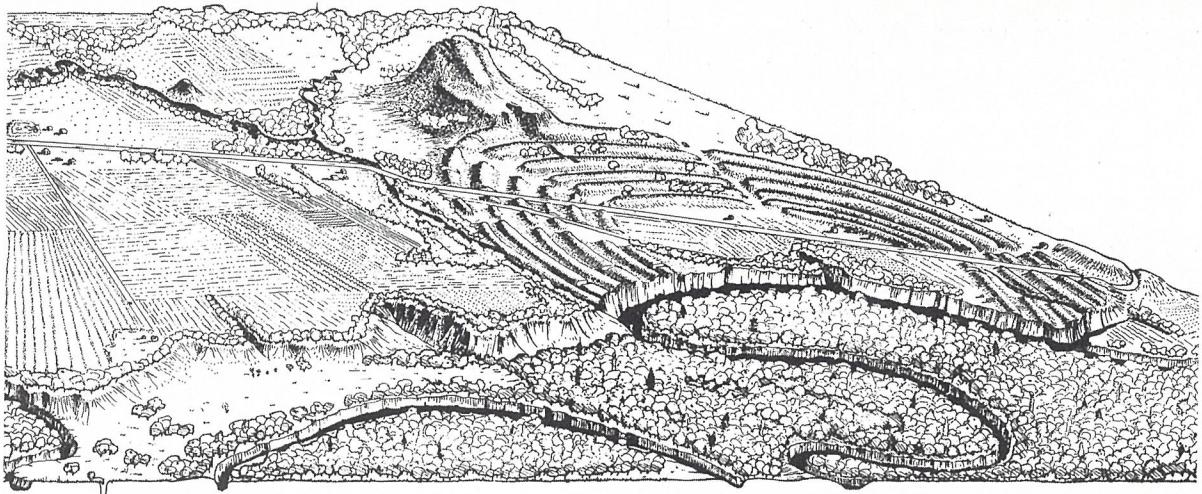
The Eastern Woodlands and the Plains

Whereas the Hohokam and Anasazi peoples built large villages and created centralized or confederated political systems as a consequence of deciding to farm for most of their food, natives on the Northwest coast and in California enlarged and consolidated their societies in the absence of agriculture. Nonfarming Indians in much of the Eastern Woodlands—that vast stretch of land from the Mississippi Valley to the Atlantic Ocean—likewise experimented with village life and political centralization without farming. But after doing so, they developed an extraordinarily productive agriculture.

In 1200 B.C. about five thousand people had concentrated in a single village at Poverty Point on the Mississippi River in Louisiana. The village was flanked by two large mounds and surrounded by eight 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 with similar communities of the period in Mexico, solar observations were the basis for religious beliefs as well as for a calendar. Poverty Point also lay at 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 throughout eastern North America and then redistributed them to nearby communities. These communities almost certainly supplied some of the labor for the earthworks. Although Poverty Point was built by local inhabitants, its general design and organization suggest the influence of the Olmec peoples of Mexico. For reasons that are unclear, Poverty Point flourished for only about three centuries and then declined. Nevertheless, it foreshadowed later developments in the Mississippi Valley.

A different kind of mound-building culture, called Adena, emerged in the Ohio Valley in the fifth century 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 largest, Grave Creek Mound in West Virginia, was 240 feet in diameter, 70 feet high, and contained 72,000 tons of soil. The treatment of Adena dead varied widely, indicating differences in social or political status. Some corpses were cremated, others were placed in round clay basins, and still others were given elaborate tombs. Some burials contained just a few utilitarian grave goods, whereas others had many more goods and a greater variety, including pipes and other finely crafted objects.

The Adena mounds constituted the heart of a religious movement whose adherents were diffused over much of the Northeast. Although many Adena burial practices, such as the inclusion of grave goods and the spreading of red hematite on some corpses, were familiar in the Northeast, the burial rituals themselves and many of the manufactured objects were new. Many of these objects were



Poverty Point, Louisiana

This perspective sketch shows the large mound located just outside the concentric rings, as well as a smaller mound in the upper right. The earthworks symbolized Poverty Point's importance as a regional center for trade and religious ceremonies.



Great Serpent Mound, Ohio

This well-known Adena mound, built for religious ceremonies rather than for burials, depicts a 1,254-foot-long snake devouring an egg or a frog.

distributed throughout the Northeast via trade networks during the period in which Adena culture flourished.

During the first century B.C., Adena culture evolved into a more complex and widespread culture known as Hopewell. Hopewell ceremonial centers were even larger and more elaborate than their Adena predecessors. They proliferated not only in the Ohio Valley but also in the Illinois River valley. Some 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. The people surrounded some corpses with thousands of freshwater pearls or copper ornaments or with sheets of mica, quartz, or other sacred substances. Hopewell artisans fashioned a wide variety of effigies, ornaments, and jewelry, which their owners wore to their graves. The raw materials for these objects originated in locales throughout America east of the Rockies. Through trade networks Hopewell influence spread over much of the Eastern Woodlands—to communities as far away as Wisconsin, Missouri, Florida, and New York. Some of these, such as Marksville in Louisiana, emulated the Ohio centers in almost every detail, but others were more selective, imitating Hopewell mounds, copper work, or pottery. Although the great Hopewell centers of the Ohio and Illinois valleys were abandoned in the fifth century A.D. for reasons that are unclear, they had an enormous influence on subsequent developments in eastern North America.

Remarkably, people who primarily were hunter-gatherers created the sophisticated Hopewell culture. Archaic Indians in Kentucky and Missouri had cultivated small amounts of squash as early as 2500 B.C., and maize first appeared in eastern North America by 300 B.C. But agriculture became a dietary mainstay for Woodlands people only 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 were Indians living on the food plains of the Mississippi River and its major tributaries. They developed a new culture, called Mississippian, that combined elements of Hopewell culture and new ideas from Mexico. The volume of Mississippian craft production and long-distance trade dwarfed those of Adena and Hopewell cultures. At the same time,



Major Mississippian Centers

SOURCE: Jay A. Levenson, ed., *Art in the Age of Exploration: Circa 1492* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1991).

Mississippian towns, numbering hundreds or even thousands of people, were built around open plazas like those of central Mexico. Large platform mounds stood next to 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 to 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.

Many Mississippian centers were built not by local natives but by outsiders seeking to combine farming and riverborne trade. Local natives and others often were coerced into bringing corn and goods to a new center and paying homage to its chief. By the tenth century most Mississippian centers were part of larger systems, based on trade and

on shared religious beliefs and dominated by a single "super-center." The most powerful such system centered around the magnificent city of Cahokia (see "A Place in Time"), located near modern St. Louis.

For two and a half centuries, Cahokia reigned supreme in the American heartland. Beginning in the thirteenth century, however, Cahokia and its allied centers began to experience shortages of food and other resources. Soon they were challenged militarily by neighboring peoples and, as a result, the inhabitants fled to the countryside. By the fifteenth century, Indians in the central Mississippi Valley were living (like their Archaic forebearers) in small villages linked by reciprocity rather than coercion. Similar developments led to the decline of temple-mound centers in the Southeast, but in this region new centers arose to take their place. Thus the decline of Etowah in northwestern Georgia near the end of the fourteenth century was followed by the rise of Coosa nearby. But Coosa and the other remaining centers were abandoned after 1500 as a result of European diseases.

The demise of Mississippian culture, like that of the Hopewell, ended a trend toward political centralization among Indians in eastern North America. In spite of their decline, however, the Mississippians profoundly affected native culture in the East. They spread new strains of maize and beans, along with many of the techniques and tools to cultivate these crops, enabling women to weave agriculture into the fabric of village life among the Iroquois and other Indians throughout the region. Only in portions of northern New England and the upper Great Lakes was the growing season for maize (one hundred frost-free days) generally too short for it to be a reliable crop. Some eastern Indians, searching for new farmlands, took the new ways to the river valleys of the plains, where they interacted peacefully with the region's hunting peoples.

By A.D. 1500 the North American continent presented a remarkable spectrum of human cultures, societies, and historical experiences. As they had for thousands of years, small, mobile hunting bands peopled the Arctic, Subarctic, Great Basin, and much of the Plains. More stable societies, based on fishing or gathering, predominated along the Pacific coast, whereas village-based agriculture was typical in the Southwest, the Eastern Woodlands, and in portions of the Plains. Finally, Mississippian urban centers still prevailed in portions of the Southeast.

Despite the vast differences among Native Americans, much bound them together. Trade facilitated the exchange not only of goods but of new ideas, techniques, and beliefs. Thus the bow and arrow, ceramic pottery, and certain beliefs and rituals surrounding the burial of the dead came to characterize Indians everywhere. Indians also shared a preference for the independent, kin-based communities that generally had characterized indigenous North America, a preference that probably was reinforced by the failure of such highly centralized systems as Cahokia and the Anasazi centers during the thirteenth century.

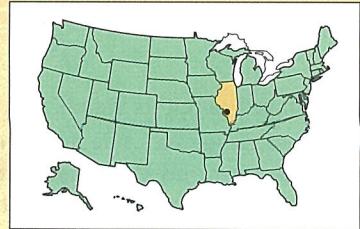
New World Peoples on the Eve of European Contact

In 1492 the entire Western Hemisphere had a population of about 75 million. Native Americans clustered most thickly in Mexico and Central America, the Caribbean islands, and Peru. But North America was not an empty wasteland. In 1492 between 7 million and 10 million Native Americans lived north of present-day Mexico, unevenly distributed. Sparse populations of nomads inhabited the Great Basin, the high plains, and the northern forests. Fairly dense concentrations, however, thrived along the Pacific coast, in the Southwest and Southeast, in the Mississippi Valley, and along the Atlantic coast. All these peoples grouped themselves in several hundred nations and tribes, speaking many diverse languages and dialects. But the most important Indian social groups were the family, the village, and the clan. Within these spheres Native Americans fed themselves, reared their children, and tried to sort out the mysteries of life.

Family and Community

Kinship cemented all Indian societies together. Ties to cousins, aunts, and uncles created complex patterns of social obligation. So did membership in clans—the large networks of kin groups who reckoned their descent from a common ancestor who embodied the admired qualities of some animal.

Cahokia in 1200



Between the tenth and thirteenth centuries, a city of 30,000–40,000 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 100 feet at its highest point. Surrounding the city, a 125-square-mile metropolitan area encompassed 10 cities and large towns and more than 50 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 and a stockade. Within another two centuries, the recently reinforced stockade enclosed Monk's Mound and numerous other public structures, and most of the city's residents lived on the outside.

Cahokia was ideally situated for a position of 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 to the Ohio and Illinois, where Adena and Hopewell peoples had previously developed extensive trade networks based on shared religious beliefs. Cahokia and other Mississippian societies combined Hopewell beliefs with new ideas from Mexico to erect even more complex political, economic, and religious institutions. By the twelfth century, many scholars believe, Cahokia was the capital of a potential nation-state.

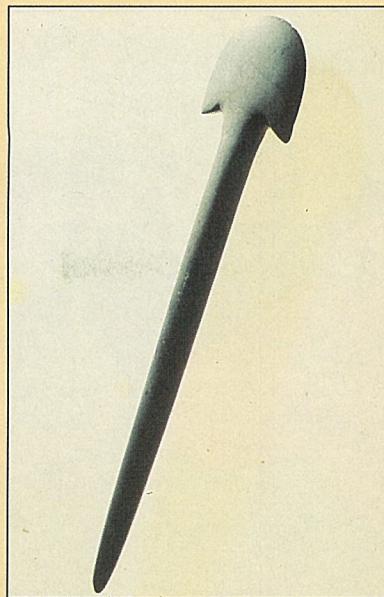
Archaeology provides evidence of what Cahokians made and left in the ground as well as clues to their social structure, trade networks, and beliefs. Work gangs dug the soil for the mounds with shovels made of wood and stone and then carried

Artist's Rendering of Cahokia



the dirt in baskets to construction sites, often more than half a mile away. Much of 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. The raw materials for these objects were brought to Cahokia from locations all over eastern and central North America as tribute—payment by Indian societies dependent on 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 French accounts, recorded in the eighteenth century, of a similar society among the Natchez Indians of the lower Mississippi River.

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 ridgeline mounds, and those of highest status in conical mounds. In the single most remarkable mound, an adult male 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



Stone Spade



Sandstone Tablet Depicting Birdman

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 authors 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 earthly representative of the sun, the central focus of Mississippian religion. This and burials like it 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 having increasing difficulty producing 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 was 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, 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.



Language Groups of North American Indians, A.D. 1500

The several hundred languages spoken by North American native peoples in A.D. 1500 were derived from just a dozen basic language groups.

SOURCE: Dean Snow, *The Archaeology of North America: American Indians and Their Origins* (London: Thames and Hudson, Ltd., 1976).

Depending on the culture, clan membership could descend from either the mother or the father. Clans linked widely scattered groups within a tribe. Several different clans usually dwelled together in a single Indian village.

Kinship bonds counted for much more in Indian society than did the nuclear families that married couples and their children formed. Indians did not necessarily expect spouses to be bound together forever, but kinship lasted for life. Thus Na-

tive Americans could accept the divorce of a married couple without feeling a threat to the social order. Customs defining proper marital partners 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 never stood alone. Instead, strong ties of residence and defer-

ence bound each couple to one or both sets of parents, producing what social scientists call extended families.

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, the victim's kin might seek to avenge the killing by armed retaliation. If necessary, chiefs and other leaders intervened to resolve disputes between families within the same band, village, or tribe. But disputes between members of different groups could escalate into war. Densely populated societies that competed for scarce resources, as on the Northwest and California coasts, and centralized societies that attempted to dominate trade networks through coercion, such as Hopewell and Mississippian, experienced frequent and intense intergroup warfare. Some scholars believe that the warfare among the Iroquois in Hiawatha's time was a symptom of the political instability accompanying the collapse of a Mississippian center in the upper Ohio valley. Still, warfare remained a low-level affair in most of North America. An exasperated New England officer, writing of his effort to obtain Indian allies in the early 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."

Women did the cultivating among northeastern Indians—and, indeed, among almost all other agricultural Indians outside the Southwest. For Indian women, field work easily meshed with child care, as did such other tasks as preparing animal hides and gathering wild vegetation. Men did jobs that took them away from the women and children: hunting, fishing, trading, negotiating, and fighting. Because Indian women often produced the greater share of the food supply, Indian communities accorded women more respect than did European societies. Among the Iroquois of upstate New York, for example, the women collectively owned the fields, distributed food, and played a weighty role in tribal councils.

In the Southwest, wresting a living from the severe environment demanded concentrated effort, but the native peoples succeeded remarkably well. The population was comparatively dense: a hun-

dred thousand people may have lived in the pueblos in the early sixteenth century, and intensive cultivation also supported large river-valley settlements. As in the rest of North America, extended families formed the foundation of southwestern village life in both the pueblos and the river valleys.

Southwestern patterns of property ownership and gender roles differed, not only from those of Native Americans elsewhere but also among local cultures. Unlike Indians in other regions, here men and women shared agricultural labor. River-valley peoples of the Southwest owned land privately and passed it through the male line, and men dominated decision making. In pueblo society (which in this respect resembled societies in the Northeast and Southeast), land was communally owned, and women played an influential role in community affairs. A pueblo woman could end a marriage simply by tossing her husband's belongings out the door and sending him back to his kinsfolk. Moreover, clan membership passed in the mother's line. Yet pueblo communities depended on secret male societies to perform the rituals that would secure the gods' blessing and ensure life-giving rain. In all respects, pueblo society strictly subordinated the individual to the group and demanded rigorous cooperation.

Indian Religion and Social Values

Most Indians explained the origin and destiny of the human race in myths told by storytellers during religious ceremonies. In the beginning, said the Iroquois, was the sky world of unchanging perfection. From it fell a beautiful pregnant woman, whom the birds saved from plunging into the limitless ocean. On the back of a tortoise who rose from the sea, birds created the earth's soil, in which the woman planted seeds carried during her fall. From these seeds sprang all nature; from her womb, the human race.

Native American religions revolved around the conviction that all nature was alive, pulsating with a spiritual power—*manitou*, in the Algonquian language, *orenda* in the Iroquoian, *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," wrote the Puritan leader

Roger Williams, one of the few Europeans who genuinely tried to understand the northeastern Indians' spiritual world. Their belief in supernatural power led most Indian peoples to seek constantly to conciliate all the spiritual forces in nature: living things, rocks and water, sun and moon, even ghosts and witches. For example, Indians were careful to pray to the spirits of the animals they hunted, justifying the killing of just enough game to sustain themselves. To the Indians, humanity was only one link in the great chain of living nature. The Judeo-Christian view that God had given humanity domination over nature was very strange to them.

Indians had many ways of gaining access to spiritual power. One was through dreaming: most Native Americans took very seriously the visions that came to them in sleep. They also sought access to the supernatural by artificially altering their consciousness through difficult physical ordeals. Young men, for example, commonly endured a traumatic rite of passage before gaining recognition as adults. Such a rite often involved "questing"—going alone into a forest or up a mountain, fasting, and awaiting the mystical experience in which an animal spirit would reveal itself as a protective guide and offer a glimpse of the future. Girls went through comparable rituals at the onset of menstruation to initiate them into the spiritual world from which female reproductive power flowed. Moreover, entire communities often practiced collective power-seeking rituals such as the Sun Dance, performed by Indians of the Plains and Great Basin (see Chapter 17).

Although on occasion all Indians tried to communicate directly with the spiritual world, they normally relied on shamans for help in understanding the unseen. The shamans were healers who used both medicinal plants and magical chants, but their role in Indian society went further. They interpreted dreams, guided "questing" and other rituals, invoked war or peace spirits, and figured prominently in community councils. Chiefs had to maintain respectful relations with their people's shamans, and by the sixteenth century, shamans were forming organized priesthoods in the Southeast and Southwest.

Because most Indian cultures tried to maintain a sense of dependence among their people, Native American communities demanded conformity and close cooperation. From early childhood Indians learned to be accommodating and reserved—slow



Kwakiutl Death Mask

This mask represents the chief spirit of the dead among the Kwakiutl people of the Northwest Coast.

to reveal their own feelings before they could sense others'. Although few Native American peoples favored physical punishment in child rearing, Indian parents punished psychologically, by shaming. Throughout life the fear of becoming an isolated social outcast (a status that could mean death) forced individual Indians to maintain strict self-control. Communities took decisions by consensus, and leaders articulated slowly emerging agreements in memorable, persuasive, often passionate oratory. Shamans and chiefs therefore had to be dramatic orators. Noted John Smith, they spoke in public "with vehemency and so great passions that they sweat till they drop and are so out of breath they scarce can speak."

Because Indians highly valued consensus building in everyday life, their leaders' authority depended primarily on the respect that they invoked rather than what they could demand by compulsion. Distributing gifts was central to establishing and maintaining leadership with a Native American community, as a Frenchman in early-seventeenth-century Canada clearly understood: "For the savages that have 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.'"

Thus for Indians, trade was not merely an economic activity by which they acquired useful goods. It was also a means of ensuring goodwill with other peoples and of building their own prestige. European visitors almost always found Native Americans eager to barter. For many centuries, trade among the Indians had spanned the continent. The Hurons of southern Ontario produced large agricultural surpluses for trade, and southwestern Indians' turquoise found its way to Mexico. Flint and other tool-making materials, salt, dyes, furs, and (in hard times) food and seeds were major objects of trade. So was tobacco, which Indians regarded primarily as a ceremonial drug, its fragrant smoke symbolizing the union of heaven and earth. Native Americans eagerly assimilated into their own way of life the new goods that European traders offered. Metal tools they valued for their practical, labor-saving benefits, and dyed cloth and glass objects quickly took on symbolic, prestige-enhancing qualities.

"They love not to be encumbered with too many utensils," remarked an early-seventeenth-century English visitor. Rather, prestige counted for everything in Native American societies. If Indians did accumulate possessions, it was primarily with the aim of giving them away, to win prestige. The most spectacular example of such gift-exchanging rituals was the Pacific Northwest potlatch ceremony. When a northwestern community's social hierarchy was shaken, an aspiring new leader would invite his neighbors to a potlatch, at which he would give away or destroy most of what he owned, all the while chanting about his own greatness and taunting his rivals. Those who received were expected later to give away even more. He who could give away the most gained the highest prestige and accumulated the greatest number of people obligated to him.

Scholars have used the word *reciprocity* to characterize Native American religious and social values. Reciprocity involved mutual give-and-take, but its aim was not to confer equality. Instead, societies based on reciprocity tried to maintain equilibrium and interdependence between individuals of unequal power and prestige. In their religious thinking, too, Indians applied the concept of reciprocity, in viewing nature as a web of interdependent power entities into which humans had to fit.

And in social organization, the Indians' principle of reciprocity required that communities be places of face-to-face, lifelong interaction. Trade and gift giving solidified such reciprocal bonds. The Indians' faith in social reciprocity also underlay their idea of property rights. They believed that the people of one area might agree to share with others the right to use the land for different but complementary purposes: hunting, gathering, farming, trapping, or traveling. The notion (then emerging in Europe) that property ownership conferred perpetual and exclusive control of land was alien to Indians.

But Native American society was hardly a simple, noncompetitive world. All Indian cultures possessed a strong sense of order. Custom, the demands of social conformity, and the rigors of nature strictly regulated life, and the people's everyday affairs mingled with the spiritual world at every turn. Nature and the supernatural world could sometimes be frightening. For example, Indians feared ghosts and believed that nonconformists could invoke evil spirits by witchcraft—the most dreaded crime in Indian cultures. Much of the Indian religion involved placating the evil spirits that caused sickness and death. The pueblo peoples, whose existence depended on rainfall, expressed their gratitude by performing frequent rituals. And even in the Southwest, where stress on cooperation minimized competition, Indian life had an intensely competitive side. Individuals and communities eagerly strove to show physical prowess in ritualized games like lacrosse, and some bet enthusiastically on the outcome. "They are so bewitched with these . . . games, that they will lose sometimes all they have," said an Englishman of the Massachusetts Indians about 1630. Such games served not only as recreation but also as a means of acquiring prestige.

The breakdown of order in Indian communities could bring fearful consequences: accusations of witchcraft, demands for revenge against wrongdoers, war against enemies. Going to war or exacting personal revenge was a ritualized way of restoring order that had broken down. A captured male could expect death after prolonged torture. Indian men learned from early childhood to inflict (and to bear) physical pain out of loyalty to kin and neighbors; they knew that they must withstand torture without flinching and death without fear. Endurance was central to Indian life.

CONCLUSION

Well before the first Siberian hunters crossed the Bering land bridge, geographic isolation and ecological variety had been the New World's most striking characteristics. Isolation made possible Native Americans' social and cultural development untouched by alien influences and lethal epidemics. Meanwhile, great climatic and geographic variations among North American regions helped ensure that native cultures—all of them shaped significantly by their natural environments—would be extremely diverse.

Yet despite North America's isolation, Native American history did not begin at Christopher Columbus's arrival, with everything before 1492 relegated to a dim, uneventful limbo of "prehistory." When Europeans "discovered" America in 1492, they did not, as they thought, enter an unchanging world of simple savages. Instead, for thousands of years, native cultures and societies had transformed the North American continent into a human habitat. Indians had tapped the secrets of the land and the environment so as to be able to sustain themselves and flourish in almost every ecological zone. Over the millennia they learned the properties, uses, and values of plants, animals, soils, rocks,

and other minerals, as well as the cycles of months, seasons, and years. And the Indians transformed the landscape, as evidenced by their hunting camps, villages, and cornfields and by the web of roads and trails connecting them to one another. But for Indians, these discoveries and accomplishments were not the basis for pride in their ability to conquer nature. Rather, they saw themselves as participants in a natural and supernatural order that pervaded the universe, and their attitudes, as expressed in their religious practices, were ones of gratitude and constant concern lest they violate that order.

After 1500 a new attitude toward the land made itself felt in North America. We will never know how American history might have unfolded had the land and its native peoples remained untouched by outside influences. "A people come from under the world, to take their world from them"—thus an early-seventeenth-century Virginia Indian characterized the English invaders of his homeland. Indeed, the modern society that since the seventeenth century has arisen on the Indians' ancient continent bears little resemblance to the world that the Native Americans once knew.

Chronology

- c. 5,000,000 b.c. Earliest human ancestors appear in Africa.
- c. 2,000,000 b.c. Ice Age begins.
- c. 300,000– Humans spread throughout Eastern Hemisphere.
- c. 100,000 b.c. Hemispheric glaciation begins.
- c. 120,000 b.c. Wisconsin glaciation begins.
- c. 40,000– Ancestors of Native Americans cross 15,000 b.c. Alaska-Siberian land bridge.
- c. 10,000 b.c. Ice Age ends.
Wisconsin glaciation retreats from North America.
- c. 10,000– Paleo-Indians spread throughout Western Hemisphere.
- c. 9000 b.c. Extinction of big-game mammals.
- c. 8000 b.c. Archaic era begins.
- c. 7000 b.c. Athapaskan-speaking peoples arrive in North America.
- c. 5000 b.c. First domesticated plants grown in Western Hemisphere.
- c. 3500 b.c. First domesticated plants grown in North America.
- c. 3000– Inuit and Aleut peoples arrive in North America.
- c. 1500 b.c. Archaic era ends.
Bow and arrow and ceramic pottery introduced in North America.
- c. 1200 b.c. Poverty Point flourishes in Louisiana.
- c. 400– Adena culture flourishes in Ohio Valley.
- c. 100 b.c. Hohokam culture begins in Southwest.
- c. 100 b.c. Anasazi culture begins in Southwest.

c. 100 B.C.– Hopewell culture thrives in Midwest.

A.D. 600



c. A.D. 300 First people arrive at Hawaiian Islands.

c. A.D. 700 Mississippian culture begins.

For Further Reading

John Bierhorst, *The Mythology of North America* (1985). An excellent introduction to Native American mythology, organized regionally.

Stuart Fiedel, *The Prehistory of the Americas* (1987). A comprehensive introduction to the archaeology of the Western Hemisphere before Europeans' arrival.

Åke Hultkrantz, *The Religions of the American Indians* (1979). A stimulating discussion by the leading scholar on the subject.

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

William C. Sturtevant, gen. ed., *Handbook of North American Indians* (20 vols. projected, 1978–). A partially completed reference work providing basic information on the history and culture of virtually every known native society, as well as surveys of regional archaeology and essays on topics of special interest.

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c. A.D. 900 Stockade and first mounds built at Cahokia. Anasazi expansion begins.

c. A.D. 1000–Norse settlement of Vinland flourishes on Newfoundland.

c. A.D. 1150 Anasazi peoples disperse to form pueblos.

c. A.D. 1200–Cahokia declines.
1300

c. A.D. 1400 League of the Iroquois formed.

A.D. 1492 Christopher Columbus begins permanent European colonization of Western Hemisphere.

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