



The Americas, West Africa, and Europe

MAIN IDEA

On the eve of their interaction, Native American, West African, and European peoples lived in complex societies.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

The interaction of these cultures helped create the present-day culture of the United States.

Terms & Names

- nomadic
- Aztec
- Anasazi
- Pueblo
- Iroquois
- Benin
- Kongo
- Islam
- Christianity
- Reformation
- Renaissance

In this chapter, you will learn about three complex societies that met in North America in the late 1400s: the European, the West African, and the Native American. However, it is with the ancient peoples of the Americas that American history actually begins.

Ancient Cultures in the Americas

No one knows for sure when the first Americans arrived, but it may have been as long as 22,000 years ago. At that time, the glaciers of the last Ice Age had frozen

4 CHAPTER 1 *Exploration and the Colonial Era*



vast quantities of the earth's water, lowering sea levels and possibly creating a land bridge between Asia and Alaska across what is now the Bering Strait. Ancient hunters may have trekked across the frozen land, known as Beringia, into North America.

HUNTING AND GATHERING Archaeologists believe that the earliest Americans lived as big-game hunters. That way of life changed around 12,000 to 10,000 years ago when temperatures warmed, glaciers melted, and sea levels rose once again. The land bridge disappeared under the Bering Sea, bringing to an end land travel between the Asian and North American continents. As the climate grew warmer, the large animals no longer thrived. People gradually switched to hunting smaller game and fish and gathering nuts and berries.

AGRICULTURE DEVELOPS While many ancient groups settled in North America, others continued south into what is now Mexico and South America. Between 10,000 and 5,000 years ago, an agricultural revolution quietly took place in what is now central Mexico. There, people began to plant crops. Eventually, agricultural techniques spread throughout the Americas.

The introduction of agriculture made it possible for people to settle in one place and to store surplus food. From this agricultural base developed larger communities. However, some Native American cultures never adopted agriculture and remained **nomadic**, moving from place to place in search of food and water. Other tribes mixed nomadic and non-nomadic lifestyles. **A**

MAYA, AZTEC, AND INCA SOCIETIES FLOURISH The first empire of the Americas emerged as early as 1200 B.C. in what is now southern Mexico, where the Olmec people created a thriving civilization. In the wake of the Olmec's mysterious collapse, around 400 B.C., the Maya built a dynamic culture in Guatemala and the Yucatán Peninsula between A.D. 250 and 900. Later, the **Aztec** settled the Valley of Mexico in the 1200s and developed a sophisticated civilization.

In South America, the most prominent empire builders were the Inca. Around A.D. 1400, the Inca created a glittering empire that stretched nearly 2,500 miles along the mountainous western coast of South America.

COMPLEX SOCIETIES ARISE IN NORTH AMERICA In time, several North American groups, including the Hohokam and the **Anasazi** (ă'nə-să'zē), introduced crops into the arid deserts of the Southwest. Later, between 300 B.C. and A.D. 1400, each group had established its own culture.



▲ Hunters roaming over 10,000 years ago in what is now southern Arizona may have used this spear point to kill large prey.

MAIN IDEA

Analyzing Effects

A What were the effects of agriculture on the hunting and gathering people of the Americas?

Artist's rendering of Tenochtitlán, the Aztec capital in the middle of Lake Texcoco.



To the east and west of the Mississippi River, another series of complex societies developed—the Adena, the Hopewell, and the Mississippian. These societies excelled at trade and at building massive earthen mounds as tombs and as platforms for temples and other buildings. **B**

These early peoples were the ancestors of the many Native American groups that inhabited North America on the eve of its encounter with the European world.

MAIN IDEA

Summarizing

B In what ways did early Native American societies leave their mark upon the landscape?

Native American Societies of the 1400s

The varied regions of the North American continent provided for many different ways of life. The native groups that populated the continent's coasts, deserts, and forests 500 years ago were as diverse as their surroundings.

DIVERSE PEOPLES The inhabitants of California adapted to the region's varied environments. The Kashaya Pomo lived in marshlands along the central coast, hunting waterfowl with slingshots and nets. To the north of them, the Yurok and Hupa searched the forests for acorns and trapped fish in mountain streams.

The waterways and forests of the Northwest Coast sustained large communities year-round. On a coastline that stretched from what is now southern Alaska to northern California, groups such as the Kwakiutl, Nootka, and Haida collected shellfish from the beaches and hunted the ocean for whales, sea otters, and seals.

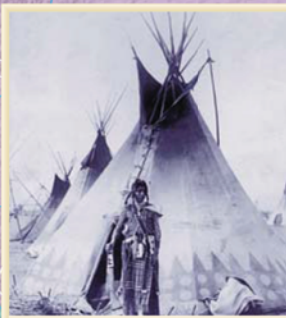
In the dry Southwest, the **Pueblo** and Pima tribes, descendants of the Anasazi and Hohokam, lived in multistory houses made of stone or adobe, a sun-dried brick of clay and straw, and grew maize (corn), beans, melons, and squash.

Beneath the forest canopy of the Northeast, members of the **Iroquois** (ĩr'ə-kwoi') nation hunted fish and game, such as wild turkeys, deer, and bear. In the Northeast, where winters could be long and harsh, Northeast peoples relied heavily on wild animals for clothing and food. In the warmer Southeast, groups lived mainly off the land, growing such crops as maize, squash, and beans.

A Northwest powwow, or multiracial gathering, in Cashmere, Washington state, 1989. Gatherings like these preserve a 500-year cultural tradition.



North American Cultures in the 1400s



Teepees could be quickly dismantled and were well suited to the nomadic lifestyle of the Plains.



Pueblos, built of sun-dried brick, or adobe, were characteristic dwellings of the Southwest.



A longhouse of the Eastern Woodlands region.

Native American Trade


Before the arrival of Columbus, the trade routes of North America allowed goods to travel across the continent.

Group and Region	Goods Traded
Algonquin of Eastern Woodlands	colored feathers, copper
Apaches of the Plains	meat, hides, salt
Navajo of the Southwest	pottery, blankets, crops
Kwakiutl of the Northwest Coast	fish oil
Ute of the Great Basin	hides, buffalo robes
Choctaw of the Southeast	deerskins, bear oil

GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER

- Region** What does this map reveal about North America in the 1400s?
- Location** Why do you think some regions had more trade routes than others?

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS Many of the Native American cultures had in common certain patterns of trade, attitudes toward land use, religious beliefs, and social values. As in other parts of the world, trade helped the spread of customs and beliefs. Tribes traded among each other both locally and over long distances. So extensive was the network of forest trails and river roads that an English sailor named David Ingram claimed in 1568 to have walked along Native American trade routes all the way from the Gulf of Mexico to Nova Scotia.

Native Americans traded many things, but land was not one of them. Land was regarded as the source of life, not as a commodity to be sold. “We cannot sell the lives of men and animals,” said one Blackfoot chief in the 1800s, “therefore we cannot sell this land.” 


Nearly all Native Americans thought of the natural world as filled with spirits. Every object—both living and nonliving—possessed a voice that might be heard if one listened closely. Some cultures worshiped one supreme being, variously called “Great Spirit,” “Great Mystery,” or “the Creative Power.”

The basic unit of organization among all Native American groups was the family, which included aunts, uncles, cousins, and other relatives. Some tribes further organized the families into clans, or groups of families descended from a common ancestor.

In the late 1400s, on the eve of the first encounter with Europeans, the rhythms of Native American family life were highly developed. All phases of a person’s life—birth, marriage, and death—were guided by traditions that often went back hundreds or perhaps thousands of years. On the other side of the Atlantic, in West Africa, customs equally ancient guided another diverse group of people.

MAIN IDEA

Making Inferences

 Why would Native American attitudes toward land ownership lead to conflict with Europeans?