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Author(s): Neal Salisbury

Source: *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Vol. 53, No. 3, Indians and Others in Early America (Jul., 1996), pp. 435-458

Published by: Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2947200>

Accessed: 12/12/2008 11:54

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The Indians' Old World: Native Americans and the Coming of Europeans

Neal Salisbury

SCHOLARS in history, anthropology, archaeology, and other disciplines have turned increasingly over the past two decades to the study of native peoples during the colonial period of North American history. The new work in Indian history has altered the way we think about the beginning of American history and about the era of European colonization. Historians now recognize that Europeans arrived, not in a virgin land, but in one that was teeming with several million people. Beyond filling in some of the vast blanks left by previous generations' overlooking of Indians, much of this scholarship makes clear that Indians are integral to the history of colonial North America.¹ In short, surveys of recent textbooks and of scholarly titles suggest that Native Americans are well on their way to being "mainstreamed" by colonial historians.

Substantive as this reorientation is, it remains limited.² Beyond the problems inherent in representing Indian/non-Indian interactions during the colonial era lies the challenge of contextualizing the era itself. Despite opening chapters and lectures that survey the continent's native peoples and cultures, most historians continue to represent American history as having been set in motion by the arrival of European explorers and colonizers.³ They have yet to recognize the existence of a North American—as opposed to

Neal Salisbury is Professor of History at Smith College. He wishes to acknowledge the valuable suggestions of seminar participants at the Charles Warren Center for Studies in American History, Harvard University, and the National Humanities Center, where he held fellowships, and at the Boston Area Early American History Seminar, the Institute of Early American History and Culture, the Five College Social History Seminar, and the Philadelphia Center for Early American Studies. He also thanks Elizabeth Carney, Ann Lattinville, and Paula Wagoner for research assistance; Dena Dincauze, David Hally, and Robert Hasenstab for helpful advice; Kate Blackmer for providing the maps; and Steven Hackel, Charles Hudson, James Merrell, and Daniel Richter for constructive comments on the manuscript. The title is offered as a compliment to James Merrell.

¹ See James Axtell, "A North American Perspective for Colonial History," *History Teacher*, 12 (1978–1979), 549–62. The beginning of this shift was signaled by Gary B. Nash, *Red, White, and Black* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1973), and Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (Chapel Hill, 1975).

² See James H. Merrell, "Some Thoughts on Colonial Historians and American Indians," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Ser., 46 (1989), 108–10, and Daniel K. Richter, "Whose Indian History?" *ibid.*, 50 (1993), 381–82.

³ See Frederick E. Hoxie, *The Indians Versus the Textbooks: Is There Any Way Out?* (Chicago, 1984); Hoxie, "The Problems of Indian History," *Social Science Journal*, 25 (1988), 389–99.

English or European—background for colonial history, much less to consider the implications of such a background for understanding the three centuries following Columbus's landfall. Yet a growing body of scholarship by archaeologists, linguists, and students of Native American expressive traditions recognizes 1492 not as a beginning but as a single moment in a long history utterly detached from that of Europe.⁴ These findings call into question historians' synchronic maps and verbal descriptions of precontact Indians—their cultures, their communities, their ethnic and political designations and affiliations, and their relations with one another. Do these really describe enduring entities or do they represent epiphenomena of arbitrary moments in time? If the latter should prove to be the case, how will readings of Indian history in the colonial period be affected?

Far from being definitive, this article is intended as a stimulus to debate on these questions. It begins by drawing on recent work in archaeology, where most of the relevant scholarship has originated, to suggest one way of thinking about pre-Columbian North America in historical terms.⁵ The essay then looks at developments in several areas of the continent during the centuries preceding the arrival of Europeans and in the early phases of the colonial period. The purpose is to show how certain patterns and processes originating before the beginnings of contact continued to shape the continent's history thereafter and how an understanding of the colonial

⁴ A volume that draws on all these approaches is Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., ed., *America in 1492: The World of the Indian Peoples Before the Arrival of Columbus* (New York, 1992). The best surveys of North American archaeology are Brian M. Fagan, *Ancient North America: The Archaeology of a Continent* (New York, 1991), and Stuart J. Fiedel, *Prehistory of the Americas*, 2d ed. (Cambridge, 1992). On languages see Harold E. Driver, *Indians of North America*, 2d ed. (Chicago, 1969), and Joseph H. Greenberg, *Language in the Americas* (Stanford, Calif., 1987), esp. chap. 2. Two especially interesting examples of work that utilizes oral traditions as historical sources to supplement "prehistoric" archaeology are Roger C. Echo-Hawk, "Kara Katit Pakutu: Exploring the Origins of Native America in Anthropology and Oral Traditions" (M. A. thesis, University of Colorado, 1994), and Donald Bahr et al., *The Short, Swift Time of Gods on Earth: The Hohokam Chronicles* (Berkeley, Calif., 1994).

⁵ On archaeology as a foundation for Indian history see Bruce G. Trigger, "Archaeology and the Image of the American Indian," *American Antiquity*, 45 (1980), 662–76, and "American Archaeology as Native History: A Review Essay," *WMQ*, 3d Ser., 40 (1983), 413–52. Among works that incorporate archaeology into historical narratives, the most exemplary by anthropologists are Trigger, *The Children of Aataensic: A History of the Huron People to 1660* (Montreal, 1976), and Kathleen J. Bragdon, *Native People of Southern New England, 1500–1650* (Norman, Okla., 1996), and by historians, Daniel K. Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The People of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (Chapel Hill, 1992). The most thorough argument for the role of indigenous contexts in shaping post-Columbian American history is Francis Jennings, *The Founders of America: How the Indians Discovered the Land, Pioneered in It, and Created Great Classical Civilizations; How They Were Plunged into a Dark Age by Invasion and Conquest; and How They Are Reviving* (New York, 1993). But Jennings argues for a pervasive "Mexican influence" in North America by the 15th century A.D. and makes several other inferences that are highly speculative at best. Lynda Norene Shaffer, *Native Americans before 1492: The Moundbuilding Centers of the Eastern Woodlands* (Armonk, N. Y., 1992), is a useful overview by a historian whose interest is world, rather than American, history.

period requires an understanding of its American background as well as of its European context.⁶

In a formidable critique of European and Euro-American thinking about native North Americans, Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., demonstrates that the idea of "Indians" as a single, discrete people was an invention of Columbus and his European contemporaries that has been perpetuated into our own time without foundation in historical, cultural, or ethnographic reality. On the contrary, Berkhofer asserts,

The first residents of the Americas were by modern estimates divided into at least two thousand cultures and more societies, practiced a multiplicity of customs and lifestyles, held an enormous variety of values and beliefs, spoke numerous languages mutually unintelligible to the many speakers, and did not conceive of themselves as a single people—if they knew about each other at all.⁷

While there is literal truth in portions of Berkhofer's statement, his implication that Indians inhabited thousands of tiny, isolated communities in ignorance of one another flies in the face of a substantial body of archaeological and linguistic scholarship on North America and of a wealth of relevant anthropological literature on nonstate polities, nonmarket economies, and noninstitutionalized religions. To be sure, indigenous North Americans exhibited a remarkable range of languages, economies, political systems, beliefs, and material cultures. But this range was less the result of their isolation from one another than of the widely varying natural and social environments with which Indians had interacted over millennia. What recent scholars of precolonial North America have found even more striking, given this diversity, is the extent to which native peoples' histories intersected one another.

At the heart of these intersections was exchange. By exchange is meant not only the trading of material goods but also exchanges across community lines of marriage partners, resources, labor, ideas, techniques, and religious practices. Longer-distance exchanges frequently crossed cultural and linguistic boundaries as well and ranged from casual encounters to widespread alliances and networks that were economic, political, and religious. For both individuals and communities, exchanges sealed social and political relationships. Rather than accumulate material wealth endlessly, those who acquired it gave it away, thereby earning prestige and placing obligations on others to reciprocate appropriately. And as we shall see, many goods were not given away to others in this world but were buried with individuals to accompany them to another.⁸

⁶ The need for an understanding of its West African contexts is equally critical but outside the scope of this article and its author's expertise. For a beginning in this direction see John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400–1680* (Cambridge, 1992), and the review of that volume by Ira Berlin in *WMQ*, 3d Ser., 51 (1994), 544–47.

⁷ Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York, 1978), 3.

⁸ The basic contributions to the vast literature on gift exchange economies are Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. Ian Cunnison (London,

Archaeologists have found evidence of ongoing exchange relations among even the earliest known Paleo-Indian inhabitants of North America. Ten thousand years before Columbus, in the wake of the last Ice Age, bands of two or three dozen persons regularly traveled hundreds of miles to hunt and trade with one another at favored campsites such as Lindenmeier in northern Colorado, dating to ca. 8800 B.C. At the Lindenmeier site, differences in the flaking and shaping of stone points distinguished regular occupants in two parts of the camp, and the obsidian each used came from about 350 miles north and south of Lindenmeier, respectively.⁹ Evidence from a wide range of settlement sites makes clear that, as the postglacial warming trend continued, so-called Archaic peoples in much of the continent developed wider ranges of food sources, more sedentary settlement patterns, and larger populations. They also expanded their exchanges with one another and conducted them over greater distances. Highly valued materials such as Great Lakes copper, Rocky Mountain obsidian, and marine shells from the Gulf and Atlantic coasts have been found in substantial quantities at sites hundreds and even thousands of miles from their points of origin. In many cases, goods fashioned from these materials were buried with human beings, indicating both their religious significance and, by their uneven distribution, their role as markers of social or political rank.¹⁰

While the Archaic pattern of autonomous bands persisted in most of North America until the arrival of Europeans, the complexity of exchange relationships in some parts of the continent produced the earliest evidence of concentrated political power. This was especially so for peoples who, after the first century A.D., developed food economies that permitted them to inhabit permanent, year-round villages. In California, for example, competition among communities for coveted acorn groves generated sharply defined political territories and elevated the role of chiefs who oversaw trade, diplomacy, and warfare for clusters of villages. Similar competition for prime fishing and trading locations strengthened the authority of certain village chiefs on the Northwest Coast.¹¹ Exchange rather than competition for resources appears to have driven centralization in the Ohio and Illinois valleys. There the Hopewell peoples imported copper, mica, shell, and other raw materials

1954); Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (New York, 1944), chap. 4; Marshall Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics* (Chicago, 1972); and George Dalton, "The Impact of Colonization on Aboriginal Economies in Stateless Societies," in Dalton, ed., *Research in Economic Anthropology: An Annual Compilation of Research* (Greenwich, Conn., 1978), 1:131-84. On North America see William A. Turnbaugh, "Wide-Area Connections in Native North America," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, 1:4 (1976), 22-28.

⁹ Edwin S. Wilmsen, *Lindenmeier: A Pleistocene Hunting Society* (New York, 1974); Turnbaugh, "Wide-Area Connections in Native North America," 23-24.

¹⁰ Fiedel, *Prehistory of the Americas*, chap. 4; Turnbaugh, "Wide-Area Connections in Native North America," 24-25; Jesse D. Jennings, "Epilogue," in Jennings, ed., *Ancient Native Americans* (San Francisco, 1978), 651; Barbara Bender, "Emergent Tribal Formations in the American Midcontinent," *American Antiquity*, 50 (1985), 52-62; Lynn Ceci, "Tracing Wampum's Origins: Shell Bead Evidence from Archaeological Sites in Western and Coastal New York," in Charles F. Hayes et al., eds., *Proceedings of the 1986 Shell Bead Conference: Selected Papers*, Rochester Museum and Science Center, Research Records No. 20 (Rochester, N. Y., 1989), 65-67.

¹¹ Fiedel, *Prehistory of the Americas*, 133-43.

over vast distances to their village centers, where specialists fashioned them into intricately crafted ornaments, tools, and other objects. They deposited massive quantities of these goods with the dead in large mounds and exported more to communities scattered throughout the Mississippi Valley. Hopewell burials differentiate between commoners and elites by the quantity and quality of grave goods accompanying each.¹² In the Southwest, meanwhile, a culture known as Hohokam emerged in the Gila River and Salt River valleys among some of the first societies based primarily on agriculture. Hohokam peoples lived in permanent villages and maintained elaborate irrigation systems that enabled them to harvest two crops per year.¹³

By the twelfth century, agricultural production had spread over much of the Eastern Woodlands as well as to more of the Southwest. In both regions, even more complex societies were emerging to dominate widespread exchange networks. In the Mississippi Valley and the Southeast, the sudden primacy of maize horticulture is marked archaeologically in a variety of ways—food remains, pollen profiles, studies of human bone (showing that maize accounted for 50 percent of people's diets), and in material culture by a proliferation of chert hoes, shell-tempered pottery for storing and cooking, and pits for storing surplus crops. These developments were accompanied by the rise of what archaeologists term "Mississippian" societies, consisting of fortified political and ceremonial centers and outlying villages. The centers were built around open plazas featuring platform burial mounds, temples, and elaborate residences for elite families. Evidence from burials makes clear the wide social gulf that separated commoners from elites. Whereas the former were buried in simple graves with a few personal possessions, the latter were interred in the temples or plazas along with many more, and more elaborate, goods such as copper ornaments, massive sheets of shell, and ceremonial weapons. Skeletal evidence indicates that elites ate more meat, were taller, performed less strenuous physical activity, and were less prone to illness and accident than commoners.¹⁴ Although most archaeologists' conclusions are informed at least in part by models developed by political anthropologists, they also draw heavily from Spanish and French observations of some of the last Mississippian societies. These observations confirm that political leaders, or chiefs, from elite families mobilized labor, collected tribute, redistributed agricultural surpluses, coordinated trade, diplomacy, and military activity, and were worshipped as deities.¹⁵

¹² Joseph R. Caldwell, "Interaction Spheres in Prehistory," in Caldwell and Robert L. Hall, eds., *Hopewellian Studies*, Illinois State Museum, Scientific Papers, 12 (Springfield, 1964), 133–43; David S. Brose and N'omi Greber, eds., *Hopewell Archaeology: The Chillicothe Conference* (Kent, Ohio, 1979); Fiedel, *Prehistory of the Americas*, 240–51.

¹³ Linda S. Cordell, *Prehistory of the Southwest* (Orlando, Fla., 1984), 207–11; Fiedel, *Prehistory of the Americas*, 209–12.

¹⁴ Fiedel, *Prehistory of the Americas*, 251–60; Dan F. Morse and Phyllis A. Morse, *Archaeology of the Central Mississippi Valley* (New York, 1983), chaps. 10–11; Bruce D. Smith, "The Archaeology of the Southeastern United States: From Dalton to de Soto, 10,500–500 B.P.," *Advances in World Archaeology*, 5 (1986), 53–63; Vincas P. Steponaitas, "Prehistoric Archaeology in the Southeastern United States, 1970–1985," *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 15 (1986), 387–93.

¹⁵ The successful integration of archaeology, history, and theory as well as the range of

The largest, most complex Mississippian center was Cahokia, located not far from the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri rivers, near modern East St. Louis, Illinois, in the rich floodplain known as American Bottoms. By the twelfth century, Cahokia probably numbered 20,000 people and contained over 120 mounds within a five-square-mile area (see Figure I). One key to Cahokia's rise was its combination of rich soil and nearby wooded uplands, enabling inhabitants to produce surplus crops while providing an abundance and diversity of wild food sources along with ample supplies of wood for fuel and construction. A second key was its location, affording access to the great river systems of the North American interior.¹⁶

Cahokia had the most elaborate social structure yet seen in North America. Laborers used stone and wooden spades to dig soil from "borrow pits" (at least nineteen have been identified by archaeologists), which they carried in wooden buckets to mounds and palisades often more than half a mile away. The volume and concentration of craft activity in shell, copper, clay, and other materials, both local and imported, suggests that specialized artisans provided the material foundation for Cahokia's exchange ties with other peoples. Although most Cahokians were buried in mass graves outside the palisades, their rulers were given special treatment. At a prominent location in Mound 72, the largest of Cahokia's platform mounds, a man had been buried atop a platform of shell beads. Accompanying him were several group burials: fifty young women, aged 18 to 23, four men, and three men and three women, all encased in uncommonly large amounts of exotic materials. As with the Natchez Indians observed by the French in Louisiana, Cahokians appear to have sacrificed individuals to accompany their leaders in the afterlife. Cahokia was surrounded by nine smaller mound centers and several dozen villages from which it obtained much of its food and through which it conducted its waterborne commerce with other Mississippian centers in the Midwest and Southeast (see Figure II).¹⁷

approaches possible with these as foundations can be seen by surveying the relevant essays in Charles Hudson and Carmen Chaves Tesser, eds., *The Forgotten Centuries: Indians and Europeans in the American South, 1521-1704* (Athens, Ga., 1994). See also Chester B. DePratter, "Late Prehistoric and Early Historic Chiefdoms in the Southeastern United States" (Ph. D. diss., University of Georgia, 1983); Charles Hudson et al., "Coosa: A Chiefdom in the Sixteenth-Century Southeastern United States," *American Antiquity*, 50 (1985), 723-37; David G. Anderson, *The Savannah River Chiefdoms: Political Change in the Late Prehistoric Southeast* (Tuscaloosa, Ala., 1994). The most recent theoretical discussion is Randolph J. Widmer, "The Structure of Southeastern Chiefdoms," in Hudson and Tesser, eds., *Forgotten Centuries*, 125-55.

¹⁶ Melvin L. Fowler, "A Pre-Columbian Urban Center on the Mississippi," *Scientific American*, 233 (August 1975), 92-101; William R. Iseminger, "Cahokia: A Mississippian Metropolis," *Historic Illinois*, 2:6 (April 1980), 1-4.

¹⁷ Archaeologists disagree as to the complexity and power of Cahokia, but see Patricia J. O'Brien, "Urbanism, Cahokia, and Middle Mississippian," *Archaeology*, 25 (1972), 188-97; Fowler, "Pre-Columbian Urban Center on the Mississippi"; Iseminger, "Cahokia"; Fowler, *The Cahokia Atlas: A Historical Atlas of Cahokia Archaeology*. Studies in Illinois Archaeology, 6 (Springfield, 1989); George R. Milner, "The Late Prehistoric Cahokia Cultural System of the Mississippi River Valley: Foundations, Florescence, Fragmentation," *Journal of World Prehistory*, 4 (1990), 1-43; Thomas E. Emerson and R. Barry Lewis, eds., *Cahokia and the Hinterlands: Middle Mississippian Cultures of the Midwest* (Urbana, 1991). For European accounts of the



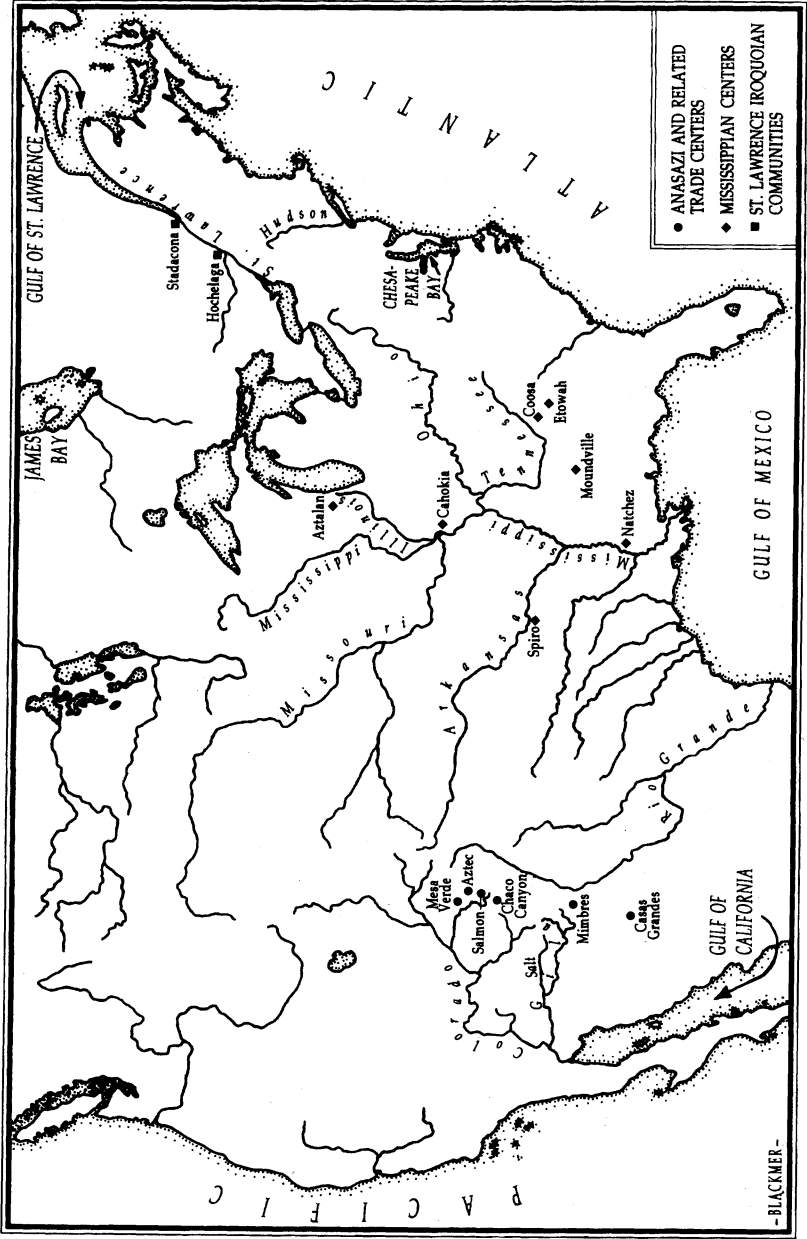
FIGURE I.

Monks Mound (rear) and two smaller mounds in the central plaza of Cahokia. Photograph courtesy of Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site.

At the outset of the twelfth century, the center of production and exchange in the Southwest was in the basin of the San Juan River at Chaco Canyon in New Mexico, where Anasazi culture achieved its most elaborate expression. A twelve-mile stretch of the canyon and its rim held twelve large planned towns on the north side and 200 to 350 apparently unplanned villages on the south. The total population was probably about 15,000. The towns consisted of 200 or more contiguous, multistoried rooms, along with numerous kivas (underground ceremonial areas), constructed of veneered masonry walls and log beams imported from upland areas nearly fifty miles distant. The rooms surrounded a central plaza with a great kiva. Villages typically had ten to twenty rooms that were decidedly smaller than those in the towns. Nearly all of Chaco Canyon's turquoise, shell, and other ornaments

Natchez and other Mississippians who sacrificed individuals when a paramount chief died see DePratter, "Late Prehistoric and Early Historic Chiefdoms," 64-77.

FIGURE II.
 Selected Native American centers in North America, ca. 1250.



and virtually everything imported from Mesoamerica are found in the towns rather than the villages. Whether the goods were considered communal property or were the possessions of elites is uncertain, but either way the towns clearly had primacy. Villagers buried their dead near their residences, whereas town burial grounds were apparently located at greater distances, although only a very few of what must have been thousands of town burials have been located by archaeologists. Finally, and of particular importance in the arid environment of the region, the towns were located at the mouths of side canyons where they controlled the collection and distribution of water run-off (see Figures III and IV).¹⁸

The canyon was the core of an extensive network of at least seventy towns or "outliers," as they are termed in the archaeological literature, and 5,300 villages located as far as sixty miles from the canyon (see Figure V). Facilitating the movement of people and goods through this network was a system of roads radiating outward from the canyon in perfectly straight lines, turning into stairways or footholds rather than circumventing cliffs and other obstacles.¹⁹

What archaeologists call the "Chaco phenomenon" was a multifaceted network. Within the canyon, the towns controlled the distribution of precious water. The abundance of rooms reinforces the supposition that they stored agricultural surpluses for redistribution, not only within the canyon but to the outliers. The architectural uniformity of towns throughout the system, the straight roads that linked them, and the proliferation of great kivas point to a complex of shared beliefs and rituals. Lithic remains indicate that the canyon imported most of the raw materials used for manufacturing utilitarian goods and ornamental objects from elsewhere in the Southwest. Particularly critical in this respect was turquoise, beads of which were traded to Mexico in return for copper bells and macaws and to the Gulf of California for marine shells.²⁰ The Chaco phenomenon thus entailed the mobilization of labor for public works projects and food production, the control and distribution of water, the distribution of prestige goods of both local and exotic origin, and the control of exchange and redistribution both within and outside the network. In distinct contrast to Cahokia and other Mississippian societies, no evidence exists for the primacy of any single canyon town or for the primacy of certain individuals as paramount leaders.²¹

¹⁸ R. Gwinn Vivian, "An Inquiry into Prehistoric Social Organization in Chaco Canyon, New Mexico," in William A. Longacre, ed., *Reconstructing Prehistoric Pueblo Societies* (Albuquerque, 1970), 59–83; Cordell, *Prehistory of the Southwest*, 246–56; Lynne Sebastian, *The Chaco Anasazi: Sociopolitical Evolution in the Prehistoric Southwest* (Cambridge, 1992), 46. For an account of the local archaeological context at Chaco Canyon see *ibid.*, 21–40.

¹⁹ W. James Judge, "The Development of a Complex Cultural Ecosystem in the Chaco Basin, New Mexico," in Robert M. Linn, ed., *Proceedings of the First Conference on Scientific Research in the National Parks* (Washington, D. C., 1979), 2:901–05; Cordell, *Prehistory of the Southwest*, 256–74.

²⁰ David H. Snow, "Prehistoric Southwestern Turquoise Industry," *El Palacio*, 79, No. 1 (1973), 33–51, esp. 35, 44, 46; Randall H. McGuire, "The Mesoamerican Connection in the Southwest," *The Kiva*, 46 (1980), 3–38; Cordell, *Prehistory of the Southwest*, 273–74.

²¹ See Cordell, *Prehistory of the Southwest*, 266–74, for a review of various models of Chacoan development.



FIGURE III.

Pueblo Bonito, the largest town at Chaco Canyon. This aerial view shows some of the pueblo's more than 800 rooms and dozens of circular kivas (ceremonial centers). Photo by Paul Logsdon. Reprinted by permission of Marcia L. Logsdon.

Given the archaeological record, North American "prehistory" can hardly be characterized as a multiplicity of discrete microhistories. Fundamental to the social and economic patterns of even the earliest Paleo-Indian bands were exchanges that linked peoples across geographic, cultural, and linguistic boundaries. The effects of these links are apparent in the spread of raw materials and finished goods, of beliefs and ceremonies, and of techniques for food production and for manufacturing. By the twelfth century, some exchange networks had become highly formalized and centralized. Exchange constitutes an important key to conceptualizing American history before Columbus.

Although it departs from our familiar image of North American Indians, the historical pattern sketched so far is recognizable in the way it portrays societies "progressing" from small, egalitarian, autonomous communities to larger, more hierarchical, and centralized political aggregations with more complex economies. That image is likewise subverted when we examine the three centuries immediately preceding the arrival of Europeans. In both American

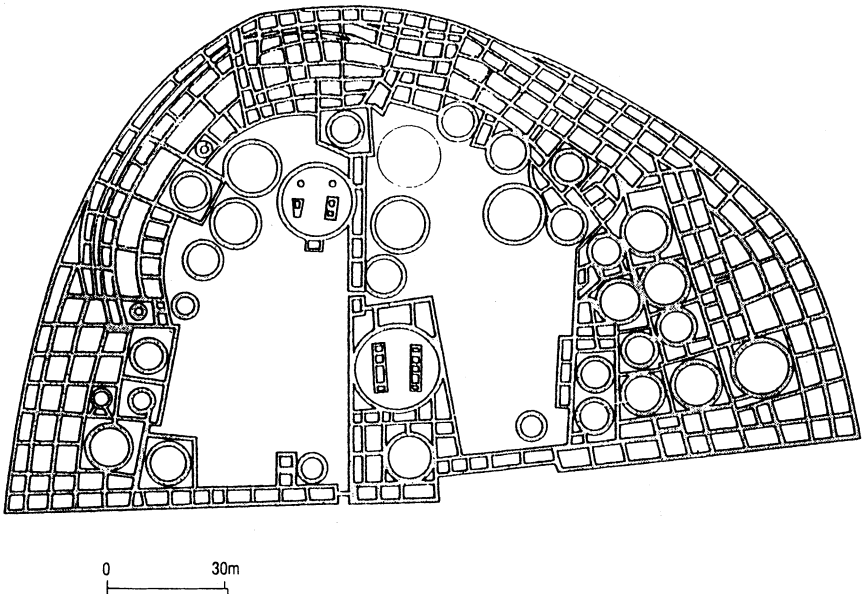


FIGURE IV.

Floor plan of Pueblo Bonito, showing the arrangement of rooms, circular kivas, and the divided central plaza. Pueblo Bonito stood four stories high and contained about 800 rooms. From *Ancient North America* by Brian M. Fagan, copyright © 1995 Thames and Hudson. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

Bottoms and the San Juan River basin, where twelfth-century populations were most concentrated, agriculture most productive, exchange most varied and voluminous, and political systems most complex and extensive, there were scarcely any inhabitants by the end of the fifteenth century. What happened and why?

Cahokia and other Mississippian societies in the Upper Midwest peaked during the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. Data from soil traces indicate that even then laborers were fortifying Cahokia's major earthworks against attack. At the same time, archaeologists surmise, Cahokia was headed toward an ecological crisis: expanded settlement, accompanied by especially hot dry summers, exhausted the soil, depleted the supply of timber for building and fuel, and reduced the habitat of the game that supplemented their diet. By the end of the fourteenth century, Cahokia's inhabitants had dispersed over the surrounding countryside into small farming villages.²²

²² Fowler, "Pre-Columbian Urban Center," 8–11; Iseminger, "Cahokia"; Milner, "Late Prehistoric Cahokia Cultural System," 30–33.

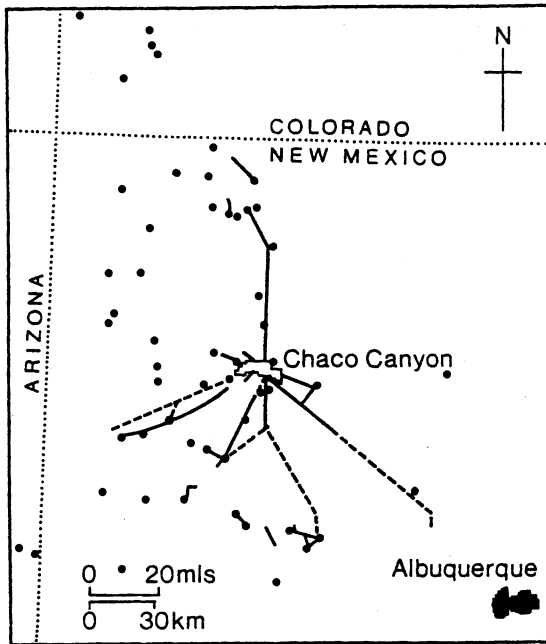


FIGURE V.

Chaco Canyon exchange system. Dots indicate sites of town and village outliers. Solid lines show roads documented by ground surveys; dashed lines are roads documented by aerial surveys. From *Ancient North America* by Brian M. Fagan, copyright © 1995 Thames and Hudson. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

Cahokia's abandonment reverberated among other Mississippian societies in the Midwest. Fortified centers on the Mississippi River from the Arkansas River northward and on the Ohio River appear to have been strengthened by influxes of people from nearby villages but then abandoned, and signs from burials indicate a period of chronic, deadly warfare in the Upper Midwest. One archaeologist refers to the middle Mississippi Valley and environs during the fifteenth century as "the vacant quarter." A combination of ecological pressures and upheavals within the alliance that linked them appears to have doomed Cahokia and other midwestern Mississippian centers, leading the inhabitants to transform themselves into the village dwellers of the surrounding prairies and plains observed by French explorers three centuries later.²³

²³ Dena F. Dincauze and Robert J. Hasenstab, "Explaining the Iroquois: Tribalization on a Prehistoric Periphery," in *Comparative Studies in the Development of Complex Societies*, 3 (Southampton, Eng., 1986), 5, 7-8; George R. Milner et al., "Warfare in Late Prehistoric West-Central Illinois," *American Antiquity*, 56 (1991), 581-603; Morse and Morse, *Archaeology*, chap. 12;

The upheavals may even have extended beyond the range of direct Mississippian influence to affect Iroquois and Hurons and other Iroquoian speakers of the lower Great Lakes region. These people had been moving from dispersed, riverside settlements to fortified, bluff-top villages over the course of several centuries; the process appears to have intensified in the fourteenth century, when it also led to the formation of the Iroquois and Huron confederacies. The Hurons developed fruitful relations with hunter-gatherers to the north, with whom they exchanged agricultural produce for meat and skins, and Iroquois ties with outsiders appear to have diminished except for small-scale interactions with coastal peoples to the south and east. Across the Northeast, political life was characterized by violence and other manifestations of intense competition. Whether the upheavals in exchange ties occasioned by the collapse of Cahokia were directly linked to the formation of the Iroquois and Huron confederacies, as Dena Dincauze and Robert Hasenstab have suggested for the Iroquois, or were simply part of a larger process generated by the advent of farming and consequent demographic and political changes, the repercussions were still evident when Europeans began to frequent the region during the sixteenth century.²⁴

Violence and instability were also apparent across the Southeast. Unlike in the Midwest, where enormous power had been concentrated in a single center, southeastern Mississippian societies were characterized by more frequently shifting alliances and rivalries that prevented any one center from becoming as powerful as Cahokia was from the tenth to thirteenth centuries. A pattern of instability prevailed that archaeologist David Anderson terms "cycling," in which certain centers emerged for a century or two to dominate regional alliances consisting of several chiefdoms and their tributary communities and then declined. Whole communities periodically shifted their locations in response to ecological or political pressures. Thus, for example, the great mound center at Etowah, in northwestern Georgia, lost its preeminence after 1400 and by the time of Hernando de Soto's arrival in 1540 had become a tributary of the nearby upstart chiefdom of Coosa.²⁵

Stephen Williams, "The Vacant Quarter and Other Late Events in the Lower Valley," in David H. Dye and Cheryl Anne Cox, eds., *Towns and Temples along the Mississippi* (Tuscaloosa, 1990), 170–80.

²⁴ James A. Tuck, *Onondaga Iroquois Prehistory: A Study in Settlement Archaeology* (Syracuse, N. Y., 1971), chaps. 2–4; James W. Bradley, *Evolution of the Onondaga Iroquois: Accommodating Change, 1500–1655* (Syracuse, N. Y., 1987), 14–34 passim; Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 1:119–76 passim; Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's "Heroic Age" Reconsidered* (Kingston, Ont., 1985), 83–110 passim; Dean R. Snow, *The Archaeology of New England* (New York, 1980), 307–19 passim; Dincauze and Hasenstab, "Explaining the Iroquois." One influential version of the oral account of the Iroquois Confederacy's founding confirms that it occurred against a backdrop of violence among the Five Nations Iroquois and their common enmity with the Hurons; see William N. Fenton, ed., *Parker on the Iroquois* (Syracuse, N. Y., 1968), bk. 3, pp. 14–29.

²⁵ DePratter, "Late Prehistoric and Early Historic Chiefdoms in the Southeastern United States," chaps. 2–3, 9; Smith, "Archaeology of the Southeastern United States," 57–59; Anderson, *Savannah River Chiefdoms*, passim; Hudson et al., "Coosa," 723–37; David J. Hally, "The Archaeological Reality of de Soto's Coosa," in David Hurst Thomas, ed., *Columbian Consequences*, vol. 2: *Archaeological and Historical Perspectives on the Spanish Borderlands East* (Washington, D. C., 1990), 121–38.

From the mid-twelfth century through the fourteenth, the demographic map of the Southwest was also transformed as Chaco Canyon and other Anasazi and Hohokam centers were abandoned. Although southwesterners had made a practice of shifting their settlements when facing shortages of water and arable land and other consequences of climatic or demographic change, they had never done so on such a massive scale. Most archaeologists agree that the abandonments followed changes in the regional cycle of rainfall and drought, so that agricultural surpluses probably proved inadequate. They point to signs that the centralized systems lost their ability to mobilize labor, redistribute goods, and coordinate religious ceremonies and that such loss was followed by outmigration to surrounding and upland areas where people farmed less intensively while increasing their hunting and gathering. Trade between the Southwest and Mesoamerica was disrupted at the same time, though whether as a cause or an effect of the abandonments is unclear.²⁶

Most Anasazi peoples dispersed in small groups, joining others to form new communities in locations with sufficient rainfall. These communities are what we know today as the southwestern pueblos, extending from Hopi villages in Arizona to those on the Rio Grande.²⁷ These dispersals and convergences of peoples reinforced an emerging complex of beliefs, art, and ceremonies relating to kachinas—spirits believed to have influence in both bringing rain and fostering cooperation among villagers. Given their effort to forge new communities under conditions of severe drought, it is not surprising that southwestern farmers placed great emphasis on kachinas.²⁸ The eastward shift of much of the southwestern population also led to new patterns of trade in which recently arrived Athapaskan speakers (later known as Apaches and Navajos) brought bison meat and hides and other products from the southern Great Plains to semiannual trade fairs at Taos, Pecos, and Picuris pueblos in exchange for maize, cotton blankets, obsidian, turquoise, and ceramics as well as shells from the Gulf of California. By the time of Francisco Vásquez de Coronado's *entrada* in 1540, new ties of exchange and interdependency bound eastern Pueblos, Athapaskans, and Caddoan speakers on the Plains.²⁹

²⁶ Judge, "Development of a Complex Cultural Ecosystem in the Chaco Basin," 904; Cordell, *Prehistory of the Southwest*, chap. 9; Cordell, "Why Did They Leave and Where Did They Go?" *Exploration: Annual Bulletin of the School of American Research* (1985), 38; Paul R. Fish, "The Hohokam: 1,000 Years of Prehistory in the Sonoran Desert," in Cordell and George J. Gumerman, eds., *Dynamics of Southwest Prehistory* (Washington, D. C., 1989), 34; Judge, "Chaco Canyon-San Juan Basin," *ibid.*, 248–49.

²⁷ Cordell, *Prehistory of the Southwest*, 330–36; Cordell, "Why Did They Leave?" 38–39; J. Jefferson Reid, "A Grasshopper Perspective on the Mogollon of the Arizona Mountains," in Cordell and Gumerman, eds., *Dynamics of Southwest Prehistory*, 80; Gumerman and Jeffrey S. Dean, "Prehistoric Cooperation and Competition in the Western Anasazi Area," *ibid.*, 127–28; Cordell, "Northern and Central Rio Grande," *ibid.*, 314–24; E. Charles Adams and Kelley Ann Hays, eds., *Homol'ovi II: Archaeology of an Ancestral Hopi Village, Arizona*, Anthropological Papers of the University of Arizona, No. 55 (Tucson, 1991).

²⁸ Cordell, *Prehistory of the Southwest*, 343–46; Adams, *The Origin and Development of the Pueblo Katsina Cult* (Tucson, 1991), esp. 120–21.

²⁹ Cordell, *Prehistory of the Southwest*, chap. 10; David H. Snow, "Protohistoric Rio Grande Pueblo Economics: A Review of Trends," in David R. Wilcox and W. Bruce Masse, eds., *The Protohistoric Period in the North American Southwest, AD 1450–1700*, Arizona State University,

When Europeans reached North America, then, the continent's demographic and political map was in a state of profound flux. A major factor was the collapse of the great centers at Cahokia and Chaco Canyon and elsewhere in the Midwest and Southwest. Although there were significant differences between these highly centralized societies, each ran up against the capacity of the land or other resources to sustain it. This is not to argue for a simple ecological determinism for, although environmental fluctuations played a role, the severe strains in each region resulted above all from a series of human choices that had brought about unprecedented concentrations of people and power. Having repudiated those choices and dispersed, midwestern Mississippians and Anasazis formed new communities in which they retained kinship, ceremonial, and other traditions antedating these complex societies. At the same time, these new communities and neighboring ones sought to flourish in their new political and environmental settings by establishing, and in some cases endeavoring to control, new exchange networks.

Such combinations of continuity and change, persistence and adaptability, arose from concrete historical experiences rather than a timeless tradition. The remainder of this article indicates some of the ways that both the deeply rooted imperatives of reciprocity and exchange and the recent legacies of competition and upheaval informed North American history as Europeans began to make their presence felt.

Discussion of the transition from pre- to postcontact times must begin with the sixteenth century, when Indians and Europeans met and interacted in a variety of settings. When not slighting the era altogether, historians have viewed it as one of discovery or exploration, citing the achievements of notable Europeans in either anticipating or failing to anticipate the successful colonial enterprises of the seventeenth century. Recently, however, a number of scholars have been integrating information from European accounts with the findings of archaeologists to produce a much fuller picture of this critical period in North American history.

The Southeast was the scene of the most formidable attempts at colonization during the sixteenth century, primarily by Spain. Yet in spite of several expeditions to the interior and the undertaking of an ambitious colonizing and missionary effort, extending from St. Augustine over much of the Florida peninsula and north to Chesapeake Bay, the Spanish retained no permanent settlements beyond St. Augustine itself at the end of the century. Nevertheless, their explorers and missionaries opened the way for the spread of smallpox and other epidemic diseases over much of the area south of the Chesapeake and east of the Mississippi.³⁰

Anthropological Research Papers No. 24 (Tempe, 1981), 354-77; Katherine A. Spielmann, "Late Prehistoric Exchange between the Southwest and Southern Plains," *Plains Anthropologist*, 28 (1983), 257-72; Wilcox, "Multiethnic Division of Labor in the Protohistoric Southwest," *Papers of the Archaeological Society of New Mexico*, 9 (1984), 141-54; Timothy G. Baugh, "Southern Plains Societies and Eastern Pueblo Exchange during the Protohistoric Period," *ibid.*, 157-67; Spielmann, ed., *Farmers, Hunters, and Colonists: Interaction between the Southwest and the Southern Plains* (Tucson, 1991).

³⁰ David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven, 1992), 30-38, 42-45, 49-75, 87-91; Paul E. Hoffman, *A New Andalusia and a Way to the Orient: The American*

The most concerted and fruitful efforts of the interdisciplinary scholarship entail the linking of southeastern societies that are known archaeologically with societies described in European documents. For example, Charles Hudson, David Hally, and others have demonstrated the connections between a group of archaeological sites in northern Georgia and the Tennessee Valley and what sixteenth-century Spanish observers referred to as Coosa and its subordinate provinces. A Mississippian archaeological site in northwestern Georgia known as Little Egypt consists of the remains of the town of Coosa; the town was the capital of the province ("chiefdom" to the archaeologists) of the same name, containing several nearby towns, and this province/chiefdom in turn dominated a network of at least five other chiefdoms in a "paramount chiefdom." These conclusions would not have been as definitive if based on either documentary or archaeological evidence alone.³¹

Coosa, as previously noted, attained regional supremacy during the fifteenth century, a phase in the apparently typical process whereby paramount chiefdoms rose and fell in the Mississippian Southeast. But Coosa's decline was far more precipitate than others because Spanish diseases ravaged the province, forcing the survivors to abandon the town and move southward. By the end of the sixteenth century, several new provincial centers emerged in what are now Alabama and western Georgia, but without the mounds and paramount chiefs of their predecessors. As with earlier declines of paramount chiefdoms, a center had declined and, out of the resulting power vacuum, a new formation emerged. What differed in this case were the external source of the decline, its devastating effects, and the inability or unwillingness of the survivors to concentrate power and deference in the hands of paramount chiefs. At the same time, the absence of Spanish or other European colonizers from the late sixteenth century to late seventeenth meant that the natives had a sustained period of time in which to recover and regroup. When English traders encountered the descendants of refugees from Coosa and its neighbors late in the seventeenth century, they labeled them "Creek."³²

Patricia Galloway has established similar connections between Mississippian societies farther west and the Choctaws of the eighteenth century. She argues that the well-known site of Moundville in Alabama and a second site on the Pearl River in Mississippi were the centers of chiefdoms from which most Choctaws were descended. She argues that, unlike Coosa,

Southeast during the Sixteenth Century (Baton Rouge, 1990); J. Leitch Wright, Jr., *The Only Land They Knew: The Tragic Story of American Indians in the Old South* (New York, 1981), chap. 2; Marvin T. Smith, *Archaeology of Aboriginal Culture Change in the Interior Southeast: Depopulation during the Early Historic Period* (Gainesville, 1987), chap. 4; Milner, "Epidemic Disease in the Postcontact Southeast: A Reappraisal," *Midcontinental Journal of Archaeology*, 5 (1980), 39–56.

³¹ Hudson et al., "Coosa"; Hally et al., "Archaeological Reality of de Soto's Coosa"; Robert L. Blakely, ed., *The King Site: Continuity and Contact in Sixteenth-Century Georgia* (Athens, Ga., 1988); Hudson, "A Spanish-Coosa Alliance in Sixteenth-Century Georgia," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 72 (1988), 599–626; Hudson, *The Juan Pardo Expeditions: Exploration of the Carolinas and Tennessee, 1566–1568* (Washington, D. C., 1990), 101–09; Hally, "The Chiefdom of Coosa," in Hudson and Tesser, eds., *Forgotten Centuries*, 227–53.

³² Hally, "Chiefdom of Coosa," 249–50; Marvin T. Smith, "Aboriginal Depopulation in the Postcontact Southeast," in Hudson and Tesser, eds., *Forgotten Centuries*, 265; Vernon James Knight, Jr., "The Formation of the Creeks," *ibid.*, 373–91.

these centers were probably declining in power before the onset of disease in the 1540s hastened the process. Like the Creeks, the Choctaws were a multi-lingual, multiethnic society in which individual villages were largely autonomous although precedents for greater coalescence were available if conditions, such as the European presence, seemed to require it.³³

As in the Southeast, Spanish colonizers in the sixteenth-century Southwest launched several ambitious military and missionary efforts, hoping to extend New Spain's domain northward and to discover additional sources of wealth. The best-documented encounters of Spanish with Pueblos—most notably those of Coronado's expedition (1540–1542)—ended in violence and failure for the Spanish who, despite vows to proceed peacefully, violated Pueblo norms of reciprocity by insisting on excessive tribute or outright submission.³⁴ In addition, the Spanish had acquired notoriety among the Pueblos as purveyors of epidemic diseases, religious missions, and slaving expeditions inflicted on Indians to the south, in what is now northern Mexico.³⁵

The Spanish also affected patterns of exchange throughout the Southwest. Indians resisting the spread of Spanish rule to northern Mexico stole horses and other livestock, some of which they traded to neighbors. By the end of the sixteenth century, a few Indians on the periphery of the Southwest were riding horses, anticipating the combination of theft and exchange that would spread horses to native peoples throughout the region and, still later, the Plains and the Southeast.³⁶ In the meantime, some Navajos and Apaches moved near the Rio Grande Valley, strengthening ties with certain pueblos that were reinforced when inhabitants of those pueblos sought refuge among them in the face or wake of Spanish *entradas*.³⁷

³³ Galloway, "Confederacy as a Solution to Chiefdom Dissolution: Historical Evidence in the Choctaw Case," in Hudson and Tessler, eds., *Forgotten Centuries*, 393–420. Historian James H. Merrell notes the role of 16th-century upheavals in shaping the people known to colonial Carolinians as the Catawbas; see *The Indians' New World: Catawbas and Their Neighbors from European Contact through the Era of Removal* (Chapel Hill, 1989), 8–27.

³⁴ Jack D. Forbes, *Apache, Navaho, and Spaniard* (Norman, Okla., 1960), 5–24, 53–54; Elizabeth A. H. John, *Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds: The Confrontation of Indians, Spanish, and French in the Southwest, 1540–1795* (College Station, Tex., 1975), 13–37; Daniel T. Reff, *Disease, Depopulation, and Culture Change in Northwestern New Spain, 1518–1764* (Salt Lake City, 1991), 68–84; Ramón A. Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500–1846* (Stanford, Calif., 1991), 39–46; Weber, *Spanish Frontier in North America*, 14–19, 45–49. The major exception to this generalization is the (uncommissioned) journey by Cabeza de Vaca and 3 fellow survivors of an ill-fated Spanish expedition to Florida, who journeyed west from the Gulf of Mexico before turning south in 1535–1536; *ibid.*, 42–45, 56–57; Reff, *Disease, Depopulation, and Culture Change*, 43–68.

³⁵ Forbes, *Apache, Navaho, and Spaniard*, 7–8, 29–34, 38–40, 47–48; Carroll L. Riley, "Sixteenth-Century Trade in the Greater Southwest," *Mesoamerican Studies*, 10 (1976), 9–14; Reff, *Disease, Depopulation, and Culture Change*, 17–42, 84–95, 119–32 *passim*.

³⁶ Forbes, "The Appearance of the Mounted Indian in Northern Mexico and the Southwest, to 1680," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, 15 (1959), 189–212; Forbes, *Apache, Navaho, and Spaniard*, 34–38, 43; Preston Holder, *The Hoe and the Horse on the Plains: A Study of Cultural Development among North American Indians* (Lincoln, Neb., 1970), 79, 111–12; Daniel H. Usner, Jr., *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley before 1783* (Chapel Hill, 1992), 177–78.

³⁷ Wilcox, "The Entry of Athapaskans into the American Southwest: The Problem Today,"

Yet another variation on the theme of Indian-European contacts in the sixteenth century was played out in the Northeast, where Iroquoian-speaking villagers on the Mississippian periphery and Archaic hunter-gatherers still further removed from developments in the interior met Europeans of several nationalities. At the outset of the century, Spanish and Portuguese explorers enslaved several dozen Micmacs and other Indians from the Nova Scotia-Gulf of St. Lawrence area. Three French expeditions to the St. Lawrence itself in the 1530s and 1540s followed the Spanish pattern by alienating most Indians encountered and ending in futility. Even as these hostile contacts were taking place, fishermen, whalers, and other Europeans who visited the area regularly had begun trading with natives. As early as the 1520s, Abenakis on the coast of Maine and Micmacs were trading the furs of beavers and other animals for European goods of metal and glass. By the 1540s, specialized fur traders, mostly French, frequented the coast as far south as the Chesapeake; by the 1550s or soon thereafter, French traders rendezvoused regularly with Indians along the shores of upper New England, the Maritimes, and Quebec and at Tadoussac on the St. Lawrence.³⁸

What induced Indians to go out of their way to trap beaver and trade the skins for glass beads, mirrors, copper kettles, and other goods? Throughout North America since Paleo-Indian times, exchange in the Northeast was the means by which people maintained and extended their social, cultural, and spiritual horizons as well as acquired items considered supernaturally powerful. Members of some coastal Indian groups later recalled how the first Europeans they saw, with their facial hair and strange clothes and traveling in their strange boats, seemed like supernatural figures. Although soon disabused of such notions, these Indians and many more inland placed special value on the glass beads and other trinkets offered by the newcomers. Recent scholarship on Indians' motives in this earliest stage of the trade indicates that they regarded such objects as the equivalents of the quartz, mica, shell, and other sacred substances that had formed the heart of long-distance exchange in North America for millennia and that they regarded as sources of physical and spiritual well-being, on earth and in the afterlife. Indians initially altered and wore many of the utilitarian goods they received, such as iron axe heads and copper pots, rather than use them for their intended purposes. Moreover, even though the new objects might pass through many hands, they more often than not ended up in graves, presumably for their possessors to use in the afterlife. Finally, the archaeological findings make clear that shell and native copper predominated over the new objects in sixteenth-century exchanges, indicating that European trade did not suddenly trigger a massive craving for the objects themselves. While northeastern Indians recognized Europeans as different

in Wilcox and Masse, eds., *Protohistoric Period in the North American Southwest*, 228; David M. Brugge, "Navajo Prehistory and History to 1859," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, ed. William C. Sturtevant, vol. 10: *Southwest*, ed. Alfonso Ortiz (Washington, D. C., 1983), 491; Forbes, *Apache, Navaho, and Spaniard*, 14.

³⁸ Neal Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence: Indians, Europeans, and the Making of New England, 1500-1643* (New York, 1982), 51-56; Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers*, 118-44.

from themselves, they interacted with them and their materials in ways that were consistent with their own customs and beliefs.³⁹

By the late sixteenth century, the effects of European trade began to overlap with the effects of earlier upheavals in the northeastern interior. Sometime between Jacques Cartier's final departure in 1543 and Samuel de Champlain's arrival in 1603, the Iroquoian-speaking inhabitants of Hochelaga and Stadacona (modern Montreal and Quebec City) abandoned their communities. The communities were crushed militarily, and the survivors dispersed among both Iroquois and Hurons. Whether the perpetrators of these dispersals were Iroquois or Huron is a point of controversy, but either way the St. Lawrence communities appear to have been casualties of the rivalry, at least a century old, between the two confederations as each sought to position itself vis-à-vis the French. The effect, if not the cause, of the dispersals was the Iroquois practice of attacking antagonists who denied them direct access to trade goods; this is consistent with Iroquois actions during the preceding two centuries and the century that followed.⁴⁰

The sudden availability of many more European goods, the absorption of many refugees from the St. Lawrence, and the heightening of tensions with the Iroquois help to explain the movement of most outlying Huron communities to what is now the Simcoe County area of Ontario during the 1580s. This geographic concentration strengthened their confederacy and gave it the form it had when allied with New France during the first half of the seventeenth century.⁴¹ Having formerly existed at the outer margins of an arena of exchange centered in Cahokia, the Hurons and Iroquois now faced a new source of goods and power to the east.⁴²

The diverse native societies encountered by Europeans as they began to settle North America permanently during the seventeenth century were not static isolates lying outside the ebb and flow of human history. Rather, they were products of a complex set of historical forces, both local and wide-ranging, both deeply rooted and of recent origin. Although their lives and worldviews were shaped by long-standing traditions of reciprocity and spiritual power, the people in these communities were also accustomed—contrary to popular myths about inflexible Indians—to economic and political flux and to absorbing new peoples (both allies and antagonists), objects, and ideas, including those originating in Europe. Such combinations of tra-

³⁹ Christopher L. Miller and George R. Hammell, "A New Perspective on Indian-White Contact: Cultural Symbols and Colonial Trade," *Journal of American History*, 73 (1986), 311–28; Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers*, 125–27; Bradley, *Evolution*, chap. 2; Calvin Martin, "The Four Lives of a Micmac Copper Pot," *Ethnohistory*, 22 (1975), 111–33; James Axtell, "At the Water's Edge: Trading in the Sixteenth Century," in Axtell, *After Columbus: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America* (New York, 1988), 144–81; Trigger, "Early Native North American Responses to European Contact: Romantic versus Rationalistic Interpretations," *JAH*, 77 (1991), 1195–1215. Compare the barbed Delaware-Mahican tradition of early relations with the Dutch recorded by John Heckewelder in his *An Account of the History, Manners, and Customs of the Indian Nations, Who Once Inhabited Pennsylvania and the Neighbouring States* (Philadelphia, 1819), 71–75.

⁴⁰ Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers*, 144–48.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 157–61.

⁴² See Dincauze and Hasenstab, "Explaining the Iroquois."

dition and innovation continued to shape Indians' relations with Europeans, even as the latter's visits became permanent.

The establishment of lasting European colonies, beginning with New Mexico in 1598, began a phase in the continent's history that eventually resulted in the displacement of Indians to the economic, political, and cultural margins of a new order. But during the interim natives and colonizers entered into numerous relationships in which they exchanged material goods and often supported one another diplomatically or militarily against common enemies. These relations combined native and European modes of exchange. While much of the scholarly literature emphasizes the subordination and dependence of Indians in these circumstances, Indians as much as Europeans dictated the form and content of their early exchanges and alliances. Much of the protocol and ritual surrounding such intercultural contacts was rooted in indigenous kinship obligations and gift exchanges, and Indian consumers exhibited decided preferences for European commodities that satisfied social, spiritual, and aesthetic values. Similarly, Indians' long-range motives and strategies in their alliances with Europeans were frequently rooted in older patterns of alliance and rivalry with regional neighbors.⁴³ Such continuities can be glimpsed through a brief consideration of the early colonial-era histories of the Five Nations Iroquois in the Northeast, the Creeks in the Southeast, and the Rio Grande Pueblos in the Southwest.

Post-Mississippian and sixteenth-century patterns of antagonism between the Iroquois and their neighbors to the north and west persisted, albeit under altered circumstances, during the seventeenth century when France established its colony on the St. Lawrence and allied itself with Hurons and other Indians. France aimed to extract maximum profits from the fur trade, and it immediately recognized the Iroquois as the major threat to that goal. In response, the Iroquois turned to the Dutch in New Netherland for guns and other trade goods while raiding New France's Indian allies for the thicker northern pelts that brought higher prices than those in their own country (which they exhausted by midcentury) and for captives to replace those from their own ranks who had died from epidemics or in wars. During the 1640s, the Iroquois replaced raids with full-scale military assaults (the so-called Beaver Wars) on Iroquoian-speaking communities in the lower Great Lakes, absorbing most of the survivors as refugees or captives. All the while, the Iroquois elaborated a vision of their confederation, which had brought harmony within their own ranks, as bringing peace to all peoples of the region. For the remainder of

⁴³ See, for example, Kenneth E. Kidd, "The Cloth Trade and the Indians of the Northeast during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," in Royal Ontario Museum, *Art and Archaeology Annual* (1961), 48–56; Wilcomb E. Washburn, "Symbol, Utility, and Aesthetics in the Indian Fur Trade," *Minnesota History*, 40 (1966), 198–202; Donald J. Blakeslee, "The Calumet Ceremony and the Origin of Fur Trade Rituals," *Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology*, 7, No. 2 (1977), 78–88; Bruce M. White, "Give Us a Little Milk: The Social and Cultural Meanings of Gift Giving in the Lake Superior Fur Trade," *Minnesota History*, 48 (1982), 60–71, and "A Skilled Game of Exchange: Ojibway Fur Trade Protocol," *ibid.*, 50 (1987), 229–40; Francis Jennings et al., eds., *The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy: An Interdisciplinary Guide to the Treaties of the Six Nations and Their League* (Syracuse, N.Y. 1985), chaps. 1, 4–7; Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics, 1650–1815* (Cambridge, 1991), chaps. 2–4 *passim*.

the century, the Five Nations fought a grueling and costly series of wars against the French and their Indian allies in order to gain access to the pelts and French goods circulating in lands to the north and west.⁴⁴

Meanwhile, the Iroquois were also adapting to the growing presence of English colonists along the Atlantic seaboard (see Figure VI). After the English supplanted the Dutch in New York in 1664, Iroquois diplomats established relations with the proprietary governor, Sir Edmund Andros, in a treaty known as the Covenant Chain. The Covenant Chain was an elaboration of the Iroquois' earlier treaty arrangements with the Dutch, but, whereas the Iroquois had termed the Dutch relationship a chain of iron, they referred to the one with the English as a chain of silver. The shift in metaphors was appropriate, for what had been strictly an economic connection was now a political one in which the Iroquois acquired power over other New York Indians. After 1677, the Covenant Chain was expanded to include several English colonies, most notably Massachusetts and Maryland, along with those colonies' subject Indians. The upshot of these arrangements was that the Iroquois cooperated with their colonial partners in subduing and removing subject Indians who impeded settler expansion. The Mohawks in particular played a vital role in the New England colonies' suppression of the Indian uprising known as King Philip's War and in moving the Susquehannocks away from the expanding frontier of settlement in the Chesapeake after Bacon's Rebellion.

For the Iroquois, such a policy helped expand their "Tree of Peace" among Indians while providing them with buffers against settler encroachment around their homelands. The major drawback in the arrangement proved to be the weakness of English military assistance against the French. This inadequacy, and the consequent suffering experienced by the Iroquois during two decades of war after 1680, finally drove the Five Nations to make peace with the French and their Indian allies in the Grand Settlement of 1701. Together, the Grand Settlement and Covenant Chain provided the Iroquois with the peace and security, the access to trade goods, and the dominant role among northeastern Indians they had long sought.⁴⁵ That these arrangements in the long run served to reinforce rather than deter English encroachment on Iroquois lands and autonomy should not obscure their pre-European roots and their importance in shaping colonial history in the Northeast.

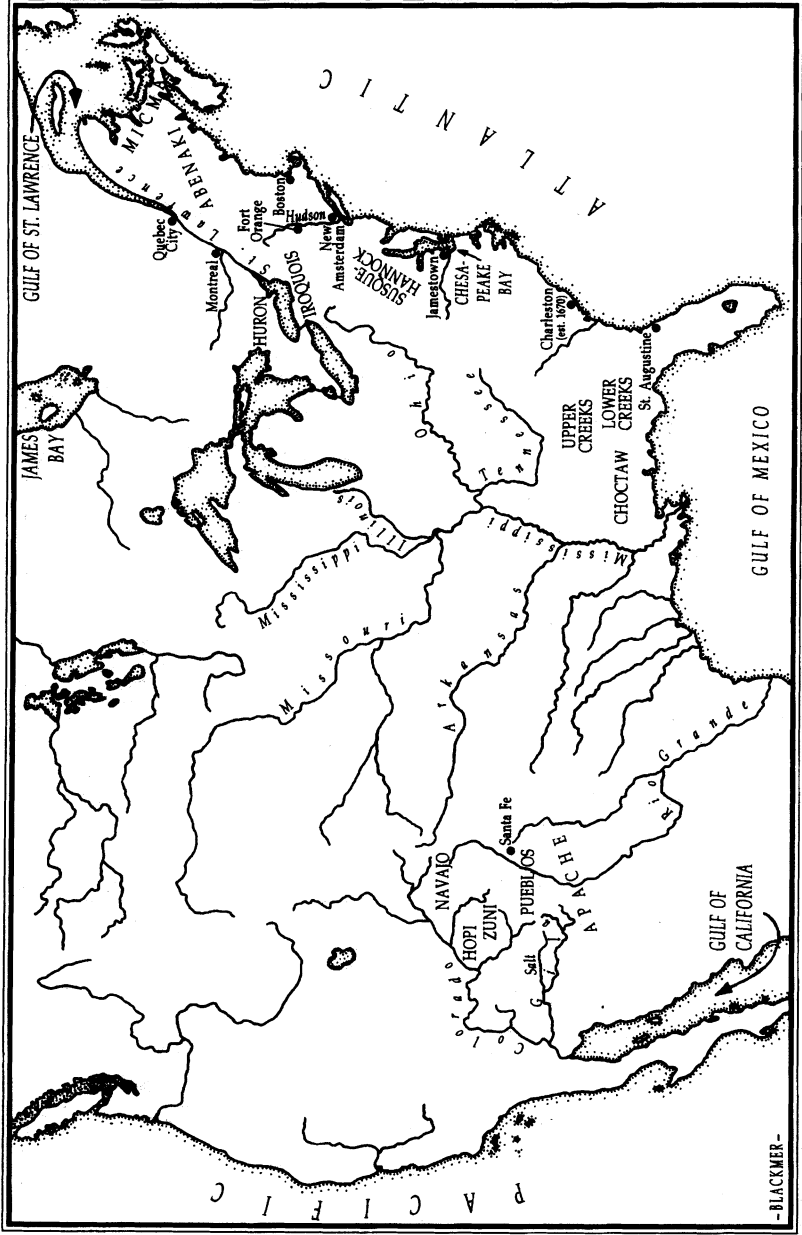
In the southeastern interior, Vernon Knight argues, descendants of refugees from Coosa and neighboring communities regrouped in clusters of Creek *talwas* (villages), each dominated by a large talwa and its "great chief." In the late seventeenth century, these latter-day chiefdom/provinces forged alliances with English traders, first from Virginia and then from Carolina, who sought to trade guns and other manufactured goods for deerskins and Indian slaves. In so doing, the Creeks ensured that they would be regarded by the English as clients rather than as commodities. The deerskin trade

⁴⁴ Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 30–104.

⁴⁵ Pennsylvania joined the Covenant Chain early in the 18th century; Francis Jennings, *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire: The Covenant Chain Confederation of Indian Tribes with English Colonies from Its Beginnings to the Lancaster Treaty of 1744* (New York, 1984), chap. 8; Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 105–213 passim.

FIGURE VI.

Selected Native American centers in North America, ca. 1645.



proved to be a critical factor in South Carolina's early economic development, and the trade in Indian slaves significantly served England's imperial ambitions vis-à-vis Spain in Florida. After 1715, the several Creek alliances acted in concert as a confederacy—the Creek Nation—on certain occasions. As a result, they achieved a measure of success in playing off these powers and maintaining neutrality in their conflicts with one another. While much differentiates Creek political processes in the colonial period from those of the late Mississippian era, there are strong elements of continuity in the transformation of Mississippian chiefdoms into great Creek talwas.⁴⁶

In the Southwest, the institution of Spanish colonial rule on the Rio Grande after 1598 further affected exchange relations between Pueblo Indians and nearby Apaches and Navajos. By imposing heavy demands for tribute in the form of corn, the Spanish prevented Pueblo peoples from trading surplus produce with their nonfarming neighbors. In order to obtain the produce on which they had come to depend, Apaches and Navajos staged deadly raids on some pueblos, leaving the inhabitants dependent on the Spanish for protection. In retaliation, Spanish soldiers captured Apaches and Navajos whom they sold as slaves to their countrymen to the south. From the beginning, the trading pueblos of Pecos, Picuris, and Taos most resented Spanish control and strongly resisted the proselytizing of Franciscan missionaries. From the late 1660s, drought and disease, intensified Apache and Navajo raids, and the severity of Spanish rule led more and more Indians from all pueblos to question the advantages of Christianity and to renew their ties to their indigenous religious traditions. Spanish persecution of native religious leaders and their backsliding followers precipitated the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, in which the trading Pueblos played a leading role and which was actively supported by some Navajos and Apaches.⁴⁷

When the Spanish reimposed their rule during the 1690s, they tolerated traditional Indian religion rather than trying to extirpate it, and they participated in interregional trade fairs at Taos and other villages. The successful incorporation of Pueblo Indians as loyal subjects proved vital to New Mexico's survival as a colony and, more generally, to Spain's imperial presence in the Southwest during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.⁴⁸

As significant as is the divide separating pre- and post-Columbian North American history, it is not the stark gap suggested by the distinction between prehistory and history. For varying periods of time after their arrival in North America, Europeans adapted to the social and political environments

⁴⁶ Knight, "Formation of the Creeks," 385–90; Joel W. Martin, "Southeastern Indians and the English Trade in Skins and Slaves," *ibid.*, 304–24; Michael D. Green, *The Politics of Indian Removal: Creek Government and Society in Crisis* (Lincoln, Neb., 1982), 17–31.

⁴⁷ Forbes, *Apache, Navaho, and Spaniard*, chaps. 5–10 passim; John, *Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds*, chap. 2; Henry Warner Bowden, "Spanish Missions, Cultural Conflict, and the Pueblo Revolt of 1680," *Church History*, 44 (1975), 217–28; John L. Kessell, *Kiva, Cross, and Crown: The Pecos Indians and New Mexico, 1540–1840* (Washington, D. C., 1979), chaps. 3–5; H. Allen Anderson, "The Encomienda in New Mexico, 1598–1680," *New Mexico Historical Review*, 60 (1985), 353–77; Thomas D. Hall, *Social Change in the Southwest, 1350–1880* (Lawrence, Kan., 1989), 83–90.

⁴⁸ Forbes, *Apache, Navaho, and Spaniard*, chaps. 11–12; Weber, *The Taos Trappers: The Fur Trade in the Far Southwest, 1540–1846* (Norman, Okla., 1971), 21–31; John, *Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds*, chap. 3; Kessell, *Kiva, Cross, and Crown*, chap. 8.

they found, including the fluctuating ties of reciprocity and interdependence as well as rivalry, that characterized those environments. They had little choice but to enter in and participate if they wished to sustain their presence. Eventually, one route to success proved to be their ability to insert themselves as regional powers in new networks of exchange and alliance that arose to supplant those of the Mississippians, Anasazis, and others.

To assert such continuities does not minimize the radical transformations entailed in Europeans' colonization of the continent and its indigenous peoples. Arising in Cahokia's wake, new centers at Montreal, Fort Orange/Albany, Charleston, and elsewhere permanently altered the primary patterns of exchange in eastern North America. The riverine system that channeled exchange in the interior of the continent gave way to one in which growing quantities of goods arrived from, and were directed to, coastal peripheries and ultimately Europe.⁴⁹ In the Southwest, the Spanish revived Anasazi links with Mesoamerica at some cost to newer ties between the Rio Grande Pueblos and recently arrived, nonfarming Athapaskan speakers. More generally, European colonizers brought a complex of demographic and ecological advantages, most notably epidemic diseases and their own immunity to them, that utterly devastated Indian communities;⁵⁰ ideologies and beliefs in their cultural and spiritual superiority to native peoples and their entitlement to natives' lands;⁵¹ and economic, political, and military systems organized for the engrossment of Indian lands and the subordination or suppression of Indian peoples.⁵²

Europeans were anything but uniformly successful in realizing their goals, but the combination of demographic and ecological advantages and imperial intentions, along with the Anglo-Iroquois Covenant Chain, enabled land-hungry colonists from New England to the Chesapeake to break entirely free of ties of dependence on Indians before the end of the seventeenth century. Their successes proved to be only the beginning of a new phase of Indian-European relations. By the mid-eighteenth century, the rapid expansion of land-based settlement in the English colonies had sundered older ties of exchange and alliance linking natives and colonizers nearly everywhere east of the Appalachians, driving many Indians west and reducing those who remained to a scattering of politically powerless enclaves in which Indian identities were nurtured in isolation.⁵³ Meanwhile, the colonizers threatened to extend this new mode of Indian relations across the Appalachians. An old world, rooted in indigenous exchange, was giving way to one in which Native Americans had no certain place.

⁴⁹ Shaffer, *Native Americans before 1492*, esp. 10–11, 94–96.

⁵⁰ Alfred W. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900–1900* (Cambridge, 1986).

⁵¹ Roy Harvey Pearce, *The Savages of America: A Study of the Indian and the Idea of Civilization* (Baltimore, 1953); Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600–1800* (Middletown, Conn., 1973); Berkhofer, *White Man's Indian*.

⁵² Jennings, *Invasion of America*, pt. 1.

⁵³ For summaries of these developments see Salisbury, "The History of Native Americans from before the Arrival of the Europeans and Africans until the American Civil War," in Stanley L. Engerman and Robert E. Gallman, eds., *The Cambridge Economic History of the United States*, vol. 1: *The Colonial Era* (Cambridge, 1996), chap. 1, and "Native People and European Settlers in Eastern North America, 1600–1783," in *The Cambridge History of the Native Peoples of the Americas*, vol. 1: *North America*, ed. Trigger and Washburn (Cambridge, in press).