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Diverse Societies of North America

TERMS & NAMES

- potlatch
- Anasazi
- pueblos
- Mississippian
- Iroquois
- totems

MAIN IDEA

Complex North American societies were linked to each other through culture and economics.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Traditions and ideas from these cultures became part of the cultures of North America.

SETTING THE STAGE Between 40,000 and 12,000 years ago, hunter-gatherers migrated across the Bering Strait land bridge from Asia and began to populate the Americas. Migrating southward, those first Americans reached the southern tip of South America by somewhere between 12,000 and 7000 B.C. At the same time, they spread out across North America. Over the centuries, early North American peoples adapted to their environment, creating a diverse set of cultures.

Complex Societies Build and Trade

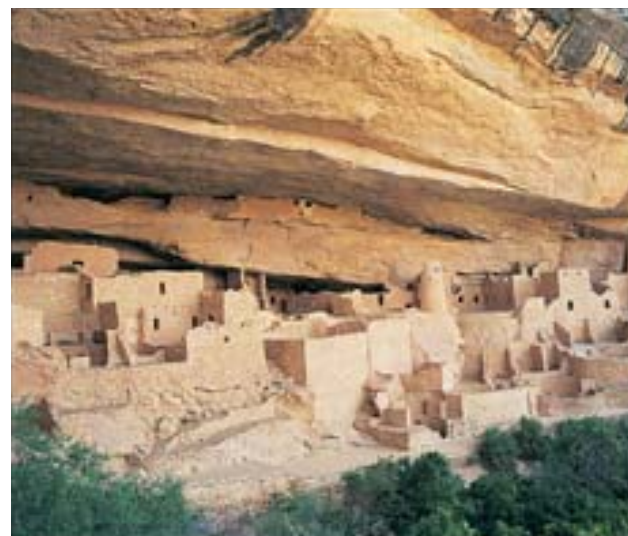
In some ways, the early cultures north of the Rio Grande River were less developed than those of South America and Mesoamerica. The North American groups created no great empires. They left few ruins as spectacular as those of ancient Mexico or Peru. Nevertheless, the first peoples of North America did create complex societies. These societies were able to conduct long-distance trade and construct magnificent buildings.

Northwest Coast—Cultures of Abundance The Pacific Northwest—from Oregon to Alaska—was rich in resources and supported a sizable population. To the Kwakiutl, Nootka, and Haida peoples, the most important resource was the sea. They hunted whales in canoes. Some canoes were large enough to carry at least 15 people. In addition to the many resources of the sea, the coastal forest provided plentiful food. In this abundant environment, the Northwest Coast tribes developed societies in which differences in wealth created social classes. Families displayed their rank and prosperity in an elaborate ceremony called the **potlatch** (PAHT-LACH). In this ceremony, they gave food, drink, and gifts to the community.

Pueblo People Construct Complex Buildings The dry, desert lands of the Southwest were a much harsher environment than the temperate Pacific coast. However, as early as 3000 B.C. the peoples of the Southwest were beginning to farm the land. Among the most successful of these early farmers were the Hohokam (huh-HOH-kuhm) of central Arizona. They used irrigation to produce harvests of corn, beans, and squash. Their use of pottery rather than baskets, and certain religious rituals, showed contact with Mesoamerican peoples to the south.

The Hohokam were also influenced by a people to the north: the **Anasazi** (AH-nuh-SAH-zee). They lived where the present-day states of Utah, Arizona, Colorado, and New Mexico meet. The Anasazi built impressive cliff dwellings, such as the ones at Mesa Verde, Colorado. These houses were built in shallow caves in the sheer walls of deep canyons. By the A.D. 900s, the Anasazi were living in **pueblos** (PWEHB-lohs), villages of large, apartment-style compounds made of stone and sun-baked clay.

Cliff Palace, located at Mesa Verde, Colorado, was an Anasazi pueblo. It had 200 rooms.



Background

Around 300 B.C. Mesoamerican people migrated into the valleys of Arizona.



North American Culture Areas about 1400



GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Maps

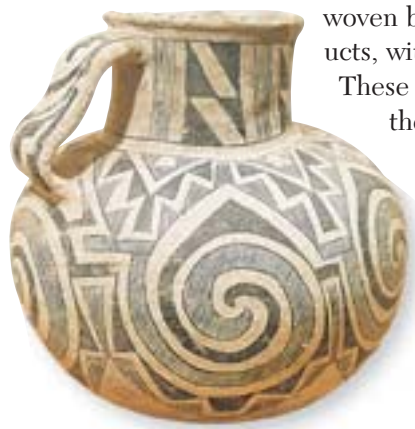
- Region** Which culture group had the largest number of tribes?
- Human-Environment Interaction** In which culture areas would movement of trade goods be made easier by river and lake connections?

One of the largest pueblos, begun around A.D. 900, was Pueblo Bonito, a Spanish name meaning “beautiful village.” Its construction required a high degree of social organization and inventiveness. Like other people of the Americas, the Anasazi did not have horses, mules, or the wheel. Instead, they relied on human labor to quarry sandstone from the canyon walls and move it to the site. Skilled builders then used a mud-like mortar to construct walls up to five stories high. Windows were small to keep out the burning sun. When completed, Pueblo Bonito probably housed about 1,000 people and contained more than 600 rooms. In addition, a number of underground ceremonial chambers called kivas (KEE-vuhs) were used for a variety of religious practices.

Many Anasazi pueblos were abandoned around 1200. Their descendants, the Pueblo peoples, continued many Anasazi customs. Pueblo groups like the Hopi and Zuni used kivas for religious ceremonies. They also created beautiful pottery and woven blankets. They traded these, along with corn and other farm products, with Plains Indians to the east, who supplied bison meat and hides.

These nomadic Plains tribes eventually became known by such names as the Comanche, Kiowa, and Apache.

This Anasazi pitcher dates from A.D. 1100. The black and white spirals form a traditional design.



Mound Builders Forge Ties with Eastern Peoples Beyond the Great Plains, in the wooded lands east of the Mississippi River, other ancient peoples—the Mound Builders—were creating their own unique traditions. Beginning around 800 B.C., two cultures, known as Adena and Hopewell, built large burial mounds and filled them with finely crafted copper and stone objects. Some mounds, such as Ohio’s Great Serpent Mound, had the shape of animals when seen from above.

Background
Tribes in the Plains are classified into groups based on one of six basic language families.



The last Mound Builder culture, the **Mississippian**, lasted from A.D. 800 until the arrival of Europeans in the 1500s. These people built giant earthen pyramids such as the one at Cahokia (kuh-HOH-kee-uh), Illinois. They created thriving villages based on farming and trade. Between 1000 and 1200, as many as 10,000 people lived at Cahokia, the leading site of Mississippian culture. Cahokia was led by priest-rulers, who regulated farming activities. The priest-rulers may have been influenced by the cultures of Mesoamerica. The heart of the community was a 100-foot-high, flat-topped pyramid, which was crowned by a wooden temple.

These Mississippian lands were located in a crossroads region between east and west. They enjoyed easy transportation on the Mississippi and Ohio rivers. They came into contact with many other peoples, including those of the Eastern Woodlands.

Woodlands Tribes Build Alliances The eastern tribes had much in common with the Mississippian peoples, including a similar environment. Despite the similar environment, woodlands groups developed a variety of cultures. They spoke distinct languages belonging to language families such as Algonquian, Iroquoian, and Muskogean. The woodlands peoples often clashed with each other over land. In some areas, tribes formed political alliances to ensure protection of tribal lands. The best example of a political alliance was the **Iroquois** (IHR-uh-KWOY), a group of tribes speaking related languages living in the eastern Great Lakes region. In the late 1500s, five of these tribes in upper New York—the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca—formed the Iroquois League. According to legend, Chief Hiawatha created this league. His goal was to promote joint defense and cooperation among the tribes. The confederacy lasted for almost 200 years.

THINK THROUGH HISTORY

A. Drawing

Conclusions Of what value would a political alliance be to an individual tribe?

Background

The belief that natural objects have a spirit is called animism.

Cultural Connections

The Iroquois alliance was a notable example of a political link between early North American peoples. For the most part, however, the connections between native North Americans were economic and cultural. They traded, had similar religious beliefs, and shared social patterns.

Trading Networks Tie Tribes Together Trade was a major factor linking the peoples of North America. Trade centers and traveling merchants were found throughout North America. Along the Columbia River in Oregon, the Chinook people established a lively marketplace that brought together trade goods from all over the West. The Mississippians were also active traders. Their trade network stretched from the Rocky Mountains to the Atlantic coast and from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico. Sometimes goods traveled hundreds or even thousands of miles from their original source. This was especially true of exotic items such as colored feathers or copper jewelry.

Religion Shapes Views of Life Another practice early Americans shared was religion. Nearly all native North Americans believed that the world around them was filled with nature spirits. Most Native Americans recognized a number of sacred spirits. Some groups held up one supreme being, or Great Spirit, above all others. North American peoples believed that the spirits gave them rituals and customs to guide them in their lives and to satisfy their basic needs. If people practiced these rituals, they would live in peace and harmony.

Native American religious beliefs also included great respect for the land as the source of life. Native Americans used the land but tried to alter it as little as possible. The land was sacred, not something that could be bought and sold. Later, when

SPOTLIGHT ON

Cahokia Monk's Mound

In 1809, in southern Illinois, a group of French monks founded a monastery on top of an unusual mound. The mound was about 100 feet high and consisted of four terraces that covered about 15 acres.

Four years later, the monks abandoned the site. Later explorations would show that their settlement had been in the middle of one of the greatest pre-Columbian Native American cities.

The large mound eventually became known as Monk's Mound. It was located inside a stockade that enclosed about 40 acres of land. To an observer standing in the enclosure on the first day of spring, the sun would appear to rise directly over the mound itself.



Europeans arrived in North America, the issue of ownership of land became a problem. A Native American expressed his view of this dilemma:

A VOICE FROM THE PAST

Some of our chiefs make the claim that the land belongs to us. It is not what the Great Spirit told me. He told me that the land belongs to Him, that no people own the land, and that I was not to forget to tell this to the white people.

KANNEKUK, Kickapoo prophet, quoted in *Through Indian Eyes*

Harmony with nature was an important part of Native American life, and so was harmony in relationships with people.

Daily Life

Iroquois Women: Holders of Political Power

The Iroquois society was matrilineal. This means that all Iroquois traced their descent through their female ancestors. Clans of the mother controlled property, held ceremonies, and determined official titles.

The ability to grant titles to men was handed down from mother to daughter. The most important title given to men was that of "Sachem," the peace, or civil, chief.

A council of Sachems met once a year to decide on war and peace and other important matters. Since Sachems could not go to war, they appointed warriors to lead a war party. Thus, in a way women controlled warfare in the Iroquois tribes.

Shared Social Patterns The family was the basis for social organization for Native Americans. Generally, the family unit was the extended family, including parents, children, grandparents, and other close relatives. Some tribes further organized families into clans: groups of families descended from a common ancestor. In some tribes, clan members lived together in large houses or groups of houses.

Common among American Indian clans was the use of **totems** (TOH-tuhmz). The term refers to a natural object that an individual, clan, or group identifies itself with. The totem was used as a symbol of the unity of a group or clan. It also helped define certain behaviors and the social relationships of a group. The term comes from an Ojibwa Indian language spoken in the Great Lakes area, but refers to a cultural practice found throughout the Americas. For example, Northwestern peoples displayed totem symbols on masks, boats, and huge poles set in front of their houses. Others used totem symbols in rituals or dances associated with important group events such as marriages, the naming of children, or the planting or harvesting of crops.

There were hundreds of different patterns of North American Indian life. Some societies were small and dealt with life in a limited

region of the vast North American continent. Other groups were much larger, and were linked by trade and culture to other groups in North America and Mesoamerica. As you will learn in Section 2, peoples in Mesoamerica and South America also lived in societies that varied from simple to complex. Three of these cultures—the Maya, the Aztec, and the Inca—would develop sophisticated ways of life like those of highly developed cultures in other parts of the globe.



Totem poles marked important events such as the naming of a chief.

THINK THROUGH HISTORY

B. Making Inferences What artificial symbols are used by nations or organizations in a way similar to totems?

Section 1 Assessment

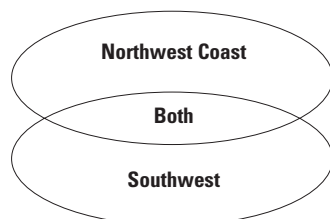
1. TERMS & NAMES

Identify

- potlatch
- Anasazi
- pueblos
- Mississippian
- Iroquois
- totems

2. TAKING NOTES

Draw a Venn diagram like the one below. Compare and contrast Native Americans of the Northwest Coast and the Southwest.



How did environment affect the development of these cultures?

3. COMPARING

In what ways did the peoples of North America share similar cultural patterns?

THINK ABOUT

- how the people viewed the environment
- the role of family in their lives
- religion

4. ANALYZING THEMES

Cultural Interaction What evidence is there that societies in North America interacted with each other?

THINK ABOUT

- how goods were obtained
- ways to defend against enemies
- what kinds of evidence historians find and consider valid