

Section 1: The Earliest Americans

FIRST MIGRATION TO THE AMERICAS

Many scientists believe that the first people arrived in North America during the last Ice Age. At that time the **environment** changed, and large amounts of water froze, forming glaciers. Water levels in the oceans dropped to more than 300 feet lower than they are today. A strip of land called the **Bering Land Bridge** was exposed between Asia and Alaska.

No one knows exactly when or how people crossed into North America, but there is evidence that people called **Paleo-Indians** crossed the bridge to Alaska between 38,000 and 10,000 BC. The **migration** took place over a long time. The descendants of the migrants went as far as the southern tip of South America. These people were **hunter-gatherers**, people who hunted animals and gathered wild plants for food. The environments they settled in created Native American societies.

EARLY MESOAMERICAN AND SOUTH AMERICAN SOCIETIES

Some of the earliest American **cultures** arose in Mesoamerica, a region that includes the southern part of what is now Mexico and northern Central America. The Olmec **developed** the earliest known civilization in Mesoamerica around 1200 BC. The Olmec are known for their stone buildings and sculptures. By 400 BC, when their civilization ended, trade had spread Olmec **culture**.

The Maya civilization followed the Olmec. The Maya built large stone temples, pyramids, and canals that controlled the flow of water through their cities. The Maya civilization began to collapse in the 900s, but historians are still not sure why.

The Aztec were fierce warriors who migrated to south and central Mexico in the mid-1100s. They conquered many towns, built a large empire, and controlled a huge trading network. The Aztec capital, Tenochtitlán (tay-nawch-teet-LAHN), founded in 1325 AD, became the greatest city in the Americas and one of the world's largest cities. The Aztec became rich on trade and tributes paid by conquered people.

The Inca began as a small tribe in the Andes Mountains. In the mid-1400s, the Inca began expanding their empire until it included much of the western coast of South America and had more than 12 million people. The Inca people had a strong central government and a network of roads and bridges that connected all parts of the territory.

Section 2: Native American Cultures

EARLY SOCIETIES

The earliest people in North America were huntergatherers. By 1500 BC people in the southwestern part of North America had farm cultures and grew maize. The Anasazi used irrigation to increase food production in the dry climate. They lived in pit houses dug into the ground and later began to build **pueblos**. The Anasazi often built complex houses on cliff walls to defend against attacks. They also built **kivas**, sacred areas at the center of the community.

The Anasazi began abandoning their villages after living in them for hundreds of years. Drought, disease, or raids by other tribes may have caused this move.

After 1000 BC several farming societies developed in the eastern part of North America. They built large burial mounds to honor their dead. More than 10,000 mounds have been found in the

Ohio River valley alone. The largest city of the mound builders had about 30,000 people.

NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURE AREAS

The culture of Native American people varied depending on geography. In the far north, in present-day Alaska and Canada, Native Americans survived primarily by hunting and fishing, living in small groups. Farther south, along the Pacific Northwest, larger groups thrived on the abundant wildlife. They carved tall poles with **totems**-symbols of animal or ancestor spirits-which had religious and cultural meaning.

Farther south along the Pacific and the Sierra Nevada Mountains, people fished, hunted, gathered plants, and lived in small groups of families. In the drier areas of the southwest, Pueblo groups had to develop agriculture to adapt to the climate. They lived in towns of up to 1000 people. Others, such as the Apache and Navajo, formed nomadic groups that survived by hunting, foraging, or raiding other villages.

Most of the Native Americans of the Great Plains were nomadic hunters. They survived on the abundant wildlife of the grasslands, living in **tepees** made of animal hides. Some Plains groups were farmers, including the Pawnee, who had a **matrilineal** society. In the east, many Native Americans had small villages and lived by farming, hunting, and fishing. The **Iroquois League** was an alliance of many groups that defended one another.

SHARED BELIEFS

Although they had many different cultures, Native Americans shared certain beliefs. Their religions were linked to nature, and they believed that the land was for the use of everyone.

Section 3: Trading Kingdoms of West Africa

WEST AFRICA'S GREAT KINGDOMS

West African trade routes were originally controlled by the **Berbers**, a people of North Africa. Later, three great kingdoms developed in West Africa by winning control of these trade routes.

The first, Ghana, formed when farmers banded together to protect themselves from herders. They built armies whose superior iron weapons let them take control of the trade in salt and gold. Ghana raised money by forcing traders who passed through its lands to pay taxes. The trade routes brought Ghana in contact with different cultures and beliefs. In the 1060s a Muslim group attacked Ghana, forcing its leaders to convert to Islam. Although Ghana was weakened and eventually fell, the influence of Islam remained strong.

Like Ghana, Mali was located along the upper Niger River. The fertile soil and the control of trade on the river allowed Mali to become rich and powerful. Its most famous ruler was a Muslim king, **Mansa Musa**. Under his leadership Mali grew in wealth and power. Traders came to Timbuktu, an important city, to trade for salt, gold, metals, shells, and other goods.

Because he was a devout Muslim, Mansa Musa left Mali on a **hajj**, or a pilgrimage to Mecca. His influence helped bring Islam to a large part of West Africa. In the 1300s Mansa Musa conquered a kingdom called Songhai, whose people also lived along the Niger River. As the Mali empire weakened in the 1400s, Songhai regained independence.

One of the greatest Songhai rulers was Muhammad Ture. He chose a military title, *askia*, and became known as **Askia the Great**. Like Mansa Musa, Askia was a devout Muslim who supported education and learning. His cities had great **mosques**, schools, and libraries. He built a professional army and organized Songhai with governors who were loyal to him. Songhai declined soon after Askia the Great lost power.

WEST AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE

Slavery had existed in Africa and in many parts of the world for centuries. Starting in the 600s Arabs and then Europeans became slave traders. Criminals and people captured during battle could be sold into slavery as well as relatives of people who owed money.

The market for West African slaves increased as Muslim traders took black Africans to sell in North Africa. West Africa was also the home of many slaves taken to the Americas. The slave trade became a key part of the West African economy, contributing to the power of the great empires.

Section 4: Europe before Transatlantic Travel

GREEK AND ROMAN GOVERNMENT

Ancient Greeks valued human reason and believed in the power of the human mind to think, explain, and understand life. Three of the greatest Greek thinkers were **Socrates**, **Plato**, and **Aristotle**, who were all philosophers and teachers. Aristotle taught that people should live lives based on **reason**, or clear and ordered thinking.

One of the most lasting contributions of the Greeks is their political system. Established during the **Classical** Period, **democracy** is the system in which people rule themselves. Rome later formed a type of democracy called a republic, in which people elect representatives to rule them. These political ideas still influence world governments, including that of the United States.

MIDDLE AGES

After the fall of the Roman empire, Europe was divided into many small kingdoms. A system called feudalism was established in which nobles gave **knights** land in exchange for protection.

In the 1000s important changes began to occur in Europe. The Crusades brought trade with places outside Europe, introducing new products and ideas. Trade also brought a disease known as the **Black Death** that killed much of the population of Europe and caused a shortage of workers. These changes resulted in the development of a middle-class made up of artisans and merchants. Cities became important as commercial centers for trade.

RENAISSANCE

The key feature of the Renaissance was a love of art and education. The search for knowledge spread to all fields. During the Renaissance the focus shifted from religion to people. Two of the great Renaissance artists, **Michelangelo** and **Leonardo da Vinci**, are famous for their paintings, sculpture, and architecture, which reflected the value of the human being. The printing press developed by **Johannes Gutenberg** helped spread new ideas in science, math, and literature.

Increased trade caused a commercial revolution. Italian cities became important trading centers. As commerce grew, so did the need for banks. Merchants created **joint-stock companies** in which groups of people invested together.