Indigenous North American World-Systems before the Rise of Chiefs

This chapter was originally written to follow Chapter 6 in Social Change. It discusses the similarities and differences among Native American societies in different regions of North America before the emergence of complex chiefdoms.

The suggestion that “culture areas”—the culturally similar regions designated by anthropologists (e.g., California, the Pacific Northwest, the Southwest)—can be equated with world-systems is fallacious from the group-centric point of view because important interactions frequently occurred across the boundaries of these culture areas. Nevertheless, it is convenient to follow Stephen Kowalewski’s (1996) lead in discussing how the world-systems in these traditional culture areas were similar to or different from one another. The literature on trade networks by archaeologists is usually organized into discussions of these culture areas, but there has been more and more study of trade interactions between the different culture areas. This chapter discusses each of these regions that were in the territory of what subsequently became the United States. The complex chiefdoms that emerged in the Midwest (Mississippian) and on the Western Shore of the Chesapeake Bay are discussed in Chapter 7.

Humans came across the Bering land bridge at least 13,000 years ago. A recently discovered encampment of hunter-gatherers near Monte Verde, Chile, complete with chunks of mastodon meat, has been firmly dated at 12,500 BP (10,500 BCE). The land route was difficult to pass before about 12,000 years ago because of the large Pleistocene glaciers. But it is possible that maritime-adapted peoples moved along the coasts. Most archaeologists discount the possibility of early voyaging across the open ocean.

In the region that became the United States, so-called Paleoindians used large distinctively fluted stone spearpoints known as Clovis points over a wide region of North America. Archaeologists think that the peoples who lived

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1 The culture areas for which there are volumes of the Smithsonian Handbook of North American Indians are the Arctic, the Subarctic, the Northwest Coast, California, the Southwest (two volumes), the Great Basin, the Plateau, the Plains, the Southeast, and the Northeast.

2 Multiscalar and multitemporal spatial analyses have been applied to the Southeast and the Midwest by the studies contained in Nassaney and Sassaman (1995).

3 The first Clovis points, found near Clovis, New Mexico, have been dated to 11,200 BP (9200 BCE).
The notion of widely nomadic populations becoming gradually more sedentary is related to the problem of cultural differences, social identities, and territoriality. Archaeologists note that stylistic differences among groups became more pronounced as sedentism developed. This is interpreted as the formation of regional cultural identities by which people distinguished their own communities from those of their neighbors.

Vehik and Baugh (1994, 250) provide a map that shows the sources of important trade goods in prehistoric North America—obsidian, chert, marine shells, galena (lead ore), copper, and so forth (see Figure 1). These goods have been found in archaeological sites far from their point of origin. For example, copper that is probably from near Lake Superior has been found at Archaic sites on the East Coast.4

The Midwest

The Midwest here is used to designate the whole drainage of the Mississippi River system. Beginning near the end of the fifteenth century BCE (1500 BCE), there was a culture in the Mississippi Valley in northern Louisiana that presaged later developments in the Mississippi and Ohio River valleys. This was the Poverty Point culture, a concentrated group of sedentary diversified foragers who constructed huge ceremonial mound complexes and were central to long-distance trade networks. More complex cultures emerged as planting was adopted, populations increased, and sedentism appeared. Horticulturalists in the Midwest developed indigenous cultigens (e.g., squash, sunflowers) that had not diffused from Mesoamerica (Smith 1992). The first indication of social complexity was the emergence of the Adena mortuary complex in Ohio in about 500 BCE and the similar, but stylistically different, Morton Complex of central Illinois. These developments involved ritual worship of the dead with certain archaeologically visible features: burial mounds, certain types of pottery with particular

4 Two publications have summarized archaeological evidence and interpretations of the relationship between changing trade networks and the rise and fall of societal complexity in North America—Ericson and Baugh (1993) and Baugh and Ericson (1994).
and there may have been long-distance trade missions carried out by religious specialists to obtain rare goods. At the same time, local identities were becoming more important as indicated by the emergence of distinctive styles of projectile points and pottery.

Archaeologists disagree about how the Adena culture spread to other regions. Some think there was a migration of people from the Adena core (e.g., Ritchie and Dragoo 1959). Others think that distant groups adopted Adena-like rituals. The latter interpretation is now more favored, and it corresponds to the model proposed by Caldwell’s (1964) idea of “interaction spheres,” in which centers (“hot spots” where cultural innovations occur) influence distant peripheries where the innovations are adopted. The archaeological evidence shows repeated instances in which cultural features

Figure 1 North American indigenous raw material source regions

Source: Vehik and Baugh 1994, 250 © with kind permission from Springer Science+Business Media B.V.

iconography, and, for Adena, a distinctive type of clay smoking pipe. A change toward more elaborate burials is understood by archaeologists to indicate the emergence of an elite. Elaborate burial rituals probably indicate the symbolization of important lineages and their links with revered ancestors. This phenomenon is seen to have spread from its original locus in the Ohio River valley to other areas.

Early Adena burials contain mostly utilitarian objects, but later Adena mounds contain definite evidence of social hierarchy, probably big-man systems, because of rich exotic goods contained in the elaborate and large-scale interments. Whereas the religion may have originated as a way of symbolizing the claims of egalitarian groups to territory, it appears that this led to the emergence of an elite that traded luxury goods over a wide area. The exchange networks were quite developed, and there may have been long-distance trade missions carried out by religious specialists to obtain rare goods. At the same time, local identities were becoming more important as indicated by the emergence of distinctive styles of projectile points and pottery.

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5 Mortuary evidence often suffers from grave problems of inference.
emerge in one region and then are later found to appear in other regions.

What is not clear from the archaeological evidence is whether these cultural features spread because of the migration of people or because distant peoples were influenced to adopt the customs by some diffusion process involving trade, ideological influence, or the migration of a few influential individuals. This is a problem that emerges again and again as we try to sort out what caused the emergence of complexity and hierarchy in particular areas. Diffusion, parallel evolution, and diasporas (the migration of groups) are the three possibilities. The reality was probably some complicated combination of all three. It is obvious that diffusion is not an automatic process, because cultural features do not spread evenly from their point of origin. They are adopted in some regions but not in others, and often there are large expanses that seem untouched in between originators and adopters. Such was the case of the “Delmarva Adena,” a group of polities on the Delmarva Peninsula of the Chesapeake Bay far from the Adena heartland in Ohio. These polities, in contrast to their immediate neighbors, adopted the rituals of worshipping the dead and obtained imported goods from the Ohio Adena heartland (Ford 1976; Stewart 1994). There must have been local circumstances that facilitated the adoption of this foreign religious software, but we cannot be sure just what these local conditions were.

After the emergence, spread, and decline of the Adena mortuary cult, another even more elaborate set of mortuary rituals emerged in the Ohio River valley by about 100 CE—the Hopewell cultures. Though there is great variability of styles and burial practices within the heartland of the Hopewell interaction sphere, in all of them there was an important distinction between elites and commoners. Much larger burial mounds were built. The Hopewell complex traded and spread mostly to the south and southeast (Brose 1994). The same problems of interpretation exist as with the case of Adena discussed above. Was this spread due to diffusion or migration? And what were the local conditions that allowed some societies to be influenced while others were not? The Hopewell style dissipated, as had Adena. Sites that were heavily populated and that had concentrated settlements became more dispersed, and in some regions whole areas were abandoned. This was a definite case of “rise and fall” in which centers of greater population density and settlement size emerged and then declined (see Chapter 7). It also appears that pulsation (waves of the expansion and intensification of trade) occurred in the Midwest region.

After 900 CE a new interaction sphere that archaeologists call Mississippian emerged along the central rivers of the North American mid-continent. We describe and analyze this system in Chapter 7 on complex chiefdoms.

Exchange networks in the Archaic period exhibited pulsation, and in the Midwest there was a double movement of localization and cosmopolitanization. Localization, as indicated by the emergence of more and more local distinctive projectile point and pottery styles, was cultural differentiation from neighboring peoples. This led eventually to the emergence of elites whose legitimation was based in part on the claim to represent “universal” powers larger than the localized world (Helms 1988). These were the interaction spheres and mortuary religions such as the Adena, Hopewell, and Mississippian ideologies. At the same time, warfare and the mobilization of labor became more important, and the new religions were used to reward brave warriors and to mobilize social labor. Polity sizes grew and hierarchies became steeper. Interaction networks got larger. But these systems all overshot their systemic capabilities and collapsed.

The Plains

The Plains Indians are best known in the ethno-graphic literature for large bands of horsemen who hunted buffalo and made war. But horses were introduced by Spaniards in the sixteenth century and rapidly adopted by nomadic groups on the Plains. The coming of the horse had a revolutionary effect on the societies of the prairies because of radically increased mobility and increased efficiency of the hunt. Groups that formerly needed to disperse to find food could now come together to form larger polities and alliances. These developments had important effects on adjacent regions where peoples both adopted similar features and organized to defend against the military power of the prairie peoples.
But an earlier story is less well known. Contemporaneous with the emergence of the Mississippian interaction sphere was the florescence on the southern prairie and adjacent semi-woodland of a mound-building culture that had important trade and cultural links with both the Mississippian heartland, especially Spiro, and the Southwest (Vehik and Baugh 1994). This is known as Caddoan culture. The Caddoans built large mounds and villages and planted corn but, culturally, were somewhat different from similarly complex societies to the east and west. This cultural distinction might be interpreted as only a marginal differentiation if we did not also know that the Caddoans cut themselves off from trading beyond the prairies and constructed a network centered on the Caddoan heartland (Vehik and Baugh 1994). This was an instance of a semi- peripheral region turning itself into a core by means of delinking from other distant cores. Around 1200 CE Caddoan trade with the Mississippian societies collapsed. This caused societies on the eastern Plains (on the border between the Plains and the Mississippian interaction sphere) to decrease in complexity. It also created a prairie trade network centered in the Caddoan heartland that was largely separated from both the Southwest and the Mississippian networks. Later the Caddoan core declined at about the same time as the Mississippian chiefdom at Cahokia (East St. Louis), but these declines are unlikely to have caused one another because the trade links between these regions had been severed much earlier.

The Southwest

Most of the research on the Southwest that explicitly uses world-systems concepts has focused on relations among societies within the Southwest (e.g., Upham 1982; Spielmann 1991b; Baugh 1991; Wilcox 1991; McGuire 1996), but there has also been an important literature on the relationship between the Southwest and Mesoamerica (discussed below). The term “pueblo” is the generic word that Spanish colonizers applied to maize-growing sedentary horticulturalists found in what is now New Mexico and Arizona. These groups had only a few traits in common: they built adobe villages with a central plaza, most had kivas (underground ceremonial centers), and they grew corn (maize), beans, and squash. In historical times (i.e., after the arrival of Spanish colonists) there was no overarching unity among the Pueblo peoples, and warfare occasionally occurred between different Pueblo villages. The people who occupied these villages spoke languages from at least three different major linguistic stocks.

There are several culture areas within the Southwest. The main centers that developed political complexity based on maize planting about 1,100 years ago were the Hohokam in Arizona, the Anasazi Chacoan polities, and, a few centuries later, the Paquime (Casas Grandes) in Northern Chihuahua, about 200 kilometers south of Chaco Canyon (see Figure 2). Other important archaeologically known cultures in the region are the Mogollon and the Mimbres.

The ancestors of the Pueblo Indians were the Anasazi—the “people of old.” The Anasazi culture emerged from 900 CE to 1150 CE. Several large centers were built in this period. At Chaco Canyon a very large center emerged in the tenth and eleventh centuries with perhaps more than 10,000 people living in the Chaco core (Vivian 1990). The Chaco culture, recognizable by distinctive pottery and architecture, spread widely in New Mexico and Arizona through the establishment of many “Chaco outliers.”

After 1150 Chaco Canyon was nearly abandoned as the region endured a fifty-year drought. Kintigh (1994, 138) notes that at the turn of the
thirteenth century there was a renewed aggregation of living units into large communities and abandonment of smaller settlements. This suggests the reestablishment of a centralized system. This second wave of complexity also collapsed. All this is reminiscent of the cycling, or rise and fall, of political centralization that Anderson (1994) describes for the Southeast.

Stephen Lekson (1999) has formulated an explanation for the rise-and-fall sequence of the Southwest that focuses on the significance of what he calls the “Chaco Meridian.” Lekson sees immense significance in the geographical aspects of the great straight roads that radiated from the ritual center of Chaco Canyon (see Figure 3). He notes that after the decline of Chaco the next large central place to emerge in the region, the so-called Aztec Ruin on the Salmon River, is directly to the north of Chaco and that one of the ritual roads goes north from Chaco in the direction of the Aztec Ruin. And after the decline of the Aztec, a new, larger central place emerged that we know as Casas Grandes in a region that allowed for the building of an elaborate canal-based irrigation system.

Lekson makes much of the observation that Casas Grandes, though 200 kilometers to the south of Chaco, is also exactly on the Chaco Meridian. Lekson’s explanation focuses on a hypothetical religious elite that adapted to successive drought crises by moving its center of operation first directly north, and then directly south of its original cult center.

David Wilcox’s (1991) interpretation of the hegemonic rise and falls in the Southwest posits a system of competing polities that succeed one another, rather than the adaptation of a single cultural group that moves its center of operation. It is, of course, possible that newly emergent groups tried to appropriate the spiritual power and legitimacy of earlier dynasties. This phenomenon is well known from state-based systems. So it is possible that Wilcox’s scenario can also account for the phenomenon of the Chaco Meridian.

Kowalewski’s (1996) comparison of the Southwest with other US indigenous culture areas describes a radical core/periphery identity separation that emerged between closed corporate Pueblo communities of horticulturalists and the more nomadic foragers and raiders who lived around them. The Pueblo peoples lived in defensible towns, often atop mesas (flat-topped mountains), where they were able to protect their stores of corn from nomadic raiders. And the dramatic Anasazi cliff dwellings (e.g., Mesa Verde) have obvious defensive advantages.

But Feinman, Nicholas, and Upham (1996), in their explicitly world-systemic comparison of Mesoamerica and the Southwest (which ignores the problem of the interaction between these two macroregions), characterize the Southwest as a region in which networks were open and permeable, without strong boundaries between societies. The contrast with Kowalewski’s portrayal is vivid. Perhaps the earlier system was open, while the bounded Pueblo communities emerged after the Spanish invasion or after nomads obtained horses. But the existence of the Anasazi cliff dwellings, built hundreds of years before the arrival of horses, looks functionally quite similar to the mesa communities of historically known Pueblos. It is a lot of trouble to build houses into a cliff and carry water up from below. Defense against raiders would be a likely explanation. Defensive communities and conflictive relations are often associated with strong cultural boundaries between the groups.

Figure 3  Chaco Canyon ancient road system, looking southeast

In her discussion of Plains-Pueblo interactions, Katherine Spielmann (1991a, 1991c) delineates two ways in which exchange between what had heretofore been relatively autonomous groups might have developed into systemic exchange (core/periphery differentiation in our terms). The first, which she favors, is mutualism, in which sedentary horticulturalists engage in peaceful exchange with nomadic hunters in such a way that the total caloric intake over the necessary variety of food types mutually benefits both groups. The second, favored by Wilcox (1991) and Baugh (1991), is buffering, in which sedentary agriculturalists use exchange with nomadic hunters to supplement food supplies during periods of scarcity.

The issue of pacific versus conflictive relations between farmers and foragers has been raised in many other contexts. Susan Gregg’s (1988) discussion of the expansion of horticulture into Europe portrays a symbiotic relationship between gardeners and foragers who exchanged complementary goods. Spielmann’s (1991c) rendering of this relationship in the Southwest also favors a symbiotic interpretation in which complementary surpluses were exchanged between Pueblos and nomadic foragers. Baugh (1991) uses world-systems concepts to analyze this same relationship. Both he and Wilcox (1991) see elements of a core/periphery hierarchy in which the sedentary groups (Pueblos) were benefiting more than the nomadic foragers from the interaction.

One hypothesis that stems from the model of world-systems evolution described in Chapter 2 is that all systems go through cycles of increase and decrease in the level of conflict among societies. Farmer/forager interactions are more likely to be symbiotic under conditions of low population pressure, but when ecological degradation, climate change, or population growth raises the costs of production, conflict among societies is likely to increase. It is during these periods that new institutional solutions are more likely to be invented and implemented. But if new hierarchies or new technologies are not employed, conflict itself will reduce the population and a period of relative peace will return.

Randall McGuire’s (1996) study of core/periphery relations in the Hohokam interaction sphere reveals evidence of the rise of a culturally innovative center near what is now Phoenix, Arizona. Several different surrounding peripheral regions adopted styles from this core. McGuire demonstrates the dangers of applying assumptions based on the modern world-system to stateless systems. He finds that the peripheral Hohokam regions did not culturally converge, but rather they became more different from one another as the climate changed and they interacted with other distant core regions. Of course, the hypothesis of convergence among peripheral regions is also contradicted for the modern world-system because peripheral areas often experience quite different developmental paths. But in both the Hohokam and the modern world-system, the idea of a core/periphery structure nevertheless proves useful for understanding social change.

Little is known archaeologically about nomad-nomad relations in the Southwest. Some of the nomadic groups may have been recent arrivals (Wilcox 1986a). Baugh (1991) and Wilcox (1991) suggest that trade among nomadic foragers was an alternative to centralization in stabilizing volatile food supplies. The arrival of the Spaniards (from the 1530s on) vastly disrupted intergroup relations (see Hall 1989). The alliances that some of the nomadic groups made with the Spanish (e.g., the Comanches) may have had prehistoric analogues in which nomadic groups allied with particular Pueblo core societies to provide protection against other nomadic groups, and possibly to serve as allies in disputes among Pueblo societies.

The nested network approach described in Chapter 2 is helpful for understanding the ways in which precontact North American societies were linked to one another and the relevance of these links for processes of development. As with state-based systems, bulk goods, political-military interactions, prestige goods networks, and information networks formed a set of nested nets of increasing spatial scale. Some of the earliest explicit usages of world-systems concepts by archaeologists (e.g., Whitecotton and Pailies 1986; Weigand, Harbottle, and Sayre 1977) were arguments that the Southwest constituted a
highly connected periphery of the Mesoamerican world-system.

There has been a huge controversy about the importance or unimportance of links between the US Southwest and Mesoamerica (Mathieu and McGuire 1986). Charles Di Peso (1974) was an early advocate of the importance of these linkages. Di Peso argued that the great houses at Chaco Canyon were erected as warehouses and dwellings for a small group of Toltec traders, the pochteca. Di Peso contended that it was the withdrawal of the pochteca in the twelfth century that prompted the rapid decline of Chaco Canyon.

That there were at least some connections between the Greater Southwest and Mesoamerica is now widely accepted. Recent studies conclude that old Puebloan ritual art contains iconography that is very similar to that found in Central Mexico (Taube 2001). However, the importance of these connections for local development in the US Southwest is still the subject of considerable dispute. Weigand and Harbottle (1993) contend that the Southwest was a periphery of Mesoamerica based on the fact that turquoise from the Southwest was mined and exported to the states in the Valley of Mexico (what is now Mexico City). They claim that turquoise played an important role in the overall structure of trade between these two regions and that the demand for turquoise was an important factor in the rise of complex societies in the Southwest. Other features of societies in the Southwest, such as ball courts, ceremonial mounds, and parrots kept as pets, also suggest influences from Mesoamerica.

Late Mississippian chiefdoms such as that at Etowah in Georgia have been found to have produced iconographs that employ design elements and symbolic content that are strikingly similar to the icons of Mesoamerican states (see Figure 4) (e.g., Anderson 1994, 83). Archaeologists refer to the cultural complex that produced these iconographs as the “Southern Cult” (Galloway 1989). Most archaeologists contend that influences from Mesoamerica were unimportant to the processes of development that occurred in the Southwest and other areas of what is now the United States. Some argue that these cultural resemblances are due to parallel evolution, not interaction (e.g., Fagan 1991).

The evidence of turquoise sourcing shows that there was definitely trade between highland Mesoamerica and the Southwest. Certainly there was down-the-line trade, but there could have also been at least a few long-distance trade expeditions undertaken by pochteca from the Mexican highlands. It is hard to imagine how down-the-line trade could have transmitted the ideologies behind the iconographs of the Southern Cult, but most of those who have studied this closely contend that direct influence was slight. Some archaeologists think the Mexican ideology was adopted by declining Mississippian chiefdoms as part of an effort to revitalize hierarchies that were caught in a downward spiral of decline. The predominant opinion among archaeologists...

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8 In the Aztec Empire, pochteca were important agents of the king who were sent on distant missions to trade and to obtain political and military intelligence. It is thought that earlier Mesoamerican states also had long-distance specialists.
The Great Basin

In what are now the states of Utah, Nevada, and eastern California is a region of high desert in which water does not flow to the seas, but rather into large land-locked basins. Some rather large rivers run for hundreds of miles and disappear into the sand. It is an ecologically sparse environment that is punctuated by small areas where water, game, and plant life are more abundant. In addition to the lack of rainfall in most areas, the distribution of rainfall varies greatly from year to year. This ecologically coarse environment was the home of nomadic foragers known ethnohistorically as the Paiute, the Western Shoshone, and the Ute, who adapted to the desert environment by moving to where food was most available. This region was also the inspiration of the theory of social evolution known as cultural ecology or human ecology that emphasizes the importance of adaptation to the local environment. Julian Steward (1938, 1955), a major figure in the development of cultural ecology, did important ethnographic surveys in which he charted population densities across the entire Great Basin region and analyzed why there were important organizational and cultural differences among the ethnohistorically known groups in this large region. The ecological constraints on human societies are dramatic in the basin and range geography studied by Steward.

As the debate about whether the Southwest was a periphery of Mesoamerica has raged, there has been an analogous controversy over whether the Great Basin was a periphery to the Southwest. The early peoples who moved into the Great Basin occupied the few locations where there were good supplies of water, game, and food plants. Subsequent population growth and more recent arrivals led groups to occupy more marginal regions. What emerged was a mosaic of social structures that mapped onto the ecological geography almost perfectly. The desert mosaic was composed of small settled groups near isolated food resources (e.g., near rivers and lakes) surrounded by more nomadic groups who were following the yearly variation in food availability. This desert mosaic was impinged upon by outside influences from California, the Plains, and the Southwest, but despite these factors and changes in climate, the basic pattern still existed when the Euroamericans came to explore this region in the 1840s.

Southwestern-type village-living horticulturalists and pot makers, called the Fremont culture, emerged in the southern Great Basin in about 400 CE. Steadman Upham (1992) argued that Great Basin peoples were continually in transition back and forth from settled to nomadic strategies depending on climatic, ecological, and interactional shifts. Trade networks that are visible in the potsherd evidence (broken pieces of pots with distinctive designs) indicate that the settled groups used trade networks to ensure against local food shortages (McDonald 1994). Around 1250 CE the Fremont peoples abandoned the Great Basin, probably because of the droughts before the Little Ice Age. It was this same climatic change that played a role in the abandonment of the Anasazi regions on the Colorado plateau to the south. New groups of people, presumably the ancestors of the Shoshoni, may have moved into the region at this time (Madsen and Rhode 1994).

Julian Steward’s (1938) analysis concluded that the local sedentary core groups living near good water sources developed religious rituals, collective property rights, and political organization at the village level, whereas their more nomadic neighbors existed primarily with only family-level organization. Steward did not discuss the interactions among these groups. Indeed, he claimed that there was little trade and little interaction. But the groups occupying prime sites would have needed to protect their resources from intruders. They developed political organization to regulate internal access, but also to protect from external appropriation. Steward argued that warfare was not an important emphasis for any of these groups, except those few who adopted some of the cultural trappings from neighboring societies on the Great Plains. Nevertheless, the development of bounded territories and the enforcement of legitimate claims to resources by means of coercion—even if only yelling and stone-throwing—represented an institutional response to a core/periphery differentiation.
in which some groups needed to protect their resources from other groups.

As for the peripheral peoples, their culture, as Steward (1938) says, was primarily “gastric”—focused on food. In order to not starve, they needed to cache enough food to last until spring. The key food for this purpose was the nut from the cone of the pinyon pine. These were available for harvest in the fall. Pinyon nut crops varied greatly from location to location and from year to year, and when they were plentiful in one location, there was usually enough for all those who had the ability to harvest and process them. This set of characteristics was not propitious for the development of property rights, and so groups did not try to control particular pinyon stands.

This was a rather elemental form of a local core/periphery structure. There was no core/periphery hierarchy in which core societies exploited the labor or resources of peripheral societies. What the core societies did was to protect their assets from potential peripheral intruders. And for their part, the peripheral peoples were disorganized by the ecological circumstances, in which “optimal foraging strategy” dictated that they remain spread out in very small groups. Thus when hunger gripped them, they did not have the capability to successfully raid the stores of the core societies. Rather, they simply starved.9

Contrary to Steward’s claim that Great Basin peoples did not trade, there is ample archaeological evidence that they did participate in long-distance trade networks. Bennyhoff and Hughes (1987) show that an olivella shell–based trade network that linked the Western Great Basin to the coast of Northern California expanded from 2000 BCE to 200 BCE and then contracted from 200 BCE to 700 CE and then expanded again from 700 CE to 1500 CE. After 1500 CE there was a major expansion within California based on a different kind of shells (clam disk beads). Hughes (1994) shows that two cave dwellings in the Western Great Basin that are rather close to each other were parts of very different obsidian exchange networks but were linked into the same shell network. This cautions us against assuming that all sorts of trade items fit into the same exchange networks.

The Northwest

In the Pacific Northwest, rather complex and hierarchical polities emerged in the absence of horticulture. These maritime societies were able to sustain large and concentrated populations because of the huge availability of fish and sea mammals on the coast and in the rivers. The popular symbol of these quintessential big-man societies is the totem pole, a symbolic representation of ranked clans. These societies are also famous for the potlatch, an institution in which chiefs vied for prestige and influence by giving away or destroying great quantities of wealth. The Tlingit, the Haida, and the Kwakiutl were Athabascan linguistic groups containing many independent polities. They warred within, as well as between, these linguistic groups. And they traded with inland peoples for important food and raw materials, including copper and slaves. The salmon runs were extremely localized in space and time. It was necessary to get hundreds of people to the river, working to catch the salmon and split and dry them as soon as the run came in. And it was necessary to be able to change rivers and timing if the runs changed. This led to a desperate need to mobilize labor power—hence the potlatches, which were about getting loyal followers, and also the slaves.

Kowalewski (1996) characterizes the Northwest in terms of a core/periphery hierarchy in which coastal societies imported slaves from inland societies. A great exchange network linked the societies on the coast with the whole region of the Columbia River plateau. The vast supplies of food on the coast created a demand for extra labor for the processing of fish and sea mammals. Both prestige goods and slaves moved long distances, primarily by down-the-line trade (Ames 1991). Documents from the early historical period studied by Mitchell and Donald (1985) show that in coastal societies, slaves constituted between 5 and 25 percent of the population. Thus slavery

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9 It is now understood that Steward’s ethnography of the Great Basin people should not be relied on for inferences about precontact indigenous peoples, because the societies of his informants were the survivors of shattered cultures.
Indigenous North American World-Systems before the Rise of Chiefs

In California there were no totem poles. A few societies had clans and moieties, but there were no hierarchical kinship systems. In the area of Northern California that we examined in Chapter 5, the largest polity was the tribelet, a very small unit consisting of a few villages. Larger political entities did not exist except in the San Joaquin Valley (Yokuts) and in Santa Barbara (Chumash). Though California has been characterized as a culture area based on social structural and artifactual similarities, there were enormous differences within California as well. Linguistic differences are the most obvious. Linguists contend that six major linguistic stocks were present in indigenous California. Whereas clay pots were not used by most of the indigenous peoples of California, the Western Mono, Paiute, and some of the Yokuts peoples made pottery in southeastern California. As we saw in Chapter 6, the only maize horticulturalists in California lived along the Colorado River on what is now the border between Southern California and Arizona, although nearly all groups in California planted small amounts of tobacco.

We have already mentioned the studies of trade linkages between California and the Great Basin. These show that the expansion and contraction of trade networks is a feature of intersocietal relations even when the constituent societies are very egalitarian.

Northern California provides an interesting example of a border region between two large trade networks. Our study of the Wintu, who lived at the northern end of the Sacramento Valley and in some of the surrounding hills and mountains, reveals a region of overlap between the Pacific Northwestern network discussed above and the network that originated in Central California. The trade of dentalia shells from the Pacific Northwest had only recently extended to the Wintu. Archaeological sites reveal very small numbers of these shells, and only in very recent contexts. And the Wintu were just beyond the boundary of the Northwestern slave raiding and trading network. The Modoc Indians in the very northernmost corner of California were raiders who took captives to sell to groups to the north.

California

In Chapter 5 we had a close look at Northern California, but we did not consider the whole California culture area in comparative perspective.

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10 Moieties are kinship groups organized as dualities. For example, the people of each village are divided into two kin-based groups.
The Modoc raided the Shasta and the Achomawi, but these linguistic groups had not yet become participants in this down-the-line mode of core/periphery relations. So the Wintu and nearly all of the other Native Californian societies to the south enjoyed a less coercive relationship with their neighbors.

The East

Another issue that arises once populations become more sedentary is the question of down-the-line trade (goods are passed from group to group) versus long-distance trade journeys. Michael Stewart (1994) contends that both kinds of trade were important in the development of societies in the Mid-Atlantic region of the East. This suggestion of the existence of long-distance trade treks is an interesting hypothesis that needs to be kept in mind. In most regions it is assumed that most trade was down-the-line, but even a small number of occasional long-distance treks could have been important for carrying ideas from one region to another.

Stewart’s (1994, 2004) studies of trade patterns in the Mid-Atlantic region are relevant for explaining the emergence of complexity and hierarchy. We have already mentioned the case of the Delmarva Adena, in which an isolated complex society emerged within a regional context of small-scale and egalitarian societies. After the decline of the Adena interaction sphere, neither the Hopewell nor the Mississippian developments had significant cultural effects on the Northeast or the Mid-Atlantic regions, while the Mississippian style was adopted by emerging chiefdoms in the Southeast.

This lack of cultural adoption corresponded with a decrease in trade between these regions. Stewart (1994, 82–85) reports a decline in trade volume, but not in extent, during the Early Woodland period from 1000 BCE to 600 BCE and then a trade expansion from 600/500 BCE to 400 BCE. This was followed by a trade contraction from 400 BCE to 200 CE and then another expansion from 200 CE to 800 CE. In this last expansion there was no sign of cultural influence from the Hopewell heartland despite expanded trade. This was followed by a severe disruption of trade networks during the Late Woodland from 900 CE on. This was the period of the rise of the Mississippian interaction sphere in the Midwest, and yet neither trade nor cultural influence linked this distant florescence with the Mid-Atlantic region. Stewart portrays a kind of insularity in which the ethnohistorically known chiefdoms of the Chesapeake traded little but extracted tribute from weaker adjacent neighbors (see Wood, Waselkov, and Hatley 1989). This kind of delinking and inward-oriented development also occurred on the Great Plains, as we saw in the case of the Caddoan culture.

Eleven Millennia on the Chesapeake

Humans probably first arrived in the Chesapeake region around 11,000 years ago. Archaeologists delineate the Paleoindian period from 9500 BCE to 8000 BCE. The first pioneers of the Chesapeake were small nomadic groups of big-game hunters who helped extinguish the remaining Mid-Atlantic Pleistocene megafauna (e.g., mammoths, mastodons, caribou, moose, bison, and musk-ox) at the end of the last ice age. The early Paleoindians are known archaeologically by their long-fluted Clovis-style spearpoints, usually made from exotic types of stone in shapes that are quite similar across all of North America. During the Wisconsin ice age, glaciers extended into northern Pennsylvania and northern New Jersey. Because the sea level was much lower, most of what is now the broad Chesapeake Bay was instead narrow rivers and streams, and what is now the ocean shelf was exposed. Many riverside and shoreside Paleoindian camps were inundated as the water rose over the millennia. The early Paleoindians wandered freely over large areas pursuing megafauna (large game). These small bands probably encountered other bands infrequently, but they must have had arrangements to come together seasonally in order to exchange marriage partners. It is thought that these small bands exchanged stone materials and other valuables when they met one another, but many of the exotic lithics may have been obtained by direct procurement during the wide-ranging movements of these nomadic hunters.

While a few isolated Paleoindian spearpoints have been found all over the Chesapeake region, the most important known habitation site is
the Flint Run complex on the south branch of the Shenandoah River (Fagan 1991, 109–110). This site was adjacent to a jasper quarry and was a major manufacturing center where finished artifacts and tool blanks were produced. The Flint Run sites were utilized from 9500 BCE to 6500 BCE.

It is probably mistaken to assume the complete absence of territoriality even among the early Paleolithic nomads. The processes of population pressure, migration, and competition for territorial resources operated on these nomadic societies, especially in a situation in which a major food source, the Pleistocene megafauna, was disappearing. The fact that Paleoindians spread over the Americas in a rather short time shows that they were quick to migrate rather than to stay and defend territory from newly arriving groups. The dominant image of peaceful exchange among these small groups that allowed valuables to move thousands of miles by means of down-the-line exchange should not be read to mean a completely pacific relationship among groups. The question of who should stay and who should move on, especially from food-rich areas, was probably not settled by consensus. There is little archaeological indication of these conflicts, but they would have been only small-scale encounters.

In the middle and late Paleoindian period, new projectile point types developed that were more regionally differentiated than the Clovis points had been. Anderson (1994) interprets this as indicating a transition to bounded habitual base areas or settlement ranges and decreased mobility.

Early and Middle Archaic

The Early Archaic (8000–6000 BCE) is represented in the Chesapeake region by certain new kinds of projectile points. There are indications of population growth, more habitation sites, a more diversified foraging including hunting of smaller game, fishing, and more trade. In the Middle Archaic (6000–4000 BCE) there are indications of decreasing nomadism. Fagan (1991, 315) contends that the Mid-Atlantic region was occupied by a “macroband” composed of about eight to ten smaller nomadic bands containing a total of from 500 to 1,500 people who came together seasonally to exchange gifts and marriage partners.

There was increased trade of rhyolite, a dense and workable type of stone that is found only in quarries in a restricted area on the west side of the Catoctin Mountains (near Camp David in the mountains of Maryland). A quarter to a third of the projectile points found at sites near the Chesapeake Bay were made of rhyolite in the Early and Middle Archaic. Rhyolite had long been used to make projectile points. Indeed, several Paleoindian points that have been found on the Eastern Shore 150 miles from the Catoctin were made of rhyolite. The proportion of all points made of rhyolite increases greatly all over the Chesapeake region during the Early and Middle Archaic. This indicates the emergence of stable long-distance trade relationships.

There were also the beginnings of increased attention to ritualized burials. Archaeologists reason that ritualized burials in cemeteries appear when people start passing vital resources from one generation to the next through lineages and other kin organizations. The most likely resource is ancestral claims to territory. Here we have the beginnings of institutionalized territoriality, the symbolization of claims to place.

The Middle Archaic may have seen the emergence of an early core/periphery interaction system between more sedentary riverine and estuarine peoples and more nomadic hunter-gatherers living in the hills. Sassaman (1995) interprets evidence from the Southeastern Middle Archaic as indicating such a pattern.

Late and Terminal Archaic

The Late Archaic period in the Chesapeake is designated as from 4000 BCE to 1500 BCE and the Terminal Archaic from 1500 BCE to 1000 BCE. During these periods there is evidence of increased usage of gathered vegetable materials such as acorns and more systematic fishing with harpoons and fish weirs (traps built across streams). There is also the first emergence of mild social ranking, but long-distance exchange networks declined somewhat as indicated by less use of rhyolite at sites distant from its source. Habitation sites are closer to rivers, indicating more intensive use of fishing. The greater occurrence of gouges and adzes suggests that
dugout canoes were being produced (Kavanagh 1982, 97). There is also increased use of heavy bowls and other objects carved of steatite (soapstone). This is deemed an indicator of increased sedentism.

Early Woodland and the Chesapeake Adena

The Early Woodland period in the Chesapeake is designated as from 1000 BCE to 200 CE. The residents of the Chesapeake region began fashioning pots out of clay during this period. Trade, as indicated by the usage of rhyolite at places distant from its source, continued to decrease in the Early Woodland period.

In the river valleys of the Midwest, groups were beginning to supplement their hunted and gathered foods by the cultivation on a small scale of certain domestic plant species (Smith 1992). But in the Chesapeake there is no evidence of the cultivation of domesticated plants before the Late Woodland period (Potter 1993, 109).

Of significance in the Chesapeake is the discovery of the Adena residential and mortuary sites in Delaware (Custer 1984), on the Eastern Shore of the Chesapeake Bay near Cambridge and Salisbury, Maryland (Bastian 1975), and on the West River on the Western Shore of the Chesapeake (Ford 1976). The Adena sites on the Delaware Bay emerged about 500 BCE. These Mid-Atlantic sites are identified as Adena because of the presence of certain items that are known to be associated with the Adena religious complex, especially tubular Ohio pipestone pipes and short, thick-walled copper beads, but also elaborate burial mound complexes. The more egalitarian Early Woodland inhabitants of the Chesapeake region surrounded these Adena big-man societies. This constituted an early instance of core/periphery differentiation between big-man societies and neighboring more egalitarian societies.

It is not clear whether the Chesapeake Adena were immigrants from the West, as claimed by Dragoo (1963), or whether indigenous groups had become converts to the Ohio religion through ritualized long-distance trade relationships (Custer 1984). Custer (1984, 113–130) reports many stylistic continuities between the Wolfe Neck complex and the Adena sites on the Delaware Bay that would indicate in situ adoption rather than immigrant intrusion. The long-distance trade networks had long involved the importation of goods such as copper from Lake Superior, and so the presence of Adena goods might only signify trade. But the building of mortuary complexes in the Adena style indicates the presence of the religious ideology and customs of the Adena ceremonial complex. If it was in situ groups adopting a new religion from distant contacts, we can wonder why these would have differentiated themselves from their neighbors in this way. Custer (1994) has argued that the Adena complex on the Delaware Bay emerged because of the circumscribed environmental richness of this coastal location. The same consideration would not seem to apply to the other Chesapeake Adena sites. While most were estuarine, the Nassawango Creek site near Salisbury, Maryland, was riverine, about midway between the Chesapeake Bay and the Atlantic Ocean (Bastian 1975). It is hard to see how ecological circumscription could have determined the location of all these sites.

The Middle Woodland

In any case, the Adena complex declined and disappeared in the Chesapeake by the last century BCE, whereas in Illinois and Ohio a new and more flamboyant ceremonial culture, the Hopewell interaction sphere (Caldwell 1964), emerged in about 200 BCE and declined by 400 CE. The Hopewell religion involved the wearing of ear spools and the glorification of big men. This ceremonial complex extended into the Southeast but not into the Chesapeake region nor into New England.

The Middle Woodland in the Chesapeake is designated as from 200 CE to 900 CE. Potter (1993, Chapter 3) examines the evidence for the lower Potomac River Basin and adjacent areas for this period. During this period the bow and arrow was adopted and replaced the atlatl, a spear-throwing device that had been used for millennia. Cultivation of domesticated crops may have begun, but it would have contributed only a small amount to the total supply of food. Specialization of gathering increased, indicated by a larger proportion of oyster shells in the mounds of refuse (midden).

Both burials and some rather large storage pits were found at the late Middle Woodland sites
on the Potomac and Patuxent Rivers. Population density continued to rise in the whole region, and there was continued differentiation of local cultural styles indicating ever-greater symbolization of territorial holdings. Large special-purpose occupation sites increased, and more sites were located in the lowlands and on estuaries. Steponaitis (1983) interprets these changes as indicating an increasing sedentism, with fewer moves and greater concentration of population at centers with large food storage capabilities. Potter (1993, 112) interprets archaeological evidence from the James, Rappahanock, and the lower Potomac Rivers as indicating villages where a local or regional band gathered for several months a year and some members of the group maintained year-around residency. Both broad-based trade networks (down-the-line trade) and long-distance procurement treks brought a new expansion of rhyolite usage. Sites in the Monocacy River valley adjacent to the rhyolite quarries indicate seasonally occupied camps where rhyolite blanks and projectile points were manufactured. Potter says,

The direct procurement of rhyolite by groups of coastal plain flint knappers does not negate the further movement of rhyolite blanks via broad-based trade networks. The extensive distribution of exotic lithics throughout the coastal plain of Maryland and Virginia is testament that such a network existed. (1993, 108)

Hoarded caches of exotic lithics have also been found in the coastal plain during this period. Potter (1993, 108), citing Stewart (1989), surmises that some groups may have attempted to manipulate the down-the-line exchange networks to their own advantage by hoarding these valuable goods.

Late Woodland

The Late Woodland in the Chesapeake is designated as from 900 CE to 1550 CE. This is the period just prior to the protohistoric period (just before the arrival of the Europeans), examined in Chapter 7. The key development at the beginning of the Late Woodland was the adoption of maize (corn) agriculture, or the immigration of maize-planting groups. As we have seen, maize (corn), squash, and beans were domesticated in Mesoamerica before 5000 BCE. They diffused to the US Southwest by 1000 BCE. The shift to maize agriculture in the Chesapeake occurred from 800 CE to 1100 CE.

The development of varieties of corn that could be grown in regions having a short growing season took a long time, but once this happened the diffusion of maize planting was rather rapid. The first evidence of maize in the Midwest is around 200 CE, and the northern Iroquoians began planting maize during the same centuries that it arrived in the Chesapeake (800–1100 CE) (Smith 1992). In the Midwest, garden horticulture using local domestics had long been practiced prior to the coming of maize, but in the Chesapeake region the advent of horticulture and maize planting were likely the same event.

The Mississippian religion did not extend into the Chesapeake region or into New England or the northern Iroquoian territories. Dinauzo and Hasenstab (1989) have contended that Iroquoian tribe formation, the development of large settlements, and intertribal confederacy for resolving conflicts may have been partly due to long-distance interaction with the Fort Ancient Mississippian chiefdoms in the Ohio River valley. But this has been greatly contested by other archaeologists who see these developments as due to local changes and the adoption of maize agriculture. The Mississippian group closest to the Chesapeake was in western Virginia.

In the Chesapeake region, the Late Woodland adoption of maize agriculture was accomplished over a wide area by peoples who had already moved toward a rather sedentary round of specialized foraging. Maize planting diffused rapidly across the whole region, though some groups used it more intensively than others. As in earlier periods, population density continued to increase in the region as a whole, with settlements located near lands best suited for growing corn. But there are indications that in the early part of the Late Woodland period, social ranking decreased. Burials became simpler. And the long-distance exchange networks that had become so important in the Middle Woodland period declined. The finding of fewer exotic trade goods and the “import substitution” of local lithic materials for imports suggest trade decline. In the early Late
Woodland period there was a dramatic drop-off throughout the Chesapeake and surrounding regions in the use of Catoctin rhyolite.

Potter identifies the early Late Woodland period with Rappahannock and Townsend style ceramics found widely in the Chesapeake following the Mockley phase. The similarities between Mockley and Rappahannock/Townsend pots indicate that this was an in situ cultural change, not an intrusion of a new immigrant group. In the estuarine areas, the Late Woodland settlement patterns reveal scattered farmsteads interspersed among garden plots, and specialized oyster-gathering sites in which oyster meat was probably dried for storage and trade (Potter 1993, 115). The settlement system appears to have been two-tiered with a larger village surrounded by outlying hamlets and specialized foraging camps. Larger occupation sites continued to increase in size and frequency along the Patuxent (Steponaitis 1983).

After about 1300 CE a new type of pottery and other artifacts known as the Potomac Creek complex appear at the head of the estuarine Potomac. Potter (1993) and Kavanagh (1982) interpret the abrupt intrusion of these new features as evidence of a migration of corn-planting people coming down the Potomac from the west and north. Potter (1993, 141) identifies the Potomac Creek complex with the historically known Piscataway and the eventual Conoy paramountcy. Potter (1993) sees the Owasco culture from the west and north as the original source of the Potomac Creek (Piscataway) immigrants. This group moved into the Maryland piedmont as early as 900 CE.

A cut piece of whelk shell, probably a blank for the manufacture of a human maskette (gorget) of the sort pictured in Figure 5, was dated in a context between 1400 CE and 1500 CE. The shell gorget shown in Figure 5 was found in an early historic elite burial. This kind of art object was usually the property of sacred chiefs, and the finding of this shell may indicate the emergence of chieftoms in the upper tidewater Potomac as discussed in Chapter 7. The design on the gorget is known as the weeping eye or thunderbird motif in Mississippian contexts. This may indicate some limited contact and influence of Mississippian societies on the emerging chieftoms of the Chesapeake’s Western Shore.

**Figure 5** A shell gorget found near the village of the Patawomeke werowance on the Potomac River. The weeping eye or thunderbird motif is similar to a Mississippian design.


The Chesapeake in Comparative and Macroregional Perspective

So why did the Adena complex expand from Ohio into the Chesapeake, whereas the Hopewell and Mississippian traditions did not? The Late Woodland Chesapeake is a significant mystery from the perspective of the population pressure model of the development of complexity, hierarchy, and trade. In the usual conception, greater population density associated with either local adoption or immigrant intrusion of maize agriculture (or both) would be accompanied by greater social ranking because more food would make it possible for the elite to devote their time to pursuits other than producing food, and more trade would be needed as a buffer against crop failures. But in the Chesapeake the appearance of maize agriculture is associated with smaller sites, less social hierarchy, and less trade. Why? And what might this have to do with the questions raised earlier about Adena influence and the lack of Hopewell and Mississippian influence?
It appears that the arrival of corn planting in the Chesapeake allowed the “mesolithic” diversified foragers living in rather large villages to disperse into widely spread farmlets and to reduce the intensity of their trading and ritual symbolization of group identity and social hierarchy. So technological change can, under some conditions, lead to deconcentration and less social hierarchy.

It is quite important to determine whether different developments in the Chesapeake were primarily due to immigration of new groups or rather due to the adoption of new cultural characteristics by indigenous residents. As with the Chesapeake Adena, there are great disputes among archaeologists regarding the advent of, for example, atlatls, bows, pottery, ossuaries (special houses holding the bones of the dead), and maize. As we have seen, it is possible to distinguish between immigration and local development by looking carefully at archaeological evidence. If pottery or projectile point styles change abruptly with no overlap of earlier and later styles or intermediate adaptations, this indicates immigration.

Potter (1993) concludes from the evidence at Patawomeke and Accokeek Creek that the adoption of Potomac Creek pottery in the Late Woodland period was due to the intrusion of groups moving down the Potomac valley from the west. Kavanagh’s (1982) study of the Monocacy watershed concurs that waves of immigration are indicated by the advent of Montgomery, Mason Island, and Luray complexes. In view of what happened in protohistoric times with the Iroquoians moving into the Bay (see Chapter 7), it should not be surprising that earlier changes may have involved the arrival of new groups.

What is perhaps surprising for the Late Woodland period is that these new arrivals seem to have been more egalitarian and less involved in regional exchange networks than the indigenous residents. It might seem that maize agriculture would be brought by groups devoted to the Mississippian religion, in which sacred chiefs mediated between commoners and the powers of the universe. Captain John Smith found this kind of ideology in the seventeenth century, but it may have been a recent development that accompanied the rise of paramountcies and the late advent of intensive warfare discussed in Chapter 7.

There are two rather different possible explanations for the lack of Mississippian influence in the Chesapeake. One might suppose that a new religion that glorified the elite would not be adopted if a similar religion was already present. It seems unlikely that this was the case in the period in the early Late Woodland when maize agriculturalists came in. There is no evidence of hierarchical societies in the Chesapeake in the Middle Woodland period.

A different explanation paints the immigrants as escapees from Mississippian religion who, because of the productivity of corn agriculture, did not need the long-distance and regional exchange networks that had been a necessary hedge against shortages for the earlier residents. Not needing the ritualized gift giving and trade meant they could dispense with sacred chiefs. Families of direct producers could get along quite well by storing their own food against hard times because they produced a lot of food. Fagan (1991, 383) suggests a similar explanation for the decline of the Hopewell ceremonial complex in the Midwest. Well before the arrival of maize in the Midwest, cultivation of indigenous crops had become so productive that regional exchange relations were less needed. Thus, according to Fagan, the commoners no longer needed their chiefs and could return to a more egalitarian form of organization. Stewart (personal communication) has suggested a similar explanation for the decline of complexity and trade with the coming of maize in the Late Woodland Chesapeake. If this is right it constitutes an instance of the circumscription hypothesis’s claim that people will run away from hierarchy unless it is the least bad alternative.

**Interaction Networks over the Long Run**

Rather than a simple model of interaction nets getting larger, the sequence found on the Chesapeake shows a more complicated pattern. As indicated in Chapter 5, the settlement systems of nomads were spatially huge as they ranged over great territories. As population density increased, these nomadic ranges became smaller until the transition to sedentism emerged. The first sedentary societies had very small interaction nets, but these got larger, then smaller, and then once again larger. This is pulsation.
The early Paleoindians were explorers and colonizers of land that was yet uninhabited. They chased big game, but they also tended to concentrate in areas that had greater amounts of game and other foods (Anderson 1994). As with other colonization sequences, the first arrivals probably took the best locations and then tried to hang on to them. Population density was so low at first that there were plenty of good new locations, and so interactions among groups were mainly friendly. But as the best locations became utilized and the mastodons became scarce, more competition emerged. Some groups developed seasonal migration rounds in particular territories and tried to defend the best camping sites against new arrivals. The small bands always needed to gather with other bands seasonally to trade and exchange marriage partners. But the sizes of these seasonal gatherings were limited by the availability of food stocks at the meeting place.

A kind of territoriality emerged, but it was probably not well institutionalized. We do not know whether the Paleoindian pioneers brought with them the cultural apparatus of territoriality. The Polynesian pioneers of the Pacific brought with them an ancestral culture that included the concepts of mana and kapu, which were the basis of sacred chiefdoms. As we saw in Chapter 5, the Polynesians temporarily abandoned ceremony and hierarchy to become egalitarian hunter-gatherers when they landed on islands populated by delicious flightless megabirds (e.g., New Zealand). But when the birds were eaten, the Polynesians reconstructed class societies and territoriality using the linguistic and ideological equipment that was their ancestral culture.

Very likely the immigrants to North America did not have such a hierarchical cultural heritage, because the Asian societies from whence they came had not yet developed ideas and kin relations appropriate to the symbolization of the linkage between place and blood. This means that the original America pioneers had to invent these things as they came to need them.

The Paleoindian interaction networks were large, especially for exchanging fine and useful objects such as Clovis points and exotic lithic blanks. Cultural styles were widely shared across macroregions. And the territories exploited by human groups were huge, though the numbers of people in each macroband were small. As bands became somewhat less mobile they developed more differentiated tool kits depending in part on the nature of the territories they inhabited, but also as a way of symbolizing alliances with friends and differences with foes.

Stephen Kowalewski (1996) has proposed the notion that the eastern United States was a half-continent-sized single world-system for 10,000 years, especially understood as an ecological macroregion. Our study of the Chesapeake has begun with the local and has brought in long-distance processes of trade, diffusion, and migration, as they have seemed to intrude on local developments. We agree with Kowalewski that the macroperspective is important for understanding what happened on the Chesapeake, but we disagree that the world-system concept should be applied to the entire eastern half of North America in this period. While we agree that environmental factors are important constraints and opportunities for human action, we do not define world-systems as interactions with the environment but rather as regularized interaction networks among humans that have an environmental component.

It is our contention, then, that the scale of systemic interaction was never at the half-continental level in prehistoric North America. Rather, there were regional systems that sometimes impacted upon one another but were never systemically integrated at the continental or half-continental level. The closest thing to that was the Mississippian world-system, not understood as a religion but as a social, economic, and political-military interaction network. And the Mississippian system never included the Mid-Atlantic or New England. The decline of the Mississippian networks in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries returned eastern North America to a condition of smaller regional systems similar in scale to those that had existed before the rise of the Mississippian system.

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11 Mana is the powers of the universe as controlled and directed by the sacred chiefs. Kapu refers to the prohibitions (taboos) that protect sacredness. These important elements of ancestral Polynesian culture can be seen throughout the regions of the Pacific that became inhabited by Polynesians. See Chapter 7.
In this view the Chesapeake system was never a peripheral region of the Central System in the great river valleys of the mid-continent. There were important differentials in settlement size, degree of hierarchy, polity size, and so on. But the two areas were never strongly enough integrated by regularized trade and political-military interaction networks to constitute a single system. The closest these two regions came to this was during the Early Woodland period when specialized trade and religious interactions were rather strong. After the demise of the Chesapeake Adena these two regions were again on separate tracks.

This is not to argue that occasional interactions did not have important effects on the development of the Chesapeake, but rather to point out that these were conjunctural rather than systemic. This sort of thing happened several times, in several places in North America. Figure 6 sketches this in a diagram that depicts these temporary connections.

Figure 6 depicts what we believe were substantially distinct regional world-systems that occasionally became linked with one another. It was the arrival of the Europeans that eventually created important continent-wide interaction networks in North America.

Chapter 7 continues the story of the emergence of sociocultural complexity in that part of North America that became the United States, and it also discusses the emergence of chiefly polities elsewhere.

**Suggested Readings**


**Bibliography**


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