



Ethnographic Panorama of Native America

Alfredo Jiménez

The Western Hemisphere is formed by two continents united by a central isthmus, and various islands, the majority of which are located in the Atlantic Ocean. This expanse was inhabited at the end of the fifteenth century by a population of ancient Asian origin exhibiting many racial and cultural differences. In 1492 Christopher Columbus, believing he had reached the Indies, called the first inhabitants that he found on the islands of the Caribbean “Indians.” Shortly, the term was generally in use and the entire native population of the Americas, with the exception of the Eskimos came to be known from that day forward as Indians. The Spaniards frequently used in their official documents the term “naturales” when referring to this population. As it is, for those who came from the Old World, the Indians they encountered were in each locale *natives* or indigenous to the land. They were the descendants of immigrants who had arrived from Asia thousands of years before.

Indeed, by 1492 the history of the native population of America was more than 20,000 years old. During this long period it had spread from Alaska to southern Chile and Argentina. At the same time, this population had increased in numbers, had diversified by means of biological adaptation and natural selection, and had developed very different cultures. As a result of this process, thousands of years in the making, Europeans found upon their arrival to America a mosaic of races and languages and a complete gradation of levels of social and cultural organization, from the simplest groups of nomadic hunters and gatherers to the great urban states and empires.

A panoramic view of the native cultures of America on the eve of the arrival of the Spaniards and other Europeans demands the use of some organizational concepts. Otherwise the account of the different peoples and the description of their cultures would be endless and repetitive. Let us utilize, therefore, two conceptual instruments for our summary. The first of

these concepts—known to anthropologists as levels of socio-cultural complexity—will allow us to classify native societies in accordance with a series of objective criteria such as whether they were nomadic or sedentary, the type of basic economy, and the simplicity or complexity of their social and political organizations. Such features are sufficiently interdependent so that their sum total allows for the identification of each society with a particular level.

Culture area is the other concept which will simplify the ethnographic panorama of a territory as vast as the dual American continent. We understand by culture area a large geographical space inhabited by several groups or peoples who share cultural patterns. Populations that are neighbors geographically and have a basic culture in common constitute a culture area which will be separated from other areas by an imaginary line or cultural border. Generally the boundaries of a cultural area coincide with natural or geographical borders. In fact, the pre-industrial societies of the Old and New Worlds had little capacity to dominate and transform the natural environment. Their cultures were fundamentally a specific form of adaptation to nature and the aggregate of material and non material techniques for survival and the better exploitation of resources. When social organization was very developed and included institutions such as commerce and an army, the borders could be very far from the center of power and then the cultural area could include a variety of ecosystems.

From the Band to the State

Before drawing the cultural map of native America let us briefly define each of the levels of socio-cultural complexity which were amply represented at the time of the arrival of the first Europeans. Let us begin with the group as the simplest form of social organization and proceed all the way to the state which is the most complex.

Social life has its basis with the family, but even the simplest human society is an aggregate of several families. This small group constitutes a band which can be very small or may number some one hundred individuals. The basic problem of the band is survival which must be resolved by means of biological reproduction and the fulfilling of vital necessities—food, protection against the rigors of nature, against certain animals, against other bands. Technology is very simple and food is exclusively what is produced naturally. Generally a variable combination develops according to regions and the seasons of the year for hunting-fishing-gathering. Almost all members of the band assist in the task of finding foodstuffs, excluding very small children and, perhaps, the elderly. The lack of evolved techniques is supplemented by the exploitation of a wide territory well-known to the band, which moves incessantly across its surface. Nomadism is, consequently, another characteristic of the group. In this very simple society, differences among individuals are based on two biological principles: sex and age. There may be a certain weak structure of leadership which need not be permanent. The ties and principles that maintain the cohesion of the band and allow it to function as a social institution are those derived from kinship. The band is the level of social organization peculiar to what historians call paleolithic. As a phase of cultural evolution paleolithic does not correspond necessarily to a definite period in time. In America the paleolithic or Paleoindian period begins with the coming of the first immigrants from Asia. In 1492 large regions of America were still inhabited by populations organized in bands.

The tribe is a much larger cluster than the band. It can number several thousand individuals. Because the capacity to obtain food is the element that makes possible this concentration and integration, the tribal level supposes, generally speaking, the presence of agriculture and the domestication of animals. Agriculture implies a sedentary life, even though there are tribes with a shepherding or herding economy that have adopted as a way of life seasonal traveling with their animals.

The tribe, like the band, is an egalitarian society devoid of strata or classes. Its members distinguish themselves from each other almost exclusively by the dual biological status of sex and age. No true specialists are to be found here, or at least, there are no professionals who have learned their trades in an institutionalized manner and are dedicated to its practice exclusively. The exercise of political power or sorcery, healing and control of atmospheric agents are in the hands of certain individuals. Their rank does not necessarily set them apart from the other members of the tribe or exempt them from community obligations

such as agriculture or hunting. Nevertheless, the thousands of persons that may constitute the tribe must be governed by certain principles of organization beyond those that operate within the nuclear or extended family. Internal ways of dividing or organizing tribes are moieties, clans and fratias, or associations and clubs of specific persons such as adult males or warriors. Additionally there are systems of kinship which are not determined by blood relationships. These entail special obligations or taboos such as the prohibition of marriage between members of the same clan. Members of a tribe may share a language and a culture with other neighboring tribes, but their sense of identity might not coincide and they may even consider themselves enemies. Enormous extensions of America were inhabited by tribes in 1492, even though the density of population in areas such as the Amazon rain forest or the United States Southwest was very low.

The chiefdom is a level of greater complexity than the tribe with a greater number of individuals. Their size measured in absolute numbers, however, may vary greatly. The population of a chiefdom lives in several towns or villages that consider a certain place as the most important, by virtue of the fact that it functions as center or capital of the remaining places. Society is no longer egalitarian. Differences among the members are established by ranking, but not yet by true stratification. The concept that the population descends from a common ancestor is prevalent. The thousands that constitute a chiefdom, however, are grouped in different lineages. The superior lineage is headed by the chieftain. An individual's rank is determined by the degree of closeness to the ruler or his lineage. The chieftain resides in what may be called the capital; his house is different and may reach the category of a palace; around him there is a court of relatives, functionaries, servants, etc. The number of high-ranking persons and specialists devoted to non-productive tasks demands that the majority of the population produce more food than it needs in order to create a surplus.

Whereas a system of exchange or the principle of reciprocity operates in bands and tribes, chiefdoms require the principle of redistribution. The greater volume of productivity and the important role of specialization (the manufacturing or production by certain individuals, lineages or places of certain objects or resources) allow for the accumulation of resources. It is the chief's privilege to redistribute these resources, a privilege which in turn serves to both maintain and increase his prestige. This redistribution—whether of material or non-material resources—demands an organization, the seat of which is in the most important village or town. Here reside the supreme political,

economic and even religious authorities. The chieftain himself may perform high religious functions. He may even be endowed with sacred attributes. Additionally, he receives tribute proceeding from production surpluses, he enjoys reverential treatment and shows his power and generosity by redistributing to the members of his lineage and court and the population as a whole a portion of what he receives.

Chiefdoms were amply represented in the Americas at the time of the Discovery. The population of the Greater Antilles, and of most of Central America, the northern region of the Andes and the coast of Venezuela was organized in chiefdoms or *cacicatos*.

The state is the highest level of political organization in ancient societies. We refer to this level as "civilization" as we view it in all its complexity. From the economic perspective, civilization entails a significant production of surplus which can only be made possible by a developed agriculture, generally with control of waters for irrigation. It also implies an extensive and intensive commerce which makes available to certain populations or regions the foodstuffs and objects that do not exist there, be it because of natural impediments or because of the existence of a regional specialization. High productivity, commerce and markets are elements basic to the economy of civilizations. When commerce does not exist—as in the unusual case of the Inca empire—a system of redistribution which fulfills the essential functions of commerce is in operation.

In ascending progression which we detect in terms of complexity and power, beginning with the band as the simplest, the state is somewhat quantitatively and qualitatively different from all the former. The power of the state may reside in an individual who, in the case of the ancient states, is commonly known as "king." In the Americas the royal person was virtually deified, and the activities of the state were distributed among the members of a political class and executed by a government in which specialists and bureaucrats played a decisive role. Society in the state is tremendously unequal. There are two great subdivisions, those who govern and dominate and the people who are dominated. In pre-industrial states this dual division was reflected in other classifying categories such as urban population and rural population. Still in the urban centers there were many individuals classified as plebeians employed in tasks not related to the production of foodstuffs. The common people produce, pay tributes and render services. The governing group controls, directs and makes decisions. Rebellions against abuses are stifled or minimized by codes of laws and mechanisms of the cultural system. Among the latter we can mention the following: value systems or reli-

gious concepts and practices; objectives located beyond the state's own borders, such as building an empire or defense against an enemy power; institutions sufficiently powerful to bring about compliance with the laws by force, if necessary, or by threatening to use such force.

Division of the Americas into Culture Areas

Anthropologists speak of Nuclear America as the great expanse where the evolution of native cultures reached the level of civilization centuries before the arrival of the Europeans. Nuclear America comprised two super areas, one in the Northern Hemisphere known to us as Mesoamerica, and the other in the Southern Hemisphere identified as the Central Andes. Between these two super areas, serving in some respects as a communication bridge, was the Intermediate Area. Using present political boundaries as points of reference, Mesoamerica, in general terms, stretched from central Mexico to Guatemala and parts of other neighboring nations. The Intermediate Area, comprising the remainder of Central America and Colombia, began at the southern border of Mesoamerica. Included within the super area known as the Central Andes were the coast and the highlands of Perú and Bolivia. During the years of the great Inca expansion, the coast and highlands of Ecuador, northern Chile and northwestern Argentina were also integrated into this space.

There is no term or expression that can be utilized to encompass the totality of culture areas outside Nuclear America. We will identify them in each particular case in relation to the level of socio-cultural complexity they attained immediately before the European presence altered, sometimes drastically and rapidly, the natural course of their evolution.

We shall describe below the main culture areas of America at the end of the fifteenth century. The order of presentation is conventional. Because a relationship did not always exist among these areas, the point of departure is irrelevant. The Spaniards' rapid and extensive explorations followed no particular order either, they were, rather, simultaneous expeditions. Consequently, between 1492 and 1550, the Spanish presence and its effects upon native cultures were felt from northern Mexico to Chile and Argentina. Regardless, we shall begin this ethnographic tour in the Antilles, the American doorway for Columbus and the Spanish sailors. Subsequently we shall discuss the South American continent. For comprehensible reasons, special emphasis shall be placed on the regions presently

occupied by Mexico, the United States and, more specifically, the North American Southwest.

The Antilles and the Intermediate Area

The level of chiefdoms or *cacicatos* was amply represented in the Antilles and the Intermediate Area (southern Central America and the Andean region of Colombia). There were great differences within this level because, while in the Antilles chiefdoms were modest, in the Colombian highlands they were true kingdoms, bordering on achieving the level of states.

The Indians That Columbus Discovered

The tiny islands that trail from the coast of Venezuela to Puerto Rico are known as the Lesser Antilles. Puerto Rico, Hispaniola (shared today by the Dominican Republic and Haiti), Jamaica and Cuba are, because of their size, the Greater Antilles. The Archipelago of the Bahamas extends to the north. Admiral Christopher Columbus, who also navigated along the coasts of Central America and Venezuela, sailed through these bodies of water and along these islands.

The most ancient inhabitants of the Antilles were the Ciboneys, who in 1492 lived secluded in the easternmost tip of Cuba and nearby islands. Their culture was very rudimentary and a grouping of several families constituted their social organization. Their chief activity was the search for the day's food which consisted of what they obtained from the sea, the meat of reptiles and small mammals and the wild fruits they gathered. They availed themselves of the natural cavities in the rocks for shelter. Their only clothing, made from vegetable fibers, was girdles for the women and loin-cloths for the men.

The most important population of the Antilles, insofar as numbers, geographical distribution and a more complex social organization, was that of the Arawaks. They expanded from the coasts of Venezuela to the larger islands probably some 1,500 years before the arrival of Europeans. The Arawaks afforded the Europeans the first model or image of the people they would erroneously label Indians. The Arawaks lived in villages and devoted themselves to farming. They supplemented their diet by fishing, hunting and gathering wild fruit. Their social organization is classified with a term borrowed from their own language and applied by the Spaniards throughout most of the Americas. The Arawaks applied the word *cacique*—as understood and transcribed by the Spaniards—to their chief. The term came to be used generally in most of Spanish America when referring to chieftains or native leaders. The Arawaks were essentially peaceful, although towards

the end of the fifteenth century they were subjugating the humble Ciboneys.

The Antillean picture is rendered complete by the Caribs, their presence dating no further than two centuries prior to the Columbian discovery. These Indians were good sailors. Warring and pillaging were part of their cultural patterns. From their beach head in South America they progressively occupied the Lesser Antilles. The pattern of warfare among the Caribs was characterized by surprise raids, destruction of settlements, massacre of the men and abduction of the women and children. They practiced cannibalism—the terms cannibal and Carib being derived from the Arawak word *caniba*. In the southern half of Central America, there were many native groups which fell in the framework of the *cacicato* level. By virtue of their languages and other cultural traits, they constitute extensions of peoples from South America.

The most distinctive feature among these Central American groups was the goldsmiths employed in fashioning ceremonial items and ornaments. The quality of these objects was outstanding and unusual, inasmuch as metal craftsmanship was very limited among American natives.

The Chibchas of Colombia

The Andean region of Colombia in the sixteenth century offered the most developed structure of the *cacicato*. The Chibcha linguistic family predominates in Colombia, its land of origin, and extends far beyond its borders. The Chibcha-speaking population reaches as far as Ecuador to the south, lengthwise across Central America as far as Honduras, and in an easterly direction it enters the upper basin of several tributaries of the Orinoco and Amazon Rivers. Their linguistic kinship, however, found no counterpart in political unity. In fact, the various Chibcha dialects are not mutually comprehensible and these Indians, who, additionally, fit within different cultural levels, either ignored or warred against each other.

The Chibchas, in a restricted sense, gave themselves the name of "Muiscas," meaning "men." They lived in the highlands of Colombia in *cacicatos*. These could already fall within the category of small states since they embraced populations of about 300,000. These populations were organized into two large chiefdoms: one with its capital in Bogotá, and the other, to the north, had Tunja as its center. Rivalry between the two propagated continuous warfare.

The Chibchas practiced intensive farming resulting in a variety of produce: corn, potatoes, quinoa, sweet cassava, yams, beans, pumpkins, tomatoes, peppers, coca and tobacco. Commerce provided crops not

produced by the region. Gold was also a commercial product. There was a dominant class that lived in large buildings the Spaniards called *palacios*. Privileges enjoyed by a minority and visible signs of the division into social classes among the Chibchas were use of palanquin transportation, richness of ornaments and attributes, high quality burials, etc. Noblemen as well as priests endured a long and careful preparation which included years of seclusion in temples where fasting and sexual abstinence were common practices. Polygamy was normal, although it varied greatly depending on social class—from 100 wives in the case of members of the nobility or the priesthood to the two or three women a plebeian could afford.

As in other places in the New World, Spanish intervention proved decisive. It is possible that the rivalry between Bogotá and Tunja would have resolved itself with the emergence of an empire in the Peruvian tradition. It could have been, on the contrary, that permanent instability fostered by skirmishes among *cacicatos* and between the states that bound them together would have resulted in greater fragmentation. Gonzalo Ximénez de Quesada's act of conquest marked the end of an era in lands which, with the passing of time, would become the core of one of the great political-administrative units of the Spanish Empire: the Viceroyalty of Nueva Granada.

South America

As stated above, the Central Andes and Mesoamerica constitute Nuclear America, or the space where social evolution in pre-Hispanic times achieved the level of civilization. The cultures of the peoples who inhabited these two super areas became progressively more complex beginning with the second millennium before Christ and culminating in powerful militaristic states. The highlands of Bolivia and Perú and the Peruvian coast served as the stage for this process in South America. This area, known as the Central Andes, underwent flourishing periods on a regional basis, concluding with stages or *horizons* of political-religious unification. The rest of South America offered at the end of the fifteenth century a variety of situations which in no case surpassed the level of agricultural tribe.

The Inca Empire

Archaeologists have applied to the area of the Central Andes the concept of cultural horizon to identify a phenomenon consisting of the expansion of a culture by a political-religious people or power. This expansion is characteristically quick, violent, expansive

in geographical distribution but of brief duration. The last of these horizons, with the Incas as chief protagonists, was extraordinarily extensive in terms of space and extremely short in terms of time. The great Inca expansion took place from approximately 1470 until the Spanish conquest, in other words, in less than seventy years. From their capital of Cuzco, the Incas imposed their power on the entire area of the Central Andes.

The powerful sixteenth-century Incas had modest tribal origins they could explain only through mythical accounts. Four brothers—each associated with a sister-wife—led several tribes on a pilgrimage at some indefinite past time. They had all abandoned caves in search of the land that would serve them as their definitive dwelling place. The fact is that, beginning with the thirteenth century, the Incas engaged successfully in regional tribal warfare, founding a city which, in a few generations, became the capital or *navel* of the greatest territorial empire in the Americas: the Tawantinsuyo or empire of the four *suyos* or regions. The supreme chief was the Inca. He was perceived by the Spaniards as sovereign or emperor. The first Incas were mythical or legendary figures, but oral tradition and archaeological research made possible the identification of real persons who greatly furthered the expansion of this nation in the fifteenth century. At the end of the century the Inca empire stretched from southern Colombia to the north of Chile, and from the coast to the highlands of Perú and Bolivia, projecting into north-west Argentina.

The Inca was the offspring of the Sun and he was treated like a god. He ruled from Cuzco over the various peoples and kingdoms incorporated into the empire by war or the threat thereof. The Inca lived in his palace with his principal wife, several secondary wives and numerous children, one of which, in due time, would succeed him. The dominant group—formed exclusively by members of the original tribe of the Incas—performed the high functions of government, the army and the temple. The incorporation of the conquered peoples into the Inca empire implied acceptance of the absolute power of the Inca, the official religion of the state and the Quechua language. The chieftains or kings (*curacas*) maintained their local or regional power after being conquered, but always under the authority of Cuzco. It was usual practice for the sons of these rulers to be removed to Cuzco for the double purpose of serving as hostages or guarantors of their fathers' loyalty, and to be instructed and indoctrinated in the culture, language and religion of the victors. Another security measure applied to newly conquered regions, particularly to those very distant from the capital of the empire, was the massive settle-

1-3

Indians from Huancayo, Peru. (Courtesy of UNESCO).

ment in their territories of populations enjoying the trust of the state.

The extent of the state's intervention in society was so complete and profound that there was neither private property nor commerce. A wide hierarchical scale and the division of the population into units of decreasing size allowed for control of individuals and for control of production. At any given moment the state was acquainted with the demographic and economic conditions of each of the four parts of the empire, even to the *ayllu*, the basic Andean social unit. In the Inca empire there was neither currency nor tribute paid in specie. Every person—within certain limits of age and time—had to render service to the state. An individual's tribute was his handiwork or his personal service. The dominant group reserved for themselves the performance of functions related to government, the army and the religious cult. The rest of the population divided time and effort among three overriding obligations: to produce for the state, for the temple and for their own families. The tasks imposed by the administration were of a varied nature, such as farming to feed the nonproductive group and accumulate surpluses, shepherding enormous herds of llamas owned by the state, building roads and other public works, participating in continuous campaigns commanded by professional and high ranking military men, for the purpose of conquest or repression.

The state constituted the only system for distributing and furnishing products to the different regions. The

exception was the small-volume exchange or barter of certain items at the local level. Surpluses, be they of foodstuffs, clothing or other objects, were stored in state warehouses (*tambos*). These accumulated surpluses allowed the state to supply its large army so that in every region they had access to whatever was necessary. Additionally, these surpluses served to supply regions suffering from the effects of bad harvests or other calamities. The state owned everything and levied tributes of manual labor and personal services rendered to the dominant group. In exchange, the state attempted to satisfy all the needs of the common people—chiefly a rural folk—and to remedy all emergencies. The only compensation the state could not provide was the freedom of the individual and the family, because even marriage was regulated from above.

The Inca empire benefited from the important achievements of the ancient Andean civilization. The level of farming was so extraordinary that it was perhaps unrivaled by the world's remaining pre-industrial civilizations. A natural environment as harsh as that of the plateau and the many deserts along the sea coast stimulated rather than hindered the development of agriculture. Aside from corn and other foodstuffs of wide distribution in the Americas, the potato is the Andean region's great contribution to the feeding of humanity. Terrace farming or *andenes* made possible the utilization of steep mountain sides. Domestication of the llama and the alpaca provided nourishment, wool and transportation. The difficult Andean geographical conditions and the enormous distances within the empire were overcome by the construction of amazing roads which alternated paths, suspension bridges and steps carved in rock. *Chasquis* or messengers committed to memory and transmitted orally instructions and news. This gave the Inca two-way communication with the most distant regions of his empire. Urban development was also remarkable. Cuzco was a great city with solid buildings and an abundance of palaces and temples. The constant threat of war demanded the construction of defensive walls and even of fortress cities such as Sacsahuaman, near Cuzco, a city surrounded by three tiers of walls. Although the Inca period was not particularly creative—militarization and conquest being its dominant traits—Andean artistic traditions were expressed in excellent works of gold, plentiful polychrome ceramic, the production of beautiful wooden vases (*keros*) and the confection of handsome textiles, particularly those in which the fine wool of the vicuña was utilized.

An empire with an agriculturally based economy demanded an astronomical calendar. For the computation of time the Incas divided the year in months

or *quillas* and in two halves separated by the summer solstice (December 21) and its winter counterpart (June 21). The army, and the civil population by extension, were organized on a decimal basis. This allowed at any given moment for an easy accounting, the assigning of work and the distribution of products. It is surprising that a civilization as rich and a society as complex as the Andean did not develop a system of writing. The Andean solution was the *quipu*, a system of cords with different-colored knots placed at specific distances one from the other. The *quipu*, when handled by specialists, served to record numerical values and as a mnemonic instrument to preserve and transmit oral texts.

Historical accounts of the Inca began around the thirteenth century. Their actual expansion beyond the region of Cuzco began and ended with the thundering campaigns of two rulers who reigned during the last four decades of the fifteenth century. Pachacuti Inca and his son Topa Inca Yupanqui were the builders of one of the greatest empires in history. The short duration of the Inca empire was the consequence of the unexpected arrival of the Spaniards, who, between 1532 and 1534, and commanded by Francisco Pizarro, swiftly defeated and sundered the powerful native state. Not to be overlooked, however, are internal factors, independent of the Spanish presence, which could have also led to the rapid disintegration of the Inca empire. Stagnation or disintegration might have occurred nonetheless, fulfilling either way the Andean constant of the short duration of its periods of political and cultural unification.

On the one hand, the Inca conquests had taken them so far that it was extremely difficult, if not impossible, to administer the empire from a single capital or center of power. Political borders exceeded the boundaries of the ecological systems that the Incas could control, namely, the plateau and the coast. Meanwhile the mountains or high eastern tropical forests offered many difficulties both for their technology to overcome and for military control. Several recently conquered states and a numerous rural population weakly integrated offered a difficult challenge to the capability for organization and control by the Incas. The official language of the state was Quechua which had become, to a certain extent, a lingua franca. Within the borders of the empire, however, there were many other languages, some as important as Aymara. The Incas imposed upon all the conquered people their official religion, but regional cults and religions were impossible to suppress, especially among rural populations. The Inca imperial mantle was very broad but not very closely knit. This mantle lightly covered a complex cultural universe which shared the millenary legacy of

Andean civilization. This universe, however, had yet to relinquish regional peculiarities which geographical diversity and the passing of time had nourished for centuries. We must not forget that "regionalism" is a typically Andean phenomenon. The short-lived Inca empire was unable to bring about the union it attempted to achieve under the aegis of Cuzco.

Indians of the South American Rain Forests

An enormous territory extends east of the Andes mountain range. This expanse of land is dominated by two fluvial systems that empty into the Atlantic Ocean: the Amazon and the Orinoco Rivers. Because the land is so flat and the rains so abundant, both temporary and permanent currents of water connect the two rivers. The damp tropical jungle is so dense that transportation is possible only along the rivers which form a complex network of byways. Large portions of several countries border on this huge basin—northern Bolivia, eastern Perú and Ecuador, southwest Colombia, southern Venezuela and the Guyanas. The major part of this tropical world, however, belongs to Brazil. In contrast with the exuberant vegetation, the fauna is not too abundant. The largest animals are monkeys, jaguars and tapirs. Various levels of social organization have been represented in this area from ancient times: from the simplest bands of hunters and gatherers to the *cacicatos* in some isolated areas.

The usual economy and social organization in the latter part of the pre-Columbian period, and that which best defines the entire area, was the agricultural tribe. In the past few centuries, the marginal condition of the jungle tribes, the scarcity of population and the distances that separate the groups have contributed to low socio-cultural levels. Nevertheless, the area population lived according to their own dynamics before and after 1492. The three great linguistic families are Tupi-Guarani, Arawak and Carib. The last two were already mentioned in discussing the people of the Antilles, where they had arrived as intruders, expanding at the expense of other people at different periods of time. As far as the Tupi-Guaranis are concerned, their migrations, even recent ones, are known as messianic phenomena. All of this has brought about the extensive dispersion and intermingling of groups that have created a complex linguistic map of the South American jungle. However, the basic unit represented by the tribes that live in different agricultural villages remains intact. A few centuries before the beginning of our era, agriculture already existed in the Amazon jungle. It probably originated in the Andean region, although farming had to be adapted to the climatic conditions of the tropical jungle and the properties of

its soil. Its main crops are sweet and bitter cassava in addition to corn, sweet potatoes, yams, beans, cotton, etc. Fish and river turtles have always been a good dietary supplement. Slash-and-burn is the usual technique in this area for clearing arable land in the midst of the jungle.

The settlements of these farming tribes are generally small. One particular type of village consists of a single great house in which live several families constituting a patrilineal lineage: an elderly man with his male offspring, daughters-in-law, the offspring of his sons and their wives. In other cases the village is made up of several houses, the whole protected from enemy attacks by a palisade. The political organization is very simple. In some regions the eldest of the familial group assumes authority; in others, a male, singled out for some particular reason, is the chieftain. The case of the shaman, who, aside from his functions as healer, assumed other more specifically religious and political duties, was frequent. In pre-Columbian times the purpose of war was neither expansionist nor economical, as would indicate the levying of tributes and the acquisition of slaves. Its main reasons were revenge and the apprehension of captives for cannibalistic practices or as human trophies.

Francisco de Orellana's expedition discovered the Amazon River in present-day Ecuador. This expedition traveled from December, 1541, to August, 1542, down the Amazon to its mouth in the Atlantic Ocean. Friar Gaspar de Carvajal, a member of the expedition, offered the first description of the great river, the axis of the farming area of the South American tropical forest. Few in numbers and scattered throughout the enormous Amazon-Orinoco area, the descendants of these Indians live today within the framework of a culture that has developed little in the past five centuries. Unfortunately, their culture, as well as their lives, are currently seriously threatened by external agents and interests.

Indians of Southern South America

Beyond the borders of Andean civilization, and also beyond the area of the tropical farmers, there once lived nomadic and semi-nomadic groups that have either disappeared or been transformed. At least 5,000 years ago the lands comprised by the southern tip of Chile, the islands below and the neighboring Tierra del Fuego were already inhabited. Man had completed the incredible journey which, in the course of millennia, had carried him from Alaska to the ends of the American lands, some 15,000 kilometers along a straight line. Frigid temperatures, abundant rainfall, treacherous currents, winds and storms were the nat-

ural elements that surrounded this population. Three different linguistic families, all termed Fuegian, lived on this tip of land where South America ends. These Indians were excellent fishermen. They built and handled with unusual skill boats made out of beech bark sewn together with whale bristles. The women did the rowing while the men on the prow fished with darts or harpoons. Seal, dolphin and whale were among their prey. On land they hunted with bows and arrows, darts, clubs and slings. They differed greatly from the Eskimos—inhabitants of the opposite extreme of the American Hemisphere—in that the attire of the Fuegians was scant and their dwellings were but huts covered with branches or seal skins. Their protection against the cold weather was the fires which they kept permanently lit in their crafts as well as on land. These Indians were, until their complete extinction during this century, the representatives of one of the simplest cultural levels in native America.



The Pampas cover the length and breadth of the Argentine and Uruguayan plains from the frontiers of Tierra del Fuego to the borders of the Gran Chaco. The Onas and the Tehuelche and Puelche tribes lived south of the Pampas. The common trait of these groups was hunting the guanaco—one of the American members of the camel family—the ñandú and smaller animals. Techniques utilized to obtain their prey were the use of bow and arrows, decoys, the imitation of animal sounds and animal-like disguises. Because meat was their staple diet by far, they developed ways of drying and smoking to preserve it. Their social organization was at the level of groups of patrilineal membership with polygamy as a practice. The household gear of the Pampas Indians, as is common for nomadic hunters, was very limited. Housing, specifically among the southernmost Onas, might be nothing more than a few skins sewn together for protection against the wind. The late contact of the Spaniards with these Indians, the vast expanses, the disappearance of groups—either through physical extinction or interbreeding with Creoles or other Indians—and, especially, the introduction of the horse, render ethnological precision difficult. It would be necessary to constantly distinguish between pre-Hispanic conditions and adaptations which had already modified aboriginal culture in colonial times. The same situation took place in the North American Plains when the horse transformed many aspects of the native culture before the white man dominated or fully settled the territory.



The southern frontier of the civilization of the Central Andes—in relation to the territories belonging to present-day Chile—was inhabited by tribes that can be generally classified as farmers and shepherds. Their closeness to the Central Andes allowed them to receive some traits of the Central Andean civilization, but the desert that separated the two areas and the scarcity of population did not enable the incorporation of institutions proper to this civilization, not even in the days of the powerful Inca empire. The Atacamenos lived in northern Chile, extending beyond the Andes into northwest Argentina. In the central region of Chile, south of the border of the Diaguitas, began the land of the Araucanians.

The Araucanians were undergoing a period of expansion in the sixteenth century. They had also gone beyond the Andes and entered Argentina. The generic name for the Araucanian tribes originates in the “País de Arauco.” The term Mapuche is also utilized to designate the entire Araucanian family. The abundance of wild vegetable resources did not stimulate the development of agriculture among these Indians. The piñón, the fruit of the araucaria pine, as well as tubers and grasses, were very important to their economy. The Araucanians knew how to cultivate corn, beans and potatoes. They hunted deer, guanacos and birds, and raised llamas. The Araucanians, generally speaking, developed no communal life. Instead, they lived scattered in hamlets near their fields. In spite of the distances that separated them from north to south, the linguistic and cultural unity among all Araucanians was enormous. Before the introduction by the Spaniards of the horse and plow, they were classified as not very advanced farmers and shepherds, thus representing a marginal Andean population. The resistance of the Araucanians to Spanish domination was so intense and prolonged that it belongs to epic literature.

Indians of Mexico and Guatemala

Mesoamerica is the location of another great native civilization, product of the millenary contribution of many peoples and cultures which shared a number of material and intellectual traits. As in all cases in the Old and the New World, the bases of civilization in Mesoamerica were agriculture and the corresponding sedentary life, with the establishment of the first villages. Certain religious ideas emerged parallel to these achievements—a peculiar interpretation of the cosmos, an iconography to represent the gods, signs and glyphs to express concepts, a calendar system to keep track of time. These basic elements appeared during the second millennium before Christ, and the earliest

major contribution to this civilization is attributed to the Olmecs of the Mexican gulf coast.

In spite of the great ecological differences between lowlands and highlands and enormous distances, archaeology has found evidence of the persistence of a substratum, common to all the peoples of Mesoamerica in the course of three millennia, extending from central Mexico to Guatemala and Honduras, and from the Gulf coast to the Pacific. These basic affinities were compatible with regional diversity. Mesoamerica was a mosaic of languages and peoples who, nevertheless, all belonged to the same cultural universe. Historical evolution, additionally, brought about great transformations, setting off phases, that can be perceived from our distant vantage point. There was a Formative period of about 2,000 years; a Classic period which occupied the first millennium of our era; and a Postclassic period, characterized by the rapid formation of powerful militaristic states, which ended with the arrival of the Spaniards.

The Maya

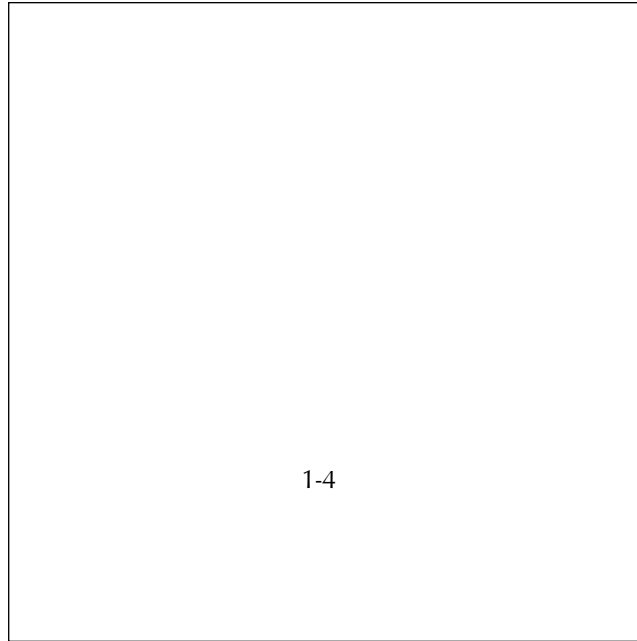
Within the history of Mesoamerican civilization, Maya culture presents the greatest continuity and the most defined contours. The Mayas occupied—and millions of them still inhabit—the southeast of Mesoamerica, namely, the Mexican state of Chiapas, the Yucatán peninsula, present-day Guatemala and the western half of Honduras. To describe Maya culture is to describe Mesoamerican civilization in general terms, since the Maya shared all its basic traits and lifted them to the highest degree of excellence.

The Maya practiced intensive slash-and-burn agriculture in the midst of the tropical rain forest and in the highlands. Their main crops were corn, squash and beans, the staple diet of so many American peoples. The calendar of 360 days plus five additional idle days was the most elaborate in native America, and as perfect, or more so, than the contemporary European calendar. The combination of this astronomic calendar with another 360-day ritual calendar allowed for very complex computations and interpretations which regulated economic activity, the life cycle of individuals and the liturgy and relationships with the gods. The perfection of the Maya astronomical calendar was based on an amazing knowledge of the stars, a result of an intelligent and patient observation of the skies. Maya priests were capable of establishing probable dates for solar and lunar eclipses. The Mesoamerican number system, based on twenty—in which the concept of zero had been introduced—enabled astronomical calculations in a simpler and more precise manner than the Roman notation utilizing letters.

The Maya skillfully applied all the elements common to Mesoamerican art. The architecture of their ceremonial centers still awakens the admiration of those who visit their ruins in the jungles of Guatemala or in Yucatán. Temples were placed on pyramids built around rectangular plazas. The facades of the temples and of the palaces of the rulers were adorned with sculptures and bas reliefs. Great monolithic stele erected on the ground recorded events with precise dates and constituted, at the same time, true works of art. The Maya perfected the Mesoamerican hieroglyphic system and in their codices, or folding-screen books, they wrote about religious, political and astronomical matters. The period of maximum cultural splendor occupies the middle centuries of the first millennium of our era. The best manifestations among the Maya of this era, the Classical period for most of Mesoamerica, are found in the lowlands of the Mexican state of Tabasco, the southern part of the state of Campeche, northern Guatemala (Department of Peten), Belize and western Honduras. The ceremonial centers in this central Maya region were the seat of political, religious, economic and intellectual power. The common people furnished the labor for building and farming which sustained the ruling class, their servants and countless artisans.

A combination of natural and social factors produced almost suddenly a great crisis in the Maya world. The imbalance between production and consumption, and most probably, abuses on the part of the nobles by their demands for labor and tribute in specie, destroyed the harmonious relationship which existed for centuries between the ruling minority and the farmers. An enormous gap developed suddenly between the ceremonial center and the humble farmers. The exact causes of this crisis during the Classic period are not totally clear, but we know their consequences well. In a few years, towards the end of the ninth century, the magnificent ceremonial centers were abandoned, to remain hidden and ignored almost to the present day. In the centuries immediately prior to the arrival of the Spaniards, a sort of renaissance took place in the Maya world of the Guatemalan highlands and in the northern area of the Yucatán peninsula. But general circumstances had changed in Mesoamerica and, during those late centuries (Postclassic period), the basic orientation of the civilization was militaristic and commercial. Power was concentrated chiefly in central Mexico. From here the Maya were subjected to new tendencies brought to their region by military groups which became the new elite of the city states.

What the Spaniards found in the Maya area was as follows: a central jungle region virtually uninhabited, with ceremonial centers that had fallen into ruin centuries before; a northern region (the Yucatán peninsula)



1-4

During the Classical Period the Maya Indians achieved a level of quality in their arts that can be compared with the most refined art works of the world. Above is a relief in stone from Palenque, Mexico.

where the decadence of the great cities of the Postclassic period (Chichen Itza, Uxmal, Mayapan) was a long-standing reality; a southern region (the highlands of Guatemala) where several kingdoms were warring ferociously against one another for hegemony. Yucatán was conquered by Francisco Montejo, and Spanish domination was consolidated with the founding of Merida in 1528. Pedro de Alvarado, Hernán Cortés' lieutenant, conquered the Guatemalan highlands after defeating the Quiches and other Indian kingdoms. Before 1550 the Spaniards dominated an area that had achieved the highest level of intellectual life and the arts. Its decadence, however, had occurred centuries before. The revival brought about during the Postclassic period was superficial, ephemeral and dominated by influences originating in central Mexico. The Maya Indians demonstrated throughout their history their capacity for assimilating foreign influences and still maintain, in spite of invasions and other pressures, their basic cultural system. Today millions of Mayans live in Guatemala, Chiapas and the Yucatán peninsula. They stand in counterpoint to the "ladinos," most of whom, after all, are mestizo.

Time of Crisis

Present-day Mexico City occupies a large portion of a valley or basin which at one time encompassed a sys-

1-5

The daily and weekly markets continue to be an important part of the economy and social life of Indians. (Pictured above is a market in Guatemala.)

tem of interconnected lakes. The abundance of water made intensive farming possible and attracted small fauna which supplemented the diet of the extensive population. Villages and even ceremonial centers of some importance were built around the lakes before the Christian era. Teotihuacan, a ceremonial center that became the seat of spiritual and economic power for Mesoamerica in the Classic period, was established some fifty kilometers to the northeast of modern Mexico City. The center, with its monumental pyramids of the Sun and the Moon, continues to this day to impress visitors. Teotihuacan, in the center of Mexico; Monte Albán in Oaxaca, the capital of the Zapotecs; El Tajin, on the Gulf coast; Tikal, in the jungle of Guatemala, and many other minor centers were in classical times—the first millennium of our era—the foci or knots of an amazing network within which the religious, intellectual, economic and artistic activities of Mesoamerican civilization bustled.

Rivalry and war were aspects of these societies during the Classic period, but religious fervor, the moral authority of their priestly leaders, the splendor manifested by the arts went beyond mere material interests or plans for political expansion. Although there were wars, ideas and beliefs seemingly superseded military power. The prosperity of this civilization, however, began to awaken the interest of marginal populations, living beyond the valley of Mexico on the northern frontier. Some of these border groups were somewhat acculturated already; others were true nomadic

hunters whose main preoccupation was to survive in arid lands that were poor in resources. A worsening of the climate must have created a very difficult situation for the border farmers. They felt additionally threatened by the incursions of nomads known as *Chichimecas*, a term equivalent to what the ancient Greeks understood as “barbarians.” The situation became so serious that by the year 700 the great ceremonial center of Teotihuacan was burnt and its stone monuments partially destroyed. Most of the population sought refuge in other cities. The great commotion was felt throughout Mexico, reaching in some instances the distant Maya region in the Guatemalan jungle. Thus began a new period in the history of Mesoamerica. Its keynote was the intrusion of people who came from the north, violently bringing the Valley of Mexico under its power while assimilating the basic elements of the existing civilization. These people placed their war gods in a prominent place among the complex Mesoamerican pantheon. Outstanding among the intruders were the Toltecs, who founded the city of Tula and carried their influence to the Maya cities of northern Yucatán; the Chichimecas, in the strict sense of the term; and, finally, the Aztecs.

Aztecs or Mexicas

Unusual coincidences exist between the short histories and the final conquest by the Spaniards of the Incas and the Aztecs. Mythical Aztec accounts speak also, as in the case of the Incas, of their abandoning some caves in a region to the west or northwest of the Valley of Mexico. This place was known as Aztlán, a name that today has again achieved important resonance among the Chicanos. What appears as a fact is that the *Mexicas* or followers of the god Mexi, also known as Huitzilopochtli, were subjugated by peoples identified as Toltecs. The Mexicas left Aztlán searching for freedom and an appropriate area to settle. The Mexicas knew agriculture. During their long march, however, they lived mainly from hunting. They were skilled in the handling of bows and arrows, were warlike and able to withstand adversities. During this sort of pilgrimage, they were organized into seven clans or *calpullis*, each having emerged from one of seven caves according to tradition. The image of their god Huitzilopochtli, born on the shoulders of four priests, guided their migrations. These Mexicas, also known as Aztecs because of their place of origin, found when they arrived in the Valley of Mexico that existing conditions were no match for their expectations. Cultivable land and other resources were already scarce for the large population that lived in the Valley. Strong tensions existed among the cities rivaling for the power in

the region. The Aztecs were considered barbarians or intruders and were not welcome anywhere because of their reputation. They were known as warlike men who sacrificed their captives to satisfy their god and claimed the women of those they attacked as booty.

The painful peregrination of the Aztecs through the Valley of Mexico ended in 1325 when they managed to settle uninhabited islands on Lake Texcoco. These poor islands, never before occupied, were supposedly chosen by the priests as fulfillment of the will of their gods. The sign for the selection of the promised land was the vision of an eagle, perched on a nopal cactus with a serpent in its beak. This mythical account explained the events that brought into being prosaic reality. One of the Aztec groups, led by chief Tenoch, founded the city of Tenochtitlan around 1345. This settlement, so humble in its beginnings, was to become one of the most important cities of native America. A few years later, a splinter group from these Aztecs founded the city of Tlatelolco on a nearby island. With the passing of time, this settlement would become incorporated into Tenochtitlan.

The history of the Aztecs for the remainder of the fourteenth century and part of the fifteenth is one of turmoil. As a mercenary army or as clients of important cities in the Valley, they participated in the continuous fights for hegemony in central Mexico. With ability, daring and some treachery, they became increasingly stronger and more respected. The old nomadic barbarians were gradually assimilated into Mesoamerican civilization, and their war god—the fearful Huitzilopochtli—became increasingly more demanding in that scenario of wars among neighbors. This was, after all, the tone of late Postclassic times. War was at the forefront of that society with the blood of captives offered to gods as nourishment and the levying of tribute upon the vanquished. The Aztecs, additionally, initiated long-distance commerce to ensure both the quality and variety of resources and manufactured goods required by a powerful and increasingly demanding minority.

During the major part of the fifteenth century, three Aztec kings successively availed themselves of the intelligence and political ability of Tlacaélel, one of the greatest figures in the entire history of native America. Tlacaélel functioned during one-half a century as *Cihuacoatl* (literally, snake woman). He had the duties of prime minister and closely collaborated with the monarch, whose substitute he became when the latter departed on a war campaign. The Aztecs owe Tlacaélel the creation of a state and an empire with a vision both mystical and warlike which transformed them into a chosen nation with a mission to fulfill. In the final years of the fifteenth century, the

Aztecs were a real power within a Triple Alliance of city-states whose power spanned from the Gulf coast to the Pacific with enclaves and areas of influence throughout southeastern Mexico down to the Maya region.

The constant need of captives for ritual sacrifices created a strange political situation. On the one hand, the Aztecs ruled far away kingdoms or engaged in peaceful trade with them. With neighboring kingdoms such as nearby Tlaxcala, on the other hand, they maintained a constant state of war. This made possible and justified the “War of Flowers,” a ritual war that guaranteed the Aztecs a continuous supply of captives. The latter died after the priests of Huitzilopochtli cut open their chest and pulled out their still-beating heart. This human blood was the divine nourishment that maintained the equilibrium among opposing forces, both benevolent and malevolent. The day this equilibrium was lost, the Universe would be destroyed again. The Aztecs and their Mesoamerican contemporaries believed the Universe had been destroyed four times previously and that they were now living in the Fifth Sun or era. This particular cosmogony was the basis for a complex system of behavior and institutions by virtue of which trade, territorial expansion and, in conclusion, the destiny of a chosen people were interrelated and reinforced one another.

Aztec society progressed in a brief period from a tribal organization to a complex and strongly hierarchical structure. The primitive division into *calpullis*, or groups of individuals bonded by a common mythical origin, continued into the sixteenth century. Each *calpulli* had a patron god who was worshiped in his own temple. Besides farming, the members of each *calpulli*, in most cases, shared a common profession, endowing this basic social unit with characteristics resembling a guild. Endogamy, the rule for the *calpulli*, maintained and reinforced the identity of the group. Each family was entitled to a piece of the *calpulli*'s land. They were obligated to till it or, otherwise, lose their rights over it. The chief of the *calpulli* and a council of elders regulated the duties of the group. Additionally they communicated with higher authorities who imposed tribute in specie or in public works or services, including the army. The increasing population of the city of Mexico-Tenochtitlan brought twenty *calpullis* into being by the sixteenth century. Because they occupied certain areas of the city, had their own temples and were devoted to specific occupations such as the production of ceramics, fishing, trade and others, the Spaniards were under the impression that they constituted “barrios,” the term they used to translate this ancient and basic form of social organization.

1-6

The myth of the Aztec founding of Tenochtitlan is illustrated above.

But the large Aztec population at the beginning of the sixteenth century was essentially divided into two great groups: noblemen and plebeians. Members of the nobility allotted to themselves the functions of governing and all positions involving responsibility, prestige and material benefit. All political and military chiefs, priests and calendar specialists, judges, administrators of the enormous and varied resources derived from war booty and the tributes of all vassal nations belonged to the nobility. Plebeians could achieve social advancement as reward for personal courage in war or for outstanding capacity in the performance of services. In this manner, and in exceptional cases, some individuals could rise from doing agricultural work in the *calpulli* to the palace, constituting an intermediate echelon between the nobility and the common people from whom they had emerged. The *pochtecas*, or rich merchants who engaged in long-distance commerce, also belonged to this class. They performed the dual mission of furnishing the powerful ruling class with valuable products from other regions and of gathering information about conditions existing in distant provinces which revealed danger of rebellion or imminent attack. The *pochtecas* were both merchants and spies and their growing economic power rendered them potentially dangerous to a state unwilling to remove the barriers between the privileged nobility and the condition of subjection of the common people.

There were two additional groups in Aztec society. The first were the landless *mayerques* who had to work

as farm workers for the dominant group. The second were the slaves, who, although lacking in freedom, had little in common with the slaves in the Old World. With the exception of the slave or war captive who was normally sacrificed, an Aztec was reduced to this status by not paying debts or by having committed certain crimes. A slave served in the house of his master, could devote part of his time to his own work, and with his savings he could buy his freedom some day. Slavery among the Aztecs was a personal and individual matter so that the family of a slave was free.

At the top of this social organization was the *tlatoani* or king. Each city state in the Valley of Mexico had its *tlatoani*, but the most powerful was the *Huei Tlatoani* of the city of Mexico-Tenochtitlan. Aside from political, military and economic power, he was endowed with religious power. More than a high priest, he was almost a god, was carried in a litter, could not step directly on the ground, be looked directly in the eyes or eat before anyone. The kings or *tlatoanis* of Mexico-Tenochtitlan manifested varying degrees of capabilities. Three of these *tlatoanis*, as mentioned above, had the fortune of availing themselves of the services of the great *Tlacaelel*. One of them, *Ahuitzotl* (1484-1502) showed considerable ability in warfare. *Tizoc*, his predecessor, on the contrary, had failed in his pursuit of an empire, which became a preordained demand for subsequent rulers. The reign of *Moctezuma Xocoyotzin* (or the Younger, to distinguish him from an ancestor of the same name) began in 1502. The political, military and economic power of

the Aztecs at that time was at its highest, seemingly having reached the limit of the possibilities that Mesoamerican natural environment and technology would allow. Let us recall that this civilization had neither a tool as basic as the wheel nor metals such as bronze or iron. This was rather for Moctezuma the time to consolidate the empire and give cohesion to the entire body of philosophy and doctrine that the Aztecs had inherited from the rich and complex Mesoamerican civilization.

Moctezuma ascended the throne of Mexico-Tenochtitlan in those critical years when the Spaniards were already sailing the Caribbean Sea. His was a strange personality, more interested in theories and philosophical and religious lucubrations than in the practical application of measures demanded by such a vast empire. Moctezuma, as a matter of fact, was more devoted to Quetzalcoatl (Feathered Serpent), the benevolent and civilizing god, than to Huitzilopochtli, god of war. Moctezuma paid much attention to the prophecies that spoke of Quetzalcoatl's return. According to legendary accounts, this personage fell into disgrace and departed for the Gulf coast. In one version he set himself on fire on the sandy beach and became the Morning Star. Another version said that he had sailed away on a raft, promising to return someday. Quetzalcoatl was depicted as a man with white skin and a beard. Certain natural phenomena that took place in Mexico in those years, brought Moctezuma to the conclusion that they were omens of the god's return. The appearance of a Spanish ship on

the horizon, its sails unfurled ("the mountain that moved"), and the presence of white, bearded men convinced Moctezuma that the moment had arrived. His reverential fear before the strange individuals that landed on the Mexican coast in 1518 was crucial to the events that swiftly followed that moment and to the final outcome of the tragedy.

After some initial combats between Spaniards and Aztecs, Moctezuma in his palace became a prisoner of Hernán Cortés. At the same time, the Spaniards were in a situation of virtual siege. In the course of this struggle, Moctezuma appeared before his people from a terrace, and a stone, of the many that were cast at him from below, mortally wounded him. Cortés' ability to deal with Aztecs and Spanish rivals, the daring of his men both in urban fighting and out in the open field and the death of the Aztec sovereign, so powerful and revered by his people, were the main causes that brought to an almost sudden end the period of Aztec domination over most of Mexico. The ending was as painful and swift as the rising of this extraordinary people that a few generations before were no more than a tribe, considered barbarian by the civilized peoples who inhabited from ancient times the Valley of Mexico.

It is not easy to reduce Aztec history, society and culture to a few pages. Because we are forced to do a brief synthesis, we draw attention to the dangers implicit in simplification and we advise the reader to avail himself of a variety of monographic works on the Aztecs if he wishes to obtain a vision that is neither

partial nor sectarian, which neither glorifies nor takes a negative point of view. Care must be taken to prevent value judgments, especially when they emerge from ethnocentric perspectives removed from the contexts of time and place.

The great enterprise of the Aztec people, although bloodied by the wars of conquest and branded by the submission and tribute imposed upon the vanquished nations, is worthy of admiration for many reasons. The Aztecs, from their capital, in their last years were the great unifying force of Mesoamerican civilization, as the Olmecs, the inhabitants of Teotihuacan, and the Toltecs of Tula were centuries before. The cultivation of the *chinampa*, floating gardens, was practiced to perfection by the Aztecs. The intelligent management of the soil, the water and certain vegetable species resulted in very high yields. The chinampa constituted the victory of agriculture over nature. The trading of products and the exchange of ideas promoted by the Aztecs were factors which lead to the enrichment of that millenary civilization.

Aztec society, in spite of the great gap that existed between noblemen and plebeians and the bloody human sacrifices, possessed and fostered a value system reflected in the normal behavior of all its members. Education took place in schools for plebeian males while the formation of the ruling class was conducted under rigorous discipline in the *calmecac*. Judicial authorities looked after the observance of the codes of laws and regulations, as much in the marketplace, where fraud was persecuted, as in the midst of the *calpulli* and the family. The dignity of work was recognized and a farmer who did not farm his plot for two successive years without a serious enough reason lost it to those who needed land. The love between parents and children was extolled even in poetry. Vices such as idleness, drunkenness or crimes such as adultery, abortion and treason were condemned and punished. The death penalty was a normal punishment applied to both nobleman and plebeian.

Commerce and war did not prevent the flourishing of plastic arts. Mexico-Tenochtitlan became a city of more than 200,000 people with a functional design and a ceremonial center that awakened the admiration of Hernán Cortés and his troops. Some of the most beautiful European cities served the Spaniards as points of reference and by comparison the great Mexico-Tenochtitlan, in many aspects, came out the winner. Although this city was indisputably the political capital of Mexico, adjacent Tlatelolco was the pre-eminent commercial city. In the neighboring city of Texcoco, king Netzahualcoyotl, with inspiration and enthusiasm, created a true court of poets and artists which constituted a worthy counterpart to the city states of Renaissance Italy.

Zapotecs and Mixtecs of Oaxaca

During the Classic period, the Zapotecs developed one of the most brilliant Mesoamerican cultures in the central valleys of the modern state of Oaxaca. In the Postclassic period another nation dominated the Oaxaca area. These were the Mixtecs who expanded at the expense of the Zapotecs, creating important chiefdoms or kingdoms. The Mixtecs, arriving at Oaxaca from Central America, in fact fused aspects of Zapotec culture into their own and put back into use some of the old Zapotec settlements. Such was the case of Monte Albán where Mixtec leaders were buried in old Classical period tombs.

Indications that Mixtec culture is Postclassic are the striving for perfection rather than creativity in techniques and craftsmanship, the importance of trade and war, and, to some extent, the secularization of social life, where there was greater concern for glorifying and memorializing their rulers than for the liturgy and priestly activities. The Mixtecs apparently introduced the use of metals to Mesoamerica. Their goldsmiths created works of extraordinary quality, achieved by the techniques of hammering, lost wax and soldering. Mixtec ceramics and codices are also extraordinary examples of Mesoamerican civilization.

For the Aztecs, the Mixtecs on their southeast border represented an obstacle akin to the Tarascans on the west. The Mixtecs were defeated by the Aztecs in the northwest region, but neither Zapotecs nor Mixtecs were ever completely dominated by them.

Tarascans of Michoacán

Within the area labeled Western Mexico by the archaeologists, there were peoples of varied cultural development. Outstanding among them at the end of the Postclassic period were the Tarascans, who from their capital of Tzintzuntzan, next to lake Patzcuaro, in the present state of Michoacán, created a powerful state that resisted the Aztec onslaught. In addition to Michoacán, the Tarascans inhabited parts of Guanajuato, Guerrero and Jalisco. Aside from the agriculture characteristic to the Mesoamerican area, supplemented by hunting and gathering, the Tarascans efficiently exploited the fishing of the lake. They were superior to many other Mesoamerican peoples in metal work, and their copper tools were especially useful for farming and war. The Tarascans were organized in three great kingdoms, held together by a military alliance which came to be dominated by the king of Tzintzuntzan. Each kingdom was divided into four smaller units, each ruled by a chief to whom other groups were subservient. The king performed impor-

tant religious functions without any hindrance from the intensive war activity.

The Tarascans and Aztecs clashed in their respective campaigns of expansion. The Aztecs were worried by the increasing power of their Tarascan neighbors. They also coveted some of the important natural resources to be found in the lands dominated by the Tarascans or on the route to the sea—salt, metal, cacao, wood, cotton and sea shells. The last two kings of Mexico-Tenochtitlan were defeated by the Tarascans, who managed in this fashion to fix their eastern border with the Aztecs. Having witnessed the sweeping defeat of the Aztecs at the hand of the Spaniards, the Tarascans offered hardly any resistance. The name “tarasco” seems to be derived from the practice of their kings or lords of offering their daughters in marriage to the Spaniards so as to win their friendship. The term *tarascue* (son-in-law) that these prominent Indians applied to their daughters’ husbands was used by the Spaniards in turn to identify the Tarascans. The name the Tarascans applied to themselves was “Purepechas.”

Indians of the Gulf Coast

Huastecs, Totonacs and historical Olmecs—the qualification added to the latter to distinguish them from the creators of the Olmec culture of the Formative or Pre-classic period—were distributed along the coastal region of the Gulf of Mexico, from the northern boundaries of Mesoamerica to the beginning of the Maya area.

The Huastecs were neighbors of the nomadic people of northern Tamaulipas and the coast of Texas. These nomads impeded or seriously hindered the communication of Mesoamerica with the Mississippi basin. In the sixteenth century, the Huastecs were a Maya-speaking population, which did not belong to the cultural world of the Maya. Many centuries before, the Huastecs must have lost all communication with the rest of the Maya population, probably because other peoples came between them, preventing the continuity of the then incipient Maya tradition. In later times the Aztecs interrupted the expansion of the Huastecs, the latter losing ground even in campaigns with the last rulers of Mexico-Tenochtitlan. Huastec culture was not near the level of other civilized people. In fact, the Aztecs looked at them with disdain and considered them barbarians. The Spaniards made their first contact with the Huastecs in 1519 while traveling up the Pánuco River.

In the center of the state of Veracruz during the late Classic period, flourished a culture which erected the important ceremonial center of El Tajin. The region was inhabited centuries later by a population we know

as Totonac. The Aztecs, in their expansion towards the Gulf, penetrated and divided in two the territory of these Indians. In the southern region was Cempoala, an important center of the Postclassical period, through which Cortés traveled in his march towards Mexico.

South of the Totonacs lay Olmec territory. Olmec means “country of rubber,” a reference to the rubber or resin employed in the manufacture of the ball used for a ritual game prevalent throughout Mesoamerica. These Olmecs that the Spaniards found are not related to those that inhabited southern Veracruz and a small part of neighboring Tabasco in the first millennium before Christ. The Olmec country enjoyed good reputation among the Aztecs because it

offered, aside from rubber, jade, gold, jaguar skins, feathers and cacao, all luxury items much coveted by the Mexica upper classes.

Northern Mexico

Conditions in northern Mexico were always marginal in comparison with the rest of the Mesoamerican area. These lands were sparsely populated and their inhabitants did not participate in the relative cultural advances that took place in areas encompassed by the present-day Southwest or Eastern Woodlands of the United States. At most it served as a cross-way that allowed the exchange of some cultural traits between Mesoamerica and those somewhat evolved areas to the north. In northern Mexico there were numerous and diverse Indian groups. Although cultural levels varied what predominated in this terrain—poor in water, vegetation and fauna—were simple cultures, with a nomadic or semi-nomadic existence as a feature. A complete account of tribes is impossible and would be of little use. We will mention those whose names were noted in colonial days in connection with dangerous borderland features and, especially, with the missionary effort, still an important challenge in the second half of the eighteenth century. Tribes belonging to the Pima and Opatá groups lived in the area occupied today by Arizona and the Mexican states of Sonora, Sinaloa, Chihuahua, Durango, Jalisco and Zacatecas. The Papagos of southern Arizona and northern Sonora—belonging to the Pima group—were visited for the first time in 1694 by Father Kino, a missionary who would later become famous. The Tepehuanes lived in the western Sierra Madre, in the state of Durango. They extended north to Chihuahua and south through the state of Zacatecas.

Members of the Opatá group were divided into a great number of subgroups according to language. The Opatas, proper, lived in Sonora. Sumas and Jumanos moved from one bank of the Río Grande to

the other. In comparison to other population groups in the area, the Tarahumaras were many in numbers and were distributed among the states of Chihuahua, Sonora and the north of Durango. More important still were the Cahitas, who, according to the Spaniards, numbered some 200,000 by the sixteenth century. They lived between the Pacific coast and the Sierra Madre, in the border region between Sonora and Sinaloa. The Yaqui and Mayo tribes belong to the Cahita group. Within a different language family which could be placed under the wide denomination of Nahua, were the Coras of Nayarit, the Huicholes of Jalisco, the Laguneros of Coahuila and also the Zacatecs, in the state that bears their name and in parts of Durango. The Coahuiltecs and the Tamaulipecos of the states of Tamaulipas and Nuevo León were in the northeastern region and are related to the native population of Texas.

The mobility of these northern nomads, the appeal that the cattle of the Spanish ranches held for them and, of course, the difficulty encountered in dominating them through an impossible war or by cultural assimilation, were still operative factors during the Spanish, and well into the republican, period, in other words, to the end of the past century.

Native Peoples of North America

This section will consist of a brief account of the population of areas encompassed today by Canada and the United States. The order of presentation is from north to south beginning with the Eskimos. The Southwest because of the historical and current importance of its native population receives special consideration. In this case we will not abide strictly by historical boundaries, since in the Southwest the present becomes easily and naturally intertwined with the past.

Eskimos

The Eskimos or Aleuts were the last migration from Asia to the Americas. By the time of their arrival, man had first entered and spread throughout most of these continents thousands of years before. The ancestors of the Eskimos must have set foot on American soil some 4,000 years before Christ. They were people whose way of life and economy were adapted to the arctic regions. This cultural specialization was perfected slowly while those who possessed it were spreading from Alaska to Greenland. Eskimos have preserved their biological and linguistic traits to such an extent that they bear greater similarities to their Asian relatives than to the rest of the native population of America. Eskimos are not classified as Indians, a term that we

use in referring to other native people from the interior of Alaska and Canada to the southern tip of South America.

Although the Eskimos were the last to migrate from the Old World to America, they were the first inhabitants of the Americas the Europeans met. The encounter took place on the coasts of Greenland around the year 985. It was, however, of no historical or cultural consequence—the Eskimos preserved the authenticity of their way of life and the Norse were incapable of surviving in those lands.

The late explorations of the Spaniards along the northern coasts of the Pacific Ocean during the second half of the eighteenth century brought them into contact with Russians, who were very interested in the Alaskan fur trade at the time. These voyages made possible limited encounters between Spaniards and Eskimo groups. This notwithstanding, the Eskimos remained outside the Hispanic sphere of influence in America.

Indians of the Subarctic Region

The subarctic region begins where the tundra ends and the forests begin. Its extreme northern location is the cause of extremely long winters and very cold climates. Conditions improve relatively, as one goes south, but the basic constant factors implicit in a very rigorous climate remain. Along general lines, the subarctic region encompasses the more inland regions of the Alaskan peninsula and almost the whole of what is Canada today. A small, but sparsely distributed, Indian population lived in these territories, still virtually uninhabited today. The great number of small tribes that occupy the area are classified into two great linguistic families: the Athapaskans, who from their point of dispersion in Alaska extend throughout the northwest region, and the Algonquians, with an eastern distribution. In many respects these Indians offered a cultural adaptation similar to that of the Eskimos, especially those living nearer the arctic frontier.

The historical interest that these Indians offer can be reduced to two principal factors. With regards to the Athapaskan families, their displacement through most of North America took some tribes to regions as far south as the United States Southwest and northern Mexico. We are referring to the Apache and Navajo to be discussed in due time. As far as the Algonquians are concerned, their distribution took place from the Labrador Peninsula with deep penetrations beyond the Great Lakes region of the United States. Algonquians, concentrated in territories of New York state, were the Indians encountered by the first English settlers. The Algonquians were also related to the

Iroquois, who, beginning in the sixteenth century through their tribal confederation, played an important role in the rivalry among colonizing European powers. Tribes with names as familiar to us as Blackfeet, Cheyennes and Arapahos are Algonquians.

Indians of the Northwest Coast

The extraordinary abundance of hunting and fishing in the short rivers and in the coastal region of Western Canada stimulated the development of a very unusual culture. The Indians of the Northwest—as this area is known today—were clustered into permanent villages. The sedentary life of these Indians did not depend on agriculture, following the general rule. The inexhaustible salmon in the rivers, gathering and hunting on land and fishing in the sea afforded them sufficient food and allowed them to accumulate surpluses. The social organization of these Indians was more complex than what could be expected from their rudimentary economy. They had permanent chieftains, an elaborate ceremonial tradition and even slaves. They lived in a state of continuous warfare among villages, however. A ritual contest among chieftains and lineages to maintain or outdo each other in terms of prestige led them to systematically practice the ceremony of *potlatch* during which all accumulated wealth was destroyed and slaves sacrificed. The chieftain who could accumulate and destroy the most at a given moment would gain the most prestige.

The Indians of the Northwest coast were excellent workers of the abundant wood of its forests. It can be said that everything was made of wood, from dwellings to boats, household utensils included, and, of course, boxes carved with beautiful geometric, as well as figurative, designs and large posts to mark burial sites. Several eighteenth-century Spanish expeditions established contact with these Indians. These early explorers rendered valuable written and graphic accounts of their culture, and, at the same time, named many geographical accidents, such as capes, rivers and islands.

Inhabitants of the Eastern Woodlands

The eastern third, approximately, of what is today the United States of America constitutes the cultural area of the Eastern Woodlands, in other words, the area from the southern border of Canada to the Gulf of Mexico and from the Mississippi basin to the Atlantic coast. The climate varies noticeably as one descends from the region of the Great Lakes and New England to the subtropical area of the Florida penin-

sula. As a whole, it is a fertile land, very adequate for human life, one rich in vegetable resources and eminently suitable for cultivation. Hunting and the fishing of its rivers and shores provided good sources of food. The Eastern Woodlands area reached a certain level of development in ancient times with a relatively advanced agriculture and very elaborate religious expression. It is quite possible that some cultural traits and stimuli were of Mesoamerican origin. During the final years of Precolumbian times there was a low density of population. Its social organization corresponded to the level of tribes that practice extensive agriculture with soil rotation.

Specialists divide the area into a northeast and a southeast region. In the first, having a common border with the subarctic region and the large displacements of some tribes bring about a degree of confusion to the ethnic map. More interesting is the southeast region where the Muscogee tribes predominated. The name was apparently assigned by the Algonquians and means swampy country. Tribes of the southeastern United States at the time of the European arrival where Choctaws, Creeks, Seminoles, Tunics, Natchez, etc. In the sixteenth century, the organization of tribes into small *cacicatos* still persisted. This is the area and these are the Indians found by Hernando de Soto and with whom Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca established contact after his shipwreck on the coasts of the Gulf of Mexico.

The Plains: Indians without Horses

The mention of Indians brings to the general public the image of great warriors covered with feathers, with painted faces, bows and arrows in hand traversing great expanses on horseback at a gallop. The Indians that roamed the Plains on the eve of the arrival of the Spaniards did not have horses, since the ancestor of this animal in America had become extinct thousands of years before.

The cultural area of the Prairies corresponds to the wide plains that extend from north to south, from the central border between Canada and the United States, to the central region of Texas; and east to west, from the border with the Eastern Woodlands to the Rocky Mountains. The vegetation is of abundant grass which from remote times has fed a plentiful fauna of large mammals. The most characteristic and typical of these is the bison. In the last period of pre-Hispanic history two distinct cultural traditions existed in the Prairies. One was characterized by life in towns and villages with agriculture as the basis for food. Ceramics and a notable ceremonial activity were other traits in a society that clearly recognized its chieftains. This cultural tradition was specifically related to the central and

1-8

A Cheyenne Indian. (Courtesy of the Bettman Archive.)

lower Mississippi valley, which implies an eastward distribution. On the contrary, towards the west the culture was one of hunters, gatherers and fishermen, living in camps they occupied or abandoned depending on the season of the year. Appropriate dwellings for these nomads were teepees, easily dismantled and transported. Plains inhabitants were the Sioux, of wide distribution from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico, with tribes such as the Hidatsa, Crow, Mandan, Dakota, Omaha, Osage, Iowa, Winnebago, etc. Other important families were the Caddos and the Kiowas, each of them constituted by numerous tribes.

Francisco Vázquez de Coronado in his expedition to the very center of present-day United States (1540-1541), found various Plains tribes. From this time forward the horses brought by the Spaniards developed into large herds that soon supplied the Indians with a new element that revolutionized the culture of the Prairies. In effect, hunting the bison on horseback became an excellent source of food that made many sedentary groups abandon their traditional agricultural way of life. An animal, domesticated in the Old World, reinforced and made more efficient the hunting of large mammals, a standing tradition for thousands of years of the North American Plains.

The United States Southwest

Let us complete the panoramic vision of native America with a separate section devoted to the South-

west. There are several reasons for drawing special attention to this region relative to the totality of North American peoples and cultures. The major part of the population still classified in the United States as Indian lives today in the Southwest. This population preserves its past, or has developed in the last centuries very specific traits that makes it clearly identifiable. It refers to a region adjacent to Mexico with no true barriers or frontiers to the south. During colonial centuries and even later, many native groups lived or roamed without distinction through territories which, although belonging today to Mexico or to the United States, were in colonial days the extreme northern kingdoms of the Spanish empire.

For the latter reason and not the least important, the native population of the Southwest is of special relevance to an understanding of the historical and cultural processes that have marked the present and the past of the Hispanic population. Let us consider, for example, the violent and peaceful relations between Spaniards and Indians, the phenomenon of acculturation, in its reciprocal sense, racial interbreeding, syncretism, or more exactly, the curious phenomenon of coexistence, in different but absolutely adjacent compartments in space and time, of two cultures: the Spanish and the native. The Pueblo Indians, better than any other group in the Southwest, have been able to preserve to our day two traditions, the most graphic expression of which is the simultaneous but separate existence and functioning of the Indian kiva and the Catholic church.

The Area

Within the large, almost infinite, northern frontier of New Spain known as the Borderlands, the Southwest deserves special emphasis. To begin with, it is an area that was Hispanic for centuries, and, additionally, because its Hispanic cultural roots are presently undergoing a process of growth and consolidation brought about, to a certain extent, by the continuous flow of people coming in from Mexico. In a general history of the Southwest, its native population should be given credit as protagonist and heir of rich cultural traditions and as creator of an interesting blend of native and popular Spanish art. Also attractive are the beauty and candor of Hispanic traditions preserved in the small villages and in the artistic and religious manifestations of the region.

When anthropologists and historians utilize the term *Southwest*, they are referring to the large rectangle formed by the states of New Mexico and Arizona (its total surface larger than Spain), large sections of the neighboring states of Utah and Colorado, and sec-

tions of Texas and California. American anthropologists also use the term *The Greater Southwest* when including the Mexican states of Sonora and Chihuahua, despite the fact that from the Mexican standpoint it is geographically incorrect—what is “southwest” for the United states is actually “northwest” from the Mexican perspective.

At any rate, we are faced with an area that is enormous in its surface, predominantly mountainous and arid and quite distant from highly civilized Central Mexico. The Southwest was a marginal area with a small but culturally diverse native population. The Spanish population, in turn, was also small and essentially rural. Throughout long periods of its history, the Southwest, although never totally isolated, was a frontier land. For this reason, interesting cultural phenomena of reaction and adaptation produced by contacts among other peoples and cultures have taken place. This is true not only for the most recent historical periods, but also for pre-Hispanic times when Mesoamerican influences and stimuli reached the area.

The Southwest has a cultural history thousands of years old. It begins with the activities of gatherers and hunters of great mammals, which with the exception of the bison became extinct later. Some of the most important archaeological sites dating from the time of the ancient North American hunters can be found in New Mexico. Several thousand years later, when a great climatic change occurred in the Northern Hemisphere, the Southwest became a predominantly arid region and its inhabitants had to return increasingly to the gathering of wild plants for food and to the use of vegetable fibers as raw materials for their crafts. This is the beginning of a still, ongoing long and outstanding tradition of basket weavers or manufacturers of containers made of fiber, whose craftsmanship, techniques and designs are a true art.

In a later period, relations between the Southwest and Mesoamerica were responsible in some regions for the introduction of agriculture and of useful plants such as corn and squash. The same holds true for pottery. The two cultural patterns inherited by later population groups known to us through Spanish history were, on the one hand, seed gatherers that were occasionally farmers and makers of excellent baskets, and, on the other, those that were farmers and potters. The first group lived in the more arid regions, while the second concentrated in areas with minimal rainfall or with water supplied by a fluvial stream. All Southwest groups were acquainted with and made use of basketry, the oldest of the area crafts. However, even in ancient times, pottery to a large extent substituted for basketry among farming Indians. During this century the decline or the relative increase in basket produc-

tion and variations in its quality and designs depended on factors as varied as the availability of work that was better compensated and the increasing demands from museums, private collectors and tourists.

Indigenous Population of the Southwest in Historical Times

Two great population complexes, or two ways of life, were evident in the Southwest in the sixteenth century when the Spaniards arrived. One of these complexes is characterized by its dedication to agriculture in the limited areas where minimal natural conditions for farming existed. This exceptional space constituted what has been called *Oasis America*, within the whole of the Southwest which has been labeled in general terms as *Arid America*. These farmers were obviously sedentary, the descendants of a very ancient population.

The other complex that the Spaniards found in the Southwest belongs to a very different racial and linguistic family, with very remote geographical origins. They were members of an Athapaskan family branch which originated in northwest North America (Alaska and Canada) and at a very late date initiated their penetration into the Southwest. From an economical standpoint, their way of life differed from that of the older population. They were nomads who hunted and gathered. By pillaging and warring among themselves and against farming groups, they precipitated reciprocal hostility. These Indians, who did not surpass the organization level typical of hunters, are known generically as Apaches and Navajos. Although related ethnically and from a linguistic standpoint, there are differences between the two, resulting largely from the forced adaptation to the terrain and from their contact with Pueblo Indians and Spaniards. If in pre-Hispanic times the clash or strife with the farming Indians was inevitable, later on the Spaniards were the inevitable target of nomadic bands who found the horse, introduced earlier by the Spaniards themselves, a most efficient tool for their hunting and war-based economy. The cattle of Hispanic colonists soon became the best and easiest source of food because it substituted advantageously for the hunting of *cibolos* or bison.

Either in their villages or on the reservations assigned to them by the United States government, traditionally agricultural Indians, as well as Navajos and Apaches, remain today as vital societies and cultures that express through their art and customs both aboriginal elements and the effects of centuries of contact with other peoples. These contacts have introduced impor-

tant Hispanic, or in general terms, European and Christian elements.

Pueblo Indians

The dwellings of the farming Indians of the Southwest were adobe structures, sharing common walls and two or three stories high. The unexpected appearance of these communities reminded the first Spanish explorers of their compact villages in Extremadura and Andalusia. Thus the name of *Pueblo Indians* (Pueblo is the Spanish equivalent of village) by which they have been known to this day. A great capacity for adaptation, and a no lesser ability to render their native traditions compatible with the new culture brought by the Spaniards made possible the survival of the Pueblos and their way of life. Neither have their basic traits been affected by the recent and powerful influence of North American culture, represented by the significant number of Anglo latecomers to the area. The indigenous language, native beliefs and accompanying ritual are part of the everyday life of the Pueblos. None of the above has been an obstacle to their centuries-old acceptance of missionaries, Catholicism and the knowledge and usage of both English and Spanish. The general pattern of their culture and social organization is common to all farming and sedentary Southwest Indians, whether, strictly speaking, to the Pueblo Indians of the upper Río Grande in northern New Mexico, the Hopis of Arizona, or the Zunis in the northwest border of New Mexico and Arizona, approximately between the two previously mentioned groups. We will discuss their culture immediately below, applying the term *Pueblos* to all, though reference will be made occasionally to a specific group or community.



The limited amount of fertile soil and the need for protection against the attacks of nomadic hunting Indians resulted, with the passing of centuries, in a very distinct type of settlement which is the "pueblo," or community formed by the tight clustering of adobe dwellings already mentioned. In many cases, these villages were located in sites that, because of their difficult access, were easily defensible. Languages or dialects spoken by a group were not necessarily comprehensible to other Pueblo groups or communities. The result was the reinforcement of the identity and independence of each community. Within the boundaries of each village, an intense and markedly religious social life takes place. Individuals who are not members of the community are considered strangers. Still today, in spite of the pressures of tourism and the ease

of communication and transportation, no stranger, whether Indian or white, is allowed to spend the night in a village. In fact, some villages charge fees for admission and for the right to take photographs, even though this regulation is fundamentally economic in nature.

The traditional social organization of the Pueblos is strongly matrilineal. Decisions and ownership of the home, household goods and land are the province of women, specifically of the grandmother, or the mother of unmarried daughters, and of the married daughters who are, in turn, the heads of nuclear families. The husband is always a stranger who comes from a different social unit. The son of a family has to leave the maternal home where he was born and live as a stranger among his wife's relatives, carrying nothing but the clothes on his back and personal possessions. In case of divorce, the husband returns to his mother's house, leaving his children behind and without rights to any of the family property, regardless of what he contributed in terms of work during the time he was married. The Spaniards gave to these communities such names as San Juan, Santa Clara, San Ildefonso, Santo Domingo and many others. They assigned to each, as protector, a patron saint, generally of the same name. They baptized the inhabitants and assigned to each community municipal authorities, such as "governor" and "chief Indians." The Pueblos accepted these new ways without abandoning their own, and, as far as possible, without mixing the two. The result was a strong and closely-knit community life, independent from any other Indian or European community. This community personality has been a distinctive feature of the Southwest Pueblos, manifested additionally in the arts, particularly in pottery, so that particular styles and designs can be readily identifiable with particular communities.

Pacifism and religiosity are two important characteristics of the Pueblos. Recourse to war has always been to defend themselves, and among the highest principles of their value system are harmony, temperance and moderate, non-violent relations with nature and other human beings. As is typical of a population at the level of agricultural tribes—distant, therefore, from a state and urban organization—the religious and political structures of each community or village are not well developed. Aside from practices in the home, religious life is concentrated in a structure called a *kiva*.

Religious practices pay particular attention to the cult of ancestors and of natural elements or phenomena, such as the sun, the rain and the animals. All of daily life and social activity are saturated by the religious aspect, and these feelings and beliefs are visible in their plastic representations. Ritual dances and

Communal dwellings of Pueblo Indians of the Taos region.

secret societies are the two means used to express collective Pueblo religiosity. Only certain individuals may belong to secret societies and sodalities, and only for particular reasons, such as having been cured of an illness through the agency of a particular healing process, abundant in magical elements. Dances are of a more public, open and festive nature. Conspicuous in some community celebrations are the so called *kachinas*. These dancers, masked and elaborately dressed, personify certain spirits, generally related to the rain and the harvest.

What drew the attention of the first Spaniards that entered the Southwest was the sight in that desolate and arid landscape of those clusters of dwellings which resembled from a distance the villages of Extremadura and Andalusia. This was an eminently functional architecture developed by a rudimentary society out of the centuries-old necessity of adapting to the environment. Tree trunks serve as a frame and support the roof. Adobe is made from wet earth mixed with straw. It can be fashioned into individual brick-like segments, or can be built up as a wall, making the appropriate stone and dirt mortar. The heat of

the sun rapidly dries and hardens the adobe, which is both very resistant to wear and tear and serves as insulation in a rigorous climate.

Each family's particular dwelling consists of one or more rooms. Sometimes there are storage rooms on the lower floor. The living quarters or apartments are reached by means of a ladder which rests against the outside wall or is removed at will. The roof is flat, of layered branches, grass, dry mud and packed dirt. All these materials intermix and rest on large beams, which, in turn, are supported by the walls. When the structure has more than one level, the roof of a dwelling can also serve as the floor of the one above. The construction of these lodgings is very simple but very efficient since it calls into use materials that are most at hand and because it resists the harsh climate. Their insulation is so effective that traditionally these houses had no windows or outside doors, the access being a hole in the roof. The availability of glass and metal or artificial fiber screening has introduced in our day the use of windows and doors. Additionally, one-story construction has become generalized. Mud and stone ovens for baking bread and ceramics are located

1-10

Pottery making among the San Ildefonso Indian Pueblo, New Mexico. (Courtesy of the New Mexico Department of Development.)

outside the houses. In the last few decades, gadgets and appliances have revolutionized the household. Even though the outside appearance of Pueblo dwellings still greatly resembles the traditional model, television antennas or a car at the door are clear signs of cultural change.

Kivas are the only structures in Pueblo communities of a public, or not strictly domestic, nature. In the Río Grande region (northern New Mexico) kivas are circular in design, their floor sunk below the ground level. Among the Zunis, further to the west, they are rectangular and at ground level. Whatever the case, kivas are chambers where religious ceremonies are executed and rites and other magical ceremonies are performed. They serve also as meeting places for certain groups, such as secret societies. This implies that, in spite of their public nature, not everyone may have access to a kiva, and a village may have several kivas.

As a visible example of religious syncretism—or better yet, of the coexistence of two different religious systems and the capacity of maintaining in a parallel fashion native and Spanish and Christian traditions—every community has a Catholic church dating to missionary times. A sort of belfry or imitation tower bearing a cross tops these church buildings. Because for centuries hostile hunting Indian groups constituted a threat, many of these churches have fortification features in order to serve as community shelters if necessary. Of course, materials and techniques employed in

the construction of churches were the same the Indians used all along for their dwellings and kivas, in spite of the fact that within their walls only Catholic rituals take place (Mass, sacraments, devotions to the Virgin and the saints). Depending on the needs and the numbers of the faithful, either a resident or a visiting priest was in charge of the religious cult. In either case and for several centuries, the chapel or church has been part of the typical Southwest Pueblo village. The general design of native architecture and the use of adobe in building, only if external and more for the sake of appearance than out of necessity, has spread to the architecture of large churches in urban places such as Santa Fe or the University of New Mexico campus in Albuquerque. It is a quaint and interesting phenomenon whereby the modern urban world imitates and is inspired by the art and techniques original to societies that, at one time, were subjected and incorporated by a dominant society.

Although most Southwest Indians produce a variety of regional handicrafts, some groups are more skilled in a specific craft than others. However, disturbances or

1-11

Pueblo Indian pottery for sale. (Courtesy of the New Mexico State Tourist Bureau.)

modifications of community traditions have been effected by commercial and tourist demands fostered by long-time access to good roads that connect the most important Indian nuclei with one another and with the cities. Disturbances and modifications occur when greater effort is placed on producing items that are more marketable or better suited to customer demands. As a result and to their detriment, the particular traits that for a long time had defined each native group, and even, each community or village may disappear.

As mentioned above, basket weaving is the most ancient of the crafts in the millenary history of the Southwest. The Pueblos' acquisition of ceramic techniques in pre-Hispanic times, from their contacts with Mesoamerica, resulted in a marked decrease of basketry among them. A new and vigorous resurgence of this craft came about by the middle of the sixteenth century to meet the demands of the newly arrived Spaniards. Centuries later, the introduction of utensils made of other materials created a new crisis which was overcome at the beginning of this century by the demands of museums and merchants. In the last few years, the Arizona Hopis have been the most devoted practitioners of the ancient art of basketry. Yucca, a plant common to the region and characteristic of the desert, with long, stiff leaves suitable to the manufacture of dishes, trays, bowls and containers, is the usual raw material. Predominant colors are rust, black and yellow. The background color is provided by the yellowish white of the yucca leaf. The motifs are varied, although predominantly geometric or linear even when depicting the human figure or animals, such as birds and butterflies. Natural phenomena—clouds giving forth rain, lightning, stars and rainbows—also serve as motifs.

Basketry pieces may be meant for the weaver's own practical use or as a decoration for her own house. It may also be a gift made by the bride for her groom who must carry it with him in order to enter the other world. Their ultimate purpose is in most cases to satisfy the demand of collectors and visitors to Pueblo villages. For the Pueblos today the crafting of silver and turquoise, excellent pottery and weaving are important economic elements. Early Spanish influences, the tastes and demands of merchants and tourists and even the prestige attached to the ancient handicrafts by museums have modified designs, introduced novelties, produced syncretic forms and, in conclusion, transformed them into a true and widely recognized art form. The variety of feasts and ceremonies—which also combine ancestral influences with others that came from the Prairies or from Spanish culture—convert these communities into tourist attractions. Time and tourists pass, but in the old villages, with their kivas and churches,

1-12

Ceremonial attire of the San Juan Pueblo Indians, New Mexico. (Courtesy of the New Mexico State Tourist Bureau.)

the Pueblos continue observing their policy of making their ancestral traditions compatible with new trends and external influences.

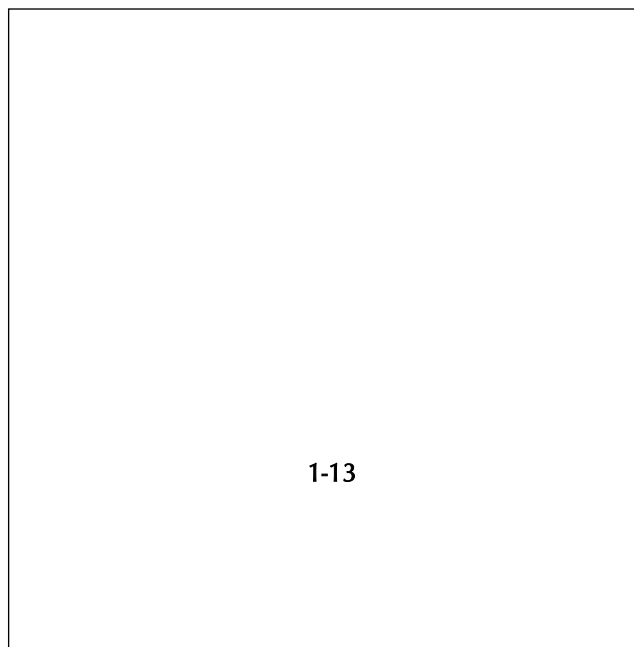
Athapaskan Indians: Apaches and Navajos

The extensive distribution of the Athapaskan linguistic family throughout North America, from their points of origin in northwestern Canada, led some of its branches as far as the Southwest, and even into northern Mexico. The arrival of these Athapaskan tribes to the Southwest occurred late, at different points in time but still fairly close to one another. Archaeological evidence is scant and not very conclusive because of differences of opinion among the experts. Intrusion into the Southwest could not have taken place any earlier than 1000 A.D. and we know that some migrations, at least within the Southwest, coincided with the period of the first Spanish expeditions from Mexico. The earliest dates, confirmed by archaeology, of Navajo Indian dwelling remains coincide with the arrival of Christopher Columbus. In truth, the best sources for identifying these Athapaskan tribes and tracking their movements are Spanish chronicles, some as late as the 1630 narrative account of Alonso de Benavides.

Apache, for linguistic purposes, is a term that comprises these Southwest Athapaskan tribes. The term is also applied to specific groups set apart from the rest by names assigned to them by the Spaniards. Apaches

in a limited sense were never numerous and today they are hardly 20,000 strong. To the contrary, today, and in spite of the terrible death rate of the past century, there are close to 200,000 Navajos, their linguistic relatives. Great cultural similarities existed between Apaches and Navajos resulting from their common origin and from their way of life as hunters and gatherers. Due to the adaptation by the Apaches to concrete areas and their contact with Pueblo Indians and Spaniards, important modifications took place during the past few centuries once they reached the Southwest.

Juan de Oñate, in his 1598 expedition to New Mexico, uses the term "Apache" which he probably heard from the Zuni Indians. During that first period, the Spaniards made no distinction between Apaches and Navajos. Actually, Alonso de Benavides in 1630 speaks of "Apache de Navajos" in referring to Indians who practiced farming they had learned from the Pueblos. From a linguistic standpoint, these Apache-speaking Athapaskans—separated into languages and dialects not always understood by one another—encompass tribes with denominations that are familiar, not necessarily for academic reasons, such as Chiricahua, Jicarilla, Kiowa-Apache, Lipan, Mescalero and the Navajos themselves. The distribution of these tribes in the last centuries comprises eastern Arizona, a good part of New Mexico and areas bordering with Mexico, southwest Colorado and parts of Oklahoma and Texas. If we accept that many other groups were also Apache



1-13

Samples of Indian silver jewelry produced by the U. S. Indian School in Santa Fe, New Mexico. (Courtesy of the New Mexico Department of Development.)

speaking—a matter that has not been proven and will be very difficult to prove because of the scarcity of data—, geographic distribution would be wider. This would be the case of the Querechos that Vázquez de Coronado encountered in 1541 east of the Pecos River. It is proper to note that the term "Querecho" was used by those first Spaniards to name any group of nomadic Indians they found in the Prairies, just like the term Chichimeca had been applied in pre-Hispanic Mexico to the nomadic and barbarian Indians of the Mesoamerican frontier. Other cases of groups imprecisely identified, but repeatedly mentioned in the Spanish documentation of the period, are the Vaqueros, Janos, Mansos, Sumos, Jumanos, Cibolos, etc.

The original culture of these Athapaskan tribes was clearly of nomadic hunters and gatherers who reached the Southwest traveling from the subarctic region through not well defined routes. In contact with the Pueblos, they learned agriculture and certain techniques such as weaving and pottery. On the other hand, the Athapaskan tribes that moved towards the Prairies developed ways of life and economies characteristic of this area that were especially suited to hunting the bison. The social organization of Apaches and Navajos was so rudimentary that they acted and moved about as autonomous bands, selecting their chiefs on the basis of their personal qualities and their capacity to make basic decisions always geared to the survival of the small group. Only serious circumstances, created by their clashes with the United States army fostered the circumstantial gathering of bands and the recognition of some leaders in order to fight against their common enemy.

It is not easy to make generalizations in speaking of the Apaches because the various groups developed differences in historical times on the basis of their varied habitats and of the greater or lesser interaction with other native groups of the Southwest. The Apache extended family was a fundamental element of social organization, and the grouping into bands was temporary and for reasons of achieving greater efficiency in raiding. When they arrived in the Southwest, their economy was based exclusively on hunting and gathering or pillaging to the detriment of other groups. The most characteristic Apache dwelling was the teepee, well suited for a nomadic people, and also the wikiup, or simple hut made of vegetable products typical of people who live in forested regions. Their original attire was also simple, with elk skin or dressed hides for both clothing and footwear.

Apaches demonstrated extraordinary resistance to the harshness of the climate and the scarcity of resources, and an excellent disposition in their fight against other Indians and white men. As a result they

were branded as extremely dangerous and cruel and were kept in a state of marginalization. A man's courage before his enemy, his ability to kill and to conduct himself successfully in war-like encounters occupied a prominent place in the value system of Apache culture. Young men were carefully trained for the harsh life that awaited them and this state of mind was reinforced with dances and other ceremonies which preceded battle.

It is important to make the distinction that for most of the Apaches there was a difference between a raid to obtain booty, especially horses, and what could properly be called war. The purpose of the latter was commonly the avenging of deaths from previous encounters. The plan of action involved a minimum amount of risk and losses and a maximum yield in terms of booty. When fighting was in order, Apaches were excellent warriors, but their ultimate goal was to escape in several groups and to rendezvous afterwards. This cultural pattern—in part of an economic, and in part of a war-like nature—was a permanent nightmare for eighteenth-century Spaniards and for Mexicans and Americans in the last century.

The religion of Apache groups was at the level of its rudimentary culture. The shaman could obtain knowledge through a vision, even though the ritual could also be taught to others. The universe was controlled by a supernatural power that specialists could use or apply through ceremonies. This power could be employed to cause evil and for this reason witchcraft was very common and a constant source of fear. Sickness and bad luck were attributed to supernatural factors. This system of beliefs fostered an elaborate ceremonial assemblage in which dances and sand paintings played an important role. A feeling of horror before death was general among all these groups. Fearing contamination from the deceased, contact with a corpse was limited to the fastest and simplest burial by a very close male relative.

Navajos are the most numerous Indian tribe in the United States, numbering almost 200,000 of which more than half live on the Navajo Reservation and in neighboring areas. They are concentrated, therefore, in northeast New Mexico and northwest Arizona. Once the serious crisis endured by the Navajo during the last century was overcome, the population grew steadily thanks to a high birth rate. At the same time, Navajos have preserved and strengthened their cultural identity, defined by their language and a syncretic culture that has been able to integrate dissimilar features borrowed both from the Pueblos and from the Spaniards.

The lands inhabited by the Navajo are arid and their daily life is difficult. These former nomads settle in a scattered fashion, to the point that their dwellings are

placed at considerable distances from each other, making it impossible to speak of villages or hamlets. The basic unit is the nuclear family, that is to say, one formed by a married couple and their unmarried children. Filiation is matrilineal and matrilocal. This means that every individual, whether male or female, is identified by maternal lineage and that when a new couple is constituted they establish their residence according to where the mother of the bride lives. When the Navajos entered the Southwest their economy was based exclusively on hunting and gathering. They learned agricultural techniques from the Pueblos and later, when they acquired from the Spaniards horse and sheep husbandry, shepherding became their most characteristic way of life.

To the Navajos the universe is a combination of good and evil. Their major preoccupation is maintaining equilibrium and harmony between opposing forces. They are especially horrified by death. When a family member dies, the survivors abandon their dwelling, so great is their aversion to the deceased. The curing of illnesses, protection against witchcraft and the process of purification after contamination are achieved through long and complicated ceremonies involving ritual songs and sand paintings of many colors.

The Navajo family dwelling is the *hogan*, a very simple structure of tree trunks, stones and mud, in the approximate shape of a half sphere. This type of lodging has no windows and only one door which faces the east, and is nothing more than a hole, closed by a blanket serving as a curtain. A hole in the highest part of the hogan functions as a chimney for the hearth. Furnishings are minimal and there are virtually no beds or other furniture. When and where traditional economy is maintained, these Indians engage in seasonal mobility. This creates the need to own one or more additional hogans, depending on the place and the season of the year. The *ramada*, an arbor-type structure on posts known by this Spanish term, is a complement of the *hogan*. In its shade the woman of the house usually works at her loom.

The attire of the Navajos is complicated, with many features borrowed from the different cultures with whom they have come in contact during the last few centuries. The traditional hair style reflects the influence of the Pueblos. The broad-brimmed hat and the boots were borrowed from the cowboys of the region. Women like to wear long, ruffled skirts and colorful blouses and wrap themselves in blankets. Both men and women wear silver jewelry, especially on festive occasions.

The Navajos learned weaving from the Pueblos, more than likely at the beginning of the eighteenth

1-14

Eighteenth-century engraving depicting Apache Indians.

century. They use vertical looms which are easy to transport, an important feature for a semi-nomadic population. Contrary to the Pueblos, among the Apaches it is the woman who performs this task. During all of the last century, blankets woven by the women were much sought after in the Southwest. They both supplied the demand of the Navajos themselves and were a marketable item throughout the region and in Mexico. The original raw material used by the Navajos for their textiles was the wool of sheep introduced by the Spaniards. In that first period colors were limited to those of the wool itself: white, brown and black. They took threads from the cloth used for making the uniforms of Spanish soldiers to interweave in their blankets and add color. This material was baize, manufactured in England, exported first to Spain and then to Mexico and arriving finally in the Southwest either in bolts or in the form of uniforms. Later industrial dyes were used in Navajo textile crafts, decreasing the quality and the strength of the fabrics. At other times during the past century the Navajos utilized materials from the eastern United States imported from Germany.

In more recent times, the Navajo have been manufacturing high quality rugs more in line with tourist and commercial demands. The capacity of these Indians to use what they have at hand and integrate it into their lives so that it becomes their own is well illustrated by the art of weaving which has afforded them a well-deserved reputation in the Southwest. Some of the best examples of this work are exhibited in museums today. The ornamentation of Navajo blankets and rugs is frequently geometrically inspired, in elegantly alternating stripes of different colors and motifs. Also evident are the depiction of natural phenomena, namely clouds, rain and thunder or of rituals such as dances.

If we examine the Navajo people from the perspective of the past centuries, several observations come to mind. They transformed their way of life from nomadic hunters and gatherers who came into the Southwest very late and from very far without ever losing their identity. Placed in a new situation, they exhibited one of the most useful traits of any cultural system: adaptability and the capacity to integrate and make material and spiritual elements from other systems their own.

The Pueblos, the Spaniards and, later, the Mexicans and even the Anglos have been sources of influence for the Navajos. Agriculture, shepherding, the crafting of silver and turquoise, pottery, basketry and weaving are skills they adopted and mastered.

Less fortunate were their relations with the white man. During the first centuries skirmishes with the Spaniards were inevitable. In the history of the Navajo people, there is an event of special significance because of its seriousness and recent date. The decade of 1860 was truly tragic for the Navajo. Some officers of the United States army were more inclined to use force than negotiations and treaties to bring to an end the problems created by the hostility and ambition of those who expected to profit from war-like conditions.

It is difficult to believe that about a century ago—coinciding with the years of the Civil War and the emancipation of black slaves—the Indians of New Mexico (Apaches and Navajos) were attacked by the regular army and by corps of volunteers with the common objective of seizing their lands, horses and other belongings and enslaving them in order to subject them to domestic servitude. The United States Army could find no better solution than to establish forts in Indian territory and force thousands of Navajos to march all the way to Fort Sumner (the Long Way). Several thousand men, women and children made this 300-mile journey on foot. Hundreds died on the way or in Fort Sumner. In 1868 a peace treaty was signed and the survivors were able to return to their lands. In the century that has elapsed since those tragic years, the Navajos have asserted themselves as a people. From 1969 on, their official name is Navajo Nation, to embrace the most numerous native group in the United States by far.

The Indian Legacy

In order to better understand the millenary history of the American Indians, it is necessary to divide it into periods. No chronological division is more evident and dramatic than the line drawn between the period before and the period after the arrival of the Europeans. It is unjust and erroneous to assume—as textbooks frequently do—that the native American world was merely a backdrop upon which to project the past and the present of the white man in the New World. A dual continent, inhabited for thousands of years by a population that developed very rich and diverse cultural traditions, perforce, had to leave an imprint upon its descendants and upon the peoples and cultures that five centuries ago established communication with the Western Hemisphere.

As an epilogue to the ethnographic overview we have presented in this chapter, we will draw attention to the importance of the American native legacy. The contributions are many and of a varied nature. The most evident and the easiest to accept is the contribution of products that are part of the material culture of humanity. Other contributions with a greater effect on the course of history are of greater importance. Likewise, it is necessary to take into account the effects of the native legacy upon the populations that inhabit the Americas today. We will refer to all these contributions briefly below, according to the limited scope of this chapter.

Thanks to their intelligent management of natural resources, the American Indian achieved important successes that we do not value enough today or the origins of which we disregard because they are so familiar. America was a world lacking in a fauna that could be domesticated and used for food or work or transportation. Its inhabitants had to depend to the maximum degree upon plant life, and, in the long run, they demonstrated a surprising capacity to domesticate wild plants. Among their great achievements were potatoes and corn, considered today two of the world's three or four most important foodstuffs. These two crops greatly reduced in these last centuries the great famines suffered periodically by the populations of the Old World. To them many others should be added, ranging from the very utilitarian to those that make eating more pleasurable or have an industrial application, namely the American varieties of squashes and cotton, beans, sweet potatoes, cassava, tomatoes, avocados, peanuts, chili peppers, cocoa and chocolate (its by product) and vanilla.

Tobacco, which entered the Old World through the port of Seville, like almost all of these products, had such wide distribution that it reached the interior of Africa and by the eighteenth century it had circled the world, re-entered America again through Siberia and was also adopted by the Eskimos. Consumption of tobacco for the Indians was chiefly of a ritual or curative nature. It was introduced in Europe for this last purpose and later became one of the most universal, and today questionable habits. Traditional pharmacopoeia—replaced almost completely today by the work of laboratories—owes much to the American flora and to native medicine. The contribution of quinine, of Peruvian origin, has been especially valuable in the treatment of malaria. By-products of coca—also from South America and so misused today—are cocaine and novocaine.

Garments such as the poncho, the huipil or mocasins are popular the world over both because of fashion and their usefulness. The same can be said of

1-15

A “ramada” and “hogan” on the Navajo Reservation in western New Mexico. (Courtesy of the New Mexico Department of Development.)

the comfortable and simple hammock. Of American origin are additionally platinum, rubber and hemp from which sisal fibers are obtained; guano from the coasts of Perú, so useful until recent times in agriculture as a fertilizer; dyes such as indigo and cochineal or the pigment produced by Brazil wood. Many of these products and items spread, together with their native name, and were introduced into all the European languages which, as a result, became richer.

The arrival in Europe of precious metals—and secondarily of the new products previously unknown—revolutionized the economy. What came from America at first greatly promoted trade as well as political and economic relations among the nations. Later, America also contributed in various forms to the Industrial Revolution, and, in fact, from then on an American nation—the United States—was at the forefront of the most industrialized countries in the world.

More significant than the products are other aspects or results derived from the reality of a world that the rest of humanity did not know until five centuries ago. Let us mention the impact of the “discovery” of America by Europe itself as the most important and having the most generalized effect. There are no precedents in the evolution of Old World civilizations to the new directions taken and the advances made in both the sciences and the world of ideas in terms of speed and magnitude. America’s great contribution was America herself that jolted, spurred on and reoriented the ideas, attitudes and behavior of European scientists

and thinkers. Rivalry in obtaining control of the new geographical spaces also revolutionized geopolitics, and, in this struggle among European nations, the native people also played a role, be it as victims, as part of political-military conflicts or as actors in the process of emancipation. Literature and arts also became an echo of the American phenomenon and, in this area, the Indian contributed with his own artistic traditions and very soon became a literary theme himself.

Where the Indian legacy is most visible and operative is on American soil, in the midst of the multiracial and multiethnic society of the Western Hemisphere. This is easy to understand and it could be no other way. The American Indian has bequeathed his blood, thoroughly intermingled today in the crossing of races or *mestizaje*, a dominant factor in many nations. The Indian cultural legacy is as evident as this biological inheritance. It is also intertwined with traditions from the Old World in a great unfinished process of adaptation and reinterpretation. There are millions of Indians that express themselves in their own languages and still know and use Spanish, Portuguese or English. A whole system of beliefs—especially among relatively mestizo rural populations—is an interweaving of the Christian religion and autoctonous beliefs. The Indian factor is present in music, dance, popular arts and in the academic arts as well. It is still in force in fashion, housing and diet, in agricultural techniques and tools. The native legacy is alive in the social organization of

Indian and mestizo communities. Excellent examples of this vitality are the native elements present in the institutions or activities of many communities, particularly in the annual feasts of patron saints or related to brotherhoods of a civic and religious nature.

The synthesis is so perfect and functional that participants are unaware or do not differentiate the native or the European elements from the totality. Popular culture in many American countries—as well as many aspects of minority and more urban cultures—cannot be understood without taking into account the vigorous and rich native component. In this sense, the American Indian legacy fulfills today an important function in defining the ethnic and national identity of millions of inhabitants of the Americas. These roots or points of support of individual and collective personalities, are, of course compatible with other legacies. Legitimate access to a more or less mythical native past is particularly beneficial and gratifying to populations that are marginated within a national society or for those who live as displaced minorities in other countries.

Translated by Silvia Novo Pena



Bibliography

- Coe, Michael D. *Mexico*. London: Thames and Hudson, Ltd., 1988.
- _____. *The Maya*. London: Thames and Hudson, Ltd., 1987.
- Collier, George A., Renato I. Rosaldo, and John D. Wirth, eds. *The Inca and Aztec States, 1400-1800. Anthropology and History*. New York: Academic, 1982.
- Driver, Harold E. *Indians of North America*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1961.
- _____, ed. *The Americas on the Eve of Discovery*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1964.
- Fernández-Shaw, Carlos. *Presencia española en los Estados Unidos*. Madrid: Cultura Hispánica, 1987.
- Fiedel, Stuart J. *Prehistory of the Americas*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988.
- Jennings, Jesse J., ed. *Ancient Native Americans*. San Francisco: Freeman, 1978.
- Joseph, Alvin, Jr., ed. *America in 1492. The World of the Indian Peoples before the Arrival of Columbus*. New York: Vintage Books, 1993.
- Ortiz, Alfonso, ed. *Southwest. Handbook of North American Indians*. Vol. 9. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institute, 1979.
- _____, ed. *Southwest. Handbook of North American Indians*. Vol. 10. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institute, 1983.
- Sanders, William T., and Joseph Marino. *New World Prehistory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1970.

Schele, Linda, and Mary Ellen Miller. *The Blood of Kings. Dynasty and Ritual in Maya Art*. Fort Worth: Kimbell Art Museum, 1986.

Spencer, Robert F., Jesse D. Jennings, et al. *The Native Americans*. New York: Harper and Row, 1965.