Chapter One:

United States History Before Columbus

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and77ion and Tradition in Native American Stories 1 (that)esm. [w TIbegin

Figure 1.1 Spider Gorget | Ancient shell gorget from Fains Island, Tennessee, depicting a spider.

$ X W K R U Gates P. Thruston
Source: The Antiquities of Tennessee

1.2.1 Origin Stories

Indigenous people throughout the Western hemisphere talk of their origins as a people in oral histories, stories, and myths that link them intimately to the places they inhabit. The land, the stories commonly assert, was made for “the people,” and they were made to inhabit the land. Every group has an origin story, and they vary widely and are unique to the group. Sometimes, groups have multiple origin stories that tell differing versions of creation and the founding of the group. Origin stories often begin with a “First Person” (or First Peoples), a mythical man or woman who founded the group. These First People often are created from, or emerge

(approximately 50,000-10,000 BP, or years before the present), humans were able to migrate from Siberia to Alaska, crossing over the land bridge between the continents that had been revealed by dropping sea levels as massive glaciers formed all over the world. During this time, as many as four distinct migrations occurred over the land bridge between about 10,000-14,000 BP. Peoples migrated from Siberia, Eurasia, and coastal Asia, following the megafauna of the Pleistocene, such as mammoth and mastodon. Other megafauna included giant species of animals that are familiar to us today, such as beavers and sloths.

The greatest supporting evidence of this theory is the extensive homogeneity of the North American Clovis culture, so named for the DUFKDHRORJLFDO VLWH DW ZKLFK LW ZDV ¿UVW LGHQW FRQVLGHUHG WR EH WKH ¿UVW SHRSOH WR LQKDELW theorize that Clovis peoples came over the land bridge and down a glacier pass to the east of the Rocky Mountains sometime between 12,000-11,000 BCE, eventually spreading through much of North America.

$ VHFRQG WKHRU\ IRFXVHV RQ 3DFL¿F VHD WUDYHO 7 suggests that some peoples arrived in the Americas through following the coast of land across Asia and the Bering Land Bridge, down the coast of North America, all the way to South America. The coastal migration theory is bolstered by the rich marine environment which would have supported maritime peoples well. Travel by boat would also have been much faster and easier than the route overland, thus allowing peoples to spread throughout the Americas much more quickly. The most compelling evidence supporting the coastal migration theory comes from archaeological sites in South America that predate the North American Clovis sites. Sites like Monte

Figure 1.2 Clovis Points | Examples of a Clovis Point from the Rummells-Maske Site (13CD15) Cedar &RXQW\ ,RZD &OYLV ZDV RQFH DFFHSWHG DV D GH¿QLQJ FKDUDFWHULVWLF RI WKH ¿UVW JU Americas, sometime between 10,000-14,000 BP. This assertion has been increasingly questioned as more and more well-documented archaeological sites with older dates have emerged.

$XWKRU Bill Whittaker
Source: Wikimedia Commons

Verde in Chile, dated 14,800-12,500 BCE and Taima-Taima in western 9HQH]XHOD GDWHG WR %&(FRQWUDGLFW WKH However, archaeological sites that support coastal migration theory number much fewer than Clovis sites, as the coastline of the Pleistocene era now lies XQGHU WKH 3DFL¿F 2FHDQ GXH WR ULVLQJ VHD OHYHO

Although the two theories might seem to be at odds with each other, most historians and archaeologists now accept that both theories are probably correct, and that human migration to the Americas occurred over a very long span of time, over land and by boat. Linguistic evidence supports this combination of migration theory, as indigenous coastal languages are very different than interior languages throughout much of the Americas. The two theories also work together in that many South American sites date 500-1,000 years older than the oldest North American sites, a real problem for the Bering Land Bridge theory.

In more recent years, some archaeologists and historians have supported alternate migration theories. These theories are uniformly much more controversial than the Bering Land Bridge and coastal migration theories. One of the more notable theories is the Solutrean hypothesis, or the Atlantic coastal model. This model argues that Clovis peoples came not from Asia over the land bridge, but instead were descended from the Solutrean culture of Europe. Clovis peoples, it asserts, arrived in the Americas through coastal migration, hugging the ice sheet that spanned the ice age Atlantic. A handful of archaeologists support this theory, based on perceived similarities between Clovis and Solutrean points. However, the majority of archaeologists discount the theory, citing the lack of resources to support travelers on the ice sheet and the 5,000 years between the Solutrean and Clovis cultures. Genetic studies of indigenous peoples across the Americas also show the Solutrean hypothesis to be unlikely, as mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) and DNA haplogroups show evidence of multiple migrations from Asia, starting at about 30,000 BP.[3] In contrast, no study has ever shown conclusive proof of European genetic markers among the Native American population before 1492.

Finally, a handful of sites across the Americas have unearthed portions dating 50,000-33,000 BCE, tens of thousands of years before the earliest coastal migration sites were established. These sites, including the earliest components of the Monte Verde site in Chile and the Topper site in South Carolina, are hotly contested by many archaeologists, who claim that the stone tools from the levels attributed to these early dates are not man-made, but natural formations. Moreover, 50,000 years BP stretches the boundaries of radiocarbon dating: as dates go further back in time, dating becomes less and less accurate, leading many more to call these early dates into further

1.3 THE PALEO-INDIAN ERA THROUGH THE AGRICULTURAL REVOLUTION

This earliest period, from the time that humans entered the Americas until about 8,000 BCE, is known as the Paleo-Indian period. During this time, humans spread throughout the Western hemisphere, supporting themselves with similar subsistence patterns and technologies. Paleo-Indians, including the Clovis culture, were nomadic hunter/gatherers. They moved as frequently as once or twice a week, hunting the big game of the Paleolithic: the megafauna. As previously noted, well-known animals such as the mammoth and mastodon were included among the megafauna. Other North American megafauna included less well-known animals, such as the short-faced bear, and giant versions of animals such as sloth, moose, and beaver. Paleo-Indian technology included knapped, or chipped, stone tools such as scrapers, knives, and projectile points, such as the Clovis point. Throughout the Paleo-Indian era, the spear was the most common weapon. $W ¿UVW KXPDQV XVHG VSHDUV DV WKUXVWLQJ ZHDSRQ very close range between the hunter and game, a dangerous prospect at best. Sometime during the Paleo-Indian era, humans developed new kinds of technology, including a lighter throwing spear and an implement to propel this spear much farther: the atlatl. The atlatl, or spear thrower, was one of the most important items in the late Paleo-Indian tool kit. It was a long, thin piece of wood with a notch at the end. This notch was designed to receive the end of a spear. The atlatl acted as an extension of the throwing arm, enabling the spear thrower to greatly increase the speed and range of the cast.

Paleo-Indians probably lived in groups that anthropologists call “bands,” small groups of related individuals, typically no bigger than 100-150 people. This set-up allowed a simple leadership structure, probably with one individual at the head of the group, to be an effective means of control. It also allowed for easy mobility. In terms of possessions, hunter/gatherers such as Paleo-Indians lived with only easily transportable and reproducible possessions. One of the greatest problems of living in such a VPDOO JURXS KRZHYHU ZDV ¿ a suitable mate. Anthropologists

religious rituals, exchange news, and trade women to ensure genetic diversity amongst their groups.

Everything that we know about humans in the Americas from these early eras comes from the archaeological record. Perhaps the most famous Paleo-Indian site is the Blackwater Draw site near Clovis, New Mexico. Blackwater Draw is the archaeological site where the large, leaf-shaped Clovis points ZHUH ¿UVW LGHQWL¿HG $V PDQ\ &ORYLV SHULRG VLWH WZHQWLHWK FHQWXU\ &ORYLV SRLQWV FDPH WR EH RC the Paleo-Indian era in North America, and anthropologists came to regard WKH &ORYLV FXOWXUH DV WKH ¿UVW ¿UPO\ HVWDEOLV in the Americas. The “Clovis First” hypothesis held sway throughout much of the rest of the century, calling archaeological evidence that dated older than about 10,000 BCE unreliable. However, as more and more sites have produced reliable older dates and the coastal migration theory became more widely accepted, the Clovis First movement has lost favor.

2QH RI WKH VLWHV WKDW ¿UVW VHULRXVO\ FKDOOHQJ Monte Verde site in Chile, which consistently produced well-documented dates at and around 14,800-13,800 BP (12,800-11,800 BCE). Archaeological remains at this site include the evidence of wood and hide shelters, clay-OLQHG ¿UH SLWV DQG GR]HQV RI SODQW PDWHULDOV a use supported by the appearance of coprolites, or fossilized human feces. Perhaps the most fascinating artifact from the Monte Verde site is a child’s IRRWSULQW SUHVHUYHG LQ WKH VRIW FOD\ VXUURXQG

The Vero Man site, located outside of Vero Beach, Florida, is one of the few sites where human bones have been found alongside megafauna bones, including bison, mastodon, giant sloth, dire wolf, llama, and camel. More gracile, modern animals such as deer remains were also unearthed at the Vero Man site. The site dates roughly around 12,000-14,000 BP. In 2009, a bone with a carving of a mammoth on it was found; testing dates the bone to sometime between 13,000-20,000 BP. This artifact probably represents the oldest artwork ever found in the Americas.

7KH $UFKDLF DQG :RRGODQG 3HULRGV

From 8,000-7,000 BCE, the Earth’s climate began to warm, and the North American environment changed. Paleo-Indians adapted to the world around them, learning to rely more and more on a diet rich in plant materials, and hunting smaller game such as bison as the megafauna began to die out. In this way, they began to more closely resemble typical hunter/gatherers, whose diet relies up to 90 percent on gathered food rather than on meat. 2YHU WKH QH[W \HDUV QDWLYH FXOWXUHV GH

ORQJ ODVWLQJ DQG LQÀXHQWLDO FXOWXUH NQRZQ DV 1400 CE). This culture originated in the Mississippi River Valley and spread out to encompass an area which spread all the way to the lower Great Lakes region to the north, the Carolinas to the east, and northern Florida to the south. This culture emerged from the late Woodland Period as agriculturalists that practiced large-scale, corn-based agriculture. The excess agricultural product allowed them to support a dense population with a large group of specialized artisans.

Politically, Mississippians were organized as a chiefdom, a hierarchy of chiefs that pledged allegiance to the leader of the most important group. :LWKLQ WKH FKLHIGRP H[LVWHG D KLJK OHYHO RI VR noble class at the top. Socially, the Mississippians appear to have practiced

Figure 1.5 Mississippian Cultures | The extent of the spread of Mississippian culture and the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex

$ X W K RHerb Rowe
Source: Wikimedia Commons
License: CC BY-S A 3.0

matrilineal descent patterns. In matrilineal descent, familial relations focus RQ WKH PRWKHU¶V IDPLO\ ZLWK SURSHUW\ VWDWXV conferred through the female line. A person's most important relations were his mother's parents and siblings. The father's relations were relatively unimportant. Boys looked to their mother's brother as an important male ¿JXUH UDWKHU WKDQ WR WKHLU IDWKHU DQG XQFOHV possessions to their nephews and maternal relatives rather than to their VRQV 7KLV V\VWHP¶V PDLQ DGYDQWDJH LV WKDW GH was beyond a doubt; a child's paternity can be uncertain, but a clan can be sure of a child's maternity. Matrilineality is relatively common among indigenous peoples of North America, and came to be commonplace among Southeastern peoples.

The religion of the Mississippians is known as the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex. Important religious symbols for the culture included a snake (sometimes depicted as a horned serpent), a cross in circle motif, and Birdman, a warrior/falcon hybrid. These symbols were closely related to not only cosmology, but also the elite and warriors, giving the religion a socio-political aspect that reinforced the social status and authority of the elite—including the high chieftain, his lesser chiefs, and the priests of the cult. These symbols, along with a host of others, appeared multitudinously on a variety of artifacts such as cups and shell gorgets, a type of pendant. Archaeological evidence strongly indicates that only the elite were able to possess these objects, which may have been sacred and therefore viewed as powerful. Additionally, evidence suggests an exchange network of these sacred objects existed among the elite of the Mississippians, fostering not only political alliances, but also trade. Objects inscribed with symbols associated with the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex may have been produced by only a handful of artists; excavation of sites in Missouri and Oklahoma have turned up artifacts so similar that some archaeologists believe the same artist produced them. These sacred objects were buried as grave goods with their owners, indicating the status and power they carried into the afterlife.

One key feature of the Mississippian culture was that they were mound builders. They produced thousands of earthworks used in a variety of manners. Some earthworks were burial mounds for the elite. The chief, his family, and perhaps other members of the elite lived atop some of the

important of these was Cahokia (ca 600-1400 CE) in southwestern Illinois, located just across the Mississippi River from St. Louis, Missouri. Cahokia was a walled complex made up of 120 mounds that housed perhaps as many as 30,000 people, making it a very large city for its day. Community plazas were located throughout the complex. A woodhenge was built for astrological observations; poles in the henge were marked to indicate the sun's rising point on the solstices and equinoxes. Cahokia's mounds took tremendous effort to build; laborers moved about 55 million cubic feet of earth in construction. The largest of the mounds, today called Monk's Mound, is approximately ten stories high and covers an area of 13.8 acres at the base. The top of the mound, the focal point of the city, housed a huge structure that may either have been a temple or the residence of the paramount chief of the Cahokia chiefdom.

&DKRNLD FDPH WR SRZHU LQ SDUW EHFDXVH RI LWV O

Another important structure found at all Ancient Puebloan sites is the kiva, the ceremonial center of the village. Kivas, often circular in shape, were dug into the earth and entered from the roof via a ladder. At the center of WKH NLYD OD\ D VPDOO KROH LQ WKH ÀRRU FDOOHG D V hold that the sipapu symbolizes the navel of the Earth, the place where the DQFHVWRUV ¿UVW HPHUJHG 0XFK RI ZKDW ZH NQRZ I derives from modern Pueblo peoples, such as the Hopi and Zuni.

In modern Pueblo societies, kivas are associated with the kachina belief system. Kachinas are spirit beings, representations of the life force within DOO SDUWV RI WKH XQLYHUVH 7KH\ PD\ UHSUHVHQW D

1.4 THE PRE-CONTACT ERA (1000-1492 CE)

,Q WKH SHULRG EHIRUH (XURSHDQ FRQWDFW PRUH groups emerged in North America. A tremendous amount of diversity existed amongst these groups; the people of the West Coast had very little in common with the way that the peoples of the Southwest lived. However, groups within each region tended to have more commonalities. For instance, HDFK UHJLRQ RI WKH FRQWLQHQW FRXOG EH W\SL¿HG supported themselves, that is, their subsistence strategies. Other similarities might include kinship relations, political structure, and material culture, WKH REMHFWV DQG DUWLIDFWV XWLOL]HG E\ D SHRSOH to them.

7KH :HVW &RDVW 7KH 3DFL¿F 1RUWKZHVW DQG &D

3HRSOHV LQ WKH 3DFL¿F 1RUWKHDVW VXSSRUWHG W KXQWLQJ JDWKHULQJ DQG ¿VKLQJ UHO\LQJ PRVW KH &RQVHTXHQWO\ WKH VDOPRQ EHFDPH DQ LPSRUWDQW JURXSV OLNH WKH 7OLQJLW DQG +DLGD 7KH 3DFL¿F 1R populated and culturally diverse because of the rich natural resources that allowed for a high “carrying capacity” of the land: that is, relatively reliable and plentiful food sources translated into a large population. Most groups lived in large, permanent towns in the winter. These towns formed the basis RI WKH SROLWLFDO VWUXFWXUH IRU PDQ\ 1RUWKZHVW themselves by their town, and towns organized themselves into larger cultural and political groups through family and political alliances. Each

One of the most diverse regions of North America was the region that came to be California. Politically, groups were divided into tribes led by chiefs whose title was passed down through families and clans. Economically, California peoples participated in large trade networks that linked much of the region and beyond. In general, they were hunter/gatherers. Acorns were a dietary staple, nutritious and able to be stored for long periods of time. However, they were a very labor-intensive crop, as they had to be SRXQGHG LQWR ÀRXU DQG FRRNHG LQ RUGHU WR EH H completely unknown on the west coast; many groups cultivated tobacco as their sole agricultural crop. Contrary to popular opinion, the switch

7KH 1RUWKHDVW

Northeastern groups were complex in many ways. Economically, they relied on both hunting/gathering and farming. Many participated in a system of exchange with shells as the medium. After the 1600s, groups began manufacturing wampum, made from white and purple shell beads, using them to record important events and to formalize agreements. Exact copies would be made for each party participating in an agreement. Wampum was very highly valued.

Politically, groups were led by men called sachems. Many towns organized themselves into tribes or nations; some tribes further allied to form political FRQIHGHUDFLHV RI DI¿OLDWHG QDWLRQV 7KH ,URTX made up of an association of the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca nations, was the largest and most successful of these northeastern confederacies. Confederacies were governed by councils made up of leaders IURP HDFK RI WKH PHPEHU WULEHV WKH PRVW LQÀXHQ

2. The practice of potlatch is associated with what region?

1.5 Conclusion

Prehistoric North America was home to a numerous and diverse array of SHRSOHV ODQJXDJHV UHOLJLRQV DQG FXOWXUHV 6R as the Bering Land Bridge and the Solutrean hypothesis suggest that the ancestors of these groups arrived in the Western hemisphere at least 14,000 years ago. The origin stories of most of the groups take another view, stressing the intimate relationship between “the people” and the land they lived in; many origin stories state that the land was created exclusively for the group. The earliest groups in the Americas are referred to as Paleo-Indians. Clovis SRLQWV DUH RQH RI WKH PRVW LPSRUWDQW DQG FORVH Paleo-Indian era. Changes in the global climate helped to bring the Paleo-Indian period to an end. The death of the megafauna meant that humans KDG WR ¿QG QHZ PHDQV RI VXEVLVWHQFH 7KH $UFKDL the archaeological periods following the Paleo-Indian, are characterized by the development of plant domestication and the beginnings of organized agricultural activities. Many of the groups of North America became agriculturalists, relying primarily on the Mesoamerican triad of corn, beans, and squash. The surplus of food from agriculture enabled the development of complex towns and cities such as the Mississippian Cahokia settlement. Regional geography also played a role in shaping groups; for instance, groups on the Plains came to be characterized by relying on the buffalo as a main source of food and resources for subsistence.

1.6 CRITICAL THINKING EXERCISES

- What was the relationship between economic trade and political and social development in societies such as the Mississippian and Anasazi? What kinds of development does trade encourage?
- How are religion, politics, and social formation connected in groups such as the Cheyenne and Iroquois? Are there any kinds of discernible patterns? What are the ties between religion, politics, and social formation in our society?

1.8 CHRONOLOGY

The following chronology is a list of important dates and events associated with this chapter.

Date	Event
14,800-13,800 BCE	Monte Verde site, Chile
14,000-10,000 BP	Bering land bridge migration
12,000-8,000 BCE	Paleo-Indian period
12,000-14,000 BP	Vero Man site
8,000-1,000 BCE	Archaic Period
1,000 BCE-1,000 CE	Woodland Period
10,000-5,500 BP	Domestication of the Mesoamerican triad
500-1400 CE	Mississippian culture
700-1300 CE	Anasazi culture
1000-1492 CE	Pre-Contact era

1.9 END NOTES

1 Russell Thornton, American Indian Holocaust and Survival: A Population History since 1492 (Norman :University of Oklahoma Press, 1987); Henry Dobyns, Their Numbers Became Thinned: Native American Population Dynamics in Eastern North America (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983).

2 Clyde Tucker, Brian Kojetin and Roderick Harrison, “A Statistical Analysis of the CPS Supplement on Race and Ethnic Origin” Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bureau of the Census. http://www.census.gov/prod/2/gen/96arc/ivatuck.pdf.

3 Jason A. Eshleman, Ripan S. Malhi, and David Glenn Smith. “Mitochondrial DNA Studies of Native Americans: Conceptions and Misconceptions of the Population Prehistory of the Americas” Evolutionary Anthropology 12 (2003), 7-18.

4 Bruce Smith, “Eastern North America as an independent center of plant domestication” Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, vol.103, no. 33 (August 15, 2006). http://www.pnas.org/content/103/33/12223.full.

ANSWER KEY FOR CHAPTER ONE: UNITED STATES HISTORY BEFORE COLUMBUS

Check your answers to the questions in the Before You Move On Sections for this chapter. You can click on the questions to take you back to the chapter section.

Correct answers are BOLDED

Section 1.2.3 - p. 7

1. Origin stories
   a. explain where a group came from
   b. explain a group's place in the world and their relationship with it
   c. promotes a common cultural identity
   d. ALL OF THE ABOVE

&OLYLV SRLQWV DUH PRVW FORVHO\ LGHQWL¿HG ZLWK ZKLFK PLJUDWLR

   a. BERING LAND BRIDGE THEORY
   b. Coastal Migration Theory
   c. Solutrean Hypothesis
   d. European origin

Section 1.3.4 - p. 17

7KH 3DOHR ,QGLDQ HUD LV PRVW VWURQJO\ DVVRFLDWHG ZLWK ZKDW W

   a. Ceramic pottery
   b. The atlatl
   c. CLOVIS POINT
   d. Basketry

2. The Mississippian culture is known for ____
   a. the kiva as the center of religious worship.
   b. MOUNDBUILDING.
   c. a tradition in whaling.
   d. hunting megafauna.

3. The region of the present-day Southeastern United States was likely one of the world's independent centers for plant domestication.
   a. TRUE
   b. False

4. The _____ are ancestors of today's modern Pueblo peoples, and their cultures share much in common.
   a. Mississippians
   b. Clovis peoples
   c. Vero Man peoples
   d. ANASAZI

Section 1.4.4 - p. 22

7KH 0RXQQLQJ :DUV ZHUH DVVRFLDWHG ZLWK ZKDW UHJLRQ"

   a. THE NORTHEAST
   b. California
   c. The Plains

G 7KH 3DFL¿F 1RUWKZHVW

7KH SUDFWLFH RI SRWODWFK LV DVVRFLDWHG ZLWK ZKDW UHJLRQ"

   a. The Northeast
   b. The Southwest
   c. The Plains
   d. THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

3.