SECOND EDITION

# NATIVE AMERICA

## A HISTORY

MICHAEL LEROY OBERG

WILEY Blackwell

**Michael Leroy Oberg** is Distinguished Professor of History at SUNY-Geneseo. The author of seven books on Native American history, Oberg received a SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching in 2003 and a Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Scholarship in 2013.

*Native America: A History, Second Edition* offers a thoroughly revised and updated narrative history of American Indian peoples in what became the United States. The new edition includes expanded coverage of the period since the Second World War, including an updated discussion of the Red Power Movement, the legal status of native nations in the United States, and important developments that have transformed Indian Country over the past 75 years. Also new to this edition are sections focusing on the Pacific Northwest. Placing the experiences of native communities at the heart of the text, historian Michael Leroy Oberg focuses on twelve native communities whose histories encapsulate the principal themes and developments in Native American history and follows them from earliest times to the present.

# Native America

## *A History*

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# Introduction

In this second edition of *Native America*, I hope to convey to you something of the history of America's native peoples. As in the first edition, I will not cover everything, and I have tried to avoid what it seems to me are the pitfalls of textbook writing: an effort to be encyclopedic, to leave nothing out. I do not want my reader to feel like he or she is awash in a sea of facts and data disconnected from any coherent narrative. Textbooks too often encourage students to view the past as a collection of names and dates and places and forget that history—the study of continuity and change, measured across time and space, in peoples, institutions, and cultures—is so much more than that. History, the philosopher R. G. Collingwood aptly noted long ago, is "nothing capable of being memorized."

I hope to provide students interested in the Native American past with an understanding of how the varied parts of the story fit into a larger whole. My goal is to tell a story of native peoples, to advance an argument. To that end, I focus upon twelve native communities whose histories encapsulate what I see as the principal themes and developments in Native American history.

The Pueblos of the Rio Grande Valley in today's New Mexico and the Chumash peoples of coastal Southern California confronted Spanish soldiers and Franciscan missionaries each for the first time more than two centuries apart. Both rose up against a colonial system that brought devastation to their communities. Both lived under successive Spanish, Mexican, and American regimes. The Pueblos received enormous attention from non-Indians, some of whom sought to civilize and Christianize them and others who indulged their fantasies about the Pueblos' ways of living for a variety of purposes. Throughout, the Pueblos quietly resisted those who intended to transform them. They never fought a war against the United States, for instance, nor have they ever signed a treaty. Yet the Pueblo communities stood firmly at the center of many of the most interesting discussions of American Indian policy. The Chumash, on the other hand, slipped into relative obscurity at the end of the nineteenth century, so much so that some Californians assumed that they had gone extinct, a product of epidemic and chronic diseases introduced by Europeans, the brutality of the mission system, and intermarriage with non-Indians. Their "re-emergence" in the late 1960s and 1970s, in a sense, shows the resilience of native peoples and their ability to turn up in unexpected places, but also how a native community's assertion of Indian identity can spark ugly and acrimonious debates in societies that claim to tolerate diversity.

The Powhatans of Virginia greeted the English colonists at Jamestown in 1607 but had emerged as a regional power in the Chesapeake Bay over the course of the preceding decades. Many Americans know something of the mythical tale of Pocahontas and John Smith, but fewer understand the important role played by native peoples in the early history of this continent.

*Native America: A History*, Second Edition. Michael Leroy Oberg.

By looking at the experience of the Powhatans—a collection of village communities unified under the leadership of Wahunsonacock and his heirs—from their initial attempts to welcome the English and incorporate them as subject peoples within their expanding chiefdom, to their growing disillusionment with the colonists' territorial aggressiveness, to the attacks they launched against the English in 1622 and 1644 and the wars that followed, and their subjugation and reduction to the status of tributary peoples, we gain insight into how Indians viewed those episodes that Europeans called "first contact," "colonization," and "conquest."

The Powhatans survived the English onslaught, though at great cost. They faced new struggles as native peoples living "behind the frontier" in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They faced continuing assaults on their dwindling land base and way of life, but also the efforts of white Virginians to classify them along with African slaves as peoples of color. In the first half of the twentieth century, they confronted a systematic and racist campaign to eradicate all traces of their existence from the state's vital records. The Powhatans have consistently fought against those who attempted to erase them from history.

Native peoples were not simply acted upon by their would-be colonial overlords. Leaders like Uncas of the Mohegans forged alliances with the newcomers and used the threat of English violence to extend his power over neighboring native communities. He provided the English with intelligence and allies, but at the same time worked to preserve enough strength to demonstrate to the English that they needed the Mohegans, who could pose a substantial threat to the colonists should they become disaffected. This approach worked for a time—Uncas played as large a role in shaping New England's early history as did any of the region's Puritan founding fathers—but the Mohegans soon enough found themselves surrounded by English settlements, their lands and their way of life under siege. In many ways they conformed to what colonists hoped they might become: they converted to Christianity, dressed like their neighbors, farmed their lands, and served as soldiers in times of war. They were consistent friends to the English. But they also preserved in the midst of a white population that greatly outnumbered them a distinct native identity. That is a noteworthy accomplishment, one that defies the long enduring image of the "Vanishing American," and that students ought to understand. Today the Mohegans live upon what remains of their ancestral lands. Thanks to their enormously profitable casino, they have reemerged as a major power in eastern Connecticut.

The Senecas, the westernmost of the Five, and later Six, Nations of the Iroquois League, occupied a critical space in the European struggle for empire in North America, but they were never mere pawns in an outsiders' game for control of the continent. Their actions, the meaning of which are debated intensely by historians, anthropologists, and archaeologists, always were directed toward the protection of Seneca interests and the interests of the broader Iroquois League. They confronted waves of epidemic disease and numerous invasions of their homeland by enemies both native and European. Still, they were a power with whom their rivals had to reckon. They suffered the dispersal of their population following the American Revolution. They faced the efforts of state and federal authorities to "remove" them to new homes in the west, to reeducate their children, and deprive them of their lands. Yet they still reside on reservations that, if any number of people had their way, they would have left long ago. Owing to gaming and the retail sale of cigarettes and gasoline, as well as powerful assertions of their enduring sovereignty, the Senecas continue to inspire envy, admiration, and outrage amongst their neighbors in western New York.

The peoples who came to be known as the Caddos confronted three imperial powers: the Spanish, the French, and the United States. Their experience reveals the creativity with which native peoples adjusted to the new worlds created by European colonists. They held these newcomers at bay, taking from them what they wanted but rejecting much else. Increasingly, however, they found themselves less able to resist the Europeans, a process that needs to be understood in detail. No longer necessary as allies and trading partners, and with their lands coveted by growing numbers of settlers, the Caddos were driven out of their homes along the Texas–Louisiana border and relocated. The Caddos' history of movement neither began nor ended with the Indian removals of the Jacksonian period. It was not until 1867 that the United States finally established for them a reservation. Even here, security proved elusive. Much of this land they lost in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The Caddos ended up sharing their reservation with, among others, their Kiowa enemies, a people whose historic movements covered a vast expanse of the Great Plains. The Kiowas resisted fiercely the efforts of agents, missionaries, and soldiers to confine them to their reservation. The Kiowas' experience allows us to analyze the devastating price native peoples paid for resisting the United States, but also the integrity and determination of a community that struggled to preserve the core elements of its culture in the wake of military defeat. Like many native peoples, the Kiowas transformed their reservation from a prison into a homeland.

Not all of the Plains tribes resisted the United States. The Crows, who live today on their reservation in eastern Montana, viewed their expansive and aggressive Lakota Sioux enemies as a more immediate threat than the United States, and they acted accordingly to secure an American alliance. Befriending the United States, however, provided the Crows with few benefits. Crow leaders helped their people make the difficult adjustment to reservation life, rallied opposition against the efforts of those who in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries hoped to break apart and appropriate their lands, and rejected the efforts of the United States to reshape their tribal government during the era of the Indian New Deal in the 1930s. Settlement on reservations could be a harrowing and demoralizing experience for native peoples, but the Crows' experience shows how they survived, how they acted to defend their way of life, and how they continue to innovate to promote and protect the interests of their community.

The Dakota, or Santee, Sioux, relatives of the Crows' Lakota enemies, attempted to incorporate the first European traders they encountered into a network of kin-based relationships. Over time, the Dakota bands learned that Europeans would not reciprocate and that they would not respect Dakota ways if they did not have to. In 1851, the Dakotas accepted a reservation in Minnesota that brought with it the worst abuses of that system. Federal forces brutally crushed their short-lived but violent uprising in 1862, an episode that demonstrated clearly the fundamental flaws in federal Indian policy in the era of the American Civil War. The Dakotas did not disappear. Today, they occupy reservations in three states and operate some of the most profitable tribal gaming enterprises in the country. Those profits, in places, have benefited individual tribal members but they have also underwritten efforts to diversify Dakota economies, improve health care and education, and preserve Dakota language and culture.

The Salish-speaking peoples of the Puget Sound region in today's Washington State, new to this volume, have histories that in many ways parallel those of the Plains tribes, even if they lived in a lush region that bore little resemblance to the harsh Great West. They confronted a host of explorers and traders before Americans began arriving to settle on their lands in the

middle decades of the nineteenth century. They were compelled by American officials to sign treaties consigning them to life on reservations. And yet they did not disappear. They continued to shape the history and culture of the "Salish Sea." They stand at the center of some of the most vigorous debates over the rights of native peoples and native polities under the United States Constitution.

The Cherokees are best known for the Trail of Tears they followed to new homes in the west in 1838, a result of Andrew Jackson's policy of Indian Removal. Four thousand Cherokees died during this forced relocation. Americans are less aware of the fact that Cherokee history did not end with their removal, and the Cherokee experience offers an example of how eastern native pioneers created new homes for themselves in the American west. The Cherokees reestablished their constitutional government in the Indian Territory, only to split apart along sectional lines during the Civil War. The Cherokees survived this crisis and others as well, and continue to demand from the United States respect for their sovereignty.

Federal forces drove the Potawatomis west in 1838 as well. The Potawatomis called this ordeal the "Trail of Death." Many Potawatomis died along the way. But Potawatomi communities began moving long before Americans called for the ouster of all Indians living east of the Mississippi River, and many of them in later years returned to their homelands in the western Great Lakes. They moved for a variety of reasons: to settle near the Catholic missions established by French Jesuit priests; to improve their position in intercultural trade; to avoid the raids of native enemies; and to reconstitute communities broken apart by land loss, disease, or military defeat. The Potawatomis' history, like that of many native peoples, has been one of continual motion in an effort to preserve core values. Deciding the precise content of those core values often was a contentious process for the Potawatomis.

We will concentrate on these communities, while not neglecting the tangled and complex relationships they maintained with the colonial powers and, later, the United States. A word on terminology is in order. I use phrases like *native peoples*, *Indians*, and *Native Americans* interchangeably. Each of these terms, of course, contains flaws, but in the absence of convenient and easily comprehended alternatives, I have decided to stick with them. Careful students will remember that it was often the prerogative of the colonizer to name the colonized, of the discoverer to name those they discovered. That is how American history always has worked, and we continue to confront the problems this has caused. Alert students will question the terms employed by non-Indians to describe native peoples, and keep in mind that these labels seldom bear much relationship to what the group in question calls itself.

These native peoples lived lives of enormous diversity, and their varied experiences make clear the difficulties of generalizing about Native Americans and their history. These groups cannot be viewed as monoliths. There are Cherokees in Oklahoma, removed there during the Jacksonian period, but there are also Cherokees in North Carolina who managed with difficulty to remain on their lands. The Cherokee Freedmen, the descendants of slaves once owned by the Cherokees, contest vigorously their continuing marginalization within the Cherokee Nation. The Tonawanda Band of Senecas disagrees with the Seneca Nation of Indians on a number of issues including gaming and religion. Both assert powerfully a sovereignty they believe the United States acknowledged in the 1794 Treaty of Canandaigua. There is no one Potawatomi tribe, and it appears that there never was; indeed, there are today nine different Potawatomi communities located in Kansas, Michigan, Wisconsin, Oklahoma, and Ontario, Canada. Many of the constituent communities that made up Powhatan's chiefdom in Virginia still exist, but they no longer are unified under a single powerful leader. The Chumash of Santa Ynez, the only federally recognized Chumash community, represent only a small

portion of the thousands of Californians who trace their descent to the region's native peoples. Chumash and non-Chumash alike debate, intensely at times, who ought to be considered legitimate and "real" Chumash. We will focus upon these native peoples, and others, and place them, and their varied experiences, at the center of this narrative. We will look at the local level. It was here that the conflicts and controversies emerged that shaped federal policies, came before the federal court system, and, on occasion, exploded into vicious warfare. It was at the local level where Indians confronted what one historian called the "three horsemen of the Indians' apocalypse": disease, warfare, and the encroachment of white settlers on native land, a resource that Indians and non-Indians used, and at times continue to use, in incompatible ways.

This second edition of *Native America* has been entirely updated, and coverage of the twentieth century expanded considerably. To help instructors and students make use of this text and to get the most out of their studies, I have created a supplemental website at www.michaelleroyoberg.com that includes documents, bibliographic essays, images, maps, suggestions for writing assignments, and a blog.

The point I would like students to understand as they make use of these materials is that native peoples do not exist merely as an adjunct to American history. They have stories of their own. They were not merely acted upon by Europeans. They are more than the subjects of federal Indian policies. Native history at times flowed through channels distinct from that of the United States. We will discuss these histories, and allow the experiences of these communities to rest at the center of our story. We will learn, I hope, how native peoples debated and discussed amongst themselves the courses they should follow as they confronted the newcomers who sought to remake their world, how they found native means to live within what became the United States, and to respond to or resist or ignore or shape the policies meant to control their lives.

# 1

# Myths and Legends

## The Beginning of the World

So many accounts of this continent's past begin with Europeans striding ashore, claiming this "new found land" and its human inhabitants for their respective empires. These ambitious assertions always have been challenged by native peoples, but nonetheless, over time, jurists and scholars inscribed them in American law and in the written histories from which the law springs. And with heads bowed, or with a bounteous welcome, native peoples in too many of these accounts greet their colonizers as saviors, whatever their initial misgivings. When the Algonquian-speaking peoples of Ossomocomuck first saw the English colonists sent to occupy "Virginia" in 1585, for instance, the English scientist Thomas Harriot reported that they "began to make a great and horrible crye as people which never before had seene men appareled like us." Confused and savage, "they made out cries like wild beasts or men out of their wits." Soon they calmed themselves, in Harriot's eyes, and stopped acting like beasts, and regained their wits, but only after the newcomers presented them with gifts that demonstrated and confirmed their benevolent intent. These native peoples soon would consider the great power these newcomers seemed to possess, and wonder whether they were "gods or men."

Today many Americans still believe that it is with the arrival of Europeans that their nation's history begins. We could find, if we looked, dozens of accounts of "discovery" that differed from Harriot's only in their details. These moments of encounter, depicted so often over the years in the work of American artists, historians, and myth-makers, represent the opening of a grand story—the discovery of America, the growth and development of the United States, the conquest of the American frontier. All that happened before these seminal moments, these dynamic processes, has been ignored or trivialized by earlier generations of historians, who celebrated the progress of a new nation, conceived in liberty. Yet even in Harriot's account we can see that native peoples were not merely waiting for Europeans to arrive, and American history to begin. Their beliefs, values, fears, hopes, and experiences all informed how they reacted to the arrival of these unfamiliar newcomers with whom they would create a new world. The people of Ossomocomuck incorporated these English colonists into a world where native rules prevailed.

Too often the words and phrases we use when we attempt to tell this story privilege Europeans, and their perspectives, over those of native peoples. Words like "Indian," for example, or phrases like "Native American," of course are flawed. They would have meant little to peoples whose names for themselves often translated as "people" or "the real

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people" or the "real human beings." But the problem with words goes even deeper than this. Too many historians, for too long, have relied upon flawed dichotomies: there was a "pre-contact" or "prehistoric" period that came before "contact" and before the arrival of Europeans ushered in the "historic" era. Native peoples obviously had long histories on this continent before Europeans arrived. They interacted and exchanged with and fought against native neighbors near and far, and these contacts bred a host of cultural practices that pertained to their "contact" with others. They did not simply drop these practices when Europeans arrived.

Words can be tricky things. Colonists "*settle*" but Indians do not: they are *nomads* who *wander* and *roam*. Europeans plant crops, but Indians do not, according to conventional wisdom; colonists serve as *soldiers* while native peoples fight as *warriors.* Language can emphasize difference, and an emphasis on difference can be misleading. In reality, the differences between natives and newcomers at the outset might not have been as great as our flawed language leads us to believe. Both natives and newcomers, in general, lived in towns. Both grew crops and relied upon agriculture to stay alive. Both supplemented their agricultural produce with sources of protein they acquired systematically. Native peoples in the east, for instance, managed forests, burned underbrush, and generated new growth that attracted game that could be more easily "harvested" by hunters. Newcomers, meanwhile, turned their livestock loose and allowed it to forage and fend for itself. When the "settlers" got hungry, they went out into the woods to hunt down their nearly feral cattle and hogs.

The very notion that the European "discovery of America" began the "colonial period" in American history is deeply flawed. Discovery did not reveal a new world to Europeans so much as it brought into contact two worlds, both very old. Europeans arrived on the edge of lands long inhabited by native peoples. Through the first half of the nineteenth century, native peoples controlled the vast majority of what became the United States. Their cultural traditions, and patterns of thought, and ways of comprehending the cosmos, shaped the lives of the people who called this "new world" home. While colonists clung, at times precariously, to the coast, casting their eyes eastward toward the Atlantic much more than westward, native peoples controlled the continent's interior. To understand *this* American history, a history of the peoples who were here first, we must commence our story long before the Europeans, sea-weary and frightened themselves, stumbled ashore in a world that was new only to them.

So we shall begin at the beginning, at the start of all things. The Powhatan Indians, the Algonquian-speaking peoples of Tsennacommacah, what English-speaking people later would label the Virginia coastal plain, told an English chronicler in 1610 that a "Great Hare" had decided long before Europeans arrived "how to people this world, and with what kind of Creatures." So began the Powhatans' tale of how the world came to be. The Great Hare made "divers men and women and made provision for them to be kept up yet in a great bag." The Great Hare struggled to protect the Human Beings from enormous "Caniball Spirits" who wanted to eat them. Their safety at last assured, he made the water and the fish and the land "and a great deer which should feed upon the land." But the Great Hare had enemies still. The Four Winds grew envious of his creation and killed the deer. The Great Hare, not so easily discouraged, "took all the hairs of the slain deer and spread them upon the earth with many powerful words and charms whereby every hair became a deer." The Great Hare then opened his bag of tricks and freed his people, placing "them upon the earth, a man and a woman in one country and a man and a woman in another country, and so the world took first beginning of mankind." So the Powhatans' tale of creation, their genesis, begins not with a man created in God's image but with a rabbit, a figure capable of great deeds who could harness extraordinary powers.

**Figure 1.1** Emanuel Leutze's painting, *The Founding of Maryland* (1861), offers a romantic depiction of Indians welcoming the first European settlers in 1634. Courtesy of the Maryland Historical Society.

The people who came to be known as the Cherokees, who lived in a vast territory in the interior of the American southeast, told a different story. They called themselves Yunwiya, the real people, and they lived in a crowded cosmos. At first, they believed, the earth was all water. The animals lived above in a sky world, but they felt crowded. They wondered if more space might be found below. The Water Beetle went to look. He dived to the bottom of this world of water and came up with a clump of soft mud, which began to grow and grow until it became a floating island, affixed to the sky with four strong cords. Other animals followed, giving shape and texture to the earth, setting the motion of the sun across the sky. The people followed, but they shared this new world with giants, water serpents, little people, ghosts, and spirits. Animal bosses, meanwhile, took care of their own kind, and watched closely relations between the human and the other-than-human beings.

The earliest of these ancestors of the Cherokees were Kanati, a hunter, and his wife Selu. She cut up and washed in a river near their house the meat that Kanati brought home from a hunt. One day their son, who played beside this river, found another child, a stranger, who had emerged, magically, from the water. Selu and Kanati knew that the strange boy had come from the blood of the game. They decided to raise the mysterious child as their own.

The two boys grew and played together. One day, they decided to learn how their father hunted. The strange boy changed himself into a tuft of bird's down. Surely this was no ordinary child. Carried by the wind, he followed Kanati unnoticed. He watched Kanati perform a number of rituals, and then followed his father as he climbed a distant mountain. At a certain spot, and aided by the powerful rituals that he had conducted so carefully,

Kanati lifted up a large rock that covered the opening to a cave, out from which sprang a large buck. Kanati killed the deer with a single arrow and carried it home to Selu.

The strange boy told his brother what he had witnessed, and together they returned to Kanati's rock and let loose all the deer, and then the raccoons, rabbits, turkeys, partridges, and pigeons. They ignored their father's rituals and paid the animals no respect, teasing them when they entered the world. Kanati was furious. He climbed the mountain, lifted the rock, and brought out four jars that he found deep in the cave. These he opened and out came bedbugs, flies, gnats, and lice. The bugs attacked the boys. For ignoring the rituals, they would be punished.

But not chastened. They returned home, hungry and tired. Selu had no meat for them, for there could be nothing to eat when the proper rituals were ignored. Selu told the boys that she would go to the provision house to get them something. Ever curious, they followed her and watched secretly how she produced their food. They watched as Selu, the Corn Mother, leaned over her empty basket, rubbed her stomach, and filled it halfway with corn. They watched her rub her armpits, and fill the basket with beans. Convinced that their mother was a witch, the boys decided that they must kill her.

Selu, a woman of great power, a creator of life, knew her boys' intentions. She loved them still, and she instructed them on what they needed to do to feed themselves and, someday, their people. "When you have killed me," she told the boys, "clear a large piece of ground in front of the house, and drag my body seven times around the circle, and stay up all night and watch, and in the morning you will have plenty of corn." The boys murdered their mother, but they followed her instructions only in part. They cleared only a few small plots of land, and dragged Selu's body only twice around the circle. Where her blood fell, corn began to grow, and by morning it was ripe and ready. But because the boys had not done all that she had asked them to do, Cherokees learned from Selu's tale, "corn only grew in certain places."

Like the Cherokees, the people of Iroquoia, which included today's upstate New York but also a much larger region through which Haudenosaunee people regularly traveled, found their origins in a Sky World. A man and a woman lived there, on opposite sides of a hearth. Every day, the woman crossed to the other side of the fire and combed the man's hair. Soon she became pregnant and gave birth to a daughter. The Haudenosaunee called her Sky Woman. When she reached adulthood, her father's spirit told her to visit the distant village of the man who would become her husband. Like her mother before her, Sky Woman and her husband slept on opposite sides of the fire. When Sky Woman mysteriously became pregnant, her husband, filled with jealousy, uprooted a large tree and pushed her through the hole in the sky.

Sky Woman fell. The animals of the air and water below saw her falling. Ducks flew to catch her on their wings. They carried her down and placed her on Turtle's back. Muskrat succeeded in bringing mud from beneath the water which, when placed on Turtle's back, became the earth. On that world that grew on Turtle's back, Sky Woman gave birth to a daughter. There the little girl grew, and in time she became pregnant with twins by the spirit of Turtle.

The Good Twin, born first, was known by different names—Sky Grasper, or Tharonhiawagon. He was followed into this world by his evil brother, Tawiskaron, who chose to kill his mother by emerging into this world through her side. Tawiskaron convinced Sky Woman that it was Tharonhiawagon, and not he, who had slain their mother.

So Sky Woman banished the Good Twin, and cherished instead the killer of her daughter. Tharonhiawagon, a selfless exile, worked to improve Iroquoia. This he did during his years in the wilderness with the assistance of his father, the Turtle. At every step, Tawiskaron and his spiteful mother undermined his work. At last, the two twins fought and with the assistance of

ritual, the Good Twin triumphed. But he could not repair all the damage his brother and Sky Woman had done. He could not make the rivers flow both ways at once, as he had intended. He could not lower the mountains raised up by his brother. With so many hardships and dangers facing his people, Tharonhiawagon taught them how to survive in this world, and showed them how to grow corn and the ceremonies and rituals necessary to keep the world in balance.

The formation of the earth on Turtle's back was the first of two founding stories recited by the Iroquois. The second involved the formation of the Iroquois League, the union of the Haudenosaunee Five Nations—Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, and Senecas, in the metaphorical Longhouse that stretched from east to west across present-day New York State. The story of the league's formation focused upon a man named Hiawatha, left deranged by the grief caused when he lost his daughters in the endemic violence that lacerated Iroquoia. "Feuds with other nations, feuds with brother nations, feuds with sister towns and feuds of families and of clans," one telling of the "Deganawidah Epic" went, "made every warrior a stealthy man who liked to kill." Mourning and grieving, Hiawatha wandered into the woods where he encountered Deganawidah, the Peacemaker, a transcendent bearer of the Good News of Peace and Power. The Peacemaker gave to Hiawatha strings of wampum, shell beads of great ritual significance, as he spoke the words of Condolence. The first dried Hiawatha's weeping eyes. The second opened his ears to reason. The last opened his throat so that he could speak.

As with the story of the creation of this world on Turtle's back, the Deganawidah epic taught villagers the importance of maintaining balance, of alliance and exchange among the peoples of the Iroquois Longhouse. The rituals of condolence became an Iroquois gospel, a message carried by Hiawatha and the Peacemaker to all the peoples of Iroquoia and beyond. The pair traveled through the war-haunted lands of the Haudenosaunee. They faced many challenges, but none greater than that posed by the Onondaga sorcerer Thadodaho, whose misshapen body and hair made of a tangle of writhing snakes symbolized the disorder of his mind. If Hiawatha had been deranged by violence as a victim, and his grief had rendered him senseless, Thadodaho represented the opposite extreme. His own violence and wickedness had damaged him. He was a killer and a sadist. Thadodaho resisted joining the League, but over time, Hiawatha restored him to reason and to a good mind. Hiawatha combed the snakes from his hair, and straightened out his crooked and deformed body. Thadodaho became the Firekeeper of the metaphorical Iroquois Longhouse, and his home at Onondaga, near present-day Syracuse, New York, became the ceremonial center of the Haudenosaunee. It remains so today.

It is not possible to tell when the Five Nations came together. Archaeologists have offered dates ranging from 1400 to sometime around 1600 CE. The process probably occurred gradually, over generations, as the Five Nations consolidated, developing the rituals of condolence that brought peace to the Longhouse. The Senecas, the westernmost of the Five Nations and the last to join, archaeologists suspect may not have become the "Keepers of the Western Door" until sometime very early in the seventeenth century.

In the Longhouse the fifty sachems, or chiefs, of the League gathered together to discuss matters that affected the League as a whole. The league sachems, appointed by the Haudenosaunee women who played so instrumental a role in community decision-making, became men of peace. At Onondaga, a Tree of Peace grew, with its roots extending in four directions. Those who wished could follow the roots to Onondaga and join in the Great Peace. With their weapons buried beneath the Tree of Peace, Hiawatha and the Peacemaker taught, "hostilities shall not be seen or heard among you," and peace "shall be preserved" among the Five Nations.

The Grand Council of the Haudenosaunee preserved the Great Peace that ended the constant warfare and grief that had damaged both Hiawatha and Thadodaho, through the rituals of condolence and through the exchange of gifts in the form of wampum. Its function was to preserve peace, power, and righteousness, to maintain balance and order, and to preserve a good mind.

Earth divers and worlds beyond the sky—so the people who came to be known as the Iroquois and the Cherokees came to this world. Other native peoples believed that they had emerged out into the world from beneath the ground, stories of creation that rooted them firmly, and quite literally, in their homelands. The peoples of the Red, Sabine, Neches, and Angelina river valleys of today's east Texas, who by the nineteenth century were known collectively as the Caddos, lived at first in a world of darkness, beneath the surface of the earth. So said their stories of creation. Here the people found themselves short of food, so they held a council. The leaders decided that some of the people should transform themselves into animals. They would live apart from the human beings, and allow the humans to hunt them for food. The animals each had ten lives and, according to a Caddo storyteller, "when killed the first time, the second life was to arise from the blood that was spilled on the ground, and so the third life was to arise from the blood that was spilled … and so on through their lives up to the tenth."

Yet still the Caddos lived in darkness. Led by Moon, the people and their animal relations moved westward through their never land until they emerged into the light, through the mouth of a cave near a lake somewhere on the south bank of the Red River. An old man first emerged into this landscape of myth and history. He carried in one hand fire and a pipe and in the other a drum. His wife followed, carrying corn and pumpkin seeds, symbols of the highly productive agriculture upon which the Caddos soon would rely. Others followed them, human and other-than-human beings, men and women and animals. All of them intended to come out from below but Coyote sealed the hole, enclosing the remaining people and animals under the earth. The people who had emerged out into the light grieved here, the "place of crying" in their language, for those they left behind. Their grief after a time assuaged, they spread out and split up and moved in different directions. They built mounds and ceremonial centers, cultivated their expertise as traders, artisans, and, eventually, farmers, and became members of the most socially complex communities between the Mississippi River and the Rio Grande. Caddoan peoples dominated the world into which they emerged for centuries before Europeans arrived and for more than a century and a half thereafter.

The Kiowas, who at the time they encountered Europeans lived on the Southern Plains, like the Caddos emerged from beneath the earth, and their story involves as well movement and migration before they settled upon a homeland. Saynday, an important figure in Kiowa legend, "was coming along in darkness" upon the face of a sunless earth. Saynday always was "coming along" in Kiowa stories: that is how many Kiowa stories begin. He wandered alone in a world without people and animals. Tired and lonely, he stopped to rest beside what he recognized as the rough bark of a cottonwood tree. There Saynday heard sounds—voices—coming from beneath the hollow trunk of the tree. "We are people," they told Saynday, and "we want to come out into your world." Saynday reached in and pulled the first person through a hole in the trunk, "and he watched in amazement as the people poured out as ants." As in the Caddos' story, not all who wanted to emerge into this world were able to do so. A pregnant woman, too large to pass through the opening, blocked the entrance and prevented many from entering this world. For this reason the Kiowas, whose name meant "coming out," were a small community, Saynday's people. He was their friend, he told them. He brought them the Sun and, he said, "I will teach you how to live in this world, how to find food to eat, and how to be happy."

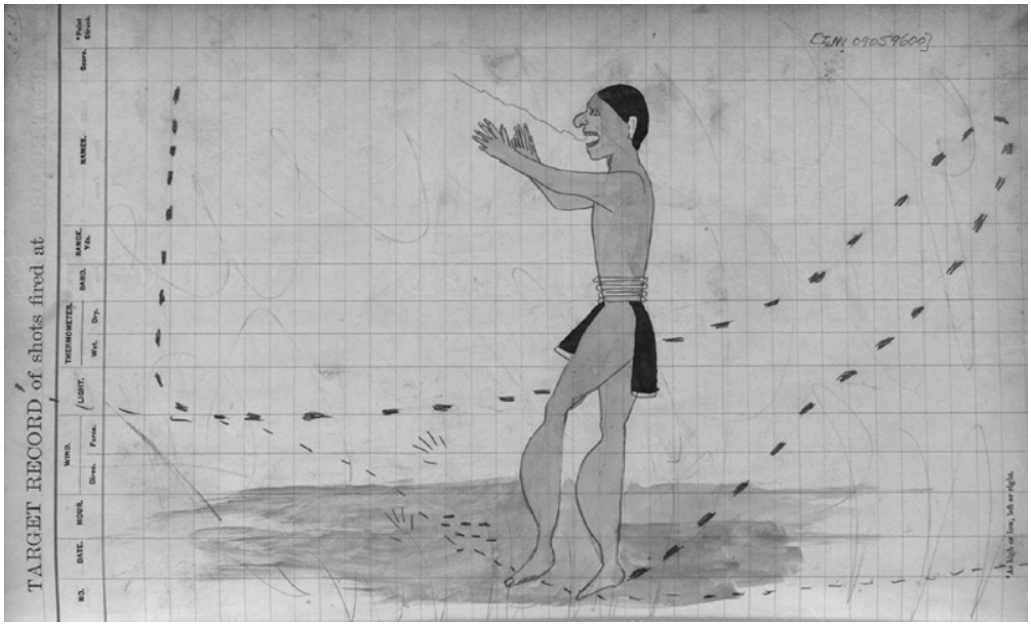


**Figure 1.2** Saynday, from Silver Horn Record Book, drawn by a Kiowa artist imprisoned at Fort Marion, in Florida, in the 1870s. Courtesy of National Anthropological Archives.

## Rules for Living

These are only a few of the many stories we could tell: of emergence, of sky worlds and worlds beneath, of Great Hares and Coyotes, and of animal helpers and tricksters and other mythic beings. They are stories of creation, of origins, and of how the world came to be. They tell of movement and migration, of how the peoples of this continent came to occupy their homelands. They are histories. They have been preserved, modified, related, and recalled for generations as the peoples of the Americas sought to make sense of their past and to understand their place in the world—no different, in this important sense, than the religious traditions and creation stories of any other culture.

There are, of course, challenges in using these stories as historical evidence. Operating on the notion that to accept these stories as true is to dismiss Christian traditions as false, for many decades non-Indian scholars have condescendingly described them as "myths" and "legends." They cannot be true, these students of the native past sniffed. Rich in metaphor and straddling the line between myth and memory, these stories do not provide scholars—whether archaeologists, anthropologists, or historians—with much in the way of specifics. Tracing how the stories have changed over time is often difficult, and some clearly contain anachronisms that indicate significant revision. They cannot tell us, moreover, when native peoples emerged on this land, how many native peoples lived here, and how the enormous variety of native cultures in the Americas developed. But these are questions that critical readers will recognize exist with all religious texts.

Since the first Europeans arrived on this continent they wondered about the origins of the "Indians" they encountered. Early Anglo-Americans observed the earthworks left by native

cultures, and they speculated about the people who made them. Most believed that the ancestors of the American Indians had migrated into America from Asia, but how, when, and from which parent group they originated remained a matter of debate. Some thought the Indians had descended, for instance, from one of the lost tribes of Israel. There seemed to be significant cultural similarities, these observers believed, between the cultural practices of the indigenous people of this continent and the Jews of the Old Testament. This hypothesis had a short life, and the Bible offered little additional guidance for those who wanted to understand Indian origins. Thomas Jefferson, for his part, excavated ancient burial mounds near his home in Virginia, and collected word lists from a variety of languages. Eighteenth-century Americans, like Jefferson, believed that through the study of comparative vocabularies a judicious scholar might discover the origins of the American Indians. Jefferson's studies led him to conclude that America's native peoples were the parent stock of the peoples of Asia, but few people, then as now, took him seriously.

Indeed, the evidence suggests that people first crossed into North America at Beringia, not a "land bridge" but a vast expanse of tundra and grassland in places 1000 miles wide occupied by large game animals and hunters. The movement may have taken many centuries and occurred in waves. But the earliest human arrivals in this continent need not all have arrived by crossing Beringia. They might have paddled along the coasts, from Asia to America, exploiting coastal resources for their subsistence as they moved along the Pacific Rim. Archaeological sites found on the coast of Peru, and dated to approximately 13,000 years ago, suggest that such a movement was possible. Coming to America took place over the span of centuries, but most scholars agree that all parts of the continent were peopled by the ancestors of today's "Indians" 10,000 years ago.

They did not live in isolation. By the twelfth century CE, evidence shows that the earliest native peoples practiced agriculture, growing corn, beans, squash, and sunflowers, along with other crops, and that they engaged in long-distance trade. An archaeological site in northern Colorado dated to approximately 8800 BCE, shows that the occupants traded with communities as far as 350 miles away. The commitment to agriculture produced a surplus that allowed for an increase in population, and the development of complex societies like those at Chaco Canyon near the Four Corners area in the American southwest and the Mississippian chiefdoms of the southeast. These communities developed dramatically hierarchical societies, complex networks of intercultural exchange, and an elaborate ceremonial life.

Cahokia burst onto the scene about 1000 years ago, a major American city that arose in part in response to changes in subsistence and the political organization of Mississippi valley native peoples. Cahokia had an elaborate ritual life and a complex economy supported by the labor of many thousands of ordinary people. At the height of its power, Cahokia dominated the middle of the Mississippi valley. Its population ranged from 10,000 to 40,000, depending on how one counts the many people drawn into the city's orbit through subordinate economic alliances, or who labored as slaves to support the construction of ceremonial mounds, and, on occasion, whose lives were offered up in rituals involving human sacrifice.

Cahokia depended upon the people it could control, and an environment it could not. A growing population, coupled with an extended period of drought, depleted stands of timber upon which residents relied for building and for fuel. Deforestation eliminated habitat for the game animals that supplied Cahokia's people with the necessary supplies of protein. By the end of the 1300s, the population had drifted away and settled in a number of smaller communities.

While Cahokia rose in the east, Chaco Canyon, according to one historian, "bloomed in its heyday with a cultural vitality never seen in the region before or since." Comprising sixteen "Great Houses" containing thousands of rooms, along with hundreds of ceremonial kivas great and small and a variety of other buildings, Chaco Canyon stood at the hub of a network of perhaps seventy communities spread over more than 25,000 square miles of today's American southwest. Chaco's power declined dramatically in the late twelfth century, a product in part of extended drought. But environmental change was only part of the explanation. Chaco's priesthood failed to procure the rain needed to sustain maize agriculture and their own claims to spiritual authority. The community's leaders lost support, and the people moved away. Some moved to locations more productive for agriculture where they could reestablish ties with allied peoples. The Pueblos, descendants of the Mogollan, Hohokam, and Anasazi peoples of Chaco, may have followed this route to the Rio Grande valley. Some may have forged their own autonomous communities, and others may have returned to an existence based upon hunting and gathering.

Many of them experienced warfare and violence. The post-Chaco southwest was a violent world. Slightly more than 100 of the 177 villages in the region that archaeologists have excavated show signs of conflagration, and half of these have unburied bodies indicative of a massacre. Cities rise and cities fall. Some cultures succeed in confronting the challenges they face, while others do not. Though they did not leave the written records upon which history relies, they had histories, sometimes difficult to see, that mattered to them deeply.

How many people inhabited this complicated, interconnected continent before Europeans arrived has proven a source of intense debate among historians, archaeologists, and anthropologists. James Mooney, an important early twentieth-century anthropologist, estimated that the native population of the region north of the Rio Grande totaled only 1,152,000. Much later, anthropologist Henry Dobyns estimated a population as high as 18 million for the peoples north of Mesoamerica. Mooney and Dobyns both represent extremes, and the methods they used to arrive at their figures have been vigorously challenged. Most scholars with an interest in the question today accept a figure in the lower half of that range, between 4 and 7 million people in North America prior to the arrival of Europeans.

By combining myth and history, memory and the work of legions of scholars native and non-native alike from a variety of disciplines, we can learn much about how the peoples of America lived prior to the arrival of Europeans, and how they came to occupy their homelands. Take the Crows, for example, who today live on a reservation located in southeastern Montana.

According to tribal historian Joseph Medicine Crow, the ancestors of the Crows and their Hidatsa relatives originated in the western Great Lakes, a "tree country" where they mixed hunting with horticulture. Long ago, a drought struck the region, the game disappeared, and "the green earth was parched to brown." They sent out parties to search for food, but only the hunters who had gone west returned with bison. The people moved westward and "caught up with the buffalo herds … maybe even settling down as part-time hunters in what is now perhaps northern Minnesota and southern Manitoba."

They stayed here for a time, the Crows believed, but around 1550 they began to move to the south and west, either in flight from enemies or in search of better lands. At Devil's Lake in today's North Dakota, a Crow leader named No Vitals received a vision: a pod of seeds and instructions to travel to the west to the mountains and plant them there. No Vitals learned that his people "would someday increase in numbers, become powerful and rich, and own a large, good, and beautiful land."

No Vitals did not immediately act on this vision. His people moved to the Missouri River where they lived for a time among the Mandans, working the soil and hunting. It was not until the beginning of the seventeenth century, according to Crow tradition, that No Vitals decided to journey westward and plant his sacred seeds in the mountains. Using a dispute amongst the women over the distribution of meat as a pretext, No Vitals led some 400 of his followers away, beginning what Medicine Crow called "one of the longest and most dramatic migrations of any Indian tribe, covering thousands of miles over rough and rugged terrain, through intense winters and torrid summers, and consisting of over one hundred years of wandering." No Vitals and his people settled for a time in Alberta, but found the winters too harsh. They then moved south, slowly continuing their exodus, arriving finally at the Great Salt Lake before heading eastward again away from its undrinkable waters, crossing Wyoming and heading toward the southeast and Arkansas. Finally, they turned back to the northwest and settled in Crow Country, a stretch of land that includes today's Billings, Montana and Sheridan, Wyoming. This land, the Crow leader Arapooish said, "the Great Spirit has put in exactly the right place," for "while you are in it you fare well, but whenever you go out of it, whichever way you travel, you will fare worse."

The Kiowas, like the Crows, preserve in their oral tradition stories of a lengthy migration to their home near Rainy Mountain on the Southern Plains. Their story begins in the mountains of western Montana, a region of brutal winters and deep snows. They moved eastward, following very closely the path of today's Interstate 90. They became friends with the Crows, by now located in their homeland along the Yellowstone, and then moved into the Black Hills. They remained close to the Crows, and learned from them some of their important rituals, in particular their *tai-me*, or sun dance medicine. They remained in the Black Hills until they fell under attack by Sioux and Cheyenne raiders. They moved to the south fork of the Platte River and from there farther south to the vicinity of the Wichita Mountains and the headwaters of the Red River.

**Figure 1.3** *Tai-me*, Medicine God of the Kiowas. Courtesy of National Anthropological Archives.

During this migration, which began perhaps at the dawn of the eighteenth century and lasted for 100 years, the Kiowas, according to the novelist and storyteller N. Scott Momaday, came "of age as a people." They allied themselves with the Comanches and became a major power on the southern plains, trading and raiding across what are now the states of Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, and Kansas, and south into Mexico. They had found their home near Rainy Mountain.

The stories native peoples told of their origins allow us a window into how they understood their place within the cosmos and in the ordering of all creation. Europeans, many of whom themselves believed in stories of virgin birth and a talking serpent in a garden called Eden, who themselves professed to believe that the first Woman was crafted from the rib of Man, and that the Son of God came to this earth, suffered for the sins of the world, died, and was buried, and rose again on the third day, were quick to dismiss native stories as myth, legends, and utterly unbelievable superstitions. Many of their modern-day descendants continue to speak of Indian stories with similar condescension. But we should be careful here, for these stories were as meaningful and satisfying to native peoples as the Bible was to Christians. Those who would understand the Native American past must consider the archaeological, historical, and anthropological evidence, and they must be disciplined and critical as they do so. But we must, as well, accord native traditions and beliefs the same respect as any other body of myth or system of belief, Christian or otherwise. And the values and beliefs expressed in these stories—these myths and legends—are important because they reflect how native peoples understood the functioning of a universe into which Europeans soon would intrude.

We must be careful as well about generalizing. An enormous variety of native peoples lived across the continent, speaking hundreds of languages, and nourishing an immense diversity of traditional knowledge. Furthermore, we must be careful about how we choose to identify native communities. Groups like the Mohegans in today's Connecticut, for instance, emerged as a regional power in southern New England only in the seventeenth century. We do not have unambiguous evidence that they existed as an autonomous and independent group prior to the arrival of Dutch traders and English settlers in the 1620s. The communities that we label as "Pueblo" or "Caddo" or "Kiowa" or "Crow" also were dynamic, and subject to forces of historical change. We cannot and, indeed, should not assume, for instance, that the Cherokees we encounter in nineteenth-century Georgia are identical to the seventeenth-century inhabitants of the high hills in the North Carolina Piedmont. Peoples and cultures change, and careful historians and anthropologists will take that into account. We must remember that there were no "Indians" in America before Europeans arrived and imposed that and other labels upon them.

Still, there are enough beliefs, ideas, values, and views about the world that native peoples across the continent shared that we can, acting with caution and admittedly painting with a broad brush, make some general observations. Without question, native peoples saw the world in terms very different from European Christians, and these differences would become deeply important once Europeans arrived.

Native understandings of the cosmos and the place of human beings within it differed from that of Europeans. In the Christian Bible, God gave to man dominion over the earth and all that was on it. Native peoples lived in a participatory universe, one filled with sentient human and other-than-human beings. Humans interacted with an enormous variety of kin-like individuals. The other beings in this cosmos, indigenous peoples believed, could be hunted, harvested, and killed, but only if treated with the proper respect and the performance of the requisite rituals.

The indigenous peoples of this continent sought to preserve balance in their relations with each other and with the other forces that inhabited their world. To preserve this balance, they practiced ritual. Ritual allowed native peoples to acquire the power they needed to keep the world in balance. Only with ritual did the animals present themselves to Kanati and Selu's corn grow properly. This power went by different names: Algonquian-speaking peoples like the Mohegans called it *Manitou*; Iroquoians like the Seneca would have called it *Orenda*; in the west, Kiowas called it *dwdw*; and the Skokomish *shuy*. Whatever the name, the concept is common across Native America. Those who had power, and who paid attention to ritual, would experience success in warfare and in the hunt, and they would experience bountiful harvests. They would live well.

Human beings sought power. They entered trances, through privation and isolation, to receive visions. They sought meaning in dreams, as had No Vitals, or the guidance of shamans, men or women with enormous power and mastery over ritual. They danced, fasted, smoked, and prayed. They engaged in ritual to appease and to harness the powerful spiritual forces with whom they interacted, and that controlled the growth of crops, the supply of game, and the functioning of the world. With proper respect, they knew that they need not fear a bad harvest or a poor hunt or other misfortune. But should they neglect their rituals, or should their rituals fail them, native peoples believed that disaster could rain upon their communities. There could be no accidents, no random events. Bad things happened for a reason. Through ritual they hoped to keep things right. Through their rituals they mediated their relations with each other and with other beings in their cosmos.

In most communities in Native America, men hunted and fought and their role as hunters and fighters shaped their relationships with other beings in the cosmos. Native men hunted an enormous variety of animals. Men went out by themselves, in small numbers, but also organized large, communal endeavors involving hundreds of hunters. Indians on the edge of the Plains, like the Crows, organized enormous buffalo hunts overseen by spiritual leaders, in which hunters worked together to stampede herds of bison over cliffs. A Kiowa elder, as well, remembered that in the old days, before they had horses, they killed buffalo "by surrounding them and driving them over a cliff." The sight was, to the Kiowas, wonderful. "The buffalo were all piled up at the bottom, some with broken legs, others with broken backs," one remembered. The Kiowas, then, would be "full of meat." The Kiowas and their bison-hunting neighbors put the entire animal to use. Bison, Old Lady Horse recounted in 1882, "were the life of the Kiowas."

Hunting techniques such as the buffalo jump might at first glance appear wasteful, but hunting in Native America rested on a logic that would have seemed strange to Europeans. With proper respect and attention to ritual, nature could be infinitely bountiful. If hunters conducted the proper rituals, and treated the animals they hunted with proper respect, there could be no shortage of game. The line between human and other-than-human beings, they believed, was unfixed. Animals thought and reasoned. They rewarded right behavior and they could take offense if not treated properly.

Kanati, in the Cherokee legend, performed rituals before he ascended the mountain. A Cherokee hunter, in another story, wounded a black bear with an arrow. The hunter followed the wounded bear, and continued to hit it with his arrows, but the animal would not go down. Its strength puzzled the hunter. This was no ordinary bear. At last the animal stopped. He pulled the arrows from his body and gave them to the hunter. "You cannot kill me," the bear told the hunter, so "come to my house and let us live together." The hunter was fearful that the bear might kill him, or that he might go hungry, but the bear knew his thoughts and reassured him.

The bear led the hunter to a large cave, "full of bears—old bears, young bears and cubs, white bears, black bears and brown bears—and a large white bear was chief." After attending this "council," the hunter followed his new friend home. There the lines between human and other-than-human beings began to blur even further, a process repeated in dozens of stories from Native America. The hunter "had begun to grow hair all over his body and act like a bear." In time the black bear told the hunter that the villagers were coming, and that he soon would die. They could not remain together any longer. He gave to the hunter an important instruction: "When they have killed me they will drag me outside the cave and take off my clothes and cut me in pieces. You must," the bear said, "cover the blood with leaves."

The bear could see the future. As he predicted, the villagers soon came. They killed the bear "and then they dragged him outside the cave and skinned his body and cut it in quarters to carry home." They found the hunter, too, who at first they thought was another bear on account of his appearance. He had not fully returned to his human shape. The villagers wanted to take him home, to restore their lost friend to his kin and connections. Before he left with the villagers, however, the hunter followed the instructions that the bear had given him. He "piled leaves over the spot where they had cut up the bear, and when they had gone a little way he looked behind and saw the bear rise up out of the leaves, shake himself, and go back into the woods."

Successful hunters made a request, not a demand. So did fishermen. The Powhatans made offerings of tobacco smoke for their fish traps. Coast Salish people living along the waters flowing into Puget Sound performed rituals for the first salmon caught each year. They still do, aware that if they neglected their rituals the fish "would get insulted and not come anymore." The people relied upon the salmon. The line that separated human beings from salmon could blur from time to time. Stories of salmon who assumed human shape appear in the myths and legends of Coast Salish people. The salmon, thinking and reasoning, would only present itself to the people if accorded the proper respect. Animals could determine the fisherman's success or the outcome of the hunt. That is why Montagnai hunters north of the St. Lawrence River lectured incredulous Jesuit priests in the 1630s about the proper manner for treating the bones of the animals they had trapped. The Indians, according to Father Paul Le Jeune, "do not throw to the dogs the bones of beavers and female porcupines," and "they are very careful that dogs do not eat any bones of birds or other animals that are caught in nets" because, they said, "they will never be able to catch any more except with the greatest difficulty." Le Jeune thought all of this was nonsense, and he told the Montagnais so. Animals do not know, and they did not care, what humans do with their remains. The Montagnais' response reflected a great patience, and shows their genuine interest in educating their strange visitor. "Before the beaver is completely dead," they explained to Le Jeune, "its soul comes to visit the cabin of the man who kills it, and looks very carefully to see what is done with his bones. If they have been given to the dogs, the other beavers would be warned, and so they make themselves difficult to catch." Cautantouwwit, the benevolent creator to the Mohegans' Narragansett neighbors, for instance, sent a crow to carry corn and beans to the people. Southern New England Algonquians, like the Mohegans, refused to harm crows despite the damage the birds might do to their crops.

Stories like this are common across Native America. Animals must be treated well and with respect. As the Salish elder Vi Hilbert wrote, all things "had spirit and if you respected everything … it would serve us, but we had to show respect first." It is for this reason that the Dakota Sioux, according to one eighteenth-century observer, "bury the bones of the beaver

and elk very carefully after eating the flesh, thinking that the spirits of these animals have influence on living ones and will inform them how they have been treated."

Animals could cause sickness and misery if mistreated. They might avenge insults. They could withdraw themselves, leaving the real human beings to suffer hunger and want. The animals had feelings, hopes, fears, and affections, and they could both help and harm their human kin. It was for this reason, Old Lady Horse remembered, that "when the white men wanted to build railroads, or when they wanted to farm or raise cattle, the buffalo" tried to protect Saynday's people. "They tore up the railroad tracks and gardens," Old Lady Horse continued, because "the buffalo loved their people as much as the Kiowas loved them." The American invasion of the Plains, she said, was at heart a "war between the buffalo and the white men." At last, Old Lady Horse sadly recalled, the buffalo recognized that they could do nothing more to protect their people. They "saw that their day was done." The buffalo gathered in council, Old Lady Horse said, decided to enter the mountains, and go back into the earth.

Like hunting, warfare involved an intense commitment to ritual. Warfare was common in early America, but native peoples fought it in a manner that led Europeans to trivialize its effects. Indians did not fight "total wars" in the European sense. Those Indian "empires" that Europeans encountered seldom aimed at the complete dispossession of their enemies when they fought, and they seldom sought to eradicate their opponents' culture and identity. They did not occupy territory and did not, in general, deny their enemies the right to exist. Rather, men fought wars for certain specific and culturally significant purposes.

If men killed, albeit in the name of sustaining life, women created. They planted and tended the crops. They bore children. Across Native America, Indian traditions reflected a widespread belief in the power of women to create life. The birth of children took place away from men, perhaps to protect them from the procreative powers of women. Menstruating women separated themselves from the community. According to the Puritan chronicler Edward Winslow, who wrote about southern New England Algonquians like the Mohegans, menstruating women lived "certain days in a house alone, after which, she washeth herself and all that she hath touched or used." Men stayed away from menstruating women and, according to the seventeenth-century Jesuit observer, Chrestien Le Clerq, the women "are accounted unclean." The women lived by themselves during this period, Le Clerq observed, and they are not permitted, "during this time, to eat any beaver, and those who eat of it are reputed bad; for the Indians are convinced, they say, that the beaver, which has sense, would no longer allow itself to be taken by the Indians if it had been eaten by their unclean daughters." And Selu, of course, from whose blood corn grew, symbolized in part the power of women to create life.

Like men, women could not succeed in their roles as growers and nurturers without power, and ritual accompanied the entire farming cycle of native peoples. The Green Corn Ceremony, common throughout the Eastern Woodlands and especially so among southeastern peoples like the Cherokees, a ritual of renewal and rebirth, strengthened the community's ties to the land and obtained for it the cooperation of the spiritual forces upon which a bountiful harvest relied.

Men as life-sustaining killers; women as creators of life: men and women lived in balance, occupying different, but equally essential places in the native cosmos. Women, in many communities, remained superior within the village—the houses and in the surrounding fields. Men held supremacy in the woods and in those matters taking place outside the village, in the realm of warriors and animals. Each complemented the other. So unlike European communities, which sanctioned and institutionalized the subordination of women to men, many native

communities were matrilineal, with descent traced through the mother rather than the father. Women, in many native communities, wielded considerable power and influence.

Men and women sought to preserve balance in their relations with the variety of forces existing within their cosmos. Native peoples also sought to maintain balance in their relations with other communities. The native peoples of this continent, living themselves in thousands of communities and speaking hundreds of distinct languages, did not exist in isolation from one another. The archaeological record suggests that exchange was widespread. People exchanged ideas, rituals, and beliefs. Through exchange, communities learned from others technologies for hunting and horticulture. People—as prisoners, adoptees, spouses, and slaves—moved through these exchange networks, from one community to another, often crossing significant linguistic, cultural, and political boundaries as they did so.

As early as 900 CE, for example, the Caddoan peoples of the American interior had established far-reaching trade networks. They buried the elite members of these communities in mounds, the remains of which can still be seen in the heart of the continent. In these burials, archaeologists have found mica originally from the Atlantic seaboard, cotton and turquoise acquired from trading partners in today's "Four Corners" area, conch shells from the Gulf Coast, and copper from the Great Lakes. Trade tied the native communities that first inhabited this continent together in networks of exchange and alliance. Trade fairs, like those held annually in the sixteenth century along the Rio Grande and in the Upper Missouri River Valley, brought together an enormous variety of indigenous peoples.

Ritual governed the resulting relationships. The people who became known as the Caddos had developed an elaborate protocol for transforming strangers into friends. In every case for which evidence remains, a delegation of Caddos met the strangers some distance from the village. Led by the elite members of the community, the Caddos guided the newcomers into their village. The newcomers were bathed, and seats for the guests were prepared. Each side made speeches, stated their expectations, and then the calumet, a pipe, would be passed. The Caddos then began serving to their guests the feast they had prepared. They then exchanged gifts, an act that transformed strangers into kin and allies.

Similar rituals accompanied exchange throughout the continent. The Englishman John Smith was adopted by the Powhatan leader Wahunsonacock and appointed *weroance* of the Powhatans' band of English tributaries, even if Smith failed to pick up on the nuances of the relationship. Scores of European observers remarked upon the rituals of greeting and condolence employed by Iroquoian peoples like the Senecas, as the Haudenosaunee sought to bring their guests to a good mind, and to incorporate them through the exchange of words and wampum into the metaphorical Iroquois Longhouse. In each case exchange was more than a mere economic transaction: exchange established and preserved close social ties between the communities involved. In such a world, an inhospitable person was looked down upon; goods were shared freely. The exchange of gifts between trading partners, in the words of Iroquois orators, kept strong and bright the chain of friendship linking partners together.

## Bears

A final story. In February of 1677, the Jesuit Father Claude Allouez began a journey to preach to the Anishinaabe peoples in the country the French called "Illinois." Passing near the Potawatomis, Allouez learned that a young man from the community had recently been killed

by a bear. Father Claude knew the young man, a Christian convert whom he had christened Good Paulin. The unfortunate young man, Allouez learned, fired all of his arrows at the bear, but the animal—that other-than-human being—"feeling itself struck, although not by a deadly blow, rose up and sprang upon him, tore off his scalp, and disemboweled him, mangling and dismembering the entire Body." The bear had heaped upon the body of Good Paulin the type of scorn and derision that a warrior might unleash against a fallen enemy. The bear had attacked, an act of aggression that the Potawatomis felt they must avenge. So "the relatives and friends" of Good Paulin, Father Claude wrote, "went to make war on the bears." They sought vengeance, to set things right, to return the world to balance. "The war," Allouez concluded, "was so successful that, in a short time, they killed over 500 … telling us that God delivered the bears into their hands as satisfaction for the death of that Young man who had been so cruelly treated by one of their nation."

Allouez told this story because he thought it would interest his readers, and show them just how much superstition remained among those Indians to whom he and his brethren labored to bring the Gospel. Allouez knew that the bears were not a "nation," and that his God did not intervene in disputes between human beings and animals. And he knew that bears did not think and that they did not reason.

But did they? The Cherokees told the story of the hunter who lived with the bears and began to look like a bear himself. From his black bear mentor he learned how to hunt, and how to treat animals with respect. The Moravian missionary John Heckewelder, who encountered a Delaware hunter in Pennsylvania in the middle of the eighteenth century, recounted the following story: the hunter, Heckewelder said, had just shot the bear with his musket and the wounded animal cried out in pain. The hunter was disgusted. He spoke to the bear. "You are a coward," he told the wounded animal, and you "lay and whimper like an old woman." The hunters and the bears were at war, he explained, a conflict the bears had begun. Now, the hunter told the bear, "you have found the Indians too powerful for you and you have gone sneaking about in the woods, stealing their hogs." Had the tables been turned, and "had you conquered me," the hunter announced, "I would have borne it with courage and died like a brave warrior; but you, sit here and cry, and disgrace your tribe by your cowardly conduct." A wounded Potawatomi man, in another story, encountered men who transformed themselves into bears, who then stole his weapons. When he called them "Brother," they dropped what they had taken. Later, his wounds were treated by eight men, half of whom wore black paint and half of whom wore white. They promised to help him in the future. They then became wolves, and returned to the woods.

We can, like Father Claude, dismiss these stories as mere myths and legends. We might recount them, again like Father Claude, for the entertainment of our audience. But there is so much more going on here than this Catholic priest recognized. Human beings and other-than-human beings were kin. The Potawatomis visited by Father Claude, and their Ottawa and Ojibway neighbors, and scores of other native peoples as well, marked the treaties that they negotiated with Europeans with images of animals. For Potawatomis, these images represented their connection to a kinship network known as *nindoodemag*, part of a system for comprehending their world in which individuals in different communities saw themselves as bound by obligation and kinship to other humans who shared descent from the same other-than-human being. There were, for instance, otter people who looked like otters and otter people who walked upright and took the form of a human being. Shared souls, not shared blood, defined kinship and measured the ties that bound people together.

The events described by Father Claude and Heckewelder and scores of other European observers correspond in important ways with the origins stories, myths, and legends of native peoples. From them we can see that Europeans did not discover a "New World." Rather they intruded into an environment in which the native peoples of this continent had found ways to meet their material and cultural needs in emotionally, spiritually, and physically satisfying ways. They had, over the course of centuries, developed the means to maintain a critical balance, with their neighbors, amongst themselves, and with the spiritual forces that ordered their cosmos. They had developed ways of living and systems of belief that worked well for them, and allowed them to survive and comprehend their world in all its complexity. They did not live in isolation. They interacted with other communities, fighting with some and living in peace with others. They had devised culturally satisfying means for interacting and dealing with strangers, and rendering unfamiliar people familiar. When Europeans arrived they found themselves, at least at the outset, operating in a world governed by Native American rules.