For a list of books in this series please turn to page 479.

EARLY LATIN AMERICA

A HISTORY OF COLONIAL SPANISH AMERICA AND BRAZIL

JAMES LOCKHART
University of California, Los Angeles

STUART B. SCHWARTZ
University of Minnesota

c. 1983

which led to his spending a time in Lisbon. Still operating as part of the Italian colony, he worked with his brother and married the daughter of an Italian who was donatary captain of the Portuguese island of Porto Santo next to Madeira. The activities growing out of these connections were also typical: maritime mapmaking and residence in Madeira as agent of a Genoese firm involved in sugar. This led to voyages down the West African coast as far as São Jorge de Mina, where he learned of the gold trade at first hand. Thus by the time he approached the Spaniards with his famous project, Columbus had recapitulated the entire course of Genoese-Portuguese expansion, had been imbued with its maritime, commercial, and organizational lore, and had experienced the sugar industry as well as the African trade in gold and slaves. Even when he came among Spaniards, he found sympathetic Genoese in the financial circles of the crown and among the merchant-exporters of Seville.

A carrier of the commercial-maritime tradition thus (unwittingly) offered Iberia a means and rationale for passage to America. Once the Iberians were there, reconquest patterns could begin to assert themselves. Conflicts and accommodations of the most basic nature for the creation of new societies would take place, beginning immediately after the European arrival in the Caribbean. But at this point the topic transcends the notion of context, and we will deal with it as part of the first European activity in America.

2

Indigenous ways

Though complex and varied, the heritage of the Iberians of 1500 was simple compared to that of the peoples of the western continents. Perhaps the lands we call the Americas had been occupied for a shorter time in terms of millennia, but the variety of their peoples, languages, ecologies, economies, and social-political systems was so great as to invite comparison with all of Eurasia or all of Africa. We must therefore abbreviate our treatment even more than we did with the Iberians, choosing from the vastnesses of time and topic only certain elements present at the time of contact which were crucial to the shape of things to come.

General characteristics of indigenous cultures

"Indian" is of course a misnomer for the people the Iberians encountered. Not only did the name originate in a geographical misconception on the part of the Europeans, who imagined themselves near the East Indies; far more seriously, it did not correspond to any unity perceived by the indigenous peoples. Many groups were not aware of each other, and those groups which were in contact felt only the kinds of identity dictated by affinities (where such existed) of language, religion, life-style, and political unit. Not one of the peoples had a word in its language which could be translated as "Indian"; that is, the concept of distinguishing between the inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere and human beings from the outside was unknown. Consequently, there was no tendency to unite in common resistance to European invaders; rather, each polity sought the most advantageous situation for itself alone. Any sense of a broader "Indianness" grew only slowly out of the colonial experience, and even by the nineteenth century Indian self-consciousness remained centered on specific units harking back to preconquest times.

The question then arises, did the "Indians" have important common distinctive features? Should we even continue to use the term or one like it? Surely we should, for despite their variety and their lack of self-consciousness, the peoples of the Western Hemisphere

shared not only a geographical habitat but a common experience, giving them certain marked special characteristics in relation to the rest of the world's peoples. Relative isolation is the key. Of all the major ethnic-geographical branches of humanity, and certainly of all those who had agriculture, cities, and large political units, the Indians were the most isolated from the rest of mankind. Peoples, techniques, and disease strains had continued to pass back and forth over the entire great land mass of Europe-Asia-Africa for interminable centuries, on into modern times, whereas the Indian peoples, whatever sporadic contact there may have been, had for some thousands of years not been in continuous touch with the ecumene. In view of the research done in African history in recent years, it should no longer surprise anyone to know that there were multiple long-standing contacts between sub-Saharan Africa and other areas. Thus whereas a generation of European scholars liked to divide the world into "West" and "non-West," a far more real division would be "Indian" and "non-Indian." For all their differences of background and assigned status, Iberians and Africans in the New World were in some respects a single intrusive group, with some important common traits not shared by the Indians.

In a sense, the results of Indian relative isolation were superficial. Indian language, social organization, religion, and art are unique and uniquely valuable, like all things human; at the same time, it is not clear that they in any way fall outside the general range of variation for human groups of other continents. Only in the special areas of epidemiology and technology were there quite drastic, and very similar, effects of isolation from the larger mass. The larger an interacting human group is, the more disease strains and the more inventions it will generate. If humanity is divided for a long time into a larger and a smaller interacting group, when the two come together again the larger group will have more diseases to which the smaller has no immunity than vice versa; it will have developed more new machines, processes, domesticated varieties, and so on, than the smaller group. In these respects all the Indian peoples were alike. Despite differences according to climate, settlement type, and the like, Indians on both continents were to succumb in large numbers to diseases to which the incoming Europeans and Africans were already hardened. In technology, Europeans and Africans knew, for example, how to manufacture and use steel weapons, and this alone gave them ultimate military superiority in the New World, for though some Indian groups had great cities, pyramids, empires, and long-distance trade, none had iron and steel. Thus the New and Old

Worlds were alike in harboring a quite similar spread of societies, from the very small to the very large, from hunting-gathering bands to urban-centered agriculturalists, but because of some rather superficial differentials, the smaller sphere was highly vulnerable to the impact of the larger, once the two had come back into steady contact.

Thousands of years of history stretch back to the time of presumed migrations from Asia and a stage of big-game hunting across the length and breadth of both western continents; such things need not concern us directly here, any more than their counterparts in the history of the Old World. We need only a sense of the antiquity of certain kinds of developments, so as to grasp how very refined they had become and what deep roots they had. The domestication of food plants goes back millennia in the Western Hemisphere, far into the pre-Christian era, as do sedentary village life and the arts of pottery and weaving. The first millennium A.D. saw the growth of cities and large political units, as well as achievements in the arts and crafts that equaled or surpassed anything still existing when the Europeans arrived. By 1500 there had been two or three cycles of the creation and destruction of vast "empires" in Mesoamerica* and the Andes.

Whether or not certain basic innovations had been brought from outside the hemisphere has not yet been established with certainty. The important thing is that by the time of contact with Europe, everything in the Indian systems of life had undergone long processes of independent evolution and had its own strength, integrity, and rationale. This is the other side of the coin of the peculiar developmental course of the Western Hemisphere: At the same time that the area was left vulnerable to conquest and population loss, its basic modes of social, political, and economic life had an exceptionally strong flavor of their own and an ability to survive under great pressures.

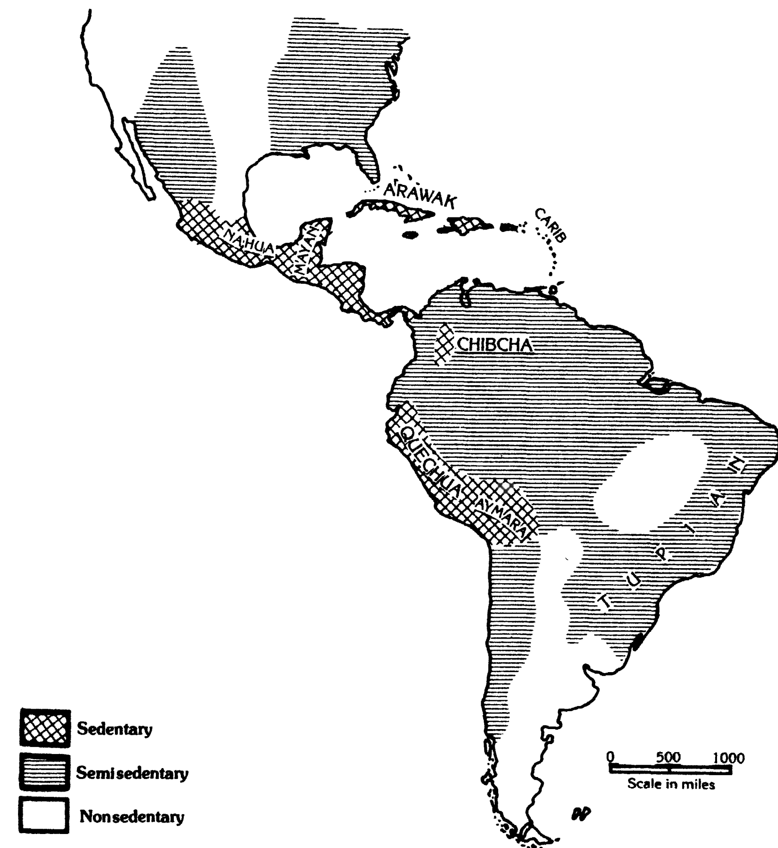
Social and technological innovations in the Western Hemisphere had a tendency to center in two areas, Mesoamerica and the central Andes, and to spread from there into other regions. The variety of American geography, however, prevented the development of any neatly concentric spheres. Because of the existence of pockets of especially wet, dry, or fragmented terrain, villageless hunters and collectors could live almost within hailing distance of a great urban

*A term used by anthropologists for central and southern Mexico and Guatemala as home of an interrelated set of high cultures in pre-Columbian times.

center. But in broadest outline, a scheme of classification of the Indian peoples, possessing considerable explanatory and predictive power for the postconquest period, can be based on the principle of degree of similarity to the Mesoamerican-Andean, or central, peoples. The central people's possession of permanent intensive agriculture, stable town and village sites, strong tribute mechanisms, and dense populations puts them in many respects in the same category as most of the peoples of Europe in 1500, a category which we will abbreviate as "fully sedentary," though in truth sedentariness is only one symptom of the entire complex (see Map 2). Population density might be an even more sensitive symptomatic indicator, if we knew it with exactitude. It now appears that central Mexico and the Peruvian–Bolivian region had a population measured in the many millions and that the population density was far greater than that of other areas (see Table 2). Yet the latter point remains somewhat controversial.

Our next category is "semisedentary." These peoples also had agriculture and villages, but cultivation and settlement shifted over the course of some years from one site to another; hunting was still vital, the delivery of tribute to superiors was not as important or institutionalized, and population, though it could be very substantial, was, most would agree, far less dense than among the central groups. Such peoples were to be found all along the periphery of the territories of the fully sedentary peoples, in parts of present-day Chile, Colombia, northern Mexico, and so on, as well as in many forested or wet tropical areas where the leaching of nutrients, regrowth of brush, or difficulty of clearing made continued cultivation of a given site impractical or unadvisable. A great swath of territory northeastward from Paraguay up the coast of Brazil and on into much of the Caribbean, as well as much of eastern North America, fits into this category.

The third category is "nonsedentary." These peoples might share large components of language, religion, and world outlook with historically related more sedentary groups, as in the case of the forest Lacandones and the famous Maya of Yucatan, but their lifestyle diverged sharply, as did their potential utility to any would-be invader, whether Indian or European. Few if any of these groups were truly nomadic in the sense of migrating indefinitely, like the prehistoric big-game hunters; most American peoples of fairly recent times have operated on the basis of maintaining rights to a quite well defined territory. Within that territory, however, nonsedentary peoples migrated frequently in a seasonal cycle of hunting and



Map 2. Approximate distribution of sedentary, semisedentary, and nonsedentary peoples at the time of European contact. (In viewing this quite rough scheme it must be remembered that the three categories are a continuum with no sharp lines of division and that a great many pockets deviated widely from the surrounding dominant culture type.)

gathering. Lacking agriculture, they had camps rather than villages; small bands were the normal social unit, tribute was token or unknown, and population densities were extremely low. Such peoples existed in parts of all the major regions but above all in those areas most inhospitable to sedentary life as then known: in the driest or wettest areas, on the plains, or in the thickest forests. The dry parts

Table 2. *Estimated indigenous population of America at the time of European contact*

	Estimated population	Percentage of total American population
North America	4,400,000	7.7
Mexico	21,400,000	37.3
Central America	5,650,000	9.9
Caribbean	5,850,000	10.2
Andes	11,500,000	20.1
Lowland South America	8,500,000	14.8
Total	57,300,000	100.0

Source: William M. Denevan (ed.), *The Native Population of the Americas in 1492* (Madison, Wis., 1976), p. 291. Used with permission of the University of Wisconsin Press. Denevan emphasizes the hazards of such estimates and recognizes that their surprising magnitude, especially for peripheral areas, is still to be well established.

of the Mexican north, the Argentine plains, and much of the Amazonian far interior are such regions.

Rather than stages of human development, the three categories represent primarily adaptations to certain environments, given a prevailing technology. Within that framework, one system was as capable of maintaining itself as another, one as complex in the totality of its relationships to an environment as the next. And being adjustments to environmental variables, the three systems we speak of were part of a single continuum, partaking freely of any characteristics appropriate to a given situation, so that the mix was never exactly the same in any two places. No people was entirely sedentary, none entirely mobile. Several of the Mayan groups, whose cities, provincial governments, and tax systems seem to place them fully among the central peoples, at the same time practiced shifting rather than permanent-site agriculture and in other ways shared characteristics with the semisedentary groups. A combination of traits such as this is a bit unusual, but it is no anomaly within the multidimensional spectrum of Western Hemisphere reality.

In general, it can be said that the Europeans concentrated their activities overwhelmingly in areas with fully sedentary indigenous populations and that other peoples held attraction only insofar as they resembled the latter. The semisedentary peoples were thus of

no more than secondary interest, and attempts to deal with the more mobile groups were a last resort. It naturally follows that the lands of the sedentary peoples should be the first and principal arena for the growth of Latin American society in the sixteenth century. We will then treat the central peoples first and more extensively.

Sedentary peoples

The "imperial" peoples

A correlation exists between empire and sedentariness in our sense; no peoples answer to the description of sedentary groups better than the inhabitants of central Mexico and the central Andes, the respective homes of the Aztec and Inca empires. It is vital to understand the nature of the correlation. Rather than creating sedentariness, the large tributary regimes that have been called empires fed on it; their borders stopped abruptly at the borders of sedentary life. Sedentary peoples antedated the vast agglomerates; over the centuries they had seen empires rise and fall and had experienced long periods of provincial autonomy, during which their way of life remained much the same. In general, the most spectacular large-scale phenomena of the preconquest Indian world are not as relevant to the postconquest situation as less visible mechanisms at the provincial level, mechanisms which survived the empires and which could support a European presence as well.

The distinguishing features of the sedentary peoples begin at the level of family and hamlet life. Intensive agriculture was the basis of that life; most often this meant maize cultivation, though the high-altitude Andean complex of potatoes and hardy grains was an equivalent. Permanent site agriculture meant that the local social-political unit (in central Mexico often called *calpulli*, in the Andes *ayllu*) held specific arable lands on a long-term basis, and individual families tended to retain the same plots for a lifetime or over generations. The integration of agriculture into the way of life was meaningfully symbolized by the fact that men shared fully in working the land, planting, and harvesting. Members of the group might live nucleated in a village or dispersed over the land; in either case there was a tight, stable set of connections of people with land and of the people with each other, since as far as we can tell most such groups married among themselves. Kinship ties and territoriality reinforced each other as the basis of a strong feeling of common identity. Indeed, the

minimal local unit at the level of the ayllu or calpulli was in many respects a microcosm of the society, and one would be justified in making it the basis for a general discussion of the sedentary Indian world.

Nevertheless, we will here adopt a different procedure, concentrating on a level between the local hamlet and the great empire: a provincial unit on the order of size of a European county or smaller, sometimes though not always centered upon an urban nucleus. There are two reasons for our emphasis. First, the provincial unit was to be the crucial one after the Europeans came; maintaining its integrity after conquest, it dictated the size and shape of jurisdictions and provided the mechanisms that allowed a concentration of the European presence. Second and just as importantly, there were many aspects of the total complex which either did not exist in the minimal local units or, if they did, served their purpose only within the provincial context, so that in some ways the province is the smallest self-contained unit intelligible on its own terms. Though hamlet groupings must have preceded provincial groupings in time of origin, one can make a case for the primacy of the province in the minds of the people living at the time of concern to us here. Province names were quite distinctive, while calpulli and ayllu names were repeated again and again, almost like street names in American cities. Patriotism, pride, and legend tended to operate in terms of the suprahamlet unit.

The bulk of the ordinary agricultural populace received land and other rights from the hamlet and provincial authorities, and in return, through well-established procedures, they performed public duties and gave tribute, which went first through the local authorities and then to the dynastic ruler of the province. The hamlet-sized unit was broken down into wards, each of which had a headman with various duties, including tribute collection. For central Mexico we know that the headman might have jurisdiction over anywhere from five to fifty households; older accounts of the Andean situation speak of an almost clockwork system of centurions and decurions, but recent research shows that at the local level the true picture may have varied as much from place to place as in Mesoamerica. Tribute consisting of products went along a well-defined route: The commoner gave it at the appointed time to his headman; he in turn to the hamlet head, who might have some assistants for the purpose; and the hamlet leader in turn to the provincial ruler or king, or rather to the latter's substantial staff of stewards and recordkeepers. For public works – building and maintaining palaces, temples, roads,

and irrigation systems, or working the lands of the lord – a system of draft rotary labor existed (in the Andes called *mita*, a term based on the word for "turn," and in central Mexico, *coatequitl*, once again "turn-work"). The duty rotated from ward to ward and hamlet to hamlet, the commoners working in their familiar units under the combined supervision of their own leaders and the ruler's men. For major projects, a large proportion of the population could be called out simultaneously. The system could also yield tribute products, that is, the rotary labor could be diverted to cutting wood, fishing, or any other economically productive activity, above all to planting and harvesting lands set aside to be worked in common or lands belonging to the dynastic ruler. In fact, in the Andes all tribute was conceived of as labor, performed by the commoner in expectation of reciprocal benefit from the ruler.

Provincial organization as it existed in central Mexico is easiest to grasp, perhaps only because it is best known. Though the provincial unit was called an *altepetl* ("water and mountain"), referring both to the people and to the entire territory, at its core was one large nucleated settlement or capital, typically containing several calpullis, as opposed to the scattered outlying hamlets, typically one calpulli each. The Spaniards were to call the former a *cabecera* ("head town"), the latter *sujetos* ("subjects"), a useful terminology which we too will follow at times. The economic specialties of the sujetos were exchanged at a public market in the cabecera. The latter contained also the palace of the dynastic ruler and the province's chief temple with its priesthood; on both counts, the area's tribute was channeled in toward the cabecera (see Figure 1).

This picture applies also to many parts of southern Mexico, but in other parts, in Guatemala, and above all in the Andean highlands, there appears to have been less nucleation of settlement. At the center was not a residential concentration so much as a ceremonial complex, with each calpulli or ayllu unit living in its own subarea. For the Andes, there is some question about the role or even the existence of markets. But the unifying force of tribute to a ruler, whether the *tlatoani* in central Mexico, the *batab* in Yucatan, or the *curaca* in the central Andes, was the same in all these situations.

Everywhere among the sedentary peoples there was the concept not only of a ruler but of a nobility, a set of interrelated lineages, the members of which stood apart from the commoners: They dressed differently, had other, lighter duties, monopolized the higher roles of government and religion, and had direct, individual control over certain lands and followers. The ruler was dynastic but rarely so by

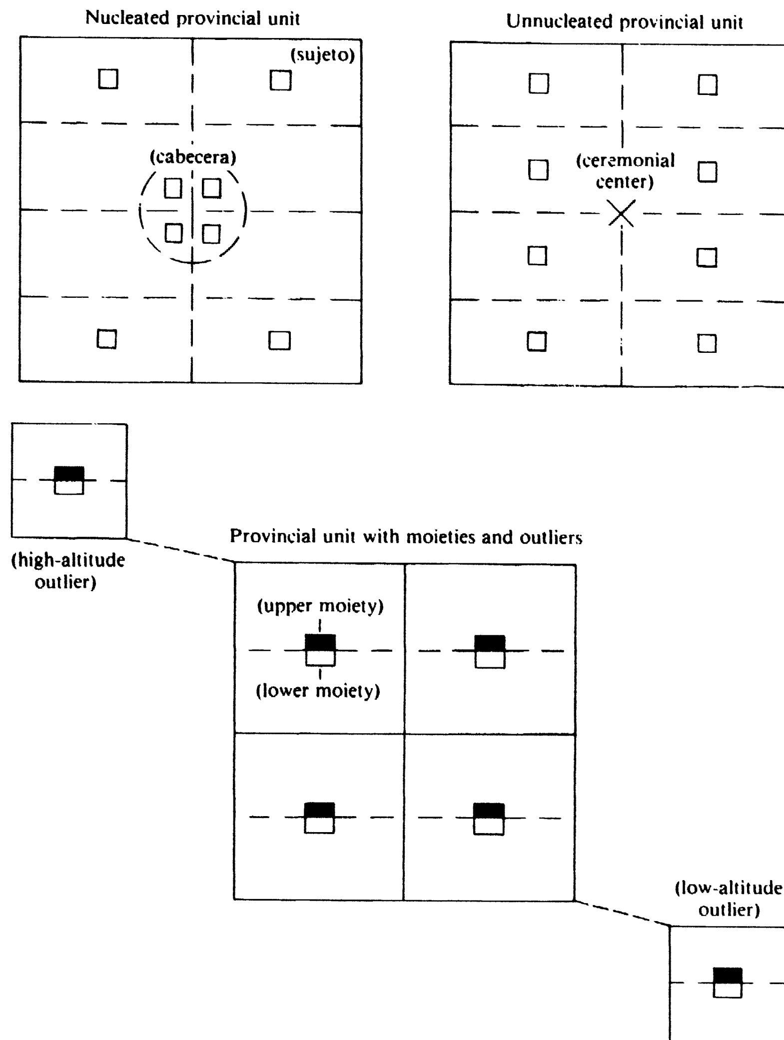


Figure 1. Schemas of some types of unit organization among sedentary peoples.

strict primogeniture in the legitimate male line as in early modern Europe; rather, the whole body of the mature nobles, a council of a kind, chose and legitimated the ruler from among various eligible members of the dynasty, whether brothers, uncles, sons, or nephews of the old ruler. These were unified societies, that is, noble and

commoner spoke the same language, and the same processes and ambitions were at play in the lives of both. But by the time of the Iberian conquest, a deep-seated consciousness of the separate role, life-style, and privileges of the nobility existed in the minds of both nobles and commoners.

The two most basic constituent groups of society, then, were a tax-paying body of commoners and a directing corps of nobles. Yet they were far from constituting the whole; a prime characteristic of the sedentary societies was the degree of specialization, the number of people who were neither nobleman nor agriculturalist. In Mesoamerica and the Andes, not only were craft skills spread among the populace, but there were numerous craft specialists, as well as (at least in Mesoamerica) specialized traders and merchants, all of whom to some extent were removed from agriculture and public duties.

Most especially, though, all the sedentary societies had a class of people who were direct dependents of others, who shared neither the duties nor the rights of ordinary commoners and were not full members of the local calpulli or ayllu group. This phenomenon bears a close relation to another, the constant movement of people in and out of the hamlet and province units. Among the peoples we are discussing, the organizational units were fully stabilized in one place, but the same cannot be said of the individuals. Individuals and small family groups were continually leaving one unit and joining another for reasons very familiar to us: overcrowding at home, opportunity elsewhere, the opening of new areas, the attraction of cities. What emerges from the early central Mexican records particularly is a process somewhat like the following: A small family occupying adequate land in a calpulli would increase beyond the supporting capacity of its allotment; if the calpulli had other good land free, a new allotment might be made, but if not, some of the younger members would go elsewhere, either to another calpulli, to the special domains of the ruler or powerful nobles, or to another province altogether. In his new situation the migrant would be marginal, outside the regular framework, a foreigner whose duties and rights emanated from his new protector and master. Around the ruler, on his extensive lands, there was often thus a group of nearly calpulli size dependent upon him alone. Not all members of this group would be new to their status, but in general they were recruited from the most marginal, recent, and alien elements. Another source of dependents was conquest. Interprovincial wars often detached a calpulli, or several, from one

province and attached it to another. In such a case many, or even the majority, of the inhabitants might be assigned to powerful leaders of the conquering province rather than become members of the regular calpulli-province structure. The proportion of dependents to calpulli members was higher the more recently acquired the area. In Mexico the dependents were a subclass of the ordinary commoners and were most often referred to by the same name, *macehualli;* over time they seem to have been constantly reconverging with the calpulli commoners. There was, to be sure, a special class of slaves who could be bought and sold. The origins of this group are, however, much like those of the other dependents: war captives, people in great economic necessity, orphans. Some early census records with actual listings of slaves show them mainly as having been brought as small children from the outside, carrying out functions much like those of the other dependents and eventually marrying among the local calpulli commoners.

In the Andes (which lacked actual slaves as far as we know) the dependents had a special name, *yana*, and a well-defined set of rights and obligations vis-à-vis their masters. As in Mexico, they did not hold ayllu lands or participate in community draft labor. They ranged from influential, wealthy chief stewards of lords down to the lowest menial. Although less is known of their origins than of their Mexican counterparts, in some cases at least the yana were ethnically or linguistically distinct from the main body of ayllu members. In general, the strength of this group seems related to the constant small-scale seasonal migrations demanded by the extremely varied and fragmented Andean environment, as we will have occasion to discuss later. With members of a single group holding lands far apart from each other and much traversing of the lands of others, it must often have happened that individuals took the opportunity to join other groups or that individuals and families were stranded in remote places.

Looking forward to the time when the Europeans would come, one can readily see how each of the three main social types in the sedentary societies would suit the requirements of an invading and occupying group. The basic commoner population could perform tribute labor and deliver agricultural and other products as it always had; the rulers and nobles could be intermediaries, through their traditional powers channeling labor and tribute to the conquerors; and the dependent group, already somewhat outside the normal structure, could become the conquerors' much-needed auxiliaries and personal dependents.

Landholding among the sedentary peoples is an extremely complex subject about which all too little is known, but there are a few important points to be made. First, we must distinguish between territory and land. The provincial unit was concerned primarily with territoriality or jurisdiction, with the notion that a certain area belonged in a general way to one people rather than to another. In Mexico it could happen that nobles would hold and work land in a province not their own, which caused no trouble as long as there was no challenge to sovereignty. The primary entity holding land in the sense of acreage to be cultivated was the hamlet group, the calpulli or ayllu. At this level, then, we must come to grips with the meaning of the concept of "communal" landholding. Communal it surely was, in certain basic ways. In general, only by virtue of community membership did individuals or families hold prime arable land, land which they could not alienate and which community authorities reallocated upon a family's extinction. It would be wrong, however, to set up communal landholding as something monolithic and entirely foreign to European ways. There were several important points of contact between the two systems.

First, most land among the sedentary peoples was not communally cultivated, that is, the norm was not an undivided area worked by all together but a plot held by one individual for his lifetime and worked by himself and his family. Only lands held by rulers, nobles, and priests were normally worked by the tribute payers as a group. Plots could vary greatly in size within a single community. In the Andes, reciprocal work was common, but it was individually oriented in that a person helped another work his land in return for the other's doing the same for him. Thus, despite considerable differences in the rationale, families, in effect, worked their own lands for themselves and paid taxes on the basis of them, much as in Europe.

Second, the rulers and nobles had not only personal dependents but lands which belonged specifically to themselves or their families. We have little certainty as to the exact status of such holdings, the extent to which they belonged in theory to the commonwealth, the noble house, or the noble individual. However, there is little doubt that the provincial rulers and the most powerful nobles in some manner held extensive private lands in various localities of the province, worked by their own permanent stewards and dependents, with periodic help from the mass of the commoners – a system in its essence identical to that of later Spanish American estates, except that in preconquest practice the holdings of an individual were often scattered in very small units over a large area.

Third, community control tended to be restricted to irrigated or otherwise prime arable land, leaving lands of marginal utility open to exploitation by anyone who thought it worth the effort. In Mexico at least, calpulli commoners might have "hill land" in addition to their main family plot, or "house land." The latter was inalienable, but marginal land could be and was traded or sold at the occupant's pleasure. Thus the concept of selling land or holding it on an individual basis would not be something entirely outside the experience of the sedentary peoples.

In several ways, then, the provincial units we have been discussing were a great deal like the Iberian province-municipality; both entities had a close generic resemblance to a city-state (the central Mexican provinces, indeed, were full-fledged city-states). Each contained all the principal traits and mechanisms of its respective culture, and each was quite autonomous and capable of survival on its own; with the Indian provinces it is striking that many institutions which are often thought of as imperial were deeply embedded in the local situation and not at all dependent on the empire's existence in order to function. The similarity extended to the matter of micropatriotism and separatism. As with the Iberians, every smallest province mistrusted all its neighbors and was forever inclined to split off from any larger unit of which it was, willingly or unwillingly, at the moment a part. With the Indians the feeling of provincial identity went so deep that each province felt itself a people and maintained its own cult and origin myth (however similar these might be to the corresponding phenomena among neighboring related groups).

In pointing out areas of contact between Iberian municipality and sedentary Indian province, we are of course not asserting any absolute identity. Only the central Mexican city-state was a close overall analog of the Iberian entity. Even there, aside from the deeper ethnicity and autonomy, there were aspects unmatched in the Iberian-style province. Through war and migration, some cabeceras had come to control subject hamlets scattered far outside their immediate hinterland. In some provinces there was a thoroughgoing moiety (dual) organization, in others a division into several parts. Such divergences were sometimes to cause problems for the Iberians, or, if they were not in direct conflict with Iberian goals, they might persist indefinitely into the colonial period, though ignored or misunderstood by the invaders. In the Andes such divergences were far greater, since the degree of urban nucleation was lower, moieties and double dynasties were rife, and holding scattered ter-

ritories in distant ecological zones was the rule rather than the exception.

Despite the predominance of provincial organization in determining postconquest structures and procedures, some supraprovincial aspects were highly relevant. In the millennia before European conquest, the sedentary peoples had a varied experience of provincial autonomy or life in confederacies, small kingdoms, large kingdoms, and empires; there was hardly an area that had not known each of these forms at some time or other. The changes came about largely through warfare or the threat of it. Thus there had grown up over the centuries a set of expectations and standard procedures surrounding conquest and territorial expansion. The conquered province would retain its identity, the essence of its local autonomy, and even its ruling dynasty. It expected, however, to pay substantial tribute (collected internally) to the conquerors, to acknowledge the conquerors' gods (while retaining local deities), and to see pressures exerted on the choice of local rulers. By intermarriage, by taking members of the nobility of the conquered group to live among the conquerors, and by even more direct and forceful measures, the conquerors often in effect named the local ruler; as long as the imposed rulers were of the traditional dynastic line, they usually met no insurmountable obstacles in securing their subjects' allegiance and obedience. Furthermore, in the expectation of conquest, weaker and smaller groups were accustomed to bargain with expanding powers, semivoluntarily accepting their overlordship in the hope of more favorable tribute terms and greater local independence than might be their fate after military defeat. Or, war having started, they might come to terms after one serious trial of strength. All of these practices naturally bore on the behavior of the sedentary peoples when faced with the Europeans; the more remarkable thing is the extent to which their expectations matched those of the Iberians, whose conquest lore also included notions of tribute imposition, change of religion and allegiance, and manipulation of local rulers, together with at least provisional local autonomy.

But what of the great empires which held sway over so many of the sedentary peoples and their richest territories? Actually, these formidable structures differed from earlier or smaller ones principally in the scale of their activities. They grew out of the provincial world, and hence their institutions were enlargements of local institutions and their procedures were the same. They too allowed local autonomy, preserved provincial units, and cooperated with provincial dynasties, concentrating on tribute collection and interregional

exchange and communication. For the Mexican sphere, the scholarly public already understands the situation quite well. Texts speak of how the Aztec empire originated as a confederation of three dominant provinces, whereas the subject provinces were under loose control and often desirous of regaining total independence, not to speak of central Mexican areas large and small which were not part of the Aztec system at all. But for the world of the Incas, we still must deal with the unrealistic picture lovingly constructed by generations of idealizers – first by the Inca nobles of Cuzco after the conquest, then by legalizing or nostalgic Spanish chroniclers, and then by writers of the earlier part of the present century. In this view, the Inca empire appeared as a vast welfare state regulating every aspect of its subjects' lives, insisting upon complete uniformity and turning the populace into little more than automatons organized in strict groups of ten and multiples of ten. The Inca empire was indeed as impressive a social-political structure as the world has seen. On analysis, however, its characteristic institutions – roads, messengers, warehouses, armies, garrisons, even houses of virgins of the sun – turn out to create a supraprovincial structure by tying together, adding to, and especially extracting from a set of provinces which continued to exist on their own terms (it becomes increasingly apparent, by the way, that the Aztecs had analogs to most of these institutions). Take the example of the Lupaca, a kingdom-empire of Aymara speakers in the highland Lake Titicaca region, near the present borders of Peru and Bolivia and in the heartland of the empire. After coming under Inca domination, the Lupaca not only retained their language, their entire internal organization, and their double dynasty of kings, but their kingdom actually expanded as they, in alliance with the Incas, subdued further neighboring groups. When the Spaniards arrived, the kingdom was still intact in this form, which it retained for quite some time even after that.

Under the Europeans the empires were to be destroyed and replaced by the invaders themselves. But even after they were gone, their precedent helped ease the way for the newly dominant group. The provinces were accustomed to delivering goods and services to outsiders; they were accustomed to having outside officials and stewards in their own territory, hastening the delivery. The European stewards and tax collectors thus stepped into a familiar slot; the parallel was so close that in Mexico the underlings of the Spanish encomenderos were called *calpixque* (stewards, literally "guarders of the house"), the Nahuatl name given previously to the tax collectors

of the Aztecs. When the Spaniards settled in great centers such as Tenochtitlan-Mexico City or Cuzco, tribute went not only through familiar channels but to a familiar destination. Another feature outlasting the empires was the corps of high imperial nobility existing in both capitals; enough of them survived the conquest and occupation to maintain their cohesiveness and the substance of their traditions for some generations. Not only did they receive somewhat special treatment from the Europeans but members of the local dynasties of surrounding provinces continued to seek marriages with them, so that interprovincial dynastic politics, centered on the capitals, did not entirely disappear.

Up to this point we have been emphasizing common traits of Mesoamerica and the central Andes. Without forgetting that for both preconquest and postconquest history the two areas constitute the core of an important unity, let us now discuss some salient differences between them. It was already seen that territorial organization varied considerably between a more nucleated central Mexican type and a less nucleated Andean type with subdivisions in widely separated ecological zones. There is no sharp overall differentiation, since parts of southern Mesoamerica veered toward the unnucleated pattern, and in Guatemala it was even common for highland groups to maintain distant lowland subject areas where cacao and other special crops were grown, whereas on the Peruvian coast there were provinces and kingdoms displaying a high degree of urban nucleation. Even so, one can say that in Mexico there was a push toward a nucleated settlement with a circle of contiguous surrounding hamlets as a goal; trade or conquest would provide needed products from a distance. In the Andes, the goal was that each province and indeed, it seems, each ayllu should have a complementary set of holdings in different microclimates. Such a procedure was feasible because in the equatorial central Andean area sharp variations in altitude created vastly different zones quite close to each other, and it was necessary because no zone by itself supplied all the staples of Andean civilization. Ideally, a group would want Pacific lowlands for cotton, medium lowlands for maize, higher land for potatoes and the like, bleak highland plains for llamas and alpacas, and eastern Andean wet hill land for coca growing. This system affected every aspect of life; ultimately it was responsible for the special strength of Andean traditions of rotary labor and colonization. In the Andes society was fully sedentary, territoriality was fully developed, and yet the people were quasi-migratory. The Andean peoples had made one kind of successful

adaptation to an extreme environmental challenge. The Europeans would not be willing or able to follow suit and would make their own adjustment, which included simple avoidance of the highlands as far as possible (far different from their acceptance of the more temperate and accessible central Mexican highland as a base).

Both Mesoamerica and the Andes knew maize, chiles, and cotton. In addition, each had some domesticated varieties not known to the other. The cacao grown in southern Mesoamerica was an important item of trade between that area and the central Mexican highlands, and it was to play a large role in the postconquest economy. But if the Andean region lacked this significant item, it had several others peculiar to itself: potatoes and other high altitude crops, as well as the narcotic coca, and especially the domesticated cameloids, the highland-dwelling llama and alpaca, which were important as pack animals, for meat, and for the wool that allowed the high development of Andean textiles.

In technology the two cultures were quite similar, but the Andeans had far more silver deposits in their territory (most of Mexico's silver lay to the north of sedentary settlement). Partly for this reason, the Mesoamericans did little with silver, whereas the Andeans had located deposits, mined them, developed sophisticated smelting techniques, and used the metal freely for artifacts. This aspect alone was to make Peru at first more valuable to Europeans than Mexico; in Peru there was to be utilization of indigenous techniques and trained personnel, as opposed to the new start that had to be made in Mexico. Since silver mining was to be the base of the postconquest economy, the differential location of the main deposits in respect to the bulk of the sedentary population was to have vast consequences for the general organization of the two areas in the postconquest period.

In the sphere of cultural achievements, one could write volumes comparing and contrasting Mesoamerica and the Andes. Only one striking difference need concern us here. The Mesoamerican peoples had writing systems, and the Andean peoples did not, though their *quipu* method (knotted-string calculation) was fully capable of maintaining statistics on an imperial scale. Both systems were esoteric arts known only to specialists, and being very different from European techniques, they did not long survive the conquest. Nor is it clear that Mesoamerican writing, as practiced when the Spaniards came, had either the intention or the capability of capturing running prose. Nevertheless, Mesoamerica had paper, ink, professional writers, and a veneration for writing. It is doubtless no accident that

many Mesoamerican peoples adopted the European alphabet for various kinds of communication and record keeping in their own languages from the sixteenth century forward, whereas the Andeans generally did not (or at least, searches have as yet revealed little evidence that they did).

Nonimperial sedentary peoples

Though many of the peoples just described were organized in relatively small autonomous units at the time of European contact, most of them had at some point been part of quite large and stable sociopolitical structures, and it is hard not to think of them in a general way as the "empire peoples." Still, as we have been emphasizing, it was not empire, organized priesthood and religion, great stone temples and palaces, or magnificently elaborate artifacts which were important for the postcontact period but the basic social, economic, and political structure at the local level. Any group which shared this structure, or most of it, fit into the same category from a postconquest perspective. And in fact, there were sedentary peoples who for reasons not always clear to us had neither experienced an imperial phase nor built stunning physical complexes. Their way of life is not nearly as well documented as that of the Aztecs or Incas, and among the great variety of American peoples they fade imperceptibly into the semisedentary groups, but we will briefly discuss two prominent cases to give some notion of the phenomenon. First we will treat a group deeply and clearly influenced by the central people's patterns, the Chibcha of Colombia, and then a group with greater apparent affinities to the semisedentary peoples, the Arawaks of the large Caribbean islands. Somewhat comparable groups were to be found scattered in many places, particularly around the periphery of the two empire areas and in the entire region of Central America and northern South America which separated the two. Also, many of the peoples of southern Mesoamerica came close to fitting in this subcategory.

The Chibcha of present-day Colombia were located in high valleys of the eastern range of the northern Andes, constituting a population that is sometimes estimated at around a million. Both women and men participated in a permanent intensive agriculture based on maize as well as the more specifically central Andean complex, including potatoes and coca (though the cameloids were lacking). Society included dynastic rulers, nobles, and tribute-paying commoners, and though yana-like dependents do not seem to

be mentioned, there were slaves. Markets were held on a regular schedule – in this the Chibcha were more like the Mesoamericans. The nature of organizational units is still a matter of some controversy. The smallest unit of which much is known was what the Spaniards were to call a partiality or captaincy, an endogamous group of perhaps several hundred or a few thousand occupying a distinct agricultural territory and led by a hereditary ruler to whom the Spaniards gave the title of captain. The members of the group largely lived scattered about the land they worked, five or six large house compounds together. The body of commoners worked lands held individually, but they also worked land for the captain and gave him cotton cloth, gold, and coca. Speaking in central Mexican terms, the captaincy seems to have fallen somewhere between the individual calpulli and the full-fledged province as to size. In any case, captaincies or combinations of them served after the conquest as the basis of encomiendas for Spaniards that were much like those of Mexico and Peru.

It was to matter little, then, that in some other respects the Chibcha were not at all comparable to the Aztecs or Incas. Although there were two large kingdoms, centered at Bogotá and Tunja, respectively, with rulers who were venerated almost in the manner of the Inca emperor, and although there were high priests and temples, allegiances shifted frequently, temples and palaces were of wood, cane, and mud, and the rulers were surrounded by only moderate concentrations of people and power. Under the high rulers were a certain number of secondary rulers, over whose selection the former exercised some control; each of the secondary rulers in turn had several captaincies in his district. A chain of tribute obligations extended from bottom to top. But in frequent warring (against less sedentary groups at lower altitudes on all sides and among the Chibcha themselves), the mid-sized groups sometimes went from one kingdom to the other or asserted independence, and, even more indicative of the instability of the larger entities, captaincies frequently switched from one secondary ruler to another. After the conquest, conflicting claims of fealty and independence were rife. Though the Spaniards were to take the royal residences of Bogotá and Tunja as the sites for their own main settlements, they would build tribute and labor arrangements mainly on the captaincies.

The Arawaks, inhabitants of the chain of large northern Caribbean islands, present a case of a sedentary people with an even less elaborate material culture or superstructure, whose way of life nevertheless supplied an adequate immediate basis of support for a

substantial European presence. Having migrated from northeastern South America, they differ from the Chibcha in showing closer affinities, in their agriculture and aspects of their social structure, to the semisedentary peoples of the South American east coast. Estimates of their population have risen over the years to seven or eight million for the island of Hispaniola (to be the first center of Spanish occupation) alone. If this is correct, densities would have been comparable to those of the empire peoples. This is more than one might expect from an agricultural system which has been described by some as a shifting one of slash-and-burn; more recently, however, it has been denied that cultivation shifted and in some areas it seems that irrigation was practiced. There is room for uncertainty on both the exact nature of the agricultural practices and the exact size of the population, but we may postulate a relatively large and dense population for Hispaniola at least. As with the eastern mainland peoples, root crops, especially cassava, which were produced on fields worked into a series of large mounds, or *conucos*, were the staple; maize and other seed crops were also present.

Sizable kingdoms, with secondary rulers over subdistricts, existed, on a pattern not unlike that of the Chibcha, but the unit basic to social organization was the village, of perhaps a thousand or two thousand inhabitants, surrounded by the conucos from which it maintained itself. In the villages, or in the larger ones at any rate, were social groupings by now familiar to us: a *cacique*, or chieftain; some *nitainos*, or nobles; ordinary commoners; and dependents called *naborías* (the Spaniards were to use the words "cacique" and "naboría" for comparable types all over the Indies). The residential pattern, however, was less like that of the individual family dwellings of most fully sedentary peoples and more like the multifamily units of certain semisedentary groups. Fifty or even a hundred people would live in a single large structure of pole and thatch; the occupants were closely related to each other, and we may infer that this large cohesive unit carried out more of the functions of society, and the superordinated institutions fewer, than among the central peoples. The house of the cacique was larger than the others and his preeminence was marked by a special seat and a litter, but his revenue was limited in that he apparently did not receive tribute in kind for himself but only in time of war for the general cause. On the other hand, his people worked on conucos for him, and he had general authority in the distribution of work. This was to be a sufficient mechanism to make Spanish encomiendas viable in the postconquest period, that is, in the few years before the culmination of a devastating demographic decline,

typical of what happened on European contact to all dense congregations of people in the warm lowlands of the Western Hemisphere.

Semisedentary peoples

Large areas of preconquest America were inhabited by ethnic groups who were intermediate between agriculture and a life of hunting and gathering, in many cases for clearly environmental reasons. These were predominantly forest peoples. They had villages and cultivated fields which were vital to their sustenance, but cultivation sites shifted frequently, and village sites tended to follow suit over time. From a combination of necessity, tradition, and preference, these peoples placed great emphasis on hunting and fishing as a pursuit and a source of food. Indeed, one of the most universally applicable and most crucial diagnostic traits in analysis of the American peoples is that among the fully sedentary groups both men and women devoted much of their lives to agriculture, whereas among the semisedentary peoples women had the primary responsibility for agriculture and men, though they may have helped clear the land, were primarily hunters and warriors. Although it is generally thought that this type of economy could not sustain the population density characteristic of the central peoples, recent scholarship has tended to place estimates much higher than before.

These groups were culturally rich, possessing in some variant a great deal of the technology prevalent among the empire peoples, plus much that was specifically their own. The variety among them, as to customs, details of social organization, and type of plant or animal life at the base of the diet, is kaleidoscopic. For our purposes, they are perhaps most simply defined by what they lacked relative to the fully sedentary peoples. Even at the village level, tribute paying and community rotary labor were not known, nor was there a strong chief empowered to demand levies; there might be a headman in some cases, but he was concerned more with ceremonies and war. Specialized social classes generally did not exist, neither nobles nor commoners nor dependents, though some peoples had temporary captives taken from their enemies, nor were there high priests and special temples. Though ethnicity was strong, village organization was loose and unstable; not only did the site shift from time to time, but in many cases individual constituent lineages came and went as they pleased. Supravillage confederations were fleeting, for specific defensive or offensive purposes. Above all, there was no good-sized provincial unit with strong coherence, permanence, and

identification with a specific compact core territory; that is, there was no potential base for encomiendas in the usual sense. Not only was there little in the way of surplus produce, there were no mechanisms capable of delivering produce and labor to a conquering group, no intermediaries to channel it.

But if, in general, it was what the semisedentaries did not have that was to be crucial for the postcontact period, one trait which they *did* have was to be very important: Their potential to combat an invader was a great deal higher than that of the empire peoples. The bow and arrow was much more prevalent than among the central groups, and the level of proficiency was as high as might be expected among constant practitioners of war and hunting. Poisoned missiles existed among some groups, the only weapon indigenous to the hemisphere which was capable of putting combatants roughly on a par with opponents equipped in the European style. Forest terrain made ambush and retreat easy, and the fragmented nature of society meant that every tiniest unit had to be conquered separately.

Peoples answering in a general way to the above description were to be found in many parts of the hemisphere. Some were located on the edges of the central peoples. One large block was in the woodlands of eastern North America; another, even larger, was spread through the entire vast tropical rain forest region of South America, with the three main culture-and-language groups of Arawakan, Cariban, and Tupian. The Tupians especially had carried out long migrations in recent times, and on European contact branches of the family were located in Paraguay, along the main part of the coast of Brazil, and in the Amazonian basin, not to speak of pockets elsewhere. They were to have more direct interaction with Europeans, both Portuguese and Spanish, than perhaps any other comparable culture, so we may appropriately use them as our principal exemplar of a semisedentary people.

Tupian agricultural practices were standard for groups of this type, involving the technique known as slash-and-burn. Parties of men cleared a patch of land of as many of the larger trees as possible, circled the trunks of others to kill them, and then burned off the underbrush, leaving the women to plant, tend, and harvest the crops, of which the primary one was manioc. Under wet tropical conditions, fields so cleared were productive for only two or three years, after which the process was repeated elsewhere. Hunting and fishing, performed by men, was a vital activity, as usual for a semisedentary people; in this case fishing predominated, either in the Atlantic or in the extensive inland river systems. It has in fact been

suggested that the tropical forest villagers were more than anything else riverine folk.

The principal social unit was a tightly knit kin group or lineage, usually dwelling together in one large house, with anywhere from thirty to sixty interrelated nuclear families. A senior male stood at the head of this entity; such power as he had emanated mainly from the fact that the other inhabitants were his junior relatives; he might have several wives or concubines, and his in-laws were obliged to help him perform certain tasks. Rather than class groupings or technical specializations, the divisions of society were by age, sex, and distinction in war. Age groups were important in the division of labor, and sex groups even more so, as we have seen. Indeed, some villages had a special men's house which constituted the community's principal means of ceremonial and social integration. Villages varied in size, being larger where resources were richer; they might contain four to eight of the large lineage houses just mentioned. As a result of constant intervillage warfare, palisades were common.

If there were groups like the island Arawaks, transitional between sedentary and semisedentary, there were also semisedentary groups veering far toward the fully mobile hunters. One could have put the Tupians themselves in such a class during their migratory phases. At the time of European arrival, a prominent group of this type were the Caribs of the Lesser Antilles, the people after whom the Caribbean is named. Originally from the mainland, they had wrested the smaller islands from the Arawaks within recent generations and were still expanding and raiding at the Arawaks' expense.

Crops were still grown, and indeed the Caribs are known for the richness of their complex of fruit trees. But they had become highly specialized as a mobile maritime people. Their large oceangoing canoes allowed long-distance voyages and warfare as well as extensive fishing. Villages were extremely small, apparently often containing only one exogamous lineage and thus comparable to a single household among the Tupians. The organization and implementation of surprise raids on other groups occupied a large part of life, so much so that Carib women were treated almost like alien captives, since that had been the origin of so many of the Caribs' women over generations: They were kept entirely separate from the men, assumed the entire burden of ordinary tasks, and even, we are told, spoke the Arawak language of the people who were such frequent victims of raids rather than the Carib of the men. The Caribs were to cause the Europeans as much trouble as any hunting people, and indeed, the Spaniards generalized the

term "Carib" to mean any extremely hostile, indomitable, mobile, poison-arrow-shooting group of Indians.

In emphasizing the difference between the fully sedentary and the semisedentary peoples in their potential as a base for a European presence, we do not want to lose sight of the fact that certain kinds of interaction were in fact possible. Europeans in areas like this could at least barter for food or commandeer it; in time they could adopt the local crops as their own, as happened with manioc in both Brazil and Paraguay. The *mate* tea of the Tupian Guaraní in Paraguay even became a successful commercial crop in postconquest interregional trade. Populations were significant, if not dense, and Europeans could in one way or another impress local people directly into their service, people who were not totally unaccustomed to agricultural and other kinds of productive labor and to whom sleeping inside walls was nothing strange. Indeed, Europeans could go beyond individuals and use the social structure of the semisedentary groups to their own advantage to the extent that they were willing and able to become a part of it themselves. That the social and political institutions created on this basis should differ considerably from those arising in the lands of the empire peoples is not surprising.

Nonsedentary peoples

In the *Florentine Codex*, compiled by Franciscan friar Bernardino de Sahagún, a sixteenth-century Nahua writer of the Valley of Mexico has described the Chichimecs of the Mexican north: They live in the wilds, in the plains and forests; they have no homes but wander from place to place and sleep where night overtakes them, sometimes in a cave. Their dress is skins; their food, game and wild fruits. They have sharp eyesight and never miss a target with their arrows, no matter how small or how distant. They are lean, hard, and fleet.

That is to say, the sedentary peoples of America were fully aware of the distinction between themselves and the mobile hunters and gatherers of the hemisphere. Their attitude toward them was much like that of the similarly sedentary Europeans: part romanticizing admiration, part contempt for a group lacking the basics of civilized life as they knew it. Never does the Nahua writer use in connection with the Chichimecs the word *tlacanemiliztli* ("people-living"), or as we would doubtless say, "civilization," a term he uses with several other sedentary and semisedentary groups and which he seems to equate with possession of permanent houses, textile garments, and

maize cultivation. Beneath the stereotype was the truth that the economy and organization of the hunters was very different and that they were extremely resistant to domination by sedentaries (for whom they returned the contempt), whether Indian or European. The empires could do nothing with them, and the European invaders little more; indigenous groups in areas such as the Argentine pampas or the American Great Plains maintained resistance and independence until the late nineteenth century.

Tendencies already seen among the semisedentary groups reached their culmination here. The hunters and gatherers had literally no cultivation of domestic varieties, no permanent settlements. Their efficiency in a mobile type of warfare was even greater than among the semisedentaries. Population densities were extremely low. Unless he brought his own supplies, an invader who fought his way into their territory would be faced with the threat of starvation in an empty landscape, for there were no stands of crops ready to commandeer. Though the hunting and gathering peoples put much effort and skill into gleaning what their environment offered, they had little if any surplus production and hence no mechanism for delivering such; and they had no framework of regularized productive activity. Normally they could be brought to live in one place and perform "work" only through physical constraint and mixing with other peoples.

Hunter-collectors were found in many corners of both continents. Most (not quite all) of their habitats were unpropitious for agricultural exploitation in either the sedentary or semisedentary fashion: deserts, swamps, rocky shores, infertile forested areas away from large rivers, and plains areas. The latter, which since the advent of draft animals and the plow have become the richest agricultural lands of the hemisphere, were a hostile arena for the techniques then employed. Hunter-collectors occupied much of southern South America, including the present Argentine and Uruguayan plains, the south coast of Chile, and the Chaco desert of Paraguay and Bolivia. The Mexican north was another area with many such peoples, and they held large sections of North America proper.

These peoples did not live in a vacuum but were linguistically, culturally, and technologically the cousins of the other American types. Despite the prejudices of the central Mexican writer mentioned earlier, practically all the hunters knew the principle of artificial, though portable or temporary, structures for human dwelling; their weapons were related to those of the semisedentary peoples, as were their legends, and kinship, age, and sex structured their lives in quite similar ways. Some semisedentary peoples, such as the

Ge of the inland Brazilian savannahs, had originated as hunters (and were correspondingly resistant to European conquest). In their religion and sense of emotional identification, the hunters stand with the semisedentaries as opposed to the fully sedentary peoples. The latter had cults in which a god or gods symbolized and gave unity to a province or a larger state as a whole, whereas with the former, spirits associated with individuals predominated. For the sedentaries, patriotism had a strong territorial dimension, being applied primarily to a group of people holding lands defined almost to the yard, whereas for both the other types, the equivalent was, on the one hand, identification with one's own immediate lineage and, on the other hand, with a much broader territory in the sense of a total environment or "nature." Even so, the hunters stood out in the American scene as the peoples with the smallest and most mobile functioning units, the least attractive lands, the greatest resistance potential, and the least willingness to accept change in their way of life.

We have not gone into the subtleties of Nahuatl poetry or Inca masonry, both of which we greatly admire, nor have we expatiated on Tupian and Carib cannibalism or Aztec human sacrifice (though these topics could profit from a nonsensationalist treatment of their rationale) because these aspects do not bear as directly on the shape of the future as do matters of social and economic organization. All the American peoples had art and intellectual achievements deserving our admiration and study. All had practices which would horrify Europeans and which, when the latter felt it necessary, they could quickly bring to a halt. It was the durable basic features of local life, such as crops, the organization of work, and the nature of territoriality, which put their stamp on nascent Latin American society and made it differ from one place to another.