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HERITAGE OF FREEDOM

HISTORY
OF THE
UNITED
STATES



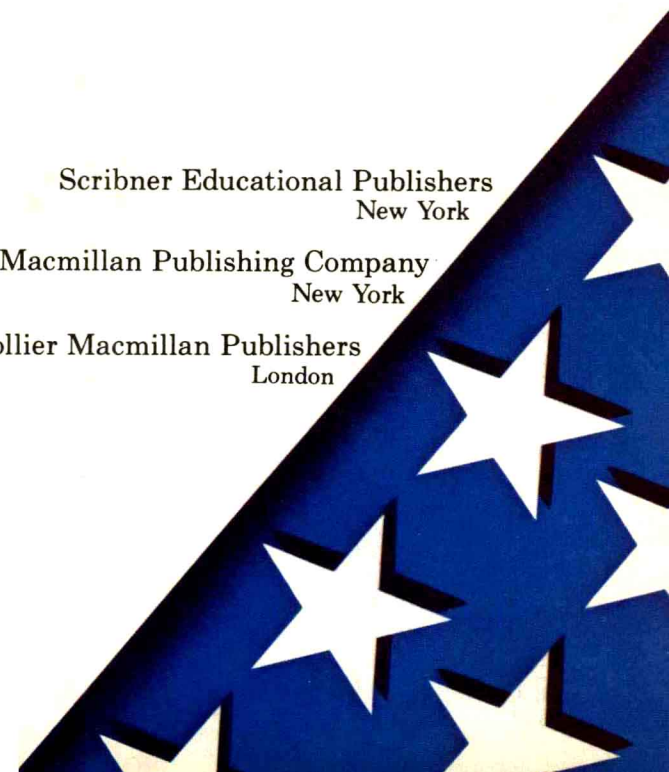
HERITAGE OF FREEDOM

HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES
DONALD A. RITCHIE

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HERITAGE OF FREEDOM

HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES



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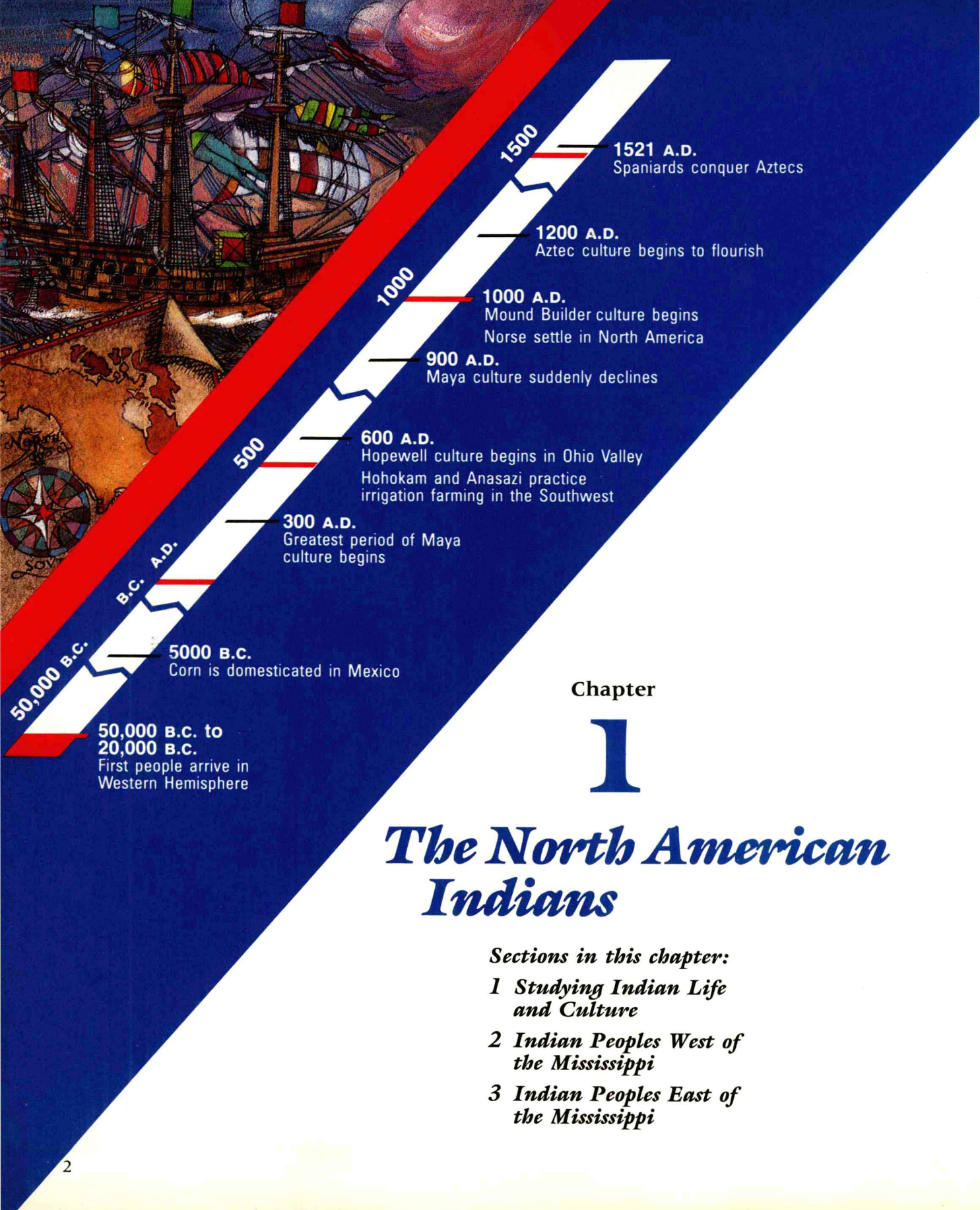
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UNIT **I**

*A Free
Country
Is Born
to 1750's*

Chapters in this Unit:

- 1** *The North American Indians*
- 2** *European Exploration and
Settlements, 1200's–1600's*
- 3** *The American Colonies,
1607–1750's*



1521 A.D.
Spaniards conquer Aztecs

1200 A.D.
Aztec culture begins to flourish

1000 A.D.
Mound Builder culture begins
Norse settle in North America

900 A.D.
Maya culture suddenly declines

600 A.D.
Hopewell culture begins in Ohio Valley
Hohokam and Anasazi practice
irrigation farming in the Southwest

300 A.D.
Greatest period of Maya
culture begins

5000 B.C.
Corn is domesticated in Mexico

50,000 B.C. to
20,000 B.C.
First people arrive in
Western Hemisphere

Chapter

I

The North American Indians

Sections in this chapter:

- 1 Studying Indian Life
and Culture*
- 2 Indian Peoples West of
the Mississippi*
- 3 Indian Peoples East of
the Mississippi*

Who “discovered” America? Until very recently, most Americans thought they knew the answer to that question. It was Columbus who sailed across the Atlantic Ocean and first reached the shores of America in 1492. But excavations in northern Newfoundland have shown that Norse settlements probably existed there about the year 1000 A.D. Thus, it seems reasonably certain that Norse sailors visited North America almost 500 years before Columbus. However, the first people to “discover” America were the Indian peoples who arrived many thousands of years before the Norse.

No one knows when the early Indian peoples first reached America. The best guess is that they came about 20,000 to 50,000 years ago. Most scholars agree that the first Americans came from Asia and crossed over to America by way of the Bering Strait, between Alaska and Siberia. Today, the Bering Strait is only 56 miles (89.6 kilometers) across, with three islands breaking up the distance. Land is never out of sight to someone traveling by boat from island to island. At various times in the past, what is now the Bering Strait may have been dry land. Wandering newcomers probably crossed from Siberia to Alaska over this land bridge and then worked their way south.

The early Indians lived by hunting, fishing, and gathering fruits, nuts, and edible plants. These hunters and gatherers spread rapidly over both North and South America, all the way from Alaska to the southern tip of South America. Faced with new, often harsh, environments, the Indian peoples of the Americas developed diverse and often advanced cultures.

I / STUDYING INDIAN LIFE AND CULTURE

Historians generally learn about the past by studying written sources. Although some early peoples, such as the Mayas (mä yəs) of Central America, developed a written language, most of the early Indians of North America left no written records. To learn about their way of life, **archeologists**, or scholars who study past civilizations, study the remains of Indian sacred sites and dwelling places and Indian hunting and burial grounds.

Digging in such sites all over North America, archeologists have uncovered hunting weapons, kernels of corn and other food, pieces of clothing and ceremonial costumes, and cooking utensils. In caves and on canyon walls they have found **petrographs**, or designs and pictures on rocks, that the early Indians carved and painted. Using all of these sources, archeologists attempt to reconstruct a picture of how Indians lived.

The Varieties of Indian Culture To archeologists, a **culture** is the whole way of life of a people. It includes their language, customs, art, religion, and family life. It also includes their ways of gath-

ering food, settling disputes, governing themselves, owning or sharing property, and playing games. The kinds of clothing worn, hair styles, work tools, as well as people's housing, furniture, and food, are all part of a culture. A people's culture is handed down from parents to children from generation to generation. It is reinforced through the education of young people by their elders.

A very large number of distinct and different Indian cultures have been found. While many Indians lived in small groups as hunters and food gatherers, others had developed complex and elaborate civilizations.

American Indians Grow Maize Indian peoples achieved many advances, especially in agriculture. Two of the crops first developed and grown by Indians—maize, or corn, and white potatoes—are now among the most basic food crops on earth. They are grown in many parts of the world. Corn itself was a remarkable human discovery. It took American Indian peoples hundreds of years of selective cultivation to develop this staple food from its wild-plant ancestors.

Corn was first cultivated perhaps as early as 5000 B.C. in Mexico or Central America. It became