

5-8: Indigenous Trade: The Southwest

Southwestern Tribes. At the time of first contact, trade among the Indians of the Southwest was similar to that practiced in the rest of North America. Like their eastern counterparts, both the sedentary Pueblo Indians and nearby semi-sedentary tribes such as the Navajo commonly exchanged gifts to strengthen personal and political relationships. In several important ways, though, trade in the Southwest differed from commercial interactions in the eastern part of North America. First, early southwestern Indians exchanged goods with Mesoamerican civilizations in the pan-southwest commercial network to a far greater degree than they traded with other North American Indians. More important, sedentary pueblo-dwelling Indians such as the Tiwas and semi-sedentary plains tribes such as the Apaches developed a complementary trading relationship in the centuries prior to the European invasion that was far more complex than the eastern Indians' reciprocity-based commerce.

Ancestral Puebloan. Around the end of the year 1000, Ancestral Pueblo Indians living in the Southwest had become fully integrated into the pan-Southwest trade network. They supplied highly valued turquoise and, to a lesser extent, obsidian to tribes located along the Gulf of California in exchange for luxury goods such as bracelets and pendants fashioned from Pacific shells. They also traded turquoise with Mesoamerican civilizations such as the Toltec Empire for high-prestige items such as macaw feathers, ornaments, and pottery. This intercourse had important consequences because it helped spread Mesoamerican pottery styles, religious customs, crops, and agricultural techniques to North America.

New Avenues. After the pan-Southwest commercial system collapsed between 1200 and 1400, the pueblo-dwelling Indians of the Rio Grande valley began to trade with semi-sedentary plains tribes such as the Apache. Pueblo tribes such as the Tewas exchanged surplus corn, cotton textiles, ceramics, and turquoise for the Plains Indians' tallow, salt, buffalo meat, and hides. This new commercial intercourse was based, in part, on the same system of reciprocal gift giving that governed trade among the Indians of eastern North America. Commerce between Pueblo and Plains tribes was substantially more complex than reciprocity-based trade, however, because it involved the complementary exchange of surplus goods. It thus allowed the Plains tribes and, to a greater extent, the Pueblo Indians to shift from a simple, subsistence-based economic system to a more complicated one based on specialized production.

Pueblo Indians. Trade among the Pueblo tribes was also becoming more and more specialized in the centuries prior to European contact. Tiwa and Northern Tewa provided fibrolite gemstones used in the manufacture of ritual items and axes; Piro and Southern Tiwa exchanged malachite; Tanos Indians supplied turquoise and lead; and Tewas traded obsidian and pedernal chert. Archaeological evidence suggests, meanwhile, that the Pecos Indians had a monopoly in the production of leather goods.

Sources

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5-8: Native American Trade Goods



Obsidian



Lead



Malachite



Pottery



Turquoise



Chert



Fibrolite



Tallow



Salt



Corn



Cloth



Buffalo meat



Buffalo hide



Shells



Macaw feathers

5-8 Native American Trade Activity

Using the **North American Indian Trade Routes map** and **Indigenous Trade: The Southwest** article,

1. Name one coastal Indian tribe west of the Rio Grande pueblos that might have provided shells in trade.
2. Buffalo meat and hides were provided for trade by the plains Indians, such as the Wichita, Pawnee, Dakota, and Cheyenne. Which cardinal direction (N, NE, E, SE, S, SW, W, NW) were these tribes located in relation to the Rio Grande pueblos?
3. The Rio Grande pueblos traded primarily with the indigenous groups in Mesoamerica (modern-day Mexico and Central America). The pueblos would have provided turquoise for trade. What product would the Mesoamerican groups provide?
4. What was one benefit of reciprocity-based trade between the plains Indians and the Pueblo Indians? (Review “New Avenues” section of the *Indigenous Trade: The Southwest* article)
5. From which groups would the pueblo Indians obtain tallow (rendered animal fat) and salt?
6. Which part of North America (coast, plains, desert) have the largest concentration of trade routes? Why?
7. Which major trade center is located furthest south? Which is located furthest north? How about west and east?
8. If members of the Rio Grande pueblos traveled directly east, which major trade center would they hit?
9. Name one mineral, one food, and one man-made item the pueblos would have traded to other groups.
10. Based on everything you have learned, can you determine why trade networks among vastly different Native American groups existed?