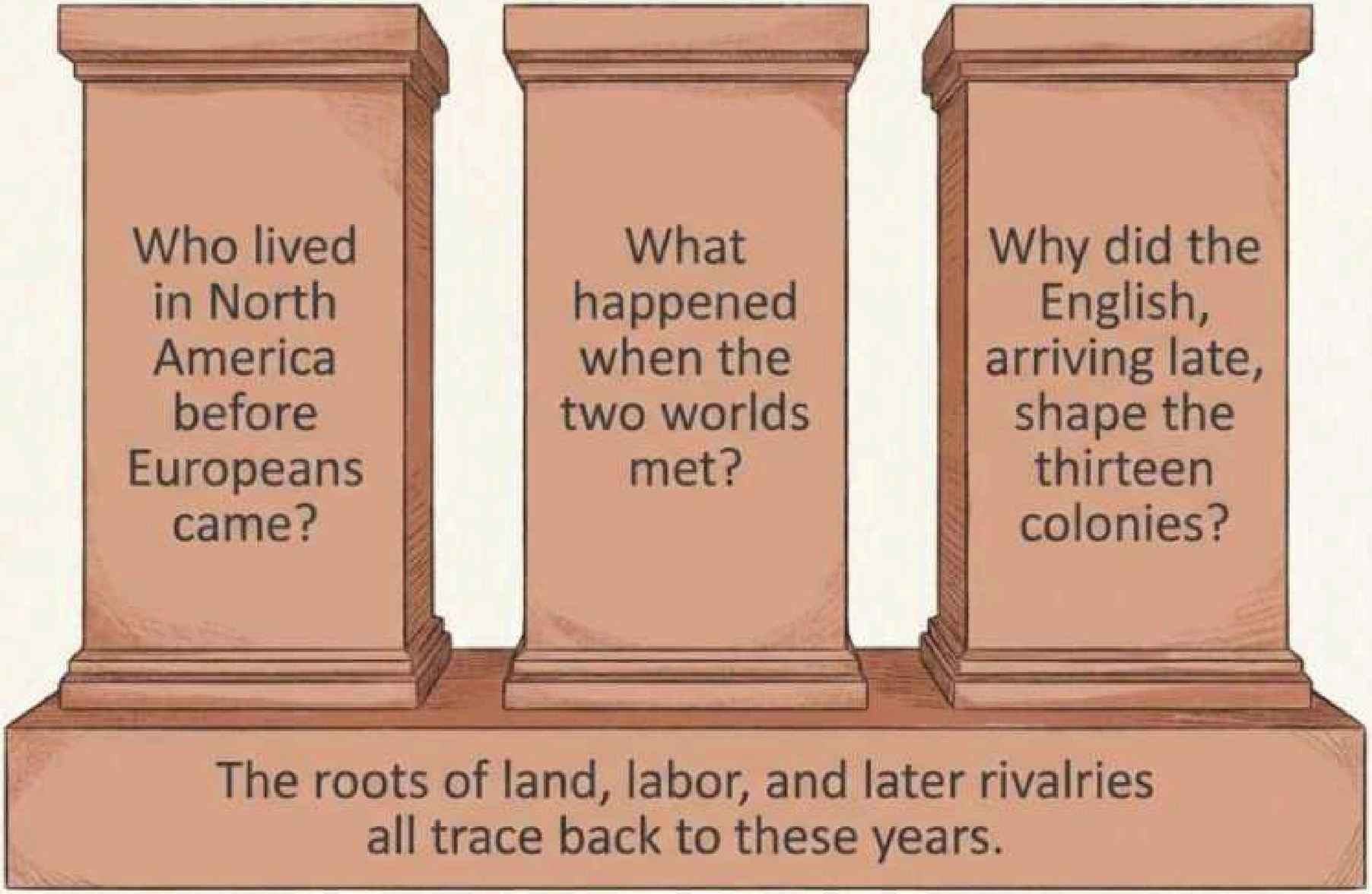
1.1


Who lived in North America before Europeans came?
What happened when the two worlds met?
Why did the English, arriving late, shape the thirteen colonies?
The roots of land, labor, and later rivalries all trace back to these years.

1.2

2,000,000 to 7,000,000+ people north of Mexico

By 1491, North America held many millions of people. While the true figure remains uncertain, the immense scale is undeniable.



15,000+ Years Ago

First Migrations

Scholars still debate exact dates and routes; evidence suggests even earlier.

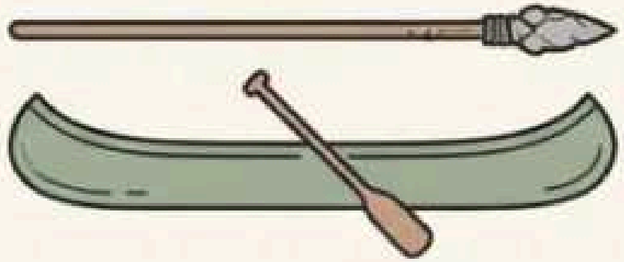
1491

1.3

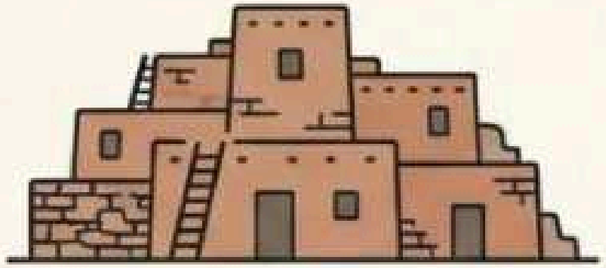
Not a single people: Hundreds of languages and ways of life dictated by the land.



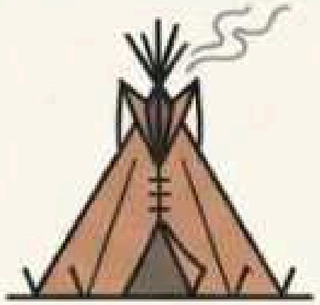
The Three Sisters
(Farming nations).



Resource networks

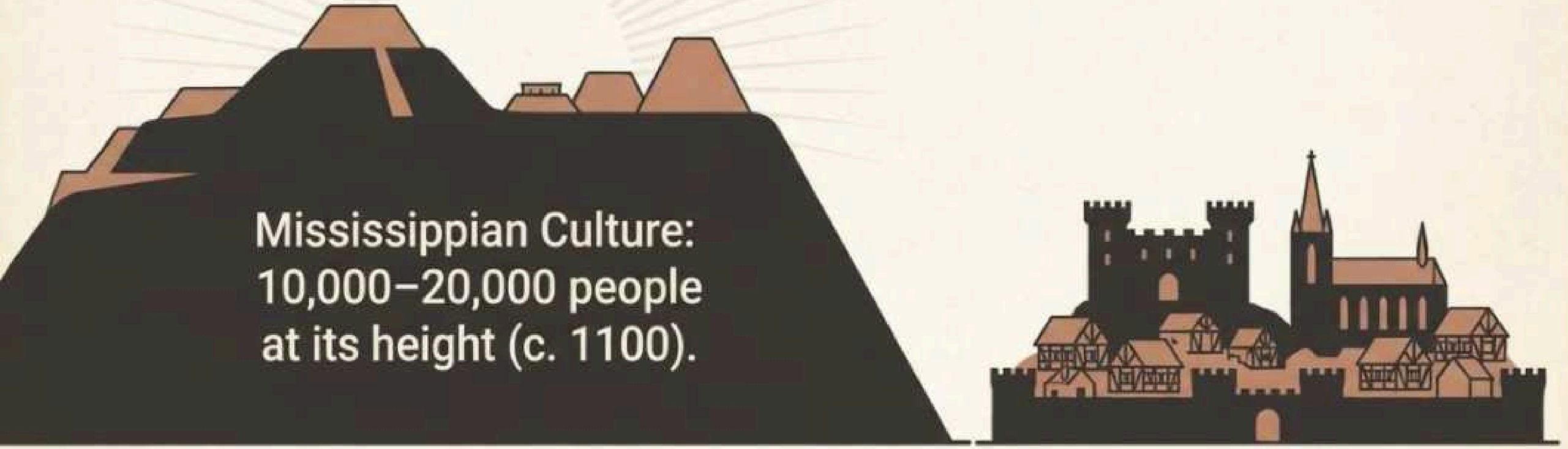


Pueblo peoples of the Southwest
(Stone and adobe towns).



Mobile bands moving with the seasonal cycles.

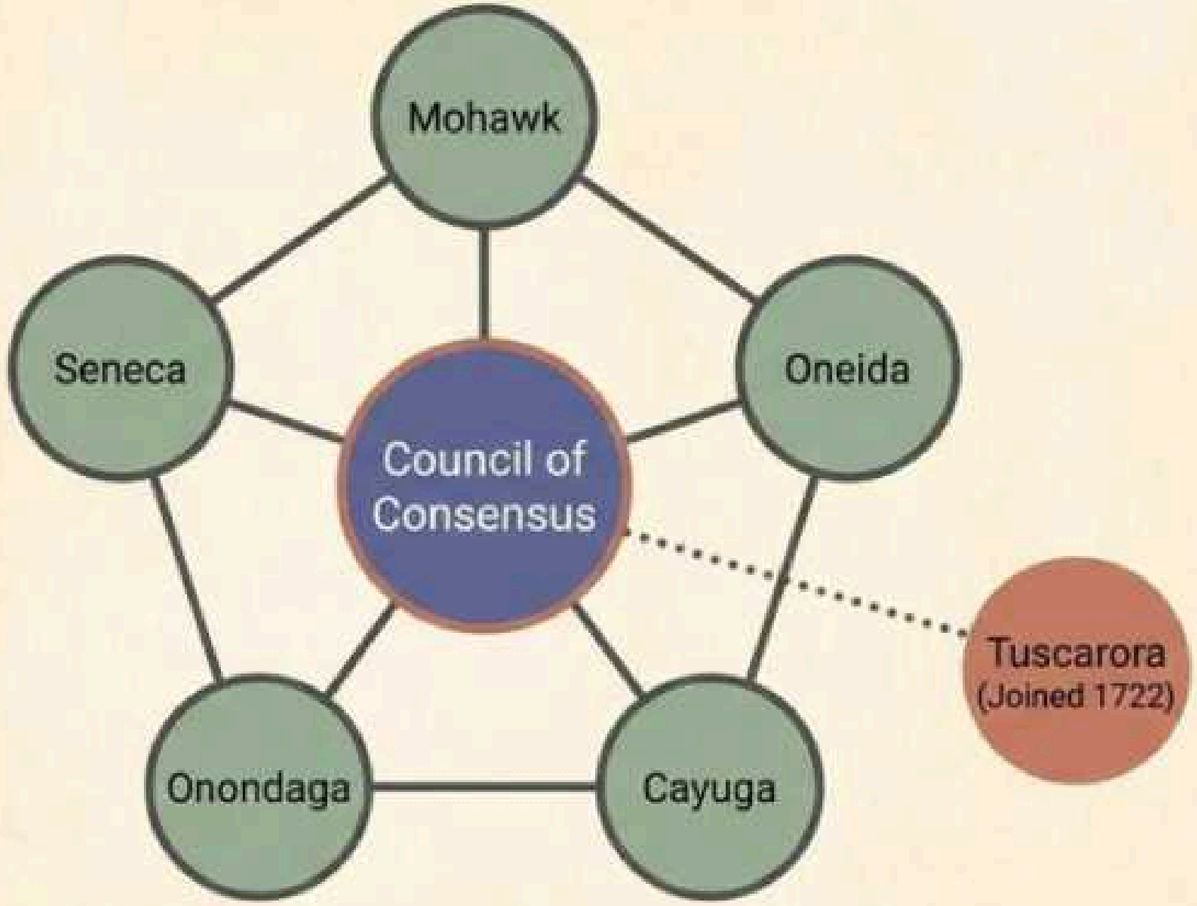
1.4



Cahokia raised great earthen mounds and was larger than most European towns of its time. It peaked and declined well before Europeans reached the interior.

1.5

The Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy

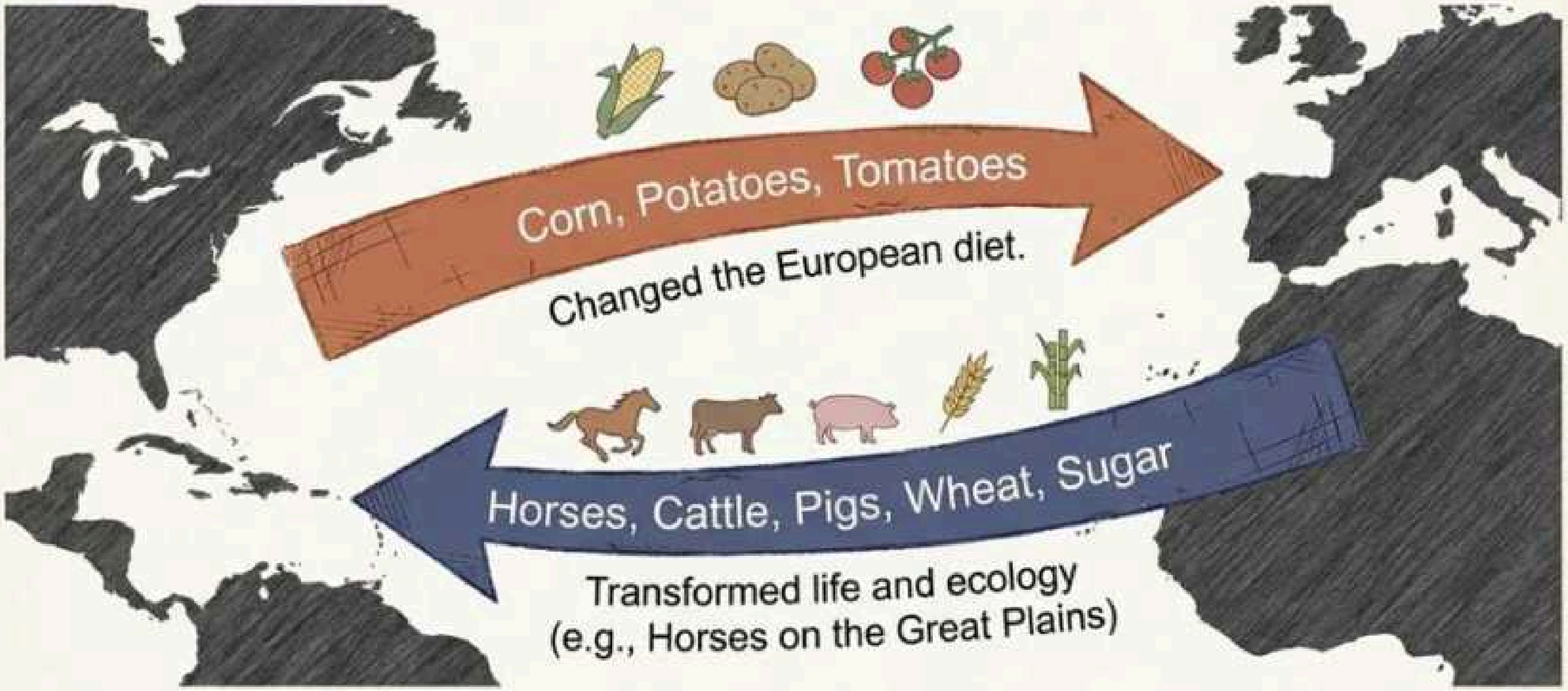


Scholars propose origins ranging from the 12th to 15th century. This sophisticated political league governed the Northeast and heavily shaped regional diplomacy.

1.6 A Tale of Two Contacts: Transitory vs. Permanent Impact



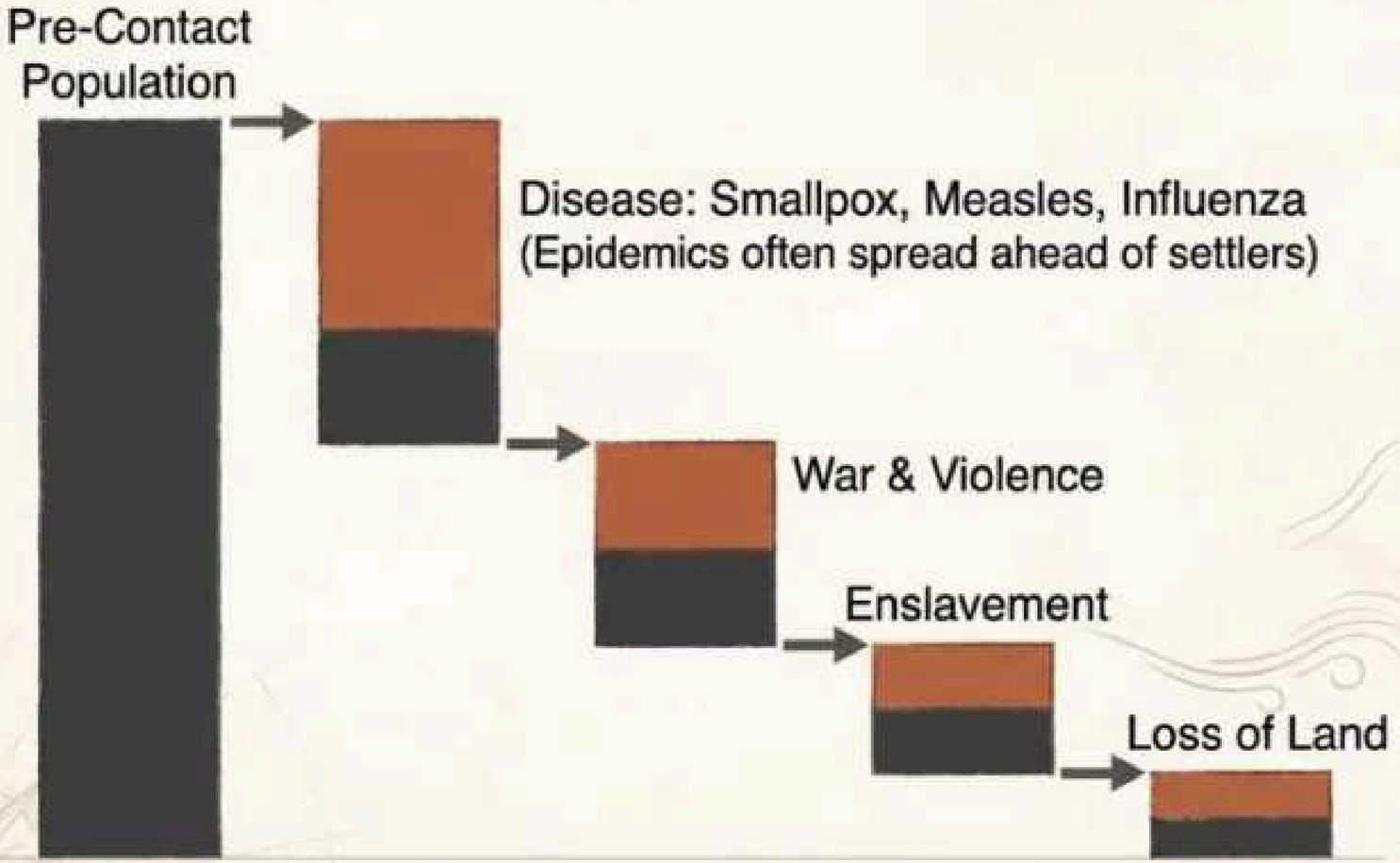
1.7 The Columbian Exchange (Alfred Crosby, 1972)



Plants, animals, people, and diseases now permanently crossed the Atlantic.

1.8 The Great Dying: Unprecedented Depopulation

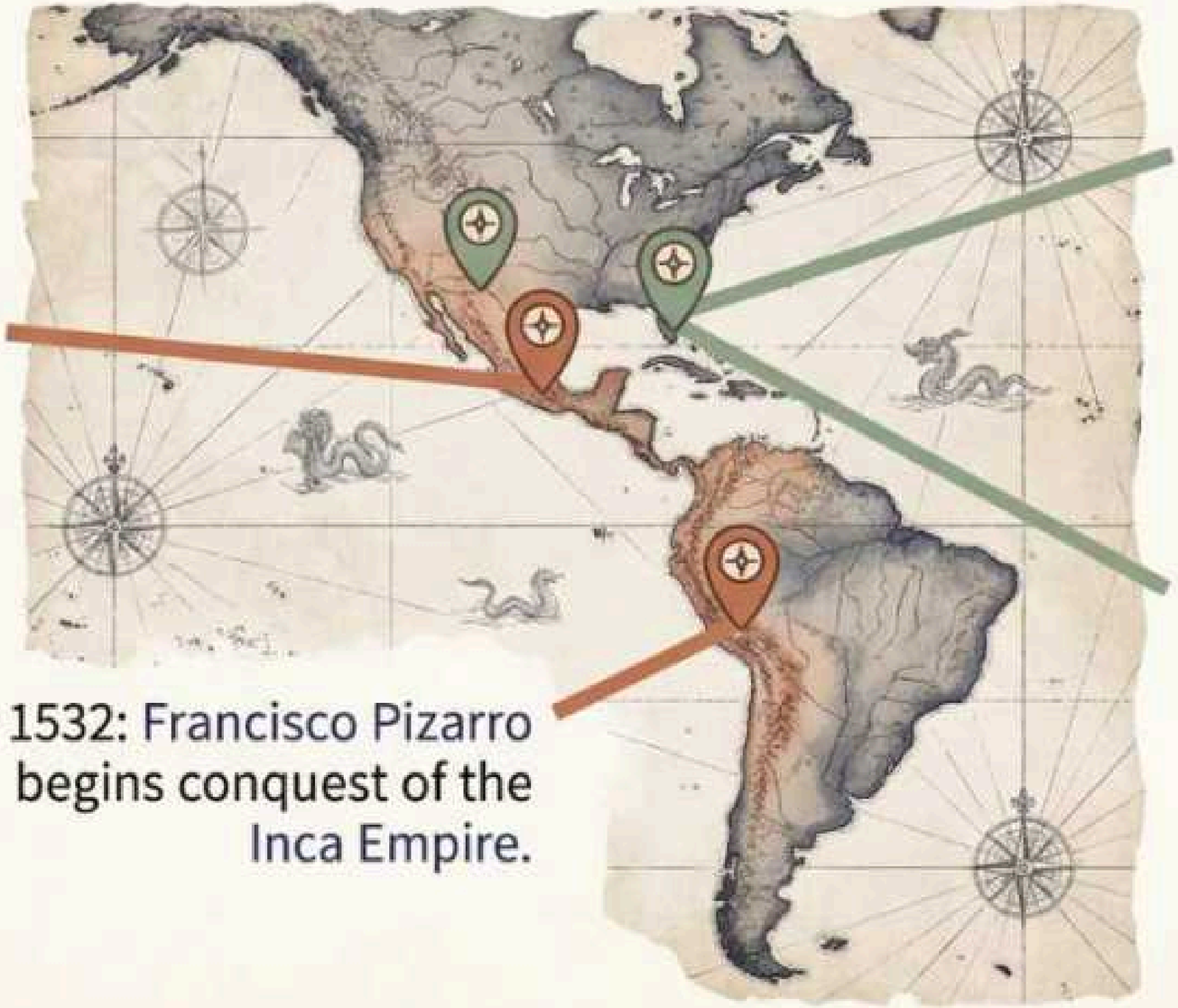
Cumulative Causes of Decline



Catastrophic Losses: In some regions, populations fell by well over 50%. While scholars debate exact numbers, the scale of the disaster is unquestioned.

1.9

The First Mover: Spain's Conquest and Settlement



1519–1521: Hernán Cortés, leveraging Native allies who resented Aztec rule, takes Tenochtitlan.

1532: Francisco Pizarro begins conquest of the Inca Empire.

1565: Saint Augustine founded *(Oldest continuously occupied European settlement in the continental US).*

1610: Santa Fe founded.

1.10

Early North American Ventures: Trade & Alliances

France

- 1608: Samuel de Champlain founds Quebec. Built alliances around the fur trade.

The Netherlands

- 1624: Dutch traders begin settling the Hudson valley.

Driven by trade rather than immediate conquest. Native peoples served as essential partners and rivals, providing furs, food, and vital guidance.

1.11 England Comes Late: The Roanoke Mystery

1585 & 1587

Under Queen Elizabeth I, Walter Raleigh sponsors colonies in North Carolina (>100 men, women, children).



1590

Supply ships return to find the town completely empty.

What became of the settlers remains one of history's great puzzles.

1.12

Why did the English want colonies?

Economic	Geopolitical
Merchants seeking profit, gold, and trade routes to match Spain.	Writers like Richard Hakluyt argued colonies would weaken Spain and employ the English poor.
Religious	**Social & Demographic**
Providing a safe haven to worship for religious dissenters.	A growing domestic population and rising prices made overseas land highly attractive.

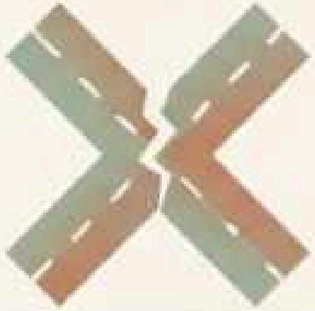
1.13

Native View: Shared Use

- Rights to hunt, farm, or pass through.



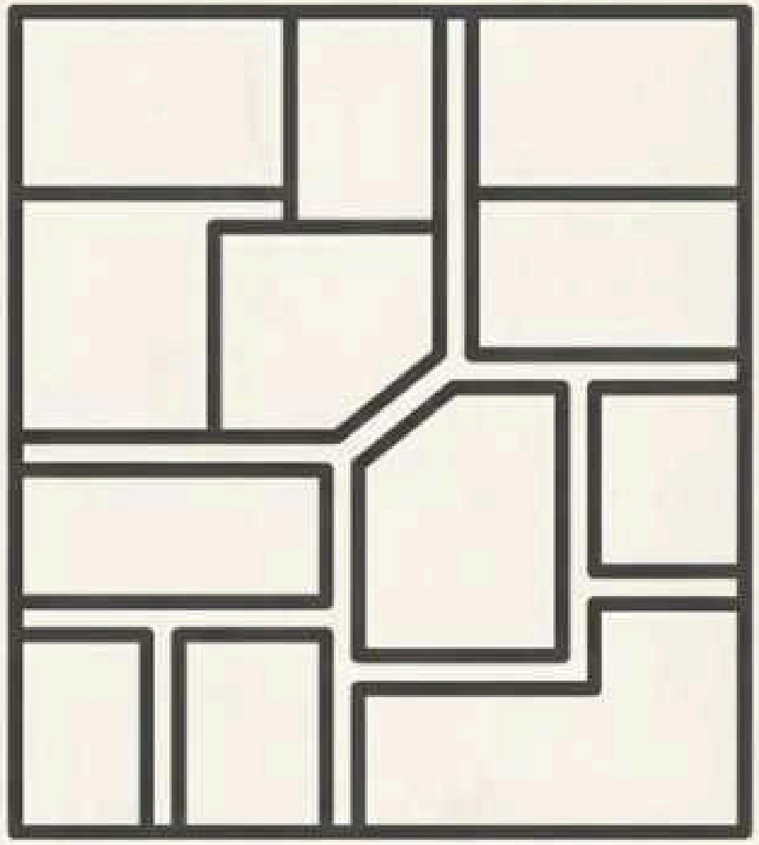
The Misunderstanding



Agreements one side regarded as a permanent sale were often viewed by the other as permission for shared use.

European View: Exclusive Property

- Land as a commodity to be bought, sold, and enclosed.



1.14



Native nations were not passive victims.

The meeting of worlds was not only conflict. Native leaders actively defended their interests, playing European powers against each other.

1.15

Another Migration: Forced and Enduring

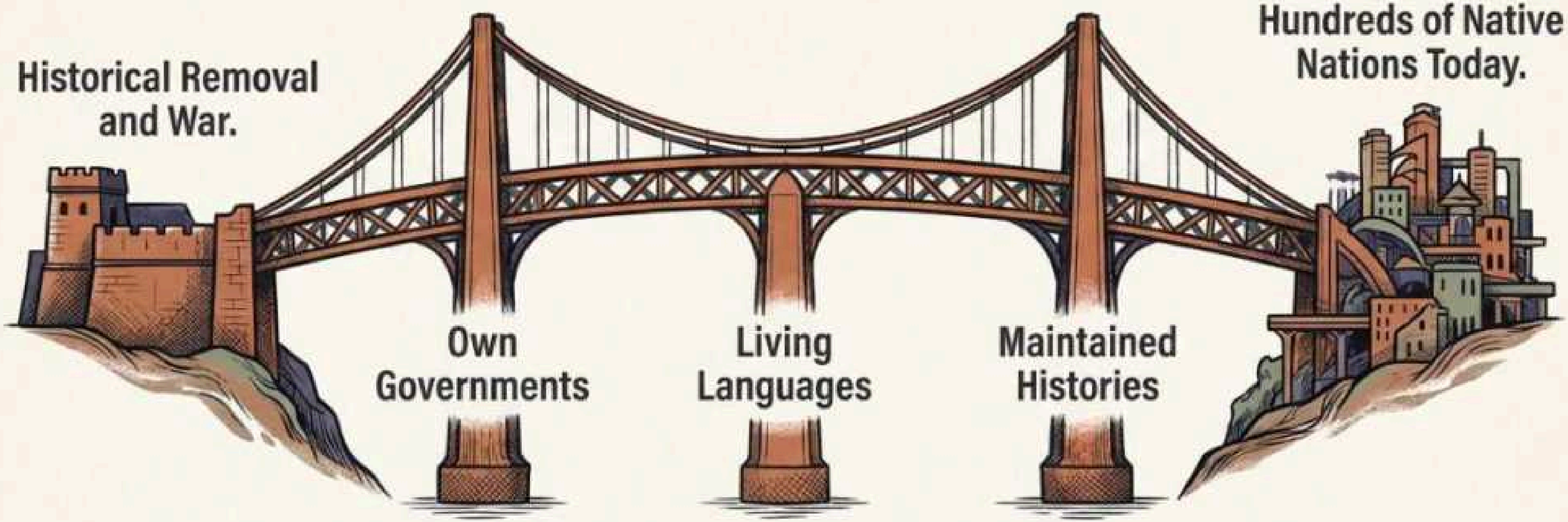
The Atlantic Slave Trade

Grew over three centuries into one of the largest forced migrations in human history.

15th Century:
Portugal begins carrying enslaved Africans from West Africa.

Early 16th Century:
Enslaved Africans forced to work in the Spanish Caribbean.

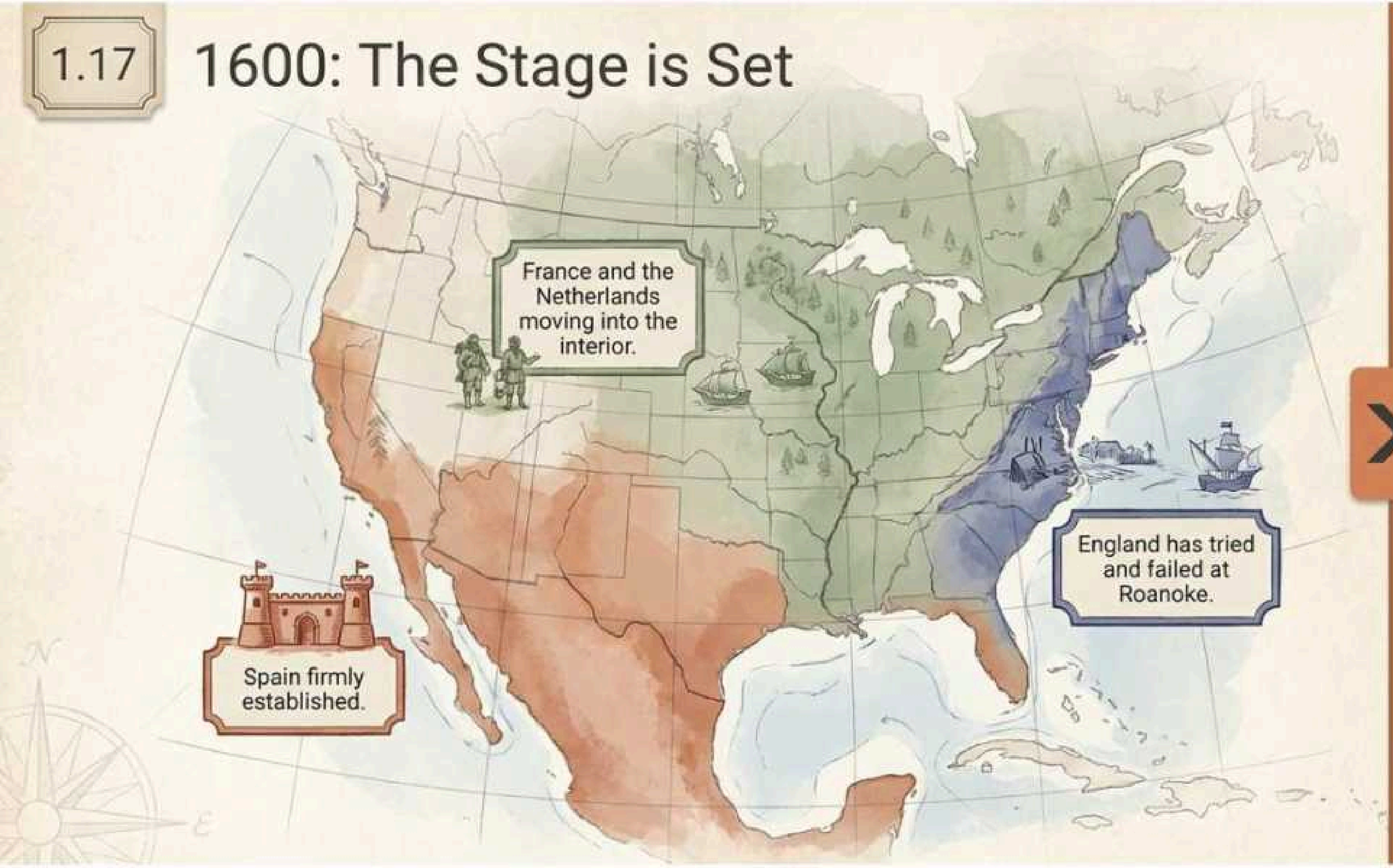
1.16 NATIVE NATIONS DID NOT VANISH.



The people affected by early contact survived. Their descendants are not figures from a distant past, but an active part of the national story today.

1.17

1600: The Stage is Set



Next: 1607 – Jamestown (The English colony that lasted).

1.18 Closing Exercise: Local Geographies and Primary Sources

- [x] **Identify:** Pick one Native nation near where you live (or one you have read about).
- [x] **Investigate (1491):** Where did their people live? What did they grow or trade?
- [x] **Connect (Today):** Where do its descendants live now?



Notice how many of your sources are written by the nation itself.

In Lecture 2, we follow the English colonies as they grow.