**Chapter 14**

*Chapter Summary*

Complex societies in North America developed along different trajectories than in the Old World, although in response to many of the same variables. Greater social complexity developed in places where a food surplus could be produced, allowing for larger populations, the specialization of labor, and production of wealth that could then be concentrated in the hands of an elite. In most cases, the ability to produce a food surplus was made possible by the adoption of an agricultural economy, where the few could feed the many. In some areas however, the natural food base was so rich that larger, dense, sedentary populations developed with attendant cultural complexity – without the benefit or added toil of agriculture. This is the case among affluent foragers throughout the world, including complex societies of the Northwest Coast.

In other areas of North America, such as the Southwest and Southeast, more complex societies developed in relation to plant domestication, or the introduction of domesticates such as maize, agricultural intensification, and the production of surplus food. The Mogollon, Hohokam, and Ancestral Puebloans of the Southwest left behind extensive evidence of complex societies that were made to flourish in otherwise unyielding landscapes. While complex societies of North America did not ultimately produce the rigid social stratification characteristic of states in Mesoamerica, South America, and the Old World, the process of civilization-building is evident in densely populated and planned communities, the control of long-distance exchange, increased concentration of wealth, and elite burials such as Mound 72 at Cahokia. Although Cahokia and other Mississippian societies have been called chiefdoms, the distinction between chiefdoms and states is actually a continuum, with the same processes of civilization at work.