



# Ancient Peoples of the American Southwest (Ancient Peoples and Places)

*Stephen Plog*

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Most people are familiar with the famous pre-Columbian civilizations of the Aztecs and Maya of Mexico, but few realize just how advanced contemporary cultures to the north were, in the American Southwest. Here lie some of the remarkable monuments of America's prehistoric past, such as Chaco Canyon and Mesa Verde. Ten thousand years ago, humans first colonized this seemingly inhospitable landscape, with its scorching hot deserts and upland areas that drop well below freezing. The initial hunter-gatherer bands gradually adapted to become sedentary village groups, and the high point of Southwestern civilization was reached with the emergence of cultures known to archaeologists as Anasazi, Hohokam, and Mogollon in the first millennium AD. Stephen Plog has spent decades working in the region and seeks to explain the rise and mysterious fall of Southwestern cultures, interweaving archaeological evidence with first-person accounts. He concludes that, despite the depredations and diseases introduced by the Europeans, the Southwest is still home to vibrant native American communities who continue many of the old traditions.

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