

Chapter 2

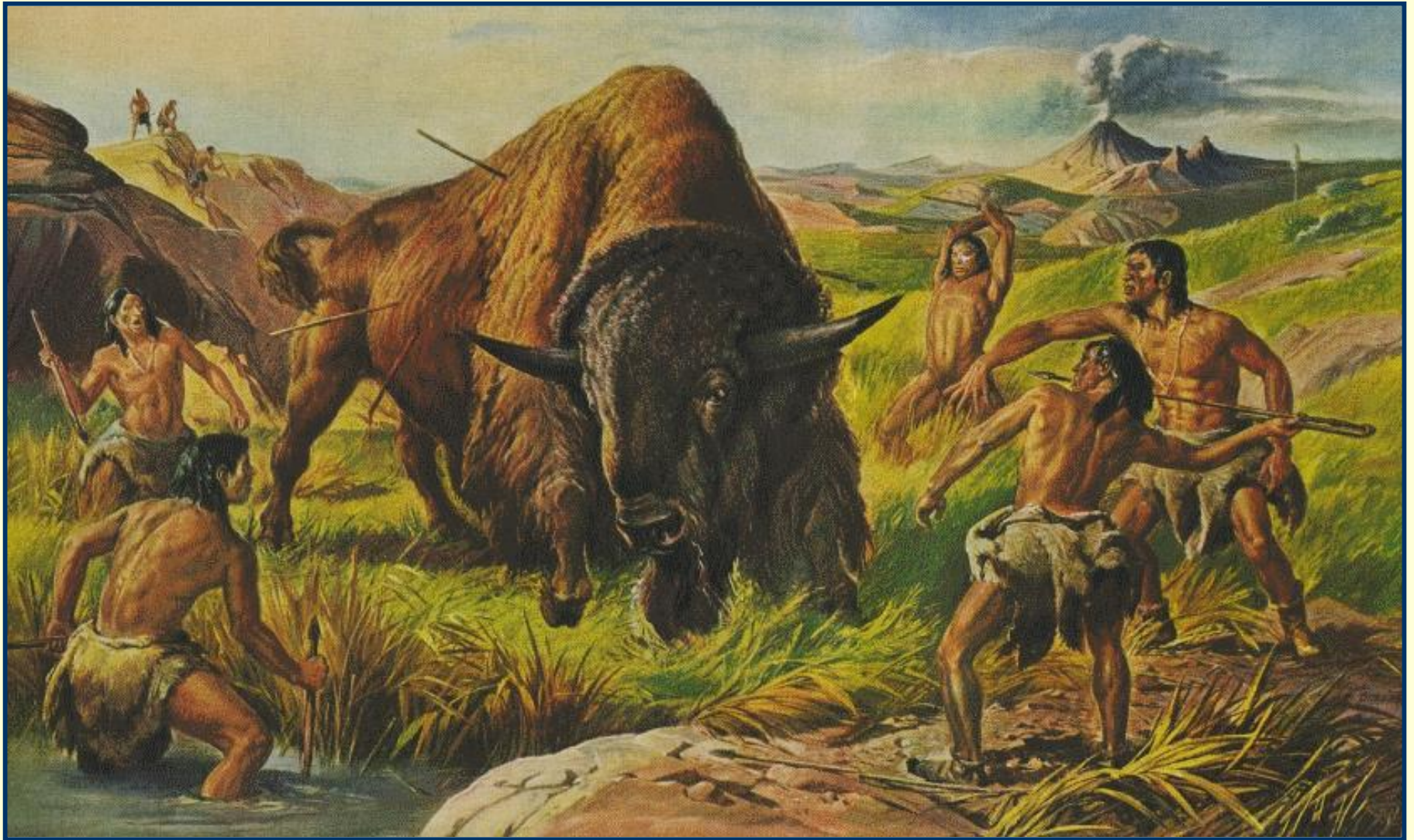
Early Cultures in Oklahoma



In this chapter:

- ❖ *Understanding the skills of archaeology and anthropology allow us to learn about ancient peoples.*
- ❖ *Oklahoma's geography and natural resources provided a homeland for various prehistoric tribes.*
- ❖ *Early European explorers found that Native American cultures had similarities and differences both to them and to each other.*

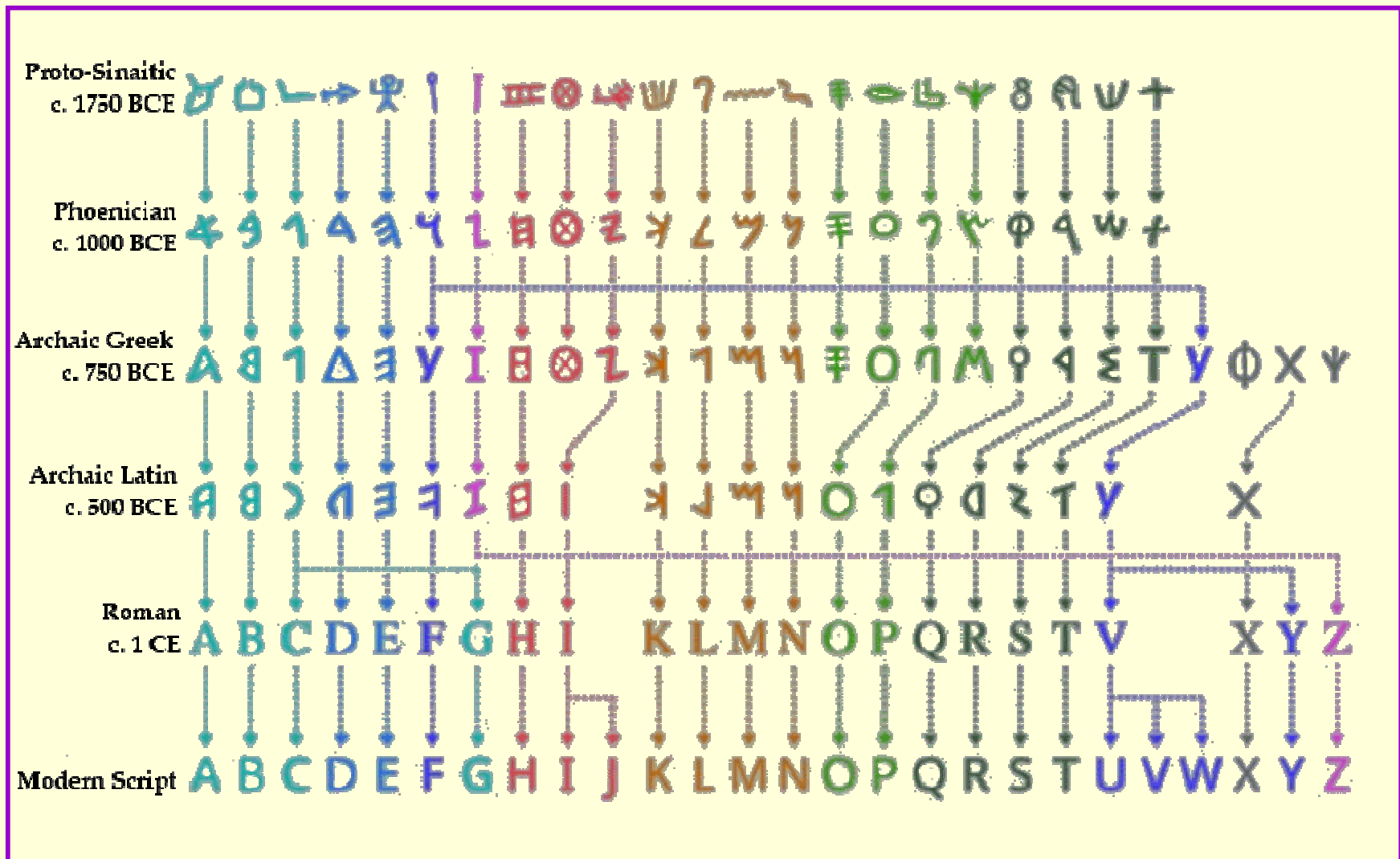
Section 1: Oklahoma's Paleo Indians



The earliest people came to North America more than 12,000 years ago, during the Prehistoric Era.



The Prehistoric Era (or Prehistory) is the time before the invention of writing.



Archaeology is the recovery of the remains of the past. Archaeologists concentrate on digging up physical remains.



Spiro Mounds Archaeological Site, 1936



One of the most important discoveries in Oklahoma was the Saurophaganax Maximus, found in 1932.

Its name means "Eater of Dinosaurs."

**Scientists also look
for items that
ancient people
have left behind.**

*The Spiro Mound Builders
lived in far eastern Oklahoma.*

*These "Tree Masks"
found near the Arkansas River
are between 600 to 1,100 years old.*



Artifacts are items made or used by people in the past, such as pottery, tools, jewelry, and paintings.

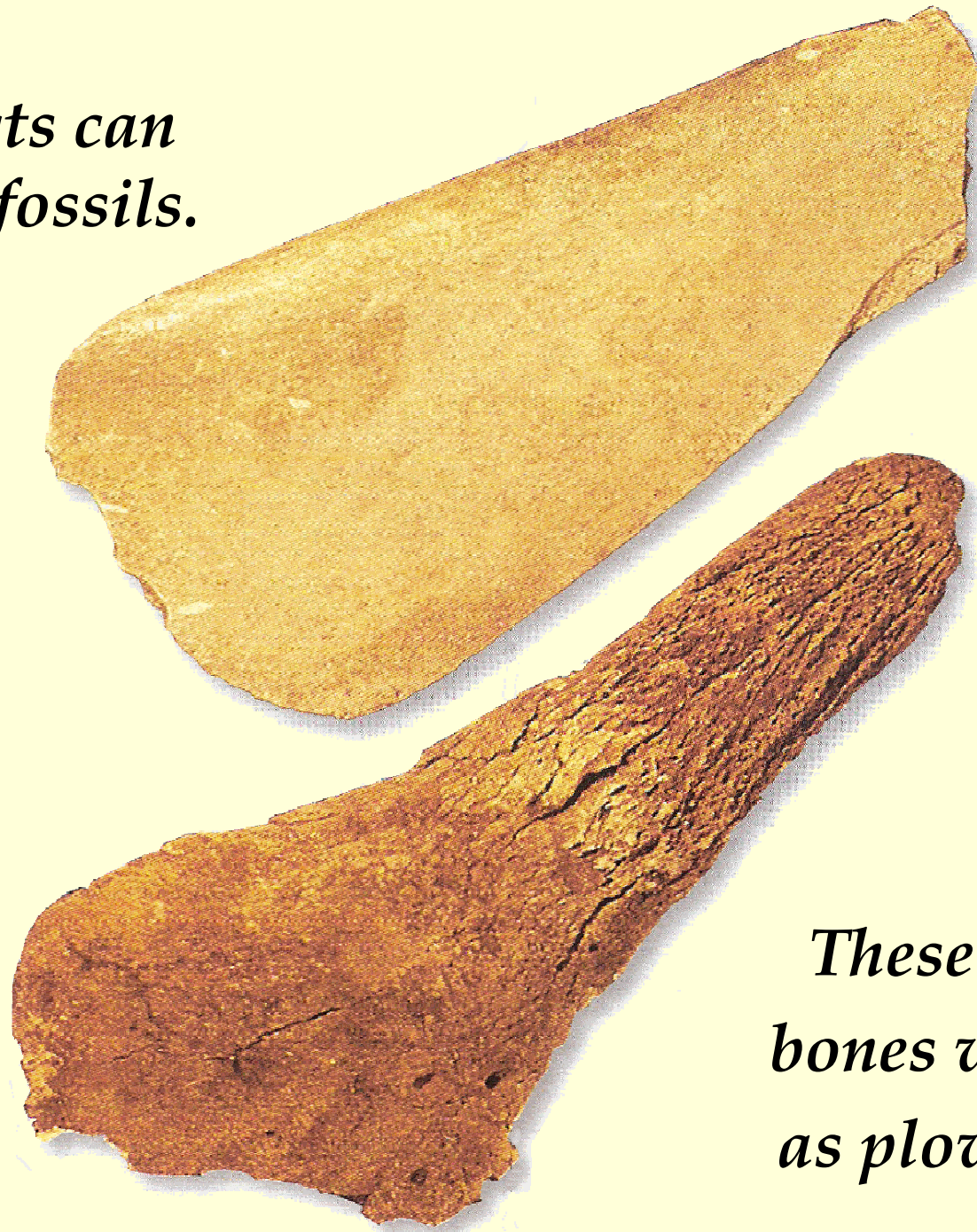


**Petroglyphs are
pictures and symbols
that convey an idea.**

*The symbol may be obvious,
but the meaning of symbol may not be.*



*Artifacts can
also be fossils.*



*These buffalo
bones were used
as plow blades.*

**Fossils are the
remains of
living things.
Most often,
they are teeth,
bones, or shells.**

*The shell of this
250-million-year-old
trilobite, a sea creature,
was discovered
in Oklahoma's
Arbuckle Mountains.*



Other disciplines are also interested in the past.



**Anthropology is
the study of the
development
of human culture.**

*Culture is the way of life
of a group of people.*

*Anthropologists study artifacts,
fossils, and cave paintings to
try to tell us how
ancient people lived.*

During the last Ice Age, hunter-gatherers reached North America when a narrow strip of dry land was exposed between Siberia and Alaska.





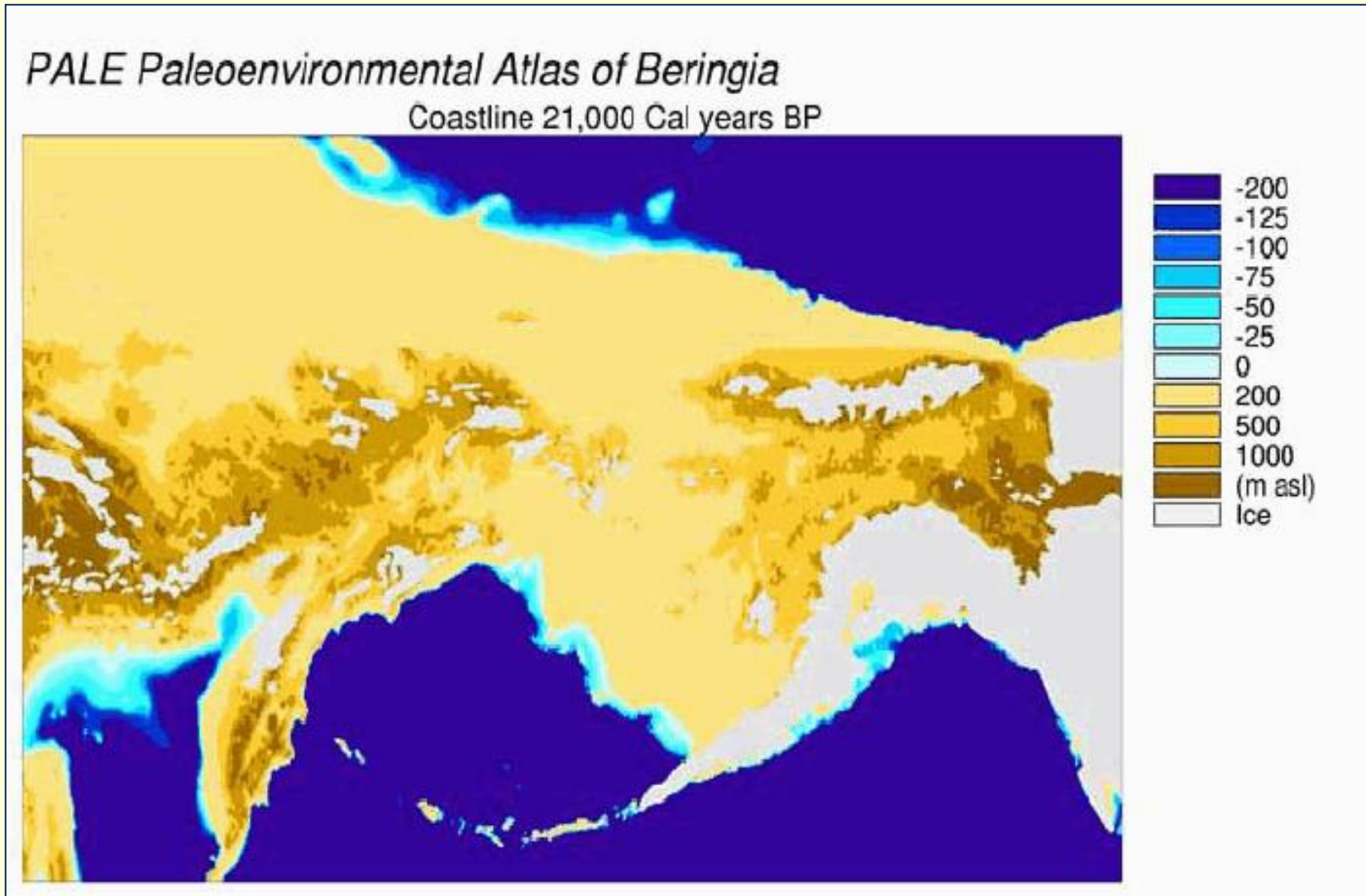
The land bridge is now known as Beringia.

Over the course of thousands of years, nomads crossed over from Asia into North America.

They were following the animals that were their primary source of food.

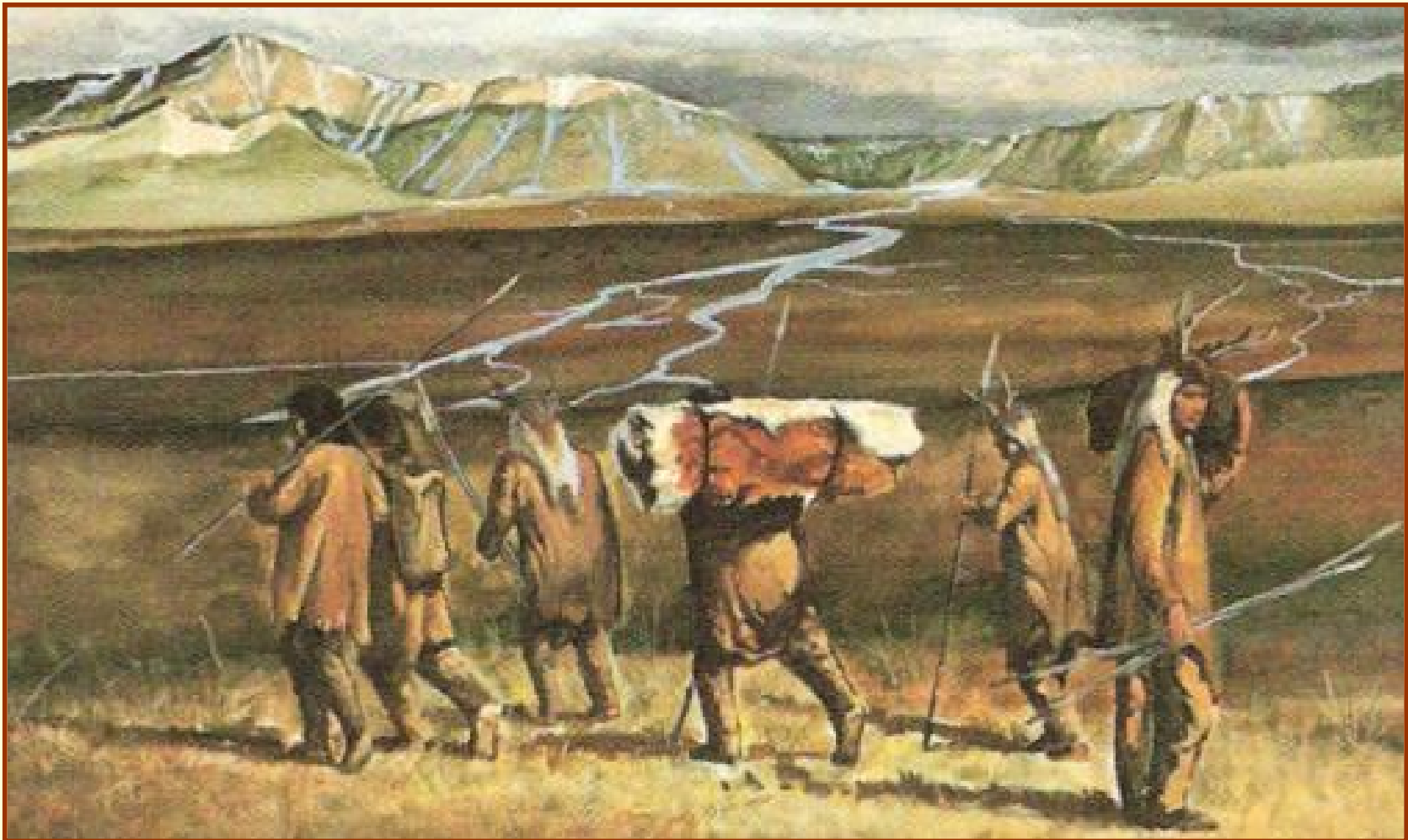


This animation shows how Beringia disappeared.



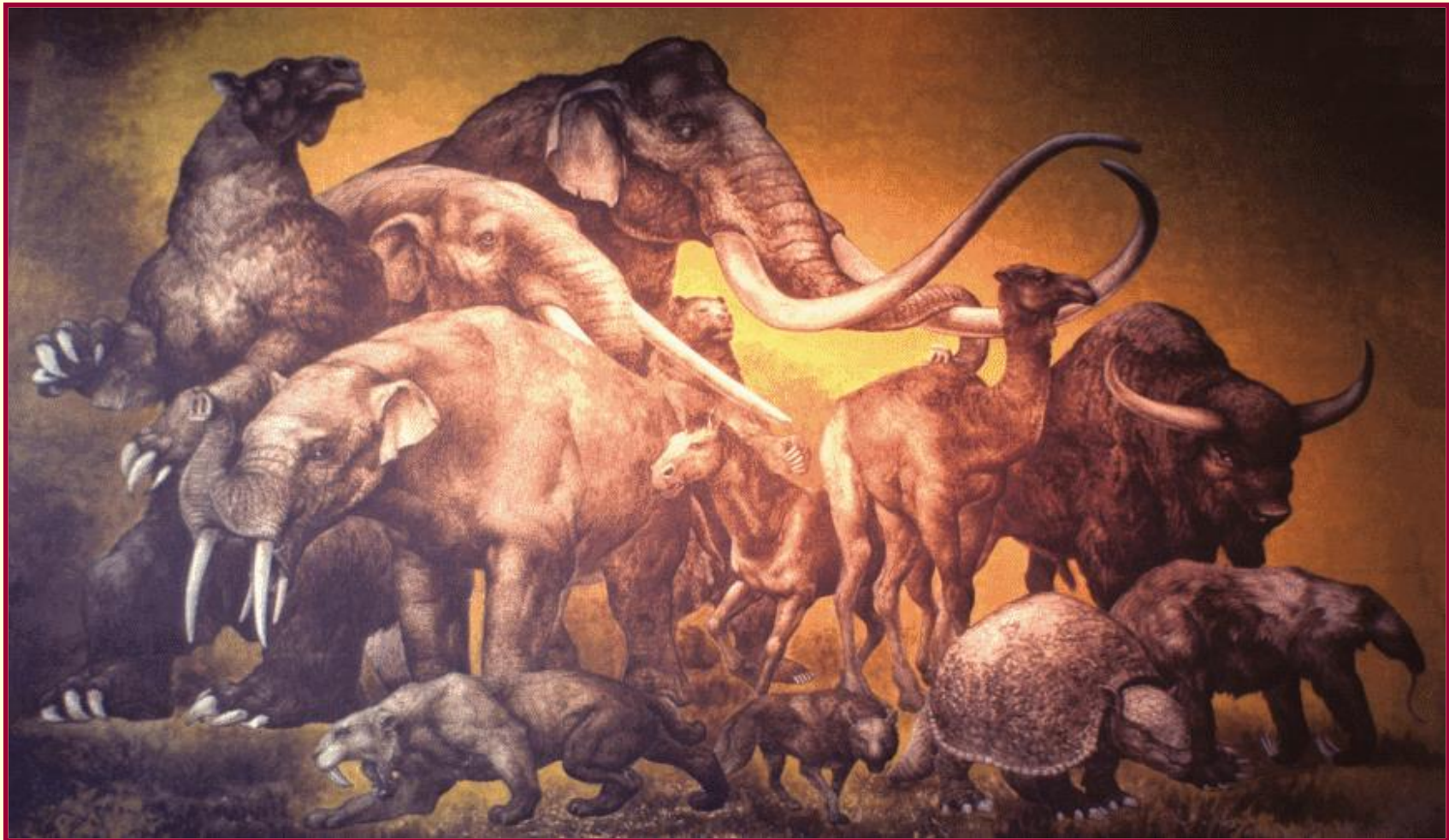
Ultimately, the early people would settle in areas with temperate climates and a steady food supply.

Oklahoma, as part of the southern Great Plains, provided both.



Gigantic mammals ruled prehistoric Oklahoma.

They included mammoths, mastodons, gomphotheriums, short-faced bears, longhorn bison, and even camels. Smaller mammals included saber-toothed cats, wolves, armadillos, anteaters, and the eohippus, a dog-sized horse.



There were also elephant-sized ground sloths.



One of the first Paleo Indian cultures that lived in Oklahoma was the Clovis People.

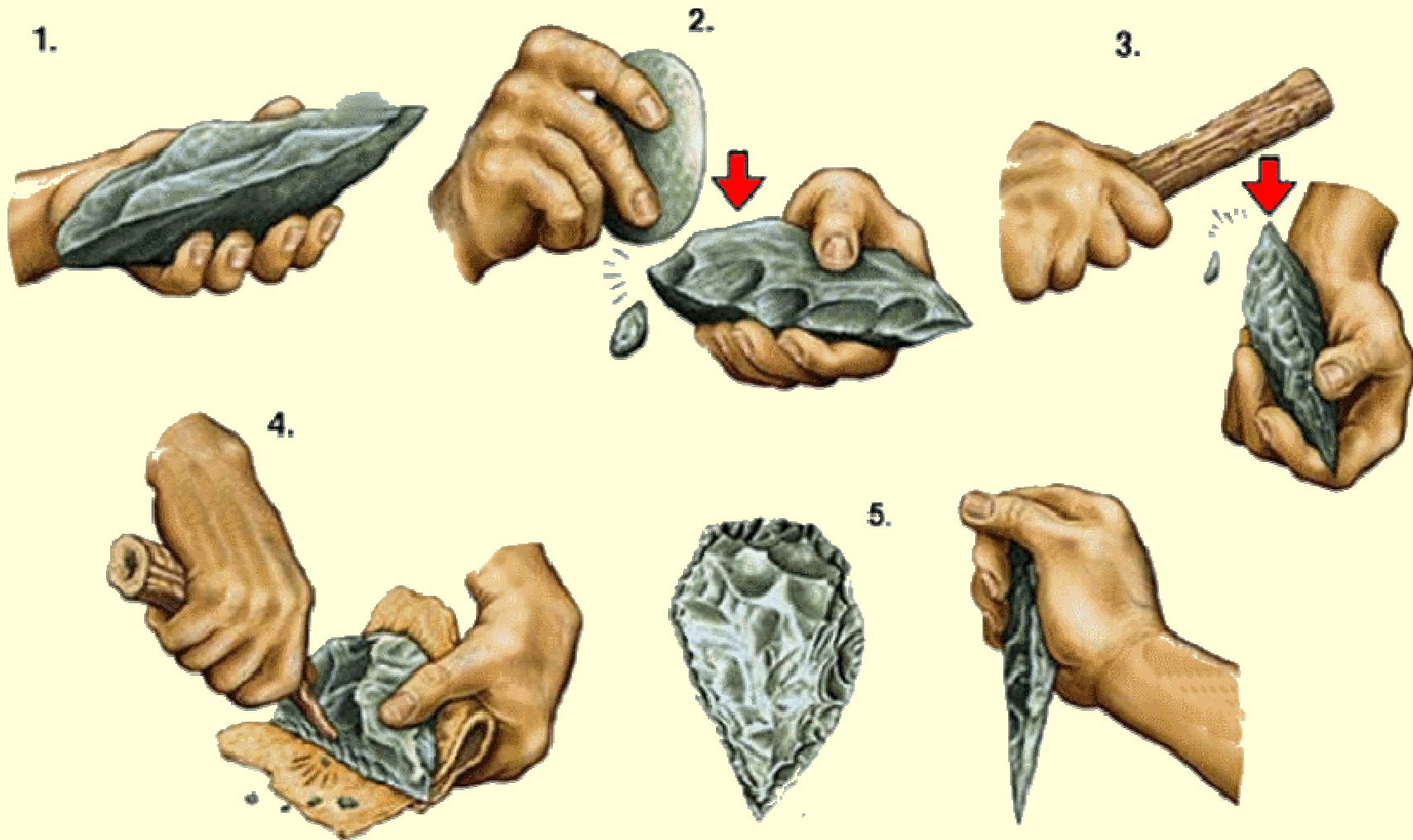




**They are named
for the
New Mexico site
where they were
first discovered.**

*They also lived in the
Texas Panhandle,
southeastern Colorado,
southwestern Kansas,
and in the High Plains of
western Oklahoma.*

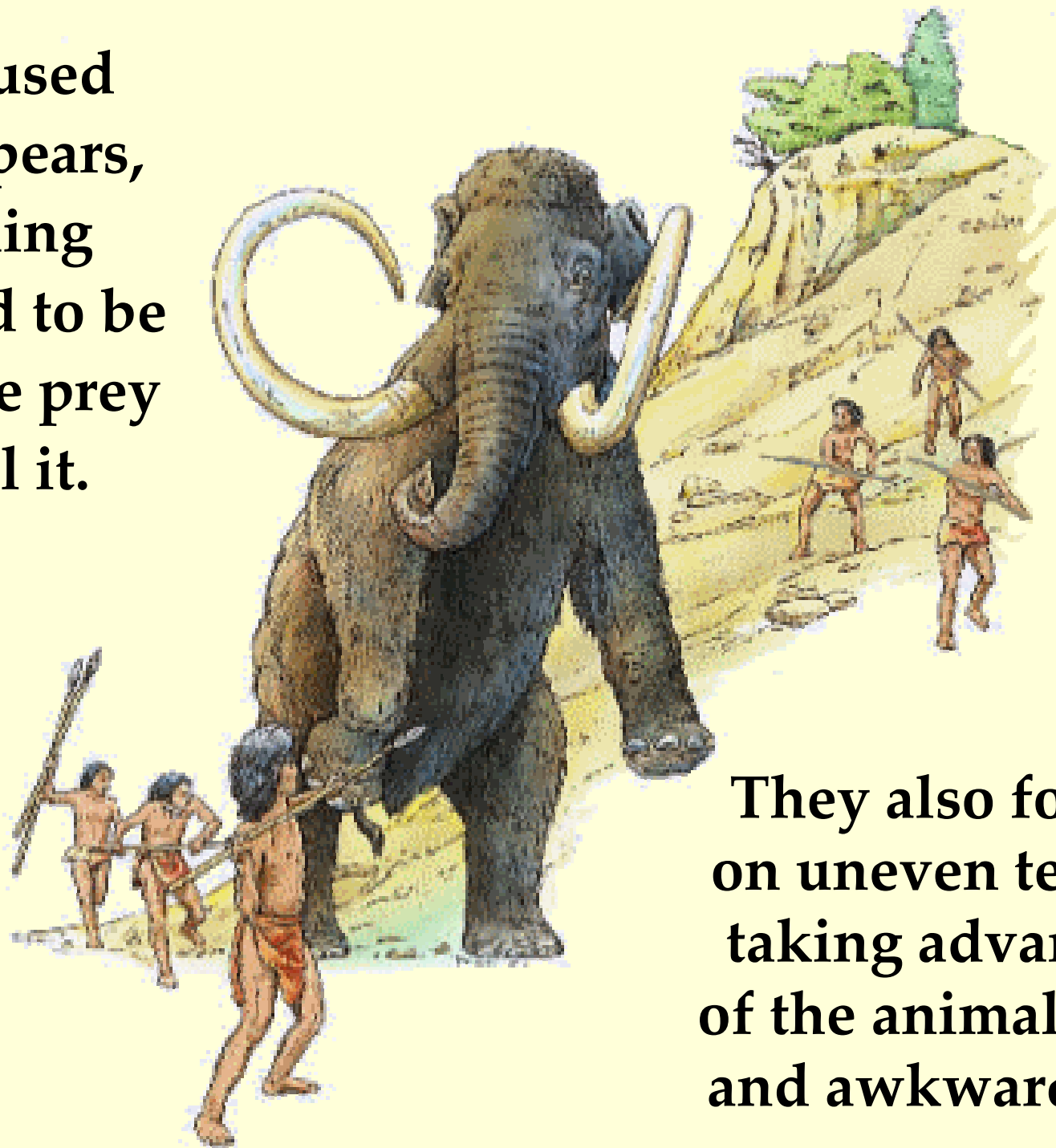
The Clovis People were skilled at flint knapping, or making spear points from stone.



**They hunted Woolly Mammoths, which were
14 feet tall and weighed almost 10 tons.**



They used short spears, meaning they had to be close the prey to kill it.



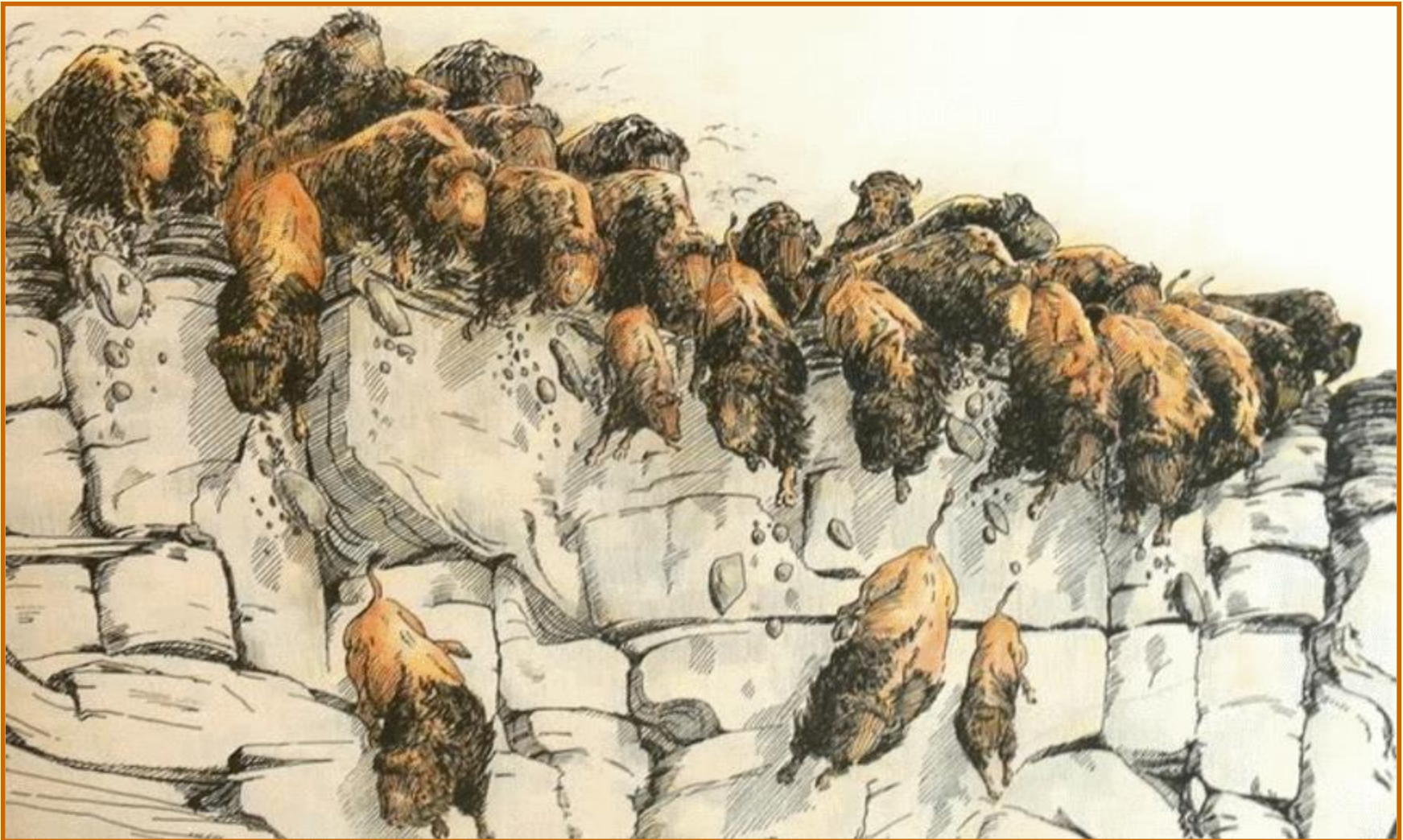
They also fought on uneven terrain, taking advantage of the animal's size and awkwardness.

*Here's a comparison from the Mammoth Site
in Hot Springs, South Dakota (2008).*



**When the mammoth population began to die off,
the later Clovis People began hunting Bison.**

They would stampede the herd over a cliff and then harvest the carcasses.



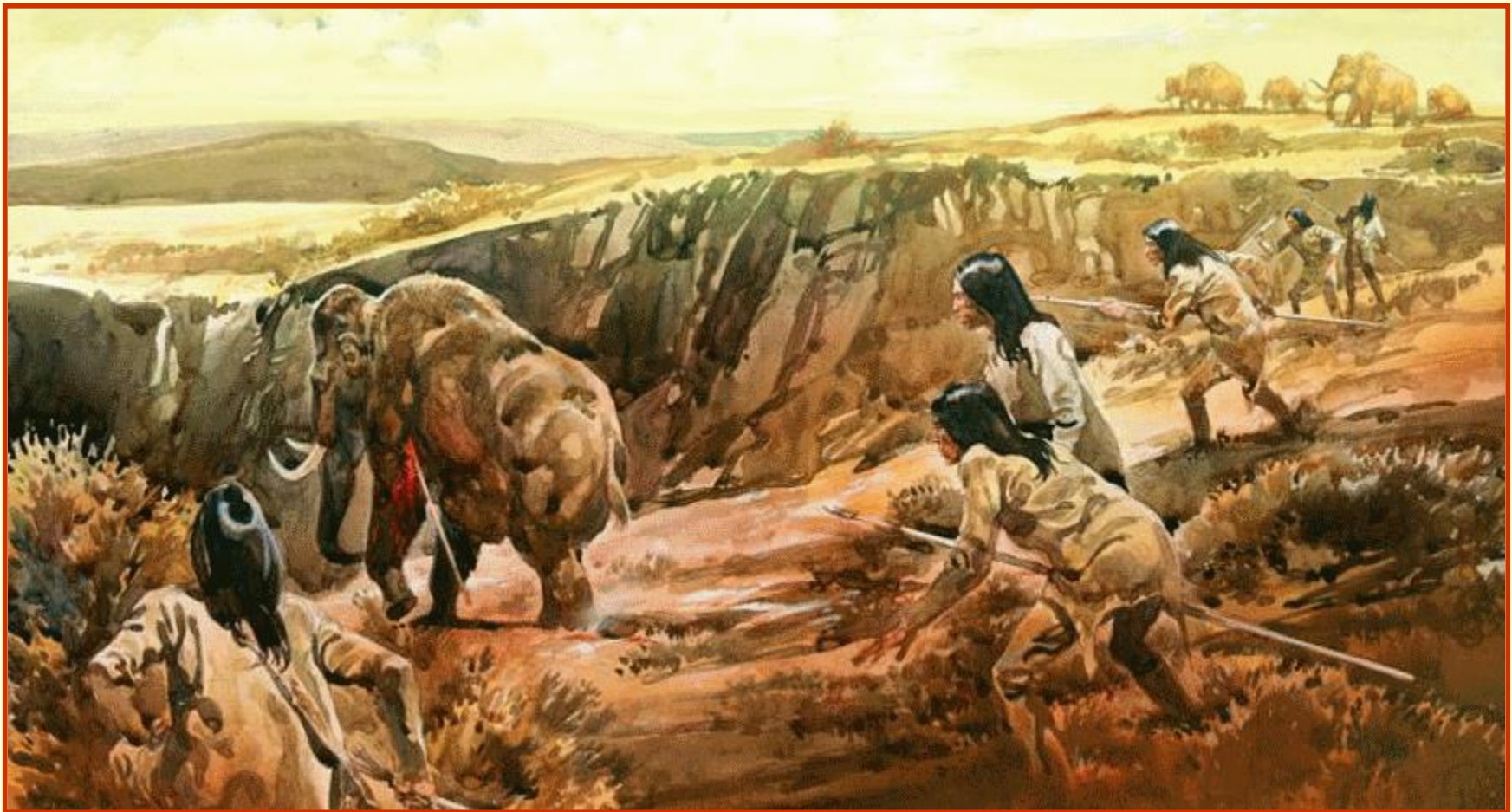
The Folsom People, a second Paleo Indian culture in Oklahoma, were also originally found in New Mexico.

They roamed the southern Plains from northwest Kansas to central Texas.



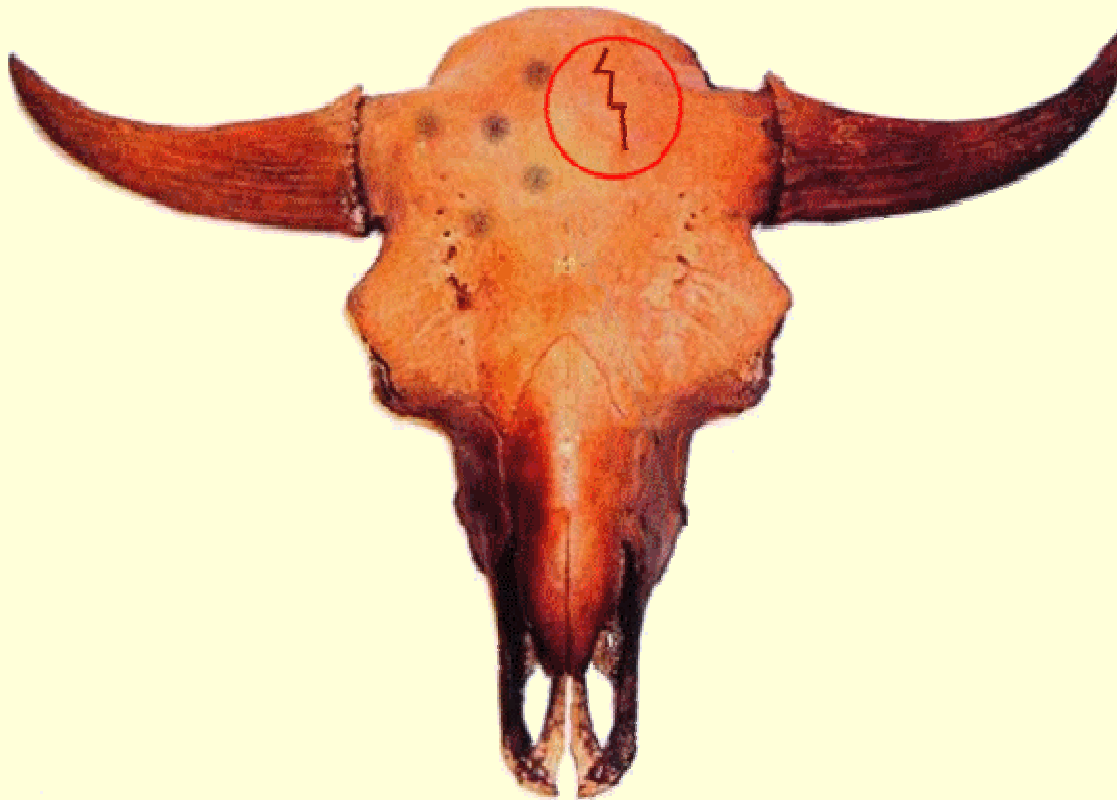
The Folsom People used new hunting methods, like trapping animals in three-sided box canyons.

They were also skilled at building temporary shelters, creating fires, and making tools from stone and wood.



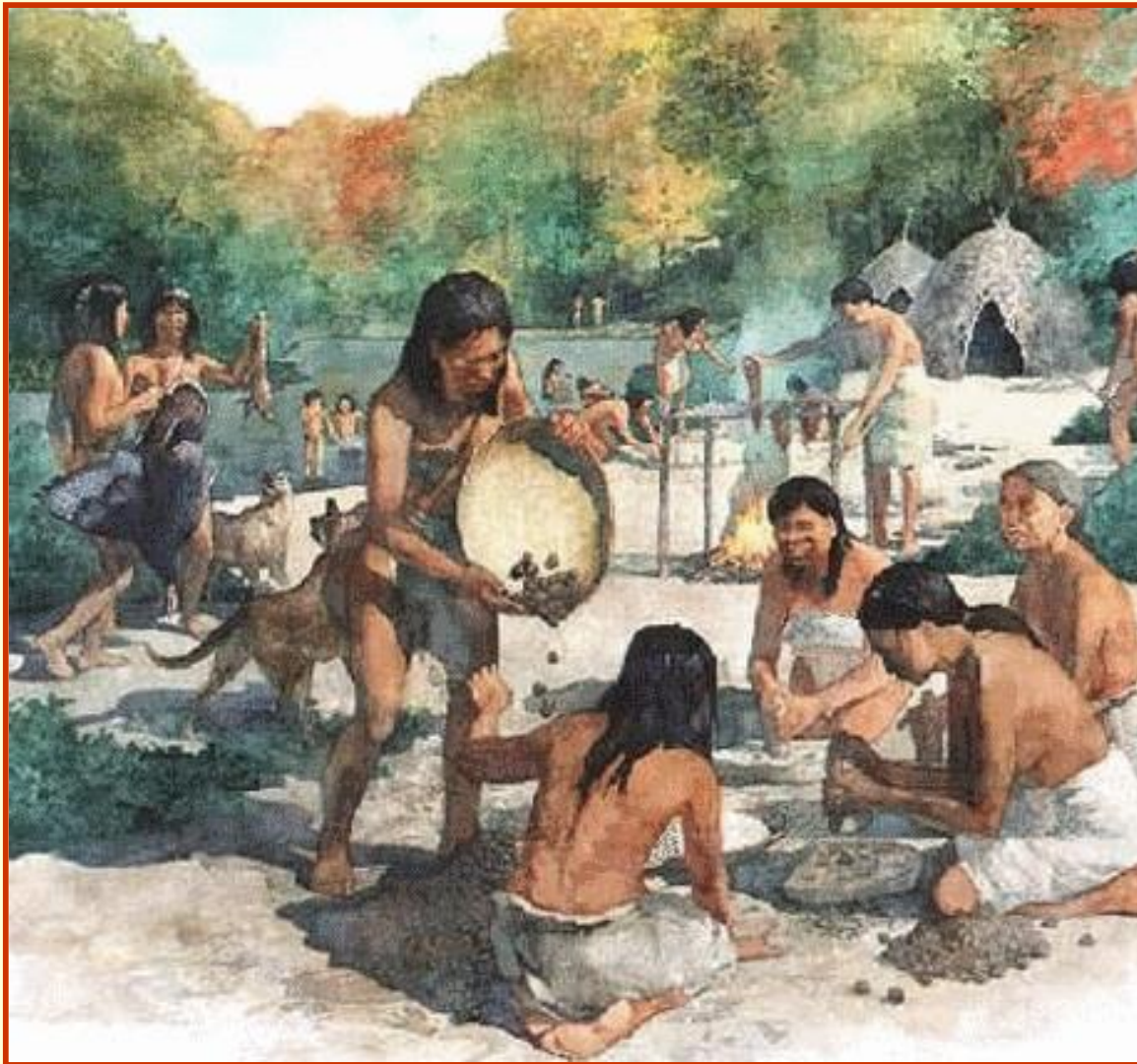
They created some of the earliest art in North America.

At left is an artist's re-creation of a bison skull found with a painted red lightning bolt on it. At right is the actual skull fragment.



It was most likely part of a religious ceremony.

As the Ice Age came to an end, the Archaic Foragers became dominant.



- *Since the large animals were dying out, people became more dependent on gathering wild crops, like vegetables, fruits, nuts, berries, roots, and seeds.*
- *But the Archaic Foragers continued to hunt smaller animals, like buffalo, deer, rabbit, and wild turkey.*
- *As populations increased, they also began to restrict their movements, rather than being nomadic.*

**Dogs were domesticated during this time
to help with hunting smaller animals.**



**The greatest advance
in weapons was the atlatl,
a short wooden shaft with
a hook at the end.**

**It allowed them to throw
their darts (short spears)
with greater accuracy
and deadly force.**

*Now, hunters could kill from
a greater distance or have more time
to escape if they missed.*

*These weapons may have been
the cause of the extinction of
the woolly mammoth.*





When farming replaced foraging, the Woodland Culture emerged.

- *The early farmers needed to stay in one place so they could plant and harvest their crops.*
- *They began to live in permanent shelters and developed villages.*
- *They tended to live in Oklahoma's eastern river valleys, because the soil was more fertile and easier to plow.*

The Woodland natives were probably the first to use the bow and arrow as well as the adze, a chopping tool similar to an axe.



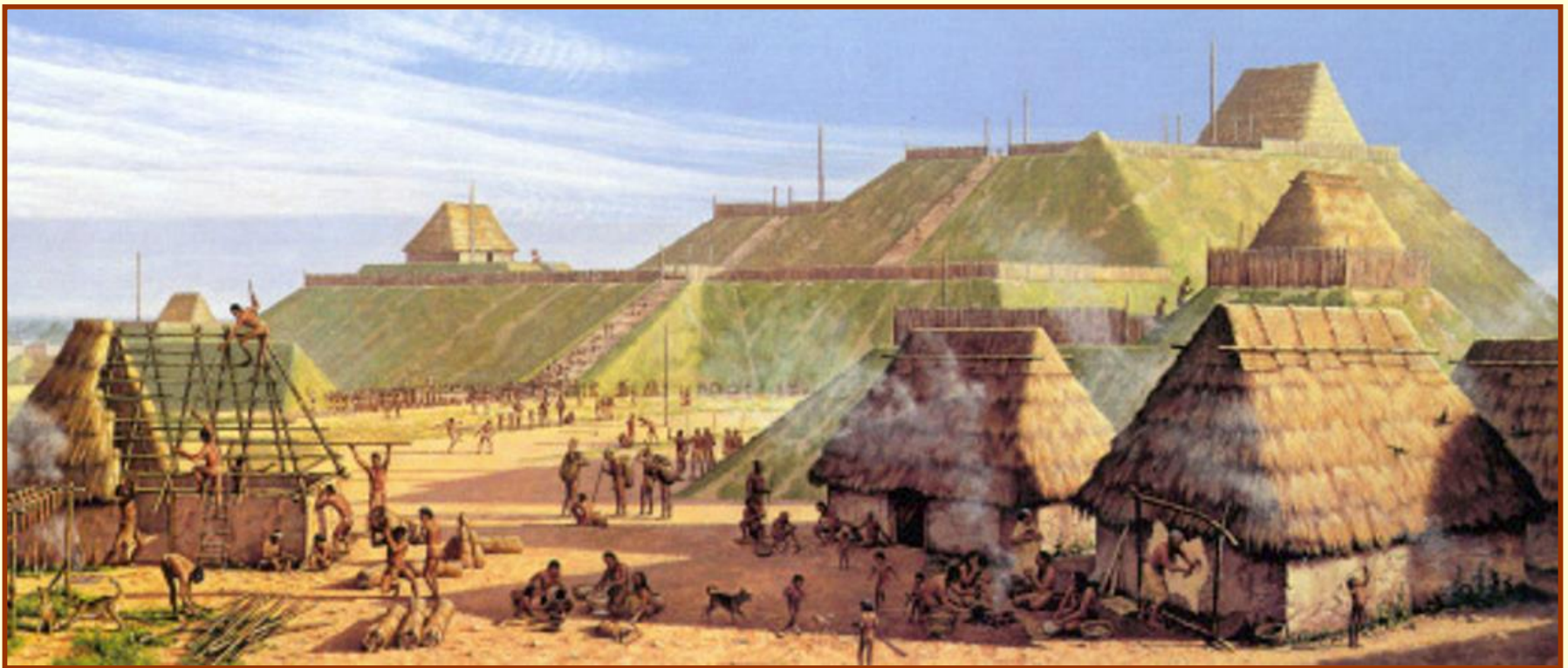
The Plains Village Farmers were almost identical to the Woodland Culture, but lived on the prairies.

The western soil was less fertile and there were fewer rivers.

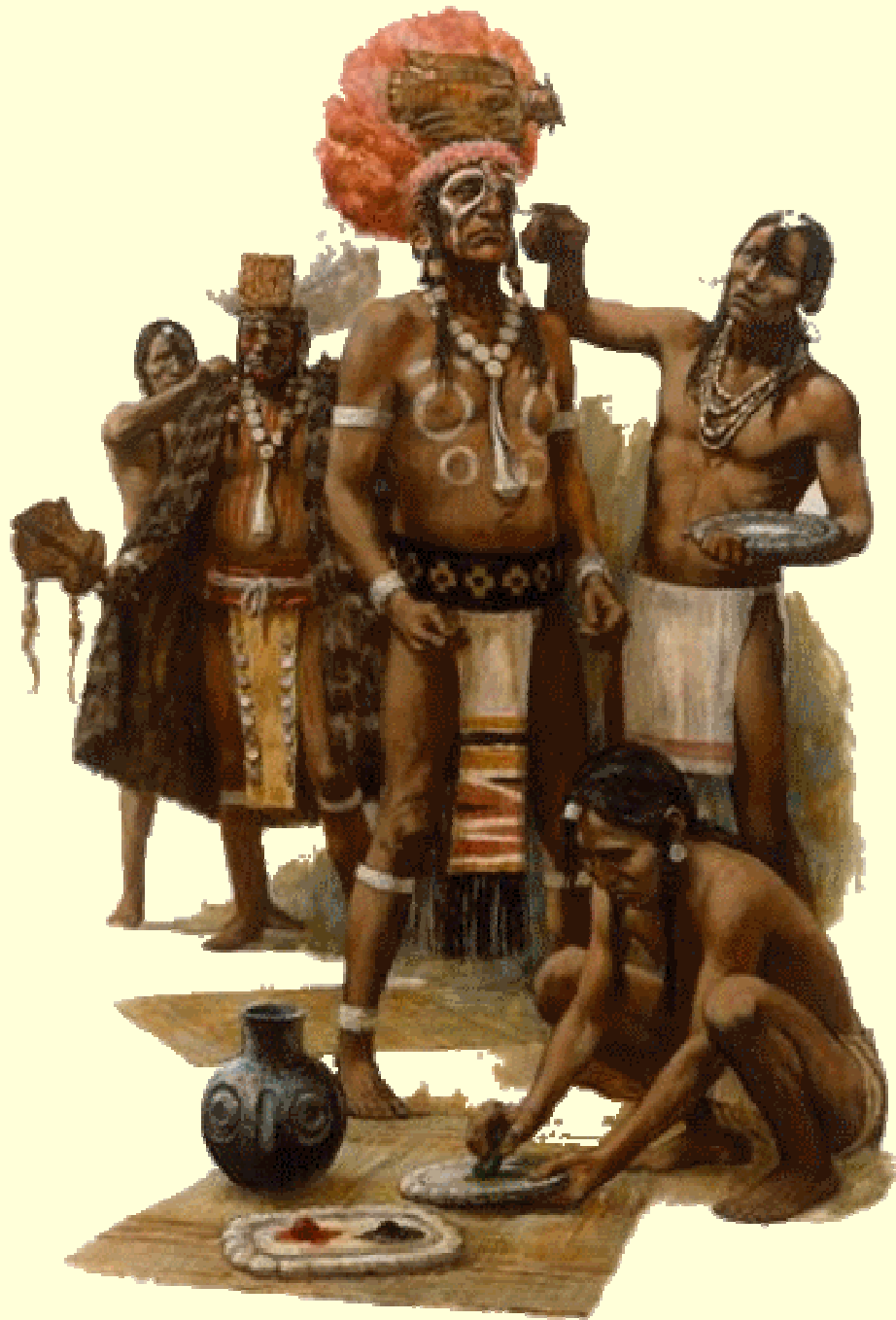


**The Mound Builders built large central complexes,
which served as temples, grain storage,
observatories, and burial chambers.**

The people's homes surrounded the city.



The Mound Builders were part of the larger Mississippian culture.



**They were
fine craftsmen
and traded
with tribes
as far away as
the Gulf Coast
for shells
and the
Great Lakes
for copper.**

*All members of the tribe
painted their bodies
and wore jewelry.*

About 500 years ago, the climate became drier and many Oklahoma Natives abandoned farming.

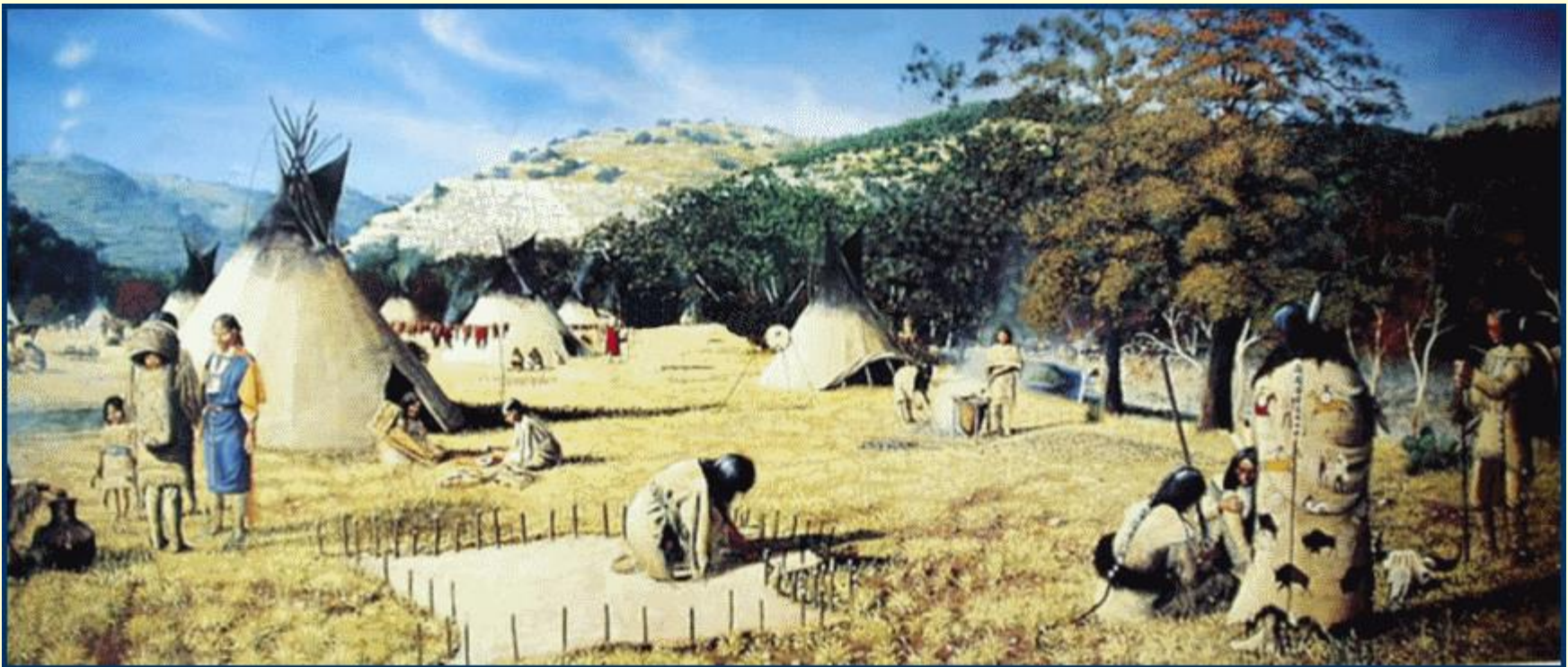


This period is called the Protohistoric Era, the time between prehistory and recorded history.

- *The Early Plains Indians returned to a nomadic way of life, hunting buffalo and foraging for wild plants.*
- *They also began living in tipis covered with buffalo hides.*



*When the Europeans arrived,
there were three major tribes
living permanently
in Oklahoma.*



Section 2: Historic Tribes and Culture





**In the 1540s,
Francisco Coronado
led an expedition
that would explore
the Great Plains
in search of
treasure.**

*Coronado would encounter
two Native American tribes
in what is now Oklahoma.*

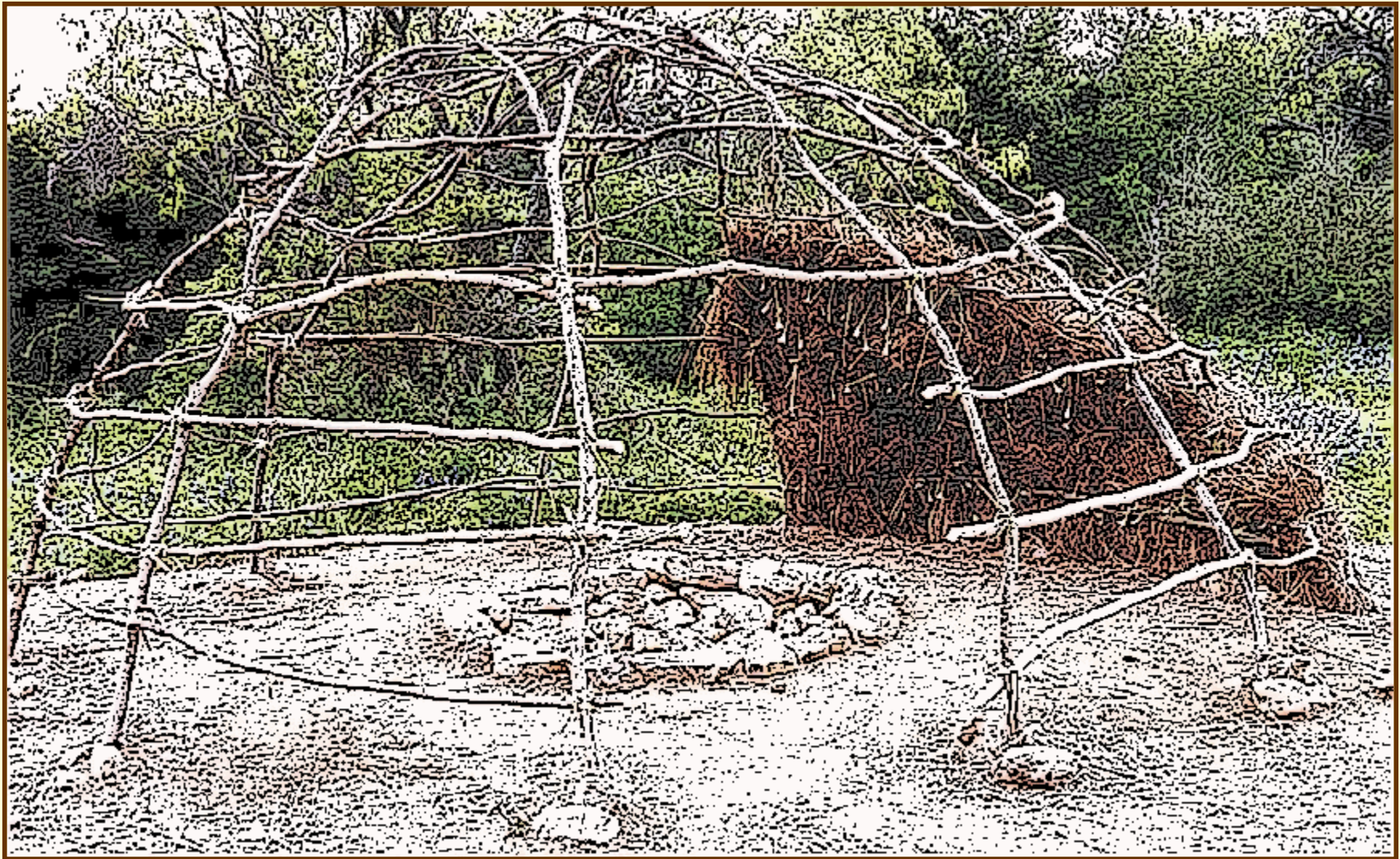
**The first
recorded contact was
with the Apache,
who Coronado described
as “a gentle people,
faithful in their
friendships.”**



The Apache lived in tribal villages called rancherias and were still nomadic hunter-gatherers.

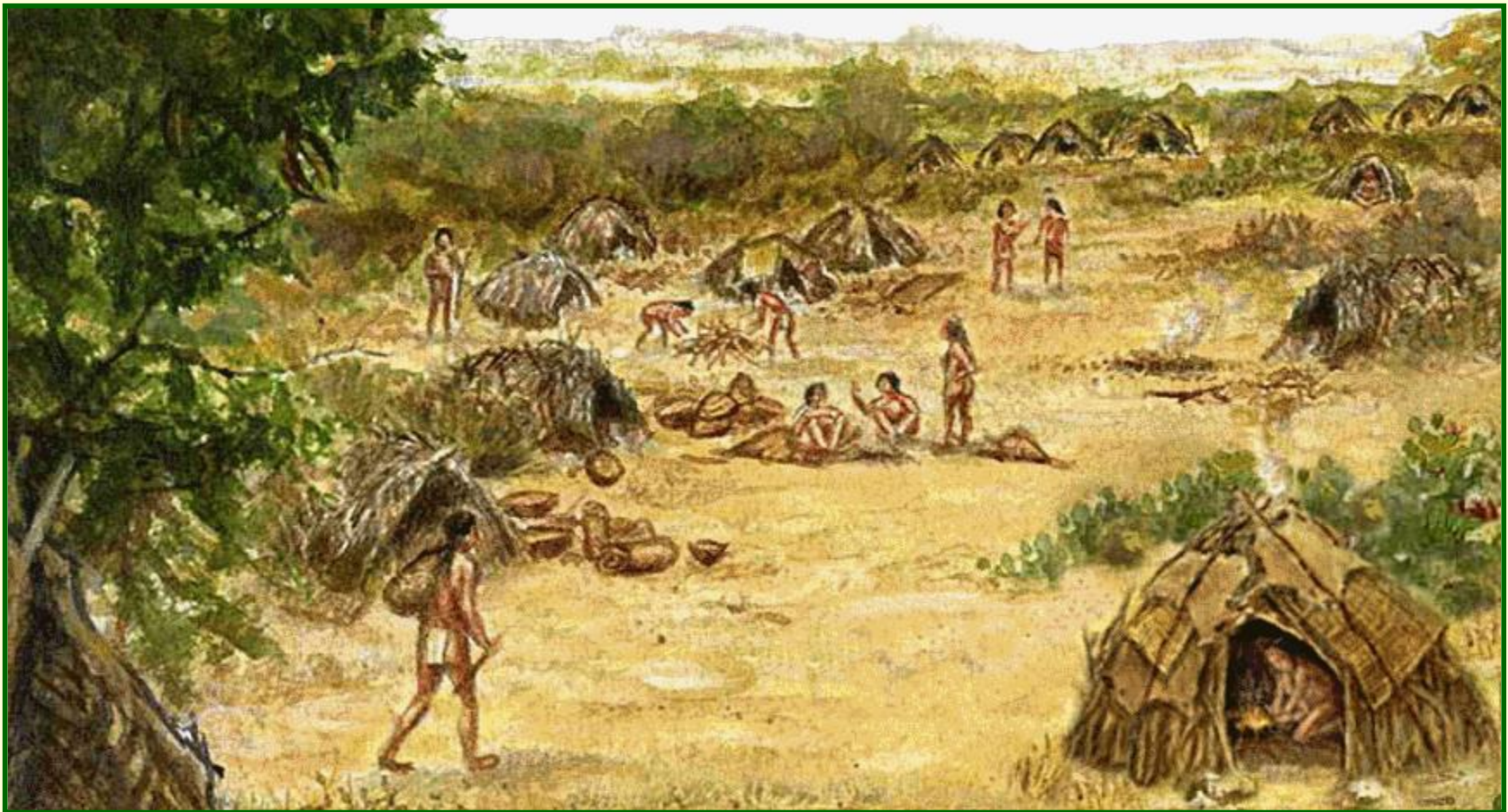


Their homes were wickiups, or dome-shaped huts made with tree branches and prairie grass.



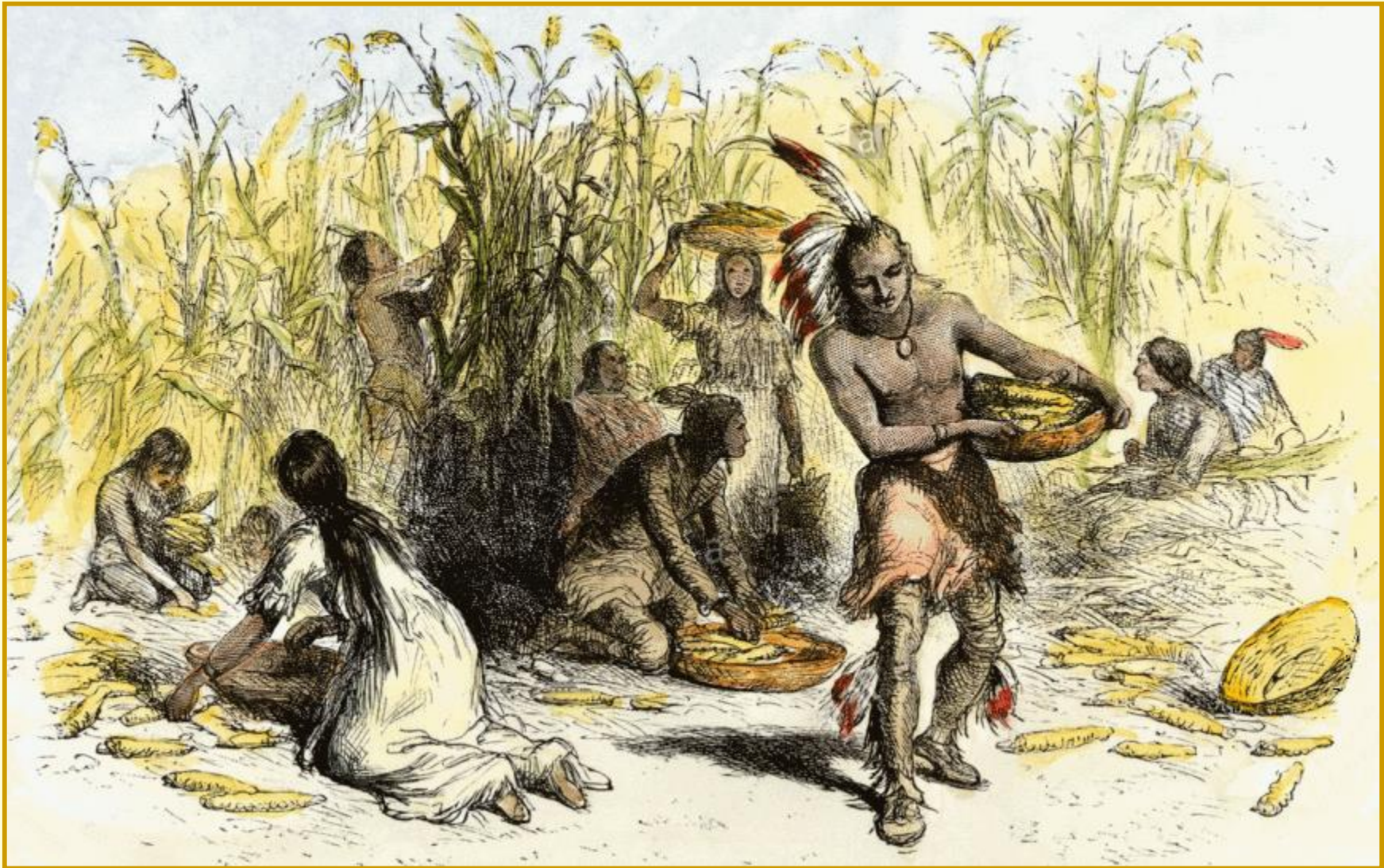
**Coronado also encountered the Wichita Indians
in the southern Great Plains.**

**The tribe used barter, meaning they traded
surplus items for others of equal value.**



The item traded most was maize, or corn.

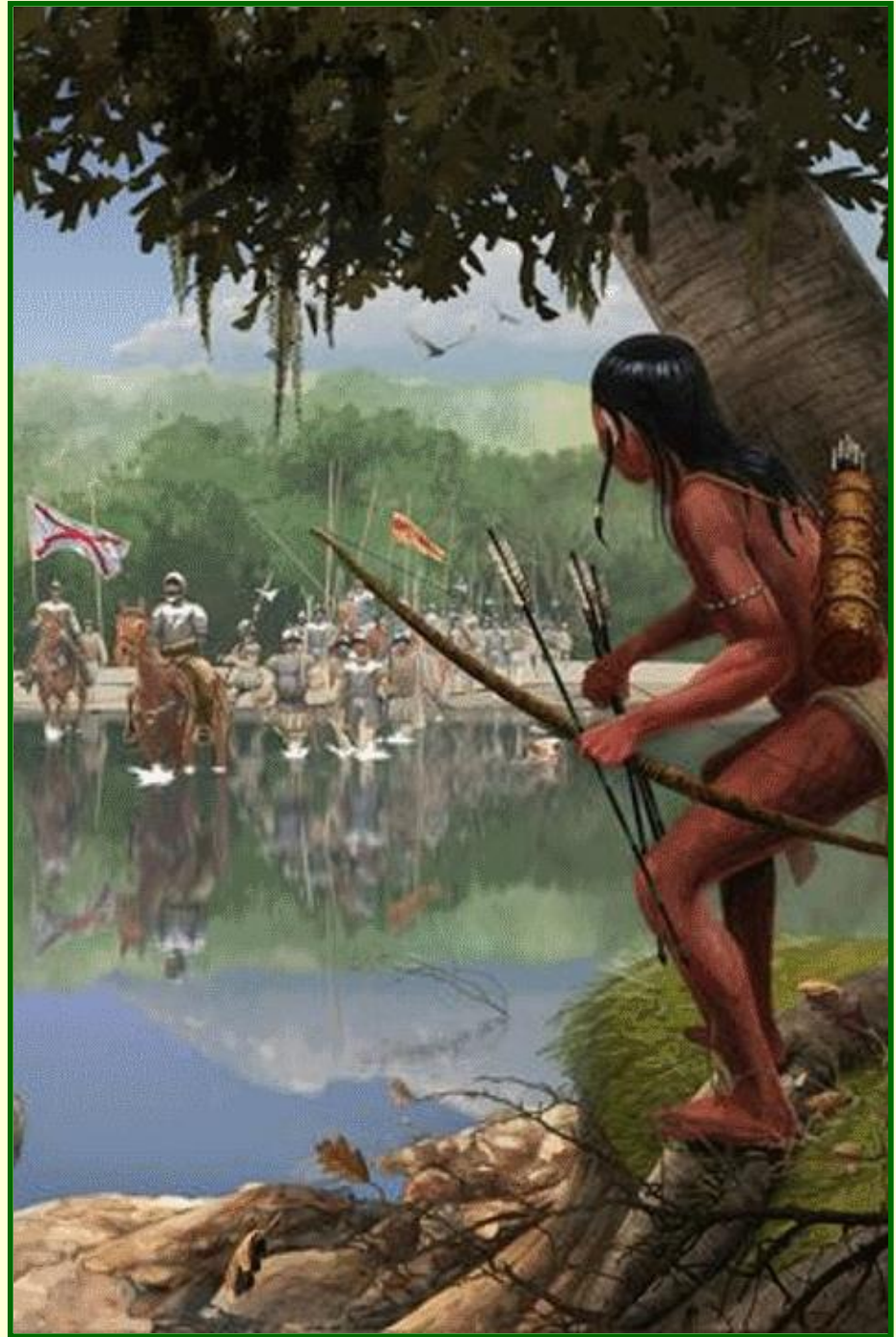
The Wichita traded it to hunter tribes for meat.



Meanwhile, the expedition of Hernando de Soto left a trail of death and destruction across the southeast.



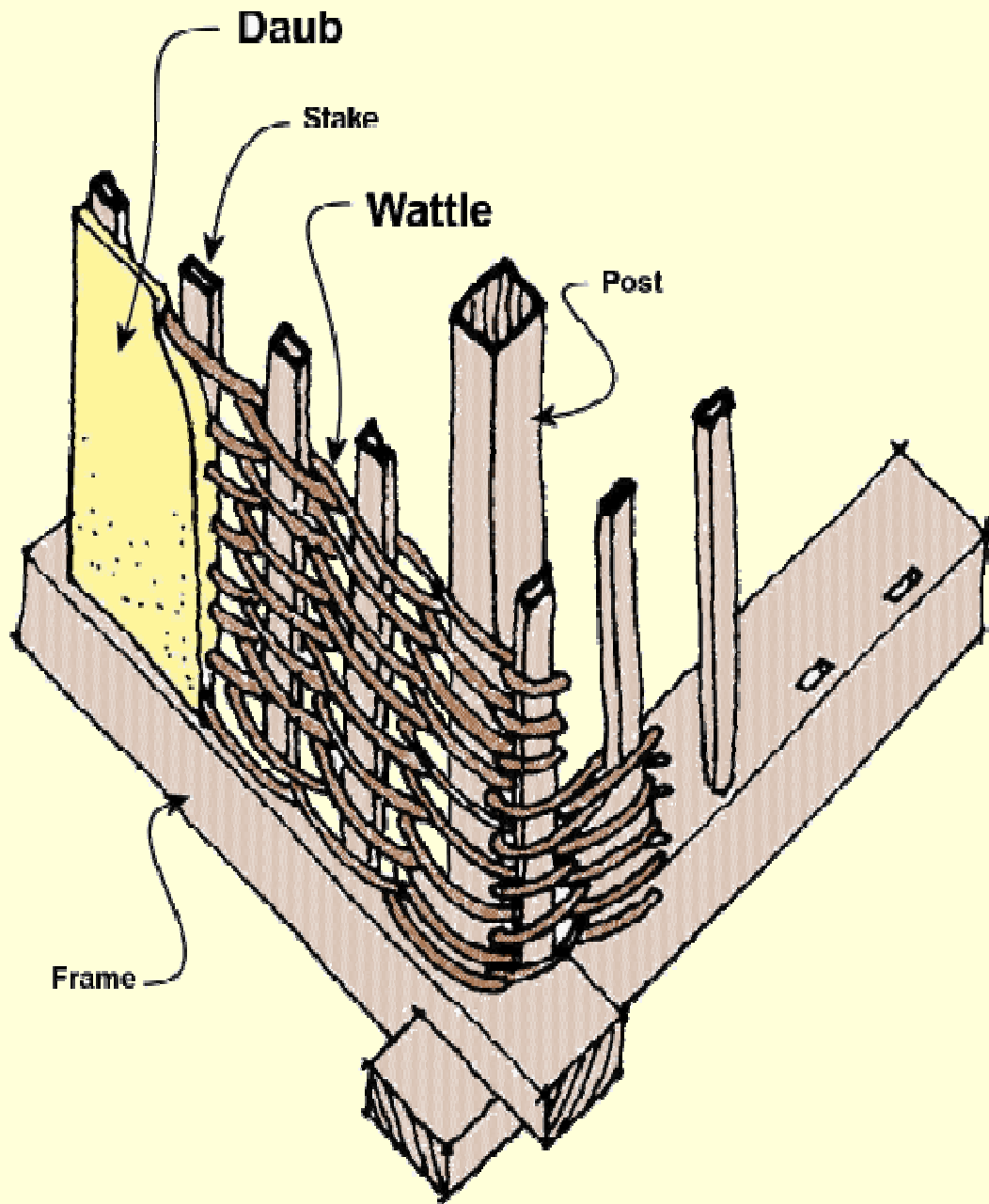
**However,
De Soto made
peaceful contact
with the Caddo,
a farming tribe
in Arkansas
and Oklahoma.**



The tribe was spared because they lived in permanent, European-style houses.

The Spanish needed shelter for the winter.





The Caddo were experts at a building technique called wattle and daub.

It consisted of sticks woven into a frame and then covered with mud.

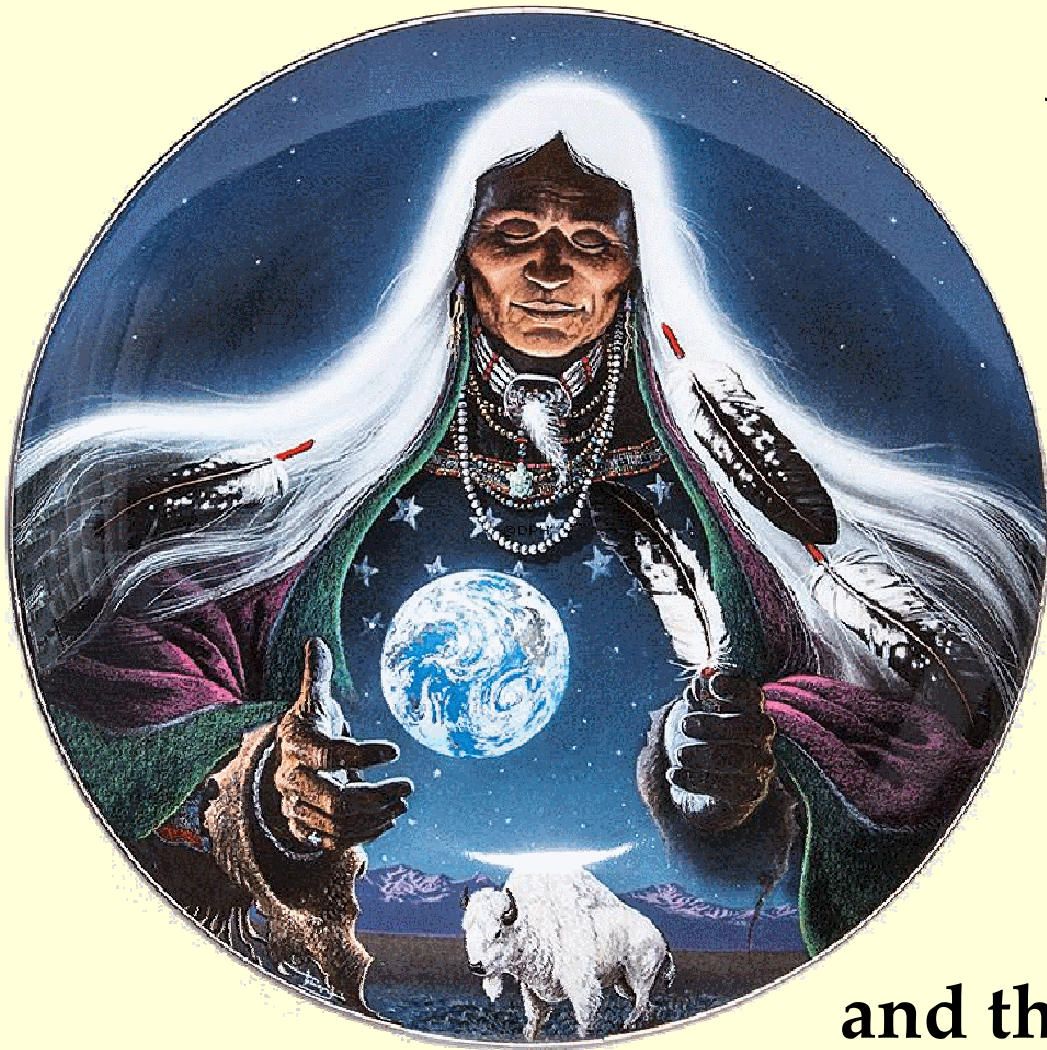


Europeans gradually began to realize that each tribe had its own culture, including language, religion, and other customs.



Many tribes prayed each day to The Great Spirit.

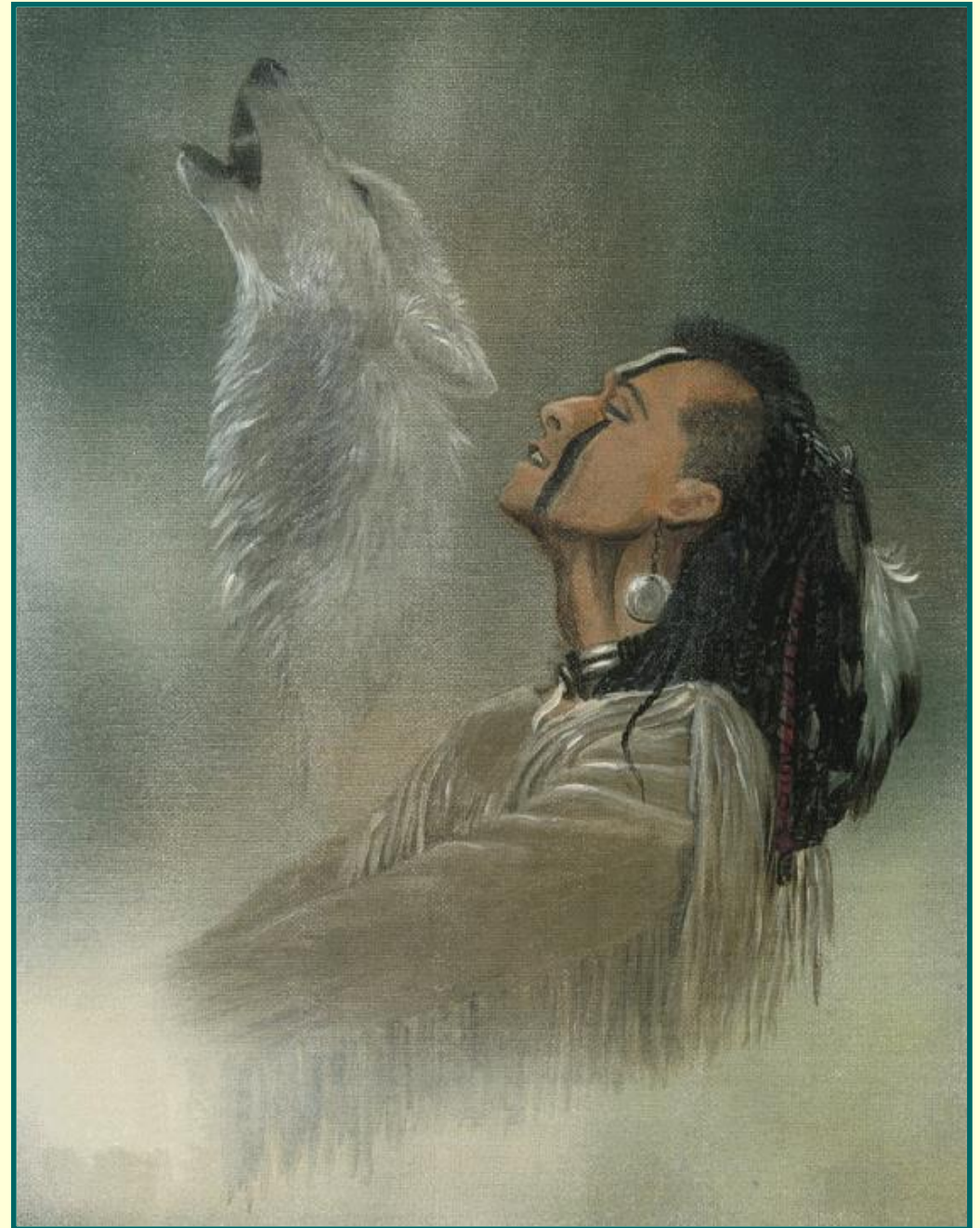
The picture below is called "Sky Father."

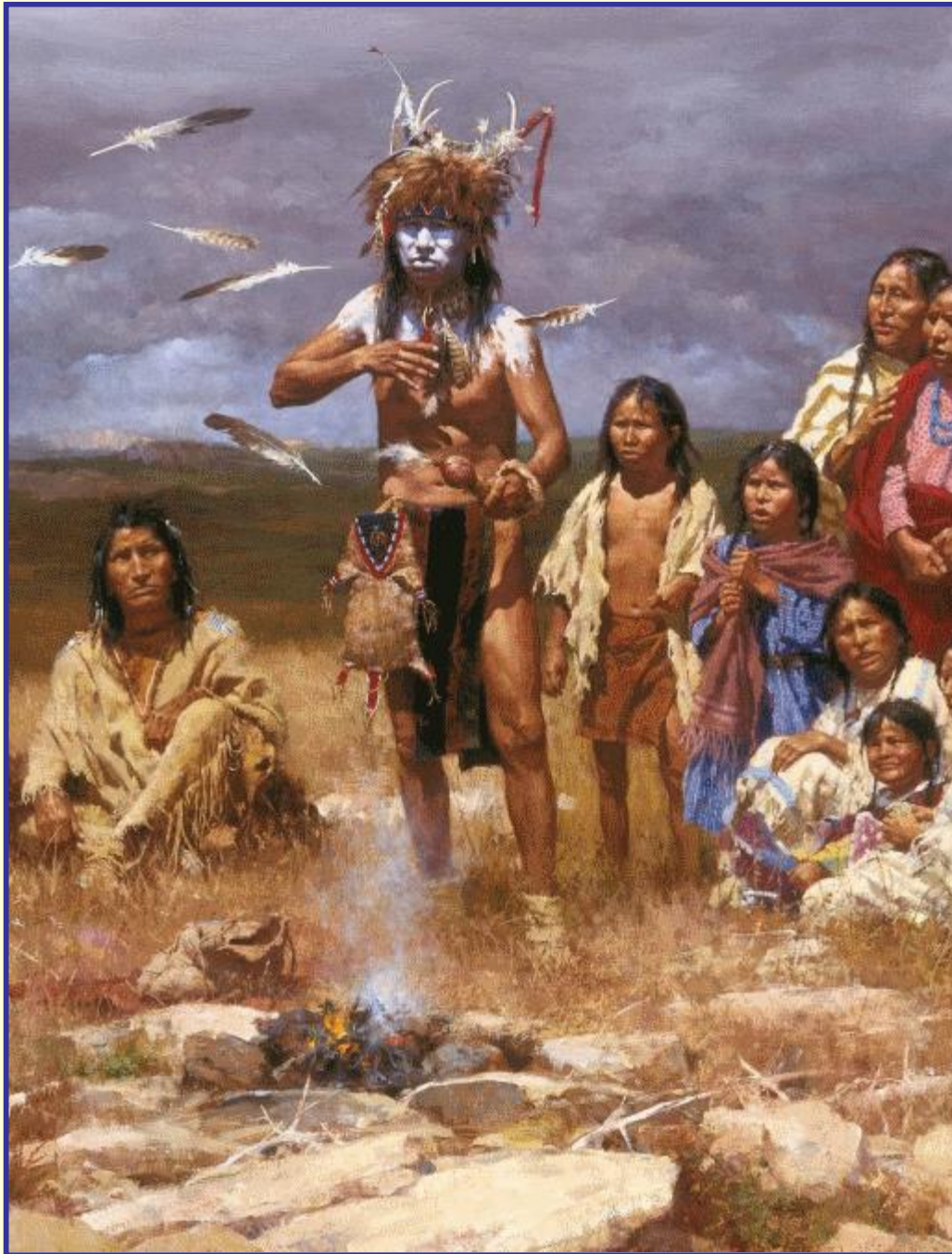


**Life was sacred to the
Plains Indians.
They believed
in an afterlife
where brave
warriors and
faithful women
were rewarded
and where cowards
and thieves were punished.**

**Many Natives also
had totems,
a land animal
or bird
whose spirit
guided them.**

**Dreams and visions
were believed
to come from
these spirits.**



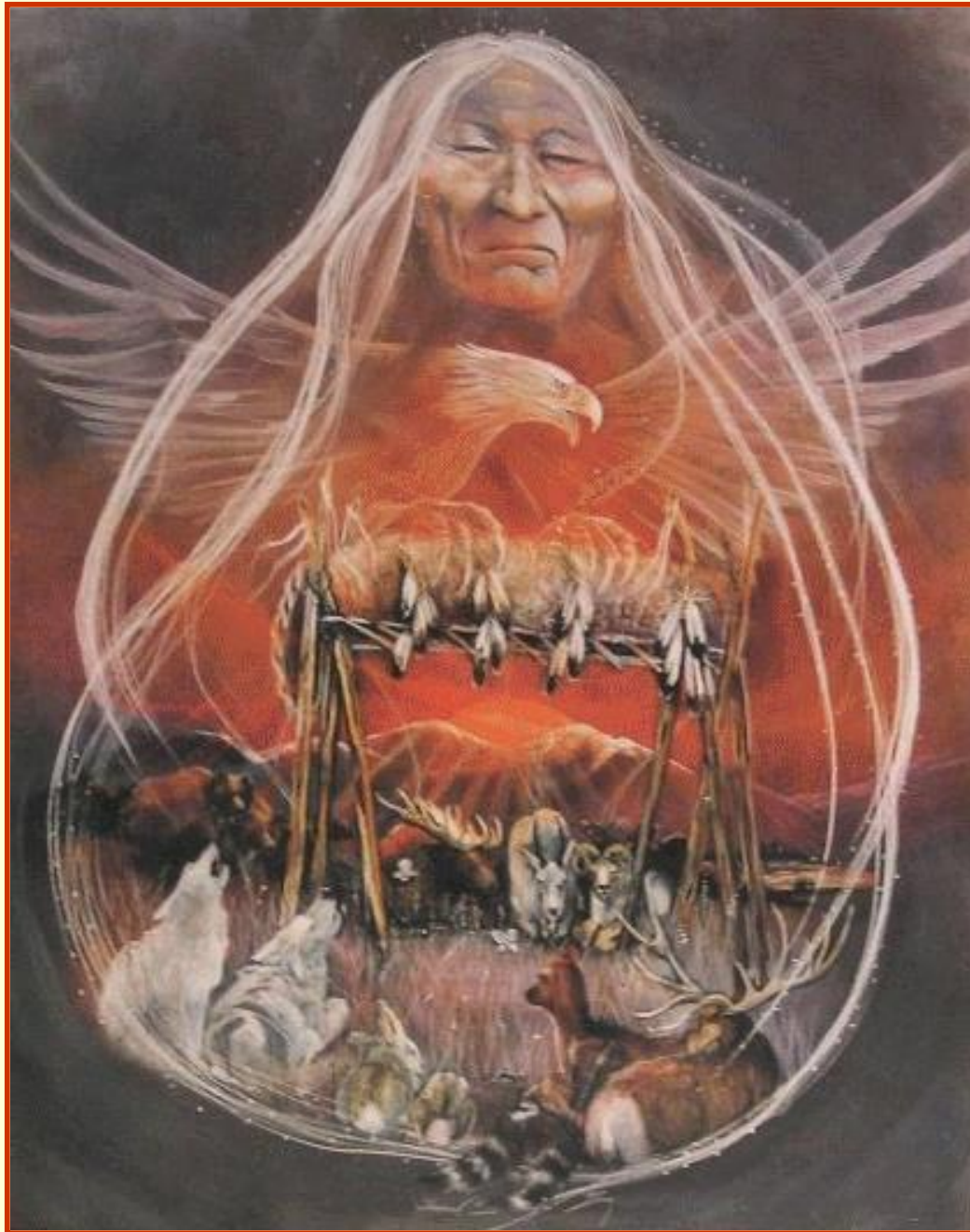


**The shaman,
a wise
medicine man
or woman,
interpreted
dreams and signs.**

**He or she also
used herbs and
prayers to heal
the sick.**

The histories and beliefs of the tribes were passed down orally by the shamans because there were no written languages.





**The Natives
believed
that all life
was connected.
People were not
more important
than the animals,
or the plants,
or the Earth.**

Polygamy (having more than one wife) was allowed if the husband could afford the extra expense.

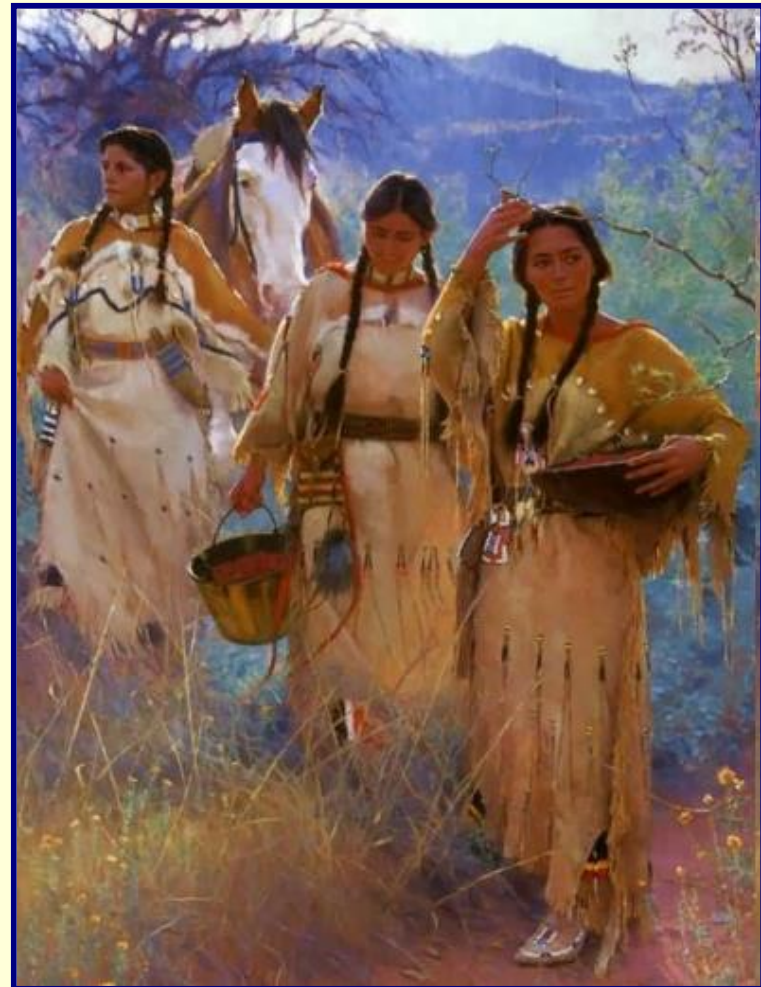
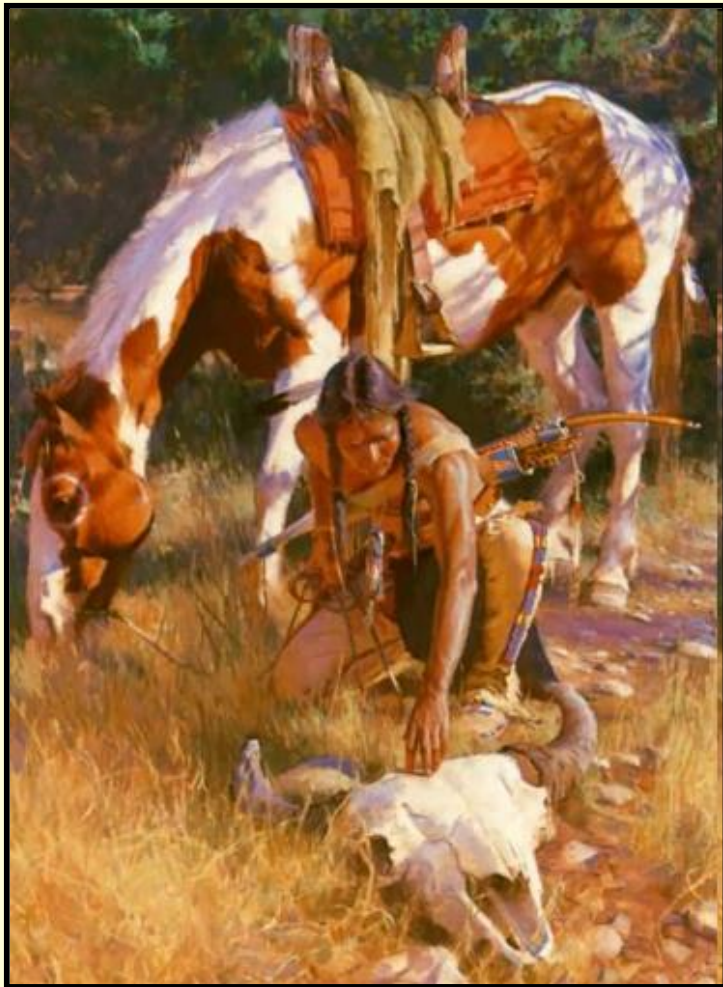
Children were valuable: boys would care for their parents in their old age, and girls were a source of income, because they could be bartered when they became old enough to be married.

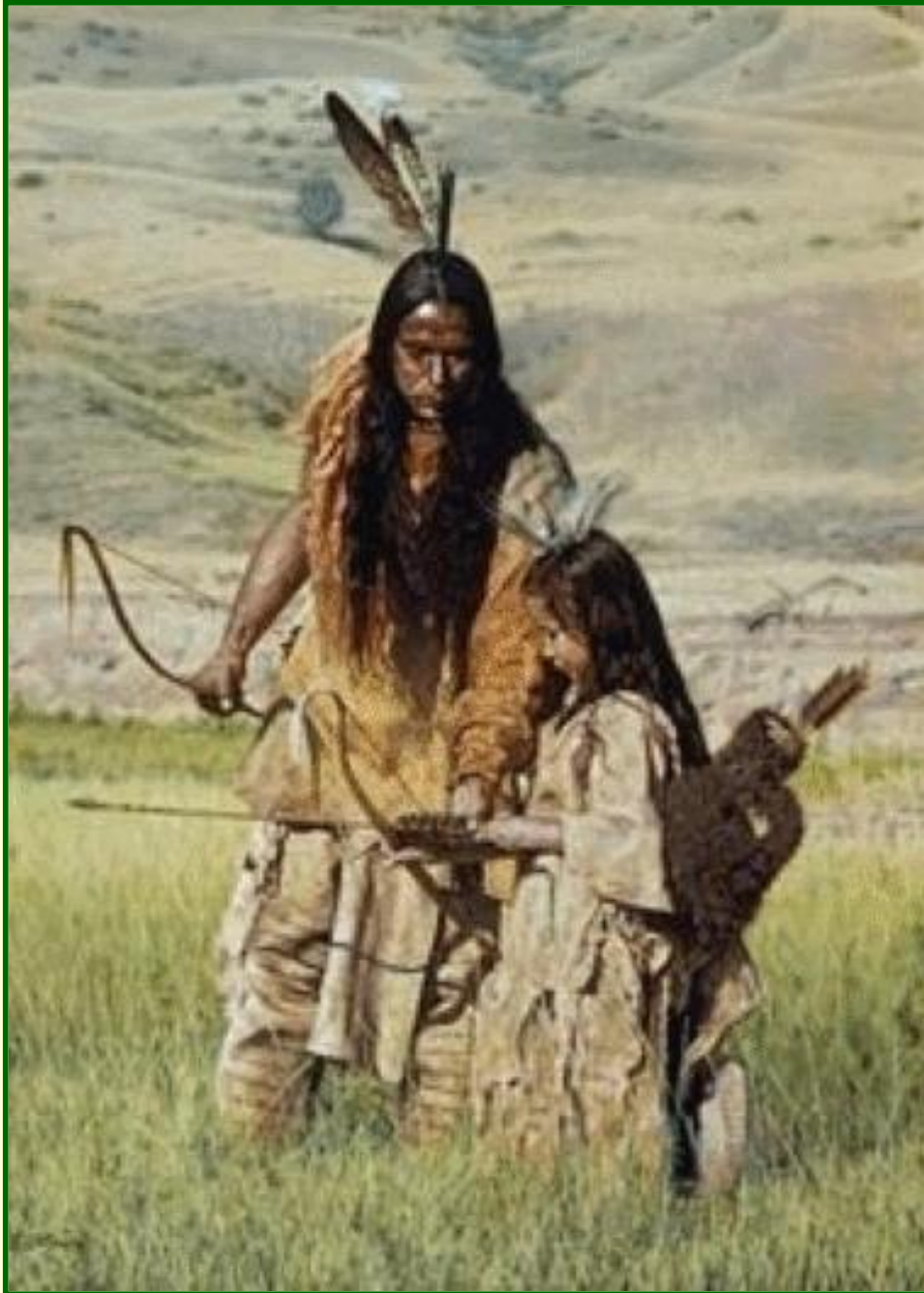


Gender roles were usually traditional.

Men were warriors and hunters.

Women cared for and sheltered the family.





*But more than
130 tribes
recognized
non-traditional
gender roles,
known as
“Two Spirits.”*





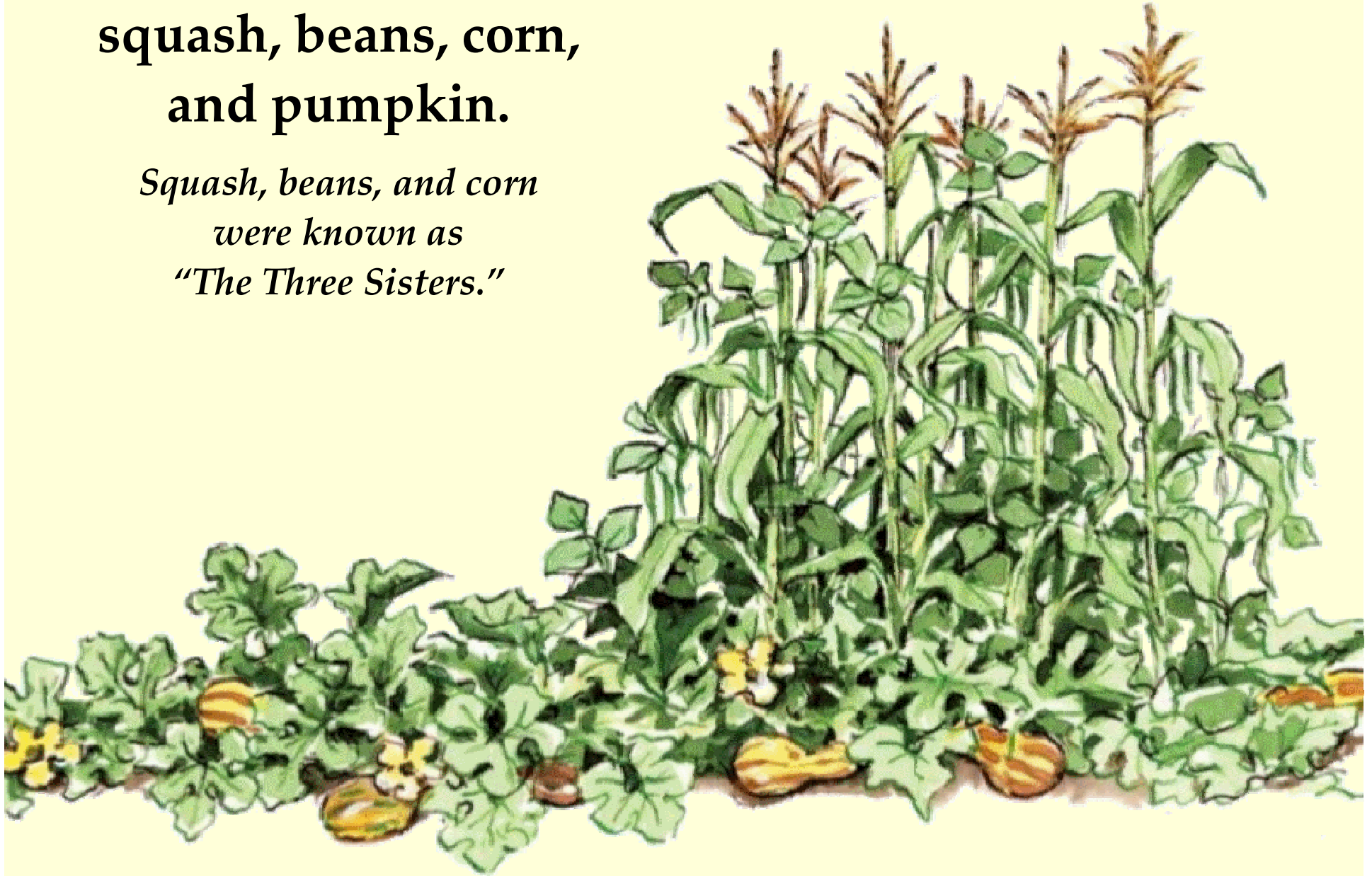
**In the Plains Natives' diet,
meat was eaten raw, roasted over an open fire,
boiled in water, or dried to make jerky.**

Soups and stews were common.

*In addition to buffalo and deer,
meats included fish, turtle, bear, squirrel, and duck and other birds.*

**Vegetables included
squash, beans, corn,
and pumpkin.**

*Squash, beans, and corn
were known as
"The Three Sisters."*



Native medicines included willow bark for pain relief, mint for upset stomach, soaproot for cleaning, and mushroom spores for wounds.



*Tribes had endured for thousands of years,
but a new challenge was on the horizon.*

