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THE PUEBLO INDIANS

After graduation from the seminary at Fort Worth in June, 1930, I set out west and northwest to a church at Aztec, New Mexico. With my wife, Olivia, and our infant son, Monte, I traveled over arid cattle and farm country, across the elevated plains where there was irrigation from shallow wells, into New Mexico with its Spanish monuments and Indian reservations--and on to Shiprock, New Mexico. There we turned east into the San Juan and Animas River Valley through Farmington, and on to Aztec.

As we descended from the desert into the valley east of Shiprock, near Farmington, we entered a new world. One of the first welcome sights was a sluice of water tumbling out of a rocky cliff west of the highway. Presently, we began to see green fields of alfalfa and corn, apple orchards and fat cattle. Soon we passed under a veritable tunnel of cottonwoods growing near the irrigation ditches beside the road. Everywhere there was evidence of prosperous farming and general contentment.

When we arrived at Aztec and were settled in our work, we became more and more amazed to see the irrigation system that worked so efficiently, seemingly with very few problems. There were irrigation ditches everywhere, usually filled with water. Really, it was easier merely to let the water flow in the ditches continuously than to divert it elsewhere. Since the water was plentiful from the one source, the Animas River, people watered crops, cattle, yards, gardens and themselves from the irrigation ditches. They even ran the water from the ditches along the streets into their cisterns.

The river was considerably lower than the town and ~~lower~~ ^{lower} even than most of the fields. This somewhat unique irrigation system operated as follows: Large canals constructed on each side of the valley of the Animas River brought the water from the river north of Aztec to all places where it was needed in the valley. The fall of the river is such that the water flows freely from the river into the canals, from the canals into the large ditches and from the

large ditches into all the small ditches.

Upon my inquiry as to when and how the irrigation system was developed, I was told that it was used by the Pueblo Indians over a thousand years ago. Only minor adjustments had to be made in the system when the white settlers found it about a hundred years ago. All the engineering had been done by the Pueblos, perhaps by trial and error. But they made it work effectively. Of course, flumes had to be constructed by the settlers over the several arroyos coming down out of the mountains. It seems that the Pueblos had run their large canals up the valleys of the arroyos, sometimes great distances, in order to conduct the water down the main valley.

No Pueblos live near Aztec now. They moved away or joined other Pueblos in other places. Practically all the Indians in and around Aztec are Navajos, as their rather extensive reservation is just to the west. The Navajos are very different from the Pueblos in many respects. The Pueblos are characterized by their houses; whereas, the Navajos live in hogans (holes in the ground covered with logs). No one seems to know ^{why} the Pueblos left Aztec about a thousand years ago. It was likely, however, because of unfriendly neighbors, as the Pueblos were apparently peaceful, sedentary farmers. (They also left their habitation at Mesa Verde ^{National} Monument at some distance north of Aztec in Colorado.)

As soon as I could conveniently do so, I visited the Aztec ^{National} Monument, a short distance west of the present town of Aztec. This national monument was established in 1923 by the American Museum of National History. (The name "Aztec" is a misnomer.) When I met the caretakers at the monument, they explained everything carefully as they had been able to learn from their several sources. In general, the place had not been inhabited for about a thousand years. The early white settlers had found the ruin (for it is only a ruin) very much as the Pueblos left it.

The ruin is that of a large pueblo (the Spanish name for that type of structure) built around a large open court, or plaza, approximately three hundred

feet long. The communal building around the court was originally three stories in height, progressively stepped back, built of skillfully cut stones, for stone is plentiful all about the place. Evidently there were no doors or windows on the outside of the first tier of rooms. The inhabitants entered the building by short ladders to the upper stories and pulled the ladders up after them. (Sometimes pueblos were five or six stories in height.) All openings on the first floor were on the inside, opening into the plaza.

As has been indicated, most of the massive pueblo is in ruins. However, nine first-story rooms were still in a perfect state of preservation. They are about the size of small bedrooms. The walls are of finely-cut stones about the size of concrete building blocks. The overhead ceilings were of cedar logs, still beautiful in appearance. The floor was just plain dirt. No items of furniture were present in the rooms. But, **strangely**, there were several basket-like caskets containing human remains, of course very dry and light. (The caretakers did ^{not} know of any other caskets, or of a burying place)

A museum has been established where many items of Pueblo culture have been deposited. Among the items are jewelry, pottery, weapons and implements of stone, wood and bone excavated from the site, which consists of 4.6 acres.

The most interesting part of the ruin was the kiva, restored to its original condition and size, in the approximate center of the plaza. The kiva was a round hole in the ground about thirty feet deep and large enough for the adult men of the pueblo to sit on the floor. It was covered over with logs and built with a ladder from the opening at the top to the floor below. In old time a fire was kept burning at the foot of the ladder so that those descending were purified by the holy smoke. Into this kiva the men of the pueblo are supposed to have met for counsel and for religious ceremonies, or rites.

Judging from all evidence available, we conclude that the Aztec pueblo was inhabited by a neatly-ordered and systematically well-governed people.

After visiting the pueblo, I wondered about their dead and the place of burial. Such things are very important to most Indians. Consequently, I went down to another ruin, a small one, at some distance from the restored ruin. This ruin was under mounds of dirt with a few projections of a building visible about the mass. Concerning this small ruin I could ascertain but little.

As I was leaving the place, to my agreeable surprise, I met an old sheep man, who was willing to talk and answer questions. He knew nothing definitely of the small ruin, but when I asked what the Pueblos had done with their dead, he replied, "Come with me and I will show you." He pointed to a mesa about a mile from the Aztec monument on the west side of the valley. "The Pueblos' dead are up there." From where we stood there appeared to be a road about forty feet wide up the side of the mesa. Evidently the stones had been cleared away from the roadway and piled along the sides. He said the Pueblos made the road to the top of the mesa.

We set out for the mesa as the old man talked. (He reminded me of Coleridge's Ancient Mariner.) He had been in the valley fifty years and more. In that time he had kept up with everything that happened, which was ^{much} indeed. He had taken care of sheep the better part of his life, but was now a man of leisure. He had the appearance of ^a mountain man of the movies, but I suspected that he was much more than he appeared to be.

After a very interesting monologue on his part, we arrived at the base of the mesa. The work of the road up the side of the mesa was a much better accomplished piece of work than it had appeared to be from our former point of vantage. All about the mesa and almost to the top stones the size of footballs and basketballs covered the ground. The Pueblos had moved the stones from the roadway and made a smooth thoroughfare adequate for any kind of procession from the valley to the top of the mesa.

Once on top, I saw an ideal site for a small airfield. It was almost level enough just as it was --an ideal natural situation. There was nothing to in-
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dicating a burying ground--at least, not on casual inspection. But my companion led me to the left side of the small plain and pointed to the ground. There, to my amazement, were arrangements of stones/sunken into the ground with the tops of the stones even with the surface of the ground. About four feet apart, these arrangements of stones stretched away in long rows. "Here is the Pueblo cemetery," the old man asserted. (About that time a sudden shower began to wet us, and we began to run for shelter.)

It seems that the old man had never before told ^{anyone} about the Pueblo cemetery. At any rate, the caretakers at the Aztec Monument did not know about it. Tragically, I never saw the old man again. I have forgotten his name. He did not tell me where he lived, and no one that I asked knew anything about him. Since I was very much concerned at the time with urgently important matters that led me to believe that I did ^{not} ~~not~~ have time for such, I failed to investigate the cemetery further. And then a sudden change of plans caused me to leave New Mexico for a matter of concern back east. I really think that the man was right about the cemetery, however.

Now let us consider briefly the history of the Pueblo Indians. In 1540 Francisco Cononado discovered the Pueblos in what is now New Mexico and Arizona. They were (and still are) sedentary, agricultural, pottery-making, village-dwelling Indians, comprising several linguistic and dialectic groups. The principal villages, listed according to their linguistic affiliation, are as follows: Tanoan--Taos, Pecuris, or San Lorenzo, Sandia Isleta, San Juan, Santa Clara, San Idelfonso, or Ildefonso, Nambe, Jemez, Tesuque, the almost-extinct village of Pojoaque, all in New Mexico, and Hano in Arizona; Keresan--Cochiti, Santo Domingo, San Filipe, Santa Ana, Zia, Laguna, and Acoma, all in New Mexico; Zunian--Zuni in New Mexico; Shoshonean--Hopi (Moki) village of Walpi, Sichomuci, Shipauloni, Mishougrovi, and Oraibe, in Northeastern Arizona (excluding Hano, a Tanoan Hopi town).

Since 1900 there has been a break from the old single-village pattern. Now

one village may have six or more subsidiary settlements. Laguna has six and the Hopi has fourteen, including the traditional seven listed above.

The Pueblo Indians in New Mexico and Arizona occupy reservation lands granted them by the Spanish. These grants were later confirmed by the United States. The Pueblo holdings in 1950 amounted to 3,828, 303 acres. The 1950 census reported a population of 19,329 Pueblo Indians.

The overall administration of the Pueblos is under the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs, which provides for schools, health, and extension work, for the reinforcement of the authority of the Pueblo Council, and for assistance toward self support.

Physically the Pueblos are relatively small in stature. Their skin is light tan to reddish-brown in color, eyes are dark, hair is straight and black, but body hair scant. The stock is basically mongoloid. However, the Pueblo Indian is the result of mixtures of different types, principally the pre-historic "Southwestern Plateau" type with a later admixture from the Plains, Navajo and Apache Indians, and (after 1540) from European and others.

Man has been living in the Southwest for thousands of years. The New World, as discovered by the Europeans, was peopled by migrants from Asia, not in a great wave, or movement, but by a slow filtering of group after group. Peoples settled in an area, lived there, and adapted their culture to the environment, only to move on again because of an urge for change or from necessity born of a diminishing water supply and a lack of natural foods, or from pressure of other groups.

With the introduction of agriculture into the Southwest, the Indians were forced to adapt to more stable habits. No longer to wander in search of food, a group began to build permanent settlements. Water supply and suitable farm land dictated the location of village sites. A more ^{or} less guaranteed food supply gave leisure for the development of other cultural traits than those that served the basic needs of subsistence. From this situation grew what has come to be called

the Pueblo Culture. The semi-arid environment affected greatly all phases ^{Page seven} of the complex traits that make up their culture, including religion and social organization, agriculture, industries, crafts, and farming techniques.

The three major traits which mark the Pueblo Indian were not acquired at the same time. Agriculture came first, then pottery, and finally the development of large communal structures.

At least two thousand years ago agriculture appeared in the Southwest. The earliest known crop was corn. Through the centuries since then corn has remained the principal source of subsistence. Beans, squash and cotton were added later. During the first years of agricultural development there was little change in living habits. Caves and overhanging rocks often provided the sole habitation. Pit houses and crude brush shelters were built. Those first attempts at architecture evolved from the single-room into multiple-room masonry as adobe houses, and finally into the great terraced buildings, often having many hundreds of rooms, surrounding plazas.

The Pueblos have dealt extensively with crafts. About 500 A.D. pottery was introduced, and the Pueblos became apparently the first potters. Pottery was not a static craft, but varied and developed into a many-styled industry. About 1870 silver working became prevalent, and weaving goes back for centuries to the development of cotton cultivation.

The coming of the Spanish put an end to purely native development, but the long tradition of the Pueblo Indians is still maintained to a marked degree. In 1680 the Pueblo Revolt brought a brief return to Indian domination of the Southwest. The Pueblo Indians rebelled and drove all the Spanish from the region. But in 1693 Don Diego De Vargas reconquered the entire area. Since that time the Indians have never been really free.

In 1958 I visited the Santo Domingo Indian Reservation a few miles west of Santa Fé during their September festival. (Now the Santo Domingo Indians are

a branch of the Keresan language group.) This was one of the most interesting and illuminating experiences that I ever had. I went from Glorieta, New Mexico, on a bus loaded with sightseers. Before we arrived at the reservation, the bus driver cautioned us not to take any cameras into the reservation. He also told us that the Indian policemen were masters of the situation inside the reservation. In addition, the Bureau of Indian Affairs would not interfere with Indian law or punishment if we should be unfortunate enough to get into trouble.

The customary fee for entering the reservation was a dollar per person at the gate. But because the bus driver knew some of the Indian policemen, he managed ~~for the~~ for the entire bus load to enter for one dollar--although we left the bus outside the reservation gate.

Once inside, we found the festival in full swing. The main event was the rain dance, which was in no way similar to any dance I had ever before seen. I suppose that every Santo Domingo Indian was in some way involved in the dance. Half the tribe danced while the other half went into the sacred plaza in the center of the pueblo, but this time behind a wall about twelve high. It was not possible to know what those inside the plaza were doing, but we supposed that they were engaged in worship.

The dancers jogged at a slow trot around the plaza on the outside. They were arranged according to age, the oldest first and the youngest last. There was a male and then a female in the procession. The males were bare to their waists and painted with gray paint, probably made of gray clay. Some of them carried bouquets of eagle feathers, and each had a gray wolf hide for a tail. The females were plainly dressed in some sort of waists and skirts. The dancers jogged along, chanting as they went, for perhaps an hour. At the end of their dancing time, they exchanged places and activities with the half-tribe in the plaza. Then the second group danced as the first group had danced.

When the second group began dancing, I turned my attention to some of the Indians who were not at the time involved in any activity. I proceeded to en-

gaged some of them in conversation. They were very friendly and talked freely, willingly answering questions. Some were even witty and cracked jokes.

One of the younger men noticed that the skin on my arms and face was peeling off because of the burning sunshine. He said, "You peel off just like a sycamore tree. You ought to be like me. I don't peel off."

Another, dressed as a business man, said that he had not danced in five years. He was working in a bank as teller in Santa Fe. He told me of an incident in which his little five-year-old son, who was with him, was involved. The little fellow, looking out the front door one day, had said, "Daddy, younde comes an Indian!" The little boy was so integrated into the social structure that he did not regard himself as an Indian--or even realize that he was an Indian.

I asked an older Indian with feathers in his headdress to tell me about the purpose of the dance. He replied that they were praying primarily for rain, but that really they were asking the Great Spirit to help them in their living to be what they ought to be and to give them food, clothes and shelter. They asked also for health and the well-being of the nation. It seemed that they received answers to their petitions, for although it had not rained for a long time, rain came in abundance almost immediately. I have noticed that in the first days of September in that land there is always plenty of rain.

The Keresan Chief

Before the dawn of ancient festal day,
Atop the highest house of pueblo stone,
In eagle feathers, body painted gray,
The grave Keresan chieftain stood alone.

He summoned all to rise and celebrate
The greatest day in all the tribal year:
" 'Tis time to rise and all participate
In dancing, soulful chant and thankful cheer.

"The Mighty Spirit calls to offer praise
For gentle rain, abundant food and peace,
For starry nights and brilliant sunny days
Till troubles end, and fitful life shall cease.

"Now, soon I go away to happy land,
Where friends in work and love shall ever stand."

In a concluding remark I recommend that any person overcome with boredom and drudgery of modern living adopt as a hobby the study of some Indian tribe, or group. In addition to ^{Apaches,} the Pueblos and Navajos of the Southwest, there are the Choctaws of Mississippi, the Cherokees of North Carolina and Tennessee, the Seminoles of Florida, and many others. Any group is an interesting subject for serious study. They are really friendly and ready to share their experiences--or even to fraternize to a certain degree. But--they are usually proud of their history and traditions.

