SMITHSONIAN MISCELLANEOUS COLLECTIONS
VOLUME 100 (WHOLE VOLUME)

ESSAYS IN HISTORICAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF NORTH AMERICA

PUBLISHED IN HONOR OF JOHN R. SWANTON
in Celebration of His Fortieth Year with the
Smithsonian Institution

(PUBLICATION 3 [illegible])

CITY OF WASHINGTON
PUBLISHED BY THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION
MAY 25, 1940

HP4289

SOME NAVAHO CULTURE CHANGES DURING TWO CENTURIES (WITH A TRANSLATION OF THE EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY RABAL MANUSCRIPT)

By W. W. HILL
U. S. National Museum

PREFACE

In recent years there has been a renewed interest in the several aspects of Navaho culture. It is with the hope of providing further stimulation to the study of the history, ethnology, and archeology of the Navaho that the following translation and notes are presented.

The manuscript, "Original depositions sent to the Superior Government of The Most Excellent Count of Fuenclara, Viceroy, Governor, and Captain General of this New Spain; by Sergeant Major Don Joachín Codallos y Rabal, Governor and Captain General of New Mexico, in conformity with the order of His Excellence in his dispatch of October 3, 1744"[1] covers the period in Navaho history from 1706 to 1743. References to the Navaho antedating this period, such as those by Zarate-Salmeron[2] (1538-1626) and Benavides[3] (1630), only mention or give meager reference to the Navaho. With the exception of this manuscript, there was but brief mention and no full description of Navaho culture until about 1780. The manuscript, therefore, fills an important historic gap, besides giving an abundance of ethnographic data and presenting clues to the cultural transitions that the Navaho were undergoing at that time. It is also of value as a concomitant of recent and present-day archeological work.

I am greatly indebted to Dr. H. I. Priestley and to the Bancroft Library for permission to publish the manuscript. The translation was made by George Taes, of the University of California. At my request a free translation was made, certain repetitions were eliminated, and a portion not pertinent to the immediate subject was

[1] Manuscript No. 678. Pinart Collection of the Bancroft Library, Univ. California, Berkeley, Calif.

[2] Zarate-Salmeron, Fray Geronimo. Relaciones de todas las cosas que en el Nuevo-Mexico se han visto y sabido, asi por mar como por tierra, desde el ano 1538 hasta el de 1626. Translation by Charles F. Lummis *in* Land of Sunshine, vols. 11-12. Los Angeles, 1899-1900.

[3] Benavides, Fray Alonso de. The Memorial of Fray Alonso de Benavides, 1630. Translated by Mrs. Edward E. Ayer. Chicago, 1916.

HP4290

deleted. The translation was checked by Dr. L. B. Kiddle, of Princeton University, who assures me that "it is well done" and that "no important detail is left out." I wish to acknowledge my debt to these two gentlemen.

I am also indebted to Dr. D. D. Brand and Frank Hibben, of the University of New Mexico; to Dr. H. P. Mera, of the Laboratory of Anthropology at Santa Fe; and to Dr. J. P. Harrington, of the Bureau of American Ethnology, for criticism and help in preparing the manuscript for publication and especially for assistance in locating the various geographic sites mentioned in the manuscript.

INTRODUCTION

Rabal's depositions contain an unusual number of pertinent ethnologic observations. All the deponents mention farming and the type of crops raised, the making of basketry, weaving of cloth, and the type of habitation. All but one speak of the military activities. Less prevalently recurring references include those to horses, sheep, goats, cattle, the use of buckskin, storage bins, farming implements, dress type, and to population statistics. For purposes of convenience these items have been abstracted, and in the following paragraphs, on this basis, is presented a Navaho ethnology as of the first half of the eighteenth century. In the main the traits are confirmed by our present-day knowledge of the Navaho. However, in a few cases certain transitions are evident.

The area occupied by the Navaho during the period of 1706-1743 seems to have included the northern and eastern portions of their present range.[4] References to the southern and western boundaries were vague and were based upon hearsay rather than upon actual visits. Inferentially, the southern boundary can be placed along the parallel 35°50′ north; the western extension slightly west of the present Arizona-New Mexico State line. This compares substantially with Amsden's location of the Navaho in early historic times.[5]

The population estimates range from 2,000 to 4,000. Judging from the numbers that were reported from the districts actually visited, it would seem that the higher figure was the more nearly correct. This is also borne out by statements of Bancroft.[6] It must be remembered

[4] For purposes of estimating distances mentioned in the manuscript 2½ miles were assigned to a league. This compared closely when checked with cases of known distances as given in the testimonies.

[5] Amsden, Charles A., Navaho weaving: Its technic and history, p. 126, Fine Arts Press, 1934; and Navaho origins, New Mexico Hist. Rev., July 1932, p. 198.

[6] Bancroft, H. H., History of the Pacific States of North America, vol. 12, Arizona and New Mexico, 1530-1888, p. 247, 1888.

that the Navaho popul
sources shortly after
the reconquest.

The period under
military activity on th
occupied in conflicts w
depredations which b
1716. From this time
measures against the
Spanish. Later, a tent
lasted, except for int
the Comanche and Ute
Sumner in 1868.

It is evident from
comparative economic
was mentioned by all
Fields were located in
beans, and pumpkins,
were also mentioned,
already well establishe
except in connection
irrigation by hand. V
for drinking purpose
period. Cultivation w
undoubtedly the digg
stored in undergroun

The beginnings of
discernible at this tin
animals, horses being
mentioned, and as the
Navaho, their paucity

By implication hunt
the basis of present-d
ences to buckskin as

The virtual cessatio
effect upon intertriba
Navaho and the "Ch
number of the testin
with the above people
of woven woolen bla

[7] Bancroft, ibid., pp. 22

[8] Bancroft, ibid., pp. 28

HP4291

that the Navaho population was substantially augmented from Pueblo sources shortly after the revolt of 1680 and during the period of the reconquest.

The period under discussion (1706-1743) was one of unusual military activity on the part of the Navaho. The earlier years were occupied in conflicts with the Spanish, reprisals resulting from Pueblo depredations which began in 1700.[7] These did not terminate until 1716. From this time on, the Navaho were too taken up with defensive measures against the Ute and Comanche to be concerned with the Spanish. Later, a tentative alliance with Santa Fe was welcomed and lasted, except for intermittent raiding, until 1818.[8] Hostilities with the Comanche and Ute continued until the Navaho returned from Fort Sumner in 1868.

It is evident from the Rabal accounts that this era was one of comparative economic prosperity for the Navaho. Agricultural activity was mentioned by all observers and was the basic economic pursuit. Fields were located in the lowlands. The principal crops were maize, beans, and pumpkins, which were grown in abundance. Watermelons were also mentioned, and we may judge that this introduced crop was already well established. No irrigation appears to have been practiced except in connection with the garden plots, and this was undoubtedly irrigation by hand. Water was stored by impounding, but this was for drinking purposes. Two droughts were mentioned during the period. Cultivation was by hand with the aid of wooden implements, undoubtedly the digging stick and the wooden hoe. Produce was stored in underground globular-shaped pits.

The beginnings of the Navaho livestock industry were clearly discernible at this time. Sheep and goats were the most important animals, horses being few in number. Only the tracks of cattle were mentioned, and as they have always been of minor importance to the Navaho, their paucity at this time is not surprising.

By implication hunting was an important economic pursuit both on the basis of present-day accounts and because of the recurring references to buckskin as a trade article.

The virtual cessation of Navaho-Spanish warfare had an important effect upon intertribal relations. It stimulated trading between the Navaho and the "Christianized" Pueblos as well as the Spanish. A number of the testimonies mention extensive commercial activities with the above peoples. The primary Navaho trade articles consisted of woven woolen blankets, baskets, and buckskins.

[7] Bancroft, ibid., pp. 222-223, 227-228, 230, 232.
[8] Bancroft, ibid., pp. 286-287.

HP4292