Alfonso Ortiz

The Tewa World

SPACE, TIME, BEING, AND BECOMING IN A PUEBLO SOCIETY

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For Saya

before she returns to the lake

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I

Introduction

This study represents an attempt to fill a serious gap in the ethnographic literature on the Pueblos of the American Southwest. As Fred Eggan observed more than a decade and a half ago: "Our knowledge of the eastern Pueblos is incomplete and often conflicting, so that it is not possible to speak with any certainty, even as to the facts" (1950, p. 304). Of the Tewa specifically, he notes that they are "the key group in any reconstruction of eastern Pueblo social organization" (1950, p. 315).

Of the six modern Tewa villages, San Juan was selected for this study for a number of reasons. First, it is the largest, with approximately 800 inhabitants (Ortiz 1965*a*). Secondly, it is one of the two most conservative villages, and it has long been regarded by the other four as the "mother village" in ritual and political matters. These factors, along with its northernmost location, furthest away from Keresan Pueblo influence, suggest that it might reflect an older or more nearly pure form of Tewa social structure and culture. Yet San Juan has never been thoroughly and systematically studied; in fact, no anthropologist has spent any appreciable amount of time there in more than four decades.

Aside from providing an opportunity to clarify the place of the Tewa in Pueblo culture generally, what other purpose in regard to contemporary anthropology might this study serve? To answer this question meaningfully let me refer to the observations of other writers on the Tewa. First, Elsie Clews Parsons concludes, in her detailed work on Tewa social organization, that "the most prominent Tewa social classification is the moiety, and for social organization the most significant habit of mind, the tendency to dichoto-

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mize" (1929, p. 278). She goes on to observe that religious societies, deities, and even beliefs and practices borrowed from the Spaniards and other tribes "are fitted into this dual pattern" (1929, pp. 279–80). In another work, published a few years earlier, she observes: "This moiety system is indeed a substitute for clans in the social consciousness, where it holds the outstanding position clanship holds, let us say, among the Hopi" (1924, p. 336). Eggan, working from a larger body of evidence, summarizes the data on the Tewa as follows:

> The organization of social, ceremonial, and political activities in terms of a dual division, and the further conceptualization of this division in terms of winter and summer, and the associated natural phenomena, suggest a fairly long period of development [1950, p. 316].

More recently, Dozier observes: "The important sociopolitical and ceremonial organization of Tanoans generally [including the Tewa] . . . is a dual division of the society, usually referred to as a moiety" (1961, p. 107).

What these statements tell us, briefly, is that the moieties and the associated tendency to think in dualistically contrasting sets are basic in understanding the Tewa. Yet no one has ever made them the focal point of analysis in the many studies that have been carried out among the Tewa since the turn of the century. This then is the task I have set for this study: to derive as many implications as possible about the operation of these several forms of dualism in Tewa culture as a whole.

I might point out here that I follow Geertz (1965, 1966) throughout this work in my use of the concept of culture. For Geertz, as for me, culture refers to a system of historically derived meanings and conventional understandings embodied in symbols; meanings and understandings which derive from the social order, yet which also serve to reinforce and perpetuate that social order. More specifically I focus here on the more intellectual aspects of Tewa culture—on the ideas, rules, and principles, as these are reflected in mythology, world view, and ritual, by means of which the Tewa organize their thought and conduct. I believe further that the symbolic statements, representations, and acts reflected in Tewa mythology, world view, and ritual are more than epiphenomenal to social relations. Rather, as I shall attempt to demonstrate, they serve not only to reflect these social relations but to give them direction and continuity as well.

While I concern myself primarily with thought rather than

action, with the rules governing conduct rather than the conduct itself, there is such a goodness of fit between the two among the Tewa that such an approach does not serve to mislead. I believe, rather, that this approach serves to inform us in the most general and reliable terms possible about what holds Tewa society together and what gives it point and continuity. Nor do I ignore those instances in which there is not such a goodness of fit between thought and belief on the one hand and conduct on the other, for these instances often serve to lay bare some of the central concerns of Tewa life.

I seek, therefore, not only to provide a much-needed ethnographic description of the Tewa, written from this particular point of view, with these particular emphases, but also to derive implications for the study of social and symbolic dualism elsewhere. For the sake of convenience, I refer to all of the phenomena of dualism by the term *dual organization*, which I have elsewhere defined as "a system of antithetical institutions with the associated symbols, ideas, and meanings in terms of which social interaction takes place" (Ortiz 1965*b*, p. 389). I have also, in the same work, reviewed other definitions of the concept and illustrated the utility of the definition by reference to a few examples found in the literature on the eastern Pueblos. I continue to use this definition in this work, but I am careful to specify exactly the relation between the moieties and symbolic aspects of dual organization. In other words, I attempt, insofar as possible, to avoid the twin pitfalls of equating the two and of attempting to explain the one in terms of the other. Let us proceed now to a consideration of some of the major issues in the study of dual organizations, as discussed by Lévi-Strauss (1960, 1963*a*) and by Maybury-Lewis (1960). These two represent, Murdock (1956) notwithstanding, the principal polarizations of contemporary anthropological thought on the subject of dual organizations.

Turning first to Lévi-Strauss, we see in his papers an attempt to demonstrate, on the basis of examples taken from widely separated areas of the world, that dual organizations really do not exist. The core of his argument may be summarized as follows. First, he regards triadic structures and concentric dualism as more fundamental than dual organizations represented by his ethnographic examples. By triadic structure, Lévi-Strauss refers not only to a system of three parts but also to a system of two parts which are in an asymmetrical relationship. Thus, he regards as triadic phenomena both the sky, earth, and water conceptual polarizations which he derives from the Winnebago material, and the opposition between cooked

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and uncooked food which he finds reflected in the literature on Melanesia and Brazil (1963*a*, pp. 153–54). By concentric dualism, on the other hand, he means any opposition between an inner and an outer, as long as it is concentric (1960, p. 54).

In applying these concepts, Lévi-Strauss first establishes, through a careful handling of his sources, that "triadism and dualism are inseparable, since dualism is never conceived of as such, but only as a 'borderline' form of the triadic type." He brings in his second notion next: "Concentric dualism is a mediator between diametric dualism and triadism, since it is through the agency of the former that the transition takes place between the other two." He then goes further: "Strictly speaking, any attempt to move from an asymmetric triad to a symmetric dyad presupposes concentric dualism, which is dyadic like the latter, but asymmetric like the former" (1963*a*, p. 151). By this method, the culmination of a complex intellectual exercise in the handling of ethnographic sources, he submerges the dual organization. In doing so, he not only fails to distinguish between social and symbolic phenomena, but overrides what he calls, in one example, "the ecological-philosophical distinction between cleared ground (i.e. 'culture'), and the wilderness beyond the timber line (i.e. 'nature')" (1960, p. 46). This failure to make analytic distinctions between different kinds of phenomena in deriving his triadic and concentric models represents one of the major difficulties reflected in Lévi-Strauss's position.

A second difficulty, one which has been pointed out by Maybury-Lewis (1960) and Schneider (1965), is that Lévi-Strauss tends to equate social structure with marriage systems. This point is closely related to the preceding one, for his notion of the triadic structure, or triadism, is based on his notion of "generalized exchange" (1963*a*, pp. 150–51). This leads him to assume that moieties, no matter where they are found, will always be exogamous or otherwise concerned with the regulation of marriage. A third difficulty reflected in Lévi-Strauss's position is that he relies strictly on societies with unilineal descent to justify his analysis. These two points present problems, because the Tewa have never been known to have any notion of unilineal descent, and Tewa moieties are not exogamous.

In the end, Lévi-Strauss reduces all of his ethnographic examples as resulting from a combination of five binary oppositions and then uses the evidence to deny the existence of dual organization (1963*a*, pp. 154–60). Since these interconnected binary oppositions are based on some notion of marriage regulation and unilineal descent, they cannot apply to the Tewa at all. All these points are

taken up in more meaningful detail in the following chapters, where I shall present the evidence on the Tewa. Indeed, I shall have occasion to refer to them again and again, by way of demonstrating why they present problems when the data on the Tewa is examined closely.

Turning now to Maybury-Lewis, we find much less to dwell upon because his own paper was intended primarily as a critique of Lévi-Strauss's position. Aside from a misunderstanding over the interpretation of data, he accuses Lévi-Strauss, on methodological grounds, of imprecision in defining terms, of ignoring the distinction between social and symbolic dualism, and of failing "to establish any adequate basis for his comparative analysis" (1960, pp. 40–41). Lévi-Strauss's pointed reply is that he wished to transcend the usual distinctions of terminology and concepts,

> and to put to test a kind of common language, into which the two forms of dualism (diametric and concentric) could be translated, thus enabling us to reach—not on the level of observation, of course—a "generalized" interpretation of all the phenomena of dualism [1960, p. 46].

What Maybury-Lewis does succeed in doing, however, is to point up the issues that Lévi-Strauss either ignores or overrides with his highly abstract triadic and concentric models. Maybury-Lewis's recognition of the first of these issues is reflected in his statement that

> the simultaneous awareness of the division and the unity of society is common enough in conjunction with dual organization and might be said to be the fundamental problem in their analysis [1960, p. 27].

He phrases another of the major issues, which he accuses Lévi-Strauss of failing to resolve, as follows:

> One of the purposes of his [Lévi-Strauss's] paper was to suggest a way in which the reciprocity characteristic of dual organization could be reconciled with the hierarchical superordination and subordination so often found associated with it [1960, p. 41].

He phrases a third issue, which he accuses Lévi-Strauss of ignoring, as follows: "One of the fundamental analytic problems in the study of dual organizations is that of the relation between social and symbolic dualism" (1960, p. 41).

Nevertheless, the difficulties inherent in Maybury-Lewis's posi-

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tion are more fundamental, for although he defines the major issues quite well, he fails to indicate how we are to go about resolving them. To illustrate with just one example, in his persistent concern with the dual organization as such—with the actual social segments comprising the dual organization—he offers no alternative method by which we might better understand what the total framework of integration is in a given society with dual organization. In other words, Maybury-Lewis seeks only what is sociologically relevant in the study of dual organizations, and this bent leads him to limit his discussion, like Lévi-Strauss, to dyadic, triadic, and concentric structures. Moreover, he ignores the time dimension by insisting on dealing with static structural models.

I can only note here, as in my discussion of Lévi-Strauss above, that the issues Maybury-Lewis raises and the difficulties presented by his position are best discussed in their appropriate context in the following chapter. What I hope I have indicated here is that there are unresolved issues of some consequence in the study of dual organization; issues that the Tewa data might serve to clarify in some measure. According to Murdock's (1956) estimates, I might point out, 10 to 15 per cent of all human societies known are or were characterized by dual organization in the sense in which the term is used here. At the risk of appearing redundant, let me restate the three major problems with which this work is primarily concerned.

One problem lies in attempting to reconcile the reciprocity which usually characterizes dual organizations with the asymmetrical relationships which are also often found associated with them. Another problem is that of determining the relationship between social dualism, which usually finds its institutional expression in moieties, and symbolic dualism. A more fundamental problem is that of understanding just how a society can be divided and united at the same time, and how it continues through time, given the fact of dual organization. It is to this third problem that the larger part of this work is addressed. I do not emphasize the dual organization itself, but seek instead the basis of unity in the society, given the dual organization. It is argued that non-dual aspects of society and culture have to be considered and analyzed, for no society is so rigorously dyadic that these aspects can be safely ignored.

To this end I outline, in the following chapter, a broad framework of analysis that does not deliberately overemphasize the dual organization. By a broad framework of analysis I mean that I begin

by presenting one variant of the Tewa myth of origin, and then determine what part this myth plays in the Tewa world view. In this way we can attempt to understand how the Tewa perceive human and spiritual existence, and how they organize time and space within the geographical area they consider their world, utilizing their own categories, concepts, and distinctions. This is the key chapter in this work, in the sense that it sets the stage for a comprehensive discussion of what the dual organization means in Tewa society and culture.

The most important finding, the one which serves as a subsequent point of departure, is that the Tewa classify all human and spiritual existence into a hierarchy of six categories, three human and three spiritual, and that the spiritual categories are further associated with specific geographical points in the Tewa world. Moreover, these six categories are linked into three pairs; that is to say, the spiritual categories represent counterparts of the human categories, and at death the souls of each human category become spirits of its linked spiritual category.

After identifying these three pairs of linked categories, and indicating their relation to the natural world, I proceed to a more detailed discussion of their place in Tewa society and culture. Chapter 3 focuses on the first, or lowest human category and its linked supernatural counterpart, utilizing six life crisis rites that each Tewa normally undergoes in his lifetime as a basis for the discussion. In chapter 4, I analyze the intermediate human category and its similarly intermediate spiritual counterpart, focusing this time on the process of recruitment into the human category. In each chapter I build upon the understanding attained in the preceding chapters. I attempt to make this understanding reasonably complete in chapter 5, where I discuss in detail the highest ranked human category, and its similarly highest ranked spiritual counterpart. This time I not only focus on the process of recruitment into these categories, but attempt to determine their role in the annual cycle of ritual, political, and economic activities. Here, as the Tewa term it, "all paths rejoin," for only by reference to these highest categories of being can the rules governing conduct, thought, and belief in the Tewa world be fully understood, so thoroughly do they permeate the other categories.

What serves as the unifying thread throughout this work is that all six categories of being are divided into two parts. Those of the three human categories together constitute the Winter and Summer moieties, while the beings of the three spiritual categories together represent symbolic counterparts of the moieties. While each of the

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six categories is conceptually distinct from the others, most of Tewa thought and action is organized according to the moiety division, and whenever any beings of the spiritual categories are impersonated in ritual, they represent one moiety or the other.

Thus I can state quite simply that it is the moieties, rather than the categories, that are basic to understanding behavior. Why then do I emphasize the categories in the organization of this work? The answer is that because the Tewa use them to order all of human and spiritual existence, they serve for me as convenient analytic units. Thus by proceeding in terms of linked categories, I can keep the relation between social and symbolic dual organization constantly in the forefront of analysis. While each category sometimes varies independently of the other, some problems arising from the human categories are resolved or clarified by reference to how the Tewa conceptualize the linked spiritual counterparts. Thus we have the dual organization weaving in and out of the categories, becoming more relevant at certain times than at others. Yet it is the one concept which is relevant to all six, beginning even with the myth of origin. It thereby permits the data to be rendered into more order, in terms of the issues outlined in the preceding section, than any other single concept.

By this process, it is hoped, we obtain an understanding of how a society with dual organization achieves integration and continuity by overriding the division at crucial points in the life cycle, by devising systems of mediation when the division is potentially most disruptive, by making possible a network of crosscutting ties which transcend the division, and by equalizing the asymmetry within the division over a period of time. I am not attempting to state conclusions here, for the supporting evidence is yet to follow, and the conclusions are presented in more meaningful detail in the final chapter. Rather, I have outlined, in this section, the procedure by means of which I attempt to clarify the issues discussed in the preceding section.

One further point of clarification on procedure remains to be made. While it is traditional to present some historical summary in an introduction, insofar as the history of the people studied is known, I have refrained from doing so for two reasons. First, the history of San Juan and of the Tewa generally is largely inseparable from that of the Rio Grande Pueblo area as a whole, and the history of this area has been summarized with considerable detail by Aberle (1948), Dozier (1961, 1966), and others. For San Juan specifically, Aberle, Watkins, and Pitney (1940) have analyzed the available historical material to 1940, while I have elsewhere

summarized subsequently published sources and added detailed demographic and other data on San Juan (Ortiz 1965*a*). As pointed out in the preface, moreover, Ford (1968) has presented additional ethnographic and historical information on San Juan which complements that given here.

The second and more important reason for the omission is that I do not wish to isolate historical facts of importance from their loci of relevance. I am concerned, throughout this work, not only with recorded history, but with myth, as indicated above, and with the archaeological record, insofar as it is known. Therefore, specific historical events are discussed where they are most meaningful, and no important area of understanding is sacrificed in the process.

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