

PUEBLO INFLUENCE ON NAVAJO ARCHITECTURE

By David M. Brugge

ETHNOLOGISTS have generally considered the presence of Puebloan or Anasazi traits in Navajo culture the result of a process of cultural change characterized as "incorporative" by Vogt (*in* Spicer, 1961, pp. 278-36). Vogt defines the incorporative process as one by which "... elements from other cultures are incorporated into Navaho culture in such a way that the structural framework of the institutional core... is maintained, and the borrowed elements are fitted into place and elaborated in terms of the pre-existing patterns..." (*ibid.*, 328). Archaeological studies have generally given slight attention to this theoretical problem and most archaeologists have let the ethnologists' ideas stand without criticism, but Hester (1962, pp. 91 & 92) has described the process that Spicer described for Spanish acculturation among the Yaquis. (Spicer, 1961, pp. 7-93).

We know remarkably little about Navajo culture prior to 1700, but three kinds of evidence can be employed to infer the type or types of dwellings then in use. These are ethnographic, historical, and archaeological. Data limitations, however, severely restrict conclusions.

The wide distribution of conical and sub-conical house types in western North America, especially among Athabaskan-speaking peoples, has led to a general belief that the Navajo, like the Athabaskans, were nomadic hunters and gatherers. This paper was read at the 33rd Annual Meeting of the Society for American Archaeology at Santa Fe, May 10, 1968. The research on which it is based was sponsored by the Navajo Tribe.

An 1890 Ben Wittick photo of forked-stick hogan at Canyon de Chelly.



generation as their principal, if not their only, kind of dwelling. A direct approach shows that most Navajos today consider the conical forked-pole hogan the oldest house type used by their people and the type most intimately associated with their religion. There is a minority opinion, however, that the earliest hogan type was a pit or semi-pit house (see Page, 1937, p. 47; Franciscan Fathers, 1910, p. 327), and one hogan type in use today, the "tethoged" or dug-out hogan, may well be a continuation of this tradition.

The limited pre-1700 documentation of Apachean house types described conical tents for the Plains Apaches as early as Coronado's time (Wedel, 1959, p. 69). Only one writer of this remote period, Fray Alonso de Benavides, made any description of Navajo architecture that has survived to the present. His account is as follows:

[1630] -- They have their sort of lodgings under the ground, and a certain sort of *xacoles* in which to store their crops -- (Benavides as trans by Mrs. Edward E. Ayer, 1916, p. 45)

or by another translation:

... they have their own peculiar type of underground dwellings, as well as a certain kind of hut for storing their grain. . . . (as trans by Forrestal, 1954, p. 46)

Thus, the comparative approach with historical documentation would seem to support the conical hogan, but the limited direct data indicate a pit structure. The similarity of Benavides' description to a Basketmaker village is notable.

Archaeological data are particularly vague. While a number of Athabaskan sites have produced pre-1700 tree-ring dates, none of the structures in these sites can be conclusively shown to have dated well prior to 1700. This does not necessarily mean that some of these sites may not have had earlier occupation, but the structural remains visible on the surface cannot be shown to be earlier.

The vast majority of early hogans, however, are the conical forked-pole type. The evidence would suggest that two house types may have been in use prior to the Reconquest, a conical structure and a pit structure. Until structures dating from the period are identified, however, the details regarding them must remain conjectural, both as to relative popularity, temporal and spatial distributions, and architectural details. The failure to find such remains in almost half a century of archaeological research suggests that the structures were not particularly substantial; certainly not as well built as the hogan types were not particularly substantial and probably more like the wigwags of the other Apachean tribes.

The greatest impact of Pueblo refugees following the Reconquest, insofar as now known, was in the Dinétah. This is an area in northcentral New Mexico east and southeast of Farmington which includes the Largo and Gobernador drainages and adjacent canyons and mesas. The name is Athabaskan and means "Among the (Navajo) People."

The architecture of the Dinétah during the first half of the 18th century is very well known. Two house types prevailed, one the conical forked-pole hogan in its most typical form and the other a small pueblo-like type commonly called

a *patrimonio*. Most sites contain only hogans, and pueblos, but some are known to consist of pueblos only.

It is generally supposed that the pueblos were occupied by refugee Pueblo Indians and the hogans by Apaches and this was probably true in the early years of the half century of intensive occupation. It might not be too far from the truth to suggest that the refugees first built their highly defensive homes as much because of distrust of their Athabaskan hosts as from fear of alien enemies. There is good evidence of increasing amalgamation of the two peoples, however, brought about probably by intermarriage, economic interdependence, and the pressures of external attacks.

There are a number of differences between the pueblos and typical late pueblos. Spanish architectural influence is most apparent in the corner fireplaces with smoke hoods and chimneys. The relatively small size of these structures is in striking contrast to most Puebloan structures of Pueblo IV and V times. More notable, however, is the lack of anything that might be identified as a *kiva*. It is

Kinazini, a pueblo near Wide Ruins, Arizona, dating about 1760.



El Palacio

1. uebitos seem to have reached their peak in the 1740's. After about 1753 no new construction took place in the uebitos of the Dinetah. A few were built to the southwest, notably near Wide Ruins, Coyote Canyon, and Nazlimi, in the 1760's. Tradition suggests that these very late uebitos served as community structures rather than as family dwellings. No religious use is mentioned, however.

Not until after the 1890's is there another reference to a structure having some of these same functions. Mindeloff in an early Bureau of American Ethnology report (1898, p. 514) describes the large flat-roofed ceremonial hogans as community property used in various ways when not being used for religious purposes. The nearest functional equivalent today would seem to be the chapter house. It is apparent that function can change rather freely in accordance with needs and be but dimly reflected in the variations in form.

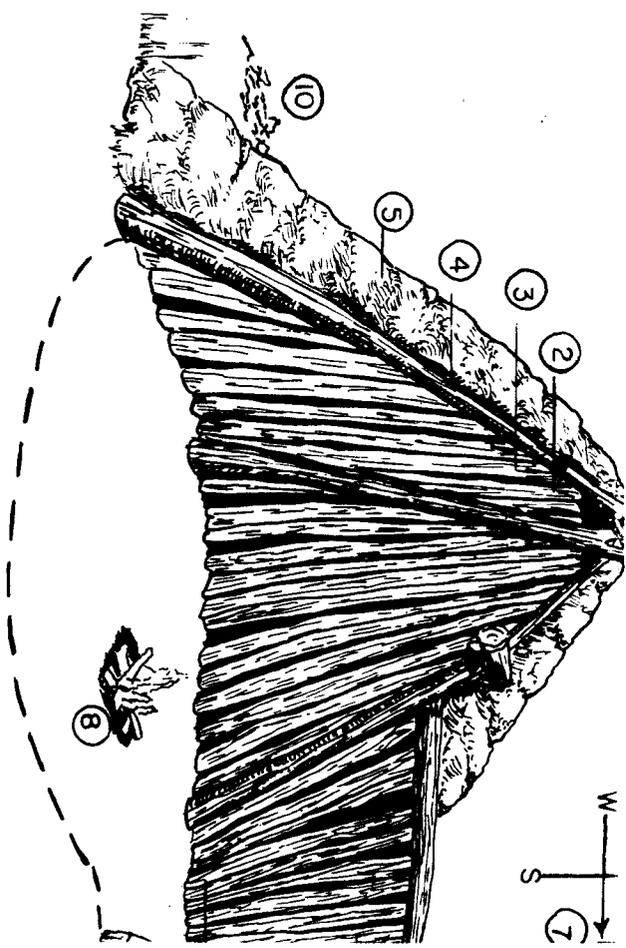
Of more importance here is the hogan as such. Insofar as the archaeological data go, a convincing case can be made that the forked pole hogan appeared fully developed about the end of the 17th century. It obviously was not something introduced by the Pueblo refugees. Its prototype is most certainly the widespread conical house form, but the forked-pole hogan is a far sturdier structure than the prototype.

The essential features of the classic forked-pole hogan are as follows:

- A basic framework of interlocking forked poles that provides a strong tripod support.
- Walls of heavy poles or logs that this support makes possible.
- Wood as the basic building material.
- Covering of juniper bark or some similar material.
- Exterior covering of earth.
- Conical shape, round or oval floor.
- Hearth slightly off-center toward the entry.
- Entry oriented to sunrise at time of construction.
- Ashes deposited easterly from entry usually somewhat to the left of the direction of entry orientation.
- Trash disposal at random, but some often found in ash heap.
- Vestibule, usually present, but often not identifiable in older remains.
- Door slabs, sometimes present under or at one or both door poles.

Functional characteristics, as suggested by modern ethnographic descriptions, are:

- Primary dwelling or home.
- Working place for women, less so for men.
- Ceremonial structure for most religious events.
- Limited use for storage, but an occasional old hogan sometimes used primarily for this purpose, at least today.
- Occasional use for meetings, probably more in the past than today.
- Occupation usually on a seasonal basis.



Probable sources of Architectural Features

1. Forked-pole construction—probably a local innovation about 1700 to meet the need for more substantial homes.
2. Solid walls—probably due to influence of Pueblo peoples used to more permanent homes.
3. Wood as a basic material—Athabaskan tradition.
4. Covering of vegetal material—probably a continuation of a tradition of thatch-like covering among Athabaskans.
5. Earth covering—probably of Puebloan origin.
6. Conical shape—Athabaskan.
7. Orientation—local innovation in the Puebloan tradition of orientation of buildings. (see Schroeder 1965, however)
8. Hearth location—Athabaskan and Puebloan.
9. Ash heap—Puebloan, but see Number 10.
10. Scattered Trash—Athabaskan.
11. Vestibule—Athabaskan.
12. Door slabs—probably a Puebloan tradition adapted to local conditions.

Functional Sources

13. Primary dwelling - Athabaskan.
14. Working area - Athabaskan and Puebloan.
15. Ceremonial structure - Athabaskan and Puebloan.
16. Limited storage - Athabaskan and Puebloan.
17. Meeting place - Athabaskan and Puebloan.
18. Seasonal occupation - Athabaskan.

Thus, of eighteen items, one may be considered strictly the result of innovation, but to meet a specific need introduced by the Puebloans; seven to be of Athabaskan origin; five of Puebloan origin; and five to be the result of compatible traits in both Puebloan and Athabaskan traditions. This mixture of traits in a single complex, many showing considerable alteration in the process, cannot be

A very similar case could be made for both stone hogans and cribbed-log hogans. Vivian has ably presented, in a different theoretical context, an essentially similar description for the development of stone hogans from the pueblo to style of architecture, based on his work on Chacra Mesa (Vivian, 1960, p. 231).

Fusion need not indicate a mixture of the peoples of the two cultures involved. In the present case, however, there is evidence in the historical record that racial and social fusion occurred as well. Only the great dearth of knowledge of the culture of the "Apaches de Navajo" of the pre-Revolt period inhibits reconstructions of a similar nature into her aspects of Navajo culture, although sufficient work with many complexes, from ceramics to religion, can be done with a greater or lesser degree of reliability to show the changes that came about in the period immediately following the Reconquest. In this respect, Navajo culture after the Reconquest can be considered as much a part of the Anasazi tradition as of the Apache tradition, but can best be characterized as something new that does not fit fully into either of its ancestral traditions.

I do not believe that the above invalidates the concept of incorporation as a process in Navajo culture change, but merely limits its application. Incorporation seems to be most evident in diffusion from European derived cultures, as in the equestrian complex, the pastoral complex, and metal working, and was probably involved in the introduction of some native southwestern complexes for which no precedents existed in Athabaskan culture.

The development of Navajo culture through the centuries has been more complex than is usually recognized and the changes that have taken place may be viewed in the light of various theoretical frames of reference, as well as differing levels of abstraction. While the period since 1700 has been the most productive in contributions to anthropological theory, as well as that in which the application of anthropological theory has given the best insights into Navajo culture history, we still lack the data that would allow us to deal with earlier periods confidently.

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practice to keep this world view alive. Where a tribe is large—the Sioux, the Iroquois, the Navajo, the Apache—these groups have kept at this thing. I suppose if we could make a generality, the only thing we could really say, hopefully, is let's try to get back to the democratic utopia where all is balanced, but again, with all the destruction and havoc that is caused around us, with the balances that have been disturbed, it would take years and years to get back. This is almost unreal.

"I think they have created a harmony on the Chapter House level in Red Rock; this you can see by the vitality in the crowd, by their willingness to come and when they meet a problem, they're not going to hold back, they're going to get involved in it. There's no holding back; if we have to handle a problem, we have to handle it and there's no ifs, ands or buts about it, let's go, you know. Now there's the other group that say, well let's go to the BJA, let's go to the missionary, let's go to somewhere else and put the burden on them. So, if they give us the wrong answer, it's going to be their fault, not ours. There are these two separate groups.

"What we're trying to do at Red Rock is to put things back in this balance and say, alright, let's head right on into it. Regardless if we make mistakes; we'll learn from them. We'll go on ahead and make a community out of this place. And so they have shut off a lot of these people who are always trying to pacify the question with other agencies, with doing what somebody else wants to do—really afraid to take the responsibility. Well, this is what you've caused in many other reservations; or the government has caused a great many other reservations. They no longer can handle their problems, they're no longer deciding their issues, because everybody's doing it for them. So, there's no need to bother yourself, just go out and get a few pennies here and there to get along.

Tradition is a push.

"This whole process of evolution—I could see the kids evolving way back eighteen years ago when they first started tramping off to college, gaining one little ounce of enthusiasm and confidence if they went. 'Til now, we've gone through a National Indian Youth Council, we've been through State Youth Councils, regional youth councils and now we've got two youth councils, one in Canada and one in the United States, and we're looking forward to a large, Pan-Indian sort of arrangement. Now there is re-emergence, it's true. So creativity has now felt new impetus; it's creeping out. But it's a re-emergence. There's no doubt about it, because they had it at one time. They had to in order to hold the lands they had, and hold all the traditions they had. Rough Rock wants to put traditions into the school system, but whose interpretation of them? Most people in this country say that tradition is a millstone, that it holds you back, puts a darn in front of everything. But to a people who have grown to love their tradition, their tradition is a push, it's a motivator and this is what it should be. You can set up all kinds of colleges, all kinds of high schools, make all kinds of pedagogical arrangements around tradition, but if the tradition is not interpreted right, it means nothing.

"This traditional thing—to us it was a good tradition, even those of us who are younger (I'm perhaps one of the youngest in the leadership sphere), but all the talk I hear about the Navajo is, 'let's go back to our tradition,' as it was something valuable, something that had to be conserved. But I can see at the same time, (Continued on page 25)