NAVAJO STUDIES *at Navajo Community College*

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Navajo Studies Program

ILLUSTRATED BY *Raymond Johnson and Jason Chee*

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(All of the above authors are full-blooded Navajos)

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DEDICATED

to the members of the Board of Regents

Who had the vision and courage

to require publication

by Navajos for Navajos about Navajos.

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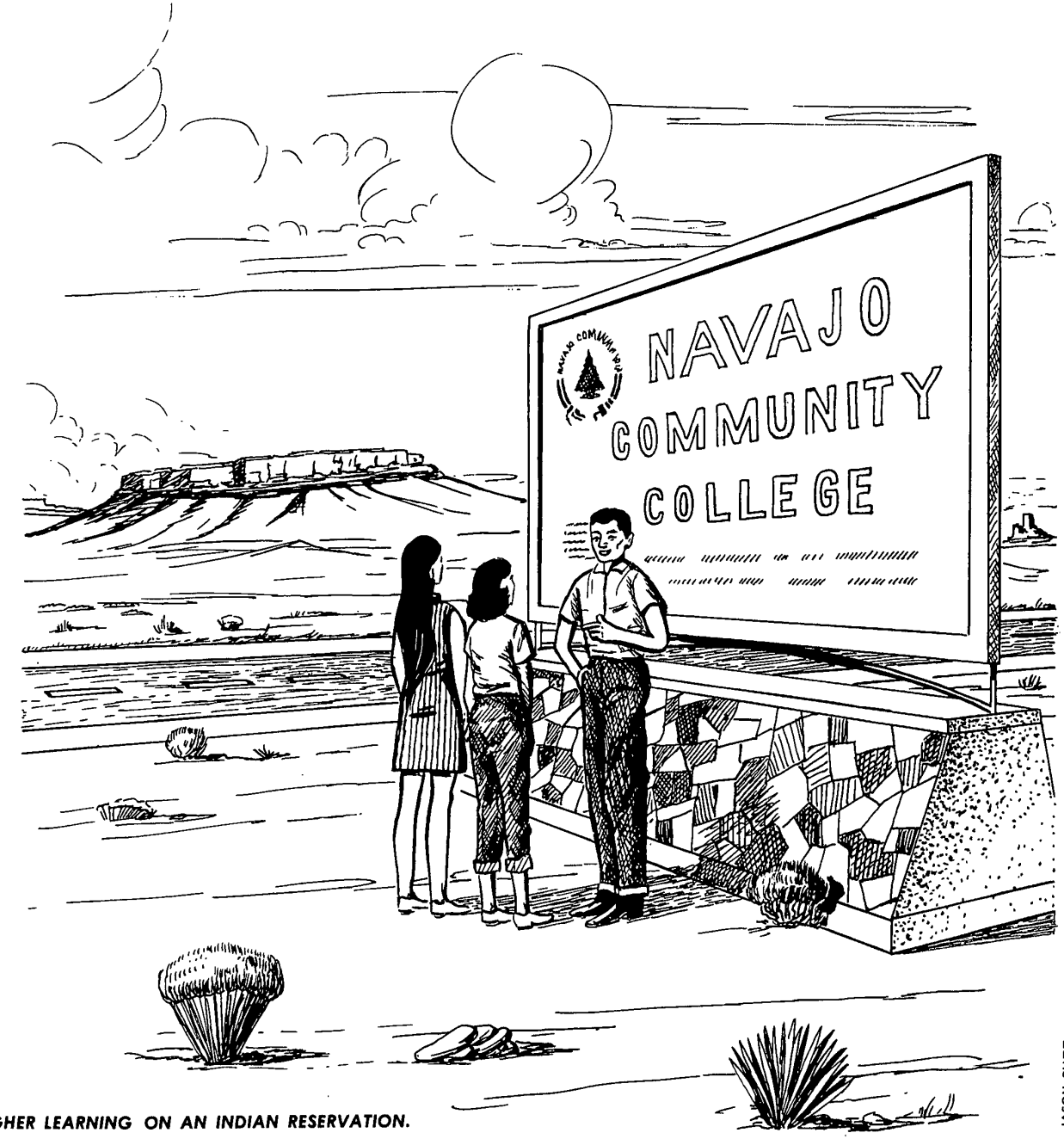

JASON CHEE

THE FIRST INSTITUTION OF HIGHER LEARNING ON AN INDIAN RESERVATION.

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Introduction

THIS BOOK IS ABOUT THE NAVAJO STUDIES PROGRAM at Navajo Community College and is a publication of the Navajo Community College Press.

It is hoped that the reader will obtain from the volume a clearer picture of Navajo Studies as taught at Navajo Community College. Consequently, in a sense, the book has as one of its objectives the presentation of information dealing with the program of Navajo Studies. This program was developed by and is operated under the direction of the all-Navajo Board of Regents for the College. Perhaps there is no other instructional area at the College that enjoys such Regential interest and leadership. This is, of course, as it should be because no other group could reflect as well the hopes and wishes of the Navajo people.

The Navajo Studies Program at Navajo Community College consists of two major areas. The first includes courses dealing with the Navajos. This book deals with that portion of the total program. However, it does not discuss all the courses dealing with Navajo culture offered at the College. For example, not mentioned are such courses as "The Navajo and Acculturation," "General Psychology—Navajo," "Independent Study—Navajo" and "Navajo Child Development."

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The second major division of the Navajo Studies Program includes study dealing with Indians in general. Here the College offers such courses as:

American Indian Seminar
Contemporary Indian Affairs
Indians of the Americas
American Indian Economic Development
Economic Workshop (Indian)
Indian Law and Government
Exploring Indian Art
Indians of the United States
Southwestern Indian Tribes
The Plains Indians
The Urban Indians
History of Indian Affairs
Anglo-Indian Relations
Introduction to Indian Education
Curriculum Development for Indian Education

Another objective of this book is to provide the student with a condensed account of some of the Navajo Studies courses offered at Navajo Community College. This

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should enable the student to gain a perspective of the overall Navajo Studies Program and to see how the pieces fit together. However, it must be made perfectly clear that the volume does not contain a full account of each course presented. The courses discussed are described in a very abbreviated form. It is expected that complete books for each course will be developed later.

Another possible use of the book will be in other colleges, universities and schools to illustrate the nature of the Navajo Studies Program at Navajo Community College. It is to be hoped that it can be of some small value to other institutions which are developing or changing their own Indian Studies Programs.

A final objective is to illustrate the vitality and beauty of Navajo culture. While this book and our Navajo Studies Program in part look backward at the origins of Navajo life, it does so only to show the roots and strength of the culture so that one can with greater confidence face the opportunities and the challenges of the future.

If the Navajo loses or ignores his own culture he stands weaker and more vulnerable. If he understands and respects his culture he stands strong and tall. Perhaps this book can help some Navajos to stand taller and can help some non-Navajos to realize the dignity and the value of Navajo culture—so that, together, as Americans, we can walk forward with confidence, ready to help each other and to respect each other.

Ruth Roessel

Ruth Roessel
Director, Navajo Studies

June, 1971

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Acknowledgments

AS DIRECTOR OF THE NAVAJO STUDIES PROGRAM at Navajo Community College, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the many persons who were involved in the gathering of material, in the preparation and writing, as well as in the production of this volume.

Although it is difficult — perhaps impossible — to name all of those who contributed their talents, efforts and time in varying ways and degrees, I feel that I should give explicit credit to those who were most directly involved.

First, I want to say *a'ye'he* (thank you) to artists Raymond Johnson and Jason Chee who spent much time in making the drawings; and, next, my appreciation to the contributing authors: William Morgan, instructor in Navajo language at the College; LaRayne Parrish, a student; and the respected and knowledgeable Navajo Elders — Howard Gorman, Scott Preston, the late Denetsosie, the late Albert "Chic" Sandoval and others.

For their wonderful cooperation in providing materials, facts and figures I say thanks to Marshall Tome, Executive Director of the Office of Navajo Economic Opportunity; to Graham Holmes, until recently Area Director of the Navajo Area for the Bureau of Indian Affairs; to Peterson Zah, Director of *Dinebeiina Nahiilna Be Agaditahe* (DNA); to Raymond Nakai, former Chairman of the Navajo Tribal Council, and to Peter MacDonald, present Chairman.

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It would have been most difficult to proceed without the assistance and suggestions of Rosemary Menninger, report specialist at the College; Kenneth Begay, instructor in Navajo silversmithing; Mabel Myers, instructor in weaving; Alta Chee Yellowhair, instructor in basket making; Ruth Begay, secretary in the Navajo Studies Department; Mike Mitchell, instructor in Navajo Studies; Eleanor Begay, manager of the College's Arts and Crafts shop, and Ned A. Hatathli, President of the College.

My special appreciation goes to the members of the College's Board of Regents who directed that this book be written and gave extra time and effort in guiding the development of the Navajo Studies Program. The Board, at the time of publication, was made up of Guy Gorman, Sr., President; Carl Todacheene, Vice President; Judge Chester Yellowhair, Secretary-Treasurer; Yazzie Begay; Raymond Brown (student member); Howard Gorman; Peter MacDonald; John C. Martin; Dillon Platero, and Wilson Skeet. Former members who also worked for development of the program were Timothy Benally and Larry Isaac.

Finally, I wish to express my deep gratitude to Broderick H. Johnson, Director of the Navajo Community College Press, who helped put the material together and shepherded the book through all of the intricate stages of publication.

I hope that the above-named persons, and others, will be pleased with the product of their dreams and labors.

Ruth Roessel

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CHAPTER ONE

Origin of the Navajos

AS TOLD BY THE NAVAJOS

THE COURSE IN *Navajo History and Culture I*, as it is taught at Navajo Community College, discusses in detail the origins of the Navajos and various mythological adventures and developments as those stories are told today by many inhabitants of the vast reservation which approximates in size the state of West Virginia. Emphasis ranges from the very beginnings of what we now know as the Navajo People (Diné), the travels of those "Beings" through the various underworlds, the separation of the sexes, the well-known emergence into the present world, the successful effort by the Twins (Monster Slayer and Child-Born-of-the-Water) to find their father and to convince him of their identity, the destruction of the monsters by the Twins, the creation of the clans and the return of the Navajos from the west.

Preparers of this book want to make it perfectly clear that they understand that there are many different versions of the "origin," "underworld," "emergence" and "early life in the present world" stories. As a matter of fact, agreement does not exist regarding the number of previous worlds—even of the colors attributed to those worlds. It scarcely could have been otherwise in the case of stories which were handed down by word of mouth by literally thousands of persons in various parts of a great land area over a period of hundreds of years.

However, basic agreement is apparent as to major events and sequences; and it has been said that the beauty of the stories of the creation and development of the Navajos equals the beauty of the Book of Genesis.

One of the main purposes of the course is to relate the stories as they are told by Navajos for Navajos. Most of the material is gathered from middle-aged and elderly Navajo men and women (many of them well-known medicine men) who dictate the legends on tape recorders for translation by excellent linguists or who relate the accounts to interviewers in Navajo or perhaps in English.

In addition to such original sources, written materials by anthropologists and archaeologists are examined, with similarities and differences being studied closely. It is stated clearly and emphatically to the students, however, that the primary source and major thrust of the course revolve around stories **by the Navajos** regarding their origin and that, only in a limited and secondary manner, does the work include the anthropological version of that origin.

Students in *Navajo History and Culture I* visit the more important sacred places described in the stories. These include Dinetah (the original location of the emergence and the Tribe), the four directional mountains, the place where the first moccasin game was played and

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CREATION OF THE CLANS

After the monsters had been killed and everything was peaceful within the area bounded by the sacred mountains, Changing Woman's husband, the Sun, asked her to live with him in a beautiful home that he would build for her in the Western Ocean. At first, Changing Woman refused; but her husband and the Twins finally persuaded her to do it. A number of the people (animals) went with her.

However, the people, after a while, decided to return to their homes in the east. Because Changing Woman thought there should be more humans, she created the beginnings of the original four clans by rubbing skin from various parts of her body. The clans were: Kiiyaa'ą́ą́nii, Honágháahnii, Tó Dích'íi'nii and Hashtl'ishnii.

In addition, she gave to each clan an animal guardian, The Kiiyaa'ą́ą́nii got a bear; the Honágháahnii, a lion; the Tó Dích'íi'nii, a bullsnake, and the Hashtl'ishnii, a porcupine. Accompanied by Talking Gods, the four groups were taken by magic to a point near their homeland. Then, on foot, they visited what is known as the Bill Williams Mountains, the Female Mountain, Corner of Mountain, what is now Tuba City, a place called Water-on-It, Black Mountain, a spot on the east side of Black Mountain, Tonalea, Thief Rock, El Capitan, Wooded Mesa, Beautiful Mountain and the Lukachukai Mountains.

On this long trek the people (now Navajos) encountered many enemies and were attacked, but the animal guardians helped save them. One by one, though, the guardians were left behind to fight pursuers or because they asked to leave. Later, when the people tired of the journey and tried to turn back, Changing Woman knew of their thoughts and ordered that the Blessing Way Ceremony be held for them at four places; and the people decided to stay in their homeland.

Gradually, guided by the Holy People, the Navajos increased and prospered, many additional clans developed and the result is the Navajo Nation that we have today.[5]

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCES OF NAVAJO ORIGIN

Archaeologists classify the Navajos as an Athapascan-speaking tribe which came from the north and entered the Southwest as a hunting and gathering people. The date of entry has not been determined, estimates ranging from the 1100s to the end of the 1400s. In many aspects, archaeological evidence and studies run parallel to — and support — the mythological concepts of the founding of the Navajo Tribe. Many archaeologists believe that the Navajos learned agriculture, weaving, sandpainting and other cultural traits from the Pueblo people who already lived in the Southwest.

The earliest positively dated Navajo site is found in the Gobernador area of New Mexico and is placed at about the year 1500 A.D. There is no agreement as to whether the Promontory Culture, located near Salt Lake and which dates from 1200 to 1300 A.D., was Navajo. The Largo-Gallina phase, southeast of Farmington, dating from 1100 to 1250 A.D., shows certain characteristics which some

[5] The full story of the creation of the clans also is given in "Navajo History," Vol. I.

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persons have taken to indicate a connection with early Navajo culture. In this case, too, disagreement exists.

Archaeological evidence seems to support a date around 1400 A.D. as the most agreed-upon time for entry of the Navajos into the Southwest.

Regarding the route used from the north, it is unknown. Some authorities favor a route along the Intermountain region, while others believe that The People (Diné) followed a plains route. Still others insist that the Navajos came down along the western side of the Rocky Mountains.

Through the use of dendrochronology (tree ring dating) certain dates have been determined with regard to select early Navajo sites. These include:

Canyon de Chelly	1758 - 1770
Chaco Canyon	1432 - 1779
Big Bead Mesa	1673 - 1812
Gobernador and Largo	1521 - 1826
Glen Canyon pottery dates	Middle 19th Century
San Juan (upper) pottery dates	Late 16th to Late 18th Centuries

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CHAPTER TWO

Navajo History and Culture II

THE GROWTH OF THE NAVAJOS (to 1960)

THIS COURSE DEALS WITH GROWTH of the Navajos from the time they returned to their native land, after their visit with Changing Woman, until 1960. Once again the emphasis is on the Navajo version of the various events which mark and highlight this period in the life of The People. **The Growth of the Navajos** includes such areas as (1) Historical References to the Early Navajos; (2) Reconstruction of Early Navajo Life and Culture; (3) Navajo Relations With Other Indians; (4) Navajo Relations With Non-Indians; (5) Events Leading to the Long Walk; (6) The Long Walk; (7) The Treaty of 1868; (8) The Post-Long-Walk Era; (9) Stock Reduction and the Navajos; (10) World War II and the Navajos, and (11) the Birth of the Navajo Nation.

To provide as complete a picture as possible, historical documents and sources are utilized. However, the primary thrust of the course is upon those sources which originate with the Navajos themselves.

Students visit certain places mentioned which were prominent during this period in the life of the Navajos. Trips to Beautiful Mountain, the Round Rock Trading Post, Fort Defiance, Window Rock and other places are undertaken to show the students the actual location of major happenings of the period.

Navajo elders are used extensively to tell stories about the events that took place.

HISTORICAL REFERENCES TO EARLY NAVAJOS

One of the problems arising from the examination of early Spanish documents is identification of the Navajos. There is no mention of the Tribe by that name in any of the accounts of the early Spanish explorers such as Coronado, Espejo or Onate. The first known historical reference is by Father Geronimo Zarate-Salmeron in his "Relaciones," published in 1626.

The first more detailed historical description of the Navajos comes from Father Benavides in 1629. The Rabal documents of 1706-'43 provide an even more complete picture of the life of the Navajos as seen through the eyes of Spanish soldiers and settlers. At that time, the Navajos were described as living on mesa tops in circular stone houses with cribbed roofs, raising corn, weaving, having horses and sheep and carrying on trade with the Pueblos. The population of the Tribe during this period was estimated at between 2,000 and 4,000. In 1785 a Spanish account describes the five divisions as: San Mateo, Cebolleta, Chuska Mountain, Ojo del Oso (the present Fort Wingate) and Canyon de Chelly.

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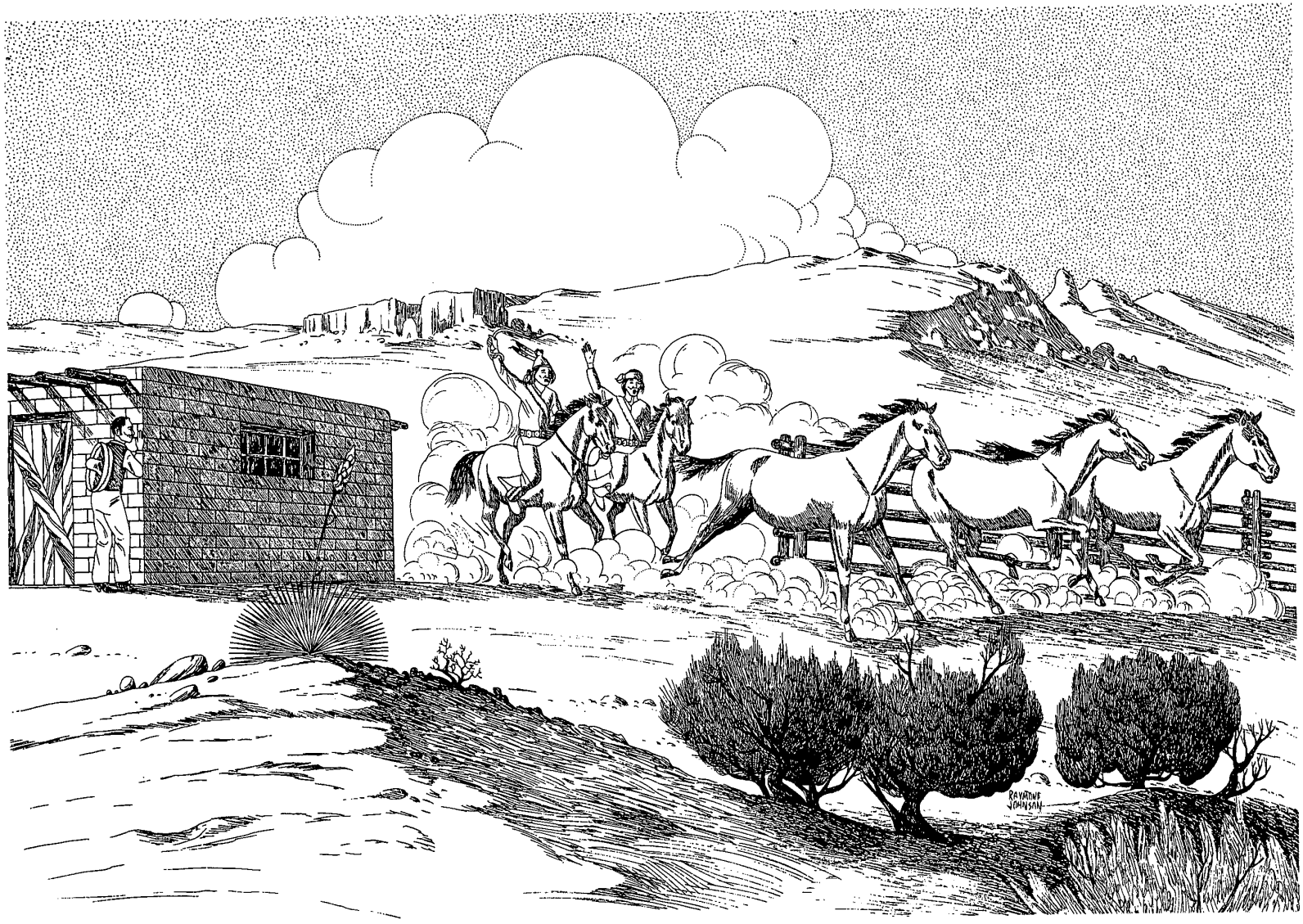

RAYMOND JOHNSON

Navajos raiding for horses—and sheep.

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In the various origin myths, hunting is given a position of prestige and importance, as is agriculture. Navajo myths and archaeological evidence both support the fact that the Navajos, at the time of their entry into the Southwest, were a weak and numerically insignificant people. The origin myths do not stress having small bands or groups. The early Navajo homeland was called Dinetah and was located in the area east and south of Farmington. As the Tribe became larger and as pressure from Whites became greater the Navajos moved west and south.

Navajo origin myths emphasize four areas: (1) the maintenance of health; (2) the obtaining of supernatural power through knowledge of ceremonial lore; (3) the maintaining of harmony in family relationships, and (4) the process of a young man's reaching adult status through acceptance of responsibility. The myths provide the best view of life and culture during the early period of the Navajos' history.

A very interesting example of the political life of the Navajos can be seen in the extinct ceremony known as the Nah-Chit. The last such ceremony was held at a place east of Chinle prior to the exile of many Navajos to Fort Sumner. The Nah-Chit was an early tribal assembly held every two or four years and lasting during a large portion of the winter months.

It is possible to determine the kind of social organization, economy and other facets of early Navajo culture from a study of the various origin myths. In addition, archaeological evidence provides support for the Navajo stories. In the Navajo land claims case, literally hundreds of volumes were prepared dealing with the archaeological evidence as well as Navajo stories of their early life and culture.

NAVAJO RELATIONS WITH OTHER INDIANS

As mentioned above, whether one uses Navajo stories or archaeological evidence, all authorities agree that when the Navajos entered the Southwest they were few in number. However, as years went by, they grew constantly stronger and more powerful. Early Navajo stories describe contact with Pueblo-type people at such places as Pueblo Bonito and Canyon de Chelly.

Raids were conducted against the Navajos by Comanches, Utes, Apaches and even the Pueblos. The Utes perhaps constituted the greatest threat to the Navajos, and, for several hundred years, they were a constant menace. The Utes especially raided the Navajos to capture women and children, most of whom were sold as slaves to the Spaniards, Mexicans and Americans. There are many locations on the Navajo Reservation where battles with other Indians took place, and a great number of stories have been handed down, even to today, telling of the capture and hardships of Navajo women at the hands of their enemies.

The Navajos also became accomplished raiders, and they conducted extensive forays against the various Pueblo, Ute, Hopi and other tribes. Many existing Navajo clans trace their origin to the capture of women from other tribes and the formation of new clans around such individuals.

NAVAJO RELATIONS WITH WHITES

Some authorities believe that the Navajos, who constantly raided the Spaniards and later the Mexicans and finally the Americans, were the aggressors and

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