

## A CHAPTER IN NAVAHO-PUEBLO RELATIONS

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IN AN effort to expand the known range of early Navaho history, an area in north-central New Mexico was chosen for survey and excavation in the summer of 1940.<sup>1</sup> This territory lies just south of the Colorado line, between 107° and 108° longitude, and between 36° and 37° latitude, in the northwestern part of Rio Arriba County, in the upper San Juan drainage. Reconnaissance extended over the country within a radius of from ten to fifteen miles from Gobernador. The area is about thirty-five miles east of the town of Aztec and includes the canyons of Compañero, San Rafael, Muñoz, Gobernador, Frances, La Jara and Pueblito.<sup>2</sup>

Sites from this region had been noted as early as 1912 by Kidder and Morris,<sup>3</sup> who point out their seemingly Pueblo-Navaho nature. Father Berard<sup>4</sup> and Van Valkenburgh<sup>5</sup> report hogan remains on the slopes of Gobernador Knob, sacred in Navaho mythology, and Mera obtained pinyon specimens for dating from several small pueblo-like structures in this region.<sup>6</sup> The presence of hogan remains in association with such structures was noted.

The region is quite heavily wooded, with a close cover of cedar and pinyon, and spruce occurs in the upper reaches. The several main washes and their side branches are bordered by mesas, formed of a series of steep escarpments alternating with flat bench-like areas. These flat benches, with their fairly dense vegetation, make excellent sites for hogans, places from which to see, without being seen. The region also has an adequate water supply, furnished by several good springs.

## DESCRIPTION AND EXCAVATION OF SITES

The sites consist of groups of hogans with associated structures, such as sweat houses and storage pits, all Navaho in character, and mixed groups of pueblitos (small pueblo-like structures) or tower-pueblitos with hogans clustered nearby. At twenty-four sites, groups of hogans and allied Navaho structures were found, devoid of any association with

<sup>1</sup> Under the auspices of Columbia University, New York.

<sup>2</sup> These canyons are listed here in order, roughly from southwest to northeast. Other areas where Navaho archaeological material has been studied include the Big Bead Mesa site, 100 miles to the south (Keur, 1941), the Chaco Canyon area (Malcolm, 1939), Canyon de Chelly (Hurt, 1942), and the upper Blanco and Largo Canyons (Farmer, 1942), the last two contiguous to the Gobernador area to the southeast.

<sup>3</sup> Kidder, 1920.

<sup>4</sup> Haile, 1937.

<sup>5</sup> Van Valkenburgh, 1941, p. 66.

<sup>6</sup> Dated by E. T. Hall, Jr., 1939.

*Ornamentation.* The copper button presumably was used as an ornament. Other finds in this category include perforated *Olivella* shells; pendants, one of clay and one of chalcedony; and a single large fragment of a blue glass trade bead. The latter is of a type usually associated with late seventeenth and early eighteenth century historic sites.<sup>15</sup>

*Spinning and Weaving.* Two pottery spindle whorls testify to a knowledge of spinning. A flattened wooden slab, presumably of oak, was excavated from the fill of a pueblito room at the junction of Pueblito and La Jara Canyons. It is 25 inches (63.5 cm.) long, has a maximum breadth of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches (8.89 cm.), and is  $\frac{3}{8}$  of an inch (.95 cm.) thick. The edges show rubbing from use, and there is a series of parallel lines or grooves running diagonally across one face. The slab is asymmetrical in form, rounded at one end, and broadening out at the opposite end, where it finally tapers to a point. Wyman's informant DS identified this object as a one-handed batten used on a narrow loom, thrust in from the side at a slant or angle. This interpretation accounts for the asymmetry of form and for the diagonal slant of the lines worn by the warp.

*Games and Ceremonial Material.* Two small slabs of cottonwood  $4\frac{7}{8}$  inches (12.38 cm.) long, flattened on one surface, and with rounded ends, appear to be gaming pieces. The flattened sides show remnants of black paint. They were evidently used in a variety of stick-dice game.<sup>16</sup> An irregular disk with neatly smoothed sides, made from a Jemez Black-on-white sherd, also suggests a gaming piece.

Under a small overhanging rock in San Rafael Canyon, two hoops of slender twigs had apparently been cached. The twigs had been bent so that the ends very nearly met and were bound with withes. The circlet thus formed is 11 inches (27.94 cm.) in diameter. Small bundles of fir twigs, 9 inches (22.86 cm.) long and bound together with strips of yucca, were attached to the hoops at four points. Several fir needles are still present. The whole suggests a piece of ceremonial paraphernalia. The use of hoops in religious ritual has been recorded, and the ceremonial unraveling of hoops which had had plant forms tied to them at four points<sup>17</sup> is highly suggestive of a possible function of the hoops found in San Rafael Canyon.

Two clay pipes indicate the practice of smoking. One, of tubular form, grayish black in color, of smooth finish but undecorated, occurred in the fill of a Pueblito Canyon hogan. It tapered gradually, for half its length only, toward the smaller (stem) end, which had an opening

<sup>15</sup> According to Arthur Woodward.

<sup>16</sup> Such as is described by the Franciscan Fathers, 1910, p. 481. See also Aberle, 1942, p. 144.

<sup>17</sup> Franciscan Fathers, 1910, p. 416.