

“BY FIRE AND SWORD”: NAVAJO RAIDING AND *NUEVOMEXICANO* RESPONSES,

1540-1821

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INTRODUCTION

The American Southwest is an area rich in cultural diversity and filled with dynamic histories. The prototypical borderlands region, it has been labelled with many different names (New Spain, Mexico, Comancheria, Dinétah, Apacheria, the West, to name a few examples), reflecting the social and political adaptability of the area. For centuries, an assortment of peoples have called the region home—some native and others foreign—and each of them, deliberately or not, have attempted to lay claim to the area. Whether motivated by imperial expansion or defense of homeland, Indian societies, European empires, and the Mexican and American republics earnestly vied for control of the region between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. Curiously, though, as each society and/or nation desired to either maintain their sovereignty or incorporate the region into a grander colonial project, they involuntarily absorbed certain aspects of the competing cultures that were there, all while trying to strictly enforce the superiority of their own. A counterintuitive social hybridity resulted, one created by different peoples who contended against each other in the quest for control and exclusivity. Native and foreign societies, like the large clasts of mineral metaconglomerate, maintained their respective distinctiveness and occupied their own locations, yet were bound together through the lithification process enacted by armed conflict. Then, through the heat and pressure of violent metamorphism, the structures of each clast (society) changed just enough to reflect a common alteration, but still maintain visible individuality. The result is a single rock whose character is defined by its miscellany. This analogy could be used on borderlands in general, but applies particularly well to what is now called the American Southwest.

Although the sharing of culture became one of the defining features in the Southwest borderlands, it must be remembered that it was an unintended result; indeed, the compounding of cultures occurred in spite of centuries of conflict between the many peoples who made the region their home. Usually the result of cultural misunderstanding, violent conflict was a regular presence in the region, and the social, economic, and imperial struggles that occurred in the Southwest should not be overlooked in the telling of its history. Warfare was commonplace, a conventional method by which both indigenous and invasive societies solved problems, exercised their wills, and manipulated their competitors. An illustrative example of this tendency is found in the turbulent history of Navajo raiding on New Mexican settlements during the years that Spain claimed the region for its empire, which is the story that will be explored here.

My interest in Indian and borderlands history has been heavily influenced by the fact that I grew up in the small town of Aztec, New Mexico. Nestled in the state's northwest corner, my childhood home was located just over twenty minutes east of the Navajo reservation, twenty minutes south of the Southern Ute and Ute Mountain tribes, about an hour west of the Jicarilla Apache reservation, and under two hours north from the various Pueblos of central New Mexico. Though it had a predominantly white population, Aztec and the surrounding towns of San Juan County contained substantial Indian (almost entirely Navajo) and Hispanic communities. While in high school, I was able to have frequent interactions with Navajos my age, many of whom were close friends on my cross-country team. I also had the privilege of being taught Navajo history and culture in many of my courses. Still, despite these benefits, my understanding of the Navajo people was cursory at best, never reaching beyond the shallow

knowledge that I had acquired only circumstantially. As I grew older, though, my interest in Navajo history increased as a result of my employment.

Toward the end of my high school experience and during summer vacations from college, I worked for a lawn-care company, mowing and maintaining the grounds of commercial, church-owned, and residential properties all over the Four Corners area. The locations were spatially far-flung, giving me the opportunity to experience the geography (human and non-human) of the region, especially of the Navajo reservation, where the majority of the contracted properties were located. I remember mowing the green patches of grass that were so uncommon in the remote places of the reservation, taking in the breathtaking desolation of the area, simultaneously beautiful and foreboding. The landscape captured my interest, and I gradually became fascinated with Navajo life, both past and present. I started casually reading about Navajo history and culture, paying closer attention to current events in the area, and asking questions of the occasional hitchhiker that we picked up on our sometimes hours-long drives between locations. In time, I began to approach a better understanding of Navajo history and culture, at least from the outside looking in.

Around this time I began to notice several recurring perceptions common to the subject of my inquiry, both from historians and present-day local prejudice. My first observation was that Navajo history only seemed to be told in respect to the European nations with whom they interacted. In other words, Navajo history seemed to be intrinsically attached to the imperial histories of Spain, Mexico, and the United States. In fact, Navajo stories about their past that took place before the arrival of white explorers were not even regarded as history, but given the titles of lore, myth, or tradition. The other common assumption that I noticed about Navajo history was the image of the tribe as a defeated people. It seemed that most of the non-Indians

of the region projected onto the Navajo the traits of passivity and submissiveness, which was reinforced by the collective trauma of the Long Walk and its aftermath. A cultural crucible that still has a lasting impact on communal memory, the Navajo defeat at the hand of Kit Carson and the U.S. Army in the 1860s and the subsequent forced march away from the Navajo homeland and incarceration at Bosque Redondo seemed to ripple forward a characterization of Navajos as beaten, at least among white Americans.

A personal experience from my lawncare days illustrates that point. As a coworker and I were driving our mowing rig home at the end of a long day of work, we traveled through Shiprock, NM. One of the largest towns on the reservation, Shiprock is home to several of the largest schools of the Navajo Nation. As we drove past the high school, we both looked toward the unique sign that pointed the way to the school's sports fields. On it, with arms folded across his chest and with a stern expression on his face, a brawny Navajo chief, dressed for battle, points the direction to the complex, using his lips rather than his hands or fingers, as is common in Navajo culture. For those who may not understand the gesture (such as white yard workers like myself), there is an arrow beneath the warrior, the kind shot from a bow as a weapon, pointing the way. Then, while driving, my friend attempted an imitation of the man on the sign, laughed, and said, "As if Navajos were ever warriors."



Photo courtesy of the author.

Aside from feeling uncomfortable from the blunt racism of his comment, something did not sit well with me. What made him say what he did? And in what ways would Navajos disagree with him? I chewed on these thoughts for a few minutes until the situation was made even worse as we passed Tsé Bít'a'í Middle School, which proudly proclaimed to be the “Home of the Warriors.” Again, my friend disparaged the title: “Warriors? Yeah, right. I don’t get why Navajos are always pretending like they’re so fierce. They’re just shepherders and farmers, not fighters! They’ve always just planted their corn, beans, and squash; they never won any battles or anything!”

Not knowing how to respond, I opted to remain silent. Something was amiss in my coworker’s comments, but I could not put my finger on it. What evidence was he basing his claims on? What evidence was he unaware of or leaving out? What parts of Navajo history was he inventing, or at least supplementing with his prejudiced conceptions of how he preferred

Navajos of the past to behave? And on the flip side, why, indeed, were the mascots of the schools chosen to be Chieftans and Warriors? Did the arrow pointing the direction to the sports complex have to be of the weapon variety? Had Navajos “always” been “just” shepherders and farmers, and were those two occupations exclusive of a warrior culture? When I asked myself these questions, I realized that I had no way in which to answer them, because I had absolutely no knowledge of Navajo history prior to the reservation period.

I did not realize it at the time, but I had started thinking historically. In that particular moment, when my white friend disparaged a Navajo projection of a warrior tradition, I was witnessing a cultural misunderstanding centered on two conflicting opinions of Navajo history and identity. One saw the Navajo as strong, independent, and proud, while the other labeled them as docile, dependent, and defeated. I was concerned of course by the ethical implications of my friend’s assumptions, but I was even more intrigued by how the same past could be presented in such different ways. That experience, with its corresponding questions, was the genesis of this project. I endeavored to come to a better understanding of the Navajo in their pre-reservation history, as well as the political, military, social, and cultural roles they filled in the region that later became the American Southwest.

While researching the Spanish period of New Mexico, it became clear from the documents kept by the European immigrants that Navajos had a much bigger role in the region than I had previously thought. In fact, their history seemed to be quite the opposite of what my friend had supposed. An overwhelming number of sources showed how Navajos effectively resisted assimilation into Hispanic society, projected their influence over their neighboring native tribes as well as the Spanish, and became a competitive and competent participant in the economy, diplomacy, and societies of New Mexico. Moreover, Navajos accomplished all this

through the adroit utilization of aggressive raiding tactics. Violent, assertive, and energetic, Navajo raiders enforced their superiority and affirmed their power over the Spanish colonists and their native allies. I intend to show here that raiding was a fundamental feature of Navajo culture prior to American occupation, and that it was rooted in spiritual conviction, motivated by social standards, perpetuated by economic incentives, and propagated by a constantly changing political situation in New Mexico.

Spanish authorities, on the other hand were essentially powerless against Navajo raids. They alternately attempted conversion, alliance, assimilation, warfare, and economic integration, but failed to incorporate the Navajos into their society as they had with other tribes of New Mexico. And, more importantly, they were unable to effectively end or combat the Navajo raids that damaged their colonial projects in New Mexico. At the heart of this failure was a cultural misunderstanding of the Navajo, which included the centrality of raiding to Navajo lifestyle and worldview. After all, the Spanish vision of New Mexico, as it had been in the other locations of the Spanish empire in the Americas, was the supremacy of Hispanic government and society, which included the subjugation of all native peoples to the civil and religious authorities of Spain and their eventual integration into Spanish society. But Navajo raids against *nuevomexicano* settlements interrupted these ambitions, both by weakening Spanish society in New Mexico and serving as a constant reminder that Spanish supremacy was more illusion than reality.

The turbulent history of the unstable relationship between *nuevomexicanos* and Navajos has not received much consideration from historians, and this thesis attempts to rectify that neglect. Scholars have certainly given attention to the two groups individually, but the early conflicts between them remain mostly unexplored. For example, the Navajo have been

widely recognized and studied, but their former identity as raiding masters has been largely forgotten. Historians, anthropologists, and political theorists have made the Southwestern tribe the subject of their studies for many years (the Navajo are, after all, the largest Indian tribe in the United States demographically and geographically), but their history of raiding has been generally overlooked in favor of other historical and cultural elements—Navajo religion and language, the impact of the Long Walk and incarceration at Bosque Redondo, Navajo weaving and silversmithing, twentieth-century political issues, to name a few—that usually focus on the tribe's history after its removal to the Bosque Redondo Reservation and subsequent return to Dinétah (the Navajo name for their ancestral homeland) in 1868. In other words, most of the scholarly work on Navajo history focuses either on elements of their history and culture that are independent of their relations with other peoples, or it is written on the reservation era, a time when raiding was no longer part of Navajo lifestyle or culture. One major exception is Frank McNitt's *Navajo Wars* (1972), which details the Navajos' conflicts with their white neighbors from earliest Spanish contact up to the Kit Carson campaign. Sparsely footnoted and vastly lopsided towards Navajo wars with the Americans, McNitt's book gives little detail on the Spanish period. In fact, only sixty-four pages of the book is dedicated to the Spanish period of New Mexico, even though it covers nearly three hundred years of history, while the remaining four hundred pages cover only twenty years. Taking a more thorough look at the events prior to the conflicts between Navajos and Americans will show how raiding patterns had been long established in the territory, already forming a key component to Navajo worldview and the politics of the territory.

While Navajo history during the sixteenth through early nineteenth centuries has been largely overlooked, historians have given more attention to the colonial history of the Spanish

in New Mexico. One of the most important scholars to address the Spanish borderlands is David J. Weber. Weber's focus was to “Hispanicize” the history of the Southwest, to put the history of the region in the context of its Spanish roots. Reflecting on his career to a colleague in 1999, Weber remarked that “if there is any thread that runs through [my] work, it might be that I like to take what is familiar and make it strange: to put westering Anglo American trappers in northern Mexico instead of the American West; to find Mexican Americans in the history of the ‘American’ Southwest; to tie the ‘American’ Southwest into Mexican history, to make the Spanish frontier in North America harder for American historians to ignore; to connect the borderlands, which Latin American historians have dismissed as a part of U.S. history, with other peripheral areas of Spanish America.”¹ In other words, Weber saw the American West as more than just the one-directional, Turnerian plane of teleologically American character that had been portrayed by previous historians of the West. The West was a result of not just one, but a combination of frontiering processes, shaped just as much in a south-to-north direction as it was an east-to-west one. Still, though Weber’s research provides a foundation for the Spanish borderlands, none of his books focus directly on the Navajo, though his work frequently includes an emphasis on Spanish and Mexican Indian policy.

But in terms of *nuevomexicanos*’ violent relationship with the Navajo themselves, very little has been written by way of analysis. There are excellent collections of primary source documents and commentary created by the likes of David Brugge, Ward Alan Minge, Myra Ellen Jenkins, J. Lee Correll, and Frank D. Reeve, local historians/lawyers/activists who published between the 1950s and 1970s, but their works consist mostly of documentary

¹ Benjamin H. Johnson, “In Memoriam: David J. Weber (1940-2010),” *Perspectives on History*, February 2011, accessed April 15, 2015, <http://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/february-2011/in-memoriam-david-j-weber>.

compilations and annotations. While these scholarly collections have been invaluable to the research presented here and provide access to many of the existent sources of Navajo raiding during the Spanish period, they do not connect the documents to the broader, more intellectual arguments about the Southwest borderlands. Recently though, other scholars have begun to recognize the transnational influence of Indian tribes on the Southwest, especially in Texas and northern Mexico.

The Navajo were by no means unique when it came to raiding—various bands of Apaches, Comanches, Kiowas, Arapahos, and Utes all displayed an inclination for pillaging whites, mestizos, and their native neighbors in the Southwest. As recently explained by Pekka Hämäläinen in *The Comanche Empire* (2008) and Brian DeLay in *War of a Thousand Deserts* (2008), these raids became primary factors in the history of the region. In his award-winning book, Hämäläinen effectively portrayed the Comanche as an imperialistic power in the Southwest, expansionist in nature and a full participant in the politics, diplomacy, economy, trade, and warfare of the region for nearly two hundred years. He expanded the historiography of Western history, Indian history, American history, and transatlantic history by emphasizing the role of indigenous peoples in the power politics of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in North America. Likewise, DeLay showed how Southwestern tribes (mainly the Comanche, though he discusses briefly the Apache, Kiowa, and Navajo as well) conducted expansionist warfare in the years preceding and during the U.S.-Mexican War, negatively affecting the ability of Mexico to repel an invasion by the United States in 1846. Both Hämäläinen and DeLay correctly assess the consequences of these Indian raids; however, they overlook the similar import of Navajo raiding on New Mexico prior to the U.S.-Mexican War.

Also helpful to my understanding of culture, society, and nationality in the Southwest borderlands has been Andrés Reséndez's *Changing National Identities at the Frontier* (2004), which cogently argued that nationality on the frontier was fluid, based mostly on a kind of situational logic. Cultural and political identities could—and did—change frequently, most often connected to market forces; it was even possible for inhabitants of the region to claim multiple nationalities if certain occasions made it worthwhile. Like several of the authors listed above, Reséndez does not directly study the Navajo, but his analysis can be applied to their history in the region. Taken together, Weber, Hämäläinen, DeLay, and Reséndez have deeply enriched the scholarly history of the Indian and Hispanic Southwest borderlands, and I hope to directly engage their concepts in the following pages.

But before the narrative begins, a comment must be made about sources and terminology. During the time period covered in this paper, Navajos had no written language, signifying a dearth in the written record produced directly by Navajos. Oral histories exist, but few of them address raiding in the pre-reservation period, and those that do are often vague, giving general information on the idea of raiding, but rarely offering specific examples or details. Spanish sources abound, but are filled with prejudice and frequent exaggeration, even occasional falsification. Notwithstanding, one can read “through” the Spanish documents, take into account their biases, and create a reasonable picture of Navajo life and society, which I have endeavored to do here.

Finally, while Spanish, Mexican, and American occupiers of New Mexico referred to their powerful neighbors to the northwest as “Navajo,” their own name for themselves is “Diné,” meaning “The People.” Though it may be more appropriate to utilize the name that they apply to themselves, I have elected to use the former term when referring to this particular

group of Southern Athabaskans. All the documents that I have referenced use the name “Navajo,” and I have not adjusted the term as I judge it to have historical value. Furthermore, I have utilized the name in my own narrative to maintain consistency throughout the text, the only exceptions coming in places where I have specifically intended to invoke Navajo conceptions of their own society to the reader. Also in the following pages, I have employed the term *nuevomexicano* when referring to a local inhabitant of New Mexico who to some degree has adopted Spanish customs (such as the practice of Catholicism and the use of the Spanish language). I use the name as an all-inclusive term for the citizens of the territory (a *nuevomexicano* could be white, black, mestizo, or indigenous) who are settled in towns and are fully incorporated into Spanish society. In the case of those who represent the policies of their nation (government officials, military leaders, etc.), I apply appropriate national adjectives (i.e. Spanish, Mexican, American). When referring to cultural aspects of Spanish-speakers, peasants and leaders alike, that are distinct from the indigenous aspects of *nuevomexicano* life, I use the term Hispanic.

In all, this thesis makes a scholarly contribution to the history of Southwest borderlands by creating a narrative of Navajo raiding, one that has not yet been told. It illustrates the spiritual, economic, and social motivations that encouraged Navajos to participate in raiding, and how raiding in turn reinforced those aspects of Navajo life. Specifically, it shows how pastoralism, a practice acquired by the Navajo after Spanish entrance into New Mexico, served as a catalyst to the acceleration of raiding in the region and encouraged violence and theft in the territory. Eventually, Navajo raiding destabilized the territory (or at least the Spanish vision of the territory) and weakened it to the point of exhaustion, paving the way for the American occupation of New Mexico during the U.S.-Mexican War, much like Comanche and Apache

raids in Texas and Northern Mexico did at the same time. Above all, it shows the central role that raiding formed in Navajo society, and by extension, the entirety of New Mexico between the sixteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Raids, and armed resistance to raids, caused instability among the peoples of New Mexico while serving as the method by which all were cemented together in a turbulent, multifaceted borderlands region.

CHAPTER 1

“Lords of New Mexico”

It was a strange new land that Lieutenant William Emory beheld on the morning of September 30, 1846. Rough lava rock spread out across the plain, covering layers of sandstone with six feet of black, vesicular basalt, all surrounded by high mesas in the immediate horizon, and mountain ranges even further beyond. The cavities in the igneous flow were large, big enough that hawks used the naturally formed holes for their nests. Emory took careful notes of birds that made this *malpais* their home, and he recorded the species of vegetation growing nearby. As part of the Army of the West, Emory and his team of topographical engineers were tasked with bringing back information in regard to the natural landscape of New Mexico and California, along with its flora and fauna, in anticipation of it becoming American territory upon termination of the war currently being waged against Mexico. Emory carried out these orders with the precision that might be expected of an engineer or a soldier, and he happened to be both. But on this particular day, he was apprehensive. In the early morning, Emory had wandered by himself away from camp to take notes of the area just described, not wanting to make his entire unit go out of the way of the trail they were already on. But he did so cautiously, for this was Navajo country.¹

¹ Lieutenant William Emory, *Notes of a Military Reconnoissance, From Fort Leavenworth, in Missouri, to San Diego, in California, Including the Parts of the Arkansas, Del Norte, and Gila Rivers*. (Washington: Wendell and Van Benthuyesen, 1848), 47.

Emory's experience with this “wild tribe” was limited. His only personal encounter with a group of Navajo, as far as his record shows, had been a month earlier, a few days after General Kearny and his army had marched into Santa Fe and captured the New Mexican capital without firing a shot. A small band of Navajos had ridden into the capital, and Emory felt uneasy in the presence of these “naked, thin, savage looking fellows,” who were apparently fierce-looking enough to set them apart from the Pueblo, Ute, and Apache Indians that had already promised good conduct to General Kearny in Santa Fe.² In Emory’s account, the visiting Navajos were aloof, austere, and guarded, seemingly living up to the reputation given them by the Pueblo and Mexicans as untrustworthy warriors and raiders. Emory seemed to have bought into these descriptions, and even went so far as to record that the Navajos eyed a little New Mexican child who played in a nearby court, as if they wanted to eat him.³ While Emory's assumptions of Navajo cannibalism were absolutely unfounded, his perception of the Navajos as fierce warriors was not. For decades, Navajos had preyed upon the inhabitants of New Mexico, stealing their livestock and sometimes their women and children, in an effort to exercise power over the territory.

And now, a month later and on his way to California, Lieutenant Emory was looking at Dinétah, the Navajo homeland; and even though his mission was to write about plants and rocks and critters, Emory could not help but wonder if this expanse of desolate badlands was a hiding spot of the Navajo, who “carry off the fruit, sheep, women, and children of the

² Emory, *Notes of a Military Reconnaissance*, 33; Frank McNitt, *Navajo Wars: Military Campaigns, Slave Raids and Reprisals* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1972), 96; In a letter addressed to General R. Jones detailing the final arrangements he was making in New Mexico before setting out for California, General Kearny explained that delegations from the Ute and Apache tribes had already been in to see him and had promised unspecified “good conduct.” He wrote that the Navajo had still not sent in a deputation. Kearny quoted in William Elsey Connelley, *Doniphan’s Expedition and the Conquest of New Mexico and California*. (Topeka, KS: William Elsey Connelley, 1907), 253-254.

³ Emory, *Notes of a Military Reconnaissance*, 33.

Mexicans.” And as far as Emory knew, they would continue in their dominant role, living in “caverns . . . in high and inaccessible mountains,” where United States troops would “find great difficulty in overtaking and subduing them.” To Emory, the Navajo had been, were presently, and would continue to be “the lords of New Mexico.”⁴

Though Emory was one of the first Americans to travel near the Navajo homeland, he was not the first foreigner to pass through or to acknowledge Navajo authority in the area. For hundreds of years, Spanish, Mexican, and other Indian tribes had been subjected to Navajo power, a dominance maintained by the establishment of a raiding culture in Navajo society. The Navajo were not unique in this by any means—the various tribes of Apaches, Comanches, Kiowas, Arapahos, and Utes had all developed an inclination for raiding whites, mestizos, and their native neighbors—but they were the biggest concern for the Spanish, Mexican, and American colonizers, at least in the territory of New Mexico in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as evidenced by the following examples. Nemesio Salcedo, Comandante-General of New Mexico, wrote in a letter to the *alcalde* of Laguna in 1804 that the Navajo had disrupted the colony enough to authorize “all the actions . . . to continue the castigation of this recalcitrant Navajo faction.”⁵ Josiah Gregg commented that the Navajos were the “most formidable enemies” of the Mexicans, while U.S. Army Major E. Backus commented that “there is probably no tribe of Indians, within the limits of New Mexico, which has so signally

⁴ Emory, *Notes of a Military Reconnaissance*, 47. It is important to remember that the area referred to by Emory as New Mexico did not align with our modern conception of the state, either geographically or politically. At Emory's time, the territory consisted of the entirety of modern New Mexico and Arizona, plus portions of Colorado, Utah, and Nevada. The territory shifted in size over the years, finally settling into its current box-shape with a staggered tail in 1863. To many *nuevomexicanos* and Indians in area, however, the borders were much more nebulous. During the Spanish and Mexican years, the New Mexico generally meant the upper Rio Grande and its surrounding settlements, but the territory could mean just about anything north of Sonora and Chihuahua, west of Tejas y Coahuila, and east of Alta California.

⁵ Nemesio Salcedo quoted in Myra Ellen Jenkins and Ward Alan Minge, *Navajo Activities Affecting the Acoma-Laguna Area, 1746-1910*, (New York: Garland Publishing, 1974), 50.

redressed its own wrongs, or inspired its inhabitants with so great a degree of terror, as the Navajoes.”⁶ And Charles Bent, first territorial governor of New Mexico after its transition to the United States, wrote to Secretary of State James Buchanan that his greatest concern in his new position was dealing with the “warlike and wealthy” Navajo who “wage open war with the inhabitants of this country.”⁷ Thus, it can be argued that Navajo identity, both projected and self-imposed, was largely based on its reputation for raiding. Though they had no central government and no organized expansionist agenda, the Navajo dominated their territory with a strong hand and exerted power over their neighbors, becoming the major political and martial entity of northern New Mexico.⁸

⁶ Josiah Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies: or the Journal of a Santa Fe Trader, During Eight Expeditions Across the Great Western Prairies, and a Residence of Nearly Nine Years in Northern Mexico* (New York: S.W. Benedict & Co., 1844), 1: 287; Backus quoted in Henry R. Schoolcraft, *Historical and Statistical Information respecting the History, Condition, and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States: collected and prepared under the direction of the Bureau of Indian Affairs per act of Congress of March 3rd, 1847* (Philadelphia: Lippencott, Grambo and Co., 1853), 4: 209.

⁷ Charles Bent to James Buchanan, 15 Oct. 1846, Navajos in New Mexico Collection, 1841-1849, Special Collections Library, University of Texas at Arlington Library.

⁸ As stated before, the Navajos were not the only Indians conducting raids against settlements in the Southwest or even in the territory of New Mexico. The Apache, for example, were just as feared by the Spanish and Mexicans and had gained their own reputation for raiding. They were raiding into southern Sonora by the early eighteenth century and were the principal enemy of Spain and Mexico in that territory and in southern New Mexico (see Philipp Segesser, *A Jesuit Missionary in Eighteenth-Century Sonora: The Family Correspondence of Philipp Segesser*, ed. Raymond H. Thompson, trans. Werner S. Zimmt and Robert E. Dahlquist (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2014), 201-203, 310). While the Apache were dominant in their own areas (as other tribes were in their respective locations), it is not my purpose to cover the subject of raiding in Apache society, a story which I feel has been adequately covered. Rather, I intend share the less-common narrative of how raiding developed in Navajo society and how it shaped it for nearly two centuries. For those looking for more information regarding the Navajo's Athabaskan relatives and how raiding figured in their society, see Grenville Goodwin and Keith Basso, *Western Apache Raiding and Warfare* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press), 1971 for an excellent collection of oral history and scholarship in that regard.

Navajo Early History and Cultural Developments

To understand Navajo raiding, it is necessary to recognize key occurrences in their past that led to their adoption of the practice. By taking into account Navajo history and culture as a whole—both independent of European influence and because of it—we can see a more comprehensive portrait of Navajo raiding and Hispanic response. Additionally, by tracing the development of conflict between the Navajo and *nuevomexicanos*, we can begin to see that animosity and friendship between the two peoples was in near-constant flux over time, which eventually became the antagonistic norm in New Mexico. From the entry of the Spanish into the region, Navajos and Spaniards treated each other with hostility, though periods of peace or even alliance occasionally prevailed as often as necessity dictated. The early history between the two peoples will also show how key Spanish materials and livestock (i.e. sheep, horses, and firearms) accelerated the growth in Navajo raiding practices and gave significant incentive to the development of large-scale and increasingly violent conflict between Navajos and *nuevomexicanos*.

The narrative of Navajo archaeological origins is far from precise. In fact, much is still unknown on the subject and only recently have scholars taken a serious look at Navajo protohistory in the Southwest prior to the arrival of the Spanish, since the efforts of most archaeologists have been dedicated to the more ancient peoples of the area, such as the Hohokam, Mogollon, and Ancestral Puebloans.⁹ Compounding the problem, the early Navajo

⁹ Ronald H. Towner, ed. *The Archaeology of Navajo Origins* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1997), 3. This volume is one of the most recent collections of scholarly essays that deals extensively with the subject, but even the editor admits that the research is long overdue.

were highly nomadic; the few structures that they did erect were usually made with organic materials—commonly stones, mud, and branches—that deteriorated rather quickly, leaving only the more durable elements of their society left as artifacts (ceramic pottery, lithic tools, arrowheads, for example). As a result, much of the history remains untold. What can be definitely determined, though, is that the Four Corners area was not always the home of the Navajo people.

Based on linguistic and archaeological evidence, the Navajo have been classified as Southern Athabaskans, close relatives of their Apachean neighbors, as well as various tribes currently living in Canada and Alaska. Even today those few who speak the Navajo language often claim that they can communicate easily with Mescalero, Chiricahua, Jicarilla, and Lipan branches of Apache; the language used by these peoples were most likely identical before their relocation to their present setting.¹⁰ For reasons that are somewhat ambiguous, these Athabaskans left their homes in the far north and traveled down to the American Southwest sometime before the Spanish arrived on their first expedition in 1540. It is not clear whether these peoples had separated into different groups before this migration or if the Apacheans divided sometime during their journey (which scholars estimate to have lasted nearly five hundred years) or after their arrival. Either way, the group that would later be known as the Navajo settled in the San Juan River Basin in an area that archaeologists refer to as Dinétah, situated somewhat in the middle of the Apache groups and to the south and west of the Numic-speaking Ute and Comanche, respectively.¹¹ The precise time period of that settlement is still

¹⁰ Curtis F. Schaafsma, “Ethnic Identity and Protohistoric Archaeological Sites in Northwestern New Mexico: Implications for Reconstructions of Navajo and Ute History,” in Towner, *Navajo Origins*, 22.

¹¹ The term “Dinétah” has multiple meanings. Archaeologists and historians use that word to designate the location of the early Navajo, situated near Largo Canyon and Gobernador Canyon of northwestern New Mexico. The Navajo occupied this space during their early years in the region, but eventually moved to other areas, either for defensive purposes, to make space for the growth in population and livestock, or simply due to their nomadic norms. When the Navajo abandoned this area in the early eighteenth century, the “Dinétah phase” is said to have

debated by scholars, but there is a clear consensus that they were not “original” inhabitants of the area.¹² Some claim that they may have arrived as early as 800 CE, but most see 1500 CE a more appropriate date; some have even made the argument that the tribe did not arrive until after the Spanish had explored the territory in 1541.¹³ Whatever estimate is the truth, the most important point is that the Southwest was an adopted, not initial, homeland for this nomadic people.

This archaeological evidence, however, is not nearly as significant as Navajo oral traditions about their own past. In Navajo tradition, Dinétah (meaning “among the people”) has always been the homeland of the Diné.¹⁴ According to one Navajo elder, the distinctive boundary mountains of the Navajo (Mount Taylor, Blanca Peak, Hesperus Peak, Navajo Mountain, and the San Francisco Peaks) existed before the earth, in the Underworld; “these Sacred Mountains that were placed for us are the boundaries of our domain,” he continued, indicating that such supernal placement made the Diné, “the heart of the world,” the legitimate occupants of that sacred ground. Another claimed that “these Sacred Mountains . . . were

ended by scholars. However, to many of the Navajo themselves, the term Dinétah is more flexible, encompassing the spiritual meaning of their homeland. It is loosely defined as being between the four sacred boundary mountains: Mount Taylor or *Tsoodzil* (South), San Francisco Peaks or *Doko 'oosliid* (West), Blanca Peak or *Tsisnaasjini* (East), and Hesperus Peak or *Dibé Nitsaa* (North). While I have used the archeologists' definition here, the majority of this paper will use the spiritual, Navajo definition of Dinétah

¹² Peter Iverson, *The Navajo Nation* (Wesport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981), 3. For details on the speculation that the Navajo were originally from Asia and descended from Mongols, see Dane Coolidge and Mary Roberts Coolidge, *The Navajo Indians* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1930), 1-11.

¹³ Gary M. Brown, “The Protohistoric Transition in the Northern San Juan Region,” in Towner, *Navajo Origins*, 68; Garrick Bailey and Roberta Glenn Bailey, *A History of the Navajos: The Reservation Years*. (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1986), 11.

¹⁴ James Matthew Copeland and Hugh C. Rogers, “In the Shadow of the Holy People: Ceremonial Imagery in Dinétah,” in Towner, *Navajo Origins*, 213. For a detailed account of the Navajo creation myth, along with astute analysis of the cultural, anthropological, and symbolic features of the Navajo origin story, see Jerrold E. Levy's *In the Beginning: The Navajo Genesis*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

established for us.”¹⁵ And so, in Navajo tradition, the geographic sites of their immediate surroundings were created expressly by divine power for the use of The People.

The oral tradition of the Navajo genesis is a fascinating and illuminating subject, but that is a story that has been covered well by anthropologists and will not be attempted here, though there are a few basic points that merit consideration. First, and similar to other indigenous creation stories, Navajo tradition maintains that everything in the present world existed in the underworlds. Since they existed in previous worlds and would continue to exist beyond this one, the geographical features of Dinétah have eternal value and meaning.¹⁶ Though the physical features of earth are perpetual in Navajo tradition, mankind was not brought into being (at least in the present form) in the early underworlds. In fact, humans were not created until the present world was created, in what is considered to be the fifth world, by the Holy People, supernatural beings whose history predated the present earth of the Diné.¹⁷ After traveling through a series of other worlds and after several dramatic adventures, the Diné eventually arrived in Dinétah, being led there by First Man and First Woman, and it became the homeland of the Navajo people ever since.¹⁸ Though the Diné did not necessarily possess the land (at least by the Euro-American definition), their origin story made them the rightful

¹⁵ Robert W. Young and William Morgan, *Navajo Historical Selections*. (Washington D.C.: Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1954), 11, 13-14. This collection is unique in that it is an abridgment of important articles dealing with Navajo history that was published in *Ádahoónígíí*, the Navajo language newspaper published in Window Rock, AZ by the Navajo Agency from 1943-1957. The collection is mostly oral histories published in Navajo and translated into English by the editors. As with all oral history sources, they must be taken with a grain of salt, but I believe that there is no source that provides better information regarding the Navajo genesis (or any form of Navajo spiritualism) than personal interviews or writings of Navajo elders.

¹⁶ Levy, *In the Beginning*, 40.

¹⁷ Young and Morgan, *Navajo Historical Selections*, 10. The Nahua peoples of central Mexico (the dominant ethnic group of the Aztec empire) have a similar creation story, in which the present earth is in its fifth rendition, or cycle. This is interesting, given the geographic separation of the two peoples. Perhaps travel, trade, communication, or other diplomatic relations had spread this concept between the two peoples, or maybe the similarities suggest continental connections of indigenous spiritualism. Or perhaps it is neither, just a coincidence. In any event, this similarity is striking.

¹⁸ Levy, *In the Beginning*, 39-81.

stewards of it. The Holy People themselves were embodied by the Sacred Mountains, and the very elements of Dinétah became infused with spiritual meaning.¹⁹

With this sacrosanct connection to their homeland came a powerful conception of place that has endured for the Navajos over the years. To them, Dinétah was more than just a traditional homeland: it was a consecrated location that embodied their spiritual essence. The boundary mountains themselves were the literal housings of the Holy People, and as such were the reservoirs of all plant and animal life, having sacred powers to bless the People when they lived in accord with them.²⁰ Each of the mountains was placed purposefully in their positions with deific intention; they were not just convenient markers of a national border. Not only were they created by divine power, but they were possessed of divine power—and presence—still. This symbiotic coupling of the physical and spiritual is reflected in the Navajo people themselves. Like the geography surrounding them, the Navajo considered themselves to be constituted of both spiritual and physical matter, the anatomy being useless without the soul.²¹ This fusion of mind, body, and spirit into a single balance extended beyond the human body, deeply attaching the Navajo to their environment. And so, though they were not “owners” of the land, their homeland, with its spiritual implications, formed a central part of the Navajo worldview. For that reason, the Navajo were empowered by their sacred relationship with Dinétah, which assured them of their right to dominate not only their traditional homeland, but its surrounding resources as well. This ideology played a central role in the Navajos relationship with other peoples and served in the future as a natural justification for Navajos raiding their neighbors.

¹⁹ Gladys A. Reichard, *Navaho Religion: A Study of Symbolism, Vol. 1* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1950), 21.

²⁰ Young and Morgan, *Navajo Historical Selections*, 13.

²¹ Reichard, *Navaho Religion*, 31-32.

That being said, it was several hundred years before raiding became a characteristic feature of Navajo society. During the early years in the American Southwest, the Navajo did not exist as a people, per se, but rather as roving bands who mutually referred to themselves as Diné, and although they occasionally had violent conflicts with their neighbors and took their possessions and food, they subsisted mostly on hunting wild animals and eating wild plants.²² By the end of the sixteenth century, the Navajo were also practicing agricultural techniques, though not on as large a scale as their Pueblo and Hopi neighbors. Diego Pérez de Luxán, a member of the Espejo-Beltrán expedition in 1583, recorded in his diary meeting a group of “warlike, mountainous people,” who attempted to interact with the Spanish explorers as they passed near what was probably the Chuska Mountains. Luxán remarked matter-of-factly that “they had planted maize.”²³ He later explained that, after a falling-out between the military and religious leaders of the expedition Espejo and Beltrán, communications broke down with the otherwise “peaceful [and] rustic” Navajo, and conflict ensued. During the fray, the Spanish “destroyed a fine field of maize which they had.”²⁴ So by the 1580s at least, the Navajos were already engaged in the farming of maize, at least on a small scale. Fray Alonso de Benavides later remarked in 1630 that it was their disposition to farm that separated the Navajo from their close relatives the Apaches, who “sustain themselves solely by hunting.” Though wrongly assuming that the Navajo learned agriculture from the Spanish, Benavides correctly observed

²² For a full description of all plants and animals hunted and/or gathered by the Navajo, see Ruth Underhill, *Here Come the Navaho!: A History of the Largest Indian Tribe in the United States* (Washington D.C.: Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1953), 54-78.

²³ George Peter Hammond and Agapito Rey, trans., *Expedition into New Mexico Made by Antonio de Espejo, 1582-1583: As Revealed in the Journal of Diego Pérez de Luxán, a Member of the Party* (Los Angeles: The Quivira Society, 1929), 105, 107. Luxán named this tribe the Querechos, but given the locality of the proceedings and his descriptions of the natives, they were certainly Navajos.

²⁴ Hammond and Rey, *Expedition into New Mexico*, 112.

that their farming ability shed light on the origin of their name.²⁵ “Navajo” means, he said, “big planted fields.”²⁶

But they still called themselves Diné, and before the mid-seventeenth century, farming was only supplemental. Their main source of food still came from hunting and gathering. Just as they embraced a spiritual relationship with the earth, Navajos also upheld a spiritual veneration of all animal life. Because, as the anthropologist Gladys Reichard has said, “the Navajo reason from mythological precedent,” it is not surprising that their hunting traditions and history have their beginnings in myth.²⁷ According to oral tradition, wild game (like the earth and like humans) existed before this earth was created. The Holy People then released the animals for humans to hunt, with instructions and rules about the hunting process. One Navajo medicine man remarked to an anthropologist in 1971 that “these rules were not made by men. They were made by the gods before the creation of humankind. These rules must be kept sacred.”²⁸ With spiritual significance attached to the hunting tradition, Navajos took seriously their pursuit of game and all the ceremonies and songs that accompanied it. Incidentally, this earnest attention to hunting lent itself to skills in both trade and war. Antonio de Espejo, military leader of the Espejo-Beltrán expedition of 1582-1583, mentioned in his record that the

²⁵ Baker H. Morrow, trans. and ed., *A Harvest of Reluctant Souls: The Memorial of Fray Alonso de Benavides, 1630* (Boulder, CO: University of Colorado Press, 1996), 62. Benavides was mistaken when he assumed that the Apache did not farm at all, since they had in fact began their own cultivation of maize by this time, though not nearly on the scale of the Navajo. What is more important, however, is that the perceived difference between the two peoples (by Benavides and others) was this agricultural disparity.

²⁶ There is often confusion in regard to the origin of the term “Navajo.” Some have theorized that the Spaniards gave the Diné this appellation because of their warlike nature, since *navaja* in Spanish signifies a folding-blade fighting knife of Andalusian origin, and the term *navajero* is applied to a miscreant who wields such a knife. The similarity in the words here is coincidental and, if true, would be anachronistic, since *navajas* did not appear in Spain until the latter half of the seventeenth century. In the account above, Benavides utilized the term that Tewa Puebloans had applied to the group, the name signifying the tribe’s agricultural bounty rather than their violent use of sharpened blades.

²⁷ Reichard, *Navaho Religion*, 13.

²⁸ Karl W. Luckert, *The Navajo Hunter Tradition* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1975), 40. For additional information on different interpretations of the Deer Huntingway ceremonies and stories, see pages 17-129.

“warlike” people who inhabited the mountains of New Mexico carried on trade with their neighbors to the south (probably the Hopi), offering them “deer, rabbits, and hares, tanned deerskins, and other things,” to trade for cotton blankets and other commodities, showing that hunting not only served as a source of food, but had economic value as well.²⁹ Incidentally, the expedition also found out only a few days later that these talented hunters were just as competent in using their weapons in war, as the Spaniards who came to burn the Navajo cornfields were “greeted . . . with a shower of arrows.”³⁰

In summary, before Spanish contact, the Navajo people seem to have comprised loose bands of hunter-gatherers who spoke the same language and had a similar religion, who seem to have supplemented their diet with small cultivated fields of maize, squash, and beans, and had no qualms about defending themselves and/or occasionally taking advantage of the property of others (their native neighbors and the Spanish certainly called them “warlike” for a reason). However, like the experience of so many Amerindians before them, Navajo life changed dramatically after Spanish contact in the sixteenth century. The Navajo subsequently adopted many of the introduced systems, commodities, and practices from the white newcomers, and it changed the nature of their culture forever, in addition to being a catalyst for the development of raiding.

²⁹ Herbert Eugene Bolton, ed., *Spanish Exploration in the Southwest, 1542-1706* (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1908), 183.

³⁰ Hammond and Rey, *Expedition into New Mexico*, 112.

Spanish Exploration, Settlement, and Early Interactions with Navajos

The European presence in New Mexico began in the early sixteenth century, when Spanish *conquistadores* explored northward from New Spain in search of treasure, personal glory, and converts. The first group of Spaniards to see the interior of the North American continent, however, did so accidentally. After being shipwrecked on the Gulf Coast in 1527 while returning from a failed *entrada* in Florida and then escaping their Indian captors, Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca and his companions attempted to return to Mexico via land crossing. While doing so, they made their way across modern-day Texas and New Mexico before eventually finding a Spanish settlement in Sonora. The remarkable journey lasted nearly ten years, and although the stories brought back by the explorers did not indicate colonial potential, in the North American interior, many Spaniards assumed that the *tierra adentro* contained vast Indian populations and prospective treasures that could enrich the Spanish crown and the fortunes of individual explorers. As a result, it sparked an interest in the northern borders of New Spain as a sight for prospective settlement.

Almost immediately after the return of Cabeza de Vaca a Franciscan priest named Marcos de Niza was tasked by the viceroy of New Spain to “find a way to go on and penetrate the land in the interior,” and seek the rumored kingdoms of the continent to the north.³¹ Using one of the survivors of the Cabeza de Vaca expedition (a black slave named Estéban) as a guide, Niza crossed the Sonoran desert and eventually encountered friendly Indians who, upon hearing the objective of his mission, agreed to take him to the city of Cibola, which they claimed to be well populated and full of untold riches. Estéban went ahead of Niza to scout the

³¹ Joseph P. Sánchez, *The Rio Abajo Frontier, 1540-1692: A History of Early Colonial New Mexico* (Albuquerque: The Albuquerque Museum, 1987), 4-7.

land and arrived at the Zuñi Pueblo, but was not heard from again, most likely killed by the native inhabitants of the village. Following crosses that were left by Estéban and other messengers to mark the way, Niza finally reached the Indian settlement. Though the pueblo was not large in actuality and totally lacking in the mineral riches that Niza and other Spaniards were looking for, the priest recorded that the city was “the best I have seen in these regions,” having a “fine appearance” that was exactly “as [it] had been described to me by the Indians.” He then went on to record the largest exaggeration of his findings, that the small settlement near the San Jose River was “larger than the city of Mexico.” Even better, according to his Indian guides, this particular community was “the smallest of the seven cities,” and that the largest “has so many houses and people that there is no end to it.”³²

Exhilarated by what he had found (or at least what he imagined that he had found), Niza hurried back to Mexico City and shared his exploits with the viceroy in September 1539. Spanish officials wasted no time following up on the report. Word was immediately sent to the king in Spain, whose hearty approval was received in Mexico City by January 1540, and the first full large-scale *entrada* into the region of New Mexico was on its way less than a month later. Francisco Vázquez de Coronado led the two-year expedition, and the *entrada* would have a lasting impact on the future of New Mexico’s Indians.³³ Along the journey, the Spanish encountered several Puebloan tribes, of whom they often required to give tributes of food, labor, and whatever riches the Spanish deemed worth their while; they also tried to instruct the natives in the workings of Christianity, though permanent converts were rare if they were not also taken as slaves. Navajos, living to the northwest of the Rio Grande del Norte, never did

³² Cleve Hallenbeck, *The Journey of Fray Marcos de Niza*. (Dallas: University Press in Dallas, 1949), 34.

³³ For a recent overview history of the Coronado Expedition, see Richard Flint, *No Settlement, No Conquest: A History of the Coronado Entrada* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008).

come into direct contact with Coronado's party in the 1540s, but the Spaniards' interactions with the Pueblo tribes affected the Navajo nonetheless. Through communication and trade with these peoples, the Navajo were made aware of the wandering strangers and, as will be seen hereafter, understood who the Spaniards were and what they wanted during their first meeting forty years later. The other tribes of New Mexico, meanwhile, were more directly involved. Their responses to Spanish intrusion differed—varying from assistance and guidance (sometimes freely given, other times coerced) to all-out resistance and pitched battles—but all the tribes that Coronado encountered, ranging from the lower Rio Grande to the Great Plains, were significantly affected. In fact, when subsequent excursions encountered these tribes, many of them had already adopted fragments of Spanish culture.³⁴ These implementations and adaptations would have profound social, cultural, political, and economic implications in New Mexico's future.

After searching for a year and a half for the fabled cities of Cíbola and Quivira, Coronado's expedition returned to Mexico, somewhat deflating the dreams of fortune- and soul-seeking explorers and clerics. As a result, there was no immediate justification for any sort of settlement in the *tierra adentro*. Still, not all interest had withdrawn. Though Coronado's expedition failed in its original intention, many Spaniards continued to believe that the valley of the upper Rio Grande had colonial potential. Following up on Coronado's reports and in an attempt to locate two priests who had gone missing in the area a few years before, Antonio de Espejo and Padre Bernadino Beltrán undertook their exploratory expedition to the area in 1582,

³⁴ For a first hand report of the expedition, see Pedro Casteneda, *The Journey of Coronado*, edited by George Parker Winship (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1966). For a detailed description of harsh requerimiento practices of Coronado, see Richard Flint, *Great Cruelties Have Been Reported: The 1544 Investigation of the Coronado Expedition* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 2002), which contains edited and translated documents regarding the allegations against Coronado and his lieutenants following the expedition.

during which the first recorded interaction between Spaniards and Navajos took place, near the Acoma Pueblo in 1583. While traveling east after an unsuccessful search for silver near the present-day Verde River, the Spanish crew came in contact with what Diego Pérez de Luxán, one of the members of the expedition, labeled “mountainous” and “warlike” people.³⁵ Luxán called these natives Querechos, assuming that they were the same group of nomadic Indians that Coronado had met on the Great Plains whose sustenance was derived entirely from buffalo hunting.³⁶ However, given the location of this meeting and the fact that these natives cultivated maize, raided the neighboring pueblos, and built “huts of branches,” they were most likely Navajos. Luxán reported that after initially fleeing from fear of the Spaniards’ horses, this group of Navajos “[sang] of the peace they wished with us” and gave the strangers pieces of metal, which Luxán interpreted as offerings of good will. They also informed the Spaniards of the location of mines where they had procured them. Manifesting that they had an idea of Spanish culture, the natives had even built a “large painted cross, and four small ones on the sides,” to welcome the Spanish party, apparently already aware of the symbol that meant so much to these Christian explorers.³⁷ Assuming that Luxán did not simply fabricate this portion of his story, it seems most likely that the Navajo learned about the cross and had an idea of its sacred nature from other Pueblo tribes who had interacted with Coronado forty years before. Another group of Indians acted similarly. Luxán explained that a tribe nearby the

³⁵ Hammond and Rey, *Expedition into New Mexico*, 105-106.

³⁶ The Spanish explorers’ use of the name “Querecho” is problematic. They frequently applied this name to all nomadic tribes who did not live in pueblos and whose main source of sustenance was hunting and gathering. Thus, Comanches, Apaches, Kiowas, Navajos, Cheyennes, Arapahos, and many other tribes could be classified as Querechos if their tribal affiliation was unknown or misinterpreted, notwithstanding their differences. The best a historian can do is search for context clues and make educated guesses about which Querecho a given Spaniard is talking about. In the case of Luxán’s record, I have used context clues in regard to location, habitations described, relationships with other local Indians, and other cultural elements to conclude that these Querechos described were actually Navajos, or at least their progenitors, a view held by several other historians.

³⁷ Hammond and Rey, *Expedition Into New Mexico*, 106.

“mountainous” people, probably the Acoma Pueblo, greeted the Spanish “with crosses on their heads, even the children,” when the Spanish met with them after this interaction with the Navajo. The Navajo likely had heard stories of the Spanish from their Acoma neighbors and had an idea of what the Spaniards valued (they did, after all, offer them precious metal—probably copper—immediately upon contact, and showed the Spanish the location of their mines).³⁸ The military leader of party, Antonio de Espejo, confirmed the hospitality of the Navajo in his own narrative, saying that “in our honor they performed a very ceremonious *mitote* and dance, the people coming out in fine array . . . They gave us liberally of food and of all else which they had.”³⁹

The cordiality proved fleeting. After leaving the Navajo region for several days, the Spaniards made a return trip through the area on their way back, but this time the “mountaineers,” along with their Acoma neighbors, were “in rebellion,” shouting from the hills and attempting to steal from the travelers. When one of these raiding endeavors ended in the death of a Mexican-Indian servant of Luxán, the Spaniards attempted a counterattack on these “impudent” Indians, but were “greeted . . . with a shower of arrows,” and decided to retreat. Instead of engaging in a pitched battle that would favor the native archers, the Spaniards made their way back to the Querecho encampment, “set[ting] fire to the shacks,” and destroying a large field of maize, “a thing which [the Querechos] felt a great deal.”⁴⁰ The expedition then went on its way, and no doubt both parties remembered the opposing group as “enemies.” The conclusion of this first meeting of the Navajo and the Spanish is significant, because it foreshadowed the turmoil that would ensue between the two peoples. It established a precedent

³⁸ Hammond and Rey, 107.

³⁹ Bolton, *Spanish Exploration*, 183-184.

⁴⁰ Hammond and Rey, *Expedition Into New Mexico*, 111-112.

that typified relations between Navajos and Spanish-speakers in New Mexico, a model of war and peace and general instability that lasted the next two hundred and fifty years. Still, these early interactions and altercations would have remained isolated events if the Spanish had not established colonies in New Mexico. Only when the Spanish and Navajos became permanent neighbors did the precedent become a pattern.

Despite the troublesome end to Espejo's journey, he recommended to the king the establishment of long-term settlements in New Mexico as soon as possible. Seemingly unfazed by the violent manner in which the Navajo treated his party at the end of his *entrada* (or any other of the Indians who were unfriendly to the Spanish), he reported to Viceroy Pedro Moya de Contreras the value of the “great number of pueblos and people,” that he saw, along with his certainty that there would be many more Indians who were “larger and richer.” He then asked the favor of being entrusted with the “exploration and settlement of these lands and of the others which I may discover.” Likewise, in a letter to King Philip II in 1584, Espejo begged for the opportunity to “finish [his] life in the continuation of the discoveries and settlements,” envisioning the “conversion of millions of souls” to the never-ending glory of his monarch and himself.⁴¹

The king consented but Espejo never realized his dream, as he died en route to Spain in 1585 with the intention of personally convincing the king of the importance of a colony in New Mexico. Instead, the task of colonization fell to Juan de Oñate, who established the first Spanish settlement in New Mexico in 1598, forever affecting native life in that area.⁴² Generally speaking, Oñate’s methods mirrored the colonization efforts of other locations in Spain’s New World empire. Upon arrival, he established a capital and initiated a system of

⁴¹ Bolton, *Spanish Exploration*, 193-195.

⁴² Bolton, *Spanish Exploration*, 203.

encomienda, by which Spanish *conquistadores* would be entrusted with a certain number of native inhabitants whom they would physically and spiritually provide for. The *encomendero*, in turn, would be entitled to the labor of those natives in exchange for the protection he provided. Although it was more often abused than not, the root of the *encomienda* was a sincere (albeit paternalistic) desire for inclusion, a key point that will be addressed further in chapter three. Suffice it to say now that while Oñate's political policies were theoretically aimed at the inclusion and assimilation of native peoples in the Spanish regime in New Mexico, the abuse of power that went along with those policies, along with the institution of the *encomienda*, eventually led to conflict between the Spanish and the Indians of New Mexico, both the "subdued" Pueblos of the colony's interior and the "wild" tribes of the periphery, which included one of the largest and most powerful of those tribes, the Navajos.

Though Oñate himself did not keep an account of his colonization efforts, Father Jerónimo de Zárate Salmerón, one of the earliest priests to make New Mexico his permanent home and the first to establish a mission at Jemez Pueblo, related his experiences in the area at the end of his life in 1627. Zárate Salmerón retrospectively wrote the tales of his own missions in addition to the events he had witnessed or been informed of in the colony generally. After relating the story of Oñate's "conquest" of the region, the priest seemed to have been more satisfied with his own work, claiming that he and his clerical brothers were responsible for having "conquered and pacified" the region. There was "no corner nor remote place, where the religious of our father . . . have not entered," Zárate Salmerón stated, "and that in all the discoveries, they are the light that guides, whom all the rest follow."⁴³ Perhaps slightly

⁴³ Jerónimo de Zárate Salmerón, *Relaciones: An Account of things seen and learned by Father Jerónimo de Zárate Salmerón from the Year 1538 to Year 1626*, trans. Alicia Ronstadt Milich (Albuquerque: Horn and Wallace, 1966), 26.

optimistic in regard to his religion's ubiquity, Zaráte Salmerón's record nevertheless provides useful information on Indian life. It also contains the first recorded reference by a Spaniard of the "Apache Indians of Nabaju," where they are referred to by name that they would be given for the remainder of their interactions with white settlers and Hispanized Indians.⁴⁴ The priest provided little more than their name, probably unaware that they were the same Querechos who had attacked the Espejo-Beltrán party in 1583, but he correctly recorded their general location and mentioned that they carried on regular trade and communication with the Jemez pueblo to whom he was proselyting, that they had "good pastures and fields," and that they occasionally carried information between Pueblo Indians and the western Apache and Hopi.⁴⁵ This account was corroborated by Fray Alonso de Benavides three years later, who (as mentioned before) recorded that the Navajos carried on trade with their neighbors and cultivated sizeable fields of maize, in addition to being warriors whose prowess was revered by adjacent tribes. Benavides optimistically hoped that these "wild" Indians could be pacified and incorporated into Spanish society in the future.⁴⁶

Despite the Christian outreach extended by Spaniards like Zaráte Salmerón and Benavides, violent altercations between Navajos and the Spanish occurred rather quickly. Although the initial reasons for Navajo raids on Spanish settlements cannot be stated with surety, there is a strong possibility that the earliest raids may have been motivated by reprisal,

⁴⁴ Though this was the first use of the Navajo name by a Spaniard, it was not the first time they were mentioned. The Franciscan prelate who accompanied Oñate in 1598 made mission assignments to his subordinates immediately after arrival in New Mexico, one of which included the Apaches of the "snowy mountains," which almost surely were the Navajo. Though the jurisdiction was organized, the mission to the Navajo was not successful. See Gaspar Pérez de Villagrà, *History of New Mexico, Alcalá, 1610*, trans. Gilberto Espinosa. (Los Angeles: Quivira Society, 1933), 163 n.26.

⁴⁵ Zaráte Salmerón, *Relaciones*, 94.

⁴⁶ Fray Alonso de Benavides, *Fray Alonso de Benavides' Revised Memorial of 1634 with Numerous Supplementary Documents Elaborately Annotated*, edited and translated by Frederick Webb Hodge, George P. Hammond, and Agapito Rey (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1945), 86-88.

not for the Navajo themselves, but for their Pueblo allies; the Spanish massacre of the Acoma is an early example. In January 1599, Don Juan de Oñate's conquest of New Mexico reached the cliffs of the Acoma Pueblo, who were geographically and politically close with the Navajo. Nearly two months before, several Acoma Indians had attacked and killed eleven Spanish soldiers and several of their servants. In retaliation, Governor Oñate led a detachment of soldiers—armed with guns, armor, and even cannon—against the pueblo. In one of the darkest moments of New Mexico history, Oñate's force killed hundreds of Acomas during the battle and captured nearly a hundred warriors, along with five hundred women and children. All male captives over twenty-five years of age had one of their feet cut off and were sentenced to twenty years of servitude. Younger captives were spared the amputation, but were condemned to slavery or to be brought up in Spanish custom and religion. The elderly, however, were “freed and entrusted to the Indians in the province of the Querechos that they may support them and may not allow them to leave their pueblos.”⁴⁷

Oñate most likely assumed that by sending the aged Acomas to the Querechos (Navajos) he was relieving himself of the burden of Indians who would neither convert nor contribute to the Spanish empire. Instead, he may have spread the ire of a provoked people to their friends, the “warlike” Navajo. In 1608, Father Lázaro Ximénez wrote to the viceroy that the first capital of New Mexico—San Gabriel del Yunque, founded in 1599, the same year as the Acoma massacre—had been recurrently besieged by Navajo raiders since the city's founding. The attackers killed the inhabitants of the city, razed their buildings and their fields, and stole their livestock. Ximénez pleaded for additional soldiers to be sent from Mexico in

⁴⁷ J. Lee Correll, *Through White Men's Eyes: A Contribution to Navajo History: A Chronological Record of the Navajo People from Earliest Times to the Treaty of June 1, 1868* (Window Rock, AZ: Navajo Heritage Center, 1979), 27.

order to protect the settlement, adding that the raids demoralized the natives who were friendly to the Spanish.⁴⁸ The viceroy curtly responded that the governor of New Mexico should send out military units to put an end to the fighting and protect the natives. The flawed strategy of solving the problem with the problem itself was predictably ineffective. A few months later, the beleaguered inhabitants of San Gabriel sent a petition to the viceroy, asking for permission to leave their posts and return to New Spain. The request was denied, but the city was abandoned anyway, and the capital, which had been located near Navajo country between the Chama and Rio Grande rivers, moved farther south and east, away from the danger of the marauding tribe, to the settlement that would later be called Santa Fe.⁴⁹

To suggest that the Navajo embarked on this violent lifestyle solely for revenge against the Spaniards, however, would be overly simplistic. Remember, the Navajo were considered “warlike” from the reports of other Indian peoples before the Spanish arrived, and they must have had the reputation for a reason. While their raids against the Spanish were fierce and unrelenting in the first quarter of the century, they were not the only targets of the Navajo raiders. During the same time, Navajos also attacked their native neighbors. In 1622, for example, the inhabitants of two villages of the Jemez Pueblo abandoned their homes, due to the

⁴⁸ A word must be said here regarding the terminology used by the Spanish record-keepers and their use of nomenclature. Many of the records in seventeenth-century New Mexico use ambiguous, incorrect, or multifarious proper nouns, especially when describing *los bárbaros* in the province. In the case of the Navajo, the term Apache is frequently used, which makes reading the documents somewhat tricky. Donald Worcester offers perhaps the best explanation on the topic: “One reason for this confusion regarding the Navajo in the early years of New Mexico’s history is to be found in Spanish terminology used for designating the wild and warlike tribes. At the time of the conquest the word ‘apache,’ from the Zuñi *apachú*—enemy—their appellation for the Navajo, was used by the Spaniards to denote any hostile Indians. . . . Soon it became known to the Spaniards that most of the enemy tribes surrounding New Mexico spoke a common language, and the name thereafter was applied only to the Southern Athabascans. Gradually other designations were given to the various Athabaskan tribes of different regions, and the Navajo became known as the *Apaches del Navajo*. Throughout the 17th century and frequently in later years, however, many Spanish documents referred to them simply as Apache, thus giving an impression at first glance that the Navajo did not figure to any significant degree in the events of that remote area. . . . this impression is entirely false.” Donald Worcester, “The Navaho During the Spanish Regime in New Mexico,” *New Mexico Historical Review* 26, No.2 (1951): 101-102.

⁴⁹ Correll, *TWME*, 29.

constant belligerence of Navajo raids.⁵⁰ Fray Benavides, meanwhile, wrote in 1630 that he had gone to live with the Santa Clara Pueblo, “where the Apaches (de Navajo) killed people every day and waged war upon them.”⁵¹ Apparently, these raids were occurring before the Spanish arrived in New Mexico, and the Navajo saw no reason to end them, Spanish protection of these Pueblos notwithstanding.

Though violence seemed to be extended by the Navajo to any and all inhabitants of New Mexico, they were not just wanton killers and thieves who acted out of “pure love of rapine and plunder,” as one American official would later describe them.⁵² As shown recently by borderlands scholars such as Hämäläinen and DeLay, native tribes were savvy, competent, and successful political and social bodies in the Southwest borderlands.⁵³ The Navajo, to whom the art of raiding was a significant cultural practice, perceived balances of power in their province, noticed when certain entities were vulnerable or required assistance, and involved themselves at times that best suited their needs and interests. Their alliances in the seventeenth century are a testament to that tendency. For example, the Navajo came to the aid of the Hopi, the same people who previously had described the Querechos [Navajos] as warlike enemies to Diego Luxán, in 1629 when word was received that the Spanish were sending missionaries to their villages. Having been warned that the clerics were “deceivers” who would “put water on their heads . . . and at once be sure to die,” the Hopi feared that these strangers would “burn their pueblos, rob their belongings and behead their children.” In response, they “secretly

⁵⁰ France V. Scholes, “Church and State in New Mexico, 1610-1650,” *New Mexico Historical Review* 11 (April 1936), 145-146.

⁵¹ Benavides, *Revised Memorial*, 86.

⁵² James S. Calhoun, *The Official Correspondence of James S. Calhoun while Indian Agent at Santa Fe and Superintendent of Indian Affairs in New Mexico*, ed. Annie Heloise Abel (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1915), 32.

⁵³ Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Brian DeLay *War of a Thousand Deserts: Indian Raids and the U.S.-Mexican War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

summoned in their favor the neighboring Apaches [Navajos], with whom at that time they had a truce.”⁵⁴ There was a confrontation between the Hopi/Navajo alliance and the Spanish monks, but luckily arrangements were discussed and no blood was shed on that particular occasion, showing the Navajo willingness to come to the aid of another social entity (one that was implied to be a former enemy) and also to engage in peaceful negotiation.

While in this episode Navajos offered support to an ally and found a peaceable arrangement with the Spanish clergymen, at other times Navajos instigated fights and encouraged Pueblo Indians to join them. In February 1639, for example, Navajos rode into Jemez and killed the local priest, perhaps assuming that by violently ousting the local leader of the Spanish religion they might be able to secure the friendship of the Jemez (who, it will be remembered, had to evacuate their pueblo in 1622 due to Navajo raiding and only returned after the raids became less frequent).⁵⁵ The plan worked. In the early 1640s, the Navajos made repeated raids on Spanish settlements with the help of the Jemez, with whom they had made a peace. Together they conspired to drive the Spanish from New Mexico. The plot was discovered, however, and the plan never came to fruition. The Navajos, still distant from Spanish settlements and not living under the thumb of the invaders, were virtually unaffected, but twenty-nine Jemez were hanged for sedition, and many others were whipped and imprisoned.⁵⁶

The enforcement of Spanish superiority over their Pueblo subjects may have ended the immediate problem, but it tended to perpetuate the violence in New Mexico over the long term.

⁵⁴ Correll, *TWME*, 30. See also Lansing B. Bloom, “Fray Estevan de Perea’s *Relacion*,” *New Mexico Historical Review* 8 (July 1933), 231.

⁵⁵ Benavides, *Revised Memorial*, 277.

⁵⁶ Charles Wilson Hackett and Charmion Clair Shelby, *Revolt of the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico and Otermín’s Attempted Reconquest, 1680-1682* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1942), 266. See also Correll, *TWME*, 33-34.

Pueblos continued colluding with Navajo allies against the Spanish, or at least during the times when the Spanish were the most pressing threat to their safety and lifeways. Five years after the first attempt by the Jemez Pueblo and the Navajo, they again made a plot to kill the local friars and soldiers during Holy Week, but this time the idea seemed to have been concocted by Pueblos since the Navajo agreed only after they had been paid with horses. This plan was more elaborate and involved a wider swath of Pueblos. But, as before, the plan was found out and the governor ordered nine leaders from Isleta, Alameda, San Felipe, Cochiti, and Jemez to be hanged.⁵⁷

Early on in the settlement of New Mexico, Spanish officials prioritized the safety of “civilized” Indians. Setting aside the hypocrisy of their own exploitations of these peoples, there seemed to be a sincere desire to defend these newest subjects of the Spanish crown. Francisco de Baeza, governor from 1635-1637, wrote that of the limited number of people who could bear arms in the province they did so “in defense of the converted Indians, who frequently suffer injuries from the neighboring Apaches [Navajoes] . . . to their defense the governors and inhabitants repair, punishing the Apaches severely. As a result the Apaches restrain themselves and the converted Indians are saved, for the Apaches see the Spaniards defend them and that those are punished who disturb them.”⁵⁸ Preferably, though, the Spanish wished to convert the Navajo and make them full participants in Spanish society. Fray Benavides expressed this desire in his memorial of 1634. After hearing that the wild tribe “killed [Tewas] every day and waged war on them,” he was intent on spreading the faith that he was sure would “make peace between them.” He preferred to convert a Navajo captive and

⁵⁷ Frank D. Reeve, “Seventeenth Century Navaho-Spanish Relations,” *New Mexico Historical Review* 32 (January 1957), 44. See also Correll, *TWME*, 34.

⁵⁸ Correll, *TWME*, 32.

send him back to his people where he could convince them of “our holy Catholic faith,” but since this method was impossible, he settled on setting a meeting with headmen from the Tewas and Navajos to have peace talks. Benavides pleaded with the Navajo leader to commit to non-violence: “when the Apache [de Navajo] heard this, he gave a great sigh and said he was very sorry that they should offer peace at this time when he had made such elaborate preparations for exterminating them all with one stroke, but since peace was such a fine thing, he could not help accepting it.”⁵⁹

Benavides’s experience was irregular, and perhaps hyperbole, but it does reveal a sincere desire to resolve conflict peacefully and incorporate the Navajo into Spanish society. Usually, however, violent defense was the more common course of action, and initially defense was the only option for the Spaniards. But soon enough they began taking the fight into Navajo country. The first party that was dispatched for the purpose of prosecuting warfare against the Navajo returned to Santa Fe in 1642. The results of the venture were not recorded, but it seemed to have been a rather adhoc campaign, since, in a letter to the church officials in Santa Fe a few months after the endeavor, the governor thanked the religious leaders for allowing his volunteer soldiers to borrow the church’s horses.⁶⁰ Although these first Spanish attacks into Navajo country were rather rudimentary, they quickly accelerated in both ferocity and frequency. One of the most efficient tactics used by the Spanish was similar to the Navajo strategy: procuring Pueblo allies. Many of the Pueblo Indians still continued resisting Spanish rule, but others were inclined to accept their protection. While the Spanish and Navajo enjoyed the relative simplicity of being pitted against each other during the seventeenth century, the Pueblo were often caught in the crossfire. Regardless of which side they aided, they raised the

⁵⁹ Benavides, *Revised Memorial*, 86-88.

⁶⁰ Correll, *TWME*, 33.

ire of the other. Thus, the Pueblos, like the Navajo, based their alliances upon temporally urgent needs. And just because the Navajo were desirous to have partners in driving out the Spanish did not mean that they ceased all raids against their Indian neighbors. Pueblos, in an effort to protect themselves from the crocodile closest to the boat, sometimes played the Spanish against Navajo aggressors and vice versa. For that reason, many of the Pueblos agreed to fight alongside the Spanish against the marauding Navajo.

As an example, in 1659 Governor Bernardo López de Mendizábal commanded an army of forty Spaniards and eight hundred “Christian Indians” against the Navajos with the intent to “[lay] waste their fields, [destroy] their power, and [make] captives.” The amount of destruction was not recorded, but it was considered successful, owing to the aid given by so many Pueblo volunteers. Two other large expeditions were sent later in the century (1675 and 1678). The first included three hundred Pueblo volunteers and the latter numbered over four hundred, in addition to several Ute soldiers, and both were Spanish victories. Dozens of Navajo warriors were killed, many more of their women and children were taken as captives, and their fields and livestock were destroyed and stolen, respectively.⁶¹

Still, Navajo aggression continued, and the tension in the province increased. By the 1670s, it seemed to many Spaniards that the colony was on its way to ruin. Fray Juan Bernal remarked in 1669 that New Mexico “is nearly exhausted,” citing the “heathen nation of Apache [Navajo] Indians, who kill all the Christian Indians they can find and encounter” as the cause of the misfortune. “No road is safe,” he lamented, “everyone travels at risk of his life, for the heathens traverse them all, being courageous and brave.”⁶² To make matters worse, there was a general drought in New Mexico for much of the 1660s, followed immediately by epidemic

⁶¹ Correll, *TWME*, 35, 39.

⁶² Correll, *TWME*, 38.

disease in 1671 that killed both people and livestock. Little aid was received from Mexico, several governors in succession were accused of corruption, and the Spanish began to lose their grip on New Mexico. And then, in 1680, their authority in the province was authoritatively severed as a result of a general Indian uprising, due at least in some part to the strain created by the powerful aggression of Navajo raiders.

CHAPTER 2

Pueblo Revolt of 1680, *Reconquista*, and Pueblo Diaspora

“The time has come when, with tears in my eyes and deep sorrow in my heart, I commence to give an account of the lamentable tragedy, such has never before happened in the world, which has occurred in this miserable kingdom and holy *custodia*.”¹ With these emotion-filled words, Don Antonio de Otermín, Governor and Captain-General of New Mexico, commenced a report to the viceroy of New Spain, describing the details of the Indian uprisings of 1680, an event which many historians consider to be the single most successful episode of native resistance against the Spanish imperial project in the New World.²

As described in the previous chapter, years of importunate raiding by Navajos and other “wild” tribes had seriously weakened the Spanish settlements in the territory, sapping their resources, straining their relationship with the Christianized Pueblo Indians, and isolating them from the rest of the Spanish empire to the south. Then, in the 1670s, persistent drought combined with epidemic disease, taking a heavy toll in both the human and ungulate populations of the region. To many of the Indians of New Mexico, particularly the Pueblo tribes that had the most immediate interactions with the colonizers, the Spanish, along with their culture and religion, seemed to bring nothing but misfortune to the indigenous peoples that they

¹ Charles Wilson Hackett, ed. *Historical Documents Relating to New Mexico, Nueva Vizcaya, and Approaches Thereto, to 1773*. Collected by Adolph F.A. Bandelier and Fanny R. Bandelier (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1937), 327.

² Heather B. Trigg, *From Household to Empire: Society and Economy in Early Colonial New Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2005), 205.

professed to love and protect.³ That, in connection with the demanding labor requirements of the *repartimiento*, convinced many Pueblo Indians of the urgent need to drive out their oppressors from the region.⁴ Insurrections had been attempted before, but were historically uncoordinated, ill-timed, and poorly planned. This time, however, after years of preparation, the Pueblos were able to unify in a common cause and enact a general rebellion that ousted the Spanish from New Mexico for over a decade.

The story of the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 is an important one, but has been adequately told elsewhere and the details will not be dwelt upon here.⁵ In summary, Pueblo Indians successfully sent secret communications and coordinated a combined uprising that concentrated on the killing or exiling of religious leaders in the Indian settlements. The Count of Paredes, senior viceroy of New Spain, recorded in 1681 that the rebellious Indians “fell upon all the pueblos and farms at the same time with such vigor and cruelty that they killed twenty-one missionary religious . . . and more than three hundred and eighty Spaniards, not sparing the defenselessness of the women and children.” Confirming the religious motivations of the event, he went on to say how the Indians “set fire to the temples, seizing the saints and profaning the holy vessels with such shocking desecrations and insolences that it is indecent to mention them. They left thirty-four pueblos totally desolated and destroyed, not counting many other farms

³ As argued by David Weber, the combination of depredations, drought, and pestilence was a testament to the inability of the Spanish God to placate supernatural forces. The harsh and unyielding repression of indigenous religious ceremonies and rites by Spanish religious officials contributed to a revival of Indian religion in New Mexico. The fight for religious freedom, then, was a central theme in the Pueblo Revolt. See David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 133-141.

⁴ Governor Otermín denied that the labor demands made on Christianized Indians contributed to their rebellion: “If I found any consolation in the event it would be in the fact that this ruin did not originate because either of *repartimientos* or of other drudgery which might have aggrieved these Indians.” This defense is certainly more of an attempt to deflect criticism of his own policies than an accurate argument about Indian motivations. Otermín quoted in Charles Hackett and Charmion Shelby, *Revolt of the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico and Otermín’s Attempted Reconquest, 1680-1682* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1942), 206.

⁵ See, for example, Andrew L. Knaut, *The Pueblo Revolt of 1680: Conquest and Resistance in Seventeenth-Century New Mexico* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995); David J. Weber, ed., *What Caused the Pueblo Revolt of 1680?* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 1999).

and haciendas at a distance from them.”⁶ According to Otermín, the plans for this attack were actually discovered days before it began (much like the Navajo-Pueblo attempts years previous), but were treated with a “certain degree of negligence by reason the uprising not having been given entire credence.”⁷ Though Otermín offered armed resistance and reported to have killed three hundred Indians while defending the governor’s house in Santa Fe, he eventually ran out of water and supplies and retreated with all remaining Spaniards to Paso del Río del Norte (on the southern side of the river, in modern-day Ciudad Juárez). The rebelling Indians, meanwhile, razed every Spanish building that had been left behind and endeavored to abandon all semblances of Spanish and Christian life. The Spanish crown sent orders for an immediate reconquest of New Mexico, but the Spanish would not return to the territory for another twelve years. The Pueblo Indian coalition had effectively won more than a decade free from Spanish influence.

As far as the actual violence of the anti-Spanish revolt, Navajos had very little involvement with the 1680 rebellion. True, their raiding of New Mexican settlements, Spanish and Indian alike, offered a major contribution to the unrest that led to the event, but they were not directly involved in the uprising itself. Still, the Pueblo Revolt and its aftermath had a significant and lasting impact on the Navajos during the next two centuries; some of the effects linger even today.

It is impossible to know the strength of the relationship between Navajos and Pueblo Indians (or any other indigenous group for that matter) during the Spanish absence given the paucity of written evidence generated at the time, but it can be reasonably assumed that they

⁶ Hackett, *Historical Documents*, 339. The casualty estimates offered here are even more consequential when one considers that the total population of Spaniards in New Mexico in 1680 has been estimated to be between 2,500 and 3,000, meaning that 13-16% of Spaniards in the province were killed in the initial attacks alone.

⁷ Hackett, *Historical Documents*, 328.

were generally amicable, though still subject to change. When Don Diego de Vargas undertook the *reconquista* of New Mexico in 1692, for example, he noted that certain Pueblos were still closely allied with the Navajo. When he attempted to convince the Acoma Pueblo to return to their old allegiance with the Spanish crown and receive Catholic instruction, de Vargas extended the offer of a full pardon, but the Acoma responded that they were hesitant to make such a commitment, having been warned by the Navajos, “not to believe [the governor], because it was with the guarantee of the pardon [de Vargas] was offering them that [he] would kill them, carry off their women and children, and leave them in the district of the outpost at El Paso.”⁸ They further revealed the trust that they placed in their Navajo allies by saying that while the Spanish had been away, the Acoma “had stood alone, having as friends only the Navajo Apaches.”⁹ After coming to an understanding with the Acoma, de Vargas marched on to the region of the Hopi, where he faced a similar experience. Navajos had warned the Hopi beforehand that the Spanish were “going to kill them all and take away their women and children,” despite the professed peace that they were offering. “They had believed that rabble-rouser,” de Vargas lamented, “to the extent that they had sent their livestock away to the mountains to protect them.”¹⁰ From these episodes we can surmise that Navajos had friendly diplomatic interactions with several tribes and willingly made alliances with them against the Spanish.

⁸ John L. Kessell, Rick Hendricks, and Meredith D. Dodge, eds., *To the Royal Crown Restored: The Journals of don Diego de Vargas, New Mexico, 1692-1694* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 204.

⁹ John L. Kessell and Rick Hendricks, eds., *By Force of Arms: The Journals of don Diego de Vargas, New Mexico, 1691-1693* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 536.

¹⁰ Kessell and Hendricks, *By Force of Arms*, 551-552. De Vargas also noted that when he arrived at the village of Walpi, the Hopi were supported by Utes, Havasupais, and Navajos. See Don Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora, *The Mercurio Volante: An Account of the First Expedition of Don Diego de Vargas into New Mexico in 1692*, trans. Irving Albert Leonard (Los Angeles: The Quivira Society, 1932), 84 n. 121.

Not all Pueblos had friendly associations with the Navajo, however. The Zuñi Pueblo, for example, consisted of five villages before the Spanish had been exiled from New Mexico in 1680. By the time the colonizers returned, it had been reduced to only one, due almost entirely to Navajo attacks. Many of the Zuñi had fled their villages and removed to more defensible locations in the mountains to protect themselves from Navajo raiders.¹¹ Other Pueblos expressed gratitude for the return of the Spanish. According to de Vargas, several villages were “very happy and content about my coming and that of the Spaniards. Now they would be able to hunt deer and go farther to plant more. Otherwise, they could not leave since their lives were at risk from the Navajo Apaches, even beside the river, because the Apaches spied on them, ambushing and killing them.”¹² We can see, then, that Navajos simultaneously traded with and formed alliances with some Pueblo tribes of New Mexico on one hand and raided and terrorized other groups on the other. Whether or not a Pueblo tribe was an ally or target could be adjusted, depending on the immediacy of political desires. Given the somewhat adaptable nature of Navajo diplomatic relations, it is safe to say that they continued to use both warfare and peace as flexible tools for their benefit, depending mostly upon their most pressing needs more than a sense of allegiance. While the Spanish were gone, the Navajo treated their Pueblo neighbors as both victims and friends, depending on the given situation or necessity that the Navajos were facing.

This delicate political balance, however, was forever altered after de Vargas’s *Reconquista* of 1692. The return of the Spanish causing a shift in allegiances first in one direction, then in the opposite. Regardless of the somewhat ambivalent manner in which Navajos considered Pueblos alternately as friends or foes, it appears clear that Navajos

¹¹ Correll, *TWME*, 41-42. See also Villagr a, *History of New Mexico*, 191.

¹² Kessell, Hendricks, and Dodge, *Royal Crown*, 463.

consistently regarded the Spanish as enemies. This position was strengthened even further when the Spanish returned to the territory at the end of the seventeenth century. With the exception of only a few Pueblo villages, nearly all of the sedentary tribes of central New Mexico resisted the return of the Spanish and reacted in one of two ways: by forming a military alliance with the Navajo or by abandoning their traditional homes to live among their allies. The first course of action was common, but never achieved the success of the 1680 revolt. When de Vargas interrogated a Tewa Indian in November 1693, for example, he admitted that most of his people “had gathered opposite the two small hills at the abandoned pueblo of La Cieneguilla with most of the Keres from Cochiti. They also brought with them the Rio Colorado Apaches and the Apaches from the province and district of the Navajos to help them fight against my company and me, the governor and captain general, until we were all dead.” This coalition incited other tribes to join them.¹³ This recorded episode was not the only instance of a second revolt that included Navajo involvement. The largest—and last—attempted general Indian rebellion against the *reconquista* occurred in June 1696, at Jemez Pueblo with the help of Navajos, Acomas, Zuñis, and Hopis.¹⁴ De Vargas’s journal stated that the Navajos had killed the majority of the victims by making them take cover in a church, sealing all exits, and then burning the building. Those inside died of asphyxiation.¹⁵ All told, the Indians killed five missionaries and twenty-one other Spaniards, but they were pursued and defeated at the battle of San Diego Canyon, where over two thousand Indian warriors were

¹³ Kessell, Hendricks, and Dodge, *Royal Crown*, 432.

¹⁴ John L. Kessell, Rick Hendricks, and Meredith D. Dodge, eds., *Blood on the Boulders: The Journals of don Diego de Vargas, New Mexico, 1694-97* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 798-802.

¹⁵ Kessell, Hendricks, and Dodge, *Blood on the Boulders*, 966.

slaughtered.¹⁶ Those who survived fled to Navajo country to escape the punishment of the provoked Spaniards.¹⁷

While involvement in political alliances and military actions with the Pueblo Indians affected Navajo life, it did so only slightly. The large-scale exodus of Pueblos to Navajo country, however, had an even greater and longer-lasting impact on Navajo life, culture, and policy. After the revolt of 1696 failed to rid New Mexico of the Spanish invaders, many Pueblo Indians decided to leave their villages and live in Dinétah; the Navajo welcomed their guests, and what followed was a brief period of cultural intermingling that proved fundamental to Navajo history and society.¹⁸ The Pueblo families brought not only their labor, but their religion and culture as well. Navajos began imitating Pueblo polychrome pottery and other forms of art. Religious symbols, masks, and ceremonies mixed and were adapted, forming hybrid rites shared by the two native peoples. And although the Revolt of 1680 had advocated the rejection of all things Spanish, the Pueblo had incorporated many European technologies, tools, and animals into their society, which they brought with them to Dinétah, the most important being their livestock.¹⁹

Livestock, Raiding, and Navajo Culture

In order to understand the importance of the Pueblo diaspora and the subsequent development of large-scale Navajo raiding, we must step aside from the narrative for a moment

¹⁶ Correll, *TWME*, 43.

¹⁷ Kessell, Hendricks, and Dodge, *Blood on the Boulders*, 842, 957, 1003, 1059, 1064, 1103.

¹⁸ Frank McNitt, *Navajo Wars*, 19.

¹⁹ An insightful discussion of the how much interchange occurred before, during, and after the Pueblo diaspora is contained in Marsha Weisiger, *Dreaming of Sheep in Navajo Country* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011): 289-290, n. 35.

and consider the impact that livestock and certain Spanish/Pueblo technologies would have on Navajos in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. More important than any other thing that the Spanish brought with them to New Mexico was the practice of animal husbandry, introducing domesticated animals to the New Mexico territory by the end of the sixteenth century. Coronado had brought horses, sheep, and cattle along with his expedition in 1540, but since the expedition made no permanent settlements, Spanish livestock did not have a home in New Mexico until Oñate returned in 1598.²⁰ Since the Spanish were willing to include native peoples into their New World empire—provided they assimilated into Spanish culture and Catholic religion—the practice of animal husbandry was quickly introduced and adopted by the natives of the territory. In fact, the Royal Orders for New Discoveries of 1573 declared that Indians who swore obedience to Spain and accepted Catholic missionaries were to be taught how to live in a “civilized manner,” which included being given “the use of bread and wine and oil and many other essential of life—bread, silk, linen, horses, cattle, tools, and weapons, and all the rest that Spain has had.” They were also to be instructed in these trades and skills so that they “might live richly.”²¹ Though the Spanish Crown only specified horses and cattle on this list (and both would play a large role in Navajo culture in the years to come), the animal that had the biggest impact on Navajo life was sheep. Though the Navajo probably were not taught the art of sheep herding by the Spanish, since conversion efforts were by and large unsuccessful, the Navajo nevertheless obtained the animals in their own way, fundamentally changing their culture, economy, and social structure, along with being the major influence on the dramatic increase of Navajo raiding.

²⁰ For an excellent survey history of the sheep industry in Spanish/Mexican New Mexico, see John O. Baxter, *Las Carneradas: Sheep Trade in New Mexico, 1700-1860* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987).

²¹ The Royal Orders for New Discoveries of 1573 is quoted in Weber, *The Spanish Frontier* 106.

Sources remain unclear on how the Navajo originally obtained sheep from the Spanish. Anthropologist Edward Spicer has conjectured that the Navajo adopted sheep herding only after the Pueblo Revolt of 1680. It was during this time of cultural mingling and inter-tribal amity, Spicer argues, that Navajos first adopted sheep cultivation.²² Anthropologist James F. Downs, however, has shown that the Spanish had taken Navajo captives before the Revolt of 1680, and that many of these slaves subsequently escaped Spanish captivity; he argues that it was from these fugitives that Navajo were introduced to the animals.²³ More likely, though, is that the Navajo had obtained sheep long before either of these events by their own manner (raiding) and taught themselves the methods of husbandry.²⁴ An anonymous Jesuit priest wrote in 1764 that sheep were taken from the very first Spanish expedition into the territory, under Coronado in 1540. He assumed that the stolen livestock was the origin of the “immense flocks of sheep at present possessed by the . . . Navajoes,” and the course of two hundred years “served greatly to multiply the species; and every year has probably only further convinced them of the importance and value of this animal, which is easily raised, in supplying them with sustenance.”²⁵ The priest went on to say that the Navajo learned to care for and utilize the products of their herds not by the Spanish method, but by “a peculiar application of their native

²² Edward H. Spicer, *Cycles of Conquest: The Impact of Spain, Mexico, and the United States on the Indians of the Southwest, 1533-1960* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1962), 211-212.

²³ James F. Downs, *Animal Husbandry in Navajo Society and Culture* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1964), 43n.

²⁴ Navajo raiders were stealing large numbers of sheep even before the Revolt of 1680. Governor Juan de Medrano Messia wrote in 1669 that Navajos had “made a bold attack on the pueblo of Acoma, killing 12 persons...taking several captives, and seizing 800 sheep and goats, as well as horses and cattle.” Medrano quoted in Correll, *TWME*, 38.

²⁵ Report of Jesuit priest published in Henry R. Schoolcraft, *Historical and Statistical Information*, 3: 309.

ingenuity.”²⁶ This assumption seems correct, since Oñate recorded in a letter to the viceroy in 1599 that the Querechos living near his settlement were already regarded as “herdsmen.”²⁷

Although copious records exist documenting the theft of sheep from Spanish and Pueblo villages during Navajo raids prior to the Revolt of 1680, archaeological evidence suggests that while Navajos certainly stole livestock during their forays, the animals were generally taken for immediate consumption. Though small flocks may have been kept by small numbers of Navajos, overall, the art of husbandry was not practiced in Dinétah until after the Pueblo diaspora of the 1690s. Already aware of the dietary potential of this valuable animal, the Pueblo refugees also taught the Navajos how to increase their flocks, how to tend them, and, just as important, how to weave its wool into warm, decorative, and useful blankets and clothing.²⁸ Still, there remains no certainty of how much of these methods the Navajo learned from cultural intermingling, intermarriage, or captivity, or precisely when the Navajo adopted them.

While it remains difficult to ascertain from historical evidence precisely when and how the Navajo adopted sheep herds, the Navajo themselves have their own explanation about how sheep became a part of their society. Like the geography of Dinétah and the wild game that lived on it, sheep were created for the use of the Navajo by the Holy People and had always been part of Navajo society since the creation. The Sacred Mountains themselves were prepared by the Holy People with sheep and other domesticated animals.²⁹ In an interview with

²⁶ Schoolcraft, *Indian Tribes of the United States*, 3: 309.

²⁷ Bolton, *Spanish Exploration*, 217. Again, the term Querecho could mean any number of tribes, but since Navajos were the only ones to fully develop large-scale herding, it is most likely that Oñate was describing them rather than Apaches or Comanches. Fray Alonso de Benavides, for example, remarked in 1629 that the Apache tribes sustained themselves “solely by hunting,” but that in many other ways were similar to the Navajo. The difference between them, then, was the fact that Navajos had diversified their production between farming, hunting, and herding. After all, Benavides said, “Navajo means ‘big planted fields.’” (Baker H. Morrow, *A Harvest of Reluctant Souls*, 62).

²⁸ McNitt, *Navajo Wars*, 19.

²⁹ Young and Morgan, *Navajo Historical Selections*, 16.

Ádahooniłígíí, the Navajo language newspaper that was operated by the Navajo agency in the 1940s-50s, one Navajo man related that “since time immemorial our grandfathers and our grandmothers have lived from their herds.” Sheep and horses, he remembered, were just as eternal and constant to the Navajo as the “the world and the sky and the male and female mountains.” To this elder, and to many other Navajos like him, sheep were “the high-lights of creation,” and were essential to Diné life, the fate of mankind connected to the fate of their livestock: “With our sheep we were created, and that is why we weep and mourn [when they are killed] . . . We were told that . . . we would live on these things.”³⁰ Once again, Navajo creation beliefs made spiritual attachments to all aspects of life, both animal and human.

Though the physical evidence points to Navajo sheep cultivation beginning in the seventeenth century, traditional Navajo stories help explain the spiritual connectivity between the Navajo people and their environment, in addition to shedding light on how social or cultural changes could be adapted into Navajo conceptions of themselves in their past, along with how they accommodated those changes into their historical narrative. In other words, the pre-reservation Navajo were able to maintain their spiritual worldview by placing new things into old contexts. Using spiritual stories to explain new discoveries allowed the Navajo to retroactively insert new assets (like sheep or horses) into the pre-established religious and cultural consciousness of the Diné.

Over the years, sheep came to define the Navajo people, their culture, their industry, their economy, and their political society, mostly because the animals were so useful. They also became the prime impetus for the large-scale and widespread raiding practices that characterized Navajo life in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. First of all, as the

³⁰ Young and Morgan, *Navajo Historical Selections*, 62.

anonymous Jesuit priest pointed out, sheep were a source of food. Though the Navajo had subsisted for hundreds of years on hunting, gathering, and small-scale farming, the introduction of sheep provided a stable source of sustenance that naturally increased and allowed for a protein-rich diet to which the Navajo were already accustomed without their having to spend so much time on the hunt. The churro sheep—disparaged in its home country of Spain for being small and coarse-haired—was the most popular breed in New Mexico, praised for its hardiness. The ovine equivalent of Texas Longhorn cattle, the churro was able to graze on the rough forage available in semi-arid New Mexico and subsist on morning dew or moist plants when water was scarce, a common occurrence in the region where the Navajo dwelt. The churro’s skimpy fleece, though not suited for the large-scale textile manufacturing in Europe, was particularly suited for the hand processing of Navajo weavers. But most of all, the churro’s mutton was regarded as a delicacy.³¹ Josiah Gregg, an American merchant who operated in the Santa Fe trade in the 1830s, called the churro “justly celebrated,” having a “particularly delicious flavor.”³² When American soldiers came to Dinétah in 1846 to seek a peace treaty with the Navajo, they were given mutton by their hosts, the food most readily available.³³ Additionally, sheep were transportable, which proved useful for the semi-nomadic lifestyle practiced by the Navajo. Sheep were a movable meal, which came in handy because they could be easily removed from a village through raiding, unlike agricultural foodstuffs. When a Navajo encampment was attacked by Spaniards or other Indians, it was common for the attackers to burn the Navajo *milpas* (corn fields) to destroy their sustenance.³⁴ While crops

³¹ Baxter, *Las Carneradas*, 20.

³² Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, 1: 190.

³³ Jacob Robinson, *A Journal of the Santa Fe Expedition Under Colonel Doniphan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1932), 43.

³⁴ Correll, *TWME*, 39. See also Reeve, “Seventeenth-Century Navaho-Spanish Relations,” 49-50.

could not be defended during a raid, sheep could at least be removed. If Navajo shepherds became aware soon enough, they could retreat from the fighting with their animals and preserve at least some of their flocks.³⁵

As noted above, Navajos valued the versatility of sheep, particularly for their wool, which the tribe wove into intricate blankets and clothing that were highly renowned in the territory and became a popular trade item. Gregg remarked that the Navajo blanket was “so close and dense a texture that it will frequently hold water . . . some of the finer qualities are often sold among the Mexicans as high as fifty or sixty dollars each.”³⁶ So popular were these blankets that many American soldiers who occupied New Mexico during the Mexican-American War traded their army issue blankets for Navajo ones.³⁷ As with other tribes of the American West, trade was a fundamental feature of the Navajo economy, and the wool produced from their herds provided the material necessary for the manufacture of their signature product. Not only that, Navajo blankets became so popular in the region by the nineteenth century that it was nearly a form of currency. Sheep, then, could be considered the investments of each Navajo family that provided their income. Additionally, the introduction of sheep seems to have altered Navajo clothing. Whereas before Navajo men and women simply wore animal skins about their loins, the acquisition of wool and the development of weaving led to wool blankets being worn as clothing.³⁸ Whether used or traded, either internally or externally, the Navajo economy became increasingly dependent on sheep and wool.

³⁵ Weisiger, *Dreaming of Sheep*, 113. Weisiger points out that this was a double-edged sword. True, sheep provided mobile nutrition that could flee along with their shepherds, but they also attracted more raiders, just like they did the Navajo.

³⁶ Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, 1: 286.

³⁷ William Richardson, *Journal of William H. Richardson: A Private Soldier in the Campaign of New and Old Mexico Under the Command of Colonel Doniphan of Missouri* (Baltimore: John W. Woods, 1848), 40.

³⁸ James H. Simpson, *Journal of a Military Reconnaissance from Santa Fe, New Mexico, to the Navajo Country* (Philadelphia: Lippencott, Grambo, and Co., 1852), 62.

The dependence on sheep also sparked the emergence of large-scale and widespread Navajo raiding. It is no accident that increasing dependence on sheep and escalating occurrences of raids developed simultaneously. The number needed to operate a society that is dependent on the animals is enormous, necessitating a ratio of humans to sheep of about 1:50, or about 400 sheep per Navajo family.³⁹ Though the Navajo were not entirely dependent on sheep and still utilized simple agricultural practices, sheep had become their main source of sustenance and wealth. As the Navajo population rose, it needed more and more sheep to support its growth, and natural increase was not sufficient. They would have to augment their herds with the stolen property of others.

And they did. Navajo herds went from numbering in the hundreds in the late eighteenth century to numbering in the hundreds of thousands by the nineteenth. Pedro Garrido y Duran, governor of Sonora y Sinaloa, estimated Navajo sheep to number only seven hundred in 1786.⁴⁰ However, Charles Bent, first territorial governor of the newly American-occupied New Mexico, estimated that Navajo sheep totaled more than 500,000 by 1846 (along with 30,000 head of cattle and 10,000 head of horses, mules, and asses).⁴¹ Though these numbers may be slightly exaggerated, the more modest estimates still put Navajo sheep above the 200,000 mark.⁴² This massive increase of sheep population was not a product of natural increase. It was the direct result of an astonishing rise in Navajo raiding.

As sheep came to characterize the Navajo people, their culture, their industry, their economy, and their political society, they also became the prime impetus for the large-scale and

³⁹ Bailey and Bailey, *A History of the Navajos*, 20, 310.

⁴⁰ Garrido y Duran quoted in Alfred Thomas, *Forgotten Frontiers: A Study of the Spanish Indian Policy of Don Juan Bautista de Anza, Governor of New Mexico 1777-1787* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1932), 350.

⁴¹ Bent to Medill, letter contained in Calhoun, *The Official Correspondence of James S. Calhoun*, 6.

⁴² "Local Items," *Santa Fe Weekly Gazette*, December 31, 1853, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84022165/1853-12-31/ed-1/seq-2/> (accessed November 25, 2014).

widespread raiding practices that defined the Navajo during the Spanish period of New Mexico. As stated by the early explorers, the Navajo were already regarded as “warlike” by the pueblo-dwelling tribes of New Mexico, even before the presence of sheep.⁴³ But the introduction of sheep, horses, and, to a smaller extent, firearms to the territory, caused a dramatic shift that heightened their motivation to conduct raids to acquire more sheep.⁴⁴ In nearly every instance of a recorded Navajo raid, domestic animals were taken from the *nuevomexicano* victims. As early as the 1630s, the Navajo launched attacks on Spanish towns and the settlements of “Christian Indians,” taking what livestock they could. Frontier friars petitioned the government in Santa Fe in 1638 for additional protection for their pueblos against the “constant Navajo attacks.” The governor in turn petitioned authorities in Mexico to send aid against the “warlike ... barbarians [who] make unexpected attacks upon them.” In the meantime, the Navajos continued raiding; sometimes the threat of attack was enough, the victims occasionally surrendering entire herds.⁴⁵ These are typical instances of typical raids, taken from a plethora of nearly identical examples between the *reconquista* and the end of the Spanish era in New Mexico. With little variation, primary sources report Navajo raids in the same way: a large number of warriors ride into a settlement, kill or capture one or two shepherds, perhaps kidnap a woman or child, and leave with as much livestock as they can handle. They rarely killed more than a few resistors (usually not killing those who did not resist). Their central purpose in these raids was to forcefully gather as much livestock as possible for their *rancherías*, to enrich

⁴³ Fray Benavides recorded in 1630 that the “Christian Indians of the Teoas (Tewa) nation,” were constantly attacked by the Apache (de Navajo), adding that they “killed people every day and waged war on them.” (Correll, *TWME*, 32).

⁴⁴ For more information on the importance of sheep in Navajo life before the Long Walk, see Lynn Bailey, *If You Take My Sheep: The Evolution and Conflicts of Navajo Pastoralism, 1630-1868* (Tucson: Westernlore Press, 1979); for more information on the Navajo and sheep post-Long Walk and how pastoralism continues to as an aspect of Navajo life, see Marsha Weisiger, *Dreaming of Sheep*, 2011.

⁴⁵ Correll, *TWME*, 32-33.

themselves and provide sustenance for their people. The raiders rarely emptied the villages of their domestic herds. In fact, as one American soldier observed in 1846, Navajo raiders took care “to leave enough stock to enable the Spaniards to make another start.” He went on to say that Navajos threatened New Mexican villagers, stating that “if it was not for the service they render them in raising stock, they would kill them all off.”⁴⁶ Charles Bent, the first American governor of the territory, likewise noted that same year that Navajo warriors exercised prudence in their violence towards the shepherds, not destroying them “because they prefer[ed] that they should continue to raise stock for them to drive off.”⁴⁷ These depredations were so frequent in some New Mexican villages that well-beaten paths had been created where the Navajo had driven off stock.⁴⁸ Theft, and not violence, then, was the object of Navajo raids, and domesticated animals were at the heart of the incursions.

Navajo theft of livestock also severely limited *nuevomexicano* ability to participate in the regional economy. Sheep were as important to *nuevomexicanos* as they were to the Navajo; they formed a significant part of their subsistence and comprised the main export of the department. Within New Mexico, sheep were a form of currency. Melquiades Antonio Ortega wrote to the editors of the *Registro Oficial* in Santa Fe in 1831, stating that within the department, “the principal commerce consists of the trading of goods for sheep,” and that the majority of the inhabitants made their living as “breeders and the stock is the common sheep.” Sheep were important in external markets as well. Ortega remarked that *nuevomexicanos* drove sheep “in herds of ten and twenty thousand head,” to Chihuahua, Durango, Zacatecas and other

⁴⁶ Marcellus Ball Edwards, *Marching with the Army of the West*, ed. Bieber, (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1936), 176.

⁴⁷ Charles Bent to James Buchanan, 15 Oct. 1846, Navajos in New Mexico Collection, 1841-1849, Special Collections Library, University of Texas at Arlington Library.

⁴⁸ Marcellus Ball Edwards, *Army of the West*, 207.

populations centers in Mexico, “to sell for cash and trading goods.” This gain of capital in turn aided in the Santa Fe trade with the United States. Even the poorer classes who did not own herds were employed in the weaving of wool. “Were it not for this,” Ortega warned, “everyone would be ruined.”⁴⁹

The sheep population reflected the importance of the animals to New Mexico residents. An 1827 estimate numbered sheep in the city of Santa Fe and the villas of Albuquerque and La Cañada (including the pueblos in their jurisdictions) at nearly a quarter of a million. The number alone suggests a large amount, but the emphasis on sheep raising in the department is even more dramatic when compared to the amount of cattle (5,000 head) and *caballada*⁵⁰ (3,000) in the same locations.⁵¹ The same author estimated the total population of New Mexico (including Indians) to be 50,000, which means that there were nearly five times as many sheep in the territory as people. Clearly sheep were important to the livelihood of *nuevomexicanos*; Melquiades Ortega was justified in claiming that “sheep make it possible for the inhabitants [of New Mexico] to live.”⁵²

If sheep were the only animals introduced by the Spanish, New Mexico society and culture still would have been fundamentally altered. However, there was one other domesticated quadruped that had a significant impact in the area, especially in regard to Navajo raiding: the horse. Historians have long recognized the importance of horses to the livelihood of Indian tribes in North America, but they traditionally focus their studies on the tribes of the

⁴⁹ Melquiades Antonio Ortega to editors of *Registro Oficial* contained in Robert A. Toash, ed. and trans., “Notes and Documents,” *New Mexico Historical Review*, XXIV (Oct. 1949), 337.

⁵⁰ The *caballada* was the all-inclusive Spanish term for all horses, mules, and donkeys.

⁵¹ “Report of the Cattle and Caballada Found in the Territory of New Mexico,” contained in H. Bailey Carroll and J. Villasana Haggard, eds. and trans., *Three New Mexico Chronicles* (Albuquerque: Quivira Society, 1942), 43.

⁵² Ortega in Toash, “Notes and Documents,” 337.

Great Plains, such as the Comanche.⁵³ Perhaps because they were semi-sedentary, or because they have been falsely historicized as submissive, the Navajos as horsemen have been frequently overlooked by historians. Nevertheless, it appears clear from written sources that Navajos enthusiastically adopted the use of horses, which greatly enhanced their raiding ability and projected their martial power over all of northern New Mexico.

Like sheep, it is possible that horses found their way into Navajo hands earlier than the historical record reveals, but it is certain that they were the objects of Navajo raids by at least the beginning of the seventeenth century. When Father Ximénez reported the besieging of San Gabriel del Yunque in 1608, he remarked that in addition to burning the buildings and fields of the pueblo and killing its inhabitants, the Navajos made off with Spanish horses; and when the citizens of San Gabriel petitioned the viceroy to allow them to abandon the settlement in 1609, they cited the theft of their sheep and horses by the Navajos as a primary reason.⁵⁴ Later, when Pueblo Indians conspired with the Navajos to overthrow the Spanish, horses acted as the currency that was given or exchanged to confirm the alliances.⁵⁵

It took no time at all for Navajos to recognize the value of the swift, domesticated animals, and they were soon regarded as the best horsemen in the territory. As described by the American volunteer soldier Jacob S. Robinson, the Navajo were “a mounted tribe, living on

⁵³ See Hämäläinen and DeLay. There is no doubt as to the central role that horses played in the lives of the more nomadic tribes of the Great Plains, such as the Comanche. In fact, an argument can be easily made that, in regard to horse culture, the transformation was far greater for these tribes than for Navajos. But notwithstanding the Navajo being semi-sedentary and practicing agriculture on a moderate scale, horses still had an enormous impact on the development of Navajo raiding. See also George P. Horse Capture and Emil Her Many Horses, eds., *A Song for the Horse Nation: Horses in Native American Cultures* (Washington D.C.: National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, 2006).

⁵⁴ Worcester, “Navaho During the Spanish Regime,” 103-104.

⁵⁵ Correll, *TWME*, 33. In other instances, horses may have broken up alliances, as in the case of the attempted coup of 1704, planned by the Hopi, Navajo, and various Pueblo peoples. As explained by Jose Manuel Espinosa: “The alliance soon exploded when some Navajos annoyed the Santa Claras by stealing a horse at that pueblo. Taken into custody, the Navajos admitted that they had made the alliance in the first place just because they wished to gain entry into the pueblos.” José Manuel Espinosa, *First Expedition of Vargas into New Mexico, 1692* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1942), 356.

their horses and by their stock.” Robinson, who traveled to Navajo territory in 1846 with Colonel Alexander Doniphan, added that the Navajos he saw “sleep in the open air, sometimes on and always among their horses.”⁵⁶ When the Americans arrived at a large encampment, the Navajos put on a show of their renowned horsemanship for their visitors. According to Robinson, a young man would startle a rabbit from the brush, which mounted riders would then pursue. “In an instant five hundred riders at least were on the chase. No fox or steeple chase can equal it; the Arab cannot excel the Navajo in horsemanship; and better horses can hardly be found . . . It was a sight unequalled in display of horsemanship; and can be seen nowhere but in the wild mountains and plains of the west.”⁵⁷ Robinson went on to say that the Navajos held other mounted competitions in the presence of their American visitors, no doubt to showcase their skills and prowess on horseback.

Many other records exist which highlight the importance of horses to this tribe, illustrating how Navajos readily adopted the horse, allowing them to better manage their sheep herds, which in turn meant that they could expand the size of their flocks (hence, more raiding). The animals also increased the efficiency and potency of those raids, and, much like the Great Plains tribes, horses allowed Navajos to travel farther and faster than before, which not only improved their efficiency, but extended their communication networks, political interactions, and trade systems. The nebulous borders of Dinétah began to swell, colliding more and more frequently with the other peoples of New Mexico, against which the Navajos acted aggressively. Taken together, the horses and sheep that were introduced by the Spanish to New Mexico transformed an already powerful people into the dominant tribe of New Mexico west of the Rio Grande.

⁵⁶ Robinson, *Santa Fe Expedition*, 50.

⁵⁷ Robinson, *Santa Fe Expedition*, 46.

War and Peace, 1696-1770

With the influence of livestock on Navajo raiding practices now well established, we can turn our attention back to the patterns of war and peace between Navajos and *nuevomexicanos* that existed for most of the eighteenth century. As already stated, Navajos initially resisted the return of the Spanish in 1692 and either enlisted the aid of other Indian tribes to try to expel the Spanish once again or welcomed the Pueblo refugees who fled from their homes to avoid being ruled by the imperial power. Many Pueblo Indians, however, stayed in their villages and accepted (or at least were compelled to accept) Spanish authority. In many ways, though, this worked to the advantage of the Pueblos. Although Spanish presence betokened restrictions and alterations of native life (particularly religion), it also offered additional security. As mentioned previously, relations between the Pueblos and Navajos could be rather capricious, the latter viewing the former opportunistically as either allies or targets. And while forming bonds with the Spanish almost certainly amplified the likelihood of Navajo aggression, the Pueblos would at least have the protection of Spanish soldiers, weapons, and resources.

Additionally, the Spanish had learned from the debacle of 1680 and were intent on improving their relationships with the indigenous inhabitants. One of the primary reasons for the first revolt revolved around the harsh labor and tribute requirements of the *encomienda* system that was employed in New Mexico, as it was throughout much of the Spanish empire in the Americas. *Encomiendas* were present in New Mexico from the beginning of colonization, requested by Oñate as early as 1595, but they did not seem to function as well in the far north

as in other areas of New Spain.⁵⁸ Father Andrés Pérez, writing from Sinaloa in 1638, explained that “the Indians who are so new to the faith,” in New Mexico exceeded, “all the people who have ever been discovered in the world in the matter of great and extreme poverty.” He concluded that it was “almost impossible for them to pay tribute, and the imposition and execution of it at present . . . exposed [them] to great dangers and inconveniences and to greater losses than gains.”⁵⁹ Still, for the sake of personal gain and glory, the *encomienda* persisted and *encomenderos* abused their grant of souls, which eventually led to the Revolt of 1680.⁶⁰ But by the time Governor de Vargas returned to the territory in the 1690s, the Spanish had learned from their mistakes and did not revitalize the labor/tribute system in New Mexico. De Vargas himself was the only Spaniard to be granted an *encomienda* after the *Reconquista*, and even he did not utilize it to exact labor and tribute from the Pueblos, dissolving it instead into cash annuities for his descendants.⁶¹

Though the Spanish still exhorted the Pueblos to convert (or in the case of those already baptized, continue attending services and receiving instruction), their methods were less intrusive than before. They also allowed the Pueblos to live semi-autonomously, in their own villages, with their own leaders.⁶² Interestingly, the tactful (albeit limited) tolerance of Indian traditions actually furthered the integration of Pueblo Indians into Spanish society. More Indians willingly converted to Christianity and took an active part in the colonial system, and as

⁵⁸ Lansing B. Bloom, “The Vargas Encomienda,” *New Mexico Historical Review* 14 (1939): 367.

⁵⁹ Hackett, *Historical Documents*, 101.

⁶⁰ Hackett, *Historical Documents*, 250-252.

⁶¹ Kessell, Hendricks, and Dodge, *Royal Crown*, 30, n61.

⁶² De Vargas’s methods reflected the philosophy of the side-by-side kingdoms (a *república de indios* and a *república de españoles*) that were to exist in all the Spanish colonies. As has been argued elsewhere, this bifurcated system of government and society did not play out in reality as it did in theory. See Douglas Cope, *The Limits of Racial Domination: Plebian Society in Colonial Mexico City, 1660-1720* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994). In New Mexico—where the populations were much smaller, where nearly all inhabitants (Spanish and indigenous) were born and raised in the province, and the population was substantially *mestizo*—the separation of Spanish and Indian life was even farther from the reality.

time passed, the Pueblos moved more and more profoundly into the Spanish realm. They learned and spoke Spanish in the public arena and participated in the Catholic religion. Likewise, Spanish colonists intermarried with the Pueblos and adopted aspects of the native culture and society, and the two cultures gradually began to merge. For all intents and purposes, the Pueblo had become *nuevomexicanos*.

For that reason, they were even bigger targets of the Navajos, who continued resisting all aspects of Spanish life and exploiting the resources of *nuevomexicanos*, Indian and Hispanic alike. And although some Pueblo Indians still absconded to Navajo country, the rate of the exodus slowed considerably by the end of the 1690s. As stated by *fiscal* Baltasar de Tovar in 1697, Spanish officials worried less about their charges fleeing because the Navajos' "haughtiness and arrogance is such that they will treat them like slaves, and [the Pueblos] will not stay with them for long." Besides, Tovar reasoned, it would "be easier for the apostates to save themselves by being with [the Navajos] and keeping the war at a distance than by waging it in the interior of the kingdom."⁶³

Tovar was only half-right. He was probably correct in assuming that it would be easier to allow the supposed few to depart into Navajo country, but he was greatly mistaken that the "war" would be waged far from the Spanish settlements. For the next thirty years, Navajos and *nuevomexicanos* were engaged in a near-constant struggle, a pattern of raids and counter-raids that kept New Mexico in a state of violent turmoil. When Don Francisco Cuervo y Valdés took over the governorship in March 1705, the settlements were reported to be "greatly harassed by the continual invasions made into them by the heathen enemy Indians of the Apache [Navajo] nation, who killed many of their people and robbed them of their scant stores, falling upon

⁶³ Kessell, Hendricks, and Dodge, *Blood on the Boulders*, 930-931.

them by surprise and subjecting them to constant danger.”⁶⁴ Intent to punish the recalcitrant Navajos, Cuervo y Valdés sent a volunteer force under the command of Roque de Madrid to “make war by fire and sword on the Apache Navajo enemy nation.”⁶⁵ After several weeks of burning *milpas*, capturing slaves, and killing as many Navajos as possible (Madrid estimated between forty or fifty), delegations of Navajos asked for a truce and promised to no longer raid Spanish settlements.⁶⁶ Madrid accepted the offers of peace, but was eager to return to Santa Fe to refit his army and return to the Navajo territory shortly, expecting that “in the meantime, the enemy may drop the vigilance which it presently maintains. Then, if at that time they do not go aground groveling, asking to make peace . . . we could make war on them again with greater advantages than at present.”⁶⁷ Madrid received his desire, attacking the Navajo settlements only two months later, burning corn, destroying hogans, taking captives, and bringing home skins, baskets, horses, and sheep. Navajo headmen sued for peace once more, promising good conduct.⁶⁸ The sincerity was real, at least at that moment. Navajo leaders arrived in Santa Fe several months later to reach a lasting peace agreement with the Spanish authorities, bringing with them a large painted cross as a peace offering and swearing to refrain from raiding *nuevomexicanos* in the future.⁶⁹

An arrangement was made, but peace was fleeting. By January 1708, Navajos were again raiding *nuevomexicano* settlements up and down the Rio Grande. *Nuevomexicanos* launched retaliatory raids in turn, and the cycle repeated. Since the process recurred in much the same way, not all of the raids will be recounted here, but suffice it to say that Navajos and

⁶⁴ Hackett, *Historical Documents*, 367.

⁶⁵ Rick Hendricks and John P. Wilson, eds. and trans., *The Navajos in 1705: Roque Madrid's Campaign Journal* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 13.

⁶⁶ Correll, *TWME*, 48.

⁶⁷ Hendricks and Wilson, *Navajos in 1705*, 35.

⁶⁸ Frank D. Reeve, “Navaho-Spanish Wars, 1680-1720,” *New Mexico Historical Review* 33 (1958): 222.

⁶⁹ Correll, *TWME*, 49.

nuevomexicanos alike used violence, theft, and slavery (along with punctuated promises of peace and reciprocal good conduct) to advance their political, social, and cultural objectives in a power struggle over New Mexico—where two cultures and worldviews competed for a single territory that was free from the interference of the other—until 1720, when a peace arrangement was made that lasted for half a century.⁷⁰

The nature of the peace between Navajos and *nuevomexicanos* in the mid-eighteenth century was more utilitarian than humane. Navajos still regarded their neighbors to the southeast as enemies—and *nuevomexicanos* generally mirrored that sentiment—but necessity required a truce. The war had taken a substantial toll on both parties. Judging by the reports of Spanish expeditions against the Navajos, the numbers of casualties inflicted steadily increased between 1692 and 1720.⁷¹ Additionally, it is important to remember that Navajos and *nuevomexicanos* were only two groups of a geographically broad and ethnically diverse borderlands area, and there were many others (particularly the other *indios bárbaros* of the region) who were similarly raiding, trading, allying, and negotiating with other peoples in order to enhance their social, political, and cultural objectives. Specifically, by 1720 an alliance between Comanches and Utes threatened the safety and supremacy of both the Navajos and the settlements of New Mexico. Spanish officials were able to juggle a system of appeasement

⁷⁰ Correll, *TWME*, 54.

⁷¹ Correll, *TWME*, 41-53. A researcher faces several problems when dealing with the records of Spanish military men. First, it is difficult to assess the validity of the numbers reported, since they appear to consistently and substantially favor the Spanish. In Madrid's 1705 expedition, for example, the commander reports killing fifty Navajo warriors, taking many more slaves, and destroying/capturing extensive amounts of corn and livestock, all "without losses on our part," but with "great success in everything." (See Hendricks and Wilson, *Navajos in 1705*, 35). One wonders if the plural possessive pronoun used here by Madrid includes the Indian allies who made up the bulk of his army, or if its use was restricted to the few Spanish men of the company. Either way, his numbers might have been exaggerated. While outcomes favorable to the Spanish are not difficult to imagine, absolute victories in nearly every offensive stretches the limits of believability. However, since the Navajos have no written record of these events (and because oral histories are frequently vague in regard to numbers and dates), it is the only record with which historians can rely, regardless of probable hyperbole. Still, while the numbers can be disputed, the frequent, increasing nature of the violence is certain.

alliances to their benefit and avoided a full war against these tribes, but Navajos were put under considerable pressure during this period. As referenced in the first chapter, Navajo encampments up to this point were based in the archaeologically designated Dinétah (as opposed to the cultural definition of the word), in the region of Largo Canyon and Gobernador Canyon, near the present-day Navajo Reservoir. But by the mid-eighteenth century and possibly earlier, the area had been completely abandoned by the Navajos, due to the relentless attacks of Ute warriors, and Navajos moved their *rancherías* to the south and east, putting them even closer to the Spanish and Pueblo settlements near the Rio Grande.⁷² Notwithstanding this proximity, Navajos and *nuevomexicanos* maintained their peace, due less to mutual understanding than prudent resourcefulness.

During these years, Navajos fought against Utes, Comanches, and other nomadic tribes, but traded with *nuevomexicanos*. In fact, relations had improved so much that Spanish clergymen made a direct attempt at converting the Navajos to Catholicism, and the Viceroy of New Spain authorized the establishment of missions at Encinal and Cebolleta in 1746.⁷³ Strategically placed between Mt. Taylor (the traditional southern boundary mountain of Dinétah) and the Acoma and Laguna Pueblos, these missions were the first attempt by Catholic authorities to extend voluntary conversion to the Navajo people in the two hundred years that the religion was present in New Mexico.⁷⁴ According to the initial reports by the proselyting

⁷² Ronald H. Towner and Jeffrey S. Dean, "Questions and Problems in Pre-Fort Sumner Navajo Archaeology," in Towner, *Navajo Origins*, 5. See Gary Brown's essay in the same collection for an interpretation that shows Navajo migration away from Dinétah prior to 1650.

⁷³ Correll, *TWME*, 57.

⁷⁴ The coercive baptism of Navajo captives had occurred long before the establishment of the missions at Encinal and Cebolleta. Though it is likely that Navajo slaves had been involuntarily baptized during the seventeenth century, the first recorded Navajo baptisms took place immediately following Roque de Madrid's second campaign of 1705, at Zia Pueblo (See Correll, *TWME*, 48). Many other Navajos were baptized between 1705 and 1770 outside of the missions, but nearly all of them involved Navajos who were captured or sold to Spanish households and/or were children of Navajo servants who had grown up away from the Navajo homeland. For an

leader Fray Carlos Delgado, these missions were an astounding success. The friar claimed that when he and his brethren arrived at the missions, all the Navajos in the vicinity “received us with a great show of joy and gladly listened to my words,” after which the natives “thanked us . . . telling us that up to that time there had never been any one to enlighten their profound blindness.” Delgado finished his report with the joyous announcement that “all became Christians.”⁷⁵

Whether or not the entirety of the congregation converted to Catholicism, the missions seemed to be a success. As recorded in later documents, however, the interest expressed by this group of Navajos may not have been as sincere as initially believed. After several years of apparently smooth operation, the Encinal and Cebolleta missions were disbanded after the Navajos had driven off the missionaries. Don Antonio Bernardo de Bustamante y Tagle, lieutenant-governor of New Mexico, recorded that while the Navajos had agreed to not molest the Spanish settlements or the clergymen in the area, “they did not want pueblos now nor did they desire to be Christians, nor had they ever asked for the fathers.” When he asked the Navajos why they did not agree to be missionized, they responded that they “were grown up, and could not become Christians or stay in one place because they had been raised like deer.” They had indeed consented to “give some of their children to have the water thrown upon them,” but “they themselves would live as they had always lived.” Though these Navajos did in fact allow many of their children to be baptized, they did not see the sacrament as binding as did the Catholic representatives. In fact, Bustamante y Tagle reported, in order to entice

extensive and well-crafted discussion of this topic, see David Brugge, *Navajos in the Catholic Church Records of New Mexico, 1694-1875* (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press, 2010), 41-156.

⁷⁵ Hackett, *Historical Documents*, 392. In a later letter, Delgado claimed that over five thousand Navajos had been baptized (Hackett, *Historical Documents*, 413). This is another case of exaggeration, since it is possible that all of the Navajo people generally did not amount to that number. Regardless of the inflated numbers, the most important thing to note is that there was indeed initial success at these first, if short-lived, Navajo missions. See also Correll, *TWME*, 56.

baptisms, one of the mission friars had “given hoes and picks as payment to those who brought their children to be baptized, but they had never told him that would consent to live in a pueblo.” He also had pledged to “send them mares, mules, horses, cows, clothing, and many sheep” in exchange for “bringing their children to be baptized.”⁷⁶ In the end, though, the friar was unable to keep his promises and was subsequently chased out of the region for not delivering his end of the purchased conversions. The missions were officially abandoned and direct conversion attempts ceased. As Governor Pedro Fermín de Mendinueta lamented in 1773, “there is no hope of attracting the Navajos back to the tranquil magnificence of our Catholic religion on account of their wild disposition which differs little from the fierce beasts.”⁷⁷

Though in a religious sense the Navajo missions were ultimately a failure for the Spanish, political and military harmony remained intact, due mostly to continued Ute raiding of Navajo camps, while the Spanish were preoccupied with the Comanche threat elsewhere in the province.⁷⁸ Many Navajos continued trading with *nuevomexicanos* at Cebolleta, participating in Spanish society in nearly every regard other than religious life. Meanwhile, Spanish authorities authorized land grants in closer proximity to Navajo country, with full cooperation from the Navajos involved.⁷⁹ However, as the Encinal and Cebolleta missions indicate, Navajos were still unwilling to commit themselves to Spanish lifestyle and culture. Their indigenous worldview remained as strong as ever, and *nuevomexicanos* were nothing more than allies of convenience, much like the Acoma, Jemez, and Laguna Pueblos in the late seventeenth century

⁷⁶ Hackett, *Historical Documents*, 433-434.

⁷⁷ Pedro Fermín de Mendinueta, *Indian and Mission Affairs in New Mexico, 1773*, ed. and trans. Marc Simmons (Santa Fe: Stagecoach Press, 1965), 19.

⁷⁸ Alfred Barnaby Thomas, *The Plains Indians and New Mexico, 1751-1778: A Collection of Documents Illustrative of the History of the Eastern Frontier of New Mexico*. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1940), 117, 138.

⁷⁹ Jenkins and Minge, *Navajo Activities*, 4-7.

(whom, it will be recalled, were occasionally raided by their Navajo allies). This pattern should have served as a foreshadowing for the Spanish, because when conditions improved for the Navajos, when relations with the Utes stabilized, Navajo raiders again targeted the livestock and fields of *nuevomexicanos*.

The settlements hardest hit by the reemergence of Navajo raids were those closest to Navajo country: the Pueblos of Laguna, Acoma, and Zuñi, the Hopi to the west, and the new Spanish settlements near Cebolleta, including the recent land grants authorized in the 1750s and 1760s.⁸⁰ The methods and motivations of Navajo raiders seemed to undergo no changes during the fifty-year truce. Livestock was still the primary target (particularly sheep), though women and children also were taken captive. Attacks were deliberately quick, designed to endure minimal risk and incur little resistance, and kept to a small scale. For example, in November 1774, Navajos raiders abducted a small boy from the Zia Pueblo, and then returned in December to take thirteen sheep.⁸¹ Spanish authorities responded with retaliatory raids, killing several Navajos and taking others prisoner, but the violence kept happening, growing more frequent and of a bigger scale fairly quickly.⁸² By the beginning of the nineteenth century, nine hundred or even a thousand Navajos participated in individual attacks on *nuevomexicano* settlements, to which the Spanish governor then authorized “all the actions . . . to continue the castigation of this recalcitrant Navajo faction, preventing it from having any of its wishes

⁸⁰ In nearly all Spanish records at the time, the Hopi are referred to as “Moqui.” While I will keep the term “Moqui” in direct quotations from the sources, I use the present-day name in my own narrative. For all intents and purposes, though, they are equivalent terms.

⁸¹ Frank D. Reeve, “Navaho-Spanish Diplomacy, 1770-1790,” *New Mexico Historical Review* 35 (July 1960): 207.

⁸² Jenkins and Minge, *Navajo Activities*, 8. In response to this particular Spanish expedition, Navajos attacked Laguna Pueblo, killed four inhabitants, captured two, and then killed “a number of sheep.” This raid stands out as an anomaly in that it is the only instance I have found where Navajos destroyed, rather than abducted, the livestock of their victims. *Ibid.*

considered until such a time as they will have been well punished and they ask for peace upon the just conditions which it will require.”⁸³

With the official policy of the Spanish government now the total conquest of the Navajo people, all hopes of lasting peace were set aside, and warfare between Navajos and *nuevomexicanos* raged until 1821, when Mexico’s war for independence ended Spanish authority in New Mexico. Though there are many colorful anecdotes during this half-century of violence, a step-by-step retelling of them would be rather monotonous. Instead, a look at how both parties viewed raiding (and how it connected to the more nebulous concepts of law, power, supremacy, and sovereignty) will give a more insightful look into how Navajo raiding shaped and defined not only the Navajo people themselves, but the territory of New Mexico generally.

⁸³ Jenkins and Minge, *Navajo Activities*, 20.

CHAPTER 3

The Cultural Implications of Raiding for Navajo Society

To this point, we have covered the immediate incentive that livestock provided for Navajo raiders, but there are many other social and cultural elements that were directly involved with the practice of raiding. These motivations varied, and the justifications by which Navajo warriors conducted their thievery were more complicated than it might seem on the surface. As stated above, Navajo society was dependent on their sheep herds, both for sustenance and for economic prosperity. But sheep and horses also became symbols of power for Navajo families. Since the Navajo did not have an aristocracy or a central government like Western nations, a family's ability to gain social standing was measured largely through the acquisition of more livestock. Wealth was measured in sheep. The bigger the herd, the more social clout a Navajo family could wield.

One of the advantages of being considered “rich” in Navajo society was the loyalty offered by fellow Navajos. For example, when Major E. Backus responded to Henry Schoolcraft's inquiry about the tribe in 1853, he stated that Navajo society consisted of many rich men, whose wealth “consist[ed] mainly of horses and sheep.” Because such large herds needed many shepherds, he said, the “rich men” took on a paternal role for those who worked for them. “Hence,” said Backus, “every rich man has many dependants, and these dependants are obedient to his will, in peace and in war.”¹ These dependents were viewed as kin, as U.S.

¹ Schoolcraft, *Historical and Statistical Information*, 4: 211. Records regarding the components of Navajo social life and hierarchy are rare during the Spanish period. While I have sought to maintain as little of a gap as possible

army surgeon P.G.S. Ten Broeck stated, saying that “each wealthy man has his own band of retainers and servants, who are called his family.”² Thus, the acquisition of sheep meant prosperity for a Navajo family, along with an increase in social standing that made the warrior an important man in the eyes of his clan, who were dependent on his livestock, which was increased through raiding.

Since the possession of sheep and other livestock represented wealth in Navajo society, raiding was a means to possess and exert power. Major Backus remarked that “every rich Navajoe may be considered the chief of his clan,” which was for the most part true.³ Though headmen were chosen by the people of a clan in a fairly egalitarian manner, those elected were nearly always rich. W. W. H. Davis reported after an expedition into Navajo country in 1855 that “there are a few rich families in the tribe, who form the aristocracy, and possess a little additional influence,” over the affairs of the tribe.⁴ Despite Davis’s Western-inspired term for the social hierarchy, he was not mistaken about the authority of warriors who were famously powerful and wealthy. Indeed, one need look no further for an example of how a rich warrior could influence his clan than the life and career of Chief Sandoval, leader of the Diné Ana'aii that lived near Cebolleta. Meaning “Enemy Navajo,” the Diné Ana'aii were a clan of Navajo that had broken away from the rest of the tribe in the late eighteenth century, and who had frequently been friendly with and offered help to the Spanish and Mexicans in fighting against

between sources and events, the scarcity of records during this time (especially on the subject of the components of Navajo society) has necessitated that I use several sources beyond the date range of this work, such as this report. Though it was written thirty years after the end of this chapter, it still offers a useful analysis, as Navajo society had not undergone significant changes in those years. Throughout this section, I have chosen to cite events and writers beyond the Spanish period, in an effort to give the reader a full understanding of raiding culture in Navajo society. I have endeavored to stay as chronologically close as possible to the Spanish period, and in no instance have I used sources beyond the Long Walk (1863).

² Schoolcraft, *Historical and Statistical Information*, 4: 89.

³ Schoolcraft, *Historical and Statistical Information*, 4: 211.

⁴ W.H.H. Davis, *El Gringo; or, New Mexico and Her People* (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1857), 237.

the main Navajo tribe.⁵ Sandoval was the chief of this band of Navajo in the 1830s-50s. He was also famously wealthy. When Sandoval offered his services to the American troops who were sent to make a peace treaty with the Navajo, he led them to his home, where one American soldier recorded in amazement how rich Sandoval was.⁶ He obtained wealth from *nuevomexicanos* and Indians alike, and his power over his tribe was evidence of his prosperity. He shrewdly garnered more wealth (and power) by seeking Spanish approval of his raids against his own people, like when he suggested to Governor Manuel Armijo that warriors in his band be integrated into the army so that they could raid their Navajo relatives and “be compensated for this service with the spoils and other interest that they may succeed in taking from the enemy.”⁷ Sandoval's power made him an important diplomat between the Navajo and their white enemies for many years, and he was present at most of the treaty signings between the two powers. His utility was matched only by his wealth, which gave him power in his own band, where he remained at the head for an abnormally long amount of time. Headmen typically only remained in their positions as long as they were favorable to the rest of the band. Of course, favor (or power) was maintained when wealth was accumulated and dependents were acquired, which is why Sandoval was able to remain the headman of his group for nearly thirty years, his personality affecting the identity of his people. In fact, during his life and for decades after, the Diné Ana'ii of Cebolleta were referred to by whites simply as “Sandoval's band.”⁸

⁵ For a detailed history of the Diné Ana'ii, see McNitt, *Navajo Wars*, 26-51.

⁶ Private Jacob Robertson remarked, “Sandeval...is a rich Navajo. He has 5,000 sheep, and 100 horses. His situation is one of the most beautiful...A view of the green grass and the fine trees, with his beautiful fields of corn and wheat, make one almost forget that it is the abode of an untutored Indian,” in Jacob Robinson, *Journal of the Santa Fe Expedition*, 56.

⁷ Governor's Letterbook, April 28, 1846, Navajos in New Mexico Collection, 1841-1849, Special Collections Library, University of Texas at Arlington Library.

⁸ McNitt, *Navajo Wars*, 363.

Livestock, then, was sought not only for its usefulness, but for the social and political influence it offered, which led many young Navajos to use raiding as a means of social advancement. But raiding not only consolidated power for individual Navajo families within their own society, it also exerted external power over other peoples. The Navajo spiritual connection to their homeland, as expressed in their creation stories, asserted their primacy to the land and its resources. This connection had two impacts on Navajo raiding. First, because the land was given to them by spiritual beings, as were livestock, to be used by the Diné, their raids were justified means by which they enjoyed the property given to them by the Holy People. Violent theft was legitimized because the commodities themselves (food, livestock, slaves) were supposed to be enjoyed by The People, which allowed them to be forcefully taken. Second, their spiritual sense of place gave them a right not only to defend Dinétah, but to extend their power beyond it. By raiding communities that surrounded their homeland, they weakened the resources, infrastructure, manpower, and resolve of those communities. Whether they were enemies or not, keeping their neighbors in a constant state of fear, along with maintaining a continuous drain on their resources, would keep them out of their sacred homeland and in a position of perpetual subordination. That is probably a reason that so many of the Navajo raids occurred beyond Dinétah itself. Though some raids occurred in Navajo country when Mexican and American shepherders let their animals graze in Navajo space, most took place in the communities outside of Navajo country.⁹ Some even extended far outside of the territory. One Navajo raid went so far as to steal cattle from the outskirts of Los

⁹ In 1858, a group of Mexican-American livestock owners entered claims to the U.S. government for wrongful losses from Indian depredations. As their attorney explained in an appeal to the Secretary of the Interior, some of their indemnities were denied on account of their livestock having been present on Indian land when they were stolen. See John S. Watts, *Indian Depredations in New Mexico* (Washington: Gideon, 1858), 13.

Angeles, California, while others went as far east as Las Vegas, New Mexico, on the edge of the Great Plains.¹⁰

Though raiding effectively projected Navajo power over New Mexico, and in some cases beyond, to suggest that the Navajo raided in a consolidated or conscious manner would be inaccurate. State power was not their conscious objective; after all, they did not really have a state. Their government was limited, shifting, and based on kinship, wealth, and personality, all of which had potential for instability. Lieutenant Colonel J.H. Eaton disparagingly remarked that their government was “mobcratic,” while W.W.H. Davis described their councils as “a tumultuous rabble, [lacking] the dignity and decorum we generally see among Indians.”¹¹ Though these sources are certainly biased (Eaton called the Navajo later in his report the “most lawless, worthless . . . most rude, least intelligent, and least civilized of all the tribes of Indians I have ever seen”), it is at least safe to say that Navajo government was loosely arranged and hardly unified. They remained organized in nomadic bands whose loyalties belonged first to themselves and their families, then their bands, then the tribe. Loyalty given to the head of a band could be withdrawn at any time, and clan leadership could be challenged when a headman failed to live up to expectations. However, the fact that nearly the entire tribe behaved so similarly without direct political supervision is a testament to how strongly ingrained raiding was in Navajo culture. It was not just a social tool; by the nineteenth century, raiding was a cultural characteristic that reinforced the Navajo reputation as warriors and projected their supremacy across New Mexico.

¹⁰ Hubert Howe Bancroft, *The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft, Vol. XX: The History of California, Vol. III: 1825-1840* (San Francisco: A.L. Bancroft Company, 1885), 359n; David J. Weber, *The Mexican Frontier, 1821-1846: The American Southwest Under Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982), 92.

¹¹ Schoolcraft, *Historical and Statistical Information*, 217; Davis, *El Gringo*, 237.

Indeed, the Spanish, Mexican, and American colonizers each in turn felt the pressure that the Navajo to the northwest put on their settlements. Governor Albino Pérez said in 1836 that “the ferocious war that the Navajos made upon [New Mexico],” led to “critical circumstances,” in the area, and Governor Manuel Armijo wrote in 1846 that “the war with the Navajos is slowly consuming the Department [of New Mexico], reducing to very obvious misery the District of the Southwest.”¹² When the Americans took over later that year, they, too, found the Navajo to be the true power in the Southwest. James S. Calhoun, Indian agent of New Mexico, anxiously wrote to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs Orlando Brown that “it is my duty to advise you, that our Indian troubles are daily increasing, and our *efficiency* as rapidly decreasing,” and goes on to list the military support needed to put a stop to Navajo advances.¹³

Navajo warriors did not seem to care who they stole from. Their targets included all peoples of New Mexico, such as the Pueblos (their former friends and allies) and other “wild tribes” of the territory (Ute, Apache, Comanche, etc., whose alliances with the Navajo constantly shifted), as well as *nuevomexicano* villages. Though New Mexico consisted of many different groups of people who vied for influence in the territory, the Navajo did not seem to notice a difference between them. That is partly because raiding was usually not inspired by hatred, but profit. Though retaliatory raids were also common, as will be discussed below, the primary purpose was still economic—and social—gain. And because the procurement of more livestock was the primary purpose, who they raided was less important than what they stole.

¹² Pérez quoted in Weber, *The Mexican Frontier*, 92; Manuel Armijo to the Prefect of the District of the Southeast, April 28, 1846. Mexican Archives of New Mexico (MANM).

¹³ Letter from Calhoun to Brown contained in Abel, *The Official Correspondence of James S. Calhoun*, 103.

In fact, the Navajo also stole from each other. Sandoval's band is an exceptional case of an entire group of Navajo fighting against the rest of their tribe, but there were many other instances of Navajo men (usually poor or young men who had not yet made a name for themselves) who stole from other Navajos. As Major Backus explained, "In addition to the clans referred to, there are many Navajoes who recognize no leader, and who live the lives of vagabonds, stealing indiscriminately, as occasion offers, from friends and foes. They are never trusted by the rich Navajoes, who are in perpetual dread of their depredations." For Backus to suggest that the headmen of the Navajo lived in fear of their own poor is only partially true. Yes, their livestock occasionally was pilfered by "vagabond" Navajos, but they allowed the minor thefts to go unpunished as a form of social stability. Curious about this judicial system, Backus asked a headman if there was any punishment for stealing among them, to which the chief replied: "Not at all. If I attempt to whip a poor man who has stolen my property, he will defend himself with his arrows, and will rob me again. If I leave him unpunished, he will only take what he requires at the time."¹⁴

The headman's statement is an insightful look into how the Navajo viewed theft. It was not considered morally wrong, at least by Western standards, for a Navajo to take what was needed, even at the expense of another. But this only applied if the raider took what he needed and nothing more. If inordinate amounts of livestock were taken, then the rich man would pursue the thief and punish him, if he could catch him. This is evinced by the wars fought between the Navajo, Utes, and Apaches, which were often started through raids of one on the others. Still, theft was deemed acceptable in Navajo culture, and they relied upon it as a method of maintaining the status quo. Possessions seem to have been more fluid in nature to the

¹⁴ Schoolcraft, *Historical and Statistical Information*, 211.

Navajo; a Navajo family had things stolen from them, and they in turn stole things when they needed them. In fact, material items were not really possessions at all, just resources used at times when needed.

This did not mean, however, that all possessions were shared equally among tribal members. Stolen goods were representative of a warrior's prowess in battle. Therefore, a warrior's spoils were his to keep and to enjoy. Poor Navajos might occasionally steal from a rich Navajo, but for the most part, rich Navajos maintained the livestock that made them rich as a symbol of their raiding ability. It was also a method by which Navajo men could express their masculinity. While attending a peace council with the Navajo in 1855, W.W.H. Davis recorded that “they consider theft one of the greatest human virtues, and no one is thought to be at all accomplished unless he can steal with adroitness.”¹⁵ Though somewhat speculative, this statement seems to have been true. Success in raiding and war was a measure of manhood in Navajo society, which is another contributing factor to why rich Navajos held leadership positions in their bands. Anthropologist Gladys Reichard recorded that starting at a young age, Navajo boys “had to be trained for activities which took him away from home—hunting, war, and trading. Young boys submitted to rigorous physical training for their self-protection.”¹⁶ As they grew, Navajo males found a place in their society by realizing their manhood through warfare and plunder. In Navajo society and spirituality, bravery was admired and cowardice deplored, and either quality could be measured by a man's performance in battle, along with the amount of his plunder.

While raiding allowed Navajo males to validate their masculinity, it was also a source of conflict between old and young generations. Upon termination of the Mexican-American War,

¹⁵ Davis, *El Gringo*, 236.

¹⁶ Reichard, *Navaho Religion*, 39.

the Navajo were pressured more forcefully by their new white neighbors, the Americans, to cease their raiding in New Mexico. Henry Lane Kendrick wrote in 1856 that rich Navajos typically agreed with American requests for an end to raiding, urging their people to discontinue their raids on the Americans. Kendrick suggested that this was because their wealth was already attained, and they had the most to lose by going into open war with the Americans.¹⁷ Young men who had not made a name for themselves in their society, however, were unable to reach the status of their elders if that avenue of virile validation were cut off, so many of them kept raiding anyway. “The rich men are opposed to war,” remarked one reporter, “for they have all to lose and nothing to gain; while the poor are anxious for any commotion or enterprise which may possibly better their condition.”¹⁸

The transition from brave and daring youths to cautious and reserved elders is a common trend in the male life cycle for Navajo men, which was well illustrated in the case of Zarcillos Largos, one of the most prominent headmen of the Navajo during the early years of American possession of New Mexico. In his younger years, Largos was “an Indian of prominence and ability in his tribe,” who initially resisted American demands that the Navajo stop raiding New Mexican settlements. “This is our war” with the Mexicans, he told the American envoy who urged the Navajos to cease their raids upon *nuevomexicano* settlements, and “if you act justly you will allow us to settle our own differences.”¹⁹ His insistence on the continuance of raiding did not last long, however, and as Largos grew older, he became an advocate of peace between the Navajo and the United States. In an effort to protect his people (and his own wealth, perhaps), Largos frequently returned livestock to the American authorities

¹⁷ Correll, *TWME*, 2: 42.

¹⁸ Correll, *TWME*, 1: 152.

¹⁹ Largos quoted in Ralph Emerson Twitchell, *The History of the Military Occupation of the Territory of New Mexico from 1846 to 1851 by the Government of the United States* (Chicago: Rio Grande Press, 1963), 98-100.

that had been stolen by young raiders. In August 1857, Largos returned eight mules stolen by a young man to an army captain at Fort Defiance. A few months later he sent his nephew to return three stolen horses in the same manner. In June 1858, he accepted the assignment from the U.S. Army to pacify one of the most famous Navajo warriors and raiders, Manuelito. In return, he was promised that he would be regarded by the Americans as the “Head Chief of all the Navajos,” for which he was “gratified.” He also offered his services to arrest Navajos involved in robberies and murders.²⁰ As he did these favors for the American government, his position as a rich and influential leader became more secure. Thus, Largos's opinion of his manhood adjusted as he aged. But even while he tried to protect the gains that he had made, other young men sought similar attainments, and they continued the policies that he had endorsed as a young man, when he had so audaciously insisted that the Navajo would continue raiding *nuevomexicanos*. Navajo conceptions of manhood, then, had a significant impact on the incorporation of raiding culture in their society.

Staying on the subject of gender, a word should be said about the relationship between raiding and Navajo women. To regard raiding as an activity that only affected Navajo men would be grossly simplistic, since women were heavily involved in Navajo social, political, and material life. W. H. H. Davis observed that, “it is a noted fact that they treat their women with more respect than any other tribe, and make companions of them instead of slaves.” Davis also noticed that a Navajo man “never sends his wife to saddle his horse, but does it himself if he has no peon.”²¹ Jacob S. Robinson, volunteer soldier under General Kearny in 1846, corroborated Davis’s statement, saying that during his time in Navajo country, the women were observed “saddling their own horses, and letting their husbands saddle theirs.” Robinson

²⁰ Correll, *TWME*, 95, 118, 131, 264.

²¹ Davis, *El Gringo*, 412.

marveled at the egalitarianism of the sexes, remarking that “the women of this tribe seem to have equal rights with the men, managing their own business and trading as they see fit,” and Davis went so far as to compare Navajo women with American activists: “the modern doctrine of ‘Women’s Rights’ may be said to prevail among them to a very liberal extent.”²² Davis’s comparison may not have been wholly accurate—Navajo women had always enjoyed an equal voice in tribal life and did not have to petition for rights that unavailable to them—but it illustrates the influence of Navajo women in their society. Davis went on to say that Navajo women took an active part in tribal councils and would “sometimes control their deliberations.” Most importantly, though, the women were “the real owners of all the sheep.”²³ Navajo men may have procured the sheep through their raids, but Navajo women owned the sheep once they were delivered. A raider, then, not only advanced his own social status through his exploits, but that of the women in his life.

While it had always been the “principal object” of raiding for the “provident Nabajoe . . . to increase his stock at home,” other reasons for raiding motivated their involvement in the practice.²⁴ Predating the lust for livestock in Navajo society was the idea of reprisal raids. Even though theft was expected, it did not go unpunished, especially when committed by peoples who were not Navajo. The purpose of the reprisal raid, for other Indian tribes as well as Navajos, was to take back stock that had been stolen, or at least an equal number if not the original pilfered stock. If murder had been committed in the initial raid, then the retaliatory raid would ideally involve the killing of a nearly equal number of the enemy, to

²² Robinson, *Journal of the Santa Fe Expedition*, 46; Davis, *El Gringo*, 412.

²³ The social, gender, and economic connections between Navajo women and sheep has been cogently covered by Marsha Weisiger throughout her book *Dreaming of Sheep in Navajo Country*, but is particularly discussed in chapter 4.

²⁴ George Archibald McCall, *New Mexico in 1850: A Military View*, ed. Robert W. Frazer (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968), 89.

restore the balance between two nations. For example, in 1788, a Navajo-guided Spanish expedition in the Gila Mountains killed eighteen Apache warriors and captured four Apache women. The Apaches accused the Navajo guide of causing the destruction, and the Apaches retaliated with an equally destructive attack on a Navajo settlement. Now it was the Navajos' turn to be offended, and they expressed their insult by counter-attacking the raiding party that had sacked their rancherias, killing several.²⁵ Vengeance as a motivator was another strong impulse in Navajo society, and continued for decades. In 1858, for example, an army detachment was ambushed by Navajo warriors, anxious to avenge the deaths of two Navajos who had been killed by the leader of the unit, Captain Valdez. Valdez was the only target and victim of this raid, making vengeance the clear purpose of the attack.²⁶ Reprisal raids also restored balance for stolen property. In 1858, an unnamed Navajo warrior came to Fort Defiance to sell blankets. While within the walls, the raider slew the fort commander's black slave and fled. When Major Brooks demanded of Zarcillos Largos, who was still doing favors for the Americans, that he turn the man over to the authorities, Largos evaded the assignment, saying that the major should not expect such swift retribution, for "it was six weeks since [he] had killed Manuelito's cattle, and [the major] had done nothing yet towards paying for them," implying that the killing was retaliation for the destroyed property of another wealthy Navajo.²⁷ This insightful comment by Largos shows how reprisal worked in Navajo culture. The murderer was not given up (Largos even went so far as to bring in a dead body to the commander, saying that it was the murderer, when it was really an imposture) because there was an imbalance remaining between the Navajo and the Americans.²⁸ Thus, until the debt was

²⁵ McNitt, *Navajo Wars*, 34-35.

²⁶ McNitt, *Navajo Wars*, 355.

²⁷ Correll, *TWME*, 133.

²⁸ Correll, *TWME*, 153.

settled, the murderer was within his rights, merely restoring the balance of destroyed property by destroying another man's property, which in this case was a person.

In regard to human property, the subject of slavery in Navajo culture should not be overlooked. Taking captives was a common part of raiding among all tribes of New Mexico, and another means of disrupting or restoring balance between peoples. Though captives were not bought and sold and put to work like animals as black slaves in English and Spanish America, they were still considered the property of their captor. W.W.H. Davis observed in his visit to the Navajo that “peons” would saddle the horses of their warrior-masters and take care of other menial chores.²⁹ Slavery allowed the Navajo blanket trade to operate more effectively. The “dependents” of rich Navajo men were frequently captured slaves who worked for their masters in the fields. As Ruth Underhill pointed out, “women of such households could work at their looms day after day, while slaves tended the flocks and fields, and even did the cooking.” This explains the ironic fact that the high point of Navajo raiding was also the high point of Navajo weaving.³⁰

As might be expected, possession of captives represented power for rich men. It elevated their status in their own society, while simultaneously projecting their power over the peoples they had stolen members from. It was also a method of reprisal. Navajos were frequently captured by *nuevomexicanos* and other native tribes in their raids conducted against the Navajo, so the fitting response was to take the offending party's people as slaves in turn. Slaves were also frequently used as bartering tools to avoid conflict when it was not desired. When the violence between the Navajo and the Mexicans was heating up in the 1840s, an envoy of Navajos went to a Mexican official, stating their intentions of peace. The official

²⁹ Davis, *El Gringo*, 236.

³⁰ Underhill, *Here Come the Navaho!*, 147.

recorded that they had “brought two captives of our people to prove their good faith.”³¹ Sometimes they used captives as political pawns. In his report of the New Mexico Superintendency to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Superintendent Collins explained that in 1854, Navajos had killed a soldier stationed at Fort Defiance. The outraged commander demanded that the murderer be turned over, or martial vindication would be pursued. “The chiefs therefore came forward and told the commanding officer that the murderer would be given up,” reported Collins. A few days later, the chiefs returned with a man in tow. However, they demanded that they be the executioners themselves, which the commander granted. The execution proceeded and the man was “hung in the presence of the troops.” However, it was discovered afterward that the executed man was “not the murderer of the soldier, but a Mexican captive, who had been with them for many years.”³² This is but another example of how Navajos exerted power over their enemies. They had escaped the retaliation of their new enemy at the expense of their old one. A Mexican slave’s life was the pawn with which they maintained their supremacy.

As these examples indicate, raiding was not just a haphazard, incidental, or opportunistic practice for the Navajo people. It was a fundamental custom of cultural importance, a core component of individual and collective identity that affected all aspects of Navajo life. And that is why Spanish authorities—civil and religious—were unable to come to a peaceful arrangement with the Navajo. What Spaniards saw as misbehavior, Navajos saw as everyday life. Spaniards saw political instability in New Mexico, but Navajos saw status quo. While Spaniards viewed the peoples of New Mexico as either their allies or enemies, Navajos

³¹ Docket 229, Navajo Plaintiff's Exhibit 870, Navajos in New Mexico Collection, 1841-1849, Special Collections Library, University of Texas at Arlington Library.

³² *Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs Accompanying the Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, for the Year 1858* (Washington D.C.: William A. Harris, 1858), 190.

viewed all peoples as both. This deep-seated misunderstanding of Navajo culture prevented the Spanish from realizing their goals in New Mexico, at least in regard to their Navajo neighbors. But in order to fully understand that misunderstanding, we must first address what those goals were.

Assimilation and Integration

The distinguishing factor of Spanish Indian policy in New Mexico was a desire to incorporate native tribes, including the Navajo, into their society. The degree of inclusion varied over time, usually depending on who was in power, both provincially and nationally. Generally, Spanish officials desired to fully assimilate the Navajo into their society, as was typical in other areas of the Spanish Empire. This meant that the Spanish sought for more than just peace between Hispanic and native peoples; they desired to make native peoples Hispanic. Methods varied, but the goal was eventual assimilation, as the Spanish had done previously (and rather successfully) with the Pueblo tribes of the territory. Over time, and as it became increasingly apparent that the Navajo would not assimilate as easily as initially hoped, *nuevomexicano* leaders adjusted their vision from assimilation to integration, which allowed the Navajo to maintain limited tribal autonomy and did not require immediate acceptance of Hispanic customs, such as Catholicism or settlement into sedentary villages. The preference of integration over assimilation evolved and became more evident as martial conflict increased in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Although policies frequently went back and

forth depending on governmental personalities, the end goal was not to conquer the Navajo, but to incorporate them into the Hispanic paradigm, one way or another.

Though seemingly paradoxical, integration (not subjugation) was the main objective of *nuevomexicano* military action against the Navajo. Many *nuevomexicanos* recognized the potential of Navajos to become citizens, and they argued that the tribe just needed a little coercion to accept Hispanic ways of living. Don Pedro Bautista Pino, a prominent resident of Santa Fe who was selected to report to the Spanish Cortes in 1810, described the Navajo as a noble and advanced Indian tribe, remarking that “this tribe is so highly civilized,” that there would be no problem if it “united with the Spanish government.” Pino lamented the impossibility of such a union, not because the Navajo were incapable of being full participants in Spanish culture, but because the province of New Mexico was not yet “prosperous” enough to adequately incorporate the tribe, “At this present time even these Indians can see our troubles and poverty,” he said, seeming to forget he also credited the Navajo, along with their Apache cousins, with “destroy[ing] all settlement,” in New Mexico.³³

While the Navajo were deemed qualified for integration, Spanish officials expected certain adjustments to occur before the Navajo could become full participants in New Mexican society. A simple cessation of raiding was an obvious beginning, but other elements were important to government officials in New Mexico as well. First, *nuevomexicanos* considered Navajos to be somewhat civilized largely because they practiced limited agriculture. The *Missouri Intelligencer* reported in 1824, claiming to be informed by a Mexican citizen, that the Navajo were “a nation of comfortable and independent farmers,” who raised corn, peaches, apricots, and “various esculent vegetables,” in addition to “fine flocks of sheep, abundance of

³³ Pino contained in H. Bailey Carroll and J. Villasana Haggard, *Three New Mexico Chronicles*, 133, 79.

mules, and herds of cattle of a superior kind.” The informant also praised the quality of Navajo woven items, pottery, and baskets.³⁴ Pedro Bautista Pino agreed, qualifying the Navajo as “civilized” due to their “farming and manufacturing.”³⁵ However, for the Navajo to become full participants in Mexican society, they would have to completely adopt agriculture, cease any dependence on wild game, and, of course, abandon all raiding. Padre Antonio José Martínez commented on this concept in his *Esposición* to General Santa Anna in 1843. In his estimation, the Navajo were the only “wild tribe” in the department of New Mexico that labored in the earth and raised domesticated animals, but he thought them the “most ferocious, most inconsistent, and most unfaithful in their peace promises, whenever they happen to make any.” Their raiding tendencies caused Navajo fields to lay uncultivated, making their agriculture insufficient to support them. Martínez’s recommended solution emphasized the importance of farming to all *indios bárbaros* in the department, and in the case of the Navajo, to highlight the benefit of agriculture over raiding, which would bring peace to them and their Hispanic neighbors. He also argued that settlement into sedentary villages would aid the Navajo in their transformation from “savage” Indians to *nuevomexicanos* (as in the case of the Pueblo tribes). To Martínez, the Navajo were students in the Hispanic society, and it was the job of *nuevomexicanos* to teach them how to become productive citizens in the territory.³⁶

Conversion to Catholicism was another prerequisite to Navajo integration into the department of New Mexico. Because proselyting efforts to the Navajo had been largely

³⁴ “Nabijos,” *Missouri Intelligencer*, April 3, 1824.

³⁵ Pino contained in H. Bailey Carroll and J. Villasana Haggard, *Three New Mexico Chronicles*, 133.

³⁶ Antonio José Martínez, *Esposición que el presbítero Antonio José Martínez, cura de Taos de Nueva México, dirige al Gobierno del Exmo. Sor. General d. Antonio López de Santa Anna. Proponiendo la civilización de las naciones bárbaras que son al contorno del Departamento de Nuevo México* contained in David J. Weber, ed. *Northern Mexico on the Eve of the United States Invasion: Rare Imprints Concerning California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas, 1821-1846* (New York: Arno Press, 1976), Imprint No. 5. The document is written in Spanish and the translation is my own.

unsuccessful (as evidenced by the Encinal and Cebolleta missions) *nuevomexicanos* relied on indirect influence to bring Navajos to Christianity. In the years before 1770, for example, parish records list a total of seventy-seven Navajos baptized into the Catholic Church in the territory of New Mexico at various locations.³⁷ Several of these individual baptisms were voluntary, but the majority were small children whose minds were malleable, and several were baptized *en extremis* immediately before the initiate perished.³⁸ When warfare between *nuevomexicanos* and Navajos resumed after 1770, Navajo baptisms increased, with ninety-three individuals baptized between 1770 and 1800. This makes sense, since New Spain's official policy was to baptize all non-Christian captives taken in warfare, as declared by New Mexico Governor Juan Ignacio Mogollón in 1714.³⁹ It should be remembered, however, that nearly every one of these "converts" on the parish records of New Mexico was a war captive, servant, or adopted slave of the Spanish, whose participation in the sacrament was forced rather than voluntary. Infants, youths, and women still made up the large majority of those baptized, and it is unlikely that they were aware of the significance of their baptism.⁴⁰ Similarly, the sacrament did not necessarily transform Navajo captives into perfect Catholics.

Nevertheless, through these involuntary methods of religious conversion *nuevomexicanos* demonstrated their willingness to integrate Navajos fully into their society. In fact, according to the language of several of the peace treaties enacted in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Spaniards refused to surrender captured Navajos (even though those

³⁷ Numbers and locations of baptisms during these years are provided in Correll, *TWME*, 48-64.

³⁸ Correll, *TWME*, 55-56, 60.

³⁹ Correll, *TWME*, 53.

⁴⁰ Pino offered an optimistic view of Navajo conversion, stating of the Navajo in 1812 that "many of them speak Spanish, and entire families often come and live among us, embracing the Catholic religion." (*Three New Mexico Chronicles*, 133). However, since parish records indicate not only the inductee, but the owner of the slave as well, it is more likely that the majority of Navajo baptisms were involuntary affairs. For an extensive study of voluntary and involuntary Navajo baptisms in New Mexico during the Spanish and Mexican periods, see David Brugge, *Navajos in the Catholic Church Records*, 41-73.

treaties required Navajos to return all *nuevomexicano* captives still in their possession), arguing that reciprocal emancipation was not needed since it did “not seem proper for Catholics” to relinquish those who had already “receive[d] the beneficial waters of baptism,” or those who desired to in the future. One of the treaties even went so far as to make conversion to Catholicism a requirement, proposing that “the Faith in Jesus Christ,” would perfect the crass attributes of the Navajo and would effectively, “[reduce] an infidel nation to the fold of the Catholic Church.”⁴¹ It appeared that *nuevomexicanos* sincerely hoped that religious conversion would play a primary role in the transformation of the Navajo from semi-civilized enemies to lawful members of New Mexican society.

Termination of raids, settlement into manageable pueblos, and conversion to Christianity were the three major requirements for Navajos to become *nuevomexicanos*. And if beneficent invitation was not enough to bring the Navajos into the Spanish system, then violent compulsion would be used. Just as frequently as Navajos raided *nuevomexicano* settlements, counter-raids and full-scale military excursions were sent in retaliation. The intent of these armed actions into Navajo country was to showcase martial superiority and to injure the Navajo sufficiently so that they would concede to Spanish demands.⁴² The campaigns ended with a peace treaty on Spanish terms and in the Spanish language, typically signed by only a small group of illiterate Navajo who could only honor the treaty inasmuch as their individual band was concerned. This occurred three more times over twenty years.

⁴¹ Brugge and Correll, *Navajo Treaties*, 54.

⁴² The Navajo were by no means inept at full-scale engagements, however. In 1835, an expedition of one thousand Mexicans and Indian allies departed Santa Fe for the Navajo country. While in a narrow pass, a party of Navajos ambushed the force of *nuevomexicanos*. Nearly all the *nuevomexicanos* were killed, including their captains, some of which were forced to jump to their deaths over the cliffs. (Corell, *TWME*, 155). However, the rule of thumb in New Mexican raids prior to 1821 is that whoever is on the offensive usually wins the engagement; thus, Spanish forays into Navajo country typically ended in their favor, resulting in peace treaties.

The repeated efforts to enter into diplomatic amity agreements reveal the desire of the Mexican government to solve their peacekeeping problems with politics, which could be interpreted as either an inability to understand Navajo society, culture, and values, or a complete dismissal of those qualities and an attempt to politically enforce Hispanic government on the Navajo in an effort to “civilize” them. The language of the peace treaties enacted by Spanish officials in the early nineteenth century heavily reflected these desires. Though each treaty was drawn up and presented by different New Mexican governors, they were all strikingly similar, containing several of the same elements that can be interpreted as an eager paternalism that would make the Navajo people wards of the benevolent Spanish government. Governor Fecundo Melgares’s treaty of 1819 generalized a peace agreement that would hinge on Navajo willingness to conform to Spanish society. The treaty forbid any violence between the Navajo and the “citizens, shepherds and others of the province,” putting in place means by which parties guilty of violence (Navajo and *nuevomexicano*) would be brought to justice. It also stipulated the need for the Navajo to “plant and work to aid their subsistence,” allowing them land (which was already theirs) that should be used for “planting, pastures, and other uses that might be applicable to them.” Melgares also required a number of Navajo youths to be designated “hostages” in Santa Fe, where they would learn Spanish customs, language, and education. New hostages would be traded out each year; Melgares hoped that these captives would then return to their tribe as emissaries of peace and that the rest of the tribe would see the “benefit” of civilized life. In return, Melgares expected a “perpetual peace and sincere and cordial harmony,” between *nuevomexicanos* and Navajos. He argued that if the Navajo were “saturated by so much kindness they will comfort themselves greatly,” insomuch that they would “carefully flee from all that could alter such a beneficial situation.” Instead, they would

“raise their livestock, tranquilly cultivate their lands, and enjoy the fruits of their labors in abundance and the energetic protection of the Monarch of the Spains that loves them tenderly, desiring their happiness as the superior government.”⁴³

When the stipulations of this treaty were not kept by the Navajo, Melgares presented another treaty in 1822, this time as a representative of the Mexican republic. Again, the primary purpose was to ensure that the Navajo would “cease doing evil and harm,” against *nuevomexicanos*, but Melgares also required that the Navajo “recognize our government as an allied nation,” and specified detailed borders between the two nations.⁴⁴ This is a curious development from the previous treaty that treated Navajos as if they were already Spanish subjects, manifesting a movement from assimilation to integration. Now, it seemed, Mexico’s representative recognized the sovereignty of the Navajos (complete with somewhat arbitrary borders). That being said, Melgares still expected Navajos to conform to the behavior that Mexico expected of an independent country. If they could not be Mexican subjects, then they would have to be Mexican allies who replicated Hispanic life.

For example, the treaty allowed Navajos to “remain at liberty to trade and travel the province,” allowing them to continue in the sheep industry, but all livestock sales had to be done through the proper channels in a *nuevomexicano* settlement, rather than in the livestock camps outside of the city as had been the common practice (that is, on the few occasions when the sheep were paid for and taken legally). Again, these compromises were offered in the understanding that the Navajo would both understand what Melgares asked of them and that the Navajos would willingly commit, as a whole, to the arrangements, a somewhat naïve assumption for someone as experienced with the situation as Governor Melgares. His first

⁴³ Correll, *TWME*, 46-49.

⁴⁴ Correll, *TWME*, 50-51.

mistake was to assume that treaties held the same meaning for Navajos as it did for Spaniards. An account from Jacob Robinson illustrates this point, though it took place over twenty years after Spain lost its control of New Mexico. In his journal, Robinson relates that after spending time with a large Navajo gathering, the Navajo leaders desired to “show us an agreement or treaty which they or their fathers had made with our fathers long ago,” in an effort to offer a continuation of good will.⁴⁵ The Navajos brought forward a large roll of buckskins, which they then proceeded to unroll. They took off “skin after skin; at last they came to a blanket, which with increased solemnity they proceed to unfold.” The Navajo leader ultimately extracted a piece of paper and handed it with a grunt to the interpreter. When Robinson and his companions looked, they were surprised to find that it was “only a trader’s printed handbill,” having no value as a binding agreement: it was not an agreement at all, only a receipt of sale. “This farce of course created a general loud laugh in our ranks,” Robinson recorded, and when it was explained that the paper was not what had previously been thought, the chief quickly “tucked it away, its value having apparently departed.”⁴⁶ This episode illustrates how diplomatic agreements, recorded on pieces of paper in a language not understood by half of the assumed participants, could be easily misunderstood, inappropriately valued, and eventually ineffective.

Additionally, Spanish treaties with the Navajo people were written with the assumption that all Navajos were of a single political unit and that knowledge of the pacts would be equitably disseminated to all members of the native tribe. As mentioned before, Navajos were organized into bands, which were loosely connected to each other as a tribe. They shared a

⁴⁵ Robinson assumes that the agreement was made with American representatives, but given that the only Americans in the region before this incident were individual trappers and merchants who were unlikely to pen a peace agreement (and that the Navajos had allegedly made the agreement “700 winters before”), it can probably be presumed that the “treaty” was made with Spanish or Mexican representatives, and that the Navajos simply assumed that the Americans were of the same lineage as the previous whites with whom they had done business.

⁴⁶ Robinson, *Journal of the Santa Fe Expedition*, 51-52.

common language, religion, and ancestry, and through marriage individuals in each band had connections to other units, holding the different bands loosely together into a tribe. Bands generally acted in harmony with each other and frequently aided each other, especially in military actions.⁴⁷ Because of the similarities that they shared, *nuevomexicanos* frequently conceived of the Navajo people on a tribal basis, when in reality the Navajo probably saw their organization as a type of confederacy that consisted of different bands, where power was adaptable, shifting, and certainly not central. But coming from the European tradition of consolidated nation-states, Hispanics in New Mexico either continued to think of the Navajo in terms of a “nation” or sought to make the Navajo conform to that model through political and martial influence.

This included a desire for a definite head of state. The 1819 treaty, for example, required that a designated leader of the Navajo would be appointed as a “general,” serving as a de facto governor of the tribe. This demand was even more ill-conceived than the preceding ones, because the Navajo did not have a “government,” at least in the sense that the Spanish and Mexicans understood when they used the word. Rather than a central administration, the Navajo were organized into bands based on family ties. Each of these bands had a headman, who rose to his position based on a combination of his wealth (measured in livestock), age, kinship ties, and performance in battle. They maintained their status through the upkeep of these characteristics, in addition to their leadership ability in both peace and war; conversely, a headman could lose his position if he did not fulfill these expectations. Headmen provided for the well being of their dependents, which was seen as their primary role. Still, a headman only

⁴⁷ Navajo tradition tells of a yearly meeting, called a *naach'id*, in the winter season in which clan leaders and many tribal members would gather and discuss the making of war and peace, along with performing sacred ceremonies and dancing. Prior to the American occupation, there is only a single reference to this meeting. See David Brugge, “Documentary Reference to a Navajo Naach'id in 1840,” *Ethnohistory* 10, No. 2 (1963): 186-188.

had influence over his band, not necessarily power. American citizen W.H.H. Davis observed that the “rich families of the tribe” formed a natural “aristocracy,” but conditioned his statement by saying that though they possessed “a little additional influence . . . neither age nor rank commands the same respect as among other tribes.”⁴⁸ The opinions of individual members were considered valuable, and councils were utilized for major decisions that affected the entire band. In these meetings, the headman presided, but was by no means an autocratic leader, and any member of the tribe could have a voice in these meetings, including women, as previously mentioned.

Melgares's 1819 treaty, however, still insisted that “a general of the Navajo Nation will be named so that this government of New Mexico might have someone to address regarding what might happen and who might govern and direct it,” and required that this general “live as close as possible,” to the *nuevomexicano* settlement closest to Navajo country.⁴⁹ This requirement appeared in the next several treaties, stating that the Navajo would have a “general” or “captain,” that would “maintain [his] warriors in good order.”⁵⁰ These stipulations probably made sense to *nuevomexicanos*, but to the Navajo it was not so simple. The Navajo had no head of state and no institutional system by which a leader could enforce policies even if one existed.⁵¹ A Navajo warrior, though roughly affiliated with his band and his tribe, ultimately owed allegiance to no one besides his own family, which is why raids resumed soon

⁴⁸ Davis, *El Gringo*, 412-413.

⁴⁹ Brugge and Correll, *Navajo Treaties*, 46.

⁵⁰ Brugge and Correll, *Navajo Treaties*, 58.

⁵¹ American Lt. Col. J.H. Eaton labeled the Navajo system of government as “mobcratic,” and W.H.H. Davis, American citizen living in New Mexico in the 1830s, remarked that Navajo government was of a “democratic doctrine,” where the “will of the majority always governs,” and that “they have no hereditary chief, but one is elected from time to time, who surrenders his authority at pleasure, when a new one is chosen in his stead.” Their meetings he described as “a tumultuous rabble, [lacking] the dignity and decorum we generally see among Indians.” (Schoolcraft, *Historical and Statistical Information*, 4: 217; Davis, *El Gringo*, 413).

after treaties were enacted and generals appointed who urged young warriors to cease their thieving activities.

In addition to their demands for a leader, *nuevomexicanos* made the situation even worse by appointing their own preferred candidates for the role, with absolutely no consideration of who the Navajo might favor. Even if the Navajo had come together and uniformly accepted *nuevomexicano* demands and converted to a western political system, they probably would not have selected the representatives that the Spanish and Mexicans chose for them. In each the three treaties where a Navajo leader was appointed and named by the New Mexico governor (1819, 1822, 1839), the appointed person was a leader of the Diné Anaa'ii, or the "Enemy Navajo." Under the leadership of a headman named Joaquin, this separate Navajo band broke away from the rest of the tribe in the late eighteenth century. Friendly to the Spanish, they relocated to Cebolleta, a settlement closer to *nuevomexicano* villages than to the traditional Navajo homeland. They generally obeyed Spanish laws and adopted many of their customs. The Diné Anaa'ii served as a kind of middlemen between *nuevomexicanos* and Navajos, frequently assisting as interpreters and occasionally providing military assistance to New Mexican governors against their former tribe.⁵² Because of the partnership that already existed between these two groups, Spanish authorities often negotiated their peace agreements with representatives from the Diné Anaa'ii and named their headman as the "general" of the Navajo (Joaquin, Segundo, and Sandoval, respectively).⁵³ As might be anticipated, this arrangement, though expedient for the enactment of treaties, was ultimately untenable. The Diné Anaa'ii definitely did not represent the interests of the remaining Navajo bands, so an agreement made with them could hardly be expected to have an effect on the rest of the tribe.

⁵² For a detailed history of the Diné Ana'iii, see McNitt, *Navajo Wars*, 26-51.

⁵³ Brugge and Correll, *Navajo Treaties*, 48, 53, 58.

Obtaining a treaty with allies must have been simpler for *nuevomexicanos*, but it did little to alleviate the issue of raiding for the part of the tribe with whom they still had problems.

Perhaps this is why raids resumed only weeks or months after a treaty was enacted.⁵⁴

Nuevomexicano leaders' attempts to politically modify the Navajo into a nation with a definite leader capable of state negotiations only exacerbated the problem of raiding by providing false security through empty treaties.

Taking a brief look into the Mexican period of New Mexico, it is clear that the treaties between *nuevomexicanos* and Navajos were total failures. Tensions continued to increase and conflict became more frequent and deadly between the two peoples. In response, New Mexican governors began to take a more aggressive approach towards the Indians, but by the 1840s it was too late. Economically damaged and socially unhinged, the department of New Mexico was barely afloat by the time the United States declared war on Mexico and invaded the territory in 1846. In fact, up until May of that year, the month that the American congress declared war, Governor Manuel Armijo continued authorizing offensive actions against the Navajo, and his correspondence shows that his attentions still lay to the west rather than east until July of that year, ordering his *alcaldes* and military leaders to prioritize defenses against the Navajo rather than prepare for the impending American invasion.⁵⁵ Only eight days before the American army entered Santa Fe, Armijo encouraged the citizens of New Mexico to "be ready for war since we are provoked to it."⁵⁶ Notwithstanding, Armijo ultimately fled to Chihuahua, and the department of New Mexico fell to American occupation without a shot. Navajo raids had effectively paralyzed Mexican ability to resist.

⁵⁴ Correll, *TWME*, 165.

⁵⁵ Correll, *TWME*, 187-189.

⁵⁶ Corell, *TWME*, 191.

Three months before the debacle, Armijo cogently identified the source of his troubles. After authorizing a group of Diné Anaa’ii to act as mercenary soldiers against the Navajo, he wrote to the prefect in Chihuahua that the Navajo (“the underhanded enemy” of New Mexico) were “little by little consuming the department ... through peace and war.”⁵⁷ Navajo power eclipsed that of Spain and Mexico because they dominated their neighbors both in times of treaty and in times of conflict. They preyed upon *nuevomexicanos* at all times, seeming to disregard all semblance of Spanish attempts at diplomatic negotiations. Because of that, Spanish sovereignty in New Mexico was more illusory than imperial, at least in regard to their attempts to colonize the Navajo. The two and a half centuries of Spanish power in the territory were desperately spent trying to validate, defend, and solidify that power against a competitive and competent equal: the Navajo. Additionally, Spanish attempts to incorporate the Navajo into their society caused their influence to wane as did their inability to reconcile the differences between themselves and the Navajo. They attempted to Hispanicize the Navajo and socially manipulate them into their own society, when in reality they left themselves vulnerable to a social counter-attack. As a result, the Navajo were able to continue their raiding practices at the expense of *nuevomexicanos*, which critically weakened the province. Treaties, slave baptisms, and alliances with false Navajo authorities may have tricked *nuevomexicanos* into believing that they had political control of the territory, but the Navajo showed how imaginary that power remained. They limited Spanish power in New Mexico before Spanish power could even gain a footing.

⁵⁷ Correll, *TWME*, 187.

CONCLUSION

Spanish authority in New Mexico ended in 1821 as a result of the successful war for Mexican independence conducted during the decade before. Geographically distant from the center of the struggle, New Mexico remained largely insulated from movement, and for the most part, life continued unaltered in the northern province. Whether it was the extension of a European empire or a state in a newly-founded republic, New Mexico functioned much as it had for the previous two and one half centuries, which included the unabated presence of warfare between *nuevomexicanos* and Navajos. Raids continued, slavery persisted, and the general antagonism between the “wild” tribe and the Mexican authorities weakened the already feeble province. And then in 1846, after only twenty-five years of Mexican “ownership,” the United States army entered New Mexico as part of a general war between the young republics and claimed control. Though Navajo raiding was not the only problem that destabilized New Mexico prior to the American invasion, it was the most significant; Navajo raiding took a heavy toll on the region of the upper Rio Grande, weakening it to a point of exhaustion and making it totally unprepared for the offensive unleashed by the United States in 1846.

However, in order to understand the conflict between Mexico and the Navajos on the eve of the war with the United States, we must first understand the relationship that developed between the two groups during the Spanish period. As argued by Brian DeLay and Pekka Hämäläinen, raids by the Plains Indians of Texas, New Mexico, and northern Mexico, particularly by the Comanches and Apaches, paved the way for the easy American conquest in 1846. While these historians are correct in their assessments, I argue that the mountain-dwelling Navajo Indians played a much bigger role than has previously been recognized. They

practiced agriculture on a larger scale and were semi-sedentary, but their use of raiding against the Hispanic peoples of the Southwest (native or not) was similar to other Indian raids prior to the U.S.-Mexican War, suggesting a general raiding pattern that was characteristic among Southwestern tribes regardless of their various differences.

DeLay also contends that Indian raids increased dramatically after the 1830s, which contributed to the decline of Mexican power in the region. While this is an accurate assertion, especially among the Southern Plains Indians that he studies more closely, the *nuevomexicano* experience with the Navajos suggests that this was a pattern that had existed for centuries in the regions of northern New Spain. True, there was a definite increase in the frequency and intensity of native raids on Hispanic settlements during that time, but there previously had been similar periods of amplified violence. More like the tide than a tsunami, the conflict in New Mexico between Navajos and *nuevomexicanos* was recurring and regular, following the ebb and flow of fluid political alliances that changed as often as the situations at hand required. There had been periods of peace and periods of war, and the influx of violence during the 1830s and 40s and its relation to the U.S.-Mexican War was more coincidental than not, at least for the Navajos. For them, it seems, raiding expeditions and retaliatory strikes were just part of life and were to be expected, dealt with, and propagated. The Navajo headman Zarcillos Largos summed up this mentality well in 1846, when the first American military envoy met with Navajos in order to convince them to cease raiding *nuevomexicano* villages:

Americans! you have a strange cause of war against the Navajos. We have waged war against the New Mexicans for several years. We have plundered their villages and killed many of their people, and made many prisoners. We had just cause for all this. You have lately commenced a war against the same people. You are powerful. You have great guns and many brave soldiers. You have therefore conquered them, the very thing we have been attempting to do for so many years. You now turn upon us for attempting to do what you have done yourselves. We cannot see why you have cause of quarrel with us for fighting the New Mexicans on the west, while you do the same thing on the

east. Look how matters stand. This is our war. We have more right to complain of you for interfering in our war, than you have to quarrel with us for continuing a war we had begun long before you got here. If you will act justly, you will allow us to settle our own differences.¹

Navajos used raiding as a means to ensure political sovereignty and assert martial dominance over their territory. But its importance extended beyond that. Raiding formed a central component of Navajo culture and worldview, formed by and likewise affecting Navajo culture, society, spirituality, and gender relations.

Raiding would not remain a part of Navajo life long after the American occupation of New Mexico, however. After two decades of instability and violence that was reminiscent of both the Spanish and Mexican periods, the United States army, with the eager aid of *nuevomexicano* volunteers and Apache and Ute scouts, embarked on a hard war campaign against the Navajos in 1863 under the command of Kit Carson with the intent to pulverize the Navajos into submission and remove them from their homeland to a place where they could be closely monitored. The story of that campaign and the subsequent Long Walk to Fort Sumner and the incarceration at Bosque Redondo has been covered well by other historians and will not be dwelt on here. But the effect of these events on Navajo life is still felt today. When a treaty was signed in 1868, the Navajos were allowed to return to Dinétah, with the understanding that they would never again raid New Mexican settlements. Unlike the Spanish and Mexican treaties before, this one stuck, not by virtue of the document itself, but because Navajos could see no potential advantages gained by the continuation of raiding. Their raiding culture had been obliterated, and Navajos were forced to adjust their society to fit the mold allowed by the United States. A chapter of Navajo culture and life had been forcefully closed.

¹ McNitt, *Navajo Wars*, 118.

Many historians have studied the post-reservation cultural turn of how the Navajo met the challenge of acculturating to a new style of life after the Long Walk. As important as this is, that part of Navajo history can only be understood in the context of who Navajos were before. Perhaps today their former reign as the raiding masters of New Mexico has been largely forgotten. Perhaps some, like my coworker several years ago, choose to project the final loss in the 1860s onto the entirety of Navajo history, choosing to remember Navajos as a defeated and passive people. But to do so would be to see only a fragment of a long and dynamic history, one that did not begin (nor end) with American influence in the Southwest borderlands. For hundreds of years, the Navajos were a major political and martial entity of northern New Mexico that projected their power across the territory, often at the expense of their neighbors. They were, as that American lieutenant described them in 1846, the “lords of New Mexico.”

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ABSTRACT

“BY FIRE AND SWORD”: NAVAJO RAIDING AND *NUEVOMEXICANO* RESPONSES,

1540-1821

by Reilly Ben Hatch, MA, 2016
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This thesis explores Navajo raiding culture during the Spanish period of New Mexico, 1540-1821. Most basically, it addresses the social, spiritual, and political implications that raiding had in Navajo life and worldview, in addition to documenting the various ways in which *nuevomexicanos* responded to those raids. More broadly, this project explores how cultural conceptions of moral or “acceptable” behavior—particularly in regard to theft, violence, and political alliance—were valued differently between Navajos and *nuevomexicanos*, leading to cultural misunderstanding between the two groups and resulting in a perpetuity of conflict in New Mexico. Both groups used raiding and warfare to their advantage when they could, but both groups also suffered from the conflict. In the end, Navajos were able to use raiding in order to maintain their social and political sovereignty, even while Spanish authorities attempted to assimilate them into their imperial society.