

BY RAYMOND J. DEMALLIE

(edited with Elaine A. Jahner) *Lakota Belief and Ritual*, by James R. Walker (Lincoln, Nebr., 1980)

(edited) *Lakota Society*, by James R. Walker (Lincoln, Nebr., 1982)

(edited) *The Sixth Grandfather: Black Elk's Teachings Given to John G. Neihardt* (Lincoln, Nebr., 1984)

(edited with Douglas R. Parks) *Sioux Indian Religion: Tradition and Innovation* (Norman, 1987)

(with Royal B. Hassrick) *Vestiges of a Proud Nation: The Ogden B. Read Northern Plains Indian Collection* (Burlington, Vt., 1987)

BY ALFONSO ORTIZ

The Tewa World: Space, Time, Being, and Becoming in a Pueblo Society (Chicago, 1969)

(edited) *New Perspectives on the Pueblos* (Albuquerque, 1972)

(edited) *Southwest*, vols. 9 and 10, *Handbook of North American Indians* (Washington, D.C., 1979, 1983)

(edited with Richard Erdoes) *American Indian Myths and Legends* (New York, 1985)

The Pueblo (New York, 1994)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

North American Indian anthropology: essays on society and culture / edited by Raymond J. DeMallie and Alfonso Ortiz.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-8061-2614-0 (alk. paper)

1. Indians of North America. 2. Ethnology—United States. 3. Eggan, Fred, 1906–91. I. DeMallie, Raymond J., 1946–. II. Ortiz, Alfonso, 1939–.

E77.2.N65 1994

306'.08997073—dc20

94-20618

CIP

North American Indian Anthropology

Essays on Society and Culture

EDITED BY
RAYMOND J. DEMALLIE
AND
ALFONSO ORTIZ

The paper in this book meets the guidelines for permanence and durability of the Committee on Production Guidelines for Book Longevity of the Council on Library Resources, Inc.

Copyright © 1994 by the University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, Publishing Division of the University. All rights reserved. Manufactured in the U.S.A.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA PRESS : NORMAN AND LONDON

12

The Dynamics of Pueblo Cultural Survival

ALFONSO ORTIZ

In confronting any question having to do with the Pueblos of New Mexico and Arizona, considered as a group, we must first ask whether it makes any sense at all to lump them together for any purpose. After all, the term *Pueblos* today encompasses some forty thousand people speaking six mutually unintelligible languages and occupying thirty-odd villages stretched along a rough crescent of more than four hundred miles. In other words, we must consider whether the term *Pueblos*, like the term *Indian*, only denotes an artificial category invented by the Spanish invaders of the sixteenth century for their own purposes and perpetuated in our time by anthropologists and other non-Indians for their own, presumably more exalted, purposes. This question has to be at the heart of any discussion of the survival and persistence of the people presumably encompassed by the term because, at the very least, if the question of specifically Pueblo cultural survival is to be meaningful, there must be some cultural level or levels at which the people knew and know themselves to be different, as a group, from other Indian and non-Indian peoples long in residence near them in the Southwest.

I shall not attempt to sustain any further suspense with my question, because I do indeed believe that we can demonstrate that the peoples called Pueblos, despite their linguistic diversity and wide geographical range, have, at various times reaching far into dim prehistory, shared a sense of cultural similarity, just as they have shared a common homeland. This sense of cultural similarity has probably never settled on any single thing held or believed in common among all Pueblos in their long existence. That this is so might have presented us with a dilemma in the past, when anthropologists were trained to look for some invariant property or properties common to all of the societies being grouped together. This search went on at either the social structural or the cultural level and yielded everything from a common principle of descent to shared symbols of identity.

For the Pueblos, this quest for something universal would be fruitless, at least for the past two thousand years of their existence. The Pueblos, it

seems safe to say, have never all shared an institution, nor have they ever had common symbols of cultural identity. Indeed, the institution coming closest to being universal to the Pueblos is the so-called “kachina cult” in its various manifestations, but even this is not found in the northern Tiwa Pueblos of Taos and Picuris.

With the Pueblos we must, indeed, assume a long-term interactionist perspective, one which does not assume that there is a shared property common to all of them, but rather that there have always been shifting clusters of experiences and meanings that have overlapped several groups at the same time, and different groups at other times. Such a long-term interactionist perspective represents an attempt to replicate on the cultural level Fred Eggan’s method of controlled comparison, which has proven so successful on the social level (Eggan 1954). It is also similar to Ludwig Wittgenstein’s philosophy of language, which he illustrates with the analogy of “family resemblances” (Wittgenstein 1953). Whenever several generations of a large family gather together an external observer is struck by the number of broad physical similarities obtaining among the family members. One knows they are related because of their general physical similarity to one another, yet one cannot point to any single physical characteristic all of them share in common. Instead, there are a multitude of relationships “overlapping and crisscrossing.” A second analogy Wittgenstein employs for this concept is that of a thread, in which “the strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of the fibres” (Wittgenstein 1953; Wittgenstein in Edwards 1967:335, 340).

So it is also with the Pueblos; one recognizes enough broad similarities in proceeding from Hopi to Taos (or vice versa) to know that the Pueblos are related to one another culturally and that they belong together conceptually, but one just cannot put a finger on any invariant cultural property held in common throughout the Pueblo crescent at any one time. Such generalizations that are possible to make about the Pueblos—such as that they all have kivas or that they all built multi-story houses—are vacuous in terms of analytical force and explanatory value.

There is, however, one non-social structural and non-cultural factor shared by all of the Pueblos surviving to our time which helps us to understand why and how they survived, and I shall lead into the substance of my discussion with it. I refer to the fact that the Pueblos have never been displaced from their homelands, something almost unique among North American Indian groups. To be sure, they have presided over a steadily shrinking world since late prehistoric times, but the fact remains that, after more than four centuries of European exploration and colonization, most

of the Pueblo people still live in places of their own choosing. The importance of this for cultural survival cannot be overemphasized, for, indeed, we might say that the Pueblos only believe in what they see and experience, and in their homeland they can see what they believe. Anthropologists have been inadequately sensitive, I think, to the role a well-established sense of place, of belonging to a space, can play in a people's will to endure. We are just now, in very recent years, beginning to understand how important this sense of place can be. If the Pueblos teach us nothing else, let us learn at least this much from them.

During many long centuries of prehistory the Pueblo people had most of the Southwest to themselves to live in. During this time they imposed their own meanings on the lands and they left quiet monuments to their presence in the form of shrines, many of which are still recognized and visited. There was considerable contact between these prehistoric Pueblo groups. The trails of specific historic Pueblo groups criss-crossed in such maddening patterns during the last centuries preceding European contact that it is still an arena of almost pure conjecture to attempt to state what historic group came from which area of prehistoric occupation. We do know that they traded widely among one another for, among other things, innovations in design or techniques of pottery manufacture quickly became disseminated widely over areas that were otherwise culturally distinguishable from one another. Similarly, there has always been a brisk trade in objects such as crystals and other minerals, materials for tools and weapons such as chert, obsidian and fibrolite, medicines, salt, piñon nuts, and other items too numerous to list here. Hopi mantas and other woven items were prized throughout the Pueblos. Aside from trading expeditions and trade fairs, diverse Pueblo peoples were often brought together by lengthy hunting trips into the mountains and plains, salt-gathering pilgrimages, piñon-gathering encampments, summer farming sites, and even calamities such as warfare, drought, and pestilence. Hence, the Pueblo peoples have always been able to cope in a variety of cultural as well as ecological environments.

In the purely religious realm, strikingly similar kachinas have been known from the Hopi villages to the Rio Grande, and there have long been Zuni and Tewa clowns at Hopi, Keresan clowns and medicine men among the Tewa, and Jemez medicine men also among the Tewa. The initiations for most of these borrowed religious practitioners were and are still conducted only in the Pueblos where they originated. Specialist medicine men also traveled freely through different Pueblos, however far-flung, to treat those who needed them. The Pueblos have also always been known, down through history, to "re-seed" decaying traditions from nearby vital

Pueblos, even across linguistic boundaries. Even priesthoods which have died out in a given Pueblo because of epidemic or other natural disasters are "replanted," to use the native agricultural terminology, by priests from other Pueblos who train and initiate new members for the unfortunate community. This, presumably, is how the borrowed religious specialists originated.

It should come as no surprise, finally, that the various Pueblo linguistic groups mention at least those others adjacent to them in their stories of genesis and other aspects of their traditional histories, something they do not do with any frequency for the Spaniards and the things they introduced, nor for the later Americans and the things that they, in turn, introduced. At the very least, this awareness of other Pueblo groups at the level of their respective genesis traditions speaks of a long, long period of mutual awareness and co-existence, facts that are borne out by the prehistoric evidence.

Prehistoric interaction was not confined to Pueblo groups, but extended to the civilizations of Meso-America as well. Pottery, maize, and, later, parrot feathers, copper bells, some architectural and astronomical knowledge and, perhaps, some religious practices came up from the south over the span of many centuries. How many non-material things actually derived from Meso-America, despite surface similarities between the two areas in many beliefs, is difficult to gauge until much more carefully determinate evidence is in. For our purposes it is sufficient to state that there was a wider awareness through trade, an awareness that, moreover, underscores the mutual pan-Pueblo consciousness during this prehistoric period. As Meso-American traits were adopted by the Pueblos, they became culturally similar in those accretions at least.

On the eve of the Spanish invasion, then, the numerous and superficially diverse Pueblo worlds had already been intersecting and overlapping for centuries in many complex ways. Their adaptability and willingness to aid each other, even across language barriers, had already been demonstrated. Indeed, we might characterize Pueblo existence in general after fifteen hundred years of *in situ* cultural development as being like an accordion. When times were good, the Pueblos expanded, at one time occupying portions of what are now five large Southwestern states. As the land slowly dried up, most of them contracted into the valleys carved by the major watercourses, and here they stayed. Other expansions and contractions, but mainly the latter, were occasioned by warfare and pestilence, but always those seem to have occurred within the context of a common sense of destiny.

The Pueblo traits of adaptability and cultural tenacity were put to a

severe test by that rapacious Spanish murderer, Francisco Vásquez de Coronado, whose plundering escapades anthropologists and historians have usually glossed over as acts of exploration. He and his forces rolled into the Pueblo Southwest in 1540-41 and sent shock waves throughout the Pueblos with their murder and plunder at some Tiwa villages near present-day Albuquerque. Then they rolled out again, and the Pueblos had four decades to think about what the Coronado intrusion meant, and what they would do with it when and if it came again. It seems from the historical record since that the seeds for the Pueblos' later pattern of passive but effective resistance were planted at that time.

One specific response to external threat that was to prove characteristic of the Pueblos for at least the next two centuries was already very much in evidence when a group of Coronado's men attempted to visit the ancestral Tewa village of Yunque, on the west bank of the Rio Grande, in 1541. On learning of the approach of the Spaniards, the people of Yunque fled to take refuge in four of their ancestral villages in the mountains. Similar flights to mountain fastnesses or to other places not easily accessible to the Spaniards would be undertaken by various Pueblo groups during the seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries. The people of present-day Sandia fled to Hopi, the Jemez into the Navajo country, Taos and Picuris to Cuartelejo in the Plains and, most memorably, the southern Tewa to Hopi in 1696. Much cultural exchange likely went on during those periods and many previously clear distinctions among these people blurred.

Following the effective Spanish colonization of their country in 1598, the Pueblos along the Rio Grande and its tributaries settled down to a very difficult eighty-two years of Spanish subjugation. These were years during which the civil and ecclesiastical authorities of the Spaniards alternated with one another in imposing oppressive measures on the Pueblos. By 1680, after many years of repressive measures undertaken to stamp out their aboriginal religions, the Pueblos had taken enough. They arose in righteous revolution and drove the Spaniards back into Mexico, to begin more than a dozen years of relative peace and independence.

The Pueblo Revolt marked the beginning of the most intensive period of cultural revitalization undertaken by the Pueblos thus far in historic times. The period between 1680 and 1696 was also one in which occurred the greatest dislocations and mass movements of Pueblo people in historic times. If the Pueblos by this time still did not share a sense of cultural similarity, they certainly shared at least a sense of common historical destiny. It seems clear that by this time the Spanish oppression had forged among the Pueblos the sense of unity and common purpose necessary to defend Pueblo cultural integrity against Spanish onslaughts. Even the

Hopis, long relatively untouched because of their splendid isolation, began to be drawn into this wider historical consciousness.

The major legacy of interest with regard to cultural survival from the centuries of Spanish rule following the revolution of 1680 is one I discussed in *The Tewa World* (1969:62-72). There I noted that the Spaniards unwittingly gave to all of the Pueblos except the Hopis a set of political institutions that eventually enabled them to cope successfully not only with the Spaniards themselves, but with the Mexicans and, later, the Anglo-Americans as well. Those institutions of Spanish municipal government have enabled the Pueblos to manage and to keep at bay external influences they find threatening. Those institutions and attendant ideas have merely been adapted to adjust to the later American presence, and they are still being adjusted today. In contrast, the Hopis, upon whom was imposed an American-style constitution in 1936, have not yet in more than five decades been able to assimilate it into their inherited perceptions of governance and order. Clearly, it takes time to assimilate and adapt new institutions to a pre-existing order, and the Hopi just have not yet had this time. The remainder of the Pueblos have been able to tinker and to adjust, and so they evolved those originally Spanish concepts into another means of assisting them in their cultural survival and continued revitalization.

It has often been claimed that the Spanish and succeeding Mexican governments both recognized the Pueblos as "civilized," in contrast to the nomadic and semi-nomadic Apache and Navajo bands, and thereby aided in the Pueblos' survival. I am not quite sure what the meaning of this claim is. At best the policy of differential and, presumably, preferential treatment bore mixed results. During the seventeenth century, up until the Pueblo revolution of 1680, this official policy meant very little in terms of how the Pueblos were treated. The Pueblos still suffered such unrelenting pressures to abandon their traditional cultures that they had to rebel to regain their freedom and sense of dignity. After the Spaniards reimposed their domination over them, the Pueblos had certain legal recourses that they were able to use to increasingly better advantage during the eighteenth century, but this was very much an eighteenth-century phenomenon. And, at that, Spanish justice was by no means even-handed with regard to Pueblo rights. In fact, American-style justice has better served the Pueblos in their quest to maintain their cultural sovereignty, at least thus far. (The Mexican period was too short to compare meaningfully with the other two.)

Another historical factor further assisting the Pueblos in their efforts to survive as distinct cultural entities is peculiar to this, the American period. I refer to the emergence, late in the nineteenth century, of the image of the Indians of the Southwest, and most particularly the Pueblos, as

artists. This followed upon the entry of the railroads and Fred Harvey hospitality houses into Pueblo country, and it was an image actively promoted by both the Santa Fe Railroad and the Harvey company. This image of the Pueblo peoples as artists has, moreover, survived unto the present time. Indeed, for many people in the Southwest today the only reality the Pueblos have is that of a people who peddle pots and jewelry under the portal of the historic Palace of the Governors in Santa Fe. This image does not permit of the most wholesome of existences for those people caught up in it, but it is far preferable to active racial hate or, worse, genocide. Unfortunately, too little is yet known about the popular image of the Pueblos as artists; perhaps scholars will eventually turn their attention to examining the genesis, elaboration, and long-term practical consequences of this image.

We come now to the ethnographic record to see what additional light it might shed on the question of Pueblo cultural survival. I consider it the most reliable of all the evidence available to us, for the archaeological record is still too full of puzzles with regard to the stubbornly insistent questions of just which historical Pueblo group was where during the critical period of classical Pueblo civilization between 900 and 1300 A.D., and just which group did what, when, where, and why. The historical record, in its turn, is sometimes mute or inadequate for important periods or hopelessly compromised by the observers' biases for anything but the most general of ethnohistorical considerations. We simply cannot get at Pueblo meanings for Pueblo events when most of the people who attempted to represent or interpret Pueblo realities were not only non-Pueblo Indians but were, indeed, individuals who had a vested interest in dismantling traditional Pueblo institutions—such as missionaries and government agents.

Let me pass quickly in review of those items of ethnographic knowledge already mentioned. I have noted that the Pueblos have traveled and traded widely among one another since far back into prehistoric times and that they traded not only material objects but, far more subtly, social institutions and religious knowledge and meanings as well. This pattern of extensive trading and exchange was not so much altered by the Spanish and Americans as it was augmented. They added new trade goods, new means of commerce and travel, and new saints' days for the calendar of commemoration and celebration. I have also noted that the Pueblos shared a mutual awareness in their traditional histories and that they put up an almost solid front of resistance to Spanish persecution when they finally decided to act. All of these factors bespeak a common sense of identity—although it is one that varies in intensity through time—and later, a common sense of destiny

as well.

There is one final ethnographic phenomenon of the Pueblos that, in a sense, ties it all together. I refer to the complex ceremonial-festival networks in which all of the Pueblos have been known to participate since the beginning of historic times and probably far back into prehistory as well. From the ethnographic record on these dramatic performances we can now specify clearly what goes on in them on the cultural level, the level of meanings embodied in symbols. There are at least six levels of activity during a major Pueblo religious observance: the public ritual itself, the feeding of visitors from other Pueblos, brisk trade, the exchange of new and other useful information, socializing among young people of different Pueblos, and prayerful meditations and offerings by the priests in the kivas to ensure the success of the whole enterprise. Of these I will focus here only on the first, the public ritual itself, and then only on a very few recurrent themes of interest to us here.

In the grand public rituals around which the whirl of other activity takes place, the Pueblos repeatedly and regularly, through burlesque, caricature, and the occasional parody of clowns, draw a sharp contrast between the self and the not-self, between what is acceptably Pueblo and what is alien. They burlesque not only the government agents, Protestant missionaries, and anthropologists who have bedeviled them in modern times, but the Spaniards and their priests who beset upon them in earlier times as well. In the *Sandaro* of the Rio Grande Keresans and other ceremonies, the Pueblos depict the original coming of the Spaniards in extremely humorous, but also extremely instructive, ways. For example, in Jemez Pueblo each year on November 12, the appearance of a clown in black face wearing a long coat representing Esteban, the first black to enter Pueblo country in 1537, electrifies those onlookers who know what is going on. In such ways as this, throughout the year, the Pueblos take important events of the past that intruded upon them and freeze them into place, as it were, by anchoring the historical events onto symbolic vehicles of expression that are traditional and that, thereby, lock those events comfortably onto their own cultural landscape. This renders what may have begun as a disturbing and disruptive historical intrusion into a permanent, which is to say unvarying, and therefore, unarmful part of their communal experience. In this way they collapse history and, in so doing, they turn time into space as well. To the extent that they have been successful in neutralizing history through these symbolic performances they have avoided getting caught up in it. Again, this should serve as a warning to those who think they are dealing with Pueblo realities when they draw conclusions about what the Pueblos were or are from historical documents alone.

Much has been said of the images whites have of Indians, but the Pueblos, at least, also create images of whites in their mass public ritual dramas, images for their own people to believe in, images that clearly set them apart. They do this not only of Spaniards and other whites, but of other non-Pueblo Indians as well. Rarely, ever so rarely, do they make comic references to the customs of other Pueblo Indians, if we require any more proof at this point of a shared general consciousness operating among all Pueblos at some deep level. Keeping in mind that these are usually occasions during which many other Pueblo people participate as fellow celebrants, these occasions serve to reinforce their image of the self in contrast to the not-self.

Once again, as with the public external image of the Pueblos that exists in the minds of aficionados of Southwestern Indian art, the steadily enlarging, sometimes shifting images the Pueblos have of non-Pueblo peoples need to be studied very carefully, for they are yet other elements contributing to their healthy sense of self and identity and, hence, to their survival. In fact, the dramatic performances and other levels of activity characterizing the ceremonial-festival networks may well constitute the single most important mechanism of cultural survival and revitalization that the Pueblos have, now as well as in the distant past. If anything, it is becoming more vital and widespread in our times because modern modes of transportation enable Pueblo people to travel easily and speedily to religious and festival events occurring anywhere within the Pueblo crescent.

To sum up, then, I have here attempted to demonstrate that we can understand the mechanics of Pueblo cultural adaptability and survival through a careful examination, by means of a dynamic interactionist perspective, of the enduring cultural similarities and shared experiences that have united them through time. That the Pueblos, most of them, have survived is obvious to anyone who knows them. That they can revitalize is also obvious, for revitalization is a way of life for them. It is not just a challenge of the present or recent past, but something that they have had to do regularly for as long as we can trace their presence on the peculiar landscape we know today as the American Southwest. When they came up out of their caves as Basketmakers early in the European Christian era and began to adapt themselves to life as village-building, pottery-making, maize-growers they had to revitalize; when they had to abandon their great towns in Chaco Canyon and Mesa Verde during the thirteenth century and

move to areas of more dependable water sources they had to revitalize; when Coronado cut a wide swath through them in the middle of the sixteenth century they had to revitalize; after their great revolution of 1680, when they cast off the yoke of Spanish oppression, they had to revitalize; after a widespread epidemic of smallpox sharply decimated their numbers in 1781-82 they had to revitalize; when there were threats to their remaining land base late in the last century and during the first two decades of this century they had to revitalize; since at least 1960, with renewed threats to their sovereignty and to their land and water rights they have again had to revitalize, and even now they are in the process of doing so. Those numerous revitalization efforts have simply not attracted much attention among scholars because most of their efforts have proceeded quietly and without fanfare.

In this long-demonstrated ability to, as one Tewa metaphor states it, reinvigorate decaying vines from nearby vital ones, lies the strength of the Pueblo people and their prime hope for the future. From my reading of the evidence here I would like to conclude that, for Americans, the Pueblos, like the poor, you shall have always with you. Indeed, shifting to a Pueblo perspective, I do not think that it should be an object of any surprise at all that these mature and sophisticated civilizations have survived two thousand years of *in situ* cultural development; the real wonder lies in the fact that a young and savage American nation has managed to survive over two hundred years.

I would have the temerity to make one final observation. I confess that I find the entire notion of revitalization a trifle culturally hidebound, for I suspect that if we had a comparably rich texture of historical detail for other cultures as we have for the Pueblos we would find that revitalization is not a challenge come uniquely to them under the impact of industrial civilization but, truly, a regularly reoccurring imperative. What we are dealing with here, I believe, are several distinctive manifestations of a universal and noble human aspiration—namely, the will to endure.

References

- Edwards, Paul, ed.
1967 *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. 8. New York: Macmillan.
- Eggan, Fred
1954 *Social Anthropology and the Method of Controlled Comparison*. *American Anthropologist* 56:743-63.
- Ortiz, Alfonso
1969 *The Tewa World: Space, Time, Being and Becoming in a Pueblo Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig

1953 Philosophical Investigations. New York: Macmillan.