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NAVAJO USE OF JIMSONWEED¹

W. W. HILL

The Navajo, like the majority of Southwestern tribes, used jimsonweed (*Datura meteloides*) only to a limited extent. They feared its narcotic effect and avoided it except in certain ceremonial capacities. These included its utilization as an aid in locating thieves and lost or stolen property, for diagnostic and curative purposes, and for revenging unrequited advances. It seems never to have been taken except by one individual at a time and no ritual of the magnitude of the California toloache rite existed.

For the purpose of apprehending thieves or recovering missing property the following procedure was employed.² A portion of the root was first obtained; the process of gathering conformed to the standard ritual pattern performed in the case of any plant destined for ceremonial purpose. The jimsonweed was first addressed, its subsequent role explained, and it was asked for help. Then an offering of turquoise was made; this was followed by pollen sprinkling. Next a hole was dug by the side of the plant and a portion of the root taken. The whole plant was never picked as in order to be ritually efficacious it must continue to live.

When the search proceedings were ready to begin the owner of the missing property either chewed some of the jimsonweed or drank some of it in solution, or if it happened that the owner was in poor health he hired a substitute to take it for him. According to the variation in individual sensitivity three types or combinations of three types of narcotic effect were reported to be produced. These included a trance, a visionary experience, or an audible hallucination. Often the individual might experience two or even all three of these effects.

In their pure forms the three types manifested themselves in the following ways. In the trance condition the individual wandered about in a stupor or partial narcosis. During his wanderings he encoun-

1. The information contained in this paper was obtained from the following informants; Grey Hair, White Cone, Arizona; Mr. Headman, Head Springs, Arizona; Margaret Shirley, Sawmill, Arizona; Pete Price, Fort Defiance, Arizona; Curley, Chin Lee, Arizona; Tomacito, Chaco Canyon, New Mexico; and, Kinipai, Mariano Lakes, New Mexico.

2. For other methods of locating lost and stolen property see: William Morgan, "Navaho Treatment of Sickness: Diagnosticians," *AA* (ns) vol. 33, no. 3, p. 402, 1931, and W. W. Hill, "The Hand Trembling Ceremony of the Navaho," *El Palacio*, vol. 38, nos. 12-13-14, p. 65, 1935. Parsons (Elsie Clews Parsons, "A Zuñi Detective," *Man*, vol. 16, no. 99, pp. 168-70, 1916.) mentions ceremonies of this type in connection with the use of jimsonweed among the Zuñi and says they are reported to have been derived from the Navajo.

tered the thief or located the lost or stolen articles. In the visionary type the man saw the location of the property or the identity of the thief was revealed. "He might be directed to the goods or the thief during the vision, or, if not, he knew exactly where to look when the drug wore off. Both these have been proven many times."

Those possessing acute auditory sensibilities were directed by voices to the hiding place. According to one account: "He went walking around and all the weeds were talking to him. A voice said to him 'Look over there by the arroyo where the water has washed the earth away. You will find your goods there.' There was a little pile of earth. There were no tracks of a man there, only the tracks of dogs. The man looked in the pile and there he found the property."

There can be no doubt as to the explicit belief of the Navajo in the validity of the above practices. Several informants cited instances of recoveries that had been made and several cases of confession on the part of individuals accused of theft were reported.

The visionary effects of jimsonweed were also utilized for diagnostic purposes. In the resulting vision the breach-of-tabu, animal, person, etc. which was causing the illness would be revealed. As soon as the cause was established it was possible to prescribe the chant which would effect a cure.

Medicinally jimsonweed was used to cure sores and internal injuries. Less frequently it was given with tobacco to cure delirium. Either the leaves or the roots were used and were applied externally or taken internally. A chanter usually administered the first time the patient was treated; after this the hiring of the chanter was optional. If taken internally the quantity was small as the narcotic effect was feared. Antidotes were generally employed and consisted of pulverized jewels or herbs. One example of the alleged curative properties of jimsonweed is as follows:

"My wife's grandfather asked me to help build a trail by which to haul wood from the mesa. The old man and I were working on the road and I picked up a rock that was too heavy for me and hurt myself in the groin. This gradually became worse until during summer the hurt became swollen and I was entirely laid up. I went to a field where there was some jimsonweed and made a prayer to it and offered it pollen. I pulled out part of the root which was about six inches long, chewed about half of it and put it in a bowl of water. After this had soaked a while I drank this bowl of water which held a quart or more. This was in the afternoon. Sometime after dark I began to see this vision. The first thing I saw was a pile of jimsonweed leaves on my sore groin. Right through the center of the pile of leaves appeared a hole. Everytime I blinked the hole got smaller until it disappeared and all that was left was a scar on the top leaf.

That was all I saw. Of course after that I got well. I believe that the sacrifice to the plant and drinking the solution made me well so ever since I have had faith in the plant. Jimsonweed simply dries you up. Your eyes are dry and your mouth. You cannot spit or urinate. Some people are afraid to take jimsonweed; they just place the weed on the sore but the cure is slower. When you come to, you just feel dry not sick."

Another account illustrated a use of jimsonweed which is concerned with the more purely magico-religious aspects of Navajo life.

If a girl repulsed a man who wished to have intercourse with her he might get revenge in the following manner. He went to the place where the girl lived and watched until he could get some of her saliva or dirt from the bottom of her moccasins. He took either the dirt or the saliva to a jimsonweed and while singing, tied it to a plant. Then he sang some more songs. The girl would go crazy right away. She would take off her dress and run around naked and everyone would laugh at her. The man would be angry at the girl and would want everyone to know it. The man would call the girl's name as he tied the material to the plant.

While the above practice seems never to have been prevalent it is interesting because the procedure is typical of that employed in one variety of Navajo witchcraft. In fact, its seeming rarity may be due to a desire to conceal any activity based on this pattern.

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SOME ARCHAEOLOGICAL NOTES FROM SOUTHERN HIDALGO COUNTY, NEW MEXICO

DOUGLAS OSBORNE AND ALDEN HAYES

During the latter part of the summer of 1936, the authors, together with Richard Hayes of Hillsdale, Michigan, were making archaeological investigations for the University of New Mexico in the extreme southern part of the small Panhandle of New Mexico in Hidalgo County three miles north of the International Border. The main seat of operations was at Red Spider Ruin (Deer Creek No. 5 of Brand's 1930 survey) which lies between Deer Creek and the road from Hachita to the ranch buildings (Culberson ranch house) of the local Victoria Land and Cattle Company (Diamond A Cattle Company) holdings. The ruin, a site of the Chihuahua complex, is