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EARLY WEAVING IN NEW MEXICO

It is not easy for one living in New Mexico in the twentieth century to think himself back into the sixteenth century. It is not easy properly to evaluate the effects which European civilization, arriving thru the first Spaniards, had upon the civilization to which the early peoples of this country had already attained.

In some respects the shock must have been severe. The early Americans were still in the Stone Age culturally speaking; they had no use, or even knowledge, of copper, iron, lead, tin, gold, silver, while the Spaniards had practical knowledge and extensive use of all them. Fire they knew, but gunpowder—and metal weapons which used fire to kill—were revolutionary to all their conceptions. The turkey they had domesticated, but here came the Spaniards with horses, cattle, burros, sheep, goats, hogs, chickens. The wheel in any form was unknown in the Southwest, but carts and wagons were used by the Spaniards certainly from the time of the first colonization and perhaps earlier.

Where there was some approximation between the two cultures, however, transition in tools and methods was quickly effected. The stone axe was superseded by the axe of iron; Spanish mattock and hoe took the place of the crude digging and planting implements of the Pueblo Indians. Maize, beans and squash were supplemented by the grains and fruits brought in by the Spaniards.

One of the most interesting examples of such transition was in the case of weaving, which is known to have been practiced in prehistoric times but the importance of which was greatly enhanced by the bringing in of sheep. We know from the earliest records that cotton was being cultivated before the arrival of the Spaniards; and kivas at archaeological sites in widely separated parts of the

Southwest, upon excavation, give evidence that they had contained weaving frames. How far back into the remote past this phase of Pueblo Indian culture extended is not known, but a recent publication¹ has an illustration of a neolithic loom which would have been quite understandable to a Pueblo Indian of Coronado's time.

For a detailed description of the loom itself, of the spindles and other implements used, and of the technique of weaving, one may turn to the article by Leslie Spier,² written from notes which he made at Zuñi in 1916. In all essential details it is safe to say that the art of weaving as there described has changed very little from what it was in prehistoric times.

Coronado's expedition brought sheep into New Mexico in 1540 and thus a new medium for weaving was introduced. Castañeda tells us clearly that when the Coronado expedition withdrew in April, 1542, a number of sheep were taken over to Pecos to be left with Fray Luis de Escalona, one of the three religious who elected to remain. Possibly as early as this, the Pueblo Indians acquired a knowledge of the use of wool; they certainly did so when sheep in larger numbers were brought in by Juan de Oñate and the first colonists in 1598.

In the Spanish archives at Santa Fe there is not much information regarding wool and weaving until towards the end of the eighteenth century. The earliest reference is in the fragment of a *bando*³ which escaped the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, in which Gov. Peñalosa Brizeño in 1664 forbade "the masters of doctrine to employ Indian women in spinning, weaving mantas, stockings, or any other things without express license from me or from him who may govern in my place."

Data supplied by the Spanish archives are not very

1. McCurdy, Geo. Grant, *Human Origins*, II. p. 97.

2. *El Palacio*, XVI, pp. 183-193, quoting *American Anthropologist*.

3. Spanish Archives of N. Mex., no. 3.

numerous for the eighteenth century. A land-grant of 1701 refers to a small tract near Bernalillo at a place on the Rio Grande called "Ancón del Tejedor," or Weaver's Bend. The record of a suit in 1734 over a contract to deliver wool gives an interesting glimpse into colonial life. Scattered references show that sheep and wool, and in later years some manufactured articles, were included in the exports which went out southwards with the regular *cordón* in November or December of each year.

In 1737, citizens of Albuquerque petitioned Governor Michelena to revoke an edict of August 24th prohibiting the sale of wool, grain or cattle, or their export. They complained of the danger from moths and rotting, and of the hardship which enforcement of the edict would cause them; but their petition was refused.⁴ Similar requests of May 22, 1744, and June 16, 1745, from settlers of Albuquerque to Governor Codallos y Rabal that they be allowed to sell their clips to the *dueñ or mayor domo de la Requa* from Mexico were both granted.⁵ A later edict, promulgated on April 14, 1777, gives some understanding of the wool situation at that time.⁶

Don Pedro Fermin de Mendinueta, of the order of Santiago, Brigadier of the Royal Armies, Governor and Captain general of this kingdom for his Majesty, etc.

Being public and notorious the scarcity at present suffered in this Kingdom of larger and smaller stock, occasioned by the exporting of these two species which was permitted by their former abundance; in addition to which from the lack of the former [cattle] results also the lack of oxen which are necessary for the cultivation of the fields, and from the lack of the latter [sheep] results the lack also of mutton and wool, because by the exporting of this species both in sheep and in uncarded wool, the looms on which it was being utilized are idle, and so likewise the fact that some few individuals advance the buying of sheep to the year before they are born so as to fatten and resell them

4. *Ibid.*, no. 421.

5. *Ibid.*, nos. 454, 465a.

6. *Ibid.*, no. 697.

at an excessive price within the same Kingdom — all of which is contrary to the public weal and of greatest injury to the Republic [sic]: Therefore by this present Bando I prohibit the export of said herds and of raw wool under the penalties incurred by those who contravene the supreme orders; and that noone may allege ignorance, the *alcaldes mayores* to whom is directed its publication in their respective Jurisdictions shall do it in the accustomed form, and shall return it to this superior Jurisdiction with a statement of execution. Given in this Villa of Santa Fee, April 14, 1777.

Pedro Fermin de Mendinueta
By order of the Governor and Captain General,
Antonio Moreto

This particular copy of the bando was sent to the alcalde in Albuquerque and shows this return-statement:

In this Villa de San Phelipe de Albuquerque, on April 20, 1777, I Don Francisco Trebol Navarro, alcalde mayor of said villa and its jurisdiction caused to be proclaimed in confirmation I have entered this return; and I signed it, I said alcalde mayor with the witnesses attending me with whom I officiate, of which I give faith.

Francisco Trebol Navarro
Manuel Zanes Garuizo Francisco Suarez Catalan

Juan Bautista de Anza was appointed governor in June of the above year and served until 1788, but the papers which have survived from these years are rather meager and nothing appears bearing on our subject. He was succeeded by Fernando de la Concha whose active interest in the production of wool and in the weaving industry is shown by one of the papers.⁷

The Most Excellent Viceroy Count de Revilla Gigedo in a communication of November 25th advises me as follows:

“As soon as I have been informed by the *expediente* upon promoting the commerce of New Mexico and the establishment of factories of coarse weaves in the same

7. *Ibid.*, no. 1072a.

Province with the facts as to what it will cost to send implements and intelligent operatives, I will report to His Majesty recommending as advantageous and very adequate the means proposed by Your Grace in your communication of October 27th of the past year.

"It is one of the things which may be granted exemption of duties on fruits and effects which are exported by the settlers for trading in Chihuahua and other places of Nueva Vizcaya, and yet of however little value is that which they contribute in this tax, it cannot be lifted without consulting His Majesty because there is a Royal order which prevents such licenses being granted. . . ."

So as to inform you of the points contained in my report above cited, in the order enclosed to Your Excellency, I am sending you a copy of it; and with regard to what I enjoined in mine of January 28 that you should prohibit the exporting and slaughtering of the females of whatever kind of stock in all the extent of that Province, allowing only the latter in the case of the old ones useless for breeding. Your Grace will renew the same provision in view of the decision of His Excellency, seeing to its punctual observance.

Having learned that those interested are accustomed to export many sheep among the droves of rams, leaving their tails long so they will be indistinguishable from those, Your Grace will command by a bando to be published that they have to cut them within a definitely fixed length, under penalty of losing them and a fine of ten pesos on him who fails to so do, or if later he should take any sheep out of the Province whether in small or large number, since this provision is to be complied with exactly according to all its tenor.

God guard your Grace many years. Chihuahua, Dec.
18, 1789. Jacobo Ugarte y Loyola

[To] Sr. Don Fernando
de la Concha

Two years later there is reference in de la Concha's correspondence to his having initiated trade by the Navajoes in the exporting of pelts and coarse blankets.⁸ Fernando de Chacón became governor in 1794, and in the following

8. *Ibid.*, no. 1176 .

year he was writing to the comandante in Chihuahua,

The Navajoes, whom you suspect may have aided the Apaches in their incursions, have since the death of their general Antonio been irreconcilable enemies, to such a degree that with us they have observed an invariable and sincere peace. These Gentiles are not in a state of coveting herds (of sheep), as their own are innumerable. They have increased their horse herds considerably; they sow much and on good fields; they work their wool with more delicacy and taste than the Spaniards. Men as well as women go decently clothed; and their Captains are rarely seen without silver jewelry; they are more adept in speaking Castilian than any other Gentile nation; so that they really seem "town" Indians much more than those who have been reduced. . . .⁹

On Feb. 14, 1803, Salcedo in Chihuahua forwarded to Governor Chacón a royal order, dated June 21, 1802, directing him to send to the consulate in Vera Cruz a report as to agriculture, industry, the arts, and trade in his territory.¹⁰ The whole of this report, which is in the archives in the form of a retain-copy, is of great interest in its picture of New Mexico as it was at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Several parts have to do with wool and weaving.¹¹

Altho the Province possesses sufficient large stock for labor, what abounds most is the raising of sheep, since without counting what is consumed within the Province from one year to another there goes out to the Province of Vizcaya and lesser presidios from 25,000 to 26,000 sheep. . .

With respect to arts and trades, it may be said with propriety that there are none in this Province, there being no apprenticeship, official examination for master-workmen, any formality of trades-unions, or other things customary in all parts, but necessity and the natural industry of these inhabitants has led them to exercise some, for

9. *Ibid.*, no. 1335.

10. *Ibid.*, no. 1644.

11. *Ibid.*, no. 1670a.

example weaving in wool, shoemaker, carpenter, tailor, blacksmith, and mason in which nearly all are skilled. The first work on racks narrow *bayetones* [baize], long *fresadas* [kind of blanket], *sarapes*, *bayetas*, *sayal* [sackcloth], and *gergo* [carpeting], which weaves they color with indigo [*añil*] and Brazil nut which they import from the outer country, and with stains and herbs which they know. From cotton they make a kind of domestic shirting [*manta*] of twisted thread closer and stronger than that of Puebla, cloths for tablecloths and stockings: and altho by the present Government said workmen in wool have been furnished with models of fulling-mill and press they have not been able to make use of the one or the other machine, on pretext of not being able to meet the expense. . .

The above report was dated at Santa Fe on August 28, 1803. On October 20th the Viceroy, Joseph de Yturri-garay, in Mexico issued a bando, five copies of which were forwarded to Governor Chacón from Chihuahua on December 16th. It appears that on October 12, 1795, the king in Spain had granted a ten years' suspension of customs duties on the products of the Province. The government had now decided to supplement the encouragement thus extended by establishing an annual fair at some point in the Province of Chihuahua where the people of New Mexico might dispose of their goods quickly and to good advantage. It had also been decided to send from Mexico artisans skilled in the art of weaving, that the industry might be introduced and promoted in that country. . . To this end workmen would be chosen of skill and good conduct and especially men free of the vice of drunkenness, and the Ministers of Army and Royal Hacienda would proceed to advertise for and to contract such men with their families. Implements and models of looms were to be sent with them; and their contract was to be for six years.¹²

It was nearly two years before the superior government succeeded in putting this decision into effect. The contract which was then made is of interest in many of its details.¹³

12. *Ibid.*, no. 1691.

13. *Ibid.*, no. 1885.

*The Ministers of the General Treasury of Army
and Royal Hacienda*

We certify that in consequence of the Superior Decree of the Most Excellent Viceroy of this Kingdom of May 6th last, goes under contract to the Villa of Santa Fe, New Mexico, Don Ygnacio Ricardo Bazán certified master of weavers and his brother Don Juan Bazán tradesman of the same guild, to teach their art to the youths there, under the following conditions:

- 1st that they shall live in that Villa teaching the youths there the said trade, at least six years without leaving there until they have approved pupils who know the art.
- 2nd that eighteen reales daily are to satisfy the master from today when he leaves the capital until he shall have fulfilled his contract, out of which he has to support himself and his sons in New Mexico.
- 3rd that in addition to the eighteen reales daily nine reales additional are to be paid him during the journey and six reales for each of his sons which assignment ceases upon arrival at their destination, and it remains then reduced to the eighteen reales.
- 4th that he is to be given, as he has been given, a horse with saddle and bridle, a musket, a pair of blunderbusses, and a saber for the road, and two horses saddled and bridled for his sons.
- 5th to the tradesman Don Juan are to be paid from today and until he fulfill his contract twelve reales daily and six during the journey, a horse saddled and bridled having been given him, a pair of blunderbusses and a saber.
- 6th they have been given the implements which are entered on the separate list of account of the Royal Hacienda, for the practice of their art, they having to equip, also at cost of the Royal Hacienda, the necessary looms in the Villa of Santa Fe.
- 7th that the transporting of those implements and other equipage is also at the expense of the Hacienda, fourteen reales daily being paid for three pack mules which have been given them provided with rope.
- 8th that the mozo guide who takes them is to be paid one peso daily which said master will supply him on account of the Royal Hacienda.
- 9th upon arriving in New Mexico the master and trades-

man shall deliver to the Governor or to the Justice of the Villa the five horses with saddles, bridles and ropes, the three mules with their equipment, the musket, two pairs of blunderbusses and two sabers, and in case any beast dies on the road they shall furnish the Justice with a certificate or other document which will explain the nondelivery.

- 10th in the Villa these artisans shall be provided with house and supplies at a just price, for all which they are to pay out of their daily allowance, and for that they are to receive it work-days and fiestas without exception.
- 11th they must be supplied with what may be considered regular at good account for the trip from here to Zacatecas; in Zacatecas with the necessary to Durango. In Durango with what may be needed to the next "box" [treasury office] and from there to the destination, with respect to the daily allowances of the master and tradesman, the six reales daily of each of the two sons, and one peso for the mozo, and fourteen reales for maintenance of the beasts.
- 12th at the said destination they are to present also the implements which, in accord with the accompanying note, they are taking to equip the looms and commence their work and teaching.
- 13th in case they wish to withdraw from that Province before the end of the six years, the daily allowance shall cease and nothing shall be furnished them for their return; and when they complete the six years and leave approved pupils in the class of expert tradesmen, the Superior government shall grant, as may be fitting the station and merit of the master and tradesman, the reward which should be accorded them.

Under the conditions stated are going to New Mexico the said Don Ygnacio Ricardo, widower, and Don Juan Bazán, bachelor, Spaniards, and two youths, sons of the first, named one Francisco Xavier fourteen years of age, and the other José Manuel of ten years, having been supplied with three hundred pesos by this General Treasury for their provision for the journey at good cost. And that it may appear where it may be proper, there may be noted below what may be supplied them at the other offices [*cajas*] on their journey until they arrive at their destination and there they may be adjusted, we give the present (certificate) in Mexico, September 3, 1805.

Joseph Maria Lano

Joseph de Vildacola

Meanwhile interested citizens in Santa Fe had held a junta in June on the matters proposed by the Viceroy's bando of Oct. 20, 1803, and in consequence Governor Real Alencaster had written on July 1st, and wrote again on October 2nd, urging that the instructors for weaving in wool and cotton be sent, and that the promised annual fair be located at El Paso del Norte.¹⁴ On November 14th, Salcedo simply replied that he had referred the request to the viceroy.¹⁵ Not until November 20th did Alencaster acknowledge receipt of the terms of the Bazán contract, and he asked that two thousand pesos be set aside in the Chihuahua treasury to meet the expenses involved.¹⁶

Unfortunately there is a break in the record from this point until April 28, 1809, when Bazán wrote to Acting Governor Joseph Manrique as follows:¹⁷

In reply to your communication of today about securing samples from my students similar and conforming to those which I have sent to the Most Excellent Viceroy, on November 24th last, I must say: that, you asking me again for other samples for his satisfaction, according to the superior order of the Sr. Comandante General of February 21st last, it is necessary for me to secure them with the few materials which I have left of Silk, Cotton, and Wool, since you are not ignorant that, except out of my own pocket I have no other resource enabling me to do it, from the lack of assistance which to date has been given me. Notwithstanding this impossibility which actually exists, I will carry out all that you are pleased to impose upon me as promptly as possible, with the satisfaction of their being worked by my said students; for which I beg that you will be pleased to name one or two persons who may come by your order to witness it, if so you esteem it fitting.

God guard you many years. Santa Fe, April 28, 1809.
Ygn. Ricardo Bazán.

[to] Sr. Governador Interino

Manrique asked the two alcaldes of Santa Fe, Antonio

14. *Ibid.*, no. 1900.

15. *Ibid.*, no. 1919.

16. *Ibid.*, no. 1925.

17. *Ibid.*, no. 2225.

Ortiz and José Campo Redondo, to be present at the test, and when on August 31st he forwarded the samples to Salcedo he informed him that the pupils had made them by themselves without the master being present. In reviewing the various expenditures which had been incurred in the undertaking, he mentioned the arrival of the Bazáns on March 3, 1807, so that the instruction which they had given had been in a matter of two years instead of the six as contracted. The total expenditure as figured by Manrrique had amounted to date to 9,215 pesos, 6 reales, without allowing for their additional expenses until they should be released from their contract by the authorities in Mexico, and the costs of their return journey to that city. As the pupils had learned all that the Bazáns could teach them, he therefore recommended that they be released.¹⁸

On October 1st, Salcedo was referring the whole matter to the viceroy,¹⁹ and on April 27, 1810, he advised the governor of the settlement decided by the authorities in Mexico.²⁰ Bazán acknowledged on July 4th receipt of this information from Manrrique.²¹ Remaining references to the Bazáns²² are so vague as to be of little value. In August 1810, Manrrique asked Bazán for information regarding the state of the trade in the Province and as to the results of his instruction; but Bazán's reply is not now in the records. The last reference seems to show that Bazán was still in New Mexico at the end of 1814.

The opinion has been expressed that a survival of the instruction in weaving which was brought into New Mexico by the Bazáns may still be seen in the famous Chimayó blankets, a connection which will be of interest if it can be established.

LANSING B. BLOOM

18. *Ibid.*, nos. 2249c, 2250.

19. *Ibid.*, no. 2255.

20. *Ibid.*, no. 2315.

21. *Ibid.*, no. 2335.

22. *Ibid.*, nos. 2354, 2565.