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## FOLK-HISTORY AND ITS RAW MATERIAL

### *White Men's Raids on the Hopi Villages*

By BARBARA AITKEN

IN ROBERT ERMATEWA'S story, "The Good-Bringing," published in the April number of the NEW MEXICO HISTORICAL REVIEW, Mrs. I. L. Harrington has collected a very interesting example of Indian folk-history in the making. The fact that a youth of sixteen is able to reproduce, in so much detail, and with such apparent fidelity, a story told to him before he was eleven years old, is a valuable bit of evidence for estimating the worth of Indian narratives which purport to be historical. It has a bearing, besides, on the artistic processes involved in Indian story-telling.

As to the date of the Mexican raid on the pueblo of Oraibi which is the subject of the story, almost certainly it must be placed, not "about a hundred years ago," but in the second decade of the American administration of New Mexico. Robert Ermatewa heard the story from his great-grandfather, Lomawikvaya, at some time before the old man's death in 1926, but presumably not before his own eighth year, 1923. Lomawikvaya said, then, that the marks which he had scored yearly on the cliff "since he was a boy" amounted to fifty-eight. Even supposing that he could call himself a boy (in the sense of a bachelor) up to the age of seventeen or eighteen, the earliest possible date for his birth seems to be about 1848, and for the raid (when, he says, he was a married man), about 1867. Lomawikvaya's appeal for the return of the Oraibi captives was made, therefore, not to the Mexican authorities but to the American governor of the territory—possibly Governor Robert Mitchell.<sup>1</sup>

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1. That Lomawikvaya thought the Santa Fé soldier looked "like the [Mexican] robbers" means no more than that both had beards. The mention of bacon and sugar would be enough to date the incident as post-1848.

Raids to procure Indian captives for sale into domestic slavery in New Mexico went on through the early years of the American administration. "The trading in captives has been so long tolerated in this Territory," wrote J. S. Calhoun in 1850, "that it has ceased to be regarded as a wrong." In 1860, unauthorized expeditions into the Navajo country by "volunteer companies" of New Mexican citizens were very frequent. These were "virtually slave-raids"; they brought back women and children, sheep and cattle, for sale in New Mexico.<sup>2</sup> Indian women and children were sold after church on Sundays in the villages of Rio Arriba county, and a healthy eight-year-old girl sometimes fetched \$400. Although these raids were ostensibly directed against the hostile Navajo Indians, the raiders sometimes found an easier prey in the Hopi towns.

Indian slavery was made illegal in New Mexico by the president's proclamation of 1865; and after that date the American authorities took steps to have captives restored to their friends whenever a definite complaint was laid. There also was a general search for, and emancipation of, the Navajo captives, well described by R. B. Townshend in his novel, "Lone Pine."

In *El Palacio*, a few years ago, I published a Navajo woman's account of her capture by Mexican slave-hunters and her subsequent captivity—which, by the way, lasted long after the general emancipation of the Navajo slaves; and I give below the account by an Indian eye-witness of a raid on Oraibi, very similar to the raid described by Loma-wikvaya and perhaps nearly contemporary with it. The scene and the raider's proceedings are the same; though the one outrage was carried out in the dawn of an autumn morning, and the other on a dark afternoon in late December.

Indians' accounts of events in New Mexico seventy or eighty years ago are, of course, no great rarity. The late José Manuel Naranjo, of Santa Clara, for example, who

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2. Gov. Rencher to Hon. Lewis Cass, Nov. 10, 1860. *H. Ez. Doc.*, 24-2.

died in 1913, was able to give a fairly full account of the Canyon de Chelly expedition of 1849, in which he had taken part, as well as certain boyish recollections of the fighting at La Cañada in 1837. But such stories by eye-witnesses have less theoretical interest for the student of tradition than the story recorded by Mrs. Harrington, which exemplifies the transmission of a true narrative through a second storyteller, half a century after the event.

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The Castila [Spaniards] killed a chief at Oraibi once. In Suyala [winter solstice ceremony] one time, they [the chiefs] had been five days in the kiva, and on the sixth day the Castila came. They came in by the back way to Oraibi, on the north side. They stayed all one day, and on the second day again they stayed. On the third day [the ninth of the ceremony], when the married women have to make wafer-bread [and carry it to feed the chiefs in the kiva], the chiefs have to make their feathers ready. While they were doing that work, the Castila went down to a spring below the town; there they put their horses and things, and came up again to the mesa themselves. When the chiefs were making the baho [feathered prayer-sticks], then the Castila came to the kiva—maybe on top of it. The men in the kiva were all around in a circle, all working and making baho.

Then my mother was making wafer-bread, and I saw lots of people going down to the kiva to see the Castila, and I wondered what was the matter and I went too. [He was "a big boy, maybe sixteen or eighteen."] All the Castila were loading their guns—we did not know why. We got scared—every one of them doing something to his gun. My maternal-uncle Kelwístiwa, he called out for the married women to take the wafer-bread to the kiva for the men to eat: the Castila told him to say that. The women began taking a lot of wafer-bread over to the kiva (in those days the women took just one roll of wafer-bread each; there were so many women in Oraibi then), and then the Castila made a fire and warmed their hands and began to eat the wafers, just outside the kiva. They beat the man, Kelwístiwa, who was attending to them. They peered down into the kiva to see what the chiefs were doing, and while they

were looking, they kept doing something to their guns. The chiefs had not eaten yet, and went on working.

When they began to beat my uncle, I got scared, and ran back to where my mother was making wafer-bread. All the women and children were on the house-tops looking at the Castila; they didn't know what was going to happen. I told my mother, while she was making wafers: "I think the Castila are going to do something bad for us; that's why they beat my uncle already!" Just as I was saying that and my mother peeped out to see,, all the women and children that were on the house-tops began to cry and run to their houses. A woman was running over a house-top and a Castila man running after her; she jumped from the roof to the ground (about twelve feet) and the man after her, and he caught her. Then *all* the children and women were crying and running away, and the Castila running after them. Then I heard some guns go off; the bullets were jumping across the houses. I thought: Maybe they have killed all the men in the kiva! I was so scared, so many guns going off! One of my material-uncles came running to our house. He had just been spinning cotton [in some other house]; because next day they were going to tie feathered strings, and he was spinning the string for them; and he asked the people who had run into the house for refuge, what was the matter?

They put the women and children down the hatchway into the basement. All along the other houses too I could hear them crying, and the guns going off at the same time. My uncle told me: We must just stay here and wait. My uncle had two guns and gave me one, and we said: "If one comes here we will shoot him as he comes; we can do the same as they do to our people; if we kill just one we may help them!" So we just waited there.

One man was in the kiva with the chiefs, making the baho with them. As he came up out of the kiva, the Castila shot him through the leg below the knee. As we waited, we heard someone groaning; we went out to see who it was. He came to the foot of our ladder, and when he got there he was very tired, and he lay on the ground and covered himself with his blanket, and the blood was running down.

My father told me to stay there: Maybe our chiefs are all gone—I am going to see. And as he said this, we heard the guns going off slower, one at a time. So I stayed there and my father went to the kiva. When he came back, he

said: "We don't know what trouble they had, but certainly they had bad trouble! I saw one man lying shot through the head, and the shot, after it went through his head, it went on and hit one of the Castilas' own men in the head and killed him too."

The Castila ran after the little children and caught a lot of them. And when they got through shooting, they went down to the place where they left their horses, and took a lot of children with them. The people were so scared that they hadn't seen where their children ran to; now they came out and hunted for their children, and a whole lot were gone! The Castila got on their horses and were driving the children along.

The Castila saw our sheep coming home, and they ran and took them all away from the shepherds and took them along too. Then, one man had gone after wood, and he was bringing it home on his back, and he did not know what had been happening up on the mesa. All the people were looking down from the mesa, watching the Castila go away; and they saw a Castila man on a horse run up to this man, and, as he got near him, a smoke came up between the two, and he fell down with his firewood: they had killed him too. Then they killed a man who was herding sheep.

The Oraibi men gathered together [the usual term for holding a meeting] and planned to go after them; but some were scared and did not want to go for fear of being killed too; so they did not go after them and bring their children back; although we had plenty of guns.

There was one Castila that the Castila themselves had killed; they brought him down off the mesa and buried him below [before they left]. Older people have shown me the place where they saw him buried.

From that time on we did not sleep at nights, fearing they might come again, by night. The people all came in to the middle row of houses to sleep, and the men walked around all night.

The men gathered together again. They told each other they would go to Alaviya (Santa Fe) and tell the [white] chief there to gather all their children and send them back to them. They took a corn clan man, Patangsi, to interpret for them in English. The men told the chief how the Castila had killed our men and taken our children away. That man wrote down something; they took the writing down for the Castila to look at. The Castila

weren't living all at the same place, they were scattered all about the place, and our poor children with them; but they gathered them all up and brought them to Patangsi and the superintendent. [The Hopi, being administered by the Indian school superintendent at Keam's Canyon, used "superintendent," in 1913, as an English title for any white official.] The superintendent gave every one of the little children new clothes and blankets, and they came back very nice with their new clothes on. (The interpreter: "Now here they made me smile, poor people!") The sheep, they brought just a few back; they had eaten a whole lot of them. Six of the Hopi men they shot to death, and one other they shot but he didn't die.

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If we now compare our two narratives of a slave-hunting raid—Ermatewa's second-hand telling of his great-grandfather's story, and Danachnemtiwa's telling of his own recollections—it is plain that they represent different stages in the art of telling. Danachnemtiwa's tale, with its slow movement, its truthful but indiscriminating preservation of every detail which impressed itself on a boy's memory in virtue of its strangeness or its emotional quality, is only raw material for folk-history. It is a *chose vue*: we might call it *the journalism of the illiterate*: but it is not art, although one or two of its "situations" are obvious material for art. The anxious crowd round the opening of the underground kiva, making way, from force of habit, for the dutiful procession of bread-bearing women. The slave-hunters cynically eating up the women's offerings while they load their muskets. And the circle of priest-chiefs below, steadily working on at their prayer-sticks, under the threat of murder; because no one has given them the signal to stop work. But life *is* like that; it owes nothing to Danachnemtiwa.

Ermatewa, on the contrary, relating a thing heard and not a thing seen, has begun to do some artistic work on the material. The story has been pruned (I hope I am not robbing Mrs. Harrington of the credit!) by the unconscious

selection of the boy's memory. The second-hand teller does remember the duller accessories of a true story, but concentrates on what is intrinsically most "tellable"; or, on what approximates to the accepted conventions of the folk-tales on which his own taste has been formed; or, on what the original teller must have told with most emphasis, namely, his own part in the action. The story begins to have a "hero" in the novelistic sense: the young man whose uneasiness would not let him sleep, who watched the night by the water-hole—heard the villains go by—hurried home, too late, to find his wife gone! Then, the hero's lonely journey, racing day and night through unknown country: his entry into the strange, formidable town: the dramatic success of his appeal to the foreign chief: lastly, his triumphant return, the people's gratitude, the name-giving! All this is such stuff as folk-tales are made of, and our author's memory shapes it a little in the folk-tale way. We get none of the tedious legal process of finding and freeing the captives: the white chief merely says the word—liberates—punishes—compensates—all on the hero's petition. Alone he did it! But, though Ermatewa's memory has thus selected and rejected, what he selects is not much assimilated to folk-tale *form*. For example, the raiders stay at Oraibi the two days of fact, not the "four days" of Indian convention. The foreign chief does not accept or offer tobacco, as the chiefs of the folk-tales would do in a like case, but "touches his forehead" to his soldiers, and bestows the actual bacon and sugar of the U. S. army stores. This actuality keeps Ermatewa's story, I think, out of the folk-tale class, and entitles it to be called biography. Biography that is on the way to become folk-history.