The West Jemez Culture Area

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WHEN THE first Spaniards entered New Mexico, the Jemez people occupied two regions, one to the east, the other to the west, of the central valley of the Rio Grande. Separated though they were by the countries of the Tiguas, the Queres and the Tanos, they were nevertheless one in culture, language and origin. When therefore the East Jemez who occupied the pueblo of Pecos and other sites adjacent for over a thousand years, had dwindled in numbers to a mere handful, it was very natural that these survivors should rejoin their cousins of the west from whom their ancestors had separated so many centuries before. This event took place in the year 1838, and today there are, among the Jemez, fifty-five who claim descent from the survivors of Pecos Pueblo.

Our present interest, however, is a survey of the culture area of the West Jemez, and some review of the history and archaeology of their country.

The so-called "grant" to the Jemez people, issued from El Paso in 1689 by Governor Domingo Jironza Petriz Cruzate after the Spaniards had been driven from the country by the Indians, was similar in purpose to a concentration camp. The intent of that act was to reduce the Jemez to a single pueblo and to restrict their range to nine square leagues. Two centuries later a grant of this extent, with the present pueblo of Jemez as its center, was confirmed by the United States government.

Before this cutting down of their country, (and for how many centuries before is not clear,) the country of the West Jemez was contiguous on the south and east with the Queres people, on the northeast with the Tewas, on the north and west with the "Apaches Navajoses." The pueblo ruin at the Ojo de Chihuahua on the high mesa east of the Vallecito Viejo, is not many miles distant through the forest from

sites which were occupied by the ancient Cochitenos; and only one and a half miles eastward from that ruin lies a thirty foot dugout, felled and shaped by the Indians of Santo Domingo and left high on the mountain range like a miniature Noah's ark for which there had been no pressing need.

Cerro Conejo, Cerro Pino, Cerro Pelado, Cerro Redondo, and Cerra Venado, were all mountains of that early Jemez world which extended from the high mesa east of the Vallecito westward to the Rio Puerco, and from the region of the present pueblo of Jemez north to the San Anton. It was a world of mountain and valley, of towering forest and living streams, of high majestic mesas which tapered into many a commanding potrero flanked by deep canyons. Even today the Jemez have community rabbit drives in the valley, and in the sierras they hunt the deer and bear, the wolf and fox, the gallina de la tierra and the eagle of the sky. But gone is the buffalo which (if we may trust the maps of Miera y Pacheco) formerly ranged the prairie like meadows of the upper Valles and the San Anton. The streams still teem with trout; the bluebird still flashes in the sunlight which filters down through the royal pines; the bluebells and grasses, mariposa lillies and yellow flowers of countless species still wave waist deep in the sun drenched glades of the mountains.

The archaeological survey and mapping of this Jemez country which had been planned for the past summer by the School of American Research was necessarily postponed because of an unusual and long continued rainy season. From partial surveys made some years ago, however, it may be stated that there are in the whole region the sites of at least twenty-two pueblos, of from one to five plazas each, which are claimed by the Jemez as having been built and occupied by their ancestors. This number does not include twelve others reported by the Jemez Indians but not yet verified and it also excludes three pueblo sites of this region which the Jemez state were occupied by other peoples.

One large ruin is reported west of the Nacimiento range in the Rio Puerco drainage, but all the others are very equally divided in two main groups for which we might re-
tain the designations given by the earliest Spanish explorers, namely, the "Jemez" and the "Aguas Calientes" (Hot Waters). The later name can refer only to the sites found in the San Diego-Guadalupe drainage, and the group which they reported as the "Jemez" must therefore have been the group in the Vallecito drainage. There are no thermal or medicinal springs in the Valles, whereas there are such springs in the San Diego canyon and at intervals as far north as the San Anton.

Castaneda was the earliest writer to give any information regarding the pueblos of the Jemez country, and the significance of the fact that he placed them in these two groups has been overlooked by every modern student. Much confusion has resulted, especially as to names and sites, and for the sake of clearness it would therefore be better to adopt such designations for the two groups as the "Vallecito" and the "Guadalupe-San Diego."

Captain Barrio-Nuevo and his "handful of soldiers," connected with the Coronado Expedition of 1540-42, were the first Spaniards to enter the West Jemez country, and Castaneda, who recounts the event, states that after leaving Tiguex (near the present Bernalillo) and having visited the Queres nation, they journeyed seven leagues northeast to the Jemez Pueblos. The direction indicated has perplexed Bancroft and others. The country under discussion did lie northwest of the main Queres country yet from Zia, the last Queres pueblo and the one doubtless which supplied Barrio-Nuevo with guides to the Jemez, the direction up the Vallecito Viejo does bear east of north. Moreover, the Queres Indians would advise Barrio-Nuevo that the trail by way of the Vallecito Viejo up into the Vallecito de los Indios and on through the Valle Grande would be far better for the Spaniards and their horses than would any trail north by either the San Diego or the Guadalupe canyon. Doubtless, also, it seemed to Barrio-Nuevo more important for him to visit the eastern, or "Jemez," group of seven pueblos than to visit the "Aguas Calientes" group of three.

It was more than forty years before another Spaniard entered the country. Then early in 1583 Espejo made the
Jemez a hurried visit, apparently following the general route taken by Barrio-Nuevo from Tiguex to the Queres, and from the Queres to the Jemez. He also reported seven pueblos of the Jemez, but his directions and distances are unreliable and unfortunately neither he nor Barrio-Nuevo recorded the names of the pueblos which they reported.

The next reference to the West Jemez is in Oñate's Obediencia of July 7, 1598, in which the "province of the Emmes," nine pueblos being named, is assigned to Fray Alonzo de Lugo. A month later Oñate visited the West Jemez country in person. As he recorded in his Discurso de las Jornadas: "On the fourth (August, 1598,) we descended to the pueblos of the Emmes, which altogether are eleven, of which we saw eight. * * On the fifth we descended to the last pueblo of the said province, and saw the marvelous hot baths which spring up in many places and have singular marvels of nature, in waters cold and very hot and many mines of sulphur and rock alum, and certain it is there are many wonders."

Coronado's headquarters had been at Tiguex, below the mouth of the Jemez river, and as we have seen, Barrio-Nuevo entered the Jemez country from the south. Oñate on the other hand had established his real at San Juan pueblo, and the wording of his report indicates that he had entered the country from the north. He "descended" thro the Valles to the pueblos in the Vallecito drainage then working to the west over the high mesa land he "descended" from the potrero to the "last pueblo" of the province which he associated with the marvelous hot springs. Guiusewa is the pueblo meant beyond any reasonable doubt, and the trail from the Vallecito down into Hot Springs is still in daily use.

It is not certain whether the missionary Fray Alonzo de Lugo entered upon the field assigned to him; in any case his labors in New Mexico were brief as he returned to Mexico in 1601 and drops out of sight. If Dr. F. W. Hodge is right in listing two Jemez churches among the eleven which had been erected in New Mexico by 1617, the honor of establishing these missions is very probably due to the fraile
or frailes who succeeded Lugo; but no missionary to the Jemez can be named for the period from 1601 to 1617. In the latter year Fray Geronimo Zarate Salmeron was made comisario of the "work in New Mexico" and he established his residence among the Jemez, but whether at the convent of San Diego de Jemez, in the pueblo of Guiusewa, or at the convent of San Jose de Jemez cannot yet be stated.

Salmeron labored among the Jemez for probably not more than four years, since Fray Alonzo de Benavides came to New Mexico in 1621 as the first incumbent of the newly erected "Custodio de la Conversion de San Pablo" and in the same year Fray Martin de Arvide, missionary at Picuris, having learned that the Jemez had deserted their pueblos and were roaming the mountains, obtained permission from Benavides and the governor to go to that field. He was successful in restoring peace and in re-establishing the Jemez, laboring among them from 1622 possibly until 1631.

The next 50 years are almost a blank, because of the destruction of records in the insurrection of 1680, but from the first the Spanish policy was gradually to draw the people of each province into fewer and fewer pueblos. Under Arvide's ministry the Jemez seem to have occupied not more than three or four pueblos; by 1680 there may have been only two served by the missions of San Diego and San Juan; and as already stated, the "grant" of 1689 restricted them to one. Like the streams of their native land, converging into one river which diminishes in volume the further it flows from its headwaters, so the Jemez have merged and diminished into a single pueblo which today has less than six hundred inhabitants.

One of the problems as yet unsolved is the identification of the church and convent of San Jose de Jemez. Aside from the church of San Diego at Guiusewa, the only church among the Jemez known to have stood previous to 1680 is that of which the ruins may still be seen on the lower mesa at the confluence of the Guadalupe and San Diego rivers. Now in 1631 Benavides stated that the scattered Jemez had

1. [Fray Estevan de Perea is the earliest known Custodian, 1616-1617 to 1621. Benavides served from 1625 to 1629.]
been congregated in the two pueblos of San Diego (which was rebuilt for this purpose) and of "San Jose which was still standing, with a very sumptuous and beautiful church and monastery." But this language cannot possibly apply to the ruin in question, which is small and insignificant especially when contrasted with the imposing ruins of San Diego. Also the manuscripts relating to the insurrection and reconquest, 1680 to 1696, repeatedly speak of this ruin on the delta as "San Juan de Jemez." Moreover, Bandelier was informed positively by the Jemez Indians that San Jose was much higher up on the mesa proper.

The solution of this problem may come in the study of the Vallecito group of pueblos. If the earliest Spaniards considered that group more important, than or even as important as the "Aguas Calientes" group, naturally one of the first missions would be established among them, and this would be the "San Jose de Jemez." Later between 1631 and 1680, when the peoples of those pueblos were brought over and merged in the pueblo of Guiusewa and perhaps others of the San Diego, naturally the mission of San Jose would be abandoned.

It may be well to state in this connection that not a single site in the Vallecito drainage has yet been studied or even carefully mapped yet it includes such ruins as Pe jun kwa (pueblo of the heart) with four plazas; Kia ba kwa (pueblo of the lion of the arroyo) of two plazas; Wa ha j ha nu kwa (pueblo of the calabaza) of three plazas; Beo le tsu kwa (pueblo of the abalone shell); Kwa tsu kwa (pueblo of the royal pine); Seh sho kwa (where lives the eagle), and Waw ba kwa (where lives the oriole). The three last named ruins have four plazas each besides extended wings. There are also in the Vallecito and its confines seven reported sites which have not yet been verified and various minor ruins.

The western group also of this cultural area, which we have named the Guadalupe-San Diego group, is still largely untouched. Some preliminary survey work has been done by A. F. Bandelier, W. H. Holmes, N. C. Nelson, and others but the only intensive research work in the whole West
Jemez cultural area is that which was done by the School of American Research during the season of 1910, 1911, 1914, 1921, and 1922.