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ACCULTURATION AMONG THE NAVAHO
INDIANS
(ABSTRACT)

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ACCULTURATION AMONG THE NAVAHO INDIANS

by

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(Abstract)

The Navaho, of New Mexico and Arizona are, at present, the largest tribe in the United States, numbering some 70,000. They are famous for craftwork and for elaborate ceremonies. Yet, four or five hundred years ago, there were no Navaho, either in name or in these well known characteristics. Their change from wandering hunters to their present condition has taken place in shorter time than that used by most Indian tribes and all its stages beyond the first are well documented by history and archaeology. Therefore it is interesting to note which influences have been most effective in the process of change and which have been least so. Among effective ones we may list personal relationships, first of all through intermarriage, then through trade and even slavery. Planned government measures, unless they involved personal relationships, have been less effective.

PERIODS IN NAVAHO ACCULTURATION

I circa A. D. 1,000 (?) — A. D. 1680

Navaho arrive gradually from the northwest. From Pueblo Indians learn agriculture and something of livestock.

II 1680 — circa 1770

Pueblo refugees from Spanish rule live commingled with Navaho. Much intermarriage. Navaho acquire

sheep and horses both from Pueblos and by theft from Spanish. Learn weaving from Pueblo mates. Devise ceremonies in Pueblo form but with northern myths and attitudes.

III circa 1770-1864

Navaho spread over the country, improve weaving and flocks and acquire wealth by banditry. Some items of material culture acquired both by conquest and by Navaho slaves in Spanish households. In 1846 the area was acquired by the United States, without much change in Navaho conditions.

IV 1864-1868

Navaho surrendered to U. S. and were deported to a reservation for four years. Signed a treaty by which they promised, in return for government help, to give up banditry and accept schooling.

V 1869 — circa 1890

Increase in population and rise to wealth. Government agents and teachers made few contacts but much influence came from traders who improved rugs and organized their sale, also started silverwork.

VI 1890-1934

More rapid change with increase of economic and social difficulties. Government measures for educational and economic help usually resisted by Navaho. Division between educated and uneducated, rich and poor. Reservation no longer large enough for people and their flocks.

VII 1934-1950

Strenuous government measures lead to reduction in flocks and outside work for people. Most Navaho still resisted imposed measures and only a small

proportion accepted schooling. Younger people however went out to work. As soldiers in World War II their eyes were opened to modern possibilities. Began to demand education and better opportunities.

VIII 1950

A government appropriation provides millions for Navaho rehabilitation. Minerals are discovered on the reservation and Navaho organize their own business and government.