

13th-CENTURY LIFE IN NEW MEXICO WAS ALMOST 'MODERN'

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By the time the Crusades were well under way in the Old World and in a period when the peasants in northern Europe were living under a feudal system, the Mogollon Indians, who lived in what is now western New Mexico from about 2500 B.C. to A.D. 1300, were enjoying a life far richer, freer, and more comfortable than were the peasants of Europe. In fact, the Mogollon Indians were better off in the 13th century

treasured belongings of the people who built and lived in this apartment-house town or "pueblo" about A.D. 1200-1300. Fourteen rooms were uncovered and from them much information was obtained—the information that enables us to answer questions about the life and customs of these now extinct people.

During the course of excavating one of the secular rooms, we encountered a group of stone objects on the floor near a firepit where they had lain for perhaps 800 years.

mals they prey upon. This magic power of the animal fetish helped the hunter overcome his prey. Just how the pipe, dish, and sun-symbol disk were used is not known.

It is remarkable that these objects should have been left behind by their owners and that they were not stolen by other Indians who may have wandered through the area after the pueblo was abandoned. We can only guess that the power or magic of these things was believed to be so great that later marauders, wanderers, thieves, and looters (Indians) were afraid to take them.

BURIALS UNDER THE FLOORS

Under the floors of several rooms we recovered fourteen skeletons, carefully buried, and in many instances provided with tools, weapons, ornaments, and dishes for use in the life hereafter.

The ages of these individuals at the time of death ranged from 12 months to 30 years. Most of the burials are of individuals who were less than 5 years old at death. It seems probable that careful interment and mortuary offerings of clothing, jewelry, food, pottery, and the like were provided because a spiritual life and advanced religious ideas had been developed. Furthermore, in all our digging experience, we have rarely encountered infant burials so liberally endowed with material objects for use in the spirit world. Thus we assume that the love of the mother for her departed ones was a deeply felt emotion. And we also assume a religious and an unselfish attitude had grown up during the ages, and that these people were thus far removed from barbarism and savagery.

STANDARD OF LIVING HIGH

But what further evidence do we have to help support the idea that the Mogollones were not barbarians?

We have evidence from four fields of human endeavor: arts and crafts, architecture, agriculture, and religion.

The crafts of basketry, textiles, the manufacture of stone and bone tools, and pottery-making were all highly advanced by the Tularosa period (about A.D. 1250). What the Indians lacked in materials (principally metals) they compensated for by great skill and ingenuity in using what was at hand. The pottery reached a new high not only in beauty and skill in painted decorations, in firing, and in variety of shapes, but also in ornamentation and treatment of unpainted wares—indenting, incising, forming of patterns by waving and indenting, and smudging. Certainly, the everyday household tools and dishes were superior to those of the 13th-century European.

AIR-CONDITIONED HOUSES

And when we come to architecture, there is no comparison between the Mogollon



AIR CONDITIONING IN A.D. 1300

Looking down into dwelling room of Mogollon house, fresh-air duct is seen to left of striped arrow. Connecting air outlet appears in wall at bottom, left foreground. There is a firepit with ashes to right of arrow and a slab-lined bin to the right of meter-stick in center of scene. The fresh-air duct was formerly roofed over with poles and covered with earth so that it was flush with the floor.

than many peoples of the world are in our own day and age. This was confirmed by the findings of the scientists of the 1953 Southwest Archaeological Expedition of Chicago Natural History Museum through their intensive digging this past summer in the remains of an ancient Mogollon village near Reserve, Catron County, New Mexico.

This ancient village, perched atop a high ridge overlooking the San Francisco River, is slowly being exposed to the 20th-century sunlight after having been buried 800 years. In the 1953 season of excavations expedition workers dug through fallen walls and masses of rubble to gain access to the ground floor rooms of this two-story apartment house. Part of this rubble is composed of the walls, floors, and nonperishable furnishings of the second-story rooms. When the archaeologists approached the ground floor level, the greatest care was exercised in digging, because it was foreseen that here would be the

As the debris was slowly removed from around these objects we could hardly believe our good luck when we realized what we had discovered. The cache of stone objects consisted of five pieces all well carved from a native stone: two animal effigies, a dish, a tubular tobacco pipe (7 inches long), and a disk about 8 inches in diameter. All of these objects were gayly painted in stripes in four colors—black, red, green, and yellow. The painting on the disk is in especially good condition and the design may represent the sun's rays. This is indeed a rare find.

The use of these objects is problematical. But, from our knowledge of modern nearby Indians (Zuni and Hopi), we guess that they were used in ceremonies having to do with hunting, good crops, rain, or general good luck in any venture. The animals may represent a bear or wildcat and may have been thought to be suffused with a spirit or magic influence over the hearts of the ani-

house and that of the European serf of the Middle Ages. The Mogollon house was a well-designed and well-built structure with excellent walls of stone masonry. The rooms were comfortably large (14 by 20 feet was not an uncommon size) and many of those in the inner block were actually provided with *air-conditioning*. That is, a special, masonry-lined duct, 10 by 12 inches, brought fresh air from an outside intake under the floors of adjacent rooms and into the inner apartment at floor level. The flow of air was by gravity induced by the building of fire in the inner room. The hot air rose and escaped through a ceiling opening, while cool fresh air flowed into the room. The volume of flow could be controlled by a stone or wooden slab that served as a valve.

In addition to rooms that were commodious, warm, and windproof in the winter and cool in the summer, the building was compact and designed to make it easy for the family and all the relatives on the mother's side to live together and to share work, planting, harvesting, and ceremonies.

One extra large room appears to have been set aside for religious purposes, and here perhaps family or clan rites were performed. Nearby are several large structures that are as yet unpenetrated. Some of these we call plazas, and it is possible that religious dances were performed therein. Others that we call kivas are believed to have been the scene of ceremonies of greater importance.

All in all, these pueblos must have been a pleasing sight with their well-laid, plumb walls made of chosen and shaped stones, their large plazas open to the skies, and

their dignified terraced lines composed of rooms of one and two stories.

FARMERS AND HYBRID CORN

The Mogollon Indian bill of fare of the 13th century was varied and nutritious. The staple crops were corn, beans, and squashes, and these were supplemented by several wild foods such as yucca pods, walnuts, pinyon nuts, sunflower seeds, pigweed, amaranthus, wild grapes, tansy mustard, and prickly pear cactus fruit.

Not content with the corn of his grandfathers, the Mogollon Indian constantly selected and bred strains better suited to this environment. Varieties were sought that were resistant to drought and would hybridize with the older local varieties. We also know from our previous research in the area that these Indian farmers were responsible, in part at least, for a continuous improvement in the size of the ear and of the kernels and in a reduction of the number of kernel-rows. For example, at about the beginning of the Christian Era, the cobs were short (about 2 inches long) and the number of kernel-rows was predominantly 10, 12, and 14. By A.D. 1300, the ears of corn were longer and fatter and the predominant number of kernel-rows was 8. This, in brief, makes for more food per ear. It was a more efficient yield.

But man cannot live by corn alone—and he did not have to. There was game aplenty roaming the forests and around the streams. From the ancient garbage dumps and from the litter in the rooms which, it must be admitted, indicate that these fellows were

not very good housekeepers, we know that they snared, trapped or shot and presumably ate antelope, deer, rabbit, mountain sheep, turkey, squirrels, and prairie dogs. But no fish—or at least fish were not eaten at home, for we find no fish bones in the dumps.

DEVELOPMENT OF CONSCIENCE

Life, then, in the 13th century in this mountainous, pine-forested western country was free, comfortable, and stimulating. Food was varied and abundant; physical comfort was provided for by well-built clan houses; and man's developing conscience, his love for near of kin, and the Promethean touch in his makeup removed him by many leagues from his less civilized ancestors of previous millenia.

Our study over the years leads us to think that the Mogollones, like ourselves and other peoples, had apparently inborn traits of being dissatisfied, of wanting to strive upward, to change, and to improve their lot through trial and error. These traits may have led to the development of conscience, of morality, of unselfishness, and of religion. They may also have made it possible for the 13th century Mogollon Indian to regard his neighbor's portion without covetousness and therefore to be free of warlike tendencies (we believe that these Indians were peace-loving). It is also possible that these same powerful traits led the Mogollone to recognize a power superior to his and perhaps beyond his comprehension—a power that controlled his universe—and from this recognition and need for superior guidance, he developed a religion that well served his purpose and satisfied his inner cravings for security, peace and comfort in moments of despair, disaster, and death.

The site on which we worked this season spans the property of two ranches owned by Owen McCarty and Ray Hudson. Assisting me in direction of the work, John B. Rinaldo, Assistant Curator of Archaeology, performed valiantly. Others participating in the expedition's difficult tasks were Juan J. Armijo, Juan M. Armijo, James T. Barter, E. D. Hester, Abe Jiron, Arthur Jiron, Julian B. Jiron, Alan Lapiner, David Mabon, Bill Menges, Mrs. Martha Perry, Joseph Shaw, Micky Snyder, and Wayne Spurgeon. Lester H. Keys, M.D., made his airplane available and with the assistance of Mr. Barter took photographs from aloft.

Caribbean Flower-Tree Paintings to Be Shown in December

A special exhibit of twenty-nine paintings by Bernard and Harriet Pertchick, showing flowering trees of Caribbean countries and islands, is scheduled at the Museum in December. The paintings, which have been highly praised both in botanical and art circles, are the originals for illustrations used in the book *Flowering Trees of the Caribbean*, published under the sponsorship of the Alcoa Steamship Company.



ANCIENT APARTMENT HOUSE

View from tower of dwelling rooms in various stages of excavation under relentless picks and shovels of Southwest Archaeological Expedition's diggers. There remain unexcavated rooms in background and a plaza in foreground whose secrets are still to be bared by the probing tools of the Museum archaeologists.



Martin, Paul S. 1953. "13th Century Life in New Mexico Was Almost Modern." *Bulletin* 24(11), 3-4.

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