

INTRODUCTION

NAVAHO! For two hundred and fifty years that name has filled the minds of many people with a variety of emotions;- fear, apprehension, pity, responsibility, admiration, respect! Who are these people to arouse such a complexity of thought in our minds? Where did they come from, what are they like, what do they do?

The known history of the Navaho is short indeed. Ethnologists tell us that in all probability the Athabaskas, speaking people, of which the Navaho are the largest group, were ^{red} the last migrations to reach the North American Continent from Mongolia, crossing Bering Straight. Just when this ⁵⁰ migration took place has yet to be determined. Wandering gradually down the Rocky Mountain Region, the Athabaskans established themselves in what now seem widely separated areas:- in British Columbia, Washington State, Oregon, California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Oklahoma. Unquestionably they were a migratory people for many centuries. Present historians believe that one group of these people came into the North Central part of our present state of New Mexico at some time between A.D. 800 and A.D. 1200. This region, lying west of the Chama River and north of the little town of Cuba, is known as "Old Navaho Land", an area including part of the present day Jicarilla Apache Reservation. The Apaches too, are Athabaskans and are considered cousins of the Navaho.

When these early wanderers came into our Southwest, they encountered the Pueblo Indian People who had been living in this

in this part of the world for many preceeding centuries. The Athabaskans doubtless learned farming from their Pueblo neighbors, for the very first reference to them by the Spanish Conquistadores are the words of Father Geronimo Zarate-Salmeron, who wrote in 1626 "The Apache Indians de Navahu, who are very great farmers, for that is what the name 'Nabahu' signifies, 'Great Planted Fields' +---" Apparently none of the Spanish of Coronado's ~~first time~~ ^{time} encountered these Indians, - they may have been just a small group ~~at that time~~ ^{then}, staying within a relatively small area.) A great change came to ~~them~~ ^{the Navaho}, however, when in the seventeenth Century they acquired both horses and sheep. This acquisition was to change the ~~Navaho~~ from farmers into roving stockmen. Nor did they discard their knowledge of farming for it ~~has~~ moved with them as they expanded their living area. They were never the closely knit community living people like their Pueblo neighbors. They became expert horsemen and whenever they wished to increase their stock ~~of animals~~ they boldly raided the Spanish settlements, driving off more animals and often taking women and children too from both the Spanish and Pueblo people. For more than two hundred years the Navaho from the west and the Comanche Indians from the ^{plains country to the} east were the terror of the Pueblo and Spanish settlements along the Rio Grande in New Mexico. During the latter part of the eighteenth century the Spanish, through bribery, held the Navaho from the severe raids of the past. But with the death in about 1800 of the Navaho chief Antonio, who held his people in check, the old raids began more vigorously than ever.

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