

# Warfare among the Pueblos: Myth, History, and Ethnography

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**Abstract.** There is a large body of information available from diverse sources related to the historical importance of warfare in the Pueblo societies of the American Southwest. Sixteenth and seventeenth century historical records from the first Europeans in the area, as well as twentieth-century ethnographies and the myths of the individual villages, provide a consistent picture of conflict and warfare among the different Pueblos.

The study of warfare in the prehistoric southwestern United States has been episodic in the course of the past century. In 1890, Adolf Bandelier published *The Delight Makers* (Bandelier 1890a), a poignant account of life among the northern Rio Grande Pueblos just before the arrival of the first Spaniards in the sixteenth century. The plot and climax of this novel revolve around conflict and warfare between two different pueblos. Although a work of fiction, the book is based on Bandelier's extensive ethnographic and archaeological work among the Pueblos. For example, Bandelier collected an account of the abandonment of the site of Kuapa (which we know from current archaeological evidence was abandoned sometime in the sixteenth century):

In regard to this the Cochitenos only state that the village of Kua-pa was once attacked by the Tehuas and captured. The survivors retreated to the Potrero Viejo; the Tehuas pursued, but their attack upon the lofty cliff signally failed. They were defeated and driven back across the Rio Grande, many of them are said to have perished in that river, and the Tehuas never troubled the Queres again. In consequence

of these hostilities, the survivors established themselves on the potrero [high pasture land] for a short time, whence they descended to settle where Cochiti stands today.

The attack and devastation of Kua-pa by some hostile tribe is further told in the traditions of the Queres village of Ka-tisht-ya, or San Felipe. According to these, while the Queres lived in the Canada, a tribe of small men called Pin-I-ni attacked Kua-pa, slaughtered many of its people, and drove off the remainder. They were pursued by the pygmies as far as a place above Santo Domingo called Isht-ua Yen-e, where many arrowheads are found to-day. (Bandelier 1892: 166)

Bandelier goes beyond these historical accounts and ascribes an important role for war in the social relations between all the Pueblos of the northern Southwest.

Political autonomy of each pueblo — even complete independence from its nearest neighbor of the same stock, to such a degree that it led not infrequently to hostilities — was the condition of the Pueblos when the Spaniards first visited them, and it remains thus to the present day, with the difference that intertribal warfare was not further tolerated as soon as the villagers became subject of the King of Spain. (Bandelier 1890b: 137)

Subsequent to Bandelier, there was a general acceptance of the prevalence of warfare in the prehistoric Southwest, though it tends to be mentioned just in passing rather than directly addressed or studied (see, for example, Hewett 1930; Fewkes 1911; Hargrave 1935; Linton 1944). In the 1950s, several articles did address the issue of warfare among historic and ancient Pueblos. Florence Ellis (1951) led off with a now-classic article on the war cult among the historic Pueblos. Richard Woodbury (1959) published a short review of the manifestations of warfare seen in the ethnographic record of Pueblo societies and even suggested at that time the possibility of interpueblo warfare. Malcolm Farmer (1957) developed a formal typology for “defensive systems” in the Southwest. Again, with the notable exception of Woodbury, there was a tacit understanding at this time that Pueblo warfare was inherently defensive in nature and aimed at the nomadic Athapaskan raiders in the area.

This link between Athapaskan raiding and prehistoric Pueblo warfare prior to 1960 is a fairly natural extension of the contemporary ethnographies of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Pueblos. In these ethnographies, warfare, war cults, warrior societies, scalp societies, and dances are

discussed consistently in the immediate historical context of conflict with Apaches, Navajos, Comanches, Utes, and Paiutes:

More than any other tribes the Navaho (Nabahuna) are thought of as the hereditary enemies. "They were the worst." (Parsons 1936a: 12)

Navaho, Apache, and Ute were the hereditary foes. Captives were made. (Parsons 1929: 138)

The latter [Plains Indians] attacked the Pueblos primarily for food; the Spaniards now brought grains hitherto unknown, cattle, sheep, pigs, fowls, and other domestic animals, especially the horse. Most of these soon became delicacies appreciated by the Apache palate; the horse was as quickly valued as a new weapon of war, an aid in buffalo hunting, and as a mark of wealth. (Thomas 1940: 1-2)

Defensive and offensive operations were engaged in against the Navajo, Jicarilla, Apache, Comanche, and Kiowa. Traditional enmity focused on the Navajo, and the majority of the hostilities occurred between Santa Clara and this group. (Hill 1982: 68)

The Pueblo Indians of the Southwest were comparatively a pacific people. . . . Intertown feuds were not uncommon, one may infer from folk tale and Spanish record, but war unprovoked, raids for depredation, probably occurred rarely, if ever. From wanton war or raid the townspeople themselves, however, were not free—even in historic times there were Ute, Apache, the Navajo, the Comanche, migratory or semi-migratory tribes to whom the wealth of the town was an invitation to adventure.

Against such adventure and exploit the mesa top for the townspeople was in early days a major defense, to which the town plan itself, together with house walls and town walls, probably contributed. (Parsons 1924: 1)

Fighting once played an important role among the pueblos. On virtually all sides they were surrounded by vigorous, warlike nomadic tribes whom the Keres called by the generic term *mó-acomi*. These included the Navajo, Apaches, and Comanches. The pueblos, each with a large store of corn, offered a keen incentive to these nomads to robbery and murder. After the introduction of sheep and horses, the

herds of the pueblos also invited visits from the moacomi. There are innumerable indications that the pueblos waged a perennial struggle with these nomads for many centuries. The question, Survival or Extinction?, was answered often by the prowess or weakness, vigilance or unwariness of the pueblo warriors.

The constant threat of the nomadic tribes has had a tremendous influence upon pueblo culture. It has dictated their choice of pueblo sites. It has profoundly influenced the form of the villages and the house architecture. The necessity for defence was reflected at almost every point. And on the social and ceremonial life of the pueblos, warfare has left an indelible stamp. (White 1942: 303)

With this kind of consensus proclaimed in the available ethnographic record, it is not surprising that archaeologists also attributed the signs of warfare found in prehistoric pueblos to conflict with nomadic groups.

We can also be quite certain that the arrival of these virile aggressive nomads in the Southwest would have profoundly affected the lives of people already there. I think it can be shown that such a disruption of society occurred at about A.D. 1000 and continued for several centuries; thus our guessing really is reduced to attributing to the Athabascans a series of upheavals for which no other explanation satisfies all of the requirements. (Gladwin 1957: 217)

Although it was convenient in the 1950s and earlier to attribute signs of warfare in Pueblo societies to raiding by Athapaskans, contemporary excavations in the 1950s and 1960s began to cast doubt on the antiquity of Athapaskan groups in the Southwest. Specifically, archaeologists working on Athapaskan sites have found no consistent evidence for the presence of Athapaskan peoples in the Southwest prior to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Jett 1964; Gunnerson 1956; Gunnerson 1979; Brugge 1983; Wilcox 1981). Furthermore, there was a growing recognition that regardless of when they entered the Southwest, the Apache and Navajo, with relatively low population densities and formed in small bands of hunters and gatherers, would not have been a significant military threat to the more densely populated Pueblos with much larger villages (see Linton 1944; Woodbury 1961; Jett 1964).

An examination of early historic accounts of the Southwest also confirms that although Navaho, Apaches, Comanches, and Utes may have been “traditional” enemies of the Pueblos in historically recent times, this conflict was not in evidence until the mid-seventeenth century:

In preconquest times, the nomads and Pueblos had maintained a cordial commercial relationship, but this amity was sundered soon after arrival of the Spaniards. The Apache, as they developed an equestrian hunting economy and gained in strength and numbers, became more predatory in their habits. The Pueblos, cast in the unwilling role of allies of the Spaniards, bore the brunt of nomadic raids, since many of their villages lay exposed on the frontier. Superiority in firearms was denied them by restrictive Spanish laws that forbade sale of guns to Indians. The first large-scale Apache attack upon New Mexico occurred in 1640 during which they burned 20,000 fanegas of corn. (Simmons 1979: 184)

The drawing together of Pueblo and Spaniard after 1700 was facilitated by an outside threat that imperiled both. The Apache and Navajo, who had bedeviled the New Mexican frontier from 1640 onward, grew progressively troublesome toward the end of the century, but even more foreboding was the appearance along the northern border of two new enemies—the Ute and Comanche. (Simmons 1979: 189)

Thus, by the 1960s the Navajos, Apaches, Comanches, and Utes could be eliminated as good candidates for “enemies” of the Pueblos prior to the mid-seventeenth century. How then can we explain the patterns of warfare and conflict that could be seen in the archaeological record from earlier periods? For a number of reasons, archaeologists did not directly address this question for more than twenty years. First, there was a prevailing image in the ethnographic literature of the Southwest that the Pueblos were in fact very peaceful people. In her classic ethnological study *Patterns of Culture* (1934), Benedict painted a picture of the Pueblo people as the “typical Apollonian civilization.” In this picture (particularly of Zuni, but generalized by Benedict to all Pueblos) the Pueblos are peaceful people who abhor violence and conflict. Benedict’s image of the Pueblos as peaceful people was and remains to a great extent the prevailing view in the ethnographic and popular literature on the Southwest, and this image had some impact on archaeological interpretations as well (see Bennett 1946).

In addition to the general image of the peaceful Pueblos, there was also a prevailing social current in the 1960s and 1970s that war was “bad” and the environment was “good.” The discipline of anthropology searched for and became enamored with examples of societies that were both at peace with their neighbors and at one with their environments (see, for example, Fried et al. 1968; Montague 1978; Lee and Devore 1968). In Southwest ar-

chaeology, this trend was manifest in the dismissal of explanations that appealed to the possible causality of warfare and the reliance on explanations that appealed primarily to the causal role of the environment (Dean 1969; Cordell 1974; Gumerman 1971, 1988).

In the past ten to fifteen years there has been a resurgence in the study of warfare in anthropology and efforts to bring together models that could incorporate the potential causal role of both warfare and the environment (Ferguson 1984, 1988; Haas 1990a; Reyna and Downs 1994; Ferguson and Whitehead 1992). A similar pattern is evident in the Southwest. Although prehistoric warfare has long been recognized by archaeologists, there has been a reluctance to accord much importance to war as an important factor in the evolution of Southwest cultural systems. More recently, there has been renewed interest in and recognition of the role of warfare during specific periods in the archaeological past (Mackey and Green 1979; Wilcox 1979, 1989; Upham and Reed 1989; Haas and Creamer 1993; Wilcox and Haas 1994; Haas 1989, 1990b). These more recent efforts have tried to place warfare into both environmental and historical context and highlighted the need to explain both the causes of warfare and the resulting effects of warfare at different times and places in the Southwest.

While there is renewed interest in the archaeology of warfare in the Southwest, there remains the question and apparent dilemma of the peaceful image and worldview of the historically known and contemporary Pueblos. If there is ample evidence of endemic warfare in different parts of the Southwest at various times in the ancient past, were conditions so different after the arrival of the Spaniards as to preclude warfare between the Pueblos? There is actually a large body of material in the ethnohistoric, ethnographic, and folkloric literature of the Pueblos themselves that indicates a long tradition of interueblo warfare both before and after the arrival of the first Spanish explorers.

### **Ethnohistory**

European accounts of the exploration and settlement of New Mexico focus on direction, distance, and size: the direction of travel, the distance from one water source to the next, and the size of the land, the resources, and the population. There is only brief assessment of the Pueblo people, who seem to have been viewed as resources, much like the mineral deposits the explorers prized. Despite the paucity of writing about the people of the region, the European explorers were keenly interested in the extent of indigenous defenses, and frequently commented on them, revealing the nature of interueblo relations.

The first of the European accounts come from the journey of Francisco Vázquez de Coronado as seen in the chronicles of Pedro Castaneda de Náxera. In these accounts from 1540–1541, there are ample references to warfare and warfare-related phenomena in the Pueblo world.

He came to a pueblo called Acuco [Acoma], built on a rock. It contained some two hundred warriors-robbers who were feared throughout the land. . . . At the top there was a protecting wall of large and small stones so that, without exposing themselves, the inhabitants could hurl so many down that no army, however powerful, could reach the top. At the top there was space for planting and growing a large amount of maize. There were cisterns to store snow and water. (Hammond and Rey 1940: 218)

This pueblo alone [Matsaki] has houses seven stories high. These are private houses which serve as fortresses in the pueblo. They are superior to the others, and rise like towers at the top, being provided with embrasures and loopholes for defending the roofs. (Hammond and Rey 1940: 222)

Cicuye [Pecos] is a pueblo containing about 500 warriors. It is feared throughout that land. . . . The houses facing the open country are back to back with those on the patio, and in time of war they are entered through the interior ones. The pueblo is surrounded by a low stone wall. Inside there is a water spring, which can be diverted from them. The people of this town pride themselves because no one has been able to subjugate them, while they dominate the pueblos they wish. (Hammond and Rey 1940: 256–57)

The Europeans' observations about village construction have been borne out archaeologically by excavations showing that few protohistoric Pueblo villages had ground floor doorways, most had rooftop work areas, and overall the villages were highly defensible (Creamer 1993, Creamer et al. 1993). Based on both thorough reading of the early chronicles and on his own ethnographic research, Bandelier also gives us a summary of early Pueblo warfare:

The mode of warfare of the Pueblos did not differ from that of other Indians. Its tactics were ambush and surprise, its weapons those of the savage. The Pueblos carried the shield, the bow and arrows in their respective quivers, and the war-club; whether the lance was in use is still undetermined. But in addition he wore a sort of helmet; it was a close-

fitting cap made of buffalo hide, strong enough to resist an arrow at long range. . . . The question whether slings were used for hurling stones is not certain. Pebbles and rocks were largely resorted to for defensive purposes. The flat roofs contained accumulations of such material [reference here to Casteneda's account of Coronado being hurt by rocks thrown from roofs at Zuni]. (Bandelier 1890b: 153-54)

After Coronado, in the accounts of the Juan de Oñate expedition in the late 1500s and early 1600s, there are repeated references to conflict, warfare, and defensive posturing among the Pueblos. For example, in an account written in 1601 it is reported that, "When differences arise among them or with the Spaniards, they use these sticks to defend themselves, as well as bows and arrows, which they also use" (Hammond and Rey 1953: 647).

This example also illustrates the complexity of reading the early Spanish accounts of Pueblo warfare. It is very difficult to tell how much of the accounts describe aboriginal patterns and how much they reflect Spanish impact. Though the Spaniards were apparently afraid of the Pueblos at some level, they also did not seem to understand their own impact on the region, as can be seen from the narratives of the Coronado expedition and subsequently the Oñate colony.

This witness replied, in accordance with the oath he has taken, that neither he nor any one he knew ever caused them [the Pueblo people] any outrage or annoyance, unless it had been to ask them for the pueblo in which the Spaniards were quartered and the food the Indians gave them. (Hammond and Rey 1940: 348-49)

The system employed during this time to feed more than five hundred persons, men, women, and children, has been to send people out every month in various directions to bring maize from the pueblos. The feelings of the natives against supplying it cannot be exaggerated, for I give your lordship my word that they weep and cry out as if they and all their descendants were being killed. (Hammond and Rey 1953: 609-10)

Earlier in this same account of Oñate's colony, there is a nightmarish description of the conflict between the Spaniards and the Indians at Acoma. This conflict ended in the execution of many Indians and the maiming of many more by the removal of a foot (*ibid.*: 649). Such behavior must have horrified the Pueblos and would have made them more defensive and possibly offensive in their relations with the Europeans. At the same time, the

Spanish accounts of conflict, war chiefs, villages destroyed by attack, etc. are too consistent to be attributable to the Spanish impact on the area.

Although clearly the newly arrived Europeans were aggressors in the Pueblo world, they also made repeated, though sometimes contradictory, references to intergroup conflict among the Pueblos themselves.

Even though there are wars among them they are infrequent and do not result in many deaths. (Hammond and Rey 1928: 333)

They [village leaders] rule and govern the pueblos, their idolatry, and wars, and the larger the town the greater the cacique. (ibid.: 336)

The Indians benefited by our settlement of the land, for ever since we arrived they have been at peace with each other, while formerly they fought continually among themselves and were never safe, and that they often said that they would support us because our presence had brought them peace. (Hammond and Rey 1953: 704)

The natives told him that peace had reigned since we came, whereas formerly they had many wars. Some chieftains told him that they would be sad if we were to leave and offered to provide us the food we needed to enable us to remain, and that they would do the same for all who might wish to stay. (ibid.: 710)

Regional peace instituted by the Europeans in the 1600s did not last, but was broken by the combined forces of the Pueblos during the Pueblo Revolt. Although the revolt did bring all the groups together with a common purpose and a united front, immediately following the revolt, the unity dissolved and internecine warfare broke out.

But when Diego de Vargas visited the Potrero Viejo for the first time, on October 21, 1692, the Queres of Cochiti and San Felipe, and the Tanos of San Marcos, who occupied the pueblo on its summit, informed him that they had fled thither out of fear of their enemies, the Tehuas, Tanos, and Picuries. *Autos de Guerra de la Primera Campaña á la Reconquista del Nuevo México, fol. 141*,—a manuscript in the Territorial archives in Santa Fe. It is true that the Queres and Tanos, possibly also the Tehuas, were in open hostility during the time the Spaniards were away from New Mexico from 1680–1692. (Bandelier 1892: 166–67)

Apparently, divisiveness was characteristic of the region:

There is one point, however, that attracts our attention in regard to the Moquis, and that is the feeling of coldness, not to say hostility, which prevailed between them and their nearest neighbors, the Zuni Indians. As early as the time of Coronado, the two clusters were not on good terms. There was comparatively more intercourse between the Moqui and some of the Rio Grande Pueblos than between the Moquis and Zuni. Up to the present day this feeling, strengthened by events subsequent to the reconquest of 1694, is very marked. (Bandelier 1890b: 117)

Not only were the relations between the Zunis and the Moquis very much strained by the attitude taken by the Moquis during the reconquest, but this tension brought about open hostilities. Francisco Cuerdo y Valdes, says: "Entendiendo en la guerra defensiva que se ase a los reueldes y contumases apóstatas de la dha Provinzia de Moqui quienes continuamente ynbadiendo ostillizando y ynfestando la dha Provinzia de Zuni."<sup>1</sup> (ibid.: 117n)

Scalping, which is very important in more recent historical times (see the discussion below under *Ethnography*), is also manifested in early historic records. Both scalping and other activities related to scalps in Pueblo society would appear to have considerable historical depth and were directly connected to warfare between Pueblos. There is also evidence of at least limited scalping in the archaeological record from before the time of first European arrival (Allen et al. 1985). Scalping is mentioned as early as 1634 by Benavides:

Whenever they [the Tewa Nation] went to war they offered meal and other things to the scalps of the enemy nation which they had brought back as trophies of those they had slain. In this way they persuaded themselves that they would obtain great victories. (Hodge et al. 1945: 43)

Early explorers also noted conflict between Pueblo and Plains people:

Farther on there was another large pueblo completely destroyed and leveled. The patios were covered with numerous stone balls as large as jugs of one arroba. It looked as if the stones had been hurled from catapults or guns with which an enemy had destroyed the pueblo. All that we could find out about it was that some sixteen years before [1525] some people called Teyas had come in large numbers to that land and had destroyed those pueblos. They besieged Cicuye [Pecos]

but could not take it because it was strong. (Hammond and Rey 1940: 257–58)

However, it is likely that some of the warfare attributed to nomadic groups was a result of the number of Pueblo people who fled Pueblo villages under Spanish rule, and who lived as nomads in the nearby mountains (cf. Upham 1994): “Because the Spaniards asked the natives for blankets as tribute, even before teaching them the meaning of God, the Indians began to get restless, abandon their pueblos, and take to the mountains” (Hammond and Rey 1953: 692). As early as 1610 Governor Peralta ordered the Pueblos to be concentrated in fewer and larger settlements to assist the missionary program and to provide protection from Apaches (Scholes 1937: 19–20). As noted below, this is an extremely early date for organized Apache raids. At the same time, by 1610 Pueblo people had been abandoning villages in the northern Rio Grande for over 50 years, and it is at least possible that some of the “Apaches” may have been displaced *Pueblo* people conducting raids on settlements in the region (see Gutiérrez 1991).

Overall, the ethnohistoric record of the first contacts between Europeans and Pueblo people is certainly not rife with stories of large-scale war in the region. If anything, it is likely that Pueblo warfare is underreported in documentary records, with more conflict attributed to nomads than was actually the case.

## Ethnography

The image of the Pueblo people as peaceful and resistant to conflict is readily derived from the ethnographic literature of the last half of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century. Indeed, peace does prevail in the contemporary Pueblo world and extends back into the recent historical past. But the ethnographic record of the past century reflects a set of historical circumstances that have been heavily influenced by a complex of social, political, environmental, and ideological conditions. Other conditions prevailed prior to the late nineteenth century, however, and there is evidence in the nineteenth-century ethnographic record of much higher levels of warfare and conflict, and twentieth-century ethnographers have recorded a body of evidence that points to much higher levels of warfare and conflict in earlier centuries.

There are few accounts of actual warfare in the ethnographic record of the Pueblos, primarily because active warfare had largely died out by the time ethnographers arrived. There are, however, consistent descriptions of scalp societies, scalp dances, warrior societies, war chiefs, war dances,

and war gods from the different Pueblo societies (see Ellis 1951; Woodbury 1959). In all of these ethnographic accounts, it is clear that warfare and related activities were an integral part of religious and social life of the Pueblos. War leaders had responsibilities that may have arisen out of the need for military coordination, as seen in the account of Santa Ana by White:

The responsibility of defending the pueblo rested upon the War priests. They were required to keep a lookout for the enemy, and, in time of attack, it was they who mobilized the pueblo for defense and took direct command of the fighting. Although every able bodied man was a warrior as well as a farmer, the Opi were regarded as especially fitted for war: they were man killers, and they had supernatural power. The Opi were the first to fight and they undertook the most hazardous duties. (White 1942: 305)

But even in the absence of warfare in recent historic times, the war leaders had roles that extended to other aspects of social leadership as well:

They were recognized as Masewi and Oyoyewi, the war gods. They went about killing the enemies of the people. After a time they, too, left the Indians to live at their home in the Sandia Mountains. So the Indians chose two men to take their places: in [Santo] Domingo there are two war chiefs, Masewi and Oyoyewi, (or tsiakiya and tsiakiya teniente). Until recently their chief business was war. They were the head of the warrior's society. Their dance was the scalp dance. Today they are still guardians of the people. They look after all the ceremonies, kill witches, etc. (White 1935: 31)

Stories, ceremonies, and societies related to the taking and treatment of scalps provide one of the clearest pictures of the importance of warfare and warfare-related activities throughout the Pueblo world. Scalp societies and scalp dances are recorded at Zia (Stevenson 1894), Santa Clara (Hill 1982), San Juan (Parsons 1929), San Ildefonso (Parsons 1929), Nambe (Parsons 1929), Santo Domingo (White 1935), Hopi (Beaglehole and Beaglehole 1935), Zuni (Parsons 1924), Taos (Parsons 1936a), Santa Ana (White 1942), Acoma (White 1930), Jemez (Ellis 1964), Cochiti (Lange 1959), and San Felipe (White 1932) among others.

Although the context of scalping and scalp dances is primarily associated with warfare aimed at Plains and Athapaskan groups, as we have seen above, war with these groups occurs relatively late. Also, as indicated in the ethnohistory section, Benavides noted scalping in the first half of the seventeenth century before there was significant impact of outside groups. In the recent ethnographic record, there are also occasional mentions that

scalps were taken by Pueblos from other Pueblos as in this case from Parsons's ethnography of Taos: "With the nearest pueblo, Picuris (Wilana), fifteen miles south, 'across the mountains', there has been some hereditary enmity. Some of the scalps in the Taos collection are from Picuris" (Parsons 1936a: 12). The Beagleholes, referring to the Hopi, provide one of the few actual descriptions of the scalping process:

Scalps were taken by any man, whether initiated warrior or not. At times the whole head was severed; usually the hair was held in the left hand and the scalp removed by cutting across the forehead, above the ears, and across the base of the skull. Scalping was not indulged in on a large scale; usually one or two scalps only were taken in each fight, and these were the scalps of the meanest (bravest) enemy. The scalps were brought back to the village and given to the men who wished to be initiated into the warrior society. (Beaglehole and Beaglehole 1935: 23)

Parsons's account of scalping at Taos illustrates how the scalps of enemies were broadly incorporated into the ceremonial realm of the community:

When a warrior killed an enemy he scalped him. Then other warriors would run up, war-whooping, and shoot at the dead foe. In the Scalp dance the scalp taker would be the "first man" in the order of their reaching the dead foe the others would rank second, third, fourth, etc. All these would become members of the temporary war group or society, the Talana, that was to hold the Scalp dance. (Parsons 1936a: 21)

Bandelier confirms that activities related to the taking of scalps was well integrated into Pueblo society:

Religion, or rather magic, was essential to warfare. Many of its details, important as well as unimportant, were connected with articles of Indian faith. Such, for instance, was, and is yet, the act of scalping. In securing the scalp of the dead, the captor secures the faculties, mental as well as physical, of him whom he has slain, and renders them so to say tributary to himself and to his tribe. The Pueblos scalped, they danced with the scalp, and honored it. (Bandelier 1890b: 153)

In most of these societies, scalps and scalp dances are primarily in the domain of men, but women do play an active role in ceremonial activities related to scalps and their treatment.

Warfare was an important activity in the past and war associations are found in every pueblo. Indeed, among the Tanoans there is a counter-

part women's organization—the Women's Scalp Association. Until about a century ago when warfare was still a live activity, members of this association among the Tewa pueblos met a returning war party, took the enemy scalps from the victorious warriors and wildly chewed the scalps while emitting vindictive epithets at the enemy. (Dozier 1970: 81)

Ethnographic accounts of Pueblo warfare also provide some insights into the archaeological record, particularly in terms of site location and defensive architecture and features.

Against such adventure and exploit the mesa top for the townspeople was in early days a major defense, to which the town plan itself, together with house walls and town walls, probably contributed. . . . The valley town of Taos is still girt with a town wall which anciently, the townsmen say, was sentinelled, but which today serves merely as a check upon invasive alien custom. (Parsons 1924: 1; see also Stevenson 1904: 289)

The villages were defended from the house-tops; in a few rare instances, as at Pecos, a rude stone wall encompassed the place. In case of dire necessity the pueblo was temporarily abandoned, and the tribe retired to the nearest convenient rock or plateau for a time. If in the interval the village had been sacked or burnt, it was rebuilt, but seldom on the same site. As a general rule, changes of location were common and easy; hence the great number of ruins to-day. They indicate, and I cannot enough insist upon this fact, numerous shiftings, and not a large simultaneous population. (Bandelier 1890b: 155)

Hill's account of the economics of warfare at Santa Clara in historic times also gives some idea of the reasons for going to war.

Economic factors were the primary consideration in determining most offensive actions, and for this reason the major discussion of the subject has been included in this chapter [on economics]. A considerable amount of property in goods was acquired through military efforts. The plunder varied, but in historic times, at least, livestock, jewelry, and captives (to be sold as slaves to the Mexicans) were the principal objectives of every raid. (Hill 1982: 68)

Although these accounts have clearly been influenced by the immediate circumstances of the American frontier in the nineteenth century, they do draw our attention to the important role of economics in Pueblo warfare.

The immediate plunder goals of offensive warfare would have been different in the ancient past, but no less determined by economic concerns.

The picture of Pueblo society derived from the ethnographies written in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries is not one of aggressive warriors preoccupied with killing, conquest, and mayhem. Rather it is a picture of people who experienced extensive ravages of warfare in the not-too-distant past. The ethnographic record demonstrates that warfare was not tangential or inconsequential to Pueblo society but was fully integrated into many aspects of ceremonial and political life. Although warfare in recent history was predominantly with Athapaskan and Plains groups, the ethnographic record gives glimpses of extensive interpueblo warfare in the more distant past. The folkloric and mythological accounts of the Pueblos themselves give a much more extensive record of intense conflict between Pueblo communities. It is significant to bring out that although active warfare is very much a thing of the past for twentieth-century Pueblo people, beliefs, ceremonies, societies, social positions, and paraphernalia related to warfare remain as important elements in most if not all Pueblo societies. War chiefs, scalp societies, scalp dances, and war gods have not disappeared as epiphenomena of a brief historic bout of warfare with Plains and Athapaskan groups. They stand as integral components in the dynamics of Pueblo society and as reminders of a long history of conflict and survival.

### Folklore and Mythology

Although the anthropological image of the peaceful Pueblo has been widely propagated, it is certainly not an image that can be easily derived from the myths and stories of the different Pueblo groups. In looking at the assembled folk tales and legends of Pueblo people in Arizona and New Mexico, there are consistent stories of pueblos being attacked or destroyed by other pueblos and of pueblos being attacked or destroyed by supernatural beings. In most origin myths that are accessible in the literature, at least one component relates a story of warfare involving the first people.

As part of the origins myth of the Zuni, for example, Stevenson recounts the stories of warfare engaged in by the Zuni (A'shiwi) as they moved about in their travels from the underworld to "the Middle of the world" (1904: 34-39). The first mention of warfare comes in the story of the origins of the war gods Matsai'lema and U'yuyewi.

The A'shiwi had proceeded less than a day's journey from Ko'th-luwala'wa, coming to the place that they afterward called Han'lipinkia, when smoke was discovered in the distance. "Ha!" exclaimed the

Kia'kwemosi, "there is a village. I wonder who these people are?" "We will see" said the Divine Ones; and two members of the Ne'wekwe ti'kili (Galaxy fraternity) were told to go ahead and hunt a trail. They refused, saying: "We are fighting men and we may meet some one and kill him, and thus get you into trouble." But the Divine Ones dispatched the two men, who had not gone far when they observed two women on the bank of a stream washing buckskin. They killed the women, who belonged to the village whence the smoke came; and as soon as the strange people learned of the murder they were enraged and as one attacked the A'shiwi, who fought two days, but without success. Then Kow'wituma and Wats'usi, having grown weary with fighting, for they had had many conflicts during their journey from the far northwest, requested their Sun Father to send two others to take their place as warriors. (*ibid.*: 34-35)

The "two others" who came to take their place were U'yuyewi and Matsai'lema.

"All right," said the elder [U'yuyewi] "we will fight for you." Wats'usi said: "We have fought two days, but we can do nothing with the enemy. Many arrows have pierced the heart of the Cha'kwena who leads the opposing forces, yet she continues to pass to and fro before her army, shaking her rattle; and until these people can be conquered or destroyed we can not proceed in our quest of the Middle place of the world." (*ibid.*: 35)

Stevenson recounts a long tale as part of the Zuni origin story in which there is war between the Zuni (A'shiwi) and the Kia'nakwe, an enemy people. The Kia'nakwe were said to live at the site of Kia'makia,

an extensive ruin about 50 miles south of Zuni and a little off the trail to the Zuni salt lake, standing upon the brink of the canyon wall of black rock, over which flow many springs of clear water as cold as ice. The village had been surrounded by a wall 5 feet thick. When the ruin was visited in 1884 the walls were standing to the height of 5 feet, and it was found that the masonry was superior to that of any ruin in the surrounding country. (*ibid.*: 39)

The battle waged for three days, during which both sides tried various pragmatic and supernatural strategies.

At night, after the third day's battle, both parties fell back, as usual, and the A'shiwi danced and prayed. The rain continued to fall, and on

the fourth morning moisture so affected the bowstrings of the enemy [they were made of sinew] that they failed in most of their shots.

After many prayers and songs addressed by Kow'wituma to the Sun Father, the knowledge came to him that Ku'yapalitsa carried her heart in her rattle. He aimed his arrow and, piercing the rattle, Ku'yapalitsa fell dead. Her death caused a panic among her people, who retreated to their village, closely pursued by the A'shiwi; these captured the village and released the three gods, who returned to Ko'thluwala'wa. (ibid.: 38)

Similar stories with similar characters are also found in the eastern Pueblos. At Zia, for example, Stevenson describes at length the exploits of Ma'asewe and U'yuyewe, the Zia War Gods, as they first began to explore the earth. On a visit to Oraibi, they appeared as two hungry boys, but were not fed by anyone in the village except one family. In response, they destroyed all the villagers by turning them into stone, sparing only the family who had fed them. Upon returning from Oraibi, they were confronted by their mother:

The mother, suspecting something wrong, remarked, "I am afraid you have been bad boys; I fear you destroyed that village before you left." Ma'asewe answered "No." Four times their mother expressed her fears of their having destroyed the village. Ma'asewe then confessed, "Yes; we did destroy the village. When we went to the feast at Oraibi we were all day with hungry stomachs, and we were not asked to eat anywhere except one house." And when the mother heard this she was angry, and Ma'asewe continued, "And this is the reason that I destroyed the village," and the mother cried, "It is good! I am glad you destroyed the people, for they were mean and bad." (Stevenson 1894: 55)

There then follows another exploit when they visit another village and do exactly the same thing, that is, destroy the village by turning everyone into stone, except for one family living in a house "a little apart from the village" (ibid.: 56).

The war gods seen at Zuni and Zia are common figures in many Pueblos and stories of their activities provide insights into Pueblo warfare. This can be seen, for example, in the mythological origin for scalping among the Santa Ana as retold by White:

Masewi and Oyoyewi [twin war gods], full of zest, go about the country "killing people for nothing." This angers the gods and they decide to teach the twins a lesson. They cause a hideous corpsewoman

(a ko'ok'o) to pursue them to the four corners of the earth. At last the boys are spared. The gods now lay down the rules for killing and scalping people. They instruct Masewi and Oyoyewi in all that pertains to war: how the scalping is to be done, how to fast and observe continence, how to dance for the scalps and how to take care of them. Chastened, the war gods organize the Opi (Warriors) society and teach the people how to take scalps, how to fast and observe continence, how to take care of the scalps and how to dance for them. In this way Keresan war customs were established. (White 1942: 304)

At Acoma, a somewhat similar tale of conflict involved Masewi and Oyoyewi, except in this case the first people of Acoma in the course of their travels go to war with the k'a'tsina. After leaving Shipap, they come to a new home and call the k'a'tsina through prayer. But when the k'a'tsina arrives, the people make fun of them. The k'a'tsina then gets angry and comes to destroy the village:

He [Mac'tuiktsatca'tc, a k'a'tsina] returned to Wenimats and told his fellows [katsinas]. They were very angry and decided to return to Kacikatcutia and destroy the village. That night the war cry "Ah-a-a-a-a Ai!" alarmed the whole village. Masewi and his brother [Oyoyewi] went out, meeting four scouts from Wenimats. The scouts told the brothers that the katsina were going to come and kill everyone. They got poles and skins and made a barricade (ai'tcini).

The morning following thousands of Katsina were seen running toward Kacikatcutia from the west, raising a big cloud of dust. They were met by the people of the village, the women behind, the men in front. They fought all day. Many people were killed. If a katsina was killed he immediately came to life again and resumed fighting. At nightfall the fighting ceased and the katsina returned to Wenimats. Most of the people had been killed. (White 1932: 144)

In many pueblos there are also myths that relate to specific historical events often in connection with the founding or abandonment of sites. At Cochiti, two short tales relate to the historical movements into and out of particular areas:

The people of Cochiti lived at San Miguel. At last they had trouble. They came to the Potrero Plateau (Plateau of the Buildings, nearer Cochiti). There they lived many years. They made war on the different pueblos, and they all tried to drive the people of Cochiti from their plateau. (Benedict 1931: 185)

At Kubero (Pojoaque) the Tewa were living (who afterwards went to Hopi). They came down against White Shell Pueblo (Hishi; old site of San Felipe) and overcame the people and destroyed the pueblo. The people went farther south and settled on the present site of San Felipe. (ibid.: 186)

A similar tale is told at Santa Ana:

Kwiiste Puu Tamaya [ancestral Santa Ana], the tradition says, was blessed with flourishing fields of corn and squash. The women of the Tsiiyame [Zia] village would cross the river each day to help the Tamayame grind corn. But the stories recall that the men of the Tsiiyame village soon grew jealous because their women were crossing the river, and in their anger, they began to plot against the Tamayame. The men recruited the Nabaju (Navajo), who had recently arrived in the region, to help them attack the Tamayame village.

When the people of Kwiiste Puu Tamaya learned of the plot, they decided to move on. They gathered food and supplies for the journey, packed all that they could carry, and then set fire to the village. Carrying their belongings, they moved south until they came to Kene'ewa (San Felipe Mesa), just southeast of Siiku (Mesa Prieta) and east of the Rio Puerco. On top of the mesa, they sought shelter from their enemies. Later, as the threat of attack became more remote, the Tamayame began to plant corn in the wide valley at the base of Siiku. (Bayer 1994: 7)

At Hopi, there is a strong oral tradition of stories that relates specifically to warfare between villages, and often these tales are connected to specific sites. One of these tales relates to Sikyatki, a site that dates from the beginning of the fifteenth century to the first half of the sixteenth century prior to the arrival of the Spaniards. "The Demise of Sikyatki" provides insights into a fairly high level of internal warfare in more ancient times.

This is a story of a rivalry between witches ("Turds") and the Coyote Clan, specifically Coyote Boy, over a girl. After a dispute between the clan and the witches, which the clan won, the witches stirred up trouble in the village of Sikyatki.

Things kept happening to people, especially those of the Coyote clan, but also to others.

The chief of Sikyatki, therefore, who held all of his children dear, was thinking of seeking someone's help. It was his desire to terminate this corrupted way of life. He wanted the witches wiped out and the

village destroyed. With these intentions on his mind he lived there. One day it occurred to him whose help he might seek. He went to the village leader of Qootsaptuvela. With him he shared his plans and explained that he wanted Sikyatki destroyed.

“Is that so?” the Qootsaptuvela chief replied. “How are we going to accomplish this? How can I help you in this matter?”

“Yes,” the Sikyatki headman said, “I plan to hold a communal harvesting party. On that occasion you can attack the village. As soon as all my capable men have gone down to the field, you can come over and set the houses on fire. And when the men come running from the field, you can kill them.”

With plans laid, the attack was set.

Early in the morning, on the day of the communal harvest party, the warriors from Qootsaptuvela set out. Upon reaching the vicinity of Sikyatki, they waited. When everybody who was going to participate in the harvest party had descended to the field, they rushed the village. In no time they were inside. Quickly they pulled the ladders out from the houses where the women and children were. Having accomplished that, they set everything on fire. Some of the warriors had come with pitch they had gathered. This they smeared on the walls of the houses; as a result they quickly caught fire.

The men who were harvesting at the field spotted smoke. They saw that it was coming from the village. Thinking that something had happened, they ran back, one after the other. When the warriors who had set the fire saw them, they fell upon them. As soon as a man reached them, he was dispatched. Since the Sikyatki men had no weapons with which to resist, they died without being able to fight back. They were all killed, poor things.

Only a few Coyote clan members managed to survive by running away. As they were no longer able to live at Sikyatki, they fled to Oraibi. The Coyote clan, therefore, became the last group to be absorbed into the community of Oraibi.

This is how Sikyatki was destroyed. And all the witches, those excrement people, perished. The village chief, who had hatched out the scheme, lost his life with them. And here the story ends. (Lomatuway'ma et al. 1993: 145-47)

There are widely told stories relating to the destruction of Awatovi, which was a large Hopi village that was attacked and destroyed by other Hopis (Yava 1978; Lomatuway'ma et al. 1993; Fewkes 1893; Wilson 1972; Voth

1905). The standard ethnographic and historical accounts of the destruction of Awatovi attribute it to the fact that Awatovi was the only Hopi village to convert to Christianity after the Pueblo Revolt and maintain that they were attacked by “traditionalists” (Bandelier 1892; Brew 1949). There are, however, several Hopi versions of the attack on Awatovi, which, in different variations, attribute the conflict to wife-stealing, sexual promiscuity, and immoral behavior on the part of the Awatovi residents (Curtis 1922; Voth 1905; Malotki 1993). As with Sikyatki, it is again the village chief who invites other villages to come and destroy Awatovi in order to rid it of evil influences. In the descriptions of the efforts of the Awatovi chief to solicit other villages to attack his home, there is some indication of the social and economic factors that may have played a role in the ultimate attack. Specifically, the chief of Oraibi is promised the women and girls of Awatovi if the Oraibi villagers participate in the attack, and the warrior chief of Walpi is promised the Awatovi lands (Lomatuway’ma et al. 1993: 391–92).

It is interesting to note that in the 1930s Parsons heard the stories of the destruction of both Awatovi and Sikyatki by Hopi but, in keeping with the emerging notion of the peaceful Pueblos, categorically dismissed the idea:

My guess is that Awatovi, and before it, Sityatki [sic] (on First Mesa, below and east of Walpi), were destroyed not by Hopi but by nomad raiders, possibly the Utes. This is why Walpi, fearing it would be its turn next, invited colonization from the East. The reasons alleged in the folktales for destruction of these towns by Hopi are too frivolous to be credible. (Parsons 1936b: 559–60)

Parsons provides a classic example of the denial of Pueblo warfare in the face of folkloric and historical evidence. In addition to the stories of the destruction of Awatovi and Sikyatki, there are stories told among the Hopi for other villages as well (see Courlander 1970, 1971, 1982; Voth 1905; Lomatuway’ma et al. 1993).

Taken all together, the ethnohistoric, ethnographic, and folkloric evidence from the different Pueblos indicates that warfare has long been an integral part of all their lives. There are many and diverse stories of inter-pueblo warfare in the near and distant past. War gods abound, and warrior societies and scalp ceremonies are almost universal. Villages are built defensively and located in defensive positions. From the earliest written accounts of the Spanish explorers up through oral histories of the Pueblos themselves there are abundant manifestations of the role and importance of warfare throughout the Pueblo world. The different records show both the fear of attack and the harsh realities of actual conflict over the course of

the past 500 years of Pueblo life. This relatively recent historical record of Pueblo warfare complements and expands the archaeological record for the emergence of warfare in the northern Southwest in the thirteenth century and perhaps earlier (Wilcox and Haas 1994; Haas and Creamer 1993).

The comprehensive picture of Pueblo warfare that is emerging today is one of people who were challenged by their environment and faced with difficult choices and decisions in the struggle for survival. In a world of endemic if not intensive conflict, warfare was integrated into Pueblo life in many facets of political and ceremonial life, myths and legends, and the pragmatics of warrior groups and community defense. There is great honor to be found in warfare, warriors are given great respect, and there is cultural value assigned to warfare itself. However, the body of historical literature also makes it apparent that warfare is a sign of things gone terribly wrong in Pueblo society. There remains an underlying philosophy and commitment to peace among the individual Pueblo communities of the Southwest, but when faced with severe pressures of the environment, regional demography, and hostile neighbors, warfare at times was an option that could not be avoided.

## Notes

We express continued gratitude to the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation for their support of our research and for their ongoing efforts to foster an understanding of why people insist on fighting with each other. Creamer would like to thank the Center for Latino and Latin American Studies at Northern Illinois University for their support of her research in the Southwest. We are indirectly indebted to Dick Woodbury for his masterful summary of Pueblo warfare in his 1959 article. He said everything so succinctly in 1959, it is surprising that the ubiquity of Pueblo warfare still seems to be an issue today. We would also like to thank Dick Woodbury, Neil Whitehead, and David Wilcox for valuable comments on an earlier draft of this article.

- 1 "I am hearing of the defensive war that is being made against the rebel and stubborn apostates of the Province of Moqui, who continually make hostile invasions, infesting the province of Zuni" (*Orden al Cappn Dn Francisco Valdes Soribas sobre la Guerra contra los Moquis* [MS 1706] in Bandelier 1892: 117n).

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