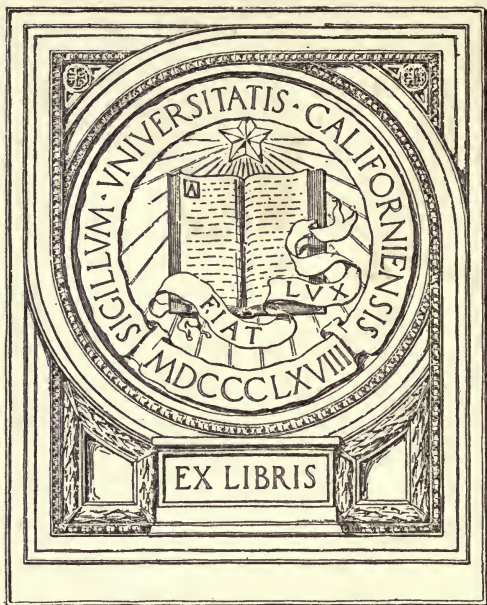


The Moquis of Arizona - Bourke

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THE MOQUIS

OF

ARIZONA.

[San Francisco?
1874?]

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[*Alta California*, December 14th, 1874.]

THE MOQUIS OF ARIZONA.

A Brief Description of Their Towns,
Their Manners and Customs.COMPILED FROM LATEST DATA AND ORIGINAL NOTES, FOR THE
ALTA CALIFORNIA.

The country of the Moquis Indians, a nation concerning whose manners and origin, no little discussion has been carried on in the Eastern papers during the past year. is situated in the northeastern portion of Arizona Territory, between the 109th meridian and the Little Colorado River, from east to west, and the Big and Little Colorado Rivers from north to south. The yawning canons through which these rivers force their way, interpose, except at a few widely separated and scarcely known crossing places, impassable barriers to the ingress of strangers, who after encountering successfully this obstacle, find themselves confronted by a Desert, seventy-five miles long, upon which for days the weary traveller may wander without having his eyes gladdened by the sight of a single tree, a blade of grass, or a drop of water.

To these frowning canons and to this torrid Desert, the Moquis are indebted for the seclusion which has enabled them to preserve intact customs and modes of life derived from the ancient so-called civilization of the Aztecs, with whom their connection may perhaps be established by the recorded fact that in, or about, the year 1536, not much more than a decade and a half after Cortez had overthrown the empire of Montezuma, their towns were first visited by Spanish missionaries, representatives of that class of zealous friars who shortly after the discovery of America, overran the continent, preaching to tribes of Indians, now extinct and forgotten, the merits of the Gospel, whose blessed precepts their own countrymen so persistently disregarded.

Not satisfied with the doctrines, or not relishing the intrusion of the "padres," the Moquis condemned some to death and the survivors to ignominious servitude. The Spanish authorities by some means becoming apprised of the predica-

ment of the missionaries, speedily organized for their deliverance an imposing expedition which, under its leader, Coronado, slowly made its way to the "seven cities of Cibola," pictured by Spanish fanaticism as the abode of Satan, and by Spanish cupidity as the casket of untold treasure. The extrication from a life of misery of one wretched friar may have rewarded the expedition for privations endured, and compensated for the treasures it failed to find: but with its further movements we have nothing to do, except to mention that upon his return march through the vast regions to the eastward, Coronado is believed by some writers to have been the first European who ever saw the buffalo, the wild cattle of the plains.

At long intervals of time, other exploring parties penetrated these unknown recesses, our own government having had under its patronage, the expeditions of Whipple, Beale, Ives, and, lately, Wheeler, all officers of the army or navy, whose published reports are filled with complete and interesting descriptions of the country. But to the people generally of the United States the Moquis are less known than any other tribe of Indians within our borders, the few Mormons visiting them from Utah, or occasional mining parties passing their towns from the Rio Grande, not being sufficiently numerous to bridge the chasm of isolation intervening between them and ourselves.

Perched like the castles of German robber-barons, upon the apices of vertical rocky bluffs, the Moqui towns overlook for miles in every direction the surrounding country, rendering it an impossibility for any party whether with hostile or friendly intent to invade the environs of their settlements without immediate discovery. These bluffs or "mesas" are impregnable to direct assault, and the subjugation of these people by hostile invasions from the neighboring tribes, supposing such ever to be made, would be reduced to a precarious dependence upon a closely drawn siege, provided against in the ample supplies laid by each harvest, in their villages.

Seven communities, severed from each other and the outside world, acknowledge the name of Moquis, but the two languages spoken are distinct and demand the services of interpreters when communication is being held among the different villages. A third dialect degenerating or advancing into a third language, shows how slender a thread of intercourse holds this nation together, and adds much to the difficulty of corresponding with them.

Tegua, Hualpi and Moqui ———, occupy the easternmost

“mesa ;” Oraybe the one farthest to the west, while Su-powalery, Su-mo-powy, and Mu-shang-nevy are built upon a high bluff about midway between the others and a little south of the line connecting them. Oraybe makes pretensions to being the principal town ; its general dilapidation and thriftless appearance poorly support these claims which may with more justice be conceded to Tegua. Hualpi and Moqui, a description of which will apply equally well to all the others. These three towns nearly cover the flat summit of a “mesa” of sandstone, quite 500 feet in vertical height and varying in width from 200 yards to ten feet. Approach is made by climbing a graded way, built up of large blocks of stone, running from summit to base. At every turn, assailants would meet with destruction either by rocks thrown from above or arrows thrown by foemen concealed in inaccessible positions. The principal passage-way here described is used generally as an easy road for their animals loaded with fuel or the produce of the field. Numerous trails beaten into the vertical face of the precipice having stone steps in the more difficult places, are used in moving quickly from the villages to the springs and reservoirs below. These springs deserve more than a passing notice. Excavated from 25 to 30 feet deep, the Moquis have walled them in with masonry and skillfully constructed ramps leading by a gentle slope to the edge of the water. In each village one spring is reserved for their great herds of black sheep and goats as well as for their “burros,” while the other supplies drinking water to the households. Bancroft Library

The material used in erecting their dwellings and other edifices is the friable sandstone of their eyrie home ; walls, in general, average not more than seven feet in each story, the upper stories receding from the lower until the fourth and last is reached and found to include not more than two or three rooms. Flooring is made of cottonwood rafters, covered with reeds laid on evenly and plastered two or three inches deep with cement, which likewise coats the walls. In some houses a wash, made from the yellow ochreous earth abundant in the vicinity gives a pleasing tone to the interior.

Once on top of the mesa, the traveller follows along trails worn six and eight inches into the sandstone ; boldly pushes his way through a crowd of yelping, vicious, worthless curs, sustains with composure the cynical criticism of patriarchal goats surveying him from sandstone crags or lofty roofs, tramps upon a few lazy chickens, sees scampering before him a horde of dirty, naked children, finds the streets filled with all the garbage and offal of a Hottentot village, inhales all the

smells of Cologne and a thousand others Coleridge never knew and finally stands at the foot of a ladder leading to the second floor of one of the buildings.

The ground floor is the kennel inhabited by the dogs and chickens of the family, and sometimes, though not frequently, used as a store-room for corn, melons and peaches, the staple products of the soil.

The Moquis receive visitors customarily with urbanity and are not slow to offer a collation to any who may enter their abodes. If the traveller will now employ his eyes judiciously, much may be observed that is very strange and deserving of recollection. First, the women who had betaken themselves for refuge to the housetops, regaining confidence, cautiously approach the apartment and resume the routine of domestic labor.

Far superior to any other nation in Arizona are the Moquis in matters of dress. The outer garment of the women consists of a dark woollen blanket or gown, fastened by a herring bone stitch of yellow embroidery at the right shoulder and extending down half-way between the knees and ankles; both arms, neck and the upper half of the left breast are exposed; a girdle of red worsted confines the waist, while a line of yellow decoration adorns the dress about six inches below the neck and another the same distance above the lower edge. The hair of the young maidens is arranged in three puffs, one at each side and one at the top of the head, giving a pronounced Mongolian cast to the features. When in grand costume, the Moqui belle dons a necklace of blue and white beads and carefully powders her face with fine corn meal. The matrons appear much more sedate than the unmarried women and wear their hair in two bands, one lapping over each ear. The men clothe themselves in trousers and shirts of cotton, moccasins of deer skin and blankets of home manufacture, in which they envelop the person from head to foot. Great care is taken by both sexes in keeping the head clean and their long tresses glossy and straight. Part of the equipment of every well regulated Moqui family is a bundle of hair brushes of evenly cut hay with which they make their daily toilet.

The children, until well advanced in years, roam about in the Garden of Paradise costume, entirely neglected by their parents and consequently are filthy and repulsive.

While the squaws prepare the daily meal or the refreshment for the visitors, the latter may curiously scrutinize culinary matters and the arrangements of the edifice. In one

corner of each room is a small hearth burning a few pieces of cedar wood, brought on the backs of donkeys for a distance of ten or fifteen miles. Over the handful of live coals is fixed a sheet of tin, iron, or stone, now hot enough to serve the purpose of bread baking. Kneeling down before the hearth, the woman stirs up a thin gruel, already prepared in an earthenware bowl; dipping her hand in the gruel she rapidly spreads the mixture over the heated plate of iron, and the bread almost as rapidly bakes. In appearance it might readily be mistaken for tissue paper, like it, being rolled up in cylindrical bundles and laid aside for future use. This is the favorite bread of the Moquis; but another kind is made from their purple corn meal, which when presented for use looks like a blue banana. Both varieties are sweet, palatable and nutritious.

The dietary of this people is more comprehensive than that of any other aboriginal nation now living within the borders of our country. In every building may be seen rooms used as pantries and provision closets, where are kept quantities of red, yellow and blue corn, sometimes hanging on strings, sometimes piled up like cord wood. Water melons, musk melons, canteloupes, and peaches of large size and delicious flavor— all these either dried or fresh or both; onions, tomatoes, chili, beets, beans, acorns, sunflower seeds, and “mescal” this last obtained by trading with the Apaches. Of the above, corn and melons are planted in extensive fields; hundreds and thousands of acres of cultivated land can be seen at one time. The peach orchards of all the towns are extensive, but those of Oraybe equal all the others united and produce a larger and more grateful fruit. The Spanish priests brought the first seeds with them. The tomato, onion, and beet are evidently of later introduction, and probably have been obtained from Americans. Sunflowers attain an enormous size, the disks of not a few being more than a foot in diameter; the seeds are esteemed a luxury. “Mescal” is obtained by roasting the heart and leaves of the American aloe, a plant that does not grow in the Moqui country, but which furnishes the principal food of the Apaches. Dried mutton, venison, and goats flesh, with an occasional rabbit or hare, comprise the list of meats, while wild honey is sometimes seen as a rare delicacy, preserved in earthen jars.

Meals are served on the cement floor, the men eating first, women and children waiting deferentially until their lords and masters are gorged and then falling to upon the remnants. Beside each guest is placed a roll of tissue bread and in the

center one or two crockery bowls containing a fragrant "olla podrida" of chopped mutton, beans, tomatoes, chili and corn. Knives and forks are unknown, so dirty paws dart quickly from dish to mouth, and from mouth to dish until the last fragment of meat has been consumed or satiety compels a respite. Melons and peaches form the after course.

Having satisfied the inner man, there is now an opportunity for looking into the other apartments. In some, buckskin ropes stretched from wall to wall, sustain heavy blankets woven in alternate bands of black, white and blue, the dark colors predominating less generally than the white. Rude weaving machines may be witnessed in operation any time. On the floor are rugs or mats about seven feet long and as many wide, woven of wool, filled in in some way with the fur of cayotes, wolves, rabbits and hares. These cover in cold weather the entrances and windows, as the Moquis have no doors; in Summer, these rugs serve as cushions and mattresses. Chimneys are of crockery, and so skillful is their construction, that it is doubtful if a smoking one can be found in "the seven cities." Crockery is indeed the great manufacture of the Moquis whose dishes are not only neat and durable, but ornamented with identically the same tracings as are detected upon the broken fragments of earthenware lying in heaps in the "Aztec ruins" of Arizona.

As might be inferred from the above brief list of comforts possessed by the Moquis, they are a thrifty, frugal and Industrious people—one of the few native tribes which do not impose all the drudgery of domestic and out-door labor upon the women. With them the men assume the care of the fields and flocks, the women employing their time in caring for their homes, weaving blankets, making pottery, and, in the proper season, drying peaches. Squads of five and six women, young and old, assemble in the orchards, gather the delicious fruit and spread it out to dry in the sun; thousands of pounds may be collected within a radius of as many yards.

Every year in the Summer months, detachments of Moquis appear in Prescott, Arizona, the Mormon settlements of lower Utah, and in Santa Fe, New Mexico, to trade for and buy necessaries or any clothing they may fancy. Among frontiersmen, the impression prevails that to them the wild Apache and Navajo have resorted, when at war with the whites, for powder, shot, and rifles. For this belief good grounds exist—the Moqui representing the Chatham-street trader of the native American tribes, and disposed to sell all that is most deart o him to secure good bargains. The wilder and nobler

Apache and Navajo disdain the effeminate Moqui over whom their superiority must be conceded in every manly and barbaric virtue.

Between Apaches and Moquis the contrast is striking; the former inured to the privations of nomadic life and darkened by constant exposure to the sun; the latter enjoying all comforts attainable by a people ignorant of the working of metals but enervated by an almost monastic seclusion and blanched by the protection of cool and lofty houses. The comparative fairness of the Moqui complexion has given rise to frequent remark, undiminished by encountering among them individuals of pure white skins, auburn hair and ruddy cheeks, corresponding to the Albinos of Equatorial Africa. They say that long ago these Albinos were numerous, but are at present much reduced, probably not over fifty living in the entire nation. The other Moquis do not intermarry with them and the existence of a mutual contempt may be detected.

Little is known of the mode of government or religion prevailing in their villages; the head captains or caciques, called in their language "mung-wee" transact all business, send out the herds to pasture at day dawn, and recall them to the corrals before sun set; designate the two sentinels who on each "mesa" keep watch by night and to all appearances have general supervision of the communities.

A faint flush of religion or superstition tinges their daily life, ushered in each morning by the chanting of choruses and clanging of bells to drive bad spirits away from their harvests and orchards.

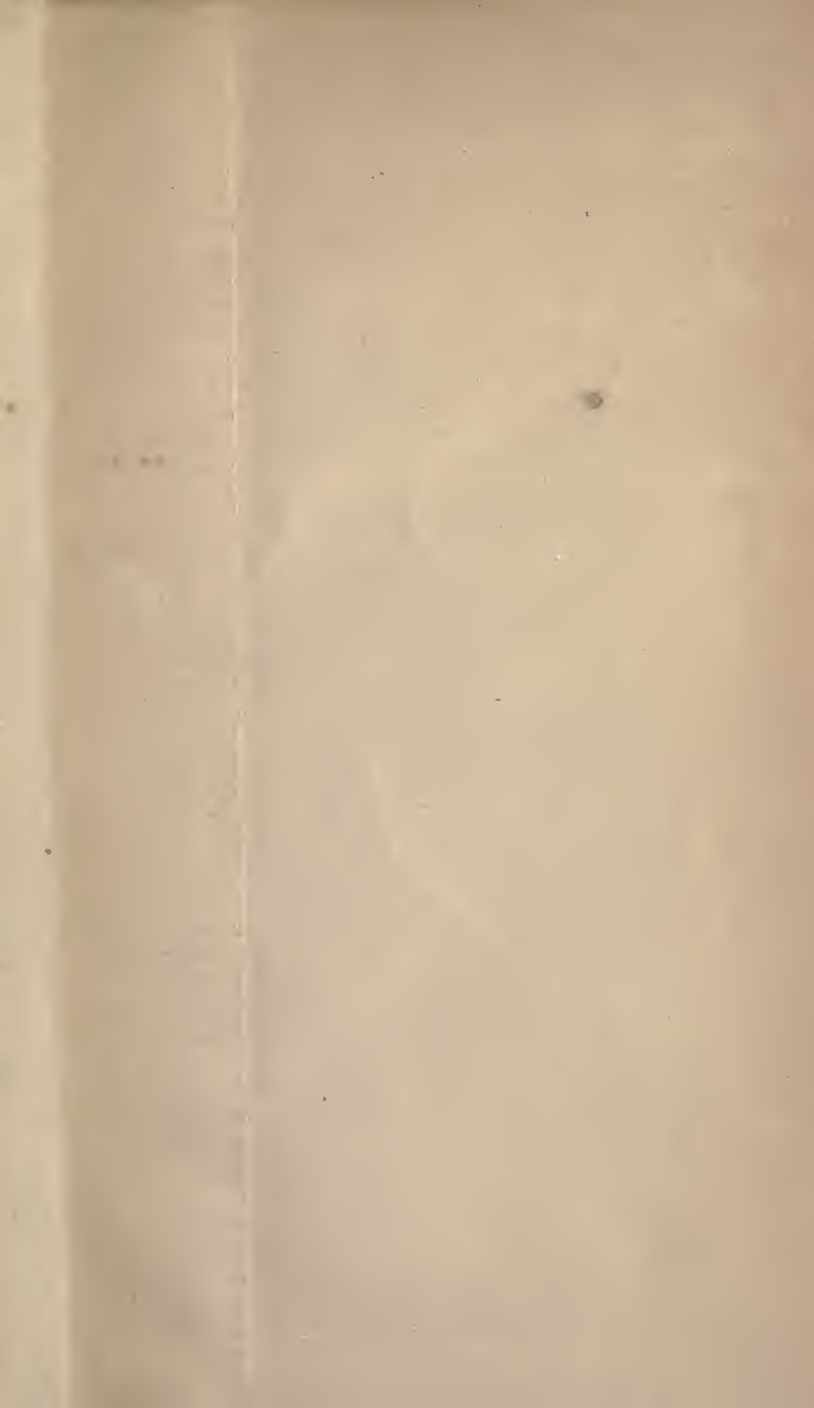
Shrines, containing votive offerings of petrified wood, twigs, and other rubbish have been noticed, but thus far no circumstantial account of their festivals, if any, or the ceremonial observed during their continuance, has been compiled. Like all other Indian nations, their traditions, historical and religious, are probably vague, incoherent and unsatisfactory. Much might be gleaned by a careful and intelligent study of the tracings upon the huge blocks of soft, friable sandstone lying about their villages; upon these are carved, not seldom of an enormous size, representations of elk, deer, horses, "burros," chickens, crows, men and women; the artists who aspired to the delineation of the human form divine not being restrained by any considerations of delicacy in the accomplishment of their tasks. Many of these tracings are scarcely discernible and bear marks of a great antiquity.

To the archæologist and ethnographer this peculiar people

of the remote Southwest, must, for a long time to come, furnish matter for reflection and discussion. Their habitations, manners and customs are to-day practically what they were when Cortez was "Marquis of Oaxaca," 350 years ago; and, if from their condition we may assume, as we have a right to do, a similarity in all respects between them and the other nations of Mexico encountered by the first Spanish adventurers, we must frame new ideas of the Aztecs whose advanced civilization formed the theme of soldiery report and monkish story; the gorgeous palaces of Montezuma fade away and leave us villages of squalid stone tenements; instead of a homogeneous and strongly cemented autonomy, we see a nation composed of many peoples, distrustful each of the other, indifferent to the maintenance of peace at home and impotent to resist aggressions from abroad. Historial iconoclasts have ere this alluded to Montezuma as a petty Captain, his Capital as a paltry and disorderly jumble of mud huts. The eloquence of Prescott has gilded the achievements of Cortez with the glamour of romance; but the coming generation may applaud the Spanish commander more for what he tried to do than for what he really won.

THE MOQUIS. London Library

On the fourth page of the ALTA to-day may be found a very interesting article upon the Moquis of Arizona; that curious people so different from every other tribe of natives of the country. It is next to impossible to believe they had the same origin as the Apache and other Indian tribes. If they are relics of the old Aztec races, they must have very essentially degenerated, or the Spanish accounts of the Aztec nations, whom they, under Cortez, overcome, were highly colored. Surely the people who constructed such cities as Palenque must have been at some time in the far past a race vastly advanced beyond the present state of semi-civilization displayed by the Moquis of the present time. But who knows what the effects of their surroundings, their neighbors, the Apaches and other warlike and brutal tribes, may have been. The article referred to is a very interesting account of this strange people, and was written from personal observation and may be implicitly relied upon.



The Moguis
of
Arizona

by
Lieut John G. Bourke
3 Cavalry, A. D. C.
