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INTRODUCTION

THOUGH they have been in intermittent contact with civilization for nearly four centuries, and under its continuous influence more than three-fourths of that time, the Pueblo Indians of the Rio Grande valley in New Mexico, so far at least as their religious beliefs and practices are concerned, remain the most conservative of all the tribes of North America. Living in a semi-arid region and tilling the soil by the aid of irrigation from time immemorial, the Pueblos evolved a cult that centers to a considerable extent in the desire for rain, consequently there were developed scores of ceremonies which had and still have as an important purpose the supplication of the cloud-gods for the beneficent showers and snows by which the tribal entity is conserved.

The conservatism of these people with respect to their religion in all its phases and bearings is traceable largely to the efforts of the early Franciscan missionaries to implant Christianity among them at the expense of their own deep-rooted beliefs, which compelled the natives to practise their rites in secrecy, even to the extent of visiting secluded spots away from their pueblos We find survivals of this custom at Taos and at some of the Tewa villages today. Most Indians are loath to reveal their religious beliefs, to be sure, yet with tact, patience, and tenacity the student can usually obtain desired information. On the Rio Grande, however, one meets organized opposition to the divulging of information pertaining to ceremonial life so strong that at Santo Domingo, most refractory of the pueblos, proclamations have been issued against affording information to any white people, and at more than one pueblo priestly avengers have executed members who have had the temerity to disregard the tribal edicts.

The right to maintain esoteric organizations and to exclude aliens from knowledge of religious ceremonies can not be questioned, but from the viewpoint of civilization it is regrettable that the priestly dominance of the population is such as to oppose progress on the part of the younger generation; for it is the custom of secret religious societies often to mete dire punishment on such returned pupils who decline to follow the ways of their forebears by participating in practices repugnant to the moral enlightenment they have gained at school. Yet in the face of every effort on the part of the priesthoods to maintain the ancient order of life, the progressive element, composed chiefly

of the younger men and women with common school education, is making substantial progress in many of the pueblos, in some instances, however, at great personal cost. The ultimate result of this conflict between primitive conservatism and progress in the pursuits of civilization awaits the slow passing of the older generation and the predominance of the enlightened.

The full story of the Pueblo tribes of New Mexico will never be told, much less condensed into the two volumes of this work which are devoted to them. Indeed, a detailed account of the gathering of the admittedly incomplete data embodied in this and the subsequent volume would form a book in itself.

In the present volume are treated the villages of Cochiti, Santo Domingo, Acoma, and Laguna, representing the Keres linguistic family, and Isleta and Taos illustrating the Tiwa group of the Tanoan stock. Preliminary field work among the Rio Grande pueblos was conducted by Mr. W.W. Phillips in 1905, and Mr. C.M. Strong, then instructor in Spanish at the University of Washington, spent about eight months in 1909 at the Tewa villages (treated in Volume XVII) and recorded also some data relating to Acoma. All of this material was confirmed, systematized, and largely augmented by Mr. W.E. Myers, who, having visited the Rio Grande in 1909 and 1917, spent the entire season of 1924 in that field.

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"Introduction to Volume 16"
From
The North American Indian: Volume 16
by Edwards S. Curtis
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