Spaniards and Pueblos in New Mexico

A Chronology

ca. 800 B.C. to A.D. 400  
Agriculture becomes important among distant ancestors of the Pueblos.

ca. A.D. 500  
West and north of the Rio Grande, some of the Pueblos' ancestors develop the high culture known as Anasazi.

ca. 1000 to 1300  
Anasazi culture reaches its zenith.

ca. 1300 to 1540  
Pueblos, heirs to Anasazi traditions, flourish on the Rio Grande and its tributaries.

1540-42  
Francisco Vázquez de Coronado enters the Pueblo country.

1565  
Pedro Menéndez de Avilés founds St. Augustine, Florida, the first permanent European settlement in what is now the United States.

1581  
Fray Agustín Rodríguez and Captain Francisco Sánchez Chamuscado rediscover New Mexico.

1585  
English plant a short-lived settlement at Roanoke.

1598  
Juan de Onate establishes an enduring Spanish colony in New Mexico.

1598  
Onate destroys the Pueblo of Acoma.

1601  
Many of Onate's colonists flee to Mexico.

1605  
Viceroy Montezuma orders New Mexico abandoned.

1607  
English found Jamestown, the first permanent English settlement in what is now the United States.

1608  
Philip III authorizes Franciscans to remain in New Mexico.

ca. 1610  
Santa Fe established.

1680  
Great Pueblo Revolt.

1682-94  
Diego de Vargas reconquers New Mexico.

1696  
Pueblos revolt again.

The Pueblos in the Sixteenth Century and Their Language Groups
Pueblos, Spaniards, and History

Pueblos and Spaniards

In 1680, in a swift and bloody revolt, Pueblo Indians overthrew the Spaniards who had occupied their lands for more than eighty years. Since 1598, when Juan de Oñate brought a small group of colonists into the mesa and canyon country of northern New Mexico, Spain had asserted its sovereignty over the Pueblo peoples. Spanish officials had demanded that Pueblos pay tribute to the Spanish Crown by working for encomiendas, a small number of privileged Spaniards to whom Spanish officials entrusted the Pueblos and their labor. At the same time, Spanish priests established missions in the Pueblos' farming villages and demanded that the Indians abandon their religion in favor of Christianity. Pueblo Indians, who vastly outnumbered their Spanish overlords, tolerated this arrangement for several generations before rebelling. Why did they wait so long? Why did they rebel at all?

Spaniards had first come to New Mexico to find treasure. As early as 1540, Francisco Vázquez de Coronado led a quixotic entrada into the Pueblo country in search of seven cities of gold. In 1598, when Juan de Oñate set out with the king's permission to plant a proprietary colony on the Rio Grande, he hoped to repay his substantial investment by finding rich mines like the fabulous silver strike that his father, Cristóbal, had made at Zacatecas. Farming and ranching also drew Spaniards into the northern regions of New Spain, but the hope of quick and great wealth had motivated the earliest Spanish explorers and settlers — as was the case with their English contemporaries who founded Roanoke and Jamestown.

Juan de Oñate's failure to find riches almost doomed his colony. In 1605, two years before Englishmen founded Jamestown and three years before Frenchmen founded Quebec, the viceroy in Mexico City recommended that Spaniards withdraw from New Mexico. Isolation and distance from the nearest settlements in New Spain, as Mexico was then called, made New Mexico too expensive to sustain. Spain had more lucrative colonies in mineral-rich Peru and Mexico.
Franciscans intervened. They objected to the abandonment of New Mexico on the grounds that their missionary work had advanced so far that they could not turn back. In contrast to Englishmen, who declined to convert Indians into Christians until they had turned them into Englishmen, Spaniards tried to convert Indians and turn them into Spaniards simultaneously. Indeed, the Spanish Crown made the conversion of Indians to Christianity central to its enterprises in the New World. Spain’s very claim to its American empire rested on papal bulls of 1493 that required Spanish monarchs to instruct natives in the Catholic faith. Additional papal bulls of 1501 and 1508 gave the Crown authority over the Church in America (the patro- nato real, or royal patronage). These effectively united church and state in Spain and left no doubt in the Crown’s responsibility for Indian souls, even in remote New Mexico.

To fulfill its religious responsibilities, the Crown turned to members of religious orders of celibate males such as the Franciscans, whose order was founded by Francis Bernardone in 1209 in Italy. Robed and sandaled Franciscans came to New Mexico with Juan de Oñate in 1598 and began to establish themselves in Pueblo communities. Drawing on long experience at manipulating Indians elsewhere in the Americas, they convinced Pueblos to build churches and living quarters for them, and they tried to replace the Pueblos’ religion with their own.

The Pueblos, whose own cultural tradition went back at least to the time that Europeans believed the soil of their god, Jesus Christ, walked on earth, seemed ideal subjects for conversion. Like Iberians, the Pueblos lived in towns, farmed nearby fields, and wore what Spaniards recognized as clothing. Although they were not a homogeneous people and spoke several discrete languages, Spaniards named these Indians “Pueblos” because they lived in permanent towns (pueblos) of stone or adobe, in contrast to the nomads and seminomads whose lands Spaniards traversed to reach New Mexico. For Franciscans, who insisted that Indians live like Spaniards and tried to congregate them into towns if they did not, the apartment-dwelling Pueblos seemed a godsend. Although Franciscans failed to plant missions among Apaches, Navajos, and other seminomads who surrounded the Pueblo country, they succeeded among the Pueblos.

Where Oñate failed to find treasure, then, the Franciscans found souls. They explained to the Crown that they could not abandon the thousands of Pueblos whom they had brought into the Christian fold through the ritual they called baptism. To abandon the Pueblos meant depriving them of the Church’s sacraments and endangering their souls, the Franciscans said. The Crown would either have to persuade thousands of Pueblo converts to leave their multi-storied villages and move south to Chihuahua to be near missionaries or allow the missionaries to remain in New Mexico. In 1608, the

Crown chose the more practical alternative. It authorized the Franciscans to remain in New Mexico, their expenses to be paid by the royal treasury.

Like Spanish Florida, which also received a reprieve from the Crown in 1608, New Mexico changed from a proprietary colony, funded largely by Oñate, to a Crown colony funded by the royal treasury. New Mexico became a center for missionary activity, with Pueblo Indians as its chief asset. Friars depended on Pueblo labor to make their missions work; colonists, whose numbers may not have reached three thousand in the 1600s, depended on Pueblo labor to operate their farms, ranches, and other enterprises from the gathering of pine nuts to the tanning of hides. The two groups—colonists and clergy—vied with one another for control of the lives and labor of the dwindling Pueblo population, which fell from around sixty thousand in the early 1600s to some thirty thousand in the 1640s to seventeen thousand by 1680. European contagious diseases probably took their familiar toll on the Pueblos. So perhaps did intertribal warfare and Spanish exploitation, which the Crown seemed powerless to stop. In that remote frontier province, far from the eyes of watchful officials, even appointed governors commonly abused their power over Indians.

Until 1680, Pueblos tolerated the outsiders. An agricultural people, rooted to fertile valleys in a high desert land of little rain, Pueblos had no other place to go. Some tried to rebel, but revolts remained isolated affairs easily quashed by Spaniards. The autonomous Pueblo towns, separated by several hundred miles and at least six different languages and countless dialects, had no central government to unify them. Moreover, Pueblos knew that rebellion invited hideous retaliations. How could Pueblos forget the burning of the Pueblo of Acoma when it offered resistance in 1598 and the punishments meted out to the survivors by Spaniards with swords of steel? Treating Indian miscreants as brutally as they treated one another, Spaniards cut the right foot off every male Acoman over twenty-five years of age.

Rewards as well as punishments probably encouraged Pueblos to cooperate with Spaniards. New draft animals, new crops, and new metal tools from Iberia enriched Pueblo material culture. Spanish warriors proved useful allies against historic enemies, and unarmed Spanish priests, so powerful that Spanish warriors obeyed them, offered spiritual power. Through the 1600s, several generations of Pueblos found reasons to accommodate to and benefit from their new Spanish overlords.

Then, in a few weeks in the late summer of 1680, Pueblos destroyed the Spanish colony of New Mexico. Coordinating their efforts as they had never done before, Pueblos launched a well-planned surprise attack. From the kiva at Taos, Pueblo messengers secretly carried calendars in the form of knotted cords to participating pueblos. Each knot marked a day until the Pueblos would take up arms. The last knot was to be untied on August 11,
but the rebellion exploded a day early. Tipped off by sympathetic Pueblos, Spaniards had captured two of the rebel messengers on August 9. When leaders of the revolt learned that they had been betrayed, they moved the attack up a day. Despite the warning, the revolt caught Spaniards off guard. They could not imagine the magnitude of the planned assault. Scattered in isolated farms and ranches along the Rio Grande and its tributaries, Spaniards were easy prey for the rebels.

Spanish refugees swarmed into Santa Fe, the province’s one Spanish town, and to Isleta Pueblo, one of the few native towns that apparently did not join the rebellion. Believing themselves the only survivors, the refugees at Isleta retreated southward toward El Paso on September 14, joined by some Isletans. Meanwhile, Governor Antonio de Oterin arrived to defend Santa Fe against a Pueblo siege. Outnumbered, losing ground, and with his water supply cut by Pueblo rebels, Oterin finally decided to abandon the snatching town. Pueblo rebels allowed the Spaniards to leave Santa Fe on September 21. Joined by some of the Pueblos who had remained loyal to them, they too fled down the Rio Grande, joining the other refugees at El Paso, three hundred miles from Santa Fe. Governor Oterin estimated that the Pueblos had killed more than four hundred of New Mexico’s Hispanic residents, whose total numbers did not exceed three thousand.6 The rebels desecrated the churches and killed twenty-one of the province’s thirty-three Franciscans, in many cases humiliating, tormenting, and beating them before taking their lives.

A dozen years passed before the Spaniards regrouped and began to reconquer the Pueblos’ inhabited villages under the leadership of Diego de Vargas. In the twelve-year interval, the glue that held most of the Pueblos together during the revolt had dissolved, and Vargas skillfully took advantage of Pueblo disunity. By 1694 he had cajoled or conquered Pueblo towns into submission, one by one. But Pueblo fealty to Spain existed only on the surface. As Franciscans reestablished missions in the pueblos, a deep undercurrent of resistance exploded once again, in 1696. Better prepared and more cunning than Governor Oterin had been in 1680, Vargas and his Pueblo allies waged a six-month war of attrition against the rebels, finally subduing all but the Hopi Pueblos (in today’s Arizona), which Spain never reconquered.

The Pueblo Revolt of 1680 was one of several coincidental wars Indians waged against Europeans along North American contact zones in the late 1600s. In the 1670s, Englishmen moving westward from their colonies along the Atlantic coast faced heightened Indian resistance in New England with King Philip’s War. In Virginia with the Susquehanna War, and in South Carolina, where English slave traders from Charleston encouraged Indians to make war on one another and on their Spanish neighbors in Florida. Beginning in 1680, the Carolinians’ Yamasee and Creek allies began to attack the Spanish missions of Florida, selling mission Indians into slavery. Within a generation they destroyed a chain of Spanish missions that ran across northern Florida and up the Georgia coast.

Meanwhile, in southwestern North America, the Pueblo Revolt represented only one episode in what historian Jack Forbes called the “Great Southwestern Revolt.” Across the northern edges of the viceroyalty of New Spain, which administered the New Mexico colony, Indians as various as Jumano, Tumaco, Tohono, Jumano, and Pima fled from Spanish control to wage missions and settlements. An “epidemic” of Indian rebellions seemed to have swept across northern New Spain in the 1680s.7

Until recently students of colonial American history in the United States were more likely to learn about King Philip’s War than about the Pueblos’ rebellion. Led by the English-educated Wampanoag chief Metacom (whom the English dubbed King Philip), Wampanoags, Narragansetts, and other Algonquian peoples nearly matched the Pueblos’ achievement of temporarily ridding themselves of their conquerors. Beginning in 1675, they destroyed English towns throughout the interior and came close to forcing the colonists to abandon New England entirely. But the tide turned against King Philip when the Iroquois, for their own reasons, attacked the Algonquins and inadvertently benefited the English colonists. By summer of 1676, what the English called King Philip’s War had ended with heavy fatalities on both sides but with Englishmen vanquishing the Algonquians so thoroughly that one historian has suggested that King Philip’s War might be more aptly called “the Second Puritan Conquest.”8

King Philip’s War and the Pueblo Revolt took place at about the same time, in territory that has become part of the United States. King Philip lost to Englishmen, whose history in America we in the United States have made our own. His struggle has been well remembered by American historians and publishers with their traditional orientation toward the Northeast. The Pueblos, in contrast, defeated Spaniards who eventually lost their colonies, from California to Florida. Anglo-centric American historians showed little interest in those former Spanish colonies, much less in the Pueblo Revolt.

Historians and the Pueblo Revolt

In recent years, however, historical sensibilities have begun to change along with economic, political, and demographic shifts. Teachers and writers of high school and college textbooks have sought increasingly to tell the stories of all the peoples who make up present-day America. The Pueblo’s exceptional victory is beginning to interest us as much as King Philip’s melancholy defeat.9
Although scholars of American history have slighted Pueblos and Spaniards, historians who study southwestern America or Latin America have long regarded the Pueblo Revolt as an important event: one of the most successful uprisings against Europeans in the New World. The Pueblo Revolt pales next to the more enduring victory of the Araucanians, who maintained autonomy for two centuries after destroying seven substantial Spanish towns in south-central Chile in 1541–1543, but the Pueblos' achievement was significant and unusual. It marked one of the rare moments in more than three hundred years of colonial rule in the Americas that Spaniards suffered a thorough defeat by natives whom they had long subjected. Moreover, most scholars believe that the Pueblos' act of defiance assured them of a measure of freedom from future Spanish efforts to eradicate their culture.

Scholars who have studied the Pueblo Revolt, then, have seen it as unusual and pivotal, and they have sought to understand its causes and its consequences. Why, scholars have wondered, did Pueblos revolt after so many years of coexistence with Spaniards? Why did Pueblos revolt in 1680? Why not earlier? Why not later? Were they responding to long-standing grievances, or to more recent provocations? Or both? How did they achieve sufficient unity to overcome the distances and language barriers that divided their autonomous towns? Who were their leaders? What was the role of mixed-blood people—Indian and Spanish blood who occupied space between the Pueblo and Spanish worlds?

Explanations of other peoples in other times is always a perilous enterprise; indeed, we often find it difficult to sort out our own motives for actions we ourselves take. The task of explaining the motives of Pueblo rebels of the late seventeenth century, however, is further complicated by the fact that Pueblos left no written accounts. Pueblo oral traditions have not provided significant insights into the Pueblo Revolt. Either memories have dimmed, as Pueblo scholar Joe Sando has noted, or Pueblos continue to keep their memories to themselves.7

Of necessity, Indian and non-Indian scholars alike have had to rely on Spanish sources to understand relations between Spaniards and Pueblos in seventeenth-century New Mexico. The Spanish sources have two serious liabilities. First, Spaniards could not easily understand the nuances of societies radically different from their own, a problem that perplexes trained anthropologists who try to enter other cultures today. Second, few Spanish sources remain. Many of the documents vanished when Pueblos took control of Santa Fe, New Mexico's capital. The rebels hauled papers out of the government building and the church and burned them in the plaza. Fortunately for scholars, however, government officials and Franciscan priests had sent reports out of New Mexico in the decades before the Pueblo Re-}

volt. Many of those reports, preserved in the archives of Mexico and Spain, shed light on relations between Spaniards and Indians in the decades prior to the revolt of 1680.

The major sources for understanding the events leading up to the Pueblo Revolt, however, come from the days and months immediately after it, when officials and priests scrambled to explain their stunning loss of an entire province. In search of answers, they interrogated Pueblo Indians, both those who remained friendly to them and rebels whom they captured or who later rejoined them. The Pueblos' answers provide our clearest testimony about the nature of Pueblos' relationships with Spaniards, even though we must listen to Pueblo voices through Spanish interlocutors and translators, articulated and understood in the context of a crisis.

All explanations of the causes of the Pueblo Revolt, then, draw on the same slender body of evidence. Curiously, the heart of that evidence — contemporary reports and the testimony of Spaniards and Indians alike — is available in print largely in English translation, removing us still further from the voices of both Spaniards and Indians. Historians who write about the Pueblo Revolt must use the readily accessible English translations or else travel to archives in Spain and Mexico or to repositories that contain copies of documents from those archives to consult original documents. Constrained by time and money, historians have put their faith in translations, which by their very nature are an imperfect medium even at their best.8

The questions that scholars have asked of this flawed evidence and the various answers they have read into it reveal much about history and the making of history. If we define history as what happened in the past, scholars generally agree about the series of events that led up to the Pueblo Revolt. If, however, we think of history as our understanding of the past (the past, after all, has vanished and all we have left is our understanding), historians' explanations of the coming of the Pueblo Revolt reveal much about historians' own interests, methods, and imaginations.

Spanish survivors of the Pueblo Revolt offered the earliest explanations for its coming as they tried to learn the details of their own recent and bitter history. Incontrovertible evidence that the Pueblos destroyed churches and killed priests convinced Spaniards that the Pueblos had rejected Christianity, and they explained that rejection in metaphysical terms. Some Spaniards said the revolt was the work of the devil. Other Spaniards saw it as the work of their own god, who they supposed had punished them for their sins. There is no record that any of the survivors blamed themselves for provoking Pueblos to revolt. In Mexico City in 1698, the great seventeenth-century savant Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora studied the official reports and put responsibility entirely on the Pueblos. "Perhaps it was the idle
life of their pagan neighbors which inspired them,” Sigüenza y Góngora wrote, “or, more likely, it was their inborn hatred of the Spaniards.”

Since the Enlightenment, scholars have placed little credence in “inborn” or innate hatreds, much less in satanic influences or divine retribution, but most modern students of the Pueblo Revolt have wondered why some Pueblos displayed Spaniards enough to drive them away or kill them. Many have seen religion as the primary cause.

The Pueblo rebels’ manifest hostility toward the Franciscans, their churches, and their sacraments in 1680 have prompted most historians to explain the Pueblo Revolt as a blow for religious freedom, a reaction against Franciscans’ efforts to obliterate the Pueblo religion. One eighteenth-century historian of New Mexico made that point, although he expressed the idea in quite different terms than modern scholars might employ. Writing in 1778, a century after the revolt, the Franciscan scholar Silvestre Vélez de Escalante offered two reasons for the Pueblos’ violent outbursts: “First, the love which many of the old men retain for their ancient mode of life, for their idolatry,” and “second, the vexations and bad treatment which they had suffered from some Spaniards in many pueblos, the persecution of those Indians who were taken to be wizards.”

A century later, in the 1880s, Anglo-American historians of New Mexico had come to similar conclusions. “Religious feeling was a very strong element among the causes which led to the revolution,” L. Bradford Prince wrote in 1883, “and a bitter hatred [of] the Christianity of the Spaniards was evinced in every act during the struggle.” The Pueblo Revolt, Hubert Howe Bancroft noted in 1889, was “founded . . . largely, on religious grounds.”

In the last half of the twentieth century, historians have continued to see religion as a primary cause of the Pueblo Revolt, but they have looked more deeply into Pueblo religion and have come to new understandings of its significance in bringing on the conflict. Informed by anthropologists, some of whom have been Pueblo Indians (most notably Edward Dozier of Santa Clara Pueblo and Alfonso Ortiz of San Juan), historians now know that Pueblos regarded the proper observance of their traditional religious ceremonies as essential to their earthly as well as their spiritual well-being. The divisions that many of us in the Western world make today between our civic, economic, political, and religious lives would have seemed completely foreign to seventeenth-century Pueblos (and the same might be said for seventeenth-century Spaniards). For them, all life was of a piece. Spanish attempts to quash Pueblo religious practices, then, did not merely threaten Pueblo religion but threatened the Pueblos’ very existence.

These insights into Pueblo religion inform the work of Henry Warner Bowden and Ramón A. Gutiérrez, from whose writings I have drawn the first two selections in this anthology. Both Bowden and Gutiérrez place the revolt’s immediate causes in the 1670s, when severe drought, accompanied by famine, disease, and intensified Apache raids made life perilous for Pueblos. As the Pueblos’ lives deteriorated, they grew disenchanted with the Franciscan missionaries whose god did not provide rain, cure disease, or discourage Apache raids. Pueblos then turned with new fervor to their traditional religion and tried to revitalize it. Spaniards responded to this religious revolt by suppressing Indian ceremonial practices more vigorously than ever. Thus, accommodation or coexistence with Spaniards became impossible for Pueblo religious leaders in the 1670s. Rebellion seemed the only way to gain freedom to pray openly to the kachinas, the spirits of dead ancestors who brought rain and other blessings, and to revitalize the kivas—the round, windowless, subterranean structures in which Pueblo men had worshiped before the coming of Spaniards. For both Bowden and Gutiérrez, the Pueblos’ quest for religious freedom was the primary cause of the Pueblo Revolt. In each of their accounts, the Pueblos repay Spanish iconoclasm in kind.

Both Bowden and Gutiérrez suggest that the bitterness that some Pueblo religious leaders harbored toward Franciscans smoldered beneath the surface long before the events of the 1670s. As one elderly Pueblo rebel, whom Gutiérrez cites, told Governor Otermín after the revolt:

the resentment which all the Indians have in their hearts has been so strong, from the time this kingdom was discovered [by the Spaniards], because the religious [the Franciscans] and the Spaniards took away their idols and forbade their ceremonies and idolatries . . . that he has heard this resentment spoken of since he was of an age to understand.

Scholars have generally taken such statements at face value. They have accepted not only the view that religious strife was at the heart of the Pueblo Revolt but that Pueblos had long resented Spanish religious oppression and Spaniards’ attempts to force them to live in the manner of Spanish Christians. Writing about 1940, historian France Scholes, whose archival research into New Mexico’s seventeenth-century society has never been superseded, noted that “the Spanish conquest and occupation of [New Mexico] had been a major shock to native life and thought, and although the Indians made an outward adjustment to the new ways, they remained fundamentally loyal to their old culture tradition.” The Spaniards, Scholes wrote, “apparently failed to understand that acceptance of European modes of life, especially a new faith, threatened the very foundations of Pueblo culture.”

Similarly, Charles Wilson Hackett, who in 1945 edited two hefty volumes of the principal documents pertaining to the Pueblo Revolt upon which scholars still depend, found the cause of the Pueblo Revolt in
"the efforts of the Spaniards to suppress not only the religious beliefs but also the ancient habits and customs of the Indians."18

In contrast, historian Van Hastings Garner, whose essay "Seventeenth Century New Mexico" is the third selection in this book, argues that historians had emphasized "the religious character of the rebellion . . . far out of proportion to its actual relevance." The friars, he says, allowed Pueblos to continue their old religious practices at the same time that they adopted Catholic ceremonies and beliefs. Garner also challenges historians who had seen the Spanish exploitation of Indian labor, by Franciscans as well as government officials and encomenderos, as a fundamental cause of the Pueblo Revolt. As early as 1638, two years after the revolt, a royal attorney in Mexico City noted that Spaniards and Indians should live separately "since the many oppressions which they [the Pueblos] receive from the Spaniards have been the chief reason for the rebellion."16 Early Anglo-American historians were more specific. They imagined that Spaniards drove Pueblos beyond the limits of their endurance by overworking them in mines in New Mexico — an argument weakened by the fact that mining scarcely existed in Spanish New Mexico.17 In the twentieth century, historians have continued to see forced labor as a fundamental cause of the Pueblo Revolt, but they have looked at the abuses of the encomenderos rather than at fictitious mines.18

Garner acknowledges that Spaniards required Indians to work for them. He did not find that work so oppressive, however, that it provoked a violent response. Rather, he suggests, Indians benefited from Spanish technology, new crops, and improved ways to store crops as well as from Spanish military protection against Apache and Navajo raiders (both Athapaskan-speaking peoples). In Garner's formulation, more harmony than disunity characterized the Pueblo Indians' relations with New Mexico governors and colonists, who built a stable society based on "mutual needs." Spaniards brought prosperity to the Pueblos until drought, famine, and pestilence swept across the land in the 1670s. Garner, then, sees the essential causes of the Pueblo Revolt in immediate events: drought, famine, and Apache raids of the 1670s, the same events that Bowden and Gutierrez see only as catalysts for a revolt caused by deeper religious and cultural differences.

Whether or not one accepts Garner's argument for all of the Pueblos, it goes far to explain why some of the Pueblos remained loyal to Spaniards even during and after the Pueblo Revolt. Like Algonquians, some of whom followed and some of whom opposed King Philip, Pueblos found their communities bitterly divided. During the revolt, historian John Kessell wrote, Pecos Pueblo split into "at least two factions, one of which chanted, 'Death to the Spaniards!,' and another which evidently did not."19

Scholars have offered reasons for the Pueblos' relatively stable relations with Spaniards prior to the 1670s as well as reasons for their rebellion. But how did the Pueblos achieve sufficient unity to rise up against the Spaniards on a single day? Spanish sources pointed to Popé of the Tewa-speaking pueblo of San Juan as the leader who coordinated the great revolt, and most historians have concurred. If they are right, then Popé himself might be seen as the principal cause of the revolt, for without his leadership it might not have happened, and Popé should take a place alongside Pontiac, Tecumseh, Crazy Horse, Chief Joseph, and other great Indian leaders. If his name does not come to mind readily, it is probably because he fought against Spaniards rather than against the English speakers who have occupied the central place in the dominant narrative of our nation's history.20

Some scholars, however, do not see Popé's leadership as the cause of the Pueblo Revolt. The social unrest of the late 1670s, they argue, produced the leader; the leader did not produce the unrest. The revolt, Garner writes, "was neither the expression of nor dependent upon one sagacious Indian; rather, it was the consequence of the collapse of a long series of delicately balanced human relationships . . . Popé was there to personify aboriginal frustration and antagonism." Here Garner points to a larger question about the relative importance of the individual in shaping large events — a question that continues to provoke debate among historians.

Nearly a decade before Garner questioned Popé's importance, Ángelico Chávez, a Franciscan and a historian, offers a startling conjecture that Popé may not have been the key leader of the revolt at all. In a controversial article published in 1967 and reprinted here, Chávez argues that Pueblo Indians in general were not discontented with Spanish rule or with Catholicism (an argument: Garner later echoed). Chávez places full responsibility for the Pueblo Revolt on religious leaders like Popé and then adds a new twist: "Some of the principal and most intelligent . . . leaders were mixed bloods and not pure Pueblo Indians. Precisely because they were mixed bloods, or mestizos, Chávez claims, they occupied key leadership positions in Pueblo society. First, they understood both the Pueblo and Hispanic worlds and thus were more effective leaders. Second, they harbored deep resentment toward pure-blooded Spaniards, who placed them on the lowest rung of the social ladder because of their mixed racial heritage. Living among the Pueblos, where they felt more at home, the mestizo leaders plotted against the Spanish elite.

Had he gone no further than explore the leadership roles of mestizos, Chávez's article would have been of interest. He went on, however, to argue that the brains behind the entire revolt was a mixed blood named Domingo Naranjo, basing his argument on an interpretation of genealogical evidence that no previous historian had considered. The idea, offered as
a hypothesis, challenged conventional wisdom about the revolt's leadership. To accept Chávez's identification of Domingo Naranjo as the guiding force behind the Pueblo Revolt is, of course, to diminish the role of Popé. To accept the argument that a mixed blood rather than a pure-blooded Pueblo led the revolt raises questions about the Pueblos' ability to exert leadership or to coalesce around one of their own. Little wonder, then, that these arguments have sparked controversy—controversy that reigned in 1997 when New Mexico politicians decided to place a statue of Popé in Washington, D.C., as one of the two notable citizens that each state is permitted to place in Statuary Hall.11 Joe Sando, a historian from Jémez Pueblo who once embraced Chávez's argument, defends the state's choice of Popé by suggesting that Chávez had invented the role of Domingo Naranjo. He "made it up," Sando told a reporter in June 1997. "It's entirely wrong."12

Chávez's observations that seventeenth-century New Mexican society was not dichotomous, that mixed bloods occupied a large space between Spaniards and Pueblos, has echoed recently in Andrew Knaut's recent book-length study of the Pueblo Revolt. Knaut takes a different tack, suggesting that the distance between Spanish and Pueblo society lessened over the course of the seventeenth century, as Spaniards and Pueblos intermarried and as Spaniards adopted aspects of Pueblo culture and Pueblos adopted aspects of Spanish culture. Knaut sees these dual processes of racial mixture and acculturation as unsettling to the social order. Mestizos, who did not enjoy the full acceptance of pure-blooded Spaniards, had a "destabilizing effect" on the colony, he argues, because the blurring of cultural and racial lines undermined the Spaniards' political authority, which had been built on "domination through physical distance and cultural segregation."13

The essays in this book do not exhaust the different perspectives that historians and other scholars have brought to the Pueblo Revolt. The role of the Athapascans—Apaches and Navajo—in the revolt, for example, remains unclear. In the standard telling of the story, drought in the 1870s forced Athapascans to raid Pueblo settlements and intensified Pueblo antipathy toward Spaniards who failed to provide protection. Ethnohistorian John P. Wilson has questioned that line of thought. The causes of Apache raiding, he has argued, resulted more from the provocations of Spanish slave traders, who captured and sold Apaches to work in the mines of Chihuahua, than to drought. Apache raids, he suggested, were aimed at Pueblos but at Spaniards. Spanish missionaries exaggerated the effect of Apache attacks in order to divert attention from the true causes of Pueblo discontent, the Pueblos' exploitation by Spaniards.14 Wilson's argument helps explain why some Apaches conspired with Pueblos in the events of 1860, a story that historian Jack Forbes has also explored.15

The roles of Pueblo women also need clarification, and historians Cheryl

J. Foote and Sandra K. Schackel have moved the conversation in this direction. They argue that the sexual exploitation of Indian women by Spaniards—civil officials and missionaries alike—contributed to the tensions between the two societies in the years before the revolt. At the same time, they find that Pueblo men who led the rebellion used their own women "as sexual pawns," promising their followers an Indian woman for every Spaniard they killed.16

Finally, some historians think the Pueblo Revolt a turning point in Spanish-Pueblo relations. Rather than continue to risk the Pueblos' wrath, Spaniards in eighteenth-century New Mexico appear to have demonstrated greater tolerance for Pueblo religious practices and made fewer demands on Pueblo labor than before the revolt. As tensions between Spaniards and Pueblos abated in the eighteenth century, more Pueblos joined forces with Spaniards to fight against other Indians, including Navajos, Comanches, and Apaches. As Pueblos and Spaniards cooperated against common enemies, tensions between them eased still further. By rebelling, then, the Pueblos had not won permanent independence, but they won a degree of freedom. They had, in the words of Alfonso Ortiz, "the Pueblos, the Apaches, and the Navajos.")17

This idea that the Pueblo Revolt represented a turning point in Spanish-Pueblo relations has also been reconsidered. Writing in the late 1980s, John Kessell agreed with the conventional wisdom that the nature of Spanish and Indian relations changed between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but he did not see that shift as a simple legacy of the Pueblo Revolt or a response to a common enemy. Rather, he suggested that Diego de Vargas, who began the reconquest of New Mexico in 1692, was the primary instrument of change. In reconquering New Mexico after the Pueblo Revolt, Kessell argued, Vargas skillfully took advantage of Pueblo factionalism to win Pueblos to his side.18 Vargas forged military alliances with Pueblos and served as godfather to baptized Pueblo children. In so doing Vargas established a pattern of accommodation for eighteenth-century New Mexico. Kessell also pointed to larger forces that might have brought about a shift in Spanish-Pueblo relations, including demographic change and new imperial priorities, but he saw Vargas and not the Pueblo Revolt as the turning point. When Kessell made this case in 1989 he was steeped in a large project to reproduce documents from the Vargas years in a multivolume series.19

In writing about the Great Pueblo Revolt, then, historians have studied a common body of evidence and agreed upon a common body of facts, yet they have produced strikingly different ways of explaining the causes and effects of that event. It could hardly be otherwise. Explaining causation is
complicated, and evidence is slender. More important, as they mediate
between past and present, historians bring different questions, knowledge,
and sensibilities to their work, giving them different perspectives on the
past.* The cumulative effect of their efforts has been to give us a fuller and
deeper picture of Spanish-Indian relations in a corner of the continent
whose past is increasingly understood to form part of our nation's rich his-
torical heritage.

Notes

1. For English priorities, see James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Context of Cul-

2. Estimates of the Pueblo population in 1600 vary widely, so the extent of decline
cannot be stated with certainty. Nor are causes entirely clear. See David J. Weber, *The
148, and the essays by Jonathan Haas and Winiﬁeld Creamer, "Demography of the
Protohistoric Pueblos of the Northern Rio Grande, A.D. 1450–1600," and Albert H.
Schroeder, "Protohistoric Pueblo Demographic Change," both in *Current Research
on the Late Prehistory and Early History of New Mexico*, ed. Bradley J. Vierra and Clara

3. Andrew L. Knaut, in "The Pueblo Revolt of 1680: Conquest and Resistance in Se-
venteenth-Century New Mexico" (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 135–34,
recently disputed these conventional estimates. He suggests a lower Spanish popu-
lation in New Mexico—a thousand or so—but he comes to this conclusion by
deﬁning Indians racially rather than culturally. Many of the "Mexican Indians" who
lived among Spaniards had become culturally Spanish and seen likely to have
identiﬁed more with Spaniards than with Pueblos.

4. The "epidemic" metaphor appears in the report of a military junta of July 9,
1684, quoted in Jack D. Forbes, *Apache, Navaho, and Spaniard* (1965; reprint, Nor-

5. Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Con-
quest of Conquest* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972), 298. Jill Lepore,
in *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York:
Knopf, 1997), explores the larger meaning of the war.

6. See, for example, the difference in coverage between Robert A. Divine et al.,
*America Past and Present* (Glencoe, Ill.: Scott, Foresman, 1984), 84 (which does not
even identify the Indians responsible for "a major uprising in 1680"), and John Mac

7. Joe S. Sand, "The Pueblo Revolt," *Handbook of American Indians*, vol. 9, South-
west, ed. Alfonso Ortiz (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1979), 194–97,
a historian from Jemez Pueblo, notes that his account utilizes "Pueblo oral tradi-
tion," but his essay is informed overwhelmingly by Spanish sources. A decade later,
Sando lamented to John Kessell that so little remained in Pueblo oral tradition, John L.
Kessell, "Spaniards and Pueblos: From Cruelty to Intolerance to Pragmatic Ac-

8. Some documents have been published in Spanish, but most exist in print only
in Charles Wilson Hackett, ed., *Revol of the Pueblos Indians of New Mexico and Otero's
Attempts to Conquer, 1680–1682*, trans. Clarion Clark Shelby, 2 vols. (Albuquer-
que: University of New Mexico Press, 1961). Native American historians remain in-
istent, nonetheless, that scholars consult living Indians about the distant past. See, for
example, Susan A. Miller's and Theodore S. Jolles' essays in *Devon Mihesuah, ed., Na-

9. See, for example, the selection from *The Pueblo Revolt* by Ramón Guizarán
in this book and the notes to Knaut, *Pueblo Revolt*. For the dangers of relying on trans-
lations, see Jerry R. Craddock, "Juan de Olarte in Quivira," *Journal of the Southwest*
(forthcoming).

Sierras and Others: An Account of the First Expedition of Don Diego de Vargas into New
Mexico in 1692* (Los Angeles: Quivira Society, 1982), 55.

Written on the 20th of April, in the Year 1778: The Earliest History of California, New Mex-
ico, etc.* (Santa Fe: Acoma Book Co., 1985), 2.

12. L. Bradford Prince, *Historical Sketches of New Mexico* (Kansas City: Legget
Brothers, 1883), 195, 196, and Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of Arizona and New
174. Henry Warner Bowdoin, in "Spanish Missions, Cultural Conﬂict, and the Pueblo
Revolt of 1680," *Church History* 44 (June 1975): 226, argues that "none of the stan-
dard interpretations of Spanish activity and Pueblo resistance in the seventeenth
century have noticed the important role religion played in the tensions between the
two cultures." He cites Bancroft and Ralph Emerson Twitchell, *The Lessening Facts of
New Mexico History*, 2 vols. (1911–12; facsimile reprint, Albuquerque: Horn and
Wallace, 1963), 1:354–55, but Twitchell's quotes Bancroft at length, in apparent app
approval. Bowdoin also cites Charles Wilson Hackett as one who overlooked the reli-
igious cause, but that is not the case. See Hackett, *Revol of the Pueblos Indians*, 1:23.
See also Forbes, *Apache, Navaho, and Spaniard*, 178.

13. Declaration of Pedro Namboa of the pueblo of Alamedo, in Hackett, *Revol of the

14. France V. Scholz, *Troubles Times in New Mexico, 1659–1670*, Historical Soci-
ety of New Mexico, Publications in History, vol. 1 (Albuquerque: University of New
Mexico Press, 1942), 257. This work ﬁrst appeared serially in the *New Mexico Histori-
cal Review* in 1894–95.


16. Marín de Sois Miranda, Mexico, June 24, 1682, quoted in Hackett, *Revol of the

17. Josiah Gregg, *Commerces of the Prairies*, ed. Max L. Moorehead (1844; reprint,

18. See, for example, the Pueblo anthropologist Edward P. Duley, *The Pueblo In-
dians of North America* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1970), 71, and
H. Allen Anderson, *The Encomienda in New Mexico, 1598–1680*, *New Mexico His-
torical Review* 60 (October 1985), 572, who ignores religious causes.

Burst in Other Men's Worlds: The Confrontation of Indians, Spanish, and French in the