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Intertribal News - FLC, Volume XI, Number 8, October 22, 1993  — Hopi-Navajo "Dispute:" Creation of a Cultural War [ARTICLE+ILLUSTRATION]

Hopi-Navajo "Dispute:" Creation of a Cultural War

By RT Thompson

There have been many questions over the years regarding the creation, the validity and the sovereignty of modern-day tribal governments. For instance, some claim that these councils are nothing more than puppet governments for the dominant technological society known as the United States of America. One important book which makes this argument is *In The Absence Of The Sacred*, published in July of 1991, and written by Jerry Manders.

This is the first in a series of articles that will use as an example, the issue known in the popular media as the "Navajo- Hopi land dispute" over what was once called the Joint Use Area (JUA). This is an area of land centered near the Big Mountain region in Northern Arizona. Rather than focus on the costs, both monetarily and in terms of human suffering, of the forced relocation of the people who live in the area, it is the historical and cultural origins of how the two tribes came to live in the same area that will be examined.

We shall also look at the fundamental differences between technological based societies and traditional Tribal societies. Finally we shall look at the reasons that led to the destruction of Traditional Native lifeways and the need for the creation of the modern-day "progressive" tribal governments.

First, we shall look at how the Hopi and Navajo Tribes came to live in the same region of Big Mountain.

The Hopi are believed to be direct descendants of the cliff dwelling Anasazi, from the Mesa Verde area, who mysteriously migrated around 1000 A.D. The Hopi moved west to settle in Old Oraibi, which is believed to be the oldest continuously occupied community in North America, according to the Winter 1981 edition of the *CoEvolution Quarterly*. The same periodical notes the southward migration, from what is now Canada, of the Athabascan tribes, including the Apache and Navajo. This migration occurred around 1400 A.D., resulting in the settlement of the Navajo between the Eastern Pueblo Tribes and the Hopi.

The fundamental differences between the two tribes, at that time, were that the Hopi were stable village dwellers with an agriculturally based society that lived in a series of independent city-states; while the Navajo were a nomadic people with a widespread range of extended clans.

Dr. Roxanne Ortiz wrote in her 1980 book entitled, *Roots of Resistance*, that the Navajo-Hopi relationship remained stable, with a thriving trade relationship for more than a century. When the Spanish invaded around 1500 A.D., Ortiz claims that even though the Navajo were given to occasionally raiding some of the Southern Pueblos, that the Pueblo people would go to live with the Navajo during times of crisis. In turn, the Navajo would often winter with the Pueblo people.

The seeds of the current "dispute" were actually planted after the Americans eliminated the Mexican Government from the scene at the end of the U.S.-Mexican War and signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1854.

Quoting from the book, *In The Absence Of The Sacred*, Jerry Manders claims, "one of the most notable factors involved in the Guadalupe-Hidalgo Treaty was that all the Pueblo peoples, including the Hopi, were officially recognized as

sovereign independent nations. But as soon as the treaty makers went back home the white, primarily Mormon, settlers began to encroach on sovereign Hopi lands. Manders notes that the Hopi handled the friction with the Whites in a primarily passive fashion, but that was not the case for the Navajo.

After Navajo bands repeatedly attacked White settlements, Kit Carson led a huge calvary brigade against them. Manders says that "after a series of horrible scorched-earth actions destroyed all the Navajo animals and orchards, Carson eventually trapped some 8,500 Navajo in a canyon and starved them. Thousands died; finally the survivors yielded, culminating in the forced "Long March" of 1864, across New Mexico to a concentration camp at Fort Sumner"

Although most of the captured Navajo remained at Fort Sumner for four years, Manders writes, "many evaded capture or escaped and fled west toward Hopi country, creating the first significant pressure on the Hopi from the Navajo in more than four centuries of contact." Later the rest of the Navajo were released from Fort Sumner and, "were given two sheep each, told to give up their nomadic ways, and were placed on the most barren region of the southwest desert, on a tiny, dry reservation. Unable to survive on this land the Navajo headed towards their fellow clanspeople who had moved near the Hopi, thereby increasing pressure on the agricultural people."

Yet despite all of these circumstances caused by the U.S. government's intervention, relations between the two tribes remained good. According to a BIA report as late as 1884, (discovered in 1978 by the Indian Law Resource Center), the BIA agent cited that, "...Trifling quarrels arise between members of the two tribes; these are usually caused by careless herding of the young Navajos who allow herds to overrun outlying Hopi gardens... but the best of good feeling generally exists between these tribes; they constantly mingle at festivals, dances, etc... The Hopi barter his surplus melons with his old pastoral neighbors for their mutton and wool.

So far, in 1884, there is still no "Hopi-Navajo dispute". Before we continue with the historical events leading to a "dispute", it would seem proper if we were to look at some basic comparisons of Native and Technological societies to discover why there was a need to create what we now call a Tribal Government to begin with, Again we quote from Jerry Manders observations:

1: Economics: Technological societies have a

"concept of private property as a basic value: including resources, land, ability to buy and sell, and inheritance. Some state ownership. Corporate ownership predominates." Whereas Native Peoples have, "No private ownership of resources such as land, water, minerals, or plant life. No concept of selling land. No inheritance."

In regarding Goods, Technological cultures believe in surplus production motivated by profit with sales techniques designed to create a "need". Competition in production is encouraged for production of personal gain. Their currency system is based on abstract value. Native cultures produce goods for use only, with values on subsistence goals, no profit motives and little surplus production. They are also barter based, meaning there is a concrete value on the goods exchanged, through cooperative, collective production.

The big differences are in the average work-days: 8-12 hours for the Technological Peoples as opposed to 3-5 hours for Native peoples.

In regards to political power, the Western Technological societies tend to put God over humans, some humans over other humans, and humans over Nature (the land). Within these hierarchical political forms decisions are made by executive power, majority rule, or dictatorship. Their governments are centralized, with most power concentrated in

central authorities. Their laws are written with a concept of "state".

The Native Peoples have a non-hierarchical system. The "chiefs", as such, have no coercive power to force anybody to do anything, since decisions are based on a consensual process involving the whole tribe. The power of a tribe is decentralized, residing in the extended community. The laws are passed orally and are based on "Natural Law". The People identify with the concept of "nation."

The most important common believe amongst the Traditional Peoples is the spiritual knowledge that the land itself, the Earth Mother, is a living being. To open up or disfigure the Earth in any way is considered taboo and unthinkable. In addition, there is the belief that the land itself is held in common with all creatures, including man.

