

BOOK REVIEW



Revolt: An Archaeological History of Pueblo Resistance and Revitalization in 17th Century New Mexico

by Matthew Liebmann.

328 pp., 6 x 9, 14 b/w photos, 27 illustrations, 5 tables, Acknowledgements, Index, References Cited. The University of Arizona Press. 2012. \$50.00 (cloth)

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Reviewed by Dr. Frances Levine, Director, Palace of the Governors,
New Mexico History Museum, Santa Fe.



The history of the colonial period in New Mexico is tangible in regional architecture, in family and street names, in food ways and artistic traditions, and in seasonal observances that are rooted in centuries-old traditions of Pueblo, Apache, Navajo, and Spanish-speaking communities. The impacts of Spanish occupation on native peoples run deep, and questions persist about what ultimately caused the “Pueblo Revolt of 1680.” These questions—why, how, and what was the cataclysmic event or events that touched off the revolt—have been reviewed by many authors. Historians continue to examine the few extant texts of seventeenth-century New Mexico, reinterpreting the events of the years preceding and following the Revolt, questioning the actions of specific governors, the influence of the friars, and the roles and motives of particular native leaders. Liebmann adds to the growing body of new interpretations with a fine-grained archaeological analysis of several Jemez Pueblo ancestral sites, set in cross-cultural context analyzing how people respond to repression and what ultimately leads to armed rebellions.

Liebmann uses the anthropological model of *revolt as revitalization* proffered first by Anthony F.C. Wallace in 1956. He steps away from the alternately romantic or tragic themes that underlie explanations of how native peoples come to throw off the yoke of colonial oppression. In a well-wrought narrative drawn from secondary historical sources, Liebmann sketches the social tensions and environmental stresses that tested colonists and native peoples from the late sixteenth century up to the moment that the Pueblos of New Mexico united and rose in bloody revolt in August of 1680. What distinguishes his summary from that of so many other authors, is that he seeks to find the signs and coded mes-

sages of resistance in the way that Towa-speaking, Jemez Pueblo ancestors decorated their pottery, built their ancestral villages on the high bluffs over the Jemez River Valley, and in the symbols and signs they used to record their story on petroglyphs found on the cliff faces. Liebmann surface mapped the sites of Astialakwa (LA 1825), Boletsakwa (136), Patokwa (LA 96), and Cerro Colorado (LA 2048), all of which were occupied between 1680 and 1696, to show the way that plaza and room blocks were reoriented to reflect social practices that were revitalized during the post-revolt occupation at these sites. Through the use of space-syntax analysis, Liebmann discerns several important intra-site spatial arrangements that show although sites were built in defensive locations, within the communities plazas reinforced community ritual and social practices that were part of pre-Spanish occupations. Later refuge sites showed the gradual addition of rooms and room blocks that seemed to indicate the more gradual aggregation of families, perhaps joining the refugee sites as they affiliated with different factions or leaders.

An analysis focused on the archeology of the Pueblo Revolt and Reconquest periods is long overdue. Archaeological study may, in fact, be some of the most important evidence that remains of this critical period of New Mexico history marked by destruction of material culture, documents, and the very fabric of colonial life. Liebmann and his mentor, Robert Preucel, have revitalized the archaeology of the historic period with their work at Jemez and Kotyiti (Cochiti) Pueblos respectively. The attributes that archaeologists use to structure regional chronologies should have long ago identified the attributes of Revolt and Reconquest-era sites—changes in pottery styles, defensive site locations, and the presence or absence of certain decorative symbols. Documents, no matter how balanced an account, are necessarily biased by the authors and contexts in which they were created. For this crucial period of the seventeenth century, the documents include a few depositions of native peoples recorded by the reconnaissance expeditions of the attempted reconquests, reports of friars who witnessed the destruction of all they had sought to establish in New Mexican missions, and colonial authorities whose loss of power and dominion was surely an embarrassment to the Crown. Archaeological study offers, perhaps, a more objective view of how Pueblo people reconfigured their world in this critical twelve-year period of 1680 to the reconquest of 1692.

The study of archaeological evidence solely found on the surface has, of course, its limitations for understanding the extent to which Pueblo people abandoned Spanish introduced foods, technology, and social forms. Liebmann accepted this limitation as part of an important relationship that he forged with Jemez Pueblo to conduct the work within constraints that the Pueblo leadership found acceptable. This is not simply a well-written archaeological report; it is model project showing strong collaboration between an archaeological project and a Pueblo Indian community. Native community members and leaders might

ask what scientific study of the past can do for their people. Liebmann's work illustrates how history is written in the very soil of ancestral sites. He uses the archaeological evidence to tell a compelling story of the Jemez resistance, making archaeology, history, and oral history partner disciplines once again in the reconstruction of the historic period.

