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Northern Navajo Frontier 1860 1900

Robert Mcpherson

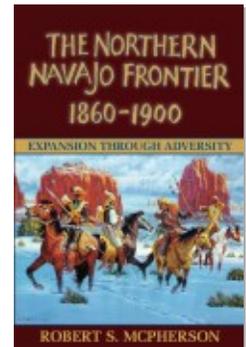
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“My grandson, do something for yourself,” the old woman warned as she left the captive Navajo tied up in the Ute tepee. Twelve days had passed since his capture near the San Juan River and his prospects of survival were diminishing, as malnutrition and mistreatment took their toll. His captors were now sitting in council to decide his fate. But the Utes had not bargained for the intervention of the supernatural in the form of Quastceelci, a *Yeibichai* (Navajo for “god”), who put them to sleep as they talked and then helped the Navajo prisoner escape. Through a rough canyon, into a mountain, down a rat’s hole, atop a mountain, and along a lightning path, the Navajo moved from the lands of the Ute to the safety of his people. Following this, he instructed the *Dine* (a Navajo term meaning “the People”) in a ceremony that reiterated the knowledge gained during his flight and reenacted the events of his travels.¹

This brief summary of the Mountain Chant recorded by Washington Matthews in 1887 is instructive for several reasons. First, it is one of the earliest versions of Navajo mythology, or sacred beliefs, to have been directly translated with an eye for accuracy. Second, the Mountain Chant holds in common with other Navajo myths and legends the thematic element of the Utes as antagonist.² Third, the narrative portrays the fine integration of the physical with the supernatural in its sanctifying of geography through mythology in the northern part of the Navajos’ land and the western part of the Utes’ domain. And finally, it shows the ambivalence in Navajo-Ute relations. When the Mountain Chant was first performed, the Navajos sent a courier to the north to

invite, among other Indian groups, "some friendly bands of Ute."³ This seeming inconsistency of friendly Utes and enemy Utes is a continuing theme in Navajo history, especially in the northern regions of Arizona and New Mexico and the southern parts of Utah and Colorado.

This chapter considers the relations between Navajos, Utes, and Paiutes in the northern part of what is today the Navajo Reservation and portrays their interaction during the period 1860–80, one of the most turbulent in the tribes' history.

The geographical location called the Four Corners area is noted for both its variety and roughness. Red rock canyons standing above desert sands quickly give way to towering alpine mountain peaks. These mountains—La Sal, Abajo, Sleeping Ute, Navajo Mountain, Chuska, and Carrizo—are collecting points for winter snows and summer rains, providing runoff to the parched basins and canyons below. Add to this the San Juan, Colorado, Little Colorado, Animas, and La Plata Rivers and two large plateaus—Black Mesa and Kaibeto—and one has a land of dramatic beauty but slow travel, inaccessibility, and protection for those who want to escape an enemy.

By the 1860s, escape was the goal of many Native American groups. Pressures from the east in Colorado, created by a series of mining strikes in the late 1850s and 1860s, encouraged some of the Utes to modify their lifestyle, relinquish their lands, and relocate further to the west in southwestern Colorado. The Paiutes, on the other hand, living in western Utah, eastern Nevada, and parts of northern Arizona, felt increasing pressure from Mormon settlements. By 1864, Mormons were located in at least four ranching and farming communities—Short Creek, Pipe Springs, Moccasin, and Kanab—assuming control over the best natural resources for their own use. They relocated the Paiutes to places outside these settlements, thus forming a protective ring and early warning system to aid the Mormons against Navajo and Ute depredations.⁴

To the south in New Mexico and Arizona, military operations, civilian forays, and Ute attacks exerted pressure against the Navajo to stop their raiding. Attempts to capture, kill, or bring about a peaceful settlement with the Navajos culminated during the early 1860s in the efforts of General James H. Carleton and Kit Carson. The trauma of the "long walk," the incarceration of the Navajos at Bosque Redondo (1864–68), and their subsequent release were all critical moments in tribal history. These events also served as a clarification of Euro-American–Navajo policy, which was implemented with varying degrees of success for the next sixty years.

While the Bosque Redondo period and the events leading to it have been adequately studied elsewhere, a large gap still remains in understanding what happened to those Navajos who did not go to Fort Sumner and their relationships with other tribal groups.⁵ In order to piece together a badly fragmented story, one needs to realize that the area north of an imaginary line drawn through

present-day Farmington, Shiprock, Kayenta, and Tuba City was used by three Native American groups—Utes, Navajos, and Paiutes (see Map 2).

The San Juan Band Paiutes hunted and gathered in southeastern Utah in a territory considered peripheral to most Paiute activity, though their presence was perhaps felt in this region as early as 1300 A.D.⁶ In defining the boundaries of the San Juan Band, Isabel T. Kelly suggests as the limits of their domain “roughly, the area extended from Monument Valley to the Little Colorado and from the San Juan River to Black Mesa and Moencopi Plateau, without including either of the latter.”⁷ Robert C. Euler’s *Southern Paiute Ethnohistory* mentions a number of contacts with Spanish, Mexican, and American military personnel and travelers in this same region, especially around the Navajo Mountain area.⁸ By the 1860s Paiutes were being squeezed out of their territory in southwestern Utah and into the less hospitable territory of southeastern Utah and northern Arizona.

Much of the land into which they moved was claimed by the Weeminuche Utes, who lived along the San Juan River in southeastern Utah and who shared friendly relations with the Capote Utes. The Capote Utes ranged through northern New Mexico and southern Colorado. Though the Utes were Numic speakers like their Paiute cousins, the former thought themselves better than the latter and committed their energies to a profitable Paiute slave trade during the 1700s and 1800s.⁹ The Utes also included the Navajos as targets for their slave raids, although there were attempts at alliance in 1855.¹⁰ As Euro-American encroachment put pressure on the Utes to the east, agencies were organized in Conejos, Colorado, for the more eastern bands and at Abiquiu, New Mexico, for the Capote, Mouache, and Weeminuche in the early 1860s. The Weeminuche at this point were the least threatened of these groups because of their use of southeastern Utah, which was not under the direct influence of Euro-Americans.

Both the Paiutes and the Utes at this time lived in loosely organized bands in which membership was fluid. There was little formal leadership beyond the warrior who proved himself an able hunter, a skilled fighter, and a wise leader for his family and those who chose to follow him. Thus, like the Navajo, the Weeminuche Utes and the San Juan Paiutes operated on a small scale at a local level, with no centralized organization to direct activities. This is not to suggest that these groups were ineffective, but only that a unified policy between groups was usually nonexistent.

The Navajos also ranged throughout southeastern Utah, partly because of the good grazing areas on the mountainsides and along the streams for their herds of sheep and partly because of the agricultural opportunities offered by the rivers’ flood plains. But during the late 1850s and early 1860s, as Ute and Euro-American contact with the Navajos increased, a period of trauma—the “Fearing Time”—descended upon the Dine. The hostilities generated during this era are well known among the older people even today. Ute raids conducted across the San Juan into the southern portion of Utah and northern

part of Arizona and New Mexico pushed the Navajos into the more inaccessible parts of the territory. One reconnaissance made by Captain J. G. Walker into the northwestern part of Navajo land in 1859 found that although the area had been used as a refuge in the past, it was now abandoned because of "Pah Utah" (Paiute) activities. Walker, however, recognized the inherent defensive qualities of the region when he noted that "discovering their [Navajos'] hiding places would be as difficult as it was to discover Seminoles in the hummocks of Florida."¹¹ This factor of seclusion would become increasingly important.

It is interesting to note that the Army's commanding officer in New Mexico, playing on Ute-Navajo hostilities, shifted his policy from fostering peaceful coexistence to one of belligerency. For instance, in 1860 Colonel T. F. Fauntleroy requested the use of 300 Utes to serve against the Navajos "as they do not require pay as soldiers but only to be supplied a short time with provisions until they can get well into the Indian country . . . It will at once have the effect to get the cooperation of a most valuable force and at the same time employ these restless people, who otherwise must foray upon our own settlements."¹² Thus the Ute-Navajo war served a dual purpose for Americans in that it not only helped eliminate part of the Navajo menace but also occupied the Southern Utes.

Yet it was not only the Utes who attacked the Navajo. New Mexicans with Pueblo allies also brought the fight to Navajo country, seeking slaves and booty. Volunteer units penetrated into the heart of the region, capturing prisoners or just pushing the Navajos out of their homelands. The results of many of these raids were not recorded, but one group reported seizing a large corn crop, 100 captives, and 5,000 sheep and horses.¹³ This was certainly a profitable way to fight a war, so these activities continued throughout the 1860s, even after the roundup of Navajos conducted by Kit Carson.

Naturally, the Dine retaliated against their adversaries, so that by 1861 they had "compelled the abandonment of the San Juan and Rio de las Animas gold mines Forty Americans and fifteen Mexicans were slaughtered upon the road and their property taken by the Navajos."¹⁴ Navajo raids against the Utes also continued, but they were not enough to relieve the relentless pressure that pushed the Navajos into peripheral areas. Carson's drive through the northern part of the reservation merely continued a process that was already well under way. The Navajos respected and feared the Utes much more than the white soldiers working under Carson's command, since the Indian allies had a much better understanding of Navajo camp sites and herding and farming patterns.

With this background, it is easier to understand the evolution of Navajo and Ute relations and the role that the Paiutes played in mediating a bitter situation with those who did not go to Fort Sumner. Southeastern Utah and northern Arizona served as a gathering place for many Navajos looking for a sanctuary from the pressures of war. Navajo oral tradition is rich with stories

of battles, slave raids, and flights into the wilderness. Sally Draper, in an interview in 1961, told how, in her great-grandmother's time, a band of Navajos, fleeing from a group of Utes and Mexicans, climbed atop a high bluff in the area of Red Mesa, Arizona. Surrounded by the enemy, parched with thirst and with no avenue of escape, they turned to supernatural help. The Navajos performed "Enemy Way" medicine, directing an evil power against their foe that killed the Ute leader and allowed the Navajos to escape.¹⁵

A more detailed account exists of a key individual named Hashkeneinii, who lived in the Monument Valley-Navajo Mountain area. With the approach of Carson and his Ute allies, Hashkeneinii gathered together a band of eight women, four men, and four children and fled north to the San Juan River. Traveling both night and day, driving a small herd of sheep before them, and avoiding the normal watering places by drinking from rock basins filled with rain water, they moved first to the San Juan River and then west to a crossing point that allowed them to enter the Navajo Mountain region. By this time Hashkeneinii had earned his name, generally translated as "Giving Out Anger," because of the relentless way he drove his family. Fear of the Utes caused him to push still deeper into the remote recesses on the southern side of Navajo Mountain where he formed a small village that remained in use for four years. Other Navajos, some of whom he found in the Kayenta area, joined him and helped gather stock scattered by the invading forces. The success of this hiding place is attested to by Hashkeneinii, who claimed that in the entire time he spent there before returning to Monument Valley in 1868, he met only one Ute man, who was friendly and more interested in trading than in warfare.¹⁶

One important point to consider in understanding Hashkeneinii's and other Navajos' experiences during this period of turmoil is the influence that wealth had upon their ability to survive. Called by some authors *ricos*—the Spanish term for "rich person"—men of wealth were often selected as leaders or *na' taani* because of their ability to ensure the physical prosperity of themselves and those who voluntarily allied with them.¹⁷ Thus, Hashkeneinii influenced ten other Navajos to accompany him back to his camp and to work together for protection and mutual benefit. Hashkeneinii emerges as both the richest and the most influential man of this period, owning a large herd of sheep and a healthy store of silver.¹⁸

But Hashkeneinii was not an isolated case. Daghaa Sik' aad in the Kaibeto area, K' aayelii near the Bears Ears, and Spane Shank in the Navajo Mountain region were some of the better known of these headmen. A report in October 1864 further established that it was the wealthy Navajo who were able to avoid the trials at Fort Sumner. The Superintendent of Indian Affairs in New Mexico stated that "less than one-half the tribe have surrendered; that the prisoners embrace the poor, while the strength and wealth of the tribe remain in the western part of their country. . . . It is the opinion of those best informed as to their resources that it will take years to entirely subdue and remove them,

as those still running at large are well mounted, well armed, have stock to live upon, and are the bravest and most warlike of the tribe.¹⁹

Perhaps the most famous of these ricos was Manuelito, who was born near the Bears Ears in Utah but by the time of Bosque Redondo lived in the area of the Little Colorado. General Carleton was aware of Manuelito's location, and though there were already too many Navajos at Fort Sumner for the Army to feed, clothe, and shelter, Carleton still attempted after some hesitation to get even more to surrender. On January 26, 1865, he sent a runner to confront Manuelito with an order to head for the fort so that he could arrive in time for the planting season. The ensuing report of this visit stated that "Manuelito answered that he would not leave his country; that he was doing no harm to anyone, and he intended to die there; that he had no fears and did not intend to run away. . . . The interpreter says there are from 400 to 600 horses and from 2,000 to 3,000 sheep owned by this band; that there are six so called "ricos;" that there are from twenty to thirty warriors, not more, and from 60 to 100 old and young, all told."²⁰ Thus, Manuelito's defiance was based principally on his economic well-being and only secondarily on his military strength.

At the end of this same report, an ominous note presaged the fate of Manuelito's band: "There have lately come from the Coconino Mountains, three rancherias, say thirty souls. One of these Indians was about the largest stock owner in the Navajo country but the Utes cleaned him out, leaving him only six horses. This party is on their way to this post, and will probably be here in about ten days."²¹ One month later, in March 1865, Carleton sent Herrera Grande, a friend of Manuelito's, to survey the situation. He saw a decimated camp, its people scattered by Ute raids, its herd reduced to fifty horses and about the same number of sheep, and women who wept at the mention of the Utes. Manuelito complained bitterly as he pointed out, "Here is all I have in the world. See what a trifling amount. You see how poor we are. My children are eating roots."²²

But he offered a brave front, persisting in his desire to remain free. Besides explaining that his livestock were too weak to make the trip to Fort Sumner, he also pointed out that his mother and his god lived in the west and that he would not leave either one. He then went on to say "that there was a tradition that his people should never cross the Rio Grande, the Rio San Juan or the Rio Colorado; that he also could not pass three mountains and particularly could he not leave the Chuska Mountains, his native hills; that his intention was to remain; that he was there to suffer all the consequences of war or famine."²³ In only a few months, however, Manuelito came in to surrender, after suffering near starvation, a devastated economic base and constant harassment by raiding Utes.

By August 20, 1866, Carlton reported that there were 6,915 Navajos at the Bosque with a new party of more than 100 Navajos having just arrived. "They were naked, sickly-looking and had the appearance of being starved.

They reported that their people, now in their old country, are in a starving and destitute condition; that they were constantly being harassed by the troops and Indians hostile to them; that they could not raise any crops and that all would come to the reservation if permitted to do so. I am of the opinion that nearly all those running at large will come to the reservation before winter sets in."²⁴

But what about those who evaded capture, particularly those in the northern part of the Navajo domain? Logic suggests that in the Four Corners area and in southern Utah especially, because of its close proximity to Ute territory, strong pressure was put on the Navajos. In some instances, this was undoubtedly true. However, there were additional social, economic, and political forces encouraging at least a partial cessation of enmity between the Navajos and Utes. This situation was due to the Paiutes. To understand the reason, one needs to return to the events preceding the "Fearing Time." David Brugge, a noted historian, suggests the possibility that as early as 1823, during a campaign by Jose Antonio Vizcarra, the Paiutes helped the Navajos by concealing their location, allowing the Navajos to flee across the San Juan River with their herds.²⁵

Yet it was not just in wartime that these relations became cemented. The Navajo considered the Paiute a poor tribe and not a military threat. The Paiutes herded sheep, did camp chores, and at times sold their children to Navajos to be used for labor.²⁶ By the late 1850s, the Paiutes' role among the Navajos increased, though still handled on an individual or family level, as both groups felt continuing pressure from white encroachment. Many Paiutes adopted the Navajo language, style of dress, and the practice of intermarriage.²⁷ They often established camps near Navajo settlements where trading and mutual support flourished. And though the Navajos looked down on the Paiutes, they considered them useful in performing tasks in exchange for which they received food. This symbiotic relationship occurred in not one but several locations—in Paiute Canyon, near Paiute Farms, along the San Juan River, by the Bears Ears, on Blue Mountain, and near Monument Valley.²⁸

This compatibility and cooperation was noticed by others in the area. During the late 1850s, as the Mormons in southwestern Utah became increasingly concerned with the advance of Albert Sidney Johnston's army, the events connected with the Mountain Meadow Massacre, and the instability created by Ute raids, they desired to form an Indian alliance to shield them from possible harm. As early as January 1858 reports started to filter back through military channels that the Navajos and Utes in the northern part of the reservation were making peace, with the encouragement of the Mormons.²⁹ Fear of this new friendship caused claims of Navajo and Ute raiding and conflicts to arise.³⁰ These subsided as the Utes reported through Kit Carson that they had no desire to join the Mormons, but in fact wanted to wage an intense conflict against both them and the Navajos.³¹

The most interesting part of this incident was the continuing role played

by the Paiutes, who acted as mediators between the Mormons, the Navajos, and other tribes. Captain J. G. Walker reported camping near the San Juan and Little Colorado rivers where a party of Paiutes, one of whom could speak the Navajo language fluently, gave the following statement:

That the Mormons had deputed them and some others who had gone to the Canon de Chelly, to meet the Navajos and to make peace with them; that they (the Mormons) were anxious to see peace established between all the different tribes between the Colorado and the Rio Grande, and by that means resist the encroachment of the people and the government of the United States, the natural enemies of the whole Indian race. . . . The Mormons had sent them (the Pah Utahs) to invite the Navajos to meet them and all the different bands of the Utahs and the Mohaves at the Sierra Panoche [Navajo Mountain]. . . . This council is to be held about the middle of October next, at which time the Mormons are to distribute arms and ammunition to the various tribes represented in the council who join the alliance.³²

Thus, Paiute fluency in Navajo, familiarity with the terrain, and friendly demeanor played a part in the decision to use them as middlemen between Utes, Navajos, and Mormons. It is also interesting that Navajo Mountain was selected as the meeting spot, since at this time it was not under the sovereignty of any one tribe.

As Ute pressures increased during the 1860s, the Navajos made greater use of the Paiutes. Beyond cooperation in daily life, they provided a lookout service to protect Navajo camps. For instance, K'aayelii lived in the Bears Ears area where he established a settlement of five or six hogans. To prevent surprise attacks, he posted Paiutes along the various approaches to his camp.³³ This same technique was employed in the Navajo Mountain area, with one informant saying that the Navajos there were "hiding behind" the Paiute.³⁴ The extent of this friendship may never be known precisely, because of a paucity of written records and conflicting oral testimony, but its existence cannot be questioned.

Paiute-Navajo relations were not always oriented toward peace and the avoidance of conflict. Occasionally the two groups united to raid profitable targets in their area, the most notable ones being the Mormon settlements of southwestern Utah. In 1866, a band of twenty-five Paiutes and Navajos came from the Navajo Mountain area and killed Dr. J. M. Whitmore and Alexander McIntyre near Pipe Springs. For the next three years, raiding activity intensified to the point that settlements on the eastern border were evacuated. Each fall a 200-mile stretch of land—from Beaver to St. Thomas, Utah—was attacked, with a total of six whites and a number of friendly Paiutes killed, and 500 horses, 500 cattle, and 2,000 sheep seized by the raiders.³⁵ Not all of the

Navajos were happy about these events, claiming that the raids were made by young men who used false reasons like hunting or trading expeditions to disguise their real intent.³⁶ The important point, however, is that Navajos and Paiutes worked together in this border warfare that continued into the 1870s.

During this same period, a problem existed in distinguishing between Utes and Paiutes in southeastern Utah. Slight variations in language, larger variations in lifestyle, and overlapping subsistence areas, combined with the slave trade and intermarriage, created a blending of the two groups that exists to the present day. Paiutes from the ephemeral San Juan Band foraged for food well within the hunting and gathering areas claimed by the Weeminuche Band of Utes. Government reports, settlers' journals, and even the Ute Agencies at times differed in their reporting of these groups, calling them *Pab Utes*, *Pab Utahs*, *Payuches*, *Pi Utes*, *Pab Wymins*, *Wymins Utes*, *Guignimuche*, and *Womenuche*. Perhaps the best way to make sense out of this confusion is to realize that the predominant group in southeastern Utah was the Weeminuche Ute, to whom was attached through marriage part of the San Juan Band Paiute. These Paiutes were never accorded full status with other Ute bands, and even today the Weeminuche group located at Towaoc are looked down upon by other Utes as a mixture of Ute and Paiute, while the members of the White Mesa-Allen Canyon Ute groups, who are of Ute-Paiute ancestry, are viewed by those at Towaoc as an even more mixed breed. The importance of this lies in the fact that the Weeminuche of southeastern Utah have often been considered peripheral to the main activity of other Ute bands.

During this period, when Ute and Navajo warfare was so intense, the Weeminuches participated in raiding, yet at the same time developed ties of friendship with certain Navajo groups. For instance, as early as 1858, a captive Mexican, who was freed from Navajo control north of the Carrizo Mountains, claimed that one group of Navajos made peace with the Utes and "removed their whole band into the country north of the San Juan."³⁷

But perhaps the most dramatic proof of Ute, Paiute, and Navajo cooperation came a few years later, during the height of Ute antagonism toward the Navajos. In September 1866, a group of Capote and Weeminuche Utes and a few Mexicans met for the purpose of organizing a ruse to trap a group of Navajos who had avoided going to Bosque Redondo and were presently living in northern Arizona. The plan was to send word that the Utes wanted to live in peace and in close proximity to them; after the Navajos arrived, the Utes would kill the men, enslave the women and children, and capture the livestock. Upon hearing this plan, however, Cabeza Blanca, a Weeminuche leader, disagreed with the others, saying that he had friends among those Navajos whom he did not want to have killed. A fight ensued, during which the Capotes killed Cabeza Blanca and then fled to Tierra Amarilla for protection. Although the sons of Cabeza Blanca never caught their father's killers, they did kill three

herders and wounded a woman—all Mexicans—and seized some livestock along the Chama River.

The government report of this incident said that “the Indians then left, joining as is supposed the Wymin and Pah Utes who had made friends with the Navajos in the meantime. The whole party of Wymin, Pah Utes, and Navajos then left that region and went to the neighborhood of Rio Dolores, Sierra Salir [La Sal Mountains], and Sierra Orejos [Bears Ears].”³⁸ Major Albert Pfeiffer, the author of the letter, wrote that he wanted the Capotes to make peace with the Weeminuche so that they could “deliver up to me the Navajos who were with the Wymin Utes that they might be sent to the Bosque; that in case the Navajos (their enemies) refused to go, I would lead them in a campaign against that tribe; that the government desired the Wymin, Pah and Capote Utes to bury the hatchet and be friends and that only one of their tribe had been killed and that this could be easily settled.” Pfeiffer also mentioned that if this bid for peace was not achieved, a war might result that would destroy Tierra Amarilla and surrounding settlements. He estimated that the hostile force that could be brought together to wage this conflict could include 1,200 Weeminuches, 1,500 Paiutes, and about 800 Navajos.

While these fears were never realized, and no massive outbreak occurred, this incident is instructive for a number of reasons. First, it shows that ties between the Navajos, Paiutes, and Utes were strong—so strong that Weeminuches turned against Capotes to the point of bloodshed. Second, the three groups were located in southeastern Utah—a place of general use for all three of these tribes. Third, this was one of the first reports to identify a triumvirate that for the next thirty years comprised those considered renegades and troublemakers not only by the whites moving into southeastern Utah but also by many leaders from their own tribes.

The Capotes continued to wage a brushfire war against their brothers the Weeminuches with sporadic instances of bloodshed in 1866 and 1868.³⁹ Weeminuche ties to the Navajos were again stressed during a conference held at Pagosa Springs near the San Juan, when the Utes pointed out that Capote raids had caused Navajo retaliation but that the Weeminuches would fight only to defend themselves if necessary.⁴⁰

And yet to characterize Weeminuche and Navajo relations during the 1860s as totally pacific is incorrect. Certain bands attacked the Navajos while others maintained friendships. For instance, one leader named Persechopa, desired peace between his people and the Navajos. When horse stealing by the latter offered justification for a return raid, Persechopa instead went to the Navajo Agency asking that the horses be given back and the peace maintained. Upon returning home, he died of dropsy which the Utes claimed was a result of Navajo poisoning, and thus grounds for war.⁴¹ Three months later some Navajos stole four horses from a group of Capotes who then retrieved them at the expense of one Ute and possibly as many as six Navajos killed.⁴² Sebo, a

Weeminuche leader, accompanied the Capotes on this trip and even went in and talked with the Navajos before the fighting started.

On the other hand, many Navajos still remember a gray-haired Ute, perhaps Cabeza Blanca, who roamed the Four Corners area and was extremely effective in capturing Navajo women, children, and livestock.⁴³ He was noted for being well-armed, persistent, and knowledgeable in ferreting out his enemies from their hiding places; he sold women captives to Mexicans.

What was the justification for this seeming inconsistency of at one point raiding Navajos and at another fighting to protect the same people? While documentation is sparse, the activities of the 1860s indicate that this was a period of increased interaction between Utes, Paiutes, and Navajos because of pressure from white encroachment. Further, the ties of the Paiutes to the Utes in language and through intermarriage brought these two groups closer together. In a spatial sense, this joined the Paiutes from the west with the Utes from the east. Likewise, the Navajos from the southern part of the Four Corners area were tied with the Paiutes to their north and west. Marriage of Paiutes to Navajos and of Paiutes to Utes created kinship ties that, though weak, found fruition first in trading negotiations and later, as the three groups became more friendly, in other forms of support. Although the Paiutes were gradually being assimilated into both Ute and Navajo culture, the Utes and Navajos remained distinctly separate and at times antagonistic toward each other. Thus, it is not suggested that there was a strong amalgamation as much as there was an easing of tension in this part of the reservation.

Trading has often been a means of softening animosity between warring Native American groups. Oral histories indicate that several areas along the San Juan River were used as trading spots between Utes and Navajos.⁴⁴ The vicinity of present-day Montezuma Creek, White Rocks south of Bluff, and a spot by the Bears Ears, were all trading places frequented by Utes, Paiutes, and Navajos to exchange goods. Even during times of war, trading expeditions were given safe-conduct to their places of business.⁴⁵ Items traded by the Utes included buckskins, buckskin clothing, elk hides and elk storage sacks, buffalo robes, saddlebags, horses, bandoleers, beaded bags, beaver skins, buffalo tails for rattles, pitch for ceremonial whistles, and baskets. The Navajos traded woven blankets, silver, and agricultural products.⁴⁶ The Navajo Mountain area provided a red earth paint sold by the Paiutes to the Utes.⁴⁷ Mention is also made of Paiutes from this area visiting Paiutes near the Bears Ears in order to obtain buckskins.⁴⁸

The trading expeditions were often as much of a religious nature as they were an opportunity for economic exchange. Songs from the "Blessing Way" ceremony were sung by the Navajos to ensure successful bargaining and a safe return, especially when venturing beyond the San Juan River, a part of the northern Navajo boundary. A ceremonial name—Dwellers-in-the-Cedar-Bark—was used to describe the Utes in order to summon supernatural aid, while the main event of trading was accompanied by the taboo that Navajo men

could not sleep with Ute women. An account of an 1870 trading expedition to the northern Utes contained the remark that it was better trading with the people in the north than it was with the people around Sleeping Ute Mountain, because those Utes had “crows” and “coyotes” amongst them.⁴⁹ Yet trading persisted, and William H. Jackson reported a Weeminuche trading expedition loaded with furs, traveling to the Navajos by way of Yellow Jacket Canyon in southwestern Colorado.⁵⁰ Often traders from the two tribes had a sponsor or “friend,” or trading partnership that was maintained between two families for several generations. Thus it seems likely that some Utes, Paiutes, and Navajos established strong bonds by trading along the San Juan.

Kinship was another source for strengthening relationships. Several Navajo families in the Navajo Mountain-Monument Valley area claim Paiute ancestry originating during this period.⁵¹ Ute and Paiute intermarriage also occurred during the same time, the results of which are seen at least in part in the White Mesa-Allen Canyon Ute community today. In the early 1900s, the Ute censuses from Towaoc show a strong mixture of Ute and Paiute families that had been established long before the censuses were taken.⁵⁶ Kinship ties, therefore, from Ute-Paiute and Navajo-Paiute marriages in at least some instances had a mellowing effect on Ute-Navajo antagonism.

Events in the 1870s reveal just how close these kinship bonds were. The label of “renegade” was attached to the amalgamation of San Juan Paiutes with parts of the Weeminuche Utes. A Navajo agent, James H. Miller, left Fort Defiance looking for irrigable lands along the San Juan River. He was attacked and killed in camp on June 11, 1872, by a group initially identified as Utes.⁵³ The criminals were next reported to be among the Paiutes in Utah, while Ouray, a Tabeguache Ute, promised to deliver the guilty parties to the government.⁵⁴ A year later the Utes reported killing the murderers.⁵⁵ If true this incident illustrates that the Utes regarded this Paiute-Ute faction as a renegade group and gave them no protected status.

Soon after this, two incidents marred the uneasy peace on the northern Navajo frontier. First, a force of Navajos and Paiutes attacked a group of miners traveling on a road along the Utah-Arizona border near Needle Rock. The miners suggested that this same group of Indians killed three Mormons near Mountain Meadows, Utah.⁵⁶ Again, in March 1874 three Navajos who had been drying beef obtained from Utes near Circle Valley, Utah, were killed, while a fourth Navajo escaped to tell the story. Relations grew bitter as the Navajos demanded a large payment from the Mormons, though in reality the murderers were non-Mormons.⁵⁷ Jacob Hamblin, a Mormon frontiersman famous for his ability to work with Indians, visited the Navajo camp at Navajo Mountain and almost lost his life there.⁵⁸ One interesting aspect of this affair is that Hamblin believed he had been betrayed by a Paiute interpreter who promised the Navajos horses and cattle from the Mormons.⁵⁹

In 1875, the Ute-Paiute faction attacked the Ferdinand V. Hayden Survey Party, and Ouray sounded the familiar cry of renegades, saying the deed

was committed by a “little patriarchal band of outlaw . . . Paiutes.” Others later admitted that it was actually a group of Weeminuches living near the La Sal Mountains.⁶⁰ About this same time, Navajos, Weeminuches, and Paiutes were reported to be camping together on the La Plata River.⁶¹

Two years later, because of reservation boundary problems with settlers, the Utes in the southwestern part of their reservation prepared for war and went to the Navajo Reservation to recruit help. The Navajo agent stated that “there are a few Navajos, who I fear will listen to the councils of the Utes,” so he sent word for all of his charges to return to the reservation.⁶²

This call to return upset a number of Navajos who had established themselves as sharecroppers on Ute lands along the La Plata River. Their arrangement of growing corn annually and sharing it with the Utes who “rented” the land worked well, so there was little motivation to return to the reservation. The agent, therefore, gave permission for those Navajos married to Utes to remain with that tribe.⁶³ Navajo and Ute ties of friendship were strengthened so that when it was time to hand out annuities and rations at the Los Pinos Agency in Colorado, 44 Navajos arrived along with 358 Utes.⁶⁴

Perhaps the most significant and instructive incident to illustrate Navajo, Ute, and Paiute relations occurred in Monument Valley in 1880. In February of that year, reports of a double murder started to filter in to Navajo Agent Galen Eastman. A Navajo named “Boy with Many Horses” mentioned that while visiting a Paiute camp sixty miles above Lee’s Ferry, he had seen four pack mules that were said to belong to two murdered white men. This type of occurrence was fairly common in the area, and often the Navajos were blamed for action taken by Paiutes. The agent ordered an investigation.⁶⁵ Within a week, Eastman received a letter from Henry L. Mitchell, the father of one of these missing men, saying that his son should have returned home to Riverside [Aneth area] a month ago and that the Navajos and Utes were acting “saussy” (*sic*)—the latter claiming that in the spring they would try to drive the white men out of their hunting grounds and grazing areas.⁶⁶ Mitchell responded to this threat by saying that within six weeks there would be 200 men ready to do battle with the troublemakers. Two weeks later a letter from Mitchell arrived in Washington, sent to Secretary of the Interior Carl Schurtz, complaining that Eastman was six months late in ordering the Navajos back to their reservation; that during this time horses and cattle had been stolen or killed; that Mitchell had just returned from retrieving the bones of his son and Charles Merrick who had been ambushed in Monument Valley; that the Navajos claimed the Utes had done it and the Utes claimed the Navajos had done it but that the blame for the crime rested on the Navajo. Mitchell then recommended that a company of soldiers be sent, to capture not only the recalcitrant Navajos but also some Utes, who had recently been involved in the White River Massacre.⁶⁷ He wrote another letter to Eastman saying that Navajos and Utes had killed not only the two already reported, but five more men whose bodies had not yet been found. He then indignantly told Eastman, “If

you can't take care of those Indians, let us know quick, for if there is not something done, you won't have any Navajos, for there will be in less than 90 days, some 1,000 men here; we can kill just as well as they can and we do not intend to be run over any longer. The Navajos are terrors, cutthroats, thieves and murderers."⁶⁸

A report of this incident was published in the *Denver Tribune* dated March 17, 1880. Entitled "Indian Imps: The Work of Butchery and Bloodshed Goes on," the article reported the gory details of the murders; stated that Utes, Navajos, and Paiutes were to blame; and then suggested that Mormons in the area were providing repeating rifles to the offenders. The reporter noted a close association among the Indians: "There has been an unusual friendship existing between the Southern Utes and Navajos. They have been passing backwards and forwards all winter, which in and of itself is a very suspicious circumstance. The Utes are more daring in their depredations than usual."⁶⁹ Although some of these claims were far-fetched—Mormons providing rifles and additional murders that had not occurred—it is interesting that Navajo-Ute relations were seen as being bonded during this period.

Agent Galen Eastman dispatched a delegation of reputable chiefs to look into the situation, but in the meantime, he received still another letter from Mitchell saying that his own investigation revealed that the murders had been committed by "Utes, some renegade Navajos and other contiguous Indians." Captain F. T. Bennett of the Ninth Cavalry was also conducting an investigation, sending a Mexican named Jesus with a Navajo to Moenkopi. Here, they were told by five Paiutes that four Utes, married to Paiute women, had killed the prospectors. "The Paiutes also said that the Utes said that their chiefs who went to Washington instructed all Ute Indians that if they (the Ute Chiefs) did not return in four months, that all Utes should kill all Americans they could. One of these five Paiutes named Bo-woos-Kush-ie, spoke good Navajo."⁷⁰ The report went on to say that "the Navajo Indians who live in that vicinity say that it was the Paiute Indians who killed the two Americans and that the Paiute live with the Utes on the north side of the San Juan River. Jesus and the Navajo who went with him say that from what they saw and heard, it is their opinion that it was the Paiute Indians who killed the two Americans." This last judgment was true, but the significance of the incident lies in illustrating the connections between the Utes, Paiutes, and Navajos in this area. News traveled quickly in those days, with visiting, trading, and political maneuverings by all three groups being a part of daily life. Also, the opportunity to pin the blame on another group was not lost, playing one against the other in order to further obscure an already confused situation.

To summarize the Navajo, Ute, and Paiute relations during the period 1860–80, the following points should be made. First, the San Juan Band Paiutes, because of friendly relations with both the Navajos and Utes, served as a bridge between these two groups who were often in conflict. In this way, strong hostilities became mellowed, and from this, cooperation grew. Sec-

ond, trading, kinship, and mutual service helped to strengthen these bonds of friendship. Evidence of this involvement is found even today in the Paiutes who live in both Navajo and Ute communities, as well as the Navajos who live in Ute communities and Utes who live among Navajos. Third, because each group was considered somewhat peripheral to its main tribe's area of activity, the bonds of cooperation were strengthened so that at times a close mutual allegiance was felt at the expense of the main tribal groups. Fourth, by the 1880s those Utes, Navajos, and Paiutes living on the northern Navajo frontier were looked upon by white settlers and government officials as renegades. All through the 1880s and 1890s, whenever an incident occurred—which was frequent—the cry of “outlaw band” was raised and accusations were made against this restless group of Indians who did not come under as strict control as did their main tribes. Finally, there developed a spirit of opposition against outsiders. The drives associated with Mormon settlement, gentile mining operations, cattle companies, and general westward expansion created competition over the land and its resources. Utes, Paiutes, and Navajos living in southeastern Utah resented this encroachment and occasionally offered cover and hiding places for those fleeing from the law. Thus the bonds of friendship and kinship, forged in adversity, held these three groups together from the unrest of the 1800s into the greater tranquility of twentieth-century America.

