Pedro Pino

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Foreword

This is a remarkable book about a remarkable man. Lai-iu-ah-tsai-lu, also known as Pedro Pino, was the most prominent Zuni political leader of the nineteenth century. Born into the Eagle Clan in 1788, Lai-iu-ah-tsai-lu was captured by the Navajos in his early teens and later sold to Don Pedro Bautista Pino, a prominent citizen in New Mexico. Don Pedro exposed Lai-iu-ah-tsai-lu to Spanish colonial culture and government and became his namesake in subsequent dealings with non-Zuni people.

During his sojourn away from his tribe, Lai-iu-ah-tsai-lu gained invaluable knowledge of the geography and peoples of New Mexico, as well as the political operation of the colonial government that held sway over the Zuni people. His Spanish benefactor eventually returned Lai-iu-ah-tsai-lu to Zuni Pueblo, intending that he continue his education under the tutelage of the Spanish priest at the Catholic mission. After several years, however, Lai-iu-ah-tsai-lu sought refuge in an outlying farming village, staying there until the mission was abandoned in 1821. This village, Heshota, now lies in ruin on the mesa north of Zuni Pueblo. Its silent walls give mute testimony to a bygone era that has largely faded from historical consciousness.

After Lai-iu-ah-tsai-lu returned to Zuni Pueblo, he was initiated into the Priesthood of the Bow, charged with providing spiritual and military protection for the Zuni people. Lai-iu-ah-tsai-lu was also initiated into other esoteric religious societies, including the Kea-shi-kwe, or Cactus Fraternity. He is remembered as a great orator, well versed in Zuni culture and tradition, and a leader of many successful war parties.
Lai-iu-ah-tsai-lu served as the governor of the Pueblo of Zuni during most of the period from 1830–1878. He was multilingual, speaking Zuni, Navajo, and Spanish. His knowledge of Navajo and Spanish culture and government stood him in good stead during the Mexican period between 1821 and 1846 and prepared him to deal with the United States when it asserted political control over the Southwest. Lai-iu-ah-tsai-lu forged alliances with the United States and other Indian nations that helped protect Zuni people from the increasing depredations of neighboring Navajo bands.

During his tenure as governor, Lai-iu-ah-tsai-lu formulated and implemented a foreign policy that steered his tribe through a politically and economically perilous period when Zuni lands were taken by the United States and the Zuni people were forced to adapt to a new American economy and culture. Lai-iu-ah-tsai-lu toiled throughout his life to document the tribe’s aboriginal lands and maintain Zuni sovereignty over them.

Promoting trade in Zuni agricultural products and natural resources was one of the means Lai-iu-ah-tsai-lu used to improve economic development in the face of a diminished land base. Lai-iu-ah-tsai-lu combined trade agreements with a political alliance with the United States, and the Zuni tribe thus supplied the United States Army with critical provisions to support Fort Defiance and other military posts in the Southwest. In addition, under Lai-iu-ah-tsai-lu’s leadership, the Zuni people also assisted government expeditions and wagon trains of American migrants heading west to California.

The midnineteenth century was a troubling time for Zuni people, who were beset by epidemics of smallpox and other diseases that periodically and tragically reduced the size of the population. The able leadership of Lai-iu-ah-tsai-lu substantially helped to mitigate the dire situation facing the Zuni people during this period.

When he was more than 90 years old, Lai-iu-ah-tsai-lu accompanied a delegation of Zuni leaders to Washington, D.C., where he met the president of the United States and other prominent politicians. During this visit, Lai-iu-ah-tsai-lu climbed to the top of the recently constructed Washington Monument, where he viewed the nation’s capital. This trip was instrumental in helping Zuni leaders
recognize and assess the cultural habits, political power, and technological achievements of Euro-Americans.

Throughout his career, Lai-iu-ah-tsai-lu’s political activities as the Zuni governor were based on statesmanship, diplomacy, defense of sovereignty, honesty, moral authority, patience, hospitality, and friendliness. This political legacy sets a high leadership standard that all contemporary politicians, Zuni and non-Zuni, would do well to emulate.

Much of what we know about Lai-iu-ah-tsai-lu comes from the letters and documents he assiduously collected from the foreigners who passed through Zuni Pueblo. These papers include messages from a cross-section of the notable Americans who traveled through the West, people such as Ives, Whipple, Beale, Wheeler, Cushing, Sherman, Bourke, and Washington. Even though he could not read English, Lai-iu-ah-tsai-lu knew the importance of these documents and carefully maintained an archive for the benefit of his people. Lai-iu-ah-tsai-lu’s papers were eventually acquired by the anthropologist Frank Hamilton Cushing. After Cushing’s death, his brother-in-law, Frederick Webb Hodge, secreted Cushing’s papers in a trunk, including the documents he had obtained from Lai-iu-ah-tsai-lu. These papers were rediscovered after Hodge’s death in 1956, and they are now available for study at the Southwest Museum in Los Angeles. Hart makes extensive use of these archival documents in crafting his book about the life and times of Lai-iu-ah-tsai-lu.

Hart successfully accomplishes a difficult task in this book. His scholarly research is meticulous and thorough, but he rises above the dry, lifeless prose of many historical narratives to animate the life and times of Lai-iu-ah-tsai-lu in a vivid style that is readily accessible to the average reader. Furthermore, in much of the published historical and anthropological literature of Zuni, individuals are subsumed under the more general treatment of the tribe as a whole. Hart’s book addresses this shortcoming by focusing on Lai-iu-ah-tsai-lu as a person. While there is a genre of autobiographies of Native Americans in the twentieth century, there are fewer biographies of nineteenth-century American Indians, and Hart’s work redresses this problem.

In writing the biography of an exceptional Zuni leader, Hart illuminates the social, political, and economic contexts of Zuni
history during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. While maintaining a penetrating focus on Lai-iu-ah-tsai-lu, the book provides broad insights into the cultural changes that shaped Zuni and southwestern history during the pivotal period when control over the region shifted from Spain to Mexico to the United States. The book provides a fascinating encapsulation of American history in the West, covering issues ranging from mountain men, government expeditions to explore geology and transportation routes, the Civil War, the Navajo Wars, Indian policy, the establishment of Indian reservations, and the activities of early anthropologists—all viewed through the lens of Lai-iu-ah-tsai-lu and Zuni Pueblo.

Hart has produced a book that is valuable to the Zuni people, scholars, and anyone interested in southwestern history and anthropology. He is to be commended for crafting a solid piece of historical research that is also accessible to multiple audiences. All readers will appreciate the clarity of language and lucid expression of ideas. In addition, scholars will find the multitude of footnotes useful in pursuing research about the people and issues dealt with in the biography. The four appendices provide valuable primary material to supplement the narrative.

Hart finished this manuscript in 1979, following a decade of historical research for the Pueblo of Zuni. For many years, it was only available to those resolute scholars who sought out Hart’s papers in archives at the pueblo and the University of Utah Marriott Library. During the 1980s and 1990s, Hart’s attention turned to additional research for the Pueblo of Zuni. During this period, he led an interdisciplinary team of scholars who studied Zuni history, culture, and environment to provide the evidence used by the pueblo to successfully litigate a series of land claims. We owe thanks to Hart for finally retrieving his manuscript from the archives and submitting it for publication. An afterword written by Hart in 2002 discusses the audience the original manuscript was intended to serve—the youth of Zuni—and helps place the manuscript into the context of contemporary historiographic and political issues. Hart’s biography of Lai-iu-ah-tsai-lu stands the test of time and is as rewarding to read today as it was when it was written more than twenty years ago.
In a fitting tribute to Lai-iu-ah-tsai-lu, E. Richard Hart is graciously donating the royalties from the sale of this book to the Zuni Senior Center at the Pueblo of Zuni. This program actively fills the needs of elderly Zuni people, providing them with social activities, companionship, meals, and other support. Thus, more than a century after his life, Lai-iu-ah-tsai-lu continues to serve his people.

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