

'From Huts to Palaces' . . .

ARCHAEOLOGISTS RESUME
DIG IN SOUTHWEST

"Southwest Dig" has long been an important summer activity of the Museum. Late last month, with the departure for the field of Dr. John B. Rinaldo, Assistant Curator of Archaeology, the twentieth Southwest Archaeological Expedition (eleventh in western New Mexico) began operations. Dr. Paul S. Martin, Chief Curator of Anthropology, will leave early in June to take charge. Past accomplishments of the expedition are reviewed and current aims outlined in the following article.

By PAUL S. MARTIN

CHIEF CURATOR, DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

FOR TEN SEASONS we have been on the trail of the Mogollon Indians of western New Mexico, trying as best we could to piece together their history. From our digging on ten Southwest Archaeological Expeditions and from subsequent analyses we have found that during a period of roughly 4,000 years (from 2500 B.C. to about A.D. 1300) these Indians "pulled themselves up by their boot straps" and achieved a moderately successful civilization.

When we first catch a glimpse of these people (2500 B.C.), they are living in skin tents or small cellar-like houses, called pit-houses, and are eking out an existence by gathering wild edible plants, by hunting, and by farming. Corn was a new thing in those days and did not yield much food per plant because the ears were only an inch or so long.

PROGRESS IN MANY DIRECTIONS

Centuries passed and the Mogollon Indians, in response, perhaps, to some universal human urge, "let no grass grow beneath their feet." They continually strove to improve their lot, and their progress was easy for us to spot as we burrowed around and through their abandoned houses and garbage dumps. We found, for example, that at A.D. 500 their houses, although still glorified pits, were better built and adapted to the climate; their crops consisted not only of corn but also of beans and squashes—and the corn-ears were larger and juicier; their pottery was now of good quality, and some of it was painted with a bold hand and imagination; their tools of stone, bone, and wood were fitted to the tasks at hand; special and larger pit-houses were set aside for ritual and worship; and belief in an after-life existed.

By the time 700 more years had passed, the Mogollon people had moved from their "huts" (pit-houses) into what we call pueblos. A pueblo is a kind of honeycomb, a group of contiguous rooms—perhaps 20 to 50 in number—that is built of stone and is one to four stories in height.

The pueblo that we excavated last summer

consisted of about 30 rooms and was mostly only one story high. Although the Mogollon Indians may not have been aware of their "emerging evolution" or of the vast improvement in their living conditions, we consider their pueblos as palaces when compared to pit-houses.

At any rate, by the time of the final and unsuccessful European Crusades (about A.D. 1250) our Indians had achieved a solid record of progress and, so far as we know, had no desire to conquer, to be conquered, or to proselytize. (A brief description of their accomplishments was published in the BULLETIN for November, 1953, and a complete account of the 1953 Southwest Archaeological Expedition now awaits publication.)

MIGRATION TO BE TRACED

If the Mogollon culture had had time to stretch and grow and develop without hindrance, there is a probability that it might have evolved a truly advanced civilization. But this was not to be. For some mysterious reason, as yet imperfectly understood, the Mogollon Indians abandoned the land they had dwelt in for more than 4,000 years. Where they went and why is not known.

But we are on the trail and have reason for believing some of them may have moved northward and some westward into what is now Arizona. We already have some clues to this migration. When we are more certain about where they went, we shall move our camp headquarters, perhaps in the next year or so, and continue our archaeological researches in the new region.

We have three projects planned for the 1954 Southwest Archaeological Expedition. The first is to dig the plazas and ceremonial room (kiva) of Higgins Flat Pueblo, part of which we excavated last summer; the second is to dig a large village-pueblo that we think was one of the last to have been occupied in the area; and the third is to investigate a village that may have been the earliest one in the area. This last project is especially important because, although we have found the tools and crops (in caves and arroyos) that are dated at about 2500 B.C., we have never found the villages in which the people of that era lived.

This is an ambitious program. We may not be able to fulfill all of it, but we shall do all we can.

"Science . . . is a natural and integral part of man's whole life, an activity which, at base, is a blend of logic, intuition, art and belief. It has been refined into an instrument of great beauty and precision by the few, but this science of the few is merely the distillation of the experience of the many. As a natural social activity of man, science belongs to all men."

—Warren Weaver

STAFF NOTES

Dr. B. E. Dahlgren, Curator Emeritus of Botany, has returned to the Museum from his botanical expedition to Cuba . . .

Dr. Julian A. Steyermark, Curator of the Phanerogamic Herbarium, recently discussed his expedition to the "lost world" of Venezuela before the Biltmore Garden Club and Chicago Ornithological Society . . .

Bryan Patterson, Curator of Fossil Mammals, has been awarded a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation fellowship for continuation of research in his field . . . Dr. Rainer Zangerl, Curator of Fossil Reptiles, and Preparator William D. Turnbull have returned from a field trip to the vicinity of Mecca, Indiana, with a carload of black shale to be studied for its fossil content . . . Miss Miriam Wood, Chief of the Raymond Foundation, represented the Museum at the meetings of the American Association of Museums in Santa Barbara, California, where she presided at the sessions of the Children's Museums Section . . . M. Kenneth Starr, Curator of Asiatic Archaeology and Ethnology, is making a tour of museums in the east to study Oriental collections and exhibition techniques . . . Miss Elaine Bluhm, Assistant in Archaeology, recently talked on her excavations in the Chicago area before the Anthropology Club of the University of Illinois in Urbana . . . Donald Collier, Curator of South American Archaeology and Ethnology, and George I. Quimby, Curator of North American Archaeology and Ethnology, attended the meetings of the Society for American Archaeology in Albany, New York, last month. Curator Quimby was chairman of the session on mid-western archaeology . . . Dr. Karl P. Schmidt, Chief Curator of Zoology, lectured before the Kumlien Club of Madison, Wisconsin, on natural history and conservation in Palestine . . . Loren P. Woods, Curator of Fishes, Miss Margaret G. Bradbury, Artist in Zoology, and Miss Pearl Sonoda, of the Division of Fishes, attended the meeting in Monmouth, Illinois, of the Illinois Academy of Science. Curator Woods and Miss Bradbury presented papers on ichthyological subjects.

Entomologist on Field Trip

Rupert L. Wenzel, Curator of Insects, will leave on a trip of six to eight weeks to the West Coast on June 1. His main purpose is to study types and other specimens of histerid beetles in the collections of western universities and museums, particularly those of the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco. En route he will collect histerid beetles and other insects, especially the shore-dwelling coastal species, the predators of beetle pests of pines, and the inhabitants of mammal burrows.



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