

UCLA

American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

Navajoland: Family and Settlement and Land Use. By Klara B. Kelley and Peter M. Whiteley.

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9p81s2g2>

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 16(4)

ISSN

0161-6463

Author

Wozniak, Frank E.

Publication Date

1992-09-01

DOI

10.17953

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

Navajoland: Family and Settlement and Land Use. By Klara B. Kelley and Peter M. Whiteley. Tsaile, Arizona: Navajo Community College Press, 1989. 243 pages. \$13.95 paper.

This work apparently is intended as a text for junior college level students but should also be of interest to a more general audience, including archaeologists working in Navajo country. Because most ethnographic work on the Navajo in the last twenty years has been buried in contract reports of very limited distribution and availability, Kelley and Whiteley have done all of us a great service with this synthesis of the socioeconomic evolution of the Navajo people in the Southwest.

The focus of this study is the interrelationship of Navajo family structure, settlement systems, and land use patterns in northwestern New Mexico and northern Arizona and the changes in those interrelationships from the origins of the Navajo in the Southwest (fifteenth century) to the late twentieth century. The authors have attempted to take their discussion back to the fifteenth or sixteenth century. They have, however, run into the dual problem of a paucity of evidence about the Diné or early Navajo period and the misfortune of the timing of the appearance of their publication. In particular, because they have not utilized ethnoarchaeological and ethnohistorical research from after the early 1980s on the protohistoric (e. g., before A. D. 1700) Navajo, the study is dated in its discussion of the early Navajo. The late 1980s and early 1990s comprise a very rich period in providing data on the Navajo in the Diné period, especially in the areas of settlement and subsistence.

The depth and comprehensiveness of the discussion of the Navajo in the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth century are curtailed by the authors' reliance on older, secondary sources. As a consequence, the book does not introduce the reader to the real and politically volatile discussion over the alleged size and impact of Puebloan refugee populations on Navajo culture in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Further, the authors have not utilized the more recent ethnohistorical studies that present a wealth of new information on Navajo settlement and subsistence from Spanish and Mexican documents of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. On the other hand, the authors' insights into the origins and development of an essentially pastoral economy that relied on sheepherding are well taken and provide a thoughtful discussion of the dimensions and

socioeconomic consequences of the Navajo exodus from the Dinétah region in the northeastern San Juan Basin in the third quarter of the eighteenth century.

The discussion of the Navajo before the mid-nineteenth century takes up only a small part of the book. The principal part of the work, both in length and depth of information, covers the period after the military subjugation of the Navajo by the United States Army in 1863–1864. The reason that the text is dominated by the most recent 125 years of Navajo history in the Southwest is the availability and quantity of information on the Navajo people in United States government records and the focus of ethnographic research on the most recent period in the life of the Navajo.

The author of this section of the book is well known in the Southwest for her own ethnographic research on the eastern Navajo; she has gathered and integrated this substantial body of ethnographic information on the late nineteenth- and twentieth-century Navajo from her own and other studies of Navajo family structure, settlement systems, and land use patterns. She has also provided interesting and useful insights into the evolution of the Navajo family as it is related to changes in land use and settlement patterns. Of equal importance to the breadth of the data is its comprehensive geographic extent. Insofar as possible, the author has drawn upon studies throughout the Navajo Nation. Consequently, she has provided important comparative insights into the life of all of the Navajo people and thus has stepped beyond the usually parochial discussions of Navajo family, settlement, and land use.

While every ethnographer/anthropologist has recognized and elaborated on the significance of sheepherding to the Navajo in the post-Bosque Redondo era, the author provides a good summary discussion of the social, economic, political, and environmental components of the Navajo family economy as it evolved in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The author also looks at the well-known environmental consequences as well as the less well-known socioeconomic consequences of the adoption and dramatic expansion of market livestock production by the Navajo in the fifty years between the advent of the transcontinental railroad in the Southwest and the Great Depression.

According to the author, the Navajo family livestock economy, which was the foundation of "traditional Navajo society," had run its course before 1930. The author documents the breakdown of the self-sufficient communities of the nineteenth-century Navajo

and the parallel environmental catastrophe due to the overgrazing that resulted from commercial pastoralism. By the 1930s, there were too many people, too many sheep, and too little land to support the traditional Navajo economy within the confines of the Navajo Reservation. The Navajo people have been attempting to adapt to the consequences of this situation since the Great Depression. Through her discussion of family demographics, domestic residential patterns, and land tenure and land use patterns, the author has done an excellent job of examining the transformation of the Navajo from family herders to wage workers. Further, she has not ignored the substantial impact of federal and tribal government programs, including the numerous abortive projects to improve the life and livelihood of the Navajo people, nor has she ignored the consequences of natural resources development on the Navajo Reservation beginning in the 1920s.

The primary contribution of this work to the study of the evolution of Navajo family, settlement, and land use is that it has placed previous ethnographic studies of Navajo communities, which have been predominantly parochial in scope, in the context of regional and national developments in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The only major improvement to the body of this book would have been the provision of more and better maps.

Frank E. Wozniak

Mobius Research and University of New Mexico

The Oneida Land Claims. By George C. Shattuck. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1991. 238 pages. \$29.95 cloth; \$15.95 paper.

This brief volume (eighty-one pages of text, followed by 151 pages of appendixes and a two-page index) describes the legal battle over Oneida land claims from 1965 through 1977. The Oneida were represented by George Shattuck, a Syracuse tax attorney with no prior experience in Indian land claims suits. The litigation was highlighted by two favorable Supreme Court rulings, the first of which came in 1974 when the Supreme Court ruled that the Oneida land claims should be heard in New York state courts. The second, a five-to-four decision by the Supreme Court in 1985, held that Oneida and Madison counties in New York State were liable for the fair rental value of nine hundred acres of Oneida land in