The Jemez Revolt of 1623

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In 1623, the Jemez revolted against the Spanish. As part of this revolt, they burned the Mission of San Jose de los Jemez and abandoned the surrounding pueblo of Giusewa, roughly translated as “Pueblo at the Sulphur Place” or “Pueblo at the Hot Place.” Today, this location is preserved as Jemez Historic Site.

At the time of the 1623 Jemez Revolt, Giusewa was among the largest – if not the largest – pueblo village in the Jemez Mountains. It sprawled over 18 acres at the confluence of the Jemez River and Church Canyon (Oak Canyon) Creek. It is presumed to have been a trading mecca for the Jemez People and may have served as a production center for Jemez Black on White pottery. Exactly how many people lived at the site is unknown. Franciscans boast that prior to the revolt of 1623, roughly 6,566 Jemez were baptized. It is possible hundreds, if not thousands, of those “converts” were settled at Giusewa.

As with many early Native American uprisings in New Mexico, little is known of the Jemez Revolt of 1623. However, events such as these have great importance in our understanding of 17th Century Native American and European interactions in New Mexico. In terms of the Jemez, the 1623 Revolt cost the lives of many more people than the more famous Pueblo Revolt of 1680.

In 1626, he was Maudre de Campo, second to only the Governor in the military affairs of New Mexico, and his land grant extended from San Felipe Pueblo to Atrisco in the south valley of present day Albuquerque. Among the many Native peoples who paid him tribute were those of the Jemez Mountains.

Regardless, San Jose Mission was abandoned and the Jemez went into revolt against both the priests and the Spanish. Spanish officials characterized this as a civil war among the Jemez people. However, there is no evidence at Giusewa to suggest non-Christian Jemez attacked the Christian tribal members. Only the church was burned, indicating the target of Jemez aggression was the Franciscan priests, not the village of Giusewa. It is possible the “converts” at Giusewa participated in the uprising or, at the very least, did not defend the priests against their non-Christian brethren.

SPANISH suzerainty over the Jemez Mountains collapsed.

Reconquest of the Jemez fell upon Spanish residents residing in Santa Fe and the surrounding area. Many of these men were located in the Galisteo Basin and what was then called the Sandia Jurisdiction (which included the Bernalillo area). Among them was Encomendero Don Pedro Duran y Chaves, who owned a large hacienda, through his wife Dona Isabel de Bohorquez (Baca), at Arroyo del Tunque near San Felipe Pueblo.

Duran y Chaves was a military man first appearing in the New Mexico archives exacting the Governor’s tribute at Taos Pueblo in 1613. By 1623, he had risen to the rank of Sargento Mayor, or major. By the end of the uprising,

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Exactly what occurred during the reconquest is unclear. It appears that Tano, Tewa and Keres Indian auxiliaries participated in most of the fighting with Spanish horsemen and gunners providing support. Several Jemez villages were likely abandoned during the conflict. Based on the absence, or near absence, of Glaze F pottery, Amoxiumwua (Old Anthill Place or Virgin Mesa Ruin), Kwastiyukwa (The Giant’s Footprint or Holiday Mesa Ruin), and Seshukwa (Eagle’s Nest or San Juan Mesa Ruin) were presumably among those deserted.

In the wake of the conflict, the Jemez people were rounded up, forced to resettle Giusewa, and build the new pueblo of Waltono (present day Jemez Pueblo). At Giusewa, the Franciscan Martin de Arvide reactivated San Jose de los Jemez Mission. At Waltono, he founded San Diego de la Congregacion. If Spanish estimates are to be believed, more than 3,000 Jemez lost their lives in the uprising, which occurred over the course of three years.

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This later revolt on August 10, 1680, unified the Pueblo peoples and resulted in the removal of the Spanish from the northern parts of New Mexico Province for more than a decade. However, it did not occur in a vacuum. Rather it represents one in a line of many actions by Pueblo peoples to resist Spanish rule and Catholicism. Despite the many unknown details, the Jemez Revolt of 1623 should not be forgotten.