

KERES

KERES HISTORY

The Keres Indians are found in seven distinct pueblos. The eastern group are Cochiti, Santo Domingo, San Felipe, Santa Ana, and Zia. The western pueblos are Acoma and Laguna. The original home of the Keres was in the canyon of Rito de los Frijoles, about fifteen miles north of the present Cochiti. According to Bandelier:

“The whole length of the village is about two miles, more or less. . . . Here was a little world of its own. The bottom afforded a sufficient extent of very fertile soil; there was enough permanent water to permit irrigation,



An Acoma man

and there are even traces of acequias on both sides of the brook. Trees stood in front of their homes, and the mesas above are well wooded. Game of all kinds, deer, elk, mountain sheep, bears, turkeys roamed about the region in numbers, and the brook afforded fish. The Rito is cool in summer and not very cold in winter, compared with the surrounding table lands and the Rio Grande Valley.”

No one knows exactly why, but there was dissension among the people, and what was perhaps some fifteen hundred individuals divided into various groups. The malcontents included ancestors of San Felipe, who later rejoined the main village in a place known as “mountain lion village,” a tongue-like mesa called in Spanish Potrero de las Vacas. The native name of this ruin refers to a remarkable shrine, a circle of stones enclosing two crouching mountain lions sculptured out of bedrock that forms the surface of the mesa.

But, here again, as one Indian put it, “trouble came; their hearts were not one.” Those who later were to found Santo Domingo went a short distance eastward to Ipani; the others, ancestors of Cochiti, moved about three miles southwest and founded the Red Village, or Potrero San Miguel, Pueblo. At the same time, the San Felipe people went about three miles west of the present village of Cochiti.

Old Cochiti, Potrero Viejo, where the ancestors of Cochiti settled finally, was well situated for defense. The Keres name, Hanat-kotyiti, translates to “high above Cochiti.” Here the Indians resided, moving but once, down to the Rio Grande around the time of the revolt. Near the close of 1681, after the general uprising of the Pueblos, Governor Otermin, in his abor-



Laguna



A narrow street. Laguna

tive attempt to reconquer the country, found San Felipe, Santo Domingo, and Cochiti abandoned. He sacked them and consumed their grain and burned their *estufas*, or kivas, which he referred to as “houses of idolatry.”

In 1689 Governor Cruzate destroyed Zia and slaughtered a large number of its inhabitants. Diego de Vargas, the new governor, found all of the Keres pueblos deserted once again in 1692. When he returned the following year, Cochiti and San Marcos had banded together and were ensconced at Potrero

Viejo. Again according to Bandelier:

“The resistance offered by the pueblo proved fruitless, and three hundred and forty two women and children fell into the hands of the Spanish, together with seventy horses and nine hundred sheep. A considerable portion of Indian corn was found in the pueblo. . . . Vargas ordered the prisoners to shell it on the spot. . . . When Vargas at last evacuated Potrero, with his booty in corn and the remnant in captives, he set fire to the pueblo. He burned the grain that could not be taken ‘in order that the rebellious enemy might not find any sustenance in it, nor be able to take up his abode without being compelled to rebuild.’ Old Cochiti was never occupied again.”



Laguna water-jar