

Hewett Describes Chaco Canyon Past and Present

Dr. E. L. Hewett, of the University of New Mexico faculty and director of the School of American Research, who is directing the field school of the University and the School in Chaco Canyon, in his initial lectures to the students of the camp described the present state of Chaco canyon and traced its changes since the time the pueblos in the canyon were occupied.

“The evidences of pre-historic human occupation of the canyon are indisputable,” he said. “The large number of towns found here indicates a large population, which presupposes a fertile valley; a large stream, and conditions generally favorable to life. The climatic and geologic conditions undoubtedly demanded a community form of society.”

The causes for the change in the valley to its present state of aridity cannot certainly be explained, but the changes which have occurred are entirely responsible for the non-community form of life found in the sector at the present time. The disappearance of the pueblo race from the canyon was probably due to their failure to adapt themselves to the changing conditions, according to Dr. Hewett.

In his second lecture Dr. Hewett described the life and customs of the Navajo Indians, the present inhabitants of the regions. He compared their mode of life with that occurring in the Arabian desert, saying that they were similar in many respects, except that the Arabs are often completely nomadic and the Navajos usually return to the same spots year after year. “The problem of the origin of the Navajos is unsolved,” he said. “According to the earliest Spanish records, they were an agricultural people, and it was only after the introduction of sheep and horses that they adopted the semi-nomadic form of life that they now practice. They have succeeded in adapting themselves to a changing environment, and therefore have survived.”

An interesting point of contrast between the Navajos and the Pueblos was brought out in the fact the Navajos are not a communal group, and can scarcely be called tribal.

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