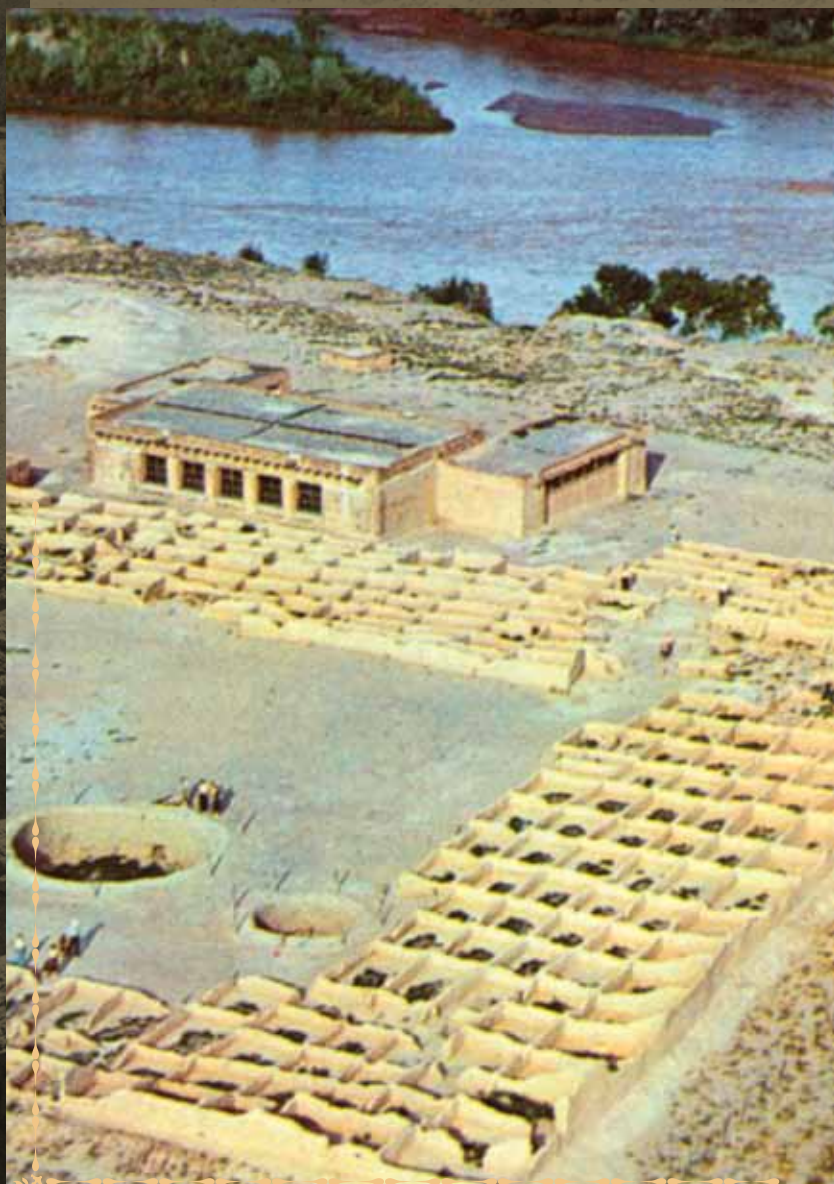


Poem

It Used *to be a* Village

by Carlos Contreras



It used to be a village
one of many
three plazas.

Connected at the limbs
and to life, by a river running
some twenty-thousand mouths toward
food
and sustainability.

Tiwa,
Tongue of the native,
Tongue of the unfamiliar,
Depending on the perspective.
And over time perspectives change—
some things stay the same,
preserved, for sake of telling stories.

Stories like the land, food for thought in
the way they bear:

Fear
Curiosity
Love
Communion
Community
Conquest

All words of different tongues,
from two worlds
that collided.

The color photograph by Kent Dick comes from a 1950s postcard, courtesy Palace of the Governors Photo Archives (NMHM/DCA), Neg. No. 089563.

Struck.

Gold,
No—

Food, yes.

Maybe not quite the Seven Cities searched for
but found nonetheless.

It used to be a village
played host to
First contact
First conversation
First questioning of cultures, and maybe

the only answers lay somewhere in the wind,
dust,
in the puddles that build a city made of mud
held together with twine

Yucca
and
Turkey feathers
then,
Retablos
Wagon Wheels
Ox Shoes
Baskets and
Blankets —

Three sisters and a dream.

Twenty villages and some sky,
some five hundred years ago, more resilient than
we could possibly imagine, right now.

A cyclical existence
one that begins and ends
with Earth.

Ceremonial birth
of a people baked to match the
color of the dust they came from
turned to,
whispered in the wind
a time-line of what we think happened
because we only know so much.
So we preserve that which we do,
Curators of culture,
Coronado to Tiwa to today
telling stories of
Two thousand meeting twenty,
Thousand.

Conflict
Compromise
Hunger
and
Survival
When there wasn't enough to go around
and no desire to go, hungry.

From throats, to mouths, communication
Compromise
Change,
Some things stayed the same—
because either way,
The Earth remains, shifted, but still in the same place.

Coronado
Bernallilo
New Mexico
Tiguex
Tiwa

It used to be a village,
If you listen, the wind will tell you it still is.

*Carlos Contreras discusses composing this
poem at elpalacio.org.*

The black-and-white photograph shows replicas of the Kuaua Ruins, at Coronado State Monument, near Bernalillo, New Mexico. The original ruins were excavated from 1933-1938, and then backfilled for preservation. In the late 1930's these replica ruins were constructed. Most of the replicas have since eroded away. Unidentified photographer [possibly George Thompson], New Mexico Magazine Collection, ca. 1950. Courtesy Palace of the Governors Photo Archives (NMHM/DCA), Neg. No. HP 2007.20.185.