



AMERICA ON THE WORLD STAGE

ALBEMARLE | CHARLOTTESVILLE | GREENE | MADISON | ORANGE

A
TEACHING
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HISTORY
GRANT PROGRAM

PROJECT TITLE:

Roots of Rebellion: Comparing the Pueblo Indian Revolt of 1680 and the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857

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History-9th and 10th Grade

SCHOLARSHIP & RESEARCH

1. Primary Investigative Question(s)

What were the major causes of the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 in New Mexico and the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857 in India? What are the similarities and differences between the two rebellions? What can these two rebellions teach us about colonialism and world history?

2. Contextual Essay

The age of colonialism from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries was marked with periods of native resistance. In 1680 the Pueblo Indians revolted against the Spanish, leading the most successful Native American rebellion against a European power in the Americas. Organized by Popè, a local medicine man, the Pueblo Indians counted down the days to revolt using knotted cords. Though the Spanish learned of the revolt a day earlier before the scheduled start, the Pueblo Indians still surprised the Spanish (Weber, 5-6). Many diverse Pueblo Indian groups, including the Hopis, cooperated to expel the Spanish from New Mexico (Rushforth & Upham, 97). The Spanish did not reconquer the New Mexico colony until 1696. Two centuries later across the globe in Asia, Indian sepoy soldiers launched a two year uprising against British rule. This conflict began as a religious one as Hindu and Muslim sepoys rejected cartridges believed to be greased in pork and beef fat, but spread through northern India as peasants revolted in town after town. Though the sepoy soldiers were not successful in overthrowing the British, the revolt was so alarming that the administration of India was directly transferred to the British crown (Streets 86). Both the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 and the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857 are important symbols of native resistance that are often neglected in both U.S. and World History curricula. What were the major causes of the Pueblo Revolt and the Sepoy Rebellion? What comparisons can be drawn from the two examples of native resistance to have a more balanced view of the age of colonialism?

One of the most significant reasons for the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 can be traced to cultural influences. Religion was perhaps the most important factor. New Mexico, after the unsuccessful search for mineral wealth under Juan de Oñate, was administered as a missionary colony under the guidance of royal governors and the Franciscans (Faragher et. al., 56). The Franciscans were charged with the conversion of the Indians and assimilating them to Spanish ways (Bowden, 24-27). This often led to disagreements between governors and Franciscan prelates about the extent of their power in the colony (Espinosa, 27-32). Uneasy church and state relationships, in part, allowed the Pueblo religion to continue (Gutiérrez, 108-110). Pueblo religion was based on the belief in katsina (gods) that lived with man and

helped him adapt to the environment (Bowden, 28). By upholding the community and pleasing the katsina, a well-ordered life was ensured for the pueblo. The ill-treatment by the Spanish coupled with environmental concerns prompted the Pueblo Indians to move against Christianity “because it posed a direct threat to their culture and religion” (Bowden, 33).

A different interpretation of religion emphasizes the importance of the Franciscans and their role in the revolt. In 1608, 7,000 Indians were baptized by the Franciscans. After a few years, almost all of the Pueblo Indians had been converted by the missionaries (Garner, 62). With these quick baptisms, strict interpretation of Christianity was not always honored and many Pueblo Indians maintained their religion and continued to practice their rites, including the worship of idols (Garner, 55). According to Franciscan observations, the traditional beliefs and practices of the Pueblos continued into the seventeenth century (Knaut, 80-86). While some historians emphasize that the Franciscans accommodated the Pueblo religion, others point to the harsh punishment exacted by the Franciscans against Indians practicing their native religion. One Franciscan whipped a Hopi Indian until he was covered in blood while another set a Pueblo Indian on fire using turpentine. Such acts encouraged hatred toward the Spanish amongst the Puebloans. While they moved closer and closer to rebellion, the Franciscans prepared themselves for martyrdom (Gutiérrez, 129). The Franciscans were principal targets during the revolt. Twenty-one of the thirty-two Franciscan missionaries were killed during the revolt of 1680 (Garner, 74).

While religion was an underlying cause of the Pueblo Revolt, environmental factors also contributed to the destabilization of the New Mexico colony. As the Spanish demanded tribute under the *encomendero* system and the Franciscans required labor for the mission, famine and disease weakened the colony in the 1670s. Spanish and Indians alike were forced to eat whatever they could find. Additionally, Apache raids on the pueblos increased after the 1670s (Garner, 69-70). Instead of lowering tribute rates for Indians, the Spanish raised the rates in 1643 and did not adjust them for famine and disease (Knaut, 157). These factors continued to threaten the order in the colony and the Pueblo Indians looked back to their native religion for answers rather than to the Spanish priests (Garner, 69-70).

The treatment of Pueblo women was another seed of rebellion. Indian women often worked in the mission and in domestic homes. These women were known not only for gathering and collecting food, but also for building and plastering homes (Foote & Schackel, 18). Many Pueblos were matrilineal (Foote & Schackel, 22). The arrival of the Spanish patriarchy threatened the women’s positions in Indian society. Furthermore, sexual relations between the women and the Spanish, including the Franciscans, complicated the social order. In a testimony after the revolt, one Indian reported that the women in particular pushed for the revolt and wanted the men to kill them all (Foote & Schackel, 30).

A final cause of the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 was the leadership of Popè. Popè was a San Juan medicine man who moved to Taos to organize the rebellion. He encouraged a return to the old religion and previous prosperity. He claimed to have divine leadership and coordinated the revolt based on a knotted cord sent to the surrounding pueblos. Those loyal to the rebellion untied the cord each day to count down the days to the start of the revolt. He also threatened non-compliant pueblos with destruction (Gutiérrez, 131-132). In the testimony of Pedro Naranjo, a Queres Indian from San Felipe, he stressed the importance of Popè and how he threatened to kill those who did not obey his orders. According to Naranjo, orders given to the Pueblo Indians stated “that whoever did not obey would be beheaded, and that everyone went out of fear” (DeMarco, 416-417).

Religion was also a critical cause of the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857. Prior to 1857, the British East India Company controlled over 1.6 million square miles of India. In order to effectively administer and protect this territory, the company hired Indians to work in the army (Streets, 86). Over the years, the sepoys became increasingly concerned with British interference in the Hindu and Muslim faiths of the country. In an 1834 Act, British subjects could settle in India and another act in 1856 required recruits to agree to serve abroad, going against the Hindu beliefs (Streets, 89). Such concern was amplified by increasing missionary activity in the nineteenth century (Khan, 123-124). The spark of the revolt occurred in late 1856 as Sepoy soldiers feared the new cartridges for rifles were greased in pork and beef fat. For Hindus, the cow is a venerated animal and to eat it would mean the loss of one’s caste. For

Muslims, pork was not suitable. This prompted the Bengal army, the Third Native Cavalry, to refuse the cartridges. The British jailed the insubordinate sepoys and the next day the soldiers rebelled, marching to Delhi. The rebellion then spread to northern and central India (Streets, 90). Bahadur Shah issued a proclamation of Indian freedom after the rebellion had started and leaders like Nana Sahib fought against the British (Strayer, 953).

An additional cause of the Sepoy Mutiny was the structure of the army. As the cost of living increased, sepoy pay did not rise with the standard of living. These soldiers also had fewer opportunities for advancement than their British counterparts. Complicating matters, British officers were often absent for extended time so they did not know the army very well. Finally, communication was not as clear as needed, strengthening sepoys' thoughts that the British did not understand the people (Streets, 88).

Economic influences were another determinative cause of the Sepoy Rebellion. Though the sepoys initiated the rebellion in Meerut to Delhi, areas across India erupted into violence. These revolts were generally led by poor peasants (Stokes, 117). British administration of the land led many farmers to fall into debt (Khan, 138). Several Indians struggled to pay revenue installments to the British. Once the rebellion began, disgruntled peasants took advantage of the chaos to plunder towns and move against the money-lending class and rich peasants. While the city of Delhi was pacified, it took years to bring the countryside back under control (Stokes, 216-227).

Comparing the two rebellions, there are common themes centered on the concepts of environment, religion, politics, economy, and society. One of the most important causes that tie these two revolts together despite being almost two centuries apart is that of religion. The Pueblos and Sepoy Indians previously held religious beliefs and resented government involvement with religion. By analyzing similarities and differences between these two revolts, students see the unique influence of religion and culture. An additional commonality is economic welfare of the people. Differences include the impact of the environment, the concern with women's roles in society, and leadership. One of the most influential factors of the Pueblo Revolt was years of famine and disease, which was not an important cause of the Sepoy Rebellion. Additionally, the treatment of women in Spanish homes and missions fueled the Pueblo uprising, a situation not seen in India. While the Pueblo uprising was coordinated by the strong leader Popè, the Sepoy Mutiny had a nominal leader in Bahadur Shah and regional leaders like Nana Sahib.

Throughout World and U.S. History, imperialism is presented as the simple tale of the success of the colonizers against native populations. The perspectives of groups that resisted colonization is all too often disregarded and the complexity of history is lost. By viewing two rebellions two centuries apart in time, students have a better understanding of the pattern and frequency of revolt during the age of colonialism. Students see similar themes in causes as well as unique circumstances for each group. While similarities are rich between these two, differences are also substantial. Through comparison and analysis of the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 and the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857, colonialism includes the complicated and incredibly significant story of native resistance.

3. **Annotated Bibliography**

Secondary Sources

Bowden, H.W. (1999). Spanish missions, cultural conflict, and the Pueblo Revolt of 1680. In D.J. Weber (Ed.), *What caused the Pueblo Revolt of 1680?* (pp. 23-40). Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.

Bowden examines religion's role in the Pueblo Revolt of 1680. He sees religion as the primary cause of the revolt. By comparing Spanish Catholicism and the Pueblo religion, he addresses the initial similarities of the two. However, he sees the differences as being particularly important and how the revolt started due to the incompatibility of Christianity and the Pueblo religion.

Espinosa, J.M. (Ed.). (1988). *The Pueblo Indian revolt of 1696 and the Franciscan missions in New Mexico*. Norman & London: University of Oklahoma Press.

This is a compilation of translated Franciscan letters from the reconquest of New Mexico under General Vargas to the failed Pueblo revolt of 1696. Espinosa begins with an introduction detailing the Spanish involvement in New Mexico from the sixteenth to late seventeenth century. In the Franciscan letters, the Frays sent repeated warnings about the revolutionary potential of the Pueblo Indians. Though the Indians did rebel again in 1696, the revolt did not push the Spanish out as in the revolt of 1680. Espinosa's work is critical to understand the continued role of the Franciscans and their changing relationship with colonial governors.

Faragher, J.M., Buhle, M.J., et al. (2005). *Planting colonies in North America, 1588-1701. Out of many* (pp. 52-77). Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall.

In this survey U.S. history textbook, particular emphasis is given to the Spanish colonization of the Americas. According to the authors, Spanish colonization was centered on the frontier of inclusion philosophy. The Spanish saw the Indians as laborers, converts, and possible partners. The frontier of inclusion encouraged marriage between colonial men and native women, resulting in a growing mestizo population in New Mexico. This chapter provides an important summary of Spanish colonial beliefs, which later impacted the Pueblo Revolt of 1680.

Foote, C.F. & Schackel, S.K. (1986). Indian women of New Mexico 1535-1680. In J.M. Jensen & D.A. Miller (Eds.), *New Mexico women: Intercultural perspectives*. (pp. 17-40). Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Foote & Shackel delve into the role of Pueblo women before and after the arrival of the Spanish. Before Spanish settlement, Pueblo women collected and stored food, but also tended animals and built walls. Many pueblos were matrilineal and emphasized the importance of women to the pueblo. Foote & Schackel maintain that this relationship changed with the arrival of the Spanish, as many were put to service in Hispanic homes and missions. They were often sexually abused, prompting many to support the overthrow of the Spanish.

Garner, V.H. (1999). Seventeenth century New Mexico, the Pueblo Revolt, and its interpreters. In D.J. Weber (Ed.), *What caused the Pueblo Revolt of 1680?* (pp.55-80). Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.

Garner examines the causes of the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 and concludes that the main causes of the revolt were drought, famine, and Apache raids. While religion is a consideration, it is not the driving force of the rebellion according to Garner. He argues that the system of cooperation between Pueblo and Spanish missionary/settler broke down due to immediate events.

Gutiérrez, R.A. (1991). *When Jesus came, the cornmothers went away: Marriage, sexuality, and power in New Mexico, 1500-1846*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. Retrieved from ACLS Humanities E-Book.

Gutiérrez traces Pueblo cultural beliefs before the arrival of the Spanish. He then discusses the changes that resulted as the Spanish colonized New Mexico. Gutiérrez focuses on the impact of the Franciscans and how they attempted to take on the role of Pueblo leaders. As their power dwindled, the Franciscans saw themselves increasingly as martyrs.

Khan, S.A. (2007). *Causes of Indian rebellion 1857*. (J. Ashraf, Trans.) Delhi: Asha Jyoti Book Sellers & Publishers. (Original work published in 1859).

Sir Syed Khan explains the causes of the Indian rebellion of 1857 (Sepoy Rebellion) from the point of view as an Indian Muslim. The main causes of the revolt in his eyes include misunderstanding of the Indian subjects, laws unacceptable to Indian beliefs, ignorance of the British government, and the poor management of the army. Khan explains the revolts in terms of multiple factors that seem to build upon each other, eventually leading to revolt.

Knaut, A.L. (1964). *The Pueblo Revolt of 1680*. Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press.

Knaut attempts to focus on the story of the Pueblo Indians before and during the revolt of 1680. He considers multiple factors that led to the rebellion, including Spanish domination, the uneasy relationship between the church and state, the continued vitality of the Pueblo religion, and societal tensions as a result of a sizable mestizo population.

Rushforth, S., & Upham, S. (1992). Hopi resistance to subjugation and change (A.D. 1680-1879). *A Hopi history: Anthropological perspectives on sociocultural persistence and change* (pp.97-122). Austin: University of Texas Press.

Rushforth and Upham elaborate on the Hopi involvement in the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 and their continued resistance to foreign penetration throughout the eighteenth century. They describe the reasons for this continued resistance, including labor demanded by the Spanish, the inadequacies of the Spanish religion with regard to bringing rain, religious suppression, and defaming of Hopi women and customs. This study is rooted in anthropological practice, which is particularly critical considering the lack of records from the Indian perspective.

Stokes, E. (1986). *The peasant armed: The Indian revolt of 1857*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Ed. C.A. Bayly.

Stokes critically examines the causes of the Indian revolt of 1857 and concludes that there were a multitude of causes. He sees the revolt not as one single revolt, but of several revolts. Stokes also focuses on the role of Indian peasants in the rebellion and their motives. Many peasants were suffering economically due to British administration and capitalized on the revolt to move against their enemies and plunder the cities. His work was groundbreaking in the study of peasants in the Indian revolt.

Streets, H. (2001). The rebellion of 1857: Origins, consequences, and themes. *Teaching South Asia: An internet journal of pedagogy*, 1, 85-104. Retrieved from <http://QL-VgQtacy4.pdf>.

Streets provides a brief and concise summary of the Indian rebellion of 1857. The origins of the revolt, according to Streets, can be traced to the British East India Company and the administration of the army. Sepoy soldiers struggled to deal with the rising cost of living and continued to be heavily utilized in the British army, which was predominantly Indian at the time. The spark to the revolt was the concern over the cartridges greased in pork and beef fat. Streets also addresses the violence inflicted by the British to the Indians as well as violence inflicted by Indians to the British.

Weber, D.J. (Ed). (1999). *What caused the Pueblo Revolt of 1680?*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.

Weber first includes a summary of the Pueblo revolt of 1680 and discusses the diverse historical interpretations of the causes of the rebellion. Five readings are included by leading historians. Prior to each selection, Weber explains the historian's main thesis and also provides guiding questions.

Primary Sources

DeMarco, B.D. (Spring 2000). Voices from the Archives, Part 1: Testimony of the Pueblo Indians in the 1680 Pueblo Revolt. *Romance Philology*, 53:2, 375-448.

DeMarco provides a lengthy explanation of the testimonies of captured Pueblo Indians after the Pueblo Revolt. She then includes a translated summary of each of the testimonies. This source is critical to understanding the Pueblo's thoughts on the causes and spread of the revolt.

Strayer, R.W. (2011). *Ways of the world: A global history with sources*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.

This document is a proclamation issued by Bahadur Shah, grandson of the Mughal dynasty, following the outbreak of the Sepoy Rebellion in 1857. He lists his grievances against the British and encourages his fellow Indians to push the British out of the subcontinent. This is a significant document as it provides an Indian account of the Sepoy Rebellion and includes the major causes of the revolt, such as state interference with religion and economic problems for the Indians.