

early 1940's, it began to be taken up by Navajos, chiefly in the extreme north-eastern part of the reservation where many different religious sects had concentrated their activities and where the Indian Bureau had instituted a resettlement project on newly irrigated land. Here, in the vicinity of Fruitland, New Mexico, peyote-eating groups of Navajos were formed. Gradually the religion spread westward until by 1955 there were some two thousand members of the Native American Church. Its spread was opposed by the Navajo Tribal Council, on the ground that peyote was a habit-forming drug, until it was pointed out that medical opinion in the United States was not in agreement on the matter. The Tribal Council then on the principle of religious freedom ceased to oppose it. Nevertheless, the fact that the use of a drug was a necessary feature of the religious ritual constantly brought the practitioners of the religion into conflict with Anglo-Americans. Navajo groups who carried on their ceremonies off the reservation were raided by police, and newspapers took up campaigns against the religion. Nevertheless, by 1960 the influence of the Native American Church was rapidly growing among Navajos. As a religion which combined some elements of Christian belief with generalized Indian traits it fitted well into the mixed culture patterns of many Navajos who had worked extensively off the reservation, and appealed as well to many Navajos who felt antagonistic towards Anglos and saw in the Native American Church an institution which they themselves could control locally. It also fit into the growing awareness on the part of Navajos of many other Indians in the United States with similar reservation background and relations with Anglos. Its spread was related to a pan-Indian type of feeling which had grown up widely over the Southwest as a result primarily of large public performances such as the Gallup Ceremonials participated in by Indian dancers and musicians from many reservations. Yet by 1960 the Native American Church had spread nowhere else among Southwestern Indians. It was confined to a declining cult in Taos and a rapidly growing movement among the Navajos.

The new religions which took hold in the Southwest affected with greatest intensity the Mayos, the Navajos, and the Apaches. The Mayo new religion was very short-lived once forcible suppression of its leaders had been applied. The other groups, with the exception of Walapais, Havasupais, some Papagos, and Tarahumaras who embraced cults very briefly, did not develop intense interest in new religions. By the middle of the 1900's the Apache Holy Ground religion seemed the strongest rooted and most influential. Yet it, too, seemed to be giving way in the late 1950's to a new type of evangelistic Protestant movement, a few years after the return from jail of Silas John.

THE PERSISTENCE OF INDIAN RELIGIONS

The great variety in Indian religious belief and practice which was characteristic of the states of New Mexico, Arizona, Chihuahua, and Sonora by the middle of the twentieth century was partly a result of the persistence of the native religions as whole systems or surviving parts. Religious diversity was greater in this region.