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INTRODUCTION

Life for the Paiutes is very hard. We suffer a lot. But I think in our hearts {gestures to chest} we are happier than the whites. We are happy because we know who we are. The young people—they are worse off. They can't talk Indian. They suffer and they don't know who they are . . . elderly Paiute, 1982

SUFFERING HAS NOT been a stranger to the Southern Paiutes of Utah. Over the past 150 years, they have been dispossessed of their lands, have suffered from hunger and cold, have died from untreated diseases, have been targeted by Mormon missionaries, have been terminated, and have been reinstated as a federally recognized tribe.

Their story is not only an epic of suffering, it is also a saga of triumphs, tenacity, and faith. They have met adversity with the easy dignity of a people confident in their ultimate fate. They abide and often thrive.

In this book, I have attempted to outline the history and culture of the Utah Paiutes through two major themes: dependency and paternalism. Dependency, or reliance on others, rests on an imbalance similar to that between parent and child. The fact that tribes might find themselves in situations of dependency was recognized in the 1950s:

Failure to maintain cultural and political independence often results in a reaction of defeatism which may be manifested in the neglect of ceremonial observances, the establishment of a dependency relationship with the dominant group, and population decline. (Social Science Research Council 1954:987)

Beginning in the 1960s, the model of “internal colonialism” as a means of explaining the dependent and exploited status of reservation-based Native Americans came into use.¹ Hagan gives a simple but

powerful explanation of Native American dependency and underdevelopment:

The essence of the colonial situation is that a people have been conquered, the functioning of its culture and social structure disrupted and suppressed in some degree, and an alien control imposed with such force that resistance is futile. By this definition the position of American Indian tribes is the archetype of colonialism, for their social structure and culture have been completely disrupted and suppressed more completely than those of any people conventionally referred to as colonial. (1961:471)

The concept of dependency shifts the concern away from viewing tribal populations as discrete, isolated groups and recognizes the importance of the weak structural position they occupy vis-à-vis the dominant power. Dominance may rest on military, economic, and/or political power. Dependency is a concept of relationships that are preconditioned by inequality.

The chains of dependency are often forged through patronage and strengthened by paternalistic assumptions. Goodell (1985:247) defines paternalism as “interference with others’ autonomy justified by reasons referring exclusively to their welfare, good, happiness, needs, interests, or values. Thus paternalism is based on ‘its ideological claim on benevolence.’”

Paternalism is usually legitimated by utilizing the asymmetrical power model of the parent-child relationship and mimicking the genuine concern of the parent, thereby hiding the conflictual basis of the ruler-subject relationship (Van den Berghe 1985). This line of thought leads Van den Berghe to conclude that paternalistic altruism is a form of parasitism in disguise.

Goodell (1985:250) hypothesizes a causal relationship between initiative (which presupposes a degree of autonomy) and corporate unity. Those who take the initiative may make decisions, suggest policies, or punish and reward through sanctions and gifts. A special kind of bond is, in turn, generated through these gifts; they create obligations to return other gifts or services (Mauss 1954:6–16). Thus a social bond is created. In a dependency situation, the beneficiary is unable

to complete the cycle by offering a return gift. A person who cannot reciprocate loses status, prestige, and self-respect. In this framework the paternalist determines policy and maintains the initiative in the relationship with the beneficiary. The beneficiaries then react to policies generated by the paternalists and are sometimes allowed to administer or implement them. The beneficiaries, therefore, are never allowed to make the initial decisions that govern their lives and do not develop the abilities necessary for decisive autonomous action.

Paternalism is a consistent theme that governs the interaction of federal and Mormon church policy makers and the Paiutes. After the Anglo-Mormon occupation of their country, the Paiutes were isolated in small, "shantytown" enclaves adjacent to the Anglo settlements and were forced to define themselves through their dependent relationship to the Mormon church. By means of military superiority, the Mormons controlled the Paiutes by controlling access to their traditional means of production: food resources and water for irrigation. While the Mormons justified their dominance of the Paiutes through religious ideology, the foundations of this relationship rested on military superiority, and force was occasionally applied when ideology failed. The Mormons seized the social and political initiative as they seized the Paiutes' land; affairs that had previously been the responsibility of the Paiutes were referred to church officials and, later, to the BIA. The opinions or preferences of the Paiutes were seldom elicited and, when they were consulted, they were generally offered only a series of preconceived alternatives, one of which they were forced to accept.

The great irony of Paiute history is that, although the avowed purpose of both federal and Mormon policy was to make the Paiutes independent, the actual results of these policies have been to create and maintain a situation of insidious dependence on outside help. The paradoxical nature of this relationship is reminiscent of Goodell's (1985:248) statement that studies of paternalism have found "the negative consequence of 'being helped' as pervasive and profound as those of being exploited."

The Utah Paiutes were not only subjected to the tutelage of these missionary colonists, they were also neglected by the federal government and then ravaged by a series of ill-conceived and poorly administered federal policies.² The paternalistic policies of both the Mormon

church and the United States government contributed to the creation and maintenance of poverty and frustration. The Paiute case provides us with a deeper understanding of the relationship between paternalism and colonialism and illustrates the dramatic effects of dependency on a conquered people. All these variables provide for a system of amplified feedback, in which the best-intentioned efforts of the state and religious bureaucracies have nurtured a condition diametrically opposite that of their stated intentions. Clearly one must decide whether, despite endless public announcements of actions taken for the good of the Indian, these policies were in fact well intentioned or whether they were self-serving, calculated attempts by both the church and federal bureaucracies to ensure the impotence of the Paiute Nation.