

THE INDÉ (WESTERN APACHES) THE PEOPLE OF THE MOUNTAINS

Bruce E. Hilpert

On a bright day in June, Edgar Perry, the director of the White Mountain Apache Culture Center, leads a small group of his staff up the long trail to the 11,590-foot peak Dzil Ligai, or Mount Baldy. Along the way they enjoy the 100-mile view across almost half of Arizona and collect trash left by careless hikers. Near the summit, a sign informs non-Apaches that they may venture no farther—for this is a special place, a mountain sacred to the Apache people. When the group reaches the peak, they stop to say prayers of thanks for their mountain homeland.

Each year, countless members of the White Mountain Tribe make this journey to seek spiritual renewal from the sacred mountain and to reaffirm the Apache way of life. The Western Apache people have attachments to their mountain homelands that go far beyond a love for the beautiful landscape of central Arizona. The mountains not only provide a wealth of economic resources to support Indé timber, cattle, and recreation industries, they are also tied spiritually to the preservation of Apachean culture and the well-being of the people. In fact, through traditional stories, Western Apache values are embodied in the mountains themselves. As Annie Peaches told anthropologist Keith Basso, "The land is always stalking people. The land makes people live right. The land looks after us" (Basso 1987:95).

Origins: The Mountain Spirit People

While some Western Apaches accept anthropologists' ideas about linguistic ties to Athapaskan speakers far to the north,



...ai beadwork. At top left: ...
...ria Kausser, at top right: ...
...Paya, and on the bottom: ...
...ria Kausser. All were made ...
...h by Helga Teiwes, Arizona ...

EDITED BY THOMAS E. SHERIDAN & NANCY J. PAREZO

PATHS

AMERICAN INDIANS OF THE SOUTHWEST AND NORTHERN MEXICO

OF LIFE





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ph by John P.

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American Indians of the Southwest and Northern Mexico

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