

# PUEBLOAN KACHINA CULTS IN THE SOUTHWESTERN UNITED STATES



## INTRODUCTION

Kachina also “katchina,” “kacina,” or, to the **Hopi**, katsina, are ancestral anthropomorphic spirit beings (masked impersonators) among the Puebloan cultures of the North American Southwest. The katsina cult is a highly practiced religion among historic western **Pueblo** Indians sponsoring public ceremonies involving masked participants known as katsina and elaborate ritual paraphernalia. In these Pueblo cultures, the **Hopi**, **Zuni**, **Hopi-Tewa** and the **Keresan Tribes** located in New Mexico still practice kachina ceremonial rituals today.

“Kachina” refers both to ceremonial dances in which these impersonators appear and to carved and painted wooden dolls with masked symbolism. The Zuni word “kok’ko” (*ko ‘ko*) refers to spirits and supernatural beings which correspond generally and specifically to kachina of the Hopi. These masked impersonators intercede with the spirits of the other world in behalf of their Hopi earth-relatives. Both the Zuni and Hopi kachinas are different from each other but have certain similarities and features.

The kachina cult is built upon worship principally through impersonation of a group of supernaturals “who bring rain and good health”. As soon as the impersonator dons the mask of the supernatural, he is believed to become that spirit. After acquiring this supernatural deity, the masked impersonator must not be approached or touched during the

ceremonies, and he must be de-charmed after the ceremonies before he again becomes mortal. Each of these Pueblo cultures incorporate distinct forms and variations of kachinas. The Hopis have built their cult into a more elaborate ritual, and seem to have a greater sense of drama and artistry than the Zunis. On the other hand, the latter have developed a more sizable folklore concerning their kachinas.

The kachina has three aspects: the supernatural being, as he exists in the mind, the masked impersonator of the supernatural being, who appears in the Kiva and plazas, and the small kachina dolls carved in the same likeness, which are given as gifts to children. A kachina can represent anything in the natural world or cosmos; they represent people (clowns, warriors), animals (eagles, buffalos, and butterflies), natural forces (wind, lighting and thunderstorms), planets and stars (sun, moon) or deceased ancestors.

Although not worshipped, each kachina is viewed as a powerful being who inspires only respect and honor and, if given that respect, can use their powers for human good: to bring rainfall, healing, protection and fertility. Hopi kachina dolls are neither idols to be worshipped nor icons to pray to. Kachina dolls are given to Hopi children during certain ceremonies to enculturate their children about that particular kachina.

Cosmologies of the Hopi and Zuni cultures demonstrate concepts of duality, opposition and spiritual personification. The upper world is inhabited by the living and controlled by the forces of day, life, and light; on the contrary, the underworld is occupied by ancestral spirits of the dead and controlled by the forces of death and darkness (Fewkes 1901; Stevenson 1904; Titiev 1944).

Although many think of dolls when they hear the word “kachina,” to non-Native American Indians, these dolls are the most desirable collectables in the Native American craft market. Although sold as objects of art, kachina dolls hold a very high religious significance among most of the Southwest Puebloan Cultures and are common in their ceremonial rituals. This article will show what these dolls actually represent along with their significance to the well-being of these Southwestern United States Puebloan cultures.

The focus of this article is manifestations at Hopi and Zuni villages because kachinas of these two cultures are well described in anthropological literature - in particular, the works of Fewkes (1897a) and Stevenson (1904). This article contains some interesting facts on these southwestern Puebloan cultures' origins, emergence mythologies, cultural beliefs, costumes and dance rituals. The Kachina Cult was the most

widespread and practiced religion among the Puebloan cultures several hundred years before the Spaniards arrived here in the North American Southwest.



**BUFFALO KACHINA**

## **ORIGINS OF THE KACHINA CULT**

Since there was no written record of the prehistoric people living in the North American Southwest prior to the arrival of the Spanish in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the origin of the Kachina Cult is not completely known. According to Spanish journals, they wrote about seeing bizarre images of the devil, most likely kachina dolls hanging in Pueblo homes. Most modern day scholars and archaeologists tend to agree that the Kachina Cult, or at least elements of it, point to a Mesoamerican origin, meaning indigenous cultures that developed in parts of Mexico and Central America prior to Spanish exploration and conquest in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Some supporting evidence comes from Polly Schaafsma (2000), a scholar who studied ancient rock art in order to determine origin and cultural development in the Southwest. She believes that the Pueblo Kachina Cult derived from ritual beliefs of Mesoamericans in the southern Mexico region and that these elements of ritual beliefs were traded to the Southwest along with material items to meet the needs of Puebloan people. Through her studies of **Pictograms** (or pictographs) and **Petroglyphs**,

Schaafsma believes the Kachina Cult began more prominently in the Eastern pueblos and later spread to the west, while some other scholars argue that it originated in the west and spread to the east.

Ancestral ancestors of modern day Native American such as the Hohokam, Ancestral Puebloan and Salado civilizations flourished here in the Desert Southwest for centuries until about AD 1450. Then, for reasons unknown, populations declined and villages were abandoned sometime around the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, while some archaeologist believe migrations may have started as early as the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Modern day archaeologists believe more in terms of relocation than “abandonment” and depopulation rather than “disappearance.” Reference information: <http://www.ajpl.org/wp/archaeological-parks-and-monuments-of-central-arizona/>

In her book, Prehistory of the Southwest, **Linda S. Cordell** points out that these early indigenous peoples felt themselves “pushed” by a combination of social and environmental changes and “pulled” for more stable weather patterns, fertile farm land, safer communities and spiritual fulfillment.

Something prompted these prehistoric cultures to flee the Four Corners region and the rest of the Southwest Sonoran Desert. The major factors that archaeologists generally agree to regarding what they call the “push” seems to have originated with environmental catastrophes, which in turn may have given birth to violence and internecine warfare around A.D. 1250. Some scholars and archaeologists agree that there must also have been a “pull” drawing these cultures to the south and east, something very appealing that lured them from their ancestral homelands.

There was another major change sweeping the Southwestern United States during this time. Sometime



between 1275 AD and 1325 AD originating in the Upper Colorado River area and along the Zuni River that is a tributary of the Little Colorado River, we begin to see the rise of the Kachina Cult. Some archaeologists and historians have agreed that the “Pull” was that of the Kachina Cult. Newly settled communities (pueblos) were turning more to the kachina cult as mediators who would intercede with

spiritual deities to answer their pleas for rain, health, and fertility; the most important call was for the continued cycle of the corn or **Maize**.



**Where did they go?** Archaeologists and historians throughout the centuries have put forth theories as to which direction these different cultures took, their relocation and depopulation. It has been speculated that the majority of these people, such as the Hohokam and Ancestral Pueblo people, migrated southward to the San Jose River and found the present day Laguna and Santo Domingo. Others moved to the Rio Grande Valley and to the Casa Grandes in Mexico, while others went north to be absorbed into the Northern Pueblo cultures such as the Hopi. There is supporting evidence that **Paquimé, Casas Grande**, located in the modern day Mexican state of Chihuahua of Northwestern Mexico, received a population influx during the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. Some historians suggest that some of these cultures, which migrated to the south and then returned northward, bring with them these kachina beliefs.



# HOPI KACHINAS

The Hopi nation lives on the Black Mesa, a plateau of the Four Corners region located in northeastern Arizona. Twelve traditional Puebloan style villages are set on three Mesas. The Hopi tribe are believed to have settled in present-day Arizona around AD 1100. Walpi is the oldest, established in 1690 and located on First Mesa. Oraibi on Third Mesa is one of the oldest continuously inhabited villages of the United States of America, dating back to sometime before 1100 CE. The Hopi Nation also occupy villages located on Second Mesa. **Hopi Reservation.** The Hopi maintain a complex religious and mythological tradition stretching back over centuries. There is more than 400+ supernatural kachina deities in Hopi and other Pueblo cultures. The story of the Ancestral Puebloans lives on in the mythology of the Hopi, considered the most mysterious and mystical of all Native Americans.



To grow crops, particularly corn, in their semiarid land, the Hopis believe it is essential to have the supernaturals on their side. The Hopis believe that their supernaturals have certain powers which they do not have, and that they in turn possess things which their supernaturals desire. Thus, quite often Hopi rituals are mutual gift-giving ceremonies. The supernaturals desire prayer feathers, corn pollen and various rituals, and the Hopis like rain, so this mutual exchange works out very well for both parties. To Hopis, it is essential to preserve harmony with the world around them. The Hopi believe in Animism – that all things have a spirit or are possessed with life - not only in man but that all animals, objects in nature such as trees, rocks, and clouds.

## CREATION / EMERGENCE

The Hopi creation and emergence traditions extend over centuries of storytelling. Hopi mythology is not consistent among each of the Hopi Mesas or villages. They have their own versions of certain stories, making it impossible to ascertain what the original or “more correct” story is.

Although the concept of the original creation is unclear, there are two main versions that exist as to the Hopi’s emergence into this present world from three preceding ones. In one of these emergence stories, according to Hopi oral traditions, their ancestors, the **Ancestral Puebloans**, first emerged from the Third World through a portal hole called a **Sipapu** into this the Fourth World. This Sipapu is located near the confluence of the Colorado and Little Colorado Rivers near the Grand Canyon. The Sipapu itself is a natural salt dome; some wonder whether it is a mineral hot spring or a geyser. It has long been considered a very sacred place to the Hopi Nation.



According to sacred creation and emergence stories among the Hopi and Zuni cultures, people lived together in total darkness deep within Mother Earth. In order to reach this, the Fourth World, the people had to first pass through first, second and third worlds.

Most Hopi accounts of creation center around Tawa or Taiowa, the sun spirit, and Sotuknang, his nephew, who formed the “First World” and this the Fourth World to be inhabited by Tawa’s creations. The first creature was Kokyangwuti, “Spider Woman,” who created humanity.

Today, it is traditional for Hopi mothers to present their newborn babies to the rising morning sun and seek its blessing on the twentieth day of the baby's birth just after the naming ceremony by the child's Godmother.

The sacred story goes that in each of the previous worlds, the people lived for the most part in harmony but for the actions of a few. These few found life to be boring so they became disobedient, lived contrary to Tawa's plan and would not live in harmony. **Spider Woman** took the obedient people to the next world. **Spider Grandmother** planted a seed that caused a hollow reed (bamboo) to grow into the sky allowing the people to ascend into this world with physical changes occurring upon emerging from the Sipapu.

Their ancestors stepped outside the "Sipapu," changing from lizard-like beings into Homo sapiens (Walters, 1963 and Courlander, 1971) and were greeted by "Maasaw," the caretaker of the land. It is from this point that these first ancestors of this world began to divide and separate into clans and begin a series of migrations across the land, whereby the stars would guide them. "Maasaw" gave each clan one or more tablets which would guide them along their journey.

In another version told at the village of Oraibi (Third Hopi Mesa), Tawa destroyed the third world along with its unruly inhabitants in a great flood. Before the destruction, Spider Grandmother sealed the obedient people in hollow reeds, which were used as boats.

The Hopi Mesas are the historic homeland of the Hopi Nation, the final destination of the wandering tribes of the Ancestral Puebloans. The real Centre of the World is "Tuuwanasavi," a few miles from the village of Oraibi on Third Mesa. The Bear clan was the first to arrive and settled on Second Mesa. When other clans completed their migration, they either settled on or near the other mesas; Snake Clan for example settled on First Mesa.

The Hopi, Zuni and other Puebloan cultures believe they are born of the Grand Canyon, which is where the original Sipapu is located. A subterranean chamber located in most of all of Puebloan villages and central to Hopi ceremonialism is the **Kiva**. This underground room is sunk into Mother Earth, where social meetings and religious ceremonies are conducted by the high priests of the clans who have the authority to conduct them. It also commemorates the emergence of humanity into the upper world. Located just off the center of the kiva is a small hole representing this Sipapu, their place of emergence. A ladder ascends from the roof to represent the bamboo reeds used to emerge to the fourth world.

# HOPI MYTHOLOGY



In Hopi mythology, the kachinas are known to be spirits of deities who dwell on the San Francisco Peaks, to the west of Flagstaff, within sight of the Hopi reservation. With its highest peak being Mount Humphreys, whose tops are usually surrounded by clouds, it is easy to see why they were seen as the source of life-giving rains. Kachinas come down from the mountains during the **Seasons of the Kachina** to visit the Hopi villages, singing and dancing for rain, fertility, the continued cycle of the corn, and bearing gifts for the village children.

The Hopi consider the **Wuya** kachinas to be very important. One of the easily recognized Wuya figures found throughout the centuries of the American southwest pueblos is the legendary **Kokopelli**.

For centuries, Native Americans of the Southwest have prayed to the great spirits to bless their world with good weather, abundant game, and a bountiful harvest. They also believe that during their lives, a number of spirits surrounds them. Just after the winter solstice, Hopi kachinas bring them messages from these spirits and reside with the tribe for half of each year conducting sacred ceremonies and interacting with the village people.



## Ceremonies

The Hopi religious ceremonies are divided into two parts, from the **Winter solstice** to mid-July and from mid-July to the winter solstice. Priest, or “Mon” Kachinas take part in five major ceremonies that are held during the Hopi calendar year. The Wu'wu'chim ceremony consists of eight days for preparation and eight days of sacred rituals in the Kiva before the public dancing ceremony begins, and only initiated individuals may witness them.

In spring, the rituals of the planting are followed by the ceremonies for germination and growth. In summer, the rites of protection of the crops coincide with the ceremonies to invoke rain. The autumn is filled with dances of thanksgiving as the gathering of the harvest evokes prayers for the fertility of the earth for the coming year. There are many other ceremonies throughout the year like the famous **Dances with Snakes**, where members of the Snake and Antelope clans perform this ritual and the participants do not wear masks.



HOPI SNAKE DANCE

The most important part of all ceremonies are the ones held in the Kiva. This underground chamber is where the rituals are held by the high priests of the clans who have the authority to conduct them. In these ceremonies, they are vital to the opening and closing of the kivas. The kiva contains an altar and central fire pit below the roof opening. A ladder extends above the edge of the roof, which represents the way to the upper world. Kachinas are grouped into two categories: priest or “mon” kachinas and ordinary or dance kachinas (Fewkes 1901; Stevenson 1904).

The mon kachina masks are never changed and each is prescribed by tradition, whereas ordinary or dance kachina masks are determined by their makers. The men spend all their time preparing offerings, costumes, and the paraphernalia for their final performance. One of the most important forms of offerings is that of corn meal or pollen. This corn meal offering is sprinkled on the dancers, alters and paraphernalia such as the **Prayer Stick - Native Indian Tribes**. Corn is held most sacred among the Hopi and has sustained the Hopi Nation for centuries.

The form of ritual held in the kiva is that of a chant which retells the myth centering in this particular rite and thus forms a background for the appearance of certain characters and the final public demonstration. So much faith and perfection is put into the ceremonies that even one slip of the tongue in a recitation,

one omission of a word, one stumble in a dance, can discredit the performer and bring misfortune for the entire village and a failed crop for the year. If that happens, then all is in vain, all the time-honored preparations and ancient wisdom is wasted. Even the wrong thoughts, evil thinking, will be known to



the spirit beings and all is lost. These ceremonies are to dramatize the universal laws of life, and because they unfold the Hopi Road of Life, they therefore must be performed without mishap.

Before each kachina ceremony, men of the village will spend days making figures in the likeness of the kachina represented in that particular ceremony. The Giver Kachina then passes these kachina dolls onto the daughters of the village during that ceremony. After the ceremony the figures are hung on the walls of the pueblo and are meant to be studied to learn the characteristics of that certain Kachina. The children are taught to regard the kachinas with a deep religious respect. Each child takes the kachina for supernatural, terrifying creatures, and this is the moment of the child's initiation into the realm of the kachinas society of the masked dancers. In accordance with Hopi tradition, both boys and girls are initiated into the Kachina Cult between the ages of eight and ten. This rite included fasting, praying, and being whipped with a yucca whip.

The Hopi Kachina Cult initiation has long been characterized by the whipping of the eight-to ten-year-old initiates. The whipping has been associated with receiving the disenchanting knowledge that the kachina figures are not “real gods, but merely masked impersonations made by mortal Hopi.” The record indicates that it is the shock of disenchantment more than the yucca switch that leaves a lasting impression on the initiates, yet observers of Hopi culture have not taken the religious significance of this response seriously. Careful consideration of the initiation rites shows that disillusionment is treated by the Hopi as necessary to prepare the children for a meaningful religious life.” (Gill 1977: 217)

One of the most anticipated ceremonies is the **Powamuya: Bean Dance** (February). The Powamuya Ceremony is one of the most important kachina ceremonies. It consists of a series of rituals lasting sixteen days where the Katsinam distributes bean sprouts that have been germinating in the Kivas during this time to the villagers. It helps prepares the Hopi people for a prosperous growing season while teaching children the Hopi ways and initiating them into the Kachina society. During these ceremonies, groups of twenty to thirty kachinas, each in different costumes, dance in the village’s plazas. None of the other Hopi ceremonies show such a spectacular array of colorful costumes and ritual masks.

Another of the well-known kachina figures who is associated with the Powamuya ceremony is the appearance of the “SOYOKO” or “SOYOK’MANA” (Ogre Kachinas). Each ogre has his or her own personality and role within a ceremony; ogres are disciplinary kachinas and their main purpose is to frighten young children into good behavior.



PLAZA CEREMONY



This is a great social occasion for friends and relatives to come together to see the dance and partake in the feasts that are always prepared. Kachinas bring baskets of corn, beans and melons, especially as gifts for the children. Girls receive brightly made kachina dolls while the boys receive miniature bows and arrows. The final closing act is a procession carrying sacred offerings to shrines and fields outside their villages.

The Hopi Niman Ceremony (Talangva), also referred to as the Home-Going Ceremony (no clowns present), takes place in July shortly after the summer solstice and is the last appearance of the masked kachinas before they depart back to their homes in the San Francisco Peaks. Each year's



Niman ceremony is a bit different from the previous year and there are certain figures who appear each year, but one of most colorful and elaborate visitor figure is HEMIS Kachina. Dressed in a traditional ceremonial costume, Hemis Kachina wears a kilt with a red sash and a TABLITA (headdress) decorated in feathers and a wheat tassel with grown corn to symbolize a good harvest. In one hand, he carries a gourd rattle, in the other, spruce fronds. He also wears decorated yarn around his chest and a spruce around the neck. The Hopi refer to the Hemis Kachina as having come from the Rio Grande

Jemez Pueblo of New Mexico where he was a bringer of rain before harvest. The Jemez Pueblo people refer to a similar dance having Hopi origins. Perhaps the origin lies with both of these cultural traditions.

Hopi clowns are an integral part of the Hopi Kachina ceremonies where they participate in sacred rituals as well as their own unique performance, some in direct contact with the plaza spectators. The clown's performance centers on humor and entertainment, but they also monitor the assembled crowd and provide policing activities over both the Kachina dancers and the audience. These clowns play dual roles; their more prominent role is to act like jesters and circus clowns during the extended periods of the outdoor ceremony and Kachina Dances. Their most sacred role is that of the Hopi's ritual performer.



Clowning societies helped sculpt the foundations of Hopi ceremony and ritual. While outsiders may have taken offense at the sometimes-obscene depictions observed during plaza dances, clowning served important purposes within these communities. Hopi clowns were often depicted mocking their targets, imitating lewd acts, and engaging in



**mischievous horseplay. Clowning rituals teach tribal members how to act appropriately by reinforcing the importance of these values through shock value behavior. Clown Kachinas figures are often depicted with a food item, like a lollipop or a watermelon, to represent the gluttonous nature of man, and they are most commonly painted with alternating black and white stripes. Tied in the Hopi clown's hair are cornhusks, which are worn like horns, and owl feathers, which dangle from their heads.**



**KACHINA CLOWN**



## **ZUNI KACHINAS**

**The Zuni tribe continue to live on their ancestral homeland located thirty-some miles south of Gallup, New Mexico. The Zuni call their homeland Halona Idiwan'a, or "Middle Place," and archaeologists believe the Zuni have inhabited the Zuni River valley since before 2500 B.C. when the tribe moved into the Southwest as big game hunters. Like the Hopi, their religion is integrated into their daily lives with respect to ancestors, moisture or rain. The Zuni culture have a clan system with a variety of ceremonies dedicated to their ancestors. The Hopi are not the only Pueblo culture that observe a Kachina Cult in its religious calendar. The Zuni also have a solar calendar, which is practiced annually.**



## CLANS AND KACHINA SOCIETIES

A kachina society has a head kachina chief and a kachina spokesperson, who each have a kachina bow priest as their assistant; each kiva has a dance chief. There are sixteen rain dance priests, each with several assistants (some may include females). Some of these must come from specific clans who care for the **Medicine Bundles** they use.

Then there are twelve curing societies, related to the animal deities, which are open to membership by both male and female by choice, or by being cured of a particular illness. Each has four officers and membership is for life. It is not uncommon for individuals to seek guidance from the priests or **Shaman**.

It is hard to specify the total number of kachinas in the Zuni religion because the Zuni do not believe in using or exploiting their kachinas for open public economic gain and believe they should be kept private.

## CREATION / EMERGENCE

Much like the Hopi, the Zuni people maintain a complex religious and mythological tradition stretching over millenia. Different versions exist among the Zuni culture making it hard to establish which stories are original or more correct. In one of the original versions according to Zuni creation myth, Awonawilona (The Great Father Sun) was the creator of the world. In the beginning, there was only moisture, which became clouds. The creator Awonawilona thickened the clouds into water and then formed a great sea. From his own flesh, he fertilized this sea and green algae grew, covering it and producing the earth and sky from which all living things came. Located deep within Mother Earth, the seed of men and animals were incubated as eggs. The Great Father Sun provided warmth so that the eggs were hatched and all living creatures emerged. Poshaiyankya led the people and creatures up into the light, sending the people that emerged out in all directions.

There are a number of kachinas that represent space and time in the Zuni religion. To Zuni, kachinas represent two parallel and opposing realms of the cosmos and are symbolically associated with ancestral deities (subterranean) and celestial deities such as Sun Father and Moon Mother. The Zuni Kachina Cult is not constant; it changes in regard to space and time.

The Zuni believe that the kachinas live in the Lake of the Dead, a mythical lake that can be reached through Listening Spring Lake. This is located at the junction of the **Zuni River** and the **Little Colorado River**.

Although some archaeological investigations have taken place, they have not been able to clarify which tribe, Zuni or Hopi, developed the Kachina Cult first. Both Zuni and Hopi kachinas are different from each other but have certain similarities and features. In addition, both Zuni and Hopi kachinas are highly featured and detailed, while the kachinas of the Rio Grande Pueblos look primitive.

## CEREMONIES

The katsina cult at Zuni has year round activities. Unlike the Hopi, various kachinas “go home” during intervals of the Zuni ceremonial year.



One of the most famous and enjoyable ceremonies of the Zuni rites is the **Shalako Ceremony**, which is celebrated at the time of the winter solstice. Eight days before the Shalako ceremony, Mudhead-clown-like figures wearing mud-daubed masks resembling deformed human faces appear in the village to announce the arrival of the “SHALAKO GODS.” The Shalako dancers are



huge figures towering up to ten feet tall, wearing headdresses with eagle feathers that fan out like the sun’s rays. It is a house blessing ceremony in which these giant gods visit the homes that have been built or enlarged during the past year, pausing in front of each house to dance and shake bunches of deer bones.

There are a number of other ceremonies and rituals; some are public, however, many of them are kept secret. It is hard to specify the total number of kachinas in the Zuni religion because the Zuni do not believe in using or exploiting their kachinas for open public economic gain and believe they should be kept private. It is believed that some of the older kachina rituals are no longer practiced, but there are new ones that have been introduced. In addition, it is believed that there are hundreds of different kachina rituals that are practiced in the Zuni religion.

Kachinas of the Zuni and Hopi are closely identified with two major religious concerns, Zuni’s association with rain or moisture and Hopi with their ancestors (Fewkes 1901: Stevenson 1904). Mon kachinas’ masks of the Hopi belong to certain clans and are regarded as ancestors. Similar relationships are indicated at Zuni, where priest kachinas that make up the Council of the Gods are identified as both deceased children and clan

ancestors who return to visit and bring blessings to the Zuni (Stevenson :2-47)

A well-known Zuni artist, Alex Seowtewa, with help from his two sons Gerald and Kenneth, painted a series of traditional Zuni kachinas and tribal religious leaders starting in 1970. These murals line the walls of the old **Zuni Mission of Our Lady of Guadalupe** located at the Zuni pueblo in New Mexico. These numerous paintings provide valuable examples of kachina iconography and associated symbolism. They illustrate symbols and symbolic paraphernalia used in the impersonation of the gods and depict a variety of images such as cloud-rain, lightning, corn, and plants. The symbolic associations signify ceremonial and mythic relationships for kachinas.



Lady of Guadalupe Zuni Mission Church, NM

Examples of Mask-katsinas pictorial representation that are demonstrably historic in origin can be found in a rock shelter located near the prehistoric Village of the Great Kivas, dated post-1930. The paintings include realistic and more abstract masks of the Shalako ceremony and the Mixed Kachina Dance. Pilgrimages are made to the site periodically to re-paint the pectoral katsina masks. Young (1985:34) reports that new masks have been made over the years and relationships among various kachinas that are obvious in ceremonies and Zuni oral traditions have been maintained by the use of repetition, superimposition and juxtaposition imagery.





VILLAGE OF THE GREAT KIVAS - ZUNI, NM

## Ceremonial Costume

Today, Pueblo Indians don ceremonial garments, masks, headdresses and color their attire and body in patterns which they believe were dictated by their supernaturals. Participants in the ceremonies dress in regalia that is designed to identify a particular spiritual kachina; the mask that is worn by the participant is believed to contain the spiritual essence of that particular kachina. Body coverings, masks or no masks, certain colors, and other paraphernalia are associated with particular types of impersonations, and all play important roles in all ceremonies.

Each pueblo village prescribes its own rules for costumes and action, so they do not appear alike even when borrowed. New kachina characters are added from year to year and ancient ones are often revived. When a costume and distinctive traits of a character become defined, that character is handed down, together with whatever ritual and legend surrounds him.

**MASKS:** The mask is the most individualizing and most highly developed article worn by the impersonator during ceremonial ritual; these masks can be face, half face, helmet and ornamental. The facial features of the masks eyes mouth have a variety of forms: circular, rectangle, or triangular, and include the representation of bared teeth with zigzag

lines, frets and realistic forms. Protruding eyes, jaws, mouth tubs, tongues, and attached ears appear in a variety of forms and shapes. These kachina masks can have additional embellishments that may be termed decoration that are included in interior



and exterior, which would include hair, feathers, and neck ruffs made with feathers or plant material.

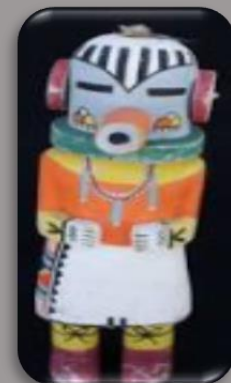
**HEADRESSES:** Headdresses appear at the top and are represented by decorated sticks and sticklike forms, birds, feathers, horns, antlers, plants, bows, and terraces of cloud-rain-lighting symbols. Hair can either hang loose or be braided; moreover, it is classified as a separate external decoration because headdresses and masks occur with and without hair. Another common headdress is one which completely covers the top of the head, such as worn by the Zuni tribe.



**COSUTMES AND MATERIAL:** The materials from which costumes are made vary with the geographical conditions under which a people live and with the degree of that people's cultural development. Many different materials have been used in the process of weaving. The use of cotton introduced cloth and garments of an advanced kind. Today the Hopi and Zuni culture use two fabrics, cotton and wool, which make up the principal woven articles of clothing. These two fibers are either weaved or spun into dresses, robes, kilts and belts, which they in turn embroider to their individual liking. Cotton, however, has been retained as a special ceremonial material. Not only is it used for garment fabrication, but as decorations as well.



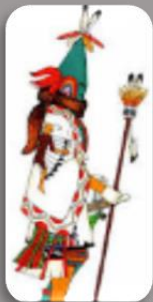
**PAINTS, STAINS AND DYES:** Out of these associations grew a kind of symbolism in which color represented ideas and objects, mythical and very alike. Colors were related to the six directions: yellow to the north, blue to the west, red to the south, white to the east, many colors to the zenith, and black to the nadir. Certain of the supernaturals are characterized in sets, which correspond to the cardinal directions and colors. During ceremonies these supernatural appear in masks and body paint. The processes of painting and staining which employ inorganic pigments are used to color the face and body, articles made of skin, wood, and nature forms, and certain fabrics for which the required colors cannot be obtained in permanent dyes. These dyes were made from the leaves, stems, and roots of plants and shrubs and certain earth fillers, with use of piñon gum and a mordant of juniper ashes to make the color lasting. There were black, dark red, and green. Some colors come in rock form; others are a clay. Iron tinged the earth red, brown, yellow, orange and intermediate shades.



**BODY PAINT:** Paints applied to the body do not contain any glues or gums; thus, being all-natural, there are no foreign substances to clog or prevent the skin pores from breathing. The pigments can be mixed with water or some times saliva and applied in a liquated state so as not to cause cracking. Corn smut is used for black, ochers for yellow and reds, clays for white and pinks, and oxide of copper ore for the turquoise color. Stains are applied by rubbing a fruit, like barberry, over the body, or by chewing the stalk or leaves of other plants and applying the fluid thus obtained.

It is a well-known fact that cotton is the hardest of all fibers to dye. New colors came with the introduction and use of wool. Woolen fibers take dye much more readily than cotton. Even today, the paints for ceremonial purposes are of native make. It is a rare and decadent society which does not permit the use of any commercial paint on the masks, body, or dress of a dancer.

**DANCE PARAPHERNALIA:** Symbolic paraphernalia associated with that particular kachina identity are carried in the hands and adorned on costumes of dancers and impersonators. For example, the Hopi Flogger kachina carries leaves from the yucca plant.



Rattles such as the turtle shell accompany every Pueblo dance ceremony, but the gourd rattles are the most frequently carried among dancers. Each rattle is “blessed” before it is carried in any ceremony by tying a hand-spun cotton cord produced from the downy breast feather of an eagle called a “breath feather.” Some dancers carry tall



staffs to indicate their office or just give dignity to their impersonations. These staffs are adorned with sacred symbols such as feathers, cornhusks, corn ears and other various sacred ornaments.

Only a brief description of these ceremonial costumes parts, materials and



colors are mentioned above; see [Ceremonial Costumes of the Pueblo Indians](#), where you will find ceremonial costumes that are complete and sufficient in their description of materials used in the costume designs. The illustrations of Hopi and Zuni kachinas depicted in this book are magnificently done.

In summary, kachinas are the intermediaries between the living (upper world) and lower worlds, dead gods (ancestors) and relatives. Day and night, summer and winter alternate between the two realms. Kachinas of the Hopi and Zuni are closely identified with two major religious concerns: ancestors and rain or moisture. Ceremonial relationships among kachinas and among the kachina cult and the elements of society are preserved in the oral traditions, symbolized, and enacted during ritual ceremonies.



## SOURCES

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