[redacted] Sie

6334

THE MICOÑINOVI FLUTE ALTARS

BY

J. WALTER FEWKES

REPRINTED FROM THE JOURNAL OF AMERICAN FOLK-LORE
VOL. IX., NO. XXXV.

HP623

that this ceremonial is primarily a form of corn worship, tinged, as all Hopi rites, with rain-making. This conclusion is substantiated by the symbolism of the altars and certain paraphernalia and rites of the participants. Like the Snake Dance,[1] which is likewise, I believe, also in part a solar rite, it may have interesting relations with midsummer sun worship, notwithstanding its date is so tardy for the time of the summer solstice. It dramatizes the advent of the Flute people, and the coming of the Corn maids.

It is commonly believed, and so stated by the Hopi priests, that their altars were first set up in the underworld, where their ancestors obtained a knowledge of the manner in which to construct them. When their forefathers came up from this mythic abode they brought with them, it is held, most of their fetishes, but especially the essential parts of their *tiponis*. Altars similar to the terrestrial are still used in the underworld, and ceremonials performed about them are similar to those on earth. The origin of the parts of the altar is thus explained by legends which reach back to ancient times. Therefore when the living priests are interrogated for a reason why they construct an altar of a certain form, they have no explanation save that the first members of their society were taught so in the underworld.[2]

Perhaps nowhere is the rapid extinction of the lore of the Tusayan Indians more apparent than in the Walpi Flute. Not only has one division of the fraternity already become extinct, but the society has lost in the last years its old chief, Cimo, with whom perished much of the Flute tradition. His survivors do not appear to be familiar with the songs, and during my attendance last summer repeatedly broke down in singing them, no one appearing to be

the flute, and with it in the underworld drew a maid to him and took her to the sun house, where she bore him many children. Possibly the Flute youth and maid effigies represent two of these offspring, especially as they are said to be the first of the Tübic people, a clan or phratry associated with the Ala or Flute people. Other clans likewise claim that their progenitors were children of Taiowa (Sun?) and this maid (Müiyiñwû?).

[1] When in the Oraibi public Snake Dance the reptile is taken from the mouth of the "carrier" and placed on the ground, and the "gatherer" advances to pick it up, he first throws a pinch of meal with a prayer to the setting sun, and then a pinch at the head of the Snake. Both of these are momentary acts of prayer, but there are several other instances where the sun is invoked by prayer in the Snake ceremony. It may be well to mention here that the Oraibi Snake carrier always holds the body of the snake which he has in his mouth with both hands, pumping it up and down as he marches or dances about the plaza. Oraibi is the only pueblo in Tusayan where the reptile is handled in this manner. The other pueblos carry it as at Walpi.

[2] See in this connection the story of the Youth in my account of the Snake ceremonials at Walpi. *Op. cit.*

familiar with them or their sequence. The young man, Tuinoa, who is now chief, is ignorant of the lore, and does not know the songs, so that the society is far from vigorous. Its exactions, especially the night songs, are great, and some of the old members do not attend. The government has erected a large building for a day school near Tawapa, where the ceremonials of the ninth day are performed,[1] and the vicinity is being rapidly built over with houses of other than Flute clans. All these influences, combined with the general education of the East Mesa people, hasten the decline of the Walpi Flute cult. Fortunately, we have a general outline of this ceremony at Walpi, but a considerable amount of ethnological data about it has already vanished; and while it may be celebrated for many years to come, it is desirable that renewed studies of the survival be made before it has lost its aboriginal character. At the Middle Mesa, and especially at Oraibi, there are less signs of decay in the cult, and here the student has more time before him in which to make observations; but it is to be hoped that our ethnologists will recognize the value which an accurate knowledge of the Tusayan ritual has, and not allow it to disappear unrecorded. There is preserved in it a heritage of the ancient culture of the Southwest, the most archaic of all pueblo rituals, parts of which were probably once practised by the cliff dwellers and contemporary village peoples. The subject calls for highest powers of observation, and is worthy of the best scientific study.

J. Walter Fewkes.

[1] In proof of the prevalent idea of the influence of this on the pagan beliefs I may mention an incident which came to my knowledge on the Middle Mesa. It was proposed a year ago to build a bath-house for the people of this Mesa near the spring in the valley between Micoñinovi and Cuñopavi. This is the pool where the former of these villages and Cipaulovi celebrate the exercises of the Flute which I have elsewhere described. The lumber was carried there and a beginning made, but the chiefs objected to the work on account of the supposed publicity which a house there would give to the spring, and the government gave up the project temporarily. The anomaly of pagan worship within a few hundred feet of a schoolhouse cannot exist very long. One or the other must go, and the Moki priests recognize that it must be the former.

HP624