There is no such thing as a little country. The greatness of a people is no more determined by their number than the greatness of a man is determined by his height.

—Victor Hugo

# BOOK OF THE HOPI

BY FRANK WATERS

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OSWALD WHITE BEAR FREDERICKS

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# FOREWORD

LAURENS VAN DER POST, gifted writer and perceptive student of humanity, has deplored the loss to our society of the "whole natural language of the spirit," with the result that we no longer have a certain basic sense of proportion. The wisdom of this observation will be apparent to readers of *Book of the Hopi,* wherein an ancient people, living in our midst today, are attempting to preserve what may be lost to us forever. Lacking that sense of proportion, we are endangered by a false set of values that may make our "Road of Life" very rough indeed. With all the teachings of our recorded history, with all the finely developed tools of the mind, with the scientific revelations of centuries of experience at our fingertips, will we fumble the ball when the moment of decision arrives? To our constant horror, we find ourselves stumbling along the brink of conflict. We search for truth, but somehow in a moment of crisis it eludes us.

This *Book of the Hopi* is the story of a people. It is a story of success and failure, but the story of success so outweighs that of failure that it deserves our most earnest attention; for here, I believe, may be the answer we seek. Here we discover the "natural language of the spirit" speaking in loud, clear tones. Here we find the sustaining power of the religious sense and the clue to understanding. Here we may find our salvation. As so often happens, the clue was in our own back yard all the time.

This story is one never before expressed in any written form. The fact that this book exists is the result of countless fortuitous circumstances. As Frank Waters states, "This great cooperative effort could not have been obtained before, nor could it be obtained now." Being in the right place at the right time has won many battles. In this case, another battle has been won. A great people (now few in number indeed) speaks to us, and we are the richer for it if we but have the necessary degree of humility to listen.

It has been our sincere desire to provide some opportunity for a remarkable group of our fellow citizens to tell us in their own words of the infinite source of their strength. Through this revelation we trust that they may regain in the eyes of their community some of the status which they so richly deserve in their hour of extremity, which, because of their traditional and deep sense of humility, may otherwise be denied them. In assisting and encouraging them to give the magnificently beautiful story of their "Road of Life" to the world, we feel that we may have taken the first step to delay the fulfillment of their most fearful prophecy.

FREDERICK H. HOWELL, Director,
Charles Ulrick and Josephine Bay Foundation

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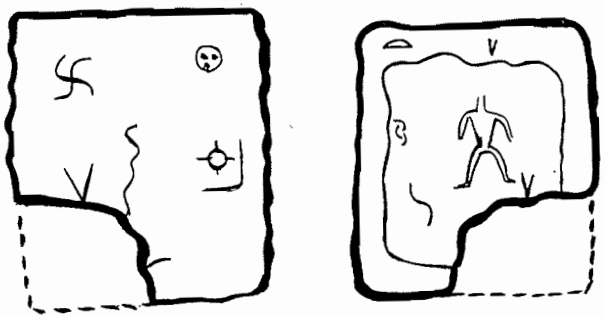

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Figure 2. Fire Clan tablet

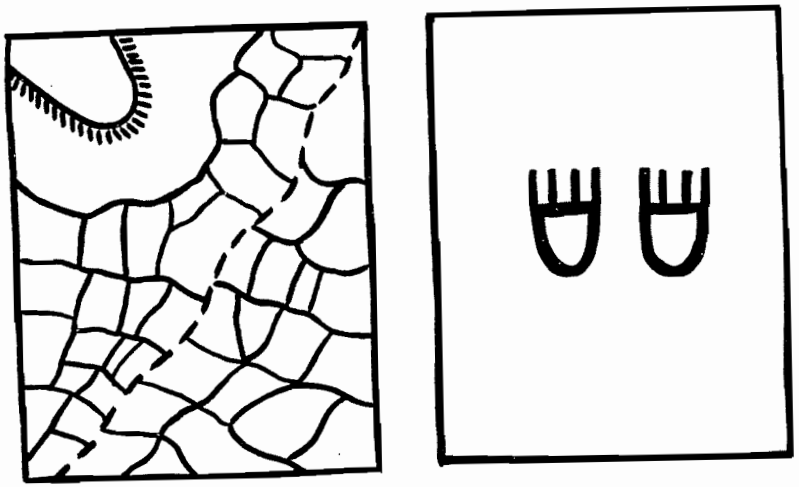

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Figure 3. First Bear Clan tablet

# 1

## The Four Migrations

Upon their Emergence to this new Fourth World, the people were told that they could not simply wander over it until they found a good place to settle down. Másaw, its guardian spirit, outlined the manner in which they were to make their migrations, how they were to recognize the place they were to settle permanently, and the way they were to live when they got there. All this was symbolically written on the four sacred tablets given them.

### THE SACRED TABLETS

One of the tablets Másaw gave to the Fire Clan. As shown in Figure 2, it was very small, about four inches square, made of dark-colored stone, and with a piece broken off from one corner. On one side were marked several symbols, and on the other the figure of a man without a head. Másaw was the deity of the Fire Clan; and he gave them this tablet just before he turned his face from them, becoming invisible, so that they would have a record of his words.

This is what he said, as marked on the tablet: After the Fire Clan had migrated to their permanent home, the time would come when they would be overcome by a strange people. They would be forced to develop their land and lives according to the dictates of a new ruler, or else they would be treated as criminals and punished. But they were not to resist. They were to wait for the person who would deliver them.

This person was their lost white brother, Pahána, who would return to them with the missing corner piece of the tablet, deliver them from their persecutors, and work out with them a new and universal brotherhood of man. But, warned Másaw, if their leader accepted any other religion, he must assent to having his head cut off. This would dispel the evil and save his people.



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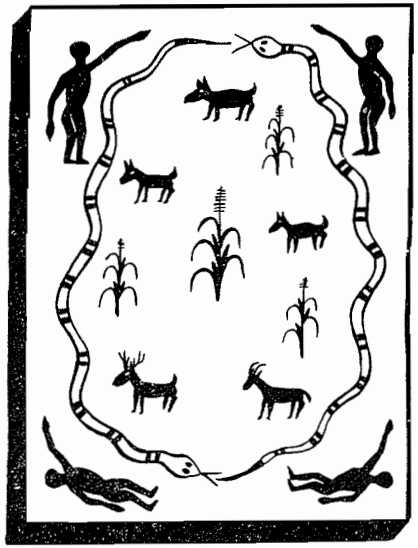
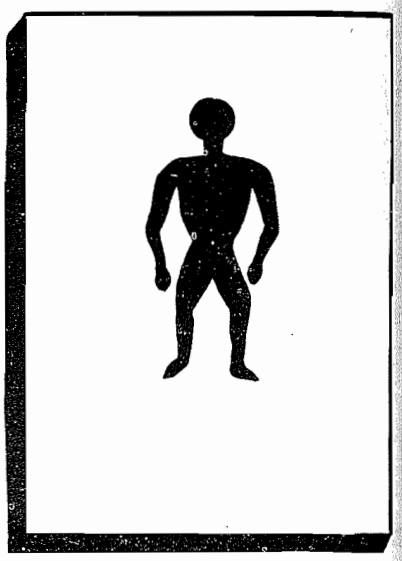
The deity of the Bear Clan, Söqömhonaw, then gave three stone tablets to the Bear Clan, which was to be the leading clan on this Fourth World. The first of these (Figure 3) was small, with a strange pattern scratched on one side. This, he said, was the land pattern around the permanent village where they would settle, showing the land holdings to be apportioned to all clans supporting the religious ceremonies. On the other side of the tablet were marked two bear tracks, indicating that all the land beyond these religious land holdings was to be held in the custody of the Bear Clan, which was to reserve it for the animal kingdom upon which the people depended for food.





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*Figures 4 and 5. Second Bear Clan tablet*

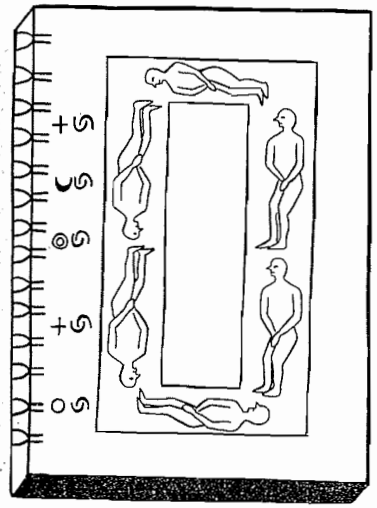
The front of the larger, second Bear Clan tablet (Figure 4), was marked with a cornstalk in the center, around which were grouped several animals, all surrounded by two snakes; and in each corner was the figure of a man with one arm outstretched. The two snakes symbolized the two rivers that would mark the boundaries of the people's land.* The outstretched arms of the four men signified that they were religious leaders holding and claiming the land for their people; no one should cross the boundary rivers without permission, or destruction would come

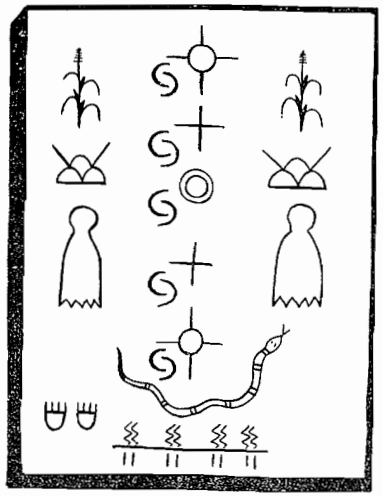
* The Colorado and the Rio Grande Rivers.



upon them. The back of the tablet (Figure 5) showed a man who represented the leader or village chief, who was always to be of the Bear Clan.*

There was still a third tablet which Söqömhonaw gave to the Bear Clan. On the front (Figure 6) six men, arms folded across belly and crotch, were enclosed within the borders of two rectangles. The double-lined borders of the rectangles again symbolized the rivers enclosing the land; and the six men represented the leaders of the most important clans. Along the left side, whose edge was notched with tiny cuts, were





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*Figures 6 and 7. Third Bear Clan tablet*

marked sun, moon, stars, and the *nakwách* symbol of brotherhood. The back (Figure 7) was covered with a maze of symbols: corn, cloud, sun, moon, star, water, snake, *nakwách*, spirit of the Creator, and bear tracks.**

* There is currently some confusion about this figure. Some informants state that the man is headless, prophesying, like the Fire Clan tablet, that a time would come when the leader would sacrifice himself by having his head cut off in order to save his people.

** This third Bear Clan tablet was shown to the writer in December 1960 by John Lansa's wife, Myna, of the Parrot Clan, in Oraibi, who now has it in custody. The tablet was approximately 10 inches long, 8 inches wide, and 1½ inches thick. The stone resembled a dull gray marble with intrusive blotches of rose. It was very heavy, weighing about 8 pounds. The markings on it were as described. There was no means of estimating how old it or the markings were.

All the tablets are said to be still in the possession of the Hopis, although some of them have disappeared and are not to be seen. They have figured importantly throughout the history of Hopi dealings with other tribes and the United States Government, and are of great significance at the present time.

The use made of them, the manner of the disappearance of some of them, and their probable location at present, are related in Part Four, Chapter 6.

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Third World. Man could not succumb to the comfort and luxury given him by indulgent surroundings, for then he lost the need to rely upon the Creator. Nor should he be frightened even by the polar extremities of the earth, for there he learned that the power given him by the Creator would still sustain him. So, by traveling to all the farthest extremities of the land during their four migrations, these chosen people finally came to settle on the vast arid plateau that stretches between the Colorado and Rio Grande Rivers.

Many other people today wonder why these people chose an area devoid of running water to irrigate their sparse crops. The Hopi people know that they were led here so that they would have to depend upon the scanty rainfall which they must evoke with their power and prayer, and so preserve always that knowledge and faith in the supremacy of their Creator who had brought them to this Fourth World after they had failed in three previous worlds.

This, they say, is their supreme title to this land, which no secular power can refute.

# 2

## North to the Back Door

*Hay-ya, ha-ya, mel-lo . . . .*

So the people began their migrations, climbing up a high mountain. They were accompanied by two insect people resembling the katydid or locust, the *máhu* [insect which has the heat power]. On top they met a great bird, the eagle. One of the *máhus,* acting as a spokesman for the people, asked the eagle, "Have you been living here very long?"

"Yes," replied the eagle, "since the creation of this Fourth World."

"We have traveled a long way to reach this new land," said the *máhu.* "Will you permit us to live here with you?"

"Perhaps," answered the eagle. "But I must test you first." Drawing out one of the arrows he was holding in his claws, he ordered the two *máhus* to step closer. To one he said, "I am going to poke this arrow into your eyes. If you do not close them, you and all the people who follow you may remain here."

Whereupon he poked the point of the arrow so close to the *máhu*'s eye it almost touched, but the *máhu* did not even blink. "You are a people of great strength," observed the eagle. "But the second test is much harder and I don't believe you will pass it."

"We are ready for the second test," said the two *máhus.*

The eagle pulled out a bow, cocked an arrow, and shot the first *máhu* through the body. The *máhu,* with the arrow sticking out one side of him, lifted the flute he had brought with him and began to play a sweet and tender melody. "Well!" said the eagle. "You have more power than I thought!" So he shot the other *máhu* with a second arrow.

The two *máhus,* both pierced with arrows, played their flutes still more tenderly and sweetly, producing a soothing vibration and an uplift of spirit which healed their pierced bodies.

The eagle, of course, then gave the people permission to occupy the land, saying, "Now that you have stood both tests you may use my feather



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