

**The Unveiling of the Hopi Prophecies:
Context and Consequences Within and Outside of the Hopi Tribe**

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Submitted by

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Introduction

In studying the Hopi Prophecies, I have become aware that the prophecies need to be looked at from a multitude of directions. First, within the telling of the prophecies one needs to have an understanding of the emergence or creation myths within the Hopi religious tradition. Next one needs an understanding of the timeline that was used in order to bring these prophecies to the rest of the world. Intermingled with that is the political, social and power complexities that are an integral part of the decision for some Hopi's to share their prophecies with the world. These acts of agency play out not only within the Hopi tribe, but also how Hopis are perceived by the Other. This includes governmental forces, both internally and externally, as well as religious forces including early contact with Christians followed by later contact with the New Age movement.

Hopi Creation Mythology

The Hopi creation/emergence mythology begins with the First world and leads up to the current or Fourth world. The First world was created by *Taiowa*, after creating the earth *Taiowa* created his nephew *Satuknang*. *Satuknang* then created *Spider Woman*. *Spider Woman* then created the twin brothers, *Pokan-Haya and Palongo-Hoya*, who were to look after the first world. The brothers needed to create a song that “mankind shall not forget in order to survive; a song they must keep inside of themselves, lest they lose the way.”¹ Their younger brother

¹ Robert Boissiere, *Meditations With The Hopi* (Bear & Company 1986) 30

created the Song of Creation. It was “through the power of this song, people of all races and color were created.”² Humankind was to keep this song in his heart, which would keep him safe. Over time, animals eventually left, then people began to not enjoy the beauty of the world that surrounded them. Eventually most of humankind forgot the instructions that had been given to them which was to sing the Song of Creation. Those who remembered to sing The Song Of Creation would be saved from the coming destruction of the First world. They were told to leave all possessions behind. *Satkunang* brought those that he was saving to the ant world and asked the ants to keep the humans safe, while *Satkunang* destroyed the first world known as Tokpela, with fire. Thus, the first world was destroyed.

Upon creating the second world and before letting the people out *Satkunang* reminded the people of their promise to be respectful of others and not to be greedy. The second world was beautiful. Plants, flowers and grass was everywhere and exceptionally large. The animals in the second world were larger than the ones in the first world. Eventually people became greedy and once again *Satkunang* needed to destroy the world. Those who remembered to sing the Song of Creation and to act as promised were once again saved by staying with their ant brothers. The second world was frozen and created an imbalance that caused the world to momentarily stop spinning.

A third world was created for those who survived the ice age. This time humans were spreading everywhere, large cities and strange objects were created, including “boxes that flew

² Robert Boissiere, *Meditations With The Hopi* (Bear & Company 1986) 32

through the air.”³ People were waging wars, and many had again forgotten their promise to sing the Song of Creation. Those who remembered to sing the song were saved, and the earth was destroyed by a flood. It rained for a full moon, approximately 28 days.

Eventually the survivors emerged into the fourth and current world. Upon emerging *Massau* created four stone tablets three of which were given to the Bear clan and one to the Fire clan. It is the stone tablets that will eventually be used in the Hopi Prophecies in conjunction with Prophecy Rock. *Massau*, who in the third world was known as the God of the Earth had been demoted to that of God of Death and the Underworld⁴ because of his misbehavior in the third world. When the fourth world came into being *Massau* was once again promoted to the role of taking care of the Earth.

Massau explained to the different clans “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.”⁵ These directions had been written on the four sacred tablets that the clans had been given. Each clan was to set off in a different direction and then settle at their designated spot. The symbol that Hopis use to tell this story is their swastika. Each turn in the swastika denotes where each clan turned and then settled. Eventually a group found its way back to where *Massau* resided, now known as the Hopi Reservation. This clan asked *Massau* for permission to live with him, his reply was only if they were willing to live the very

³ Robert Bossiere, *Meditations With The Hopi* (Bear & Company 1986) 35

⁴ Also known as *Skeleton Man*

⁵ Frank Waters, *Book of The Hopi* (Penguin Books 1963) 31

simple life that he lived: Using a digging stick to plant corn, living in harmony with nature, and having few possessions. *Massau* gave them directions in how to live on the Mesa, including ceremonies that were to be performed to bring the rains.

The Hopi Prophecies Timeline

Having completed the background information on the creation/emergence myth of the Hopis and how they came to live in Arizona I would like to look at the timeline for the prophecies. What we need to understand is that the prophecies themselves do not have specific dates but are recognized only while they are occurring or after they have occurred. One of the first prophecies is that of a lost White Brother or *Pahana*.⁶ This white brother will have a piece of the missing stone tablet. The Hopis first encounter with Europeans was when they came into contact with the Spanish. Eventually realizing that the Spanish were not the long sought after White Brother, they managed to get them to leave their land. Armin W. Geertz in his book "*The Invention of Prophecies: Continuity and meaning in Hopi Indian Religion*" suggests that since 1858, important changes have occurred "within the contents of Hopi prophecy." (p117) Geertz breaks down the prophecies into two different time frames, these being 1858-1958 and the 1960s-1980s. He then proceeds to explain the political and/or social actions that Anglo-Europeans, Mexicans and Navajo were engaged in while interacting with the Hopis from 1858 - 1958. Geertz lumps the 1960s-1980s into one group partially because of the comingling of New Age thought, Hippy movement and ecological concerns. Geertz deliberately leaves out the "Spanish

⁶ White Brother or *Pahana*, is also referred to as *Bahana* or *Baahana*

period because we have no documents that prove the existence of Hopi prophecies at that time.”

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The prophecy of White men coming from the east seems to have appeared after the Hopis “discovered the Mormons were not the awaited *Pahaana*”⁸ One of the prophecies that came forth in the 1850’s occurred when Jacob Hamblin was trying to convince the Hopis to move to the other side of the Colorado River. The Hopis responded with the following prophecy:

*They must not cross that river until the three prophets who took them into the country they now occupy, should visit them again. Their chief men also Prophesied that the “Mormons” would settle in the country south of them, And that their route of travel would be up the Little Colorado.*⁹

The next major round of prophecies according to Geertz occurred during the 1880s. Including Frank Hamilton Cushing’s ability to get the Hopis to convey to him their emergence/creation myth. This occurred on December 20, 1882 after a hostile encounter with the Hopis.¹⁰ Cushing was thought, by the Hopis to initially be the one to fulfill the prophecy of decapitation and purification. In fact, they challenged Cushing to fulfill this prophecy. Stating

⁷ Armin W Geertz, *The Invention of Prophecy: Continuity and Meaning in Hopi Indian Religion* (University of California Press 1994) 119

⁸ IBID 120

⁹ IBID 121

¹⁰ Richard O. Clemmer, “Then Will You Rise and Strike My Head From My Neck: Hopi Prophecy and the Discourse of Empowerment” *American Indian Quarterly* 19, no. 1 (1995) 31-73

“Then will you rise and strike my head from my neck.”¹¹ From here we move on to the next major prophecy the split at Oraibi.

The division at Oraibi occurred in 1906. This schism which had been foretold by *Massau*, was a result of “changes that would affect the keeping of the Covenant-matters like schooling, leadership, government pressures in general and Christianity-split the community and brought the founding of Hotevilla”¹² Those that remained at Oraibi were to become known as the Progressives or two-hearteds. For they were willing to follow what the United States government wanted to occur on Hopi land. While those that left and founded Hotevilla became known at the Hostiles, Traditionals or one-hearteds.¹³ It is also around this time that Prophecy Rock comes into play with the ongoing and expanding revelations of the prophecies to the Other.

Prophecy rock foretells the division within the Hopi tribe explaining that there will be those who want to be like the white man and those that don't. Prophecy rock also tells that “a phase of life will come when those Hopis who have become like the white man will realize their wrong goings and attempt to join the Hopis who are holding on.”¹⁴ It is this spilt between the Progressives and the Traditionalists that will eventually play out in a very political manner, as we shall see later. Where did Prophecy Rock come from? According to Kaiser the drawing on

¹¹ Richard O. Clemmer, “Then Will You Rise and Strike My Head From My Neck: Hopi Prophecy and the Discourse of Empowerment” *American Indian Quarterly* 19, no. 1 (1995) 31-73

¹² Thomas E. Mails and Dan Evehema, *Hotevilla* (Marlowe & Company 1995) 79

¹³ I will be using the term Traditionals or Traditionalists.

¹⁴ Rudolf Kaiser, *The Voice of the Great Spirit: Prophecies of the Hopi Indians*, tr. Werner Wilnshek (Boston and London: Shambhala 1991)

prophecy rock dates from 1890-1905, he goes on to explain that even though the drawing on the rock is new, the oral tradition of the prophecies foretold on the rock is much older.

The next major revelation of the prophecies that I will discuss is the gourd of ashes and the decision to take the prophecies public. The gourd of ashes was interpreted as the bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima. In 1948, it was determined that Thomas Banyacaya would be the one to deliver the message to the outside world that the “conservative Hopi would not give up their autonomy nor follow United States customs in negotiating for land and rights.”¹⁵ Banyacaya's appointment came as the result of a meeting of traditional chiefs that had been called together by Katchongya. Katchongya believed that “the atomic bombs dropped in 1945 had been the fulfillment of a revelation that a time would come when Hopi religious teachings would save the world.”¹⁶ These traditional chiefs were not members of the Tribal Council, a group that was backed by both the Progressives and the US government.

Some of the other prophecies that were being brought out was that Hitler might be the Elder White Brother because of the swastika symbol that the Nazis used. Remember the Elder White Brother will help save the world and the Hopis from hardship if he chooses the correct path. Another prophecy was that Japan could also have been Paahana because of the Red Sun on their flag. Part of the Hopi Prophecy is that Paahana will appear wearing a red hat or a red cape.

One last prophecy that I would like to discuss is the prophecy of the house made out of glass or mica where many nations will convene in order to prevent world disasters. It was foretold

¹⁵ Alice B. Kehoe, *North American Indians: A Comprehensive Account, Third Edition* (Pearson/Pentice Hall 2006) 144

¹⁶ *Ibid*

that a Hopi representative would need to go to this house of glass (the United Nations). After four tries Thomas Banyacya was able to finally get an audience at the UN in 1992. “He was allowed to make a brief speech at the General Assembly hall, but on a day when the General Assembly was in recess.”¹⁷ There are many other prophecies which I have put forth in the appendix.

Political, Social & Governmental Ramifications to Releasing the Prophecies

Finally, I would like to look at the political, social and governmental ramifications for those who chose to release the prophecies and those who didn't. Within the Hopi tribe there is a division between the Progressives and the Traditionals. It is the Traditionals who want people to follow the original teachings of *Maasau*. That is to live a simple life in harmony with the planet, not being greedy or materialistic. In other words, following traditional Hopi ways. The Progressives, however, are thought of by the Traditionals as having fallen into the trap of the White Man's way-that of greed and consumption. Prior to the 1948 revelation by the Traditionals of the prophecies they, the Traditionals, were often persecuted by not only by the US government, but also by their own Tribal Council or the Navajos who often were alienated with the Progressives. This continued for many years after 1948. Over a number of years, the Traditionals children were often forcibly taken away from their families and sent to “Indian” schools. The purpose of the schools was to colonize the Hopi children into white Christian

¹⁷ Robert Mcg. Thomas Jr. "Thomas Banyacya, 89, Teller Of Hopi Prophecy to World." *New York Times* (New York, N.Y.), February 15, 1999.

thought and society. The Progressives often embraced what the US government wanted done, which theoretically ensured funds for themselves and their families. The Progressives wanted to bring waterlines and electricity to Hoteville, the Traditionalists that live in Hoteville did not want this. They were concerned that by allowing these lines to go in, sacred objects will be dug up and therefore solidifying the end of the fourth world. For the most part, the Traditionalist have been left without a voice in matters of self-government on Hopi Land.

This began to change when the Traditionalists brought the prophecies to the world. “The Hopi traditionalist sought to make their voices heard in a publication called *Techqua Ikachi* meaning ‘blending with the land and celebrating life’ (the forty-two issues that have been preserved are available on the Web.”¹⁸ This publication was put forth in secrecy in order to hinder the Progressives from preventing their publication. The release of the prophecies by Hopi traditionalists has brought forth a flood of non-Hopis interested in how to bring about change. This included the Hippies of the 1960’s and 1970’s who were searching for a way to change the world from one of war to one of peace. Other groups that also became interested in the Hopi prophecies were many of the New Age affiliated groups as well as those interested in ecology of the world. This attention brought agency to Hopi traditionalists and took “power” away from the Hopi progressives and the Tribal Council. Many people were coming to Hopi Land in order to see Prophecy Rock, this in turn brought income and voice to the Hopi traditionalists.

Geertz points out that:

1966 brought a questionable lease and water agreement with the Peabody Coal Company, perpetuated by attorney Boyden and Secretary Interior

¹⁸ Jurgen W. Kremer, “Hopi Prophecies” *ReVision* 23, no. 2 (Fall 2000) 10-19

*Stewart Udall. This began the stripmining controversy and induced the growing involvement of outside interest groups in support of the Traditionalist Movement's battle against the Hopi Tribal Council which the Traditionalists considered to be an illegal "puppet council"*¹⁹

Geertz goes on to state that:

*1966 also brought the granting of conscientious-objector classification to all Hopis who could document their initiation into the Katsina cult a move that further endeared them to the hippies. In 1967, however, a Tribal Council passed a resolution requesting and authorizing the superintendent of the Hopi Indian Agency to remove the hippies. A resolution that was never enforced, however.*²⁰

How has the Tribal Council dealt with the invasion of New Agers, Environmentalist, and others who are interested in Hopi culture? The Tribal Council has implemented a Cultural Preservation Office of the Hopi Tribe. This office has issued statements that in effect have closed off all cultural sites to outsiders, including Hopi oral traditions. "Unfortunately, the Hopis do not distinguish between legitimate scholarly work and popularizations by pop writers and New Agers, and therefore they also blame anthropologists for the undesired attention the Hopis

¹⁹ Armin W Geertz, *The Invention of Prophecy: Continuity and Meaning In Hopi Indian Religion*, (University of California Press 1994) 149-50.

²⁰ Ibid 150

continually are subjected to by various interest groups.”²¹ By implementing this new law, the Tribal Council has found one way of taking back “power” from the Traditionals.

Conclusion

In conclusion there are many factors that we can look at when trying to tease out where, when and why the Hopi prophecies have come to light as well as the popularity of the Hopi Prophecies within the New Age movement. First, we have a beautiful emergence/creation myth that lets us know that there will be a next time around. We are only in the fourth world of nine. We have been told that *Maasau* gave the Hopis certain prophecies, but the prophecies can only be interpreted after the fact. The Hopis have the stone tablets, oral history and Phophecy rock. Being mindful that Prophecy rock didn't come about until somewhere between 1885 and 1905, it was one way of retaining oral tradition. We are told by *Maasau* that at some point in time there will be a reuniting of the Elder White Brother with the Hopis. We, however, do not know who this brother will be. At first the Hopis thought maybe it was the Spanish, then the Mormons, the Mennonites, and the US government, none of whom has turned out to be Elder White Brother.

Maasau also foretold a split within the Hopi tribe, when looking back on events it is now thought that the division that occurred at Oraibi in 1906 was the division that had been foretold. *Maasau* knew that some of the Hopis would want to follow white man's ways and others would be willing to follow traditional ways, and thus helping to keep the world safe. What were some of *Maasua* other prophecies that have come to pass? The land will be crisscrossed by a giant spider web, this has been interpreted as being telephone wires. Houses on giant spinning wheels

²¹ Armin W. Geertz, “Contemporary Problems in the Study of Native North American Religions with Special References to Hopis” *American Indian Quarterly* 20, no 3/4 (Summer/Fall 1996) 393-415

were covered wagons. Snakes of iron would have been railroad tracks. Of course, the major one was the gourd of ashes, interpreted as being the atomic bombs that had been dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima. It was after this prophecy had been filled that the Traditionalist came forth to the world with their prophecies. With their prophecies, the Hopis also let people know how they needed to live and that if we changed then all would be saved from the end of the fourth world and the beginning of the fifth world.

The interaction of other cultures also had an impact on the Hopi prophecies. With the contact of the missionaries, came about a more apocalyptic translation of the prophecies. As the world changed around the Hopis and become more confrontational both internally and externally their prophecies “increased in frequency and elaboration” especially after 1945 “Hopi mythic prophecy as revolving around empowerment in an increasingly uncertain universe²². The New Age movement embraced the Hopi prophecies as have many environmentalists. Not only do the prophecies foretell the end times, how to prevent the end times, but they also tell of a new beginning and who will be allowed to move into the fifth world.

And let’s not forget the political and economical factors that also play into this.

According to Clemmer

Hopis invented mythic prophecy as an expression of disempowerment as well as in anticipation of a time when that disempowerment will end...As Hopis collectively regain some of the economic and political power they have lost, Hopi mythic prophecy can be expected to change, but hardly to disappear, since paradox that it envisions-Elder Brother as Punisher and Elder Brother as deliverer from anxiety—is likely to endure as long as the current political

²² Richard O. Clemmer, “Then Will You Rise and Strike My Head From My Neck: Hopi Prophecy and the Discourse of Empowerment” *American Indian Quarterly* 19, no 1 (Winter 1995) 31-73

*economic organization of the world, which creates anxieties and levies hardships even as it alleviates them, endures.*²³

Johnson points out that according to Katchongva

*“The Hopi knew all of this would come about. All these aspects of today’s life pattern were planned. So today we must stand firmly on our belief in order to survive. The only course is to follow the instructions of the Great Spirit himself”*²⁴

So, although on the one hand you have prophecies that seem to expand and contract with current circumstances, you also have the belief that the Hopis have always known what was going to happen. This however is an if/then situation. If you choose this path X might happen, if the other path is chosen then Y might happen.

It is interesting that looking at the Hopi prophecies from a political perspective how the “enemies” of the United States during WWII became possibilities of being the Elder White Brother who was going to save the Hopis. This predication was based on the fact that Hitler used the sign of the swastika. The swastika, for the Hopis, denoted the direction of their travels when first coming into the fourth world. The Japanese were thought to also be the Paahana because of the red sun on their flag. Again, this corresponds to one of the prophecies within the Hopi oral tradition. Are the prophecies valid if they are so mutable? Just like other prophecies that can only be interpreted after the fact, it doesn’t mean that the message is invalid. In the case of the Hopi prophecies, if we don’t change our ways then the end of this world, the fourth world is forth coming. The only way to prevent that is to live in harmony with the earth. According to

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Willard Johnson, “Contemporary Native American Prophecy in Historical Perspective” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 64, no 3 (Autumn 1996) 590

Hopi prophecy if even a small handful of people were to live as *Maasau* directed this world, the fourth world might be saved, more importantly you will be able to ascend to the fifth world.

Appendix

Hopi Prophecies that have already come to pass

Roads in the sky

Moving houses of Iron

Horseless carriages

The ability to speak through cobwebs

The ability to speak through space

Men's clothing being worn by women

Women's skirts above the knee, devaluing the sacred body of the female indicating that many things will be devalued as well

Gourd of ashes

House of glass or mica where representatives from many nations meet to prevent wars

Increased floods, hurricanes tornadoes

Sea turning black and many things dying because of it.

The land will be crisscrossed with rivers of stone that will make pictures in the sun.

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