

***Classic Hopi and Zuni Kachina Figures.* Barton Wright. Sante Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 2006. 186 pp.<sup>1</sup>**

Reviewed by Dorothy Washburn and Emory Sekaquaptewa

This is a classic coffee table picture book with rich, colorful, full-page images of *kachina* figures, each artfully arranged before antiqued backgrounds, interleaved with duotone vistas of mesas and ruins. A catalog and essay follow. A closer look, however, reveals fundamental flaws. The book claims to illustrate Hopi and Zuni kachinas (62 are Hopi figures; 10 are Zuni), yet the essay is about the cosmology of the eastern pueblos. Furthermore, the essay was written in 1986 for another book. There is almost no relation between the essay and the illustrations. In the following discussion we address several persistent misconceptions about Hopi kachinas, *katsinas*, and *tihus*, as well as other associated issues that also are often misunderstood in this and other essays.

The errors in the book begin with the title, *Classic Hopi and Zuni Kachina Figures*. This book purports to show “traditional” dolls, that is, those made before 1940 when the carving style supposedly changed, but in Hopi practice, carved dolls are called *tihu*, a Hopi word that translates as ‘child.’ These dolls are intended to be played with so that the girls learn their future roles as wives and mothers. They are given to young girls at performances by the katsinas, who come as rain between February and July. The word kachina is an Anglo spelling whose use is probably best limited to figures carved to resemble the katsinas that are made for sale to non-Hopi. Furthermore, many of the figures illustrated, such as the Snake dancers, Butterfly dancers, Buffalo dancers, as well as, of course, the figure of the woman grinding, are not even katsinas.

Importantly, very few of the figures that represent katsinas, even the ones collected by H. R. Voth and others at the turn of the century, are accurate renderings of katsinas, much less tihu. In the first place, actual tihu are *never* dressed with clothes or equipped with accessories such as bows and arrows, Douglas fir ruffs, elaborate feather headdresses, and other paraphernalia. A child would have quickly destroyed or lost such accessories. Tihu are simply carved and carefully painted representations of katsinas that are meant to be actively played with. What Voth collected were figures made as copies of katsinas by Hopi who were satisfying his desire to acquire these dolls. These carvers dressed the dolls in clothes and accessories in an effort to represent the katsinas observed performing in the plaza. Importantly, even if these figures were meant to depict the katsinas, many of the colors and features painted are incorrect, again an indication that these figures were meant to be sold outside the context of their traditional cultural use. Finally, because many of the feathers and clothing appear to be in good condition, one wonders how often these dolls were “refreshed” as they circulated as precious art objects in the world of collectors and museums.

In the essay by Barton Wright there are many cosmological concepts and practices attributed to the Hopi that are incorrect. We can address only a few in this short review. The Hopi are not

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organized by a dual system (p. 149) regulated by summer agriculture and winter hunting. Hunting goes on all year at Hopi. In fact, there is only one ceremonial related to hunting at the Winter Solstice. Although many of the dances in January are Buffalo dances, they are social events. It is very misleading and inaccurate to attribute conceptual universals to all pueblo peoples (p. 153), especially the notion of the existence of different cosmic levels. Although Hopi children are told how the Hopi emerged from the Underworld in a reed, this story is a simplified version for children of the complex narrative that traces how the Hopi migrated from down below, *atkya*, that is, from the southwest direction, ultimately from Mesoamerica. The katsinas do not come to the villages at the Summer Solstice and leave at the Winter Solstice (p. x). Rather they come in the winter with the *Qööqlo*'s appearance at the Winter Solstice and they all appear at *Powamuya*, the Bean Dance, in February. They return to their cloud dwelling places in all of the four cardinal directions, not simply to the southwest to the San Francisco peaks, in July.

Importantly, katsinas do not *bring* rain (p. 159); they *are* rain. This misconception is pervasive in the literature and is perpetuated in this book. When a Hopi individual passes on, he becomes a katsina, a cloud that returns as rain to the villages in answer to the Hopis' prayers. The katsinas do not pray for rain; the Hopi people do. Katsina song performances in the plazas are full of advice and admonitions since they have observed that the Hopi have deviated from the practices, *natwani*, that will lead them to a fulfilled life. There are no "Cloud People" at Hopi that are separate from katsinas (p. 162). The Hopi katsina season is not divided between the Badger and the Katsina clan (p. 158). The Badger clan sponsors the Powamuya because, as an in-migrating clan they demonstrated their pre-ordained right to live at Hopi by magically growing corn overnight—a feat that is reenacted every February with the growing of the bean sprouts in the kivas at the Bean Dance. During the other 6 months of the year the Katsina clan does not dominate the villages affairs. The *Soyoko*, the so-called ogres, are not "cannibals" (p. 159) and it is not only wrong but also degrading to label them as such. The ogres are not involved in helping the children to "lose their youth," rather their role is to punish children who have misbehaved. The Hopi do not think in terms of categories of katsinas (p. 159 ff)—these are the fictions of anthropologists.

These are just a few of the errors, inaccuracies, and distortions attributed to the Hopi in the essay. Finally, it is a pity that Wright did not use the orthography now accepted as standard by the Hopi Tribe in the Hopi Dictionary published in 1998. It is a major contribution to the language and culture of the Hopi and to ignore this resource is no longer acceptable for any museum, serious researcher, or collector.

The take-home message of this review is that museums need to recognize that their collections—especially those acquired during the early collecting expeditions—are probably infiltrated if not dominated by kachina figures made to satisfy the acquisitive directives of museums and collectors rather than by traditional *tihus*. The blind assumption that something old must be "traditional" has turned *tihus* into precious art forms and fostered the proliferation of showcase tributes in exhibits and catalogs that place these ancient tourist objects in a traditional role that is not accurate.

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