

## DISCUSSION AND CORRESPONDENCE

### MASKS IN THE SOUTHWEST

Were kachina masks used in the Pueblos prior to 1540, or were they introduced by the Spaniards? Dr Elsie Clews Parsons has argued in support of the theory of Spanish introduction.<sup>1</sup> Dr R. L. Beals, in a communication to the *AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGIST*,<sup>2</sup> has cited evidence in support of pre-Spanish use of masks: (1) a statement by Luxán that Espejo's party witnessed masked ceremonies among the Tigua in 1582-1583; and, (2) an explanation by Bandelier of why masked ceremonies were not mentioned by early Spanish explorers. Dr Beals also cites several instances of mask-wearing in Mexico at the time of the Spanish conquest, which lends support to the assumption that kachina masks were of Indian origin.

In consideration of this problem, the following notes may be of interest.

Bandelier believed the kachinas to be aboriginal:

The "cachinas" in the pueblos of the Rio Grande are for the most part strictly private; . . . I am convinced that, although neither Coronado nor Castañeda and Jamarillo mention the dances, they were still zealously performed in the winter of 1540-41 in the seven pueblos of Zuñi.<sup>3</sup>

The Spaniards, especially the clergy, attempted to suppress the Indian kachina dances:

The dance was early prohibited, but was never completely suppressed. . . . One of the first things the Pueblos did after the expulsion of Otermin from New Mexico was to re-establish the Cachinas.<sup>4</sup>

Masks are not specifically alluded to in these passages. But in the following citations it will become quite clear, I think, that masks are definitely associated with the kachinas.

During the revolt of 1680 the Indians destroyed almost everything that was Spanish, but they were especially eager to destroy religious articles. Escalante tells us:<sup>6</sup>

. . . and soon as all the Spaniards were gone . . . Popé [the Indian leader of the uprising] gave orders (under pain of their lives to such as should not obey) that all the men, women and children should take off the crosses and rosaries they might have, and should break them in

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<sup>1</sup> *Spanish Elements in the Kachina Cult of the Pueblos*, ICA 23; *Masks in the Southwest of the United States*, *Mexican Folkways* (Mexico City) 5, No. 3, 1929. In a later publication (*Some Aztec and Pueblo Parallels*, AA 35: 611-31, 1933) Parsons has somewhat modified her theory.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. 34: 166-69.

<sup>3</sup> *The Gilded Man* (New York) 1893, p. 195.

<sup>4</sup> Bandelier, *Final Report of Investigations Among the Indians of the Southwestern United States*, etc. (Cambridge) 1890, Part 1: 151.

<sup>6</sup> From Escalante's letter, translated in *Land of Sunshine* (Los Angeles) 12: 309, 1900.

pieces or burn them; that no one should speak the name of Jesus or Mary, nor invoke the saints; that all the married men should abandon the women with whom they had contracted matrimony according to the Christian law, and should take other [women] as suited them; and that no one should speak the Castilian tongue, nor show any holding of affection for the God of the Christians, for the saints, nor for the priests and Spaniards; and that wherever they had not already done so they should burn all the temples and sacred images. . . . In fine, there remained in all the kingdom no vestige of the Christian religion; all was profaned and destroyed.

Had the masks been borrowed from the Spaniards it is quite likely that they too would have succumbed to such thoroughgoing destruction of foreign things.

But the Indians did not destroy masks (neither did they destroy *all* of the articles of Catholic worship, as the following quotations show).

In December, 1681, Otermin arrived in Isleta pueblo on his way to reconquer the Pueblos. He searched the houses and found a few church relics.<sup>6</sup>

The Indians were then ordered to take out of their houses and from any other place whatsoever, the idols, feathers, powders, masks, and every other thing pertaining to their idolatry and superstition. This was done, and when all such things had been collected they were piled in a heap and burned.

It seems quite clear from this that both Indians and Spaniards alike recognized the masks as belonging to Indian culture rather than to the Spanish.

Otermin's maestro de campo, Mendoza, marched on to the north. At Puaray<sup>7</sup>

. . . they made a house to house search and found . . . a great many "masks de cacherias, in imitation of the devil, which are those that they use in their diabolical dances." All of the latter were collected and burned.<sup>8</sup>

Arriving at Sandia pueblo (December, 1681) Mendoza found that three cells of the monastery had escaped destruction, and these<sup>9</sup>

judging from their appearances, had been left by the Indians for the principal purpose of conducting their dances in them. All of these cells were employed as storerooms for masks, powdered herbs, feathers, and other things used by the Indians in their ceremonies and dances, particularly that of the Cacina. . . . In the whole pueblo not a cross was found; on the other hand new estufas had been built. The masks, powders . . . were burned.

At San Felipe Mendoza made a house to house search.<sup>10</sup>

In most of the houses a great many masks such as were employed by the Indians in their ceremonies were found.

<sup>6</sup> C. W. Hackett, *Otermin's Attempt to Reconquer New Mexico, 1681-1682*, Old Santa Fé (Santa Fé, New Mexico) 3, No. 9: 56, 1916.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>8</sup> I see no reason for assuming that this passage refers to the Devil of Christian theology; the Spaniards declared that anything non-Christian was of the Devil.

<sup>9</sup> Hackett, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

At Santo Domingo, Mendoza made a similar search.<sup>11</sup>

Many masks and other idolatrous objects were found. New estufas had been built.

"Not a cross to be found," "new estufas built," "masks hidden by the Indians; burned by the Spaniards," all seem to reveal a sharp distinction drawn by Indians and Spaniards alike between things Indian and things Spanish. And the association of masks with kachinas is quite evident. To assume that masks alone, among the many objects of Spanish ritual, were adopted and cherished by the Indians seems unwarranted. It is significant to note, too, that today it is in the region of early Spanish influence that whites and Mexicans are strictly excluded from the kachina dances. Among the Hopi, who were quite free from Spanish domination, as compared with the eastern pueblos, aliens are admitted freely to the masked ceremonies. At Zuñi, whites are admitted but Mexicans are excluded. Thus, a fairly close correlation between the presence of Spaniards and secrecy about masks is established. The fact that the kachina cult is more extensively developed among the Zuñi and the Hopi than among the pueblos of the Rio Grande region may also be related to this relative absence of Spanish influence.

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#### MAIDEN SACRIFICE AMONG THE OJIBWA<sup>1</sup>

In the article *Sacrifice* in the Handbook of American Indians,<sup>2</sup> Swanton states "It appears from Cuoq that the Nipissing formerly offered a young female as a sacrifice to 'the god of war,' but the wording leaves us somewhat in doubt whether the sacrifice was anything more than symbolic." Undoubtedly the source for his observation is Cuoq's *Lexique de la langue Algonquine*, article AGOJ (p. 17), Agonakwens, *la petite femme du sacrifice*, with the footnote "C'était avant l'introduction du christianisme, une jeune fille que l'on plaçait sur une estrade élevée, pour l'offrir au Dieu de la guerre, et obtenir sa protection dans une expédition militaire." A similar Ojibwa custom seems to have escaped his notice. In Baraga's *Dictionary of the Otchipwe Language*, Part I, English-Otchipwe, under Virgin (p. 278) we read "Virgin presented to the Great Spirit, *agonakwe*;" in Part II, Otchipwe-English, under *Agonakwe*, "A virgin whom pagan Indians place on an elevated scaffold and present to the Great Spirit, in order to obtain a prosperous success in war." The type of compound is certainly unusual, but the underlying concepts are clearly "hanging" and "woman." There can be no doubt that the above is to be connected with Huron customs: observe Bressani's Relation of 1653, "They also paint the prisoners destined to the flames, as victims consecrated to the God of war," and "Aireskoi, we sacrifice to thee this victim, that thou mayst satisfy thyself with her

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>1</sup> Printed by courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution.

<sup>2</sup> BAE-B 30, Part 2: 404, 1910.