

The Sa'lakwmanawyat Sacred Puppet Ceremonial among the Hopi Indians in Arizona:

A Preliminary Investigation

Abstract. - In this preliminary description of the Sa'lakwmanawyat Ceremonial performed by the Third Mesa Hopi at Hotvela, the focus has been on the author's eyewitness observations together with central portions of oral and musical material taped during the March 1979 Ceremonial and on various folkloric statements regarding the origin and meaning of sacred puppets. The material seems to indicate that the overt aims of the puppet ceremonials are the procuring of rain and floods in order to bring about a good harvest and, of equal importance, the transporting of the worshipper into the richly populated mythical and ritual time dimensions where a totality of religious desire finds the means and the modes of expressing total fulfillment. The folk traditions indicate the deeper-lying psychic influence which the puppets have on mothers and children. The mythical evidence tentatively points to the importance of the fertile girl in Hopi religious thought and indicates as well the secondary, accretive role of the deities represented by the puppets. The entire body of evidence seems to indicate the late, and probably foreign, origins of these ceremonials. [North America, Hopi Indians, Ritual, Mythology, Sacred Objects, Puppets]

1. Introduction

The present article seeks to describe in preliminary form the important religio-historical and religio-phenomenological aspects of the Hopi Indian Sa'lakwmanawyat puppet ceremonial. I spent the fall and winter of 1978 and the spring of 1979 in the village of Hotvela,¹ Third Mesa, on the Hopi reser-

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