

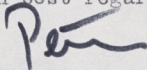
12 March 79

Dear Laura,

Remembering your showing me Kate Cory's photographs, I thought you might be interested in this article I discovered in a short-lived, dressy magazine put out in the late 20's in Tulsa by Indians. I thought the people at Museum of Northern Arizona - wasn't that where the pictures are deposited - might like to add it to their material on her.

Working hard on volume 2 of the anthology. Might be coming by in late April. I'd love to pay you a visit if you've time. I'll call ahead.

with best regards,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'Peter', written in a cursive style.

Peter Nabokov



## A Weird Hopi Snake Dance Is One of Reverence and Awe

The Snake ceremony of the Hopi Indians is the most widely known of all their eight or nine big annual ceremonials. It is a biennial, but as several of the villages perform it, and on different years, it is to be seen at one or more of them each summer.

Other of their big ceremonies are of more vital interest, perhaps, to the tribe as a whole; as the

New Fire, coming in the fall, the Sun ceremony at about the winter solstice, and the Bean ceremony in February; but because of its weirdness and the fact of its coming in mid-summer, making it comparatively easy of access, the Snake ceremony is the one pre-eminent, that is known throughout the land and indeed in other countries, notably Germany and England.

These ceremonies "belong", as they say, to different clans who have brought them, in early days, as their contribution for rain and the consequent growth of crops.

The drama of the admittance of the Flute clan into the village by the chief is still celebrated annually at the beginning of the Flute ceremony, and may be interesting inserted here briefly:

### Entrance of the Flute Clan

In early morning some people are seen approaching the mesa (the high plateau upon which the villages are located); the chief in informed and he, with others, go to the edge of the mesa and call down to them to inquire what they want; one man having gone down and drawn four lines of meal across the trail.

They reply that they wish to come up and live in the village. The chief asks them what ceremony they have for rain, and they tell him. The chief and the others then confer, and finally decide to let them come up. The chief calls to them and the man runs off the four lines of meal across the trail and draws them again leading up the trail. The Flute people then come up and all go to the village singing. Then the ceremony begins.

It is very beautiful. It alternates annually with the Snake Dance.

Returning to our subject, the Snake clan had its origin in a myth which still can be heard from the clan members in the villages.

### The Snake Myth (As told by the Snake Priestess, Sa-a-la-ah)

A long, long time ago our people lived in a place called To-Ko-na-na, to the north, and near it was a large river (probably the Colorado).

A young boy, the son of the village elder, used to go and sit by this river all day long and wonder where it went to, that it always flowed one way; it must be making it very full somewhere. He decided to learn more about it.

He was afraid to get into it, but he noticed that logs floated down with the current, so he got the trunk of a large



By KATE T. CORY  
Prescott, Arizona

cottonwood tree and burned a hollow in one end, and in that built a fire, which he blew along it till he hollowed it out sufficiently to admit his body and some food inside. And he made a cover to fit down upon it and keep the water out.

Then his father told the chief about it and they made pahos (prayer sticks) for him to give as presents to the people he might meet; and his mother and sister made for him kumpe, a nutritious food made from green corn, ground fine and cooked and rolled into balls.

He cut a hole in the log, and through it he put a pole to push away from the banks, and when all was ready he got in. His mother put the food in beside him and the pahos, then they placed the cover down and he entered the river. He was very happy for he knew that he would find out many useful things.

He felt that he was moving on and on for a great many days, and bye and bye he knew that the log was not going ahead, but that it was being driven just forward and back; so then he pushed the lid off finding himself on the shore of a great water, and out beyond in it was an island and a kiva (underground room) in it, guarded by a great snake on either side.

He wanted to go to the island, so Ko-kyang Wurti (Spider Woman), who lived there, threw a rainbow across and made a roadway for him.

On this he went over, but the snakes guarding the kiva entrance were very angry; he gave them pahos, which took away their anger, then he went to the kiva and looked in.

"Pa-ke-e," called Ko-kyang Wurti, for it was her home. "The opening is too small," he replied. "Put your foot on it," sounded a voice from below. He did so, and then was able to go down. She asked him to sit down. "And why have you come here?"

He replied, "I have come to learn some of the ceremonies, so that we may have more rain and better crops among my peo-

ple; and I want to get some nice beads here also." He gave her red pahos. "Ee-quali" (thanks), she said and she was very happy to get them.

She led him across the water to another island. Then a rainbow appeared on which they went across to the house of Hu-zu-ing Wurti was all covered with beads, and turquoise and abalone shells, she

being the mother of hard substances.

She was an old woman, but he gave her pahos, and for this she was very happy, so she gave him some beautiful beads of all kinds, but told him not to look at them till he reached home.

Then Ko-kyang Wurti took him to an opening in the ground, and there she opened a door from the north, and from there came a yellow snake; then to the west, and from there a blue one; to the south, and from there a red one; and to the east and from there a white one; and these were the chiefs of the clans from those directions. Also many other snakes came in.

The four chiefs soon turned into men and asked him why he had come there. He said that he had come to learn the ceremonies so that his people could have rain and plenty of corn, and he gave them each red pahos, for which they were pleased.

Now the snakes in the room were getting very wild and angry, and the chiefs told him he must take one up and carry it and put it in his mouth. Ko-kyang told him not to be afraid, but to take one on the other side of the room that seemed particularly angry, for that was the one he wanted. So though he was afraid, gathering courage he went to it, spurted on it something that Ko-kyang Wurti had given him; it became tame and he picked it up.

Then all the snakes became people, and she was a very pretty maiden, so they taught him their ceremonies and gave him the young girl for his wife. So after four days he started with her, and many beautiful presents and the beads for home.

He wanted to look at his beads, but his wife would not let him; they were easy to carry at first, but each day they became heavier, till the last day before they reached home the bag was almost full.

He could not wait any longer to look at them, and the next morning they were all gone except the original ones Hu-zu-ing Wurti had given him. He was very unhappy to think that he could take so few beads home. And this is why the Hopis have so few beads.

Soon to his wife was born a litter of snakes, and as these went out to teach the children they often bit them, causing trouble among the people; and his wife said, "Let us send them back to my people. After that her children were always like



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other children, and they are the ancestors of the present Snake Clan.

The Snake clan home, as stated in the myth, is supposed to have been some distance to the north of the present Hopi villages, at the ruin now called Wuu-patki. They are members by inheritance only, but there are associates who have been admitted for various reasons, and who take part in the ceremonies. The date is fixed by the Nemon Katsina, when the Katsinas (ancestral dieties), who are a story by themselves, "go home" till the next fall.

Their ceremony is late in July, or early in August, and three weeks afterwards the Snake Dance begins; announced at a shrine on one of the houseposts by the erier, just as the sun appears on the horizon, and this is the call:

#### The Snake Call

"You people, the sun is shining for you! Come and hear what I say! In sixteen days the Snake Clan will finish their ceremony; because of this you men and women and children will be happy through these days. Now don't be angry with each other! Don't have anything bad in your hearts. It may be if there is a child or anyone has anything good in their hearts there may be rain, and no one will die till his time comes. And you will all have a chance to see this dance. And even before the dance we may have rain, and have a chance to drink the water!"

A runner is usually ready to start for the railroad on hearing the cry, and he reaches his destination, sixty miles away, early in the afternoon.

After the call eight days elapse before the two priests, the Antelope and Snake, "go into the kivas," when the ceremony officially begins.

Qe-ov-yom, the present chief, and owner of the Tiponi, the badge of office, is a son of old Sa-a-la-ka, the veteran Snake priestess; who finally became a Christian and abandoned this and one of the women's ceremonies, of which she was leader.

#### The Tiponi

The Tiponi deserves a word, as its presence in a ceremony is essential to the effectiveness of the prayers and various appeals made to the gods. It is a living embodiment; two certain feathers, its eyes; the surrounding ones its dress, and a crystal inside, its heart. Its essence is seed corn, the surrounding feathers inserted in a clay base, and the whole wound round in many times with native spun cotton cord, the tops of the feathers standing out above.

It is inherited, and with each new chief it is reworded in solemn ceremony, placing in it fresh corn. While the Tiponi exists there will always be so much corn to eat

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or to plant, and so it becomes a symbol of life.

On the eighth day, in the Antelope kiva, associated with the Snake clan in this ceremony, the medicine water or charm liquid is mixed, and this is used in painting the pahos, asperging the clouds of the four world quarters, and other ceremony purposes.

Many pahos are made for the shrines, including Snake pahos, which are long as the forearm and painted black. Then there is much smoking and praying over these pahos, to make them vital, and they are then carried to distant snake shrines in the four directions, and the snake people of the underworld know their rites are being performed.

The Snake kiva at this time is simply the starting point for the Snake priests on their four days of hunting snakes, they hunt here and there, after depositing pahos in the shrines, under scrubby bushes and in the holes of other animals where the snakes are apt to make themselves at home. They take with them their snake whips and hoes, which they find useful after the snake is sighted.

On the seventh day the sand picture is made in the Snake kiva, and the medicine brewed with dramatic rites; and this night, while the village is asleep four or five of the leading priests pick their way down to the Sun-spring (Tawapa) and there have chanting and planting of green pahos by the spring.

As they return they plant four black snake pahos on the trail, "to please the snakes," and then the chief draws rain-cloud symbols and scatters a path of meal as they retrace their steps slowly up to the village, and are again in the kiva before dawn.

Later in the night, also, two men emerge and walk rapidly around the two kivas (the kivas about thirty feet apart) whirling each a whizzer.

As they swing it rapidly it responds with a climax of roar, and then down to the cadence of a lulling storm, and shortly following this storm drama, at the earliest crowing of "Ko-a-ko," a tall blanketed figure is dimly discernable making its way to the top of the tallest house, and the call for the racers breaks the stillness:

#### Call to the Racers

"Wake up, boys! Remember this is the day we run! It may be if any of you have good in your hearts, it may be before the day is done we shall have rain and can drink the water."

Soon they are off for the starting point, four miles away; arriving, they rub the soles of their feet with kaolin, to make them fleet, and then, scattering meal to

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the east, and in the direction of the race, they are off for the return.

Unclothed, throwing themselves joyously, singing through the early morning air, their feet speed them on. Through the cornfields, they grab the choicest stalks up by the roots as they run.

In the foothills below the mesa, the girls and younger matrons in grayest colors await the racers—and as they arrive a scramble and a frolic ensues, the corn waves wildly in the air, and the girls spring up to catch it—and soon the men are on their way again up the steep rocky trail to the village, just as the sun rises, glowing above the horizon.

Then the families gather on the terraces for the morning meal. And during the afternoon of this day the kist or sun protection for the snakes is made of cotton-wood boughs, the opening covered with canvas, originally probably a skin. Si-pa-pu the opening in the earth in front of the kist, symbolizing the underworld, is dug, and the opening covered with a stone slab.

The tourists are beginning to appear by now, sometimes having the troubles crossing the arroyo, but at last arrived and camped below, and peering about everywhere.

Late in the afternoon comes the Corn Dance, a duplicate of the Snake Dance, except that cornstalks are substituted for the reptiles. Again in the night a repetition of the storm drama and the other rites, and in the morning the races.

At noon on this the last day, with chanting and other rites, the Snake priests in the kiva sit about the bowl for the snake washing; holding their "younger brothers" up, grasping them a few inches below the head, which they plunge into the liquid in the bowl, and which are then thrown forcibly on the sand picture to dry.

A little beyond mid-afternoon the chief and one or two other priests emerge from the kiva, and carry the snakes to the kist.

Many Navajos have drifted in during the day, and Hopis from the other mesas, and all find places on the houseposts as the hour for the dance approaches. It is now 5:30 p.m. and the sun has left the plaza; a cloudless, perfect Arizona day, which there is none finer.

They are watching the great black ravens whirl and dive in circles about the mesa in front of us, when our Hopi friends crane forward, and all eyes turn in the direction of the kivas.

#### The Dance

First is the War Chief with his bow and arrows, advancing into the plaza; then the Antelope Chief, with his tiponi, follows. (Continued on Page 16)

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## WEIRD HOPI SNAKE DANCE

(Continued from Page 7)

leading the Antelope priests in solemn line. The white zig-zags of lightning run like shoulder straps down their breasts to meet the white kilts, gay on the edge with embroidered rain clouds in green and red and black.

They march four times around the plaza, stamping each on *si-pu-pu*, then form in line abreast of the kisi, shaking all the time mushroom-like rattles of pure white.

Again beyond the dark shadows of the portico we spy the dull red kilts of the Snake men, the zig-zag snakes painted thereon moving in swing with their red moccasined feet. Their eyes glare out from the blackened cheeks, and the whitened lower jaw lends a weirdness to their faces. The chief, his tiponi on his arm, leads the line down the plaza.

Tca-ma-hia, the ancient, in his fillet and anklets of cottonwood leaves, with white kilt and long white sash, comes next, with his bowl of sacred liquid held in front of him; then the long line of priests follow at rapid rate, circling also four times around the plaza, stamping violently each time on *si-pu-pu*, and then lining up opposite the Antelopes.

The priests have each a snake paho, and carry their snake whips made of two eagle feathers. Pointing them to the earth they being moving with quivering motion in unison with their bodies, which are now swaying back and forth.

Meanwhile the Antelopes are keeping up a steady shaking of their rattles, and the Snake men begin a low, almost inaudible chant in monosyllables of archaic origin.

At times Tca-ma-hia steps forward to the kisi, calling in loud voice, "Tca-ma-hia! a-wa-hia! ye-ma-hia! tca-ma-hia!" and the real Tca-ma-hia, the ancient brother, comes from far to the east, he cannot be seen, but he is here.

As the chant finally dies away, the Snake priests separate into groups of three, the carrier, the hugger, and the gatherer; the carrier reaches into the kisi bringing forth a reptile, and the three (four including the snake brother) start on their "dance" around the plaza.

The carrier has the snake, near its head, in his mouth; the tail to the right and whipping round in the air, his right hand grasping it about half way down its length; the hugger close behind, his left arm about the carrier's neck, and his whip played about the reptile's head, he keeps him diverted, and the group prances in circles about the plaza.

As they pass near the big snake rock, women and girls scatter meal on the snakes from their trays. Other groups, and others follow in quick succession, and as each completes the circuit the snakes are dropped to the ground and left to the gatherers, while the carrier goes to the kisi for another.

Thus in a short time the plaza becomes a weird scene of moving figures and writhing serpents; some on the ground, some dangling from the carriers' mouths, and more and more coiling about the gatherers' arms; and some are handled to the Antelopes, who still stand in line, perhaps shaking their rattles, but the scene is too grotesque

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somely absorbing to spare a thought for them.

After all the snakes have been carried, the Antelope chief walks forward, makes a big circle of meal, crosses it with lines to the four world quarters, the priests throw the snakes in the center, and the women and girls cast the rest of their meal upon them; the chief then reverently utters a prayer, after which the priests rush forward, grab all they can, and run with them down the trails to the snake houses.

There they plant their pahos, throw a path of meal, leave the snakes to find their way back to the underworld, and they return to the kiva, where they disrobe, and whence they emerge again to the edge of the mesa for the emetic as a purification after the ceremony.

This done, they end their fast with a royal good feast in the kiva, which their wives bring them steaming hot from their homes.

The Antelopes meanwhile have gone to their kiva, dismantled the altar, discharmed themselves and are again ordinary citizens; but the Snake men must sleep in the kiva, and be discharmed by throwing a little ashes (symbol of the end) with the left hand, and other ceremony, before they can again enter into mundane affairs.

The ceremony over, the villagers return to their homes, the Navajos wander from door to door where feasts are cooking, and the tourists, suddenly brought to earth, are planning an early start next morning for the railroad.

After these big ceremonies always come four days of frolic by the young people, but this, as Kipling says, is another story.

## Judge Madden to Wichita

John Madden, former Tulsa attorney, is now with the firm, Madden & Madden, of Wichita, Kansas.

Judge Madden is a consistent contributor to this magazine and is recognized as one of the leading authorities on Indian life in the Southwest. He is the author of an American novel, now on the press, depicting the opening up of the western country by the white man along the Old Santa Fe Trail.

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