

# Masks and Rain Spirits:

## Mesoamerican Influences on Southwestern Kachina Ceremonialism

Author: Thomas Lai  
Program: Anthropology (Honors)

**ABSTRACT:** This study examines Mesoamerican influences on kachina ceremonialism, a Southwestern religious institution in which kachina spirits infiltrate Pueblo communities for a portion of the year as masked impersonators. Kachina spirits are in fact ancestral spirits who inhabit the underworld. They emerge in cloud-form from mountain tops to bring rain to the fields of the living. Kachina ceremonialism arose in the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries during the Pueblo IV period following the Chacoan collapse, representing a social adaptation encouraging integration and stability in newly-established Pueblo communities. Whether the kachina cult's genesis is represented by ceramic evidence in the western Little Colorado Basin, or rock art in the eastern Rio Grande, a significant Mesoamerican ideological substrate fed into its origins: the Southwest imported such Mesoamerican commodities as copper bells, Scarlet Macaws, and the Mesoamerican ballgame, the latter two of which left ideological impressions evident in kiva murals and ceramic motifs. Ultimately, it was the Mesoamerican cult of the rain-bringing dead which was modified into the socially-integrative kachina cult in response to Pueblo IV social needs, as well as the Southwest's arid environment.

---

**KEYWORDS:** Kachina, Plaza, Kiva, Pinedale, Four-mile, Jornada, Tlaloc, Teixiptla

The Southwest is arguably the most distinguished division of North American archaeology, benefitting from a well-preserved archaeological record that captures the imaginations of archaeologists and laymen alike. In this rich cultural environment, kachina ceremonialism is the most iconic aspect of living Pueblo culture, a social ceremony stirring the whole community into motion as the spirits come once again to live amongst the people. Kachina ceremonialism is attested archaeologically as early as the early 13th century, following the collapse of the Chacoan world, and survived to the present day in spite of Catholic suppression during the 17th century. Much debate surrounds the origin of kachina ceremonialism, with theories ranging from Indigenous development within a Southwestern context to importation by Mexicans accompanying the Spanish (Adams 1991). Although evidence for kachina presence predating Spanish arrival invalidates this last theory, macaws from Casas Grandes, ballcourts at Hohokam (Museum of Peoples and Cultures 2008), and Tlaloc figures in Jornada rock art (Schaafsma 1999) testify to the fact that the Southwest was a recipient of Mesoamerican ideological influence in addition to its luxury goods. In light of Mesoamerican cultural presence in the Southwest, this paper discusses possible Mesoamerican contributions towards the development of kachina ceremonialism. The 13th century Southwestern spiritual landscape where kachina ceremonialism arose was a receptacle for Mesoamerican ideological imports, which contributed to the cult's origins.

### **Kachina Ceremonialism**

Contemporary kachina ceremonialism is shrouded in secrecy, partially the result of Catholic suppression of Indigenous spirituality driving ceremonial proceedings underground. In its earliest days, the cult served as a socially unifying institution for emerging Pueblo communities in the wake of the Chacoan (Pueblo III) period. With the exception of some Tiwa groups, kachina ceremonialism is practiced by all contemporary Pueblo peoples, encompassing large segments of Pueblo society through mandated participation of the whole community. Kachinas are not gods, rather, they are a class of spiritual beings with a multifaceted character. In part, kachinas function as divine messengers, conveying prayers to the gods for agricultural fertility since much of kachina spirituality centres around bringing rain (Hieb 1994; Adams 1991). When not present in villages, the kachinas reside belowground, later emerging through mountain peaks as rain-bearing clouds to water parched fields. In this respect, kachina ceremonialism retains aspects of ancestor worship, as the Pueblo deceased become kachinas. Thus, the arrival of rain clouds is in fact the return of the ancestors,

who nourish their descendants by watering their fields. To this end, the Hopi place cotton on the faces of the deceased to symbolize the clouds that they will become. Physically, kachinas take three forms: dolls, masks, and masked impersonators. The dolls have a limited archaeological presence, and therefore need not concern this present discussion as they possibly originate from later European influence. Masks are the most important aspect of kachina ceremonialism, being the means by which kachina spirits are channeled. So revered are these masks that they are never referred to as mere "masks," rather they are personified through the appellation of "friend". When an impersonator, invariably a man initiated into the mysteries, dons a mask, he does not merely channel the kachina's presence, he becomes the kachina through the mask's transformative powers. Depending on the importance of the kachina represented, masks are either individually owned if the kachina is relatively inconsequential (the bulk of dancing kachinas), or communally owned if the kachina is a clan ancestor. (Adams 1991).

The arrival of the kachinas marks the beginning of village-wide celebration, as kachina dances double as social events whose success at propitiating the gods is contingent upon participation from the whole community. This ceremonial cooperation reflects broader social cooperation, as kachina ceremonialism overcomes clan distinctions by encouraging communal food redistribution. Through initiation into one kachina society or another, all Pueblo members are integrated into the village enterprise. In addition to strengthening communal bonds, the kachina cult's most important function is to bring rain. This aspect of kachina ceremonialism is reflected in the rain-bringing iconography employed during ceremonial proceedings, including tadpoles, lightning, maize, and clouds painted onto masks or impersonators themselves. Douglas fir boughs, which evoke the longed-for moisture, complete the ceremonial attire. Masking and the socially integrative nature of the ceremonial proceedings are significant points in the archaeological discussion to follow, while the supremely important rain-bringing function is discussed in light of Mesoamerican influences (Adams 1991).

Masking is a crucial component in kachina ceremonialism, as masks are what facilitate the impersonator's transformation into the kachina represented in a kind of temporary apotheosis. In addition to spiritual significance, kachina masks are important archaeologically since they are the only reliable indicator of kachina cultic presence (Adams 1991). In general, these masked faces are a-nasal, with elongated eyes and toothed rectangular mouths (Hays 1994), although the earliest

masked faces in rock art exhibit trapezoidal or triangular noses (Schaafsma 1994). The historical debate regarding the kachina cult's specific origins within the Southwest is divided between East and West. Charles Adams (1991, 133), based on ceramics and ceramic-influenced kiva murals, favours a western origin in the Little Colorado Basin, while Polly Schaafsma (1994, 66) in her analysis of Rio Grande rock art advocates for an eastern origin in the Rio Grande. An overview of the archaeological record will elucidate the matter.

### Masked Faces in the Archaeological Record

Beginning in the West, kachinas are documented in ceramics, rock art, and kiva murals in the upper and middle Little Colorado River (hereafter LCR) basins, Mogollon Rim, Mesa Verde, and Hopi Mesas. The upper LCR has ceramic and rock art evidence of kachina ceremonialism by the early to mid-14th century (Adams 1991). In particular, Adams (1991, 42, 47) identifies the Pinedale and succeeding Fourmile ceramic traditions as intimately linked to the kachina cult's proliferation. The Pinedale ceramic tradition is a redware characterized by bilaterally symmetrical geometric patterns sporting macaw motifs; beaks or feathers incorporated into the design. The succeeding Fourmile ceramic tradition marked a break from Pinedale in the asymmetry of its designs and its depictions of masked faces. Adams (1990) links Fourmile ceramics with the spread of kachina ceremonialism based on contemporaneous appearance of masked faces in rock art as well as kiva murals in the upper LCR during the early to mid-14th century. Around the same time as masked faces began proliferating in the arts, village layouts changed to accommodate central plazas and rectangular subterranean kivas located at the corners of plazas. Both plazas and rectangular kivas are architectural features Adams (1991, 47) links to the cult's spread and adoption, reflecting a change in village layout to accommodate the new ceremonial system. These plazas and rectangular kivas seemed to have had a stabilizing effect on LCR Pueblos, which began lasting for longer periods of time after their introduction in the 14th century. Significantly, evidence of war and medicine societies are discernable in the kiva murals of the middle LCR. The martial overtones of some kachinas, such as the warrioress He'e'e', indicates that kachina ceremonialism became integrated with pre-existing medicine and war societies, coming to share influences and ceremonies while remaining as separate institutions. Presently, Zuni kachina ceremonialism retains a healing aspect, while kachinas such as He'e'e' perpetuate martial themes in contemporary Hopi kachina ceremonialism (Adams 1991).

In the Mogollon Rim, kachina presence is evidenced primarily by Fourmile ceramics, from which kachina iconography seems to derive its stylistic roots. Fourmile ceramics in turn exhibit stylistic influences from Casas Grandes ceramics, with both traditions sharing macaw motifs and masked faces by the 14th century. Ultimately, the Pinedale style, which preceded the Fourmile style, was born of local Mogollon ceramics merging stylistically with Kayenta ceramics, the latter of which were imported by Chacoan refugees, who emigrated from the Four Corners area following the end of the Pueblo III period (Adams 1991).

Scant evidence of kachina ceremonialism, ceramic or otherwise, exists in Mesa Verde. Absence of central plazas, or indeed their associated kivas, suggests that the kachina cult never took hold there, and what little iconographic evidence exists is attributable to importation of Hopi goods. In the Hopi Mesas, which represent the northern-most extent of kachina ceremonialism, the Fourmile style developed into the Sikyatki style. [1] The presence of Sikyatki ceramics, as well as extensive Sikyatki-influenced kiva murals, indicates kachina cultic presence in the Hopi mesas by the early 15th century (Adams 1991). While Sikyatki ceramics appear only in those communities where kachina ceremonialism had taken root, the paucity of masked depictions on Sikyatki vessels seems to indicate a proscription against depicting kachinas in the Hopi mesas, possibly the result of a premium on cultic knowledge (Adams 1991). Even today, Pueblo children are kept ignorant of the masked impersonator's humanity until their own initiations into the mysteries, whereupon they realize, often with great emotional distress, that the kachinas have been impersonated by humans all along (James 2000). [2] The only places in the Hopi mesas where kachinas were depicted in abundance were the kivas of Awat'ovi and Kawaika'a, as these subterranean ritual spaces hid the secretive aspects of the cult. By the 15th century, some kachina depictions are even identifiable: Ahola, the Solstice Kachina, the Spotted Corn Avatshoya Kachina, and the flute-playing Kokopelli Mana, who may also represent the martial He'e'e', are all depicted on the kiva murals of Awat'ovi and Kawaika'a (Adams 1991).

In the east, the middle Rio Grande features the distinctive Rio Grande rock art tradition, which exhibits masked faces as early as the 14th century (Schaafsma 1999). Evidence of Mimbres influence includes figures with coned or rounded heads, paralleling the contemporary iconography of Ewtoto Kachina and his lieutenant Ahooli, who also possess rounded and coned heads, respectively. Although the Mimbres

ceramic tradition represents the earliest instance of anatomically detailed human depictions, nothing in their iconography suggests that the Mimbres practiced kachina ceremonialism. Instead, Mimbres iconography represents a more general Southwestern spiritual world that dealt directly with the gods, sans kachina intermediaries (Adams 1991). In contrast to Mimbres iconography, Rio Grande rock art does display masking, suggesting that the members of this distinctive cultural tradition did practice kachina ceremonialism (Schaafsma 1994). Influence from the Casas Grandes region, as with upper LCR ceramics, may be the reason behind kachina presence. In the upper Rio Grande, elaborate kiva murals at Kuaua and Pottery Mound depicted kachinas in full regalia, complete with the sashes and kilts of contemporary masked impersonators. Kuaua and Pottery Mound kiva murals are considerably older, dating to the 15th century and stylistically resembling Hopi kiva murals. There too, the kiva murals display Mesoamerican influences in the form of macaw motifs and feathered serpents (Adams 1991).

Plazas and rectangular kivas were necessary architectural elements for the cult's social existence. Kachina ceremonialism as a socially-integrative institution brought the entire village together in festivities. Plazas were the ideal space for observing the public dances, while the mysteries could be performed in the subterranean privacy of the kivas. Plaza-oriented Pueblos arose after the 13th century collapse of the Chacoan world, Adams (1991, 126) sees this new spatial layout as indicative of the Southwest settling into a new social order, with disparate immigrant groups settling into larger villages than had existed previously, and in consequence requiring a source of ideological unity for social stability. The kachina cult represented just such a socially-stabilizing religious institution. While the plazas central to kachina ceremonialism may have southern origins with the Casas Grandes culture, the subterranean kivas arose in the Mogollon Rim, developing there from above-ground square Great Kivas. Adams (1991, 126) speculates that the kivas became associated with kachina ceremonialism by developing alongside the cult in the same geographical area, likely in the upper LCR where kivas and plazas came together around the 13th century. Pinedale ceramics also have Mogollon Rim origins, synthesized of local Mogollon wares combined with Kayenta ceramics brought from the Four Corners area by post-Chacoan refugees. Though many elements associated with kachina ceremonialism originate in the Mogollon Rim, Adams (1991, 127, 131) sees the upper LCR as the crucible in which they all came together. Instead of the western upper LCR basin, Schaafsma (1994, 64) considers the eastern Rio Grande to be

the more likely place of origin for kachina ceremonialism. The more numerous depictions of masked faces in Rio Grande rock art seem to indicate a longer period of kachina cultic development in the East. In the West, by contrast, the comparatively fewer occurrences of masked faces on ceramics suggest a more limited western cultic presence. While Adams (1991, 28) dismisses the relevance of the Mimbres artistic tradition to kachina ceremonialism, Schaafsma (1994, 65) sees it as a contributing factor to Jornada rock art, representing an earlier stratum of spiritual belief that later evolved into kachina ceremonialism. The great variety of masked faces suggests to Schaafsma (1994, 64) that kachina ceremonialism had its earliest and greatest level of complexity in the Rio Grande, while its comparatively limited presence in the West indicate a less developed version of the cult there. In particular, Schaafsma (1999, 171 – 73) focuses on Jornada rock art figures depicting Tlaloc, a rain deity of Mesoamerican extraction. These Jornada Tlaloc figures anticipate the rain-bringing function of Southwestern kachinas, and speak to the Mesoamerican ideological influences on kachina ceremonialism. These two irreconcilable perspectives aside, Adams does note Mesoamerican material presence. Facilitated by the Salado culture, copper bells and non-indigenous Scarlet Macaws entered the Southwest from the Casas Grandes culture. Ultimately, however, Adams' account of the archaeological record situates the kachina cult's origins in the Southwest. For this reason, Adams tentatively restricts Mesoamerican influences from Casas Grandes to trade, though he does acknowledge the prominence of macaw motifs and the presence of Jornada Tlaloc figures as suggestive of Mesoamerican spiritual influences (Adams 1991, 131 – 32). In particular, macaw motifs on ceramics and ritual spaces associated with kachina ceremonialism speak to direct Mesoamerican influence. Having provided a brief outline of the kachina cult's archaeological history, several points of Mesoamerican influence will now be addressed.

### **Mesoamerican Influences: Macaws and Ballcourts**

Scarlet Macaws appear in the Southwest between the 10th and 13th centuries, a presence that was facilitated by Casa Grandes traders since Scarlet Macaws are endemic to rainforests in Central America. At Paquimé, the presumed centre of Casas Grandes, specialized cages designed to mimic the humid conditions of the macaw's native rainforest habitat demonstrate the integral nature of macaw aviculture to its economy. Since macaws have never been domesticated, any breeding attempts at Paquimé were presumably only partially successful at best, thus compelling its enterprising traders to constantly import tamed macaws in order

to meet demand. Physical remains, as well as iconographic evidence on ceramics and kiva murals, indicate a demand for macaws that encompassed the Southwest; as far north as Mesa Verde and as far east as the Rio Grande. The distances required to transport macaws hint at their prestigious status to the inhabitants of the Southwest, who prized their radiant plumage and likely harvested feathers from live birds over their lifetime. Ritual use of macaw feathers, as well as instances of their burial with rich grave goods, also hint at their ideological value; the red of macaw plumes quite possibly evoked southern directionality and moisture. Ceramically, macaw motifs form part of the Pinedale and Fourmile stylistic repertoire; in Mimbres ceramics, they seemingly straddle the boundary between life and death for their love of hanging upside down. More than mere economic commodities, Scarlet Macaws likely also had an ideological impact on the Southwestern spiritual landscape during the 10th to 13th centuries, a supposition supported by macaw motifs on ceramics and in ritual spaces associated with kachina ceremonialism (Museum of Peoples and Cultures 2008).

Another cultural import which made a mark on the archaeological record is the Mesoamerican ballgame, played in distinctive ballcourts present at Hohokam and Casas Grandes sites (Museum of Peoples and Cultures 2008). The Mesoamerican ballgame was played between groups of two to three players, with the objective of directing a rubber ball from one end of the court to the other (Miller and Taube 1993). Methods of controlling the ball varied, but usually involved some combination of hips, thighs, buttocks, forearms, and even bats. Ballcourts generally had I or T-shaped layouts (Museum of Peoples and Cultures 2008). Rich symbolism accompanied the ballgame: the ball itself was ascribed solar symbolism; its travels around the ballcourt were equated with the sun's movements between the upper and netherworlds, making it an expression of renewal. The game also held martial themes, substituting for actual military conflicts with the heads of losers impaled on skull racks (Miller and Taube 1993). In the *Popol Vuh*, the hero twins Hunapu and Xbalanque faced the Lords of Death over a series of ballgames, ultimately triumphing and resurrecting their father (Christenson 2008). In the Southwest, ballcourts are found in Hohokam and Casas Grandes sites. The Hohokam region boasts over 200 ballcourts, whose ovular shape departed from Mesoamerican layouts. These ballcourts had rock-lined sidewalls, and their location near central plazas hint at their social importance. Casas Grandes ballcourts, comparatively fewer in number, exhibited both Hohokam's ovular layout and traditional I or T-shaped courts, these latter

developing independently from open-layout courts. The grandeur of Paquimé ballcourts may reflect its pre-eminence among Casas Grandes sites. While Paquimé's status as an indigenous settlement or Mesoamerican colony is debated, the presence of macaws, pyrite mirrors, copper bells, and depictions of Mexican divinities implicate the Casas Grandes as a nexus for Mesoamerican influence (Museum of Peoples and Cultures 2008).

The Mesoamerican ballgame almost certainly arrived in the Southwest accompanied by its associated body of mythology. Though Hohokam ballcourts fell out of use after the 13th century (Museum of Peoples and Cultures 2008), the Southwestern mythological landscape attests numerous pairs of heroic twins: the Hopi have the Aha'yuta as twin war gods (Adams 1991), and the Navajo twins Monster-Slayer and Born-of-Water rid the world of monsters who menace humanity (Zolbrod 1984). These divine twins may derive from the Mesoamerican hero twins, hinting at the ballgame's indelible ideological influence on the Southwest in spite of its ultimate disappearance. Pairs of heroic twins aside, the material evidence of Paquimé and other southern sites points to deeper Mesoamerican ideological influences on Southwestern spirituality. A further examination of these influences will focus on ceramics, rock art, and parallels between Hopi and Mexica ancestral worship.

### **The Hero Twins: Fertility and Renewal**

The Classic Mimbres culture flourished between the 11th and early 12th centuries in the southern portions of the middle Rio Grande, producing a distinctive black-on-white ceramic tradition featuring the earliest anatomically detailed anthropomorphic depictions (Hays 1994). Adams (1991, 28) does not consider Mimbres iconography representative of kachina ceremonialism, rather, he considers it to have contributed to later kachina iconography, with some of the toothed-mouth and oval eyes of later masked faces discernable in some Mimbres figures (Hays 1994). Though Mimbres ceramics may not reflect kachina ceremonialism, their rich iconography does parallel aspects of Mesoamerican mythology, which, when taken in conjunction with evidence for mercantile relations at Casas Grandes, strongly suggests the importation of Mesoamerican beliefs along with luxury goods. The mortuary context of many Mimbres ceramics suggest that they depict scenes of the afterlife, and their execution in a ceramic medium served as a mnemonic device aiding the deceased's travels, hence their detail and high quality (Thompson 1994). Due to the effects of pareidolia, Mesoamerican peoples perceived a rabbit on the moon's surface, and therefore attributed lunar symbolism to rabbits (Miller and Taube 1993). Mexica mythology pertain-

ing to the current world's creation recount how at its formation, the moon's brightness equalled the sun's. To diminish the moon's brilliance, the gods hurled a rabbit at its face, dimming its brightness with a dark leporine impression (Phillips 2012). Lunar symbolism is apparent in Mimbres depictions of rabbits, which appear in conjunction with crescents or lie on their right sides in imitation of the lunar rabbit's appearance (Thompson 1994). In one intriguing example, the younger brother of the hero twins, whom the K'iche' Maya call Xbalanque and who eventually transforms into the moon (Christenson 2008), is also depicted in an arched position, carrying a basket symbolizing his lunar burden (Thompson 1994).

In addition to celestial symbological parallels, Mimbres ceramic iconography also reflects the mythology of the Mesoamerican hero twins, who rid the world of monsters and rescue their father from the underworld (Christenson 2008). [3] While Hays (1994; see also Thompson 1994) treats the Mesoamerican cosmological parallels seen in Mimbres ceramics as a body of belief that was held in common between the Mesoamerican and Southwestern cultural areas, Thompson (1994, 95) regards the ballgame's prominence in the narrative as indicative of the story's Mesoamerican origins. To briefly recount the K'iche' Maya version of this narrative, the twin's father and uncle, Hun Hunapu and Vucub Hunapu, shake the foundations of the underworld (Xibalba) with their ball-playing. The Lords of Death invite them to Xibalba to play, where they perish after a series of humiliating defeats. Hun Hunapu's head, hung on a tree, impregnates a daughter of the Lords of Death by spitting on her hand, and she flees to the mortal world to give birth to the hero twins, Hunapu and Xbalanque. After defeating the macaw Vucub Caquix, the twins themselves play the ballgame, once again disturbing Xibalba's foundations and, like their father before them, being invited to play ball. Unlike their lamented father, however, the twins successfully pass Xibalba's tests, though they allow themselves to be defeated and killed in one final match with the Lords of Death. Afterwards, the twins regenerate as catfish, then mermen, and finally as two miracle workers performing magic tricks for the amusement of Xibalba's denizens. Eventually, the Lords of Death summon the twins to perform and, impressed by their ability to sacrifice and resurrect each other, ask to be killed and revived themselves. By complying with only half of their request, the twins vanquish the Lords of Death, thus diminishing Xibalba's hold over the mortal realm. The story concludes with Hun Hunapu's resurrection as a maize deity, destined to cycle between the upper and netherworlds, and the twin's transfor-

mation into the Sun and Moon, celestial bodies which likewise also move between the upper and lower worlds (Christenson 2008). Mimbres ceramic vessels depict many episodes of this saga, one of these being the arrogant Vucub Caquix's vanquishing, as he claimed to be both the sun and the moon. In this episode, the younger twin is depicted climbing onto Vucub Caquix's back, masquerading as a dentist so as to strip the hubristic macaw of his finery, whereupon Vucub Caquix dies of shame. Another depiction shows the hero twins smoking cigars, recalling their trial in the Dark House when they were provisioned a torch and cigars which needed to be returned whole the next day. The twins solved this dilemma by affixing a macaw feather to the torch and fireflies to their cigars to give off light without combusting. Twinned depictions of fish recall the twin's regeneration. Some of the fish even sport human limbs, representing the advanced stages of the twin's reconfiguration (Thompson 1994). A final episode depicted is their feats of magic wrought to impress Xibalba's denizens, where the twins restore what is burnt or killed, even resurrecting each other (Christenson 2008).

The presence of the hero twin narrative in the Southwest is significant. Not only does it prominently feature macaws and the ballgame as pivotal aspects of the plot, its themes of death and vegetal renewal are also central to kachina ceremonialism. The ballgame's importance lies in its disturbances of the underworld, which prompt the Lords of Death to invite its players to their perdition. These chthonic disturbances symbolize the unsuccessful tilling of the earth before the latter's destructive, life-swallowing powers have been neutralized. In consequence, the life that entered the earth could not subsequently return, and so Hun Hunapu and Vucub Hunapu died in Xibalba, corresponding in the agricultural register to seeds being sown and failing to germinate. When Hunapu and Xbalanque vanquish the Lords of Death, they significantly diminish the power of death over the living. Thereafter, the life essence that entered the underworld was subsequently able to return to the mortal realm. Through their heroism, the twins not only free their father from the underworld (nothing more is ever said of their uncle), but also ensure the existence of agricultural fertility, embodied by Hun Hunapu in his new role as the god of maize. Thus, whenever kernels of maize are planted in the ground, symbolic of the hero twins and their father descending into the underworld, the seeds germinate, and the earth obediently yields up their sprouts (Florescano 1999). In kachina ceremonialism, this concept of chthonic regeneration is echoed in the kachina spirits themselves, who emerge from the earth as the rain which nourishes the maize of their descen-

dants. To this end, the Hopi mask their deceased with transformative cotton, admonishing them to return and water the fields of the living (Hieb 1994). Beyond fertility as a form of ancestor worship, the risk that the earth might indefinitely swallow vegetal life without returning it would have been a concern to agriculturalists in the arid Southwest. Thus, it is unsurprising that the hero twin narrative with its message of vegetal renewal received particular attention in Mimbres ceramics.

### **Masks, Bundles, and Rain Gods**

Continuing with the theme of agricultural fertility, Tlaloc depictions occur in Jornada rock art, a style which lasted from the 11th to 15th centuries. Jornada rock art gave rise to 14th century Rio Grande rock art, whose iconographic repertoire includes kachina masks (Schaafsma 1994; 1999). Tlaloc's iconography consists of goggled eyes, fangs, and moustache-like oral volutes. In Jornada rock art, the only aspect of Tlaloc's iconography that remains constant is his goggled eyes, though occasionally he sports a square fanged mouth. Lacking extremities, the trapezoidal bodies of Jornada Tlalocs feature elaborate zigzags and meanders. The meander is paralleled by crosshatched motifs whose cloud symbolism extends back into Olmec times, while zigzags represent the lightning that lashes the clouds to bring rain. Jornada Tlaloc figures frequently appear near ancient stream beds, often on trapezoidal rockfaces which may have been suggestive of Tlaloc's spiritual presence (Schaafsma 1999).

Though often regarded as a rain deity, Tlaloc in reality had a multifaceted association with moisture that extended beyond what fell from the sky. He is also linked to caves, which are sources for groundwater as well as entry-points to the underworld. The precincts of Tlaloc's temples contained excavated holes representing entrances to the underworld, paralleled in the Southwest by the sipapus in kivas. Tlalocan, the verdant afterlife enjoyed by those who die a water-related death, was also accessed via caves (Schaafsma 1999). Maya cosmology echoes Tlalocan in their *nikte' witz*, or Flower Mountain masks, whose reptilian maws opened to a paradisiacal afterlife for kings and revered ancestors. At northern Maya sites, these *nikte' witz* are depicted stacked one atop another, or as whole doorways through which the elite symbolically entered paradise every time they stepped through (Coe 2012). In addition to caves, Tlaloc was also associated with the mountains in whose caves he dwelled, emerging along with his entourage of subservient Tlaloques as clouds around mountain peaks. Tlaloc's cave habitation and cloud-form are paralleled by the kachina spirits, who also inhabit a netherworld situated beneath a moun-

tain, from which they emerge in cloud-form (Schaafsma 1999). These striking similarities aside, the aspect of Tlaloc's veneration regarded by Schaafsma (1999, 185 – 87) as foundational to kachina ceremonialism is the cult of the rain-making dead, whose worship involved funerary bundles, masks, and effigies known as *teixiptla*.

In Mexica eschatology, individuals who died by drowning, waterborne illness, or lightning were eligible to enter Tlalocan. Such individuals received special funerary treatment to encourage their transformation into rain-makers: their corpses were bundled with white cloth so as to impart the amorphous shape of a cloud. Bundling effectively stripped the corpse of its identity so that it joined the ranks of the anonymous rain-making dead. In a similar fashion, the Puebloan deceased lost their individual identities when they became kachina spirits. Appearing in the mortal realm as clouds or dancers, the living would be unable to distinguish one particular cloud or pick out one particular dancing kachina as being a deceased relative. Though bundling plays a small role in kachina ceremonialism, it has an ancient history in Mesoamerica, where scorched masks at Teotihuacan suggest the cremation of the bundled deceased. In context of the Mexica rain-making dead, masking and bundling factored only in their conjuring with effigies known as *teixiptla*, a term referring to both masked impersonators and faux bundles attired as a divinity. As a bundled effigy, the *teixiptla* commemorated the host of the rain-making deceased who, divested of their identities and assimilated to the forces of nature, were directed by Tlaloc to bring rain. In this capacity, *teixiptla* were employed to summon the rain-makers, usually when crops required another bout of rain to finish their ripening (Schaafsma 1999).

Given the Trapezoidal shape of Jornada Tlalocs, their lack of extremities, and limited iconographic resemblance to Tlaloc, Schaafsma (1999, 189) postulates they may not in fact represent Tlaloc at all. Instead, they depict *teixiptlas* attired to resemble Tlaloc, which would explain their trapezoidal bundled form and reduced iconography. Representations of *teixiptla* attired as a Mesoamerican rain god and decorated with rain-bringing symbolism indicates that the Mesoamerican cult of the rain-making dead was imported into the Southwest, where it became foundational to kachina ceremonialism (Schaafsma 1999). Elaborated upon to fit the needs of the Pueblo world, the masked *teixiptla* became the masked and anonymous kachinas, whose personae absorbed the identities of the deceased. In a final parallel to the cult of the rain-making dead, not every member of Puebloan society was eligible to become kachinas. Whereas the Mexica determined eligibility

by the manner of death, in Pueblo communities this spiritual franchise was extended to all who participated in the festivities. At Zuni, those who shunned the kachina dances were thought to continue their antisocial ways as lone clouds, unlikely to bring rain (Schaafsma 1999).[4] This social aspect of kachina ceremonialism represents a modification of the original cult of the rain-making dead to encourage social integration. In context of social upheaval during the early Pueblo IV period, Adams (1991, 126) hypothesizes that the kachina cult was adapted to stabilize Pueblos populated by peoples of various backgrounds. Thus, the cult of the rain-bringing dead, a belief system derived from Mesoamerica, was tailored to the socially-integrative needs of the Pueblo IV period, as well as the environmental realities of the arid Southwest.

### Conclusion

To conclude, the preceding discussion identified Mesoamerican influences which permeated the Southwest and became foundational to kachina ceremonialism. However, kachina ceremonialism was only one expression of Pueblo IV social upheaval, in which populations made decisive changes to maximize the effectiveness of their societal operations. The Tewa, who descend from Mesa Verde Pueblos, serve as a quintessential case study. Numerous lines of evidence suggest the Tewa developed from Mesa Verde's competitive lineages into a cooperative communal organization (Ortman 2016), a societal shift evidenced ceramically and architecturally: Tewa ceramics were far less elaborate than the "baroque" styles of Mesa Verde, while their architecture dispensed with elaborations which in Mesa Verde indexed family prestige. Instead of a radical break from tradition, however, Ortman (2016, 87) argues that Tewa society reconfigured pre-existing cultural ideas into a communal mentality that, while drawing on aspects of the past, was nevertheless distinct from Mesa Verde's competitive, lineage-oriented one. A change from competitive lineages to a community structured as an extended family, all the while repurposing existing social institutions, meant Tewa society cooperated to better meet the needs of its people (Ortman 2016). Similarly, the kachina cult represented a Pueblo IV reconfiguration of rain-making spirituality present earlier, during the 13th century. The cult of the rain-making dead, a belief system of Mesoamerican extraction, was modified into a celebration of fertility encouraging communal cooperation. This change manifested architecturally as villages accommodating central plazas, and ceramically as the Fourmile style sporting masked faces with oblong eyes and toothed mouths. Thus, kachina ceremonialism was the product of Mesoamerican mythological and ideological concepts

pertaining to moisture and vegetal rejuvenation, which were imported into the Southwest and indigenized as a socially-stabilizing institution during a time of social reconfiguration.

---

[1] For more information on the differences between the Fourmile and Sikyatki ceramic styles, please consult Adams 1991.

[2] Which is not to imply that the kachinas are mere figments. As has been explained at length, the impersonators become the kachinas they embody through the transformative powers of the masks they wear. Children, however, may fail to appreciate this nuance, seeing only the human impersonator while disregarding the veracity of the kachina's spiritual existence. In consequence, they are kept ignorant of the impersonator's humanity until such time as they are mature enough to understand that the impersonator's humanity does not diminish the kachina's spiritual existence.

[3] Paralleled in the Navajo Diné Bahane' by the hero twins seeking out their father to eliminate the monsters which threaten humanity (Zolbrod 1984).

[4] The apathy these antisocial individuals demonstrate towards their community by shunning the festivities manifests in death as a reluctance to water the fields of their descendants. In both instances, the welfare of the community is of little importance to them.



# Work Cited

Adams, Charles E. 1991. *The Origin and Development of the Pueblo Kachina Cult*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

Christenson, Allen J. 2008. *Popol Vuh, Literal Poetic Version*. Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press.

Coe, Michael D. 2012. *Royal Cities of the Ancient Maya*. New York: The Vendome Press.

Florescano, Enrique. 1999. *The Myth of Quetzalcoatl*. Translated by Lysa Hochroth. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

Hays, Kelly Ann. 1994. "Kachina Depictions on Prehistoric Pueblo Pottery." In *Kachinas in the Pueblo World*, edited by Polly Schaafsma, 47 – 62. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Hieb, Louis A. 1994. "The Meaning of Katsina: Toward a Cultural Definition of 'Person' in Hopi Religion." In *Kachinas in the Pueblo World*, edited by Polly Schaafsma, 23 – 33. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

James, Susan E. 2000. "Some Aspects of the Aztec Religion in the Hopi Kachina Cult." *Journal of the Southwest* 42 (4): 897 – 926.

Miller, Mary, and Karl Taube. 1993. *An Illustrated Dictionary of The Gods and Symbols of Ancient Mexico and the Maya*. London: Thames & Hudson Ltd.

Nielsen-Grimm, Glenna ed. 2008. *Mesoamerican Influences in the Southwest: Kachinas, Macaws, and Feathered Serpents*. Utah: Museum of Peoples and Cultures.

Ortman, Scott G. 2016. "Discourse and Huma Securities in Téwa Origins." *Archeological Papers of the American Anthropology Association* 27: 74 – 94. <https://doi.org/10.1111/apaa.12075>.

Phillips, Charles. 2012. *Aztec & Maya: The Complete Illustrated History*. Leicestershire: Anness Publishing

Schaafsma, Polly. 1994. "The Prehistoric Kachina Cult and Its Origins as Suggested by Southwestern Rock Art." In *Kachinas in the Pueblo World*, edited by Polly Schaafsma, pp. 63 – 80. University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque.

———. 1999. "Tlalocs, Kachinas, Sacred Bundles, and Related Symbolism in the Southwest and Mesoamerica." In *The Casas Grandes World*, edited by Curtis F. Schaafsma and Carroll L. Riley, 164 – 192. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.

Thompson, Marc. 1994. "The Evolution and Dissemination of Mimbres Iconography." In *Kachinas in the Pueblo World*, edited by Polly Schaafsma, 93 – 106. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Zolbrod. 1984. *Diné Bahane', The Navajo Creation Story*. New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press.