Amerind Quarterly

The Newsletter of the Amerind Foundation

Summer 2009 (Vol. 6, No. 3)

Happy New Year from Collections

During the new moon this July, one group of indigenous people celebrated their New Year, the Concáac Nation of Sonora, Mexico (called the "Seri" by Spanish and English speakers). According to a 2007 report by ethnologist Rodrigo Rentería Valencia, there are about 900 Concáac today, and the Amerind houses an astonishing array of their people's objects. Prior to the twentieth century, most Concáac lived along the Sonoran coastline and sustained their families with the wild plants and animals of the Sonoran Desert and Sea of Cortez. Although engaged in the world economy today, their homeland's plants remain important to Concáac life.

The Concáac gather fruit from the saguaro, organ pipe, *senita, pitaya agria*, and *cardón* cacti. Most of these cacti's fruit ripens in the summer months just before the monsoon rains. In 1974, the Amerind acquired two large pottery jars from the Concáac. One of the jars was filled with over three gallons of cactus seeds, probably from the cardón (see photo).

Botanist Richard Felger and linguist Mary Beck Moser, who learned from the Concáac about their homeland's plants, believe the *cardón* was the most nutritionally important plant in their traditional diet. *Cardón* fruit was consumed fresh and dried. Rich in protein and oil, the fruit's small black seeds were toasted and ground into flour. Storage jars full of seeds, like the ones at the Amerind, might provide food throughout the year. Why were these important storage containers sold to the Amerind in the 1970s? Anthropologist Thomas Bowen and linguist Edward Moser spent considerable time living with the Concáac and have written about why the Concáac were anxious to sell their ancient pottery.

Concáac pottery made before the twentieth century was very thin and hard like the Amerind pots. Traditional pottery making came to an end in the early twentieth century as manufactured metal containers became available. As traditional pottery making passed into history, the Concáac began attributing historic pots to a race of giants who lived in Concáac country in pre-Hispanic times. By the mid-twentieth century, Concáac pottery vessels had thicker, softer walls, and the exteriors were brightly painted for sale to tourists. The Concáac began selling ancient ceramic pots and figurines found on their land. Large storage pots were worrisome because it was believed that they could contain potentially harmful spirits from the past. These ancient pots, when discovered, were painted with protective symbols, like the blue and white crosses on the Amerind jars. By selling the pots to visitors, the objects were safely removed from the community.

In their long history, the Concáac suffered terribly under Spanish and later Mexican rule, but today the Concáac Nation is growing. In 2006, linguist Stephen Marlett reported that almost all Concáac were still fluent in their Native tongue. The Concáac Nation's local government has developed economic projects that benefit their people. In the summer time when cactus fruits ripen and rain starts to fall, the Concáac continue their traditional New Year celebrations.

—by Eric J. Kaldahl, Curator

Dear Members: On the back page of the last newsletter I talked about Amerind's 10-year plan and highlighted several of our long-term goals. Let me reiterate that raising funds to support our curator endowment will remain our highest fund-raising priority until the generous quarter-million dollar challenge grant from an Amerind member is matched. We are nearly halfway toward that goal, but still need to raise nearly $150,000 to complete the match. As you prepare to renew your membership in the Amerind Foundation this fall, please consider a contribution to our curator fund. Remember that every dollar you give will be matched one-to-one with challenge grant funds. *—John Ware, Director*

MISSION STATEMENT: *Established in 1937, the Amerind Foundation and Museum seeks to foster and promote knowledge and understanding of the Native Peoples of the Americas through research, education, and conservation.*

The Amerind can be proud: Pueblo World Tours are not like other tours. The places we go to and the guides who lead us there are extraordinary. *Pueblo World Tour IV: Hopi Origins* was led by Michael Kabotie, famed Hopi artist; Kelley Hays-Gilpin, Professor of Anthropology at NAU and curator at MNA; Joseph Suina, Professor Emeritus of UNM and former Cochiti Pueblo governor; and John Ware, Executive Director of the Amerind Foundation. Amerind purposefully combined a mostly rational archaeological and historical perspective with the mostly intuitive Native American perspective. Many times the lines crossed, but always the ancient and modern informed each other.

Mike Kabotie talks about his fa

Watchtower at Desert View, South Rim

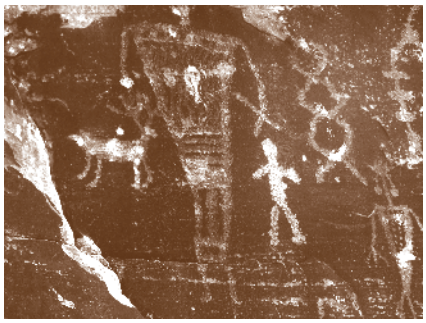
Our Hopi trip was a migration from near the place of Hopi emergence, to ruins where ancestral Hopis lived, to the mesas of the Hopi reservation, and back again toward the San Francisco Peaks and Flagstaff. We moved from past to present and moved also between various shades of light and dark. We saw traditional images of *Massau'u* who entrusted the Hopi to be protectors of the land as well as modern images of troubles within the Hopi world. Later we would walk on pottery sherds that are considered the footprints of the Hopi people and see the beauty, balance, and some of the troubles of this complex place called Hopi. The light and the dark.

Our trip started with the bus crossing over cornmeal and the prayers Michael said to protect us on our way to the Hopi place of "emergence." On the rim of the Grand Canyon looking down on this scared place, each of us took a pinch of cornmeal and with a prayer scattered it to the wind at the edge of the canyon. The wind blew the cornmeal back to us and all around us. We wound our way up the watchtower and heard from Michael about the room his father, Fred Kabotie, painted. Michael told us stories of running to the bottom of the canyon in forty-five minutes as a young man, and playing in mud-flats below, sinking up to his chest, getting in trouble with the rangers and then struggling up the trail without enough food and water. We met the "mischievous twin" side of Michael in this story and we would see this side return at times along the way.

We followed an ancient migration route to Hopi, stopping at Wupatki National Monument and Sunset Crater, and later at Homolovi ruins. The descendants of Hopis would have come from these places, among many others. We moved from high desert plateau floor to the ponderosa pines of Sunset Crater, walked beside the room blocks of the ancient ones, and imagined the cataclysmic eruption of the crater which some of those ancients witnessed.

Fred Kabotie painting at the Watchtower

At Hopi, we stood in a cornfield and listened to a *pahana* (white man), Joseph Day, who is married to a Hopi woman, talk about how the cornfields are still planted today in the same way they have been for hundreds of years. With his hoe he showed us the moisture just below the surface of what seemed a completely dry field. We toured Sipaulovi, one of the newer settlements on Second Mesa, at only two hundred years old. On the walk up to the plaza we saw dried corn cobs along with whiskey bottles, the light and the dark, and marveled at a view that went hundreds of miles. At the top we saw houses of stone on stone, of adobe mud walls, of concrete blocks. We saw the old and the new, mapped in a seemingly hodge-podge way, but practical, and still in a shape that defined the ancient plaza, as the Hopi continue into the twenty-first century: two village water pumps along with some solar panels.



Petroglyphs at Chevelon Canyon

One afternoon we visited the ruins of Awatovi, winding our way down roads that sometimes were so thick with sand we had to drive fast to float on top or we would sink. Our guides, Kelley and her husband Dennis Gilpin, shared their expert knowledge of these ruins and told us the story of Awatovi, an ancestral Hopi village of people who allowed the Spanish to convert them to Christianity and were later destroyed by other Hopis for their betrayal of their own culture. We heard about the excavation hundreds of years later revealing that the church had been built on top of a huge Kiva. We saw the light and dark of these times and walked on the footsteps of those who

by Leslie Skelton
Photos by Steve Skelton

ther's Watchtower mural

lived here before, out even to the Black-on-White pottery sherds at the tip of the mesa, where the most ancient site had stood.

We spent a wonderful day in Hotevilla, on Third Mesa: observing an amazing glass blower Hopi artist, Ramson Lomatewama; walking to the sacred spring of the village; spending time with a basket maker surrounded by dozens of Katsina dolls that had been given to the daughters of the family, hanging from the rafters; and learning from carvers, Horace and Justin, who shared more than carving, in stories about living in Flagstaff and then in Hotevilla. We ate food that Ramson's wife Jessica and her relatives prepared, lamb stew with hominy from corn her family grew. We saw the old and the new, heard about and witnessed the struggles to keep the sacred spring clean and the gardens watered in peace. Saw the new stonework that turned what they described as a mud-hole into a usable spring and heard of the controversy around the change. We saw the water and we saw the litter and debris the wind brought into the spring. We saw light and dark.

Wupatki National Monument

There is nothing simple about the Hopi story. It is a complex weave and pattern. When we were at Chevelon Canyon, a site of amazing petroglyphs and a beautiful canyon stream, the mischievous twin struck again. On a hike up a side canyon, Mike slipped, and as he got up he pulled his wet cell-phone out of his pocket. A half hour later, as he came back to the overlook where we were waiting by the cars, he realized the van keys had fallen out of his pocket. We then crowded into the remaining vans for hours of shuttling up the Hopi mesas in turn, and a new key had to be made for a dusty trip back to the abandoned van at Chevelon Canyon.

Overlooking Wupatki

The hero journey is not without tests, and our migration had its dark side. But the light part was that not one person fussed or complained. Mike came out of this with one dead cell phone and laughter about the keys ultimately was the story, in the Hopi way of humor. Light came out of darkness.

We heard from Joe Suina of Cochiti Pueblo, in a night-time gathering at our motel that knowledge for his people depends on three things: age and maturity, gender, and commitment. When information is shared with outsiders, it is no wonder that it is not a simple thing for us to learn. We make mistakes in our understanding and interpretation of what we see, as we are not part of their world, ancient or modern. Michael shared, at this same time, some of the problems of his personal journey, and some of the problems of his people, what he called the "raw and savage" side of life. Joe and Mike spoke about the forces that threaten the survival of their traditional cultures: language loss, drugs and alcohol, and in Hopi, tension about leadership of the community. They made it clear that they represent only two voices about their cultures and problems.

During this discussion, however, both men also showed a spirit of balance and hope and optimism about the future, as they and their cultures move forward on their migrations. They, with Kelley and John, helped all of us move forward in our understanding of the Hopi, and in our personal life journeys. This trip was an emergence and a migration, in light and darkness, and all shades in between.

Emergence to Migration

We Pahanas sprinkled cornmeal
Hoping to understand our own emerging prayers.
Rightfully, the only words spoken aloud on the Grand Canyon edge,
Were Hopi.

We can only touch in silence
The surface of this ancient culture.
Walking on shards of pottery,
We vaguely understand the mystery of migration.

But we can laugh at story-telling time
In the plaza of our Hopi motel,
And enjoy the raw and savage
Enlightenment and humor of a Hopi tale.

We can understand in a shadowy way
The Spider Woman who greets each
Traveler seeking wisdom with,
"Thank you for coming. I've been waiting for you."

—Leslie Skelton

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The Amerind Quarterly is produced seasonally by staff and volunteers of the Amerind. John Ware and Eric Kaldahl content; Barbara Hanson, editor and drawings; C. Charnley, design and layout; photography by Amerind staff (except where noted).

CALENDAR OF EVENTS AT THE AMERIND

September 12, 2009, 10:00 A.M.
BOTANY WALK with Barbara Hanson. Meet at the front museum entrance.

October 8-14, 2009
Sky Island Journeys: People and Nature in SE Arizona. Tour based out of the Amerind Seminar House. Tour is full.

October 29, 2009
BOTANY **HIKE** at Fort Bowie with Barbara Hanson. One hour drive one-way from Amerind, then 3 mile round trip hike. Limited to 12. Call Barbara for details and to register: 520.586.3960.

November 30, 2009, 10:00 A.M.
BOTANY WALK off-road at Amerind with Barbara Hanson. Meet in front of museum. Wear sturdy shoes or boots.

December 19, 2009, 1:00-4:00 P.M.
Maya Weaving Cooperatives: a presentation and sale of items from Maya weaving cooperatives in Chiapas, Mexico, with Christine Eber, Ph.D. (NMSU). Please see **www.lascruceschiapasconnection.com** for a preview of the work Christine is doing and to see some of the items the Maya weavers are creating.

Inside you will find a listing of programs, workshops, tours, and events for the upcoming season. Hope you can join us!