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Chapter 3 The Hopi Way: Art as Life, Symbol, and Ceremony

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> "As artists, we try to document every aspect of Hopi life. We know the Hopi way; we live it, we can taste, we can see, and we can smell Hopi."

Spiritual essence is the heart of the Hopi way. It is the ceremonial way, but also it is the every-day way of Hopi, human life. It is the physical world of beauty which surrounds us in animals and plants, but also it is the spiritual world, because everything in nature has a spirit. Our concept of the Hopi way is that a spiritual essence touches every part of our lives; it exists as a very personal religion providing a belief about ourselves and how we live with each other and our surroundings. In a special way, it exists in our religious celebrations. It also exists in our art.

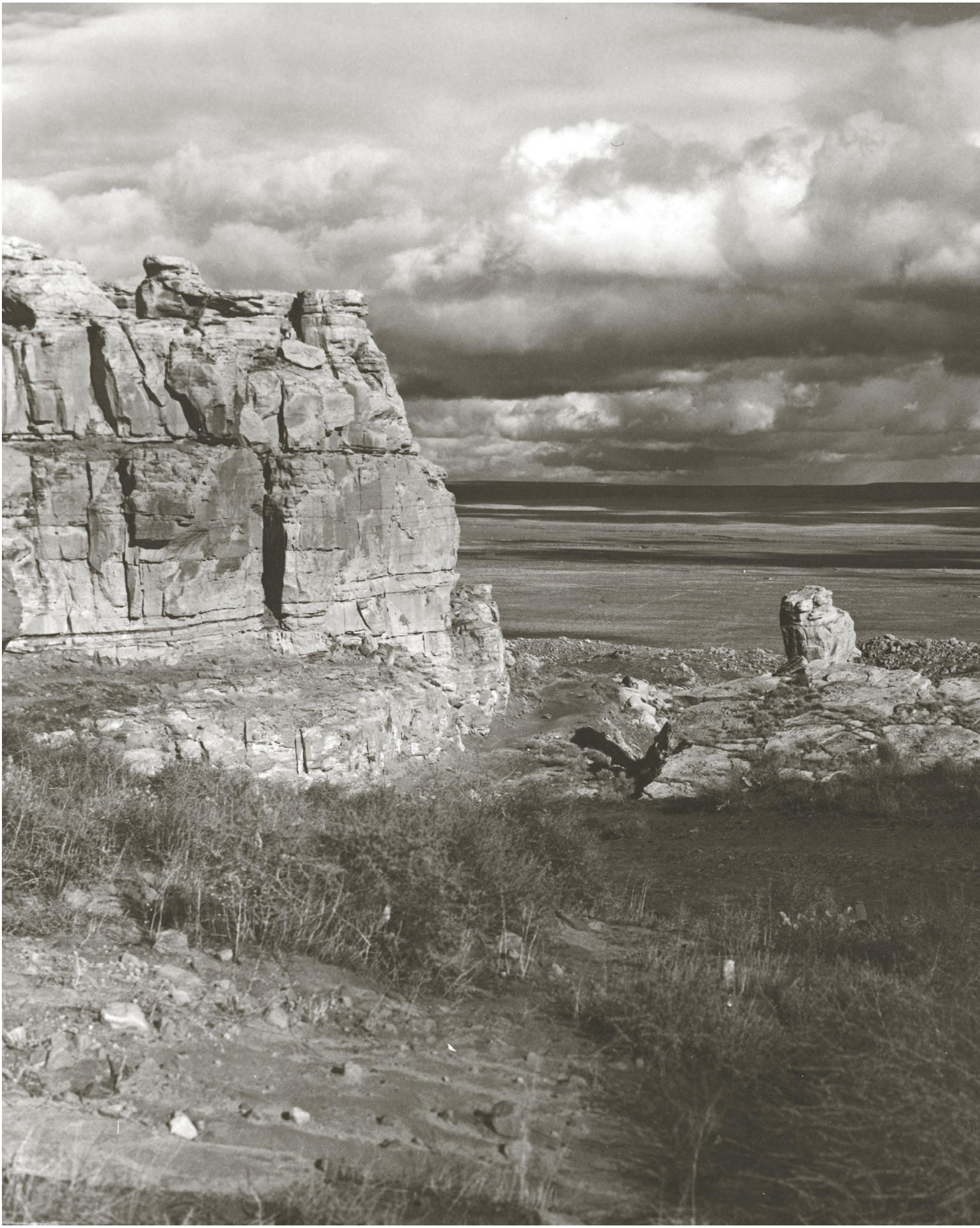
From birth we are Hopi. As young children, we grow as Hopi. We do not go to school to learn what it means to be Hopi. Ceremonial life begins for a child when it is ten years old and it is initiated into the first society, the kachina-cult society. At this time the child understands the importance of Hopi spiritual life as related to the activities of its own life.

When a boy child is sixteen, he is given a name and initiated into the manhood society. As a mature Hopi, he fully comprehends his tribal responsibilities and his obligations to live the Hopi way, observing the sacred rituals. As he practices these religious beliefs, he grows in the concepts of spiritual essence. There are times when a Hopi moves to the outside world and learns the white way of life. My experience took me away from the Hopi mesas for some fifteen years. That was very much a part of my education. Still my spirit was Hopi. My return to my people enabled me to paint, to write songs, to dance, and once again to live the Hopi way. My obligation is to carry on the sacred responsibility.

Five of us, the Artist Hopid,[1] understand this responsibility. As artists, we try to document every aspect of Hopi life. We know the Hopi way; we live it, we can taste, we can see, and we can smell Hopi. We feel that we are in tune with nature in all of our surroundings.

The sun is an important part of Hopi essence; it is the source of energy for all living things. We live with our land; it provides daily nourishment and strength for our bodies and souls. Even the rocks of the mesas have a kind of life-essence. The rocks are beautiful in their many colors and textures; they change with the seasons and with the years. They are the substance of our ancient village shrines and the houses we live in. The kiva is our most sacred ceremonial space, the central area of the Hopi way of life. It is made of stone and plastered with earth mud.

One summer my paintings concentrated only on the forms of rocks. Rocks, to me, were going to disappear from our land, so it was necessary to paint and preserve them. It was a comfortable feeling for me to paint the rocks because I identify with rock, which is the natural source of the Hopi environment.



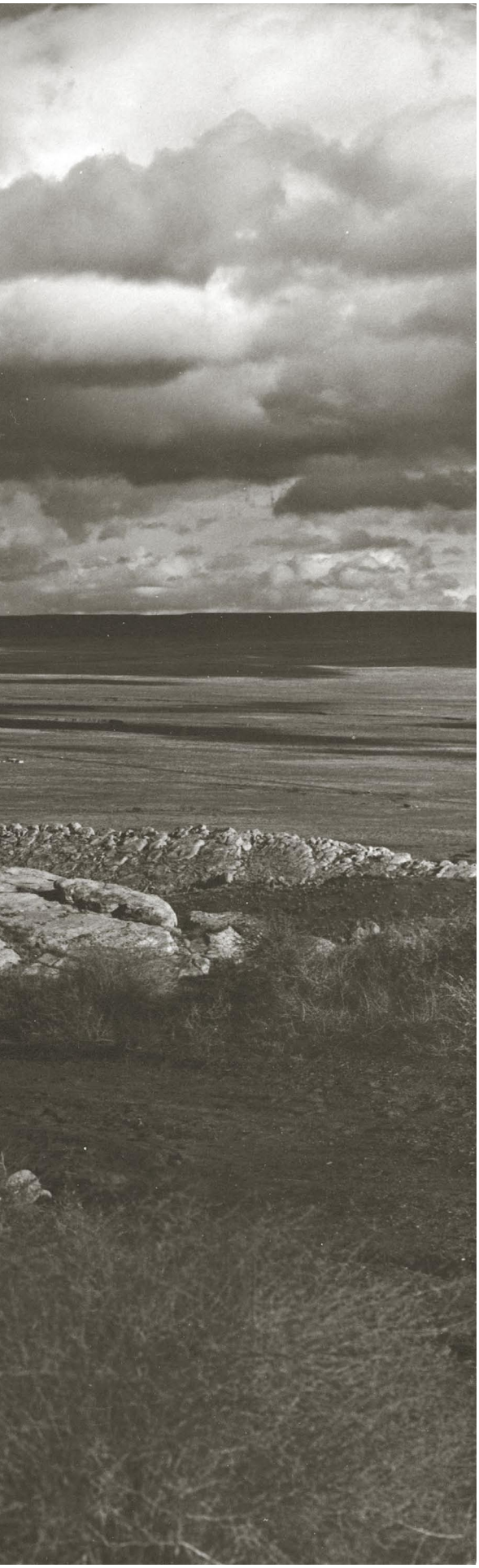


Figure 18. THE HOPI LAND
Owen Seumptewa, photograph, 1981
(Courtesy of the photographer, Second Mesa, Arizona)

Figure 19. HOPI CEREMONIAL CALENDAR (mural)
Artist Hopid: Lomawywesa (Michael Kabotie), Dawakema (Milland Lomakema), Coochsiwukioma (Delbridge Honanie), Honvantewa (Terrance Talaswaima), Neil David, Sr.
painting, acrylic. 1975. Collection: Hopi Cultural Center Museum Second Mesa, Arizona (Courtesy of Artist Hopid, Second Mesa, Arizona; and Jerry Jacka, photographer, Phoenix, Arizona)

Colors which represent the earth are also important: reds, yellows , browns , and blues. We use them in our art works, and when we perform the sacred rituals we paint them on our bodies and on our ceremonial clothing. Sometimes we use paint brushes, or we may use our hands as paint brushes, which is the ancient, traditional way of painting.

As Hopi artists, we sense beauty and meaning in every aspect of our lives. We believe that we are a part of a great living force which began hundreds of years ago. We do not accept the popular theory which says that all people came to this land from across the Bering Strait. Our concept is that we came from the Third World of the Hopi and that, now, we are in the Fourth World. We emerged from underground, somewhere in the Grand Canyon. That is our concept. Archaeologists date our people back to the twelfth century, but we believe that this great, living-force comes to us from ancient times, and that our culture retains it today.[2] As Hopi artists we share it. We live the artistic, aesthetic way; we must develop the talents given to us. We have the responsibility to communicate to others, Hopi and non-Hopi peoples, through our art, the spiritual images of Hopi life.

When we concern ourselves with Hopi life and Hopi art, we are involved with the very existence of the ceremony. The most significant work of the Artist Hopid is a large mural, the "Hopi Ceremonial Calendar," which we painted in 1975. It depicts, through symbols, the Hopi path of life based on ritual events occurring in one lunar year. It is a summary statement which presents our significant ceremonials: those for the kachina , for the Men's Society and Women's Society, and for the clans that pro-

vide leadership and guidance through the succession of rituals. Not only are there spiritual lessons to be learned from the mural, there are portrayals of the physical elements of night and day, the change of seasons, and the agricultural life of the Hopis.

The mural hangs at the Hopi Cultural Center and Museum on Second Mesa, covering a wall space of some thirty-five feet in width, a total of 274 square feet. The process of making the mural was a contemporary art-happening in itself. Four of us of the Artist Hopid painted continuously, night and day, for a period of two weeks, with Hopi people and music providing background support. Actually, the painting is a large Hopi timepiece portraying the ceremonial cycle of life. The completed Ceremonial Calendar was presented to the Hopi people and to the Cultural Center by the Artist Hopid in formal ceremonies in July 1975. "Dedication," quoted below, was written by Lomawywesa (Michael Kabotie) for that occasion.

This mural was painted in reverence and in homage to HOPI:
A life force and philosophy that nurtured and gave strength to countless generations of HOPI PEOPLE
A way of life, time tested by the forces of Mother Nature for eons; survived and matured.
A concept so deep that deliberate attempts by gold and soul hungry ideologies to unroot it have failed.
A spiritual outlook so strong, that despite the hardships, it prays for all living beings to have fulfilling lives,
And those beautiful souls that live its teachings, and guide it,
THE HOPI PEOPLE
So with the greatest honor and respect, members of ARTIST HOPID dedicate the
HOPI CEREMONIAL CALENDAR to the HOPI PEOPLE and all living beings.
ARTIST HOPID[3]

Observing the mural reproduced on preceding pages, there are seven interlocking circles: one, a large full moon circle at the center connected to a series of three small circles on each side. The circle form is one of our most sacred symbols, and the total series of adjoining circles represents a kind of ceremonial kinship among all of our clans and societies.

Although the calendar does not mark non-Hopi Christian calendar-time, it is to be noted that each small circle symbolizes two moons, or an approximate equivalent of two months. The circle at the far left represents the month of August. Moon cycles which follow left to right, move from August through the fall and winter months to December which marks the winter solstice at approximately Hopi mid-year and mid-center of the mural. The months of spring and summer follow through the moon cycles at the right, the final circle designating the month of July. Late June marks the time of summer solstice. In this way, one Hopi year, timewise, appears to be complete. But we believe that the Hopi ceremonial path is ever evolving, so that on the calendar mural, the path moves from the July circle on the extreme right into the succeeding lunar year, beginning again at the far left with the August circle.

It is the ceremonies that structure calendar-time for the Hopi. Approximately one-half of our year is devoted to kachinas, preparing for their return to the mesas and their special celebrations. The remaining one-half year is devoted to non-kachina rituals. Transition points for the two one-half year periods occur at the sun solstice events in late December and June. Kachina observances are portrayed on the calendar in the three small circles on the right, the non-kachina events are noted in the three small circles at the left. Ceremonies are shown in the following order, beginning at the left: August, Snake or Flute ceremonies (non-kachina); September-October-November, dances of the Women's Societies (non-kachina); November, Wuwuchim tribal initiation (non-kachina); late December, winter solstice time, Soyal ceremonies and the beginning of kachina celebrations. Pamuya kiva dances and Powamu bean dances occur in January-February (kachina). Various plaza dances for the kachina take place from March through the summer months. And with Niman time in July, following summer solstice, the kachinas leave the mesas, returning to their kiva in the sacred San Francisco Peaks.

Examining the full moon circle at the center of the mural, two important clan figures are shown. The Soyal Kachina who faces us at upper left represents Bear Clan leadership over the non-kachina rituals depicted on the left; Ahula, facing us on the right in the large circle, represents Kachina Clan leadership over the kachina rituals depicted on the right. The two halves of the ceremonial year are under spiritual guidance of these two clan leaders. Both figures rise powerfully above the symbolic sun-and-earth space in the lower circle-half and control the vertical prayer stick which is laden with prayer feathers and anchored in a sacred ceremonial bowl. Stylized seed forms in an earth mound support the ceremonial bowl and represent the harvest to come. Other symbols include planting sticks, bear-paw tracks, ears of corn, lightning, and a cloud-altar form. All images included in this circle refer to the blessings of rain and abundant crops which are for the benefit of all human beings.

Two white lines extend outward from the exact center of the full moon circle, which also is the exact center of the mural. They represent our sacred corn meal and symbolize Hopi ceremonial paths. The corn meal paths in the painting intersect all moon cycles and rituals. They direct the Hopi way of life; every Hopi travels the corn meal path each year. Covering the total arrangement of moon circles is a colorful rainbow. It rises from the symbolic blue water of the ocean and the brown earth across the bottom of the mural to spaces above, enclosing four large areas at the top. These areas are colored to

represent the four cardinal directions: yellow for north, blue or green for west, red for south, and white for east. Actually, Hopis knew that the earth had a rainbow covering long before the astronauts from Houston made that discovery in their spaceships. In its entirety, the painted mural presents a display of color, symbolic forms, spiritual beings, and religious meaning.

Every Hopi is involved in ceremonial life, the men with the Men's Societies and the women with the Women's Societies. A man usually belongs to one society and one kiva only. He does not try to learn about the kiva ceremonies of a society other than the one to which he belongs. In this way we keep a balance of the religious facets of the Hopi way of life. In this way we preserve the sacredness of the societies, the kivas, and the rituals.

There are five societies which are traditionally important to us: Two Horn, One Horn, Wuwuchim, Snake, and Flute. Each ceremony requires personal sacrifice, physically and spiritually. Sometimes it takes sixteen days of preparation and planning for a religious ritual: making and organizing the proper clothing and accessories, learning the songs, learning to dance the songs and the music, and finally, on the last day, performing the ceremony. Weekend dances require less time, perhaps an involvement of four days. But it is six hours out of your life, every day, for four days.

My people are the Pumpkin Clan people. We were the last people to come to the mesas at the time of our emergence and migration. We are known as the Hopi historians. At a certain time in the ceremonial year, we re-enact the traditional concept of the emergence of the Hopi people into this world. My involvement with these ceremonies allows me to compose the songs for both the kachina and social dances. There are approximately 250 distinct types of kachinas, and the major types are divided into groups. Each kachina ceremony requires certain dances and new songs for me to write.

The Water Clan people and the Snake Clan people are involved with the spiritual blessings of the springs, replenishing the water sources of Hopi villages. In the mural, in the August moon cycle on the far left, the Snake and Antelope Clan people are shown paying homage to the sacred ceremonial snake with prayers for rain. Water is very central to Hopi existence. It brings flowers and abundant harvest for Hopi life: corn, beans, and squash. Late in the summer when these particular ceremonies take place, the Snake people with their own ritual blessings gather snakes for six days.

On the ninth day they dance with them: bull snakes, rattlesnakes, sidewinders, and whipsnakes—all native to the Hopi mesas. In alternate years, there is the Flute Dance Ceremony, also shown in the August circle, which brings blessings of rain. The pleasing flute sounds cause the corn and flowers to grow. We must have the ceremonies, the blessings of rain, and a continuous flow of spring water.

We believe in reincarnation to a certain extent. When we die we want to become rain people, and we want to come back as priestly rain clouds. If we are fortunate, we are transformed in the spirit world to revisit the Hopi world as clouds, snow, spring showers, summer storms, and winter rain. Ancestral people are rain people; they wait in the four corners of the Hopi world for prayers from Hopis.

During the September-October moon cycles the Women's Society performs non-kachina rituals. These are celebrations involving the growing of young girls into womanhood, and their basketry craft. In the mural, the September half-circle (adjacent to the August circle at far left) shows Hopi women involved in the "Knee-High" dance. A single dancer shows body-painted designs taken from a sacred prayer stick. They indicate her maturity and prayer offerings at this time. Within the same circle, the October half-space portrays the women's Basket Dance or Lakon Ceremony. Lakon women are ob-

served with their hand-woven baskets in front of them, their baskets revealing the artistry of weaving. Their October prayers ask for winter-time blessings, and most of all, successful animal hunts for the Hopi men. The baskets also are symbols of food blessings and food sharing to take place in late spring and summer.

The moon-circle of November and December is found in the mural joining the large full-moon figure at the left edge. Representatives of the Men's Societies are shown in the kivas, praying and performing the rites for rebirth of life which comes with the winter solstice and early spring. At this time the sun is asked to direct the Hopi path of life to warmer seasons.

Calendar sequences designate the Hopi agricultural cycle: seasons for planting, germinating, growing, and harvesting of crops. These are primarily associated with kachina ceremonials depicted in the circles on the right side of the calendar and occurring in late January through July. The small central circle in the sequence on the right represents the months of April through June, and kachinas are depicted here arriving at the Hopi mesas on a rainbow amid numerous symbols for rain and harvest blessings: flowing streams of water, cloud-altars with rain, the fertile earth, a frog, prayer stick, and a sacred seed form. This circle moves into the white background area of the mural indicating the direction east, symbolically important to ideas of creativity and growth, the regeneration of life.

We painted the mural to express the Hopi way of life today. Clearly, the essence of the artwork and of our lives is ceremonialism. But the twentieth-century ceremonial way is very much the traditional ceremonial way: for us, the new and the old harmoniously merge to provide meaning and direction to both contemporary life and contemporary art.

The Artist Hopid were inspired and challenged when we took time in the early years of the 1970s to study wall paintings from kivas unearthed at the ancient villages of Awatovi and Kawaika-a in Arizona.[4] Other kivas with significant wall paintings were excavated at the Pottery Mound site in central New Mexico.[5] Researchers from the Peabody Museum, Harvard University, excavated and documented some twenty-one sites in the Awatovi area in 1932. These studies were available to us, and we did some intensive research for the purpose of learning about ancient Hopi ceremonial art. Primarily, we were interested in the style of images, form and composition, and their symbolic meanings.

Tests conducted by the Harvard group proved that the large Awatovi pueblo, some twenty-three acres in size, reached the greatest extent of development in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In the sixteenth century, the Spanish came to our land, and when they did not find the material wealth for which they were searching, they tried to persuade our people to obey and to pray in the Catholic way rather than in our native, tribal way. Our kiva chambers were covered with dirt and sand by the Spanish, and mission churches were built on top of them; the final destruction of Awatovi took place in 1700. Harvard scientists found that the kiva frescoes beneath the church ruins at Awatovi were very much intact. In a single kiva which was unearthed, twenty-seven layers of fresco paintings were found, some of them revealing Hopi religious rituals from very early times; 128 types of feathers were documented. The feathers, the body paintings, the textile designs and ceremonial kilts observed in these murals, all have been incorporated into Hopi art today. Painted forms are primarily two-dimensional and abstract, colors are flat with no shading; it is the aesthetic, symbolic way of expressing beliefs about our way of life.

The Ceremonial Calendar shows the blending of the old and the new. Stylistically, the portrayal of the spirit beings and their related symbols are essentially that of the ancient frescoes. But our contemporary concepts and experiments with color and composition are clearly evident. Other artworks of the Artist Hopid show how much we are involved today with very old Hopi artforms as a rich source of ideas, design, and images. They also show that ceremonial beliefs and practices, expressive of the Hopi way, have endured for centuries.

As a Hopi artist, I endeavor to bring to the canvas the real meaning of spiritual essence as it permeates the lives of our people. As Artist Hopid, we believe that we possess a faith and "a spiritual outlook so strong, that despite the hardships, it prays for all living beings to have fulfilling lives."[6]

Notes

1. See Kabotie, *supra*., p. 51, note 11.

2. See Wright, "Hopi Kachinas: A Life Force," *infra*., pp. 111–121.

3. Michael Kabotie, "Dedication," in Patricia Janis Broder, *Hopi Painting: the World of the Hopis* (New York: Brandywine Press, 1978), p. 151.

4. For a full description of the Awatovi and Kawaika-a kiva murals, see Watson Smith, *Kiva Mural Decorations at Awatovi and Kawaika-a with a Survey of OtherWall Paintings in the Pueblo Southwest,* Papers of the Peabody Museum, Vol. 37 (Cambridge, Mass., 1952).

5. See Frank C. Hibben, *Kiva Art of the Anasazi at Pottery Mound* (Las Vegas: K C Publications, 1975), pp. 44, 106.

6. Kabotie, "Dedication," p. 151.