

A RARE STONE HUMPBACED FIGURINE
FROM PECOS PUEBLO, NEW MEXICO

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A MOST UNUSUAL stone anthropomorphic idol was uncovered in 1939 during excavations of rooms in the South House by the School of American Research and Museum of New Mexico.¹ Readers familiar with Kidder's earlier work at Pecos will recall that "In view of the extreme rarity of stone 'idols' in the Southwest, it is remarkable that no less than four should have been found in the comparatively small amount of digging done at Pecos. All of them came from in and about the plaza of the North Quadrangle" (1932, p. 86). Since Kidder has already published excellent descriptions (*ibid.*, pp. 86-91; Figs. 62-65), only brief mention of them will be made for comparison. The Pecos idol is probably without parallel in several of its more distinctive features. (See Fig. 1a, b, c.) The late William Witkind's field notes and photographs concerning the uncovering of the effigy are not yet available, but in his last letter to the writer he stated that it "definitely came from the South House, and to the best of my memory he was in the southwest corner of the room, next to the remains of a fireplace—in the corner in a sort of built-in niche—it was *not a cache*, and the strat contained the usual mixed stuff we were getting." Excavations by Kidder and by the School of American Research have shown that the South House was occupied in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries; in addition, there is also evidence that the original building was in use in the Fourteenth and early Fifteenth Centuries.

The humpbacked figurine is undoubtedly a deity effigy. It measures 8¼" high; it is of dark grey schist whose polish suggests considerable handling over a long period of years. Though sculpturing is simple, skill is shown in the careful execution of various details. Compared with Kidder's somewhat angular and rectangular idols, this one is in the round; but although the back of the head is rounded, facial features are flat (Fig. 1a). A narrow ridge encir-

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1. Field supervisors were John M. Corbett and the late J. W. Hendron and William Witkind.



Photos by Ernest Johanson

Fig. 1. Pecos humpbacked stone idol: a, front view, showing mask-like face, and head ornamentation rising at top center; b and c, back and profile views, showing head ornamentation, the "hump," the groove at the lower edge (center back) perhaps representing feet folded back or buttocks, and the ridge around the face.

clinging the face suggests a mask.² The rectangular nose is in bas-relief. Eyes are carefully drilled round holes, at one time possibly inset with turquoise or other material. The lips of the oval mouth are also in bas-relief, and red pigment appears in the opening. From the top center of the head a perhaps plaited or braided hair arrangement, or "rabbit ears" (also in bas-relief), extend down over the back. This feature is divided by a longitudinal groove. Through the top a hole 3/16" in diameter is drilled, perhaps for attaching decorative materials, since probably the effigy would have been too heavy for suspension.³

The shape of the body suggests a squatting or kneeling position. The legs are depicted in bas-relief on the lower front of the torso (Fig. 1a). Although the hands are not actually shown, the arms are folded upwards on the breast and joined at the center as if the hands were clasped. The shoulders are squared at the front. Another very distinctive feature is the rounded humpback; this figure embodies the only Southwestern portrayal of such a feature in stone effigy art, so far as the writer knows. (Fig. 1b, c.) At the lower center of the back a shallow groove appears to indicate feet folded back, or perhaps buttocks (Fig. 1b). Although no pigment is discernible, it is possible that the figurine may once have been colored.

What does this idol represent? How does it compare with other known Southwestern effigies, deities, or personages? In contrast with Kidder's figurines, it is in excellent condition, whereas three of those which he describes were broken and damaged; they "had all been subjected to violent misuse, but they had nevertheless been buried in prepared receptacles where they were accompanied by other objects evidently of ceremonial nature" (1932, p. 88). The fourth in his series had not been finished (*ibid.*, p. 91; Fig. 65, b).

The humpbacked idol is made of schist, like two of those recovered by Kidder.⁴ His are squared; this one being done in the round, represents a different technique. All including this one are intended to stand upright. While the four other idols were cached with cere-

2. General appearance somewhat similar to fragmentary pottery effigy faces from Pueblo Bonito (Judd, 1954, Fig. 62, a, c, f).

3. Byron Harvey, III, has suggested to the writer that instead of a braid, the above decorative feature might possibly be a tumpline.

4. The remaining two are of limestone and sandstone.

monial materials, this one was by itself in an open niche. Kidder mentions that a "broken one had been mended, or had at least been most reverently reassembled for deposit in its final resting place. This, together with the fact that interment had surely taken place after the Spanish Conquest, lends color to the supposition that the iconoclasm was due to the zeal of missionary priests, who may at the same time have been responsible for the breaking of the painted stone slabs that were also buried so carefully in the upper strata of the plaza" (*ibid.*, p. 88). "While the Pecos effigies differ in materials and in workmanship, they are all alike in showing the arms bent and the hands close together on the breast. As to their age one cannot speak with certainty, for although three of them emanated from post-Columbian deposits, and the one from Kiva VI may well have been placed in its niche after the Conquest, we have no way of telling when they were made. Objects as sacred as these might, however, be expected to have remained in use for long periods" (*ibid.*, p. 91).

Since our effigy, undamaged, was found near a hearth in an open niche, is it not possible to imagine that the Indians, or an Indian, secretly kept it for ceremonial purposes after the coming of the Spaniards? It may have been considered so precious that the Pecos people were willing to run the risk of detection in order to reap the benefits of its magical powers.

It is also quite likely that the humpbacked effigy is of pre-Columbian origin. The original concept behind this, and the making of many other Southwestern stone effigies, must go back to a much earlier period of prehistory, perhaps a thousand years or more, and stem from Mesoamerica. There appear to be a number of prototypes, in both Mexico and the Southwest. The Pecos image has characteristics in common with the God of Fire, Fire Boy, and/or the "humpbacked flute player" deity, Kokopelli.

Considering first the God of Fire concept, a deity of widespread usage and great antiquity, we may look to Mexico; the Aztec god *Ixcōauhqui*, *Xiuhtecutli*, or *Ueuetēotl* was one of the oldest and most important deities (Seler, 1939, p. 60). Dr. J. Charles Kelley has shown the writer a photograph of a stone image from the Schroeder Site, near Durango, Mexico, similar in concept to the Pecos effigy. (Fig. 2.) Generally speaking, there may also be other

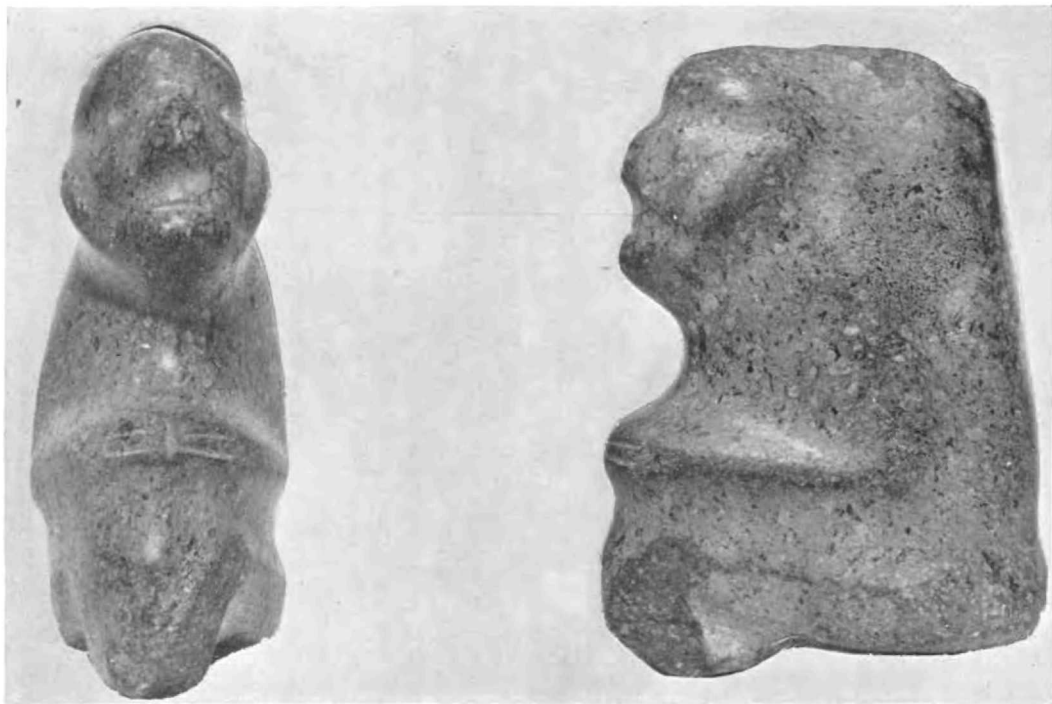


Photo by Pedro Ornelas

Fig. 2. Humpbacked stone effigy from Schroeder Site, near the City of Durango, Mexico, showing remarkable similarity to the Pecos effigy. Property of Pedro Ornelas. Photo lent through courtesy of J. Charles Kelley.

related prehistoric examples made by the Mixtecs, Toltecs, Zapotecs, and other Mexican Indians.

Of specific interest, at this point, is a statement of Parsons: "Of all extant Uto-Aztekan peoples, Cora-Huichol tribes of the Nayarit Sierra in Jalisco are the closest in culture to the Pueblos" (1939, p. 1008). As early as 1902 Lumholtz described in detail the importance of this god among the Huichol. He was taken to a series of sacred caves near Santa Catarina dedicated to this personage. One was said to be "the birthplace and first home of the God of Fire, a large shallow cavern, called Haino'tega, . . . for a small bird from the coast, which Grandfather Fire used to keep while residing here. . . . on the east of the god, and close to him, were ruins of the ancient stone houses" (p. 165). The Huichol idol Lumholtz saw was "of solidified volcanic ash and more than twelve inches high, . . . facing the door in the middle of the room. . . . Arms and legs were only rudimentarily indicated; but the head was somewhat better in execution" (p. 169).

His description also gives a great deal of insight on how such effigies were treated: "On his right side two tobacco-gourds were suspended from strings passing over his left shoulder, indicating that he, too, was a priest; and a few fresh hikuli had been placed in front of him, on the tuff disc on which he stood. . . . The idol was very dirty and smeared with blood, but on his right side was a hole showing the natural white colour of the material, contrasting strangely with the dusky appearance of the rest of the figure. This hole owes its existence to the belief that the power of healing and the knowledge of mysterious things are acquired by eating a little of the god's holy body. . . . Curing shamans come to visit the place, and, having deposited different kinds of food or hikuli, or, better still, a votive bowl, scrape off with their fingernails particles of the god's body and eat them. Afterwards they must not partake of salt, and must keep apart from their wives for five months" (*ibid.*, pp. 169-170).

Asking an intelligent Huichol why they had so many idols of the God of Fire, Lumholtz was told, "Tatevali, our Grandfather, the God of Fire, is far away from here; you cannot see him; a man would get dizzy if he tried to. It is for this reason that we pray to his images. Every five years we make a new god of fire, because

the old ones are of no further use; and, besides, they often disappear by themselves, if we do not comply with their wishes" (*ibid.*, p. 171; see *illus.*, p. 173).

It is also apparent that among a number of Southwestern Pueblo Indians the Fire God is still a most important personage, appearing in *kachina* form and in many ritualistic observances today. At Nambé, Cochití, Isleta, and Zuñi there is "Fire Old Woman," for example. The deity Masauwü, "The first denizen of Hopi-land, ordinarily god of fire and death, is impersonated as a god of fertility in planting and harvesting ritual. . . . He wears bloody rabbit pelts, and skin molded masklike on his face" (Parsons, 1939, p. 349). The reader will recall, at this point, the masklike appearance of the Pecos effigy's face, as well as the ornamentation over the back of the head (Fig. 1a, b). "Masauwü was the first house builder, and to his underground house journey the dead. Masauwü gave the first people squash, and other vegetables; he is summoned by the farmers. In some obscure way he is the god of fire, perhaps because he walks only at night by firelight, perhaps because offerings to the dead are cast into the fire and Masauwü is the god of death" (*ibid.*, pp. 183-184). A Hopi informant has said regarding the meaning of the Pecos humpbacked idol:⁵ "In order to explain the meaning of this carving, it is necessary to explain that in the beginning of the world all the pueblos came out together. It was the mockingbird that gave them the different languages. That is why the names of these things are different, but this [Pecos effigy] is Masaowuh, a Hopi god. When they came out it was before the Hopi made the moon from a wedding robe or the sun from a buffalo skin. The only light was from the north where four fires were burning. Then they saw someone facing toward the dark. When they came up to him he admitted he was caught. . . . He was the prettiest, handsome man. He wore many necklaces. He knew all kinds of crops, and the four fires kept them growing: corn, beans, melons, . . . any kind of things. In this form he has a round face perfectly slick and shiny like a melon. The shape of his face has the same meaning, melons, pumpkins, and all those crops. On top of his head he has a rabbit ear, which is one of the ways you can tell Masaowuh. His back is full of crops; which is why he is humped."

5. Courtesy of Byron Harvey, III.

From this it is clear that the Hopi believed the Pecos idol to be the God of Fire, who, among his people, is also associated with crop fertility.

Another significant Pueblo fire deity should be noted in relation to the Pecos effigy. This is Shulawitsi, or the Fire-Corn Little Boy. "Zuñi Shulawitsi is a hunter, also a sun or fire god, quite in character with Huichol mythology, and in Huichol character too he is a virgin" (Parsons, 1939, p. 1015). "Fire may be 'tamed' only by a little boy (or girl) too young to have had sexual intercourse. The virginity of the Shulawitsi impersonator is unique in Pueblo circles, and no explanation is available in Zuñi myth. This Fire-Corn little boy of Zuñi, Hopi, Acoma, Laguna, and of Pima and Papago is surely a southerner" (*ibid.*, p. 1015). Noteworthy is the fact that this deity-katsina is also regularly associated with fire, corn, and hunting, for "little fire god Shulawitsi who kindles fires as Hopi lads once did in the antelope drive . . . comes in with a string of rabbits, and carries a fawn-pelt bag" (*ibid.*, p. 758).

Neither is the fire deity concept lacking in the Rio Grande pueblos, according to recent information given the writer by Indian friends. Moreover, "When a Santa Ana man is out hunting, his sister sprinkles prayer-meal on the fire morning and night and prays to Fire Boy. . . . Possibly the hunter's sister was once identified with Mother of Game who among the Hopi is sister to the Fire God" (Parsons, 1939, p. 758, n.). In San Juan Pueblo, further north, "they . . . pray to Fire Boy for a good day when they come out to play" (*ibid.*, p. 912).

Since no sexual characteristics are depicted on the Pecos effigy, it may possibly represent the Fire or Fire-Corn Boy deity. Furthermore, its similarity to the Huichol God of Fire and the image from the Schroeder Site reported by Kelley (and perhaps others in Mexico) is indeed striking.

Neither should the Pecos humpbacked effigy's possible relationship to the Hopi Kokopelli (Kokopölö) or the Tewa Nepokwai'i be overlooked. This is the widespread "Humpbacked Flute Player" deity, of ancient lineage in the aboriginal Southwest. That Kokopelli was considered a powerful being at a remote period in the Pueblo Southwest is demonstrated in numerous petroglyphs, pictographs, pottery effigy vessels, pottery designs, and even mural art

(Brainerd, 1949, pp. 121-24; Kidder and Guernsey, 1919, p. 196; Fewkes in Holmes Anniversary Volume, 1916, Fig. 2, p. 107; Morris, 1919, Fig. 66, a; Renaud, 1948, pp. 25-40; Smith, 1952, Fig. 53, b, and pp. 299-300). He is regularly shown playing a flute and in various erotic poses. In parts of northern New Mexico, however, he sometimes carries a crooked staff. In hunting scenes he is associated with various animals, tracking, or shooting game. Some portrayals, usually grouped, indicate that he may also have been a warrior. In the Galisteo Basin and other parts of north central New Mexico, he plays his flute in the presence of animals, or a maiden or maidens, or he makes love to the latter. It is obvious, therefore, that the humpbacked flute player deity is not only associated with game, hunting, and tracking, but also with fertility, reproduction, and perhaps rainfall. Since a number of these figures in northern New Mexico rock carvings are depicted with animal ears, and since, by the interpretation of Indian informants, the Pecos idol also has animal ears, there may be an association here. In view of the many representations of this deity in a variety of scenes, in northern New Mexico petroglyphs, possibly the Pecos image may also be a portrayal of this humpbacked being.

The humpbacked flute player also appears in pottery decorations (see Fig. 3) and in the form of pottery effigy vessels. Hawley cites instances on Pueblo and Hohokam pottery (1937, pp. 644-646), and Judd at Pueblo Bonito (1954, p. 200; Fig. 50, q). More pertinent, because near Pecos, are Stubbs' examples on Santa Fe Black-on-white sherds from Pindi Pueblo, (1953, Fig. 59, p, q.) and the writer's from Paa-ko, a Santa Fe Black-on-white sherd, and a Glaze I-Red fragment (1954, Fig. 16, d; Fig. 37, a). Since human portrayals of any kind on prehistoric pottery in the northern Rio Grande are exceedingly rare, it is significant that among these a number are of the "Flute Player."

Regarding hunchback effigy vessels from the Puebloan Southwest:

Dr. Morris later found additional figurine fragments at Aztec; one hunchback figurine was restorable (cat. no. 4303, Kiva Q, Court) These figurines all belong to a common type. Those seen by the author are all seated, with flat face, and neck of the vessel rising from the top of the head. Roberts says, "The effigies may be either male or female, but my impression is that representations of males are more frequent. Also I believe that more of them are hunchbacks than otherwise. Kokopelli again?" (Brainerd, 1949, pp. 122-123).



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

*Photos by Laura Gilpin (above)
& Wm. J. Lippincott (below)*

Fig. 3 (above): Pueblo III Mesa Verde Black-on-white bowl depicting Kokopelli, the humpbacked flute player. From Southwestern Colorado. William J. Lippincott Collection.

Fig. 4 (below): hunchbacked danzantes, Monte Albán Ruins, near Oaxaca, Mexico.

Smith illustrates and describes a number found in Jeddito Valley excavations on wall paintings and as pottery designs. A "seated male figure in Room 529, Back Wall Design" is a kiva mural painting (1952, pp. 299-300; Fig. 53, b). Pottery designs (Fig. 17, r and t) show Kokopelli and his female companion, Kokopelmana, on a Sikyatki polychrome bowl (r), and a Jeddito Black-on-yellow vessel (*ibid.*, pp. 220-21). The hump on both male figures is shown as a pick-a-back rider. "Can it be, then, that the hump as usually drawn is a conventionalization of a pick-a-back rider?"—*Ibid.*, p. 300.)

Male humpbacked portrayals also occur in Mexico's archaeological remains. For example, on prehistoric Casas Grandes district pottery effigy vessels,

Of the male figures one squats in a very natural attitude and holds to his mouth some object which he appears to be chewing. The lower part of the back is enlarged into a prominent hump covered by a kind of spiderweb decoration. . . . The figures in the double effigies squat side by side and are connected by hollow bars. Each pair consists of a male and a female. The former bear on their backs distinct humps which suggest the humpbacked erotic figure of Kokopelli (Kidder, 1916, p. 259; Plate III, Fig. 2, 4, and 6).

Further southward, two examples occur at Monte Alban, near Oaxaca. (See Fig. 4.) The significance placed on this deformity in pre-Columbian times is suggested in the following:

. . . enormous stone slabs had been uncovered. . . . Some bore rows of large glyphs and numerals; . . . others were carved in low relief showing eerie, life-size human figures with contorted faces, their deformed nude bodies in extravagant, loose poses that justified their popular name *danzantes*. We grew enthusiastic over the powerful and mysterious archaism of the expressive monsters (Covarrubias, 1946, pp. 175-76; illus., pp. 176-77).

The occupants of Tomb 7 were eight Mixtec chieftains or priests and one woman. The most important personage, to judge from his bones, was a human monster: a hunchback (*ibid.*, p. 180).

As has already been pointed out, the modern Pueblo interpretation of Kokopelli appears to suggest strongly an ancestral affinity with the humpbacked flute player portrayed in rock pictures, kiva mural art, pottery decorations, or effigy vessels. Furthermore, Parsons has stated that "Since Dragon Fly is associated with the game animals, possibly he is to be identified with Hano-Hopi insect kachina Nepokwai'i or Kokopelli, a hunter who seduces girls or makes them bridal moccasins and whose 'hump' is really a gift-containing sack.

His prototype may be represented in the pictographs, shooting mountain sheep" (1939, p. 191, n.).

When Byron Harvey, III, recently showed a photograph of the Pecos humpbacked idol to a Hopi Indian, the latter gave a phallic interpretation: "The hump of Kokopelli represents babies. He is full of them, so that every time he has relations he makes a baby."

The writer also has information from several Rio Grande Pueblo Indian friends. According to one, the effigy is very old and good. It is a type which may still have power.⁶ I was requested not to use the names these Indians gave to the figure, but there is no doubt that its resemblance to both the God of Fire, and to Kokopelli was immediately recognized. One Indian felt sure that the idol was "asked" before the remnants of the Pecos population made their final move to Jémez: "The god was left where he was to protect the pueblo [Pecos] until his people could return. Idols like this are always consulted before we make a journey — they tell us how to go, and they protect us. While we are gone he watches the fires and does not let them go out, and he cooks our meat and food so that we may eat them when we come back. He brings good luck with hunting and planting of our crops. He makes it rain, if we believe in him." It is clear, then, that these Rio Grande Indians recognized this effigy as their God of Fire, and that their interpretation is basically the same as that of the Hopi. Of the hump, one of the informants said, "It is to make babies with." Another Pueblo friend states, "He holds this bag always because it carries many babies and many presents."

One informant said that the head adornment was two animal ears; another said that it was hair, but that rabbit ears were once attached to the head by means of the hole. These interpretations

6. Kidder tells of the rain-making powers of one of his Pecos idols (Fig. 62, 1932) that he had mended in the field: "as there was a big drought that summer I put some butter on his face and burned some tobacco in front of him hoping that it might do some good. And it did! We had a cloudburst the next day. I told some visitor from Santa Fe about it and he told ----- of the *New Mexican*, and he of course published it on the front page. I got letters from all over New Mexico offering me all kinds of transportation and rewards per inch of rain if I would bring him over. So maybe you might have done some good for yourself by publicizing 'Little Jo'" (personal communication, Jan. 25, 1957). "Little Jo" is our nickname for the Pecos humpbacked effigy.

are interesting in connection with the many petroglyphs of north central New Mexico showing the humpbacked figure with animal ears, or long ear-like appendages attached to their heads.

It was also made clear by my informants that stone effigies are still used in both the Rio Grande and western pueblos, though how extensively we cannot say at this time. Some are "people who turned into a stone a long, long time ago." Among them some are "fed" daily. Two informants said, "The Pecos stone carving has always been a god (or priest). This is because he wears a mask. You cannot see his face, and by this you can tell that he was never of this earth."

SUMMARY

The Pecos humpbacked effigy, with its remarkable head ornamentation, is unique among the relatively scarce Southwestern stone anthropomorphs known to the writer.

Kidder's assumption that such stone images were in use for a long period of time is undoubtedly correct. Although this image was found in a post-Spanish period South House room, it may easily be of archaeological origin. Perhaps it was brought to Pecos when the original inhabitants first settled here.

Its resemblance to the Huichol Fire God stone effigies, the Schroeder Site stone anthropomorph, and others in Mexico is significant. However, the lack of overtly-portrayed sex characteristics may indicate that it is actually that of the deity Fire Boy, or Fire-Corn Little Boy, whose virginity is stressed by a number of Southwestern pueblos, as well as by the Huichol of Mexico. Again, if the hump may be interpreted as the manifest fertility symbol, then this image may be a prehistoric Pecos Indian's conception of an adult Fire God. In any event, the Fire God concept, certainly of archaeological origin in Mexico, appears to have spread into the Pueblo Southwest from the south, from peoples already imbued with a stone effigy tradition.

Is the Pecos humpbacked image another link in the chain of evidence pointing to the prehistoric "humpbacked flute player" as the ancestor of modern Kokopelli and his Tewa counterpart, Nepokwai'i? There is a definite affinity, in view of his numerous

prehistoric portrayals on the cliffs and rocks of northern New Mexico and other areas in the Southwest. Additional evidence is also to be noted in Southwestern pueblo kiva mural art, pottery effigy vessels, and ceramic decorations, all of which are prehistoric.

Is this image nothing more than the portrayal of a physically deformed human being? For centuries, all over the world, dwarfism, as well as many other types of human bodily malformation, have been depicted in various ways by artists. Nevertheless, I feel that the renowned Monte Alban *danzantes*, so grotesquely executed, had some special meaning for the Indians who carved them, like the human monster they so carefully placed in one of their tombs. It is only remotely possible that the little Pecos effigy is not a deity, but is rather some ancient artist's conception of a malformed man. Besides, it should be remembered that the fact that the Pecos anthropomorph was found in a niche, near a hearth, would appear to indicate an active "idol" usage, or enshrinement. At the present, the strongest evidence is that this is the God of Fire. Whether it is this deity, or Fire Boy, or Kokopelli (Nepokwai'i), the meaning of the hump, as given by Indian informants, is indeed interesting. It was variously stated that the hump was a gift or carrying-sack, or, on the other hand, a fecundity pouch; "In this he carries squash, melons, etc.; or, the hump means babies: every time he has relations, he makes a baby." Recent Pueblo interpretation of the hump on the Fire God, then, is in general associated with fertility and abundance, whether of crops, game, or human fecundity. The same general meaning is applied to Kokopelli's hump, and it appears to be of archæological origin. Attributes these two deific personages shared apparently concerned human well-being.

Ornamentation of the top and back of the head of the Pecos idol, whether intended as hair, rabbit ears, or tumpline to hold the "sack," is unique in stone figurine embellishment among Southwestern examples known to this writer.

Both archæological and ethnological evidence point strongly toward a definite Mexican antecedent for this and perhaps many other Southwestern stone anthropomorphs including the Fire God, related deities, and perhaps the Humpbacked Flute Player.

It may be that in a remote period of Southwestern prehistory there were only one or two recognized deities, and that the pantheon

increased as the Pueblo culture became more complex. The God of Fire and the Humpbacked Flute Player could very well be the oldest in concept among Southwestern archæological supernaturals. It is also important to remember that stone anthropomorphs are still in use in a number of pueblos. Their magical powers are still recognized, particularly with reference to rainfall, and crop and human fertility. It is obvious that stone effigies generally deserve further study and analysis. The writer hopes that readers of this paper will bring to her attention all pertinent information.

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