

MUSEUM NEWS

Archaeological Discovery

A unique sacred image—the first of its kind ever to be unearthed—which was of key importance in the religious ceremonies of Pueblo Indians living in Arizona between 1250 and 1350 A.D., has just been discovered by Chicago Natural History Museum's Southwest Archaeological Expedition under the direction of *Paul S. Martin*, Chief Curator of Anthropology.



This is a copy, made on the site, of the sacred stone image found in a secret crypt of a rectangular kiva being excavated by Dr. Paul Martin in Arizona. The kiva was used by Pueblo Indians living about 1250-1350 A.D. The right arm of the image, which was found broken off, has been restored in the model.

Dr. Martin reports that the stone image, very probably a katchina, was found in a secret crypt within one of the largest rectangular kivas, or religious ceremonial chambers, ever excavated in the Southwest.

"This may well be one of the important discoveries of the 20th Century in Southwestern archaeology," Dr. Martin writes from the site of the excavations near Vernon, Arizona. "To my knowledge no one has ever before found a katchina of either wood or stone in a kiva. As far as I can determine, the image is unique."

Present-day Hopi Indians carve wooden katchina figures to represent various

deities, and use them in the religious education of their children. But while the figures are more than playthings, they are not, in themselves, sacred. However, masks and other paraphernalia used by men who impersonate the katchina deities are extremely sacred and are stored in kivas when not in use. The fact that the stone image was hidden in a secret masonry vault within an unusually large kiva suggests that this image possessed god-like sacredness and power in its own right.

The three-dimensional sacred image, nine inches high, is carved in sandstone and painted with gay colors—black, orange, green, blue. The right arm is broken off and was not found in the crypt—perhaps indicating that it was broken intentionally in order to curtail the powers of the katchina when the Indians using the kiva moved away from the pueblo. With the image in the foot-square stone vault was a tiny jar painted in red and black crosses, and containing a few beads of stone, shell, jet, and turquoise. "These two objects," continues Dr. Martin, "the stone figure and the little jar, were probably of indescribable sanctity."

The crypt in which the religious objects were found appears to duplicate on a small scale the architecture of the great kiva itself. It has been suggested that the crypt may have symbolized the entrance to the underworld—in the religious belief of the Hopi Indians, it was through such a passage that their ancestors emerged into the world from their place of origin in the underworld. Thus the stone figure may be related to underworld ceremonies that are still a part of the religion of the Hopi people today. Other preliminary interpretations place the unique stone katchina figure as an ancestral cult deity. "We expect," reports Dr. Martin, "that further research will reveal more of the full import and significance of this sacred object, which has remained mute and buried in its secret crypt for the past six or seven centuries."

This is the fifth season in which Dr. Martin has conducted archaeological

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THIS MONTH'S COVER

September—and it's summer's end. But while the livin's still easy, these youngsters are making the most of it. They linger at will before their favorite exhibits, knowing that in a few weeks their teachers will be bringing them back to the Museum to absorb more formal learning from the well-organized school programs planned by the Museum's educational division, the Raymond Foundation. Altogether, more than 400,000 children visited Chicago Natural History Museum last year. Of these, 206,583 came in organized school groups. About 78,000 students, or more than 2,000 groups, were given programs and tours by the Raymond Foundation. Many other students found that Soundtrek, the Museum's radio guide system, provided them—and their teachers—with an excellent educational tour of the Museum's major exhibits.

work at the site near Vernon, Arizona.
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