



Book of the Hopi

Frank Waters , Oswald White Bear Frederick (Illustrator) , Frederica H. Howell (Foreword)

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In this "strange and wonderful book," some thirty elders of the ancient Hopi tribe of Northern Arizona freely reveal for the first time in written form the Hopi world-view of life. The Hopis have kept this view a secret for countless generations, and this book was made possible only as a result of their desire to record for future generations the principles of their "Road of Life." The breaking of the Hopi silence is significant and fascinating because for the first time anthropologists, ethnologists, and everyone interested in the field of Indian study have been given rich material showing the Hopi legends, the meaning of their religious rituals and ceremonies, and the beauty of a conception of life within the natural world that is completely untouched by materialistic worlds.

"Only a person as deeply steeped in Hopi mysticism as the Hopis themselves could have produced this volume. Mr. Waters and Mr. Fredericks have approached the task of combining Hopi art, history, tradition, myth, folklore, and ceremonialism with dignity and authority....Deserves to be part of the library of any student of the American Southwest." --*American Anthropologist*

Book of the Hopi Details

Date : Published June 30th 1977 by Penguin Books (first published January 1st 1963)

ISBN : 9780140045277

Author : Frank Waters , Oswald White Bear Frederick (Illustrator) , Frederica H. Howell (Foreword)

Format : Paperback 345 pages

Genre : History, Nonfiction, Religion, Anthropology, Spirituality

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Valorie says

Holy cow this book is fascinating. The Hopi have such interesting legends like how the earth was destroyed three times. Once by volcanoes, once by a flood, and once by an ice age. Also their creation story is pretty cool. But some of the things I loved the most were how they say that the creator had to destroy the earth because people would get really selfish and also they would start misusing their "powers of creation". Wow so true. Also their god led them to their land that they have now because is kind of harsh and not too easy to live on so they wont become lazy and selfish. They have to work too hard just to survive. Definately worth the effort to read.

Giorgio Comel says

true and sad account of what magnificent culture is lost forever. the Hopi, the first Americans.

Robert Hann says

Even the briefest glimpse of another way of navigating the human experience can illuminate one's own being. Because of that, I found this book to be worthwhile. I valued the exposure to one author's synthesis of the Hopi way of life. There were moments not of transcendence, but of understanding and admiration. 'The Legends' and 'The History' parts are chock-full of examples. However, there were also some head-scratching moments (e.g., unjustifiably moving from theorizing about the Mesa Verde 'Spruce Tree House' in one part to referring to this theory as fact in another part, and some of the period-specific references to 'WWIII').

I also really appreciated the structure of the text. I found the choice to start with their origin story, then explore their legends, before moving on to the ceremonial structure of their year, all before any kind of discussion of their 'history' in the academic sense of the word, to be a distinctive, sensitive, and very effective way of learning about the Hopi. It was a kind of inside-out approach for my kind of mind, and I liked that very much. This despite the fact that, for large portions of the ceremonial catalogue, I admit to reading only very lightly. Partly because it felt something like cultural voyeurism, and partly because it was not captivating reading. Treating the academic history of the Hopi as a (powerful) post script to their story and 'world-view' highlighted the inherent beauty and humanity of the information above all else, and that seemed in itself a very Hopi thing to do.

Tom says

It is easy to get lost in the detailed descriptions of the overwhelming number of symbols and spirits that form the basis of the Hopi culture that Frank Waters lays out. It is a monumental effort and much too rich to read in a month or two. In my opinion this research takes more of a life long commitment to read and understand. This is my second time through the book and it is just as fascinating as my previous effort. A very complex culture indeed.

Velvetink says

I read this as a teenager, and the world view of the Hopi's affected me deeply enough at the time to consider running away from home. It was probably one of the major catalyst's to me to think about other cultures in a way that wasn't presented to us in the western world at the time via the media. (which was typically racist and demeaning).

Rae says

A classic title dealing with native American religion. I've worked my way through it two or three times over the years. Don't know why it wasn't on my list of books read.

An amazing read -- one to be savored and thought about rather than sped through.

Chante says

This book is a long account of the history of the Hopi. I thought it was pretty boring and hard to read. not a fun book at all.

Eric says

Fascinating research on Hopi belief, history, and tradition. I read this book to prepare for a trip to northern Arizona and found this additional context to be useful in getting more out of visits to pueblos and heritage sites. I now feel more informed and sensitive to Native Americans living in the US and for that I am grateful.

For the most part the book is at a good level for a reader with no existing knowledge of the Hopi, but at times I felt like it lacked explanation for some of the terms used. I also felt that the chapter about the ceremonies and dances was too detailed for my interest level; I skipped this chapter. However, I did learn a lot from the chapters devoted to explaining the creation myths, clans, and recent history, especially in relation to the US. The pictures and illustrations were also a key inclusion -- I'd insist on a print copy over a digital copy in order to help flip back and forth between the illustration and the explanation as the annotations on the illustrations themselves are limited.

Erin Moore says

The testimonial on the back of this edition proclaims "deserves to be part of the library of any student of the American Southwest", which I find to be very short-sighted on the part of the reviewer.

This book is not just an origin myth of an indigenous people. It proclaims the history of the Americas and a

history of a pre-historic people, and, if one wants, a geological history of the world. Any anthropologist, geologist, or sociologist needs to study what this book has to tell us about our origins.

The detail of the Hopi migrations, the explanations of the worlds destroyed by fire, ice, and then water, are fascinating in what they reveal. Though most anthropologists do not believe that an oral history of the past 30,000 years (pre-history) could possibly exist, it seems that it does for the Hopi, and if I had a Ph.D. candidacy to fight for, this would definitely be my subject of choice.

But is also much more than a history (though that was, for me, the most fascinating part): it is an explanation of Hopi ceremonies and dances. Mr. Waters details a pathway to the sacred, if one is so inclined to follow it. I only wonder how much more was left unrevealed - the various secret societies are only briefly mentioned, and their ceremonies still shrouded.

I was left feeling saddened and hopeful after reading this book: saddened (once again) about the treatment of all of the people that the Europeans found here, but also hopeful that the Hopi revelations tell of a path to the next world that we all may find. (though our own may be destroyed in the process...)

I don't even know for whom to recommend this book, but I would start with history buffs, enlightenment seekers, and those who are open to life. Wondrous and full of new ideas, the love and concern of the author and his collaborators in writing this comes through on every page.

B.atz says

In the beginning Taiowa created his Nephew to lay out the the universes in proper order. And so begins Frank Waters' book of the Hopi.

Fully a third of the book is dedicated to telling the lore of this tribe, and through the saga you learn of a tradition that explains why this small group of people have been living in the same area for a millenia. As Waters moves to discussing recorded history and the shameful exploitation of a people by the American Government, you discover how unique and special it is that they are still there. How they have avoided the attempts to change their religion by those of other faiths. How they have refused the good graces of the American Government's attempts to 'normalize' their society. And here they remain, living what the rest of us on the continent wold consider to be a sustenance existence as they have for almost a thousand years.

This is an easy-flowing readable social history, and it's well worth the time. Though Waters' book you'll gain an understanding of how these principled people have continued in this area as they have for centuries. I only wish there was a supplement to cover these last few decades as the book was written in the early 1960's, and I can't figure out why he would not include an index. But ... again, well worth the time.

Eugene Miya says

Based on a friend's recommendation.

My problem with the book (it's an OK read) is that it's a period book of the 1960s without trying to be. It's automatic declaration of WWII. It has some decent recommendations about their relation with the

neighboring Navajo (seen in a more nomadic less positive life and a little arrogant (they might say the same about the Hopi)).

Covers the 3 Mesas (been there), and the 4 directions. The photos were taken before the extensive photo-prohibition (can't say that I blame them).

I will reread and annotate this book a 2nd time, because said friend was really into their view of time (compared to Piaget). I have sympathy, but it needs an update.

Must now read the Book of the Navajo which I also picked up in Sedona.

Jennifer says

As a document of the spiritual beliefs, history and prophecies of the Hopi people, this book is very important. However, much of it is very confusing and barely readable; it took me several years to get through it. The last few chapters about the history and the prophesies are interesting, and those I recommend.

Bk says

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Reiden says

It was fascinating to read about the culture and history of a people who have lived in North America long before Europeans came on the scene. The first part of the book which went over all the ceremonies and traditions took a while for me to read but when I got to the the history of the people (towards the end), all the previous reading became relevant. A lot of times Native people are all lumped together as one race. This book brought to light the uniqueness that one particular tribe has as it described the politics between the Hopis and the other surrounding Pueblos & Navajo people. The Hopis, unlike many other tribes held fast to

their pacifist beliefs even at the cost of seeing their culture become slowly encroached upon by people who did not understand or respect them. My hope as I read this book was that in the time that has lapsed between when it was written and present day, there has been action taken to preserve the sacred ways of these great people.

Noah Vickstein says

I haven't finished the book but read most of it 3 or so years ago. It's unlikely I will ever receive it back from the person who borrowed it, so I may never finish it.

I was in the perfect state of mind for this book to be meaningful. I was living near the four corners area so the landscape of the surrounding environs I knew were pointedly relevant.

I'm not sure what else to say but I've encountered a lot of people it would seem who are resistant to the idea that there was anything special about our native brethren. To them I would suggest a close study of this book, among others. The cosmology might seem 'primitive'--but many of the ideas I encountered in the text struck me as on a level more profound than might appear to the casual observer.

I am grateful this book was written. I know some people might accuse it of harboring a Western bias, but the bias is, I think, necessary. It's a gateway tome to the world of alternate cosmology.
