



Issue Number 22

THANKSGIVING DAY IN HOPI LAND

"Thanksgiving Day is one of the occasions to which I look forward," said one Hopi elder, "because it is the day when the whole family comes together. After stuffing ourselves with turkey, pumpkin pies and other goodies, we sit back and review the history of our ancestors and cover other subjects we think are important to pass down from generation to generation."

"Maybe other friends and relatives whom we seldom see, will be dropping by from towns and cities away from Hopi land, wishing us good health. They are usually carrying in or towing new additions to the family. The children are mischievous, but even so I love them and pat them. When trouble arises among them taming them can be useless because they cannot understand my loving words to them in Hopi. I then remember and pity them for losing their original language before their time. I scold the mothers to use more Hopi language while their children are growing so we can communicate. Well, I say to myself, our ancient ancestors are right -- the time will change."

This is the Bahanna way of celebrating Thanksgiving. Hopis do observe Thanksgiving, but not by feasting on turkey or pumpkin pies.

First, let us go back to the question of how the tradition of Thanksgiving Day originated. It seems no one has an absolute answer. Versions we have learned from books or were taught by Bahanna teachers say that the Indians and Pilgrims (a group of white religious people who landed at Plymouth Rock) feasted together to thank the gods for the food they ate. One version is that this feast in actuality was a going away party for the Pilgrims given by the Indians, because they were ready to return to their own land due to hardships, starvation, sickness and deaths. After the feast the Pilgrims realized the Indians had more food stored than they had thought so they never left. There are still other versions, but let us add our own.

Our version is more a story based on prophecy, one so long that it would take many pages to relate. Here we shall briefly outline the tale for you to judge. As remembered by our wise men the so-called "Turkey Feast" landing of Pilgrims on this continent was a fulfillment of a prophecy for Bahanna (white men) to come. In this case great care and caution must be taken by the Indians according to the Great Spirit's instructions. Tests must be taken to screen out the bad from the good. Are the newcomers in proper order to be accepted by the native people of the land so that they may settle?

Somehow the Pilgrims must have passed some of the tests. Mainly they were not warlike. They were well mannered and strongly religious in their duties to the Great Spirit and the unseen. Their beliefs appeared closely related to the native religion. The natives would readily accept them but only one thing was lacking. They never asked permission to settle upon the land.

So at the end of four years, perhaps four months or four days as is customary in mystic counting, the command was given for the Pilgrims to leave.

Perhaps they then met in council and resolved the misunderstanding and were accepted to settle permanently but not before a resolution was made and sealed with the blood of both parties.

Vows were made, that settlers will obey the Natural Laws of the land. That they would not in any way hinder the way of life of the natives, and not extend beyond the boundaries of the land given them to use into land not given to them. So someone is right that actually the Pilgrims celebrated to give thanks for the land in which they were allowed to settle. Partly the celebration may have been to give thanks for the turkeys, corn and pumpkin which the natives threw in which completes the origin of Thanksgiving Day.

Of course we have no written documents to prove that this is true, it is possible Bahanna may have the documents, but no doubt glorifying the event in order to cover up their wrong doings. This could be the first broken treaty, this much we know.

We know that most Indian tribes have some form of celebrating the Thanksgiving day

with dances and feasts in traditional ways to give thanks for abundant harvest. Hopi have our own way of Thanksgiving during this time of the year based on ancient concepts. Hopi believe all life on our earth lives and goes by life cycles; therefore all must rest and renew for the coming cycle. Whatever it may bring, either good or bad, in some part rests on man's behavior.



Hopi women and girls, Mishongnovi, 1898

This life cycle is also known as the ceremonial cycle. An ending and beginning, or an ending of a time and a new life. When this cycle ends we give thanks to our guiding spirits and Mother Earth for their care. We give thanks for our health and nourishment, for completing the cycle with all life and we pray and ask for the same during the coming new cycle. We often hear our Grandmothers and Grandfathers saying, "Thank you. Thank you, my guiding spirit for the care in making it possible for me to complete this cycle. I wish to be here next year." This Thanksgiving is not only for ourselves, it includes all life. We must all keep strong and pray that we all reach the end of this years cycle with good health and peace. Happy Thanksgiving.

VISITOR FROM U.N.

During August we had a dignitary visit from the United Nations. Techqua Ikachi was honored to have him and his wife in our home. They witnessed the Snake Dance in Second Mesa. During their two day visit they met and talked with the Traditional Leaders in Second Mesa village and Hotevilla village. They were very impressed by village life and with the farming methods.

The enclosed statement we sent to the U.S. Assembly to be read or presented before the

General Assembly of the United Nations.

In October, Hotevilla Hopi made a trip to Frankfurt, Germany where a Spiritual gathering was held to present their statement and to meet with the Dalai Lama of Tibet to compare knowledge.

There is still pressure from the B.I.A. and the Tribal Council to modernize Hotevilla Village.

We have had a good corn harvest this year. The crows and blue birds which destroy the crops suddenly vanished. Only a few can be seen now and then. We wonder why?

Because of tight money everywhere these days Techqua Ikachi will do its best to stay alive. Please be patient, we will make our best effort to bring you our message whenever enough funds are available. Thank you and good day.



*The shield symbol with its four circles in four quadrants means:
“Together with all nations we protect both land and life, and hold the world in balance.”*
