

PUEBLO OF ZUNI

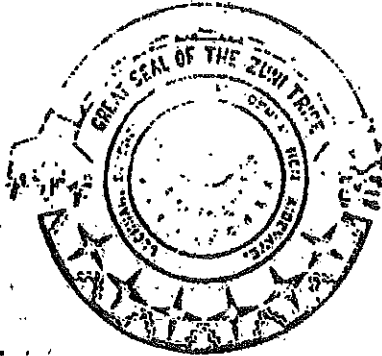
P. O. BOX 339
ZUNI, NEW MEXICO 87327

EDUARDI AGUILAR
Governor

OSWALDO TORRES
Li Governor

QUINTO VALENTE
Head Councilman

VIRGIN WYICO
Councilman



FRED BOYD
Councilman

CHESTNUT
Councilman

LOWELL
Councilman

CHAUNCEY SAMPOLICIO
Councilman

In reply refer to:

Religious Leaders
c/o Alonzo Hustito

9 October 1978

Mr. John L. Marion, Chairman
Sotheby Parke-Bernet, Inc.
980 Madison Avenue
New York, New York 10021

Greetings:

We write to you as the religious leaders of the Pueblo of Zuni. We are hurt and distressed by your offering for sale one of our Ahayu:da, a sacred War God. This Ahayu:da is listed as item #126 in your catalog for the auction to be held in New York City on October 26, 1978. Your actions indicate you do not understand the true nature and reality of the Ahayu:da you have in your possession, and we are obligated to thus educate you and to request your assistance in seeking the return of this stolen War God to its shrine/home.

To understand Ahayu:da you first need to understand a little of the history of our people. For the last 600 years our people have dwelled in the Middle Place, the pueblo village known today as Zuni. Before we found the midmost place, the center of the universe, we spent a period of time after the creation of this world wandering about. During this time of moving from place to place, we sometimes met with hostility from neighboring peoples which required military action. During one of these times of war, when our people were in need of new war chiefs, our Sun Father caused to be created Uyuyewi and Ma'a'sewi, Elder and Younger Brothers - the Ahayu:da or Gods of War. These twin War Gods, through their great destructive powers, helped our people overcome all obstacles as we sought and found the Middle Place. The Ahayu:da today serve to protect our village and our world.

The powers of the Ahayu:da are vast and destructive. Prayers, blessings, and supplications are needed in times of peace to channel these destructive powers into positive ends to protect and ensure the order, harmony, productivity, fertility, and all other good things our religion is responsible for creating and maintaining. The responsibility for these prayers, blessings, and supplications is vested in the Anshe:kwe (Bear Clan), the Shokwida:kwe (Deer Clan), and the Bi'la:shiwani (Priests of the Bow). As priests and religious leaders, we assume our awesome responsibility for the Ahayu:da only after years of rigorous and intensive preparation and training. We carry out our responsibilities with dedication and seriousness.

Each year the image of Uyuyewi (Elder Brother God of War) is created anew by the Shokwida:kwe, while the image of Ma'a'sewi (Younger Brother God of War) is created anew by the Anshe:kwe. War God images are also created when a new Bi'la:shiwani (Bow Priest) is initiated. The Bi'la:shiwani are charged with the responsibility of carrying the Ahayu:da to their proper shrine/homes, whose locations around the Zuni lands were determined in ancient times. The creation of the Ahayu:da, and their placement by the Bow Priests, is done throughout with prayers and supplications so that the great destructive powers they embody can be used to benefit us all, and protect the world.

The Ahayu:da are created only through the cooperation and combined efforts of many religious leaders from many different groups. The Ahayu:da are not "owned" by any one individual, and no one individual or group of individuals has the right, power, or authority to give away or sell the Ahayu:da. The War God images which embody the Ahayu:da belong to the whole tribe; insomuch as they are property at all, they are communal property. Thus all Ahayu:da which have been removed from their shrine/homes have been stolen.

For a hundred years and more we have watched outsiders come to Zuni land and steal, or induce our own people to steal for them, the Ahayu:da and other sacred religious objects. In recent years, these thefts have increased so much that we can no longer stand by without taking action.

The Ahayu:da we place at our shrines are meant to stay there. When a new War God is placed out to protect our lives and land, the old one it replaces is placed with all the other Ahayu:da at that shrine. Even though these Ahayu:da are replaced they retain the same powers bestowed upon them by prayer when they were created. The Ahayu:da always retain their effectiveness. Many people have mistakenly believed that old

War God images were discarded. This is not so; they are purposely placed together and retained at each shrine so that their destructive powers can be controlled by prayer to influence the world in beneficial ways.

When these Ahayu:da are stolen from their shrine/homes, and are removed from Zuni lands, their destructive powers are unleashed and act on the world in frightful and harmful ways. The twin brother Gods of War are mischievous, and without our prayers and supplications, they act to cause wanton destruction and mayhem. Many of the wars, military conflicts, fires, earthquakes, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, and other violent destructions which afflict our world can be directly attributed to the unleashed powers of the Ahayu:da which have been removed from Zuni lands. These things affect everyone in the world, and therefore are of great concern to us. We pray for everyone so that they can live with goodness and peace. Unless the Ahayu:da are in their shrine/homes, we cannot control them and they cannot act as our guardians. Therefore, it is essential that all Ahayu:da be returned to their shrine/homes.

It distresses us greatly that you are offering for sale a stolen Ahayu:da. It is demeaning to the Ahayu:da and offensive to us that you would place a crass material and monetary value on so priceless a religious being. It is further distressing to us that the placing of monetary value on our sacred religious objects by their sale and auction leads directly to more thefts of these items. By buying or selling these religious objects you encourage theft and provide a marketplace for stolen objects. The psychological and physical damage this does to the Zuni people, and to the world we share with you, should weigh heavy on your conscience.

For these reasons, we request that you remove from sale the Ahayu:da you have in your possession. We also request that you identify the California person who is offering the Ahayu:da for sale; and that you help contact this person to assist the Pueblo of Zuni in securing its return. Furthermore, we ask that you consider the enclosed resolution of the Zuni Tribal Council dated October 5, 1978, and the documents attached to that resolution. Finally, we ask that you establish policies for your auction house that will not encourage the theft of sacred Zuni religious objects, and that will deter their sale or transfer on the commercial art market.

Ms. Dynde Andrews, Esq., and Mr. James A. Stark, Esq., with the firm of Schulte and McGolderick, 460 Park Avenue, New York, New York, (telephone 212/758-0404), have been authorized to negotiate on behalf of the tribe to achieve the ob-

jectives set out in this letter. However, should you wish to contact us directly, arrangements to do so can be made through the Zuni Tribal Archaeologist, Mr. T.J. Ferguson, (505/782-4814).

The matters discussed in this letter are of importance to us all, and we respectfully ask that you consider them fully and deeply.

Sincerely,

Allen Kallestewa
Mr. Allen Kallestewa
Deer Clan
(Shokwida:kwe)

Alonso Hustito
Mr. Alonzo Hustito
Bear Clan
(Anshe:kwe)

Victor Niha
Mr. Victor Niha
Bow Priest
(Bi'Ya:shiwani)

Juan Qualo Jr.
Mr. Juan Qualo
Bow Priest
(Bi'Ya:shiwani)

Blair Amosoli
Mr. Blair Amosoli
Bow Priest
(Bi'Ya:shiwani)

Mike Keekela
Mr. Mike Keekela
Bow Priest
(Bi'Ya:shiwani)

Dextra Cellicion
Mr. Dextra Cellicion
Bow Priest
(Bi'Ya:shiwani)

Perry Tsadiasi
Mr. Perry Tsadiasi
Bow Priest
(Bi'Ya:shiwani)