

little of the white and yellow; the blue and the black lasted most of the time. As yet there was neither sun, moon, nor star.

When they arrived on the surface of the fourth world they saw no living thing; but they observed four great snow-covered peaks sticking up at the horizon, — one at the east, one at the south, one at the west, and one at the north.

They sent two couriers to the east. These returned at the end of two days. They related that they had not been able to reach the eastern mountain, and that, though they had travelled far, they had seen no track or trail or sign of life. Two couriers were then sent to the south. When they returned, at the end of two days, they related that they had reached a low range of mountains this side of the great peak; that they had seen no living creature, but had seen two different kinds of tracks, such as they had never seen before, and they described such as the deer and the turkey make now. Two couriers were next sent to the west. In two days these returned, having failed to reach the great peak in the west, and having seen no living thing and no sign of life. At last two couriers were sent to the north. When these got back to their kindred they said they had found a race of strange men, who cut their hair square in front, who lived in houses in the ground and cultivated fields. These people, who were engaged in gathering their harvest, the couriers said, treated them very kindly and gave them food to eat. It was now evident to the wanderers that the fourth world was larger than any of the worlds below.

The day following the return of the couriers who went to the north, two of the newly discovered race — Kisáni (Pueblos) they were called — entered the camp of the exiles and guided the latter to a stream of water. The water was red, and the Kisáni told the wanderers they must not walk through the stream, for if they did the water would injure their feet. The Kisáni showed them a square raft made of four logs, — a white pine, a blue spruce, and yellow pine, and a black spruce, — on which they might cross; so they went over the stream and visited the homes of the Kisáni.

The Kisáni gave the wanderers corn and pumpkins to eat, and the latter lived for some time on the food given to them daily by their new friends. They held a council among themselves, in which they resolved to mend their manners for the future and do nothing to make the Kisáni angry. The land of the Kisáni had neither rain nor snow; the crops were raised by irrigation.

Late in the autumn they heard in the east the distant sound of a great voice calling. They listened and waited, and soon heard the voice nearer and louder. They listened still and heard the voice a third time, nearer and louder than before. Once more they listened, and soon they heard the voice louder still, and clear like the voice of one near at hand. A moment later four mysterious beings appeared to them. These were: Bītsís Lakaí, or White Body, a being like the god of this world whom the Navajoes call *Hastséyaltí*; Bītsís Dołí'z, or Blue Body, who was like the present Navajo god *Tó'neníli*, or Water Sprinkler; Bītsís Lítsóí, or Yellow Body; and Bītsís Lízí'n, or Black Body, who was the same as the present Navajo god of fire, *Hastséžíni*.

These beings, without speaking, made many signs to the people, as if instructing them; but the latter did not understand them. When the gods had gone, the people long discussed the mysterious visit, and tried to make out what the gods meant by the signs they had made. Thus the gods visited four days in succession. On the fourth day, when

the other three had departed, Black Body remained behind and spoke to the people in their own language. He said: "You do not seem to understand the signs that these gods make you, so I must tell you what they mean. They want to make more people, but in form like themselves. You have bodies like theirs; but you have the teeth, the feet, and the claws of beasts and insects. The new creatures are to have hands and feet like ours. But you are uncleanly, you smell badly. Have yourselves well cleansed when we return; we will come back in twelve days."

On the morning of the twelfth day the people washed themselves well. The women dried themselves with yellow corn-meal; the men with white corn-meal.³ Soon after the ablutions were completed they heard the distant call of the approaching gods. It was shouted, as before, four times, — nearer and louder at each repetition, — and, after the fourth call, the gods appeared. Blue Body and Black Body each carried a sacred buckskin. White Body carried two ears of corn, one yellow, one white, each covered at the end completely with grains.

The gods laid one buckskin on the ground with the head to the west; on this they placed the two ears of corn, with their tips to the east, and over the corn they spread the other buckskin with its head to the east; under the white ear they put the feather of a white eagle, under the yellow ear the feather of a yellow eagle. Then they told the people to stand at a distance and allow the wind to enter. The white wind blew from the east, and the yellow wind blew from the west, between the skins. While the wind was blowing, eight of the Mirage People came and walked around the objects on the ground four times, and as they walked the eagle feathers, whose tips protruded from between the buckskins, were seen to move. When the Mirage People had finished their walk the upper buckskin was lifted, — the ears of corn had disappeared; a man and a woman lay there in their stead.

The white ear of corn had been changed into a man, the yellow ear into a woman. It was the wind that gave them life. It is the wind that comes out of our mouths now that gives us life. When this ceases to blow we die. In the skin at the tips of our fingers we see the trail of the wind; it shows us where the wind blew when our ancestors were created.

The pair thus created were First Man and First Woman (*Atsé Hastín* and *Atsé Estsán*).

[1897]

3. The women . . . white corn-meal: Yellow corn belongs to the female, white corn to the male. This rule is observed in all Navajo ceremonies and is mentioned in many Navajo myths. [Matthews's note]

Hupa

The Hupa (or Hoopa, as the name is sometimes spelled today) and their neighbors the Yurok and the Karuk long ago established themselves in what is now northwestern California. (Tests have determined that a fire pit on the Hupa lands dates to more than seven thousand years ago.) The Hupa lived in small villages of cedar-plank houses with small round doorways

of the Hupa, *Ta'k'imilding*, has been chosen by the *k'ixtnay* for the role of initiating the ceremonial dances, which are still performed in the Hoopa Valley. This version of the story is a translation by Victor Golla of a recording made in 1963 of an oral narration by Minnie Reeves (1880-1972). "Minnie Reeves's telling of this sacred story was appropriately solemn and serious," Golla observes. "Although her version was abbreviated and broken here and there by a hesitation and a groping for words, it was clear that she was reciting well-known lines and phrases – a sacred text in the most real sense." The text is taken from *Surviving through the Days: A California Indian Reader*, edited by Herbert W. Luthin (2002).

THE BOY WHO GREW UP AT TA'K'IMILDING

There once was a boy who grew up at Ta'k'imilding – born into the Big House there. He did nothing but sing all the time. He would always be singing. He was a good boy and did what he was told, but he would stay there in the Big House at Ta'k'imilding, singing all day long.

One day his mother went down to the river to fetch water, leaving the boy singing in the house. She dipped up some water, and was on her way back up to the house when a sound stopped her. It sounded like someone was singing inside a cloud that hovered over her house. She put her water basket down and listened. She could hear it clearly: Someone was singing there inside the hovering cloud. After a while the cloud lifted up into the air. She could still hear the singing. Eventually it vanished into the sky.

She went on back to the house. When she went inside, the boy was gone. It was clear that he had gone off inside the hovering cloud.

When her husband returned from hunting she told him what had happened. They had loved him very much, and they cried and cried.

A long time passed and there was no sign of the boy. Then, one day, many years later, the man went up the hill to hunt. After hunting for a while he got tired and decided to rest under a big tan oak. As he sat there smoking his pipe he was suddenly aware of a young man walking toward him out of the forest. Looking more closely he saw that it was the boy, now grown up. He leapt to his feet and ran to embrace his son.

"Stop there, Father! Don't come toward me," the young man said. "Don't try to touch me. I can't bear the scent of human beings anymore."
Then he continued, "The only reason I have come back is to tell people the way things should be done in the future. When I went off to Heaven in that cloud, I found them dancing there, dancing without ever stopping, dancing the whole day long.
"And that is why I have returned – why you see me now. I have come to tell you about the dances. I am here to tell you the ways they should be danced, and the places where they should happen.

on the banks of the Trinity River. They fished for the plentiful salmon in the river, gathered acorns and berries, and hunted small game. They were also skilled at crafts. Men practiced woodworking, while women fashioned distinctive bowl-shaped hats and baskets. For centuries, the Hupa were largely unknown to European explorers and settlers. Following the discovery of gold in California in 1848, however, miners and settlers moved onto Hupa lands, causing serious disruption to their way of life. In 1864, they were resettled on the Hoopa Valley Reservation, which included a large portion of their original tribal lands. The Hupa speak a dialect of the Athabaskan language, which was also spoken by several Native American peoples of the Southwest and the Great Plains. The Hupa language has been extensively studied by linguists, and many of their oral narratives and stories have been transcribed and translated into English.

Reading "The Boy Who Grew Up at Ta'k'imilding" (Hupa). This story accounts for the origin of the World Renewal Dances, sacred ceremonies that are unique to the traditional cultures of the Yurok, Karuk, and Hupa. The dances take two forms. The purpose of the White Deer-skin Dance, *xonsit ch'idilge* or Summer World Renewal, is to inspire life and vitality for the coming year. The purpose of the Jump Dance, *xay ch'idilge* or Winter World Renewal, is to protect against disease and natural disasters. Both dances are intended to celebrate the *k'ixtnay*, supernatural beings who dwell in the "Heaven" of the story and who influence the human world below. The young boy who lives in the principal village



Hupa Jump Dancers

This photograph of the Hupa in the ceremonial garb worn for the Jump Dance was taken by A. W. Ericson in the 1890s. Even at a time when the policy of the federal government was to eradicate the indigenous cultures of Native American peoples, the Hupa maintained a strong sense of their cultural identity, which they have preserved to the present day.

bedfordstmartins.com/americanlit for research links on Native American tales and stories

on the banks of the Trinity River. They fished for the plentiful salmon in the river, gathered acorns and berries, and hunted small game. They were also skilled at crafts. Men practiced woodworking, while women fashioned distinctive bowl-shaped hats and baskets. For centuries, the Hupa were largely unknown to European explorers and settlers. Following the discovery of gold in California in 1848, however, miners and settlers moved onto Hupa lands, causing serious disruption to their way of life. In 1864, they were resettled on the Hoopa Valley Reservation, which included a large portion of their original tribal lands. The Hupa speak a dialect of the Athabaskan language, which was also spoken by several Native American peoples of the Southwest and the Great Plains. The Hupa language has been extensively studied by linguists, and many of their oral narratives and stories have been transcribed and translated into English.

Reading “The Boy Who Grew Up at Ta’k’imilding” (Hupa). This story accounts for the origin of the World Renewal Dances, sacred ceremonies that are unique to the traditional cultures of the Yurok, Karuk, and Hupa. The dances take two forms. The purpose of the White Deer-skin Dance, *xonsit ch’idilye* or Summer World Renewal, is to inspire life and vitality for the coming year. The purpose of the Jump Dance, *xay ch’idilye* or Winter World Renewal, is to protect against disease and natural disasters. Both dances are intended to celebrate the *k’ixinay*, supernatural beings who dwell in the “Heaven” of the story and who influence the human world below. The young boy who lives in the principal village

Hupa Jump Dancers

This photograph of the Hupa in the ceremonial garb worn for the Jump Dance was taken by A. W. Ericson in the 1890s. Even at a time when the policy of the federal government was to eradicate the indigenous cultures of Native American peoples, the Hupa maintained a strong sense of their cultural identity, which they have preserved to the present day.



of the Hupa, *Ta’k’imilding*, has been chosen by the *k’ixinay* for the vital role of initiating the ceremonial dances, which are still performed in the Hoopa Valley. This version of the story is a translation by Victor Golla of a recording made in 1963 of an oral narration by Minnie Reeves (1880-1972). “Minnie Reeves’s telling of this sacred story was appropriately solemn and serious,” Golla observes. “Although her version was abbreviated and broken here and there by a hesitation and a groping for words, it was clear that she was reciting well-known lines and phrases – a sacred text in the most real sense.” The text is taken from *Surviving through the Days: A California Indian Reader*, edited by Herbert W. Luthin (2002).

THE BOY WHO GREW UP AT TA’K’IMILDING

There once was a boy who grew up at Ta’k’imilding – born into the Big House there. He did nothing but sing all the time. He would always be singing. He was a good boy and did what he was told, but he would stay there in the Big House at Ta’k’imilding, singing all day long.

One day his mother went down to the river to fetch water, leaving the boy singing in the house. She dipped up some water, and was on her way back up to the house when a sound stopped her. It sounded like someone was singing inside a cloud that hovered over her house. She put her water basket down and listened. She could hear it clearly: Someone was singing there inside the hovering cloud. After a while the cloud lifted up into the air. She could still hear the singing. Eventually it vanished into the sky.

She went on back to the house. When she went inside, the boy was gone. It was clear that he had gone off inside the hovering cloud.

When her husband returned from hunting she told him what had happened. They had loved him very much, and they cried and cried.

A long time passed and there was no sign of the boy. Then, one day, many years later, the man went up the hill to hunt. After hunting for a while he got tired and decided to rest under a big tan oak. As he sat there smoking his pipe he was suddenly aware of a young man walking toward him out of the forest. Looking more closely he saw that it was the boy, now grown up. He leapt to his feet and ran to embrace his son.

“Stop there, Father! Don’t come toward me,” the young man said. “Don’t try to touch me. I can’t bear the scent of human beings anymore.”

Then he continued, “The only reason I have come back is to tell people the way things should be done in the future. When I went off to Heaven in that cloud, I found them dancing there, dancing without ever stopping, dancing the whole day long.

“And that is why I have returned – why you see me now. I have come to tell you about the dances. I am here to tell you the ways they should be danced, and the places where they should happen.

Native American Stories through a Modern Lens

AS NATIVE AMERICANS HAVE SOUGHT to regain their lands and to reaffirm their identities, especially during the last fifty years, their rich oral traditions have become increasingly important to writers who draw on tribal lore and memories. Indeed, some scholars have referred to the late twentieth century as the "Renaissance" of Native American literature. The writers who have participated in that rebirth are as varied as the tribes that once inhabited North America, but few figures have been as influential in the emergence of Native American literature as N. Scott Momaday. Of Kiowa, English, and Cherokee descent, Momaday was born in 1934 in Oklahoma and spent most of his childhood on Indian reservations in Arizona and New Mexico, where his parents were teachers, and where he was



Mississippian Wooden Mask

This remarkable mask, which was fashioned from red cedar and originally covered with a thin sheet of copper, dates from sometime between 1200 and 1350. It was used in rituals by Mississippian people at the largest settlement in ancient North America, Cahokia, an extensive city and ceremonial site across the Mississippi River from present-day St. Louis.

there on Bald Hill: That is where the White Deerskin Dance is to be danced. "Ten days after the White Deerskin Dance is finished, you will dance the Jump Dance for another ten days. There behind the Jump Dance fence I will always be looking on. I will always come back for the Jump Dance, although you won't ever see me. Because I will be looking on from there, invisible though I am, don't let anyone go back of the fence, don't even let a dog go back there. "I will always be watching." That is the end of the story.

[2002]