

Zuni Fetishes

A Zuni fetish is an object believed to have power greater than the object itself would naturally possess. Most of the fetishes created today might more properly be referred to as carvings. The most renowned carvers of fetishes are the Zuni, although other tribes also make them. The Zuni Pueblo is one of the largest in the Southwest.

The Zuni use fetishes for many purposes. Some enable hunters to catch game. Some make the game more plentiful. Fetishes can also play an important role in curing ceremonies. They may protect not only the individual, but the community as well. Abundance, fertility, rain, and bountiful crops are blessings a fetish can endow.

- **Badgers:** Protective animal of the South.
- **Bears:** Protective animal of the West, promotes health.
- **Bobcats:** Hunting animal of the South.
- **Corn Maidens:** Corn Maidens were said to have secretly emerged with the Zuni from their previous underworld. The Zunis and the Corn Maidens became separated and witches destroyed the Zuni crops. The twin the twin sons the Sun Father set out to find the Maidens. After a long search they were found and the twins asked them to bring corn back to the Zuni people. The Corn Maidens returned to save the Zuni from starvation.
- **Coyotes:** Hunting animal of the West.
- **Domesticated Animals:** Originally used to protect the herd.
- **Eagles:** Protective and hunting animal of the sky.

- **Frogs and Turtles:** Very commonly carved in Zuni and used in jewelry prehistorically. The most common function is fertility.
- **Game animals:** Thought to increase the quantity of each animal in Zuni.
- **Moles:** Protective and hunting animal of the underground.
- **Mountain Lions:** Protective and hunting animal of the North.
- **Owls and other birds:** The owl greets the visitor, while the other birds are believed to carry prayers to the clouds and Sky, asking for rain and blessings.
- **Snakes:** Associated with lightning.
- **Wolves:** Protective and hunting animal of the East.

The intricate carvings of the Zuni fetishes used many stones, but the most common are Serpentine, Picasso Marble, Turquoise, Jasper, Florida, Pipestone, Black Marble, Jet and Alabaster.

Many Zuni carving families use similar carving styles and enjoy working together while creating art that becomes more and more creative and collectible.