

Diné (Navajo) Research Makeup

Part 1. Read the following essay on Navajo history and write a report on it with enough detail that I know that you read it. Then go to Part 2 on page 3.

Diné (Navajo) Indians. Linguistically and culturally related to their Apache Indian neighbors in the Southwest, the Diné speak an Athapaskan language that is intelligible to many speakers of Apache as well. The most recent archaeological and historical data available suggest that the Diné, like other Apachean groups, came into the Southwest from the Plains in the sixteenth century. Since the early seventeenth century, by which time they had become farmers, hunters, and gatherers, living in widely scattered local groups, the Diné homeland has been in the high plateau country of northeastern Arizona, northwestern New Mexico, and southeastern Utah.

The basic unit of social and economic support was the biological family, composed of a man, his wife, and their unmarried children. Each biological family occupied its own six-sided house, the *hogan*.

Because many tasks required more people to perform them than provided by a single family, Diné traditionally lived together in camps of loosely grouped hogans made up of members of an extended family. The extended family included husband, spouse, unmarried children, married daughter, sons-in-law, and unmarried grandchildren. Beyond the extended family groupings there were larger family clusters, or “outfits,” composed of kinsmen whose hogans were out of sight but who nonetheless could be counted on for economic or social support when needed. The Navaho, like the Apache, also had non-localized matrilineal kin groups called clans. In former times there were more than sixty such clans.

The Diné “tribe” as a political entity is a modern phenomenon. In the old days Diné headmen were the leaders of independent outfits. Each outfit had its war leader and its peace leader, and each outfit made its decisions independently of those of other Diné. It is not surprising, therefore, that to non-Indians who dealt with them in the nineteenth century, it often appeared the Diné were breaking the terms of settlement agreements. Whites failed to realize that a single leader could be spokesman for only a rather small group of people.

As Diné in increasing numbers moved into the Southwest in the sixteenth century, it was inevitable that they would come into conflict over land and resources with people already there—Ute, Pueblo Indians, and Spaniards. The Diné fell into the Apachean pattern of raiding for goods and waging revenge warfare. In 1622 Diné even forced the abandonment of one of the New Mexico pueblo settlements from which the people of the modern Jemez Pueblo are descended. Between 1630 and 1700 they acquired horses and sheep, and people who had been sedentary farmers, hunters, and gatherers became increasingly raiders, travelers, and stockmen. As their territory grew, so did their enmity with neighboring Hopi, Zuni, and other Pueblo Indians, but especially with the former two tribes.

In the eighteenth century, attempts by Spanish monks to Christianize Diné and to establish missions among them ended in failure. By the early nineteenth century, the Diné had become a veritable scourge in the eyes of their neighbors. The northern frontier of New Spain was in a state of collapse; after 1821, when New Mexico became part of the Mexican republic, Mexican troops on the frontier were equally incapacitated, being too few and short on supplies. Diné attacked the Hopi village of Oraibi in 1837 and nearly depopulated it.

Between 1846 and 1849, when Lieutenant Colonel John Washington negotiated a second treaty with the Diné, United States troops were forced to send five expeditions against the persistently marauding Diné. The treaty between Washington and the Diné, negotiated at the mouth of Canyon de Chelly in Arizona, was formally ratified by the US Senate, the first to be thus approved.

But in spite of ratification, some of the Diné outfits continued their raids and had numerous clashes with US troops. In 1863 Colonel Kit Carson, backed by Ute Indian scouts and allies, went on a search-and-destroy mission through the very heart of Diné country, ruining crops and capturing or killing livestock wherever he found them. In early 1864 large number of Diné began to surrender. Before long some eight thousand of them were taken on the brutal “Long Walk” of three hundred miles from Fort Defiance,

Arizona, to Fort Sumner at Bosque Redondo on the Pecos River in New Mexico. They were held here as prisoners until a treaty between the Diné and the US was approved in 1868.

The Navajo treaty of 1868—and the Diné are the only Indians living today in Arizona and New Mexico who have a treaty negotiated and ratified by both sides—gave them a reservation of 3.5 million acres. Subsequently, fourteen major additions were made to the reservation, either by executive order or act of Congress, bringing it up to its present size—15,132,143 acres. Today there are more than one hundred thousand Diné living on the reservation. Thus, in terms of population and land, the Diné is by far the largest in the US.

During the 1960s many Diné referred to their reservation as the “land of the sleeping giant.” And that sleeping giant is awakening. The first stirrings of modern Diné political organization came in 1923 when the first tribal council was elected. This was followed in 1927 by the creation—through urging of United States Indian agents—of local institutions known as chapters. Each of the present day 96 chapters elects its own president and is responsible for administering its purely local affairs.

In the early 1930s grazing district committees were established, again at the urging of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), this time to combat the problem of overgrazing and deterioration of the rangeland. Since the 1800s the Diné had been acquiring land. Since the 1800s the Diné had been acquiring ever larger herds of sheep, goats, and horses, so that by the twentieth century the entire tribe had been converted from farmers, hunters and gatherers to pastoralists who supplemented their income and subsistence from livestock with more traditional means of making a living.

The tribe is also divided into 74 Navajo Tribal Council districts, and there are 19 district tribal councils in addition to the chapter organizations. The modern result is what is now proclaimed verbally on letterheads and in all tribal publication as the Navajo Nation. It is comprised of an enormously complex bureaucracy and is becoming increasingly sophisticated in the management of all of its own affairs.

The tribe operates its own tribal utilities, police, ground water development, public works and housing, and a host of other activities and has department to oversee leases involving mining and industrial development. In 1969 Diné became the first reservation tribe in the US to found their own college, the Navajo Community College, now Diné College.

Although the public image of the Diné, reflecting history, continues to be that of the colorful desert shepherds who excel in silversmithing and the weaving of fine rugs, saddle blankets, and other woolen textiles, it does not accord with present realities. Sheep camps and remote tradign posts sell exist, but so do supermarkets, paved highways, and rapidly growing reservation urban centers, such as those at Window Rock, the capital, and Tuba City, Fort Defiance, and Shiprock. Shiprock, in New Mexico, is the home of a large Fairchild electronics plant. Window Rock, in addition to housing the tribal offices and US governmental offices, has its own bank, museum, tribal arts-and-crafts store, motels, an FHA housing development, fairgrounds, restaurants, and modern community building, which serves as both sports arena and concert hall, It is also where the *Navajo Times*, the most widely read tribal newspaper in the country, is published.

Government, both Navajo and federal, has become the largest income source on the reservation. Tribal income is derived from various kinds of numeral and industrial leases and from a multiplicity of tribal business enterprises and investments. The 1971-1972 tribal budget was more than \$18 million.

For all of its spectacular growth and in spite of its high annual budget, the Diné continue to be beset with problems of poverty and unemployment. The represent estimated rate of unemployment is about 65%; about 23,000 Dineh required assistance through the BIA during 1970.

There is no question, however, that the prognosis for the Diné future is good, The people have retained their language and innumerable aspects of their native culture and continue to find ways to combine the best of all worlds, Their native religion and mythology, which borrows heavily from Pueblo Indian religion, including such elements as the famous sandpaintings, are probably as important to the Diné as they have ever been. They make up part of the curriculum of Dine College. Diné weavers are probably among the best known in the world, and their rugs, which are really of tapestry quality, ore among the most prized possessions of the museums and collectors who own them. Diné silversmithing, which began in the

nineteenth century, is also known today throughout the work and continues to be an important source of income for many of the people. The Diné are a spirited and nationalistic tribe, a group whom other Indians will doubtless come to emulate in the future.

Part 2: Read “Kinaalda: A Navajo Celebration of Womanhood” Then:

Briefly explain the Kinaalda ceremony.

Explain the meaning of Navajo "Blessing Way" and "Enemy Way" rites - p. 3

Explain the meaning of the Navajo concept of "Hozho" - p. 3, p. 4, pg. 5

Kinaalda: A Navajo Celebration of Womanhood

Other cultures talk openly about and celebrate menstruation as a girl's passage into womanhood. One such culture is the Navajo, whose "Kinaalda" ritual for adolescent girls celebrates in a positive and community-inclusive way the onset of menstruation. Kinaalda, the Navajo puberty rite for girls, is the most important rite in the Navajo culture. This puberty rite is initiated as soon as possible after a girl's first period. Her "first bleed" is announced to the whole community in an extensive ceremony, "regarded . . . as a time for rejoicing" (Frisbie 7). For two to three days, the girl, a medicine man or woman, family members, and others in the community celebrate the onset of puberty by participating in Kinaalda. This celebration lasts four to five days and was initially performed to ensure procreation. The structure of the ritual is typical of the Navajo ceremonial pattern "in its use of songs, prayers, taboos, purification rites, and a final night of singing" (Frisbie 8).

One of the most important aspects of Kinaalda--a characteristic within much of Native American culture in general--is that it is a celebratory ritual. This is the most important and stark difference between Navajo culture and America. That Navajo ideology focuses more on the celebration of menstruation than on the taboos surrounding it is evident in the differentiation between two "song ceremonial complexes" set in opposition to each other. The first, known as "Enemy Way," "is used in rituals of exorcism, warfare, and healing, . . . being designed primarily for the overcoming of adversity in one form or another" (Lincoln 17). The second song complex, called "Blessing Way," is given priority over Enemy Way, and used to "maintain and reinforce hozho by attracting and incorporating the goodness and power of benevolent Holy People" (Witherspoon 35). Hozho is usually translated into English as "beauty," but, as Witherspoon points out, it is much more complex. As a central concept within the Navajo, it "expresses the intellectual concept of order, the emotional state of happiness, the moral notion of good, the biological condition of health and well-being, and the aesthetic dimensions of balance, harmony, and beauty" (154).

"Blessing Way" rites create or preserve hozho at "the birth of a child, the erection of a hogan, a wedding, and so forth" (Lincoln 17). Of all Navajo Blessing Way rites, Kinaalda is considered the most important because it is "directed toward the obtaining of good fortune, happiness, and perfection; all mention of anything related to illness, conflict or unpleasantness is strictly forbidden" (18). Blessing Way emphasizes hope and joy, and most important, it celebrates the female body.

Within this rite of passage, participants recognize the presence of major deities and religious figures. Menstruation is viewed as holy and sacred, and is celebrated as such. Kinaalda is one of the only Navajo rites that stress the collective "good," and the positive characteristics of the gods:

Many of the major Navajo deities are introduced in Kinaalda including Changing Woman, White Shell Woman, Salt Woman, Talking God, Hogan God, Corn Pollen Boy, Corn Beetle Girl, the Sun, the Moon, Mountain Woman, Water Woman, Corn Plant Woman, Wood Woman, First Man, and First Woman. Although most Navajo

deities can harm as well as help [hu]mankind, the songs and myths, as well as informants' comments, show that only their positive, beneficent aspects are stressed in Kinaalda. Changing Woman, the main deity of the puberty ceremony, is one of the few gods in Navajo religion whose motives are solely good. (Frisbie 370)

Not only is Kinaalda a celebration, but it is a holy and pure celebration in the presence of the gods.

One of the main tenets of Kinaalda is the symbolic and literal transformation of the girl into Changing Woman, who represents wholeness because she is the product of the mating between Mother Earth and Father Sky, and was created "to bring good life to the people on the earth. There was nothing bad or wicked about her" (Frisbie 400).

This metamorphosis is evidenced in one of the chapter headings in *Emerging from the Chrysalis*, entitled "Kinaalda: Becoming the Goddess" (Lincoln 17). Gladys Reichard says that Changing Woman is "the mystery of reproduction, of life springing from nothing, of the last hope of the world, a riddle perpetually solved and perennially springing up anew" (407). This transformation is especially evident in the sequence of songs. Frisbie observes that through the course of the songs, "the house where the Blessing Way Ceremony is taking place first becomes a ceremonial hogan, a sacred place . . . by Song No. 13, the house has become that of Changing Woman. . . . In Song No. 25 she reaches the house and "at this point . . . the person referred to in the song text is no longer 'she'; instead, it is 'I'-an 'I' which is now completely identified with the chief Kinaalda deity" (171).

This recognition and naming of the girl as Changing Woman not only establishes her as an important member of her community but also as a powerful person with divine capabilities. Not only could the value placed on process and flexibility be empowering, but the association with a female deity can also be empowering to a girl beginning her menses and her reproductive era.

This sense of empowerment is felt by the girl and the community alike, in specific ways. Prayers are dispersed throughout the songs and ceremonies. The prayers are different in this rite from other major Navajo ceremonies in which the medicine man's or woman's words are repeated, because these prayers are individual and personal. Frisbie says, "By using their own words with or without additional formulas from the songs, the Navajo ask for what they desire" (370).

Navajos recognize tremendous power within the acts of thought and speech and believe they are vulnerable to the influence of others: "The will-the power of thought-can cause . . . hozho" (Witherspoon 89). Everyone is involved in these prayers. The girl prays, and the other participants pray for themselves and for the girl in a type of communal prayer. This not only actively involves each person, but it also stresses that the community is responsible for and has the power to influence the girl, which alludes to the well-known saying that "it takes a village to raise a child." In this part of the ritual, there is a unification of the divine, the individual, and the community. The psychological effects on both the girl and the individual members of the community are tremendous because the involvement of the community does not mock menstruation, rather it supports the girl in her physical changes, lets her know she is cared for, and teaches her how to be an adult. She becomes actively involved in her own physical state.

As another aspect of this sense of empowerment for the girl, it is believed that her attitude during the rituals determines the attitude of the ceremonies and her adult personality. This concept is powerful, because the girl is given the choice of defining herself. She will receive guidance, help, and support from the community, but she is also responsible for herself. This issue of choice is recognized as something vital to human existence. When a girl feels control over at least certain parts of her life, a positive change in her attitude almost automatically happens.

Racing, another part of Kinaalda, is done two times by the girl, both beginning and ending in the hogan. She chooses to run as far as she wants to, and it is said that the longer a girl runs, the longer she will live (Hazen-Hammond 17). The purpose of the racing traces back to stories in Navajo mythology, but the girl also "runs to improve her leg muscles, to prevent laziness, to strengthen her body, make her a good runner, to make her strong, supple, and energetic, to insure that she will continue to be lithe and active throughout womanhood, [and] to insure bravery" (Frisbie 360).

Several things are important to note about racing. First, as mentioned above, choice is present. This is unlike the early childhood and teenage years for the many American girls, who are neither encouraged nor allowed to be as active as boys are. The concept of Navajo girls continuing their energy, strength, and overall health into their adult lives will help them to have easier births and healthier babies, as well as being healthier themselves. It is also a key point that during Kinaalda, racing is encouraged while the girl is menstruating, to promote endurance. People of any age can join her in her race, and to join is "to share her blessedness" (361). The community involvement is intended to be enjoyable and is done with little competition, which, along with conflict, is "not valued" because the Navajo wish to maintain "a peaceful heart. This is not stoic peace, however, but good natured, vibrant, and humorous" (Bell 238). They run for the pure joy of running, for feeling their bodies move, and for their own health and concept of beauty..

The key to understanding the Navajo concept of beauty, or hozho, lies in two words practically identical: zho, "beauty," and sho, "to be good" (Frisbie 378). The prefix ho most closely translates into "environment," and next to zho the word "involves a proper relationship to everything in one's environment" (Witherspoon 24). Before "beauty" is attained, "An element of perfection and holiness must be associated with the object or person" (Frisbie 380). It is not something to go and get, but is generated and radiated from within a person and projected into the universe: "Beauty is not so much a perceptual experience as it is a conceptual one" (Witherspoon 151). The general application derived from the attitude of Kinaalda is the idea that women walk in harmony with the earth, their communities, and with their own bodies. The text of "Racing Song No. 1" reads:

This daily prayer, nearly identical to another Kinaalda song says:

With beauty before me, I walk
With beauty behind me, I walk
With beauty above me, I walk
With beauty below me, I walk
. . . From all around me beauty has been restored.
(Witherspoon 153-54)

At the very end of Kinaalda, the girl spends "the next four days at the hogan, thinking about herself and her culture, her people and her life" (Hazen-Hammond 19). Her community recognizes her as becoming a goddess, one who has "knowledge, political, economic, and transformational power. Transformational power is very important power for a culture that exalts the daily creation of life" (Bell 238). She has the power to influence her own and others' lives and health, to connect herself and others to personal experiences, to create that which is good, and to bring people together. Once again, she is established in her own present and future, and as a vital and influential person in her community.

Adapted from a work by Kiri Manookin