

The Dinè (Navajo) Creation Account

A Synopsis of the Coming Forth of an Indigenous Landscape

First World: small, barren, red land floating island in a great sea of water mist, inhabited by 12 kinds of black insect-like creatures (among them Wasp People, Black Ant People, Bat, Thunder, Water Monster), all known as the Yei (often called the “holy ones,” meaning literally, “the immune ones”),

- there was **First Pair - First Man** (to the east, represents Dawn and Life Giver) and **First Woman** (to the west, represents Darkness and Death),

- roam around with insatiable desire for food, eventually led to incest, sorcery, adultery and murder, flood,
- and climb reed of emergence into world above

(re-occurring pattern of **hozho** - order, beauty and harmony - followed with **hocho** - disorder, ugliness and chaos).

Second World: Yei emerge into a dry, cheerless, blue land, with bird-like creatures (among them Swallow People, Blue Jay People, and Blue Bird People),

- First Man and First Women created 12 people who would become the **Pueblo Peoples**,

- established **agriculture and corn**,

- and established **kinship terms**,

- but **First Woman and Sun had an affair** that lead to hozho and flood,
- and ascent up reed of emergence into world above.

Third World: Yei emerge into a barren, yellow land, no light (no moon, no sun) only yellow everywhere, with newcomers establishing **friendly relations** with the peoples already their (among them Grasshopper People, Yellow Ant People, Red Ant People, and Black Ant People),

- there were **two rivers** flowing through it (one from east, the Male River, and one from the south, the Female River, with the place they crossed called the “Crossing of the Water”),

- First Man created **marriage and clan exogamy**,

- people began using **cloths**,

- established **hunting** skills,

- created **languages**,

- Pueblo People built **adobe houses**,

- but **First Woman unfaithful to First Man**, blaming it on First Man and in fact began leading the Yei,
- and when **Coyote took Water Monster's baby** and hid it a great flood washed over the land

- and First Man planted a series of **4 trees** for Yei to climb up into the world above (cedar, pine, male reed and with 4th female reed pierced sky into Fourth World, and First Man returned to leadership)

Fourth World: similar events

Fifth World also known as the Earth World: Locust first to emerge up the “reed of emergence” and worries as all is water and monsters, and is tested to see if those following are worthy (stand in place 4 days - sheds skin, arrow through body),

Locust is followed by First Man and First Woman, Pollen Boy, Lightning God and Talking God, and all the other *Yei - Diyin Dinee*, the Holy People. All around is water and darkness. There are no peoples, but there are many monsters. There is much *hocho* – disorder and ugliness. At the Emergence Place, the Holy People decide to build a sweathouse, like a hogan though much larger (small lodge, but couldn’t get it hot, so with **blankets** from Owl Man and Owl Woman, **flint** to light fire, and burnt **4 woods** - fir, pinion, spruce and juniper). First Man brings his medicine bundle with him into the sweat bath, the bundle containing four jewels – turquoise, white shell, abalone and obsidian. In the heat and the steam, the Holy People whisper to each other and, with the knowledge of *hozho* – beauty and harmony, plan the earth-surface world. They think of the *biisti*, the "in-standing ones," the inner forms of all things. Then the Holy People speak the words of the world and sing the world into being.

The earth will be,
 the mountains will be . . . ,
The earth will be,
 from ancient times with me there is knowledge of it.
The mountains will be,
 from ancient times with me there is knowledge of it. . . .
The earth will be,
 from the very beginning I have thought it.
The mountains will be,
 from the very beginning I have thought it. . . .
The earth will be,
 from the ancient times I speak it.
The mountains will be,
 from the ancient times I speak it. . . .
The earth will be,
 the mountains will be, . . .
 and so it will be. (from the *Beginning of the World Song*)

And the rivers and mountains, the sun and moon, come forth; each with *biisti* – spirit and life. And there is *Saah Naaghahi Bikeh Hozho*, "continual reoccurring long life in an environment of beauty and harmony."

- **Hogan** made of 5 logs (e, w, n, s and ne, made of white shell, turquoise, abalone, jet and tied by the feathers of different birds),

- **Moon and Sun** (moon = rock crystal, whiteshell, forked lightning and sacred waters, and sun = large turquoise disk, red rain, lightning and snakes, heated by Black God's fire drill),

- **Mountains** to orient people (**Mount Taylor**, south, turquoise and blue swallows held down by great stone knives where Turquoise Girl lives - **Blanca Peak**, east, blanket of white shell fastened down by white lightning inhabited by Dawn Boy, **San Francisco Peak**, west, covered in abalone fastened down by sunbeams where Abalone Boy lives, **La Plata Mountain**, north, blanketed by obsidian fastened down by rainbow where Obsidian Girl lives),

On the centrally located mountain of **Gobernador Knob** First Man saw a dark cloud and heard a child's cry and found baby girl, "born of darkness and dawn was her father," First Pair raised her, fed her sun-rays pollen, pollen from clouds, pollen from plants and the dew from flowers, known as **Changing Woman** - as she changes so do the seasons from birth in the spring, to youth in the summer, maturing in the fall and old age in the winter, to be reborn each spring

It would be Changing Woman who creates the **Earth Surface People** - Dine (from her feet rub soil of valleys become our feet, from her heart rub obsidian become our heart, from her breathe rub white wind becomes our breath, from her movement rub air and wind becomes our movement, from her tears rub rain becomes our tears, from her face rub daybreak becomes our face, from her noise rub red stone becomes our noise, from her eyes rub sunlight become our eyes

Earth's feet have become my feet
by means of these I shall live on.

Earth's legs have become my legs
by means of these I shall live on.

Earth's body has become my body
by means of this I shall live on.

Earth's mind has become my mind
by means of this I shall live on.

Earth's voice has become my voice
by means of this I shall live on.

Earth's headplume has become my headplume
by means of this I shall live on.

The cord-like extension from the top of its head
is cord-like from the top of my head as by means of this I shall live on.

There are mountains encircling it and
Hozho extends up their slopes,
by means of these it will be hozho as I shall live on.

Saah Naaghaii Bikeh Hozho I shall be,
Before me it will be hozho as I live on,
Behind me it will be hozho as I live on,
Below me it will be hozho as I live on,
Above me it will be hozho as I live on.

Hozho has been restored.

Hozho has been restored.

Hozho has been restored.

Hozho has been restored. (from the *Blessingway Song*)

And it would be Changing Women who brought **Monster Slayer and Child of the Water** into being and raise them, who to confront and overcome most of the monsters (hocho) that threatened the existence of the Dine and human peoples, and fully transform the landscape to the features we know see

But there remains much *hocho*. Monsters persist – Sickness, Hunger, Poverty, Lice Man, Laziness.

KEY: In the heat and steam, the Holy People think the world and then speak the world into being. And as Changing Woman is healthy so is the earth and the people, but also as the earth is healthy so is Changing Woman and the people

And in the hogan today, the Dine re-create and re-member the story of Creation, as the songs of hozho are sung and the images of hozho painted on the ground for those with hocho. As *hozho* within so without. In the Four Mountains Dry painting below there are the images in the Four Mountains Dry Painting are the Pine Mountain, Black Spruce Mountain, Spruce Yellow Mountain, and Blue Mountain, as well as the *Yei* or Holy People – hanging Grandchild (top), Monster Slayer (right), Child of the Water (bottom), Reared within the Mountain (left), with Pink Herb, Black Herb, Yellow Herb and Blue Herb, and the Moon and Sun (left). See **Dine Image** of the Four Mountains Dry Painting.

Sixth and Seventh Worlds: with worlds, peoples and events - and hozho and hocho yet to come

