

The *Diné* (Navajo) Creation Account

A Synopsis Outline of the Coming Forth of an Indigenous Landscape

First World – the Black 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),

- they roam around with insatiable desire for food, eventually led to incest, sorcery, adultery and murder, causing a great flood to wash over the land,
- 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 – the Blue 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 *hocho* and flood,
- and ascent up reed of emergence into world above.

Third World – the Yellow 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 – the Glittering World: similar cycle of events of *hozho* - order, beauty and harmony - followed with *hocho* - disorder, ugliness and chaos

Fifth World also known as the Earth Surface 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 *biiasti* – 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, outer boundaries of their world, the first geographic features created – *Tsoodzil* (Blue Bead or Turquoise Mountain – Mount Taylor) to the south, turquoise and blue swallows held down by great stone knives where Turquoise Girl lives; *Sis Naajini* (Dawn or White Shell Mountain – Blanca Peak) to the east, blanket of white shell fastened down by white lightning inhabited by Dawn Boy; *Dook'o'oosliid* (Abalone Shell Mountain – San Francisco Peak) to the west, covered in abalone fastened down by sunbeams where Abalone Boy lives; and *Dibé Nitsaa* (Obsidian Mountain – La Plata Mountains) to the north, blanketed by obsidian fastened down by rainbow where Obsidian Girl lives,

On the centrally located mountain of *Ch'óol'í'í* (Precious Stones – Gobernador Knob in New Mexico, considered the "heart" of Diné country) First Man saw a dark cloud, a fog 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 *Asdzáá Nádleehé* – **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 was also here at *Ch'óol'í'í*, when Changing Woman came of age, that the **first Kinaaldá** ("Walking into Beauty") was performed. It would be performed for all girls when they reached puberty.

It would be Changing Woman who creates the Diné, the **Earth Surface People** - (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 Naaghahi 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 *Naayéé' Neezghání* (**Monster Slayer**) and *Tó Bájísh Chíní* (**Child Born of the Water**) into being and raised them, who confront and overcome most of the monsters (*hocho*) that threatened the existence of the Diné and human peoples, and fully transform the landscape to the features we know see. For example, One Walking Monster lived near *Tó Sidoh* (Hot Springs) and after being killed you can see his blood at *Ye'úitsoh Bidit*, (south of Mt. Taylor, near Grants, New Mexico as lava beds); Monster Bird lived on top of *Tsé Bit'a'í* (Rock with Wings or Shiprock, New Mexico); Big Monster lived near Mount Taylor and after killing him, his head was thrown to east and became *Tsé Naajiin* (Cabezon Peak, New Mexico).

But there remains much *hocho*. Monsters persist – for example, there is Sickness, Hunger, Poverty, Lice Man, and 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. All are interconnected.

And in the hogan today, the Dine re-member and **re-create** 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 it is without. And in the act of doing so, the world is renewed, made *hozho*. In the dry painting there are the images in the certain sacred Four Mountains – 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 Born 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 Dry Paintings](#) for of the Four Mountains Dry Painting.

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

Source: Ethelou Yazzie, ed. *Navajo History*. Navajo Curriculum Center, Rough Rock Demonstration School, Chinle, Arizona. 1971.