

The Future of the Kinaalda

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Navaho Rituals : An Overview

Native American ceremonies (Navaho) were observed and recorded by a Spanish expedition in 1653, and it is quite possible that impermanent art portrayals (drypaintings) were being made in connection with the ceremonies (Dutton, 1976, p.7). Each Navaho chant (song) usually has a particular sandpainting associated with it.

Sandpaintings are more accurately called drypaintings,

"for pollen, meal, and other vegetal material, as well as pulverized clay and certain minerals may be used in addition to sand; occasionally, the paintings are made on buckskin...usually, the paintings are made on a background of clean sand. Different colors are made by crushing rock, charcoal, or other material into fine powders and mixing them with sand or dirt for easier handling" (Dutton, 1976, p.27).

The organic material is used as the basis of the desired color (pigment), while the sand is used as the medium or vehicle to transfer and transport the color to create patterns.

"Sandpaintings are not something of and for themselves, but they are part of a performance which continues for a period varying from one to nine days which commonly referred to as a 'Chant' or 'Sing'. These words simply mean a combination of many ritualistic acts carried out in a fixed order" (Newcomb and Reichard, n.d.,p. 6).

There are many reasons, both explicit and implied, for the creation and performance of ritualistic acts by the Navaho people. Rituals can be viewed as a form of response to events in the life of a person.

"According to the Navaho view, the dangers of the world are caused by lack of harmony; illness, unhappiness, and drought, for example, all result from disharmony. The compulsive power of ritual, including the songs, paintings, and prayers which are parts of the whole, brings everything in the vicinity into line; harmonious, under control, and therefore healthy" (Hatcher, 1974, p.27).

The idea of ritual as a behavioral response to external stimuli was advanced by Kluckhohn, who wrote:

"...myths and rituals constitute a series of highly adaptive responses from the point of view of the society. Recital of or reference to the myths affirms the solidarity of the Navaho sentiment system...Performance of the rituals likewise heightens awareness of the common system of sentiments. Myths and rituals jointly provide systematic protection against supernatural dangers, the threats of ill-health and of the physical environment, antisocial tensions, and the pressures of a more powerful society. The all-pervasive configurations of word-symbols (myths) and of act-symbols (rituals) preserve the cohesion of the society and sustain the individual"... (Kluckhohn, 1942, passim)

Each Navaho chant has a corresponding sandpainting which is made inside the hogan where the ceremony is to be held; or if it is to be performed outside, the painting is done out-of-doors. Navaho chants (also referred to as 'ways') are divided by mythological associations, ritual aspects they may have in common, and the forces or related forces they are addressed to within the ritual itself (Dutton,1976). Table 1 shows the major divisions of ceremonial songs.

This project focuses on the data collected by Frisbie, et al, from the Navaho girls' puberty ritual, Kinaalda, which is part of the Blessingway. Frisbie stated,

"The Kinaalda is typical of the Navaho ceremonial pattern in its use of songs, prayers, taboos, purification rites, and a final night of singing. Being part of the Blessingway complex, the Kinaalda is prophylactic, rather than curative; it ushers the girl into society, invokes positive blessing on her, insures her health, prosperity, and well-being, and protects her from potential misfortune" (Frisbie,1967,pp.8-9).

Meaning of the Word 'Kinaalda'

According to Frisbie, "The term for the puberty ceremony is "kinaalda" or "kinaaldah". Most Navaho use this word to refer to the first menses, alluding to the ceremonial rather than the physiological event"(1967,p.8). However, Mitchell states "the term 'kinaalda' refers to the girl and to the house in which she was formerly isolated during that period (Frisbie, 1967,p.8). According to Sandoval, (referencing Sapir), "kinaalda was an Athabascan

term", which was "used in Alaska where the people live in ice houses"; "Sida means 'sitting along'; i.e. isolated in the ice house. There a girl is isolated from the family... The form of the word used in Alaska is kin ya shidah. This has been corrupted to kinaalda by the Navaho" (Johnson, 1963).

Procedures

The Frisbie dataset contained observational records of nineteen different anthropologists from the Kinaalda ritual ceremony. The researcher examined the archival data to determine how to code and organize the data. Since each 'X' on the original chart denoted the presence or absence of an observed trait, a binary number system was selected to represent this dataset. Next, SAS code was written to

read in these coded observations. Frequencies of each trait were calculated, and those traits with a frequency less than or equal to one were dropped from the analysis. The resulting dataset was graphed using star icon visual displays.

Future of the Kinaalda

The Kinaalda ceremony is by no means obsolete. Kinaalda is still planned and performed by the Navaho in the Southwestern United States. It is anticipated to remain as an important ceremony in the life of the Navaho. Frisbie (1967) collected significant data on the past and present rituals associated with Kinaalda. These ritual changes are shown in Table 2.

Table 1. Major and Minor Divisions of Navaho Ceremonies *

Name of Rite	Reason Performed
Blessingway	To approve a newly selected headman For expectant mothers For men going away Girls' puberty rites Marriage ceremonies
War	(Obsolete)
Gameway	Hunting
Holyway	Employed for the attraction of good 3 minor divisions :
Beautyway	given if snakes have been offended
Shootingway	to appease thunder and lightening
Mountaintopway	when one has trouble from contact with bears
Evilway	Ghostway - for exorcism of evil
Lifeway	Curing bodily injuries
Nightway	Introduces boys and girls to full participation In ceremonial life

*Per Dutton, 1976, *Navahos and Apaches : The Athabascan People*, pp.27-28.

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	Item	Old Way	Present Way
1.	Timing of ceremony	Within a few days of puberty	Can be postponed due to school in some regions.
2.	Pony tail	Only used for Kinaalda	Anyone can wear hair in this style.
3.	Hair string	Tied only with appropriate string.	Rubber band put on first.
4.	Race	Competition	No competition
5.	Grinding	Done to singing. Use only grinding stones.	No Singing. Use corn grinders bought at the store as well.
6.	Taboos	Mentioned	Many not mentioned
7.	Food taboos	Allow sugar	Not allow sugar
8.	Cake	Ferment and sweeten by chewing sprouted wheat and spitting it into batter.	No longer do this.
9.	Cake size	Size	Bigger than before.
10.	Measuring the pit	Horn implements used.	Shovels used.
11.	Pit lining	A kind of plant.	Cornhusks.
12.	Drinking	None	Much
13.	Police	Not present	Presence requested.
14.	Cake-cutting	Wood or stone implements used.	Knives used.

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