

New Mexico Anthropologist

Volume 6 | Issue 3

Article 1

9-1-1943

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Recommended Citation

Hill, W. W. and Dorothy W. Hill. "Two Navajo Myths." *New Mexico Anthropologist* 6, 3 (1943): 111-114.
https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nm_anthropologist/vol6/iss3/1

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TWO NAVAJO MYTHS
W. W. HILL AND DOROTHY W. HILL

The two following myths were collected during the period of 1934 to 1935 while one of the authors was engaged in field work in Navajo economics and material culture. Both myths were recorded incidentally, being volunteered to clarify specific occurrences in Navajo culture.

The myth of the Coyote Chantway was obtained from Slim Gambler of Keams Canyon, Arizona, and was given by him to explain Navajo use and treatment of dogs. According to the informant the Coyote Chantway was still known and practiced in this section of the reservation. Therefore, the account is of more than passing interest; little is known of this ceremonial and its equipment, and the chantway is reported obsolescent, or nearly so, in other localities.¹ The informant was not a chanter, thus, the tale is correspondingly brief.

The myth Frog Races a Lewd Woman was recounted by The Late Little Smith's Son of Crown Point, New Mexico. It deals with the Navajo character Woman Who Drys You Up. It contains the motif of the growing rock and was volunteered to explain the origin of Mesa Fahada in Chaco Canyon, New Mexico.²

THE MYTH OF THE COYOTE CHANTWAY

From the east came a fat dog who belonged to the White People. From the west came a thin dog who belonged to the Navajo. White Dog said to Navajo Dog, "Where are you coming from?" Navajo Dog answered, "I come from the Navajo where there is nothing to eat. They are stingy people and will not give me anything to eat. They throw sticks and hit me. When they hit me, particularly if it is on the back, it surely hurts. Sometimes they almost kill me. They tie a rope around my neck and tie me to a tree." White Dog said, "Why do they do that?" Navajo Dog answered, "The reason they treat me that way is because I stole from them. When they were eating they gave me nothing. I was starving and I stole some food. That is why they beat me." White Dog said, "The White People do the same thing for stealing but they give me food and allow me to sleep in the house." Navajo Dog said, "You are fat because

1. The Franciscan Fathers, *An Ethnologic Dictionary of the Navaho Language*. Saint Michaels, Arizona. 1910. pp. 363, 385, 392, 395, 404. Leland C. Wyman and Clyde Kluckhohn, *Navaho Classification of Their Song Ceremonials*. *Memoirs of the American Anthropological Association*, no. 50. 1938. pp. 6, 27. Clyde Kluckhohn and Leland C. Wyman, *An Introduction to Navaho Chant Practice With an Account of the Behaviors Observed in Four Chants*, *Memoirs of the American Anthropological Association*, no. 53. 1940. p. 188.

2. See Richard F. Van Valkenburg, *Dine' Bikeyah*. United States Department of the Interior, Office of Indian Affairs, Navajo Service, Window Rock, Arizona. 1941. p. 34.

you get enough food." White Dog said, "I am going to the west and see what kind of people live there. I will find out about them. You go to the east where you can get fat. If the Navajo People will not give me food I will be thin like you when I return."

Navajo Dog went to the east and White Dog went to the west. The Navajo People wondered where the fat dog had come from. "Maybe he is a 'Prophet Dog,'" they said.

Navajo Dog arrived among the Whites and was given food to fatten him. White Dog did not get much food among the Navajo and he became thin and was treated badly. Within ten days Navajo Dog had become fat; White Dog thin.

The two dogs started back toward their own countries and they met at the same place as before. White Dog said, "I was treated as you said you had been treated." Navajo Dog said, "I was well treated and have become fat. You told the truth about the Whites." Then Navajo Dog said, "We will cross at this point four times and we will be sure how the Navajo and the Whites treat their dogs."

They both returned to their original homes. Navajo Dog arrived home and some of his people said, "That is our dog." Others said, "No, our dog was thin." Navajo Dog was the only dog on the reservation. When anyone appeared he always barked to keep the stranger away. He was cruelly treated as before. The Navajo said, "This dog does nothing for us," and they threw rocks at him.

The Whites had not forgotten their dog and they treated him well. They said, "I wonder where this dog of ours has been? I wonder if he fell between two rocks or into a hole?"

Navajo Dog thought of the food that he had received from the Whites and wished that he had remained there. Navajo Dog received only feces or the intestines of rabbits to eat. He was thin and weak and unable to hunt rabbits for himself.

In ten days the dogs met again. White Dog was fat and Navajo Dog was thin. They said the same things to each other as they had said before and then they changed places again. This occurred four times. The Whites said, "I wonder where this dog goes to get fat and then later comes back thin."

When the dogs met for the fourth time each dog had something on his nose, feet, around his mouth, and on the end of his tail. This material gave the dogs power to kill. The dog would think about the people who had treated him badly, then he would speak to that man and the man would die. (That is why the Navajo will not hit a dog.) Each time either of these dogs was badly treated he would say to the Navajo, "You are going to get sick and die," and the Navajo would die. The people would always have a chanter sing over the man, but he would not get well. At first, diagnosticians could not find what was wrong with the man. Finally they said, "It can be nothing but a dog. It must be that." But they had no songs for this. At last they decided to try the Coyote Chantway. They made prayer sticks from cane which was called, "white coyote" for the east, "blue coyote"

for the south, and "yellow coyote" for the west. They did not know what to do for the north so they took "big cane," put a coal in it, and burned it. They called this "dog smoke." They put the prayer stick in the north and rested it on goldenrod. Then they took dough and out of it made an image of a coyote. The north prayer stick was colored black and was filled with wild tobacco, and the end was plugged with pollen. The wild tobacco in the prayer stick was lighted by letting the sun come through selenite. Then it was extinguished by putting some water on the singer's finger. Jewels were also placed under the north prayer stick; turquoise, jet, white shell, and "black shell." The prayer stick was placed with its tip to the north. A mixture of feathers and jewels was then placed on top. Only prayer sticks were used in this chant; not sand paintings. After the "sing" had been made over the prayer sticks they were taken out and the chanter prayed over them so that the patient would get well.

FROG RACES A LEWD WOMAN

There was a Holy Man. Frog was hoeing his garden. Holy Man came by and wanted to run a race with Old Man Frog. They ran the race and Frog won. So Holy Man had to give away his legs.

Frog put the legs inside his wife's dress and immediately she began grinding corn on the metate. She ground for four nights without stopping. Although the other women rested, or spelled each other, this woman continued grinding.

The men were singing, playing flutes, and stamping poles. Someone called Whippoor-will, put pollen on him, and shook it off. Then they put this pollen on the woman and she began to go to sleep at her work. (This was on the fourth day.) Then she fell asleep.

The brother of the Holy Man went to Frog's wife to get his legs for him. The singing was still going on. He took the legs out of the woman's skirt, brought them to his brother. The Holy Man put them on and started home. On the way home the lightning missed him four times. He was then initiated with the lightning.

When Holy Man arrived home he told his relatives they should hold a five night singing over him. While the ceremony was taking place, the man was sent out doors. There were many people outside, including a girl who was named "Woman-Who-Dries-You-Up." She grabbed the man and took him to a piece of hard rock where he found all kinds of jewelry, shells, and hides. The two went to bed. During the night the rock began to grow; it grew way up.

In the morning Holy Man found himself with a bony old woman instead of a young girl. The old woman was snoring and the boy became afraid. He started to leave but when he came to the rock's edge he could not see the ground at the bottom. He looked in the four directions but he could not find a way down.

While the man was walking around the old woman awakened but she did not pay any attention to him. The man continued walking around and soon a Piñonero (jay) and a Dove came to him. They

made fun of him but they gave him water to drink. (Of course, these two birds were young girls.) They also gave him jerked meat in hollow grass. They made fun of him because the woman he was with ate herself and drank her own urine; that is how she lived. For four days the two birds fed Holy Man and gave him water. They told him to stay where he was because the people below would try and get him down from the rock.

On the morning of the fourth day the birds told the man that Big Snake would come up on the east side of the rock and not to be afraid but get between Snake's horns and he would take him down. They told him he would hear a loud noise when Snake was approaching. When Snake poked his head over the rock the man got between the horns and Snake took him down to the ground. As soon as he reached the ground Snake told him to run. The old woman also came down but no one knew how she had reached the ground.

Holy Man ran toward the east and the woman trailed him. He came to Spotted Lizard and told Lizard the old woman was chasing him. Lizard said perhaps Frog would help him. Then he came to Long-Legged-Frog, who said he could not help him but sent him on to another Frog. This Frog could not help either, and sent him on.

Then he came to Old Man Frog. As at first, Old Man Frog was hoeing. Holy Man told Frog the old woman was chasing him. Frog turned away from him three times but on the fourth time he asked the man why he was afraid. Holy Man said the old woman was chasing him. Old Man Frog said, "That is nothing," and he pulled out a tule and told the man to go into the hole. Then Frog plugged the hole.

Woman-Who-Dries-You-Up came to Frog and asked where her husband had gone. Frog said, "I did not see him." The old woman asked again. At last Frog said, "Let us race." They were to race around Mt. Taylor. They began running. (Of course, Old Man Frog was traveling on the lightning.) While they were racing around the mountain, the wind blew and they could scarcely see. The Old Woman could not turn and she had to run straight until the wind had passed. Then she saw Frog on the other side of the mountain. Just as she was about to catch him, a cloud came down to the earth and she could not see. Frog again went ahead. When the cloud passed, she again started to run. When she almost caught Frog it began to rain and she could not see him. When the rain stopped Frog was ahead again. The old woman started after him. By that time they were nearing the finish. They were running in the mud. Just as the woman was about to pass Frog, he hopped over the finish line. Before the race, Frog had told the woman if he won she must release the man. So the old woman went on and let the man go.

Old Man Frog gave the man some advice. He told him never to let anything like that happen again. He told the man to remember him if he got into trouble again.