Navajo Ye'ii in the Rock Art of Dinetah in Northwest New Mexico

Richard Jenkinson



- Dinetah location: NW New Mexico
- Navajo occupation: 1600's and 1700's
- Time and place where Athabaskans and Puebloans combined and formed Navajo culture.
- Location of the origin of many Navajo ceremonies.
- When Navajos moved west to the Canyon de Chelly area, sandpaintings took the place of rock art for depiction of images related to ceremonies.

Ghą́ą 'ask'idii

Ghaa'ask'iddi is Humpback

- A Navajo Ye'ii
 Supernatural Powers People
- Ye'ii of agriculture, harvest and plenty
- He is one of the Mountain Sheep People
- The hump on his back is a bag full of seeds and mist. It is rimmed with eagle feathers.
- He usually has a digging stick or staff.
- Humpback plays an important role in the myth of the Nightway and Mountainway ceremonies.



























Photo by Roger Cook





Source: Berard Haile-Head and Face Masks in Navajo Ceremonialism, p. 66

Zaha'doolzhaai

Zaha' doolzhaai is Fringe Mouth

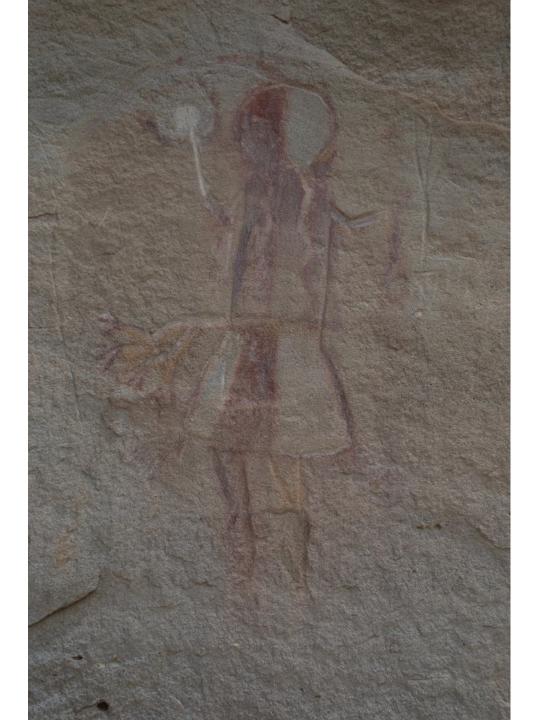
- There are Zaha'doolzhaai of the Land and the Water, so it is a class of Ye'iis, not an individual.
- The small, round mouth sticks out and is surrounded by a fringe of fur.
- Zaha'doolzhaai is identified by the body being divided vertically by different colors. The colors can vary.
- The hat is conical with a rim made from a basket with the bottom cut out.
- Like Ghaa'ask'iddi, Zaha'doolzhaai is associated with the Nightway and Mountainway ceremonies.















hózhó

Hozho is central to Navajo philosophy and world view.

There is no English equivalent word.

It's meaning is a combination of beauty, balance, harmony, and peace, all of these more in the spiritual realm than the physical realm.

The goal of the Navajo healing ceremonies is to bring the one sung over – the patient – back into hozho.

k'é

• K'e refers to relationships of all kinds, not just with humans, but with everything.

Navajo Ceremonies

- Seasonal, but not tied to the calendar
- Done as needed
- Almost all ceremonies are performed for healing.
- The physical issues to be healed are symptoms; the deeper issues involve spiritual imbalance.
- A diagnostician, usually a hand trembler, determines what ceremony is needed.
- A singer performs the ceremony, which can be as long as all night for nine nights.
- The arts are central to healing: song, visual art, and dance are featured.

Ceremonial Connections:

Tł'éé'jí

Dziłlátahjí

The Nightway and the Mountainway

Humpback and Fringe Mouth are closely associated with the Nightway and Mountainway ceremonies.

The ceremonies are based on myths, and the protagonists in the myths encounter Ye'ii who cure them of their problems and teach them the curing ceremonies so that they can take them back to the Navajo people and use them to cure health problems.

The Nightway is performed to cure paralysis, blindness, deafness, and issues related to the head.

The Nightway culminates with the Ye'iibichai dance, which includes Humpback and Fringe Mouth.



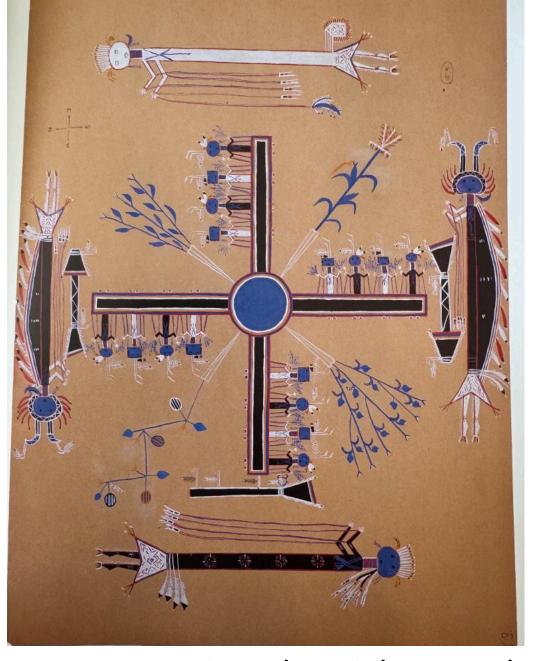




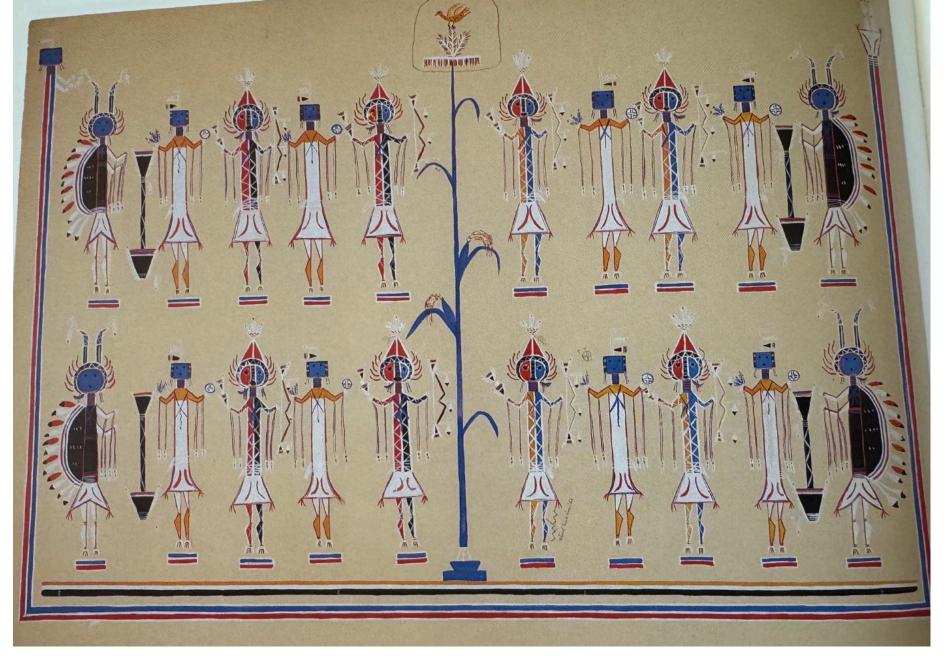




Source: James Faris – The Nightway, plate 22

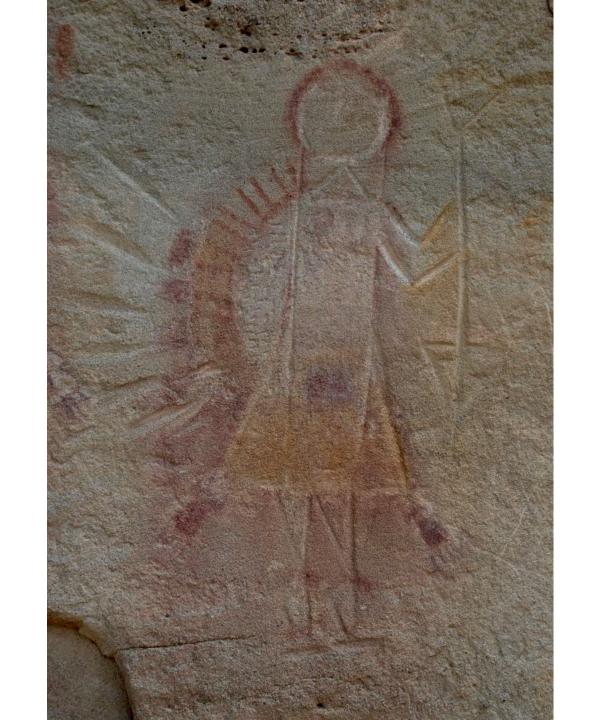


Source: James Faris – The Nightway, plate 4



Source: James Faris – The Nightway, plate 8

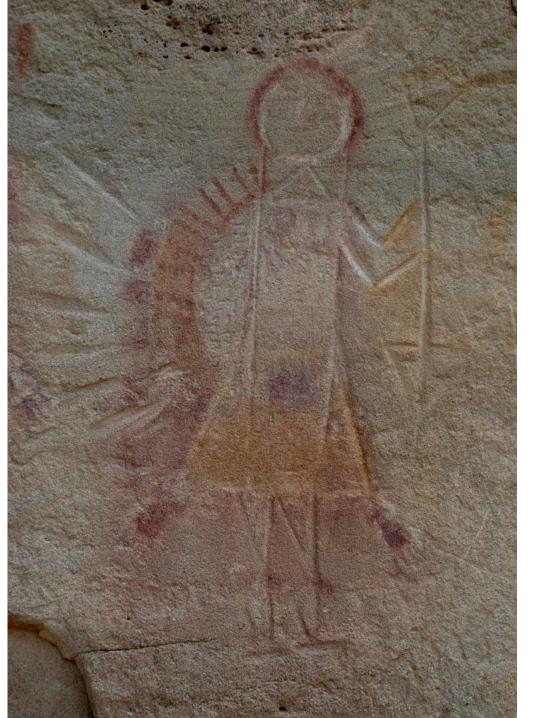
- The Mountainway
- The Mountainway ceremony is performed to cure diseases associated with mountain animals, especially the bear. Anything that may have offended a bear could cause disease.
- The most common manifestations of bear disease are arthritis and mental disturbances.
- The Mountainway culminates with the Fire Dance, which includes Humpback as one of the featured dancers.

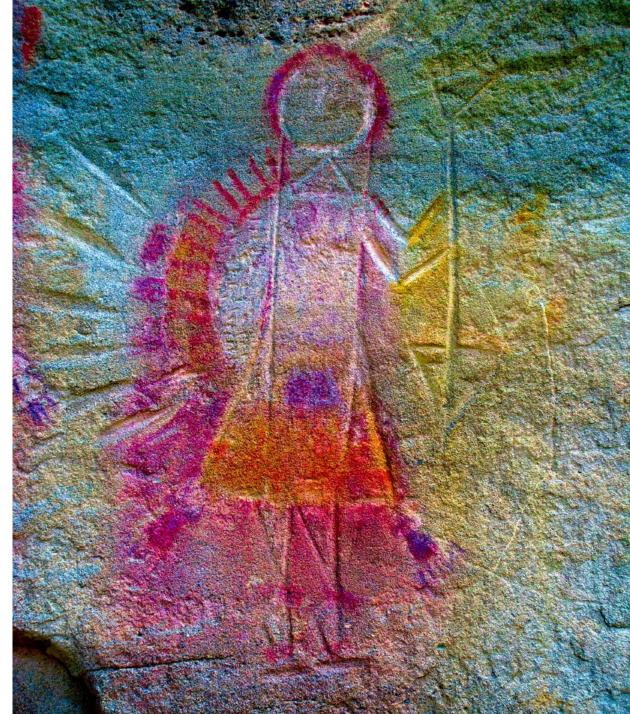




















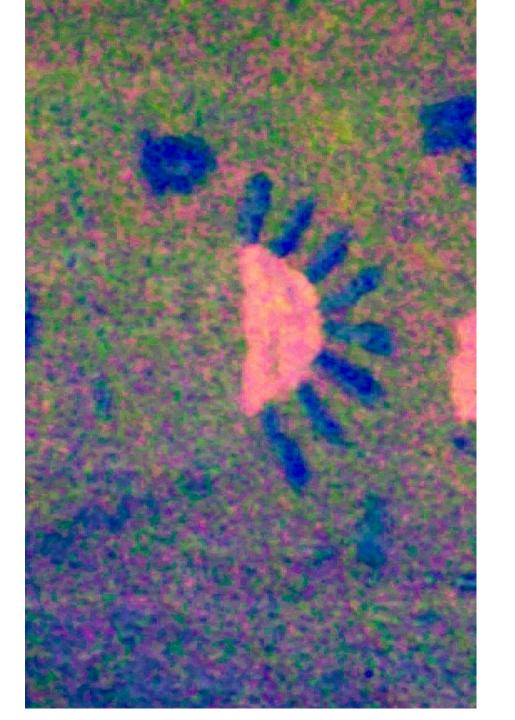














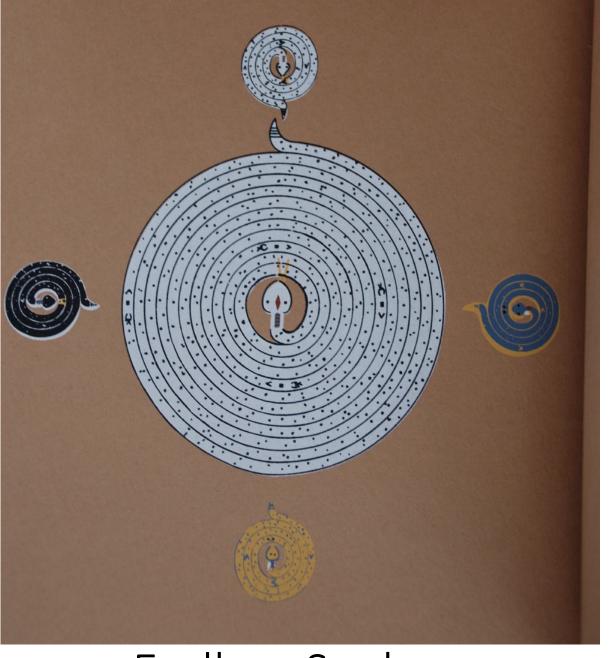


Hózhóģjí

- Beautyway
- Based on the myth of the younger sister
- Cures the following: aching feet, legs, or arms, painful urination, swelling in ankles and knees, itching, pain around the waist, backache, pain in arms, dry throat, feeling senseless, loss of consciousness, lying in a snake's bedding, and killing a snake.
- No dance, so there is no rock art illustrating dance groups.



Big Snake



Endless Snake



In beauty I walk.
With beauty before me I walk.
With beauty behind me I walk.
With beauty below me I walk.
With beauty above me I walk.
With beauty all around me I walk,
It is finished in beauty,
It is finished in beauty,
It is finished in beauty.

Washington Matthews. *The Night Chant: A Navaho Ceremony.* American Museum of Natural History, 1902.

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