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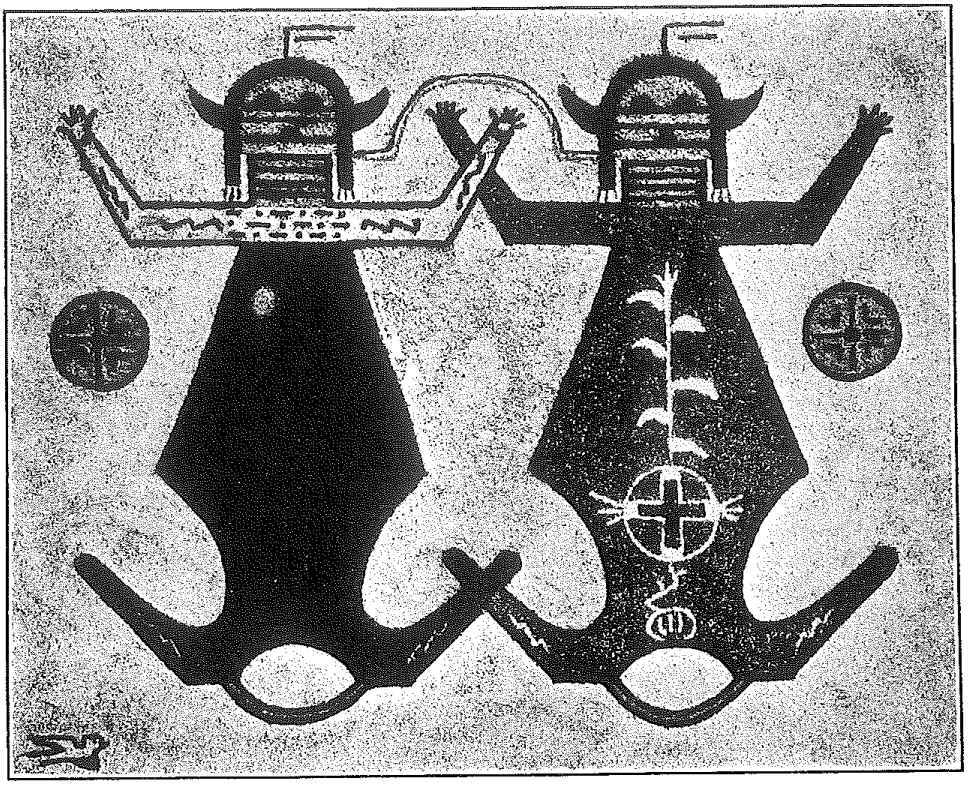

FATHER SKY AND MOTHER EARTH
NAVAHO SAND-PAINTING

From a replica executed in varnished sand by Red Robin
at the Denver Art Museum.

Leaflets 43 and 44 - March, 1932

6th Printing, July 1951

INDIAN SAND-PAINTING

TRIBES, TECHNICS AND USES

SAND-PAINTING. This term has many synonyms. Dry-paintings, ground-paintings, sand altars, sand mosaics, earth pictures and mosaics, are some of the many names given to this art. While all of them have points in favor of their use, in this paper "sand-painting" will be used, as being the most common expression.

ORIGIN. The beginnings and early development of sand-painting are unknown. Not until about 60 years ago was the existence of this art known to the world. The discoverer of the Navaho pictures was the late Dr. Washington Matthews, whose descriptions are still a main source of information. The widely scattered locations of this art, the existence of similar pictures among the Japanese and Hindus, and the common Asiatic origin of the Indian perhaps indicate the invention of sand-painting somewhere in Asia. In the case of the Navaho, the leading producers of these paintings, we find some authorities thinking that this tribe is of quite recent appearance in their present home and that sand-painting was learned by the tribe from the Pueblo peoples, who in turn are believed to have received most of the elements of their culture from the great civilized centers of Mexico. Other investigators, taking their stand on the legends of the Navaho, say that these people invented the process themselves centuries ago. Owing to the extremely ephemeral character of the pictures and the secrecy with which they have been surrounded the question of their origin will probably never be answered.

Cushing says that among the Zuñi the pictures on the floors of the kivas are connected with the lower regions, and that those which are related to the compass points are painted on the walls. He suggests that the reason for the great development in the size and intricacy of the Navaho pictures is that because of the impossibility of making pictures on the rough log walls of the medicine lodges it was necessary to combine the wall and floor pictures.

PRESENT CONDITION. Available information indicates that sand-painting is done today by all the tribes mentioned, except those in California, where the art came to an end about 1890. Perhaps a few very old men remember the process.

NAVAHO

MYTHOLOGY. The gods were the first makers of the pictures now made in sand. In some of the stories the pictures were embroidered on cloth. They were called *naska*, "a sewing." In other stories the gods made the pictures on black clouds spread on the floor. They realized that the people could not do this and ordered the use of sand. In one story the Eagle is said to have taught man how to make sand-paintings. The legend says they were made on sand so that no outsiders could steal them, and to prevent fights within the tribe.

PURPOSE. The Navaho name, *eek-ha*, meaning "the entry" or "the gods enter and go," indicates the idea behind the making of the pictures. Through them the gods enter the bodies of those whose cure is sought in the religious ceremonies in which the paintings are used.

MEDICINE LODGE. All, or the very large majority, of the sand-paintings are made in this ceremonial building. It is a structure of logs and earth built in much the same way as is the hogan, or dwelling house described in leaflet 9. The principal difference lies in the greater size of the medicine lodge, which must be large enough to accommodate a considerable number of persons besides the sometimes very large sand-paintings. Diameters as great as fifty feet are attained, though smaller sizes are more usual. The single door faces east.

COLORS. Five colors only are mentioned in the older accounts; white,

red and yellow, made from groundup sandstone; black, made from powdered charcoal mixed with a little sandstone to give it weight; and blue, really a gray made by mixing black and white. Reports of present day practices list other raw materials and colors. White is from gypsum; red and yellow are ochres. A brown is now used and a sparkling pink made by mixing red, white and some shiny mineral, probably mica or hematite. Matthews mentions the very rare use of powdered turquoise, malachite or indigo for very specially important bits of the pattern. When the locale of a ceremony is announced the raw materials for the colors are transported there, if they are not to be found in the neighborhood. Assistants of the shaman or medicine-man crush them into fine powder between stones such as are used for grinding corn. Supplies of prepared color are placed in small bark trays and cloth bags.

COLOR SYMBOLISM. With some exceptions the five colors are connected with the points of the compass as follows: white, east; blue, south; yellow, west; black, north. Red is the color symbol for sunshine. Black is male and blue female. The east and north sometimes exchange colors.

WORKERS. The older accounts say that the sand-paintings were made by young men who had passed through certain preliminary initiation rites, but who were neither medicine-men nor even candidates for this office. A very recent book says that anyone, of either sex, who happens to be present may assist in the work. If this be true it is certainly a modern innovation. In every case the pictures are made under the watchful eye of the shaman. Small pictures accompanying minor ceremonies may be made by the shaman himself. Women may be shamans.

PROCEDURE. Clean, yellow-white sand is carried into the medicine lodge in blankets and spread over the floor in an even layer from 1 to 3 inches thick. The layer is smoothed with the long, sword-like batten sticks used in weaving. Sometimes only enough sand is spread for the start of the picture, the rest being added as needed. This background is placed as near to the west side of the lodge as is possible.

The picture is begun as near the center as the design will permit, the worker constantly backing away from the completed portions. The design proceeds in accordance with the order of precedence of the compass points: east, south, west, north. If the figures all run in one direction the heads are to the east. The worker crouches on his heels with his bark trays of color nearby. He picks up a little color between his first and second fingers and opposed thumb and allows it to trickle out as he moves his hand along. Loose particles are blown off before the trickling begins. If a mistake is made it is covered with background sand and the design redrawn. The drawing is not entirely freehand, long lines being drawn with the aid of tightly stretched string, and spacing measured off with the palms and other parts of the hand and arm. After the design is finished the shaman sprinkles pollen on various parts of it and sets up plumed sticks around the edge, in cases where the rite requires this.

As the pictures must be destroyed the same day that they are made, the work usually begins in the morning. Some of the big pictures require hours of work by as many as a dozen workers.

In the ceremonies the patient usually sits down in the middle of the picture, which disturbs it to some extent. Further destruction is wrought by the application of pinches of the design to various parts of the patient's person. When the ceremony is ended all persons in the medicine lodge are permitted to help themselves to small pinches of the col-

ored sand from the painting. This is for healing and to be used in fetish bags. Any sick people in the assembly are allowed to apply sand from the pictures to their persons. For example, someone with a headache will moisten his palm, lay it on the head of one of the figures, and apply the sand adhering to his palm to his own head. When all this is over the shaman obliterates the picture, the process varying with the different ceremonies. After the final destruction the sand is gathered up in blankets and carried out of the lodge to be deposited somewhere nearby to the west of the lodge.

SUBJECT MATTER. The pictures represent, in conventionalized form, the figures of male and female gods, divine ceremonies, lightning, stars, sunbeams, rainbows, mountains, animals, plants and other objects having a mythical or traditional significance. The bodies of the dieties are extremely long and slim, with round or square masked heads and very abbreviated arms and legs. True symbolism is found in these pictures to the highest degree, this art being one of the outstanding examples of this type of expression among the Indians.

The individual elements and the complete compositions are theoretically drawn in accordance with unvarying rules. Only in a very few cases are variations allowed. The notable exceptions are the pouches of the divine beings, which can be made to suit the fancy of the artists. But there really is a certain amount of variation in the pictures because of the fact that no models or guides exist, the extremely elaborate intricacies of the designs being carried in the minds of the shamans from winter to winter. Besides these small individual variations there are those which are due to the fact that in the vast Navaho reservation there are local customs and practices. So not only does the shaman in New Mexico unknowingly allow little changes in the pictures made from year to year in his territory, but he also makes them on a slightly different general plan than does his fellow practitioner over the mountains in Arizona. But the differences in either case are extremely slight. No pictures are made in the summer. Matthews reported that the water color sketches which he was allowed to make were carefully studied by the workers to refresh their memories.

NUMBER AND SIZE. It is known that there are 166 pictures made in connection with the 17 major ceremonies of the Navaho, there being from 4 to 16 paintings for each ceremony. How many more there are is not known, though a guess of perhaps 400 has been made by an investigator working today. Over 100 have been carefully copied by white students of the art. A large number of exact replicas have been executed by medicine-men on the walls of the Fred Harvey "El Navaho" hotel in Gallup, New Mexico.

The pictures are square, rectangular and round. The latter range in diameter from perhaps 3 to 20 feet and the former show the same relative range in size. Jeancon watched the making of one 20 by 32 feet.

SWEAT LODGE PAINTINGS. The picture of a rainbow, with conventionalized human head, hands and feet, is drawn on the roof of the low domed sweat houses.

APACHE

BANDS. Sand-paintings have been reported from the several bands living on the adjoining San Carlos and White Mountain reservations in east central Arizona, and from the Jicarilla in north central New Mexico. For further information about this tribe see Leaflets 16 and 64.

PURPOSE. Like the pictures of the Navaho those of the Apache are made in connection with the curing activities of the medicine-men.

CHARACTER. Among the Apache sand-paintings are called medicine disks. They are made both outdoors in canvas or brush encircled areas and in medicine lodges. The pictures are made in connection with the ceremony which is the last resort of the medicine-men. If every other means of healing fails the medicine disk is made, for even if the patient does die, the use of the disk insures a pleasant life in the hereafter.

Th pictures consist of a series of concentric circles in red, black or white, bearing pictures of gods in human shape, heavenly phenomena, water, mountains, frogs, snakes, and various birds and animals. White limestone, red sandstone, black charcoal, yellow ochre, green powdered leaves and gray or blue made by mixing white or black, are the colors used. The pictures are from 10 to 18 feet in diameter.

As among the Navaho the sand-paintings must be made and destroyed in a single day. The picture is partially destroyed by the medicine-man in the course of the ceremony. He moistens his palms, lays them on the designs, and rubs the adhering sand on various parts of the patient's body. Pinches of the sand are also preserved for future use. When the ceremony is ended the picture is totally destroyed by the medicine-man. Ceremonies may also be conducted by women.

PUEBLO

HOPI. It is impossible to state how many of the ceremonies of the Hopi include the making of sand-painting in their rituals. Religious rites of some kind are going on the year round among these people and many of them have never been carefully investigated. There are also practices peculiar to each village, so that an account of a ceremony of a certain society at Walpi, for example, would not necessarily apply to the same ceremony of the Oraibi branch of the society. Hence the following list is very incomplete. Sand-paintings are made for the Snake and Antelope dances, for the Oaqol and Powamu ceremonies, for the woman's ceremonies called Lalakonta and Mamzrauti and for the Monkiva altar at Hano. The latter, however, is a Tewa village, though located on one of the Hopi mesas.

CHARACTER. The pictures are made in the underground rooms called kivas as part of the altars erected for the various ceremonies. The altars are groups of ceremonial objects such as wood or stone figures, painted wood backgrounds, prayer-sticks, fetishes, etc., erected on the kiva floors against one of the walls. The pictures are on the floor directly in front of the altars. They are rather small, squares, rectangles and sometimes circles from 2 to 4 feet in the greatest dimension being usual. The subjects of the pictures are clouds, rain, rainbows, lightning, snakes, various animals and representations of the masked figures called kachinas. The colors are connected with the points of the compass. Yellow, made from ochre or sandstone is north; green, made from copper carbonate, is west; red, made from sandstone, is south; white, made from gypsum, is east. Black powdered charcoal is also used. The background is sand of various shades. The pictures are made by the priests or priestesses of the societies. Unlike the Navaho, the Hopi do not have to destroy the pictures the day they are made.

ZUÑI. The above remarks about the Hopi sand-paintings apply very largely to those at Zuñi. Their full extent is not known. They are parts of altars in the kivas of the societies, their subjects are about the same as those of the Hopi, and they are not destroyed the day they are made.

OTHER PUEBLOS. Almost nothing is known about the extent or character of the art in the remaining pueblos. From the very scanty available data it would seem that in use and appearance the pictures are

quite similar to those of the Hopi, though perhaps less elaborate. They have been seen and quite carefully described at Sia and Jemez, and mention is made of them at Laguna, Isleta and Acoma. Mrs. Stevenson says that they were made at all the pueblos, but gives no supplementary information. Yet from other indications and studies of the relationship between those towns about which we know and those concerning which there is a lack of information it is altogether probable that her statement is correct. While progress may be made, the existence of a strong policy of secrecy on the part of the Indians, coupled with the slow dying of the old ceremonial life, makes the procuring of additional knowledge somewhat uncertain.

MEAL PAINTINGS are very widely distributed among the pueblos. Except for the material used in their construction they are identical with those made of colored earths. Mention is made of them at nearly every pueblo. Pollen is often used with the corn meal.

CALIFORNIA

TRIBES. Sand-paintings are known to have been made by the following tribes, which today are grouped under the general name of Southern Mission Indians: Luiseño, Juaneño, Gabrielino, Cupeño, Fernandeño and Cahuilla of the Shoshonean or Uto-Aztecan linguistic stock; Diegueño, of the Yuman-Hokan stock. It is possible that the neighboring Chumash also made such pictures. These tribes lived along the coast from the Mexican border to somewhat north of Los Angeles. While a few thousands of these peoples have survived, their old native life has very largely vanished, so that but little information about their sand-paintings is available.

ORIGIN. It is unquestioned that there is a strong connection between the sand-painting of the California tribes and that of the Pueblos and Navaho. The original idea seems to have come to these tribes very long ago from the Southwest, but the final working out was purely Californian.

USE. The paintings are made in connection with the worship of the god Chungichnish, a powerful being whose cult centered among these tribes. A better known feature of this religion is the use of the narcotic Jimson-weed, *Datura meteloides*, known also by its Mexican name of toloache. The pictures are much cruder than those of the Navaho and are the work of the medicine-men.

DIEGUEÑO. In this tribe a sand-painting is made in connection with the boy's adolescence ceremony. The circular pictures, 15 to 18 feet in diameter, were made in the houses in which the ceremonial objects were preserved. They represented the universe of the tribe, all the familar heavenly bodies and well known mountains, together with snakes and other creatures being placed within the circle. White powdered soapstone, red oxide of iron, black charcoal and colored seeds were used to make the picture. The significance of the picture was carefully explained to the boys in a long lecture on good conduct and then it was destroyed.

LUISEÑO. Sand-paintings accompanied four ceremonies: the boy's and girl's adolescence rites, the ant ordeal—a supplement of the boy's ceremony—and the ceremony for burying the feathers of an initiate. The only available information is about the pictures made for the girl's and boy's ceremonies, the difference lying in the designs. The pictures ranged from 4 to 18 feet in diameter and like those of the Diegueño represented the world. But while the latter picture the actual tangible world, the Luiseño universe is one of abstract and mystic symbolism. The heavenly bodies and earthly creatures appearing in it are mere lumps of color

and not the fairly realistic pictures of the Diegueño. The colors were commonly red, black and white, though for the boy's picture yellow, green and blue are mentioned.

CUPEÑO. For the boy's and girl's initiations a 12-foot circle was made in white, red, black and yellow, the latter being some sort of seeds. Within this circle were gods and human figures.

CAHUILLA. The mountain division of this tribe made a picture for their boy's initiation ceremony. It was like a wheel with spokes and was made with red ochre or iron oxide, white clay and black graphite.

OTHER TRIBES. Nothing seems to be known about the pictures of the other tribes listed. But as they were of the same stock as the Luiseño and close neighbors it is presumed that their pictures were generally similar.

PLAINS TRIBES. The Cheyenne and Arapaho make earth pictures as part of the altar set up in the lodge in which the Sun-dance takes place. The Ponka make a picture in each of the four preparation tipis. The pictures show concentric circles, straight lines, dots, etc., in white, red, black and yellow and are usually made in a shallow excavation. The Blackfoot make small sand-paintings during the ceremonies accompanying the transfers and other uses of medicine bundles, pipes, etc. The name smudge altar is given to them. The pictures, from 12 to 30 inches square, are made on the floor of the tipi behind the central fire. White, yellow, red and black are arranged in simple patterns showing heavenly bodies, realistic figures, and various abstract designs having symbolic meanings. A definite ritual, including the singing of songs, is followed in making the pictures. On the smudge altars various plants are burned to produce a scented smoke. Mention is made of Dakota, or Sioux, sand-painting, but information is not at present available.

YUMA. In reference 13 there is an account of a sand-painting made by the Yuman tribes at the Camp Verde reservation in Arizona. But as careful investigators have found absolutely no traces of this art among the Yuman tribes the picture was undoubtedly made by Apaches on this reservation. The description of the picture bears out this idea.

Compiled by Jean Allard Jeancon and F. H. Douglas from the following sources:

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