

## The Navajo Hooghan

The literal meaning of hooghan is "the place home". The hooghan is built in a specially chosen place. Consideration is made of the presence of trees that have been struck by lightning, gravesites, old battlegrounds, ant hills, etc. In particular, the Diné have a strong taboo against lightning struck trees. Lightning is very dangerous for them and their livestock. As opposed to the bilagáana attitude that



lightning never strikes the same place twice (demonstrably incorrect), the Navajos avoid places where lightning has struck as places favored by lightning. Trees that have already been struck by lightning are considered to be the property of Lightning. Therefore they are excluded from use in building the hooghans as well.



The hooghans are constructed according to instructions given by the diyin dine'é, as related by Haashch'éełti'í (Talking God) shortly after they emerged into the Fourth World. The hooghan is to be built of wood or mud. It is modelled after the hooghan of First Man. The entrance is to face the east [Ha'a'aah] in order to catch the first rays of dawn [hayíík]. The hooghan is to be round, as is the sun

[Jóhonaa'éí] and as was the ceremonial basket [ts'aa'] used by Haashch'éełti'í in the first Blessing ceremonies after the Emergence into the Fourth World, those ceremonies which have now evolved into the Blessing Way ceremonies. When logs are cut for the hooghan, note must be taken of which is the root end and which the growing end. The logs are placed with the growing end clockwise to the east [Ha'a'aah] and so forth, in a clockwise manner. Beneath the entrance to the hooghan, supporting the entrance structure, two stone slabs are buried in the ground. These slabs are mentioned in the chief hogan songs. Such stones have been found, identically located as those in



use today, in hooghan remains dated as far back as 1680 (using tree-ring dating methods). These stones are symbolic of the unchanging tradition of the properly built hooghan.



The main beams of a hooghan are anointed during the blessing of a new hooghan, moving clockwise. The owner of the building uses white corn meal [naad' ak'n] to anoint the main beams or may hire a chanter [Hat'aalii] for the ceremony. The hooghan may be blessed again if the family has been away for a long time and then wishes to move in again. The hooghan is anointed again if a prayer [sodizin], Blessingway [Hózhójí], or major ceremony is to take place there. If the one being sung over is male, white [igai] corn meal [naad' ak'n] is used, yellow [itso] corn meal [naad' ak'n] if female.

Since many Navajos now live in bilagáana style houses (white man style houses), and hooghans are necessary for ceremonies, you will find hooghans built beside the most modern of houses [tsineheeshjii bee kin]. (There is a two story, six sided house between Round Rock [Tsénikání] and Rock Point [Tsénitsaadeez'áhi] with a two car garage and a hooghan nearby.)



During ceremonials the women will sit on the north [náhooks] side and the men will sit on the south [shádi'ááh] side. This follows the Navajo stories of the meetings of the diyin dine'é to create the Sun [Jóhonaa'éí] and the Moon [T'éhonaa'éí]. The completed shape of the hooghan was decided upon after the fixing in place of the mountains. The hooghans are to have the best qualities of the shapes

of Gobernador Knob [Ch'óol''], a fine tapering shape, and Huerfano Mountain [Dziná'oodiii], a rounded top). Thus the forked pole hogan is like Gobernador Knob [Ch'óol''] and the six sided round roofed hogan is like Huerfano Mountain [Dziná'oodiii]. The forked pole hooghans are thought of as male and the rounded roof hooghans are female.

Within the hooghan the children and grandchildren are taught all of the stories of the origin of the hooghan and the respect and care that is necessary for the hooghan. These stories will include those where the diyin dine'é also discuss the interior of the hooghan and the proper placement of items within the hooghan. They say that in this way the

hooghan will become a center of strength and sound planning.



The Diné say that the diyin dine'é check each home at dawn [hayíík]. The children are all urged to rise early, when the morning stars [s' doo nídzídí] are out to see them. They should be active outside their hooghans so that the diyin dine'é will bless them each morning ['abíní].