



Yoolgaii Asdzáá Ilkaad

Transcribed by Sylvia Jackson

Traditional hane' recalls Child of Dawn reaching maturity within twelve changes of seasons. It is told that one day the People witnessed the days progressed through haniísá, new life, anooéél, maturity, neest'á, aging, and reaching sá, old age, over a short length of time. Diyin Dine'é witnessed Changing Woman returning to her youth with each complete cycle as she walked round the fire hearth. Metaphorically, the Diyin Dine'é understood with the woman's menstrual, life would repeatedly renew itself with new births passing through her mind, body, soul, and spirit. The Holy Ones became aware of the tremendous task laid before the wonder child. They gathered and discussed how to approach molding the Mother of People for her task. Her purpose for coming to the earth surface and to the People was to fulfill the role of becoming the Mother of the People. Preparation for her role required her to be physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually in control to successfully accomplish the enormous task before her. First Woman took on the responsibility of molding her daughter with the help of Diyin Dine'e. They understood the growing process would be part of the natural order of living.

Atsé Asdzáá informed everyone when her daughter experienced her first women menstrual. The Holy Ones came together and dressed Changing Woman in white deerskin adorned with white shells. She stood before them glowing with beauty. They called her Yołgai Asdzáá. First Woman brushed her daughter's hair with a grass brush. She brought her hair together at the nape of her neck and tied it in a ponytail with a strip of buckskin cut from a kill called Doo k'aa k'ehii.

Buckskin, Doo k'aa k'ehii, is from a buck killed without piercing the body with shape weapons. The animal would be wrestled down and suffocated by causing it to inhale pollen through its nostrils while covering the mouth. The hide is tanned and whitewashed in white clay. A strip measuring two fingers in width is cut from the nose, neck, down the back to the top of the tail and is used to tie the hair of the kinaaldá. Buckskin from this type of kill is highly valued and used in many ceremonies for restoring mental balance and harmony.

Gathering Changing Woman's hair at the nape of her neck and tying it with a buckskin strip signifies the importance of learning to gather one's thoughts, learning to focus, to set priorities and to make good decisions. The event of Changing Woman maturing with the aging process set precedence for all earth surface females.

Diyin Dine'é placed a pair of moccasins on the feet of Yoolgail Asdzáá. It was red with white wrappings, representing the lower and upper creations. A sash belt representing sunbeam and rainbow was wrapped around her middle. It is told by the elders that sunbeam represents the life pathway for male children and rainbow is the life pathway for female children not yet born. Each Holy One placed a strand of beads around her neck, earrings on her ears, and bracelets on her wrist. It is a traditional belief that jewels display an appreciation for the creation of the People created from the same sacred elements Mother Earth is adorned with. Wearing a piece of jewel displays a connection to Mother Earth and Yoolgail Asdzáá.

Diyin Dine'é encouraged Changing Woman to run to the four directions in accordance to values placed within the directions. Ałkʼaad was prepared each time she experienced woman's passage at four consecutive occasions. Twelve feathers placed over the sweet cake in circular position initialized and recognized fertility in the power of the female body and represented maturity. This has never been repeated in the making and baking of the Ałkʼaad.

Haashch'ée'yáalt'i conducted Hózhóqjii doo iigháash for Changing Woman. Everyone was invited to volunteer a song or two in appreciation for life and the process of living. This is a wonderful event for the earth surface people to practice in rejoicing reproduction of self, a continuous growth of people from generation to generation.

An all night event, Hózhóqjii, includes honoring the force of creation, the process of growth, the natural order of nature and fertility for the living world. It is the traditional Diné mother's role and responsibility to reflect the values of this celebration to her daughter. Additionally, Navajo woman should dress appropriately daily to identify with Changing Woman, Mother of the People. She, in return, recognizes her children and offers protection, guidance and direction. The jewels are called Yodí and Nitłíz Ałtaas'éeí, the human's connection to the elements of life and the natural world.