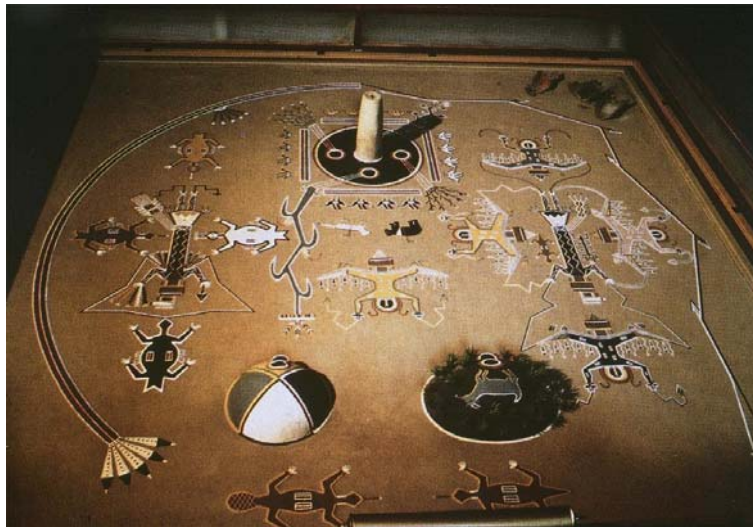


The ‘Secularization’ Process of Diné Commercial Sand Paintings and the Persistence of Religious Values

A critical discussion, concerning the Diné people in southwestern North America, of the commercialization and ‘secularization’ of ceremonial dry painting designs during the 20th century under the impact of western civilization.



By Jason Falkenburg

Figure Displayed Above: Picture of an impermanent ceremonial Sand Painting. Date, title and Artist Unknown. (ARTSTOR_103_41822003255716.jpg). Access Date: 05-08-2011.
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Bachelor Thesis

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	4
Theoretical Framework.....	6
Diné, Aboriginals, Secularization Processes and Archeology.....	8
Ch. 1 Diné Dry Paintings.....	10
1.1 A brief Historical Background.....	10
1.2 Religion.....	10
1.3 Dry Painting and Original Function.....	14
Ch. 2 The Secularization Process of Dry Paintings.....	16
2.1 Influences of Washington Matthews and Hosteen Klah.....	16
2.2 Manipulating Diné Ceremonies.....	20
2.3 Wall Decorations and other Permanent Media Forms.....	24
2.4 Weaving.....	25
2.5 Diné Painted Pottery.....	27
Ch. 3 ‘Secularization’.....	30
3.1 Dry Painting as Commodity.....	30
Conclusion.....	35
English Summary.....	38
Dutch Summary.....	39
Bibliography.....	40
Figures.....	42

Introduction

In the late 20th century, the modern art-market has witnessed an increasing interest in forms of contemporary art that originate in non western cultures. In this paper I aim to explore an art form of non-western origin that in the process of its emergence has entirely adapted to the demands, values, and expectations of the modern western art-market. This adaptation has come at a price - a price that is not financial but cultural. The question being raised here, is to which degree the original cultural values underlying this art form have survived, or have been altered or obscured, in the course of this adaptation to the modern art market.

The art form that is explored here is somewhat confusingly called ‘sand paintings’. As it seems to indicate that they originate in practices of drawing permanent visual signs on a canvass by using sand as part of religious ceremonial practices executed by medicine men belonging to the Diné¹ – native people living in the southwest of North America (particularly in Arizona).² In their original context, sand paintings only exist in temporal form. These paintings are created in the process of healing ceremonies and last only for the duration of these rituals. At the end of these rituals these paintings are destroyed in order not to harm uninitiated individuals.

Anthropologists and other westerners have influenced the creators of these ritual drawings who started to produce paintings for buyers that was according to the western notions of commercial art and aesthetics. And so instead of creating temporal designs in a ritual context that was associated with spiritual powers and religious beliefs, these creators started making ‘art objects’ in a permanent form: often rectangular paintings, on wood, executed in modern materials and techniques.

A typical permanent commercial sand painting can range from a simple small inexpensive souvenir (sold in museums for example) to a large expensive ‘fine’ art product (Parezo 1983, 164). An example of such a sand painting design can be seen in a work made by Luther Douglas, titled ‘Big Thunder’ (fig. 1).

¹ The Diné are also known as Navajos, but the indigenous people prefer to be called by the former name.

² There are two distinctive terms that I will use in this paper to separate two concepts. The term **sand painting** is used when painters produce for the commercial art-market, and the term **dry painting** is used when painters make their creations in a ceremonial context.

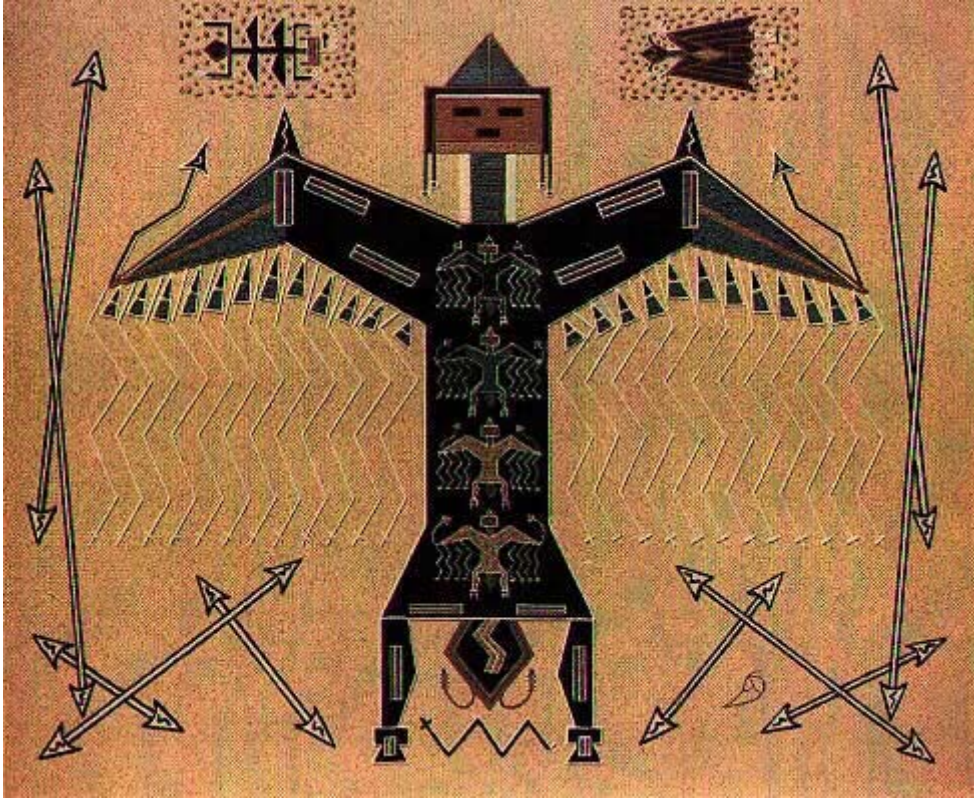


Figure 1: Luther Douglas, *Big Thunder*, Collection Orma J. Smith, Museum of Natural History, The College of Idaho

The geometrical figures, motifs and patterns in this painting derive from the mythology of the Diné symbolic ancestral universe. They usually represent stylized human figures, animals, vegetation, man-made and natural signs and objects. Often, the creations also contain abstract representations of natural phenomena indicating wind directions or geographical locations. In the case of figure 1, we see in the center a large black stylized bird motif, known as ‘Big Thunder.’ According to Douglas³ and Bahti,⁴ the zigzag lines that are protruding from its wings symbolize lightning. The two figures at the top are known as ‘Bat’ and ‘Dontso:’ they are guardian figures that, in the healing ceremony, help protect the patient or chant singer – i.e. the medicine man – from evil spirits that could enter the ritual space or even the patient him or her self (Bahti 2008, 49-50). To uninformed western viewers, however, while they sometimes are aware of possible symbolic connotations of such figures, these connotations are not very clear. Even for the

³ This figure and interpretation is retrieved from:

<http://www.collegeofidaho.edu/campus/community/museum/Archaeo/Douglas/gallery.asp?id=3>

⁴ Bahti in ‘Navajo Sandpaintings’ likewise interprets the symbolic meaning of the Big Thunder on p. 49-50.

informed viewer, knowledge about a particular symbol in a sand painting has little to do with its original spiritual value and ceremonial meaning. The western ‘art’ viewer will have an entirely different understanding of the design than a medicine man, or his patient. This is because they view the design as an instrument of healing. So it seems that sand paintings by definition seem to have lost a lot of connections with the religious and cultural practices they originate from.

In this paper, I would like to investigate whether this loss of religious content is really the case in Diné sand paintings produced for the market. I will describe and analyze in some depth the ritual contexts from which these paintings emerged, the changes that happened when painters started producing for western people, and also particularly try to answer the question whether certain spiritual values, that were originally part of a ceremonial context, have survived in the commercial product. Firstly, I will address a theoretical discussion about ‘modernization’ processes in some relevant literature. I will do this because the emergence of sand paintings in the modern art-market can be seen as a process of modernization. This literature is relevant because it offers a general framework for my discussion of the possible loss of spiritual values in modern Diné sand paintings.

Theoretical Framework

I will use Ronald Inglehart and Wayne E. Baker’s article, *Modernization, Cultural Change, and the Persistence of Traditional Values* (2000) to help answer my question whether traditional cultural values persist or not, in Diné sand paintings. These two authors offer a critical discussion of a broad range of theories (from Marx and Weber to Wallerstein and DiMaggio) relating to processes of ‘modernization,’ that is to say, shifts in cultural values occurring during the emergence of modern and postmodern economies. Their discussion is on a high level of generalization and touches upon a wide and wild variety of subject matter ranging from belief systems during the Reformation, Confucian traditions, and the social function of MacDonald’s restaurants across the globe. Moreover, Inglehart and Baker incorporate data from western and non-western societies, covering a period roughly from the sixteenth to the twentieth century. Their discussion, they state, covers 65 societies and 75 percent of the world’s population (Inglehart & Baker 2000, 23).

Despite their sweeping generalizations, these authors offer a helpful framework for my own discussion of the Diné culture. Their analysis regards the question whether traditional cultural values, in particular religious values, including those originating in non-western societies, persist, or not, in secular (post) modern industrial societies. They briefly review two different schools of thought. The first is, what they call, the *convergence* school of thought, which promotes the idea that through modernization traditional values will inevitably be replaced by modern values (Inglehart & Baker 2000, 20). The other is the *persistence* school of thought that promotes the idea that the traditional values of society will persist despite economic and political changes (Inglehart & Baker 2000, 20). In the end, Inglehart and Baker, come to the conclusion that economic development will bring pervasive cultural changes to a given society. However they believe that the persistence of religious values are “path dependent” and that the cultural heritage of traditions such as Protestant or Confucian, leaves an imprint on a society that will endure despite modernization (Inglehart & Baker 2000, 49). Furthermore, they also believe that the process of secularization, suggested by earlier theorists on modernization of cultures, such as Marx, is way too oversimplified and turns out not to be as strictly linear as was first thought (Inglehart & Baker 2000, 49). These conclusions seem to suggest that even though economic development and industrialization causes a major impact on a given society, certain cultural values, like religion, can or will persist. This is quite different from the assumption of earlier modernization theorists whom suggest that all modern societies will follow a linear path of secularization and industrialization.

Even with the generalizations made by Inglehart and Baker, their analyses are quite valuable in providing a general theoretical framework for my discussion regarding Diné sand painting produced for the modern western art market. ‘*Navajo Sandpainting: From Religious Act to Commercial Art*,’⁵ written by Nancy Parezo, offers a detailed study of the process of secularization of commercial Diné sand paintings. By critically investigating Parezo’s chronological description on the ‘modernization’ process of Diné sand painting production, I will argue that the process of secularization of sand paintings, which originate in ceremonial contexts, follows a less linear path of development than these general theories postulate.

⁵ I will mainly use Parezo’s book because she is one of the few authors who actually discusses the secularization of commercial sand paintings in detail.

Diné, Aboriginals, Secularization Processes and Archaeology

The subject matter treated in this thesis is related to the contemporary archaeological attention awarded to investigating cultural change, also in relation to how tradition and indigenous culture are reconfigured in light of modern societies. Archaeology has an important relevance in this debate. As one will notice the anthropological approach and human agency is evident throughout.

In order for archeologists to come to an improved understanding of the past, the field of cultural anthropology can be taken into consideration. A significant part of the archaeological investigation concerns itself with particular belief systems, which in its institutionalized form as religion also focuses on processes of change such as ‘secularization’. In line with contemporary archaeological approaches, I argue that incorporating aspects of cosmology and ideological belief systems in studying material culture, a more complete interpretation of contextual landscapes can be achieved not only for ancient cultures but also for indigenous cultures that have continued to this day. Along this rationale, one case is investigated in this thesis, which is the Diné ceremonial dry paintings, and its (continued) development since its adaptation from the Pueblo Indians in the late 19th century.

Apart from the evident importance of studying processes such as secularization and commercialization for the archaeological field as a whole; the study of symbols and semiotics are also important contributions to archaeology. This needs no further argumentation. However, it might be of interest to note that the early background and evolution of sand paintings obviously will never be found in the archaeological record (as they were not to be permanent drawings, as is clearly argued in the thesis); this does not mean that the cultural trait of making these kind of drawings is not of great importance to the archaeological field: some cultural traits are not to be found in the archaeological record, even though they are of great and pivotal importance to the culture under study. May the case of the Diné sand paintings serve as a perfect example of this.

One should note that secularization of ideology and its associated material culture is a recurring phenomenon that is seen in many archaeological/anthropological cases throughout studied cultures. To name one: the secularization process is likewise, and frighteningly similar to the Diné, evident amongst the Aboriginals (consisting of various and diverse tribes- such the

Pintupi, Luritja, Arrernte, Anmatyerre, and the Walpiri) whom reside in the Papunya community in the mid-western dessert of Australia (Myers 2002).

Prior to western contact the Aboriginals' ceremonial artifacts and traditions conceived of ground drawings, skin decorations, dancing, singing, and carved boards that are deeply embedded in their ancient cosmological perspective of the world, also known as 'Dream-time' (Myers 2002, 85). After contact around 1971---when Geoff Bardon, a school teacher that was part of the Australian government's assimilation project, took interest in traditional Aboriginal ceremonial designs and motifs (Morphy 1998, 282)---a process of secularization and commercialization took place. It was through western contact that there was a great increase in interest by the commercialized art-market for Aboriginal painters to make traditional design like ground sculptures in a more impermanent commercialized and 'secular' form (which is now known as Acrylic dot painting). Although Myers avoids the concept of 'secularization'---because perhaps the political situation is very delicate as both colonial and indigenous inhabitants still do not treat each other as equals---but through his readings one can easily denote that western influences have again changed the traditional ceremonial art (i.e. the archaeological material culture) in many aspects.⁶ The question remains if indeed this material culture still holds religious connotation, as Inglehart and Baker propose in their article *Modernization, Cultural Change, and the Persistence of Traditional Values* (2000). Through their broad anthropological and sociological framework one can use their perspective to help investigate and answer such questions. By applying several seminal and contemporary academic works I believe I was able to reveal that indeed religious connotations are still prevalent in the context of Diné permanent commercialized sand paintings (see **Ch. 3 'Secularization'**). With similar cases, such as the secularization and commercialization of Aboriginal ceremonial art, I believe that similar investigation and research---with the use of Inglehart and Baker's theoretical propositions---can be made concerning such cases like the Aboriginals.

⁶ Due to lack of time this area could not be fully investigated. Perhaps indeed an interesting topic for a master thesis.

Chapter 1: Diné Dry Paintings

1.1 A brief Historical Background

To help us set off we shall very briefly take a look at the historical background of the Diné so as to give the reader a better idea on how the Diné settled in the Navajo Indian reservation, located in Southwest America and where the dry paintings supposedly came from.

The ancestors of the Diné go all the way back to the 11th century A.D., when the Athapascan Native Americans migrated from Canada and Alaska, making their way down to the American Southwest (Reichard 1974: xvii). The Diné and several other Apache tribes, whom are believed to all originate from these Athapascans, spread and settled into small tribes next to another large, but ethnically and culturally different, Indian group called the Pueblo Indians (p. xix). It was only in the year of 1870, that the American government authorities had forced the Diné into a reservation (Reichard 1974, xx). Since then, the culture of the Diné has not stopped changing and they adopted several cultural aspects from the Pueblo Indians, which included the ceremonial dry paintings. The Diné made the dry paintings their own, enhanced it and incorporated their own mythologies and narratives into it (Reichard 1974, xxii). In the late 19th century western researchers started to have closer contact with the Diné people. This closer contact propelled the making of commercially produced sand paintings. By the late 1970s these productions became an international phenomena.

1.2 Religion

By taking a look at the religious values of the Diné, we will get a clearer picture of what dry paintings are, and how they exist in their original context. This will help the reader get a better understanding on the transformative period, that later took place, when the ceremonial dry paintings in its original context changed into art commodities.

The Diné believe that the universe consists of a very delicate balance system in which great powers of good and evil forces reside (Parezo 1983, 11). They think that only humans can upset this harmonious balance system and when they have done so, even if they did it

unintentionally, the consequences usually take form in an illness (Bahti & Joe 2009, 12). Humans can upset this fragile harmonious balance, for example, by unknowingly set up a camp near a cemetery, kick over an anthill, or use firewood from a tree struck by lightning, or when one is not using correct manners, or overworking, indulgencing in too much sex, or accidentally disturbing certain spirits that reside in unmarked burial grounds (Bahti & Joe, 12; Reichard 1976, 80). All these accidents, mishaps, and rule breakings can conform to a form of illness or ailment in which a ritualized ceremony needs to be implemented in order to restore the individual of its illness and bring back the harmonious balance of the cosmic order.⁷

In order to cure such illnesses a patient must take part in a complex ritual of song ceremonies (or chant ways), divination rites, and prayer ceremonies (Parezo 1983, 12). The most well known chants are the Blessingway chants, the Evilway chants, and the Holyway chants. It is in the Holyway chants in which most of the dry paintings are made and used, as it corrects problems and illnesses due to improper contact with supernatural forces and also helps protect against future misfortunes (Parezo 1983, 29). The other song ceremony, The Evilway chant, deals with improper conduct with ghosts or witches and the Lifeway chant is used when an individual has been in an accident (Parezo 1983, 13). The Diné use dry paintings mainly in the Holyway chants, never in Lifeway chants, and only sometimes in Evilway chants (Parezo 1983, 13).

The individual who has fallen ill will first seek out a seer or prognosticator, before a ceremony or specific chant way can be carried out. This is because a diagnosis needs to be made so that the disease can be indentified and a recommended treatment (chant way) can be proposed (Parezo 1983, 93). The medicine man or also called singer or chanter⁸ is involved in the chant ceremonies in which dry paintings, prayers, ritualistic acts, and songs are performed. The main task of a medicine men is to make sure that the whole ceremonial process proceeds in such a manner that the supernatural (called the Holy People) will come and heal the patient who is situated on top of a dry painting, as is seen down below in figure 2 (Wyland 1983, 15):

⁷ There are many different ceremonies that are assigned to different illnesses and ailments. Examples of such illnesses are: headaches, eye sores, but also insanity (Reichard 1974 , 89)

⁸ I will use chanter and singer interchangeably throughout this paper.



Figure 2: “Medicine Man Chants with Rattle”, (ARTSTOR_103_41822003022256)

Above in figure 2 a little boy is situated, somewhat to the left side, on top of a dry painting. The exact chant ceremony, which is represented in this picture above, is unknown, but we can see that the older man squatting behind the boy in the left corner is a contemporary medicine man or singer. Supposedly this medicine man is chanting or singing while holding a rattle like object. Here we can easily see the designs of these figures visible beneath the boy, typically characteristic of a dry painting. The figurative and geometrical shapes and usage of different bright colours (which all carry different important meanings) represent characteristics of individuals that are part of a mythological narrative that is retold and carried out by the medicine men (Bahti & Joe 1978, 20). These mythological creatures or figurative are also known as the holy people.

The holy people as they call them are believed to be the deities of the Diné who have created the cosmic order of their universe. These holy people are believed to have immense power that can be ruthlessly potent and dangerous (Bahti & Joe 1978, 15). This

dangerous power, however, can be brought under control by the medicine men or singer by the use of knowledge which is taught by their master singers through many years of training. If the medicine man, with the help of his workers, creates a dry painting in a correct manner as taught by their masters, the holy people have little choice but be attracted to these figurative designs of their ancestors and heal the patient, who is sitting on top of them, with the controlled power of the medicine men.

The most prominent of Holy People of the Diné which are most often represented in the designs and motifs of the dry paintings represented in their mythological narratives are The Sun, his wife Changing Woman, and their twin children Monster Slayer and Born-for-water. These figures are the very old, ancestral figures that are believed to have played a crucial role in shaping Diné comic order and the universe (Wyland 1983, 17). The Holy people and other legendary supernatural figures are seen as exemplary and idyllic heroes, whose ways and doings, described in their mythologies, help instruct the patient, who is sung over by the medicine men, to identify with his belief and relate to the manner of how and why the ceremony could cure him (Wyland 1983, 17).

This identification to the narrative mythological story and the curing of the diseases of the patient, will be best understood if we take a quick look at the basic principles of Diné mythology and what their stories reveal. To begin with, there are two major sections of narrative stories in the mythology of the Diné that are used in healing ceremonies. The first one being the origin myth and the second one being the narratives containing legendary tales, where either a hero or heroine (sex depending on individual being cured) got him or herself into a certain predicament and has acquired the necessary knowledge to solve his or her problems. These predicaments of the specific chant coincides with some of the problems the sick person has contracted. This goes to show why the patient first needs to seek out a prognosticator as each specific chant relates to a specific illness (Reichard 1976, 99).

It is very important to remember that the ceremonial act must be executed perfectly. For it is believed that the holy people, who are attracted to the dry painting, will notice any imperfection which can cause them to neglect the chanter's request of curing the patient and

perhaps even cause harm to them (Parezo 1983, 20).⁹ It seems that with the help of the dry painting that takes part in a large ceremonial context, the cosmic order and harmonious balance of the universe of the Diné can be restored.

To sum up: the illness of a patient, which has developed because he or she upset the harmonious balance of the cosmic universe, can be cured through identification with the narrative story which is displayed in the dry paintings and retold (or sang) by the medicine man. The trained medicine men will use the power of knowledge to control the supernatural Holy People, who are obliged to come as they are attracted to their own perfectly executed representation, and cure the patient from his illness (Bahti & Joe 1978, 13). Now that we know the religious function of the dry painting, we can dive a little deeper and see what these dry paintings consist of and how they function in their original context.

1.3 Original Function of the Dry Paintings

The dry paintings in their original context are a sacred form of art that is made by using natural pigment material such as sand, charcoal, pollen, and cornmeal which is poured or sprinkled on the floor of a special medicine lodge (Young-Sanchez 1992, 86). Along with dry paintings other ritualistic paraphernalia are used in the ceremonial chants such as medicine bundles and sacred objects like prayer sticks which are made from carefully selected wood and feathers (Reichard 1976, xxxiv). Another important element of the ceremonial chant is the accompanied song that is sang by the medicine men. This song was taught by the medicine men's trainer and the performance needs to be of great accuracy, for otherwise the holy people might not be attracted to the dry painting and help cure the patient (Reichard 1976, xxxiv).

Even before the actual chant ceremony will begin and the dry painting is made, the person who is to be cured undergoes many ritualistic endeavours. To start off the patient will undergo periods of purification, in which many hours are spent in sweat baths. During this time the patient might even have to undergo a period of abstinence, as having sex is considered taboo and would interfere with the purification and healing process of the chant ceremony (Reichard 1976, xxxiv). After this purification process, the ceremonial chant that is specific to the disease

⁹ We shall see later below in chapter 2, why perfection has major influences in the 'secularization' processes of the Diné sand painting.

of the patient will start to take place (a ceremonial chant can sometimes last up to nine days). A typical chant ceremony will start off by purifying the patient every morning for the first four days. This is done through more sweat rites and other ritualistic acts that ward off the evil spirits that reside within the patient and simultaneously also purifying him/her (Reichard 1976, xxxv). Each night the chanter addresses an appropriate song that is associated with the dry painting and is sung over the patient, helped by assisting singers (Reichard 1976, xxxvi). In the next four days a dry painting is constructed. With the help of as many as over forty assistants a small painting can take up to half an hour to make, but large ones can take up to ten hours (Parezo 1983:16; Reichard 1963, xxxv). The size of the dry paintings will evidently have an impact on the power of the ceremonial chant and increase the ability of recovery of the patient. This means that the patient will have more chance of being cured if his or her family can afford a large dry painting that will attract the Holy People easier (Parezo 1983, 16).

When the construction of the dry painting is finished the patient is seated directly on top of the beautifully figurative designs, as is seen in figure 1, and is asked by the medicine man to concentrate as much as possible on the song that is told in story form. Simultaneously the chanter will perform various songs and prayers over the patient. The use of the rattle as seen in figure 1 is not clear, but it seems to add to the ambience of the ceremonial act that is ousted by the trained medicine men. While the singer is chanting he will sprinkle the sand specifically onto the patient's body from the figures drawn in the dry paintings. According to Parezo it is believed by the Diné that by physically incorporating the sand, which is now thought to contain potent healing powers, on to the body, the patient will be able to merge with the story told by the medicine men and feel as one with divine powers of the holy people (Parezo 1983, 19). Their dangerous and divine powers can thus cure the sick individual and restore the harmonious balance of the cosmic universe.

After the whole ceremony has been completed the dry painting is erased with a wooden stick with prayer feathers. The sand, which is still believed to contain powerful forces, is then gathered up carefully and disposed of some distance from their homes or trails. Before doing this the chanter says a final prayer over the sand which is meant to neutralize it (Bahti & Joe 1978, 15).

Ch. 2: The ‘Secularization’ Process of Dry Paintings

Before we start we need to stop and recollect the key concept that was raised in the beginning of this paper. The question raised was if religious values of a certain culture, in this case the Diné, will persist through the process of ‘modernization’. It is necessary to keep this question in mind as we view Parezo’s description of the ‘secularization’ process of dry paintings. Along with this question we shall critically assess the linearity of the process as described by Parezo when it comes to the commoditization of these sacred creations.

2.1 Influences of Washington Matthews and Hosteen Klah

The commoditization of the dry painting started when the first ethnographer researching the Diné, Dr. Washington Matthews, who came in touch with them in 1884 (Parezo 1983, 23). Matthews became interested in the beautiful designs displayed on the dry paintings when he was able to attend some of the chant ceremonies after befriending some of the medicine men. With permission of these medicine men he was able to record (draw) the sacred images of certain dry paintings. Matthews publicized the watercolour sketches of the Mountainway chant dry paintings with interpretive notes (Young-Sanchez 1992, 90). These published water colour sketching ignited interest in anthropologists and other scholars in the United States to study and visit the Diné reservation. And so we can say that the year 1884 ‘officially’ marked the beginning of the ‘secularization’ and commercialization process of the dry paintings.

It is interesting, however, to mention that Margaret Young-Sanchez in ‘*Replica of a Drypainting from the Navajo Mountainway*’ reveals that permanent replicas of ceremonial dry painting designs were actually made prior to Matthews’ permanent water colour sketching. According to Young-Sanchez--who uses Newcomb’s biography on Hosteen Klah (see below)--in 1875, Klah, who was then eight years old, had discovered a cave that was filled with permanent rock paintings and pottery with ceremonial motifs. Klah said to believe that they were made by an exiled singer who wanted to preserve his ceremonial knowledge (Young-Sanchez 1992, 100). This indeed reveals a unique case in which permanent ceremonial sand paintings were made prior to the contact with westerner researchers. We can ask ourselves if we can take Klah’s

reasoning as actual fact, but as there are no other similar circumstances in which permanent ceremonial designs were made, it should give us ample evidence that such a case is indeed out of the ordinary and that we have to take Klah's belief as being the most likely reason. His reasoning can be held as most accountable as we shall see further below Klah was an extraordinary man, who played a crucial role in the development of commercial sand paintings.

The next wave of informants that took interest in the dry paintings came in the early 1900s. These anthropologists were interested in the Diné culture and particularly wanted to study their intrinsic religion. While the anthropologists (such as Gladys A. Reichard) studied the Diné, traders and self established ethnographers started to collect sand painting reproductions. For example, in the year of 1917, one such ethnographer named Franc J. Newcomb (a trader's wife) befriended and teamed together with the famously unorthodox and innovative medicine man and *weaver* Hosteen Klah (Parezo 1983, 25). Klah would make pencil sketching of the dry paintings while Newcomb would turn them into watercolour reproductions. With the collaboration of Hosteen Klah and several other singers, Newcomb recorded over 700 permanent watercolour sketching (see figure 3) of sand painting designs and motifs (Parezo, 1983, 24). And so with the help of Reichard's anthropological book *Navajo Medicine Man, the Sandpaintings of Miguelito* and Newcomb's published sketching of the watercolour sand painting reproductions, the Diné dry painting designs started to become more well known amongst the general public of the U.S. (Parezo 1983, 27).

According to Parezo, Klah was very eager to work with ethnographers and anthropologists and teach them about Diné myths, rituals and dry paintings because he wanted to preserve his religion. It was obvious to him that there was a lack of number of apprentices who wanted to learn the traits of a singer and so he thought that the best way of preserving the Diné religion and its ceremonial practices was to share his knowledge with the westerners (Parezo 1983, 27). The western anthropologists of course encouraged this thought of behaviour as they themselves were eager to learn about the indigenous culture of the Diné.

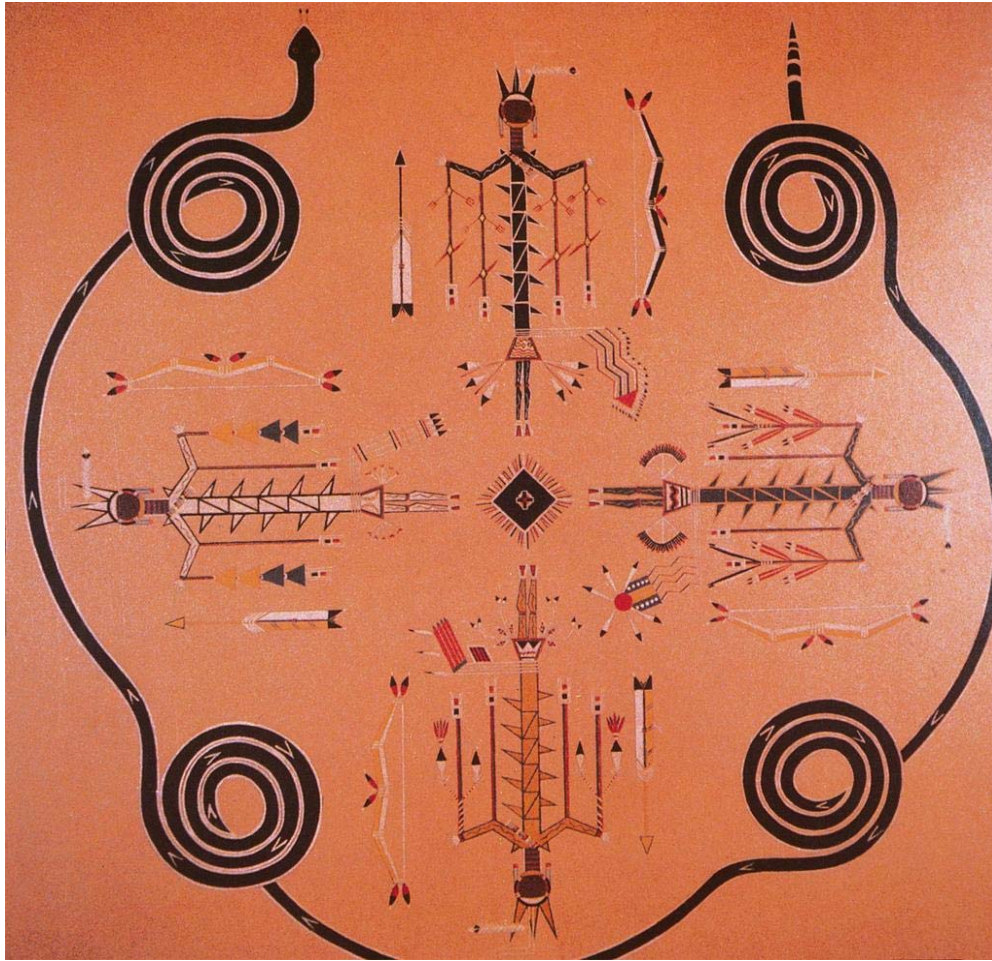


Figure 3: Water colour Sketch by Newcomb: 1936, called 'Endless Snake and Wind People' from the Big Starway chant ceremony, from: Chart. ARTSTOR_103_41822001475530

The actual beginning of the 'commercialization' of dry painting designs on permanent media, which were sold as commodities outside of ceremonial context, can bring about an interesting debate. Apparently, according to Roscoe, it is believed (by Parezo and other authors) that Klah had woven a tapestry in 1896 which conveyed dry painting designs: "...the first rugs with sandpainting designs were being woven in the Chaco, apparently at the request of members of the Hyde Exploring Expedition" (Roscoe 1988, 137). Roscoe mentions that the weaving of sand painting motifs on that specific date (1896) was cited in a 1923 manuscript by George Pepper that was found in the Museum of the American Indian. Furthermore, Roscoe states that authors including Parezo used this report to point out the first usage of sand painting motifs on permanent media. However, these reports seem to have never existed and according to Roscoe

they were based on thin air as he has good evidence that these sources (the Indian reports) were never actually documented (footnote in Roscoe 1988, 148-149). Interestingly though, the actual noted date, revealed by Roscoe, in which Klah supposedly really did weave his first tapestry in which dry painting motifs were used, was made much later: “As a weaver, Klah made a radical break with tradition when he began to weave sacred images in 1919” (Roscoe 1988, 138). To add to the mixture Roscoe likewise mentions that there are several other documents which also report totally different dates when the first dry painting rugs were initially made (Roscoe 1988, 149). Curiously, Roscoe argues that Klah could only begin weaving dry painting designs after he had completed the ‘final initiation’ of his training as a medicine man, which was in 1919 (Roscoe 1988, 138).

The remarks of Roscoe enable us to show that there were several other sources which also announced different dates in which dry painting motifs were woven in permanent form. So the process of secularization that Parezo describes is not so linear after all, but rather uncertain.

Due to large request from western buyers, Klah soon enough had to teach his two nieces to weave tapestries that contained sacred ceremonial designs (Roscoe 1988, 140). According to Roscoe Klah held protective ceremonies to make sure that his nieces would not face the possible consequences of reconstructing these sacred images (Roscoe 1988, 140). These consequences, as we have read in chapter 1, were of course the wrath of their supernatural deities, the Holy People. Some singers believed indeed that making their sacred dry painting permanent was sacrilegious and that this could possibly anger the gods. Apart from angering the gods several singers, whom were interviewed throughout the book of Parezo, also thought that the most dangerous aspect lay in fact that the power invested by the Holy People would become potentially dangerous, even fatal, to the uninitiated individual who saw the sacred images and was unable to control their power (Parezo 1983, 73). However, when a few years had passed and no harm had come to Klah and his two nieces, other weavers started to reproduce tapestries as well. They did this in the *style* of the figurative forms seen in the ceremonial dry paintings but no one actually dared to make exact copies out of fear for unknown consequences (Roscoe 1988, 140; Newcomb, 1980, 162).

In his time (early 1900s), Klah was a respected and innovative man as he helped promote and preserve the Diné religion that, according to him, was in danger of dying out. Along with

preservation, Klah also saw that there was a large opportunistic market for the creations of dry painting reproductions. And so it is thanks to the bold innovative steps made by Klah that helped the Diné increase its economic as a whole, as dry painting reproductions almost became a norm in the average household in the later years to come (Parezo 1983, 133).

2.2 Manipulating Diné Ceremonies

Since the 1900s, there have been several public dry painting demonstrations that were executed outside of ceremonial context. At the time, when such demonstrations were finished, the impermanent creations were always destroyed afterwards. According to Parezo it seems that in the 1920s, demand to make dry paintings for exhibitions slowly increased and several were setup for educational and entertainment purposes that were close to the reservation, such as in the Santa Fe Indian Market in 1923 (Parezo 1983, 35). Then in the 1930s, some singers were invited to make impermanent dry paintings at art shows or museums in distant cities such New York or Chicago. As one can see below in figure 4, a dry painting is made by two artisans at the museum of modern art in New York in 1941:



Figure 4: Eliot Elisofon, Navajos sand painting (aka dry painting) March 26, 1941, Exh 'Indian Art of United States' Museum of Modern Art New York. AMOMA_10310214740

It is interesting to point out the people that are standing in the upper left hand corner whom are witnessing this event as if it were a spectacle performance, almost as if it were a tourist attraction. The actual function of the dry painting is completely lost when it is performed outside the ceremonial context in a (secular) place like a museum. It can be generally assumed that most of the western viewers have no knowledge of the intrinsic religious values of the Diné that is reflected in their complex ceremonial chants. The public viewer sees in this kind of museum exhibition no more than a source of entertainment. Surely, the exhibition is meant for educational purposes, but the actual meaning of the dry painting is almost redundant if the ceremonial context is removed.¹⁰ From this perspective one can easily argue that by removing them from the original context, the dry paintings witnessed a major change in which they started

¹⁰ In this point of view the applicability of phenomenology, in the archaeological sense, would make a valid stand. For in order to understand the real essence of Diné and the function of dry paintings, one has to be immersed with the surrounding landscape and with it, all its sensory experiences. see Christopher Tilley's *A Phenomenology of Landscape* (1994)

to function as a consumerist marketing product. As is revealed by Parezo herself, it is thanks to these spectacular exhibitions that indirectly “created a potential market for commercial sand paintings...” (Parezo 1983, 36). This goes to show that these exhibitions, in which dry painting designs were still represented in impermanent form, helped promote the commoditization of what would later become *permanent* dry painting reproductions.

To give an idea of how westerners perceived the Diné, and other indigenous cultures, in the early 1900s (which continues to the late 20th century)¹¹ I will give a short example, based on Erika Marie Bsumek in ‘*Indian Made: Navajo Culture in the Marketplace, 1968-1940*’, that involved an ‘educative’ staged performance which would reveal parts of Diné ceremonial beliefs. In 1901, a rich business couple named Mr. and Mrs. Frederic Goodwin organized a cultural event that was known as ‘Navajo Indian Fiesta [party]’ in New York City. Their program consisted of: “... a talk by Si-which-i-me, a “Medicine Man Driving Away the Evil Spirit” performed by Hostine Nez, a “Navaho Wedding” performed by Hostine Klish, and a “Mother Singing a Lullaby to Her Pappooose” performed by Tom-ah-no-tah.” (Bsumek 2008, 1). Interestingly it turns out that none of these performers were Diné people, as ‘Hostine Nez’ was played by an archaeologist named M.R. Harrington, Hostine Klish was played by an anthropologist named George Pepper, Si-wich-i-me was played by a self-designated Native American expert named George Wharton James, and several other advocates that were involved in this staged ceremony were actually actors or actresses. Even the photograph that was depicted on the front of their invitation, that was supposed to represent a ‘Navajo’, was actually a photo of a Sioux Indian named ‘Chief Wets It’, seen in figure 5:

¹¹ The discrimination and racists views of the Native Americans is still evident even today



Figure 5: 'Chief Wets It': Originally photograph by F.A. Rinehart, 1898, New York Public Library (Bsumek 2008, 3), retrieved from: <http://www.franksrealm.com/Indians/tribes/Assiniboiné/pages/assiniboiné-chiefwetsit.htm>

Bsumek explains that the reason the Goodwins organized this event was not so much because they were interested in the Diné and their culture but in exploring a marketing strategy in finding ways to promote the sale of 'Indian-made' goods, such as the rugs or weaves (see 2.1 or 2.4 for weaving).

The case of the 'Navajo Indian Fiesta' sets a good example of how westerners exploited (exploit) Native American people and their culture and products for their own beneficial commercial goals by trying to create an art market so that the collectors or intermediaries could sell their collections as commodities to western people. Of course it is also important to remember that with any supply and demand exchange it is a two-sided story and that the Diné artisans also played an important role as active agents. These manipulations and the artificial staging of (mock) ceremonies give us a good notion of how westerners were trying to create commercial interest in Diné culture products like sand paintings.

2.3 Wall Decorations and other Permanent Media Forms

In the early 1920s John Huckel, who was under contract of The Fred Harvey Co., built a Diné theme hotel in New Mexico, Gallup named El Navajo Hotel (Parezo 1983, 51). Along with Diné rugs, pottery and baskets, the walls were decorated with correct, unmodified ceremonial dry painting designs. It is interesting, however, to note that the Navajos singers that helped create these dry painting motifs on hotels like the one in Gallup, wouldn't execute the work unless a Blessingway ceremony was conducted in order to counteract any possible negative effects from the designs (Parezo, 1983, 53). This concept again reveals that the singers were still uncomfortable with the supposed 'secularization' process as they still felt that any representation of sacred symbolic designs out of religious context was dangerous and so sacrilegious. Furthermore, one can notice here that as early as 1920 there were other forms of media on which ceremonial dry paintings designs were created in a permanent form. So the question when dry painting designs became permanent gets even blurrier if one takes these other media forms into account. Likewise, it seems that in the early 1920s, the singers were still very much engrained in their indoctrinated religious beliefs.

As we move along the chronological timeline of the transformative period of the dry paintings, we have to make an important side step and look at another media form in which dry painting designs were reproduced, namely in weaving.

Weaving dry painting designs on 'rugs' or 'tapestries' started in the late 19th, early 20th century and began with the famous medicine man, Hosteen Klah. This step is crucial, as it will reveal that commercialized sand painting is not the only media form in which dry painting designs were reproduced and to be sold as a 'fine art' in the western modern art market.

2.4 Weaving

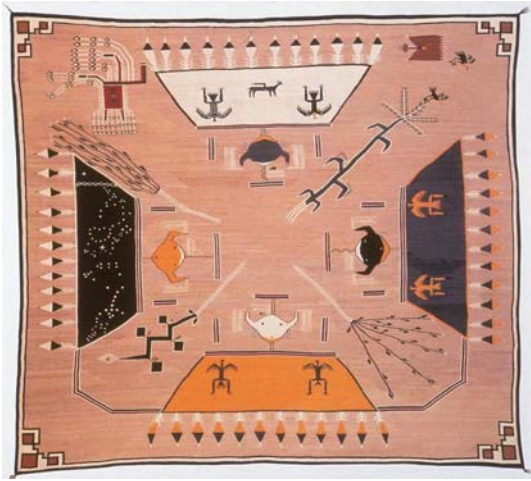


Figure 6a: Sand Painting weaving Early 20th cen.¹²
(origin unknown, retrieved from art store¹²)

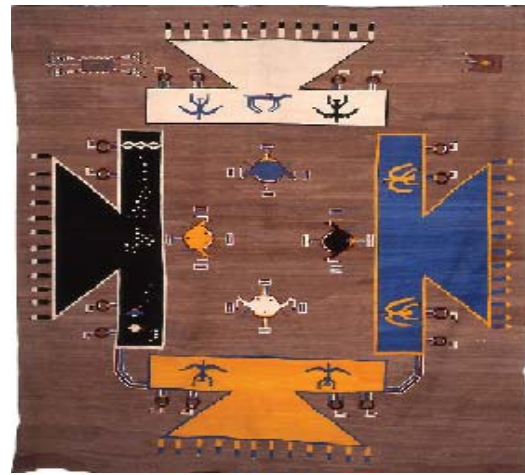


Figure 6b: by Hosteen Klah, from the shooting way chant, 1937. Handspun wool. The Edwin L. and Ruth E. Kennedy Southwestern Native American Art Collection. The Kennedy Museum of Art, Ohio University.

Weaving is another form of a permanent media in which dry painting designs were reproduced. The figures 6a and 6b, shown above, reveal two typical woven rugs that display ceremonial dry painting designs. Figure 6a is made in the early 20th century but the exact date and artist is unknown. Figure 6b, however, is known to be woven by Hosteen Klah himself. The fact that we know Klah created ceremonial dry painting designs as accurately as possible initially casts a dubious shadow over the fact that both these rugs do not look exactly the same. Yet we have to remember (see 2.1) Parezo's statement that early artisans would not dare make exact replicas as they feared repercussions. Indeed this could be one of the reasons why 6a and 6b do not look exactly the same. Nonetheless, the small contrasts in these rugs give us a good perspective in which ways artists would alter certain designs so as not to offend the supernatural. We shall see further in 2.4 what these changes entailed and if indeed alteration would actually help when it came to pleasing the Holy People when commercialized sand paintings were constructed.

Originally, the Diné (namely the women¹³) had learned that craft of weaving some three hundred years ago from their neighbours the We'wha's Zuni (Pueblos) ancestors (Roscoe 1988,

¹² Internet site:

136). Currently, Diné weaving is considered a type of art which can be sold handsomely in ‘fine’ western art markets (Roscoe 1988, 137).

Parezo distinguishes three types of rugs: Yei Rugs, Yeibbachi Rugs, and Sandpainting Tapestries. Parezo then continues to write and state that all three of these types of rugs display dry painting designs from *original ceremonial context* (Parezo 1983, 41). It is interesting to note however, that Parezo seems to contradict herself a little bit later on when she writes: “...they [the rugs] are strictly secular, commercial items, although the symbolism they contain may sometimes be considered sacred by the Navajo.” (Parezo 1983, 42). Initially, she states that the rugs are strictly seen as secular products which are meant to be sold in the western art market as commodities. Contradictive as it seems, this statement reveals that rugs were most likely not considered as a completely ‘secular’ product that was to be sold for economic reasons only. Evidently, one can derive from Roscoe’s statement: “Women made prayer-offerings to their weaving tolls and passed them on to their daughters” (Roscoe 1988, 136; Berlant and Kahlenberg 1977) that weaving was an intricate part of the religious values of Diné society. As Parezo again mentions on p. 47: “Klah thought each sandpainting rug was the same as a sacred sandpainting in that it was capable of calling the gods...”.

This brief encounter with weaving can help us conclude two important things. First it is important for the reader to see that Parezo seems to be contradicting herself, even within the same sentence. This goes to show that it is difficult to state that there is such a thing as a clear distinction between ‘secular’ and ‘sacred’ when it comes to dry painting designs. We shall see further that this concept of ‘intertwined overlapping’ is a recurring theme to this paper as it helps accentuate the vagueness of the supposed process of ‘secularization’ as described by Parezo. Secondly with the help of Roscoe in ‘*We’wha and Klah the American Indian Berdache as Artist and Priest*’ we were able to reconstruct that weaving is an equally important media form in which dry painting designs are created outside of the ceremonial context. This goes to show that commercialized sand paintings, which will be discussed below, are not the only permanent form in which dry painting designs are shown. It is very important to keep this in mind because it makes clear that there already existed a ‘fine’ art market in which permanent dry painting

¹³ The fact that Hosteen Klah made rugs, which was actually a women’s duty, shows the special role he played in Diné society. For Klah was a *nadle* or *berdache*: a person who performs both male and female social roles (Roscoe 1988, 127).

designs were sold as commodities. It is now evident that Parezo description on the 'linear' process of the 'commercialization' in which ceremonial dry paintings transformed into secular sand painting commodities wasn't that linear and straightforward after all.

To top it all off rugs and tapestries were seen by some Diné singers (like Klah) as sacred objects because they contained symbolic iconography which had the same potential of enticing the supernatural: "Klah thought each sandpainting rug was the same as a sacred sandpainting, in that it was capable of calling the gods..." (Parezo 1983, 47). Henceforth, if we take it that tapestries contain religious motifs as revealed by Klah and are at the same time sold as commercial products, we can make a valid conclusion that weaving is another media form in which dry paintings designs are sold as a commodity to the western buyer, who has no intricate knowledge of the symbolic nature of the iconography. The presence of religious connotation in commercial weaving products thus helps us argue that the same must be true for commercial sand paintings. We shall delve deeper into this concept as we will discuss Parezo's description of the 'secularization' process of the commercial sand paintings, but first we must take a little side step toward another man-made item i.e. pottery of the Diné. It shall be interesting to see whether artisans also used ceremonial dry painting motifs on these regular household items.

2.5 Diné Painting Pottery¹⁴

Pottery is probably the least researched object of Diné craftsmanship. Traditionally, Diné pottery is coarse and unpainted. It contains no slipware and is characterized as: "...conical-bottomed vessels which are coated with piñon gum"¹⁵ (Tschopik 1938, 257). Tschopik proposes Diné pottery production underwent a three-phase 'degeneration'. In a first phase around the mid 19th century, these vessels were used as strictly every-day utilitarian devices. Furthermore certain ceramics were used in ceremonial context, but disappointingly, Tschopik does not elaborate on this matter any further. In a second phase (no date mentioned) the westerners introduced their material household goods which pretty much replaced all the pots and pans of the Diné. However, pottery was still used in ceremonial context although we don't know in which manner,

¹⁴Scholarly literature on Diné Pottery, contrary to lit. on Pueblo pottery, is very scarce.

¹⁵ According to Tschopik, the paper written about Diné pottery is strictly applicable for the Ramah region of New Mexico and might not apply for all of the Diné people.

but most likely they were used in chant ways. In a third phase (around the time Tschopik wrote his book i.e. in the 1930s) traditional Diné pottery had no more household function. Pots were still used, however, as drums in a ceremonial chant, namely the ‘Enemy Way’, also known as “Squaw Dance” (Tschopik 1936, 258).

In addition Tschopik notes that pottery making is linked to certain taboos or restrictions. Examples of such taboos are: sleeping in caves while making pottery, when laymen especially children should witness the making of pottery, or that an artist is not allowed to make pottery when it is raining, or that no pottery maker may harm or molest snakes or dogs ((Tschopik 1936, 259). Even though Tschopik does not elaborate any further on the matter concerning snakes, it is still interesting to take this example and examine it in more detail.

According to Diné mythology snakes are associated with fear and danger, therefore it is believed that they hold great power (Bahti & Joe 1978, 51). Snakes motifs are often depicted in traditional dry paintings, especially in the Shooting Chant. This chant is used particularly when a patient has been afflicted by arrow heads or lightning. Likewise, these same elements often appear to be represented in stylistic form in the commercial sand paintings (see figure 7).



(Figure 7: ‘Four Snakes With A Snake And Two Bat Guardians’. Navajo Picture Writing On Muslin. Post 1940s Indigenous Art of the Americas circa 1947-1970)¹⁶

¹⁶ Retrieved from internet site: <http://brucekapson.com/display/291/post1940>, promoting its art gallery.

In accordance with Bahti and Joe's description of a similar picture in '*Navajo Sandpainting*', this picture most likely depicts Big Snake Man, a mythological animal, as each individual snake is typically marked with a horned headdress (Bahti & Joe 1978, 51).

Snakes indeed seem to play an important role in the mythological stories of the Diné which probably goes to show why they are considered to be part of the taboo restrictions that is placed upon pottery making. Interestingly, according to Chuck & Jan Rosenak in *Navajo Folk Art: The People Speak*, traditional taboo can actually influence the way in which artists make pottery. As a Diné potter named Mae Adson says: "the Anasazis [a neighbouring native tribe of the Diné] started to over decorate their pottery, and the wind destroyed them, because of that." (Chuck & Rosenak 1994, 17).

While, the exact nature and reason of the taboos or restrictions mentioned by Tschopik remains unclear, the manufacturing process of pottery seems to be linked by the Diné to certain ceremonial rituals and possibly to the avoidance of certain behaviour that might disrupt the spiritual animal world and so the harmonious balance of the cosmic order. This in turn signals that even an activity like making pottery which belongs to the secular realm and has no connections to ceremonial practises, seems to contain certain religious connotations that directly relate to the spiritual world. All of this shows that there is no clear separation between the secular and sacred realm for the Diné people.

In connection with the general commercialization of Native American craftsmanship in the 20th century, Diné pottery too came to be, even highly, decorated. Highly decorated pottery manufacturing really took off at around the early 1970s when the boom of commercial sand paintings took its rise in the western art market (Chuck & Rosenak 1994, 113). The reason for this, most likely, was the influx of tourism which brought a great amount of supply and demand in the art market.

Diné pottery is a craft that is usually made by women, especially today¹⁷. They are made by coiling up the clay, retrieved from local resources and moulding them into pots (see fig. 8).

¹⁷Information from: <http://www.ic.arizona.edu/ic/mcbride/ws200/navpots.htm>, by Kyle T. Belleque



Figure 8: Contemporary commercial Diné Pot i.e. ‘Stylized Vase’, from: <http://navajopeople.org/navajo-pottery.htm>, updated 2011, and artist unknown.

The Diné vase seen in figure 8 is highly decorated and contains abstract stylized motifs all across its body. The geometrical and linear fashion as seen in dry paintings (see figures 1 and 3) is quite compatible with the motifs seen in figure 8. Such commodities are sold to westerners in large quantities which helps boost Diné economic income. Even though this kind of highly decorated pottery is influenced by their neighbours, the Pueblos, one can clearly see that certain traditional ceremonial dry painting designs are visible in these creations.

Ch. 3: ‘Secularization’

3.1 Dry painting as Commodity

We shall now critically address the question of how the dry paintings supposedly went through a process of ‘secularization’, in which artists started to produce sand paintings for commercial reasons, based on traditional dry painting designs. As we shall see in Parezo’s point of view this ‘secularization’ process pretty much followed a straight linear line. With the help of Judith

Hamera in *Disruption, Continuity, and the Social Lives of Things Navajo Folk Art and/as Performance* and Rosenak in *Navajo Folk Art: The People Speak* we shall continue our critical quest on Parezo's simplistic linear thinking and see that things are not as clear as Parezo wants us to believe.

It was in the early beginning of the 1970s in which 'commercial' sand paintings started to flourish in the western art market as profitable commodities. This was thanks to the increase of tourism in this region in which a market was created for souvenirs, Here a commoditized dry painting could be sold to western individuals who were interested in 'Indian-made objects'. Evidently, through the influx of tourism, 'commercial' dry painting had become an important source of economic income for the Diné, as knowledge and techniques on permanent commercial dry painting spread throughout the community (Parezo 1983, 106).

In order for these dry paintings to be sold as commoditized sand paintings, the Diné had to find a way to make them permanent. Interestingly, the tone was set by earlier pioneers who had already begun 'commercializing' dry painting reproduction. According to Parezo, the 'commercialization' of dry paintings began with two non-Navajo Americans named George de Ville and his wife Mae de Ville. It so happened that these two individuals had stumbled upon the practise of reproducing sand paintings during the Great Depression, in the early 1930s (Parezo 1983, 101)¹⁸. And so it was the De Villes that created an adhesive which enabled them to make the sprinkled sand stick on a backing (preferably a wooden board). In this simple manner the two had managed to create permanent dry paintings. The two started to sell them and were able to make a good living. They mainly created landscapes, portraits, romanticized scenes of Navajos daily life, mountain scenes, and sometimes religious paintings.

A little later in 1950s, in the eastern part of the Navajo Reservation in a small community called Sheep Springs a Diné singer named Fred Stevens, Jr., wanted to make permanent sand paintings as well. Stevens, like Hosteen Klah, did this because he wanted to preserve the supposedly dying religion of the Diné by revealing their intricate religious mythology (Parezo, 1983, 106). With the collaborations of his friend, Luther Douglas, he also developed a special

¹⁸ In order to make dry painting designs permanent, they used glued wallboard as their backing. Then they used sand-based pigments to sprinkle on top of a wet adhesive that was composed of varnish, white lead and raw oil so that everything would stick. This is pretty much how they made the dry paintings permanent (Parezo, 1983, p. 102).

adhesive that would make the sprinkled sand stick on the backing, preferably made from plywood (Parezo 1983, 114). It is thanks to these individuals that the tone was set for making profitable commercialized sand paintings for a western art market.

After this early developing period of permanent dry paintings Parezo believes that the artists had to go through a process of ‘rationalization’. As one hopefully remembered, by making these ceremonial dry paintings designs to be permanent, the supernatural deities could cause illness to either the uninitiated laymen or the singer. And so, in order not to displease the holy people, the Diné artisans had to rationalize the making of ceremonial dry painting designs. According to Parezo, they did this by making a conscious decision on separating the ‘secularized’ sand painting from the ‘sacred’ dry painting in ceremonial context (Parezo 1983, 75).

The artisans separated the ceremonial dry painting with the commercial sand painting by altering and changing certain aspects of the sacred designs and motifs which were supposed to entice the holy people. As explained above the deities would only be attracted to the sacred designs if executed perfectly by the artisans and so even the smallest change in the whole production would result in not being able to entice the gods. This alteration ranged from very small changes such as using different colours, to some more radical changes such as changing its design or composition (Parezo 1983, 75; Reichard 1963, 160). Interestingly though, Parezo also mentions, very briefly, that some Diné singers thought that if the dry paintings reproductions were not perfectly executed the gods would become angry nonetheless because errors angered the gods and inaccuracy was a sign of disrespect (Parezo 1983, 76).

It is at this very point Parezo should have been critical and see that certain claims seem to be contradicting one another for they do not clearly add up. First she mentions that artisans had to change certain aspects of the ceremonial designs of the dry paintings which would cause the supernatural not to be attracted and be enticed to the creation and therefore prevent any harm to any laymen or singer. However, Parezo likewise mentions that certain singers thought that the supernatural would be most displeased if anyone would reproduce dry paintings in an incorrect and inaccurate manner. To add to the messiness, which pinpoints the nonlinearity, Parezo mentions that certain trained singers, who believed in accurate representation, were confident in making dry painting reproductions accurately because they had the knowledge to control the

powers of their deities (Parezo 1983, 76). Singers like Klah likewise believed they could control the dangerous powers of the supernatural because they obtained knowledge through years of training. This goes to show that Parezo seems to be contradicting herself at certain points in her dissertation. In one of her book reviews this same contradiction was likewise pinpointed and criticized: “What is secular in one instance is sacred in another...consequently, whether on wood or in wool , sand painting representations carry a sacred load...how, then, can the earlier statement that weaving was always secular hold?” (Farrer 1985, 218-219).

This same thought-pattern is also illustrated in *Disruption, Continuity, and the Social Lives of Things Navajo Folk Art and/as Performance* written by Hamera. She points out that similarly to Klah, another singer named Roger Hathale enabled his two sons, Dennis and Bruce, to make reproductions of dry painting because “...I have the power to protect my boys.” (Hamera 2006, 158; Rosenaks 1998, 77). Hathale also mentions that: “...[my sons] could reproduce the sandpaintings I made for ceremonies as long as they were accurate.” (Hamera 2006, 158; Rosenaks 1998, 77). This last point illustrates exactly where Parezo contradicts herself, for Roger, who is a contemporary medicine man that lived much later than Hosteen Klah, likewise believes that reproduced dry paintings should be executed in an accurate manner.

We can back up this point again if we take a look at *Navajo Folk Art: The People Speak* written by Chuck and Jan Rosenak. These authors mention that: “...Artist Tom Yazzie has attempted to avoid the taboos against carving [and also pottery] by making certain that his figures are as accurate as possible, down to the last tiny detail” (Chuck & Rosenak 1994, 16). This not only shows that taboos seem to have an impact on Diné art productions (see pottery 2.5), but that contemporary artists like Yazzie, likewise reveal that figures have to be executed in a manner that is as accurate as possible. The authors likewise interviewed a contemporary medicine man named Faye Tso, who states that like Hosteen Klah, he also depicts Yei figures in any commercialized form of production in which accuracy is of the essence and that such depictions will bear no bad ramifications (Chuck & Rosenak 124).

Parezo tries to make a clear distinction between sacred dry paintings and secular dry paintings and that it was thanks to the process of ‘rationalization’ that the artists supposedly were enabled to convince themselves they had the green light to create dry painting designs to sell as commodities. It is most interesting however and most confusing when the reader discovers that

Parezo actually, however briefly, seems to mention the very opposite. With the use of Hamera and Rosenak one can simply notice that the ‘commercialization’ process that is described by Parezo is not that linear after all and that we actually cannot speak of a ‘secular’ process in which all religious values have diminished.

As we have seen with Hamera and Rosenak we can establish that certain continuation of spirituality and religious connotation persists to this day. The example of the medicine man named Roger Hathale, who follows in Klah’s footsteps and believes in accurately displayed designs, shows us that in contemporary times there indeed can be certain religious connotation in the commercial sand paintings. Here it is evident that the traditional beliefs of the Diné are still present today, however there also have been major changes in their belief system.

According to Begay and Maryboy in ‘*My Whole Universe is My Cathedral: A Contemporary Navajo Spiritual Synthesis*’ there are three major spiritual healing ways: The Traditional Diné healing practices (using the ceremonial dry paintings), the various Christian healing traditions (ranging from Catholic Charismatic to Protestant Pentecostal, and the NAC (the Native American Church) (Begay & Maryboy 2000, 498).

In this article the authors follow a sick Catholic Nun named Sister Grace who succumbs to all three of the traditional practises and uses all three to try to heal herself of her ailments and psychological problems. Although this article tells us nothing about the religious connotations of the commercial sand paintings reproductions, we can, on the other hand, get a better conception what the belief system is like in contemporary Diné society. With it, we can see that the belief system of the Navajo is a complex and overlapping religion that does not contain strict institutional boundaries. Apparently religion for the Diné is a multi-faced concept that is part of their daily lives. This gives more than ample proof that religion is still very much alive in contemporary Diné society. More importantly, with the help of Maryboy and Begay we can see that the ceremonial dry painting use is still used today in healing ceremonies as well. This can help us argue that indeed these religious values still persist today, and by using Roger Hathale’s case, we can see that commercial sand painting reproductions also still hold religious connotations. So therefore we can propose that the term ‘secularization’, used by Parezo, is not very appropriate after all.

Finally, it is also interesting to see that Parezo in her description of the process of ‘rationalization’, she distinguishes two types of commercial artists. One is labelled as the traditionalist and other as a fundamentalist. The former, is a type of artist that is mainly concerned with preserving Diné religion and will only change minor details i.e. colour patterns because he believes this is more respectful to the supernatural. The fundamentalist, who is not concerned about the preservation of Diné religion, rather creates commercial dry paintings for the monetary reasons. These type of artists will not just change minor details but rather create a non-traditional commercialized dry paintings which completely charts away from the original designs. Examples are creations of landscapes, portraits of people, Diné rugs, jewellery, or Hopi kachina dolls, but also Pueblo eagle dancers and even other new religious elements such as peyote symbolism and even Christian designs (Parezo 1983, 96) One can also simply argue that the incorporation of ‘other new religious elements’ such as Christian designs reveals to us that perhaps these new commercial sand paintings, made by fundamentalist artists, are sometimes not at all ‘secular’ and that religious ideological connotations, even though not in traditional form, persist. In this way we can argue that both the ‘traditional’ and ‘fundamentalist’ artist create sand painting designs that contain religious connotation in the eyes of the artist and perhaps sometimes even the collector or viewer.

In summary, we can deduct from this literature research study that in some pre-industrial societies, like the Diné, certain traditional religious values seem to persist in spite of the impact of western culture and the process of commercialization as postulated by Parezo.

Ch. 4: Conclusion

We have now come to the end of our chronological exposition in which we have critically discussed, with the use of several other authors, Parezo’s description of the ceremonial dry painting design that transformed into a commercialized commodity—which were then to be sold to the general western world as a ‘fine’ art product as they were believed to contain intrinsic aesthetic quality. Parezo describes this transformation as a linear process toward secularization. Through the perspective of the general framework of Inglehart and Baker in ‘*Modernization, Cultural Change, and the Persistence of Traditional Values*’ (2000) and by the use of work of

Hamera, Roscoe, Rosenak and Maryboy & Begay we have come to a quite different conclusion and have hopefully added something valuable to their study, specifically on whether the continuation of traditional values, namely religion, of non-western preindustrial societies will persist or not with the impact of westernization (or globalization). Likewise, studying processes such as secularization and commercialization in cultures such as the Dine, can bring great contribution to the field of archeology, as it helps us understand cultural traits and cultural changes in both contemporary and ancient human civilizations (see p. 10: **Dine, Aboriginals, Secularization Processes and Archeology**).

The main issue that was addressed here was whether this ‘secularization’ of dry painting designs really did occur and if there has been a linear process, as proposed by Parezo. Or was the situation quite different and were there still religious connotations reflected even in the commercialized sand painting.

According to Parezo this commercialization, which goes hand in hand with a process of ‘secularization’ had started in the early 1900s with Dr. Matthews who had copied and published permanent forms of dry painting designs in watercolour sketches. Through his publication and through the works of other anthropologists such as Reichard, the western world came to see the Diné in a whole new light. Their beautiful ceremonial sacred designs attracted westerners to come to the Diné reservation and made them curious about their culture. The increased influx of tourism in the early 1970s triggered many Diné people to become artisans and create and provide supply for the eager demand that was given by the westerners. The Diné, like many other native American tribes, were eager to fill this potential niche in the art market, as it would increase their economic income and boost their living conditions. Since it was traditional designs that the western art market was interested in, the Diné artists were stimulated to get their inspiration from traditional sources. At the same time some artisans/singers, like Klah, wanted to preserve the Diné religion as well. So when push came to shove, the Diné people had little choice but to meet this demand and find a way to make their impermanent traditional designs fit for the western art market. The consequences according to Parezo, however, were dire, as according to their belief system it would be very dangerous to make the sacred ceremonial dry painting designs permanent instead of destroying them after the ceremony, both for the maker and the uninitiated viewer. According to Parezo this would mean that the singers/artisans had to ‘rationalize’ the

making of these holy creations by separating ‘sacred’ designs from ‘secular’ ones. Changing minute details would be sufficient to make the images powerless.

With the help of several articles, I have tried to argue and cast a critical eye on Parezo’s linear description of a secularization process for the dry paintings. First of all we have seen that sand paintings were not the first and only media form in which dry painting designs were permanently portrayed. Such media forms range from wall decorations, water colour sketching, pottery, and weaving. As we have seen, the unorthodox and famous singer and weaver, Hosteen Klah, was the first to start making sand painting designs permanent, in his case as tapestry, and so set the tone for the commoditization of these designs. His main reason for doing so was to preserve the Diné religion. Whether Klah got this insight by himself or that he was convinced by the anthropologists---who may have wanted to preserve the religion of the Diné, but probably not in the same sense, as they were more concerned in studying and learning about cultural systems that were seemingly dying out across the world---who pressed this matter vehemently, is not exactly clear, yet it is clear that in the end Klah thought, according to Parezo, that the Diné religion was endangered.

Perhaps Klah was indeed conscious of the supposed demise of the traditional beliefs of the Diné with the introduction of other institutionalized religions like the Native American Church or other Christian practises. However, the reason why Klah had gone rogue and started to produce permanent sand painting designs was because he wanted the Diné to become a proud nation. Roscoe states that the Navajos were a dispersed nomadic folk who had their extended family as their largest political and economical unit although only in times of war did indeed the families come together. However due to the assimilation project of the U.S. government these people had to integrate and become one culture, one people. (Roscoe 1988, 142). And in fact with the help of Mr. Klah the Diné people did come together as one in their reservation. According to Roscoe, Klah had: “ provided a point around which a sense of Navajo identity could coalesce.” This identity came from the concept of religion. By preserving and ‘synthesizing’ their religion through the collaboration with ethnographers and anthropologists the Diné could actually call themselves a nation. Of course there was also an economic motif, so that we can say that in the end it was religion and commercial sand painting reproduction that brought these people together (Roscoe 1988, 143).

The fact that religion was the key that held the Diné people together as one social unit so to speak, makes clear that the ancestral religion even when maybe influenced by western, Christianity, was not going to diminish with the impact of western society.

As we have shortly seen in *My Whole Universe is My Cathedral: A Contemporary Navajo Spiritual Synthesis* by Maryboy and Begay the contemporary Diné have indeed changed somewhat as their ancestral religion is now overlapped by several other religious ideas from Christianity. Still this does not prove that traditional religious values do not exist or rather persist with the development of commercial sand paintings. Rather I would like to argue that such spiritual and religious connotation is still very present in these creations. With the help of Hamera in “*Disruption, Continuity, and the Social Lives of Things Navajo Folk Art and/as Performance*” we can state that there are still singers/artisans in present time that actually reproduce accurate dry painting designs. According to these conventional artisans the gods will be enticed to the painting anyway, except that inaccuracy will actually anger the gods in which the artisan and perhaps viewer would suffer the consequences. Indeed, the only question that is left in my mind is that if indeed commercial sand painting reproductions attract these powerful gods, then what would all this mean for the (western) viewer. Interestingly, Parezo mentions an interesting story about Washington Matthews and his informants who reproduced dry painting designs in water colour sketching, The urban myth reveals that by recording the Mountain Chantway, which is used to cure deafness or paralysis, the informants and Mr. Matthews became deaf and later on died of paralysis (Parezo 1983, 68). Maybe this was a sheer coincidence, but it does pinpoint the fact that perhaps these commercial sand painting reproduction are not so secular after all. And that we might take Hamera’s proposition in mind which says that the commodity product continues to hold the spiritual values that the artisan has consciously (or not) put into it, even when the context has been removed and the function is completely different from where it came from.

English Summary

Sand paintings in Diné culture are part of a larger ceremonial whole that is used to cure sick patients from certain ailments. A singer, or also called a medicine man, is an individual that

helps guide such a ritual with songs and prayers and pass down traditional oral mythological stories. An important part of the healing ceremony is the construction of a sand painting. This sand painting must be an exact replica of traditional designs which coincides to the specific kind of ailment the patient has in order to be cured. Due to the exact reconstruction of the divine harmony and supernatural the Gods cannot resist and will therefore be attracted to the sand paintings. The trained medicine man has the appropriate knowledge to control their powers and use it to cure the patients. When the ceremony has been completed the sand painting needs to be terminated in order for it to lose its potentially dangerous powers.

The aesthetic value of these sand paintings was much admired by the western people and so a certain demand for traditional Diné designs was developed. In order to make these sand paintings nonhazardous their designs were altered. Parezo calls this a process of rationalization, as she sees a difference between a secular and a sacred sand painting.

In this paper I will take a critical look at the work of Parezo whom states that a certain secularization process developed when it came to the production of commercial sand paintings in the course of the twentieth century. With the use of Inglehart and Baker (2000) I will take on a certain perspective as I aim to investigate whether certain religious connotations are still present in contemporary commercial sand paintings which have developed originally from a traditional ceremonial context. I will use several academic articles to help state my argument.

On hindsight it seems that there are indeed several indications which point out that certain religious connotations do still exist in contemporary commercial products like sand paintings, but also in tapestry weavings, ceramics and baskets. Hereby I can conclude that it is not possible to declare commercial sand paintings as secular entities.

Dutch Summary

In de Diné (voorheen Navajo) cultuur maken zandschilderijen deel uit van een groot ceremonieel geheel dat gebruikt wordt om zieke patiënten van verschillende kwalen te genezen. Een zanger, of ook wel medicijn man, is de persoon die zo'n ritueel begeleidt met zang en gebeden en oraal overgeleverde mythologische verhalen. Een belangrijk onderdeel van de genezingsceremonie is de constructie van een zandschilderij. Dit zandschilderij moet een exacte replica zijn van het

traditionele ontwerp dat hoort bij de soort van ziekte die moet worden genezen. Door de exacte reconstructie van de goddelijke harmonie en het bovennatuurlijke kunnen de goden niet anders doen dan naar de zandschilderijen komen. De getrainde medicijn man heeft de kennis om hun krachten te controleren en te gebruiken om de patiënt te helen. Na afloop van de ceremonie diende het zandschilderij te worden vernietigd, om zo de potentieel gevaarlijke krachten die het had opgeroepen kwijt te raken.

Deze zandschilderijen werden door westerse mensen zeer gewaardeerd en er ontstond een vraag naar de traditionele Diné ontwerpen. Om de zandschilderijen ongevaarlijk te maken werden de ontwerpen aangepast. Parezo noemt dit een rationalisatie. Zij ziet een verschil tussen een seculier en heilig zandschilderij.

In dit stuk werp ik een kritische blik op het werk van Parezo die constateert dat er zoiets bestaat als een secularisatie proces ten behoeve van de productie van commerciële zandschilderijen. Met hulp van Inglehart en Baker (2000) kom ik met een andere invalshoek en kijk ik of religieuze aspecten of connotaties nog aanwezig zijn in de hedendaagse commerciële zandschilderijen die hun oorsprong hebben in een ceremoniële context. Dit doe ik met behulp van verschillende academische artikelen.

Achteraf blijkt dat er inderdaad nog veel aanwijzingen zijn dat er religieuze connotaties te vinden zijn in hedendaagse commerciële producten zoals zandschilderijen, maar ook in geborduurde of geweven tapijten, keramiek en manden. Hiermee constateer ik dat het niet mogelijk is om commerciële producten seculier te verklaren.

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Figures

Figure 1

Luther Douglas, “*Big Thunder*”, Collection Orma J. Smith, Museum of Natural History, The College of Idaho. Access Date: 05-08-2011.

<http://www.collegeofidaho.edu/campus/community/museum/Archaeo/Douglas/gallery.asp?id=3> (page 4)

Figure 2

Artist and Date unknown, “*Medicine Man Chants with Rattle*”.

(ARTSTOR_103_41822003022256). Access Date: 05-08-2011. www.artstor.org (page 9)

Figure 3

Newcomb: 1936, “*Endless Snake and Wind People*”. (ARTSTOR_103_41822001475530). Access Date: 05-08-2011. www.artstor.org (page 15)

Figure 4

Eliot Elisofon, no title, March 26, 1941, Exh 'Indian Art of United States' Museum of Modern Art New York. (AMOMA_10310214740). Access Date: 05-08-2011. www.artstor.org (page 17)

Figure 5

Originally photograph by F.A. Rinehart in 1898, “*Chief Wets It*”, New York Public Library.
Access Date: 05-08-2011.

<http://www.franksrealm.com/Indians/tribes/Assiniboiner/pager/assiniboiner-chiefwetsit.htm> (page 19)

Figure 6a

Artist and date unknown. “*Sand Painting weaving Early 20th cen.*”. Access Date: 05-08-2011.
www.artstor.org (page 21)

Figure 6b

Hosteen Klah, 1937. The Edwin and Ruth E. Kennedy Southwestern Native American Art Collection. The Kennedy Museum of Art, Ohio University. Access Date: 05-08-2011.
www.artstor.org (page 21)

Figure 7

Artist unknown, “*Four Snakes With A Snake And Two Bat Guardians*” . Post 1940s Indigenous Art of the Americas circa 1947-1970. (ARTSTOR_103_41822000047314). Access Date: 05-08-2011. <http://brucekapson.com/display/291/post1940> (page 24)

Figure 8:

Harold Carey Jr., “*Stylized Vase*”, Access Date: 05-08-2011. <http://www.ffcais.com/native-american-pottery.html> (page 26)