

**UCLA**

**American Indian Culture and Research Journal**

**Title**

Dinéjí Na'nitin: Navajo Traditional Teachings and History. By Robert S. McPherson.

**Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7mr2k9ks>

**Journal**

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 38(2)

**ISSN**

0161-6463

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**Publication Date**

2014-03-01

**DOI**

10.17953

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conclusion, and also is well-researched, employing a broad range of governmental and indigenous sources. Like many good books, this one raises a few points of contention. Riseman argues, for instance, that the militaries' use of indigenous soldiers is an example of "soldier-warrior colonialism," which he defines as "the active employment of colonized indigenous people by the military of a colonial power, for the benefit of a colonial power, against a different imperial power, and with little or no consideration for the impact on indigenous societies" (224). The issue here is that wartime disruption is hardly a problem unique to indigenous societies. The draft and enlistment of millions of men around the world during WWII was universal in its disruption of community and family life, indigenous peoples included.

Secondly, Riseman argues, "the participation of indigenous servicemen in the war did *not* represent widespread appreciation of indigenous culture or fighting skills" (5). Yet in the conclusion he appears to contradict this assessment by declaring that the US government employed specialized indigenous units such as Navajo code talkers "specifically for skills derived from their native cultures" (225). While federal officials may not have appreciated the Navajo language, they nonetheless valued it for the advantages it offered US Marines in the Pacific War. Finally, Riseman contends that the wartime sacrifices of indigenous soldiers did not lead to improved conditions at home since discrimination, assimilation, and colonialism persisted in the postwar period. This is certainly true, but the postwar period also witnessed the rise of veterans' groups that fought for equality and self-determination based in part on their wartime sacrifices. Although change certainly did not occur overnight, these sacrifices helped pave the way for major reforms in the 1960s and 1970s.

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**Dinéjí Na'nitin: Navajo Traditional Teachings and History.** By Robert S. McPherson. Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2012. 287 pages. \$24.95 paper.

This ambitious and eclectic book combines accounts of Navajo historical events in the Four Corners area together with syntheses of Navajo traditional knowledge and practices that derive from the entire Navajo Nation. These two distinct, broad topics and approaches demand shifts in focus throughout the book's nine chapters. Historical topics in southeastern Utah and the surrounding Four Corners include the 1918–1919 influenza epidemic, Ba'álílee's resistance to encroaching Anglo influence, the work of the

Episcopalian priest Father Baxter Liebler, and the Pectol shields discovery. Discussions of Navajo traditional knowledge and practices include chapters on methods of divination, witchcraft, metaphors, and predictions about the future. Sources of information encompass an extensive list of publications and interviews, many of which were conducted by McPherson with Navajo elders.

McPherson's account of the influenza epidemic during the winter of 1918–1919 in chapter 2 compares the response in Anglo communities such as Moab, Utah to that among the Navajos living in the rural Four Corners and other parts of the reservation. This discussion supplements Robert Trennert's account of the impact of the influenza epidemic in *White Man's Medicine: Government Doctors and the Navajo, 1863–1955*. In Moab, community members responded by organizing quarantines and medical care for those stricken with influenza. Among rural Navajos, many of those stricken with the disease received little or no care from overextended families and medicine men. Both Trennert and McPherson attribute the spread of the highly contagious disease and the high rates of mortality among the Navajo after the outbreak to the return home of off-reservation workers, the practice of abandoning the dead, and the lack of medical care. In addition, McPherson implicates "ceremonial practices" in the spread of the disease, weakened resistance of the sick, who "had no choice but to perform necessary labor in the elements," and physical remedies that were "marginally successful" (67–68).

Chapter 4 recounts the resistance of the medicine man Ba'álílee, who knew six Navajo ceremonies and, unlike others, openly proclaimed his knowledge of and ability to use the power of witchcraft. About thirty miles from Ba'álílee's camp in Aneth, Utah, in 1903 the Northern Navajo Agency in Shiprock, New Mexico was established, headed by Superintendent William T. Shelton (Tall Leader). The pious Shelton instituted an aggressive policy of change that included taking measures to improve the Navajo economy, educate children, eliminate vices on the reservation, and promote stability in the face of lawlessness. Ba'álílee and his followers opposed Shelton's policies and also stole livestock from Utes in Towaoc, cowboys in Colorado, and Mormons in Bluff, Utah. The hostilities culminated in a surprise attack by troops from Ft. Wingate, New Mexico on Ba'álílee's camp in October 1907. The capture of Ba'álílee and nine followers ended the resistance and paved the way for further changes among Navajo people.

Chapter 6 records Father Baxter Liebler's establishment of an Episcopalian mission to the Navajo in southeastern Utah two miles from Bluff, a project that was aided by his understanding of Navajo culture and traditions. St. Christopher's Mission grew to include a school, a hospital, and well facilities, as well as satellite missions in Montezuma Creek and Monument Valley to meet the needs of the local people. Liebler spoke Navajo, wore his hair tied

back in a hair bun, and adapted his Christian teachings in light of Navajo beliefs and traditions. He referred to Christ as “the Holy One” and emphasized the relation of man and God as one of personal harmony and peace. McPherson’s interviews with Navajos attest to their respect for Liebler, who had “good, strong medicine” (170).

The most novel of the regional historical chapters is undoubtedly chapter 7, which relates the tale of Ephraim Pectol’s 1926 discovery of the Pectol shields. Pectol and other Mormons originally attributed the shields to ancestral Native Americans, identified in the Book of Mormon as Nephites and Lamanites. With the advent of the Native American Graves Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) came Native claims for the shields, and in 2002 NAGPRA awarded them to the Navajo Nation, based on oral tradition recounted by John Holiday. Holiday, a Navajo medicine man from Monument Valley, identified eight generations of the shields’ caretakers, medicine men with knowledge of the shields’ spiritual power.

In chapter 1, McPherson cites publications by many Navajo scholars as well as Four Corners diviners such as Don Mose and Navajo Oshley. Three major types of Navajo divination are wind-listening, star- and crystal-gazing, and hand-trembling, all of which reveal the knowledge of the Holy People who know what takes place among humans. Each type of divination originates with complex stories that detail how men acquired this sacred knowledge. Diviners may be used to diagnose the cause of an illness as well as identify the source of witchcraft and the location of lost or stolen objects. Divination is a gift that brings supernatural power that must be employed with respect.

As McPherson emphasizes in chapter 3, witchcraft is an integral part of supernatural power that can be used for good or evil. Sacred power typifies the dualities of the universe, which also include male and female, night and day, and health and illness. “Respect, balance, and orderliness become the means by which positive forces are controlled, while the rituals of evil and witchcraft are based on excess, lack of reverence, and chaos” (74). Medicine men must have knowledge of the evil uses of supernatural power in order to combat them with methods of detection and protection. Similarly, Navajos must protect themselves from witchcraft through various means, such as carrying gall medicine, not going out at night, and staying away from the base of large rocks or cliffs where witches congregate.

Navajo metaphors are discussed in chapters 5 and 8, with an emphasis on traditional teachings in chapter 5 and more contemporary metaphors in chapter 8. The traditional teachings include that of the fire poker, the human body, the hogan as a symbol for the universe, the wedding basket as a symbol of life’s journey, and teachings related to home, marriage, and family. Contemporary metaphors demonstrate the adaptability of the Navajo language

and the insightful observation of Navajo speakers on topics that range from cars to credit cards to marriage. For example, the origin of the Navajo word for car, *chidi*, is “to sniff, or the one who scouts or sniffs around with its nose to the ground” (21). McPherson agrees with Keith Basso’s interpretation in *Western Apache Language and Culture: Essays in Linguistic Anthropology* that metaphors provide a sense of discovery of relationships that had not been seen before, and teach important Navajo cultural values.

Predictions about the future in chapter 9 express the concerns of Navajo elders about the loss of cultural values and the neglect of traditional teachings. Elders refer to sacred stories as a way to discern what the future holds, often invoking the tale of the Anasazi and the Great Gambler, who gained control over all people, livestock, and material objects in Chaco Canyon. Among the signs of the times indicating that the end of the world is near are the loss of language and traditional teachings, the “crazy” behavior of young people, modern dress, wildfires, and drought. The story of the Great Gambler and the demise of the Anasazi in Chaco Canyon represent a cyclical pattern that can be brought on by “abuse of the sacred, pride, inventiveness, and loss of culture and tradition” (260).

McPherson acknowledges that the book’s unifying theme, “the role of traditional Navajo thought in daily life, its pervasive interpretation, and incidents that foster its change,” is impossibly broad (5). However, McPherson makes an admirable attempt to synthesize traditional knowledge by giving voice to the Navajo perspective gathered in numerous interviews as well as by drawing on the work of many Navajo scholars. The regional historical chapters give insight into the Navajo worldview through the Diné peoples’ reaction to illness and the intrusion of white society in their lives.

It would have been appropriate scholarship to identify previously published articles (chapters 2, 4, 5, 6, and 7) in the introduction. Moreover, the chapter sequence leaves the impression that little thought was given to the organization of the book. Rather than providing a unifying framework, interspersing chapters on historical topics with those on traditional knowledge and teachings results in a somewhat loosely connected collection. From a Navajo perspective, these topics are likely to be interconnected in meaningful ways. As it stands, however, it is not clear how “They are all connected and framed in a rational network of ideas that, when taken in their entirety, not only make sense but serve as a guide for daily life from birth to death” (3).

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