

A Dissertation  
entitled  
The Trickster Archetype: Tracing the Trickster Myths to Their Proto-Trickster Roots

by  
Gregory Keith Robinson

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty as partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree in History

---

Dr. Alfred Cave, Committee Chair

---

Dr. Thomas Barden, Committee Member

---

Dr. Michael Jakobson, Committee Member

---

Dr. James Seelye, Committee Member

---

Dr. Patricia R. Komuniecki, Dean  
College of Graduate Studies

The University of Toledo  
May 2011

Copyright 2011, Gregory K. Robinson

This document is copyrighted material. Under copyright law, no parts of this document may be reproduced without the expressed permission of the author.

An Abstract of  
The Trickster Archetype: Tracing the Trickster Myths to Their Proto-Trickster Roots

by

Gregory Keith Robinson

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty as partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree in History

The University of Toledo  
May 2011

In modern Native American culture, a “trickster” trope often appears in myths, oral traditions, recorded narratives, ceremonies, and historical accounts, although its purpose and role in society is ambiguous. To the First Peoples who owned the myths, these stories had educational, moral, and spiritual purposes that explained the natural phenomena of their environments, their histories and backgrounds, and their cultural lifeways. Anthropologist Paul Radin noted that “few myths have so wide a distribution as the . . . *The Trickster*. . . they belong to the oldest expression of mankind.” Radin suggested that the trickster myth-figure “is at one and the same time creator and destroyer, giver and negotiator . . . He possesses no values, moral or social, is at the mercy of his passions and appetites, yet through his actions all values come into being.”

Despite Radin's assertion that few other myths have continued with their basic content unchanged, this is generally not the case with the recorded trickster myths. In fact, as I will explain, many of the written trickster accounts have changed, changes that can be traced to the early contact accounts and descriptions recorded by the Europeans. In order to make sense of the modern trickster concept, and to determine if the missionaries and colonizers altered these myth-figures (whether inadvertently or not), I have sought

the earliest forms of trickster, the tribal-specific, proto-trickster, human-animal myth-figures, and personified spirits that were collected by outsiders during early contact periods.

Moving away from theories that erroneously categorize these myth-figures and personified spirits into cross-cultural modern trickster, devil, Creator, and Great Spirit classification systems, I will present a clear representation of First Peoples' actual beliefs.

I dedicate this dissertation to Cody, my son and *study buddy*, who sat across from me at our kitchen table these past years working on his own schoolwork. In that same regard, I also wish to credit my wife, Lisa for cheering me on through to the beginning of my life's work. Additional credit belongs to my mother, Norma Robinson, whose love has taught me about people and handling the stresses. I am also indebted to my sister, Patricia Wolff for her unyielding interest in this academic endeavor. It is often joked that when you start a doctoral program, you find out who your friends really are and in this case, it includes my friend and fellow editor of Westron Press, John Roth. In addition, I wish to thank my brother, Steven Robinson; my friends Steve Smith and Jim Lopinski, Dr Mary Jo Hennig, Dr. Reising along with Dr. Boss for support in my mytho-methodos, classroom approach. As for others, I am grateful to have met and prayed with Tim Daene, along with Dan Dubiel who fostered my interest in North American history en route to the Arctic Circle.

In conclusion, I wish to pause, reflect, honor and remember my late father, Louis Keith Robinson, who in his own whimsical humor brought me to understand that in some big and inexplicable way, "it will all work out"—and in every way, it somehow did.

## Acknowledgements

This dissertation represents a task completed that would have remained unfulfilled if not for the help of Father God and his only son, my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ who sought fit to carry me through each success and detour that I encountered during this process. From there I wish to give thanks to my Professor Alfred A. Cave, who immediately understood the value and importance this research. Without his insight and seemingly infinite knowledge, the concepts in this study would have never materialized. I also wish to thank Professor Thomas Barden who represents the iconic image of a teacher-guide, one who appeared to me at the most opportune times in my journey. On a similar note, Professor Michael Jakobson recognized the personal discipline in me through our shared interests in the iron sports and in folklore. Professor James Seelye, a colleague of distinction who for many years U.T. sat in most of my seminar classes. I want to express a special thanks to a dedicated scholar and friend, Professor John T. Nelson, whose enthusiasm inspired me to achieve this pinnacle of my academic journey. As to the others whose influences and help further strengthened my resolve, I wish to thank Dr. O'Neal, Dr. Mary Jo Henning, Dr. Charles Beatty-Medina, Dr. Glen Ames, Dr. Glaab, Dr. Wilcox, and Dr. Lora. Finally, I also want to convey a great thanks and a great hug to Debbie Macdonald who always conveyed a positive, understanding, and joyful presence during these years.

# Table of Contents

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	vi
Table of Contents	vii
1 First Peoples Proto-Trickster Myths Human-animal Myth-figures, and Personified-spirits, 1610-1854	1
1.1 Pre-Columbian Myths	4
1.2 Timelines and Texts	6
1.3 Historical Considerations: the Jesuits of New France	10
1.4 Who were the Jesuits?	11
1.5 Historical Considerations: non-Jesuit Writers of New France	14
1.6 Historical Considerations: the Puritans of New England	15
1.7 Historical considerations: the “Praying Indians” and John Eliot	17
1.8 Historical Considerations: the Moravians	18
1.9 Kohl and Early Ethnological Understandings of Native American Spirituality	20
2 The Jesuits, <i>The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents as presented by the Jesuits of New France during Their Missionary Assignments, 1610-1791</i>	23
2.1 What Were The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents	25
2.2 The Histories Concerning How Were the Relations Published	26
2.3 First Peoples, Their Myths, and the Jesuits of New France, 1610-1792	27

2.4 What the Huron Think of Their Origin	29
2.5 What is the Earliest Trickster Myth Concept	33
2.6 Brébeuf's Collected Narrative: Judeo-Christian Perspectives	35
2.7 Among the Huron and Biographical Histories of Jesuits, Jean de Brébeuf, Gabriel L'allemant, and Paul Biard	38
2.8 Language Difficulties	39
2.9 Jesuit Father Albert Lacombe and the trickster Archetype	43
2.10 The Jesuit Lacombe, Scholars Brinton, the Early Trickster Archetype, and Methodist Minister, Peter Jones	44
2.11 Devil Figure Assumptions	49
2.12 The False Trickster Concept Rooted in the First Peoples' Proto-trickster	52
2.13 European and Christian Dualism and Thought in First Peoples' Myth-Stories, the Great Spirit	54
2.14 Reconsiderations: the Cultural-transformers Recast as Tricksters or Devil Figures	57
2.15 Dualism, First Peoples' Creator-transformer Myths and Twins	59
2.16 Iroquois Spirituality and Proto-trickster	62
2.17 Biographies and Historical Perspectives, Father Paul Le Jeune's Direct Method, and the Perceived Authority by the First Students of Native American Spirituality	65
2.18 Jesuit, Marc L'Escarbot	68
2.19 Historical perspectives, Jesuit Le Jeune, Conversion Difficulties Revisited, and the Shamans	69
2.20 The Shamans	71
2.21 The Outaouacs and Jesuit, Claude Jean Alloüez	74
2.22 Alloüez, Dualism, and Customs of the Outaouacs	76
2.23 The Relations, Dualism, and Conversions Revisited	80



2.24 First Peoples' Spirituality as Expressed Through Myths and Other Oral Traditions; Le Jeune and the Montagnais	82
2.25 Le Jeune early encounters with Montagnais Myth-Stories and Rituals	86
2.26 Le Jeune, trickster, and Shamanism	88
2.27 Le Jeune, Additional Eurocentric Constructs, and Husbandry	90
2.28 Skepticism of the Interpretations of First Peoples' Belief Systems and the Descriptions Falsely Described by Joseph Jouveny as Found at the Beginning of the Jesuit Relations.	94
2.29 Jouveny's Eurocentric Affect Revisited	97
2.30 A pre-Columbian Captive's Tale: Father Isaac Jogues	98
2.31 Dictionaries and Additional Language Difficulties	101
2.32 Cultural Genocide, Conversion, and Historical Perspectives	103
2.33 Conclusion	105
3 The Writers of New France, <i>The Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi Valley and Region of the Great Lakes</i> , 1616-1820	108
3.1 Nicholas Perrot and the Historical Context	109
3.2 Introduction: New World and Old World Religions as Understood by the Jesuits and Other Writers of New France, Christian Heritage versus Iouskeha Slew Tawiscaron Creation Myths	110
3.3 Methodology and Scope	111
3.4 Creator and Cultural-hero-trickster-transformer Myth-figures	112
3.5 Historical Perspectives: European Dominion and Religious Expansion	115
3.6 The Spanish in Decline, French Religion, Royal Ascension and Presence in the New World Historical Perspectives: European Dominion and Religious Expansion	116
3.7 Polytheism and Cultural Genocide among the First Peoples	119
3.8 European Christian Conversion Tactics and Missionaries' Intentions	120

3.9 Religious Differences, Agendas, and Conversionary Practices	122
3.10 Problems Associated with First Peoples' Creator stories and other Mischaracterization by Euro-Americans	124
3.11 Great Spirit Concept	133
3.12 Who or What is the Great Spirit, General Histories, and Reasons for Conversion	135
3.13 In Search of the Earliest Proto-historical Great	146
3.14 The Earliest Recorded Great Spirit Motif	148
4 The Protestant Missionaries of New England, Mid-Atlantic Seaboard, the Midwest, and Great Lakes Regions, (1606-1820s)	151
4.1 Introduction and Premise	152
4.2 English Perspectives, Protestant Factions	153
4.3 Jamestown, Virginia and Captain John Smith	158
4.4 What Captain John Smith Thought of First Peoples' Religiosity	159
4.5 The Histories of Some Early Contacts	165
4.6 Missionaries Villages and John Elliot's "Praying Indians"	166
4.7 Roger Williams: A Clash of Cultures	167
4.8 The Histories of the Moravian missionary David Zeisberger	170
4.9 Praying Towns: Rule and Regulations	175
4.10 Sole Creator as Found in Lenni-Lenapé Myths: A Comparative Analysis	176
4.11 Modern Lenni-Lenapé' Creation Myths	178
4.12 Spirits and Beliefs	179
4.13 The Interplay Between First Peoples, John Gottlieb Ernestus Heckewelder	181
4.14 Creator Myths Collected by the Moravians with Similar Modern Versions	183
4.15 European Missionaries, Native Preachers, and False Beliefs	184

4.16 Conclusion	185
5 Algic Researches: The Traditional History and Characteristic Sketches of the Ojibway Nation <i>The Lake Superior Ojibwa and The Trickster: A study in American Indian Mythology</i>	188
5.1 The Rise of the Mid-Nineteenth Century Research-based Study of Native American Spirituality	191
5.2 Prophets and Beliefs in the Power of the Myths	196
5.3 Translators and editors	198
5.4 The Rise of Anthropological and Ethnological Methodologies	199
5.5 Henry Rowe Schoolcraft	200
5.6 George Copway (Kah-Ge-Ga-Gah-Bowh), Chief of the Ojibway Nation	209
5.7 Johann Georg Kohl	211
5.8 Kohl's Scholarly Preparations and His Contribution to Research Methodologies	213
5.9 Johann Georg Kohl and Scientific Methodology	220
5.10 Shifts in Researchers' Methodologies and Approaches	222
5.11 Historical Roots, Polytheism, and the Ojibway	225
5.12 Ojibway Myths, Confusion and the Outsiders' Perspectives	225
5.13 Conclusion	227
References	232

## **Chapter 1**

### **First Peoples Proto-Trickster Myths Human-animal Myth-figures, and Personified-spirits, 1610-1854**

The trickster—identified as the proto-trickster, human-animal myth-figures, or personified spirits collected by early explorers, missionaries, traders, and other non-Indians writers—first appears between 1610 and 1854. By the 1850s, the Europeans compromised or transformed the myths into good and evil figures or spirit stories. These reflected Judeo-Christian constructs—not First Peoples’ symbolic nature-spirituality, which has an oral credibility different from the written forms the Europeans had previously known or encountered.

There were two ways to preserve early anthropomorphic sacred myths found in Native American spirituality. The first was through the oral circulation of these tribal-specific materials, today loosely described as trickster, Creators, sub-Creators, vanishing Creators, the Great Spirit, cultural-transformer-trickster figures, or even devil figures. Though difficult to prove, modern scholars have even argued that some of these ancient proto-myths survive today in modern forms. Many anthropologists, ethnologists, and mythologists believe these ancient myth-figures, created during pre-Columbian times, were transmitted orally through generations until they became significant components of contemporary Native American spirituality. I will focus, however, on the written reports

and will explain the differences between the oral and written forms by tracing the First Peoples myth stories to the modern trickster concept.

Myth-figures were also maintained through recorded literature—and frequently misinterpreted or mischaracterized by European and American writers, whose agendas were often indifferent to the cultural lifeways, rituals, rites, ceremonies, customs, or the intent and meanings of Native American spirituality. In fact, from early contact to more recent times, the stories were arranged in archetypes that involved common themes or “recurrent patterns or types which transcend geographical and linguistic boundaries.”<sup>1</sup> These motifs were often used as a basis for cross-cultural comparisons, not for understanding the tribe or the culture area they represented.

Indeed, with each new generation, outsiders’ perspectives and practices continued to alter many First Peoples’ proto-trickster or myth-stories into something notably different. Certainly, as each successive wave of North American exploration, colonization, and migration moved westward and south, new contacts between formerly unknown tribes of Native Americans and European explorers and missionaries fostered many of these changes. As early narratives indicated, the newcomers often misunderstood the varied religious beliefs and myth-stories that were expressed by the First Peoples, often assuming that these natives were part of a *one-tribal* culture and lifeways. Such misunderstandings survive today. If we can sift through the moral interpretations and synoptic judgments that permeated early reports and collected stories, we can better understand First Peoples’ lifeways and spirituality.

---

<sup>1</sup>Stith Thompson, *Tales of the North American Indians* (Bloomington, Indiana and London: Indiana University Press, 1967), vii.

Therefore, in this process of analysis and methodology, the documents used must stand against the histories of the period from which they had originated, along with detailed information about the writers—if we can sift through the moral interpretations and synoptic judgments that permeated these collected stories.<sup>2</sup>

Descriptions of the specific tribes misrepresented and the specific informants who conveyed the myth stories are also important. These collective details will prove essential in understanding pre-Columbian forms of First Peoples spirituality. As Ann Doueihi argued, “We learn less from these trickster theories than about Native American cultures than about the Western intellectual perspectives that inform the theories.”<sup>3</sup> We must move away from theoretical cross-cultural categories and archetypes to understand that these myths belong in context with the tribal-specific cultural framework from which they originated. This is admittedly difficult because more than a century of comparisons by scholarly modern Amerindian Spirituality studies researchers continues to endure. For example, the trickster is now more complex than ever since it “has now taken on real being as a figure, at least within Western mythology, and that he is now recognized even by many contemporary Native Americans as their own.”<sup>4</sup>

In examining the evolution of the erroneous representation of the trickster, I will move away from cross-cultural generalizations, categories, and the classification of

---

<sup>2</sup>James Axtell, *After Columbus: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America* (New York, New York and Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1988), 24.

<sup>3</sup>Ann Doueihi, “Trickster on Inhabiting Space between Discourse and Story,” *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 67, 3: 283-311. This description was originally found in *Dictionary of Native American Mythology*, ed., Sam D. Gill and Irene F. Sullivan (New York, New York and Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1992), 310.

<sup>4</sup>Sam D. Gill and Irene F. Sullivan, ed., *Dictionary of Native American Mythology* (New York, New York and Oxford England: Oxford University Press, 1992), 310.

folktale elements often associated with the perceived ancestral or familial patterns twentieth-century scholars considered essential in the holistic study of world and Native American mythologies. In other words, if scholarship continues with the centralized studies of perceived belief patterns—the shared experiences that these world myth collections assume, researchers risk continuing to lump together more tribal-specific belief systems into stereotypical classification systems commonly referred to as trickster archetypes.

I will argue instead for a reconsideration of the myths and thus return the myths back to their original tribal-specific cultures and forms, and in doing so, re-examine these myths within the specific cultural and geographical frameworks that fostered the nature-stories into the tribal-specific cultural representations of the individuals and communities. Admittedly, there is one problem in this venture: the absence of First Peoples' voices.

The methodology used in this study employs the following patterns:

First, each chapter begins with a First Peoples' myth-figure story or a narrative account including details of their tribal-specific lifeways. Within this introduction and premise section, I will argue that many non-Natives falsely portrayed these myths, a position that represents a significant part of this study.

Second, each chapter will identify who collected the myths and why, in order to examine who chronicled, translated, or edited the myths. This will allow us to see if the proto-trickster, human-animal, or personified spirit roots were corrupted. Personal biographies are also cited as they can determine potential agendas of who recorded these tribal-specific myths and why.

Third, views by Native American studies experts will be included, along with historical perspectives to help trace the myths to their proto-trickster roots.

Finally, since we cannot divorce political and economic factors from the histories of social change, I will include additional details concerning Europeans and individuals who enacted, led, or participated in such interactions.

## **1.1 Pre-Columbian Myths**

Two themes deserve a central focus here. One is that First Peoples' proto-trickster, human-animal, and personified spirit myth-stories and belief systems merit a certain tribal-specific respect in their placement in the histories of the Americas. The second is that outsiders were responsible for much of the myth literatures known today. Indeed, since the First Peoples relied on oral traditions, any investigation of the original lost myth-stories remains irretrievable. Although myth evidence remains scant, the missionaries and colonizers who chronicled some of the earlier First Peoples' myth-stories did so with surprising results. Indeed, in some very early contact proto-trickster oral traditions, some myths collected do not contain elements of Judeo-Christian Creationism or dualism; therefore, they represent evidence of pre-Columbian myth sources.

With respect to pre-Columbian oral traditions, there were no First Peoples' collected or written myth-stories in this work since pre-Columbians had no written means or visible syllabaries of cultural transmission. Nonetheless, this understanding sheds light on some issues. As I will maintain that if the myth-stories collected during early European contact phases show no evidence of Judeo-Christian elements or dualism, then



presumably the myth-stories were pre-Columbian in nature. However, as I delved into the earliest evidence of proto-trickster stories, I discovered these pre-Columbian myths also had no specific references to Europeans or Africans within the context of their storylines, nor did they mention or describe the advance technologies or non-native food sources the newcomers introduced into the natives' cultural lifeways. Therefore, it was plausible to assume that these stories existed prior to European exploration, settlement, and invasion. Although varied, and limited to a few sources, the term "pre-Columbian," will be used to explain these differences. Additionally, if good and evil concepts were evident in the myth-stories, then it was clear that outsider sources altered, influenced, or radically changed them into something different from First Peoples' religious intent. Nevertheless, pre-Columbian evidence was available in many numerous and unlikely narratives, but this evidence was often presented through the prism of Eurocentric and Christian views.

Nonetheless, the term pre-Columbian is useful since it explains the differences between pre-contact myths, most probably human-animal or personified myths-stories, and the post-contact myths that exhibited European influences and were indeed different in presentation. Thus, if a recorded belief system or myth-story revealed the presence of dualism, the opposing forces of good and evil associated with Judeo-Christian beliefs, then it was post-Columbian because those concepts were not present in First Peoples' myth-figure stories. Indeed, as I will show, the Europeans at least gave some voice to myth stories. However, what European voicing also can include the idea that the Europeans were solely responsible for the delivery of First Peoples' myth-stories, and in doing so, giving at least some echo of a voice to the severed roots of Native American spirituality. However, with mixed and varied results, Europeans often clouded the proto-

trickster myths-stories with their own religiosity, thereby leaving scholarship with the task of separating the modern trickster myths from the proto-trickster, pre-Columbian roots.

## 1.2 Timelines and Texts

A good place to begin this inquiry is the year 1610. Although the invasion and exploration of the Americas by the Spanish, Portuguese, French, English and other European powers began well before 1610, the year coincides with the beginning date of *Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents as Presented by the Jesuits of New France during Their Missionary Assignments, 1610—1791*.<sup>5</sup> The document collection reflected one of the most comprehensive assessments of Native American life and offers a starting point to explain perceptions of First Peoples' spirituality. I will also include other early contact myths collected and recorded by non-native writers Nicholas Perrot and Claude Charles Le Roy Bacqueville de la Potherie, along with fur traders and two government agents' accounts also found in Emma Helen Blair's collection, *The Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi Valley and Region of the Great Lakes*.<sup>6</sup>

I will also examine other proto-trickster stories collected by colonizer and explorer, Captain John Smith,<sup>7</sup> as well as other works by several early theologians who

---

<sup>5</sup>Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France 1610-1791*, 73 vols. (New York, New York: Pageant, 1959).

<sup>6</sup>Emma Helen Blair, trans., ed., *The Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi Valley and Region of the Great Lakes as described by Nicholas Perrot, French commandant in the Northwest; Bacqueville de la Potherie. French Royal commissioner to Canada; Morell Marston American army officer; and Thomas Forsyth, United States agent at Fort Armstrong. Volume I* (Lincoln, Nebraska and London, England: University of Nebraska Press, 1996, originally published 1911).

<sup>7</sup>Captain John Smith, *Captain John Smith Writings with other Narratives of Roanoke, Jamestown, and the First English Settlement of America* (New York, New York: Penguin Putman Inc., 2007), 291.

left colonies to establish new congregations. These include works by John Eliot,<sup>8</sup> Baptist, Roger Williams,<sup>9</sup> along with David Zeisberger's<sup>10</sup> and John Heckewelder's<sup>11</sup> personal notes and recorded accounts found in several key Moravian collections. Finally, as the frontier moved westward, so did many tribes. Of particular interest here are the Native American human-animal myth-figures and personified spirits as collected by Henry Rowe Schoolcraft.<sup>12</sup> I will also study the detailed lifeway descriptions and myth-stories of the Lake Superior Ojibway recorded by early ethnologist, Johann Georg Kohl.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup>Henry W. Bowden and James P. Ronda, *John Eliot's Indian Dialogues: A Study in Cultural Interaction* (Westport, Connecticut and London England: Greenwood Press, 1980), 21.

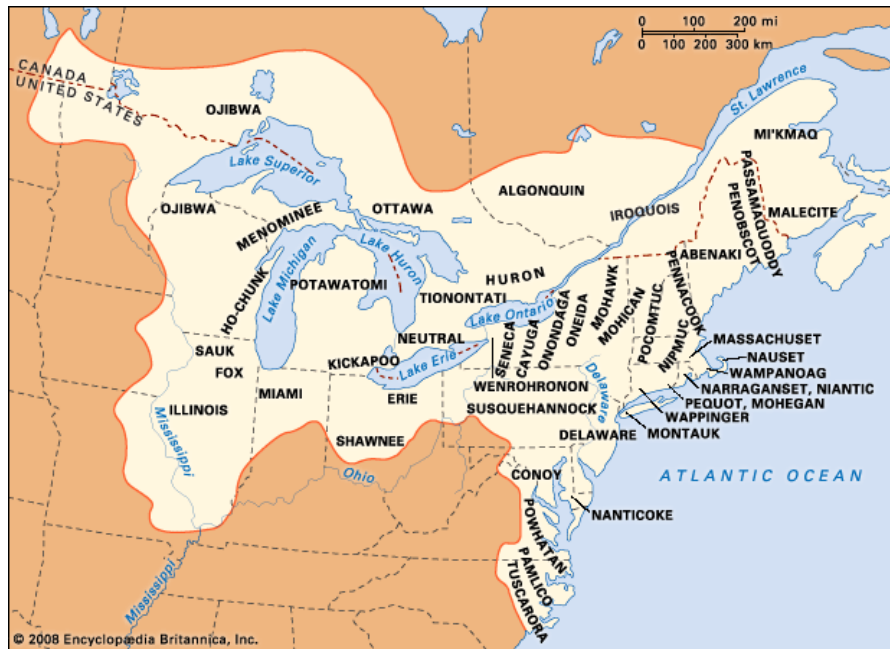
<sup>9</sup>Roger Williams, *The Complete Writings* (New York, New York: Russell & Russell, 1963), 1:124.

<sup>10</sup>David Zeisberger, *David Zeisberger's History of the Northern American Indians*, ed., by Archer Butler Hulbert and William Nathaniel Schwarze (Columbus Ohio: The R.J. Heer Printing Co., Printers, Ohio State Archeological and Historical Society, 1910).

<sup>11</sup>John Heckewelder, *History, Manners, and Customs of the Indian Nations Who Once Inhabited Pennsylvania and the Neighboring States* (New York, New York: Arno Press & The New York Times, 1971).

<sup>12</sup> Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, *Schoolcraft's Indian Legends* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1974), 302.

<sup>13</sup>Johann Georg Kohl, *Kitchi-Gami: Life Among the Lake Superior Ojibway*, trans., Lascelles Wraxall (St. Paul, Minnesota: Historical Society Press, 1985), xvii.



[www.werelate.org/wiki/Native\\_American\\_Research\\_Guide](http://www.werelate.org/wiki/Native_American_Research_Guide)

(Accessed October 3, 2010)

The mid 1850s mark a natural end for this examination of First Peoples' spirituality. The rationale for the "closing date had to be made rather arbitrarily"<sup>14</sup> but seemed appropriate because the eastern and woodland area myths collected after the 1850s appeared less than faithful to their pre-Columbian merited heritages. As noted earlier, elements of Christian dualism that distorted perceptions of Native Americans were not evident in the earlier literatures. However, as the interactions between the cultures increased and the settlers moved westward, many Native American tribal nations started to absorb Christian doctrines into their own polytheistic belief systems. In addition to these swift changes that affected many First Peoples' faith beliefs and lifeways, the closing date of 1854 also coincides with the removal of the Wisconsin

<sup>14</sup>W. Vernon Kintz, *The Indians of the Western Great Lakes* (Ann Arbor Michigan: Ann Arbor Paperbacks: The University of Michigan Press, 1965), v.

Ojibway to reservations. This devastating action was emblematic of the times, as the last remnants of Great Lakes' First Peoples were packed up spiritually and move physically to the west.

And 1851 Indians Appropriations Act was well under way by 1854. The act was intended to be a solution to the question of land use and settlement but resulted in the forcible relocation of many Native Americans to reservations. More tribes were learning of Christianity through increased contacts with Euro-American missionaries as well as Christianized Native Americans. As W. Vernon Kintz notes "Catholic Iroquois trappers from eastern Canada, who followed British fur companies into the Oregon country, aroused an interest in the white man's religion. [The Christian Iroquois] preached the rudiments of Christianity to them" (the natives of the Pacific Northwest), as "certain bands became intrigued with the white man's relations with the supernatural, believing that possession of knowledge of those relations would give their people power, influence, and prestige."<sup>15</sup> Thus, by the mid-nineteenth-century, patterns of Christian influences emerged in many Native American belief systems, eventually penetrating most of the North American continent. In addition, belief in the Judeo-Christian story of Creation, once taken for granted throughout much of the Western world, began to diminish as people increasingly questioned the Biblical explanations of origins and physical causalities.

In fact, the 1850s ended with expansion of scientific research that implicitly challenged the acceptance of faith. The 1854 closing date symbolically corresponds with Charles Darwin's published work, *On the Origin of the Species by Means of Natural*

---

<sup>15</sup>Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., *The Indian Heritage of America*, (New York, New York: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1991), 325-7.

*Selection*, which demonstrated “through exceedingly gradual (passive) adaptation, a species may diversify or simply become better attuned to the world, producing, ultimately, a creature which is different in form from its ancestor.”<sup>16</sup> Native Americans former understanding and approach to man’s origins and creation were changing and began to include the developing concepts of evolution, as well as concepts from the First Peoples’ ancient polytheistic belief systems. Thus, as more scientific understandings and theories developed, this created confusion in the Native American belief systems regarding *their* own tribal-specific Creation stories and *their* origins of man.

Finally, with increased immigration, technological advances, and the building of the Transcontinental Railroad on the horizon (1863-1869), the tribes east of the Mississippi (and later the rest of the country) began to lose their environmental myth-figures as their exposure to the natural surroundings of their ancestors dwindled. Through warfare, forced assimilation or fringe indoctrination into the dominant European and American culture, First Peoples’ belief systems and rituals—often associated with their hunting and planting rites and ceremonies—were permanently disrupted, damaged, or destroyed due to the steady influx of immigration, scientific thinking, and technological advances. The eastern and northern territorial regions fell to European and American colonizing efforts that forever altered the First Peoples’ belief systems.

### **1.3 Historical Considerations: the Jesuits of New France**

It is important to examine how the Europeans and Americans explorers, missionaries, and colonizers altered and destroyed the cultural and spiritual lifeways of

---

<sup>16</sup>Richard E. Leakey and Roger Lewin, *Origins: What New Discoveries Reveal About the Emergence of Our Species and its Possible Future* (New York, New York: The Rainbird Publishing Group Limited, For E.P. Dutton, a Division of Sequoia-Elsevier Publishing Company, Inc. 1977), 30.

the First Peoples. Indeed, there were marked differences in the way history portrayed the policies of the major European countries that interacted with the First Peoples. Francis Parkman generalized, “Spanish civilization crushed the Indian; English civilization scorned and neglected him; French civilization embraced and cherished him.”<sup>17</sup>

As this study traces the modern trickster concept to its proto-trickster roots, it will also examine the results of European settlement and expansion, as well as the interactions between First Peoples, colonizers, and Christian missionaries (more specifically, the Catholics and the Protestants) that resulted in permanent shifts and changes in First Peoples’ lifeways, belief systems, and proto-trickster myth-figures and personified spirit stories. This chapter will address the first organized group of missionaries, the Jesuits, including missionaries Jean de Brébeuf, Albert Lacombe, Paul Le Jeune, Francesco Gioseppe Bressani, as well as Marc L’Escarbot, Charles, L’allemant, Pierre Biard, Ennemond Massé, Claude Jean Allouez. There will also be an analysis of the Isaac Jogues’ narrative.

#### **1.4 Who were the Jesuits?**

Who were the Jesuits, and how did they perceive the First Peoples’ proto-trickster myths? According to the *Oxford Universal English Dictionary*, the Jesuits are “The ‘Society of Jesus’, a Roman Catholic order founded by Ignatius Loyola in 1534. The object of the Society was to support and defend the Roman Catholic Church against the 16<sup>th</sup> [Century] Reformers, and to propagate the faith among the heathens. The stringent organization of

---

<sup>17</sup>Francis Parkman, *The Jesuits in North America* (Boston, Massachusetts, 1867), 1:131.

the order soon made it very powerful.”<sup>18</sup> In other words, these Catholics were well-trained activist missionaries whose job was to Christianize non-believers—not necessarily understand or accept their cultural belief systems—which may explain many of their misperceptions and mischaracterizations of First Peoples’ spirituality and lifeways.

According to Alfred A. Cave, the Jesuits “often misunderstood what they saw and what they were told. Their accounts contain both errors and inconsistencies. Some agreed with observers such as Columbus, Vespucci, and Verrazano, who had reported that Native Americans had no religion. Others believed they worshipped an evil spirit who resembled the Christian Devil.”<sup>19</sup>

Ruth M. Underhill would agree that not only were there misperceptions found in the narratives but there were also “gaps that cannot be filled,” since the tribes concerned were extinct. She added: “Sometimes we are reduced to using the accounts of early travelers, which may be brief jottings or misinterpretations, such as ‘They worship the Devil.’ Or some priestly missionary may have gone to the other extreme and translated the Indians’ talk of Power as a belief in God. Even when Indians themselves gave information, the English words they must use could not carry their exact meaning.”<sup>20</sup> The intention “is to not chastise the missionaries. Not only would that serve little purpose, but

---

<sup>18</sup>*The Oxford Universal English Dictionary*, vols. ICE-MAG, 1063 (1937).

<sup>19</sup>Alfred A. Cave, *Prophets of the Great Spirit: Native American Revitalization Movements in Eastern North America*, (Lincoln, Nebraska and London, England: University of Nebraska, 2006), 250-1.

<sup>20</sup>Ruth M. Underhill, *Red Man’s Religion: Beliefs, Practices of the Indians North of Mexico* (Chicago, Illinois and London, England: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), 6.



it would be asking these forebears in the faith to have done the impossible—namely, to have demonstrated an awareness beyond what was culturally possible at that time.”<sup>21</sup>

I will argue, however, that the Jesuits and other European writers and missionaries set the stage for creating false European descriptions of Native American spirituality, as hundreds of collected narratives developed common themes that cast First Peoples’ beliefs as part of Christian dualism of good and evil, more specifically, God versus the devil or Satan.

Yet, the priests were seen as *gradualists*, since they had systematically, steadily, and often slowly (in terms of their conversion tactics) worked to convert Native Americans to Christianity. As part of their strategy, the French missionaries moved into the First Peoples communities, spending a great deal of time living with them amidst disease, starvation, intertribal conflict, and the ever-changing hostile environments. The Jesuits also hunted and defended the First Peoples against other tribes, as well as other European invaders—even dying in the process. Many Jesuits spent time learning the tribal-specific languages, dialects, and customs, in order to understand the First Peoples’ rituals, myths, and belief systems. In doing so, the Jesuits learned how the natives viewed their own tribal-specific understanding of the world and its creation. From these interests and their Jesuit training, the missionaries were inspired to collect and record First Peoples’ proto-trickster human-animal myth-figures and personified spirit stories, seeing this work as a way to connect with the tribes they wished to convert. From there, the French priests progressively introduced concepts of Catholicism and European civilization into the First Peoples’ spirituality and cultural lifeways. Gradually, the

---

<sup>21</sup>George F. Tinker, *Missionary Conquest: The Gospel and Native American Cultural Genocide* (Minneapolis Minnesota: Fortress Press and Minneapolis, 1993), 9.

understanding and eventual acceptance of many of the tenets of Christianity became a way of life for a number of Native Americans.<sup>22</sup>

## **1.5 Historical Considerations: non-Jesuit Writers of New France**

In addition to Jesuit writings, a collection written by non-Jesuits writers also emerged. Indeed, these other writers also spent time living, learning, and accepting the Native Americans they met. Emma Helen Blair's compilation, *The Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi Valley and Region of the Great Lakes*, reveals that the next generations of writers also lived in New France, 1710-1820. They also collected and recorded First Peoples' belief systems. The European and American writers Nicholas Perrot, Claude Charles Le Roy Bacqueville De La Potherie, Morrell Marston, and Thomas Forsyth encountered First Peoples, but did not attempt to convert the Native Americans to Christianity as Jesuit missionaries had. Indeed, Perrot and the other writers generally disregarded First Peoples' myth-figures, personified spirits, and even to some extent, their religious practices as false; however, they still collected the stories. Their work was also important in tracing the changes that developed in the proto-trickster myths stories.

These writers, like the Jesuits, lived nearby or within Native American societies. But they participated in cultural exchanges between the tribes for economic and political reasons. After a review of their accounts, it is clear that Perrot, La Potherie, Marston and Forsyth did not waste time linking First Peoples' belief systems to the Judeo-Christian heritage.

---

<sup>22</sup> Oscar Handlin, "The Significance of the Seventeenth Century," in *Seventeenth-Century America: Essays in Colonial History*, James Morton Smith (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. 1972), 9-10.

Instead, the four writers accumulated and preserved Native Americans myths for different reasons. They sought First Peoples' stories as a way to understand different cultures' needs and values, thereby strengthening their partnerships with the natives in the fur trades or other economic ventures. The writers also sought to find common ground between cultures in order to make quick generalizations about the peoples they encountered. Perrot, for example, had mutual business deals with many tribes and he used those encounters to broker a temporary peace among several warring tribes.

It was advantageous for Perrot and the others to learn to translate Native American languages and to understand and learn about the social mores of a culture in order to develop and maintain business relationships. In short, such interactions yielded some economic benefits for both parties involved. Although there was much at stake, especially in terms of economic successes, many writers admitted in their narratives that they were generally interested in Native American culture because of the perceived exotic and different nature of aboriginal lifeways.

## **1.6 Historical Considerations: the Puritans of New England**

In New England, however, the pattern of interaction was different and more reserved, since Puritan *absolutism* pervaded most interactions between European newcomers and the First Peoples. Simply put, some Puritans mistrusted the First Peoples and therefore had limited relations. This would explain why there is little evidence of proto-trickster myth-stories collected and recorded by the Puritans; some knowledge of eastern woodland First Peoples, however, is evident in European diaries and journals. The Puritans wanted to purify the church of false teachings by advancing an authoritarian

religious discipline that condemned many traditional Catholic customs and practices as evil or idolatrous. They had challenged the Catholic conception of Sacraments and condemned the use of saints and priests as intermediaries between God and themselves. They also regarded anything not explicitly mandated in the Bible as false interpretations of the Word.

These traditions crossed the Atlantic to the New World, as the Puritans came to view First Peoples' cultural lifeways and belief systems as licentious, idolatrous, and wrong. According to Oscar Handlin, the Puritans believed that all persecution and sorrow meant one thing: Divine intervention. They saw "Indians, imps of Satan, and the Papists" as "Creatures of the devil;" the external wilderness and the environment were thus evidence that they had a God-given right to tame dark forests and uncultivated lands, and thus, sow the seeds of a new life in the New World.<sup>23</sup>

Nonetheless, New England Puritans still "thought of themselves as led by Divine Providence to a New Canaan where they were to create a new kind of society that would be a model for the whole world. Their city upon a hill would ultimately be emulated by other men. It was part of the scheme of divine redemption, occupying the stage at a critical turn in the cosmic drama that had begun with Creation, that had been continued in the reformation, and that would end in the Second Coming."<sup>24</sup> Yet, the Puritan mission was simple and direct, "To convert the Indians or to civilize the wilderness. The newness of the of a New World reserved for some ultimate purpose and waiting for those who would bring it under cultivation or use it as the setting for their own experiments in salvation confirmed the successive groups of immigrants, in the seventeenth century and

---

<sup>23</sup>Smith, 10.

<sup>24</sup>Smith,10.

later, in the belief that there was a profound importance to their coming.”<sup>25</sup> Nonetheless, many Puritans were too busy, especially in Boston, dealing with new settlers who sailed into the Massachusetts Bay Colonies to bother converting their native neighbors. Some sixteenth and seventeenth century Protestant religious beliefs and observances limited interactions with the First Peoples to basic and necessary exchanges. Consequently, the Puritans were not especially inspired to collect much religious information about the tribes they removed or destroyed—until a written challenge to convert the natives emerged later in the colony’s charter.

Rayner Wickersham Kelsey credited Roger Williams with carrying the Gospel to the natives in a more structured missionary work. Kelsey wrote, “When Roger Williams (later a Baptist) fled from the authorities of Massachusetts early in 1636 and found refuge from the wintry storms among the friendly Wampanoags and Narragansetts southwest of Plymouth, the Protestant effort to carry the Gospel to the natives may be said to have fairly begun.”<sup>26</sup> Yet the work of the Protestant missions in the New World was sporadic, unorganized, denominationally driven, and therefore, limited—simply because they “did not possess a task force like the Franciscans and Jesuits to do missionary exploration.”<sup>27</sup>

## **1.7 Historical considerations: the “Praying Indians” and John Eliot**

Unlike the majority of his Puritan counterparts, English missionary John Eliot

---

<sup>25</sup>Smith, 10.

<sup>26</sup>Rayner Wickersham Kelsey, *Friends of the Indians, 1655-1917* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The Associated Executive Committee of Friends of the Indian Affairs, 1917), 11.

<sup>27</sup>John McManners, *The Oxford History of Christianity* (Oxford, England and New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 328.

(1604-1690) decidedly followed a directive or a challenge to convert the First Peoples into Anglicized Christians. In 1751, Eliot established the first Praying Town in Natick, Massachusetts. There, he encouraged and persuaded the weaker tribal bands like the Nipmuck, Massechsett, and the Pennacock to join his “Praying Town” communities. In order to understand the different cultures, Eliot recorded some of their religious belief systems. Yet he only allowed for partial preservation of their lifeways, insisting that the Algonquians renounce their nature religion and fully accept their new Christianized beliefs. However, as colonial expansion continued westward, resentment against these “Praying Town” communities fostered tension and escalated mistrust. In the end, Christian influences often failed to take a rigid hold in the midst of westward expansion, European and tribal warfare, economic controls, and political infightings.

## **1.8 Historical Considerations: the Moravians**

In addition to John Eliot and his Praying Towns, the Moravians attempted to redirect Native American spirituality towards Christianity. In their work among First Peoples, the Moravians also enacted Praying Towns that enabled the Native Americans to live independent of outside influences. Indeed, the Moravians were different from the other missionaries. They were *accommodationists*. They neither practiced the militant *absolutism* of the Puritans, nor the *gradualism* of the Jesuits; instead, their beliefs ranged somewhere in between those two philosophies.

Moravians traditionally only accommodated *some* aspects of Native American spirituality, as long as it did not interfere with their Christian beliefs. Moravians newcomers originally settled in Savannah, Georgia, in 1735. Around 1740, they moved to

Pennsylvania and began their communal missionary work. To assist their missionaries in converting the First Peoples, the Moravians believed that the Bible and other religious texts needed translations specific to the tribal languages of the Native Americans they served. The theme of accommodation, albeit limited and controlled, was prevalent in Moravian missionary John Heckewelder's writings:

Wherever the Moravians went among the Indians, they brought not only religion but educations, industry, and the arts. Their success in introducing the better elements of white culture did not involve the destruction of the native ethos. They did not make assault on the Indians' personality. The Moravian purpose was to restore the morale of the broken peoples, give them enough of white man's skills to live beside him without pauperization, in a word, to give hope to the displaced persons whom Europeans' roaring advance across the continents had left in its wake. [The Moravians] . . . sought not to destroy the Indian ethic, which had much nobility in it, but to save as best of it from extinction.<sup>28</sup>

These principles worked until the Revolutionary War began (1775-1783). Then the Moravians declared neutrality from the English and Americans. In doing so, their church communities came under suspicion and persecution by both the English as well as the American colonists. In 1781, the British arrested Moravian leaders David Zeisberger and John Heckewelder as spies. Both ended up in Detroit and while they were absent, ninety-six Christian Delaware died in the Gnadenhutten massacre. Eventually the two leaders convinced authorities of their innocence and were released from custody.

Nonetheless, this pattern of failed missionary works, whether by choice or by political or legal hindrances, added to the dispossession of numerous tribes and what remained of their ancient lifeways and spirituality. The choice was clear for many First Peoples in the seventeenth and middle eighteenth centuries—adjust either to European (or after the Revolution), American authority or, face the cultural genocide.

---

<sup>28</sup><http://www.moravianhistoricalsociety.org/monuments/shekomeko.php> (Accessed August 10, 2010).

## 1.9 Kohl and Early Ethnological Understandings of Native American Spirituality

As the frontier moved westward, similar patterns of invasion and colonizing plagued all the tribes, including those of the Great Lakes. For example, the Wisconsin Ojibway, who formerly lived near the Sault St. Marie region, were one of the last tribes to retain some of their lifeways. They had relocated to one of four reservations on the shores of western Lake Superior. This devastating action was emblematic of the times, as the last remnants of the Great Lakes woodland hunting cultures were packed up spiritually, and moved physically to the western reservations. Just one year after the swift changes and the destructive culture shock of their removal, a German travel writer, cartographer, and early ethnologist, Johann Georg Kohl observed and vigorously recorded their historical beliefs systems and lifeways.

Kohl's work is important for various reasons. He was not a missionary. Therefore, unlike other writers imbued with Christian concepts, he avoided judging Native American religious practices and myth-stories. Instead, Kohl simply chronicled First Peoples' lifeways and spiritual belief systems, including the proto-trickster myth-figures and personified spirits—often by seeking clarification or explanation of *their* concepts and spirituality. His surveys of Ojibway histories, social structures, technologies, and religion are important today because he portrayed what was left of their traditional lifeways, shortly after their removal around 1854.

As I will contend, the Ojibway nineteenth-century ways and belief systems were the result of generations of intercourse between the waves of Europeans and then Americans. “Some traditional ways were given up, their usefulness no longer apparent or their meaning clear in the new world of the mid-nineteenth century. Still other traditions



were altered, blending cultural elements derived from Euro-Americans and from other tribes.”<sup>29</sup> Finally, Kohl’s methodologies involved empathetic regard for the Ojbiway.

Kohl noted this in his text, *Travels in Canada*:

When I was in Europe, and knew them only from books, I must own, I considered them rude, cold-blooded, rather uninteresting people but when I had once shaken hands with them, I felt that they were ‘men and brothers’ and had a good portion of warm blood and sound understanding, and I could feel much sympathy for them as for any other creature.<sup>30</sup>

In summary, Kohl’s interpretation of events appeared more scientific in nature, and has a modern sensitivity of the peoples he described that transcends his work. Even though he wrote in the mid-nineteenth century, Kohl applied modern methodologies and appropriate constraints similar to modern ethnologists and even anthropologists, and in turn, produced a work of interpretation that has lasting meaning to events and the peoples he described.

But why did Kohl, or any of the other missionaries and writers, bother to accumulate and record the Native Americans’ cultural lifeways? The answer is complex and needs further exploration. One quality, however, is present in all these narratives—the writers regarded First Peoples as human beings, even though the First Peoples often described the unfamiliar practices, customs, and beliefs as barbaric, different, and foreign to the European invaders. To the Europeans, the natives’ legacies and spiritual heritages were very different from the Eurocentric Christian belief systems. As history has proven repeatedly, strife, warfare, and greed intensified those differences and invoked rationalizations of conquest and control.

---

<sup>29</sup>Kohl, xvii.

<sup>30</sup>Kohl, xxxi. Additional material found in Johann Georg Kohl, *Travels in Canada*, 2:18.

In addition to Kohl's scientific ethnological descriptions, the following chapters will revisit in detail the Jesuits, non-Native explorer-writers and colonizers, the Puritans, and the Moravians, along with the early ethnologists whose works reflected the times, the interactions, and the social histories of the First Peoples they chronicled.

## Chapter Two

### ***The Jesuits, *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents* as presented by the Jesuits of New France during their missionary assignments, 1610-1791***

Early contact, non-judgmental, primary-source materials explaining tribal-specific First Peoples' myths and belief systems before cultural infiltration are scant. Most of the evidence of early, proto-trickster myth-figures associated with First Peoples' lifeways survived, but only through European writings. Since the myths were presented in the voice of the missionaries, conquerors, and colonizers, it is apparent that the newcomers often misinterpreted and misunderstood First Peoples' myth-figures and lifeways and thus gave readers false views based on those misconceptions of aboriginal spirituality. This chapter will examine the Jesuits and their varied interactions with the numerous First Peoples they encountered.

Next, I will examine the early trickster image—rooted in anthropomorphism (“the attribution of human characteristics to inanimate objects, animals, or natural phenomena”<sup>31</sup>) as found in First Peoples' oral traditions. By modern times, scholars often separated proto-trickster, human-animal, or personified spirits and cultural manifestations

---

<sup>31</sup> *The American Heritage College Dictionary: Fourth Edition* (New York, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 2002), 61.

into western-defined world archetypes and categories, including tricksters, Creators, sub-Creators, vanishing Creators, Great Spirit figures, cultural-transformer-tricksters, or devil myth-figures.

I am specifically using myths found in *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents as Presented by the Jesuits of New France during their Missionary Assignments, 1610-1791*, which included narratives concerning the Montagnais, Huron, Outaouacs, and Mohawks, along with the Algonquin and Iroquoian-speaking First Peoples of northeast and north-central North America. These myth-stories and figures are remarkably different from the trickster tales, culture-transformer, sub-Creator, vanishing-Creator, Great Spirit, and the devil spirit archetypes found in today's literatures.

This chapter will also explore several tribal-specific myths focusing on collected natives' oral-tradition stories—especially those proto-trickster myths whose central themes included human-animal or personified spirit figures that were misidentified as demons, devils, or Satan. I will also trace how the trickster concept developed from First Peoples' myths into the modern theoretical classification systems that erroneously placed these complex and multifarious—yet tribal-specific traditions—into common contemporary archetypal categories.

Finally, I will present evidence that in the *Jesuit Relations*—specifically, Father Jean de Brébeuf's<sup>32</sup> 1616 narrative, *What the Hurons Think of Their Origin*—that the use of the trickster-like expression, “a bad trick,” appeared well before the 1878 description. In that myth, Brébeuf wrote, “*Aataentsic* was sure to play them a bad trick, if they did not

---

<sup>32</sup> John de Brébeuf, 1593-1649), was the first Jesuit missionary in Huronia (1626), and was viewed as adept at numerous First Peoples languages and dialects. He lived with the Huron near Lake Huron, learning their customs and belief systems. He was the first to write a Huron dictionary and is considered a serious ethnologist.

keep on their guard.” I will thus argue that the modern trickster archetypal concept can be traced to the proto-trickster personified spirit myth at least 262 years prior to what was previously believed to be the first use of the idiom, by Father Albert Lacombe. This date lends credence to the idea that the incorrect archetype was found in even earlier literatures—well before the commonly accepted date of 1878; thereby giving rise to the idea that these archetypal classifications systems were drawn from many sources.

## 2.1 What Were the Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents?

Three experts can best answer this question. First, according to Alan Greer, “The Jesuit *Relations* constitute the most important set of documentary materials on the seventeenth-century encounter of Europeans and native North Americans. The *Relations* were, in essence, annual reports of French missionaries of the Society of Jesus on their efforts to convert the ‘pagan savages’ to Catholic Christianity. Originally published in Paris between 1632 and 1673, these yearly chronicles always included much more than a simple account of the business of evangelizing.”<sup>33</sup>

As Joseph P. Donnelly explains, St. Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus, issued a directive that required “subjects and superiors frequently communicate with one another, especially when great distances separated them.” From those reports and letters, published accounts surfaced in the form of “forty-one little duodecimo vellum-bound volumes” that alone could “technically be called *Jesuit Relations*.”

Donnelly continues: [writer] “Henri Harrisse correctly described the technical beginnings of the *Relations*. He wrote: ‘On 28 August, 1632, Father Le Jeune, then in the

---

<sup>33</sup>Allan Greer, ed. *The Jesuit Relations: Native and Missionaries in Seventeenth-Century North America* (Boston, Massachusetts and New York, New York: University of Toronto Bedford/St. Martin’s Press, 2000), 1.

midst of the forest eight-hundred leagues from Quebec, wrote a letter which was the first document of a long series comprising the collection, so well known and respected today, which is rightly called the *Relations des Jesuites de la Nouvelle France*.’ ”<sup>34</sup> Other Jesuit narratives followed, forming the core material of these volumes. The history of the *Relations* is also important because it explains how and why these annual reports developed.

## **2.2 The Histories Concerning How the Relations Were Published**

According to Donnelly, “Father Barthélemy Jacquinot, [Paul] Le Jeune’s provincial, arranged to have the Relations of 1632 printed by Sebastion Cramoisy, whose company printed all the subsequent Relations, except that of 1637. . . . The manner in which the Relations were composed and prepared for publication is a matter of some interest. The Superior of the Jesuit Mission, who resided in Quebec, received from various missionaries’ accounts of their work since the last publication of the Relations. The Superior usually wrote a quite lengthy introductory section, reviewing the major events of the previous year. Following the introduction were sections written by the various missionaries, usually attributed to them but edited by the superior.”<sup>35</sup>

Those views resulted in misrepresentations of the documents depicting First Peoples’ lifeways in a less-than-favorable light. Although the Jesuit reports provided detailed descriptions of the First Peoples’ lifeways, it is evident that the Jesuits’

---

<sup>34</sup>Joseph P. Donnelly, *Thwaites’ Jesuit Relations: Errata and Addenda* (Chicago, Illinois: Loyola University Press, 1967), 22-4.

<sup>35</sup>Donnelly, 3-4.

Eurocentric perspective hindered the impartial reading of the narratives. It is also evident that scholars, whether Jesuits or modern scientific academics, misinterpreted what they believed to be First Peoples' spirituality. Their portrayal of the human-animal, devil figures, and personified spirits lead to false or distorted views of the trickster concept. Finally, Donnelly notes "The whole manuscript was then forwarded to the provincial of the province of France in Paris, who edited the material and sent it to Cramoisy for publication. Much to the regret of subsequent generations, the originals of the Relations survived in only rare cases. One can sorrowfully imagine the floor of Cramoisy's typesetting room littered with page after page of Le Jeune's Relation of 1636."<sup>36</sup>

To understand the nature of these reports, I will examine the idea that there were others who translated and edited the accounts before publication. Presumably, the myths were different from the original narratives recorded by the Jesuits. Therefore, it is important to examine the accounts with some reservations, especially if the stories were susceptible to Judeo-Christian concepts of good and evil.

### **2.3 First Peoples, Their Myths, and the Jesuits of New France, 1610-1792**

The earliest known evidence of the trickster concept is found in the *Jesuit Relations* in the section entitled *What the Hurons Think of Their Origin*. This is the First Peoples' Creation myth as recounted by Father Jean de Brébeuf, 1636.

Brébeuf wrote:

One is astonished to see so much blindness in regard to the things of Heaven, in a peoples who do not lack judgment and knowledge in to those of earth. This is what their vices and brutality have merited from God. There are some indications that they had formerly some more than natural knowledge of the true God, as they may be remarked in some particulars of their fables; and even if

---

<sup>36</sup>Donnelly, 4.

they had had only that which Nature can furnish to them, still they ought to have been more reasonable on this subject, if it had not happened to them according to the word of the Apostle ... for not been willing to acknowledge God in their habits and actions, they have lost the thought of him and have become worse than beasts in his sight, and as regards the respect they have for him.

Now, to begin with the foundation of their belief—the greater part boast of deriving their origin from heaven, which they found on the following fable, which passes among them for a truth.

They recognize as head of the Nation a certain woman whom they call *Ataentsic*, who fell among them, they say, from Heaven. For they think the Heavens existed a long time before this wonder; but they cannot tell you when or how its bodies were drawn from the abysses of nothing. They suppose, even that above the arches of the Sky there was and still a land like ours, with woods, lakes, rivers and fields, and Peoples who inhabit them. They do not agree as to the manner in which this so fortunate descent occurred. Some say that one day, she was working in her field, she perceived a Bear, her dog began to pursue it and she afterwards. The Bear, seeing himself closely pressed, and seeking only to escape the teeth of the dog, fell by accident into a hole; the dog followed. *Ataentsic*, having approached this precipice, finding that neither the Bear nor the dog were any longer to be seen, moved by despair, threw herself into it also. Nevertheless, her fall happened to be more favorable than she supposed; for she fell down into the waters without being hurt, although she was with child—after which, the Waters having dried up little by little, the earth appeared and became habitable.<sup>37</sup>

As noted in the passage, Brébeuf, like other European explorers, invaders, and missionaries added predisposed and often biased explanations of First Peoples' belief systems to their myth-stories. In the Huron Creation myth, Brébeuf considered that “the foundation of their belief,” was merely a “fable, which passes among them for a truth.” According to *The Oxford Universal English Dictionary*, the word “fable” implies “a narrative or statement not founded on fact, a myth or a legend, a foolish story; a fabrication.”<sup>38</sup> This common understanding of “fable” was certainly part of seventeenth-century European vernacular; yet by modern standards, it certainly dismisses or relegates First Peoples' ancient and sacred spirituality as naïve and simplistic. As is often the case, the Jesuits interjected their views into First Peoples' stories. In general, their opinions

---

<sup>37</sup>Thwaites, 10: 85-7.

<sup>38</sup>*The Oxford Universal English Dictionary* vols. DEC-FIT), 665.



were similar, linking First Peoples to Bible-centered histories and beliefs. The following passage illustrates how Brébeuf inserted his views on Judeo-Christian traditions while attempting to connect to the Huron myth.

## 2.4 What the Hurons Think of Their Origin

Part two of Brébeuf's narrative, describes the story of how *Aataentsic* fell from the Sky, and delivered a daughter, who brought forth two boys, *Tawiscaron* and *Iouskeha*.

They say that the husband of *Aataentsic*, being very sick, dreamed that it was necessary to cut down a certain tree from which those who abode in Heaven obtained their food; and that, as soon as he ate of the fruit, he would be immediately healed. *Aataentsic*, knowing the desire of her husband, takes his axe and goes away with the resolution not to make two trips of it; but she had no sooner dealt the first blow than the tree at once split, almost under her feet, and fell to this earth; whereupon she was so astonished that, after having carried the news to her husband, she returned and threw herself after it.

Now, as she fell, the Turtle, happening to raise her head above water, perceived her; and, not knowing what to decide upon, astonished as she was at this wonder, she called together the other aquatic animals to get their opinion. They immediately assembled; she points out to them what she saw, and asks them what they think it fitting to do. The greater part refer the matter to the Beaver, who, through courtesy, hands over the whole to the judgment of the Turtle, whose final opinion was that they should all promptly set to work, dive to the bottom of the water, bring up soil to her, and put it on her back. No sooner said than done, and the woman fell very gently on this Island.

Some time after, as she was with child when she fell, she was delivered of a daughter, who almost immediately became pregnant. If you ask them how, you puzzle them very much. At all events, they tell you, she was pregnant. Some throw the blame upon some strangers, who landed on this Island. I pray you make this agree with what they say, that, before *Aataentsic* fell from the Sky, there were no men on earth.

However that may be, she brought forth two boys, *Tawiscaron* and *Iouskeha*, who, when they grew up, had some quarrel with each other; judge if this does not relate in some way to the murder of Abel. They came to blows, but with very different weapons. *Iouskeha* had the horns of a Stag; *Tawiscaron*, who contented himself with some fruits of the wild rosebush, was persuaded that, as soon as he had struck his brother, he would fall dead at his feet. But it happened quite differently from what he had expected; and *Iouskeha*, on the contrary, struck him so rude a blow in the side, that the blood came forth abundantly. This poor wretch immediately fled; and from his blood, with which the land was sprinkled,

certain stones sprang up, like those we employ in France to fire a gun—which the Savages call even to-day *Tawiscara*, from the name of this unfortunate. His brother pursued him, and finished him. This is what the greater part believe concerning the origin of these Nations.<sup>39</sup>

To the unwavering Jesuits, the idea that there was some “preexisting religious situation” or ancient heritage that connected tribal-specific New World belief systems to the Old Testament Creation stories was more than plausible—it was true. As noted in the second passage, Brébeuf believed this to be the case. In the narrative, he interjected into the myth-storyline his assertion that the two brothers, *Tawiscaron* and *Iouskeha* “relate in some way to the murder of Abel” account. His commentary did two things. First, it interrupted the flow of the story thereby altering the oral tradition to such an extent that it was difficult to determine where the Huron myth-figure story began and where Brébeuf’s explanations ended. Secondly, it limited the possibilities of conclusions other than the connection to Old World accounts. It is possible that the story, with its quarreling brothers, was a mere coincidence, or Brébeuf may have mistranslated it. He or the editors, who later translated and published the *Relations*, may have intentionally mischaracterized the myth as part of Jesuit work or propaganda.

The possibility exists that specific details or myth patterns, seen in the Huron Origin story, matched similar elements found in the Judeo-Christian written traditions. Yet there are key and significant differences between the two accounts. For instance, “*Iouskeha* . . . struck him [*Tawiscaron*] so rude a blow in the side that the blood came forth abundantly. This poor wretch immediately fled; and from his blood, with which the land was sprinkled, certain stones sprang up.” This is obviously different from the Judeo-

---

<sup>39</sup>Thwaites, 10: 87-9.

Christian account. Nonetheless, as Brébeuf noted, he was convinced that the two brothers' story paralleled the Cain and Abel story.

Furthermore, Brébeuf noted that the brothers “came to blows, but with very different weapons. *Iouskeha* had the horns of a Stag; *Tawiscaron*, who contented himself with some fruits of the wild rosebush, was persuaded that, as soon as he had struck his brother, he would fall dead at his feet.” To the Jesuit, that familiar plotline, in which one brother murdered another brother, was enough to connect the Huron myth to the Cain slew Abel story. More importantly, since Brébeuf established that he believed the myth corresponded with the Old Testament story, it is difficult to consider other possibilities. Moreover, to some seventeenth-century writers, this Huron myth-story would have been proof that the First Peoples were also rooted in Biblical histories because if they remained unaccounted for in Creation literatures, they would be considered devils. Thus, one could ask, since “there were no men on earth” how does the Adam figure play into this Huron myth? Finally, both stories differed on yet another major point, the Huron first-mother figure. *Aataentsic* fell from the Sky, while in the Judeo-Christian story, God created Eve from Adam's rib.

Although theories that the aboriginal myths were traceable to the Judeo-Christian traditions remain interesting, proof in addition to any Eurocentric cross-cultural assumptions or comments is necessary. Brébeuf alone translated and recorded the Huron Creation myth from the Huron themselves and his printed version—and although probably authentic—was still interrupted the myth with his biased commentaries.

Indeed, these patterns of interjections and interpretations are visible throughout many different narratives described by other missionaries, colonizers, traders, and

explorers, including the works of other Jesuits, Puritans, Moravians, and other non-Native writers. More often than not, the subjective sentiments of the writers interrupt the flow of the myths and thus distract from the meaning and intent of the First Peoples' beliefs.

In the third part of Father Brébeuf's "*What the Hurons Think of Their Origin*," he described how the First Peoples thought how the different landmasses formed and developed into the distinct geographical regions:

They say that in the beginning of the world, the land was quite covered with water, with the exception of a little Island on which was the sole hope of the human race, to wit, a single man, whose sole companions were a Fox and a little animal like a Marten, which they call Tsouhendaia. The man, not knowing what to do, seeing himself cut off in so narrow a range of country, asked the Fox to plunge into the water, so see if there were any bottom to it; but he had no sooner wet his paws than he drew back, fearing that this experience would cost him his life. Whereupon the man became indignant: "Tessandion, thou hast no sense," he said to him, and kicked him in the water, where he drank a little more than his fill.

However he did not desist from his design, and so encouraged the little animal that was now his sole companion, that it finally resolved to plunge in: and as it did not imagine that the water was so shallow, it did this so violently as to dash itself against the bottom and came back with its snout all covered with slime. The man, very glad at this happy discovery, exhorts it to continue, and to bring up soil to increase the size of the Islet; which did much assiduity, that the Islet lost its identity, and was changed into these vast fields that we see.

If you again press them here, and ask them what they think of this man, - who gave him life, who put him upon this little Island, how he could become the father of all these Nations, since he was alone and had not companion; you will gain nothing by asking all these questions, except that you will get this solution, which would not be bad, if their Religion were good. We do not know; we were told so, our Fathers never taught us any more about it.

What would you say to that? All that we do is to bear witness to them that we feel compassion for their gross ignorance; we take thence occasion, when we judge them capable of appreciating it, for explaining some of our Mysteries, and of showing them how fully they conform to reason. They listen very willingly, and are well satisfied therewith.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> Thwaites, 10: 90-1.

In order to understand this Creation myth, I will examine the earliest known evidence of a trickster-like myth-story.

## **2.5 What is the Earliest Trickster Myth Concept?**

Sam D. Gill and Irene F. Sullivan wrote, “The origin of the term ‘trickster’ is commonly attributed to the 1896 edition of Daniel Brinton’s *Myths of the New World*, although it does not appear in that work. In his 1885, article “The Hero-God of the Algonkins as a Cheat and Liar,’ Brinton cited an entry from Father Albert Lacombe’s *Dictionarie de la Langue des Cris* (1878), in which Lacombe wrote that the name of the Cree figure Wisakketjak (Wesucechak) of the Cree means “the trickster, the deceiver. This is probably the first time the term was used to suggest a general category.”<sup>41</sup>

I have determined, however, that the earliest known identification of a trickster or one who can play a “bad trick” on someone is evident in the Fourth Part of the proto-trickster Huron creation myth recorded by Brébeuf as early as 1616. Here he described how four natives had taken a journey to find out if the French Heaven was different from their own. When they arrived, *Iouskeha* (the Sun according to the Huron) who was alone in his cabin then greeted them. “After some compliments on both sides, in the fashion of the Country, he advised them to conceal themselves in some corner; otherwise he would not answer for their lives; that *Aataentsic*, [identified as the Moon] was sure to play them a bad trick, if they did not keep on their guard.”<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>41</sup> Gill and Sullivan, 308.

<sup>42</sup> Thwaites, 10: 92

Here, in the fourth part of *What the Hurons Think of Their Origin*, one supernatural personified spirit figure or deity warns the four Huron travelers that another spirit god would play a “bad trick” on them:

But to return to *Aataentsic* and *Iouskeha*; they hold that *Iouskeha* is the Sun and *Aataentsic* the Moon, and yet that their Home is situated at the ends of the earth, namely, toward our Ocean sea; for beyond that it is a lost country to them, and before they had any commerce with the French they had never dreamed that there was under Heaven a different land from their own—and, now that they are disabused [free from falsehood or misconception] of this idea, many still believe that their country and ours are two pieces quite separate, and made by the hands of different workmen.

They say, therefore, that four young men once undertook a journey to find out the truth about it; that they found *Iouskeha* quite alone in his Cabin, and that he received them very kindly. After some compliments on both sides, in the fashion of the Country, he advised them to conceal themselves in some corner, otherwise he would not answer for their lives; that *Aataentsic* was sure to play them a bad trick, if they did not keep on their guard.

This Fury[mother of both?] arrives toward evening, and, as she assumes any form she sees fit, perceiving that there were new guests in the house she took the form of a beautiful young girl, handsomely adorned, with a beautiful necklace and bracelets of Porcelain, and asked her son where his guests were. He replied that he did not know what she meant.

Thereupon she went out of the Cabin, and *Iouskeha* took the opportunity to warn his guests, and thus saved their lives. Now, although their Cabin is so very distant, they are nevertheless both present at the feasts and dances which take place in the villages. *Aataentsic* is often badly abused there. *Iouskeha* throws the blame on a certain horned oki named *Tehonrressandeen*; but it is found at the end of the tale that it is he himself who, under that disguise, thus insults his mother.

Moreover, they esteem themselves greatly obliged to this personage; for, in the first place, according to the opinion of some—who hold a belief quite contrary to that of those whom we have mentioned thus far—without him we would not have so many fine rivers and so many beautiful lakes.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, the use of the trickster-like term “bad trick,” can be traced this personified spirit-myth.

Finally, whether the Jesuits, explorers, colonizers, Puritans, or the Moravians, collected these myths, there were many of variations of myth-stories, often tribal-

---

<sup>43</sup>Thwaites, 10: 92-3.

specific; therefore, it is a wonder there were enough similarities to have them assigned by scholars and writers to such broad archetype categories as the trickster. While examining the proto-trickster myths collected by the Jesuits, I will also weigh the likelihood of problems associated with poor translations, inaccurate commentaries, Eurocentric biases, and Christian dualities—often described by the missionaries themselves or added by later editors and translators. I will look closely at the sensitivity and nature of the individual Jesuits who collected the First Peoples’ oral traditions. It is necessary to examine the ways in which observers clouded their perceptions of the myth-stories or gave generations of readers a false view of Native American spirituality, especially the devil figures conceived by the European newcomers themselves.

## **2.6 Brébeuf’s Collected Narrative: Judeo-Christian Perspectives**

In order to understand and explain how the First Peoples came to be and how their ancient myth-stories were erroneously recast into Judeo-Christian schemas, I will return to the written Creation and Flood stories of the Old Testament as Biblical evidence used to explain First Peoples’ origins and existence.

According to Robert F. Berkhofer, “the Christian perspective had difficulty explaining or reconciling how previously unknown peoples to be in the Americas, given the story told in Genesis of Adam and Eve first peopling the Earth.” The theoretical model attempted to “trace the Indians back to Adam and Eve through Old World peoples known to be descendents of them, for naturally in the Eurocentric view of history the Old

World was the original one and the New World with its peoples was one that required explanation.”<sup>44</sup>

Since Christian accounts differed greatly from the oral traditions, including the Huron Creation myth, Europeans erroneously linked native myth stories to Judeo-Christian constructs. In Huron ancient spirituality, the Huron believed that they lived on an ever-growing islet. One Huron explained to Brébeuf that “In the beginning of the world, the land was quite covered with water, with the exception of a little Island on which was the sole hope of the human race, -to with, a single man, whose sole companions were a Fox and a little animal like a Marten, which they call Tsouhendaia. The man, not knowing what to do, seeing himself cut off in so narrow a range of country, asked the Fox to plunge into the water, so see if there were any bottom to it.”

From this passage, emerge several ideas central to this chapter. First, many missionaries—in their religious zeal—often-mischaracterized First Peoples’ myth-figures and personified spirits as false Creator figures, when in fact, those personas were better defined as cultural-transformers or sub-Creators. More specifically, the Huron’s Creator was presumably not the original Creator-figure at all since he was unable to bring up the soil himself; instead he was a sub-Creator because he needed help from the “two human-animal figures, namely a fox and a Marten,” do this work. The supernatural human-animal figure, as in the Algonquian Great Hare myth in the last chapter, also echoes these familiar themes of an unfinished creation completed by sub-Creators.

---

<sup>44</sup>Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man’s Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York, New York: Vantage Books, 1979), 34-5.



Secondly, there is the potential for linguistic-translation problems common with limited communications between newcomers and aboriginals. J. Randolph Valentine argued:

Whether we want it to be or not, the voice of linguistics is a monologue voice of academic English dominance . . . This is a vexing problem since most dictionaries of Indian languages are not really dictionaries in important senses, either, but bilingual glossaries, and provide neither definitions nor relationships between meanings, but only rough English correspondences to indigenous vocabulary. These documents, too, for all their value, impose external conceptualizations.<sup>45</sup>

Consequently, we must be cognizant of the possibility that since the dictionaries were one-sided, the Jesuits, other missionaries, and non-native writers would more than likely have misunderstood or misinterpreted the oral traditions; and by doing so, they may have added elements to the myth-stories explaining what they believed to be the missing Judeo-Christian pieces of the myths they recorded. Very often the writers disregarded First Peoples' beliefs in their written accounts— even to the point of denying that Native Americans had any real beliefs at all. Or if they did, the First Peoples clearly forgotten or misunderstood what the Christian knew to be biblically sanctioned historical facts. Brébeuf complained, “You will gain nothing by asking all these questions,” since the communication and general comprehension difficulties of both European and First Peoples' languages impeded real understanding. The Jesuits believed that the natives clearly misunderstood their own histories since they believed in a false and mixed-up doctrine, which the missionaries assumed had to connect somehow to the Judeo-Christian histories. Nonetheless, the Jesuits still worked to convert the natives by attempting to

---

<sup>45</sup>J. Randolph Valentine, *Linguistics and Languages, Studying Native America: Problems and Prospects*, ed., Russell Thornton (Wisconsin, University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 174.

learn the languages and tribal-specific dialects; they also collected and recorded First Peoples' belief systems amidst these verbal communication difficulties.

## **2.7 Among the Huron and Biographical Histories of Jesuits, Jean de Brébeuf, Gabriel L'allemand, and Paul Biard**

In some instances, conversion of many First Peoples spiked, especially after the epidemics that swept through their nations around the time of early European contact. A 1634 letter to Paul Le Jeune, Father Jean de Brébeuf,<sup>46</sup> who had recently returned to the Huron, provides an example of the regard and concerns for the First Peoples' salvation as well as the effects epidemic disease were having. He wrote:

I send you an account of our journey into the Huron Country. It has been filled with more fatigues, losses, and expenses than the other, but also has been followed, and will be, God aiding, by more of Heaven's blessings . . . it was of vital importance to have a footing in the Country in order to open the door which seemed firmly closed to the Faith. This resolution was far easier than the execution of it . . . nevertheless, arguments and presents won them over. . . But the contagion which had spread among all these Tribes last year, with great destruction . . . suddenly seized several of our Savages, and filled the rest with fear.<sup>47</sup>

The fear also caused anger and resentment towards the Jesuits who were not afflicted by the plague. Indeed, suspicions often escalated, causing additional fury because the priests were seemingly immune to the diseases that ravaged Native communities. The Jesuits also belonged to the race of Europeans whom the First Peoples saw as *outside* invaders. The politics of intertribal warfare also resulted in unwarranted deaths of some missionaries. When one Jesuit lived with the Huron, the Iroquois considered the missionary to be their enemy as well. In one famous case, "A thousand Iroquois attacked

---

<sup>46</sup>Quinn, 98.

<sup>47</sup>Quinn, 98. Thwaites 10: 69-71.

two villages and captured Brébeuf and Gabriel L'allemant, "both of whom were put to death in 1649 with cruel tortures."<sup>48</sup> Finally, the Iroquois near St. Louis tortured, killed, and consumed the remains of Brébeuf and L'allemant near St. Louis, Missouri.

Thus, conversions ebbed and flowed, often with the plagues. In some cases, the First Peoples argued for protections and cures against the afflictions that only their shamans could produce. Others believed that the Jesuits and *their* Christian God could save them from the epidemics. Yet others believed that the Jesuits themselves had bewitched their peoples and brought on the wanton destruction. The Jesuits often paid dearly with their lives for those superstitions.

## 2.8 Language Difficulties

In addition to disease and superstitions that sometimes thwarted the priests' conversion efforts, other misunderstandings affected cultural intercourse. The early missionaries' glossaries lacked appropriate complete and coherent understandings of what each cultural concept meant—not only to the Europeans who had written these dictionaries, but as difficult to the First Peoples who attempted to explain their concepts to the newcomers.

In "Indian Adjustment to European Civilization," Nancy Oestreich Lurie describes the difficulty with communication problems:

The narratives are difficult to follow because of the variety of orthographies employed for Indian words. Certain features remain speculative because initial communication between whites and Indians was limited to the use of signs and the few native words that readily could be learned readily. However, it is possible

---

<sup>48</sup>Carole Blackburn, *Harvest of Souls: The Jesuit Missions and Colonialism in North America, 1632-1650* (Montreal, Kingston, London, England, and Ithaca, New York: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), 38-39.

to see native culture in terms regularities and consistencies which were not obvious to the colonists.<sup>49</sup>

Communication was presumably limited during these contact periods. Furthermore, the likelihood that the myth-stories were misunderstood was evident. However, a change to myth-stories remains suspect and, as Dell Hymes complains:

The bibliographies of the languages grow, but there is hardly to be found anywhere a comprehensive, cogent presentation of what is known about a language, so that what is known can be used by anthropologists, folklorists, or even just other linguists. There are no handbooks that interpret, reconcile, codify [arrange systematically], the various orthographies [the method of representing a language or the sounds of a language by written symbols, spelling], vocabularies, grammatical discussions that make what is collectively known a means to further knowledge.<sup>50</sup>

Given the numerous difficulties in cross-cultural language comprehension that stood between oral traditions and the collected written accounts, it is apparent that opportunities for misinterpretation were present and numerous. In addition, factor in the Eurocentric and Christian agendas—for despite many of their best efforts, the written work of missionaries and explorers, including Brébeuf's narrative accounts, were “fraught with characteristics” of seventeenth century rhetoric and innuendo that surely altered the First Peoples' myths. If adequate communication was seriously limited, then so was the probability that both parties understood the missionaries' line of questioning as they searched for Creation stories in the cultures they encountered.

If that is the case, then the reason the Huron could not adequately explain their beliefs is obvious. In addition, they could not expand on the sacred nature of their spirituality due to the frustration often associated with the rudimentary and limited

---

<sup>49</sup>Nancy Oestreich Lurie, “Indian Adjustment to European Civilization.” in *Seventeenth-Century America: Essays in Colonial History*, James Morton Smith, ed. (New York: The University of North Carolina Press, The Norton Library, W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 1959), 38.

<sup>50</sup>Valentine, 174.

communication processes. Finally, the Huron could not answer questions about Bible-based subjects when they knew nothing about them. Above all, the Europeans held firm to their Eurocentric assumption of superiority, visible when Brébeuf complained that not all interactions and difficult communication problems “would be bad, if their Religion were good.” We only need to read their interjections to assess what they thought of First Peoples’ unrecorded and misunderstood spirituality.

Indeed, the missionaries’ biased explanations and assumptions often interrupted the flow of the myths. These interruptions, presented as explanatory notes and helpful explanations, often depicted the myths as superficial and not spiritual. And many of the early religious explorers found First Peoples’ beliefs difficult to understand—the priests were often frustrated with the reliance on or acceptance of anthropomorphized myth-figures and personified spirits, which did not readily fit into Judeo-Christian perceptions. The perceptible levels of frustration expressed by the European and Christian writers about the First Peoples’ belief in human-animal or personified spirits figures are obvious. The concepts were often incomprehensible to Europeans, who retold them in a series of short, disjointed aggregates, different from the flowing narratives of European cultural histories. The missionaries could not understand how or why the polytheistic myth-stories developed and how they remained genuinely ingrained in the First Peoples’ belief systems.

Thus, the fact that the writers tainted the accounts to fit into their own monotheistic perspective becomes increasingly obvious as they groped for answers, including the idea that the domination of the New World resulted from evil forces or satanic impulses. Since many myths discussed here had their transcribed storylines

interrupted with opinions, assumptions, or personal explanations, the myth-stories' original intention and meaning was changed. In one example, Brébeuf changed the end of the story to focus less on the storyline and more on his Jesuit perspective: "All that we do is to bear witness to them that we feel compassion for their gross ignorance." Presumably, their "ignorance" was their inability to understand the French language or their inability to comprehend the Judeo-Christian traditions that he understood so well.

Brébeuf added, "We take thence occasion, when we judge them capable of appreciating it, for explaining some of our Mysteries, and of showing them how fully they conform to reason. They listen very willingly, and are well satisfied therewith."<sup>51</sup> To Brébeuf, if only the natives would stop "their gross ignorance" and somehow show some appreciation for the "Mysteries" of his faith, they would learn from the doctrines, and thus, be "well satisfied." Yet during this early critical contact period, Brébeuf often attempted but failed to fully explain his own written traditions and beliefs. This must have been a frustrating endeavor for the Jesuit—as well as for other missionaries. Furthermore, since there were vast differences between the European and Native belief systems, the task of finding social and religious common ground must have been daunting, if not nearly impossible. Other early explorers, as well as Protestant missionaries, Puritans, Moravians, also experienced difficult communication problems and translation issues in their missionary endeavors.

Indeed, many of the Jesuits would have concentrated on learning the tribal-specific languages, myth-stories, and the cultural mores of the First Peoples they met in

---

<sup>51</sup> Thwaites, 10: 90-1.

order to better connect with the natives and thus, increase opportunities for conversionary successes.

## **2.9 Jesuit Father Albert Lacombe and the trickster archetype**

As this study returns to Lacombe, it is clear that Father Albert Lacombe, [1827-1916] whose early work involved converting the Métis, also collected information about their lifeways and belief systems, in order to have every advantage in the redemption of their souls. Although he did not agree with those lifeways or practices, he did make some effort to understand their beliefs by recording them.

Lacombe's later missionary work in the 1870s included attempts to convert the Cree and Blackfoot in the prairie provinces of Canada.<sup>52</sup> There, Lacombe determined distinguishing patterns of cultural human-animal myth-figures similar in theme; he then assumed they belonged to the same Judeo-Christian story. From these motifs, it is clear that the rise and development of the early stages of the tricky or deceiver concept seemingly rooted in the Bible traditions that portrayed similar evil spirits or devil figures. Nevertheless, the Jesuits typically "based their operation for their ministry," on the "immediate care of souls"<sup>53</sup> and less on collecting the proto-trickster, human-animal, or personified spirit figure myth-stories. Yet, in their attempts to connect with First Peoples' lifeways, they concentrated on recasting Native personified spirit-figures as devil figures. In fact, missionaries would often proclaim to their readers that any number of these

---

<sup>52</sup> [www.geocaching.com](http://www.geocaching.com), Father Lacombe GC53BA Calgary History Tour-Missionaries (Virtual Cache), Retrieved March 16, 2010.

<sup>53</sup> Gilbert J. Garrington, *The Jesuits of the Middle United States in Three Volumes, Volume Two* (New York, New York: American Press, 1938), 1.

personified nature spirits were very real evil devils or demons. Nonetheless, they also spent a great deal of effort assimilating the First Peoples into their doctrines—by whatever means necessary. As dedicated Jesuits, their objective was to preach salvation to the First Peoples, “as the common good shall dictate.” The Jesuits recognized the rules of the *Epitome Instituti Societis Jesu*, which declared the following:

The chief ministries of the Society, are the following: with a view to the defense and propagation of the faith and the advancement of souls in the life and doctrine of Christ, to preach and lecture to the public and exercise any ministry whatsoever of God’s word; to give the spiritual exercise; to instruct children and the ignorant in Christian doctrine; to hear the confessions off the faithful and administer to them the other sacraments; to practice works of charity according to God’s greater glory and the common good shall dictate.<sup>54</sup>

Hence, it is not always easy for contemporary readers to understand that missionaries’ agendas favored change, claimed much. Their presentations of Native American spirituality were very different from the practices of modern, Western ethnological or anthropological methodologies seen today. Therefore, the missionaries’ intentions and agendas, along with scholarly classification systems, played an important role in the false presentations of First Peoples’ stories and belief systems.

## **2.10 The Jesuit Lacombe, Brinton, the Early Trickster Archetype, and Methodist Minister, Peter Jones**

In 1885, in an essay titled “The Chief God of the Algonkins, in his Character as a Cheat and a Liar,” Daniel Brinton linked the First Peoples’ spirituality to the modern trickster-cultural-transformer or spirit-figure categories. In fact, other missionaries and colonizers, before and after Lacombe, had also described, collected, and attributed tribal-specific belief systems to be part of the modern cultural-transformer myth-figures,

---

<sup>54</sup> Garrington, 1.



vanishing Creators, sub-Creators, and Great Spirits, as well as “tricky” or “evil” personages’ categories.

Brinton also claimed, “The Chipeways apply to him a similar term, *Nenaboj*, or as it is usually written, *Nanabojoo*, and *Nanaboshoo*, ‘the Cheat,’ allied to *Nanabanisi*, he is cheated. This is the same Deity that reappears under the names *Manabozho*, *Michabo*, and *Messou*, among the Chipeway tribes; as *Napiw* among the Blackfeet; and as *Wet nicks* among the New England Indians.”<sup>55</sup> The difficulty with these tribal-specific myth-stories is that they have similar themes, but each has different human-animal or personified spirit characters; generalized classification is impossible since they are indeed different from each other, as an example, the name *Nanabojoo* or *Nanaboshoo* was sometimes identified and spelled today as *Nanabozho* and *Nanabush* or, it was also known as *Winabojo*. According to Gill and Sullivan, “Tribal groups differ in their understanding of Winabojo’s origins. The Menominee say that Menapus is fathered by the North *Wind* . . . . In some versions, the woman gives birth to triplets . . . . According to the Ojibwa, Winibojo has a brother known as Wabosso,” and the story changes later “when Ojibiwa lifestyle begins to change due to the arrival of traders . . . .”<sup>56</sup>

These categorical descriptions and condensed accounts typically omit many important and certain details—such as who collected the myth-stories, when they were obtained, and under what circumstance they were recorded—as the myths sometimes changed to accommodate or include newcomers to the culture. The accounts also neglect

---

<sup>55</sup>Daniel Brinton, “The Chief God of the Algonkins, In his Character as a Cheat and a Liar,” in *The American Antiquarian and Oriental Journal*, Volume VII, No.1, January 1885, 137-9.

<sup>56</sup>Gill and Sullivan 340-1.

other information, including who translated the stories, what were their experiences in the language and cultures of the natives.

The sheer complexity of the one-transformer-cultural-hero personas is evident as scholars placed or shoehorned the myth-figures into collective archetypes, often loosely based on misunderstanding the individual nature of the tribal-specific belief-systems. As to why modern practices fail to adequately identify and explain certain unambiguous myth-figures and stories, Ermine W. Voegelin writes:

Nanabozho in his many forms among the Cree, Algonquin Ottawa, Ojibwa, Potawatomi, Fox, Sauk, and Menomini Indians is, like nearly all American Indian culture heroes, a composite and contradictory character. He is the most powerful of supernatural beings, the creator of all ceremonies; yet on the other hand he is a buffon, the butt of gross jokes, a dupe and a victim of his own stupidity and greed. Some of the above tribes mentioned identify him with the Great hare and with the Wolverine, yet at the same time attribute to him human actions and shape.<sup>57</sup>

Therein lays the crux of identifying and classifying trickster or any Native American myth-stories—simply put, they are indeed different, not only in character but in storyline as well. Since the stories, along with the rituals and ceremonies associated with them, varied widely between different tribal-specific peoples, why then do scholars classify these individual stories into *one-native*, *one-myth archetypes*, especially when the tribal differences are clear?

The First Peoples represent individuals from different tribal nations, who clearly believed that their creation and cultural-transformer stories were true and were very different from those of the Europeans, as well as other tribes—even those nearby. Nonetheless, by 1885, Brinton, along with other scholars, attempted to find common themes or patterns of cross-cultural deities from the myths of other peoples. It was also

---

<sup>57</sup>Voegelin, Ermine W. *The Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore Mythology and Legend* (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 1984), 783.

argued that Native American myths were associated not only with Judeo-Christian constructs, but also with world myths, especially classical Greek and Euro-Asian myths. And scholars soon embraced the term “trickster” (as well as other archetypes) as a character type widely accepted in Native American mythology.<sup>58</sup>

The early contact proto-trickster, human-animal, or personified spirit myth-stories are important because they give insight into the spirituality and thinking of the First Peoples. Admittedly, the myth-stories can be confusing to non-natives since the First Peoples’ accounts and histories did not follow typical chronological ordering. In addition, it was often difficult to sort through the assemblage of human-animal figures and personified spirits since numerous myths often contained an immense range of personas and storylines within any specific tribe’s lore and belief systems. Finally, the confusing proto-trickster myth-figures include stories about supernatural beings that often encompass numerous variations of a single tale—even from the same band or tribe; in addition, these stories often changed with the teller and the audience.<sup>59</sup>

In fact, according to an Ojibwa interpreter Peter Jones (1802-1856), many traditions developed from dreams, “which will account for the numerous absurd stories current amongst them.” What makes this non-Jesuit important there is that Reverend Jones had the opportunity to live in both worlds. He was the “son of Augustus Jones, a land surveyor, and Tuhbenahneequay, daughter of Mississauga Chief Waubanasay.” He converted to Christianity at twenty-one, became a Methodist preacher, and then

---

<sup>58</sup>Gill and Sullivan, 308.

<sup>59</sup><http://www.jrank.org/literatures/pages/7299/Aboriginal-legends-tales.html>”>Aboriginal legends and tales – Bibliography, Jesuit Relations, Native, written</a> Retrieved Jul 12, 2010.

converted “his own Ojibwa-speaking bands around Lake Huron and Superior.”<sup>60</sup> What is interesting is that biographies portrayed Jones as an *insider*, unlike the Jesuits, who generally remained outsiders to the First Peoples’ culture. Yet, Jones found the myths to be “absurd,” part of Natives’ misinterpreted dreams. In one respect, Jones, like the Jesuits, pursued Christian ideologies to such an extent that he rarely focused on anything that did not somehow involve converting and preaching to non-believers. Therefore, Jones dismissed the myths while the Jesuits did not, for they recognized that if the oral traditions were not Judeo-Christian in origin, then, they were at least useful in finding common ground for the conversion of natives to Christian and European cultural lifeways.

However, as noted before, cultural myth traditions developed to meet tribal-specific societal needs and concerns. Indeed, the myths explained physical causalities, life and death events, and the social mores associated with the tribes and peoples they represented. Anthropologist William Bascom offers a concise and simple explanation of the four functions of folklore: “(1) to entertain (2) to educate (3) to validate a culture and (4) to maintain conformity and exercise social control.”<sup>61</sup> Thus, myths performed many societal functions and for Native American spirituality, the myths were necessary, if not vital.

---

<sup>60</sup>Penny Petrone, <http://www.jrank.org/literature/pages/8084/Peter-Jones.html>”>Peter Jones Biography – (Kahkewquonaby or sacred Feathers, 1802-56</a> Retrieved August 3, 2010.

<sup>61</sup>William Bascom, “The Four Functions of Folklore,” *Journal of American Folklore*, JAF 68, 1955.

It is important to look beyond the former mischaracterization of First Peoples' beliefs and to examine the histories of contact and interplay that inspired some newcomers to collect and record myth-stories. By revisiting the early examples, traits, and characteristics of these pre-Columbian narratives (presumably prior to European influences), I will offer new understandings of First Peoples spirituality, which undoubtedly affected their interactions with the Euro-American invaders. In fact, European assumptions that the First Peoples' myth-figures were devils or evil spirits certainly affected the relationships, policies, and lives of both peoples—and continue even today.

### **2.11 Devil Figure Assumptions, Dualism, and the “Savage”**

According to *The Oxford Universal English Dictionary*, the word Devil means “in Jewish and Christian theology, the supreme spirit of evil, the tempter and spiritual enemy of mankind, the foe of God and holiness, Satan. Hence, generally, A fiend, a demon. Also applied to the idols or false gods of the heathen.”<sup>62</sup> The Jesuits believed that non-Christian figures were “false gods of the heathen,” and seen any of the non-Deity First Peoples' spirits or supernatural entities as evil creatures or devils who possessed and controlled their nature-lifeways. In addition, Jesuit missionaries would have assumed the nature of First Peoples' beliefs in human-animal and personified spirits were very real and that they feared the spirits they worshipped or believed them to be present. The missionaries' duty therefore was to use their training in theology and skills in rhetoric to direct the First Peoples away from spirit worship.

---

<sup>62</sup>*The Oxford Universal English Dictionary*, vols. DEC-FIT, 496.

There were European histories that described a *good* Creator spirit that battled the evil spirits and beings whose presence were thought to be felt on earth. According to Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, Europeans came to believe in a world in “which demons roamed the earth unleashing tempests and possessing entire peoples. By the mid seventeenth-century, colonists were certain of the overwhelming presence of demons in the New World. Satan appeared to the settlers as a tyrannical lord . . . whose subjects were willing to go down fighting to the last man.”<sup>63</sup>

Cañizares-Esguerra explains the mindset of many sixteenth-century Europeans about the Americas, ideas also present in Jesuit, Puritan colonial, and to some degree, Moravian writings:

After having lorded over the continent for centuries, Satan was suddenly facing an unexpected onslaught by a determined vanguard of Christian knights. In the world of Europeans, demons were real, everyday physical forces, not figments of the imagination or metaphors standing for the hardships of colonization . . . Plainly put, in the eyes of the European settlers; colonization was an act of forcefully expelling demons from the land. Whether it was by defeating external plots devised by Satan to weaken colonial settlements (by means of, say, pirates, heretics, indigenous religious revivals, frontier wars, imperial policies, seeking to weaken colonial autonomy, etc.) or by physically casting out demons using charms such as crosses (Catholics/Anglicans) or Bibles (Puritans). One way that Europeans saw colonization was as an ongoing battle against the devil.<sup>64</sup>

Nonetheless, a European-style Christian dualism was not present in First Peoples’ spirituality, as encountered during the early contact period. Rather, in Native American spirituality, human-animal characters and personified spirits were not evil demons or devils. These figures were not in need of subjugation by a good or Great, Creator spirit. Instead, the traditional First Peoples’ anthropomorphic figures were neither pious nor

---

<sup>63</sup>Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, *Puritan Conquistador: Iberianizing the Atlantic 1550-1700* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2006), 12.

<sup>64</sup>Cañizares-Esguerra, 12-15.

wicked—although wicked and evil events did happen to the First Peoples, their stories lacked a Christian-based dualism.

Yet, as the writers of the *Relations* detail, it is apparent that the French missionaries branded the First Peoples' proto-trickster human-animal characters or personified spirits as devil figures. This pattern of European misinterpretation and mischaracterization developed from the false idea that Native American spirituality had to fit into European dualism. It was through these misrepresentations of the collected myths that the origins of the modern trickster concepts can be located.

The best way to examine the *Relations* is to consider the earliest myths collected to determine if the missionaries misunderstood or misinterpreted First Peoples' spirituality, specifically the human-animal, personified spirit myth-figures. In addition to evaluating the earliest myths recorded, I will examine the Jesuits who collected these remarkable myths—including biographical details about their training, their assignments, and their abilities to correctly translate and interpret the languages of the inhabitants they encountered. I will try to determine if the modern tricksters, Creators, sub-Creators, vanishing-Creators, Great Spirits, cultural-transformers, and devil myth-figures likely evolved from those early, collected oral traditions.

The Jesuits certainly had preconceived notions of specific terms and identifications applied to the First Peoples' belief systems. Explaining the European use of "savage" Carol Blackburn notes, "The original etymological derivation of sauvage from Latin roots referring to the forest dwellers had the most literal relevance in the Jesuits' use of it to refer to the Montagnais and other Algonkian-speaking peoples, who spent several months of the year pursuing a hunting economy in the woods. The Jesuits

often associated residence in the woods with the acquisition of traits that they considered inappropriate for human beings.”<sup>65</sup>

## 2.12 The False Trickster Concept Rooted in the First Peoples’ Proto-trickster

As Europeans incorrectly referred to the First Peoples as “savages” generations of scholars and writers have erroneously identified some of their myth figures as tricksters. Such misidentification essentially reduces First Peoples’ myths into overly simplified generalizations, stereotypes, misclassifications, and seemingly innocuous motifs. There never was an all-encompassing concept identified as *trickster* in First Peoples’ belief systems. Given the sheer diversity and richness of Amerindian cultures, this false *one-Native, cultural-transformer myth* or archetype, as defined by early twentieth-century scholars has only served to perpetuate the *one-trickster, one-myth* stereotype.

Simply put, many scholars incorrectly categorized First Peoples’ myth figures as trickster archetypes. This error was based on generations of misinterpreted human-animal Creator and cultural-transformer myth stories, devil figures, or personified spirit myths, from the first Jesuit collecting efforts to the all-too-often references in the Native American literature and histories. Angela Cavender Wilson argues:

Since its inception, the area of American Indian history has been dominated by non-Indian historians who use non-Indian sources to create non-Indian interpretations about American Indians and their pasts . . . Very few have attempted to find out how native people would interpret, analyze, and question the written documents they confront . . . as long as history continues to be studied in this manner, the field should more appropriately be called non-Indian perceptions of American history.<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>65</sup>Carole Blackburn, *Harvest of Souls, The Jesuit Missions and Colonialism in North America, 1632-1650* (Montreal, Kingston, London, and Ithaca: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2000), 49.

<sup>66</sup>Angela Cavender Wilson, *The Power of the Spoken Word: Native Oral Traditions in American Indian History. Rethinking American Indian History*, ed., Donald L. Fixico, (Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), 101.



Thus, while striving to explain and understand the New World peoples, the Jesuits were among the first Europeans to develop false misinterpretations and misunderstandings of First Peoples' myths. Nonetheless, American and European scholars alike soon employed these incomplete and incorrect archetype classifications, which in turn, developed into our modern cultural vernacular and psyche, our often erroneous and incomplete understanding of Native American spirituality. By the end of the nineteenth century, incorrect classifications had gained a wider audience and remain employed by many scholars—even today. Given that pre-Columbian myth-figures represent no European good-versus-evil spirit dualism, why do these archetypes exist?

Nonetheless, European missionaries often misunderstood some First Peoples' Creator or cultural-transformer stories, altering them into false "good spirit" or Great Spirit stories, as they misrepresented other spirit-figures as evil or demonic. In this respect, many generations of writers continued to decide that tribal specific myth-figures were either good or evil spirits. As Gill and Sullivan explain, there are thousands of First Peoples' creation myth figures. "Native American stories of creation take a variety of forms. Often these stories attribute creation to figures with specific identities. Beyond these stories, however, a great variety of figures play creator." Tribal specific examples include the Navajo's many creator-figures such as *First Man* and *First Woman*, *Changing Woman*, and *Biocide*. Gill and Sullivan add other Creator myth-figures:

[There were also the] sky-dwelling male figures" defined "as creator, yet these figures vary considerably from one culture to another. They include *Above-Old-Man* (Wiyot); the Maidu *Earth Initiate*, *Earth-Maker*, who descends from the sky on a rope. . .along with his companion Coyote; *Ehklaumel* Yuki), the Thunderer *Madumda* (Pomo) *Mukay* (Cahuilla), who is especially associated with the creation of plants; the Seminole *Es-te-Fas-ta*,; *Sky-Holder*, a Seneca Creator; *Iouskeha* (Huron), who created lakes and rivers; the Blackfoot Old man (*Napioa*);

and Zuni Sun father (*Yatokka taccu*). The Onondaga speak of *Sapling* as one name of the creator. [We shall address the Iroquois Sapling and Flint myth later in this chapter]. Among the Crow, *Old Man Coyote* is portrayed as creator.<sup>67</sup>

### **2.13 European and Christian Dualism and Thought in First Peoples' Myth-Stories, the Great Spirit**

Elements of European thought did enter into many myth-stories. However, as the First Peoples absorbed the missionaries' Biblical accounts, it became more difficult to see the former evidence of pre-Columbian nature-figures or spirits. This idea leads us to understanding that the false myths had elements of dualism, not evident in First Peoples' belief systems. From this dualism, the concept of a good spirit developed. Concerning the Great Spirit motif employed by scholars and Native Americans alike, Cave notes:

The "Great Spirit" they invoked and portrayed as the omnipotent, omnipresent creator and ruler of the universe cannot be found in the traditional Native American tribal folklore that has been compiled over the centuries. Indian stories of the creation and of human relationships to the spirit world are rich and varied, full of lore about gods, spirits, ghosts, animals, and cultural heroes. If they speak of a sky-god-creator, that deity plays only a minor role in the daily lives of the people. Nor can descriptions of an all-powerful and ever-present "Great Spirit" be found in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century European accounts of Native American religious beliefs and practices.<sup>68</sup>

As discussed earlier, there are numerous examples of tribal-specific Great Spirit, Master Spirit, or Creator figure stories erroneously included by later missionaries and explorers. In their struggles to try to fit Native American oral traditions into the *one-God, one-Creator*, monotheistic Judeo-Christian perspective, the writers often overlooked the tribal-specific nature of the myths and instead searched for cross-cultural patterns among

---

<sup>67</sup>Gill and Sullivan, 56.

<sup>68</sup>Cave, 2-3.

the tribes that would fit into their own Judeo-Christian doctrines and histories. According to Underhill:

In many tales, the man-animals not only shaped the world and formed its hills and valleys, they also decided on the length of the days and nights and of the seasons . . . More often the transformation was left to a fantastic figure who was the very focus of the mythical age. This was the man-animal whose powers rose sometimes to the height of creation. In some tales, he transformed the world from a wilderness to a fit habitation. In others he played clownish tricks . . . His place in myth varied, [due to the tribal-specific differences in First Peoples' myth figures]. Sometimes he was one of the man-animals who kept his place long after the Creator had vanished. Sometimes he slid into place of helper and brother to the Creator. Then he may not have been simply careless or mischievous: he had his own plans for the world and became a genuine precursor the Devil, though with more humor and less grandeur.<sup>69</sup>

Given this twentieth-century description, it is easy to see the complexities associated with cross-culture comparisons that invoked the Creator, sub-Creator, vanishing-Creator, Great Spirit, or modern trickster-cultural-transformer figures found in myth-stories. That many of the missionaries generally forced or recast what they perceived to be one of the First Peoples' stronger spirits (perhaps a sky or personified spirit) into a *Great* or *Master* spirit form was clearly an effort by the newcomers to connect First Peoples' belief systems with Judeo-Christian Creation concepts.

To the Jesuits, the First Peoples' mythic figures needed to fit into the God versus Satan beliefs they held. According to Voegelin:

The erroneous notion that there existed a general belief in an overwhelming deity, the "Great Spirit," is a popular fallacy of the 19<sup>th</sup> century which still persists to some degree. Although the concept of a supreme for some tribes, actually all groups recognized a number of supernatural beings and attributed power to a variety of animate and inanimate objects. Supernatural power to success in war, hunting, gambling, curing, witchcraft, oratory, and other pursuits could be obtained from a host of beings. Even though prayers might be addressed to one deity in particular in such major annual ceremonies as the Sun dance, the Big

---

<sup>69</sup>Underhill, 35-6.

House, or the bust (and even this was not always the case,) no tribe can be said to have concentrated on the worship and propitiation of a single high god.<sup>70</sup>

In some seventeenth century literatures, however, the missionaries looked for and even helped develop a *good* or *great* Creator spirit-figure to oppose the evil and demonic myth-figures they believed inhabited and controlled the First Peoples' lifeways and woodlands. The narratives mistakenly represented, or inaccurately described, one of the more prominent or important Native American deities as the monotheistic Creator of Christian traditions. In the next chapter, I will discuss the idea that the misrepresented Great Spirit concept appeared earlier than nineteenth century accounts, which inaccurately depicted goodly or kind spirits as the Great Spirit deity.

For now, it will suffice to say that colonizers, missionaries, and writers erroneously concluded or willfully conceptualized the Great Spirit concept earlier than previously thought—even though the missionaries knew that the concept was not part of First Peoples' traditional human-animal or personified spirit belief systems. Later, as the Great Spirit concept was gradually accepted and absorbed into Native American cultures, scholars defined and classified the good-spirit tropes as Great Spirit myths, certainly different from the Native Americans' original intent, “especially after the advent of Hell-bearing Europeans, who turned a deity into an evil god.”<sup>71</sup> If the myths did not fit their Judeo-Christian worldview, the Jesuits, as well as other writers and missionaries, often declared that the First People worshiped in one of three ways. The first was a devil figure or Satan. However, if the human-animal or personified spirit was considered a good or positive being, it was recast as the Great Spirit. Finally, if the myth-figures did not fit into

---

<sup>70</sup> Voegelin, (Funk & Wagnalls 1959), 464-5.

<sup>71</sup> James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (New York, New York and Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1985), 16.

one of the European world-myth categories, the missionaries argued that the natives did not have a religion at all. They did—it was just different.

## **2.14 Reconsideration: Cultural-Transformers Recast as Tricksters or Devil Figures**

The fact that there were scores of First Peoples' cultural-transformer stories also explains why missionaries had difficulty deciding how to interpret or fit the stories into their own monotheistic schema of understandings. In short, the Jesuits assumed that First Peoples' beliefs could fit into the Judeo-Christian view and beliefs. But the Jesuits incorrectly identified Native myth figures as devils, demons, genies, or deceiver characters and in so doing, included them within the good-evil paradigm. The Jesuits failed to understand the First Peoples did not see the world in dualistic terms of good and evil, not grasping that tribal members did not define their spiritual deities as solely evil or solely good. Where early missionaries saw one or more deities as evil demons or devil figures, First Peoples saw the same spirit as a positive force in their lives. As Daniel Brinton explains:

This view, which has obtained without question in every work on native religions of America, has arisen partly from habits of thought difficult to break, partly from mistranslations of native words, partly from the foolish axiom of those early missionaries, "The gods of the gentiles are devils." Yet their own writings furnish conclusive proof that no such distinction existed out of their own fancies. The same word (*otkon*) which Father Bruyas<sup>72</sup> employs to translate into Iroquois the term "devil" in the passage "the Devil took upon himself the figure of a serpent," he is obliged to use [as] "spirit" in the phrase, "at the resurrection we shalt be spirits," which is rather amusing illustration how impossible it was by any native word to convey the idea of the spirit of evil.

---

<sup>72</sup> Father Jacques Bruyas, 1635-1712, was a Jesuit who spent 46 years among the Iroquois, from 1693-1698. Bruyas authored the oldest known Iroquois grammar, *The Iroquois Dictionary*. Superior General to the Canadian missions. "Jacques Bruyas," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, (New York: Robert Appleton Company 1908). Retrieved 3/17/10 from New Advent: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03024b.htm>. Additional information drawn from Thwaites, 1:323.

When in 1570, Father Rogel<sup>73</sup> commenced his labors among the tribes near the Savannah River, he told them that the deity they adored was a demon who loved all evil things, and they must hate him; whereupon his auditors replied, that so far from this being the case, whom he was called a wicked being was the power that sent them all good things, and indignantly left the missionary to preach to the winds.<sup>74</sup>

Whether the Jesuits' written re-creations of human-animal myth figures were authentic to native understandings remains difficult to assess since the Eurocentric viewpoint permeates the stories. Although twentieth-century historians, anthropologists, and ethnographers remain credited with developing and refining the trickster concept<sup>75</sup> into its modern nomenclature, it was the early European missionaries whose writings, translations, and narrative discourses generally defined and misinterpreted First Peoples' spiritual lifeways—especially the human-animal myths, devil figures, and personified spirits that developed into present-day scholarly misperceptions.

Since no devil figures existed in First Peoples' spirituality, the Jesuits created one in order to satisfy their Christian model of Creation and spirituality. The Jesuits needed a creator figure (in their eyes, God), to counteract what they saw as the demonic nature of the First Peoples, their sinful and savage lifeways that permeated their beliefs, and their

---

<sup>73</sup>Father Juan Rogel, a Spanish Jesuit, along with Brother Francisco de Villareal, after spending a winter studying the language, worked among the Calusa tribe in southern Florida. Reinforced by ten more Jesuits in 1568, they went to Havana to establish a school for Indian boys from Florida. Retrieved 7/5/10 from: ([http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Catholic\\_Encyclopedi\\_\(1913\)/Catholic\\_Indian\\_Missions\\_of\\_the\\_United\\_States](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Catholic_Encyclopedi_(1913)/Catholic_Indian_Missions_of_the_United_States)).

<sup>74</sup>Daniel G. Brinton, *Myths of the Americas: Symbolism and Mythology of the Indians of the Americas* (Blauvelt, New York: Multimedia Publishing Corp., 1976), 60-1.

<sup>75</sup>Although I disagree with this all-encompassing “trickster” idiom as an all-encompassing, specialized term—the vehicle that explains and interprets indigenous religions of the North American Native Americans—the term is useful in our understanding of the development of tribal-specific creator and cultural-transformer figures. Finally, it is important to note that these figures first appeared in Jesuit writings and thus developed into the modern trickster concept.

wild environments. The Jesuits had been instructed to go out to preach and assumed they also had the authority to drive out the demons.

To the missionaries, “the Devil was viewed as a corporeal figure, a demonic being who ruled the world and was the founder of an empire that constantly struggled with and counteracted the Kingdom of God.”<sup>76</sup> The Jesuits saw a New World under the dominion of Satan who controlled not only the wilderness but the inhabitants as well. This explains why missionaries had difficulty determining what to do with the proto-trickster myth figures— either dismiss them as fanciful fables of the primitive minds, or adapt them to fit the Eurocentric Christian mindset. The result of the New World European invasion was the loss of lands and autonomies, and with that, the significant and permanent cultural changes that occur when one culture loses its myths or belief systems.

### **2.15 Dualism, First Peoples’ Creator-transformer Myths and Twins**

The groundwork laid by the Jesuits in retelling the myth-stories was without question one-dimensional, one-sided, and inaccurate. The explorers and writers continued to perpetuate a Eurocentric pattern of cultural misunderstanding of the Native American proto-trickster myths, changing them as well to include dualistic ideas foreign to the First Peoples.

For example, the generalized devil themes found in French Jesuit early-contact literature were wrong for two reasons. The proto-trickster cultural-transformer figures were seen as evil—often cast as “devils” by the French, who then incorrectly pitted the myth characters against the forces of good, specifically the creator-figures that were

---

<sup>76</sup>Anthony S. Mercatante, *Good and Evil in Myth & Legend*, originally published as *Good and Evil in Myth and Folklore* (New York, New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1996), 51.

found in many First Peoples' myths. The readings then produce a perspective clouded by Eurocentric viewpoints and misinterpretations. As Barbara Mann argues:

If the monotheistic concept of the Christian God was originally incomprehensible to the Iroquois, the concept of an absolute evil, loose upon the world, was even more bewildering. There was simply no counterpart of Satan in the Iroquoian world, since the Twins, as authentically told, concerned reciprocity and balance, not conflict and victory. To the communal Iroquois, the very idea that one Twin could—let alone should—exist without the other was grotesque, while the corollary that the two acted to affect humans *but not each other*, was outlandish. Whatever happened to one, happened to all. The idea was to keep the halves in balance, not for one half to obliterate the other half.<sup>77</sup>

It is also important to remember that the First Peoples' spirituality was foreign to Jesuits.

They presented the Iroquois twin figures as good or evil, but in fact, they were neither.

From their preconceived beliefs or dualistic constructs, the missionaries set the foundation for centuries of misunderstandings of the human-animal myths, which ultimately led to the modern trickster concept.

Secondly, the French often disassociated the myths from rituals, thereby missing portions of the larger Native American spiritual framework. Emma Helen Blair explains:

To the Indian layman, the ceremony was essential. From it he received security and courage... Each ceremony grew up within its local group, using some traditional and some borrowed elements, and adapting itself, through the generations, to local needs and knowledge. Yet according to Indian belief, the rites were on a plan established by Supernaturals long ago to avert evil, bring good fortune, and keep man's world operating as in the beginning. Their purpose was not worship. Perhaps it can be thought of as the renewing of a partnership between man and the Supernaturals, to the benefit of both. Its proper conduct required a great deal both officiant and layman. For the time being, they entered the sphere of the sacred and most purify themselves before stepping into it and out of the secular world. Those most concerned bathed, fasted, and sometimes underwent ordeals. Others at least observed rules and taboos. These rules had to do only with reverent treatment of the sacred . . . no activity could be undertaken without a protecting ritual. Ceremonies great and small were the very fabric of life . . . Often the Indian did not think of the Powers, which they believed existed and

---

<sup>77</sup>Barbara Alice Mann, "Iroquoian Women: The Gantowisas," *American Studies*, eds., Elizabeth Hoffman Nelson and Malcom A. Nelson, v. 4 (New York, New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 306.



influenced their lives, in such personal terms as does the white man.<sup>78</sup>

Even though the Jesuits associated their Christian beliefs with specific rituals, they dismissed or mischaracterized First Peoples' customs that defined the relationship between their belief systems and rituals. Brinton asserts, "moral dualism can only arise where the ideas of good and evil are not synonymous with those of pleasure and pain, for the conception of a wholly good or a wholly evil nature requires the use of these terms in their higher ethical senses."<sup>79</sup>

According to the Jesuits, the First Peoples generally expressed no understanding of antagonistic forces, good versus evil, as part of their tribal-specific spirituality; however, certain tribes believed in evil and good spirits, but not as opposing spirits. Moreover, these spirits were not necessarily engaged in a battle against adversarial forces over the dominion of one soul, as seen in Eurocentric religious belief systems; rather, these two forces worked together in a single task, namely to transform world and the cultural lifeways.

An Italian Jesuit, Father Francesco Gioseppe Bressani (1612-72), described the Ondataunats as a people who believed in seven genies. These manifestations of nature spirits were neither evil, nor solely good. Bressani wrote:

A nation of Algonquians nearer to the Hurons, called *ondatauauat*, invokes at almost every feast the maker of heaven, asking him for health, long life, and favorable results in hunting, fishing, wars, and trade; but they believe that the genii who has created Heaven is different from the one who has made Earth, and from the author of winter, who dwells toward the North, whence he sends the snows and the cold, as the genii of the waters sends tempests and shipwrecks. The winds have their origins from the seven other genii.<sup>80</sup>

---

<sup>78</sup>Blair, 19.

<sup>79</sup>Mercatante, 157.

The Algonquian speakers did not consider the “genii of the waters,” the one who “sends tempests and shipwrecks”, as an evil spirit. Nor was the “author of winter” considered evil. Nor were these two geniis in direct opposition to the “genii who has created Heaven,” rather, these genies were simply part of the original seven genii who were an integral and necessary part of Algonquin spirituality.

## **2.16 Iroquois Spirituality and Proto-trickster**

Another example, illustrates Iroquois spirituality and sensibilities. As Dean R. Snow explains, Iroquoian cosmology is the co-existence of good and evil, not beings vying for control of an individual soul.

There are over 40 recorded versions of the Iroquois origin myth, beginning with one reported in 1632. . . In an Onondaha version, Otter is substituted for Beaver. In some versions, Sky Woman gives birth to the Twins herself and there is no daughter. In a Seneca version, the earth comes not from the Muskrat, but from the hands of the Sky Woman herself, who grabbed it as she fell through the hole in the sky. Sapling can be called the “Older Brother,” “the Good Twin,” the “Good Minded-One,” “Sky grasper,” and so on. Flint can be called “Ice,” “Crystal,” “Younger Brother,” or “the Evil Twin.”

Various animals and supernaturals can be recast in key roles.<sup>81</sup>

Numerous versions of the animals and personified spirits evolved through tribal-specific belief systems and languages. Snow continues:

Thus, the genesis that this Iroquois myth tells us most about compromises the fundamental principles that underlie traditional Iroquois thought as it was recorded in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The co-existence of

---

<sup>80</sup> “Francesco Gioseppe Bressani,” in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, (New York, New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1920), Retrieved May 10, 2010 from New Advent <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02776a.htm>. Bressani’s notes were originally found in Thwaites, 23: 326-7.

<sup>81</sup> Dean R. Snow, *The Iroquois: The Peoples of America*, eds., Alan Kolata and Dean R. Snow (Oxford, England and Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), 2-4.

good and evil pervades the Iroquois cosmos . . . The Iroquois waste little time grappling with this problem, for their traditional beliefs do not lead them to the paradox. Instead, the Iroquois cosmos is composed of good things, everywhere tainted by evil. The proportions can change; good men can become evil as the balance tips, and evil men can become good by right-minded neighbors. The wolf is not pervasively evil, though he may appear to be to the rabbit; and the rabbit is not all good, for he destroys the young shoots of Iroquois crops.

Once again, as Snow contends, First Peoples' beliefs were not dualistic during early contact but had changed by the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Mann also argues that there was no evidence of dualism in Native American spirituality before the French Jesuits' arrival.

Daniel G. Brinton checked into the primary sources in 1868, he found no evidence that a belief in good and evil pre-existed the missionaries among the Iroquois or among Native Americans generally. The European fixation on 'Evil' was completely absent from Iroquoian culture. Instead, he found what the Moravians (the most successful missionaries) had recorded in the eighteenth century to have been absolutely accurate, that 'the idea of a devil, a prince of darkness' only came to the Iroquois 'in later times through the Europeans.' This contradicted the fond missionary assertion that a knowledge of good and evil already existed, a claim that Brinton traced 'partly' to their own 'foolish' belief that devils abounded the Iroquois.<sup>82</sup>

Thus, Native American spirituality had nothing in their cosmologies that resembled "good versus evil" dualistic concepts. Instead, different essentials, those parts of the good and the evil, invariably were seen as part of the holistic nature of life.

As Joseph Campbell notes, "In planting-cultures mythologies a principle of polarity is symbolically recognized and resolved. In the Iroquoian tales of the Contending Twins, for example, where the names of the two are Sapling and Flint, the opposition suggested is of a plant and stone, the becoming and became, future and the past, life and

---

<sup>82</sup>Mann, 307-8.

death.”<sup>83</sup> The opposing forces were not good and evil, merely plant and stone. Indeed the idea that these two mythic figures were “opposing” is in itself a misnomer, and, as understood by the Iroquois, the dualistic-like concepts represent different parts of nature.

“In understanding the contest between sapling and Flint at the far rim of the earth, it is important to bear in mind, as Barbara Mann has also written, that dualistic Western concepts of good and evil do not apply here. The twins, she writes, ‘were collaborators who, between them, brought forth the exhilarating and fruitful mixtures of the benign and the dangerous, the funny and the grave, the frightening and the comforting that constitute the human world.’”<sup>84</sup>

Finally, since the Twins, mythic figures in First Peoples’ cosmologies were not considered opposing forces of good and evil but rather part of the cosmic whole, it is plausible that the modern trickster archetype can be drawn from these types of proto-trickster, non-dualistic myth figures. This idea sheds light on the reasons why modern trickster personas, are posited as neither good or evil, but simply a manifestation, or an incarnate spirit or figure that represented the nuances and shades of life itself. In the larger context of Native American spirituality, the twins’ stories represent tribal specific, non-Eurocentric or non-Christianized proto-trickster figures that eventually became part of the false modern trickster archetype, incorrectly based on many of these recorded native oral traditions.

---

<sup>83</sup>Joseph Campbell, *Historical Atlas of World Mythology, Volume II: The Way of the Seeded Earth. Part 2: Mythologies of the Primitive Planters of North America* (New York, New York: Harper’s & Row Publishers, 1988), 175.

<sup>84</sup> This explanation was originally found in Alfred A. Cave, *Prophets of the Great Spirit: Native American Revitalization Movements in Eastern North America*, University of Nebraska, Lincoln and London 2006) pages 205-6. Also in Mann, page 89.

Many of the missionary-collected myths were part of the oral myth-traditions of Native Americans, but with few original examples available, our intimate knowledge of First Peoples' spirituality rests with the narratives taken down by the Jesuit "letter-writers or the diarists."<sup>85</sup> Despite their Eurocentric perceptions and viewpoints, the missionaries' narratives still represent important primary sources of Native American spirituality.

### **2.17 Biographies and Historical Perspectives, Father Paul Le Jeune's Direct Method, and the Perceived Authority by the First Students of Native American Spirituality**

The authors of the French journals wanted to win souls for the Christian faith. In order to do so, the Jesuits believed they needed to familiarize themselves with the languages, beliefs, and cultural practices of First Peoples. "To gain these savages, it was first necessary to know them intimately—their speech, their habits, and their manner of thought, their strong points and their weak."<sup>86</sup> The Jesuits attempted to do this amidst the alien, harsh, and at times deadly environments of the New World. These "first students of the North American Indian," wrote, "amid the chaos of distractions . . . insects innumerable . . . scenes of squalor and degradation . . . overcome by fatigue and lack of proper sustenance, often suffering from wounds and disease." However, in order to gain insight into First Peoples' spirituality and "save the unbaptized from eternal damnation,"<sup>87</sup> the Jesuits suffered through these hardships.

---

<sup>85</sup>Thwaites, 1:1

<sup>86</sup>David B. Quinn, *Black Gown and Redskins: Adventures and Explorations of the First Missionaries among the North American Indians*, ed., Edna Kenton (New York, New York and London, England: Longman's, Green and Co. LTD., 1954), xlix-l.

<sup>87</sup>Quinn, xlix-l.

The personal European accounts provide specific details about who collected the proto-trickster myths, their methodologies, and a clear sense of the Eurocentric agendas—sometimes even before the missionaries arrived in North America. In a letter written sometime prior to his arrival, after 1632, Father Paul Le Jeune<sup>88</sup> wrote:

“I thought nothing of coming to Canada when I was sent here; I felt no particular affection for the Savages, but the duty of obedience was binding, even if I had been sent a thousand times further away . . . It is only necessary to know the language . . . The means of assisting them, to build seminaries, and to take their children.”<sup>89</sup>

Interestingly enough, Le Jeune converted to Catholicism after being raised as a Protestant. After his conversion, he joined the Jesuits. From there he spent years in language training in languages before traveling to Quebec where he spent most of his North American career. After some time in Quebec, Le Jeune became “the first superior of the New France mission.” His influences extended beyond his work as a superior to all the Jesuits in New France. For example, he ordered the Jesuits to record in detail any lifeways, or cultural customs, including religious beliefs and the proto-trickster myth-figures, in order to help future missionaries understand and redirect First Peoples towards Christianity. However, as Mann notes, Jeune still believed in his project “to spirit children away to France for a proper education (a plan his superiors overturned on account of cost).”<sup>90</sup>

---

<sup>88</sup>According to Greer, It was important to understand the Jesuits’ histories in order to understand how their religious and personal agendas attributed to their commentaries, Greer, 20-21.

<sup>89</sup>Thwaites, 5: 31-3.

<sup>90</sup>Mann, 274.

Le Jeune and other Jesuits came to New France armed with little ability to communicate effectively with the natives. The priest initially had little conversion success until he immersed himself in the culture—but only within the boundaries of his Christian beliefs and practices. He failed in Quebec, but later accompanied the Montagnais on their winter hunt. Le Jeune's non-traditional methodologies involve immersion into the Montagnais cultural and lifeways, this way became the template for Jesuit missionary work that followed.

Later, as Le Jeune became Jesuit Superior, his influences were evident throughout the country. For example, he required other missionaries to follow the techniques he used to learn the Montagnais' language and belief system. In fact, he was a direct participant in many of their daily routines and milieus. Yet, Le Jeune, like other missionaries, often mischaracterized and misunderstood the significance and meaning of First Peoples' beliefs and myths. From his European Christian hierarchal viewpoint, the missionaries misinterpreted any non-Christian religious viewpoints as heresy and paganism. Modern readers must understand that Le Jeune's writings reflect the viewpoints of activist missionaries and not of modern ethnologists or anthropologists who accepted—not rejected or dismissed—other cultural beliefs and lifeways.

While his experiences with First Peoples helped Le Jeune gain insight into the Montagnais' daily routines, language, and cultural logic, such insight did not necessarily lead to success in conversion. Given the Jesuits' agenda, the number of actual conversions that Le Jeune or any of the Jesuits claimed, remains suspect. Before Le Jeune arrived in Quebec, the pattern of conversion was slow. In fact, after nearly “a half a century of fur-trading, these hunting-gathering people had experienced considerable

contact with the French by the time Le Jeune encountered them, and yet their ancestral way of life was only beginning to show the effects of European colonization,”<sup>91</sup> and Christianity. The evidence indicates that the First Peoples most frequently did not fully convert to Catholicism; rather, they added the new Christian God to their own polytheistic belief systems. The Jesuits mistook this adaptation for conversion. As many Jesuits would testify, without constant or immediate reinforcement, First Peoples often returned to reliance on their own belief systems. Nonetheless, the missionaries’ efforts at acculturation were in one sense still noteworthy since, at the very least, they attempted to learn about Native spirituality, even if for ulterior reasons of conversion and control.

## **2.18 Jesuit, Marc L’Escarbot**

Although other primary source of materials on tribal-specific First Peoples’ myths and belief systems are scarce, once again, much of what we know about the creator and culture-transformer myths associated with First Peoples’ lifeways survives through the early European writings. Yet in other seventeenth-century writings, Jesuits clearly demonstrated their Christian colonizing intentions.

One Jesuit, Marc L’Escarbot, (1570-1642), a lawyer and author, surprisingly considered the aboriginal way of life to be more civilized than the Europeans did, and criticized the search for quick riches by European countries.<sup>92</sup> His statements stressed that in some cases, the colonial dogmas rooted in belief of European historical and political

---

<sup>91</sup>Greer, 20-21.

<sup>92</sup>Thwaites, 1:306-307. Additional information can be found in Gerald Howell, *The Oxford Companion to Canadian History* (Don Mills, Ontario, Oxford University Press 2004), 357.



hegemony were evident; however, some Europeans came to the New World claiming religious authority, and therefore were there for religious not personal reasons.<sup>93</sup>

L'Escarbot spent the winter at Port Royal, Acadia, he explored the coast the harbor of St. John, New Brunswick and the River St. Croix during the spring of 1607, writing:

*This Gospel of the kingdom, shall be preached in the whole world, for a testimony to all nations, and then shall the consummation to come . . . Dense ignorance prevails in all these countries where there is no evidence that they ever felt the breath of the Gospel, except in this last century when the Spaniard carried thither some light of the Christian religion, together with his cruelty and avarice . . .*<sup>94</sup>

## **2.19 Historical Perspectives, Jesuit Le Jeune, Conversion Difficulties Revisited, and the Shamans**

Other Jesuits also had numerous challenges initiating and maintaining conversion, as seen in the following passage by Le Jeune. Near the end of Le Jeune's part of the *Relation*, 1636, he describes the violent deaths of three Montagnais brothers who "wickedly violated the promise they had made to acknowledge him as their sovereign, to love and obey him as their Lord. . . . They had not yet swallowed the morsel when God took them by the throats." The eldest, a sorcerer who gave Le Jeune much trouble, "was burned alive in his own house," while the second, "who was my host, a man who had naturally a good disposition, but, to please his brother, was willing to displease God, was drowned." Finally, Le Jeune believed that the youngest had the "stamp of the Christian for a little while," but "died of hunger, abandoned in the woods like a dog. It is very remarkable that he did not have anything to eat, in their abundance; for perhaps not since

---

<sup>93</sup>Howell, 357.

<sup>94</sup>Thwaites, 1:59-63.

ten years have the Savages killed so many Elk as they have this winter, the snow being in exactly the condition they desired for hunting them.” Le Jeune’s reference to the abundance of elk makes it clear that he blamed the youngest brother’s death on his lack of Christian faith, because “It was very reasonable that his impious mouth, which had so often blasphemed God, should lack food.”<sup>95</sup>

Le Jeune believed the deaths of the three brothers were linked to their “impious” behavior and that the three deaths were some form of Eurocentric justice since the brothers did not “love and obey him as their Lord,” and thus, “God took them by the throats.” Le Jeune did not write about the emotional impact or the sadness of the deaths of the three brothers that he was trying to convert. Instead, Le Jeune simply noted the fact that the eldest brother burned to death, the second drowned, and the third and youngest starved.

There were several possible explanations why Le Jeune did not explain why the brothers failed to convert. First, the natives may have returned to their tribal-specific belief systems after noting little improvement or success in their hunting activities. Second, many First Peoples may have never fully committed to the Christian practices since to do so would require them to denounce their own cultural heritage, along with the human-animal myth figures and personified spirits the Jesuits misinterpreted as devils. Third, some societies may have included the Christian God as part of their polytheistic belief systems, making complete conversion to a one-creator faith a cultural impossibility. There might also have simply been communication problems that misled

---

<sup>95</sup>Thwaites, 9: 69-71.

natives; or they might have merely agreed to whatever the Jesuits wanted to secure some form of economic or social, improvement in their lifeways.

Modern scholars have described how the European missionaries were frequently at odds with belief systems and the deities, myths, rituals, and shaman leaders that held considerable sway over their societies. As Edna Kenton wrote:

But while at first the missionaries of New France were well received, the innate savagery of these people in time asserted itself. Their medicine-men, as bitterly fanatical as the howling dervish of the Orient, plotted the destruction of the messengers of the new faith; the introduction of the European diseases was attributed to the 'black gowns'; the ravages of the Iroquois were thought to be brought in by the presence of the strangers; the rites of the church were looked upon as infernal incantations, and the lurid pictures of the Judgment, which were displayed in the little forest chapels, aroused unspeakable terror among the simple people . . .<sup>96</sup>

Thus, the Jesuits not only had to deal with harsh environments, poor sustenance, abuse and deadly responses by the First Peoples, another danger was present, as they confronted the shamans who worked to maintain the natives' traditional rituals and spiritual belief systems.

## **2.20 The Shamans**

Huron tribal medicine men did not want their beliefs collected or recorded by the Christians. They frequently harassed the Jesuits, including Ennemond Massé and Pierre Biard. Yet somehow both priests collected and preserved several human-animal and spirit-figure myth-stories, along with their perceptions of the shamans, or Automoins who

---

<sup>96</sup> David B. Quinn (Preface), Edna Kenton, Edit., *Black Gown and Redskins: Adventures and Explorations of the First Missionaries among the North American Indians*, Longman's, Green and Co. LTD. London, New York, Toronto, (1954) pages xlix-l.

controlled daily Huron life and claimed to understand or intimate connections with the human-animal, devil figures, or spirit-filled deities that filled their myths, dreams, and cultural experiences.<sup>97</sup> As Biard chronicled his skepticism of the Automoins, he wrote:

Now with all their religion, to speak briefly, is nothing else than tricks and charms of the Automoins . . . they have many similar sacrifices that they make to the Devil, so they will have good luck in the chase, favourable winds, etc. They believe also in dreams . . . furthermore they say that the magic of the Pilotoyes [medicine men] often calls forth spirits and optical illusions to those who believe them, showing snakes and other beasts which go in and out of the mouth while they are talking; and several other Magical deeds of the same kind. But I never happened to be present at any of these spectacles.<sup>98</sup>

Biard presents this as an issue of faith, choosing to accuse the medicine men as leaders who duped the Huron into believing their abilities to bring forth spirits and have snakes and other creature go in and out of their mouths. Yet, as the passage from Biard's *Relations* shows, it was unclear whether the stories he heard were part of their religious rituals or simply tricks the natives believed had actually occurred.<sup>99</sup> Biard also assumes that the First Peoples' sacrifices were to a devil figure, an evil-personified spirit, drawn from his Eurocentric construct. But to most Native Americans, the shamans played an important role in religious practices; the Jesuits, however, saw them as demonic figures.

For example, L'allemant, in 1627, wrote that the Automoins communicating with the Devil "have no form of divine worship, nor any kind of Prayers. They believed,

---

<sup>97</sup>Howell, 72

<sup>98</sup>Thwaites, 3:133-135.

<sup>99</sup>According to *The Oxford Universal English Dictionary*, the word "shaman" appears in English in 1698, as "a priest or priest doctor who among the various northern tribes of Asia. Hence applied to similar personages in other parts, esp. medicine man of some tribe of northwest American Indians. The term 'shamanism' 1780, is described as "the primitive religion of the Ural-Altaic peoples of Siberia, in which all the good and evil of life are thought to be brought about by spirits which can be influenced only by Shamans." vol. REL-SOL 1864.

however, that there is One Creator who made all, but they do not render him any knowledge. Among them, there are persons who make a profession of talking to the Devil; these are also physicians, and cure all kinds of diseases. The savages have a great fear of these people, and humor them lest they do them some injury.”<sup>100</sup>

Indeed, in their conversion efforts, the missionaries often risked their lives to accompany tribal groups into remote areas where their hosts’ enemies lived—potentially provoking warfare, capture, torture, and death. In addition to these hindrances, many Jesuits saw the shamans solely as the greatest obstacles to their conversion successes. “The Indian shaman was the missionaries’ number one enemy because he seemed to hold their potential converts in the devil’s thrall through errant superstition. . . a Christian alternative stood little chance of success. So adamant was the resistance of these spiritual leaders that more than one missionary must have entertained the sentiment of an early Virginia minister, who insisted that, ‘*till their Priests and the Ancients have their throats cut, there is no hope to bring them to conversion.*’ ”<sup>101</sup>

To many Jesuits, the idea that they faced devil figures constitutes an accepted ideological part of Christianity. Some Jesuits believed demons or devils possessed or controlled tribal spiritual leaders. They blamed the devil and his shaman minions for thwarting any real and sustaining conversion enterprises; others blamed the shamans. But for the First Peoples, their spiritual leaders held important sway and influence over their beliefs. Still such roles occasionally were reversed as epidemics and warfare broke out,

---

<sup>100</sup>Thwaites, 6: 203.

<sup>101</sup>James Axtell, *The European and the Indian, After Columbus: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America* (New York and Oxford, England: The Oxford University Press, 1985), 75-7.

rendering the shamans impotent against the life-threatening bio-invasions and social upheavals that often followed contact with Europeans.

According to Axtell, “Father Jacques Bigot remarked that he functioned in a shamanistic role among the Abenakis. Arriving in time of cataclysmic change, Jesuit priests ‘helped the Abenakis to bridge the precontact and postcontact worlds.’ They functioned as intermediaries between Indian and European society . . .”<sup>102</sup> So in one respect, the state of the individual tribal society’s health, along with its political and economic status at the time of Jesuit intervention, more than likely determined conversion failures or successes.

## **2.21 The Outaouacs and Jesuit, Claude Jean Alloüez**

Father Claude Jean Alloüez (1622-89) starkly demonstrated his Eurocentric bias in the following terse statement: “There is here, a false and abominable religion.” Alloüez, who “set out for Lake Superior, and reaching Chequamegan Bay in October (1665), built a little chapel of bark upon the southwest shore of that rock bound estuary—the famous mission of La Pointe. His flock was a medley, Hurons and Algonkins here clustering in two villages, where they lived on fish, safe at last from the raging Iroquois, although much pestered by the Sioux of the west. For thirty years Alloüez traveled from tribe to tribe . . . and established missions at Green Bay, Saulte St. Marie, on the Miami, and, with Marquette, among the Illinois at Kaskaskia.”<sup>103</sup> At first, the Northwest seemed promising as Father Allouez and the other Jesuits preached to large audiences; but First

---

<sup>102</sup>Tinker, 60.

<sup>103</sup>Quinn, xlv.

Peoples' nomadic lifestyles and strict devotion to their human-animal, personified spirit myth-figures, thwarted most of their conversion successes.

During his time spent in the Western missions, Alloüez encountered what he regarded as irreverence to Judeo-Christian Creation traditions.<sup>104</sup> He noted that there were the deeper mysteries surrounding the complex relationships between the shamans and their human-animal or personified -spirit beliefs systems. To Alloüez, these mysteries revealed fundamental life-issues in their quest for survival. The Jesuit believed that this connection failed to inspire significant numbers of the Outaouacs<sup>105</sup> to Christianity.

Europeans often applied the name Outaouacs to all the Native peoples, although they were from different Nations and regions, because the first the French encountered were the Outaouacs, (or the Ottawa as explained later). The same type of mischaracterization occurred with the "Illinois," who were very numerous and dwelt further south, but since they were the first to visit Point Saint Esprit to trade with the French, all tribes in that vast area became known by that one tribe's name. Once again, there existed a pattern of incorrectly identifying and placing different tribes into the *one-tribal* associations. Given the complexities of tribal associations and the range of his ministry, Alloüez failed to understand that the First Peoples' spiritual beliefs were also tribal specific. Nevertheless, he also linked together different belief systems by the different tribes into the *one-tribe* classification. Alloüez wrote:

There is here, a false and abominable religion; resembling in many respects the beliefs of some of the ancient master of Heaven and Earth, but they believe there are many spirits—some of whom are beneficent, as the Sun, the Moon, the Lake, Rivers, and Woods; others malevolents, as the adder, the dragon cold, and storms.

---

<sup>104</sup>Quinn, 314.

<sup>105</sup>Thwaites, 55: 207.

And, in general, whatever seems to them either helpful or hurtful they call a Manitou and pay it the worship and veneration which we render only to the true God.<sup>106</sup>

Alloüez attempted to connect his belief in the one Christian God, as the “ancient master of Heaven and Earth,” to that of the Outaouacs’ Creator spirit; instead, he discovered the good spirit he was seeking was a human-animal Great Hare figure that the Outaouacs believed finished Creation.

## **2.22 Alloüez, Dualism, and Customs of the Outaouacs**

The conflicts between the Kingdom of God and evil spirits or devil figures of New Testament and European folklore and belief systems were not evident in the Outaouacs’ worldviews which were not dualistic. Rather than acknowledging the dissimilarities and accepting them as cultural differences between Europeans and First Peoples, Alloüez changed the conceptual makeup of the Outaouacs’ religious abstractions into Eurocentric terms.

For example, he described some of the mythic figures in Outaouacs’ cultural beliefs as either “beneficent” or “malevolent” to fit into Judeo-Christian dualism. Alloüez argued that the Outaouacs’ in general paid “worship and veneration” to “Manitou”—something he gradually altered to stand for what Christians called God, since they already venerated and worshiped a deity that he believed was close to the Old Testament Creator.

Thus, to Alloüez, “Manitou” was good in nature, placing a “Christian veneer”<sup>107</sup> over the deity, mischaracterizing of their spirituality as dualistic in nature. Alloüez

---

<sup>106</sup>Thwaites, 50: 284-5.

<sup>107</sup>Mercatante, 157.



considered Manitou the ruler of the earth and as solely benevolent—clearly different from the nature of Outaouacs’ spirituality, which identified this *Manitou* as neither good nor evil. In fact, *Manitou* is “A word which in variant forms occurs in all Algonquian languages, having various specific meanings in each language. These meanings usually relate to a supernatural power but *manitu* is not a general term for a ‘mysterious cosmic power everywhere in nature.’ ”<sup>108</sup> To the Outaouacs, various gods and spirits held power, but did not necessarily subscribe to one particular view of good or evil. Here Allouez describes the essence of Outaouacs’ spirituality:

These divinities they invoke whenever they go out hunting, fishing, to war, or on a journey—offering them sacrifices, with ceremonies appropriate only for Sacrificial priests . . . recognize no purely spiritual divinity, believing that the Sun is a man, and the Moon his wife, that snow and ice are also a man, so goes away in the spring and comes back in the winter, that the evil spirit is the adders, dragons, and other monsters; that the crow, the kite, and some other birds are genii, and speak just as we do; and there are even people among them who understand the language of birds, as some understand a little that of the French. . .<sup>109</sup>

Like other missionaries, Alloüez falsely interpreted these First Peoples’ understanding of beings of cosmic power by denoting them as either good or evil. This false view of the human-animal myths and stories that surround the Outaouacs’ belief systems—the idea that all of their beliefs are merely “false and abominable,” resulted in the Jesuit’s dismissing rather than working to understand their spirituality.

Alloüez clearly understood that the Outaouacs’ beliefs were polytheistic in nature, for they believed and worshiped many spirits, and often expressed their beliefs in ritual sacrifices. For example, “These divinities they invoke whenever they go out hunting, fishing, to war, or on a journey—offering them sacrifices, with ceremonies appropriate

---

<sup>108</sup> Leach, 674.

<sup>109</sup> Thwaites, 50: 285-7.

only for Sacrificial priests.” The most common sacrificial offering to the *Manitou*, was tobacco, identified as the link between mortals and spiritual powers.

In addition to the rituals and sacrifices, Alloüez noted that the Outaouacs believed “that the Sun is a man, and the Moon his wife, that snow and ice are also a man, so goes away in the spring and comes back in the winter.” Alloüez’s accounts included a realization of the rituals associated with these myth figures and a sense of purpose in the Outaouacs’ belief systems, that went beyond the confusing and disjointed commentaries and interjections that clouded his conclusions.

Nonetheless, Alloüez erroneously described the spirits and human-animal figures he encountered. He believed that “the evil spirit is the adders, dragon cold, and other monsters; that the crow, the kite, and some other birds are genii, and speak just as we do; and that there are even people among them who understand the language of birds, as some understand a little that of the French.” Here, two ideas emerge: the first, that there is evidence of the proto-trickster or human animal myth-figures in his writings, and the second, a sense that something is missing from the lists of evil spirits—namely their purposes and rituals found in the larger picture of Outaouacs’ spirituality. Thus, modern readers are unable to understand the reasons for these spirits as Alloüez merely named them, neglecting to provide details of their purposes and meanings.

Describing the rituals that accompanied First Peoples’ religious expressions, Alloüez defined them as “indecent” customs exhibited by the Outaouacs. “The fountain-head of their Religion is libertinism; and all these various sacrifices end ordinarily in debauches, indecent dances, and shameful acts of cubinage. All the devotion of the men is directed toward securing many wives, and changing them whenever they choose; that

of the women, toward leaving their husbands; and that of the girls, toward a life of profligacy.”<sup>110</sup>

Finally, Alloüez attached his interpretations of behaviors associated with the death and the personification of spirits as animals. He wrote:

They deem most common cause of illness to come from failure to give a feast after some successful fishing or hunting excursions; for them the sun, who takes great pleasure in feasts, is angry with one who has been delinquent in his duty, and makes him ill . . .

They believe, moreover, the souls of the Departed govern the fishes in the lake; and thus, from earliest times, they have held the immortality, and even metempsychosis, of the souls of the dead fishes, believing that they pass into other fishes’ bodies. Therefore they never throw their bones into the fire, for fear they will offend these souls, so that they will cease to come into their nets. <sup>111</sup>

Although Alloüez depicted many tribal customs and superstitious rites, one thing did remain consistent in his writings—as well as in other Jesuit accounts—that sense of Eurocentric authority. He, along with many other Jesuits, felt compelled to denounce First Peoples’ tribal rituals integral to their belief systems.<sup>112</sup> The goals of the missionaries were clear: First Peoples needed to abandon all their tribal-specific, polytheistic human-animal or personified myth-figures. Only then could they completely accept Christian doctrines and authorities.

The Jesuits’ genuine concern and care for the natives of the New World can be seen in their learning aboriginal languages, recording their stories, learning their mythologies, and developing and publishing language dictionaries. Some also included details and ideas about farming, food supplies, and forms of rule, the welfare of the

---

<sup>110</sup> Thwaites, 50: 285-6.

<sup>111</sup> Thwaites, 50: 285-9.

<sup>112</sup> Thwaites, 50: 295.

children and other societal members, the inhumane practice of cannibalism and torture, as well as other lifeway considerations that surely weighed on the French Jesuits. Alloüez described concern that the Algonquin, as well as Iroquois and Siouan-speaking peoples he believed to have converted, would leave behind their newfound Christian beliefs, eventually returning to their native religions:

All this shows that those poor people are very far from God's Kingdom; but he who is able to make them children of Abraham and vessels of election, will also be abundantly able to make Christianity spring up in the blossom of Idolatry, and to illuminate with the lights of the Faith those Barbarians, plunged although they are in the darkness of error, and in an Ocean of debauchery."<sup>113</sup>

While the *Relations* represented Eurocentric colonizing agendas, it remains filled with the Jesuits' authentic concern for, urgency, and drive to help the natives.

## **2.23 The Relations, Dualism, and Conversions Revisited**

Some of the earliest written narratives were recorded when European cultural influences and pandemics had begun to take a foothold in the New World, forever altering First Peoples' cosmologies and lifeways. The Jesuits worked to increase conversions in an attempt to drive away many vestiges of First Peoples' beliefs systems. The missionaries argued that there was a devil, he was evil, and that he needed to be subjugated by the one Christian deity—and not through the superstitions or conciliatory rituals found in First Peoples' religions.

Throughout the *Relations*, the Jesuits posited the idea that good and evil were always in opposition. Therefore, they argued that all First Peoples needed to acquiesce and dismiss their inclinations towards appeasing the evil spirits, and join the Christians

---

<sup>113</sup>Thwaites, 50: 295.

instead by fully converting. As noted, the Jesuits misinterpreted the religious oral traditions of Native American spirituality. Many also misunderstood the results of their work and claimed to have Christianized multitudes of First Peoples. In one example, the first French missionary among First Peoples seemed to have been wildly successful:

Jesse Flesche, a secular cleric, came to Port Royal in 1610 and within a year had baptized well over a hundred Indians, including the powerful Sagamore and his family. In the spring of 1611, two Jesuits arrived to take over the missionary effort but were extremely critical of Flesche's work. Indeed, Paul Biard found that the baptized Micmacs had no understanding whatsoever of the traditional European Christian significance of the rite but had interpreted it quite differently and within their own cultural frame of reference. The 'converts' he concluded, merely 'accepted baptism as part of a sacred pledge of friendship and alliance with the French.'<sup>114</sup>

Biard complained that some First Peoples understood the word "baptized" but not the word "Christian." Again, the issue here was translation and communication. "Indian peoples," Tinker wrote, "in characteristic fashion, demonstrated their willingness to form a bond of friendship by engaging in a ceremonial act—and would doubtless have wanted to reciprocate by including the French in some ceremonial rite of their own had the French willing. Flesche unexplainably thinks he has effected conversion."<sup>115</sup>

Misunderstanding conversion activities gave rise to many challenges. The acceptance of Christianity by some First Peoples created strife and warfare between Christianized and non-Christianized tribes. The resistance to the Judeo-Christian Creator, the so-named French God, who seemed to favor the Europeans also led to unrest within the tribal societies. Other tribes experienced forced absorption or annihilation by the newcomer colonizers, which ultimately resulted in the disappearance of the tribal-specific

---

<sup>114</sup>Tinker, 14-15.

<sup>115</sup>Tinker, 14-15.

cultures, as well as their political and economic futures. The *Relations* saw the changes in First Peoples' lifeways and spirituality as victories.

## **2.24 First Peoples' Spirituality as Expressed Through Myths and Other Oral Traditions; Le Jeune and the Montagnais**

To Le Jeune, the Montagnais had some form of understanding of creator deities; however, they did not express them in forms of general worship. "As this Savage gave me the occasion to speak of their God, let me say that it is a great mistake to think they have no knowledge of any divinity. . . I confess that the Savages have no public or common prayer, nor any worship usually rendered to one whom they hold as God, and their knowledge is only darkness. . . I do not know their secrets; but, from the little that I am about to say, it will be seen that they recognize some divinity."<sup>116</sup>

Le Jeune argued that the Montagnais had no common worship practices that paid reverence or homage to their creator deity. In addition, the Jesuit admitted that what little he understood about the First Peoples was limited to an outsider's perspective since he did not "know their secrets,"—a telling admission. When the Montagnais collectively chanted "Atahocan," Le Jeune learned the name of their creator deity and attempted to connect his religious traditions to theirs:

They say that there is a certain one whom they call *Atahocan*, who made all things. Talking one day of God, in a cabin, they asked me what this God was. I told them that it was he who could do everything, and who made the sky and earth. They began to say to the other, '*Atahocan, Atahocan, it is Atahocan.*' They say there is one named Messou, who restored the world when it was in the waters. You see that they have some traditions of the deluge, although mingled with fables. This is the way, as they say, that the world was lost.<sup>117</sup>

---

<sup>116</sup>Thwaites, 5: 153-4.

<sup>117</sup>Thwaites, 5: 153-5.

Le Jeune developed a general, although limited, knowledge of the Algonquin language in order to pursue his Christian conversion activities. This included learning details about the Montagnais' culture in an effort to find common ground so he could argue that their religious belief systems and myths stories were false. Le Jeune chronicled his immense difficulties in learning the language:

First, my defective memory, which was never any good, and which continues to wither every day...Second, the malice of the sorcerer, who sometimes prevented them from teaching me. Third, the perfidy of the Apostate, who, contrary to his promise, and notwithstanding the offers I made him, was never willing to teach me—his disloyalty even going so far as to purposely give me a word of one signification for another. In the fourth place, famine was for a long time our guest; and I scarcely ventured in her presence to question our Savages. . . In the fifth place, my attacks of illness made me give up the care for the languages of earth, to think about the language of the other life whither I was expecting to go. In the sixth place, and finally, the difficulty of this language, which is not slight...Still, I talk a jargon, and, by dint of shouting, can make myself understood.<sup>118</sup>

Despite his limited ability to understand, and the fact that his teacher often purposely gave him “a word of one signification for another,” Le Jeune still managed to ascertain that they did have a concept of a Creator-figure called *Atahocan*.<sup>119</sup> Le Jeune and the other Jesuits attempted to translate the Montagnais' human-animal myths stories despite their limited fluency, thereby filling their translations with pseudo-interpretations. For example, a Montagnais man with whom the priest passed the winter told Le Jeune about zoomorphic figures and a personified deity. The following is a shortened version, starting with the Creator deity whose world was flooded, then later restored by Messou, a personified spirit who used human-animals to rebuild the earth.

---

<sup>118</sup>Thwaites, 21-9.

<sup>119</sup>Thwaites, 4: 157-7.

It is important to note that as the myth unfolded into a flood story, Le Jeune wrote that the Montagnais believed Atahocan had created the world and that one named Messou had restored it but they did not know who the first Author of the world was.

Messou restored the world after the flood, going to the chase with his Lynxes who went into a great lake and hid. Messou sought them everywhere until a bird informed him that he had seen them. When Messou went in to get them out, the lake overflowed, covered the earth and swallowing up the world. Very much astonished, Messou sent a raven in search of a little piece of ground but to no avail. Messou sent Otter into the abyss of waters, but it could not bring any back. Finally, he sent a muskrat, which brought back a little morsel, which Messou used to rebuild the earth. Later, Messou also married a muskrat, by whom he had children who re-peopled this world.

Some early evidence suggests that the Montagnais believed their ancestors were creatures with human characteristics and abilities but also had elements of supernatural powers and capabilities, reinforcing the belief that links between the spiritual world and the mortals existed and were accessed through offerings, sacrifices, and rituals. From the Montagnais myth shows that in their belief systems, animals are able to communicate with Messou, establishing the concept of anthropomorphized or human-animal myth-creatures. Secondly, the myth shows a belief that of a time in Montagnais history when there was a great deluge or flood. Although it is tempting to assume that this is part of a worldwide flood archetype, there is little proof that the Montagnais did not hear stories similar stories before Le Jeune recorded them. Indeed, the Montagnais in all likelihood heard the Flood story from earlier European explorers who may have passed through their territories, or by other tribes who had met with European years before.



Finally, there is a duality between Atahocan and Messou, indicative of a form of polytheistic belief system that confused Le Jeune because of his Eurocentric attitude, the Montagnais inability to explain the myth, or his inability to grasp these Montagnais concepts. Therein lies the crux of my argument—from at the time of the Jesuits to modern scholarship, many writers have interpreted and explained First Peoples’ religiosity and spirituality, but from outsiders seeking simple categorical solutions and answers to the complex tribal specific cultural practices and belief systems of Native American spirituality.

Le Jeune described how the Montagnais believed that all animal species have an elder brother, the source and origin of all individuals. The elders of all the animals are the juniors of Messou, the leader brother of all beasts. The Montagnais also believed that if anyone while sleeping, dreams of the elder of the Beavers, he will take (or hunt and attempt to kill) Beavers; if he dreams of the elder of the Elks, he will take Elks. “The Montagnais also recognized progenitors of the seasons—Nipinoukhe, who brings the Spring and Summer, and Pipounoukhe, who brings the Winter.”<sup>120</sup> Le Jeune learned that both of these beings share the world. Nipinoukhe leaves for a while, then returns and brings back with him the heat, the birds, et cetera, and restores life and beauty to the world. Pipounoukhe is absent during the time when Nipinoukhe returns. Later, Pipounoukhe returns and lays waste everything.

Le Jeune described another account that dealt with a Genie of light, or Genie of the air, called Khichikouai, from the word *Khichiku*, which means “light” or “air.” Le Jeune wrote:

---

<sup>120</sup>Thwaites, 6: 157-76.

Two First Peoples consulted these two Genii at the same time, but in two different tents. One of them was a wicked man who had treacherously killed three men with his hatchet, and was put to death by the Genii, who, in crossing over into the tent of the other Savage to take his life, as well that of his companion, were themselves surprised because there was this juggler who defended himself so well that he killed one of these Khichikouai, or Genii, and thus it was found out how they were made, for this One remained in the place where he was killed.”<sup>121</sup>

Le Jeune wrote that the Montagnais’ lack of gratitude for their version of a creator in their myth stories:

What astonishes me is their ingratitude, for although they believe that Messou has restored the world, that Nipinoukhe and Pipounoukhe bring the seasons, that the Khichikouai teach them where to find Elks or Moose, and render them a thousand other good offices—yet up to the present I have not been able to learn that they render them the slightest honor.<sup>122</sup>

What is most interesting is that not one of the mythic figures show up in any Native American anthologies I’ve studied, with the exception of Le Jeune’s account in the *Relations* leading me to argue that belief in these figures died out with the original tribes who told these stories to the Jesuit. Indeed, they were either lost in the annals of myth-stories that disappeared with the peoples who relied on them, or they were so mischaracterized as to be renamed and placed into another story rooted in the eastern Algonquian subarctic language stock, deleted from history.

## **2.25 Le Jeune’s early encounters with Montagnais Myth-Stories and Rituals**

Nonetheless, in another account, Le Jeune wrote, “I have only observed that, in their feasts, they occasionally throw a few spoonful of grease into the fire, pronouncing these words: *Papeouekou*, *Papeouekou*: ‘Make us find something to eat, make us find something to eat.’ I believe this prayer is addressed to the Genii, to whom they present

---

<sup>121</sup>Thwaites, 6: 157-76.

<sup>122</sup>Thwaites, 6: 157-77.

this grease as the best thing they have in the world.”<sup>123</sup> Le Jeune believed that the Montagnais recognized a Manitou, whom “we may call the devil. They regard him as the origin of evil; it is true that they do not attribute great malice to the Manitou, but to his wife, who is a real she-devil.”<sup>124</sup> Once again, the term devil is a European construct that forced a Montagnais myth figure into a Eurocentric pattern.

Another fundamental Montagnais religious belief was the concept that not only men and animals had personified spirits or souls but, as other Jesuit narratives recorded, inanimate objects such as rocks, the wind, and bodies of water also had spirits or souls believed to be immortal. Le Jeune wrote, “They imagine the souls as shadow of the animate objects: never having heard of anything purely spiritual, they represent the soul of man as a dark and somber image, or as the shadow of the man himself, attributing to its feet, hands a mouth, a head, and all other parts of the human body.”<sup>125</sup>

Le Jeune, as well as many other Jesuits, did not readily accept the differences between the cultures. Instead, he and other Jesuits disapproved of most of the First Peoples’ expressions of beliefs. In many cases, the missionaries’ work was often met with disdain and resistance by the First Peoples. In one case, Le Jeune argued publicly against a sorcerer. He wrote:

I heard him crying out that he saw Moose; that my host would kill some. I could not refrain from telling him, or rather those who were present and listened to him as if to an oracle, that it was indeed quite probable that they would find a male, since they had found and killed two females. When he understood what I was driving at, he said to me sharply, “Believe me, this black robe has no sense.”<sup>126</sup>

---

<sup>123</sup>Thwaites, 6: 157-77.

<sup>124</sup>Thwaites, 6: 157-77.

<sup>125</sup>Thwaites, 6: 157-77.

<sup>126</sup>Thwaites, 6: 191.

Facing communication barriers, the Jesuits and First Peoples misunderstood each other's spirituality, confusion that ultimately led to myths, which later developed into trickster.

## **2.26 Le Jeune, trickster, and Shamanism**

Although Native cultural resistance to conversion was strong, evidence exists that in many cases, the Jesuits were undaunted by First Peoples' spiritual leaders and continued with their Christian desire to help the indigenous peoples achieve salvation as well as literacy, as well as a less nomadic and more Christianized, church-influenced lifestyle. This would, of course, require the First Peoples to relinquish their religious beliefs, including worship of human-animal deities and personified spirits that the Jesuits viewed as incompatible with a civilized, Europeanized Christian life. Le Jeune wrote:

While conversing with my Savages, I communicated to them this plan, assuring them when I knew their language perfectly, I would then cultivate the land if I could have some men, and if they wished to stop roving—representing to them their present way of living. . . I may be mistaken; but if I can draw any conclusions from the things I see, it seems to me that not much ought to be hoped for from the Savages as long as they are wanderers; you will instruct them to-day, to-morrow hunger snatches your bearers away, forcing them to go and seek their food in the rivers and woods. . . I know well there are persons of good judgments who believe that, although the Savages are nomadic, the good seed of the Gospel will not fail to take root. . . They imagine also that if a few families come over here, as they are beginning to do so, the Savages will follow the example of our French and will settle down to cultivate the land. I myself was impressed with these ideas, when we first came over here; but the intercourse which I have had with these people, and the difficulty that men accustomed to a life of idleness have in embracing one of hard work, such as cultivating soil, cause me to believe that they will lose heart, especially the Savages at Tadousac.<sup>127</sup>

There was much confusion, collision, and resistance to each other's lifeway viewpoints, especially from the First Peoples' spiritual leaders. Le Jeune describes several ideas about

---

<sup>127</sup>Thwaites, 6: 147-151.

how he thought that the devil was visible to the native shamans—the same spiritual leaders who often circumvented his conversionary practices and strategies. Le Jeune wondered:

. . . whether these Sorcerers really have communication with the Devil. If what I am about to tell is true, there is no doubt that the Demons sometimes manifest themselves to them; but I have believed until now that in reality the Devil deluded them, filling their understandings with error and their wills with malice, though I persuaded myself that he did not reveal himself visibly, and that all things their Sorcerers did were only Deceptions they contrived, in order to derive there from some profit. I am now beginning to doubt, even to incline to the other side, for the following reasons:

I have said before that, when they intended to consult the Genii of Light, they prepared Tents by driving stakes into the ground, binding and fastening them with a hoop, then covering them with robes or blankets. When the sorcerer has entered therein, and has sung or invoked the Genii of Demons. The tent begins to shake. Now I imagined the sorcerer shook it; but Makheabichtichiou, speaking to me frankly . . . protested me.<sup>128</sup>

Yet, the purpose and intent of missionary interactions were complex and often difficult to sort through, given the missionaries' Christian and European perspectives. Le Jeune could not prove whether the answers the Natives gave were true, or if their myth-stories they described were part of their belief systems. Indeed, Le Jeune had difficulty discerning whether they were serious or "jesting." He wrote:

The Savages, being filled with errors . . . are void of the knowledge of truth. . . They imagine they ought to by right of birth, to enjoy the liberty of Wild ass colts, rendering no homage to any one whomsoever, except when they like. . . I do not believe there is a nation under heaven more given to sneering and bantering than that of the Montagnais. Their life is passed eating, laughing, making sport of each other . . . but among themselves, they are real buffoons and genuine children, who ask only to laugh. Sometimes I annoy them a little, especially the sorcerer, by calling them children, and showing them that I never could place any reliance upon all their answers; because if I questioned them about one thing, they told me something else, only to get something to laugh and jest about; and consequently I could not know when they were speaking seriously, or when they were jesting.<sup>129</sup>

---

<sup>128</sup>Thwaites, 12: 17-19.

<sup>129</sup>Thwaites, 5: 243.

Nonetheless, Le Jeune's narratives still reduced Montagnais' lifeways to "eating, laughing, making sport of each other." He was never convinced that these stories were religious truths or part of an elaborate hoax. As part of his frustration, Father Le Jeune called the First Peoples "children," a term often offensive to the shamans, jugglers, medicine men, or "sorcerers."

Indeed, it is interesting to note that many Jesuits described the First Peoples as children often incapable of having a serious spirituality. Yet the missionaries often also proclaimed that the Natives' spiritual leaders were minions of Satan, who used using trickery to dupe the First Peoples into believing their own powers. Some evidence supported the idea that the Jesuits believed as if they were losing an epic battle against a very real devil figure; that is, until the biological invasion of epidemics decimated the First Peoples.

### **2.27 Le Jeune, Additional Eurocentric Constructs, and Husbandry**

The Jesuits, including Le Jeune, misunderstood not only the First Peoples' religious belief systems and significant cultural differences, but also the roles of the shamans who were integral to tribal lifeways and spiritualities. Still, Le Jeune described the stark reality that his Jesuit goals were nearly impossible to achieve because of those dissimilar cultural beliefs and relationships. After a short time with the Montagnais, Le Jeune came to realize that conversion to Christianity would be a difficult if not an entirely impossible task unless the First Peoples could be convinced to build permanent homes and farms—an overwhelming enterprise given the Montagnais' nomadic lifeways. Indeed, because their regions were not conducive to farming European grains and crops.

Nonetheless, Le Jeune's chronicles provide modern readers with an insightful glimpse into Native culture and religiosity. In the following passage, describing a dying Montagnais man's conversion to Christianity, Le Jeune<sup>130</sup> explains the difficulties with the process:

The savages, wishing to care for him in their way, with their songs, their uproar, and their other superstitions, tried several times to take him away from us, even going so far as to bring a sledge upon which to take him back, and one of their sorcerers or jugglers came to see him, for the express propose of enticing him away from our belief; but the good Neophyte held firm, answering that they should not speak to him about going away, and he would not leave us unless we sent him away.

It is no slight indication of the efficacy of the grace of holy Baptism, to see a man who had been steeped for over sixty years in Barbarism, accustomed to all the ways of the Savages, imbued with their errors and with their illusions, resist his own wife, his children, his sons-in-law, his friends and his fellow-savages, his *Manitousiouets*, sorcerers or jugglers, not once but many times, to throw himself into the arms of strangers, protesting that he wished to embrace their belief, to die in their Faith and in their house. This shows that grace can give stability to the soul of a Savage, who is by nature inconstant.<sup>131</sup>

The resistance exhibited by the dying man to remain steadfast was impressive to Le Jeune. "The good Neophyte held firm," amidst the pressures of his tribe's shaman leadership, and his family and friends' pressures. Here are the complexities the Jesuits faced as they tried to alter native spirituality, and then worked to establish their church authority over the New Peoples.

In the following passage, Le Jeune expresses another Eurocentric assumption:

It was the opinion of Aristotle that the world had three steps, as it were, to arrive at the perfection which it possessed at the time. At first men were contented with life, seeking purely and simply only those things which were necessary. . . First they found food and then seasoning.

---

<sup>130</sup>According to Thwaites, Father Paul Le Jeune was at the residence of Notre Dame des Anges, a school for those Indian children as he could collect from the wandering families or parties camping near Quebec—Montagnais or Algonkin.

<sup>131</sup>Thwaites, 6: 122-4.

In the beginning, they covered themselves against the severity of the weather, and afterward grace and beauty were added to their garments. In the early stages, houses were made simply to be used, and afterward they were made to be seen. In the third stage, men of intellect, seeing that the world was enjoying things that were necessary and pleasant in life, gave themselves up to the contemplation of natural objects and to scientific researches; whereby the great Republic of men has little by little perfected itself, necessity marching on ahead, politeness and gentleness following after, and knowledge bringing up the rear.<sup>132</sup>

Le Jeune is implying that the natives were capable, and would in due course; reach that designation, perhaps more quickly with the help of *friendly* European colonizers. Later, Le Jeune connects the idea to the Montagnais and his understanding of their stage of development.

Now I wish to say that our Montagnais Savages are yet in the first of these three stages which I have touched upon. Their only thought is to live, they eat so as not to die; they cover themselves to keep off the cold, and not for the sake of appearance. Grace, politeness, the knowledge of the arts, natural sciences, and much less supernatural truths, have as of yet no place in this hemisphere, or at least in these countries. These people do not know there is any other science in the world, except that of eating and drinking; and in this lies all their Philosophy. They are astonished at the value we place upon books, seeing that a knowledge of them does not drive hunger.<sup>133</sup>

Later, Le Jeune returned to this concept that theirs was a less civilized culture. In his judgment, the First Peoples would be better off if they nourished themselves with consistent sources of foods, obtainable from European farming and husbandry. From there, the natives would benefit from the nourishment of European culture and Christian beliefs. If the First Peoples relinquished their nomadic lifeways, they would rise to the third level of civilization development, where they would enjoy the pursuit of newer worldly understandings as well as develop an interest in technological and religious

---

<sup>132</sup>Thwaites, 6: 122-4.

<sup>133</sup>Thwaites, 6: 122-5.



knowledge. The Jesuits often promised sustainable nourishment, if the Natives would completely change their lifestyles and devote themselves to European forms of civilization and religiosity.

They cannot understand why we ask from God our prayers. “Ask him,” they say to me, “for Moose, bears, and Beavers; tell him that we thou wishest them to eat;” and when I tell them that those are only trifling things, that there are still greater riches to demand, they laughingly reply, “What couldst thou wish better than they eat thy fill of these good dishes?” In short, they have nothing but life; yet they are not always sure of that, since they often die of hunger.<sup>134</sup>

According to Le Jeune, and other Jesuit writers, First Peoples’ religious conventions and values remained embedded in a food-survival mode of existence that placed a premium on securing nourishment. Many Jesuits theorized that if the First Peoples would convert to Christian agricultural-based economies and lifeways, remaining in one place planting the lands and raising livestock, their ability to provide consistent sustenance to their peoples would mean that few, if any, natives would have the need or desire to return to human-animal or personified nature deities—or face starvation. Finally, by if they stayed in one place, the First Peoples could be under the watchful eye of the church and its authority.

The Jesuits ignored, denigrated, dismissed, or explained away the First Peoples’ beliefs as worthless, as inherently wrong, or some form of Devil worship. What the missionaries did understand was that the First Peoples’ lifeways were largely dependent on their food sources. The development of settlements and agricultural practices, the missionaries believed, would ensure their success shaping the natives into devout and submissive Christians. But they did not understand that the natives’ lifeways represented a real belief system. The Jesuits were not interested in studying, unraveling, or

---

<sup>134</sup>Thwaites, 7:7.

reconstructing this broader idea that the First Peoples indeed had a functioning and useful ritual and religiosity; they wanted and needed positive conversion results. It is doubtful the Jesuits understood the need for rituals other than Christian ones, since many narratives did not include any descriptions. Instead the Jesuits often offered explanations that ridiculed most of the ceremonies, rituals, and other societal practices associated with First Peoples' spirituality.

### **2.28 Skepticism of the Interpretations of First Peoples' Belief Systems Described by Joseph Jouvency as Found at the Beginning of the Jesuit Relations.**

The Jesuit reports offered first-hand, if misunderstood, glimpses of the First Peoples' lifeways at what would be the final moment before European influences would forever alter Native American spirituality. One classic example emerges in Joseph Jouvency's writings.<sup>135</sup> According to Thwaites (from *The Jesuit Relations*, 1: 319), Jouvency, (1643-1715), became a Jesuit in 1659. Jouvency was a Jesuit historian, a poet, philosopher, philologist, and dramatist who wrote the historical account of the Jesuits in 1611-13, up until the 1710 date of the publication of *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*. Jouvency wrote the history of the Jesuits but considered the Montagnais "a wretched tribe of nomads [who] were, at this time, chiefly centered upon the banks of the Saguenay River."

Interestingly, Jouvency, considered the official Jesuit historian of the period, had never visited North America at the time he wrote the following passage:

There is among them no system of religion, or care for it. They honor a Deity who has no definite character or regular code of worship. They perceive however, through the twilight, as it were that some deity does exist. What each

---

<sup>135</sup>Thwaites, 1:319

boy sees in his dreams, when his reason begins to develop, is to him thereafter a deity, whether it be a dog, a bear, or a bird. They often derive their principles of life and action from dreams; as, for example, if they dream that any person ought to be killed, they do not rest until they have caught the man by stealth and slain him.<sup>136</sup>

This short passage highlights several incorrect ideas that would later become central to Europeans' conception of First Peoples' belief systems. The first was the use of dreams and visions to discover one's human-animal guides. Throughout the *Relations*, the writers implied that the dream vision was a common practice among many First Peoples. However, Father Jean de Brébeuf, who lived among the Montagnais and learned their language and culture, had a different understanding of the dream vision's purpose, related to either absurdities or a celebratory activity:

I do not undertake to mention in detail everything our Savages are accustomed to do in virtue of their dreams; I should be compelled to display on this paper too many absurdities. I shall content myself with saying that their dreams usually relate to either to a feast, or to a song, or to a dance, or to a game—or, lastly, to a certain sort of mania that they in fact call *Ononharoia*, or “turning the brain upside down.”<sup>137</sup>

The second misunderstanding is Jouvency's statement that the First People often acted on these dream and visions: “. . . if they dream that any person ought to be killed, they do not rest until they have caught the man by stealth and slain him.” This accusation of murder based on dream visions rested solely on Jouvency's assumptions that this was a common Montagnais practice, which was not the case. In fact, Jouvency, who did not witness any such events, may have redefined the dream-vision practice to include his Christian perspective. Jouvency erroneously portrayed, or at the very least

---

<sup>136</sup>Thwaites, 1:287-9.

<sup>137</sup>Thwaites, 10: 175.

misrepresented, the Montagnais practice of dreaming, hunting down, and slaying a dreamed-about individual as typical practice—with little evidence to back his assertions.

However, it was plausible that if the dreamer saw a person as someone who should be killed, that the individual might have been an enemy—especially in times of warfare. Since many Jesuit accounts describe tribal warfare, it was likely that the dream hunting-slaying process was part of the Montagnais warrior way of retribution or justice. In addition, many Jesuit accounts described torture and murder among the tribal nations, and if these practices did belong to a form of inter-tribal hostilities, then Jouvençy misconstrued the tradition, which he believed to be part of ordinary Montagnais societal custom. His error fueled the need to send more missionaries and consequently increased funding for New World missions to change the natives' customary behaviors. Aside from confirming warfare among tribal societies, nothing reported by other Jesuits, (those who actually lived with the tribes they described) would have supported Jouvençy's idea that Natives would hunt and kill someone from their own tribal families based on a dream vision.

Le Jeune had argued that the dream visions and rituals associated with these personified spirits and animals, specifically those of the Montagnais, were “taught to them by Demons.”

. . . we learned that there is hardly any family in these countries, the heads of which do not have some dances, feasts, and other ceremonies suitable for the cure of their diseases and the successes of their business; but all these have been taught by Demons, either in the manner that we shall presently describe, or by appearing to them in dreams—now in the forms a raven, or some bird, now in the form of a serpent. . . or some other animal, which speaks to them and reveals the secret of good fortune, either in recovery of their health when they fall sick, or in the successful issue of their business. And this secret is called “Ondinac,” that is to say “a desire inspired by the Demon.”<sup>138</sup>

---

<sup>138</sup>Thwaites, 16: 153-155.

Since Jouvency was not in the New World, his assessment remains dubious, in terms of accurate editing and explanations of Native American spirituality. There were several people involved in readying the *Relations* for publication. However, something seemed incorrect in the translation and presentation of Jouvency's works. Indeed, it was probable that while translating and printing such narratives, Jesuit collaborators, like Jouvency, may have purposely altered or contaminated the texts to fit their anti-pagan and pro-Christian agendas, or they might have misunderstood the diaries, accounts, or journals. In fact, many of these letters were private and not originally intended for publication.<sup>139</sup>

## **2.29 Jouvency's Eurocentric Affect Revisited**

The third idea emerging from Jouvency's work was the dismissal of Montagnais religious practices and spiritual devotion as nonexistent or a form of false doctrine. "They honor a Deity who has no definite character or regular code of worship," Jouvency wrote. "What each boy sees in his dreams . . . is to him thereafter a deity."<sup>140</sup> However, readers with modern understanding and acceptance of cultural differences will notice that Jouvency's passages were highly Eurocentric. Jouvency's analysis misses the religiosity of the Montagnais' codes of worship, which were clearly part of the Montagnais' spirituality, although different from the Jesuits' understanding of their daily faith-based practices, rituals, and beliefs. The Natives believed that spiritual guides manifested

---

<sup>139</sup>Donnelly, 1-4.

<sup>140</sup>Thwaites, 1:287-289.

themselves as animal figures, which today have become part of the trickster concept. They also believed that the anthropomorphized animal figures communicated ideas and goals. Jouvency misunderstood the Montagnais conception of deities and forms of worship because their worship practices were not grounded in the formal beliefs, customs, and codes of Roman Catholicism. In fact, their clouded perception of tribal religious spiritualities explains why the colonizers dismissed and rejected these First Peoples' belief systems. As Donnelly explains:

The Jesuits initially believed that the Huron did not have any religious system of their own and would therefore be easy to convert. The priests came to this conclusion after noting an absence of the kind of institutional structures and practices that were characteristic of the religions they were familiar with, such as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. It was only after they had devoted considerably more time and effort to convert people that the Jesuits realized the extent to which religious beliefs and spiritual observances permeated the day-to-day activities as well as the annual and life cycles of Huron individuals.<sup>141</sup>

Their Eurocentrism, then, led some to the conclusion that the First Peoples' had no religious practices—with the exception of the human-animal, devil figures of personified spirits that the colonizer-missionaries described in the *Relations*.

The fourth Europeanized view of the Montagnais' spiritual practices (as noted in Jouvency's work) is that they expressed their spirituality with animal figures, which made up the significant part of their belief systems. However, throughout the *Relations*, the Jesuits often ignored, denigrated, or explained the animal-dream or personified spirit deities as forms of idol worship, and thus, gave the *one-Indian, one-voice perspective*, different from the natives' own understanding of their specific religiosity.

### **2.30 A pre-Columbian Captive's Tale: Father Isaac Jogues**

---

<sup>141</sup>Donnelly, 37-38.

Father Isaac Jogues (1607-1646) whose story appears *Held Captive by Indians: Selected Narratives 1642-1836*, is an important figure here since the myth-figures in his work appear to be pre-Columbian. Jogues' work resulted from his capture in 1642 and several years of forced indoctrination into Mohawks' cultural lifeways. From those experiences, Jogues was able to detail and explain many of the Mohawk's tribal-specific traditions and cultural myth-stories.

Although he was completely at the mercy of the Mohawks (they even prohibited him from practicing his religious sacraments during much of his imprisonment), Jogues managed to preach Christianity—even though he needed permission of his watchful captors to pray. In fact, during his imprisonment, the Mohawks treated him as a prisoner-slave, subjugated him to tortures and sufferings, and generally ostracized him. Nonetheless, according to Vanderbeets, Jogues sought to learn parts of their language as he interacted with several curious tribal members. They wanted him to explain Christian concepts and answer questions concerning the physical causalities and natural phenomena that encompassed their world.<sup>142</sup> Jogues wrote:

When I saw that my life was in some sort spared, I applied myself to the study of the language, and, as our cabin was the council hall, not only of the village, but of almost the country, I began to instruct the oldest on the articles of our faith. They, too put me many questions, as to the sun, and moon, the face, which seemed to appear on his disk, of the circumference of the earth, of the size of the ocean, its tides, whether, as they had heard, the heavens and the earth anywhere for me teach others; adapting my philosophy to their reach.<sup>143</sup>

---

<sup>142</sup>Richard Vanderbeets, *Held Captive by Indians: Selected Narratives 1642-1836* (Knoxville, Tennessee, The University of Tennessee Press 1973), 3.

<sup>143</sup>Vanderbeets, 31-2.

From there, he worked to understand their perceptions of Creation in an effort to lead them towards his Christian perspective. Even under threat of torture and death, he still managed to pray, translate, preach, collect, and record the following account of their belief systems.

The religion of the Iroquois was a sort of nature-dread, a belief that everything material had life and intelligence, had power to harm, and would exercise that power upon the slightest offence or neglect. Trees, rivers, mountains, winds, beasts, birds, and fishes were all embodied spirits capable of understanding the language of man and doing him good or harm. A storm, for example was an angry wind spirit, an unsuccessful hunt, an offended deer spirit; an upset canoe an angry river spirit; an unsuccessful crop, a displeased harvest spirit; and so on for all the occurrences of life. Iroquois also believed that some material thing or animal possessed a particular spirit which was a personal deity, to be worshipped by a particular individual. The spirit was called an “oki” or “Manitou.” The Indian made an image of it which he always carried with him and to which he made supplications and offerings. Human life was frequently sacrificed to a “Manitou” to placate or propitiate an offended spirit.<sup>144</sup>

In this 1643 myth story, Jogues described several important Mohawk personified spirit myth-figures other than Manitou. What makes his account important is that it was pre-Columbian in nature. The account does not contain evidence of European or African peoples’ presence, nor does it acknowledge any form of monotheistic Creationism. Rather Jogues described several personified nature-spirits (polytheism) that needed to be honored with sacrifice and appeasement. Finally, Jogues described the spirits as neither good nor evil, thereby proving that the Christian concept of dualism was not yet present in the time he was describing. Therefore, the personified-spirit, myth story he describes is a uniquely important First Peoples’ proto-trickster sketch.

Later, Jogues wrote, “I endeavored to raise their minds from creature, to a knowledge of the Creator; I confuted their old wives’ tales of the creation of the world,

---

<sup>144</sup>Vanderbeets,10.



which their fable makes out to have been created by a tortoise.” Jogues, like the other Jesuits or European explorers, invaders, and missionaries presented here, added Judeo-Christian elements to the First Peoples’ belief systems, which they deemed as a devil figure. These would eventually fall into the trickster trope categories.

### **2.31 Dictionaries and Additional Language Difficulties**

This chapter has examined several First Peoples’ anthropomorphized myth, devil-figures, or personified-spirits stories presented in *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*. Two key points emerge. First, there is evidence within the collected accounts that Christian concepts and motives colored the texts. Second, First Peoples’ lifeways and myth stories could have been misunderstood or misinterpreted by either the Natives—who may have not completely understood what the Jesuits were referring to when asking about their tribal specific belief systems, or by the Jesuits—who were not capable of completely translating the First Peoples concepts, ideas, and cultural myth stories. In short, these misunderstandings, especially of the human-animal myth-figures and personified spirits found in Native American spirituality resulted in a false view of trickster.

An examination of the mischaracterizations and misinterpretations of the proto-trickster myths shows that one area, communication, needs further consideration. Communication problems between the Jesuits and First Peoples clearly existed even though the Jesuits did attempt to learn native languages. Even with well-thought out translations, the ability to fully grasp and understand each Native culture’s separate abstract terms and universal phraseologies was challenging.

The Jesuits' attempts to convey details and concepts from the New Testament were evident in their dictionaries and their writings. However, as Axtell argues, "often parables symbolize the Christian mysteries [and] were nearly untranslatable." In addition, vague and incorrect definitions caused friction between the Jesuits and the Montagnais. "The natives simply had no words for salt, sin, gold, prison, candle, king, shepherd, or flock. 'Their ignorance of the things of the earth,' lamented the priests, 'seem to close for them the way to heaven.' This linguistic barrier was an obstacle that neither culture completely overcame."<sup>145</sup> This inability to fully understand and translate concepts and ideas often led to erroneous conclusions and understandings of religious meanings and symbols between the cultures as they struggled to connect and resolve differences.

Axtell had argued that the Jesuits' attempts were different from other Europeans, since as they immersed themselves in First Peoples' cultures. "Traveling alone into Indian country and making their abodes in Indian villages, they had to adapt to Indian ways. Some, like Father Sebastien Rasles, became almost totally immersed in Indian culture. They lived in Indian lodges, ate Indian food, they traveled the seasonal round by canoe and snowshoe. They learned native language, adapted their message to suit Indian oratorical styles, and behaved as much as possible according to Indian protocols and cultural expectations."<sup>146</sup>

Yet the Jesuits still faced language translation challenges that resulted in cultural and religious misunderstandings. Take Sebastien Rasles (1657?-1724), for example. He was a "French Jesuit missionary in North America. Arriving in present-day Maine in

---

<sup>145</sup> Axtell, 77. In addition, the exact Jesuit quote can be found in Thwaites, 20: 71.

<sup>146</sup> Colin G. Calloway, *Dawnland Encounters Indians and Europeans in Northern New England* (Hanover and London, England, University of New England Press, 1991), 60.

1689, he spent two years with the Abenakis in Acadia. He then became a missionary among the Illinois. In 1693, he was recalled to take charge of the mission in Abenaki, now Norridgewock, Maine, which was then in disputed territory of the French and the British. When in 1721 the British invaded camp, Father Rasles escaped, but his dictionary of the Abenaki languages, which he was carefully compiling, was carried off. It was not published until 1833. He was killed in 1724 when the British raided the settlement.”<sup>147</sup>

### **2.32 Cultural Genocide, Conversion, and Historical Perspectives**

In its assertion of Christian authority, European expansion led to what modern researchers have identified as “cultural genocide.” Quinn, for example, argues that regardless of their intentions, all European nations were in effect guilty of cultural genocide; indeed, he blames all of the involved European countries for that devastating process. He argues:

What is clear is that Europeans of whatever nation, at most times and places, believed they had a right to enter and occupy lands. . . Spanish arrogance in this regard was without comparison. Buoyed by her sense of mission, Spain considered it her duty and her right to occupy non-Christians lands and subordinate non-Christian peoples. . . The English, for the most part . . . followed the same path more slowly. . . The French were least concerned with disrupting and taking over native territory until missionary activities were added to the fur trade, when she too became involved in the long genocidal process that was to mark European intervention. . . <sup>148</sup>

The Christian colonialists sought to foster the permanent life-altering transformation of First Peoples’ cultures by drawing them away from their ancient belief

---

<sup>147</sup>Sebastien Rasles, *The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition* (Columbia University Press. Licensed from Lernout & Hauspie Speech Products N.V., Copyright © 2004 All Rights reserved), <http://www.questia.com/library/encyclopedia/rasles-sebastien.jsp> Retrieved July 5, 2010.

<sup>148</sup>David B. Quinn, *Explorers and Colonies: America, 1500-1625* (London, England: The Hambledon Press, 1990), 132-133.

systems. Josephy explains, “On the whole, the church played an important part in the degeneration of Indian culture. Conversion was often only superficial; many lesser gods and spirits simply became merged with Christian saints, and some peoples retained parts of their earlier beliefs and mixed them with Christianity.”<sup>149</sup> In addition, Tinker states: “The missionaries all came to the Native American tribal communities with firmly established commitments to their own European or Euro-American cultures with their social structures and institutions. As a result, they naturally assumed the superiority of their institutions and social structures of their world and readily imposed them on Indian people.”<sup>150</sup>

The Jesuits—along with the next generations of European and American missionaries and colonizers—exhibited a sense of cultural hegemony that reflected their perceived superiority, which in turn, clouded their viewpoints and consequently altered their narrative accounts that described many First Peoples’ proto-trickster-figures, human-animal myths, personified spirit stories, rituals, customs, and lifeways. The missionaries were in New France with the sole intent of converting souls to Christianity, but by modern estimates, their work yielded few conversions as the First Peoples in general, held steadfast to their ancient polytheistic belief systems during this early period of exploration. Tinker adds:

Cultural genocide can be defined as the effective destruction of a people by systematically (intentionally or unintentionally in order to achieve other goals) destroying, eroding, or undermining the integrity of the culture and system of values that defines a people and gives them life. First of all, it involves the destruction of those cultural structures of existence that give a people a sense of holistic and communal integrity. It does this by limiting a people’s freedom to

---

<sup>149</sup>Josephy, 294.

<sup>150</sup>Tinker, 15-16.

practice their culture and to live in culturally appropriate terms. It effectively destroys a people by eroding both their self esteem and their interrelationships that bind together a community. In North American mission history, cultural genocide almost always involved an attack on the spiritual foundation of a people's unity by denying the existing ceremonial and mythological sense of a community in relationship to the Sacred Other. Finally, it erodes a people's self-image as a whole by attacking or belittling every aspect of native culture.<sup>151</sup>

As noted before, the histories and myths recorded by non-Indian writers countered, dismissed, or redefined the tribal-specific intentions and the spiritual significances of North American indigenous religions. In terms of the human-animal myth-stories, the Jesuits not only mischaracterized their meanings but also disregarded the essential rites.

Jesuit writers and others underestimated the intrinsic value that the proto-trickster myths held in First Peoples' cultural lifeways. Nonetheless, since few documents remain that describe First Peoples' spirituality, including their rituals, before European acculturation, the Jesuit *Relations* remains one of the few invaluable primary sources to trace the roots of pre-trickster myths to their modern archetypal forms.

### 2.33 Conclusion

In summary, the portrayal of First Peoples' lifeways and myths in the Jesuit *Relations* demonstrates that the missionaries acted not as modern scholars researching other cultures but as Christian Jesuits whose objective was preaching salvation to the inhabitants of the New World. This Christian goal, along with other colonizing agendas, further explains why texts did not provide the informants' names. To many Europeans, because the natives would never fully become European Christians but rather stay as "savages," the writers kept their identities out of the narrative accounts. The Jesuit

---

<sup>151</sup>Tinker, 6.

translators or European publishers may have felt that it was unnecessary for European readers to know the names of these informants or tribal shamans. In short, the names of the tribes were not important to the story of conversion and conquest. Nonetheless, the Jesuit writers provided much of the raw material of the First Peoples' human-animal or anthropomorphized myth, devil-figure, and personified-spirit stories that later developed into the false trickster concept.

However, it is clear that the *Relations* exhibited Eurocentric distortion through the *one-Jesuit voice* of the texts. The Jesuits provided insight into early contact difficulties between the different human-family cultures as the Jesuits and First Peoples struggled to define the relationships and the meanings of contact between the cultures—human family get-together that went askew. Yet, their traditional myths could add to our holistic understanding of a specific society's spirituality—something that escapes many scholars as they force these uniquely specific tribal myths into the contemporary trickster concept. The etiological hierocracy of the false trickster concept a product of Eurocentric bias later transcended the perception of the Jesuits and other early explorers, leading to a secular-scientific cultural determinism that forces myths into unnecessary and often inappropriate archetypal constructs.

It is therefore important not only to trace the myths rooted in these First Peoples' oral traditions, but also to investigate the ways that scholars—from the European-educated Jesuits to present-day writers and scholars—erroneously attempted to explain native traditions and cultural mores as outsiders looking through “a glass darkly.”<sup>152</sup> It is clear that those who created this false view of Native American spirituality

---

<sup>152</sup>Axtell, *After Columbus*, 126.

misunderstood the belief systems, and the nuances of languages, or misinterpreted Native American spirituality.

In the next chapter, I will assert that the Jesuits were not alone in their difficulty reconciling an omnipotent, monotheistic Christian Creator with the vanishing Creator figures, sub-Creators, Great Spirit, and cultural transformer figures of First Peoples' spirituality. In addition, I will examine how the next generation of writers recast or mischaracterized the tribal-specific First Peoples' proto-trickster myths into archetypal conceptualizations. At first, some writers denied the existence of Native American spirituality, even though they were amazed and perplexed at the human-animal forms of the First Peoples' Creator deities. The writers also misunderstood the intermittent and non-traditional ways First Peoples worshiped or thought about their deities, as they did not correspond to European norms.

## Chapter Three

### **The Writers of New France, *The Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi Valley and Region of the Great Lakes, 1616-1820***

#### **The Algonquian Great Hare Myth as collected by Nicholas Perrot:**

“The Algonquians believed,” Nicholas Perrot wrote, “Before the earth was created there was nothing but water; that upon this vast extent of water floated a great wooden raft, which were all the animals, of various kinds existed on earth; and the chief of all these, they say, was the Great Hare. He looked about for some spot of solid ground where they could land; but as nothing could be seen on the water save swans and other river-birds, he began to be discouraged. He saw no other hope than to induce the beaver to dive, in order to bring up a little soil from the bottom of the water; and he the beaver, in the name of all the animals, that if he returned with even one grain of soil, he would produce from it land sufficiently spacious to contain and feed all of them.

“But the beaver tried to excuse himself from this undertaking, giving his reason that he had already dived in neighborhood of the raft without finding there any indication of a bottom. Nevertheless, he was so urgently pressed to attempt again this great enterprise that he took the risk of it and dived. He remained so long without coming to the surface that those who had entreated him to go believed that he was drowned; but finally he was seen appearing, almost dead, and motionless. Then all the other animals, seeing that he was in no condition to climb upon the raft, immediately exerted themselves to drag him on it; and after they had carefully examined his claws and tail they found nothing thereon.

“Their slight remaining hope of being able to save their lives induced them to address the otter, and entreat him to make another effort to search for a little soil at the bottom of the water. They represented to him that he would go down quite as much for his own welfare as for theirs; the otter yielded to their just expostulations, and plunged into the water. He remained at the bottom longer than the beaver had done, and returned to them in the same condition as the latter, and with little result.



“The impossibility of finding a dwelling-place where they could maintain themselves left them nothing more to hope for; when the muskrat proposed that, if he wished, he should go to try to find a bottom, and said that he also believed that he could bring up some sand from it. The animals did not depend much on this undertaking, since the beaver and the otter, who were far stronger than he, had not been able to carry it out; however, they encouraged him to go, and even promised that he should be ruler over the whole country if he succeeded in accomplishing his plan. The muskrat then jumped into the water, and boldly dived; and after he had remained there nearly twenty-four hours he made his appearance at the edge of the raft, his belly uppermost, motionless, and his four feet tightly clenched. The other animals took hold of him, and carefully drew him up on the raft. They unclosed one of his paws, then a second, then a third, and finally the fourth one, in which there was between the claws a little grain of sand.

“The Great Hare, who had promised to form a broad and spacious land, took this grain of sand, and let it fall upon the raft, when it began to increase; then he took a part of it, and scattered this about, which caused the mass of soil to grow larger and larger. When it had reached the size of a mountain, he started to walk around it, and it steadily increased in size to the extent of his path. As soon as he thought it was large enough, he ordered the fox to go to inspect his work, with power to enlarge it still more; and the latter obeyed. The fox, when he had ascertained that it was sufficiently extensive for him to secure easily his own prey returned to the Great Hare to inform him that the land was able to contain and support all the animals. At this report, the Great Hare made a tour throughout his creation and found that it was incomplete. Since then, he has not been willing to trust any of the other animals, and continues always to increase what he has made, by moving without cessation around the earth. This idea causes hollow of the mountains, that the Great Hare is still enlarging the earth; they pay honors to him, and regard him as the deity who created it. Such is the information which those peoples give us regarding the creation of the world, which they believe to be always borne upon that raft. As for the sea and the firmament, they assert that these have existed for all time.”<sup>153</sup>

### **3.1 Nicholas Perrot and the Historical Context**

Nearly three and a half centuries have passed since Nicholas Perrot recorded the Algonquian Creator myth. For Perrot, the myth was unbelievable, because it was so different from his Judeo-Christian understanding of Creation. To the First Peoples, however, the myth, like other types of myth-stories and personified spirits, defined,

---

<sup>153</sup>Blair, 34-6.

explained, and gave meaning to the significant, traumatic, or emotional events that affected their lifeways. Myths also helped to create a universal understanding of physical causalities and natural phenomena and thus, made real their cultural belief systems. It would have been difficult for a newcomer like Perrot to grasp these concepts since he had not been fully acculturated into the First Peoples' lifeways.

Perrot came to New France in 1660 as a *donné* of the Jesuits and had the opportunity to visit Indian tribes and learn their languages. Even after Perrot left the missionaries and visited the Potawatomis and Foxes, he could not claim full and complete cultural knowledge. However, because he knew the languages and increasingly understood the tribal-specific cultures he encountered, Perrot was able to act as an official interpreter and liaison to the various factions of warring tribes. Perrot was successful in that role. In addition, he used his language skills to interact with tribal nations he encountered during his various business ventures and fur trading endeavors. Perrot was different from many of the colonizers, explorers, and traders of the period because he took the time to chronicle the histories and belief systems—the Algonquian Great Hare Myth, for example—of the First Peoples he met.<sup>154</sup>

### **3.2 New World and Old World Religions as Understood by the Jesuits and Other Writers of New France, Christian Heritage versus Iouskeha Slew Tawiscaron Creation Myths**

---

<sup>154</sup>[http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?id\\_nbr=1030&&PHPSESSID=8glb2fb8fmrn59bbug0arp51](http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?id_nbr=1030&&PHPSESSID=8glb2fb8fmrn59bbug0arp51) Retrieved August 9, 2010.

As seen in Chapter one, the Jesuits, in their missionary zeal and dualistic views, recast First Peoples human-animal myth figures and personified spirits as devil figures. Often, the priests attempted to connect First Peoples' belief systems to the Judeo-Christian heritage by linking Native American proto-trickster myth-figures and personified spirits to Old Testament constructs—possibly as a tactic to increase conversion successes. The Jesuits were not alone in this endeavor since there were other non-Jesuit writers—fur-traders, explorers, and colonizers of New France—as found in Emma Blair's anthology *The Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi Valley and Region of the Great Lakes*. This chapter will investigate the next generation of writers who wrote extensively about the connections between European and New World cultures and will examine how Judeo-Christian stories were used to recast or mischaracterize First Peoples' proto-trickster myths. Perrot, Bacqueville de La Potherie, Morell Marston, and Thomas Forsyth denied the existence of Native American spirituality or misinterpreted it as a false religion.

### **3.3 Methodology and Scope**

This section will focus on the histories of European and American expansion and conquest in the Upper Mississippi Valley and the Great Lakes region. I will examine various missionary activities and strategies in order to better understand how the Christian perspectives often changed First Peoples' belief systems— especially the human-animal Creator and cultural-transformer myth figures. Bacqueville de La Potherie (1668-1738) “whose *Histoire de l'Amérique Septentrionale*, published at Paris in 1716, summarized much of what was then known about Wisconsin. He relied very heavily on

the unpublished journals of Nicholas Perrot, whom he met in 1701.”<sup>155</sup> In these accounts, it will be evident that the myths were altered from the proto-trickster myths into modern Creator or cultural-transformer myth forms. I will continue to weigh the likelihood of problems created by poor translations and inaccurate commentaries, as well as the writers’ commitment to Christian hegemony. These writings are important because they help document the westward and southern movements in New France along with the interactions and relationships of the tribal-specific nations the Europeans and Americans encountered. The record contains several proto-trickster creation myths that shed light on the developing Great Spirit motifs.

The first part of this chapter will examine the impact of the rising tide of European and American expansion, as well as the influences of new religious leaders and their doctrines, as illuminated by the early traders, explorers, government agents, colonizers, and conquerors. The second part will examine the mischaracterized tribal-specific First Peoples’ proto-trickster myths by the next generation of writers to ascertain whether they erroneously declared the myth figures as good or evil spirits, but also as creators, sub-creators, culture-heroes, or cultural-transformers. The final part will examine Christian dualism and the extent to which it transformed the Native-American creator-figures into “master spirit” or Great Spirit deities.

### **3.4 Creator and Cultural-hero-trickster-transformer Myth-figures**

Early writers often projected Judeo-Christian constructs into First Peoples’ myths. Later writers assigned Eurocentric classifications systems such as the Creator or devil

---

<sup>155</sup>La Potherie (<http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/turningpoints/search.asp?id=901>) Retrieved July 12, 2010.

figures, or by the late nineteenth century, cultural-transformer-trickster figures, to the myths they heard. The following definitions are important because non-Natives—from the newcomers to modern scholars—attempted to fit the proto-tricksters into their Christian and Euro-American scholarly patterns of understanding. However, as Voegelin explains, there were no such boundaries or limitations found in First Peoples' belief systems since the myth-figures did not often fit into dualistic or monotheistic systems. Voegelin writes:

In North American mythology, creation of the earth and mankind is generally attributed to a character who combines attributes of creator with those of a culture-hero-trickster-transformer. In a few tribes, however, such as some Pacific, California, and Pueblo groups, and among certain Eastern Woodlands Algonquians a Creator or a supreme being is referred to in the mythology. Such a creator or high god is generally an otiose [ineffective] deity, and many of the details involved in bringing the world to its present order are relegated to the more active subordinate deities [sub-Creator]. The presence of a 'high god concept' among some of the primitive North American tribes has been used to support the thesis that monotheism is a primary concept in the history of religion.<sup>156</sup>

Gill and Sullivan describe and define a culture hero as:

A type of character responsible for establishing distinctive features of a culture. Culture Heroes may take diverse forms. They almost always have proper names and distinct transformational abilities. They are often clearly differentiated from trickster characters, even though some trickster characters are also understood to be culture heroes . . . The culture hero may appear in stories of creation but usually enters a world already created. The culture hero is frequently responsible for conditions in nature and culture. Primarily a wanderer, he or she is able to talk with and transform living things into animals as well as change the shape of the landscape. . . Native American mythology features hundreds of culture heroes.”<sup>157</sup>

Because there was a broad spectrum of meaning associated with Creator-figures and personified tricksters, it is no wonder that early Europeans mischaracterized proto-

---

<sup>156</sup>*Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore Mythology and Legend*, 260.

<sup>157</sup>Gill and Sullivan, 59.

tricksters and that contemporary writers misclassify the trickster—since he truly does defy classification.

However, it is true that the modern trickster concept is rooted in the numerous and varied proto-trickster, First Peoples' myths and figures. Yet different versions of the tribal-specific human-animal appeared as archetypes in European, and later, American literatures. This resulted in the continued mischaracterization of myth-figures. From the beginning, missionaries and explorers recast proto-tricksters, human-animal myth figures into the modern trickster god-figure, the Creator, the Cultural Transformer, the sub-Creator, or, as examined in this part of the chapter, the Great Spirit or Christian God.

Given the hundreds, perhaps thousands of varied myth-stories about the identified trickster; it is difficult to understand why the trickster archetype existed at all since there were so many different versions and characters associated with different tribes. Yet the misnomers persist today. First Peoples' myths were forced into a one-myth category, not broad enough to explain the sheer numbers of individual tribal-specific stories (not to mention the sheer number of interpretations) found throughout the Americas.

Nonetheless, in some cases, Christian-based religious roles were given to the First Peoples' Creator figure or their cultural-transformer deities. Or good and evil constructs were attributed to First Peoples' divinities, often based on Christian dualism—even though Native Americans did not necessarily have a deity that was either devoutly good or solely evil. Finally, with the conversion of the First Peoples, and myth-figures being classified as Creator archetypes, the Christianized Supreme Being, or the good or Great Spirit motif, began to appear—arguably a new manifestation of Native American

spirituality that evolved from cross-cultural contact which can be traced to proto-trickster roots.

### **3.5 Historical Perspectives: European Dominion and Religious Expansion**

It is difficult to divorce the histories of European political and religious expansion from the devastating loss of myth, the cultural genocide experienced by many Woodlands and sub-Arctic First Peoples. In tracing the trickster concept to its proto-trickster roots, Blair's collection yields much historical information about several generations of the Indian tribes of the Northwest, Upper Mississippi Valley, and Great Lakes region. The accounts she collected are important because they traced the development of the Great Spirit, the devil figures and evil spirits, and cultural-transformer-trickster-deities to their tribal-specific proto-trickster roots. In order to understand the results early contacts had on First Peoples lifeways, we must revisit European colonization and conversion practices along with the rise in immigration and technologies, and the warfare that brought further division and unrest among New World tribes during these critical periods of colonization.

In New France, beginning on the North Atlantic coast, waves of people migrated as each successive frontier moved west and south. While encroaching on the traditional First Peoples' territories and lifeways, Europeans, and later the Americans, attempted to understand, alter, annihilate, or assimilate Native Americans and their spiritual belief systems into Christianity. It was this enthusiasm for profits and souls that shaped relationships and governmental policies.

### 3.6 The Spanish in Decline, French Religion, Royal Ascension and Presence in the New World

By the end of the seventeenth century, the Spanish had less visible presence, leaving the French poised to establish a new colony, Louisiana, in the lower Mississippi Valley. Alan Taylor explains:

Like New France, Louisiana remained thinly populated and dependent upon Indian allies to conquer the superior and growing number of British Americans. Together the French colonies of New France and Louisiana stretched from the Gulf of Mexico, sweeping around British America, confined to the Atlantic seaboard east of the Appalachian Mountains. Despite their small numbers, the French claimed and affected more of the continent than did any other empire. In the vast Great Lakes country and Mississippi Valley, the thin French presence depended more on Indian consent than French power.

Through generosity and restraint, the French could exercise some influence, but they could never command their Indian allies. The trader Nicholas Perrot (1644-1717) grumbled at the natives' 'arrogant notion that the French cannot get along without them and that we could not maintain ourselves in the colony without the assistance that they gave us.' But Perrot knew both to be true. Although more subtle and patient than their British rivals, French officials and priests only grudgingly accepted the limits of their power.<sup>158</sup>

Since Native Americans did most of the work of the beaver hunts,<sup>159</sup> and the French needed the inhabitants in order to survive, thus many tribal nations experienced economic and political successes. Fueled by their autonomy, the First Peoples were initially in a unique position to limit the power of the French royal authorities—different from their European rivals. This limited control by the French Crown and the Catholic missionaries allowed the First Peoples to continue to maintain many aspects of their belief systems, myths, and lifeways while other Native Americans remained subjugated to other Europeans and their imperialistic practices.

---

<sup>158</sup>Taylor, 364-5.

<sup>159</sup>Taylor, 365.



As the French traders continued to push the boundaries of New France west and south, they looked for new lands and other tribal nations to provide additional sources of furs and trade. Similarly, the Jesuit missionaries also moved west and down the continent's interior as they vied for First Peoples to convert to Christianity. They did so in a manner different from other Christians. "Compared with other European missionaries . . . the Jesuits proceeded more patiently with the Indians."<sup>160</sup> In 1642, a Jesuit explained:

To make a Christian out of a Barbarian is not the work of the day. . . A great step is gained when one has learned to know those with whom he has to deal; has penetrated their thoughts; has adapted himself to their custom, and their manner of living; and when necessary, has been a barbarian with them, in order to win them over to Jesus Christ.<sup>161</sup>

While it remains suspect whether First Peoples' conversions were completely sustainable due to the varying individual natures and degrees associated with processes of conversion, in some cases the Jesuits and explorers claimed some successes. As Taylor argues "Overmatched by the hardships, the distances, and the indifferences of the Montagnais, the four Recollect priests managed, in ten years, to baptize only fifty natives, almost all on their deathbeds and hedging their eternal bets."<sup>162</sup>

By the late eighteenth century, the French missionary and political power structures, not unlike the Spanish and their former New World governing presence, withdrew from the North American scene. The Jesuits' Catholic villages and townships began to disappear, either destroyed or abandoned due to dissension among European nations or other tribal nations. Nonetheless, in one sense, the Jesuits were more

---

<sup>160</sup>Taylor, 109.

<sup>161</sup>Taylor, 109.

<sup>162</sup>Taylor, 108.

successful than most missionaries including the French Recollects,<sup>163</sup> who appeared several years before the Black Robes.<sup>164</sup> Nonetheless, it took a series of catastrophic causalities and events that led to the rise and development of the one-Creator concept as part of Native American spirituality. As the numbers of European and American colonizers swelled, so did the deadly skirmishes and hostilities between these migrating newcomers and the warring tribal factions—especially between the Iroquois and Algonquin language-based nations. Other factors, like poverty, starvation, and the deadly epidemics that weakened tribes by changing their social and political alliances, as well as their religious beliefs and lifeways structures, also played a crucial part. Such devastations helped missionaries establish European imperialism and some aspects of Christianity into the First Peoples' belief systems, most notably the concept of God or the Great Spirit as the sole Creator. The histories of warfare, death, and forced indoctrination

---

<sup>163</sup>The Black Robes were the Jesuits and the Grey Robes were described as Recollects. "In 1615, the French launched their first effort to evangelize the Indians of Canada, sending four priests of the Recollect order (the French branch of the Franciscans) to convert the Montagnais. But the Recollects faced grave difficulties in attending to the far-flung and highly mobile northern Indians. Unlike the Indians of New Mexico and Florida, the Canadian Indians enjoyed the upper hand in their alliance and could safely treat the priests with indifference or contempt. The missionaries had to endure muscle-numbing days of paddling canoes or portaging them through clouds of mosquitoes and blackflies. The priests could not decide which was worse, the prolonged spells of hunger or consuming the stews bubbling with strange plants, animals, and insects. The priests also spent restless nights in bark lodges, filled with bodies, fleas, dogs, and smoke." Taylor, 108.

<sup>164</sup>James Axtell asserted that "the three leading missionary societies in New France—the Recollects [in New France prior to 1625], Jesuits, and Ursalines, were 'regular' orders (from the Latin *regula*, meaning 'rule'), organized hierarchally and tightly bound by perpetual vows, the most important of which was obedience to one's superiors. Virtually the whole education of a priest or a nun consisted of learning to annihilate one's self—one's pride, vanity, independence—in order to be subsumed completely by God's will, for a soul filled with the natural self had no room for the infusion of the Holy Spirit. Because of its inherent difficulty, self-abasement before God was learned in stages, before one's religious superiors. To renounce one's own judgment and to blindly obey the Church and its representatives was considered the most appropriate and most efficacious [capable of producing a desired effect] training for the spiritual life. From their own point of view, the missionaries asked of their Indian neophytes only what the religious demanded for themselves. From Indian viewpoint, of course, that was asking too much: the Indians were expected to not only give up their former course of life, in all its habitual concreteness, but to assume new physical and spiritual habits that the vast majority of Frenchmen could never wear." James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America*, 54.

reveal the transformation of First Peoples' beliefs into something rather different from their original tribal-specific forms.

### **3.7 Polytheism and Cultural Genocide among the First Peoples**

It was common for Native Americans to adopt elements of Christianity into their polytheistic religious belief systems since they had a history of acculturation and adaptation among the various tribal nations. In some cases, when one tribe absorbed and adapted another tribe's religious beliefs into their own cultural tenets, they were in effect developing a more authentic (as in pre-Columbian) form of polytheistic religiosity and behaviors.

Åke Hultkrantz noted one unique circumstance between the Algonquin and Sioux:

Under pressure from the white invasion east of the Mississippi, Algonkin and Sioux Indians emigrated from the forests to the prairie and plains. Here the former corn cultivators were transformed to hunters for ecological reasons at the same time that they adjusted to the lifestyle already established within the area of old prairie tribes. Through adaptation the old fertility rites—the Sun Dance in a more nearly original form—were changed to rites for the duration of game (the buffalo), and the importance of individual visions increased.

Consequently, plains religion in its later form owes its existence indirectly to the whites, although in its composition it betrays little European influence. It is a different matter with many other religious structures that have originated in more recent centuries. Through missions, commercial connections, and colonial endeavors, indigenous religions were gradually tainted by Christian propagation and, to some extent, by European values.<sup>165</sup>

Yet, the level of absorption of one tribe into another tribal culture was evident in an Algonquin and Sioux account. In general, many Native American tribes had built into their polytheistic belief systems the capacity to integrate the knowledge and practices of another tribe. From there it is plausible that many tribal nations would absorb various

---

<sup>165</sup> Åke Hultkrantz, *Religions of the American Indians*, trans., Monica Setterwall (University of California Press, Ltd. 1979), 150.

aspects of European civilization and Christian spirituality into their own belief systems as well.

Tinker suggests that European religious leaders did more than convert Native Americans; they destroyed their lifeways by disregarding their cultural belief systems:

[There was] a presumed level of naïveté with respect to the complicity of the missionaries [as well as others] in the acts of cultural genocide. They surely did not intend any harm to Indian people, yet their blindness to their own inculturation of European values and social structures meant that complicity was unavoidable. . . it is clear that the missionaries were myopic regarding their own cultural biases. They engaged in actions that were a genuinely naïve imposition of their own cultural values and models of society on tribal peoples for whom the experience became dislocative and disruptive.<sup>166</sup>

As symbol-seeking creatures, humans often looked for common patterns of understandings and beliefs. The historical practice of connecting Judeo-Christian symbols and stories with “pagan” symbolic belief systems helped the Jesuits gain common ground as they worked to explain Christian doctrines. Nevertheless, it also contributed to, according to some scholars, the loss of myth and consequently, to the destruction of First Peoples’ cultural lifeways.

### **3.8 European Christian Conversion Tactics and Missionaries’ Intentions**

Other missionaries and writers also employed similar techniques as they recast and redefined First Peoples’ creator or cultural-transformer myth-figures into either good or Godly spirits and angels, or evil demons or devil figures. Mercatante details this early model of Christian conversion tactics since the late third and early fourth centuries. He explains:

The conversion of Armenia to Christianity, said to have taken place when Saint Gregory the Illuminator baptized King Tiridates III (AD 238-314), made Armenia

---

<sup>166</sup>Tinker, 15.

the first nation to embrace Christianity officially. With the coming of the new religion, the ancient pagan myths and legends had to be either dismissed as lies or adjusted to the new beliefs. In Armenia as in other places, Christianity spread, the latter course followed. This tactic was the most common Christian approach to paganism. Instead of denying the existence of the ancient gods, the church merely said they were demons who had come to lead people astray from the true God. Now the Christ had come, the demons should no longer be worshiped.

Since pagan gods had beneficent aspects, the Church took some aspects and applied them to its own saints . . . The most notable examples of Christian transference of pagan gods to its own uses are found in the Armenian translation of the Bible. The translators used ancient, well-known spirits from the mythological past to make the Biblical message meaningful to the readers.<sup>167</sup>

The Jesuits used historical transference to replace the tribal-specific “pagan gods”—the human-animal creator or cultural-transformer figures of First Peoples’ belief systems, to the good Christian icons and images found in the monotheistic Creator, God, who battles against the antagonistic evil figure, Satan.

The historical pattern of New World evangelization is apparent in the work of the following generations of writers and missionaries. As with many of the explorer-conquerors and colonizers, they too recast the tribal-specific myths and belief systems they encountered, asserting the First Peoples were wild evil heathens or savages in need of the discipline of Euro-American Christianity. And these concepts justified the escalation of expansionary activities into the continental interior.

It is important to examine who collected the myth-stories and why. In many cases, the missionaries’ intentions were noble, and they suffered much in the name of salvation. But while the historical implications of Euro-American encroachment on the First Peoples’ territories remain significant factors, what is important is how such relationships changed First Peoples’ spirituality, specifically their myths.

---

<sup>167</sup>Mercatante, 62.

Mercatante argues, “The line between mythology and theology, therefore, is very thin. One man’s theology is another man’s mythology.”<sup>168</sup> Undoubtedly, both have great value in the cultural frameworks of their respective lifeways. This is often not the case, especially when one culture (in particular the dominant one) rejected or denied others’ doctrines, myths, oral traditions, or theologies as false or inconsequential:

The Huron had an idea of divinity who created heaven and earth. In looking for something supernatural, their lewdness and licentiousness prevented the Huron from finding God and the devil thrust himself in. They recognized God only in created things, from which they hoped for benefits or dreaded mishaps, in particular the earth, rivers, rocks, and, above all, the sky. All of these were considered to be inhabited by powerful demons, called Oki. Brébeuf thought it was really God whom they honored by their offerings to these Oki, as the sky, or the Oki inhabiting it, was thought to rule the seasons, the waves, and the winds.<sup>169</sup>

### **3.9 Religious Differences, Agendas, and Conversion Practices**

As noted throughout this chapter, the French missionaries and explorers often recast First Peoples’ proto-trickster myths into angelic or creator figures, or as devil figures or evil personified spirits, which then needed to be ousted from the belief systems. Many European colonizers argued that these antagonistic devil figures were in fact real manifestations of evil whose goals were to destroy souls and control the world. For both Catholics and Protestants, “the belief in the corporeal existence of the devil” crossed the Atlantic and continued nearly unabated into the New World.<sup>170</sup>

---

<sup>168</sup>Mercatante, xiii.

<sup>169</sup>Kinietz, 123.

<sup>170</sup>According to Mercatante, 56, The great Roman Catholic doctor of the Church, Saint Thomas Aquinas believed in devils, witches, incubi, and succubi.” In addition, “The great Protestant Reformer Martin Luther also firmly believed in devils, witches, succubi, and incubi.” Luther often complained that he “was constantly annoyed by the Devil, who tried to stop his work, especially when he was translating the Bible into German. . . Luther, like Aquinas, believed in the Devil’s power to assist wizards and witches in their

The religious nature and spirituality of First Peoples cannot be discussed without recognizing the religious and spiritual influences of the missionaries, explorer-conquerors, and even the traders who recorded many primary source materials. “No matter how ‘objective’ an author may be in collecting, classifying, and presenting religious documents, his choice is ultimately a personal one.”<sup>171</sup> Both missionaries and colonizers believed the First Peoples had no Creator-figure, or they held some mistaken view of God as the one of many creators or cultural transformers. For example, Nicholas Perrot erroneously assumed the First Peoples had no knowledge of creation and instead lumped together many tribes with varied belief systems into his own assumption of their tribal-specific religiosity:

All the peoples who inhabit North America have no knowledge about the creation of the world save what they have learned from the Europeans who discovered them, and those with whom they have contact intercourse; and they give hardly any attention even to that course; and they give hardly any attention even to that knowledge. Among them there is no knowledge of letters or of the art of writing; and all their history of ancient times proves to be only confused and fabulous notions, which are so simple, so gross, and so ridiculous that they only deserve to be brought to light in order to show the ignorance and rudeness of those peoples.<sup>172</sup>

Perrot’s views lack any modern sense of non-biased impartiality, which was typical of seventeenth and early eighteenth-century thought. As seen in a majority of these accounts, many European and American writers clung to the notion of Eurocentric superiority; they unapologetically concluded that the First Peoples had little or no cultural practices comparable to more civilized religions found in the rest of the world. Explorers

---

evil designs.” These traditions were understood by Europeans to be real and, they needed to be stopped—at all costs.

<sup>171</sup>Mircea Eliade, *Primitives to Zen: A Thematic Sourcebook on the History of Religions* (New York, New York, and Evanston: Harpers & Row, 1967), vii.

<sup>172</sup>Blair, 31.

like Perrot incorrectly assumed that a tribe like the Outaouais had no religious traditions, doctrines, histories, omnipotent Creator figures or Supreme Beings, just “confused and fabulous notions, which are so simple, so gross, and so ridiculous.”<sup>173</sup>

### **3.10 Problems Associated with First Peoples’ Creator stories and other Mischaracterization by Euro-Americans**

It is clear that Perrot mischaracterized the Great Hare myth-figure. First he erroneously identified the Outaouais’ Great Hare figure as *the* Creator. Perrot’s assumption contained serious flaws since the Outaouais’ Great Hare could not have been the all-powerful and omnipotent Creator because Hare needed the other animals to secure a grain of sand for him so he could make land and thus finish creation. In one respect, the Great Hare was at best considered a sub-creator—a figure that has little affinity in Christian traditions. Hultkrantz wrote, “The Supreme Being” is “consequently designated as a secondary creator, ‘transformer,’ or merely a culture creator.”<sup>174</sup>

But perhaps a communications problem led to the confusion. If so, Perrot more than likely assigned the Outaouais’ sub-Creator figure as a Creator role since no other deity fit his Christian schema of understandings. Perrot may have not been able to communicate his ideas of a Creator spirit or misunderstood what the Outaouais’ expression of a Creation figure. Nonetheless, the Creator figure somehow disappeared from the world he created before the Great Hare and the other animals arrived. Since Judeo-Christians did not believe in a vanishing Creator, or the arrival of a sub-creator or

---

<sup>173</sup>Blair, 31.

<sup>174</sup>Hultkrantz, 33.



cultural-transformer figure, the new arrivals misunderstood the Great Hare as *the* Creator figure.

In addition, Perrot differentiated the different roles of the Great Hare as found in other neighboring tribal traditions, writing, “The Montagnais ‘make him [the Great Hare] the younger brother of Messou or Creator.’ ” Perrot did not refer to the Hare as the Creator in the Montagnais’ traditions. Instead, the Great Hare was a *sub-creator*, who was “wonderfully great and powerful” but not omnipotent; he had limited power, a concept once again different from Judeo-Christian traditions since the creator was considered all-powerful.

According to Blair, Father Tailhan (the editor of some of Perrot’s work) argued that the Great Hare was a Creator typical of many Algonquin tribal traditions, but only in the Outaouais myth-story, did the Hare form the earth. Tailhan wrote:

The traditions collected by Perrot ...were common to the greater part of the peoples of New France, found with greater or less variation, among not only the Algonquian tribes but those of the Huron-Iroquois family (consult Charlevoix’s *Historie de la Nouvelle France*, vol. iii, 344; *Letters édifiantes*, Paris, ed. 1781, vol. iv, 168, 169; and *Jesuit Relations* – of 1633; of 1634, c hap. I; of 1636, part 2, chap. 1). But Perrot pays most attention to the traditions and beliefs of the Outaouais of the lake region.

Of all the peoples above enumerated, the Outaouais alone ascribe to the Great Hare the formation of the earth. According to them, this Great Hare (Michabou, Ouisaketchak) was a man of gigantic stature, born in the island Michillimakinak (now Mackinac Island, in Lake Huron), who made the first nets for catching fish, on the model of the web by the spider. (*Relations of 1670*, chap. xii; *Lett. Édif.*, vol. iv, 168, 169).<sup>175</sup>

Yet by definition, the Great Hare’s ability to make the first nets for catching fish places him in cultural-transformer category. But his role as a creator of landmasses from

---

<sup>175</sup>Blair, 1:36-7.

a single grain of sand makes the Great Hare a sub-creator, something quite different from Perrot's understandings of Creation and the omnipotent Creator, God:

The Huron had not this tradition of the Great Hare as creator. The Montagnais make him the younger brother of Messou or Creator, and, by a just compensation, the elder brother of the animals of his kind—that is, a hare wonderfully great and powerful; the same, very probably was put to death by a certain Tchakabeach, whose mother he had (without a doubt, through absentmindedness) devoured. (Relations of 1637, chap. Xi; id of 1634, chap iv.).<sup>176</sup>

As the passage notes, in the Huron traditions the Great Hare can be "put to death" or be "devoured." This understandably does not make him the Creator in Judeo-Christian terms.

As Perrot's short passage demonstrates, the Great Hare was posited either as a cultural-transformer figure or, as the Outaouias believed, he became the sub-Creator, capable of much but also limited in capacity. For planting cultures, the Great Hare was a necessary component of their spirituality and their understanding of the natural world.<sup>177</sup> Thus, the Great Hare became the personification, or the incarnate of life itself as explained by their belief systems.

Above all, even though sub-Creator figures manipulated or re-created various aspects of their environments, they were still unable to create life itself. They only transformed it. And since a human could not be a Creator—or control much of his or her environments—the next best thing was to be a sub-Creator or a cultural-transformer, or to worship one. Thus, agricultural communities saw the Great Hare as deity who could do

---

<sup>176</sup>Blair, 1:36-7.

<sup>177</sup>"Agriculture: 1603, The science and the art of cultivating the soil; including the gathering in of crops and the rearing of livestock; farming." The sense that humans, like sub-Creators or cultural-transformers are able to manipulate or recreate various aspects of their environments which meant that they are not able to create life, only transform it or recast it. *Oxford Universal English Dictionary*, vols. A-BRO, 37.

something about their unpredictable lives. This was very different from the Judeo-Christian Creator, the God who does not allow sub-Creators.

In general, however, Native Americans used the creator myth-figures to explain the etiological beginnings and endings of life as they understood them. Through such vibrant nature myths, the First Peoples relied on the human-animal creator-transformer myth figures to invoke changes in their world. Sub-Creator or Creator-transformer proto-trickster figures were essentially a sacred part of the natural world and therefore part of the customary beliefs and ritual sacredness of First Peoples' spirituality.

Perrot noted other descriptions in the Outaouais' Great Hare myth figure. He wrote, "The savages—I mean those who are not converted [to Christianity]—recognize the Great Hare, the sun, and the devils." In the Great Hare creation story, the chief of the animals was the tribal-specific, human-animal creator figure. The story offered European writers more examples of what they saw as biblically related stories to explain First Peoples' lifeways and beliefs, as with the familiar Genesis flood story. Vine Deloria Jr. explains:

Indian traditions spoke of a great flood and featured tribal ancestral heroes who built rafts and boats to escape the disaster. Sadly, the Indian flood stories were taken as evidence of the truth of the Bible rather than as independent evidence of a planetary flood. It was simply assumed that Indians originated shortly after Noah's flood and over the years got their stories garbled. And creation stories of the original state of the planet as a place covered with water were also seen as evidence of Noah's flood, the roles of birds and other animals in creation of dry land being conveniently discarded so the story would match Old Testament standards. Linking Indians to the descendents of Noah meant bringing them to the Western Hemisphere via land (strangely, they forgot how to build boats and rafts), trooping across the Bering Strait.<sup>178</sup>

---

<sup>178</sup>Vine Deloria, Jr., *Red Earth, White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact* (Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing, 1997), 47-8.

Perrot wrote the Outaouais believed “that before the earth was created there was nothing but water; that upon this vast extent of water floated a great wooden raft, upon which all the animals of various kinds, were which exists on earth; and the chief of these, they say, was the Great Hare.” Perrot explained, “They [the Outaouais] oftenest invoke the Great Hare, because they revere and adore him as the creator of the world.” In general, the Outaouais’ human-animal creator figure, as noted earlier, was considered a form of sub-Creator figure because if he *were* the Creator figure, he would have been able to finish creation himself, as noted in the following passage:

He looked about for some spot of solid ground where they could land; but nothing could be seen on the water save swans and other river-birds, he began to be discouraged. He saw no other hope that to induce the beaver to dive, in order to bring up a little soil from the bottom of the water; and assured the beaver, in the name of all the animals, that if he returned with even one grain of soil, he would produce from it land sufficiently spacious to contain and feed all of them.<sup>179</sup>

It was also interesting to note that Perrot erroneously considered the Great Hare figure as a creator figure. Perrot identified the Great Hare as some omnipotent Creator figure, yet his role is that of a cultural-transformer or a sub-creator figure. In the cultural-transformer role, the Great Hare was a helper of man, not a creator—even though he could create some things, he was not the all-powerful Creator of Judeo-Christian traditions. This must have perplexed the Christians since the Great Hare could not create land unless he had a grain of sand. Perrot resolved this by misclassifying the cultural-transformer or sub-creator as the Creator figure.

Yet as the story unfolded, since the grain of soil from the watery depths led to the creation of the landmasses by this Great Hare, it was reasonable to understand why Perrot considered the Hare as the Creator figure. In tracing this proto-trickster creator figure, the

---

<sup>179</sup>Blair, 1:36-7.

Great Hare was not the true creator but a sub-creator figure since he did not bring forth the soil himself; rather he transformed the sand into ever-growing landmasses. By his own admission, Perrot's Judeo-Christian beliefs could not have embraced the idea that there would be another Creator figure, a sub-Creator who finished the creation of the world but did not start it—would be absurd in his theology. In an effort to increase conversions or to usurp First Peoples' beliefs, the myth figures were misinterpreted as variations of the Old Testament stories. Simply put, according to the writers of New France, Native American spirituality was wrong since it did not articulate Judeo-Christian traditions. The idea that everything connected to the Old Testament was firmly rooted in Christian belief.

In general, the writers of New France believed the Old Testament creation story of Genesis: "First, man; then a garden for him to cultivate; next, the animals for his entertainment; and finally, woman, from his rib; after which, the Fall."<sup>180</sup> To the European Christians, the concept of sub-creators—widespread among First Peoples—instead of one omnipotent Creator figure, conflicted with Old World dualism. In addition, the dualism found in good-versus-evil Christian constructs had little room for a sub-creator myth figure, since the chroniclers believed that after the sixth day, Creation was perfect and completed. Ruth Underhill explains this about Native American spirituality:

None of these Creators remains permanently to guide and cherish the world he has produced . . . He performed his task of world-making and then was gone. . . After the flat disk of earth had been made, the incidents of its shaping and furnishing follow much of the same general course. There must be rocks and rivers, vegetation, and finally inhabitants . . . The ancient myth-makers did not gloss over the fact that earth and all upon it was far from perfect . . . Primitive

---

<sup>180</sup>Campbell, I:12.

philosophers . . . must have asked themselves why a kindly Creator allowed such things. They found a very human answer. The Creator could not do everything. He left some tasks to a helper who was a bungler or just plain mischievous . . . The brother of the Iroquois Creator. . .

These two brothers or companions, the desirable and the undesirable, appear in many guises . . . Gradually their characters become sharpened until people saw them as God and the devil. Indian tales never quite reached that point.

..

After the disk of the earth was in order, we might expect the next episode to be the creation of man . . . The inhabitants who fill the greatest part of the tale are not human, or only partly so. Nor are they animal. They may be called man-animals for they had the speech and behavior of humans, though in animal bodies. In some tales, they were not created. They simply appeared on earth, as of right. If the Creator fashioned them, he did it long before he made men. They were man's predecessors and sometimes ancestors, not servants or inferiors.<sup>181</sup>

On one hand, the missionaries believed the myths represented good or evil concepts but the concept of good versus evil was not present in First Peoples' traditions. As Underhill explains, the development of the Creator, sub-Creator, and cultural-transformer figures is rooted in the human-animal, proto-trickster myth-figures. To some natives, the human-animal myth figures or personified spirits were neither good nor evil, depending on who was retelling the story. According to Perrot:

But the beaver [another human-animal figure] tried to excuse himself from this undertaking, giving his reason that he had already dived in neighborhood of the raft without finding there any indication of a bottom. Nevertheless, he was so urgently pressed to attempt again this great enterprise that he took the risk of it and dived. He remained too long without coming to the surface that those who had entreated him to go believed that he was drowned; but finally he was seen appearing, almost dead, and motionless. Then all the other animals, seeing that he was in no condition to climb upon the raft, immediately exerted themselves to drag him on it; and after they had carefully examined his claws and tail they found nothing thereon.<sup>182</sup>

Here what is important in understanding the Great Hare as a sub-Creator at best is that the Beaver almost "drowned." Yet the Great Hare was unable to do anything to save

---

<sup>181</sup>Underhill, 34-5.

<sup>182</sup>Blair, 1:36-7.

the Beaver's life, proving that the Hare was not the creator but a sub-creator. As the myth continues, the otter tries to retrieve a grain of sand after the beaver failed since he too could swim. Perrot continues:

Their slight remaining hope of being able to save their lives induced them to address the otter, and entreat him to make another effort to search for a little soil at the bottom of the water. They represented to him that he would go down quite as much for his own welfare as for theirs; the otter yielded to their just expostulations, and plunged into the water. He remained at the bottom longer than the beaver had done, and returned to them in the same condition as the latter, and with as little result.<sup>183</sup>

Thus, the task of finding a grain of sand in order for the Great Hare to create a dwelling-place where they could have lived looks hopeless until the muskrat-hero figure proposes that,

...if they wished, he should go to try to find a bottom, and said that he also believed that he could bring up some sand from it. The animals did not depend much on this undertaking, since the beaver and the otter, who were far stronger than he, had not been able to carry it out; however, they encouraged him to go, and even promised that he should be ruler over the whole country if he succeeded in accomplishing his plan . . . the muskrat then jumped into the water, and boldly dived; and after he had remained there nearly twenty-four hours he made his appearance at the edge of the raft, his belly uppermost, motionless, and his four feet tightly clenched.<sup>184</sup>

Here it should be noted Perrot used the phrase "twenty-four hours" to define a day and a night. Since the mechanical clocks were rare or not available at all to First Peoples during this period and, the First Peoples did not have the concept of time, as something that could be broken into hour-long increments, the concept of twenty-four period was not part of Outaoucs' language at that period. Therefore, if Perrot or an editor somehow added the European element of time to the story, this author wonders what other things

---

<sup>183</sup>Blair, 1:37.

<sup>184</sup>Blair, 1:37.

were incorporated into the myth; more specifically, were other elements added that consequently altered the story from its pre-Columbian early proto-trickster roots?

As the story continues, Perrot notes that the animals showed little conscience as they worried more about the grain of sand than the health of the muskrat. “The other animals took hold of him, and carefully drew him up on the raft. They unclosed one of his paws, then a second, then a third, and finally the fourth one, in which there was between the claws a little grain of sand.” Perrot notes that the sub-creator Great Hare is able to finish Creation, but is unable to retrieve the grain of sand himself. In fact, he also unable to create the land masses without the grain of sand. Hence, he is not the Creator.

The Great Hare, who had promised to form a broad and spacious land, took this grain of sand, and let it fall upon the raft, when it began to increase; then he took a part of it, and scattered this about, which caused the mass of soil to grow larger and larger. When it had reached the size of a mountain, he started to walk around it, and it steadily increased in size to the extent of his path. As soon as he thought it was large enough, he ordered the fox to go to inspect his work, with power to enlarge it still more; and the latter obeyed. The fox, when he had ascertained that it was sufficiently extensive for him to secure easily his own prey returned to the Great Hare to inform him that the land was able to contain and support all the animals. At this report, the Great Hare made a tour throughout his creation and found that it was incomplete. Since then, he has not been willing to trust any of the other animals, and continues always to increase what he has made, by moving without cessation around the earth. This idea causes hollow of the mountains, that the Great Hare is still enlarging the earth; they pay honors to him, and regard him as the deity who created it.<sup>185</sup>

As the myth ended, the idea that natural events and occurrences could be explained through myth stories implied that Native Americans not only had a spiritual knowledge but also a knowledge of physical causalities that was evident in these numerous and tribal-specific narrative forms.

---

<sup>185</sup>Blair, 1:37.



Perrot finishes the story. “Such is the information which those peoples give us regarding the creation of the world, which they believe to be always borne upon that raft. As for the sea and the firmament, they assert that these have existed for all time.”

Even though Perrot wrote about the Outaouais’ Great Hare creator-figure myth-story as presented, he neglected to see the human-animal Creator story as *their* Creation story, even if it was quite different from Judeo-Christian traditions of his Jesuit background. Simply put, Perrot either missed the idea that there were other Creation stories besides his own, or his Christian views were so entrenched that he could not possibly accept any story of Creation so different from the Christian story. The Outaouais’ Creation story ends as the Hare causes the birth of peoples from the corpses of the first ones who died and from fishes found along the shores.

“After the creation of the earth, all the animals withdrew into the places which each kind found most suitable for obtaining their pasture or their prey. When the first ones died, the Great Hare caused the birth of men from their corpses, as also from those of the fishes which were found along the shores of the rivers which he had formed in creating the land.”<sup>186</sup>

### **3.11 Great Spirit Concept**

One of the other principle deities rooted in First Peoples’ human-animal or personified spirit myth figures is the Great Spirit. Although not a trickster deity in the modern sense of the word or archetype, the Great Spirit concept developed from mischaracterized cultural-transformer or Creator deities. The recast or misunderstood proto-trickster myth-figures had developed into European and Christian constructs and

---

<sup>186</sup>Blair, 1:37.

eventually into First Peoples' religious schemas. Later, as the natives adopted or forcibly accepted various aspects of Christianity, the myth-figures were changed into reinterpreted Great Spirit deities.

Throughout history, Native American spirituality experienced rapid and unexpected changes. First Peoples' religiosity repeatedly reconstituted or reinvented itself due to the collision of cultures. Missionaries as well as other writers sifted through the First Peoples' oral histories to find any form of myth-figure that resembled the Judeo-Christian Creator monotheistic figure or God. Then any remotely corresponding Native American deity was recast into the Great Spirit divinity, representing the Judeo-Christian Creator figure.

As a means to find common spiritual ground, Jesuits often redefined the qualities attributed to the Great Spirit as lost or as mistaken versions of the Genesis Creation story. To find common iconic images, the missionaries looked for similar patterns or motifs. Both European and First Peoples' cultures believed that their Creator figure was gone from earth, since he had disappeared from the landscape. In addition, both believed the Creator resided elsewhere, possibly in the sky, but his presence could be felt or found everywhere. Christians believed the Creator answered prayers and requests; the prayers offered to him often involved various ceremonial rituals, rites and sacrifices. Although different in presentation, the tribal-specific rituals, sacrifices, and ceremonies were also integral to Native American spirituality.

By using the Great Spirit or God image, the Jesuits worked within the political and social confines of the tribal-specific lifeways as they tried to redirect First Peoples' beliefs toward Christianity. Thus, their interpretation of the Great Spirit falsely created a

*one-Native*, Great Spirit concept that encompassed many, if not all the First Peoples' belief systems. As Hagan notes, "History has no record of the sufferings and the triumphs of the Indians except that left by White observers, which is often less than sympathetic."<sup>187</sup> Thus, it is feasible that the Great Spirit figure, like other misrepresented trickster figures, Creators, or Cultural transformers, or even devil figures, developed from the unwavering Eurocentric Christian dualism of the Christian missionaries.

It is important to trace the Great Spirit myth-figures to the earliest recorded spirit myths, specifically the narratives collected by Thomas Forsyth and Morrell Marston, as well as rare Perrot documents edited by Claude Charles Le Roy, Bacqueville de la Potherie.<sup>188</sup> In addition to these accounts, other writings offer even earlier evidence of Great Spirit motifs. I will consider how the Great Spirit concept developed from the First Peoples' spirituality, Christian dualism, and the missionaries and explorers who misinterpreted and mischaracterized the oral traditions. If the Jesuits misunderstood the First Peoples' personified spirits as devils or demons, could the missionaries also have misinterpreted a sky god or a good spirit as the Creator, and thus named him accordingly?

### **3.12 Who or What is the Great Spirit, General Histories, and Reasons for Conversion**

---

<sup>187</sup> Hagan, 6.

<sup>188</sup> Claude Charles Le Roy, Bacqueville De La Potherie, was born on the West Indian island of Guadeloupe, about 1668. La Potherie's first important appointment was a post in the squadron sent under Le Moyne d'Iberville (1697) to drive the English out of Hudson Bay. La Potherie was a first-hand observer of First Peoples' spirituality; he also admired the work of Perrot. La Potherie edited the second volume of Nicholas Perrot's narratives; however, the third and fourth volumes have yet to be translated. Blair, 1: 273.

La Potherie was in fact "a French writer whose *Histoire de l'Amérique Septentrionale*, published at Paris in 1716, summarized much of what was then known about Wisconsin. He relied very heavily on the unpublished journals of Nicholas Perrot, whom he met in 1701." <http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/turningpoints/search.asp?id=901>.

In many surveys of Native American spirituality, there exists the belief that a kindly Creator figure—described as one who is omniscient and omnipotent—perhaps existed before contact between Europeans and First Peoples. Native Americans and scholars alike often identify the Great Spirit as an Elder Spirit, an ancient deity, or a Vanishing Creator figure.<sup>189</sup> Josephy explains that,

In some societies, the combined total of the people's spiritual powers was believed to be the unseen force that shaped and directed life. The Iroquois called it Orenda, the Algonquians Manitou, the Sioux Wakan, and the South American Incas Huaca. Various Indian groups believed in gods, ghosts, and demons. Some believed in personal guardian spirits and sought to establish contact with them through dreams and vision quests. Several tribes worshipped a single creator force, or Supreme Being, which white men taught them to call "the Great Spirit," but some groups, while acknowledging such a force or presence, regarded it as dead or disassociated from human affairs and dismissed it from consideration of daily life.<sup>190</sup>

It is difficult to discern when the kindly Creator figure—seen as the Great Spirit by the natives or the Christian God as understood by non-natives—developed. Perhaps the figure existed in some human-animal or personified spirit form before first contact. Perhaps he did not. Presumably, the human-animal goodly figures, were represented as something different from pre-Columbian First Peoples' belief systems, but met Judeo-Christian traditions, and thus grew into this modern spirit. The Jesuits had recast the proto-trickster human-animal myth-figures as devil figures. Non-Indians also misrepresented First Peoples' Creator or Cultural transformer myth-figures, possibly as a tactic to find common ground for their conversion activities.

Mann described the tribal-specific Iroquois Great Spirit persona: "Europeans were more than likely to cross-identify De'hao" 'hwěñdjiawă"kho"' with the Great Spirit,

---

<sup>189</sup>Underhill, 34.

<sup>190</sup>Josephy, 25-26.

simply because he lived in the sky, as did our own God, yet there was no agreement on the choice.” From this, it was likely that some writers looked to connect common Judeo-Christian constructs and beliefs with the tribal-specific belief systems in order to assist in the conversion process.

In 2000, Mann depicted a multitude of potential Great Spirit personas, including one of the earliest known myth-figure literatures found in First Peoples’ spirituality. Of the Laurentian Iroquois, she wrote: “In 1535, Jacques Cartier presented the name of *Cudouagny* or *Cudoïagni* as the closest thing the Laurentine Iroquois had to a ‘God of any worth,’ as Lescarbot put it—and the *Cudoïagni*’s main task among the Laurentians was predicting the weather.”<sup>191</sup> However, she also acknowledges that may have not been a viable Great Spirit entity. Mann describes other erroneously portrayed Great Spirit myth-figures:

Of course, the missionaries only heard the male names suggested. In 1632, Gabriel Sagard<sup>192</sup> put forward *Yoschala* (Sapling) as the “Creator,” even though he was confessedly aware of the high esteem enjoyed by the Sky Woman—a state of affairs that left him pondering how god wound up with a grandmother. He

---

<sup>191</sup>Mann, 303-304.

<sup>192</sup>Gabriel Sagard, baptized Théodat (Fl. 1614-1636) “was a Catholic Priest and missionary of the Franciscan recollect order (French Récollect) who is notable for his writings on New France and the Hurons (or, Wendat). Father Gabriel Sagard’s origins and the dates of his death are obscure.” Sagard arrived in New France in 1623 where he “joined four members of his order who had been there since 1615. In August, Sagard traveled to a Huron village on the southern shore of Lake Huron where he began his missionary work and study of the Huron language. In July 1624 at Quebec, he was ordered by his superior to return to Paris, France. Sometime around 1636, Sagard left the Recollect order. He may have died while living with the Franciscans, ([http://wapedia.mobi/en/Gabriel\\_Sagard](http://wapedia.mobi/en/Gabriel_Sagard)). According to Lionel Lindsay, Sagard “presented a memoir concerning the state of religion to the Duc de Montmorency, Viceroy of New France, inveighing against the agents of the trading company whose evil influence paralyzed the zeal of the missionaries. He convinced his superiors of the necessity of introducing a more powerful and influential religious order to cope with the difficult situation. The Jesuits have been suggested, the choice of them was ratified by Cardinal Richelieu in 1625.” In 1686, Sagard’s *Historie du Canada et voyages que les Freres Mineurs Recollects ont faits pour la conversions des Infideles*. “It is a clear and simple account of all he saw or heard mentioned in this new land. Charlevoix criticizes his Huron vocabulary as inaccurate compared with later studies of the language, but gives him credit for his good judgment and zeal for the conversion of souls and the progress of the colony,” ([http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Catholic\\_Encyclopedia\\_\(1913\)/Théodat-Gabriel\\_Sagard](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Catholic_Encyclopedia_(1913)/Théodat-Gabriel_Sagard)).

never considered Sky Woman as a possible candidate for Great Spirit, even though he noted that there were no prayers or offerings to *Yoschala* as to God. Indeed Sagard had heard some Iroquois openly revile Sapling. Significantly, Sapling did not loom as a choice until quite recently. Quite the contrary: Sagard's fellow missionaries scorned Sapling as a myth or ghost, due to his frequent and (to the missionaries) often absurd appearances among the people.

In 1761, Charlevoix offered up for consideration the Elder earth spirit *Agreskouê*, as the "Sovereign Being and the god or war" of the Iroquois . . . *Agreskouê* was to become a popular choice among Iroquois for the name of the Great Spirit . . .

In the nineteenth century, the Search for the Great Spirit intensified, as Iroquoian assimilants rooted around their cultural files for the solitary God that the missionaries had convinced them must have existed in their lore. Seeking a more appropriate, yet still Iroquoian, candidate than *Cudoïagni*, *De'hao* " *hwěñdjiawă"kho"*, or *Agreskouê*, they hit upon yet another: *Hawěñi 'o'* (*Hä-wen-né-yu*) as 'Great Spirit,' even though (most likely, courtesy of Ely Parker) he footnoted its truer translation as "simply 'A Ruler' . . . As Arthur Parker noted in 1927, selecting *Hawěñi 'o'* as the Great Spirit definitely showed western influence, most probably having been a reflection of the Hebrew Jehovah who was like *Hawěñi 'o'*, a Thunder God.<sup>193</sup>

From this, two ideas emerge in the search for the Great Spirit proto-type. First, there is a history of non-Natives classifying tribal-specific gods or personified spirits as the Great Spirit. Second, there was a tribal-specific distinction between Iroquois' personified myth-figures such as rain, lightning, and thunder and the Great Spirit concept; the missionaries often mischaracterized these. Once again, the Europeans incorrectly misinterpreted or mischaracterized personified spirit myths from their first contact through the nineteenth century.

For example, Thomas Forsythe, born in Detroit (1771), became a fur-trader in 1790, then a sub-agent during the War of 1812. He helped to keep the Potawatomis neutral and later became an American agent at Fort Armstrong near Rock Island, Illinois, around 1819. While there, he wrote a detailed account of the Sauk and Fox ceremonial worship of a Great Spirit deity, but through his perspective as a government agent in

---

<sup>193</sup>Mann, 303-4.

charge of controlling Native Americans: “It is the work of a knowledgeable outsider and described the culture and history of a tribe critical to American policy. It is designed to produce knowledge necessary to control and manipulate the Sac and Fox, even though as it recognized them as a people of importance and significance.”<sup>194</sup> Forsythe added:

The Sauk and Fox Indians believe in one great and good Spirit, who superintends and commands all things, and that there are many supernatural agents or munitoos permitted by the Great Spirit to interfere in the concerns of the Indians. They believe the thunder presides over the destinies of war, also Mache-munitoo or bad Spirit is subordinate to Kee-shay-Munitoo or the Great Spirit, but that the bad Spirit is permitted (occasionally) to revenge himself on mankind thro the agency of bad medicine, poisonous reptiles, killing horses, sinking canoes, etc., every accident that befalls them, they impute to the bad Spirit’s machinations, but at same time, conceive it is allowed to be so, in atonement for some part of their misdeeds.<sup>195</sup>

From Forsythe’s account, the Christian-influenced Great Spirit motif developed in the early nineteenth century among many Eastern and Midwest tribes. In another example, Natives invoked the Great Spirit in ceremonies as part of elaborate rituals designed to foster military successes. Lt. Major Morrell Marston, U.S. military commander at Fort Armstrong, reported to the special commissioner of the U.S. government in 1820. He wrote that:

an Indian intending to go to war will commence by blackening his face, permitting his hair to grow long. . .if his dreams are favourable, he thinks the Great Spirit will give him succefs; he then makes a feast, generally of a dog’s meat (it being the greatest sacrifice that he can make to part with a favorite dog); when all those who feel inclined to join him will attend the feast; after this is concluded they will immediately set off on their expedition. . .When they are succefsful in taking prisoners and scalps, they return to their village with pomp and circumstance. . .The chiefs in their villages will determine if they should dance the scalps.<sup>196</sup>

---

<sup>194</sup>Blair, 2:5.

<sup>195</sup>Blair, 2:222-3.

<sup>196</sup>“The dance of the older time was fraught with symbolism and mystic meaning which it has lost in civilization and enlightenment.” Blair, 2:158.

Here it's clear that the Sauks' traditions remained, even though their beliefs now encompassed elements of Christianity. In Blair's text, Marston also described what the Fox believed about the Great Spirit and would what happen after death:

A Fox Indian told me that their people generally believed that as soon as an Indian left this world, he commenced his journey for the habitation provided for him by the Great Spirit in the other world; that those who had conducted themselves well in this life, met with but little difficulty finding the road which leads to it; but that those who had behaved badly always got into the wrong road; which was very crooked and very difficult to travel in; that they frequently met with broad rivers which they had to ford or swim; and in this manner they were punished, until the Great Spirit thought proper to pull them into the good road, and then they soon reached their friends, and the country of their future residence, where all kinds of game was plenty, and where they had but little to do, but the dance by night, and sleep by day; he further observed that when young children died they did not first fare so well.<sup>197</sup>

Thus, the elements of Christian dualism represented here were the Foxs' version of heaven, as well as hell. In addition, conduct on earth determined which road one would travel. The cliché "happy hunting grounds" connected Christian images of heaven with romanticized images of First Peoples' beliefs. Given the variety of tribal descriptions of different spirit forces, along with misinterpretation and mischaracterization by non-Indian missionaries and writers, two things are certain: the Great Spirit name is connected with Christian imperialism and dualism, and the Great Spirit concept developed from the First Peoples' proto-trickster human-animal myth-figures and personified spirits. While these icons were the products of European and American acculturation, they remained defined in different ways by the various cultures.

As noted before, there is an inherent difficulty in tracing the roots of any First Peoples' recurrent themes or archetypes to their earliest proto-forms. Mired in Eurocentric agendas and viewpoints, the human-animal personified spirits—like the

---

<sup>197</sup>Blair, 2: 174.



Great Spirit himself—remain evasive and often difficult to define. “As we look at different myths,” Underhill writes:

The characters slip and slide about, so the Helper is sometimes also the Trickster or the Culture hero. Any one of them may take a hand at the work of creation. All this appears in hunter-gatherer tales. Those of planters may have one or more of the same elements but they are overlaid by others connected with the ceremony. Here the Creator is indeed envisioned as a person, not a Power in the sky to be treated with continual reverence. Some Southeastern tribes called him the Great Holy Flame of life. Some on the Mississippi River and its tributaries seem really to have used the Great Spirit. Human origins, also, have a different slant from that given by the hunter-gatherers. In many planter myths, humankind, or at least one ancestor, descended from the sky. Some animals were also sent down but just as helpers and messengers for men, not their superiors.<sup>198</sup>

Thus, this good spirit is different from the modern tricksters, sub-Creators, Vanishing Creators, Creator-Helpers, cultural-transformers, or even devil figures. And whether by accident or by design, he helped transform or complete the Creation myth-story.

From the broad overview of tribal-specific Creator figures, Voegelin argues that the concept of the Native-American Great Spirit is the result of mischaracterized First Peoples myth-figures. He writes, “The erroneous notion that among the Indians of North America there existed a general being in the overruling deity, the ‘Great Spirit,’ is a popular fallacy of the nineteenth century which still persists to some degree today.”<sup>199</sup>

Voegelin continues his description of the Great Spirit:

Although the concept of a supreme deity, either etiose or active, may have been aboriginal for some tribes, actually all groups recognized a number of supernatural beings and attributed power to a variety of animate and inanimate objects. Supernatural power for success in war, hunting, gambling, curing, witchcraft oratory, and other pursuits could be obtained from a host of beings. Even though prayers might be addressed to one deity in particular in such major

---

<sup>198</sup>Underhill, 38.

<sup>199</sup>Voegelin, 464-5.

annual ceremonies as the Sun dance, the Big House, or the busk [to perform for recompense] (even though this was not always the case), no tribe can be said to have concentrated on the worship and propitiation [appeasement] of a single high god.<sup>200</sup>

Since it is difficult to prove exactly where and when the Great Spirit concept originated, we must rely on a survey of literature written by outsiders. Josephy argues that in general, First Peoples' belief systems were "colored by a deep faith in supernatural forces that were believed to link human beings to all other living things. To many Indians, each animal, each tree, and each manifestation of nature had its own spirit with which the individual could establish supernatural contact through its own spirit or that of an intermediary."<sup>201</sup> Thus, many missionaries assumed that the supernatural spirits that was integral to many native beliefs and consequently the newcomers might have incorrectly defined some of them as the one Great Spirit. Since there was no *one-creator* figure or Great Spirit in First Peoples' belief systems and since the missionaries needed one, therefore, they fashioned or created one. The missionaries recognized that the First Peoples also wanted a deity they perceived to be powerful and adopted this figure into their polytheistic traditions and belief systems. Given First Peoples' repertoire of gods, it was plausible that the Creator-personified spirit myth-figures evolved into the Great Spirit motifs not just through the missionaries but also as the Natives searched for a more powerful deity to add to their polytheistic belief systems. In the Iroquois Twins' myth-story, described in the last chapter, it is apparent that the European concept of good and evil changed the First Peoples' myth-figures into antagonistic opposing forces—something different from their human-animal aboriginal roots.

---

<sup>200</sup>Voegelin, 464-5.

<sup>201</sup>Josephy, 25-6.

Thus, the traditional, ancient personified-spirit belief systems complicated European and American missionaries' attempts to cultivate and sustain complete Christian conversion. As a result, the missionaries often recast First Peoples' myth-figures into the Great Spirit persona as a way to connect Christianity to Native American spirituality. Finally, since the tribal-specific beliefs were entrenched for centuries and were stalwart, another answer is needed to understand what life-altering series of events unfolded to change the First Peoples' myth-figures.

In the early European conquest and conversion histories, each nation generally posited a similar goal: to uproot First Peoples' lifeways by remaking them as European Christians subject to the monarchies and their nation-states. From an historical viewpoint, the policies enacted by the French missionaries and explorers were different from the Spanish, whose earlier interactions shaped First Peoples' lifeways by destroying or circumventing their cultural belief systems. The French missionaries worked to identify common ground between their biblically sanctioned ideals, such as God as Supreme Being, and the mischaracterized First Peoples' "good" spirit deities.

This search for common ground is exemplified in the larger cultural war waged by the colonizers and, as Carl Waldman writes,

In the conquest of aboriginal America, European civilizations waged ideological as well as military and economic warfare against the integrity of Native American culture. The European powers that colonized North America sent forth not only missionaries to convert the Indians from so-called pagan and primitive ways to Christian religion and Western customs. The resulting effect of Christian missionaries on tribal culture had been every bit as profound as the Indian wars, the fur trade, or European diseases.<sup>202</sup>

---

<sup>202</sup>Carl Waldman, *Atlas of the North American Indian* (New York, New York and Oxford, England: Facts on File Publications, 1985), 58.

Both Europeans and First Peoples generally believed in an “author of the world,” a Creator who, shortly after completing His work, was generally not seen, except to give First Peoples messages through visions and dreams or, in the case of Christianity, through Jesus.

It is important to trace the contemporary images of the Great Spirit to its personified spirit roots—just before Christian dualism separated the concepts into the trickster, devil-figures, Creator, sub-Creator, vanishing-Creator, cultural-transformer, and Great Spirit concepts. In tracing the roots of the personified spirits to the modern Great Spirit motifs, continued patterns of altered or mischaracterized myth-figures into good and evil forces of Christian dualism are evident. Thus, through missionaries’ and explorers’ monotheistic writings, the concept of a sole good spirit was steadily absorbed into Native-American religious traditions. From these mischaracterized origins, it was evident that the dualistic concepts, rooted in Christian beliefs, incorrectly recast First Peoples’ myth figures into a benevolent Great Spirit motif.

Since the First Peoples believed in more than one deity, it is important to note the generations of pre-Columbian cultural assimilations by which one tribe absorbed the practices and beliefs of other tribes. The Europeans who streamed into the New World held the idea that First Peoples belief systems would include elements of Christianity. Since the Europeans had advanced technologies and First Peoples sought deities they assumed would help them to create and develop such advances. It was therefore reasonable that Native Americans embraced the divinities that they assumed made the technologies. To the natives, the Europeans had power manifested in the form of a God, who allowed, or perhaps bestowed upon them, weapons or other useful implements as

divine gifts. Thus, the new religion, Christianity, needed to be included in the First Peoples' repertoire of deities.

There are other reasons why First Peoples increasingly accepted Christian conversion. Many missionaries survived the bio-invasions of bubonic plague, dysentery, pneumonia, and typhus, previously unknown to inhabitants of the New World.<sup>203</sup> And to the chagrin of the shamans, "for every year, disease, especially consumption, erysiptekas, and smallpox, carry many to their grave."<sup>204</sup> These viruses assaulted and decimated many tribes to the point where they would try anything to stop the ravaging effects. And "perhaps the most characteristic of all North American methods of gaining control over supernatural powers is that of the acquisition of one of them as a personal protector,"<sup>205</sup> which the Natives might have thought would help thwart diseases, since few missionaries were affected by the epidemics.

Yet, in some cases, there were no conversion activities at all since the epidemics destroyed entire populations of tribal societies who virtually disappeared from the landscape. As Taylor writes, "When the French explorers first visited the Mississippi Valley during the 1670s, they found relatively few Indians. In an area of southwestern Arkansas and northeastern Louisiana where Soto [Hernando De Soto, before 1542] had counted thirty thousand substantial towns, the French noted only five small villages."<sup>206</sup>

---

<sup>203</sup> Taylor, *The American Colonies: The Settling of North America*, 30.

<sup>204</sup> Blair, 2:294.

<sup>205</sup> Taylor, *The American Colonies: The Settling of North America*, 30.

<sup>206</sup> Taylor, 73.

Above all, the Christian one-Creator concepts melded into the First Peoples' cultural belief systems. Indeed, natives perhaps thought what worked for the Europeans would work for them. Blair explains:

Protection against disease is also sought by the help of superhuman powers. These practices have two distinct forms, according to the fundamental conception of disease. Disease is conceived of principally in two forms—either as due to the presence of a material object in the body of the patient, or as an effect of the absence of the soul from the body. The cure of the disease is entrusted to the shamans or medicine-men, who obtain their powers generally by the assistance of guardian spirits, or who may be personally endowed with magic powers. It is their duty to discover the material disease which is located in the patient's body, and which they extract by sucking or pulling with the hands; or to go in pursuit of the absent soul to recover it, and restore it to the patient.<sup>207</sup>

However, given the deadly effects of the microbes, this system of beliefs changed and faded from Native American spiritual landscapes.

### **3.13 In Search of the Earliest Proto-historical Great Spirit**

Admittedly, it remains difficult to find evidence of the roots of the Great Spirit motifs since they represented clouded and one-sided versions of First Peoples' belief systems. The European versions of Native-American symbols and imageries were the results of poor translations, inaccurate commentaries, or Christian hegemony, and the Eurocentric politics and biases that permeated those periods. Immediately after the very early contacts, Christians introduced elements of a Great Spirit deity—whether consciously or not—and those interactions altered Native-American beliefs into something else. The missionaries identified that *something else* as the Great Spirit, or God.

---

<sup>207</sup>Blair, 2:268.

According to Blair, La Potherie translated several of Perrot's narratives. One written around 1684 described how the Puans staged a ceremonial reception and dance that in reality was a trap. The Puans tricked five hundred Isilinois as part of a vengeful massacre. Perrot wrote that the Isilinois considered not retaliating with counter-attack until they "spent one year or more mourning to move the Great Spirit." This account, considered important, offers evidence of one of the earliest descriptions of the Great Spirit.<sup>208</sup> In the account, their rituals and their belief in the Great Spirit stopped the Isilinois from attacking. According to Perrot:

The Isilinois, finding that their people did not return, sent out some men to bring news of them. They arrived at the Puan village, which they found abandoned. . . The Isilinois saw only the ruins of the cabins, and the bones of many human beings which, they concluded, were those of their own people . . . They consulted together whether they should immediately attempt to take hostilities against their enemies. Their wisest men said that they ought, in accordance with the customs of their ancestors, to spend one year, or even more, in mourning to move the Great Spirit; that he had chastised them because they had not offered enough sacrifices to him; that he would, notwithstanding, have pity on them if they were not impatient; and that he would chastise the Puans for so black a deed.<sup>209</sup>

In tracing the Great Spirit as recorded in narratives such as this one, three important ideas emerge regarding the collecting of myth-figures by outsiders. First, La Potherie could have added the Great Spirit as part of his translations. Other writers may also have done so—even though Blair argues that La Potherie was scholarly and "honest" enough to translate correctly all his work without embellishment, I remain suspect of all accounts that lack balance from the First Peoples' perspectives. Thus, although the Great Spirit is evident in earlier literatures, the Christian explorers may have introduced it years

---

<sup>208</sup> Blair, 2:295-7.

<sup>209</sup> Blair, 2:299-300.

before Perrot encountered the First Peoples or La Potherie added it to the story.

Nonetheless, the Great Spirit concept developed as part of the Isinoio belief systems.

Thus, it is important to remember that although these proto-trickster like, human-animal, or personified spirit myth-figures were represented as something tribal-specific, they still reflected Judeo-Christian themes introduced by the Europeans and thus were not original to the indigenous society. The writers' beliefs and opinions were intermixed throughout. In that light, few documents exist, that offers insight into the First Peoples' spirituality, and those that do exist, lack native *voice* representation. In a footnote on Pierre François Xavier Charlevoix (1682-1751),<sup>210</sup> Blair writes:

But the antiquity and authenticity of these traditions should not be accepted without much reserve; this is Charlevoix's opinion, who is considered a careful and cautious historian. This position is supported by the following considerations: The savages had had more or less intercourse with the Europeans during more than a century before the missionaries and Perrot studied their beliefs; these beliefs were handed down solely by oral tradition (*relations of 1646, chap. v.*).<sup>211</sup>

### 3.14 The Earliest Recorded Great Spirit Motif

Thus far, evidence exists that the Great Spirit was rooted in Christian monotheistic Creator traditions, the result of colonizing activities by the early Europeans

---

<sup>210</sup>Pierre François Xavier Charlevoix (1682-1751) entered the Society of Jesus in 1698, went to Quebec 1705 to 1709, and then returned to Paris. According to E.P. Spillane, "In 1720, under instructions from the French Court, he began his travels through the French colonies to gather information for the discovery of the Western sea. He embarked at La Rochelle in July of that year, and reached Quebec towards the end of that year. He proceeded up the St. Lawrence River and through the Great Lakes to Michillimackinac, from which he journeyed to the lower end of the territory of the Puans or Winnebago Indians. Entering Lake Michigan, he continued along the eastern shore and at length after much endeavor reached the Illinois, whence he descended the Mississippi to its mouth." ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pierre\\_Fran%C3%A7ois\\_Xavier\\_de\\_Charlevoix](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pierre_Fran%C3%A7ois_Xavier_de_Charlevoix)) Retrieved July 27, 2010 Charlevoix's travels "were marked by frustration and illness, but his detailed notes and scientific observations furnished the material for a travel narrative published in 1744, as part of his 3-vol. *Historie et description générale de la Nouvelle France*," (<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1ARTA0001527>) Retrieved July 27, 2010

<sup>211</sup> Blair, fn., 40.



who erroneously united the First Peoples' proto-trickster, human-animal Creator traditions with Judeo-Christian Creation traditions. In other words, the missionaries and explorers often told the First Peoples that what they worshiped was in fact the Judeo-Christian God or, what they recognized as the Great Spirit.

In analyzing the earliest literatures, I have uncovered evidence that the familiar Cabeza de Vaca's account may have preceded all other narratives. This account described how the Europeans introduced the Christian God or Great, Good, or Master Spirit concepts, into the belief systems of the Karankawas. Cabeza De Vaca's account occurred nearly eight years earlier than Cartier's 1535 narrative. Cabeza de Vaca describes his stay with the Karankawas—associated with the Coahuiltecan linguistically based groups, specifically of Uto-Aztekan origin, and of the “semi-nomadic tribes found along the eastern coast of Texas.”<sup>212</sup> Around 1527, Cabeza de Vaca wrote:

The Indians replied to the interpreter that they would be very good Christians and they would serve God ... When they were asked what they worshiped and sacrificed and whom they petitioned for water for their cornfields and health for themselves, they replied that it was a man who was in heaven. We asked them his name and they told us he was named Aguar, and they believed that he had created the whole world and everything in it. We asked them how they knew this and they said their fathers and grandfathers had told them so ... We told them we called the man they were describing God, and that they should call him God and serve him and worship him as we had told them to do, and that things would turn out very well for them. They replied that they understood everything very well and would do so.<sup>213</sup>

---

<sup>212</sup>Frances M. López-Morillas, *Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca: Castaways* (California: University of California Press, 1993), pages 134-135.

<sup>213</sup>Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's story adds further insight into the developing understanding of native humanity as reflected in the prism of the sixteenth-century Christianity, European politics and authority. Martin A. Favata and José B. Fernández, *The Account: Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's Relación, An Annotated Translation* (Houston, Texas: Arte Público Press, 1993), 113.

What is surprising is that Cabeza de Vaca actually told the Karankawas the spirit they described was in fact the Judeo-Christian God—whose attributes reflected the Great Spirit motif. Cabeza de Vaca's example helps illustrate how Europeans altered First Peoples' belief systems to fit their own Christian sensibilities.

The next chapter will look at the early British conquest on the eastern seaboard. I will examine the historical implications of the English colonizers and missionaries, specifically the Protestants, interactions with First Peoples.

## Chapter Four

### The Protestant Missionaries of New England, Mid-Atlantic Seaboard, the Midwest, and Great Lakes Regions, (1606-1770s)

One early writer, “Johannes Megalopensis, a dominie of the Dutch Reformed Church,” spent several years as minister at Fort Orange (now Albany New York), described the Mohawk Native Americans he encountered. “In 1644, he published *Een Kort Ontwerp vande Mahakvase Indiaenen* (A Short Account of the Mohawk Indians).”<sup>214</sup> According to Megalopensis:

They have a droll theory of Creation, for they think that a pregnant woman fell down from heaven and that a tortoise (tortoises are plenty and large here, in this country, two, three, and four feet long, some with two heads, very mischievous and addicted to biting) took this pregnant woman on its back, because every place was covered with water; and that the woman sat upon the tortoise, groped with her hands in the water, and scraped together some of the earth, whence it finally happened that the earth was raised above the water. They think that there are more worlds than one, and that we came from another world.<sup>215</sup>

This early myth clearly echoes the familiar Iroquois Creation myth noted earlier.

The French—and in this case, the Dutch—took liberties with the myth-stories by

---

<sup>214</sup>Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), 3-4.

<sup>215</sup>Ahlstrom, 3-4.

interrupting them with unnecessary commentaries and often mischaracterized explanations. For example, Megalopensis introduces the myth as “a droll theory of Creation.” He labels the Mohawk theory of creation as “droll,” thereby relegating or reducing it to an amusing or entertaining story. In addition, the minister also added the unnecessary description of the tortoises, “some with two heads, very mischievous and addicted to biting;” in doing so, he interrupted the flow of the narrative with his commentaries. In one respect, Megalopensis also attempts to explain the myth figure as just a common tortoise, prone to biting and such. He did not acknowledge that the myth-figure potentially represented a significant human-animal figure that played an important part in the Creation of the world to the Mohawks.

Nonetheless, although Megalopensis’ version of the myth appeared as late as 1644, it contains no elements of Judeo-Christian influences—just commentary which dismisses the Mohawk’s spirituality. The myth also contains elements of a personified human-animal figure that appeared to be cognizant enough to take the woman on its back until she gathered up enough soil to raise the earth above the water. The Mohawk Creation myth is clearly pre-Columbian, but with additional and unnecessary editorializing from Megalopensis.

#### **4.1 Introduction and Premise**

This chapter will examine other intermittent and scant examples of European missionaries, colonizers, and writers who often disrupted First Peoples lifeways, and consequently, altered their belief systems. I will utilize other primary source journals, diaries, and letters specifically written by various English colonizers or religious

sectarians, who also usurped native territories, reigned in the wildernesses by cultivating First Peoples' lands, and at times, forced the removal of the numerous tribal societies from their ancient hunting and planting grounds. This chapter will include biographical data of early colonizers like Captain John Smith (1580-1631) of the Virginia colony; John Eliot (1604-1690), apostle to the natives in Massachusetts; and the Puritan Roger Williams (1603?-1683), founder of Providence Rhode Island. In addition, this chapter will look at the detailed histories, biographical and narrative accounts of Moravians, David Zeisberger (1721-1808) and John Gottlieb Ernestus Heckewelder (1743-1823). Their work illustrates how the different Protestant factions affected First Peoples' belief systems and ways of life.

#### **4.2 English Perspectives, Protestant Factions**

From the onset of colonization, a variety of English settlers brought different perspectives on the interaction with and treatment of Natives. Their varied Reformation views reflected the diverse Protestant factions in the New World. These views often changed with the influx of newer colonizers. Since many different religious factions entered the scene, there clearly existed no real unified attempt to convert the First Peoples into Christians. Indeed, the English spread a line of unique and separate religious settlements along the Atlantic Coast, and would eventually move into the interior.

Much of the literature collected shows interest in actual conversions; however since most colonizers were more concerned about survival, these practices were limited. For example, some factions of Protestant dissidents and missionaries either ignored First

Peoples' beliefs or altered them by assimilating, demonizing, or annihilating them. Yet not all missionaries were unyielding in their conviction and treatment of the natives. In fact, several key religious leaders worked to transform some receptive First Peoples into independent English citizens and converted Christians. These *accommodationists* wanted Natives not only to convert to Christianity, but also to establish autonomous Praying Town communities that would still allow them to retain some elements of aboriginal lifeways. The *absolutist* Puritans, however, insisted that if the First Peoples were to receive conversion at all, they must submit to the authority of the Bible. Nonetheless, as James Muldoon notes, "The clear definitions of doctrines and ritual practices drawn in the course of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation in Europe were difficult to apply in the Americas as Protestant and Catholic missionaries wrestled with the task of translating sophisticated theological concepts developed over centuries into languages that lacked the vocabulary for doing so."<sup>216</sup>

The Protestants experienced a wide variety of responses, meeting with native resistance and language difficulties as had the Jesuits. Indeed, as the "enthusiasm wore off," some became discouraged and thus "showed comparatively little interest in the actual work of conversion;"<sup>217</sup> others who participated in missionary work, sought natives who would respond to their form of Protestantism. The difficulty lay in the fact that there were many Protestant factions who either believed the First Peoples resisted conversion because they were incapable of being Christianized or that their inherent beliefs in their proto-trickster human animal, myth-figures or personified spirits

---

<sup>216</sup>James Muldoon, ed., *The Spiritual Conversion of the Americas* (Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida Press, 2004), 13.

<sup>217</sup>Muldoon, 13.

prevented them from accepting the monotheistic nature of Christianity. In addition, since no central Protestant doctrine or leadership existed, other reasons hindered holistic Protestants' conversion efforts and activities. These included the fact that some believed in predestination, some were enticed by economic recompense, some were still sorting out the aftermath of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation movements, while others still worked solely to survive in the New World.

Because there was no central focus to Protestant conversion activities, David Cody notes that instead, there were increasing numbers of Puritan sects who managed to establish groups of "autonomous North American colonies, including Plymouth (1620), Massachusetts (1628), New Hampshire (1629) Connecticut (1633), Maine (1635), Rhode Island (1636), and New haven (1638). Like their counterparts in Britain, they were extreme Calvinist Protestants who viewed the Reformation as a victory of true Christianity over Roman Catholicism."<sup>218</sup> The New Calvinists rejected Catholicism and accepted the doctrine of predestination. Man's duty mandated him to interpret the law of the Bible, and to preserve order in the world. Given these types of disparaging and hierarchal views, few Calvinist Puritans tried to understand the belief systems or to collect the myth-stories from these non-Christian aboriginals. And for some Protestants, the natives did not even fit into *their* understanding of foreordained salvation, meant their efforts were in vain.

However, other Protestants believed differently. Henry W. Bowden and James P. Ronda argue, "Both the Separatist Pilgrims who settled in Plymouth Colony in 1620 and the non-Separatist Puritans of Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1630 came to the New

---

<sup>218</sup> David Cody, *Puritanism in New England*, <http://www.victorianweb.org/religion/puritan2.html>. Retrieved August, 9, 2010.

World hoping to build model communities of godly living.”<sup>219</sup> These “model communities” differed greatly from each other, as did the First Peoples’ tribal lifeways and belief systems they encountered differed from their own. Indeed, the various Protestant strategies of civilizing and then Christianizing the Natives often led to strained responses. Laura M. Stevens writes:

One of the cruel ironies of imperial history that, even as they condemned the exploitation of America and sought to save the souls of its natives, British missionaries set in place a religious rhetoric that bridged the benevolent and acquisitive desires of Europe in relation to America. Describing colonial commerce through biblical descriptions of charity and the kingdom of God, they made it possible for the British to see Christian conversion as fair compensation for the sufferings of America’s natives . . . missionaries presented spiritual conversion—with the accoutrements of European acculturation—as the most valuable export Britain had to offer America.<sup>220</sup>

In other words, colonization involved not only taking lands but also winning natives to the knowledge of Christ—but only after obedience to the English:

But efforts towards that end languished for more than a dozen years in New England; practical considerations of survival preempted any altruistic sharing of the gospel message. Initially, English statesmen and clergy spent most of the time shaping the temporal and ecclesiastical form of government to exhibit the best form of Christian civilization. Their priorities centered on achieving righteousness for themselves and building new plantations, not converting those who already occupied the territory.<sup>221</sup>

In addition, problems arose because of poor translations, inaccurate commentaries, and Eurocentric as well as American biases about Native American spirituality. Only a few seventeenth and eighteenth-century Protestant missionaries and colonizers thoroughly studied the Algonquin or Iroquoian languages or bothered to

---

<sup>219</sup> Bowden and Ronda, 21.

<sup>220</sup> Stevens, 247.

<sup>221</sup> Bowden and Ronda, 21-2.



learned about the sacred human-animal myth-figures and personified spirits of the polytheistic belief systems. In fact, few proto-trickster myths collected by the early missionaries and colonizers of New England and the Midwest survive. And again, many recorded myths contained added Judeo-Christian concepts.

For instance, an observer and naturalist named John Josselyn, who traveled twice to New England in 1638-39 and 1663-71, described First Peoples' myth-stories in Bible-centered terms. In *An Account of Two Voyages to New England*, he incorrectly concludes that some of the First Peoples' proto-trickster myth-stories were Old Testament stories altered over the centuries:

Their theologie is not much, but questionless they acknowledge a God and a Devil, and some small light they have of the Souls immortality; for ask them whither they go when they dye, they will tell you pointing with their finger to Heaven beyond the white mountains, and do hint at *Noah's* Floud, as may be conceived by a story they have received from Father to Son, time out of mind that a great while ago their country was drowned, and all the People and other Creature in it, only one *Powaw* and his *Webb* [wife] foreseeing the Flood, fled to the white mountains carrying a hare along with them and so escaped; after a while the *Powaw* sent the Hare away, who not returning emboldened thereby they descended, and lived many years after, and had many Children, from whom the Countrey was filled again with *Indians*. Some of them tell another story of the *Beaver*, saying that he was their father.<sup>222</sup>

Josselyn's account is important because it illustrates several key points from in the last chapter. Some early writers believed the First Peoples were one of the Lost Tribes of Israel. Missionary writers argued that the First Peoples were part of the Judeo-Christian tradition, as their human-animal myth-figures or personified spirit stories were distorted Creation traditions that had evolved into something different over time. Other

---

<sup>222</sup>John Josselyn, *An Account of Two Voyages to New England*, (London, 1674, reprinted by University Press of New England Press, 1988), Noel Rae, ed., *Witnessing America: The Library of Congress: The Book of firsthand Accounts of Life in America 1600-1900* (New York: A Stonesong Press Book, 1996), 5.

missionaries changed First Peoples' proto-trickster myths into Christianized stories. In doing so, the missionaries forced the First Peoples human-animal or personified spirit myths into Judeo-Christian constructs, as a way to connect with the Natives, and thus help ease their conversionary transition.

Josselyn attempted to establish common ground between his Judeo-Christian beliefs and those of the unnamed tribe (presumably the eastern Algonquians) he described but did not identify. In doing so, he essentially declared that the tribe had some form of central figure or spirit that assumed the role of the Judeo-Christian God and Creator. In addition to establishing who this unnamed tribe should call "God", Josselyn also determined that many of the rest the other tribal myth-figures were devils. He assumed the stories hinted "at a *Noah's* Flood" and associated their human-animal myth with his understanding of Judeo-Christian traditions. Many writers asserted that the myth-stories had some semblance of Old Testament imageries—even if the stories were vastly different from those of the Bible.

#### **4.3 Jamestown, Virginia and Captain John Smith**

In the first British colonization venture, the newcomers who settled in Virginia did so for reasons other than religious freedom. In fact, many arrived for personal enrichment. As Robert M. Utley and Wilcomb E. Washburn note:

When the English came to establish their first permanent colony in Jamestown in 1607, they too hoped to find gold and a passage to India. But they also sought furs, sassafras (then believed to be a cure for syphilis), and anything else that could make a profit for Virginia Company of London, the joint stock operation that was financing the colony. This English foray into the Virginia wilderness had been designed with political and economic ends in mind. A few pious remarks

about introducing the Indian to Christianity, but there was little real missionary zeal.<sup>223</sup>

Although portrayed as more of a commercial and enterprise, John Smith attributed the help the newcomers received from the First Peoples as part of Divine intervention, writing, “It pleased God (in our extremity) to move the Indians to bring us Corne, ere it was halfe ripe, to refresh us, when we rather expected . . . that they would destroy us.”<sup>224</sup> In many ways, Smith anticipated the type of continental interplay that followed as the English invoked the Christian God and British way of life as superior to Native Americans. The idea that the lands existed solely for the taking continued unabated. The colonists attributed the disappearance and Native deaths from disease as a sign that God wanted the English to claim the lands and make use of them. Utley and Washburn also note:

Of the approximately twenty-five thousand Indians living between the Penobscot River and Narragansett Bay, perhaps one third had succumbed to a series of mysterious plagues that struck between Smith’s voyage and the Pilgrims’ landing. Smallpox, measles, and other Europeans diseases to which the Indians lacked immunity had depopulated the land. The pious English interpreted this phenomenon as an expression of God’s providential concern for His people. The real source was more likely the explorers and fishermen who had visited the coast since the beginning of the century and perhaps even before.<sup>225</sup>

#### **4.4 What Captain John Smith Thought of First Peoples’ Religiosity**

The perceived “expression of God’s providential concern for His people” led Captain John Smith in 1606 to conclude that the First People he encountered were non-

---

<sup>223</sup>Robert M. Utley and Wilcomb E. Washburn, *Indian Wars* (Boston, Massachusetts and New York, New York: Houghton and Mifflin Company, 2002), 13.

<sup>224</sup>Utley and Washburn, 15.

<sup>225</sup>Utley and Washburn, 33.

Christians, indeed so culturally different, that they surely must have worshiped the devil himself. He wrote:

There is yet in Virginia no place discovered to be so Savage, in which they have not a religion, Deere, and Bow, and arrows. All things that are able to doe them hurt beyond their prevention, they adore all kinds of divine worship; as fire, water, lightening, thunder, our Ordinance, peeces, horses, etc. But their chiefe God they worship is the devil. Him they call Okee, and serve him more of feare then love. They say they have conference with him, and fashion themselves as neare to his shape as they can imagine. In their temples they have his image evill favourably carved, and then painted and adorned with chaines of copper, and beads, and covered with a skin, in such a manner as the deformitie may well suit with such a God.<sup>226</sup>

Here Smith clearly mischaracterizes Okee, the chief God of the Powhatan Confederacy, as a devil figure or an evil spirit. In addition, he writes, “In their temples they have his image evill favourably carved . . . adorned . . . in such a manner as the deformitie may well suit with such a God.”<sup>227</sup> Smith distorted the meanings of the First Peoples’ deity by defining it as a devil whose image he determined as evil. Indeed, Englishman claimed that the carvings and imageries represented a god who was deformed and whom they feared. Thus, like the Jesuits and other writers, Smith erroneously defined or purposely mischaracterized the First Peoples’ deity as a being whose deformities suited the natives’ belief systems and religious customs. In doing so, Smith misrepresented natives’ belief and their religiosity as inferior, savage, and wrong.

In another instance, Smith portrays the practices of another Powhatan Confederacy tribe as horrific. He wrote, “In some parts of the Country they have yearly a sacrifice of children. Such was one at Quiyoughcohanock some ten myles from James

---

<sup>226</sup> Captain John Smith, *Captain John Smith Writings with other Narratives of Roanoke, Jamestown, and the First English Settlement of America* (New York, New York: Penguin Putman Inc., 2007), 291.

<sup>227</sup> Smith, 291.

Towne, and thus was performed . . .”<sup>228</sup> Perhaps Smith misidentified or misunderstood the event as an attack on children. But in the Captain’s journal, it appears that the Quiyoughcohanock horrifically tortured and murdered children. In fact, in Smith’s presentation of the events, it seems that after the series of brutal treatments, the children eventually were executed. This description helped identify the First Peoples as savages, prompting the destruction of their lifeways. Divine Providence justified. Furthermore, this meant that it was appropriate to take lands away from the First Peoples, since the Natives worshiped a devil instead of God, abused and assaulted their own children, and finally did not use natural resources in the ways the English saw fit.

But as most tribes discussed were not in the habit of disciplining their children harshly, let alone having them brutally sacrificed, the outsider Smith possibly misunderstood the event. In fact, the spiritual leader called a Werowance “answered that the children were not dead.”<sup>229</sup> Smith may also have misinterpreted the encounter and event as murder when it could have been an elaborate rites of passage ritual associated with manhood or indoctrination into a tribe, where no children were actually beaten or murdered. As Smith explains, he understood that the children were “beaten mercilessly with Bastinadoes;” however, “the children escaped . . . the rest were kept in the wilderness by the young men till nine months were expired, during that time, they must not converse with any, and these were made their Priests and Conjurers.”<sup>230</sup>

---

<sup>228</sup> Smith, 294.

<sup>229</sup> Smith, 294.

<sup>230</sup> Smith, 294.

The Quiyoughcohanock employed this ritual as a way to find and develop their tribal spiritual leaders. Other Algonquian speaking tribal nations also had elaborate rituals symbolizing death and rebirth. According to Smith, if the Quiyoughcohanock did not adhere to their traditional rituals, their Okee or the other gods would not let the Natives have success hunting “Deere, Turkies, Corne, nor fish.”<sup>231</sup> The Quiyoughcohanock venerated these human-animal spirits in order to maintain their hunting culture.

In fact, the familiar story of Smith’s being “saved” from certain death by Pocahontas, contains many cultural misunderstandings. As with many myth-stories discussed here, the difficulty is that no other evidence exists—with the exception of the Smith’s account, to substantiate the report. Some scholars have even argued that what Smith experienced was instead a ritual invoked on his behalf. Quite possibly, Smith endured a similar ritualistic practice or rites of passage that symbolized his death and rebirth into their tribal community. Nonetheless, he only understood it as attempted murder,<sup>232</sup> and propagandized that version.

If the Quiyoughcohanock were so evil that they actually murdered their own children, the Europeans could then rationalize their removal from their traditional lands. The political patterns of European invasion were based on mischaracterized events and beliefs of the First Peoples’ spirituality and lifeways, which often led to rationalized and wanton isolation, destruction, and annihilation of the Natives’ ways of life. Indeed,

---

<sup>231</sup> Smith, 294.

<sup>232</sup> J.A. Leo Lemay, *Did Pocahontas Save Captain John Smith?* (Athens Georgia, The University of Georgia Press, 1992) 25.

through *legal* expansion, encroachment, and removal of tribes—even those who'd converted to Christianity—Eurocentrism gained momentum.

And even if First Peoples converted, Smith asserted they still failed as Christians because they clung to old polytheistic traditions. For instance, Smith accused the Quiyoughcohanock of misusing their newfound beliefs in order to advance their own tribal needs, as some natives wanted Smith “to pray to his God for raine, for their Gods would not send any.” Here Smith taints his views of First Peoples’ spirituality:

To divert them from this blind Idolatry, we did our best endeavours, chiefly with the Werowance [an Algonquian word for tribal chief] of Quiyoughcohanock, whose devotion, apprehension, and good disposition, much exceeded any in those Countries, who although we could not as yet prevaile, to forsake his false Gods, yet this he did believe that our God as much exceeded theirs, as our Gunnes did their Bowes and Arrowes, and many times did send me to James Town, intreating me to pray to my God for raine, for their Gods would not send any. And in this lamentable ignorance doe these poor soules sacrifice themselves to the Devill, and not knowing their Creator; and we had not the language sufficient, so plainly to expresse it as make them understand it; which God grant they may.<sup>233</sup>

This pattern of misunderstanding developed throughout the New World, as various indigenous peoples’ belief systems evolved into something different from their original, pre-Columbian tribal-specific intentions and meanings. In fact, Smith acknowledges that they “had not the language sufficient enough,” to explain Christianity to the natives; therefore, it follows that Smith and others did not understand First Peoples’ beliefs as well. The English settlers’ struggles of communication were similar to those of the explorers and Jesuits of New France as they moved into new territories and met new tribal nations.

Many of the first colonial settlers, however, showed little interest or tolerance of First Peoples’ religious beliefs and lifeways. In fact, weakened from their arduous

---

<sup>233</sup>Smith, 295.

voyage, they were unable to engage in much else except survival. Collecting and recording First Peoples' religiosity and belief systems would not have been immediately useful. As time progressed, language barriers (with the exception of some early translators like Samoset and Massasoit), and the continual miscommunications between the parties, developed into mistrust, tense cultural differences, territorial disputes, and eventual warfare. With the influx of the English into Algonquian-speaking First Peoples areas, arguments about who owned the land thwarted most amiable interactions between the newcomers and the native inhabitants. As tensions increased so did the casualties. As Utley and Washburn also note:

Like their Plymouth counterparts, the Massachusetts Bay settlers landed in an area that had been cleared by the plague. Although welcomed by the surviving Indians, the new arrivals were frightened by reports of native cruelty. They fear men who, in their warfare, liked nothing more than to torment men in ye most bloodie manner that may be; fleaing some alive with ye shells of fishes, cutting of[f] ye members and joints of others by peesmeale, and broiling on ye coals, eate ye collops of their flesh in their sight whilst they live; with other cruelties horrible to be related.<sup>234</sup>

The strained relations at times ended in skirmishes and deadly encounters as the colonists resorted to increasingly ruthless actions. As immigrants filled villages and towns, border wars escalated when the newcomers ventured further into the forests, rationalizing their territorial claims with clearly mischaracterized stories that exploited the differences in First Peoples' lifeways and cultures.

Nonetheless, because there are only the scant records of non-natives available, once again, the existing histories of early interactions between the First Peoples and the English remain burdened with purposeful and even vengeful acts of mischaracterizations, along with acute misunderstandings. The stereotypes that endured

---

<sup>234</sup> Utley and Washburn, 35-6.



would shape beliefs and relationships for centuries as the patterns of intolerance swept throughout the colonies.

#### **4.5 The Histories of Some Early Contacts**

Once again, from the early contact and colonial periods, the newcomers had claimed many of the First Peoples' deities were evil spirits, part of the devil's designs. Certainly, many Catholics and Protestants believed the need existed to intercede on behalf of God since the New World had been under Satan's control for far too long. The devil was the "trickster and master of deceit," who had "for centuries enjoyed absolute mastery over the easily duped natives."<sup>235</sup> Catholic and Protestants felt compelled, therefore, to answer the calling to convert the "savages" into good Europeans and Godly Christians. Some Puritans fueled the idea that the Natives were planning to exterminate all Christians who invaded their lands. Indeed, the Puritans viewed the Natives as wild, savage-like creatures, born of the foreboding, dark, dangerous, and presumably evil, forests, controlled by the Satan. The devil provided the wherewithal for the Natives' planned destruction of the Christians who dared ventured into his ancient domain, and subdued its decadent wild overgrowth. The Puritans saw Divine Providence as the reason why they were able to wrest the territories from the evil inhabitants, stimulating beliefs that rationalized conquest. For example, In 1618, "Edward Johnson, the Puritan author of *Wonder-Working Providence of Sion's Saviour in New England*," wrote:

The Pecod (who retained the Name of a war-like people, till afterwards conquered by the English) were also smitten at this time. Their Disease being a sore Consumption, sweeping away whole Families, but chiefly young men and Children, the very seeds of increase. Their Powows, which their Doctors, working partly by Charmes, and partly by medicine, were much amazed to see their

---

<sup>235</sup>Cañizares-Esguerra, 1-2.

Wigwams lie full of dead Corpes, and that now neither Squantam nor Abbamocho could help, which are their good and bad God, and also their Powows themselves were oft smitten with death stroke.<sup>236</sup>

Edward Johnson also notes the First Peoples' views of death:

Howling and much Lamentation was heard among the living, who being possest with great feare, oftimes left their dead unburied, their manner being such, that they remove their habitations after death of any. This great mortality being an unwonted thing, feared them more, because naturally the Country is very healthy. But by this meanes Christ (whose great and glorious workes the earth throughout are altogether for the benefit of his Churches and chosen) not onely made room for his people to plant; but also tamed the hard and cruel hearts of these barbarous Indians.<sup>237</sup>

From this passage, some Puritans believed, "But by this meanes of Christ (whose great and glorious workes the earth" solely for the "benefit of his Churches and chosen," offered proof of their right to plant a garden and root out the non-believers, or the weeds. Weeding out non-believers quickly developed into the norm as many Europeans moved toward the development of reservations as to the way to locate the removed weeds, elsewhere. Such removals would leave the Puritans able to develop their own gardens, without the unnecessary distractions of the First Peoples and their perceived ungodly lifeways. Other Puritans, however, saw the first Peoples not as weeds but as souls in need of God's salvation.

#### **4.6s Missionaries Villages and John Elliot's "Praying Indians"**

Since the early contacts, missionaries had tried different ways to create and secure permanent Christian conversion.

---

<sup>236</sup> Noel Rae, ed., *Witnessing America: The Library of Congress Book of Firsthand Accounts of Life in America 1600-1900* (New York, New York: A Stonesong Press Book, A Penguin Reference, 1996), 10-11.

<sup>237</sup> Rae, 10-11.

The Puritan preacher, John Eliot (1604-1690), did have some measure of success as he attempted to develop institutions to foster Native American reform. His practices included controlling the social, economic, political, and religious structures of the First Peoples' lifeways:

Social and cultural change was deemed a prerequisite to conversion and involved a wholesale restructuring of social institutions. Thus, through forced separation and alienation within native family structures, Eliot's strategies became instrumental in the development and maintenance of native conversions. This included isolating new converts both from their old societies and from the English, with whom they could mingle. While the effort to 'reduce' Indian people to 'civilitie'—that is, to English cultural and social structures—may not have been very successful, Eliot's mission endeavor did succeed in reducing native peoples to economic dependence on the English... Out of the political context came legislation from the beginning of Eliot's mission that outlawed the traditional Indian religious ceremonie.<sup>238</sup>

In this way, the Europeans could control what they considered the chaos of First Peoples' religiosity. To the Europeans, it was not only wildness of Native American spirituality, but also the wildness of the primeval forests that often tempted the neophytes to return to their former "evil" state. Different Protestant groups chose other methods to attract and maintain converts.

#### **4.7 Roger Williams: A Clash of Cultures**

In *Friends of the Indians 1655-1917*, Rayner Wickersham Kelsey describes what he believed to be the first "Protestant effort to carry the Gospel to the natives."

The first and some of the finest Protestant missionary efforts among the Indians were begun by the Congregationalists in New England. When Roger Williams (later a Baptist) fled from authorities of Massachusetts early in 1636 and found a refuge from wintry storms among the friendly Wampanoags and Narragansetts

---

<sup>238</sup> Tinker, 22.

southwest of Plymouth, the Protestant effort to carry the Gospel to the natives may be said to have fairly begun.<sup>239</sup>

As Cañizares-Esguerra notes, Protestants differed not only in doctrinal issues but also in terms of treatment of the First Peoples they encountered. Roger Williams had “argued that the heretics were weeds from the garden of the church, but that the Bible did not authorize their being rooted out. Moreover, the weapons with which to battle the devil were not physical but spiritual. Thus according to Williams, toleration was the orthodox position to take.”<sup>240</sup>

“John Cotton [1584-1652] on the other hand, found biblical passages that allowed him to claim the opposite, namely, that heretics were both weeds to be cleared from the enclosed garden of the church and agents of Satan to be fended off physically, not spiritually. This controversy alone shows that there were important differences when it came to thinking of the devil as an extreme enemy of the New England polity.”<sup>241</sup> Because there was no effective single English authority to prescribe rules for relations between the First Peoples and the settlers, their philosophical differences deepened. It is no wonder that many tribal nations distrusted European intentions.

In a rather long and detailed account, Williams describes a dialogue between himself and an unnamed Native or several Natives of the Narraganset tribe. Once again, the Native remained unnamed. Williams describes their beliefs:

Musquantum manit God is angry. But herein is their Misery.  
First they branch their God-head into many Gods.  
Secondly, attribute it to Creatures.

---

<sup>239</sup> Kelsey, Rayner Wickersham, Ph.D. *Friends of the Indians, 1655-1917* (Philadelphia: The Associated Executive Committee of Friends of the Indian Affairs, 1917),

<sup>240</sup> Cañizares-Esguerra, 18.

<sup>241</sup> Cañizares-Esguerra, 18.

First, many Gods: they have given me the Names of thirty seven which I have, all which in their solemne Worships they invoke: as Kautantowwit the great South West God, to whose House all soules goe, and from whome came their Corne, Beanes, as they say.<sup>242</sup>

Here the Native speaker details the polytheistic nature of his belief systems. As with all pre-Columbian tribal nation myths, the numerous deities invoked by the First Peoples are acknowledged. In addition, their gods often manifested as creatures or human-animals myth-figures, proto-trickster concepts paralleling Jesuit findings. Questions remain about one deity, Kautantowwit, who appears to be a powerful god who took all souls into his house. Interestingly, Williams does not identify that deity as the one-Creator god. This omission likely occurred due to the dialogue recorded and the difficulty in communication that he experienced translating this piece.

In another section of the interchange, Williams writes:

At this Relation they are much satisfied, with a reason why (as they observe) the English and the Dutch &c. labour six dayes, and rest and worship the seventh.

Besides, they will say, Wee never heard of this before: and then will relate how they have it from their Fathers, that Kautantowwit made one man and woman of a stone, with disliking them, he broke them in pieces, and made another man and woman of a tree, which were the Fountaines of all mankind.

In this passage, Williams explains the Sabbath, the Judeo-Christian day of rest, to the Narragansetts. They are astonished, as they never heard of a Sabbath Day practice. In the following sentence, the Narragansett relate their Creation myth-story. They believed that their Creator, “Kautantowwit made one man and one woman from a stone, with disliking them, he broke them in pieces.” This version of the myth differs from the many sub-creators, or cultural-transformer myth-figures since it involves a personified spirit who actually created people. Kautantowwit made them from a stone. In Judeo-Christian

---

<sup>242</sup>Roger Williams, *The Complete Writings of Roger Williams*, (New York, New York: Russell & Russell, 1963), 1:124.

theology, the Creator made man from dust. Here the Narragansett myth seems to be pre-Columbian since the story lacks any evidence of dualism; additionally, the myth-story contains no elements of Old Testament Creationism in its text. And Williams' account differs from other Puritans or other writers of the early contact period who either employed negative or unnecessary commentaries in their explanations.

#### **4.8 The Histories of the Moravian missionary David Zeisberger**

During the mid-1770s, the Moravian Church had evangelists seeking to assist people, including Native Americans, in conversion to Christianity. "Chief among the missionaries to the Indians were David Zeisberger and John Heckewelder, both of whom helped found communities, such as Schoenbrunn and Gnadenhutten, in eastern Ohio."<sup>243</sup> Their work is important since both Moravians were *accommodationists* who employed conversion strategies that digressed from other Protestants. Their approach included speaking Native Americans' languages and acknowledging the differing cultural lifeways.

Zeisberger's story followed that of many Europeans who wanted to preach the Gospel to the Native Americans.

Born in "Moravia in 1721, Zeisberger immigrated to British North America in the late 1730s. He joined the church of the Unity of the Brethren, commonly known as the Moravian Church. He eventually settled near Bethlehem, Pennsylvania and became a missionary to various Native American groups in Pennsylvania and New York. As a missionary, Zeisberger emphasized how Christianity could be beneficial to the natives.

---

<sup>243</sup> (<http://www.ohiohistorycentral.com/entry.php?rec=609>). Retrieved, August 1, 2010.

However, his work often led to the end of traditional ways of life of the Native American converts.”<sup>244</sup>

Similarly, John Gottlieb Ernestus Heckewelder served as Moravian missionary in the Ohio territory before the American Revolution and the early years of the new nation. Born in Bedford, England in 1743, “he spent his early years attending Unity of Brethren (Moravian Church) schools in England as well as in Pennsylvania after his parents immigrated to British North America in 1754 . . . In 1762, missionary Christopher Frederick Post granted his wish, asking Heckewelder to assist him with the Christian Delaware Indians located in western Pennsylvania. He spent the next eight years serving as a messenger for Post and David Zeisberger . . . In 1772, Heckewelder accompanied Zeisberger to eastern Ohio to establish a village for the Christian Delawares. The village, Schoebrumm, prospered and the missionaries quickly founded other communities, including Gnadenhutten and Lichtenau.”<sup>245</sup>

Compared to the structured efforts of the French Jesuits, British involvement was patchy, intermittent, and biased at best. Because funding and support for the early colonies and the church remained inconsistent, the solution evolved to eradicate First Peoples’ belief systems, destroy their culture, and take over their lands; rather than accommodate through acculturation since few British thought that natives would accept complete conversion. The Moravians differed. Zeisberger sought “not attempt to convert

---

<sup>244</sup> David Zeisberger, (<http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/entry.php?rec=428>). Retrieved, August 1, 2010. Additional information from David Zeisberger’s *History of the Northern American Indians*, ed. Archer Butler Hulbert and William Nathaniel Schwarze, (Ohio State Archeological and Historical Society, The R.J. Heer Printing Co., Printers, 1910).

<sup>245</sup> John Heckewelder, *History, Manners, and Customs of the Indian Nations Who Once Inhabited Pennsylvania and the Neighboring States*, (Arno Press & The New York Times, 1971), 99-100. Additional information, (<http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/entry.php?rec=184>).

the natives to the white man's world." Instead he wanted to reach for "accommodation between the native culture and mission life."

Zeisberger's approach was distinctly different from that of most missionaries who lived among the Indians during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He loved the Indians, spoke their languages fluently, and admired many of their cultural traits. He also understood their desperate attempt to fight the ever-encroaching Euro-American efforts to dislodge them from their lands. He did not attempt to convert the natives to the white man's world but desperately tried to reach an accommodation between the native culture and mission life.

He did not insist that the mission Indians adopt all of the white man's cultural traits, as was the standard practice among nineteenth-century missionaries, notably at the Carlisle School for Indian Children. Rather, he took a halfway approach, borrowing from native culture characteristics that did not conflict with his Christian teachings. He did not attempt to remove his converts from their native environment but to find accommodation near to their friends and neighbors.<sup>246</sup>

Olmstead's statements are not entirely accurate. Zeisberger claimed to have understood some of the First Peoples' languages and dialects, as did many Jesuits. I posit the question, which specific dialects did the missionary speak fluently. Moreover, how "fluently" did he speak, since he claims to have fully understood several different languages; this included the ability to understand the shades and nuances of the tribal specific dialects that surrounded the region.

There existed many different dialects from the numerous and specific tribes that made up geographical areas. Although credited with writing "a complete dictionary of the Iroquois language,"<sup>247</sup> there manifested in fact not a single Iroquois language.

---

<sup>246</sup>David Zeisberger, *A Life Among the Indians* ed., Earl G. Olmstead (Kent, Ohio and London, England: The Kent State University Press, 1997), xxvii-xxviii.

<sup>247</sup>"Mr. Zeisberger wrote a complete dictionary of the Iroquois language in three quarter volumes, the first of which, from A to the middle H, was unfortunately lost. The remainder, which is preserved, contains upwards of 800 pages, which shows at least, the Indian languages are not so poor as is generally imagined, it is German and Indian beginning with German." Heckewelder, *fn* 2, 97-8.



Zeisberger acknowledged the diversity of the various tribal sects, languages, and dialects, explaining in detail that:

Their languages resemble various other languages, some more, some less. When one remembers how far or how near they have lived from one another it will appear that the differences in the languages have come through the separation of the peoples and the little contact they have had with one another.

The Unami and the Wunalachtico both lived along the sea in Pennsylvania and in New Jersey, a short distance from another. Their languages differ very little. That of the Moseys [??] who lived on the other side of the Blue Mountains in Mississink is very different from these, so that they had not dwelt nearer together and been in constant contact in recent times they would hardly understand each other. Yet the speech of these peoples is but a dialect of one and the same language.

The language of the Mahikanders bears much resemblance to that of the Mosys, the former having lived in New England.

The language of the Nantikoks, formerly residing on the seacoast in Maryland, very much resembles the Delaware, differing only in pronunciation and accent.

The language of the Shawanose is also related to the Monsy and Delaware but, more particularly, too the Mahikander, only the former generally place the accent upon the last syllable of a word. The reason for this is that they originally lived in Florida and whether their language changed very much since they were driven out and lived first in the Forks of the Delaware, then along the Susquehannah, then along the Ohio and finally here among the Delawares, I am not able to determine, except it be, that in Florida the language of some other nations bore a resemblance to this.

The language of the Twiches and Wawiachtanos resembles the Shawanose and consequently, also, the Delaware. The dialects of the Kikapus, Tuchachschas, Moshkos, Kaskaski the further away they lived resembles the Delawares less and less. Yet the Delawares have much intercourse with them, for many of them live along the Wabash where the Kikapus have given them hunting grounds. Every year Delaware hunters go thither for the chase and return.

The language of the Ottawas is related somewhat Shawanose, Chipuways, and the Delawares. The language of the Cherokee is a mixture of other languages. It has a little of the Shawanose, the Mingo and a great deal of the Wiondats. The speech of the last named people and that of the Six Nations are again dialects of one and the same language, differing from one another, yet easily understood by either of the nations named.<sup>248</sup>

Indeed Zeisberger may have had contacted and might possibly conversed with many, if not all, the tribes described in his accounts. However, in some of these cases, Zeisberger

---

<sup>248</sup> Zeisberger, *A Life Among the Indians*, 128-9.

may have had only a limited, rudimentary level of understanding. His communication efforts were noteworthy in that he tried to learn or at least differentiate the numerous First peoples' languages and dialects, given the survival challenges, which he and other missionaries faced in their work. This proved unusual since Europeans lumped together into virtually non-descript categories of tribal-specific languages and dialects. Finally, he incorrectly categorized and defined the various and loosely associated First Peoples as the Delaware, an error that raises questions about the depth of his understanding. In the next passage, a modern Lenapé Amerindian explained how the Delaware name originated.

First, Hitakonanu'laxk (Treebeard), in his book, *The Grandfathers Speak: Native American Folktales of the Lenapé Peoples*, asserts that the "Lenapé wak" as they called themselves, carried the name "the grandfathers" and claimed title to the "progenitors of all Algonquin Peoples. Lenapé means 'common peoples.'"

Delaware" is derived from the third Lord de la Warr, Sir Thomas West, who was the governor of the English colony in Jamestown, Virginia in 1610. One of his captains, Samuel Argall, went up the Atlantic coast to seek provisions for the Virginia colonists and in his way back he sailed into the bay of the Delaware River, and he named it in honor of Governor de le Warr (who never saw it in his lifetime). After a while, the Native peoples living along the river, which emptied into the bay, became known as Delaware Indians.

There were three main divisions of our Lenapé people, the Munsee, Unami, and the Unalaxtako (or jersey), each living in different area, and each speaking slightly different dialects of a similar language.<sup>249</sup>

The mischaracterization of three incorrectly categorized separate and distinct divisions of First Peoples with a name attributed to river that connected to a man who never had even been to the region is typically Eurocentric.

---

<sup>249</sup>Hitakonanu'laxk (Treebeard), *The Grandfathers Speak: Native American Folktales of the Lenapé Peoples*, (Brooklyn New York: Interlink Books, 1994), 4-6.

Yet, as Zeisberger claimed, he preached in the First peoples' languages—at least to some extent. However, the idea that he was also able to collect and translate the Delaware, (or more correctly, the Lenni-Lenapé) Creation myth is significant.

#### **4.9 Praying Towns: Rule and Regulations**

According to Olmstead, Zeisberger “did not insist that the mission Indians adopt all of white man’s cultural traits.” Rather “he took a halfway approach, borrowing from native culture characteristics that did not conflict with his Christian teachings.” The idea that there existed identifiable “white man’s cultural traits” or that the Native Americans could use some part of their own culture, as “a halfway approach,” provided it “did not conflict with his Christian teachings” proved absurd since these ideas remained difficult to define.

Olmstead adds:

Zeisberger’s mission [praying towns] had strict rules, but those who violated them were always shown compassion and were usually forgiven and permitted to remain at the mission, providing they agreed to mend their ways and abide by the rules. Little attempt was made to restrict the wandering nature of the native lifestyle. Mission Indians were permitted to travel and visit their relatives providing they notified the native helper in the village. This rule was primarily designed to keep track of all village residents. Their native friends or relatives’ visits to the missions were not restricted, and the villagers entertained numerous native and white visitors.<sup>250</sup>

Olmstead argues that the Native Americans who lived in the missions faced “strict rules.” Even though Olmstead wrote that “little attempt was made to restrict the wandering nature of native lifestyles,” Zeisberger seemingly disallowed or limited travel, unless, under controlled circumstances by which “the native helper” received notification. The above passage best exemplify the English and Protestant ideologies

---

<sup>250</sup>Zeisberger, *A Life Among the Indians*, xxviii.

concerning the practice of first civilizing First Peoples, and then making them into Christians. Zeisberger believed that Christians needed to interact with the First Peoples in controlled environments. According to Olmstead, Zeisberger considered this interplay as an “accommodation between native cultures and mission life,”<sup>251</sup> yet it seemed little accommodation existed in the Moravian programs.

#### **4.10 Sole Creator as Found in Lenni-Lenapé Myths: A Comparative Analysis**

Zeisberger believed that evidence of Judeo-Christian influences surfaced in the First Peoples’ myth-stories. He wrote (between 1779-1780), “They believe and have from time immemorial believed that there is an Almighty Being who has created heaven and earth and man and all things else. This they have learned from the ancestors, but where the dwelling place of the Deity is they know not.”<sup>252</sup> Given the earlier arguments in previous chapters, it was clear this “Almighty Being” is not present in the Lenni-Lenapé oral traditions which are posited as pre-Columbian.

Some earlier missionaries had potentially influenced the Delaware with Christian elements since Zeisberger’s religious descriptions involve a *one-deity* Creator-figure, the “Almighty Being” who created heaven and earth and man. Once again, monotheism did not manifest in First Peoples’ proto-trickster mythic-figures. Zeisberger continues:

They fear the thunderbolt, because it occasionally strikes and shatters the trees, but they seek to disguise their fear. Yet they believe that the Deity is graciously and mercifully disposed towards men, because he imparts power to the plants to grow, causes the rain to fall and the sun to shine and give game to man for his support.

---

<sup>251</sup>Zeisberger, *A Life Among the Indians*, xxviii.

<sup>252</sup> David Zeisberger, *History of the Northern American Indians*, 128-9.

According to this passage, the Lenni-Lenapé, as well as the Moravians, relied on God, the sole Creator-deity in order to explain such physical causalities as thunder, plants, rain, and sunshine. Nevertheless, the Lenni-Lenapé had believed in the human-animal, sub-Creator figure deity who helped to finished Creation instead of the deity that now resembled the Christian Creator, God. These Christian-Creator influences certainly altered the Lenni-Lenapé proto-trickster, human-animal, or personified spirit myth-figure, stories, as well as their belief systems.

In the original Lenni-Lenapé Creation myth, there existed a sub-Creator or a cultural-transformer figure, described as a human-animal myth-figure that finished Creation. Zeisberger writes:

From some old Mingo I heard that they believed themselves to have come from under the earth, where they had lived before. A badger had worked to the surface, seen the beautiful land and returned at once to announce to them what he had seen. They had been so pleased with his account that they left their subterranean abode forthwith and settled on the beautiful land.

Zeisberger, in typical missionary fashion, interrupted the myth and explained it as a fable of how the Lenni-Lenapé arrived on this continent after the Creator had vanished, leaving the cultural transformer, the badger, to transform or bring the people up from the earth.

From the habit of speaking in figure or parable, it may be concluded that by this account they meant to convey the idea that they originally came from the other side of the earth. Others say they came from under water, which may mean much the same thing. The tradition of Nanitkoks<sup>253</sup> is that seven Indians had suddenly seen themselves seated at the sea-side. Whether they had come over the sea or been created they did not know. Descendants of these Indians peopled the land.<sup>254</sup>

---

<sup>253</sup>Since little is written about the Natnikoks, Zeisberger footnoted them in his journal: "By 1750 the Moravian missionaries had been successful mainly among scattered groups of Delawares and remnants of lesser tribes, such as the Mahican, Natnicoke, and Wampanoag." Zeisberger, *Life Among the Indians*, 55.

<sup>254</sup>Zeisberger, *History of the Northern American Indians*, 132.

This passage does not include Christian elements, although several ideas may explain why. Zeisberger may have incorrectly collected the myth or mischaracterized the Creator spirit myth-figure as more like the Judeo-Christian Creator, God. In addition, it seems possible that some of Zeisberger's recorded narratives were misinterpretations, mischaracterizations, or even mistranslations by later editors or translators, since the original accounts along with the original pre-Columbian tribe's specific intent or meanings remained lost.

#### **4.11 Modern Lenni-Lenapé' Creation Myths**

Since early Christian missionaries understood Old Testament Creation in literal terms, they presented their story as the sole, correct representation of Creation. Many Protestants reduced the Creator-cultural-transformer figure into a parable or fable. Zeisberger's commentaries on the retelling of the Lenni-Lenapé myth certainly reflect this.

As noted in earlier chapters, the possibility exists that translators and editors of all these diaries and journal entries may have added their own interpretations to the myth-stories and introduced the Christian idea of heaven into the collected accounts of the First Peoples' belief systems—which then altered the original myth-figures with non-Indian concepts.

Zeisberger writes:

Others, again, claim that the first human being fell from heaven. This was a woman, cast out from the upper regions by her husband. Shortly after her fall, she was delivered of twins, from whom the inhabitants of this land are descended. They believe that in the realm above them is a world of men much like this, whence the Indians originally came.<sup>255</sup>

---

<sup>255</sup> Zeisberger, *History of the Northern American Indians*, 132.

According to the Christian beliefs, Biblical Creation was complete, and required no additional help; no sub-Creator fell from heaven or peopled the earth. Here Zeisberger may have mischaracterized or misinterpreted the word “heaven” to fit his Christian beliefs or failed to find the exact word or translation of what the Lenni-Lenapé meant; therefore, the word “heaven” suited his understanding and translation of the myth.

In the following passage, Zeisberger describes the concept of God as part of Lenni-Lenapé spirituality. In a ceremony, all spirits named in the dance represent the holistic worship of God:

Preparations for such a sacrificial feast extend through several days. . . After the meal, the men and women dance, every rule of decency being observed. It is not a dance for pleasure or exercise, as is the ordinary dance engaged in by the Indians. One singer only performs during the dance, walking up and down, rattling a small tortoise shell filled with pebbles. He sings of the dreams the Indians have had, naming all the animals, elements, and plants they hold to be spirits. None of the spirits of things that are useful to the Indians may be omitted. By worshipping all the spirits named they consider themselves to be worshipping God, who has revealed his will to them in dreams.<sup>256</sup>

Thus, this Huron feast represented numerous entities that they honored and were considered a collection of natural personified and human-animal spirits which Zeisberger inaccurately defined and identified as God.

#### **4.12 Spirits and Beliefs**

The Lenni-Lenapé had many personified spirits who empowered their daily lives. “They believe in numerous spirits or subordinate deities. Almost all animal and the elements are looked upon as spirits, one exceeding the other in dignity and power. There

---

<sup>256</sup> Zeisberger, *History of the Northern American Indians*, 137.

is scarcely an Indian who does not believe that one or more of these spirits has not been particularly given him to assist him and make him prosper.”<sup>257</sup> The existence of a multitude of deities parallels the proto-trickster personified spirits described earlier.

Zeisberger writes:

This, they claim has been made known to them in a dream, even as their religious belief and witchcraft is alleged to have been made known to them in a dream. One has, in a dream, received a serpent or a buffalo, another the sun or moon, another an owl or some other bird, another a fish, some even ridiculously insignificant creatures such as ants. These are considered their spirits or manittos. If an Indian has no Mantitto to be his friends he considers himself forsaken, has nothing upon which to lean, has no hope of any assistance and is small in his own eyes. On the other hand those who have been favored possess a high and proud spirit.<sup>258</sup>

Once again, the tendency of non-Native writers to presume much about Native American spirituality continued. For example, the Manittos’ remained important to Lenni-Lenapé belief systems; however, since they differed from Christian doctrine, and were part of the New World natural environment, the missionaries often viewed and depicted these ceremonies as insignificant or even ridiculous.

Zeisberger also detailed the ceremonies associated with Lenni-Lenapé belief in personified spirit deities:

Worship and sacrifices have obtained among them from the earliest times, being usages handed down from their ancestors. Though in the detail of ceremony there has been change, as the Indians are more divided now than at the time, worship and sacrifice have continued as practiced in the earlier days, for the Indians believe that they would draw all manner of disease and misfortune upon themselves if they omitted to observe the ancestral rites.<sup>259</sup>

---

<sup>257</sup> Hitakonanu'laxk (Treebeard), 6.

<sup>258</sup> Zeisberger, *History of the Northern American Indians*, 132-3.

<sup>259</sup> Zeisberger, *History of the Northern American Indians*, 136.



Thus, rituals associated with ceremonial community experiences explained much about Lenni-Lenapé lifeways. However, the telling of the tale remained limited to the time to the season. For example, Hitakonanu'laxk (Treebeard) explains the tribal-specific details that surrounded these myth-telling events:

We also believe that if you tell stories in the summertime when the crops are growing, the corn, beans, squash, etc. may stop to listen to you and forget your duties—to grow and produce. It is believed that stories so powerful that things in Nature will listen to them and get confused, and forget what it is they are supposed to do. The only stories that are to be told in summertime are histories, biographies, or the Creations stories and those like it of a sacred nature, which may be told in connection with certain spiritual ceremonies.<sup>260</sup>

#### **4.13 The Interplay Between First Peoples, John Gottlieb Ernestus Heckewelder**

Heckewelder worked as an assistant to Fredrick Post and wrote extensively about the First Peoples. In Heckewelder's *History, Manners, and Customs of the Indian Nations Who Once Inhabited Pennsylvania and the Neighboring States*, he explains:

An old Indian told me about fifty years ago, when he was young, he still followed the custom of his father and ancestors, in climbing the pinnacle for the Great Spirit for all the benefits before bestowed, and to pray for a continuance in his favour; that they were sure their prayers were heard, and acceptable to the Great Spirit, although he himself did not appear to them.<sup>261</sup>

It is important that the Great Spirit concept did not appear in the earlier sixteenth- and seventeenth-century accounts. Cave explains:

The "Great Spirit" they [the prophets] invoked and portrayed as the omnipotent, omnipresent creator and ruler of the universe cannot to be found in the traditional Native American tribal folklore that has been compiled over the centuries. Indian stories of the creation and of the human relationships to the spirit world are rich and varied, full of lore about gods, spirits, ghosts, animals, and cultural heroes. If they speak of a sky-god creator at all (and sometimes they do not), that deity plays only a minor role in the daily lives of the people. Nor can descriptions of an all-powerful and ever-present "Great Spirit" be found in sixteenth- and seventeenth

---

<sup>260</sup> Hitakonanu'laxk, 42.

<sup>261</sup> Heckewelder, 100.

century European accounts of Native American religious beliefs and practices. The indigenous people of North America did not conceive of the supreme being as an anthropomorphic celestial deity who personally ruled the world and intervened regularly in human affairs. The Great Spirit spoken of by the prophets was born in the eighteenth century.<sup>262</sup>

What is also striking is that the “Old Indian’s” name was omitted, as well as his tribal association. Heckewelder was able to distinguish the different tribes. He writes:

The Lenapé and their kindred tribes never have called the Iroquois ‘the Five or Six Nations.’ In conversation, they call themselves the Mengwe, and never make use of any other but this generic name when speaking of them. In their councils, however, they occasionally distinguished them by the name Palenach endchiesktaject. These two words literally translated mean ‘the five divisions, sections or parts together,’ and does not in any manner imply the idea of nations. Had they meant to say ‘the Five-Nations,’ they would have expressed it by the words Palenach ckhokewit; those which they used, on the contrary, expressly imply sectional divisions, and leave no doubt about their meaning.

The Iroquois themselves, as we have already seen, had adopted a name Aquanoschioni, merely indicative of their close union. After, however, they came to be informed of the meaning of the name which the English had given them, they were willing to let it pass as correct. The Indians are very fond of high sounding names; I have known myself chiefs who delighted to be called Kings after they had learned from us that the rulers of the English and the French nations were distinguished by that title.

Thus, Heckewelder’s explanation employed this concept that Euro-Americans used whatever phraseologies or stereotypical terms that befitted their understandings—even though these sentiments appeared false and very different from aboriginal intent. And given the numerous languages, the possibility of overgeneralization existed. In addition, this false Delaware category, Heckewelder gives the correct names and meaning associated with each specific tribe:

Thus, the proper name of those six united tribes is in their own language Aquanoschioni. By other nations they are called Mengwe, Maquas, Mingoes, and Iroquois. The Lenapé call them by the first, the Mohicans, and the Dutch by the second, the English and Americans by the third, and the French by the fourth. I employ these different names

---

<sup>262</sup> Cave, 2-3.

As detached bodies or tribes, their names with the Lenape are the following:

1. Sankhican, the Mohawks, from Sankhican, a gunlock, this people being the first who were furnished with muskets by the Europeans, the locks of which, with their effect in striking fire, was a subject of great astonishment to them; and thus they were named, as it were, the fire striking peoples.

2. W'tássome, the Oneidas. The name means the stone-pipe makers, and was given to them on account of their ingenuity in making tobacco pipes of stone.

3. Onondágoes, the Onondagoes. This name signifies in their own language on top of the hill, their town being situated.

4. Queúgue, the Cayugas, thus called after a like of the same name.

5. Mæchachtinni, the Senecas. This name means Mountaineers, and was given them because they inhabited the hilly parts of the country.

6. The Tuscaroras, the sixth and the last tribe in the league, they call by the same name, yet I have never heard the Lenape speak of the six divisions or tribes; when they describe them in that manner, it is always by the number Five.<sup>263</sup>

#### **4.14 Creator Myths Collected by the Moravians with Similar Modern Versions**

Heckewelder's description of Creation has obvious Christian elements:

The Indian considers himself as a being created by an all-powerful, wise, and benevolent Mannitto; all that he possesses, all that he enjoys, he looks upon as given to him or allotted for his use by the Great Spirit who have him life: he therefore believes it to be his duty to adore and worship his Creator and benefactor; to acknowledge with gratitude his past favours, thank him for present blessings, and solicit the continuation of his good will.<sup>264</sup>

In comparison, the modern Chief of the Lenapé, Hitakonanu'laxk (Treebeard) explained in 1994, the Lenapé concept of Matantu, the opposing evil spirit.

Whereas the Creator is continuously creating, there is another Spirit, called Matantu, who resides in the Underworld and is an opposing, balancing force in the Universe. Sometimes he is destructive, negative and evil in his actions. But he is not like the Christian Devil, but rather like the Chinese concept of yin and yang, or opposing, balancing forces. Thus, there is good and evil, day and night, male and female, positive and negative. Without opposition forces found in Nature, the Universe would cease to be and fall apart. Matantu often brings us bad thoughts and dreams, often tests our Spirits.<sup>265</sup>

---

<sup>263</sup> Heckewelder, 99.

<sup>264</sup> Heckewelder, 100-01.

<sup>265</sup> Hitakonanu'laxk, 35-6.

The myths differ in many ways. First, both passages identify Christian elements of a one-Creator spirit deity; however, the Judeo-Christian beliefs argue that Creation stood completed. The contemporary Lenapé believe that there exists a Creator still developing and creating the world. This discrepancy offers several interpretations. Heckewelder may have incorrectly collected the Creator myth or mischaracterized the Creator spirit myth-figure as more like the Judeo-Christian Creator. Or the modern retelling of oral traditions keeps the myths sacred and therefore is more authentic than Heckewelder's account. But as Hitakonanu'laxk uses others' cultural belief systems and imagery to explain Lenapé belief systems, this bolsters the argument that some outside influences have entered Lenni-Lenapé spirituality. There was no one Native American tribe and no one-First Peoples' myth-figure that explained Creation and its various cultural transformations.

#### **4.15 European Missionaries, Native Preachers, and False Beliefs**

Communication problems continued to foster mischaracterizations about Native Americans. Hitakonanu'laxk writes:

We [Lenapé Peoples] believe in a multitude of worlds, inhabited by spiritual beings or Spirits, who we Lenapé called Manito'wāk. All of these spiritual . . . We hold the Creator to have had no beginning And no end. He exists throughout all things and everything is but an expression of his great thought and power. Thus, we believe all things have spirit, are innately alive, and can exert influences on things around them. Everything that exists partakes of the power of the Creator, some having more or less and some being good and some being bad. Everything is gifted to a greater or lesser degree and able to share or confer this spiritual power to we human beings, to help us in our lives in many ways.<sup>266</sup>

---

<sup>266</sup>Hitakonanu'laxk, 32-3.

This version of the Creator reflects their oral tradition and is different from the one described by the Moravians. What does scholarship make of the myths collected in modern times since they differ from the ones collected by the missionaries? The reasons for mischaracterizations remain the same. Europeans and later Americans incorrectly collected, translated, and mischaracterized myths—whether purposeful or not—and thus tainted or marred indigenous beliefs with Euro-Americanized and Christianized ideas.

Or the First Peoples may have duped the missionaries into believing conversion occurred. And, as part of their heritage, they quietly kept the myths from the missionaries, instead passing them to their own next generations until the stories emerged in modern times for anthropologists, ethnologists, and other scholars to study. Thus, myths were passed along in their original oral traditions and ceremonies, without outsider intervention or knowledge. In that process they may have been changed by the tellers who purposely told the tales differently to accommodate the missionaries, or the listeners, including writers, editors, or translators, and thus duped generations of scholars.

#### **4.17 Conclusion**

Permanent damage to the understanding of the authentic lifeways and belief systems for any number of individual tribal nations was done as myths were collected and mischaracterized or misinterpreted. The loss of intent and meaning associated with First Peoples' myths by European and American writers is great. The natives worshipped or recognized a variety of tribal-specific human-animal myth figures or personified spirit deities in all types flora, fauna, rivers, inanimate objects, rocks, plants,

or other naturally occurring phenomena such as weather. To embody these remarkably varied myth-figures into *one-native* archetypal category is to continue to falsely identify and interpret Native American spirituality.

The myths, however, were as varied as the tribes who explained them and the different non-native writers and religious factions who collected, recorded, and mischaracterized them. The majority of missionaries and colonizers rarely considered the tribal-specific and culturally bound proto-trickster myths as serious forms of Native American spirituality.

After the contacts, First Peoples' realities expanded to include the idea of other peoples (Europeans and Africans) who had traveled across vast watery distances, from previously unheard of places. The aboriginal world was transformed in life-altering ways as both newcomers and First Peoples attempted to understand, explain, rationalize, and adjust their worldviews, physical understandings, and belief systems to accommodate each others' cultures. In addition, both struggled to deal with the religious and spiritual implications and transformations that resulted. Because each of their respective histories, cultures, and religious beliefs appeared incorrect to the other, each dealt with the changes those understandings wrought, forever altering each other's lifeways. But as First Peoples also struggled with Protestant missionaries, the unending encroachment of English colonization and settlements, starvation, and the violence of continual warfare, many of their tribal-specific cultural lifeways tragically faded from the North American landscape; and with that, so did their myths.

The next chapter will trace the trickster concept to its early trickster roots and will also mark the early rise of the anthropological-ethnological approach to chronicling Native American spirituality and lifeways. The conclusion will also explain how the waves of socio-political periods and the different tribal-specific beliefs systems were part of the cultural interexchange between the non-natives and the Amerindians.

## Chapter Five

### **Algic Researches: *The Traditional History and Characteristic Sketches of the Ojibway Nation* The Lake Superior Ojibwa and The Trickster: A study in American Indian Mythology**

Only a few seventeenth and eighteenth-century missionaries and colonizers thoroughly studied the languages of the Algonquin or Iroquoian First Peoples they encountered—or learned about the sacred human-animal myth-figures and personified spirits that made up their polytheistic belief systems. In fact, few proto-trickster myths collected by the early missionaries and colonizers of New England and the Midwest survive. In addition, many of the recorded myths contain Judeo-Christian concepts that were not part of First Peoples' spirituality. It is clear that the early explorers and missionaries introduced these elements into the natives' culture.

Many of the writers discussed here asserted that First Peoples' myth-stories had some semblance of Old Testament imageries—even though the stories were vastly different in imagery and plotline from the Bible. The practice of recasting First Peoples' myth-stories into Biblical accounts was not limited to the Puritans of New England; the French Jesuits, Dutch and English Protestants, and early Spanish Catholics did the same, as they employed similar patterns of cultural misunderstandings and mischaracterizations. Since Columbus, many Europeans had linked Native American oral traditions of beliefs



or myths incorrectly to Christian concepts. These assertions persisted well into the nineteenth century when the claim that First Peoples were the descendants of the lost tribes of Israel was added.

In 1856, travel writer Johann Georg Kohl, noted in his text, *Kitchi-Gami: Life Among the Lake Superior Ojibway*:

It was a very curious thing that I meet so many persons here [in America] still adhering to the belief in the Jewish descent of the Indians, not merely among the American clergy, but also among traders and agents. Many cannot be persuaded out of this curious idea, though it seems more deeply-rooted among the Anglo-Saxon Protestants than the French Catholics. Perhaps, this arises from the fact that the former employ themselves so much more in reading the Old Testament, the history of the Jews, and, above all, the final fate of the lost ten tribes. The latter they insist on finding here in America, and detect all sorts of Jewish customs among the Indians, which are, in truth, no more than resemblances they bear to all other peoples that live in a similar nomadic state.<sup>267</sup>

The idea continued to persist that the First Peoples' myths were associated with European Bible-centered traditions, even that the Native Americans might be Jews themselves.

This chapter will look at the rise of newer types of anthropological and ethnographical research, including those scholars who collected accounts that were less biased, more research-oriented, and finally, held no colonizing agendas. I will also examine the works of Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, Johan Georg Kohl, and finally Paul Radin. This chapter will also bring to a close the story of the Ojibway, from Chapter One, and their capitulation to the Americans, as one of the last Great Lakes tribal nations removed from the southwest Lake Superior woodland hunting areas, to the western reservations. This period in history is important because Kohl records the cultural

---

<sup>267</sup>Kohl, 134.

lifeways of one of the Lake Superior Ojibway prior to their final relocation to reservations in Kansas.



General Map of Some Commonly Identified Tribal Nations

<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~agrandchildsheritage/victory.html>

Johann Georg Kohl arrived at the time, mid-nineteenth century, when anthropological and ethno-historical models of research and presentation were developing into the modern scientific methodology. Indeed, Kohl's abilities and skills in processing the indigenous peoples helped explain in a holistic way, our understandings of Ojibway lifeways. His insights added to the body of Native American literature that was becoming less accessible as the frontier began to fade and disappear from the sacred

landscapes of Native America. Nonetheless, what is important is that Kohl visited and lived with the Ojibway. His writings are considered unbiased as he chronicled one of the final stages of American incursion into their domain, territories, and cultural remnants of their lifeways.

### **5.1 The Rise of the Mid-Nineteenth Century Research-based Study of Native American Spirituality**

From first and early contact, assumptions concerning First Peoples belief systems had rested on the most tenuous of evidence. Some early missionaries believed many First Peoples' myth-stories were distorted versions of Biblical truths that in time had evolved into something inaccurate or *evil*. European writers often believed that Satan was responsible for Native Americans' misrepresented Christian traditions. According to Cañizares-Esguerra, the Puritans held:

The devil and his minions had exercised uncontested sovereignty over the new world for over 1,500 years, ever since Satan took a group of Scythians, his own elect, to colonize the empty land that was America right around the time the Gospel began to spread in Eurasia. Thus, the devil had time to build 'fortifications' in the New World and set deep roots both in the landscape and among the people.<sup>268</sup>

The Protestants needed to address this otherworldly presence. Some early missionaries had attempted to learn First Peoples' languages and some began to compile important dictionaries. The writers employed the dictionaries as a way to increase conversion successes. If they could use the natives' own words, understandings, and belief systems, they could help them become Christianized Europeans. Accommodationists such as John Eliot helped tribal members ease into Christian beliefs by translating the Bible into their

---

<sup>268</sup>Canizares-Esguerra, 16.

own tribal-specific languages, associating the First Peoples myth-stories with Christian traditions connections which would help increase conversion successes. Eliot established praying towns which accommodated very little of the First Peoples' religious customs and rituals. Instead of using their aboriginal myth-stories to connect the different cultural traditions, the praying town missionaries denied the First Peoples opportunities to express any form of their spirituality, although some native dress, traditions, and customs were approved. Many First Peoples permanently lost their autonomy, but their myth-stories as well once they agreed to live in the perceived *utopian* Christianized communities. This may explain why few chronicled First Peoples' proto-trickster myth-stories during that period.

Moravian missionaries, led by David Zeisberger, experienced early successes in developing and maintaining missionary towns. In fact, these towns eventually peaked at about thirty-one congregations with fifty Indian missionaries and itinerant preachers. Although the Moravians became a major denomination, they did influence and help many scattered remnant tribes to maintain some livelihood and sense of autonomy. The Moravians also collected and recorded Native American lifeways and oral traditions. Unfortunately, the data was collected after several generations of interplay between the First Peoples and the colonists, which resulted in modified myths that contained elements of dualism and other post-Columbian concepts.

By the nineteenth century, the patterns of contact between tribes and visitor-writers evolved into something more clinically scientific, and with less religious fervor, as more professional scholars chronicled First Peoples' tribal lifeways, specific

languages, belief systems, and myths or folklore. In 1846, William John Thomas introduced the word *folklore* into English. As Bascom explains:

The term culture was introduced into English by Edward Taylor in 1865, and defined in his book *Primitive Culture* in 1871 as “that complex whole which knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.” In the second edition, Tyler acknowledge that he had drawn largely from the writings of Steinheil, and “from the invaluable collection of facts bearing on the history of civilization in the *Allgemeine Culturwissenschaft*, of the late Gustav Klemm, of Dresden.” Both of Klemm’s works use the word *Cultur*, the first appearing in ten volumes published between 1843-1852. In the second, published in two volumes in 1852 and 1854, Klemm refers to *Cultur* as including “customs, information, and skills; domestic and public life in peace and war; religion, science, and art.”<sup>269</sup>

The definition of culture began to imply a more complex and holistic approach to the studies of indigenous peoples and their lifeways. The previous collected accounts were often incomplete as the early contact writers misrepresented, mischaracterized, dismissed, omitted the proto-trickster, human-animal, or personified spirit myth-stories. Yet by the mid-nineteenth century, writers began to holistically, and in less biased ways collect, record, and present the folklore and ways of life of First Peoples they studied. One early anthropologist, Franz Boas noted in his pre-1895 work with the Kwakiutl, (presumable collected in 1877): “I have spared no trouble to collect descriptions of customs and beliefs in the language of the Indian, because in these the points that seem important to him are emphasized.”<sup>270</sup> As Helen Codere explains:

The collection and translation of texts is a tedious and demanding task that anyone who has ever done such work will respond to Boas’ “. . . I have spared no trouble . . .” as to a joke he planted for them. The preliminary work of standardizing the alphabet of an unwritten language is itself a considerable task. Any adequate translations must wait on grammatical analysis. The process

---

<sup>269</sup>Dundes, 27.

<sup>270</sup>Helen Codere, *Kwakiutl Ethnography: Franz Boas* (Chicago, Illinois and London England: University of Chicago Press, 1966), xiv-xv.

involved demands almost infinite patience with the repetitions needed for checking and confirming details. Boas taught George Hunt much of the art, but it was he who made the final translation and the final editing of the Kwakiutl for phonetic and grammatical accuracy and consistency, checking all doubtful points with Hunt and others. With a sufficient body of textual materials and grammatical knowledge, the aim of obtaining unbiased ethnographical data is as nearly achieved as it could ever be. "In a text, the ethnographer has acquired data in which he is out of the picture . . ."<sup>271</sup>

The early myth-stories lacked the stringent methodologies developed after the mid-nineteenth century; therefore, they were prone to false interpretations and mischaracterizations and failed to bring out the true intent, meaning, and characteristics of the tribes described. But by the early to mid-nineteenth century, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft and Kohl presented myth materials with a minimum of biased misinterpretation and interference. This general practice was later employed by writers and scholars in the early twentieth century as a methodology used to understand and explain a specific culture. In fact, by the 1920s and 30s, "the structural or pattern approach was sweeping through linguistics, psychology, ethnomusicology, and anthropology."<sup>272</sup>

Early Protestant, Catholic, and other writers had frequently mischaracterized and misrepresented proto-trickster myth-stories and spirituality in order to help their conversion activities. If the newcomers somehow demonstrated that the First Peoples' spirituality was demonic in nature, they could then rationalize that it was their God-given right to destroy such aboriginal customs, and thus, acquire and occupy the lands of those whom they believed were in league with the devil himself. By the time the Puritans were entrenched along the eastern seaboard, they viewed nature with suspicion and fear which

---

<sup>271</sup>Codere, xv.

<sup>272</sup>Dundes, 207.

fueled their need to cut down trees and cultivate the wilderness. The primordial forests and wild land were seen as the devils' sanctuary, a view used by many seventeenth and eighteenth century Puritans to justify westward expansion into Native Americans' territories. The Puritans did not chronicle many First Peoples' myth-stories since they neither cared to understand what they considered to be twisted versions of Biblical truths, or they were involved in skirmishes and outright wars against Native Americans. Simply put, the Puritans were part of a longstanding tradition that feared the Biblical Satan. To them, he controlled not only the inhabitants, but also the vast regions of the New World, and thus, needed to be subdued.

Some Europeans engaged in missionary activity with some successes. However, it seems that most Europeans had little time or energy to learn about the cultural lifeways of the peoples they met, encountered, displaced or destroyed.

As previously stated, written evidence of First Peoples' proto-trickster myth-stories is scant. Suitable translations often were difficult to complete, and, given the biased nature of the writers' narrative accounts, numerous complications thwart contemporary understanding of First Peoples' belief systems and myths-stories. Still, "as long as there is a human curiosity or scientific interest in exotic cultures in their own terms, rather than how an observer reacted to or interpreted them, texts will be valued and indispensable."<sup>273</sup> The issue of early-contact materials tainted by problems of translation accuracy and biases is still present. In fact, the life-threatening, volatile, and dangerous situations the early Europeans faced clearly hindered the type of objective accountability seen in modern studies, it is a wonder that modern readers even have access to the scant materials collected.

---

<sup>273</sup>Codere, xv.

## 5.2 Prophets and Beliefs in the Power of the Myths

What the Europeans, and later the Americans, did not understand post contact, was that the myths were adaptable and powerful. Indeed, since they were important to Native Americans in times of strife and warfare, the myths were useful in raising not only awareness of the First Peoples' loss of territory, battles, and cultural-religious autonomies, but also in raising armies to fend off the effects of European colonization. For example, the new belief in the Great Spirit was a rejection of polytheism that fostered a rise in the revitalization movements from the 1740s to the middle 1830s. Revitalized prophets inspired and assembled different tribal bodies to fend off the influx of Europeans. As Cave notes, strong spiritual leaders invoked intense patterns of responses that called "for the regeneration of the Native American way of life" as they warned the Native Americans of the wrath of the Great Spirit if their ways of life did not return to the times before the Europeans invaded.<sup>274</sup>

Making use this imagery, Amerindian prophets like Neolin, Tenskwatawa, Seekaboo, Kenenkuk, and Handsome Lake called for a rejection of Euro-American lifeways. In fact, some prophets described visions of a burning Christian-like hell as the price for Indian past transgressions,<sup>275</sup> a reversion back to traditional cultural practices and lifeways. In short, the origins and developments of the prophet movements and the syncretic religious practices and beliefs that formed were likely drawn from some of the thematic Europeanized and Christianized elements that were introduced into their culture

---

<sup>274</sup> Cave, *Prophets*, 45

<sup>275</sup> Cave, *Prophets*, 69-70.



during the early contact period. Ironically, these images were influential in the resurgence of Native American spirituality and the rise of tribal upheaval and unrest.

By the late nineteenth century, many wars and struggles had ended in the decimation and in some cases the dislocation, of entire tribal nations, their sacred myths, and belief systems. Native Americans were fading from their ancient and natural lifeways and lands. Interested scholars started to chronicle what was left of Native American culture and belief systems.

More than eighty-five years ago, “during what has been aptly called the Heroic Age of American Indian studies, in the fieldwork of Franz Boas and his colleagues and students, who raced against the foreclosing of history”<sup>276</sup> scholars attempted to learn Native languages and recorded the literary samples of their myth-stories. The effort to collect and record Native American spirituality “can be illustrated in the work Boas did in 1890-91 and 1894 with one Chinookan informant, Charles Cultee.” Jarold Ramsey adds:

What Boas discovered in Cultee, born in 1850, was not only a linguistic informant fluent in two languages thought to be extinct, Lower Chinook and Kathlamet . . . [as] Boas managed to learn enough of the languages to transcribe and translate sixty-six narrative ethnographic texts . . . Despite such now-or-never urgencies in their work as transcribers, Boas and his colleagues managed to give some attention to those early years to the task of interpreting their collections as literature.<sup>277</sup>

Thus, mid to late nineteenth century writers began to effectively document the informants, oral traditions, and histories of Native Americans. To understand the evolution of the trickster concept, I will look at the changes that occurred within the tribes, their economies, social histories, and interactions with the newcomers.

---

<sup>276</sup> Ramsey, xix.

<sup>277</sup> Ramsey Jarold, *Reading the Fire: The Traditional Indian Literatures of America* (Seattle, Washington and London, England, University of Washington Press, 1999), xix-xx.

### 5.3 Translators and editors

It is obvious that many translators and editors distorted or even changed the tribal-specific nature of the myths. Indeed, this practice developed “courtesy of the early missionaries, what we do have is evidence of the impact of Catholic and Protestant evangelism and preaching on the mythologies of the Indians of the west missionaries.”<sup>278</sup> This practice continued beyond the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century as anthropologists, ethnologists, editors, translators, through to present day scholars were also responsible for the miscast and mischaracterized First Peoples’ myth-stories. Jarold writes:

From the beginning, North American anthropologists and folklorists have in the main followed a classicist line in their endeavors as transcribers and commentators, positing the ideal of classical precontact Native literature and relegating everything else—assimilated Bible stories, Indianized European folktale, and so on—to the status of impure curiosities. By classifying Indian traditional literature, we are, in effect, denying its historical continuities . . . So even when we get beyond missionaries’ indifference and attempt to take up Indian literature and religion seriously, there is a danger that we will impose a sort of false-classicist purity on these endeavors.<sup>279</sup>

Thus, mid-nineteenth century, writers started to categorize these tribal specific myth-stories into archetypes. The myths were not only forced into Eurocentric and Christianized categories, printed accounts of these tales were often mired with editorialized commentary and negative ideas about Native American spirituality. In fact, as noted earlier, evidence exists that several key editor-translators, like the Jesuit translator Jouvency, did not visit North America at all. Nonetheless, in some accounts, editors and translators presented the myth-stories as if they had been active participants in

---

<sup>278</sup> Jarold, 208.

<sup>279</sup> Jarold, 208-9.

the recording process, even as they introduced *their* perspectives into the documents.<sup>280</sup>

As noted earlier, Jouvency added his own distinctive feedback into the Jesuit *Relations*—and since the original documents were lost or destroyed, his interpretations and views became part of our modern misunderstanding of First Peoples’ belief systems. The confusion surrounding these mischaracterized myths gives rise to the need to investigate and include the political nature as well as the economic agendas of the missionaries, colonizers, explorer-writers, editors, and translators who transcribed these myth-stories, as well as the Native American informants who retold them.

#### **5.4 The Rise of Anthropological and Ethnological Methodologies**

As the proto-trickster myth-stories continued to be collected in the mid-nineteenth century, the reasons why researchers collected the stories began to change. The rise and elaboration of anthropological and ethnological concepts and practices allowed some mid-nineteenth-century accounts of Native American spirituality to be included in various works. These newer, social scientific researchers posited no religious agendas, nor did they have political or economic motives to dominate or displace Native Americans. The investigator simply collected and recorded data based on his scientific observations.

One pathfinder who examined the myths and cultural histories of the Ojibway or Chippewa tribal nations was Henry Rowe Schoolcraft. In 1820, during his tenure as an agent of Indian Affairs, Schoolcraft visited the “Odjibwa” nation near “*Sault* of St.

---

<sup>280</sup>Thwaites, 1:287-9.

Mary's.” His work established certain practices that helped develop the early ethno-historian methodologies.

It is important to remember how the natives’ beliefs and myths had changed, but also how the outsiders who collected these sacred stories altered them. By using newer types of scientific methodologies and principles, the next generation of presumably unbiased researchers, whose influences were more scientific in nature, were now challenging writers who had included religious or political viewpoints, and thus altered our understanding of the proto-trickster myth-stories.

## **5.5 Henry Rowe Schoolcraft**

In 1822, Schoolcraft focused his attention on “the existence of such tales among the Ojibwa nation inhabiting the region about Lake Superior.” Prior to that, he visited that area as one of the members of a corps of observation, on an exploratory expedition to the head waters of the Mississippi . . . The department of war” was to “extend a military post to the Falls or *Sault of St. Mary’s*, near the outlet of Lake Superior,” and Schoolcraft, “accompanied this force, and assumed, at the same time, an official relation to this tribe, as Agent of Indian Affairs.”<sup>281</sup> This led him to “inquire into their distinctive history, language, and characteristic traits. It was found that they possessed a story-telling faculty,”<sup>282</sup> and to collect and record their human-animal and personified spirit belief systems:

Their [the Ojibwa] traditions and beliefs on the origins of the globe, and the existence of a Supreme Being, are quite accordant with some things in our own

---

<sup>281</sup> Schoolcraft, 17-8.

<sup>282</sup> Schoolcraft, 17-8.

history and theory. They believe that the Great Spirit created material matter, and that he made the earth and heavens by the power of his will. He afterwards made animals and men, out of earth, and he filled space with subordinate spirits, having something of his own nature, to whom he gave a part of his own power. He made the one and great master of evil, to whom he also gave assimilated and subordinate evil spirits, to execute his will. Two antagonist powers, they believe, were thus placed in the world who are continually striving for the mastery, and who have power to affect the fortunes and lives of men. This constitutes the groundwork of their religion, sacrifices, and worship.<sup>283</sup>

It is clear that Schoolcraft found the Ojibway beliefs to contain elements of Christian dualism since they believed in the Great Spirit and an antagonistic evil one with great powers to affect the fortunes of men. Both Creator spirit and devil figure are vying for mastery of the world. According to Schoolcraft, these spirits need conciliation through ritual and sacrifice, whose absence would have affected “the fortunes and the lives of men.”<sup>284</sup>

Schoolcraft provides evidence that pre-Columbian myths were still part of the Ojibwa belief systems as he collected and recorded several proto-trickster types, human-animal myth-figures and personified spirit stories in his work. He writes:

They believe that animals were created before men, and that they originally had rule on the earth. By the power of necromancy, some of these animals were transformed to men, who, as soon as they assumed this new form, began to hunt the animals, and make war against them. It is expected that these animals will resume their human shapes [*sic*] in a future state . . . they believe that all animals, and birds, and, reptiles, and even insects, possess reasoning facilities, and have souls. It is in these opinions that we detect the ancient doctrine of transmigration.<sup>285</sup>

From this, it is clear the Ojibway believed in souls (or spirits) that permeated their surroundings. Nonetheless, Schoolcraft was also a product of *his* times; and like most of

---

<sup>283</sup> Schoolcraft, 304.

<sup>284</sup> Schoolcraft, 304.

<sup>285</sup> Schoolcraft, 304.

the other writers, included additional, less than sensitive commentaries on Native American spirituality:

Their narration includes a number of these fictitious tales; some of which were merely amusing, others were manifestly intended to convey mythological or allegorical information. The boundaries between truth and fiction in this instance, that the individuals of the tribe who related the tales were also the depositories of their historical traditions, such as they were, and these narrator wove the few and scattered incidents and landmarks of their history into the web and woof of their wildest tales.<sup>286</sup>

These types of remarks echoed those of the Jesuits, as well as the Puritans, other Protestants, and other non-missionary writers who posited Eurocentric commentaries and ideologies. Although Schoolcraft's opinions do not necessarily interrupt the flow of the myths he collected. He describes the lifeways and myths in a more clinical manner with observations that refrained from intrusive innuendo and negative feedback. This distinction is important because Schoolcraft did not impose his Christian beliefs on the Ojibway; rather he merely collected and recorded *their* belief systems, traditions, and spirituality.

Schoolcraft concluded that the human-animal, myth figure, and personified spirit myth-stories had great currency and that a collection of these myths would broaden understanding of the holistic nature of tribal-specific cultures and their lifeways. Indeed, by recognizing the differences between the tribal-specific myths, readers recognize their complexity and uniqueness. In fact, because there was no *one-native* tribe, there is no *one-trickster myth*, as each represented a different cultural belief and practice. Finally, the forces of European interplay recognized that as the culture changed and adapted to the newcomers, the First Peoples' myths also changed and adapted to their presence and

---

<sup>286</sup>Schoolcraft, 304.

influence as well. In fact, decades later, ethnographer, Franz Boaz would have surely agreed with this idea:

The specific aim of ethnography was to be a written record of an alien way of life that was true to that way of life and that omitted no essential. The test of authenticity and completeness was that the record disclose analysis the ‘innermost thoughts’ the ‘mental life’ of the people, that is to say, the meaning of the culture in its various aspects to the individual members of the culture.<sup>287</sup>

In some ways, Schoolcraft anticipated this new type of scholarly research, where methodologies present a complete, less biased, and more holistic understanding of a culture. He argued, “The value of these traditionary stories appeared to depend, very much, upon their being left, as nearly as possible, in their original form of thought and expression. In the original, there is no attempt at ornament. Great attention is paid, in the narration, to repeating the conversations and speeches, and imitating the very tone and gesture of the actors. This is sometimes indulged at the risk of tautology [needless repetition].”<sup>288</sup> Indeed, Schoolcraft advocated using the most correct and complete uninterrupted version of the myth, as explained by the storyteller himself, in order to obtain an accurate representation of the storytelling/myth collecting event.

Of the antiquity of the tales, the surest external evidence may probably be drawn from the lexicography. In a language in which the actor and the object are riveted, so to speak, by transitive inflections, it must needs happen that the history of its names for objects, which preserved orally or by letters, is, in fact, the history of the introduction of the objects named, and this fixes eras in the enlargement of the vocabulary. Although it’s inferences may be drawn from an examination of this branch of the inquiry. Words are like coins, and may, like them, be examined to illustrate history. A large proportion of the names of individuals in the Algic tribes is drawn from this fruitful source of Indian observation. The Great Spirit is invariably located in the sky, and the Evil Spirit, and the train of minor malignant Spirits, in the earth. Their notions of the position of seas and continents are altogether vague and confused. Nor has it been observed that they have any knowledge of volcanic action. The idea of universal deluge appears to be equally

---

<sup>287</sup>Codere, xi.

<sup>288</sup>Schoolcraft, 20.

entertained by the tribes of North and South America. The Algics certainly have it incorporated in their traditionary tales, and I have found the belief in these traditions most firmly seated among the bands the farthest removed from the advances of civilization and Christianity.<sup>289</sup>

As noted in the above passage, Schoolcraft dealt with language and vocabulary problems and these communication issues certainly tainted or miscast the myths into something different from its original intention and meanings. However, Schoolcraft acknowledges those differences, but he recognizes the difficulties in language comprehension as inevitable given the limited abilities of the interpreters. It is important to remember that the early Boasian theories on scientific inquiry into cultural lifeways, languages, and spirituality were unknown in 1839, when Schoolcraft published this account.

In an ethno-historical analysis, more suited to modern methodologies, Schoolcraft writes:

The legend of Manabozho reveals, perhaps, the idea of an incarnation. He is the great spirit-man of northern mythology. The conception of the character reveals rather a monstrosity than a deity, displaying in strong colors far more of the dark and incoherent acts of a spirit of carnality than the benevolent deeds of a god. His birth is shrouded in allegoric mystery. His is made to combine all that is brave, warlike, strong, wise, and great in Indian conception, about of moral and immortal.<sup>290</sup>

Here, Schoolcraft assesses the qualities of Manabozho in a more scientific, rational, and logical manner, rather than deriding the Ojibway beliefs in this entity. Indeed, he refrains from emotional attachment and self-interest that is the norm for today's investigative approaches to a different culture's lifeways and belief systems. In fact, modern readers will find Schoolcraft's extensive chronicling of Native American

---

<sup>289</sup>Schoolcraft, 20.

<sup>290</sup>Schoolcraft, 23.



proto-trickster myths, somewhat typical by today's anthropological standards. In fact, Schoolcraft was able to offer mostly unbiased explanations of Native American early human-animal myth-figures and personified spirit myth-stories, just before the onslaught of erroneous anthropological trickster classification systems. He argues that because the Manabozho was many things to the Ojibway, it would be erroneous for the deity to be placed into any one trickster-cultural-transformer archetypical category. The Manabozho fit any part the storyteller deemed appropriate. Schoolcraft writes:

He [Manabozho] conquers the great magician, overcomes fiery serpents, and engages in combats and performs exploits the most extravagant. He has no small share in the Adam-like labor of naming animals. He destroys the king of the reptile creation, is drawn into the mouth of the gigantic fish with his canoe, survives a flood by climbing a tree, and recreates the earth from a morsel of ground brought up by the paws of a muskrat. In contrast with these high exploits, he goes about playing tricks, marries a wife, travels the earth makes use of low subterfuges [ruses or tricks] is often in want of food, and, after being tricked and laughed at, is at one time made to covet the ability of a woodpecker, and at another outdone by the simple skill of a child. The great points in which he is exultingly set forth in the story-telling circle, are his great personal strength, readiness, resource, and strong powers of necromancy. Whatever the part he is made to play.<sup>291</sup>

Two ideas emerge from this passage that is central to this discussion. The first is the evidence of Judeo-Christian traditions in Schoolcraft's description. These were clearly present, admittedly however, some evidence of Schoolcraft imposing some of *his* belief systems on the Native Americans. These were limited to a few afterthoughts and occasionally interjections. Secondly, the Manabozho figure can fit into many Creator and cultural-transformer roles; therefore, he is indefinable, and can not, and should not be forced into some Euro-American classification system.

---

<sup>291</sup> Schoolcraft, 65.

It is important that oral traditions have been erroneously conflated with other myths from other tribes and cultures. Thus the roots of the modern world classification system were being formed and developed by outside researchers—even at the early stages of contact some scholars attempted to reconcile tribal-specific myths with other cross-cultural myths, like the Greek or Roman stories or any myths that described the figure or spirit as “tricky.”

Although Schoolcraft did not classify it as such, this *trickster-like* identification is evident very early in his accounts. For example, Native Americans often accused the Manabozho character of “playing tricks” on them while he “travels the earth makes use of low subterfuges” The Manabozho, “is often in want of food, and, after being tricked and laughed at, is at one time made to covet the ability of a woodpecker, and at another outdone by the simple skill of a child.”<sup>292</sup> Indeed, the early trickster concept is evident in Schoolcraft’s literature nearly forty years before Father Lacombe coined the term in 1878.

Interestingly, Schoolcraft did not comment on the early trickster-like myth-figures. Instead, he dismissed the Ojibway sacred myth-histories as merely fables. In an article, In a separate work, Schoolcraft writes, “But a people who live without letters, must expect their history to perish with them. Tradition soon degenerates into fable, and fable has filled the oldest histories of the world with childish incongruities, and recitals of gross immoralities.”<sup>293</sup> Here Schoolcraft reduces their human-animal and personified

---

<sup>292</sup> Schoolcraft, 65.

<sup>293</sup> Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, *Scattered Bones of Aboriginal History* (New York Historical Society Proceedings, Appended Address, 1846), 33. Originally found in *Schoolcraft’s Indian Legends*, 303.

myth-stories into childlike fables—missing the point that these were sacred traditions that had pre-Columbian elements that presumably had been passed down for generations.

The only way to verify Schoolcraft's collected stories would be to seek oral traditions from modern Ojibway storytellers to look for non-dualistic elements. But it would be difficult to consult contemporary storytellers, as an outsider trying to glean unwritten proto-trickster myths, potentially the last vestiges of their culture.

Although Schoolcraft had shown an increasing sensitivity to the peoples he described, his notes still provide readers with a sense of struggle between his newly converted faith (he later became a Christian) and his natural curiosity in Native American belief systems and lifeways, along with his scientific research methodologies and his hierarchal biases. In one sense, scholars correctly identify Schoolcraft as the “father of ethnology and folklore.”<sup>294</sup> In another, scholars erroneously identify him as such since he reduced Native American to the genre of fables-stories.

In fact, he stands accused of misnaming the *anishinabe*, calling them the Ojibwa instead. Abraham Chapman, in *The Literature of the American Indians: Views and Interpretation*, asserts that Schoolcraft had written numerous “inaccurate renditions” of Native American myth-stories:

The Traditional History and Characteristic Sketches of the Ojibway Nation (1850), is considered one of the first histories of the Indian nation written in English by and Indian. The following selection as a chapter from this book and embodies his memories. Actually the name Ojibway, also seen as Ojibwa, is a name invented by Henry R. Schoolcraft, written in English by an Indian. The following is a name invented by Henry R. Schoolcraft the author of The Myth of Hiawatha, and other inaccurate renditions of American Indian legends, which were sources of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's famous poem. Gerald Vizenor, in his book *The Everlasting Sky: New Voices from the People Names the Chippewa* (1972), writes: “In the language of the tribal past the families of the woodland

---

<sup>294</sup>Schoolcraft, xviii.

*spoke of themselves as the anishinabe until they were named the ojibway and chippewas. The oshki anishinabe are the new people of the woodland. Before white contact the people used the collective name anishinabe in general reference to the human beings of the woodland who spoke the same language. The collective name was not an abstract concept of national identity. The family was the basic political and economic unit in the woodland and the primary source of personal identity . . . Today the oshki anishinabe—meaning the new people of the woodland—are known to most of the world by the invented names Ojibway and Chippewa are not from the language of the woodland people of the past.” In an article published in the Indian Historian (Winter 1971) Gerald Vizenor proposed that the tribal names of the Ojibway and the Chippewas be changed back to Anishinabe.”<sup>295</sup>*

Native American historian Gerald Vizenor’s proposal to return the Ojibwa to the original *Anishinabe* tribal name is an intriguing idea, reflecting the fact that non-native writers took many liberties in describing and explaining Native Americans, including the incorrect identification of First Peoples as *one-Indian*. And as noted before, the “Ojibway” human-animal myth-figures and personified spirits had been erroneously defined and recast by different writers since the early contact period. The changes from their proto-trickster roots were gradual as there is evidence that the Great Spirit concept, the elements of dualism, along with other Christian imageries and customs were at times absorbed into the various polytheistic belief systems.

Christian elements were sometimes absorbed into Native American spirituality as a way to increase Native power. “In 1831, four Flatheads from Montana traveled to St. Louis to meet presumably seeking a black robe missionary who would bring his book of power. It was understood that the Flathead had heard about the book from the Iroquois who came out west to trade. Four Indians reached St Louis to see General William Clark requesting some kind of big medicine. They were looking for incantations to use on this

---

<sup>295</sup> George Copway, *The Traditional History and Characteristic Sketches of the Ojibway Nation* (London, C. Gilpin, 1850). In *Literature of the American Indians: Views and Interpretation*, ed. Abraham Chapman (New York and Scarborough, Ontario, 1975), 30.

earth . . . They believed the Bible could give them this power.”<sup>296</sup> However, the mission failed since no Jesuits responded.

New ideas were also absorbed into the sacred myth-stories of Native American spirituality. Thus, in some cases the myth-stories were altered due to the natives’ desires to acquire power or “medicine,” often associated with Christianity, more specifically traditional Catholic rituals and practices. The additions eventually and permanently altered the myths; it changed them into Christianized versions of the proto-trickster myth-stories.

### **5.6 George Copway (Kah-Ge-Ga-Gah-Bowh), Chief of the Ojibway Nation**

Different storytellers and the different audiences who listened to them also altered the tales. Eventually, many cultures accepted the newer versions of proto-trickster, human-animal, and personified spirits myth-stories into their culture. As George Copway (Kah-Ge-Ga-Gah-Bowh), chief of the Ojibway Nation explains:

There is not a lake or a mountain that has not connected with it some story of delight or wonder, and nearly every beast and bird is the subject of the storyteller, being said to have transformed itself at some prior time into some mysterious formation—of men going to live in the stars, and of imaginary beings in the air, whose rushing passage roars in the distant whirlwinds. I have known some Indians to have commenced to narrate legends and stories in the month of October, and not end until quite late in the spring, sometimes not till the month of May, and on every evening of this long term tell a new story.<sup>297</sup>

Copway’s knowledge of Ojibway culture provides unique insights since he was an Ojibway who converted to Christianity. He then received Eurocentric-style education and eventually worked as a minister. His writings are valuable because he lived in both

---

<sup>296</sup><http://www.nps.gov/archive/whmi/history/timeline1.htm> Retrieved August 29, 2010.

<sup>297</sup>Chapman, 31.

worlds and was therefore was able to bring an insider's perspective that explained Ojibway belief systems and cultural lifeways.

According to Chapman, Copway

was a chief of the Ojibway Nation. In 1830, he converted to Methodism, studied for two years at Ebenezer Academy in Illinois, became a Christian missionary among the Indians, and until his death in Michigan devoted much of his time to writing and lecturing on Indian problems from an assimilationist point of view. He was the author of five books, including a book-length epic poem . . . His last book, *The Traditional History and Characteristics Sketches of the Ojibway nation* (1850) is considered to be one of the finest histories of an Indian nation written in English by an Indian.<sup>298</sup>

As Copway explains the customs associated with the myth, he notes the value of these tribal-specific Ojibway myth-stories:

These legends have important bearing on the character of the children of our nation. The fire-ablaze is endeared to them in after years by a thousand happy recollections. By mingling thus, social habits are formed and strengthened. Hence, the hour for this recreation arrives, they lay down the bow and arrow, and joyously repair to the wigwam of the aged man of the village, who is always ready to accommodate the young.<sup>299</sup>

Here it is apparent that the Ojibwa myth-stories were part of the socialization rituals. Yet, as noted throughout this dissertation, few Jesuits or Protestants bothered to ascertain why these myths were important to the specific tribes described. Indeed, if evidence of proto-trickster or pre-Columbian myths is scant, then the intimate knowledge of why these stories were important to First Peoples is also inadequate and missing from nearly every myth described here. Copway adds that the "legends are of three distinct classes, namely, the Amusing, the Historical, and the Moral. In the fall we have one class, in the winter another, and in the spring a third."<sup>300</sup> If indeed all tribes had different myths

---

<sup>298</sup> Copway, 31-2.

<sup>299</sup> Copway, 32.

<sup>300</sup> Chapman, 31.

for different occasions, this may explain why many non-native writers often misconstrued some myths as merely fables.

### **5.7 Johann Georg Kohl**

The German writer, Kohl visited the Wisconsin Ojibway to collect and record their myth-stories and cultural lifeways—before their final 1856 removal to the reservations. His work is important because he represents a new type of researcher—one who was interested in other cultures, without the biased viewpoints. As noted earlier, unlike many other writers, translators, or editors, Kohl did not blatantly reshape the myths into something different from their original meaning and intent.

Rather, Kohl's work objectively reflected the Ojibway belief systems, but not through the prism of Eurocentrism or Christian viewpoints. As Kohl described the Ojibway Creation myths of one of the last Great Lakes hunter societies, it is clear that he represents an impartial and less biased researcher who tried to repeat the stories exactly as described by the Ojibway informant:

As in other parts of the world, there is probably no people in North America that does not have stories to explain the various upheavals in the history of creation. They tell of repeated destructions of the world through fire and water and describe a rebirth of the earth out of the wet element.

Although the Ojibway tell the history of these upheavals and rebirths with many variations, their Menaboju [a mythical person also mentioned by other Indian tribes] always plays the main part. And although Menaboju is not the original creator of the universe, in most stories he is the creator of the earth as it is now—of rivers beds, of the shapes of the lakes, and of rugged mountains as we find them today.

Occasionally during my stay at L'Anse I visited the mother of the half-breed La Fleur in the evening in her tent. She narrated for me the history of the deluge and Menaboju's second creation of the world. I will try to repeat her stories exactly, in details and in manner.<sup>301</sup>

---

<sup>301</sup> Kohl, 431-2.

Here Kohl details part of the Wisconsin Ojibway Creation oral tradition. Yet, as with many of the myth-stories already discussed, the difficulty in understanding who retold the proto-trickster myths and why always needs to be addressed. At the end of *Kitchi-Gami: Life Among the Lake Superior Ojibway*, Kohl explains the difficulties in depicting holistically the Ojibway's lifeways and belief systems: "Rapidly disappearing nations remained behind me, whom I shall never see again, and who yet appeared to me so deserving of a thorough study, when I had myself scarce laid my fingers' ends on them."<sup>302</sup> Kohl admits that he was unable to produce a complete and not entirely accurate study of the Ojibway. I have argued that few people can ever fully appreciate or completely understand another's lifeways and belief systems, unless they are indoctrinated into that culture, not received as a temporary observer. Although Kohl's outsider attempts were laudable, a complete portrait of any Native American culture was still difficult to obtain.

And not only were there significant cultural differences and moral judgments made by outsiders, there were many difficulties finding appropriate translators. In fact, as the editor of Kohl's text, Robert E. Bieder explains,

The stories in this appendix were translated by Ralf Neufang and Ulrike Böcker. The text has thus endured several translations: Kohl's informants spoke in Ojibway, his translator related the stories to Kohl in French, Kohl wrote them in German, and they are here presented in English. These translations follow Kohl's words as closely as possible, although the translators have modernized some spellings and usages chosen by Lascelles Wraxall, the translator of the 1860 edition.

It is clear that most of the myths included here have a vast array of informants, translators, and editors who helped in the process to produce and publishe these works.

---

<sup>302</sup> Kohl, 413.



Indeed, the authenticity of the European and American missionaries' and colonizers' translations remains questionable. In Kohl's case, many people were associated with the translations and eventual publication of his collected fieldwork and notes. In fact, Harry Hoijer notes that modern researchers should adhere to the following ideological precepts:

A Field student who is also an ethnologist must combine two rarely co-existing qualities: the ability to forget his own culture and immerse himself sympathetically (Einfühlung) into the primitive view-point, and the ability to forget not only his own but also his favorite tribe's standpoint, as local and subjective, in order to be prepared to view the subject at hand in broader perspective and with critical objectivity.<sup>303</sup>

Nonetheless, Kohl generally exhibited an unbiased acceptance of the Ojibway's cultural lifeways and belief systems. This approach differed from the Jesuits who were gradualists as they attempted to coerce or persuade the first peoples to convert. Kohl also differed from the Puritans absolutists, as they considered the act of conversion to be part of a strict and absolute process. On the other hand, the Moravians were accommodationists, who attempted to accept some Native American cultural practices. Yet, Schoolcraft and Kohl both were different again in terms of their methodologies. Both writers generally, but to varying degrees, employed the acceptance of the Native Americans and the lifeways they chronicled. Indeed, Kohl's work appeared less biased than any of accounts presented here.

## **5.8 Kohl's Scholarly Preparations and His Contribution to Research Methodologies**

In Kohl's need to learn and write about other cultures, he investigated and read much of what Native American material was available in Germany. Several of Kohl's friends reflected this interest as well, as

---

<sup>303</sup> Harry Hoijer, *A Navaho Lexicon* (Berkeley California Press, 1974), 340.

two were especially influential in urging his visit to America. Karl Andree, a friend who studied under ethnologist-geographer Carl Ritter at the University of Berlin . . . During the winter of 1851-51, Kohl secluded himself . . . read extensively in American literature and in accounts of American travel . . . It is not known whether Kohl read the highly popular German ethnographic novels of Charles Sealfield (Karl Post) and Frederick Gerstäcker on American Indian life or the travel Prince Maximilian of Weid-Neuwied and Duke Paul Wilhelm of Württemberg describing the Indians on the upper Missouri . . . Kohl also read the works of such Americans as Washington Irving, William Prescott, George Bancroft.<sup>304</sup>

Kohl's pioneering work resulted from these studies. He offered theories and methodologies he would later employ with the Ojibway. His story is unique because he did not compare the Ojibway to other cultures, specifically his own. By end of the nineteenth century, researchers had started to use methodologies that forced tribal-specific Native American myth traditions into one-tribe archetypes, including the forced, world-myth, modern trickster categories. Earlier, the objective had been to find similar universal themes or archetypes. As scholarship progressed, writers often expanded on such classification systems, seeking connections between the "endless variations" and "central themes," and human-animal or personified myth stories.<sup>305</sup> Kohl had simply collected and recorded the data necessary to understand and explain Native American spirituality and lifeways:

I only take the credit for having endeavored to understand them [Ojibway stories and their ways of life] correctly and to present them clearly. Everything is taken from life itself, and as much as possible I have carefully avoided repeating what has been said in other works. Some of the legends, traditions, and stories may have already been told elsewhere. But since I took them from the mouths of the people themselves, these too seemed to me very new and characteristic.<sup>306</sup>

---

<sup>304</sup> Kohl, xxi-xxii.

<sup>305</sup> Dundes, 168.

<sup>306</sup> Kohl, xxxiii.

Kohl employed a modern anthropological sensitivity but his collected myth-stories suffered from the same flaw as other non-native translators' work—the lack of the names and other pertinent biographical data. Again, the question is why did the non-native writers who collected these myths, and relied and trusted the informants who presumably knew the First Peoples' languages and cultural mores, omit such information? One answer is that Native Americans did not want some the sacred remnants of their belief systems exploited or used by the Euro-Americans. Indeed, if the tribal society collectively decided it was wrong to divulge the part of their culture and the fear of retribution and reprisal was evident, then the writers omitted the names of the informants from their narratives. However, Kohl did partially identify the woman who conveyed the myth, which may have the informant from her community.

Kohl's systematic study of religious traditions and customs, along with historical details of the Ojibway's forced westward movement, present a holistic and easily understood piece. In this regard, Kohl differed from most non-Native writers. He traveled there to study the social-cultural, political, and economic characteristics of the Wisconsin Ojibway, not to convert them to Euro-American lifeways or Christianity. Kohl collected the complete Wisconsin Ojibway Creation myth cycle. The myth is important because it has some Judeo-Christian concepts along with other features that are not.

For example, Kohl's collected "Menaboju and the Deluge" myth, is presumably different in form from its pre-Columbian roots since it contains elements of dualism. But it is also evident that the deluge myth retains some of its pre-contact, proto-trickster human-animal myth-figure characteristics. The first part of the myth is an important primary source because it qualifies as a transition between the modern and the earlier,

erroneous dualistic trickster archetypes. The “Menaboju and the Deluge” myth, from *Kitchi-Gami: Life Among the Lake Superior Ojibway*<sup>307</sup>:

“All animals,” the old woman began, “were relatives and kinsmen of Menaboju. He could speak with them and he lived together with them in great friendship. Once Menaboju had his hunting camp in the middle of the forest, far away from the whole world. Times were bad for him. The hunt was unprofitable. He had to fast, and he was starving.”

“In bare distress he went forth to the wolves and talked with them. ‘My dear little brothers, would you give me something to eat?’ The wolves said ‘Yes!’ and they fed him.

“Since he liked their food he continued, ‘Would you allow me to go hunting with you?’ They gave him permission, thus Menaboju went hunting with the wolves, and he shared their camp and their meals.

“In this manner they managed well for ten days. Then, one day, they came to a crossroads. The wolves wanted to go on the side road, but Menaboju wished to follow the wide path. They argued about their different opinions and, since both parties stubbornly persisted in their views, and finally decided to go separate ways. Menaboju asked, however, that at least the youngest wolf go with him. He loved this young wolf very much and even used to call him his little brother. The little wolf, too, did not want to part with Menaboju. Hence, the two continued on their way together while the other wolves followed the side road.

“Menaboju and his beloved pet built their camp in the middle of the forest, and they hunted together. Once in a while the little wolf went hunting all by himself.

“Menaboju cared very much for this wolf and he said to him, ‘My dear little brother, did you see the lake just west of our camp? Do not ever go there! And never go on the ice. Do you hear me?’ Menaboju said this very forcefully, since he knew that in that lake lived the Snake King, his worst enemy, who would do anything to irritate and distress him.

“The little wolf promised indeed to do as Menaboju had told him and not to do what Menaboju had forbidden, but he thought to himself, ‘Why does Menaboju forbid me to go on the ice? Perhaps he believes that I would meet my brothers the wolves there. But I truly love my brothers.’

“And he said that to himself the first evening, and he said that to himself the following evening. And on the third morning he still thought the same. He finally went to the lake and ran about on the ice looking for his brothers. But when he came to the middle of the lake the ice broke. He sank into the water and drowned.

“Menaboju waited the whole evening for his little brother. He did not come. He also waited the following day, but in vain, for the wolf did not come. And so he waited for five days and five nights. Then he started moaning and

---

<sup>307</sup>Kohl, 432-8.

mourning, and he cried for his little brother so loud one could hear it at the other end of the forest.

“For the rest for the sad winter Menaboju lived in loneliness and sorrow. But he knew well who had killed his brother. It was the Snake King. During the winter Menaboju could not get at him. But then spring finally arrived. On a beautiful warm day Menaboju went out to the lake where his little brother had been killed. All winter he had not been able to make up his mind to visit this site of horror and grief. At one place in the sand that had not been covered by the snow, he could still find his little brother’s footprints. And when he saw them he burst into mourning so loud one could hear it far and near.

“Even the Snake King could hear it, and since he was curious to find out where the noise came from, he rose to the surface and stuck his horned head out of the water. ‘Ah, there you are,’ Menaboju said to himself, drying his tears with his sleeve. ‘Now you will suffer your misdeed.’ Quickly he changed himself into a tree trunk, and in this disguise he planted himself at the shore of the lake.

“The Snake King and all the other snakes who appeared behind him were curious to find out who had started the lament. But they could not find anything wrong with the tree trunk, although they had not seen it at their lake before. ‘Stop,’ one of the snakes said, ‘be on your guard. There is more to it than meets the eye. Perhaps it is even our enemy, the cunning Menaboju.’ The Snake King immediately ordered one of his snake followers to go the tree trunk and examine it. And this gigantic snake wound his body, twenty ells [The length of the German ell between 55-80 centimeters] long, around the trunk, pressing and squeezing it in order see whether it was just wood or perhaps a living being.

“The bones in Menaboju’s body cracked, but he stood still and did not utter a sound. So the snakes calmed down and said, ‘No it is not him! We can go to sleep without fear. This is nothing but wood.’ And since it was a hot day they lay down on the sand of the beach and fell asleep.

“No sooner had the last snake closed his eyes than Menaboju slipped out of his tree trunk. He grabbed his bow and arrow and shot down the Snake King. He also riddled three of the King’s sons with his arrows. Then the snakes woke up and, slithering into the water, they screamed, ‘Alas! Alas! Menaboju is among us, Menaboju will kill us.’

“They made a dreadful noise about the whole lake and whipped the water with their long tails. Those among them who were the most apt shamans got out their medicine bags, untied them, and sprinkled the whole contents, all their charms, over the beach and all over the forest and into the air.

“Thereupon the water began to rise and to circle in muddy swirls. The sky was covered with clouds that dropped torrential rains. The entire neighborhood was flooded, and then half of the earth and in the end the whole wide world was covered with water. Poor Menaboju, frightened to death, has long since escaped. He jumped from one hill to the next, not knowing where to turn because the rising waters followed him everywhere. Finally he discovered a very high mountain where he could rescue himself. But even this mountain was soon flooded. So Menaboju climbed on a fir tree that stood one hundred ells tall on the highest peak of this mountain. He climbed to the very top of that tree while the water was still

rising beneath him. And then the water reached up to his belt, it stopped rising, either because the snakes had exhausted their charms, or because they thought they had used enough of them, believing that Menaboju could not possibly have escaped.

“Menaboju, notwithstanding his uncomfortable position held out in his tree for five days and nights, vainly racking his brain for a way to help himself. Finally on the sixth day, he saw a solitary bird—it was a loon—swimming in the water. He called him to come over and said to him, ‘Brother Loon, you are a skilled diver! Please do me a favor and dive down to the bottom and see whether you can still find the earth, without which I cannot live, or whether it is completely drowned.’ The loon did as he was told and dived down several times, but he could not get down deep enough. Time and again he came up without having accomplished anything, reporting the dismal message that the earth could not be found.

“Menaboju almost gave up hope. But on the following day he saw the stiff corpse of a small muskrat floating toward him in the waves. He caught him, took him in his hands, and put life back into him by blowing his warm breath on him. Then he said to him ‘Little brother Rat, neither of us can live without the earth. Dive down into the water and bring me some soil if thou canst. Even if it is only a little bit, even if you only bring three grains of sand, I will be able to make something out of it for you and me.’

“The obliging little animal dived down immediately and came back to the surface after a long time. But he was dead and floated on the water. Menaboju caught the little body and examined its paws. In one of the little front paws he discovered a few grains of sand or dust particles. He took them out of the paw, put them on his palm, and dried them in the sun. Then he blew them away across the water, and whatever they fell they floated on the surface. They grew and expanded, either due to the earth’s own natural power, or because it had received this power through Menaboju’s magic breath.

“First of all small islands were formed, then they expanded quickly and grew together to form larger ones. Finally Menaboju was able to jump down from his uncomfortable seat in the tree onto one of these islands. He navigated it like a raft, helping the other islands to get closer and grow together, so that in the end they became big islands and continents.

“Diligently and actively he marched back and forth arranging everything and setting up nature in its former beauty. Now and then he found small root systems and little plants that had been washed up onto the beach. He put them into the ground, and thus grassland, shrubbery, and forests appeared again. Also many stiff animal corpses were washed onto the beach. Menaboju carefully picked up all of them and flew life into them. Then he said to them, ‘Leave for your places at once.’

“And so each animal went to its place. The birds built nests in the trees. The fishes and beavers chose for themselves small lakes in the forests and rivers, and the bears and the other four-footed animals roamed above the land.

Menaboju had his long measuring string in his hand, and he walked all over the earth measuring everything. He decided on the length of the rivers, on the

depth of the lakes, on the height of the mountains, and on the shape of the lands so that everything would be in good proportions.”

At this point the old woman suddenly ended her story, but she added, “This earth that had been created by Menaboju in this manner was the first land in this world inhabited by Indians. The earlier one that was drowned in the waters had only been occupied by Menaboju and the wolves, and by the Snake King and his monsters.”

I asked her, “Does this mean that your story of Menaboju’s creation of the world comes to an end at this point? And what happened to the snakes? Did they later give up their war against Menaboju?”

Here La Fleur interrupted, “Did the story come to an end? For heaven’s sake, no! The sagas of our storytellers do not end that quickly. Even if you stayed with us for the whole winter my mother could continue telling stories every night for three months.”

I answered that in any case I would be in the neighborhood for another few days and would like to come back the following evening. And if La Fleur’s mother was inclined to go on we could take up again the thread of the story. We agreed to do that and I said goodbye and left.”<sup>308</sup>

The first part of the Ojibway Creation myth cycle, is noteworthy for three reasons.

First, Kohl did not add any of his own commentaries to the myth. Second, although there are elements of Judeo-Christian imagery, there is no indication that Kohl added them, especially as he had no interests in converting anyone. Third, the myth has a flowing narration whose expressions and storylines are logically developed. This flow enables both Ojibway and modern readers to follow the myth to its conclusion. This is different from the next three parts of the myth he collected since those myths were presented as fragmented pieces not complete myth-stories.

In the end, Kohl collected the entire corpus of the Creation and cultural-transformer myth cycle, even though he considered them “only fragments — in a way, they were fairy-tale arabesques, without beginning or end. Nevertheless, they were unusual enough to be worth hearing and retelling.”<sup>309</sup> Kohl recorded the myth-stories

---

<sup>308</sup>Kohl, 423-8.

<sup>309</sup>Kohl, 438.

from an apparently unnamed elderly woman. Kohl only refers to her as the “old woman” or “La Fleur’s mother,” instead of by her name, as did the Jesuits, Puritans, and most of the writers discussed here; the names of the informants were often omitted from their field notes as well. Not knowing the myth-teller’s identity is unfortunate since knowing who the narrator was, along with any other information would help to identify biases that might have clouded the work or the socio-cultural knowledge base. Finally, the knowledge of the person’s identity would have further proved the authenticity of the myth. Other important details also are curiously omitted, including the specific tribal dialect, as well as with the informant’s tribal authorization that allowed her to retell the myths.

Yet, what makes Kohl uniquely different for his period is that he still objectively observed, notated, and published his fieldwork, with a more holistic and unbiased sense of understanding and interpretation of the Ojibway human-animal and personified spirit myth-stories. In short, Kohl’s work is important because he conveys important and irretrievable glimpses of the fading Ojibway hunter cultural lifeways, along with their spirituality—just prior to the devastating relocation process, which moved their peoples to nearly uninhabitable reservations, destroying much of their cultural traditions, beliefs, and lifeways. In Kohl’s acceptance of the Ojibway’s cultural lifeways and their daily routines, he showed great interest and concern for presenting and telling *their* version the myth-story in a respectful and non-biased way. ‘

## **5.9 Johann Georg Kohl and Scientific Methodology**



My specific aim has been to trace the modern trickster concept to its proto-trickster roots. In doing so, I have studied a number of writers who recorded human-animal and personified spirit myth-stories—with propagating agendas. Most collected accounts incorrectly defined and described Native American spirituality as an alien and demonic way of life. In fact, almost all the early writers and missionaries omitted essential details of the peoples they encountered, leaving modern scholars the task of sorting which tribes were associated with which myth-stories, languages, and cultural lifeways.

However, Kohl was different. Although his practices were not entirely new to the those working in Native American studies and developing new scientific methodologies, Kohl's work anticipated elements of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century investigators. His extensive work, published at least thirty years before Franz Boas was accurate, non-biased, and impressive.

The claim made by Schoolcraft's followers truthfully belongs to Kohl. Kohl is more logically the "father of folklore," than Schoolcraft as he focused on what modern readers consider unbiased historical information, based on the myth-stories and practices associated with native beliefs. Kohl also often provided detailed ethnographical observations of the Wisconsin Ojibway. Kohl's work significantly embraces the holistic representations and conditions of the Ojibway. According to Robert E. Bieder:

The ethnology of Kohl was a sharp contrast to that of Schoolcraft. Kohl seemed to have empathy for Indian culture that the American lacked. As Kohl noted in *Travels in Canada*, "When I was in Europe, and knew them, [Indians] only from books, I must own I considered them rude, cold-blooded, rather uninteresting people, but when I had once shaken hands with them, I felt that they were 'men and brothers,' and had a good portion of warm blood and sound understanding, and I could feel as much sympathy for them as for any other human creatures."<sup>310</sup>

---

<sup>310</sup> Kohl, xxxi.

Kohl's work reflects the move away from early contact Eurocentric and Christianized representations. His writings are considerably more scientific—involving non-biased observations and interpretations of Native Americans' lifeways and belief systems. In fact, Kohl described their expressions of spirituality in terms more objective and with clinical representations, missing from the works of the early writers. This newer type of holistic study emerged as a more scientific and less biased observational approach to collecting, recording, and interpreting information about a tribal nation.

### **5.10 Shifts in Researchers' Methodologies and Approaches**

By the mid-nineteenth century, there was a shift in presentation and understanding of Native American cultures. The growing number of academic scholars and theorists sought to include the entire corpus of tribal specific belief system and lifeways. Most early anthropological researchers and ethnographers avoided endorsements of their own Christian beliefs, since they were not there to preach conversion. Researchers like Kohl and Schoolcraft had a different agenda: to study the cultural lifeways of the Wisconsin Ojibway and record those observations. Kohl already possessed the skills necessary to present other cultures and their lifeways to the European public. His 1855-56 surveys provided readers with unbiased and more scientific portraits of what was left of the traditional hunting societies. Luckily, for modern readers and researchers, Kohl collected and recorded just prior to the Ojibway's removal from the shores of western Lake Superior. Many woodland tribal lifeways were absorbed in Plains Amerindian traditions, leaving scant evidence of their former belief systems and lifeways. Kohl described their

economic, social, and familial organizations, and included unbiased descriptions of the religious ceremonies practiced and the ancient customs they still employed.

Yet in many ways, their lifeways were different from their pre-Columbian ancestors; some were the result of generations of intercourse between Europeans and Americans. Kohl notes: “Some traditional ways were given up, their usefulness no longer apparent or their meaning clear in the new world of the mid-nineteenth century. Still other traditions were altered, blending cultural elements derived from Euro-Americans and from other tribes.”<sup>311</sup> Kohl’s descriptions were informative and insightful, based on early scientific thought and knowledge. But what prompted a German cartographer and travel writer to seek out the Ojibway and present their story to the world?

The answer is evident in Kohl’s developing interest in the budding scientific practices, clinical observations, and accurate documentation process, part of the atmosphere surrounding European thinking of the time. Kohl’s approach to the Ojibway paralleled the late eighteenth- to mid-nineteenth century growing interests in the natural world. Newer processes of scientific inquiry into the natural world and the analysis of patterns of culture and environments were beginning to be seen in the scientific literature. By the end of the nineteenth century, many thinkers and writers used such practices as they tried to understand and rationalize the natural world around them. They did so by collecting biological and geographical samples and classifying them into neat categorical groupings.

This scientific methodology carried over into the social sciences, as researchers followed new collecting strategies. It remains important to remember, however, that non-

---

<sup>311</sup> Kohl, xvii.

natives collected and recorded the myths. This clearly affected the literary presentations of Native American belief systems as authors focused less on the myths' relationships to Judeo-Christian concepts and more on how they fit into native and world myth categories. In comparing Christianity and Ojibway belief systems, Kohl uses his typical, non-judgmental manner: "It seems to me as if they employ the word Kitchi-Manitou at times not as the proper name of a single Great Being, but as the appellative of an entire class of Great Spirits. As they have no schools or orthodox churches, the ideas they form in their minds on this subject are very various and confused. An old Indian, with whom I once talked, told me there were six Kitchi-Manitous. One lived in the heavens, one in the water, and the other four, north, south, east, and west. They were all great, but the two in heaven and the water were the most powerful, and the water god was also spiteful. This seems a tolerable extended view."<sup>312</sup>

Kohl also notes two traditional customs associated with their myths that seem rooted in pre-Columbian First Peoples' traditions but without any editorialized intrusion.

The two most usual sacrifices the Indians offer to Divinity, or the Great Spirits, are a dog and tobacco. Tobacco they sacrifice and strew everywhere; on all stones, boulders, masses of copper, graves, or other places which they attach a holy significance. The dog however, is a great sacrifice. "The dog is our domestic companion, our dearest and most useful animal," an Indian said to me. "It is almost like sacrificing ourselves. The bear is honored, but does not serve as a sacrifice: nor do they offer plants, corn, flowers, or things of the nature."<sup>313</sup>

Here Kohl is able to understand and convey that the Ojibway primarily sacrificed things or animals important to and associated with their belief systems—even if they involved seemingly Christian Great Spirit elements. And Kohl explains the seriousness and

---

<sup>312</sup>Kohl, 60.

<sup>313</sup>Kohl, 60.

sacredness of the Ojibway belief systems, once again, different from the majority of other writers.

### **5.11 Historical Roots, Polytheism, and the Ojibway**

According to Kohl, “Catholic missionaries made their appearance in the country around Lake Superior some two hundred years ago. The Bible stories and Christian legends rather pleased the savages, and excited their fancy. Had the missionaries remained permanently among them, the work so well begun might have prospered. But as the labours of the Christian missions have often been give up and then recommended, the whole resembles a garden that has been laid out and then left to itself.”<sup>314</sup> In fact, in 1640, the Jesuit Paul Ragueneau had mentioned what we now understand to be the “woodland people who spoke of themselves as the Anishinabe” in his Jesuit *Relation* narrative.

As a writer of several travel journals, Kohl detailed much about other cultures; his insights were rooted in the German practice of collecting folklore. The German methodological process marks the beginning of anthropological and ethno-historical study of native cultures. Even Joseph Campbell agrees: “The serious study of popular story began in Europe, with the Romantics. With the Grimm Brothers, the science came of age.”<sup>315</sup>

### **5.12 Ojibway Myths, Confusion and the Outsiders’ Perspectives**

---

<sup>314</sup>Kohl, 190.

<sup>315</sup> Joseph Campbell, *The Flight of the Wild Gander: Exploration of the Mythological Dimensions of Fairy Tales, Legends, and Symbols* (New York, New York: Harper Perennial, 1990), 25.

One Ojibway tradition concerns the migration of souls. In one myth-variation, concerning Paradise, Kohl asks:

Tell me, now, how you Ojibways regard the matter, and what traditions you possess of the migration of the deceased to paradise, and of the things that happen to them along the road, as well as those that await them in entering?' Here my friends began telling me of a great, straight path, and its branch and side roads, of a great strawberry that lay in the path of souls, of a river, and a serpent before the entrance to paradise. I did not readily understand it all, so the full-blooded Indian . . . began drawing and measuring, as if he were preparing a map . . .<sup>316</sup>

The unnamed informant describes "Paradise" "(Wakui, or Wakwi) as made by Menaboju. He aided the Great Spirit in the creation of the world . . . Men, such was their decree should be happy on this earth and find satisfaction in this life . . . But the Evil Spirit, involved the path that led to paradise." Indeed another informant explained what Paradise meant to the Ojibwa. Kohl could never "rightly make out whether the souls that are lost" needed to arrive. He adds:

. . . at the strawberry, or step off the bridge and are converted into toads, are the souls of the wicked and evil doers: or if those which successfully dance the tight-rope into paradise are the good and virtuous, or whether, after the Indian fashion, all depends on skill and strength. I believe, however, that the list is the case, for I questioned Indians on the subject, and when they condescended to give me an answer at all, it was in this wise; "We know that you Christians make a distinction between good and bad persons, and have separate places for them at the end of the world. We have only one place for all, and we know not whether the Great Spirit makes such a distinction, or how and in what way he separates good and bad." I must confess I praised the Indians to a certain extent, because they pretended to no opinion on this subject, and left it an open question. Perhaps they think—indeed, they hinted so much to me—that what we praise and condemn here may be judged very differently by the Great Spirit. To this we must add, that among them the ideas of bad and good, lying and truth, evil deeds and heroic deeds, are more confused than among us.

"Do your deadly enemies, the Sioux, enter your paradise?"

"Yes they replied, to my amazement; "we have already told thee that after death all war ceases. There is only one paradise for all savages and pagans. There the Indians are all related!"

---

<sup>316</sup>Kohl, 215-6.

If this be the correct view, and generally accepted, it is remarkable enough that these revengeful Indians are yet capable of forming the idea of a universal reconciliation after death.

“But how do you know all this about the nature of the path of life, as no one ever returned thence?”

“Oh” they said, “many of our tribe have been there and returned. When a man dies, our jossakids make a feast, and in their convulsions, the spirits carry them on the way of souls into paradise.”<sup>317</sup>

Here Kohl does not promote any European or Christian agendas. He simply asks several questions concerning their belief systems. The myths, whose translation moved through several languages, are indeed confusing; something is missing. There were other myths associated with the one above and those myths were part of a larger cycle of myths, all part of their cultural heritage. Obviously, a couple of years of observations did not make Kohl an Ojibway. His expertise was developing. Others like Boas and Radin spent a great deal of time learning the languages and living among the tribes they visited. Kohl admittedly spent a short amount of time but collected much material that had shows the continuation of the human-animal or personified spirits traced here.

### 5.13 Conclusion

I have attempted to trace the modern trickster concept to its proto-trickster roots. However, since the purposes and meanings of the myth-stories have changed—to such an extent that these stories are now very different from their former sacred representations—I can offer only the following: While examining the development of the trickster concept from its proto-trickster roots, I found four ideas that surprisingly surfaced.

First: There are connections between our current understanding of the modern trickster archetype and its usage in scholarly anthropological and ethno-historical

---

<sup>317</sup>Kohl, 216-7.

literatures and the early myths as collected by missionaries and others unable to understand the Native American cultural contexts. By naming the scattered first or early contact trickster-like myths that are available, I can tentatively develop the concept of a proto-trickster trope and thereby develop a working definition of the early trickster concept. In doing so, I have developed the idea of human-animal, myth-figures and personified spirits were based on the familiar patterns of stories that admittedly, these iconic definitions are similar to the same types of methodologies and classification systems employed by modern researchers. However, there are several distinctions.

Second: It appears that in their earliest forms, the myths were essentially pre-Columbian in nature since they lacked the dualism of modern myth-stories. Thus, Christian influences introduced into the First Peoples' cultures are evident in the European narratives collected shortly after the early contact period. These proto-trickster myths arguably had no identifiable evil spirits or satanic figures within the oral traditions.

Third: Many people were involved when the proto-trickster human-animal myth-figures and personified spirits were translated, collected, recorded, revised, and edited. In fact, the early missionaries and explorers mischaracterized and misunderstood many of these tribal-specific myth-traditions, and whether by choice or by design, those misrepresentations changed the structure and content of the myths themselves. In other words, the Europeans redefined or recast the myths to reflect their beliefs and not those peoples they eventually conquered. As evident in many of their writings, the newcomers posited the idea that First Peoples had no religious beliefs at all. Or they decided the inhabitants were under the dominion of Satan who had altered the Judeo-Christian traditions to such an extent that faint echoes of the Old Testament Creation stories could



be seen in the myths. Finally, the newcomers both verbally rejected the religiosity of Native Americans and thus recast these mythic wonders into something else, or they told the First Peoples what these myths meant in conjunction with Judeo-Christian traditions.

Fourth: My intent and purpose is to trace the earliest forms of trickster—identified as the proto-trickster human-animal myth-figures or personified spirits—to its modern trickster concept. However, I tried to reconstruct the myths and present them in some form of historical evolutionary pattern, something else developed. Instead of a gradual time line or sequence of development, the myths experienced an almost immediate shift. As first or early contacts unfolded, the characteristics of the myths also shifted. Initially, the myth-figures appeared to be non-dualistic in nature. However, after a short time, they included Judeo-Christian elements of antagonistic forces of good and evil. Some changes developed as normal evolutionary patterns within the tribal-specific structured belief systems, as the polytheistic intent was evident. There are many examples from numerous tribal across vast geographical and time distances. However, it is also interesting that in some of the myths presented, clouded viewpoints had appeared. The Jesuits, Puritans, and Moravians had many different translators and editors who played roles in the presentation of collected and recorded myth-figures and personified spirits. Nonetheless, the trickster can be found in the earliest oral traditions collected and recorded by the explorers, missionaries, and colonizers.

In summary, this work notes three additional points. The intent of myths themselves had changed as First Peoples began to include newcomer stories, technologies, and physical-causality explanations into their forever-changing polytheistic belief systems. The intruders wanted the First Peoples' myths to fit into their own

Christian doctrines. And it is clear that the editors and translators also wanted to fit the myths into their own canons.

Finally, the accumulation of tribal-specific proto-trickster, human-animal, myth-figure or personified spirit stories serve to illuminate the history of interactions between the Europeans and other non-native intruders. Indeed, the cultural and communication difficulties between the First Peoples and the newcomers emerged as I attempted to trace the trickster concept. In fact, many of these scattered accounts, letters, journals, or reports preserved by Euro-Americans include mischaracterized descriptions of Native American customs, rituals, or belief systems. These mischaracterizations are due to language-communication difficulties, misinterpreted translations by outsiders, editorialized comments often miscast as objective reports, misunderstood religious practices gleaned from biased observations, European immigration and warfare, intertribal hostilities, and the ever-present histories of unprecedented bio-invasions. The Eurocentric outsiders' perspectives, agendas, and hierarchal relationships, along with Christian dogmas, often cloud much of our knowledge of the Amerindian belief systems and their sacred myth-stories. This has resulted in an incomplete portrait their cultural lifeways, belief systems, and pre-Columbian-to-modern Native American trickster myths and spirituality.

Paul Radin blames the sources for the continued mischaracterizations of Native American spirituality, yet he maintains, if not developed this modern trickster concept to its incorrect archetype. He writes: "The early English anthropologists by their acumen, their interpretations, and their intuitions, laid the foundations not only for the ethnology of our own time but for the more mature ethnology of the future. In many instances where they have palpably gone wrong they have been victimized by the uncritical,

incomplete, and unintelligent manner in which the sources, on which they have been compelled to rely, were collected and presented.”<sup>318</sup>

By tracing the trickster archetype to its proto-trickster roots, I have marked the immense changes the natives had undergone since first encounters with the Europeans. Much work remains, as the search for original meaning of the trickster concept will probably never end.

---

<sup>318</sup> *American Anthropologist*. ed., Frederica De Laguna Selected paper from 1888-1920 (Row, Peterson and Company. Evanston Illinois, New York, New York.  
Radin (AA: p. 13 1929). Wedding ceremony.

## References:

### Books

- Ahglstrom, Sydney E. *A Religious History of the American People*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004.
- Axtell, James. *After Columbus: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- Axtell, James. *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Bascom, William R. "Folklore and Anthropology." In *The Study of Folklore*, by Alan Dundes. Englewood Cliff, New Jersey: The University of California at Berkeley, 1965.
- Berkhofer, Robert F. Jr. *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present*. New York: Vantage Books, 1959.
- Billington, Ray Allen and Hodges, James Blaine. *Ray Allen Billington (with the collaboration of the Westward Expansion: A History of the American Frontier*. New York and London: The MacMillan Company, 1967.
- Blackburn, Carole. *Harvest of Souls, The Jesuit Missions and Colonialism in North America, 1632-1650*. Montreal, Kingston, London, and Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000.
- Blair, Emma Helen Blair. *The Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi Valley and Region of the Great Lakes*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1996.
- Bowden, Henry W. and Ronda, James P. *John Eliot's Indian Dialogues: A Study in Cultural Interaction*. Westport, Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press, 1980.
- Brinton, Daniel G. *Myths of the Americas: Symbolism and Mythology of the Indians of the Americas*. Blauvelt, New York: Multimedia Publishing Corp., 1976.
- Brinton, Daniel. *Daniel Brinton, The Chief God of the Algonkins, In his Character as a Cheat and a Liar*. The American Antiquarian and Oriental Journal, Volume VII, No.1, 1885.

- Calloway, Colin G. *Dawnland Encounters Indians and Europeans in Northern New England*. Hanover and London: University of New England Press, 1991.
- Campbell, Joseph. *Historical Atlas of World Mythology Volume I: The Way of the Animal Powers Part I: Mythologies of the Primitive Hunters and Gatherers*. New York: Perennial Library: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1988.
- Campbell, Joseph. *Historical Atlas of World Mythology, Volume II: The Way of the Seeded Earth*. New York: Perennial Library: Harper's & Row, 1988.
- Campbell, Joseph. *The Flight of the Wild Gander: Exploration of the Mythological Dimensions of Fairy Tales, Legends, and Symbols*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1990.
- Cañizares-Esguerra, Jorge. *Puritan Conquistador: Iberianizing the Atlantic 1550-1700*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006.
- Cave, Alfred A. *Prophets of the Great Spirit: Native American Revitalization Movements in Eastern North America*. Nebraska: University of Nebraska, 2006.
- Chapman, Abraham. *Literature of the American Indians: Views and Interpretation*, by Abraham Chapman. New York and Scarborough, Ontario: C. Gilpin, 1975.
- Deloria, Vine Deloria, Jr. *Red earth, White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact*. Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing, 1997.
- Donnelly, Joseph P. *Thwaites' Jesuit Relations: Errata and Addenda*. Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1967.
- Dundes, Alan. *The Study of Folklore*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1965.
- Eliade, Mircea. *From Primitives to Zen: A Thematic Sourcebook on the History of Religions*. New York and Evanston: Harpers & Row, 1967.
- Favata, Martin A. and Fernández, José B. *The Account: Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's Relación, An Annotated Translation*. Houston Texas: Arte Público Press, 1993.
- Garrington, Gilbert J. *The Jesuits of the Middle United States in Three Volumes*. New York: American Press, 1938.
- Greer, Alan. *The Jesuit Relations: Native and Missionaries in Seventeenth-Century North America*. Boston and New York: University of Toronto Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 2000.

- Hagan, William T. *The Indian in American History*. Washington: The American Historical Association, AHA Pamphlets, 1985.
- Heckewelder, John. *History, Manners, and Customs of the Indian Nations Who Once Inhabited Pennsylvania and the Neighboring States*. Arno Press & The New York Times, 1971.
- Howell, Gerald. *The Oxford Companion to Canadian History*. Ontario: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Hultkrantz, Åke. *Religions of the American Indians*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, Ltd., 1979.
- Indians, David Zeisberger's History of the Northern American. *David Zeisberger's History of the Northern American Indians, Edited by Archer Butler Hulbert and William Nathaniel Schwarze, (Ohio State Archeological and Historical Society*. Columbus, Ohio: The R.J. Heer Printing Co., Printers, 1920.
- Jarold, Ramsey. *Reading the Fire: The Traditional Indian Literatures of America*. Seattle, Washington and London: University of Washington Press, 1999.
- Joseph, Alvin M. Jr. *The Indian Heritage of America*. New York: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1991.
- Kelsey, Rayner Wickersham, Ph.D. *Friends of the Indians, 1655-1917*. Philadelphia: The Associated Executive Committee of Friends of the Indian Affairs, 1917.
- Kinietz, W. Vernon. *The Indians of the Western Great Lakes*. Ann Arbor Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 1965.
- Kohl, Johann Georg. *Kitchi-Gami: Life Among the Lake Superior Ojibway*. St Paul, Minnesota: Historical Society Press, 1985.
- Leach, Maria and Fried, Jerome, Assoc. ed. *Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend*. Mantou. San Francisco: Harper, 1984.
- Leakey, Richard E. and Lewin, Roger. *Richard E. Origins: What New Discoveries Reveal About the Emergence of Our Species and its Possible Future*. New York: The Rainbird Publishing Group Limited, For E.P. D, 1977.
- Little, William, H.W. Fowler Coulson, and C.T. Onions. *The Oxford Universal English Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., 1937.
- López-Morillas, Frances M. *Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca: Castaways*. California: University of California Press, 1993.

- Lurie, Nancy Oestreich. *Indian Adjustment to European Civilization. James Morton Seventeenth-Century America: Essays in Colonial History*. New York: The Norton Library, W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 1959.
- Mann, Barbara Alice. *Iroquoian Women: The Gantowisaas*. New York: American Indian Studies, Peter Lang, 2000.
- McManners, John. *The Oxford History of Christianity*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Mercatante, Anthony S. *Good and Evil in Myth & Legend*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1996.
- Muldoon, James. *The Spiritual Conversion of the Americas*. Gainesville Florida: University of Florida Press, 2004.
- Parkman, Francis. *The Jesuits in North America* . Boston, 1867.
- Quinn, David B. *Black Gown and Redskins: Adventures and Explorations of the First Missionaries among the North America*. London, New York, and Toronto: Longman's, Green and Co. LTD., 1954.
- Quinn, David B.—. *Explorers and Colonies: America, 1500-1625*. London: The Hambledon Press, 1990.
- Radin, Paul. *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology*. New York: Schocken Books, 1972.
- Rae, Noel. In *Witnessing America: The Library of Congress Book of Firsthand Accounts of Life in America 1600-1900*. New York: A Stonesong Press Book, A Penguin Reference, 1996.
- Reid, John G. In *The Oxford Companion to Canadian History*, Ontario: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Schoolcraft, Henry Rowe. *Scattered Bones of Aboriginal History*. New York : New York Historical Society Proceedings, 1974.
- Schoolcraft, Henry Rowe. *Schoolcraft's Indian Legends*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1974.
- Smith, James Morton. *The Significance of the Seventeenth Century*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1972.

- Smith, John. *Captain John Smith Writings with other Narratives of Roanoke, Jamestown, and the First English Settlement of America*. New York: Penguin Putman Inc., 2007.
- Snow, Dean R. *The Iroquois: The Peoples of America*. Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell, 1994.
- Stevens, Laura M. "The Trope of the Trade in English Missionary Writings." In *The Spiritual Conversion of the Americas*, by James Muldoon. Gainesville Florida: University of Florida Press, 2004.
- Sullivan, Sam D. Gill and Irene F. *Dictionary of Native American Mythology*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Taylor, Alan. *American Colonies: the Settling of North America*. New York: Penguin Books, 2002.
- Taylor, Alan. *The Penguin History of the United States*. New York: Penguin Books, 2001.
- The American Heritage College Dictionary: Fourth Edition*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 2002.
- Thwaites, Reuben Gold. *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France 1610-1791*. New York: Pageant, 1959.
- Tinker, George F. *Missionary Conquest: The Gospel and Native American Cultural Genocide*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press and Minneapolis, 1993.
- Hitakonanu'laxk (Treebeard). *The Grandfathers Speak: Native American Folktales of the Lenapé Peoples*. Brooklyn: Interlink Books, 1994.
- Underhill, Ruth M. *Red Man's Religion: Beliefs, Practices of the Indians North of Mexico*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1965.
- Utley, Robert M. and Washburn, Wilcomb E. *Indian Wars*. Boston and New York: Houghton and Mifflin Company, 2002.
- Valentine, J. Randolph. "Linguistics and Languages." In *Studying Native America: Problems and Prospects*. Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998.
- Vanderbeets, Richard. *Held captive by Indians: Selected Narratives 1642-1836*. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1973.
- Voegelin, Ermine W. *The Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore Mythology and Legend*. San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 1984.



Wagnalls, Funk and. *Funk and Wagnalls Standard Encyclopedia of Modern Knowledge: One Volume Edition*. New York: Standard Reference Works Publishing Company, Inc., 1959.

Walden, Carl. *Atlas of the North American Indian*. New York and Oxford: Facts on File Publications, 1985.

Williams, Roger. *Roger Williams, The Complete Writings*. New York: Russell & Russell, 1963.

Wilson, Angela Cavender. *Rethinking American Indian History*, by Donald L. Fixico, Albuquerque: New Mexico Press, 1997.

Zeisberger, David. *A Life Among the Indians*. Kent, Ohio and London: The Kent State University Press, 1997.

Zeisberger, David. *History of the Northern American Indians, Edited by Archer Butler Hulbert and William Nathaniel Schwarze*. Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State Archeological and Historical Society, The R.J. Heer Printing Co., Printers, 1910.



## Web Sites Accessed

- Aboriginal legends and tales – Bibliography, Jesuit Relations, Native.  
(<http://www.jrank.org/literatures/pages/7299/Aboriginal-legends-rites.html>)>  
August 1, 2010.
- Charlevoix, Xavier De.  
([www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pierre\\_Fran%CC%87ois\\_Xavier\\_de\\_Charlevoix](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pierre_Fran%CC%87ois_Xavier_de_Charlevoix)).  
July 27, 2010.
- Charlevoix, Xavier De.  
([www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1ARTA0001527](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1ARTA0001527)) . July 27, 2010.
- Claude Charles Le Roy, Bacqueville De La Potherie,  
(<http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/turningpoints/search.asp?id=901>). July 23, 2010.
- David Cody, Puritanism in New England ([www.victorianweb.org/religion/puritan2.html](http://www.victorianweb.org/religion/puritan2.html)).  
August 9, 2010.
- John Eliot, (The Columbia Encyclop< <http://www.encyclopedia.com>>) August 1, 2008.
- La Potherie ([www.wisconsinhistory.org/turningpoints/search.asp?id=901](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/turningpoints/search.asp?id=901)) July 12, 2010.
- Lacombe, Albert ([www.geocaching.com](http://www.geocaching.com) Father. Father Lacombe. Calgary) March 16,  
2010.
- L'allemant, Jesuit, Father Charles ([www.jesuits.ca/ania2002/english/martyrs.html](http://www.jesuits.ca/ania2002/english/martyrs.html))  
September 23, 2010
- Lindsey, Lionel.  
([en.wikisource.org/wiki/Catholic\\_Encyclopedia\\_\(1913\)/Th%C3%A9odat-Gabriel\\_Sagard](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Catholic_Encyclopedia_(1913)/Th%C3%A9odat-Gabriel_Sagard)). July 25, 2010.
- Map of Tribal Nations Discussed in this Study  
[www.freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~agrandchildsheritage/victory.html](http://www.freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~agrandchildsheritage/victory.html))  
November 4, 2010
- Moravians. ([www.moravianhistoricalsociety.org/monuments/shekomeko.php](http://www.moravianhistoricalsociety.org/monuments/shekomeko.php)) August 10,  
2010.
- Petroen, Penny ([www.jrank.org/literature/pages/8084/Peter-Jones.html](http://www.jrank.org/literature/pages/8084/Peter-Jones.html))>Peter Jones  
Biography) Kahkewquonaby or sacred Feathers) August 3, 2010.
- Perrot, Nicholas ([www.nicolasperrot.org/ancestor.html](http://www.nicolasperrot.org/ancestor.html)) November 3, 2010

Puritans ([www.victorianweb.org/religion/puritan2.html](http://www.victorianweb.org/religion/puritan2.html)) August 9, 2010.

Sagard, Gabriel ([www.wapedia.mobi/en/Gabriel\\_Sagard](http://www.wapedia.mobi/en/Gabriel_Sagard)) July 25, 2010.

Spillane, E. "Francesco Gioseppe Bressani." The Catholic Encyclopedia, Robert Appleton Company. 1907. ([www.newadvent.org/cathen/02776a.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02776a.htm)) May 10, 2010

([www.nps.gov/archive/whmi/history/timeline1.htm](http://www.nps.gov/archive/whmi/history/timeline1.htm)) August 29, 2010.

Woods, J. "Jacques Bruyas"([www.newadvent.org/cathen/03024b.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03024b.htm)) March 17, 2010).

([www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?&id\\_nbr=1030&&PHPSESSID=8glb2fb8fmran59bjbug0arp51](http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?&id_nbr=1030&&PHPSESSID=8glb2fb8fmran59bjbug0arp51)) August 9, 2010.

Zeisberger, David ([www.ohiohistorycentral.org/entry.php?rec=428](http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/entry.php?rec=428)). David Zeisberger. August 1, 2010.

## Journals

Bascom, William. *The Four Functions of Folklore*. Journal of American Folklore v.68., 1955.

Doueih, Ann. *Trickster on Inhabiting Space between Discourse and Story*. Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal, Journal 67 (3): 283-311