

DALA

Digital American Literature Anthology



Unit One: Native Peoples, Native Influences

Version 1.5

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Unit One Introduction:

Native Peoples, Native Influences

Under any definition of American literature, the story of this nation's heritage must begin with the native peoples who occupied this continent before the Europeans arrived on its eastern shores. Their interactions with these arriving explorers, conquerors, and colonists are inextricably bound and woven into the fabric of the evolving cultural inheritance and the very institutions that will become a part of the United States of America.

Native American origin myths, culture hero legends, and trickster tales are some of the more recent additions to the American literary canon. Some of these materials predate the European arrival on this continent and were passed down from generation to generation through dynamic, subtly-changing oral performances. Early explorers, missionaries, English-speaking natives, and anthropologists wrote down these native stories, making them available as American literary works that we study today. However, the written versions of these once-oral tales come to readers at a cost. Critics worry about how much has been lost in the translation of these works from their original languages to English. They also worry about the loss of the dynamic orality of these tales, when they were once reshaped and adapted to a particular setting and audience as they were told aloud. Finally, they worry about a modern reader's grasp of key cultural elements that often lie beneath each tale. Still, some of the best of these stories as they exist today are informative, insightful, and entertaining and they offer a glimpse into the rich and complex foundations of a particular nation or tribe.

In reading and studying these works, scholar Andrew Wiget recommends:

- knowing the difference between "oral performance" versus "writing as a mode of publication"
- knowing typical types of native tales (origin stories, culture hero stories, trickster tales)

- understanding mythic elements of origin stories, such as "the three zone cosmos: underworld, earth-surface, sky world" and an emphasis on sacred numbers (like 4, representing the four directions)
- learning how these myths are about "boundary-setting, establishing distinctions"

See his complete essay at:

http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/bassr/tamlit/essays/native_am.html

Professor Paul Reuben expands on Wiget's advice with this introductory material, at: <http://www.paulreuben.website/pal/chap1/native.html>

Franz Boas, an early 20th century anthropologist, explains specific key concepts of native American tales from his essay, "Mythology and Folk-Tales of the North American Indians," in this manner.

Creation or Origin Stories

The idea of creation, in the sense of a projection into objective existence of a world that pre-existed in the mind of a creator, is also almost entirely foreign to the [native] American race. The thought that our world had a previous existence only as an idea in the mind of a superior being, and became objective reality by a will, is not the form in which the Indian conceives his mythology. There was no unorganized chaos preceding the origin of the world. Everything has always been in existence in objective form somewhere. (390)

. . . a number of types of origins may be distinguished, - first, origins due to accidental, unintentional occurrences; second, the formation of the present order according to the decisions of a council of animals; third, development due to the actions of two antagonistic beings, the one benevolent and wishing to make everything easy for man, the other one counteracting these intentions and creating the difficulties and hardships of life; as a fourth type we may distinguish the culture-hero tales, the narrative of the migration of men or deities who wander about and set things right. (393-394)

Trickster Tales

We shall next turn to a consideration of the trickster tales. In a sense these have been referred to in the previous group, because many of the trickster tales are at the same time origin tales. If, for instance, Coyote tricks the birds by letting them dance near the fire, and their red eyes are accounted for in this way, we have here an origin story and a trickster tale. At present we are not concerned in this

feature, but rather in the consideration of the question whether certain features can be found that are characteristic of the whole cycle as developed in various regions. First of all, it seems of interest to note the degree to which the whole group of tales is developed. It is absent among the Eskimo, moderately developed in California, probably not very prominent in the aboriginal myths of the Southwest, but most prolific on the Northwest coast, the Northern Plateaus, and in the East. Whether it is a marked feature of the Athapascan area cannot be decided at present. Some of the heroes of the trickster cycle have been noted before. Raven, Mink, Bluejay, on the Northwest coast; Coyote on the Plateaus; Old Man among the Blackfeet; Ishtiniki among the Ponca; Inktumni among the Assiniboin; Manabosho, Wishahka, and Glooscap among various Algonkin tribes, - are some of the prominent figures. Although a complete list of all the trickster incidents has not been made, it is fairly clear that a certain number are found practically wherever a trickster cycle occurs. I have already stated that one group of these tales is confined to the Western Plateaus, another one to the northern half of the continent. At present it is more important to note, that, besides these widely distributed elements, there seem to be in each area a number of local tales that have no such wide distribution. The characteristics of the tales appear most clearly when the whole mass of trickster tales in each region is studied. A comparison of the Raven, Mink, and Bluejay cycles is instructive. The background of the Raven stories is everywhere the greedy hunger of Raven. Almost all of the Raven tales treat of Raven's endeavors to get plenty of food without effort; and the adventures relate to his attempts to cheat people out of their provisions and to the punishment doled out to him by those who have suffered from his tricks. Quite different in type are the Mink stories. Here we find throughout an erotic background. Mink tries to get possession of girls and of the wives of his friends, and his tricks have almost exclusively this one object. Occasionally only a trick based on his fondness for sea-eggs is introduced. The Bluejay adventures may be characterized in still another way. Generally it is his ambition to outdo his betters in games, on the hunt or in war, that brings him into trouble or induces him to win by trickery. He has neither a pronounced erotic nor a notably greedy character. The tricks of the Plateau cycles are not so easy to characterize, because the deeds of Coyote partake of all the characteristics just mentioned. Coyote attempts to get food, and his erotic adventures are fairly numerous; but on the whole these two groups are considerably outnumbered by tricks in which he tries to outdo his rivals. (394-395)

The Culture Hero

Wherever the desire to benefit mankind is a more marked trait of the cycle, there are generally two distinct persons, - one the trickster, the other the culture-hero. Thus the culture-hero of the Pacific coast gives man his arts, and is called "the one who sets things right." He is not a trickster, but all his actions have a distinct

bearing upon the establishment of the modern order [explanations for the way things are or the proper rules for living]. Perhaps the most characteristic feature of these culture-hero tales is their lack of detail. Many are bare statements of the fact that something was different from the way it is now. The hero performs some very simple act, and ordains that these conditions shall be changed. It is only when the culture-hero concept rises to greater heights, as it does in the South, that these tales acquire greater complexity. Here may also be mentioned the animal tales that belong neither to the trickster cycle nor to the origin tales. It is hardly possible to give a general characterization of these, and to distinguish local types, except in so far as the importance of the tale is concerned. (396-396)

Key Lecture: Dr. Donna Campbell provides important approaches to learning and understanding native American works through her lecture outline at:

<http://public.wsu.edu/~campbelld/amlit/native.htm>

Questions for Each Assigned Work

Questions of Fact (often the stuff that quizzes are made of)

For each assigned piece of writing, try to record any relevant information related to reporting the facts about the story: who, what, when, where, why, and how?

Reflection and Application

What is the theme, point, or moral of the writing?

How does the author wish readers/listeners to consider the subject?

Specific Questions for Creation and Origin Stories

Note that a good deal of the American literature written by explorers, colonists, and settlers concerns itself with the interactions between these European writers and Native Americans. Be prepared to note and record observations and evolving attitudes towards native inhabitants through the writings of Columbus, Las Casas, Cabez de Vaca, Smith, Bradford, Morton, Rowlandson, Franklin, and Cooper.

Concisely describe the differences and similarities between a trickster and a culture-hero in native stories.

What are the similarities and differences between the two major types of origin/creation stories, earth-diver tales and emergence tales?

What are the similarities and differences between native origin/creation stories and other key origin/creation stories? Use the outlines below to make your

reflections.

Outlines of Five Origin Stories from Around the World for Comparison/Contrast

Babylonian Creation story - Enuma Elish (1200 BC)

- A God (Marduk) battles a Goddess (Tiamat).
- Marduk destroys Tiamat, rips her corpse in two
- Two halves are the earth and the skies
- Marduk now rules over all (other gods, too)
- Sun, moon, planets, stars, weather created and set in motion.
- Dry land (Babylon) created as terrestrial counterpart to heaven.
- Creation of men and women from blood of Kingu, Tiamat's husband
- Men and women were created to do the work of the gods

Jewish Creation Story, Genesis (600 BC)

- A single male God, YHVH.
- Universe darkness, void, no forms.
- Light created.
- Firmament created - a rigid dome over the earth separating the earth and heaven.
- Dry land created.
- Sun, moon, stars created.
- Creation of men and women, charged to obey the word of God
- God rests and sanctifies the Sabbath.
- A serpent (evil one) corrupts humans, banishment from Eden (terrestrial counterpart to heaven)
- Battling brothers, Cain/Able
- God destroys humankind with flood to start over.

Iroquois (Northeast US) Creation Story

- upper world and lower world of darkness
- Sky Woman pregnant with twins falls into the dark lower world
- Turtle creates the earth island for Sky Woman to lay on
- good twin and evil twin, fight even in the womb,
- when they are born Sky Woman dies
- good twin uses Sky Woman's head for sun, body for the moon
- good twin creates elements of the rest of the world
- good twin creates humans out of the dust, breaths spirit into them
- twins fight, good twin kills evil twin
- Evil Twin becomes the Evil Spirit

Pima (central Arizona, Southwest) Creation Story

- a void of nothingness with one being, Juhwerta Mahkai, Doctor of the Earth
- He rubs off parts of himself to create the world
- Creates ants and creates a Person (Noo-ee, Buzzard) out of his eye
- Doctor of the Earth makes mountains, seeds, sun, moon, stars
- Doctor rubs off parts of his breast to make man and woman
- First people perfect, don't die, eat everything then each other - killed off falling sky
- Second people all gray - killed off
- Third people smoked - killed off
- Sun and Moon have a child, Coyote
- Seeurhuh, Older Brother, comes out of the North
- Older brother creates humans, gives them bows & arrows
- A Great Flood kills the people, some on Superstition Mnts turn to stone
- Various gods made more people, all the various Southwestern tribes

Jicarillas Apache (Northern New Mexico) Creation Story

- all people, birds, beast live far beneath the earth in darkness
- Sun and Moon tell people to leave this world by passing up through a rift in the sky
- They pile up a mountain of sand and add seeds, growing the mountain larger
- with poles and buffalo horns a ladder is constructed to get to the rift/passage in the sky
- upper world is covered with water and Four Winds try to partially dry it out
- animals are sent up to explore (Crow, Badger, Skunk, Beaver)
- then all the people pass up to the upper world
- Sun is held back by Spider, but the people tear the web away
- the People finally find their home in the mountains near Rio Chama, northern New Mexico

Using Donna Campbell's lecture, locate specific examples of some of the literary/oral devices she describes that appear in Native American myths and legends.

Before the 1960s, Native Americans were often depicted in a negative fashion or as idealized stereotypes in western popular culture (children's books, novels, radio, TV, movies). Can you offer examples of some of these portrayals? (for example, in classic black and white western films)

How are Native Americans portrayed today in the news and in popular media?

Specific Questions related to Trickster Tales

- 1.) Google the word, "Trickster" or research it in Wikipedia. How does the meaning of the word affect the way that we think about these stories before and after reading them?
- 2.) In the Winnebago Trickster Cycle, the main character talks to the others in the story as brothers. What meaning does this have in the story and to the author?
- 3.) What is your impression of the event when the Trickster dresses up as a woman and marries the chiefs' son? How do you think the author intended the audience of the tale to understand it?
- 4.) During the episode of the Winnebago Trickster and the flower/bulb, what lesson does the author/speaker try and relate to the listener or reader?
- 5.) Close to the end of the story there is the episode of the Winnebago Trickster running into trees and asking them for directions. How does this relate to Native American Culture and what they may believe in?
- 6.) In the Sioux trickster tale, Ikto (Iktomi) is able to trick and defeat Iya, The Eater. Expand the moral/lesson of this story to contemporary twenty-first century society. What is eating/consuming/endanger the people today? Think broadly about this.
- 7.) Almost all these varied "trickster" tales are about someone being tricked, taken advantage of, poked fun at, and involves bawdy, sexual, or "bathroom" humor. What versions of these kind of tales or stories exist in modern society?
- 8.) In order for any unique culture to exist and survive, it must pass on its history, cultural background, ethics and morals to the next generation. As opposed to these Native American tales, how did or is this transfer functioning today with U.S. "culture"? How did the transfer happen with you, individually?

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Boas, Franz. "Mythology and Folk-Tales of the North American Indians." *The Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 27, no. 106, Oct. - Dec., 1914.

Campbell, Donna M. "Early Native American Literature: Brief Outline Guide." *Literary Movements*. Dept. of English, Washington State University, 2010.

Reuben, Paul P. "Chapter 1: Early American Literature to 1700 - Native American Oral Literatures." *PAL: Perspectives in American Literature- A Research and Reference Guide*. 2017.

Wiget, Andrew. "A Talk Concerning First Beginnings: Teaching Native American Oral Literature." *Electronic Archives for Teaching the American Literatures*. Ed. Randy Bass, 2012.

Other Resources

[YouTube: "Keep America Beautiful" Ad from 1970s](#)

Unit One Readings:

Native Peoples, Native Influences

[Resources for Native Peoples, Native Influences](#)

"The Creation Story of the Iroquois" Iroquois Nation/Six Nations

Central and Northern New York Region

from *David Cusick's Sketches of the Ancient History of the Six Nations* (1827) by David Cusick

Cusick, David. *David Cusick's Sketches of the Ancient History of the Six Nation*. Lockport. N.Y.: Cooley & Lothrop, 1828.

electronic text from <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/57237>

PART I.

A Tale of the Foundation of the Great Island, now North America.

The two Infants born, and the Creation of the Universe.

Among the ancients there were two worlds in existence. The lower world was in a great darkness; the possession of the great monster; but the upper world was inhabited by mankind; and there was a woman [Sky Woman] conceived and would have the twin born. When her travail drew near, and her situation seemed to produce a great distress on her mind, and she was induced by some of her relatives to lay herself on a mattress which was prepared, so as to gain refreshments to her wearied body; but while she was asleep the very place sunk

down towards the dark world.

The monsters of the great water were alarmed at her appearance of descending to the lower world; in consequence, all the species of the creatures were immediately collected into where it was expected she would fall. When the monsters were assembled and they made consultation, one of them was appointed in haste to search the great deep, in order to procure some earth, if it could be obtained: accordingly the monster descends, which succeeds, and returns to the place. Another requisition was presented, who would be capable to secure the woman from the terrors of the great water, but none was able to comply except a large turtle came forward and made proposal to them to endure her lasting weight, which was accepted. The woman was yet descending from a great distance. The turtle executes upon the spot and a small quantity of earth was varnished on the back part of the turtle. The woman alights on the seat prepared, and she receives a satisfaction. While holding her, the turtle increased every moment, and become a considerable island of earth, and apparently covered with small bushes.

The woman remained in a state of unlimited darkness, and she was overtaken by her travail to which she was subject. While she was in the limits of distress one of the infants was moved by an evil opinion, and he was determined to pass out under the side of the parent's arm, and the other infant in vain endeavored to prevent his design. The woman was in a painful condition during the time of their disputes, and the infants entered the dark world by compulsion and their parent expired in a few moments. They had the power of sustenance without a nurse, and remained in the dark regions.

After a time the turtle increased to a great Island and the infants were grown up, and one of them possessed with a gentle disposition and named Enigorio. i. e, the good mind. The other youth possessed an insolence of character, and was named Enigonhahetgea, i. e. the bad mind. The good mind was not contented to remain in a dark situation, and he was anxious to create a great light in the dark world; but the bad mind was desirous that the world should remain in a natural state.

The good mind determined to prosecute his designs, and therefore commences the work of creation. At first he took the parent's head (the deceased) of which he created an orb, and established it in the center of the firmament, and because of very superior nature to bestow light to the new world, (now the sun) and again he took the remnant of the body and formed another orb, which was inferior to the light, (now the moon.) In the orb a cloud of legs appeared to prove it was the body of the good mind, (parent.) The former was to give light to the day, and the latter to the night; and he also created numerous spots of light, (now stars;) these were to regulate the days, nights, seasons, years. etc.

Whenever the light extended to the dark world the monsters were displeased and immediately concealed themselves in the deep places, lest they should be discovered by some human beings. The good mind continued the work of creation, and he formed numerous creeks and rivers on the Great Island and then created numerous species of animals of the smallest and greatest, to inhabit the forests, and fish of all kinds to inhabit the waters.

When he had made the universe he was in doubt respecting some being to possess the Great Island; and he found two images of the dust of the ground in his own likeness, male and female, and by his breathing into their nostrils he gave them the living souls. and named them Ea-gwe-howe, i e. a real people; and he gave the Great Island, all the animals of game for their maintenance: and he appointed thunder to water the earth by frequent rains; agreeable to the nature of the system; after this the Island became fruitful, and vegetation afforded the animals subsistence.

The bad mind, while his brother was making the universe, went throughout the Island and made numerous high mountains and falls of water, and great steeps, and also creates various reptiles which would be injurious to mankind; but the good mind restored the Island to its former condition. The bad mind proceeded further in his motives, and he made two images of clay in the form of mankind; but while he was giving them existence they became apes; and when he had not the power to create mankind he was envious against his brother; and again he made two of clay. The good mind discovered his brother's contrivances, and aided in giving them living souls, * (It is said these had the most knowledge of good and evil.)

The good mind now accomplishes the works of creation. Notwithstanding the imaginations of the bad mind were continually evil; and he attempted to enclose all the animals of game in the earth, so as to deprive them from mankind; but the good mind released them from confinement, (the animals were dispersed, and traces of them were made on the rocks near the cave where it was closed.) The good mind's experiences that his brother was at variance with the works of creation, and feels not disposed to favor any of his proceedings, but gives admonitions of his future state.

Afterwards the good mind requested his brother to accompany him, as he was proposed to inspect the game, etc., but when a short distance from their nominal residence, the bad mind became so unmanly that he could not conduct his brother any more. The bad mind offered a challenge to his brother and resolved that who gains the victory should govern the universe; and appointed a day to meet the contest. The good mind was willing to submit to the offer, and he enters the reconciliation with his brother; which he falsely mentions that by whipping

with flags would destroy his temporal life; and he earnestly solicits his brother also to notice the instrument of death, which he manifestly relates by the use of deer horns, beating his body he would expire.

On the day appointed the engagement commenced, which lasted for two days, after pulling up the trees and mountains as the track of a terrible whirlwind, at last the good mind gains the victory by using the horns, as mentioned the instrument of death, which he succeeded in deceiving his brother, and he crushed him in the earth: and the last words uttered from the bad mind were, that he would have equal power over the souls of mankind after death; and he sinks down to eternal doom, and becomes the Evil Spirit. After this tumult the good mind repaired to the battle ground, and then visited the people and retires from the earth.

"The Story of Creation" Pima Nation

Central and Southern Arizona Region

from *Aw-aw-tam Indian Nights: The Myths and Legends of the Pimas* (1911) by J. William Lloyd

Lloyd, J. William. *Aw-aw-tam Indian Nights: The Myths and Legends of the Pimas*. Westfield N.J: The Lloyd Group, 1911.

electronic source: <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/38064>

"The Story Of The Creation"

In the beginning there was no earth, no water--nothing. There was only a Person, Juh-wert-a-Mah-kai (The Doctor of the Earth).

He just floated, for there was no place for him to stand upon. There was no sun, no light, and he just floated about in the darkness, which was Darkness itself.

He wandered around in the nowhere till he thought he had wandered enough. Then he rubbed on his breast and rubbed out moah-haht-tack, that is perspiration, or greasy earth. This he rubbed out on the palm of his hand and held out. It tipped over three times, but the fourth time it staid straight in the middle of the air and there it remains now as the world.

The first bush he created was the greasewood bush.

And he made ants, little tiny ants, to live on that bush, on its gum which comes out of its stem.

But these little ants did not do any good, so he created white ants, and these worked and enlarged the earth; and they kept on increasing it, larger and larger, until at last it was big enough for himself to rest on.

Then he created a Person. He made him out of his eye, out of the shadow of his eyes, to assist him, to be like him, and to help him in creating trees and human beings and everything that was to be on the earth.

The name of this being was Noo-ee (the Buzzard).

Nooee was given all power, but he did not do the work he was created for. He did not care to help Juhwertamahkai, but let him go by himself.

And so the Doctor of the Earth himself created the mountains and everything that has seed and is good to eat. For if he had created human beings first they would have had nothing to live on.

But after making Nooee and before making the mountains and seed for food, Juhwertamahkai made the sun.

In order to make the sun he first made water, and this he placed in a hollow vessel, like an earthen dish to harden into something like ice. And this hardened ball he placed in the sky. First he placed it in the North, but it did not work; then he placed it in the West, but it did not work; then he placed it in the South, but it did not work; then he placed it in the East and there it worked as he wanted it to.

And the moon he made in the same way and tried in the same places, with the same results.

But when he made the stars he took the water in his mouth and spurted it up into the sky. But the first night his stars did not give light enough. So he took the Doctor-stone (diamond), the tone-dum-haw-teh, and smashed it up, and took the pieces and threw them into the sky to mix with the water in the stars, and then there was light enough.

And now Juhwertamahkai rubbed again on his breast and from the substance he obtained there made two little dolls, and these he laid on the earth. And they were human beings, man and woman.

And now for a time the people increased till they filled the earth. For the first parents were perfect, and there was no sickness and no death. But when the earth was full then there was nothing to eat, so they killed and ate each other.

But Juhwertamahkai did not like the way his people acted, to kill and eat each other, and so he let the sky fall to kill them. But when the sky dropped he,

himself, took a staff and broke a hole through, through which he and Nooee emerged and escaped, leaving behind them all the people dead.

And Juhwertamahkai, being now on the top of this fallen sky, again made a man and a woman, in the same way as before. But this man and woman became grey when old, and their children became grey still younger, and their children became grey younger still, and so on till the babies were gray in their cradles.

And Juhwertamahkai, who had made a new earth and sky, just as there had been before, did not like his people becoming grey in their cradles, so he let the sky fall on them again, and again made a hole and escaped, with Nooee, as before.

And Juhwertamahkai, on top of this second sky, again made a new heaven and a new earth, just as he had done before, and new people.

But these new people made a vice of smoking. Before human beings had never smoked till they were old, but now they smoked younger, and each generation still younger, till the infants wanted to smoke in their cradles.

And Juhwertamahkai did not like this, and let the sky fall again, and created everything new again in the same way, and this time he created the earth as it is now.

But at first the whole slope of the world was westward, and though there were peaks rising from this slope there were no true valleys, and all the water that fell ran away and there was no water for the people to drink. So Juhwertamahkai sent Nooee to fly around among the mountains, and over the earth, to cut valleys with his wings, so that the water could be caught and distributed and there might be enough for the people to drink.

Now the sun was male and the moon was female and they met once a month. And the moon became a mother and went to a mountain called Tahs-my-et-tahn Toe-ahk (sun striking mountain) and there was born her baby. But she had duties to attend to, to turn around and give light, so she made a place for the child by tramping down the weedy bushes and there left it. And the child, having no milk, was nourished on the earth.

And this child was the coyote, and as he grew he went out to walk and in his walk came to the house of Juhwertamahkai and Nooee, where they lived.

And when he came there Juhwertamahkai knew him and called him Toe-hahvs, because he was laid on the weedy bushes of that name.

But now out of the North came another powerful personage, who has two names,

See-ur-huh and Ee-ee-toy.

Now Seeurhuh means older brother, and when this personage came to Juhwertamahkai, Nooee and Toehahvs he called them his younger brothers. But they claimed to have been here first, and to be older than he, and there was a dispute between them. But finally, because he insisted so strongly, and just to please him, they let him be called older brother.

from "The Story of the Flood" Pima Nation

Central and Southern Arizona Region

from *Aw-aw-tam Indian Nights: The Myths and Legends of the Pimas* (1911) by J. William Lloyd

Lloyd, J. William. *Aw-aw-tam Indian Nights: The Myths and Legends of the Pimas*. Westfield N.J: The Lloyd Group, 1911.

electronic source: <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/38064>

"The Story of the Flood"

[omitted text]

Then Juhwerta Mahkai got into his walking stick and floated, and Toehahvs got into his tube of cane and floated, but Ee-ee-toy's vessel was heavy and big and remained until the flood was much deeper before it could float.

And the people who were left out fled to the mountains; to the mountains called Gah-kote-kih (Superstition Mts.) for they were living in the plains between Gahkotekih and Cheoffskawmack (Tall Gray Mountain.)

And there was a powerful man among these people, a doctor (mahkai), who set a mark on the mountain side and said the water would not rise above it.

And the people believed him and camped just beyond the mark; but the water came on and they had to go higher. And this happened four times.

And the mahkai did this to help his people, and also used power to raise the mountain, but at last he saw all was to be a failure. And he called the people and asked them all to come close together, and he took his doctor-stone (mahkai-haw-teh) which is called Tonedumhawteh or Stone-of-Light, and held it in the palm of his hand and struck it hard with his other hand, and it thundered so loud that all the people were frightened and they were all turned into stone.

[text omitted]

Creation Story of the Jicarillas Apache Nation

Northern New Mexico Region

Curtis, Edward S. The North American Indian. Volume 1: Apache. Norwood, MA: Plimpton Press, 1907.

source of extext: <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/19449>

In the beginning all people, birds, and beasts were far beneath this earth, somewhere in the darkness; there was no sun, no moon. It was not a good place in which to live, because of the darkness. After a time came Chunnaái, the Sun, and Klěnaái, the Moon. They directed the people to leave the world of darkness, showing the way they were to go by passing up through a rift in the sky. But the sky was so far above that the people knew of no way to reach it, so they made a pile of sand in the form of a mountain, and painted the east side white, the south blue, the west yellow, and the north side all colors. Then they gathered seeds from all the plants they knew and placed them inside the little mountain. Chunnaái sent back his messenger, Ánltsıstn, the Whirlwind, to instruct them how to make the mountain increase in size.

Then all gathered about it and danced and sang, until after four days the seeds sprouted and the mountain began to expand and to increase in height. This continued for four days, at the end of which time the mountain seemed almost to reach the sky; but suddenly its growth ceased, and none knew the cause. From Chunnaái came Whirlwind to tell the inhabitants how two of their maidens had entered the sacred space on the mountain top and had wantonly broken and destroyed plants and fruits, thus causing the mountain to cease growing.

With two long poles and four buffalo horns, which then were straight, the people made a ladder, which, when placed on the mountain top, reached the sky. One of the four Great Whirlwinds, Níchitso, went up to see what this new place was like. He put his head through the opening, and seeing that the world was covered with water, at once descended the ladder. The four Whirlwinds then went up; White Wind rolled the water to the east, but still there was water at the south; Blue Wind rolled it away to the south, but still there was water at the west; so Yellow Wind blew it away to the west, and then there was water only at the north, which All-Color Wind quickly blew away. Then the Winds blew over the earth for four days to dry it; but they left some of the water, which flowed along in streams.

When they returned and told what they had done, the people sent Kágě, the Crow, who was wise, to view the land. They waited long, but Kágě did not return.

Then they sent Little Whirlwind, who found the Crow perched upon some dead bodies, plucking out their eyes; and because of his wickedness in forgetting the people, his feathers, once white, had turned black. Then Nagánschitn, the Badger, was sent to see if the land was good, but just as soon as he had crawled through he sank in the black mud and could go no farther, so Little Whirlwind was despatched to succor him. To this day Badger's legs are black. Next Kěldinshě́n, the Skunk, was sent, because he was light in weight; but even he sank in the mud and blackened his legs. Then the people sent Cha, the Beaver, who travelled about for a long time, and finding all the water running away in streams, built dams and thus formed many lakes. He came back and told the people that the land was good to live in, which pleased them greatly. Then they started up the ladder, and when all had passed over, it was found that their weight had bent the buffalo horns, which ever since have been curved. Thus all the people came out upon this earth at a place in the north.

During the first days the Sun did not rise above the horizon, having been held back in the east by a web that Mansché́, the Spider, had woven about him. But the people succeeded in tearing the web away, and from that time the Sun each day has travelled across the whole sky.

On emerging from the underworld the inhabitants began moving in a great circle, travelling from the north to the east, then to the south, then to the west. When any found a spot that pleased them, they settled there, and Chunnaái and Klěnaái gave them a language of their own. Four times the land was thus encircled, but each time the circle became smaller, and when the people came the last time to the north, Haísndayĭn, the Jicarillas, found their home in the mountains near the Rio Chama.

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