



Hodinöhsyo:nih Star Knowledge

2006

Words in Onödowa'ga:' – Seneca language

There are two different sets of diacritic marking systems used.

The words are left as the original authors provided them.

Every ojiso'da' (star) is said to be the soul of a departed relative.

Our speakers acknowledge that we have lost much of our knowledge about the stars but are grateful they are still doing their duty. They remind us that the stars are beautiful to look at. They dampen our plant life. They provide directions at night. The stars help us look toward the Sky World, and remember the Original Instructions. They provide us direction and make us feel good when we see them, for they are our relatives.

Stars are one of our timekeepers. When the Pleiades (Taurus) are at the zenith, Mid-Winter is to take place. When the Pleiades set on the horizon, in April-May, it is time to plant. When they rise in August the harvest begins.

Stars in the Creation Story

Songwajä:nokda'öh created a beautiful world. Light was created so that we could see and appreciate the beauty of Creation. De-io-da-son-dai-kon, Deep or Thick Darkness was created by the Creator's Brother, Flint, the Mischievous One, as a time when his dark creatures would roam the earth. The Creator made gajisöhdëo:nyo' (stars) so that the darkness of night would not be so complete. The Creator also made the T'henden hawit' ha' - He Brings the Day With Him (Morning Star) to bring the daylight as the period when the Creator's goodness could be seen.

In one version of the Creation Story, the Creator told the Ögwë'ö:weh (Original People) that if they were upright people, who have done no wrong, after they have lived their allotted days, they will ascend and live among the stars. As long as the earth shall live, the number of stars will increase. There will come a time when no one on earth will be able to count all of the stars in the sky. The stars are our relatives and a reminder of how we are to keep the Good Mind. This is why we have such good feeling when we see the thousands of stars in a clear nighttime sky.

J.N.B. Hewitt recorded a Seneca version of the Creation Story, obtained in 1896 on the Cattaraugus reservation, from John Armstrong, of Seneca-Delaware-English mixed blood, that had this passage about the stars, as identified by "she, the Ancient-bodied":

"Now, seemingly, next in order, there will be a star [spot] present here and there in many places where the sky is present [i.e. on the surface of the sky]." Now, truly, it thus came to pass. So now, there out-of-doors where she stood, she there pointed and told, moreover, what kind of thing those stars would be called. Toward the north there are certain stars, severally present



there, of which she said: 'They-are-pursuing-the-bear they will be called.' [This is the Big Dipper]

"So now, next in order, she said another thing: "There will be a large star in existence, and it will rise customarily just before it becomes day, and it will be called, 'It-brings-the-day.'" [This is the Morning Star]

"Now, again she pointed, and again she said: "That cluster of stars yonder will be called 'the Group Visible.' And they, verily, will know [will be the sign of] the time of the year [at all times]. And that [group] is called 'They-are-dancing.'" [This is the Pleiades]

"So now, still once more, she spoke of that [which is called] 'She-is-sitting.' [She said]: "Verily, these will accompany them [i.e., those who form a group]. 'Beaver-its-skin-is-spread-out,' is what these shall be called. As soon, customarily, as one journeys, traveling at night, one will watch this [group]." [It is unknown what constellations these refer to]

(Iroquoian Cosmology, By J. N. B. Hewitt, Annual Report, Bureau of American Ethnology, 21:127-339 [1903])

In another version of the Creation Story, written by Elias Johnson, Tuscarora, in 1885, we learn of the origin of the stars. The Good Minded twin, our Creator, began to create things to make the earth a pleasant place. First he made the sun from the head of his deceased mother, who died giving birth to his twin. The Creator took parts of her body and tossed them up into the skies and they turned into the moon and the stars. The brightness from these shinny sources of light made the various monsters flee the surface of the water and seek the darkness down below.

Arthur Parker recorded a third version of the Creation Story that discusses how the stars were made. Parker noted that he heard the Seneca stories from Tahadondeh (George Jimerson), Bill Snyder, (Gahweh), from Tonawanda, Frank Pierce and several others. This story was published in *Seneca Myths and Folk Tales*:

"Now Good Mind sat with his grandmother beneath the tree of light and he spoke to her of the world and how he might improve it. "Alas," said she, "I believe that only one more task awaits me and then I shall go upon my path and follow your mother back to the world beyond the sky. It remains for me to call into being certain lights in the blackness above where Heavy Night presides."

"So saying she threw the contents of a bag into the sky and it quickly became sprinkled with stars. And thus there came into being constellations (haditgwää'dää?), and of these we see the bear chase, the dancing brothers, the seated woman, the beaver skin, the belt, and many others.

"Now it seems that Good Mind knew that there should be a luminous orb and, so it is said, he took his mother's face and flung it skyward and made the sun, and took his mother's breast and flinging it into the sky made the moon. So it is said, but there are other accounts of the creation of these lights. It is said that the first beings made them by going into the sky.



“Shortly after the creation of the stars (gadjií? son’ dää’?), the grandmother said unto Good Mind, ‘I believe that the time has come when I should depart, for nearly all is finished here. There is a road from my feet and I have a song which I shall sing by which I shall know the path.’

The Sun, Moon and Stars

Harriet Maxwell, *Myths and Legends of the New York State Iroquois*, Education Department Bulletin, NYS Museum, 1908.

When Hah-gweh-di-yu, the Creator, lost his mother, he shaped the sky with the palm of his hand, and creating the sun from her face, lifted it there, saying “You shall rule here where your face will shine forever”. But his brother, Hah-gweh-da-et-gah, set darkness in the west sky, to drive the Sun down behind it.

Hah-gweh-di-yu then drew forth from the breast of his Mother, the Moon and the Stars, and led them to the Sun as his sisters who would guard his night sky. He gave to the earth her body, its Great Mother, from who was to spring all life.

Hah-gweh-da-et-gah herded hurricanes in the sky which frown with mad tempests that chased the Sun and the Stars.

Origin of the Constellations

Myths of the Iroquois, by Erminnie Smith, SI-Bureau of Ethnology, 2nd annual report, 1880-81, Washington, 1883.

Haudenosaunee tradition tells us that the sun and moon existed before the creation of the earth, but stars had been mortals or favoured animals and birds.

Seven little boys were once accustomed to bring at eve their corn and beans to a little mound, upon the top of which, after their feast, the sweetest of their singers would sit and sing for his mates who danced around the mound. On one occasion they resolved on a more sumptuous feast, and each was to contribute towards a savory soup. But the parents refused them the needed supplies, and they flew around the mound, until suddenly the whole company whirled off into the air. The inconsolable parents called in vain for them to return, but it was too late. Higher and higher they arose, whirling around their singer, until, transformed into bright stars, they took their places in the firmament, where, as the Pleiades, they are dancing still, the brightness of the singer having dimmed, however, on account of his desire to return to earth.

A party of hunters was once in pursuit of a bear, when they were attacked by a monster stone giant, and all but destroyed. The three together, with the bear, were carried by invisible spirits up to the sky, where the bear can still be seen, pursued by the first hunters with his bow, the second with the kettle, and the third who, farther behind, is gathering sticks. Only in the fall do



the arrows of the hunters pierce the bear, when his dripping blood tinges the autumn foliage. Then for a time he is invisible, but afterwards reappears.

An old man, despised and rejected by his people, took his bundle and staff and went up into a high mountain, where he began singing the death chant. Those below, who were watching him, saw him slowly rise into the air, his chant ever growing fainter and fainter, until it finally ceased as he took his place in the heavens, where his stooping figure, staff and bundle have ever since been visible, and are pointed out as Na-ge-tci (old man).

Star Stories

From Seneca stories we can conclude the following star knowledge:

Milky Way – Dja-swen'-do

Dja-swen'-do is the Milky Way, which is a procession of stars, each guiding a soul to the Sky World. Within the Milky Way is O'nio'da, the Great Sky Road for the souls to travel back to ga-o-ya'ge, the Sky Place or the Sky World. This path is also called Ga-o-ya'-de he-io-o'dio – The Good Sky Path. It is also known as the nighttime path in the sky. In the beginning there was only one path, however, the Milky Way divided into two and the people began to disagree and not follow the Original Instructions. There is a separate path for those who have not respected the Creation, that path is called O-a'-gwent, where the souls of the deceased might wander forever.

Sganyodai:yo' (Handsome Lake) described those two paths. One was narrow and on it he saw mostly footprints of children. The other was wide, mostly the footprints of adults. The purity of a child's mind led their souls to the Good Sky Path. The confused mind of the adults often led their souls to the O-a'-gwent, the other path.

Morning Star – The last star to be seen on the horizon as the sun begins to rise.

T'henden hawit' ha', He Brings the Day With Him, is the spirit of the Morning Star, to signal a special time of day when we are to send our personal thanksgiving to the Creator. One of his duties is to transform night into day. The Creator said that it was this Morning Star that provided all of the thoughts that inspired all of his work on the earth. The Creator was really transforming the Sky World chief, the Keeper of the Celestial Tree, into the daylight bringer. Therefore, at daybreak, T'henden hawit' ha' will reveal himself for a short time as the Morning Star, to be the first to see what has been created. Then Ęnde:ka:gähgwa - the Elder Brother Sun - will follow and also look upon the Creation. Soika:gähgwa - the Grandmother Moon - will then follow. The moon crosses the sky on a canoe. In this way there will never be a time when the Sky World Beings are not observing the world below.

One story relates how the Gěñ-deñ-wit-hă, It Brings The Day With It, is a female Star Woman, who precedes the Elder Brother sun and carries a torch to light the council fire of the Haudenosaunee.



Haditgwää'dāá? (constellations)

We do have some oral history about the stars, their meaning and how they have interacted with the people and other spirit beings in our universe. Our stories recall several constellations:

- 1) Na-ge-tci (old man), his stooping figure, with his staff and bundle
- 2) Niagwai hadeshe, meaning "Bear they are pursuing" is the Big Dipper constellation
- 3) Seven Brothers of the Star Cluster - The Origin of the Pleiades, or Twelve Dancing Stars
- 4) Ga-do-waas, his star belt, the Milky Way
- 5) Ji-hen-yah (Sky Witches)
- 6) 'She-is-sitting.'
- 7) 'Beaver-its-skin-is-spread-out'

THE SEVEN BROTHERS

We also have one story of the meaning of the Big Dipper. It comes from Converse, Harriet Maxwell, *Myths and Legends of the New York State Iroquois*, Education Department Bulletin, NYS Museum, 1908. Reprinted, 1974. This is a rewrite of the original:

In the early days of human existence, there were seven brothers who were all skillful hunters except one - the Lazy One. One season they hunted without success. They became hungry and their minds were affected from the long fast. One had grown so weak they had to carry him on a litter for one last hunt. One in front carried a torch. One in back carried a kettle.

The torch carrier spotted some bear tracks, but the Lazy One on the litter said that his brothers must first bathe him with their saliva. He hoped that this would allow him to share their strength. They agreed but they did not like the idea of delaying their hunt.

They followed those bear tracks for three days until they caught up to it. In order to conserve their energy, the brothers decided to leave the Lazy One behind. After they disappeared into the woods, the Lazy One leaped to his feet, full of energy and ran ahead to fight the bear, which he easily defeated.

By the time his brothers arrived, he had already skinned the bear and was cutting it up. They made a fire and began to cook the meat in the kettle. After they ate they were surprised to find that they had risen into the air and were floating high above the earth. The blood and oil from the bear had stained the leaves, making them red, orange and yellow.

They began to move about and came across the bear that they had killed and eaten and the pursuit was on once again. The bear would hide in a sky cave and come out only when the hunters are very hungry. But it took all year to chase him and in the fall, they finally killed him again, with his blood and oil dripping to the trees below.

If you look to the nighttime sky, you will see the bear-chase cluster of stars, with the hunter with



the torch at the end of the group, followed by the four brothers carrying the litter, and the man with the kettle in the middle. The Senecas call the Big Dipper constellation, *Niagwai hadeshe*, meaning “Bear they are pursuing”

NYA-GWA-IH, THE CELESTIAL BEAR

In another version of this story, The Haudenosaunee had been disturbed by the ravages of an enormous bear which was devouring their winter game.

Numbers of hunters had banded together and plodded through all the forests in search of it, but to no avail. At times it would near for a moment but then would outdistance their arrows in a most mysterious way, and the blinding snow would fall fast and thick as if to cover its tracks.

In the darkness it frequently prowled near the villages, where the terrified people would hide from its roaring voice, and a deep snowfall always followed these visitations; and baffling all their plans for its death, the Nya-gwa-ih continued to ravage of his plunder.

The winter was fierce in its cold blasts, and the snows had drifted mountains high in the forest; the trails were lost; the deer were vanishing, and their hunts were strewn with their bones which the Nya-gwa-ih had left behind him, when one night each of three brothers dreamed he had found the bear. Deeply impressed by the remarkable coincidence; on the following morning they silently left the village and started their secret hunt, accompanied by their faithful dog, Ji-eh, whose keen nose ridged the snow down to the trail.

(The oldest brother was named Tug-a-wa-ne’ and he was a braggart; the next younger, Ha-da-wa’-sa-no (Ho-we-ta-ho’) was given to much speaking and he carried the cooking kettle; and the youngest, Hos’-to’ was shy and quiet, he carried kindling for the fire.)

In their pursuing one day, they saw the bear. It had pushed under a snow bank, and was ravenously devouring a deer. So certain were they of its capture, that they cut down a small pine and made ready the fire for cooking it, but when they resumed their hunt, the bear had vanished, and there was no trail of it in the swift falling snow which had covered its tracks; and chagrined that they had been so near and had failed, they decided not to stop again until they captured it.

Having thus determined, they bundled the fire brush on the shoulders of one of the brothers, and to their belts tied their strong bags of o-na-oh, the roasted corn flour which would sustain them while they were running, and again set out on the chase.

At night they slept not; during the day they rested not; for the elusive shadow of the rapid running bear could be seen on the snow hills as they ran to the north sky.

As if avenging them, the freezing winds pursued them, the ice weighed down their moccasins, and the pitiless snow drifted near to the skies; but impelled by their dream, the intrepid hunters faltered not until they reached the end of the flat earth where it edges close to the north sky. Then the shadow of the bear disappeared, and the distant paths seemed enveloped in a vaporous



mist like a hiding cloud that floats over the water.

Yet the tireless hunters would not rest, but climbed higher and higher away from the earth, when again they saw the bear, who was now slow in its path, yet mightily as it pushed the white clouds before it, weaving an invisible net which it cast over the skies and crawled under to rest.

Astray in the strange place, the untiring hunters, who knew not fatigue nor hunger, rejoiced when they came near the bear to find him sleeping.

“We will not lose it now, and will carry it back to our people,” was their victorious cry. However, the boastful older brother falls behind. The youngest brother strikes the bear with chunk of firewood that he had been carrying. The blood of the bear dripped down and turned the male leaves red while the fat melted into oil in the heat of the chase and dripped down and turned yellow.

The listening bear slowly opened its sleepy eyes and rising in its giant height, lifted the net with its huge paws and, dragging the hunters under it, drove them far away to roam the broad skies forever! And the hunters and their faithful dog, Ji-yeh, unknowing their imprisonment under the invisible net, are ceaselessly following the snow bear, who ever eludes them.

THE SEVEN STAR DANCERS

by Arthur Parker, *Seneca Myths and Folk Tales*, University of Nebraska Press.

Now this even happened a long time ago in the days when the whole world was new. Our Creator it was (*S'hoñgwadiěnnu'kăaon*), had finished his work.

One of the first men beings lived with his nephew in a lodge near a river. The river was broad and had a wide sandy shore. The nephew received the name *Djinaĩñ'dăa'* and his uncle sent him away to dream on the shore of the river, there to stay and dream until his dream-helpers appeared. For a long time he did not eat, but drank water and sweat himself in a sweat lodge.

One night he thought that he saw a light upon the water and he looked and saw lights moving toward him. Hiding in the reeds on the shore he watched. Soon he saw seven shining young women dancing in the water against the shore and they made no splashing but went up and down. He heard them speak but could not understand what they said. He observed them all intently, for all were without clothing and were very beautiful of body. The youngest appeared the most beautiful of all. The young man watched her and thought that she would do for a wife.

Hoping to catch her he rushed out from his hiding place but the maidens were alarmed and leaped into a great corn basket and were drawn rapidly up into the sky and he looked and said, "They are dancing," (*De'hoñnont'gwěe*).

Djinaěñ'dăa' (Elk) continued his vigil and the next night he saw the dancers swing back over the water in their basket. Soon they came to the shore and alighted. Again he heard their voices



and again they began their bewitching dance. Djinaenda's eyes were upon the youngest dancer and she appeared more beautiful than ever. He waited until she danced very near to him and away from the basket, then he rushed out from his hiding place and pursued the maidens, at length grasping the youngest before she touched the basket, but she gave a leap, and the youth holding to her was drawn upward as she fell into the basket. She looked to see who held her so tightly and immediately both fell to the earth.

The maiden gazed upon Djinaenda and asked him what he wanted. "I want to marry you," he said. "You have caused me to love you."

"Then we shall be married," said the maiden, "but we must return to the sky and prepare for living upon the earth." So the basket came down and drew them into the sky.

Djinaenda was taken to the lodge of the dancing sisters and then led to the lodge of a great chief who caused him to recline upon the ground. The chief then took him apart, joint by joint and removed all his organs. After cleansing them he replaced them and Djinaenda was regenerated. He now felt very strong and able to do mighty things.

His bride now came to him and said that she would now return to the earth with him and live as his wife. The sisters then placed the couple in the basket and lowered them to the earth. They came down on the beach of the river but it was changed and there was a great village of men beings there.

Djinaenda inquired where his uncle lived but no one knew. Finally an old man said, "An old man such as you describe lived in the woods with his nephew near this place more than a hundred years ago."

The couple now tried to live contentedly but could not understand the ways of the people, and so, in time the two returned to the sky. The wife rejoined her sisters but she had lost her brightness, and Djinaenda roamed the sky world hunting game which he captured by running it down.

THE SEVEN BROTHERS OF THE STAR CLUSTER :

The Origin of the Pleiades

By Edward Cornplanter, as recorded by Arthur Parker, *Seneca Myths and Folk Tales*, University of Nebraska Press, originally published in 1923.

Seven brothers had been trained as young warriors. Each day they practiced in front of their mother's lodge, but this did not please the mother. With the boys was an uncle whose custom it was to sit outside the lodge door and drum upon a water drum, that the boys might learn to dance correctly.

In time the boys became perfect in their dancing, and then announced that they were about to depart on an expedition to test their skill. The seven assembled about the war post and began



their dance. They then went into their mother's lodge and asked her to supply them with dried meat and parched corn for their journey but she sent them away, scoffing at their presumptions. Again they danced and again returned for food. "I will not give you so much as a small cake of corn bread," said the mother hoping to restrain them. But they went back to their dance. A third time they returned but again were repulsed.

The fourth dance started and the oldest youth changed his tune to the song of *Djihaya*. With great enthusiasm he sang compelling his brothers to dance a dance of magic. Hearing the weird music the mother rushed out of the lodge and saw her sons dancing in the air over the trees. This greatly startled her and she cried, "Return, my sons! What manner of departure is this?" But the song continued and the boys danced higher and higher.

Again the mother cried, "Oh, my eldest son, will you not return?" But the eldest son would not listen, though his heart was touched. Then the mother screamed, "Oh my eldest son, will you not hear your mother's voice? Only look down to me!" Then was the oldest son's heart touched very deeply, but he did not respond, for fear of making his brothers weak.

"Oh my brothers," he called. "Heed no sounds from the earth but continue dancing. If you look down you shall fall and never more be able to dance."

The mother now gave a heart-broken cry and called, "Oh my first born son, give your mother one look,--one last look or I die!" This weakened the heart of the oldest son and he looked down toward the figure of his mother with outstretched arms, weeping for him. As he looked he lost his power to master the air, and began to fall. With great rapidity he fell until he struck the earth and penetrated it, leaving only a scar where the soil came together again.

The mother rushed to the spot and swept aside the rubbish, but no trace of her son could she find. Finally looking up she saw her other boys dancing far up in the sky. They had become the "dancing stars."

In deep sorrow the mother with covered head sat beside the spot where her first born had fallen. For a whole year she wept as she watched. Winter came and her dancing boys appeared over the council house and each night were observed overhead, but no sign of her eldest could be seen.

Springtime came and the time of budding plants. From the spot where the eldest had disappeared a tiny green shoot appeared. This the mother watched with great solicitude. It grew into a tall tree and became the first pine. This tree was guarded by the melancholy old woman and she would allow no man to touch it; she knew that it was her son and would sometime speak to her.

The winds blew and the tree swayed, it began to speak, and the mother heard. Only she could interpret the sounds that came from the waving branches, only she could see the face of the young warrior with his plumes.



A careless hunter slashed at the tree and blood flowed, but the mother bound up the wound and drove other intruders away. In time the tree bore small short feathers (cones), and more trees grew. These the hunters slashed in order to get pitch for canoes and ropes. Every winter the pine tree talked to its dancing brothers in the sky and the mother knew that her eldest son should be her comfort while she rested on this earth.

GA-DO-WAAS, HIS STAR BELT, THE MILKY WAY

Recorded by Harriet M. Converse and Arthur Parker, *Myths and Legends of the New York State Iroquois*, New York State Museum. Museum Bulletin 125. 1908.

Still another story is about Ga-do-waas and his star belt, the Milky Way.

Ga-do-waas is the guardian of the threshold to the Sky World, and dwells in the top of the sky. He has four eyes to be able to watch every corner of the Turtle Island. He used to be a hunter on the earth, however, he destroyed all the game and was transported in the sky to watch the gate through which each soul passes to immortality.

To assume his new duties he removed his hunting belt, which possessed the charm for enticing game. He began to decorate his belt with stars, casting it into space, where it spans the heavens and illuminates the path to which he guides a soul.

The light from his star belt is so strong; it blends with the path to reach down the earth, with rays stationed at each lodge where a human is dying. In this way the departing soul will not lose its way.

No human has seen these rays of light as they are visible only to the soul. The south wind accompanies the soul until it reaches the gate where Ga-do-waas watches. As the soul passes the portal, Ga-do-waas reaches into space and grasps a star, which he then fastens to his belt, thereby guiding the soul on its journey.

When the soul crosses the entire heavens, Ga-do-waas removes the star from his belt and returns it to its appointed place in space. The soul cannot enter the Sky World, the land of the Creator until it crosses the star belt. Sometimes the soul gets confused on its skyward journey and departs from the path. This can happen if the soul is disturbed. The associated star never loses its way and will search out the wayward souls and return it to its rightful course along the Milky Way.

OD-JE-SO-DAH AND JI-NEH-YAH, THE DANCING STARS AND THE SKY WITCHES

Recorded by Harriet M. Converse and Arthur Parker, *Myths and Legends of the New York State Iroquois*, New York State Museum. Museum Bulletin 125. 1908.

A hunter was teaching his eleven sons the secrets of the forest, and had them in its innermost



density where game strode unafraid in its stillness. He had taught them the hunter's step, which must fall light as the leaf that falls from the branch, and has shown them the haunts and foot signs of all of the animals, and on the morrow would find for them the deep pools where the fish shoaled in secret or hid from the sunshine; and as night had shadowed the forest in its darkness, the hunter and his sons lay down to rest.

As they slept, soft singing voices floated through the still trees, nearer and nearer approaching till they awakened Hai-no-nis, the eldest of the eleven brothers. Charmed by the weird chanting, he aroused his brothers to listen to the sorceress song, and they followed it as it led through bewildering paths to a large tree where under its branches a great circle widened its moon shadows. For a time the voices ceased, but as the brothers waited, the song was resumed in a quicker strain that turned them to swift dancing till in the frenzy of its measure, they could not cease. They implored the Night Wind to guide them back to their father, but it passed heedlessly by, and the voices led the brothers still further as, delirious in motion, they danced onward and upward until they had left the earth far beneath in their skyward flight.

Day after day, the brothers danced, and day after day the troubled Sun glanced after them but could not reach them. Night after night, the stars grew dizzy as the dancers swirled around the sky, when Hai-no-nis disappeared and song-voices faded far away.

Yet the dancers could not rest, and pitying Moon, thinking to quiet them, left her path and led them to her procession of stars which was marching across the nighttime sky. But their ceaseless dancing set the stars whirling until the Moon, frightened at the confusion, transformed them to a group of fixed stars and assigned them the change of the New Year, commanding that forevermore they must dance over the council house during the ten days of the New Year's feast.

When Hai-no-nis left his brothers he followed the voices, and discovered them to be the Ji-hen-yah (Sky Witches), promised that if they would not further torment his brothers, they should dance forever in their honor.

And so the brothers continued to dance, ever obeying the Moon, which sometimes sends them to return wandering stars that may have lost their way in the darkness.

These Sky Witches frequently descend to the earth in the darkness in search of victims for their sky feasts which they are ever celebrating.

(Only seven of the brothers are now visible because some are very small and dance behind the rest. On very clear nights those with good eyes can see the others.)

In another version of this story, the party of eleven was comprised of young men and boys, the eldest being made a chief. They were training for battle which the future should bring and asked their parents to furnish them food to eat during their period of training. The request was refused several times. The chief lifted their spirits by singing and beating the water drum whose ringing rhythm charmed their feet to the war dance. Their spirits were high when they finished the dance and again they asked their parents for food.



Refused once more, the Chief became angry and took up the drum and said: "we will dance ourselves away from the earth and leave forever."

He sang the Ji-ha-ya (witch) song and roused the dancers to high enthusiasm, bade them dance and look upward and listen to no plea that might be wailed up through the trees. Thus they danced up to the sky, all unheeding of the cries of terror and distress from below, save one who looked down and fell to the earth.

One story tells that it was the Chief of the skyward dancers who looked down after hearing the cries of his mother. He immediately fell like a stone into the soft mud below. He struck the clay and disappeared within the earth. The mother mourned for one year and watched over the spot where he entered the earth. When springtime came she saw a tiny green shoot sprouting through the sod. When the years passed by, it became a lofty evergreen tree and people called it O'-so'-ä (ge-i). [O'so:ä' is Seneca for White Pine].

The White Pine was the first of its kind and the soul and body of the chief were in it. From time to time, the people could hear it sighing and moaning to its brothers in the heavens at night. Once a thoughtless warrior slashed the bark of the White Pine and red blood poured out, and it was human blood. Eventually, "feathers" dropped from the headdress (wide branches) of the O'so:ä'-Chief, that sprouted into many pine trees, which produce a useful thick sticky blood, called pine pitch.

(The two top-most branches of the White Pine point east and west, providing a natural compass.)

THE TWELVE STARS

Seneca Fiction, Legends and Myths, collected by Jeremiah Curtin and J. N. B. Hewitt, edited by J. N. B. Hewitt, *Thirty-Second Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, 1910-1911*, Washington, D.C., 1918

Twelve children were playing together on the grass near their fathers' cabins. They thought they would play a new game, and they invented one. They joined hands in a circle and danced, not swinging around, but standing in one place. As they danced they sang: "We are dancing. We are dancing."

Their parents were watching them and listening to their song, when all at once they noticed that their feet did not touch the ground. The parents were frightened and ran out to stop the dancing, but the children were already above their heads in the air and going higher and higher, always singing: "We are dancing. We are dancing."

They went up and up until they disappeared, still holding hands, and they were next seen as twelve stars in the heavens just above their fathers' cabins. One got a little out of the circle and therefore appears a little at one side of the others.



Curtain recorded another story involving the Morning Star saving the victim of an evil-minded grandmother:

**THE MAN-EATING WIFE, THE LITTLE OLD WOMAN AND THE
MORNING STAR**

(told by John Armstrong)

A man and a woman lived by themselves in a clearing in the forest. The man hunted; the woman raised beans and corn.

One day, when the woman sat in front of the fire baking an ash cake, a large spark flew out and burned her. She rubbed the spot with her finger, and when it began to blister she wet her finger in her mouth and rubbed the blister; in this way she got the taste of her own flesh, and she liked it.

She took a flint knife, cut out the burnt piece of flesh and ate it. The taste was so agreeable that she took a coal of fire, burned another place on her arm, cut out the flesh and ate it. The desire grew upon her and she kept burning and eating herself till she had eaten all the flesh she could reach on her arms and legs.

The man had a dog that was wise and was his friend. The dog sat by the fire and watched the woman. When she was about half through eating herself, she said to him, "You had better go and tell your friend to run away and to take you with him. If he doesn't hurry off, I shall eat both of you."

The dog ran as fast as he could and when he came to where the man was hunting, he told him what had happened, that his wife had become an ONGWEIAS (Man-eater) and was going to eat herself and then eat them.

The man and the dog started off. The dog's legs were short; he couldn't run fast, so the man put him in a hollow tree and commanded him to become punk. The dog was willing, for he wanted his master to save himself. The man went on as fast as he could till he came to a river with high banks. By the river sat an old man.

"Grandfather," said the man, "I am in great trouble. Put me across the river; save me, my wife is following me, she wants to kill and eat me."

"I know she is following you," said the old man, "but she is still a long way off. I will put you across but first you must bring me a basketful of fish from my fish pond."

The man went for the fish. The pond was enclosed. On the bank was a basket with a handle. The man caught a large number of fish, filled the basket and carried it to the old man, who cooked the fish and then said, "Sit down and eat with me."

They ate together, then the old man said, "Now you must bring me a basketful of groundnuts."



The man ran to the old man's garden, dug up the groundnuts as quickly as possible and carried them to him. After he had cooked and eaten the nuts, he said, "Now I will put you across the river."

He lay down at the edge of the water and, leaning on his elbows, stretched his neck to the opposite bank, and called out, "Walk across on my neck, but be careful, I am not as strong as I used to be."

The man walked over carefully, then the old man bade him, good-bye, saying, "Far off in the west you will come to a large bark house; that house belongs to your three aunts; they will help you."

After the women sent the dog away, she took a stick, and pushing the marrow out of her bones, ate it. She filled her bones with pebbles and the pebbles rattled as she moved. Every little while she stopped eating and danced and when she heard the stones rattle in her legs and arms, she said, "Oh, that sounds good!"

The woman devoured everything in the cabin, meat, bread, skins, everything that could be eaten, and when there was nothing left she started off to find her husband. She came upon his tracks and followed them. Once in a while she stopped and danced and listened with delight to the rattle of the pebbles in her bones; then she went on again. When she came to the bank of the river and saw the old ferryman she screamed to him, "Old man, come and put me across the river; I am following my husband. Be quick!"

The fisherman turned slowly toward her, and said, "I can't put you across. There is no crossing for a woman who is chasing her husband to catch and eat him."

But the woman urged and begged till at last the old man said, "I'll put you across, but first you must bring me a basketful of fish, and dig me a basketful of groundnuts."

She brought the fish and the nuts, but when they were cooked she wouldn't eat with the old man. She would eat nothing now but human flesh.

After the old man had eaten the fish and the nuts he stretched his neck across the river but in the form of a horse's neck, very narrow and arching. The woman was angry, and asked, "How do you think I am going to walk on that?"

"You can do as you like," answered he, "I am old. I can't make my neck flat; it would break. As it is you must walk carefully."

No matter how the woman raged, she had to stay where she was or cross on the arched neck. At last she started, picking her steps and scolding as she went.



The water was deep and full of terrible creatures. When the woman reached the middle of the river the old man, angry because she scolded, jerked his neck. She fell into the water and that minute was seized and devoured all except her stomach; that floated down the river and past the house of the three aunts.

The woman's life was in her stomach. The aunts were watching, for their nephew had been at the house and they had promised to help him; they caught the stomach, chopped it up and killed it.

[This section rewritten] In the meanwhile the husband came to the lodge of his three aunts and they told him to keep moving and that they would aid him. He continued on to a woods and he saw a young woman collecting sticks for fuel. When she asked him where he was going, he said, "I am going on until I find pleasant people to live with." The young woman asked him to remain as her husband, promising him a good life if he could manage her grandmother, who was a little old troublesome woman.

The hunter decided to remain. When he met her grandmother, she was about half the size of ordinary people, but quite stout. The grandmother was surprised to see him but told her granddaughter to take him in the lodge, let him rest and feed him.

Once inside, the grandmother took a club and began to beat her granddaughter, saying: "Oh! You like too well to have a husband." The young woman took the beating without making any defense.

At night, the grandmother insisted that the husband sleep with her instead. Once in bed, she covered them tightly with a skin, fastened on all sides, so the man could scarcely breathe. The old woman tried to smother the husband, who was saved by a small fetish hidden in his bosom. When morning arrived, he was still alive. The old woman left him in peace and he enjoyed the company of his wife.

One day, the old woman said that they had to go to an island to hunt. The island was low and in the middle was a very deep lake. When they landed their canoes, the old woman instructed the husband where to stand and that she would drive the game to him. As he walked toward the spot she pointed out, he heard a sound and saw the old woman paddling away as fast as she could.

He noticed that the high water marks were very high, so he sought out the tallest tree for the night. The water began to rise, and kept rising. At dawn he saw that all of the shorter trees were submerged, while around him were a great number of monsters waiting to devour him.

While looking for an avenue of escape he noticed the Morning Star shining brightly in the east. Remembering that the Morning Star had previously promised him in a dream to help him in times of peril, he prayed that the Morning Star would hasten the coming of the day, as he believed that daylight would make the waters recede.

He cried in anguish in his mind: "Oh, Morning Star! Hasten the Orb of Day. You promised when I was young that you would help me if ever I should be in great peril."



Now the Morning Star lived in a beautiful lodge, with a small boy as an assistant. Hearing the voice of the hunter; he called out to the boy: "Who is that shouting on the island?"

The small boy replied: "Oh! That is the husband of the little old woman's granddaughter. He said you promised to help him"

"Oh, yes!" replied the Morning Star, "I did promise him so. Let the Orb of Day come at once."

Daylight arrived and the waters subsided. The hunter went back to the land place, buried himself in the sand, leaving only his nostrils and one eye exposed. The old woman returned, landed the canoe and said to herself: "The flesh of my granddaughter's husband has been eaten by this time, so I will eat some of his bone marrow."

She searched the island for his bones. The hunter watched from his hiding place and when she wandered off, he sprang up and launched the canoe. Once he got away, the grandmother saw him and shouted for him to return, promising that she will not trick him again. "I will love you," she said. The hunter refused her, "You shall play no more tricks on me," as he paddled away.

When night came, the waters rose again. The old woman climbed to the top of the tallest pine tree to escape the monsters. Before sunrise, the waters reached the top of the tree and in desperation she called out to the Morning Star. "When I was young, you promised to help me if ever I were in distress. Help me now."

[return to the original story] The Morning Star heard the voice and called to his boy, "Is that man on the island yet?"

"Oh, no!" answered the boy. "He got off yesterday; that is the little old woman herself. She says that, when she was young, you promised in a dream that if ever she were in trouble you would help her."

"Oh, no!" said the Morning Star. "I never had any conversation with that old woman, I never made her any promise."

The Morning Star went to sleep and let day come at its own time. The water rose until it reached the top of the pine tree, then the creatures of the lake seized the little old woman and ate her up.

The man went home to his wife and they lived happily ever after.