



## Gëönda'shë'oh Ge:idö'(Trees)

As the spring takes hold, men would take to the woods to strip bark from various trees as needed for houses, containers and canoes. As the tree sap begins to flow, the bark is easier to strip off. Bark would be taken from the following trees:

<b>White Birch</b> ( <i>Betula papyrifera</i> ) gyeh		M = Watenake:tarons	T = oo na
<b>Red Elm</b> ( <i>Ulmus rubra</i> ) gwas	S = gäägä:'gowa:h	M = Aka:ratsi	T = Ga rat
<b>American Elm</b> ( <i>Ulmus americana</i> ) gwas		M = okaratsi	T = Ga rat
<b>Red Oak</b> ( <i>Quercus rubra</i> ) <b>Basswood</b> ( <i>Tilia americana</i> ) sta'	S =	M = karihton M = Ohosera	T = Ru?ne tuk T = Ooh ooh
<b>Shagbark Hickory</b> ( <i>Carya ovata</i> )		M = onennohkara	T = Roo'da'sf
<b>Red Cedar</b> – nyeh		M = Onen'takwenhten:tshera	T = Ha neh
<b>Cucumber</b>			

## Is the Celestial Tree a Tree of Life or a Deadly Plant?

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We have all become familiar with our Creation Story. We now have more people who know the basic premise behind the creation of the Great Turtle Island, Sky Woman, and the Creation twins.

In most English versions of the Creation Story there is a reference to a great celestial tree, often called the Tree of Life, or the Tree of Lights. Modern art works depict it as a large maple-like tree, but with colorful flowers that emit light. In a Seneca version the tree is called the standing tree, named *ga'it*, said to be a flowering dogwood or wild cherry tree. The flowers produced light in the Sky World.

We also know that there is an old male spirit that guards that tree, and in most versions the tree is uprooted to create a hole in the Sky Dome through which the Sky Women accidentally falls, or is pushed, or willingly leaps through (depending upon what written version you adhere to).

When UB professor John Mohawk (Seneca) wrote his doctoral dissertation on the Creation Story, he noted that in the Onondaga version from Grand River the tree was referred to as *ono'dja*, meaning “the Tooth.” John was intrigued by this and asked fluent speakers at Cattaraugus what they thought it meant. It turned out to be the Yellow Dog-Tooth Violet, also known as the Trout Lilly. This a very small medicine plant with a yellow flower that hangs



downward, but flares open with six long, curved pedals that point upward. Six long stamens hang from the center of the flower. The leaves are spotted like a speckled trout. Questions arise: What is it about this plant that was so special? Why do most versions of the Creation Story avoid mention of it? Why do we think of a great tree instead?

As it turns out the Tooth is one of several medicine plants that was used by our ancestors to prevent pregnancy. However, there is great risk to the women who use this plant. She could lose her ability to ever get pregnant. That would go against the gift of womanhood – to bare children. The use of the plant (*Erythronium americanum*) is also identified in the book “Iroquois Medical Botany.” To me, it seems that the Old Man was trying to keep people from using this plant because he wanted life to continue.

In order to understand what this means, you have to take a broader look at the intention of Creation. The Creation Story starts with a young couple engaging in Sky World sex - combing each others hair. The girl becomes pregnant and gives birth to a daughter, known as Sky Woman. The boy later dies (the first death in the Sky World), and his daughter could not console herself over his loss. Death caused an emotional and physical illness in the Sky Woman. She could not stop crying.

The spirit of her dead father directs her to see the Old Man guarding the Tooth, for he has some “medicine” to uplift her mind and spirit. We focus on the venison he provides her, but he may have provided her with much more. She also becomes pregnant from sleeping with the Old Man, with only the bottoms of their feet touching. Symbolically her grief is lifted by this new life that is created.

The Old Man was also suffering from a spiritual imbalance caused by an unfulfilled Dream Wish. These are the longings of our soul that must be addressed if we are to live a happy life. His wish was to have a great feast, uproot the “tree” and start a process of creation and re-creation in the world below. The Sky Woman was to be the key player in that adventure. She brings him cornbread with berries and this uplifts his mind.

To make a long story short, the pregnant couple sit with their legs dangling through the hole created by the uprooted “tree”. The Old Man talks kindly to the Sky Woman, explaining what is about to take place. She will be the one that brings life into the world below, and will start a process that will add to the universe the missing elements – the Original People, our ancestors. Symbolically, his Dream Wish is fulfilled because he is about to send new life into the dark world below. The hope was that the process of regeneration would continue forever. Therefore, any plant that could disrupt the flow of life would be jealously guarded in that grand plan.

The Tooth likes to grow at the foot of trees. Perhaps the Birth Control Medicine was so powerful that it was described as a “great” powerful medicine, so that through time it is transformed in scale to that of a tree. The Old Man could be guarding both, the tree and the Tooth – as opposing forces of life and death.





Why is the reference to the Tooth not well known by our modern storytellers? John Mohawk also noted that the Creation stories collected and rewritten by J.N.B. Hewitt (Tuscarora) were done so in an era when American social mores dismissed sexualized-talk. Both Hewitt, and Arthur Parker, who also wrote on Haudenosaunee traditions in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, clearly embellish the stories with a style of writing of the Victorian Era (1837 to 1901). That era is defined by a British need to improve public morals, increase dignity and self-restraint, and hold high moral principles. There was a concern that loose morals within the Royal Family would damage the public's respect for the Crown and the ruling class. Written descriptions of emotional or sexual feelings were taboo, so writers began to use the language of flowers. A flowering tree in Haudenosaunee language could mean a very different thing in Victorian language.

John Mohawk wondered how much Christian overlay was placed on our story (making it sound like heaven and hell, good versus evil); and how much of the original language was sanitized by Hewitt, who as a Christian? Did Christian values take the birth control reference out of our Creation Story? It is not that the Victorians were prudes as popularly believed, however, for indigenous writers, seeking to gain respect for indigenous culture, they must have been aware of the tastes, morals and values of their audience. Thus, Hewitt and Parker stylized their writing to create a more common frame of reference (such as Christian-like imagery) and translated the words of our ancestors through the Victorian dictionary. We can see this more clearly when they referred to our Chiefs as "Lords" in their writing of the Great Law, and the use of the terms "thee" and "thou" when the Peacemaker speaks. It was intended to make it sound more civilized, more acceptable.

When Mohawk Lacrosse players demonstrated lacrosse at Queen Victoria's Crystal Palace during that era, Victorian etiquette required them not to show their bare legs, so the players wore stripped long-johns so as not to excite the women too much. If bare legs were not appropriate, imagine how any discussion of birth control would have gone over.

In fact, there are several events in the Sky World which could have been colored by the Victorian overlay. One story implies that there was an incestuous relationship in the Sky World that produced the Sky Women in the first place. Was her father her uncle? For this "sin" was she cast from the Sky World, recalling Adam and Eve being banished from the Garden of Eden? However, the written versions dance around this matter. There is also a preoccupation with virgin birth, recalling the story of Mother Mary and baby Jesus. Was this the real story, or was it added to our story because of the incestuous connotations? During this era, there was a great ideological and religious battle going on in our communities about the sanctity of marriage as defined by Christianity, and a battle between Christian believers and Longhouse believers, who were still be called pagans in the local press. Hewitt and Parker were not out to cast a negative light upon our culture.

Maybe the Victorian authors were not as careful as I think and these are just coincidences. Whatever, the intent, some messages ring true. Sky Woman's real name was *Awe(n)ha'i'*, meaning "Mature Blossoms," making the connection to Dog-Tooth or the Flowered Tree more



profound. When we recall that the name given to the first human woman created was *Awenhaniyonda*, meaning “Inseparable Flower,” we can see that the connection between women and flowers has to do with the process of Creation. Women are the flowers from which more flowers will grow. So what the Old Man guarding the “tree” gave to the Sky Woman was the power to make life and culture continue. She took seeds of life from the Sky World, rather than a plant to stop life. I can only imagine that it was the Creator’s twin brother who brought that plant to this world. He wants us to use that plant so that life will come to an end. The Yellow Dog-Tooth Violet still grows on this land.

This all makes me wonder how much of our Creation Story is truly ours. Normally I would say don’t get hung up on the details and focus on the bigger picture. In this case, the small detail of the Tooth could have major implications in our comprehension of the Creation Story. It is about striving to overcome all that is intent upon destroying life. Our duty is to bring forth new life, to enhance the opportunity for new life to take hold and to enjoy life so much that we could not conceive of killing anyone. The amazing thing is that an ancient story can help us reflect on meaning in our lives and now that you have heard my story, you can think for yourself what it means to you. Happy thinking!

**Haudenosaunee Peach** (*prunus persica*) **The peach** (*Prunus persica*) is known as a species of *Prunus* native to China that bears an edible juicy fruit also called a peach.

### Akwesasne Mohawk Tree Names

Conifers	Ohonte (evergreen)
Eastern White Pine	Tsinerathe kowa (tree the eagle sits on)
Spruce	O’so:ra
Larches	Kanen:ten’s
Hemlock	Onen’ta on:we
Balsom Fir	Otso’ko:ton
Northern White Cedar	Onen’takwenten:tshera
Willow	Ose
Red Willow	O nekwenh tara-ni wa tah tshe ro:ten
Poplar	Onerahton:ta
Walnut	Okiehwa:ta
Shagbark Hickory	Onennohkara
Hop-Hornbean	Tsiorahsa
White Birch	Watenake:tarons
Oaks	Tokenha
White Oak	Otokenha
Elm	Ahka:ratsi
Slippery Elm (red or Soft Elm)	okon;ra
Sassafras	Onos da sha
Canada Plum (Horse or Red Plum)	Oriko:wakawahtsite
Juneberry	Hadon





Black Cherry	Ori'ko:wa
Common Chokecherry	Teiakoniatawen:eks
Staghorn Sumac	Tara:kwi
American Basswood	Oho:sera
Black Ash	Ehsa
White Ash	Kaneron-o'non:na

## EMBLEMATIC TREES IN IROQUOIAN MYTHOLOGY BY ARTHUR C. PARKER

A student of Iroquoian folklore, ceremony or history will note the many striking instances in which sacred or symbolic trees are mentioned. One finds allusions to such trees not only in the myths and traditions which have long been known to literature and in the speeches of Iroquois chiefs when met in council with the French and English colonists, but also in the more recently discovered wampum codes and in the rituals of the folk-cults.

There are many references to the "tree of peace" in the colonial documents on Indian relations. Colden in his *Five Nations*, for example, quotes the reply of the Mohawk chief to Lord Effingham in July, 1684. The Mohawk agree to the peace propositions and their spokesman says: "We now plant a Tree who's tops will reach the Sun, and its Branches spread far abroad, so that it shall be seen afar off; & we shall shelter ourselves under it, and live in Peace, without molestation." (Gives two Beavers).<sup>2</sup>

In a footnote Colden says that the Five Nations always express peace under the metaphor of a tree. Indeed in the speech, a part of which is quoted above, the Peace tree is mentioned several times.

In Garangula's reply to De la Barre, as recorded by Lahontan are other references to the "tree." In his "harangue" Garangula said:

"We fell upon the Illinese and the Oumamis, because they cut down the Trees of Peace--." "The Tsonontouans, Gayogouans, Onnotagues, Onnoyoutes, and Agnies declare that they interred the Axe at Cataracuoy, in the Presence of your Predecessor, in the very Center of the Fort; and planted the Tree of Peace in the same place; 'twas then stipulated that the Fort should be used as a Place of Retreat for Merchants, and not as a Refuge for Soldiers . . . You ought to take Care that so great a number of Militial Men as we now see . . . do not stifle and choke the Tree of Peace. . . . it must need to be of pernicious Consequences to stop its Growth and hinder it to shade both your Country and ours with its Leaves."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> First published in *American Anthropologist*, Oct.-Dec., 1912.

<sup>2</sup> Colden, *History of the Five Nations*, reprint, p. 68. New York, 1866



The above examples are only a few of many that might be quoted to show how commonly the Iroquois mentioned the peace tree. There are also references to the tree which was uprooted "to afford a cavity in which to bury all weapons of war," the tree being replanted as a memorial.

In the Iroquoian myth, whether Cherokee, Huron, Wyandot, Seneca or Mohawk, the "tree of the upperworld" is mentioned, though the character of the tree differs according to the tribe and sometimes according to the myth-teller.

Before the formation of the lower or earth-world the Wyandot tell of the upper or sky-world and of the "Big Chief" whose daughter became strangely ill.<sup>4</sup> The chief instructs his daughter to "dig up the wild apple tree; what will cure her she can pluck from among its roots." David

<sup>3</sup> Lahontan, *Voyages*, Vol I, p 42. London, 1735.

<sup>4</sup> Connelly W. E., *Wyandot Folk Lore*. Topeka, 1899.

Boyle<sup>5</sup> wondered why the apple tree was called "wild," but that the narrator meant wild-apple and not wild apple is shown by the fact that the Seneca in some versions called the tree the crab-apple. The native apple tree with its small fruit was intended by the Indian myth-teller who knew also of the cultivated apple and took the simplest way to differentiate the two.

<sup>5</sup> *Archaeological Report of Ontario*, 1905. Boyle David; *The Iroquois*, p. 147.

With the Seneca this tree is described more fully. In a manuscript left by Mrs. Asher Wright, the aged missionary to the Seneca, I find the cosmologic myth as related to her by Esquire Johnson, a Seneca, in 1870. Mrs. Wright and her husband understood the Seneca language perfectly and published a mission magazine as early as 1838 in that tongue. Her translation of Johnson's myth should therefore be considered authentic. She wrote: "--there was a vast expanse of water--. Above it was the great blue arch of air but no signs of anything solid--. In the clear sky was an unseen floating island sufficiently firm to allow trees to grow upon it, and there were men-beings there. There was one great chief there who gave the law to all the Ongweh or beings on the island. In the center of the island there grew a tree so tall that no one of the beings who lived there could see its top. On its branches flowers and fruit hung all the year round. The beings, who lived on the island used to come to the tree and eat the fruit and smell the sweet perfume of the flowers. On one occasion the chief desired that the tree be pulled up. The Great Chief was called to look at the great pit which was to be seen where the tree had stood." The story continues with the usual description of how the sky-mother was pushed into the hole in the sky and fell upon the wings of the waterfowl, who placed her on the turtle's back. After this mention of the celestial tree in the same manuscript is the story of the central world-tree. After the birth of the twins, Light One and Toad-like (or dark) one, the Light One, also known as Good Minded, noticing that there was no light, created the "tree of light." This was a great tree having at its





topmost branch a great ball of light. At this time the sun had not been created. It is significant as will appear later that the Good Minded made his tree of light one that brought forth flowers from every branch. After he had gone on experimenting and improving the earth "he made a new light and hung it on the neck of a being and he called the new light Gaa-gwaa (gä'gwāa) and instructed its bearer to run his course daily in the heavens." Shortly after he is said to have "dug up the tree of light and looking into the pool of water in which the stump (trunk) had grown he saw the reflection of his own face and thereupon conceived the idea of creating Ongwe and made them both a man and a woman."

The central world-tree is found also in Delaware mythology, though as far as I discover it is not called the tree of light. The *Journal*<sup>6</sup> of Dankers and Slyter, records the story of creation as heard from the Lenape of New Jersey in 1679. All things came from a tortoise, the Indians told them. "It had brought forth the world and in the middle of its back had sprung a tree upon whose branches men had grown."<sup>7</sup> This relation between men and the tree is interesting in comparison with the Iroquois myth as it is also as the central world-tree. Both Lenape and the Iroquois ideas are symbolic and those who delight in flights of imagination might draw much from both.

The Seneca world-tree is described elsewhere in my notes as a tree whose branches pierce the sky and whose roots run down into the under-ground waters of the underworld. This tree is mentioned in various ceremonial rites of the Iroquois. With the False Face Company,

<sup>6</sup> *Journal of a Voyage to New York* in 1679-80, by Jasper Dankers and Peter Slyter. Translated in Vol I, *Trans. L. I. Hist. Soc.* 1867.

<sup>7</sup> With the New England Indians the idea was held that men were found by Glooskape in a hole made by an arrow which he had shot into an ash tree.

Hadīgo<sup>n</sup>"sāasho<sup>n</sup>"o<sup>n</sup>, for example, the Great Face, chief of all the False Faces, is said to be the invisible giant that guards the world-tree (gaindownē'). He rubs his turtle shell rattle upon it to obtain its power and this he imparts to all the visible false faces worn by the Company. In visible token of this belief the members of the Company rub their turtle rattles on pine tree trunks, believing that they become filled with both the earth and the sky-power thereby. In this use of the turtle shell rattle there is perhaps recognition of the connection between the turtle and the world-tree that grows upon the primal turtle's back.

In the prologue of the Wampum Code of the Five Nations Confederacy we again find references to a symbolic "great tree" In the code of Dekāanāawīdāa and with the Five Nations' confederate lords (rodiyāānēer) "I plant the Tree of the Great Peace. I plant it in your territory, Adōodarho' and the Onondaga nation, in the territory of you who are Firekeepers.

"I name the tree the Tree of the Great Long Leaves. Under the shade of this Tree of Peace we spread the soft feathery down of the globe thistle, there beneath the spreading branches of the Tree of Peace."



In the second "law" of the code the four roots of the "tree" are described and the law-giver says, "If any individual or any nation outside the Five Nations shall obey the laws of the Great Peace and make known their disposition to the Lords of the Confederacy, they may trace the Roots to the Tree and if their minds are clean and obedient they shall be welcome to take shelter beneath the Tree of the Long Leaves.

"We place in the top of the Tree of the Long Leaves an Eagle who is able to see afar;--he will warn the people."

In another place is the following: "I Dekāanāwīdāa, and the union lords now uproot the tallest pine tree and into the cavity thereby made, we cast all weapons of war. Into the depths of the earth, down into the deep under-earth currents of water flowing to unknown regions we cast all the weapons of strife. We bury them from sight and we plant again the tree. Thus shall the Great Peace, Kayēe'narhe'kowa, be established."

These laws and figures of speech are very evidently those which the Iroquois speakers had in mind when addressing "peace councils" with the whites.

Symbolic trees appear not only in Iroquois history, mythology and folk beliefs but also in their decorative art. The numerous decorative forms of trees embroidered in moose hair and porcupine quills by the eastern Algonquins and by the Huron and the Iroquois appear to be attempts to represent the world-tree and the celestial tree, in some cases with its "all manner of fruits and flowers." Many, if not most, of the modern descendants of the old time Indian, who copy these old designs have forgotten their meanings and some have even invented new explanations. A few of the more conservative, however, remember even yet the true meaning of their designs and from such much of interest has been learned.

In examining examples of Iroquois decorative art one is immediately impressed with the repeated use of a pattern consisting of a semi-circle resting upon two parallel horizontal lines having at the top two divergent curved lines each springing from the same point and curving outward, like the end of a split dandelion stalk, (See [fig. 4b](#).) This design or symbol, with the Iroquois represents the celestial tree growing from the top of the sky, or more properly, from the bottom of the "above-sky-world" (gāoñyāa'gēe? +). The two parallel lines represent the earth. This symbol is found with the same meaning among the Delaware. In the Walum Olum<sup>8</sup> parallel semi-circles represent the sky-dome, though single semi-circles appear. Two parallel horizontal lines, likewise, represent the earth. (See fig. 1, a.)

With the Iroquois the sky-dome and earth symbols are employed as pattern designs for decorating clothing. Nearly always these symbols are associated with the celestial tree symbol,





though sometimes this is employed alone. These patterns appear embroidered in moose hair, porcupine quills and beads as borders for leggings, skirts, breechclouts and moccasins. (See [fig. 5.](#)) Occasionally the pattern is found on head-bands and hair ornaments. In some cases,

<sup>8</sup>  
*Brinton: Lenape and their Legends*, p. 170. Phila. 1885.

especially in examples of silver work and beaded articles it seems evident that the decorator has not the meaning of his pattern in mind. This is true of some of the more modern attempts to use it.

These outward curving designs, besides being symbols of the celestial tree have a secondary meaning, that of life, living and light. Curving inward upon themselves they sometimes represent sleep and death. [Fig. 3](#) shows this design on a legging strip. In [fig. 4 h](#) we have it used in conjunction with a sleeping sun. The Onondaga call the double curve design oëen'shää', tendril.

In this connection it may be well to note that the "horns" wampum when placed upon a dead civil chief's body is curved inward, the two ends touching and forming the outline of a circle or heart. When the condoling ceremonial chief finishes his address and is about to lift the strands of wampum from the corpse to hand it to the successor he turns the wampum-string so that the ends point outward and away from each other. These particular symbols while being those of death and life respectively are regarded as horn and not tree symbols. The wampum so employed "the horns," onää'gasho? + ää, and alludes to the symbolic title of the civil chief (roya'ner).

The celestial-tree symbol appears also as a trefoil. The third tendril or branch unfolds from the center of the tree. (See [fig. 4 c.](#)) A fourth branch is often used and then appears as a double tree. (See [fig. 4 d.](#)) In [4, e](#) the nightsun is represented over the world-tree and in meaning this sign is found to be the same as [4.h](#). In [fig. 4, f](#) the day-sun is represented as shining at zenith above the world-tree. In [4, g](#) the sun-above-the-sky is awake and roosting in the celestial-tree. All of these designs are found on borders of Iroquois garments some of which are shown in plate 1.

Another important modification of the sky-dome and celestial-tree combination is that which represents the sky dome with the celestial-tree upon it and the earth-tree within the dome below and resting upon a long intersection of an oval (possibly the turtle) and sending its long leaves or branches upward to the sky-arch.

Sometimes the design is used as the motif of a rosette or other balanced design. Morgan figured several and the Report of the Director of the State Museum of New York for 1907 shows a picture of Red Jacket's pipe pouch ornamented with such a pattern. There the ends of the tendrils are split and represented as conventional flowers. In other instances the motif is built upward



upon itself as shown in [figure 6](#). The first "tree" in this figure is copied from Lafitau<sup>9</sup> and the others from Mohawk moccasin toes.

With the Iroquois the celestial-tree symbol is generally represented by this allies-like figure. The *earth-tree*, on the other hand, is less highly conventionalized. With the Iroquois as with many other tribes in the forest area in North America, the Ojibwa for example, the ordinary tree sign is commonly used,--that depicting the upward slanting branches of the balsam fir. [Figure 7](#) shows the Ojibwa pictograph which is interpreted as "the big tree in the middle of the earth." The terminal buds on the conventionalized trees of the Huron moose hair embroidery type resemble in form this balsam fir symbol. The Huron indeed call the bud "balsam fir."<sup>10</sup> The method of slanting the hair to form the design creates the resemblance and causes the confusion, in all probability. Used alone the "bud" would be a tree if placed in proper position but as ordinarily used by the Huron at the extremity of an embroidered branch, it seems paradoxical to find a tree on the small end of one of its branches. This is discussed more fully hereinafter.

[Figure 4. e. and f](#) show the Iroquois "middle-of-the-world-tree" as used in conjunction with the

<sup>10</sup>See Speck F. G., "Huron Moose Hair Embroidery", *Amer. Anthropologist*, N. S., Vol. 13, no. 1, p 1.

<sup>9</sup>Lafitau, *Moeurs des Sauvages Ameriquains, Tome II, plate 3. page 43, Paris, 1724.*

sky-dome and sun symbols.

Another, and more elaborate, form of the "tree" as it appears in Iroquoian decorative art is a flowering plant of tree having conventionalized leaves (generally, "long leaves"), branches, buds, tendrils and flowers. See plate 2. In this plate (9) is shown the flowering tree as embroidered in porcupine quills on an Iroquois pouch collected by Lewis H. Morgan, and now in the New York State Museum. It will be perceived that here the diverging curved lines play a conspicuous part in the make-up of the tree.

Like all Iroquois symbolic trees of the purely conventional type the tree is exactly balanced on each side of the central line that represents the trunk or stalk.

With the Huron these trees are, likewise, used as an adornment for bags and other things where a comparatively large surface is afforded. Dr. Speck illustrates one of these trees in the article on moose hair embroidery previously cited, and gives the Huron interpretation for the various parts of the tree. With the Huron, it is most interesting to note, the topmost flower is called not a flower but a star, thus suggesting some dim recollection of the "tree of light."





The Confederated Iroquois made similar trees, though they interpret some of the parts differently. With them the significance of the tree is recognized. Mr. Hewitt describes the tree in his Onondaga creation myth.<sup>11</sup> His informants in relating the myth said: "And there beside the lodge stands the tree that is called Tooth (Ono'djää'). Moreover, the blossoms this standing tree bears cause the world to be light, making it light for men-beings dwelling there." This agrees with the Seneca version previously cited in this article.

The "Tree of Peace" symbolically planted by Dekāanāawīdāa, as has been noted was called the "Tree of the Great Long Leaves." It will be observed that the "tree of light" in nearly every case where leaves are shown at all has long sword-like leaves. This is true among the Huron in their older patterns, as among the Iroquois. The Huron, however, now call these long leaves "dead branches" and the unopened flowers "balsam fir."<sup>12</sup> The Huron, as with most of the Iroquois, have likely forgotten or confused the true names of the elements of their designs. These designs, with the Huron at least, seem to have undergone some change due to the necessity for trade purposes of working their patterns in outline and quickly. It is most important to observe,

<sup>11</sup> Hewitt, *Iroquois Cosmology*, Part I, p. 151; 21 An. Rept. Bur. Am. Eth., Washington, 1903.

<sup>12</sup> Speck, op. cit.

however, that oftentimes when the object of using a symbol is primarily for decorative purposes, the Indian artist or needle-worker gives parts of the design "pattern names," often at entire variance with the real meaning of the part but based upon real or fancied resemblance. With the Huron with whom the decorative element is now of primary importance this seems to have been the case. Indeed, Dr. Speck does not say that the parts of the designs which he illustrates are symbols though he does give the names which the Huron told him. The Huron are very likely making "trees of light" and do not know it, in this respect being similar to their Iroquois brethren. The designs are worked, as some of my Indian informants say, "Because they are Indian" and likewise because they have become accustomed to them and because there seems nothing more appropriate to invent.

This instance suggests how with change of environment myths, symbols and ceremonial rites may lose their meaning and yet preserve their outward form.

The two-curve motif in Indian art is widely distributed throughout America. In many instances it seems to have meanings similar to that given it by the Iroquois, though there are other instances where it had not. It is sometimes used with a few simple additions to represent the face of the thunderbird or even the human face, at least the eyes and nose. In a more elaborate form it is



found in the Fejérvary Codex as a tree symbol though a variation of the form in the Vienna codex makes the cross-section of a vase.

It is not strange that the simple outline should be found almost universally. It is one of those simple conceptions in art that would occur to any people independently. Many things in nature suggest it. It is not its outline, however, so much as its use as a definite symbol and its combination with others that gives it interest to the writer.

The world-tree with its long leaves and luminous flowers is worthy of more detailed consideration. It seems to have been a deeply imbedded concept with the certain branches of the Algonquin stock and of the Iroquois, affecting not only their mythology and ceremonial language but also their decorative art. Whether the idea has a deeper and more primitive meaning than here suggest the author does not pretend to know.

### The Origin Of The Chestnut Tree

In a lodge that stood alone in a land of hills lived Dadjedondji with his older brother Hawiyas. Dadjedondji busied himself each day in the forests hunting game, catching fish, gathering fruits, berries, roots and nuts and studying the wonders of the woods. He prepared his own meals in the lodge and always ate them alone, for, strange to relate, his brother steadfastly refused to eat with him or, indeed, to eat in the presence of anyone. He never hunted or cooked, but sat all day smoking moodily.

The boy often pondered over the strange difference between his brother and himself and at length resolved to pretend to start on his daily hunt, then turn back and secretly watch his brother. He did as he had planned but failed to discover his brother, Hawiyas, eating or at any extraordinary practice. Night came and the two boys lay side by side with their feet toward the fire. Dadjedondji remained awake in order to continue his watch and toward midnight heard his brother stir. In his anxiety to spy upon him Dadjedondji sat upright and his brother seeing him dropped back upon his couch. Dadjedondji chided himself for his impulsiveness and when, some time later, Hawiyas asked in an undertone, "Are you awake now?" he remained quiet and did not reply.

Later Hawiyas arose cautiously believing himself unobserved and crept to the side of the lodge. Dadjedondji was peeping through a hole in the skin that covered him. Hawiyas pushed aside a sheet of bark and drew forth a small kettle and a tiny bag. From the bag he took a small nut from which he scraped a few shavings with a flint. Casting them into the kettle he poured in a quantity of water and shaking the kettle placed it over the fire. The water soon began to heat, and as it did so, the kettle increased in size until a pudding was cooked, when he dipped it out, cleaned the kettle, shook it and stored it away with the bag. Then he began to eat greedily, and, having satisfied his hunger, lay down and slumbered again.

The next night Dadjedondji concluded to try the experiment and while his brother slept crept to the hiding place, found the kettle and bag, and did exactly as his brother had done. He ate the





pudding and found it most delicious. Wishing more, he threw the entire contents of the bag into the kettle and set it on to boil again. It was not long before the kettle began to expand so much so that it filled half the house. Moreover the pudding began to boil over in enormous quantities.

With a cry of dismay the brother awoke.

"Oh what have you done?" cried he, "Oh! I am dead! You have killed your own brother. Oh!"

"What troubles you, brother?" asked Dadjedondji as he skipped out from the lodge, "You do not look very much like a dead man."

"Oh!" exclaimed the brother, "you have used all my food. It is all I eat and can eat. No one can obtain more of its kind for it is far away and charmed, so you have killed me!" Scarcely had he spoken when the walls bulged and the building collapsed.

"Oh, do not worry brother," said Dadjedondji, "there is more where this grew."

"Ah yes, but no man can get it, use what magic he may."

The brother raved throughout the remainder of the night but Dadjedondji slept unmoved.

When the morning came Dadjedondji sprang from the ground and expressed his surprise at his brother's sober countenance. "Tell me the full history of your magical food," he commanded.

Moodily the brother answered, "To the east is a great gap in the earth. Beyond it is a monstrous serpent whose poisonous breath kills all that comes where it blows. Should a man by chance, escape him, beyond are two panthers. Should some cunning magician creep by unobserved, beyond, high in the tree that bears the wonderful nuts, is a witch whose very look makes men fall apart, and her six sisters devour their meat. So boast not my brother, you cannot reach the tree. Know only this,--you have killed your brother."

Dadjedondji thought about it and said to himself, "All these things are strange. They are not right, neither are they in according with the ways I know about, and, therefore, I can conquer all these obstacles."

Boldly he set out with his face toward the rising sun. After a day's journey he came to a chasm that extended far beyond the eye's reach. "This is not right," thought the boy, so whittling a doll from a soft chunk of decayed log, he threw it across the chasm and followed it with a running jump. He landed safely on the other side and immediately resumed his journey. For a time he hurried onward and then nearly rushed into the yawning jaws of a big snake that leaped from a hidden cavern.

"Oh, get out of my way," said Dadjedondji flinging a wooden doll into its mouth.



Presently from a thicket appeared two panthers. Dadjedondji drew two more dolls from his pouch and cast one into the mouth of each beast. Then, without looking behind he hurried onward again. A song came floating through the air and following the direction Dadjedondji came to a large branching tree. In its topmost branches hung the singer,--a flayed human skin,--but her charm song had no effect upon the boy for he said, "It is all wrong and I am right, therefore evil cannot befall me."

The skin-woman lifted her voice and sang with increased vigor, "An intruder comes to our clearing."

"Come down here," called Dadjedondji, "I have a present for you, gaswe'da, wampum. Promise you will be kind."

The skin-woman seeing the handsome purple quills descended and accepted the gift with many grimaces and then drew back into the tree.

Now wampum is the emblem of truth and the skinwoman was entirely controlled by evil. Holding the beautiful necklace in her hand she sang, "I have been bribed by a present of wampum not to tell of a stranger's approach."

While she sang she threw the beads over her head and around her neck and the beads grew tight and choked her into silence.

Out rushed the six sisters that had been called ravenous cannibals, but their shouts were not those of anger or of gluttons, but glad cries of joy. Coming up to Dadjedondji they saluted him and with extravagant flattery thanked him for coming to rescue them from their evil sister.

They gave him a great bag of brown nuts and sent him back on his journey. The great witch had now no food and perished.

On his return the panthers angry at the deception he had practiced on them, pounced from the bushes.

"Go away, you are not doing right. I never heard of panthers acting as you are. Are you not ashamed? Go now and never dare trouble men again! You are now free!"

The panthers, surprised at their intended victim's words, rushed off in fright. Dadjedondji continued his journey and rebuked the serpent and sent it wriggling to the nearest lake. Then he addressed the chasm.

"Oh, Earth, why are you rent? This is not the way of doing things. I have never seen such fissures in my life before. Close up once again and let men enjoy themselves!" And the earth closed with a loud crash.





Walking safely across the solid earth where once the breach had been, he persevered until he reached the ruins of his home. His brother was sitting mournfully on a log still lamenting, but Dadjedondji bade him cheer up, and showed him the large bag of nuts. He gave him enough for several meals and then sent him on to the lodge of the six sisters where he could find a good wife to cook for him. Then he went upon the side hills and scattered the nuts over the ground and in time beautiful trees grew and now all the world has chestnuts. When they were confined to one tree they were magical but now their powers have gone and they neither spread nor burst kettles.

**GENERAL NOTES.** --There are a number of stories similar to this. In some the hero is a nephew living with his uncle. The adventures of the hero in overcoming the magic beasts that guard the paths to the chestnut tree are various and recited in greater or less detail. In some stories the youth pacifies the hunger of the monsters by flinging chipmunks at them which increase in size and afford them a full meal. In one version the last guard of the tree is the skin of the boy's sister, dried and hanging over the path. The skin is alive but held by sorcery as the slave of the wicked witch sisters. When the hero presents the wampum to her she sings out: "I cannot tell you now that a stranger is about to assail us, for he has stopped my mouth with wampum." The six sisters thereupon rush forth and finding no enemy beat the skin and tells it to tell the truth hereafter and not give false alarms. In similar stories the hero projects himself into the body of one of the witches, as is done in the story of the magic arrow and the quilt of men's eyes. He is then born and cries incessantly for power over the tree and the witch, yielding, he becomes master of the chestnuts. He is also the deliverer of the dried skin which he conjures back to its normal self, when he finds it to be his own sister. The mole is the hero's dream animal and it aids him to perform his deeds of magic.

