# Following the wandering hero: The Algonkian story of creation

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## Abstract
This essay explores a folklore tradition that recounts the creation of the world by the hero-trickster figure known as *Nanabozho* among the Algonkian-speaking Indians. By applying the historic-geographic method to the corpus of materials collected, a point of origin and spread for this tale cycle is explored. It should be noted that this study is both a departure from, and an extension of, previous historic-geographic research, in that it is applying the method to a smaller corpus of texts than is usually considered; the method is also applied to a tale cycle, rather than to an individual tale-type.

KEYWORDS: hero, trickster, folklore, Nanabozho, Algonkian

## Introduction
Within the folklore tradition of the Algonkian speaking Indians the supernatural being known as Nanabozho figures prominently. The foolish escapades, ribald tales and heroic adventures of this folk hero are frequently told by native raconteurs. The objective of this paper is to determine the point of origin and path of dissemination of a particular folktale cycle relating to Nanabozho through an application of the historic-geographic method. As the corpus of material available for this combination trickster-transformer-culture hero is quite extensive, the study will restrict itself to a small portion of the native lore. It will examine that part of the folklore which recounts the death of Nanabozho's brother "Wolf" and the flooding and re-creation of the world.[1] Contained here is the well-known tale of the earth-diver, found throughout North American Indian folklore.[2]

[1] This part of the folklore was selected because of the relatively large amount of material available.
[2] Victor Barnouw points out: 'Deluge myths are among the world's most widespread folklore themes and are found in all the aboriginal North American culture areas' (Wisconsin Chippewa Myths and Tales [Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977], p. 38, n. 23. See Earl W. Count, The Earth-Diver and the Rival Twins: A Clue to Time Correlation in North Eurasiatic and North American Mythology, in Indian Tribes of Aboriginal America, ed. by Sol Tax (New York, NY: Cooper Square Publishers Inc., 1967); Alan Dundes, Earth-Diver: Creation of the Mythopoeic Male, American Anthropologist, LXIV (1962), pp. 1032-1051; Anna Brigitta Rooth, The Creation Myths of the North American Indians, Anthropos (1957), p. 197ff.

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The tribes I will be considering in this study reside primarily in the area of the Great Lakes of North America (see Figure 1 below). Moving from west to east, this territory covers the south-eastern corner of Manitoba, mainly Lake of the Woods and Rainy Lake (Saulteaux), northern Minnesota (Minnesota Ojibwa), Wisconsin (Wisconsin Ojibwa), eastern Michigan (Fox and Michigan Ojibwa), northern Michigan (Menomini), central and southern Michigan (Potawatomi), central Ontario (Mississauga and Ottawa), and southwestern Ontario (Ontario Ojibwa) (Driver 1953).

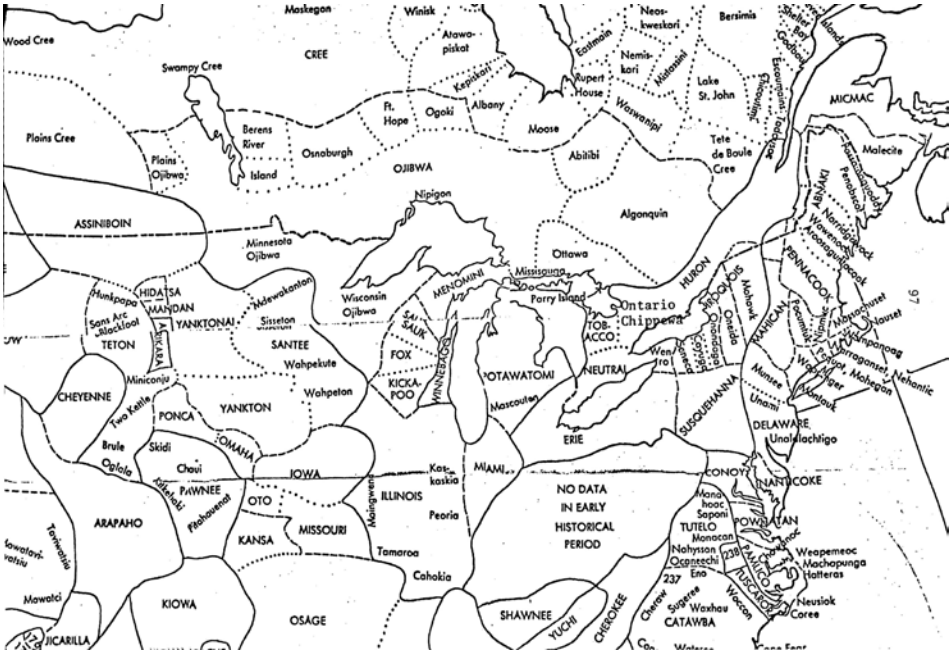


*Figure 1: Territories of the Algonkian Speaking Indians*

It should be noted that this study is both a departure from, and an extension of, previous historic-geographic research, in that it is applying the method to a vastly smaller corpus of texts than is usually considered; the method is also being applied to a folktale cycle, rather than to an individual tale-type.

## The historic-geographic method

Some consider the historic-geographic method to be out of date as a methodological tool. However, I believe that it continues to provide important insights into the ways in which oral tradition is transmitted among linguistic groups. As this essay will demonstrate, there is a remarkable consistency in the traits presented in the story of creation collected from a variety of sources, tribes, and periods. Identifying the point of origin and spread for this folktale cycle will aid to better understand how indigenous peoples recount important cultural events in the absence of a written record.

On another level the hero tale, as a cultural expression, is found in popular tradition throughout the world. The story of the hero is even more important in the context of the folktale cycle examined here because it involves a combination hero-trickster figure who, while certainly not unique to Amerindian tradition, has been largely supplanted in Western lore by the more one-dimensional figure of the hero.

The goals of the historic-geographic method, as articulated by its practitioners, are to determine 1) the original form of a tale, 2) the place of its origin, 3) the date of its composition, and 4) the routes taken by it from its place of origin, along with any changes that it has undergone (Lindgren 1949).

The original form of the tale is arrived at by examining the overall corpus of folklore material, calculating the frequency with which certain events occur and carefully analysing the earliest versions, with particular regard to those which are the most "reliable" and which help to explain variations. The age of the tale is much harder to determine, and, in consideration of the nature of oral tradition (for which few records are more than two centuries old in native North America) dating becomes particularly difficult (Lindgren 1949).[3] In tracing the path that a tale takes, the historic-geographic method hypothesises that a wave-like motion will be evident, spreading out from a centre, though new waves may start up along the way (Lindgren 1949).[4]

A summary of the methodology is as follows:

1. By surveying the material at hand, the basic form of the tale (or, tale cycle, in this case) is established, which is then broken down into its component parts (principal traits).
2. The folktales are collected and assembled in geographic order. In this paper, moving from west to east, the ordering will be: (a) Saulteaux, (b) Minnesota Ojibwa, (c) Wisconsin Ojibwa, (d) Fox, (e) Michigan Ojibwa, (f) Menomini, (g) Potawatomi, (h) Mississauga, (i) Ottawa, (j) Ontario Ojibwa.
3. The data for each tribe (as above) is listed chronologically, citing the earliest sources first.
4. The tales collected for each tribe – in historic and geographic order – are compared to this basic form of the folktale. An analysis is then prepared indicating the degree of correspondence between the principal traits of the basic cycle and the individual tales.
5. A tally is made of the principal traits and, on the basis of the frequency of occurrence, the archetypal form is established. Thus, by way of example, if the Nanabozho-Wolf relationship is shown to be that of "nephew" in the majority of cases, then this trait becomes part of the archetype. The frequency of its recurrence is recorded and, along with those of other traits, is used to construct the full archetypal form.

[3] The earliest sources on the Algonkian-speaking Indians are found in The Jesuit Relations of the mid-1600s. Apart from these, the oldest sources date back only to the mid-1800s.

[4] Compare the following: Wesselski [see Lindgren, The Collection, p. 378, no. 83] believes that the occurrence of written versions and wandering story-tellers disrupts the process to such an extent that the historical-geographic method is thereby rendered invalid.

6. A hypothetical development of the tale is proposed by considering the degree of correspondence between specific tribal versions and the designated archetype. In this way a probable geographic origin is established and then traced, via the folklore of the surrounding tribal groups.[5]
7. An attempt is then made at determining the age of the tale by examining the earliest versions for the degree of correspondence with the archetype.

## The wandering hero

The first mention of Nanabozho is found in *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents* (1633), in which he is referred to as 'Messou' in the account of Father Paul Le Jeune (Thwaites 1959: 155). Following that, he is cited sporadically throughout the Jesuit Relations, as well as in the accounts of early explorers such as Alexander Henry and Charles Lanman.[6]

Historically, Nanabozho assumes a variety of forms (from fool, to hero, to giant) and is seen from a plurality of perspectives, some complementary, some contradictory, and most (at least from our Western viewpoint) somewhat confusing. To the Indians of L'arbe Croche, Michigan, Nanabozho was above all else a clown. According to J. C. Wright, 'most of his episodes were of a humorous nature and generally he was the subject of his own joke' (Wright 1916: 29) Daniel Brinton singled out Nanabozho's craftiness, which, though it often got the legendary figure into trouble and made him appear foolish, was always exercised for the benefit of mankind (Brinton 1890).

Frances Densmore writes that in the minds of the Ojibwa elders, Nanabozho was 'the source and impersonation of life in all sentient things, human, faunal and floral' (Densmore 1929: 97).[7] Beatrice Blackwood states that, although Nanabozho was greater than human, he was also subject to many of the wonders and woes of the human condition: hunger, fear, love, and lust. (Blackwood: 1929: 320) In Robert Ritzenthaler's estimation, Nanabozho was modelled on the Indian image 'precisely because he exhibited human characteristics and failings' (Ritzenthaler 1970: 138).

Felix Keesing (1939) states that among the Menomini, Nanabozho is seen as a type of Christ figure. Conversely, one of Selwyn Dewdney's (1975) informants saw

[5] Compare Johannes Gille, Der Manabozho Flutzyklus der Nord, Nord-ost, und Zentralalgonkin (Gottingen: C. Trute, 1939). Barnouw summarises Gille's thesis as follows: 'Johannes Gille's argument is that the Chippewa or Ojibwa were the originators of the string of episodes [i.e. the Nanabozho culture hero cycle as outlined in the principle traits], which spread from them to the Menomini, who in turn transmitted this cycle to the Sauk and the Fox and Kickapoo. Northward the cycle spread from the Chippewa to the northern Saulteaux and Cree and eastward to the Ottawa, from whom it diffused to the Mississauga and Montagnais' (Wisconsin Chippewa Myths and Tales, p. 69).

[6] Other early sources that mention Nanabozho but do not relate his adventures include: Alexander Henry, Travels and Adventures in Canada (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, Inc., 1966); Charles Lanman, Adventures in the Wilds of the United States and British American Provinces (Philadelphia, PA: J. W. Moore, 1856); and Lewis Spence, The Myths of the North American Indians (London, England: George G. Harrap and Co., 1914). Nanabozho, or variations of the name, is mentioned in several places in the Jesuit Relations (Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., The Jesuit Relations): vol. 54, p. 197 (1669–70); vol. 68, pp. 43-45 (1720–36); vol. 5, pp.155–6, p. 159 (1633); vol. 9, p. 125 (1636); vol. 67, p. 153 (1722).

[7] Compare Victor Barnouw, Wisconsin Chippewa Myths and Tales, pp. 252-53.

Nanabozho as the Devil. Chase Osborn (1942) singles out Nanabozho's role as a bringer of culture to the Indians, as one who taught them how to make axes, lances, arrow points, snares, traps, and nets.

Nanabozho is known by a variety of names among the Algonkian speaking Indians. The Potawatomi refer to him as Wi'ske, the Wisconsin Ojibwa as Wenebojo, the Menomini as Nanabush, and the Ottawa as Manabush (Ritzenthaler 1970). Among the Saulteaux he is known as Wiskendjac (Fisher 1946),[8] while the Blackfoot refer to him as Old Man (Young 1903). The Mississauga know him as Naniboju (Chamberlain 1892), and the Minnesota Ojibwa as Nanabozho (De Jong 1913). For simplicity and convenience, I will refer to him by the one name only (Nanabozho) in this paper.

## The Algonkians

A story is told by the Algonkian-speaking Indians relating how the tribe had at one time lived far to the east near a great salt water ocean. In the late 16th or early 17th century, the Ojibwa, Potawatomi, and Ottawa tribes migrated west toward Lake Huron in search of more bountiful hunting grounds. At the Mackinac Straits in northern Lake Michigan, they separated, with the Potawatomi going into the lower peninsula of what is present-day Michigan, the Ottawa settling in the Lake Nipissing region, and the Ojibwa moving westward (Danzinger 1978).

The first historical account given of the Ojibwa is found in *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents* (1640) (Blackwood 1929). Here they were encountered at Sault Ste. Marie by the French traders and missionaries. They then moved westward around Lake Superior, either into Wisconsin and Minnesota or towards Fort William (Thunder Bay). During this time, the Ojibwa established amicable relations with the neighbouring Menomini. They also continued to exist on peaceful terms with the Ottawa and Potawatomi tribes. Their enemies were the Iroquois in the east and the Sioux who they encountered during their westward migration.

In the 18th century, the Ojibwa ousted the Santee Sioux from their land holdings in northern Minnesota (Danzinger 1978). At this time some Ojibwa bands continued westward into Manitoba and the Plains, later to be known as the Bungi, or Plains Ojibwa (Skinner 1928).

## The story of creation

In its simplest form, that part of Algonkian folklore dealing with the death of Nanabozho's brother Wolf and the flooding and re-creation of the world proceeds as follows (descriptions of principal traits are indicated by capital letters below, i.e. A, B, C ...):

(A) Nanabozho is with Wolf.
(B) Because of a premonition he warns him not to do something.
(C) Wolf chases some animals.
(D) Wolf is captured by the underwater *manidos* (spirits).

[8] Compare J. Owen Dorsey, Nanibozho in Siouian Mythology, Journal of American Folklore, V (1892), pp. 293–304.

(E) Nanabozho follows Wolf's tracks to the water where he meets Kingfisher.
(F) Nanabozho grabs Kingfisher and, in the process, creates his present-day appearance.
(G) Kingfisher tells Nanabozho the location of the underwater *manidos*.
(H) Nanabozho disguises himself as a tree stump and waits for them to emerge from the water.
(I) In some versions a ball-game takes place.
(J) The *manidos* emerge and test the tree stump.
(K) Eventually they fall asleep and Nanabozho reverts to his human form and shoots their chief.
(L) Nanabozho then meets a healer.
(M) The healer is going to cure the wounded underwater *manido*.
(N) The healer reveals certain information to Nanabozho.
(O) Nanabozho kills the healer and assumes her appearance.
(P) In some versions 'sun-fish' provides the information about the *manido's* location.
(Q) Nanabozho goes to the camp of the wounded *manido* where he sees the skin of Wolf.
(R) Entering the lodge, he kills the *manido*.
(S) As he escapes, he takes Wolf's skin.
(T) The world is flooded and Nanabozho flees to the top of a high object (a mountain or tree).
(U) He commissions several animals to dive to the bottom of the water to get a particle of earth.
(V) One of the animals is successful.
(W) Nanabozho re-creates the world from the particle of earth.
(X) Nanabozho commissions various animals to check on the size of the world.
(Y) Some versions have a second flood from which Nanabozho is rescued by a burrowing animal.
(Z) Sometime later, Nanabozho emerges from his shelter.

## The principal traits

The principal traits of the story are elaborated below, based on the variants presented in the sources identified. In total, there are 26 major traits (A to Z, inclusive) and 129 minor traits. For example, major trait A has eight minor traits. The major traits are more general versions of the principal traits. The minor traits provide detail and context for the major traits.

(A) Nanabozho-Wolf Relationship:
(1) brother (2) nephew (3) son (4) grandson (5) servant (6) hunting dog (7) cousin (8) fox

*(B) Premonition and Warning:*
Do not cross a (1) stream (2) ice (3) lake (4) creek (5) do not leave side (6) warns

of *manido's* plan (7) brook (8) river (9) hollow in the ground (10) do not go near water

*(C) Wolf Chase:*
(1) deer (2) caribou (3) moose (4) game (5) bear (6) birds

*(D) Wolf's Fate:*
(1) death (2) taken (3) skinned (4) lost (5) falls into water

(E) Meeting with Kingfisher:
Watching (1) Wolf's skin (2) Wolf's guts (3) *manidos* playing with Wolf

*(F) Kingfisher's Appearance:*
(1) ruffled head feathers (2) ring around neck (3) painted eyes (4) fishing spears

*(G) Kingfisher's Information:*
(1) location of *manidos* (2) fate of Wolf (3) how to kill *manidos*

*(H) Nanabozho's Disguise:*
(1) tree stump (2) dandelion seed (3) tree (4) hides in tree (5) hides in hollow tree stump (6) hides behind roll of birch bark

*(I) Ball Game:*
(1) planned by Nanabozho (2) Nanabozho informed of

*(J) Test:*
(1) snake (2) bear (3) panther (4) water-tiger (5) *manidos* (6) lynxes (7) sea-lions

*(K) Chief Killed:*
(1) shot under arm (2) shot in shadow (3) shot (4) shot in heart (5) struck on head (6) chief's wife shot

*(L) Meeting with Healer:*
(1) toad woman (2) frog woman (3) old woman (4) toad (5) serpent woman (6) frog

*(M) Healer's Task:*
(1) cure chief (2) cure son (3) cure brothers (4) cure wounded lion

*(N) Healer's Information:*
(1) teaches cure (2) location of *manidos*

*(O) Slaying of Healer and Disguise:*
(1) dons skin (2) dons clothes (3) uses magic words

*(P) Sun Fish's Information:*
(1) location of *manidos*

*(Q) Skin Covering:*
(1) over doorway

*(R) Chief's Death:*
(1) pushing in arrow (2) poker (3) clubbing (4) knifed

*(S) Flight:*
(1) takes skin (2) sheds skin (3) rescues nephew

*(T) Refuge:*
(1) mountain (2) stretching tree (3) raft (4) bubble (5) canoe

*(U) Earth-Divers:*
(1) bear, otter, loon (2) beaver, otter (3) tortoise (4) unspecified (5) beaver (6) loon (7) loon, beaver (8) otter, beaver, mink (9) duck, loon, beaver (10) otter (11) otter, loon

*(V) Success:*
(1) muskrat (2) unspecified

*(W) Re-creation:*
(1) blowing (2) spreading (3) circling (4) expanding ball (5) accumulation (6) raven and parcel (7) unspecified (8) drying

*(X) Check on Earth's Size:*
(1) wolf (2) hawk (3) crow, falcon-hawk, eagle (4) raven, dove (5) caribou (6) big bird, eagle (7) crow, wolf (8) fox (9) wolf, raven (10) bird-hawk, raven (11) various animals (12) mink (13) raven, hawk, caribou (14) crow, gull, owl

*(Y) Identity of Burrower:*
(1) badger (2) woodchuck (3) groundhog

*(Z) Emergence:*
(1) flood waters recede (2) safe again

## Sources

The sources listed below are ordered geographically by tribal group (west to east) and chronologically (oldest to most recent) for each tribal group. The source numbers correspond to those shown in figures four and five, which follow. The year of collection is shown by author reference. Where this is not known, the year of publication is provided instead.

*Table 1: The list of sources*

| Source | Geographic tribal group | Author reference* (pages) | Year collected |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Plains Ojibwa (Saulteaux) | Jones | 1903-1905 |
| 2 | Plains Ojibwa (Saulteaux) | Skinner | 1909 |
| 3 | Minnesota Ojibwa | Jones (89–101; 145–59) | 1903-1905 |
| 4 | Minnesota Ojibwa | Jones (251–79) | 1903-1905 |
| 5 | Minnesota Ojibwa | De Josselin De Jong (12–3) | 1911 |
| 6 | Minnesota Ojibwa | Radin & Reagan (67–70) | 1911-1914 |
| 7 | Minnesota Ojibwa | Radin & Reagan (70–6) | 1911-1914 |
| 8 | Minnesota Ojibwa | Coleman (70–2) | 1940s |
| 9 | Wisconsin Ojibwa | Schoolcraft (13–53) | 1822 |
| 10 | Wisconsin Ojibwa | Schoolcraft (317–8) | 1839 |
| 11 | Wisconsin Ojibwa | Jones (33–5) | 1861 |
| 12 | Wisconsin Ojibwa | Ellis (55–7) | 1888 |
| 13 | Wisconsin Ojibwa | Blackwood (324–8) | 1925-1926 |
| 14 | Wisconsin Ojibwa | Casagrande, in: Barnouw (64–9) | 1941 |
| 15 | Wisconsin Ojibwa | Ritzenthaler (141–5) | 1942 |
| 16 | Wisconsin Ojibwa | Barnouw (34–41) | 1944 |
| 17 | Wisconsin Ojibwa | Leekley (27–49) | 1965 |
| 18 | Fox | Busby (53–63) | 1883-1885 |
| 19 | Fox | Jones (209) | 1911 |
| 20 | Fox | Jones (225–38) | 1901 |
| 21 | Fox | Jones (337) | 1907 |
| 22 | Fox | Harrington (256–7) | 1910 |
| 23 | Michigan Ojibwa | Kinietz (182–6) | 1947 |
| 24 | Menomini | Hoffman (249–57) | 1890 |
| 25 | Menomini | Michelson (72–8) | 1910 |
| 26 | Menomini | Skinner (253–63) | 1910-1914 |
| 27 | Potawatomi | De Smet (244–354) | 1845-1846 |
| 28 | Potawatomi | Skinner (332–3) | 1927 |
| 29 | Mississauga | Chamberlain (150) | 1888 |
| 30 | Ottawa | Perrot (31–4) | 1680-1718 |
| 31 | Ottawa | Blackbird (75–7) | 1887 |
| 32 | Ontario Ojibwa | Hindley (2–22) | 1885 |
| 33 | Ontario Ojibwa | Wilson (107–8) | 1886 |
| 34 | Ontario Ojibwa | Radin (62) | 1911-1914 |
| 35 | Ontario Ojibwa | Reagan (63–7) | 1911-1914 |
| 36 | Ontario Ojibwa | Radin (19–21) | 1912 |
| 37 | Ontario Ojibwa | Radin (22–23) | 1912 |
| 38 | Ontario Ojibwa | Speck (34–38) | 1915 |
| 39 | Ontario Ojibwa | Carson (491–2) | 1917 |
| 40 | Ontario Ojibwa | Laidlaw (89–90) | 1918 |
| 41 | Ontario Ojibwa | Jenness (19–22) | 1956 |
| 42 | Ontario Ojibwa | Coatsworth (1–7) | 1930s |

* Publication information included in the References

## The frequency of occurrence

The figures below summarise the detailed analysis of the sources listed above, in terms of the occurrence of the folktale cycle's principal traits.

Figure 2 shows the frequency (%) of the major traits (e.g., A, B, C) occurring in the folktale cycle. For example, trait A (Nanabozho-Wolf relationship) is present in 79% of the sources examined.

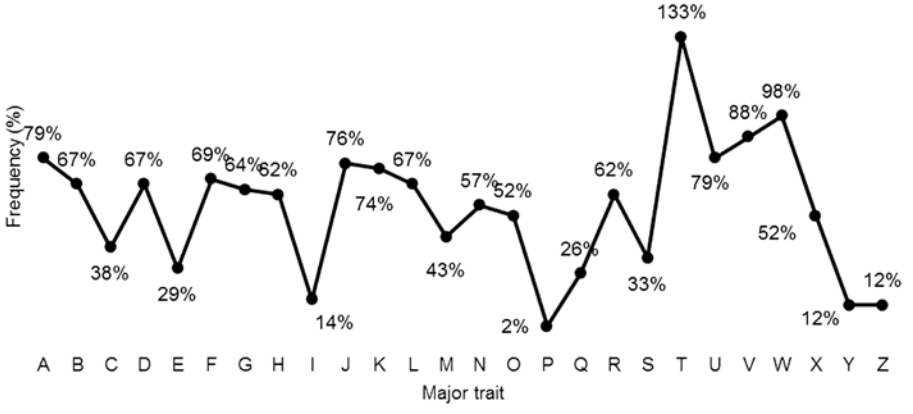


*Figure 2: Frequency of major traits*

*Note: Trait T (Refuge) has a frequency greater than 100% because in several accounts Nanabozho seeks refuge from the flood waters by ascending more than one high object.*

Figure 3 (below) shows the frequency (%) of the most commonly occurring minor traits (e.g., A1, B3, C1) in the folktale cycle. For example, minor trait (A1) occurs in 36% of the sources.

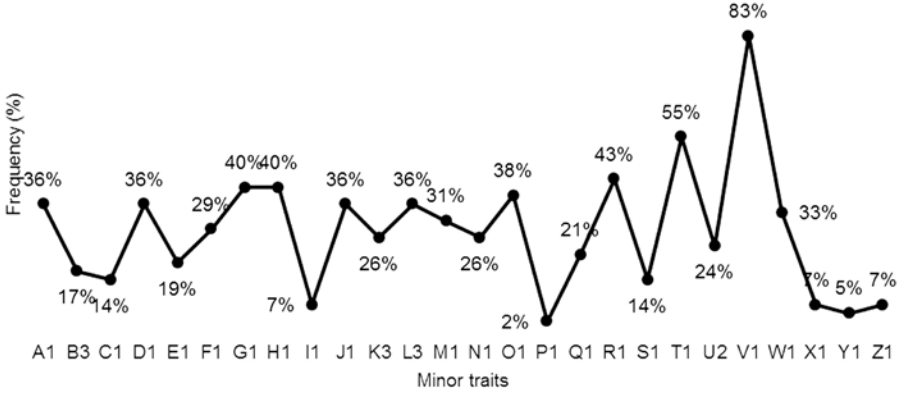


*Figure 3: Frequency of minor traits*

Figure 4 shows the minor traits that occurred most frequently (as per figure 3), contrasting Ojibwa and non-Ojibwa groups. For example, minor trait A1 (where Wolf is described as Nanabozhos 'brother') occurred most often in the sources analysed and was cited in approximately 60% of the non-Ojibwa sources and 30% of the Ojibwa sources.

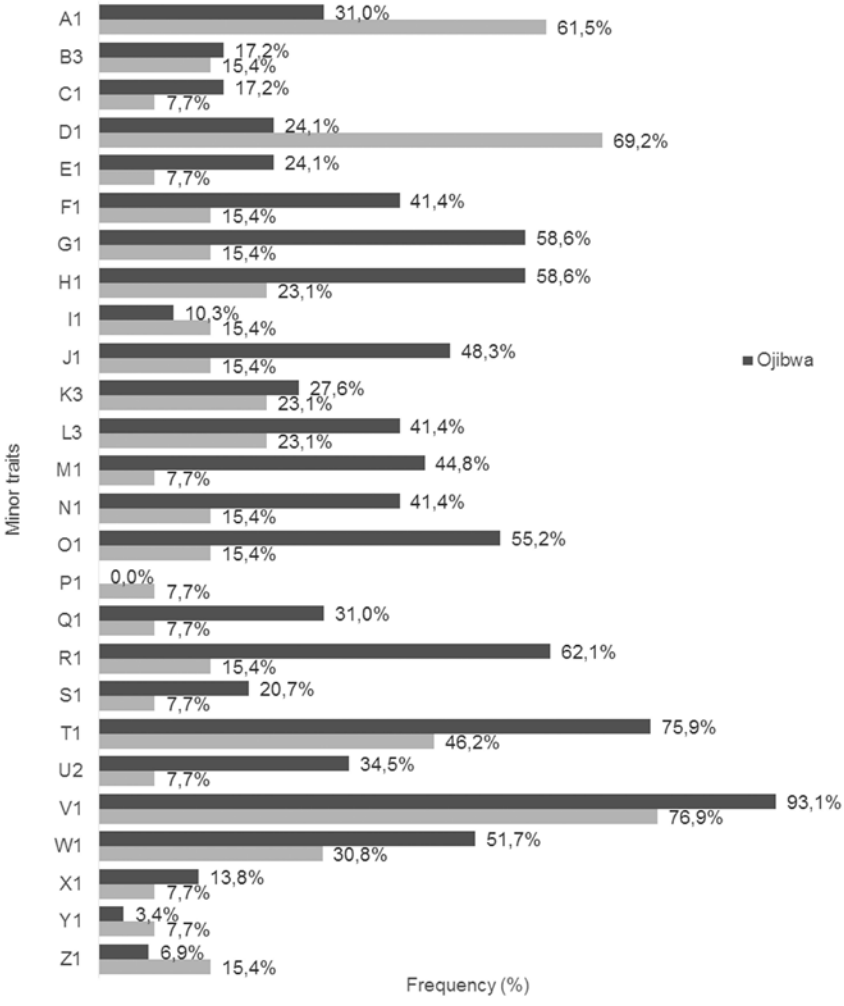


*Figure 4: Frequency of minor traits by Ojibwa vs. Non-Ojibwa groups*

Figure 5 shows the number of occurrences for all major and minor traits collected from Ojibwa sources. The source numbers shown on the horizontal axis correspond to source numbers in Table 1.

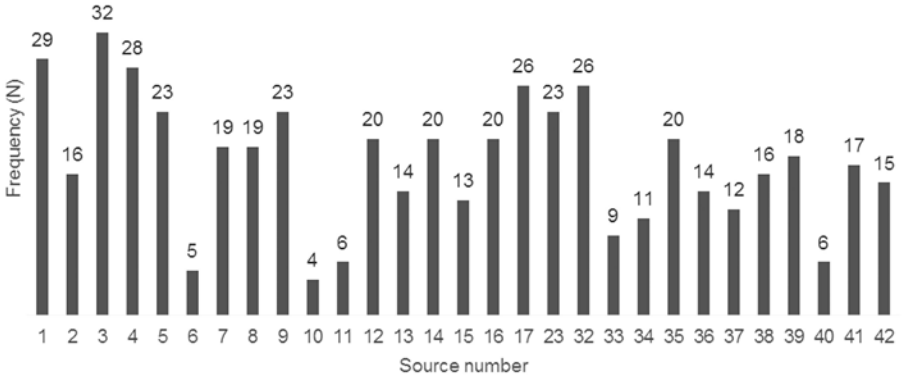


*Figure 5: Frequency of major and minor traits by source for Ojibwa group*

Figure 6 shows the number of occurrences for all major and minor traits collected from non-Ojibwa sources. The numbers on the horizontal axis correspond to the sources cited.

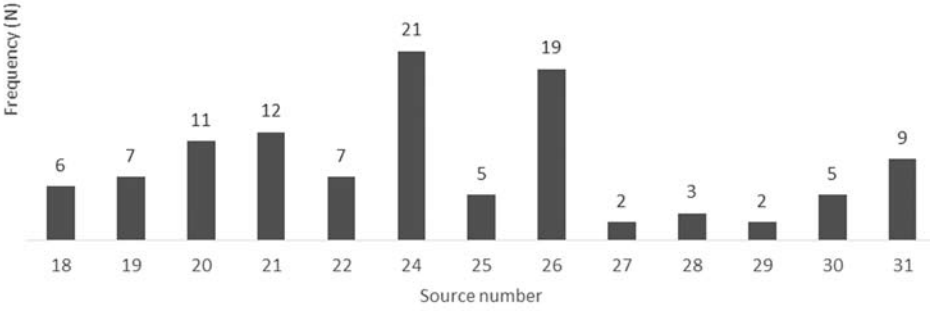


*Figure 6: Frequency of major and minor traits by source for Non-Ojibwa group (13 sources)*

## The archetype

Because this study goes somewhat beyond the bounds of the historic-geographic method by examining the spread of a tale cycle and not just a particular tale (the latter type of investigation being more common among the practitioners of this method), the degree of correspondence between traits, simply because of their greater number, is lower. Note, too, that the frequencies for major traits are higher than those of minor traits (see Figure 1). This, of course, is due to the greater generality of the major traits.

Fourteen of the sources examined relate Nanabozho's adventures with a wolf pack prior to the beginning of the cycle. The overwhelming majority of these are from the western part of the ethnographic region (Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Western Ontario: 12 sources).[9] The Fox versions precede their cycle with the plot of the underwater *manidos*

[9] This series of events is typically of a trickster variety, in which Nanabozho is made to look foolish in relation to the wolves.

to kill Nanabozho and Wolf. The remaining accounts either have no preceding events or relate other parts of the cycle.[10] On the whole, the sequels to the cycles share few points in common.

The most complete versions of the cycle occur among the Ojibwa (including the Saulteaux) and Menomini (see Figure 4). On the whole, the Menomini versions agree with the Ojibwa except for the Kingfisher episode, where sun-fish is substituted, and a lacrosse game (or ball-game) becomes the focal point of the action leading to the wounding of the *manido* (Skinner 1913). The Fox versions agree in most respects with the Ojibwa, but on the whole seem to be rather incomplete. The Potawatomi versions, as well as the Mississauga, are only fragments, and not at all representative of the cycle. The Ottawa accounts are sparse. The Potawatomi, Mississauga, and Ottawa versions omit the toad woman and the Kingfisher episodes entirely.

Of the forty-two sources that have been collected, assembled, and analysed for this study, twelve can only be considered as fragments: (6) Radin and Reagan, (10) Schoolcraft, (11) Reverend Jones, (18) Busby, (19) Jones, (22) Harrington, (25) Michelson, (27) De Smet, (28) Skinner, (29) Chamberlain, (30) Perrot and (40) Laidlaw.

Given these considerations, the highest frequencies of occurrence were found among the following traits: A1, B3, C1, D1, H1, J1, K3, L3, M1, N1, O1, Q1, R1, S1, T1, T3, U2, V1, W1, X. This formula reads as follows: Nanabozho is living with his brother Wolf (36%) and warns him not to cross a lake (17%). Wolf violates Nanabozho's interdiction by chasing some deer (14%) and dies (38%) Among the Algonkian groups investigated, it seems that the Kingfisher episode is peculiar to the Ojibwa. Nanabozho somehow discovers the location of the underwater *manidos* and goes there, changing himself into a tree stump (43%). One of the *manidos* (who assumes the form of a snake) emerges from the water and tests the stump (38%). After having convinced himself that it is not Nanabozho in disguise, he goes to sleep. Nanabozho changes back to human form and shoots the chief of the underwater *manidos* (26%). He next meets an old woman (36%) who tells him that she is going to cure the wounded chief (33%). Nanabozho tricks her into teaching him her cure (31%). He then slays her and disguises himself in her skin (43%) Going to the village of the wounded chief Nanabozho sees his brother's skin over the doorway of the chief's lodge (24%). He slays the chief by pushing the arrow further into him (48%). Nanabozho flees, taking his brother's skin (17%) as the flood waters begin to rise. He runs to the top of a mountain (48%) and then a raft (60%). Beaver and Otter are sent to dive for earth (26%). In the vast majority of cases muskrat succeeds in retrieving some earth (88%) which Nanabozho blows on to re-create the world (36%). Various animals are then sent out to check on the earth's size (52%, animal type unspecified). Traits I, P, Y, and Z are peculiar to only a few accounts, and as such are not considered part of the archetype.

The oldest recorded versions were obtained from (30) Perrot (Ottawa: 1680-1718), (9) Schoolcraft (Ojibwa: 1822), and (27) De Smet (Potawatomi: 1845-46). Of these, De Smet's is only a fragment of the cycle, accounting for the origin of the medicine society.

[10] The entire cycle referred to here encompasses two other segments: Nanabozho's birth and infancy and his "war-path" episodes.

Perrot's also represents only a part of the cycle, dealing with the earth-divers and the re-creation of the world. Schoolcraft's version is the most complete of the three, but it must be remembered that his account represents an amalgam of materials collected during his tenure as an Indian agent at Sault Ste. Marie (Osborn 1942).

Notably, there is some agreement between the three earliest sources, not in terms of specifics, but regarding the general pattern of the story. De Smet and Schoolcraft agree that Nanabozho warns Wolf about the underwater *manidos*, as well as about Wolf's fate (at this point De Smet's version ends) while Perrot and Schoolcraft hold in common that some animals are sent out as earth-divers, that muskrat succeeds in re-retrieving some earth, and that Nanabozho re-creates the world. Schoolcraft's version because of its completeness can be viewed as fairly representative of the earliest account.

When compared with the archetype previously outlined, several correspondences are noted. Both accounts cite Nanabozho's disguise as a tree stump (H1), both recount the slaying of the healer and the disguise by donning her skin (O1), both describe the killing of the *manido* by pushing the arrow further into him (R1), both mention that Nanabozho flees to a raft with the approach of the flood waters (T3), and both credit muskrat with retrieving some earth after the flood (V1).

Given these historical and geographical considerations it seems that, hypothetically, the cycle originated somewhere among the Ojibwa, for which group the greatest degree of correspondence with the archetype is in evidence (see figure four). As in Fisher's study, here too, the Ojibwa '. . . material appears to occupy a rather central position, sharing a greater number of absolute correspondences with each of the other groups than any one of them does with any other single tribe' (Fisher 1946: 237).

Because of the relatively recent recordings of the cycle (Schoolcraft's version being the earliest), postulating a date of origin is impractical.

If the similarities in traits are examined between cultural groups, it appears that the cycle spread from the Ojibwa northwards to the Saulteaux and south to the Menomini and Potawatomi. From the Menomini it travelled to the Fox, and then from the Ojibwa east to the Ottawa and Mississauga. Both the general lack and incompleteness of material for the Potawatomi and Mississauga makes it difficult to speculate on how much of the cycle is known here.

This conclusion is entirely in agreement with that reached by Johannes Gille in 1939. Here, his diagram (Figure 7, abridged form) is useful in tracing the hypothetical spread of the creation cycle (Gille 1939: 76).

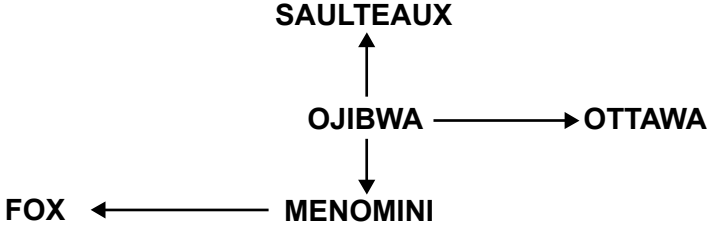


*Figure 7: Hypothetical spread of the creation cycle*

It is remarkable that a story like the Algonkian creation cycle can be retold with such consistency within a culture and among various tribal groups. The historic-geographic method has provided confirmation, through a more rigorous analysis of the folklore collected, of the possible origin and spread of this tale. Other Algonkian tribes will have undoubtedly adopted and re-told these stories because of the ubiquity of the well-known hero-trickster figure Nanabozho. The spread of folktales among closely related linguistic groups is common. As an important part of their oral tradition, these stories provide a source of entertainment, enlightenment and wonder for native raconteurs and their attentive audiences.

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## Povzetek

Prispevek proučuje folklorno tradicijo opisovanja stvaritvenega mita, po katerem naj bi svet ustvaril prevarantski junak, ki je med algonkiansko govorečimi indijanci znan kot *Nanabozho*. Z uporabo zgodovinsko-geografske metode smo proučili korpus zbranih materialov in na ta način raziskali točko izvora in širjenja te pripovedi. Pudariti je potrebno, da je pričujoča študija po eni strani odmik od prejšnjih zgodovinsko-geografskih raziskav, hkrati pa tudi njihova poglobitev, saj metodo aplicira na manjši korpus besedil, kot je običajno, hkrati pa je metoda uporabljena za proučevanje cikla pripovedi, ne pa proučevanje posameznega tipa pripovedi.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: junak, prevarant, folklora, Nanabozho, Algonkian

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