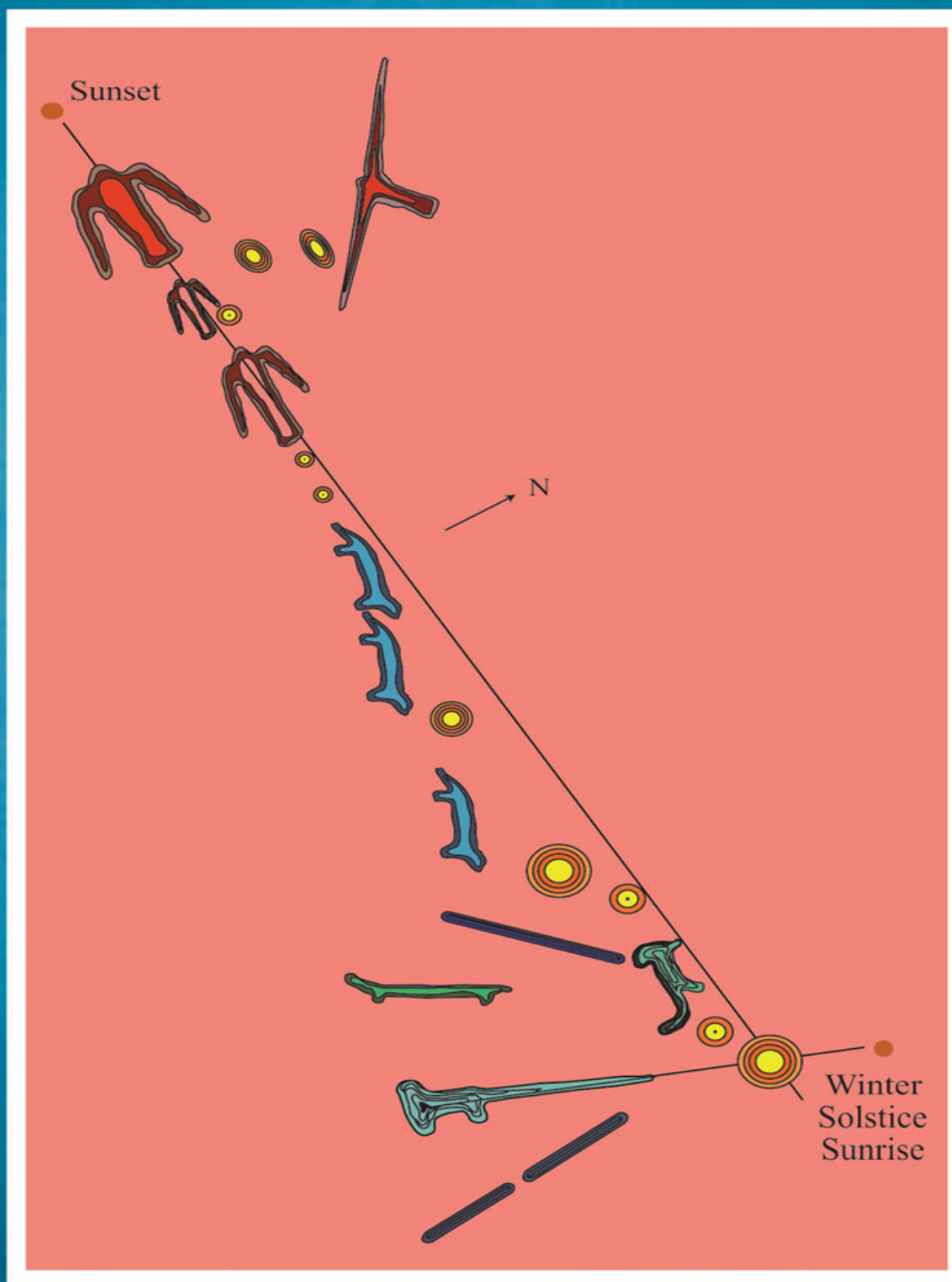


ANCIENT SAUK, OJIBWAY AND WINNEBAGO COSMOLOGY: MYTH, MOUNDS AND ARTIFACTS: A THEORY OF ANCESTRAL DIFFUSION



J. Price Ph.D.

Ancient Sauk, Ojibway and Winnebago Cosmology: Myth, Mounds and Artifacts: A Theory of Ancestral Diffusion


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TABLE OF CONTENTS

MUSQUAKIE TERMS

DEDICATION

TEXT: PURPOSE

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER ONE: SAUK, OJIBWAY and WINNEBAGO CREATION MYTHS

The Sauk Pantheon of Gods; Sauk Origin and Winnebago Creation Sequence, Sauk Gods Before Man Appears, Emergence of the Thunderers and Underwater Panthers, Fire is named; Earthmaker, Early Manitous, Four Winds, Formation of Wisaka, Yapatoe and Man, Fire, Ice and Flood, I-am-oi (giants), 3 World Destructions and The New Earth

CHAPTER TWO: Sauk-e-nuk, Sauk City and Devils Lake: Ancient Sauk Homes

CHAPTER THREE: The Copper Trade: The Sauk-Federation, Illini-Miami Piasa legends

CHAPTER FOUR: Indian Mound Sites: Astronomical alignments, myths and interpretation of Thunderbird, Panther, Bear, Man, Goose, Conical, Turtle, and Elephant Effigy Mounds

CHAPTER FIVE: The Saka in China, India and Turkestan: Legends, copper coins and discs

CHAPTER SIX: Aztalan, Cahokia, Eygpt, Phoenicians and Copper

CONCLUSION

FOOTNOTES

ILLUSTRATION LIST

BIBLIOGRAPHY

CHAPTER ONE: ANCIENT SAUK, OJIBWAY AND WINNEBAGO COSMOLOGY

THE SAUK PANTHEON OF GODS: SAUK ORIGIN & WINNEBAGO CREATION SEQUENCE, THE SAUK GODS BEFORE MAN APPEARS:

THE SAUK VISION OF THE WORLD involves many dieties, many realms of Heaven, Earth, Sea, under water and outer worlds that are enveloped in a great cycle of changes. The Sauk consider the world, the earth, in a metamorphic period, one that will eventually disappear in a fiery furnace and then be restored to it's original pristine state. The Sauk's conception of the world incorporated many manitous or spirits; both great and small, anthropomorphic beings and ethereal entities. There are many different versions of the Sauk, Fox, Ojibway and Winnebago Creation legends.

IN THE BEGINNING, the Sauk believe that before the earth existed, there was a Great Void, comparable to the Taoist notion of the Great Chaos, a vast expanse of nothingness, until the Earthmaker, or Great Original Spirit, appeared.¹ In the Sauk creation legend, "in the beginning, after the Creation, the Universe became inhabited by vast number of supernatural beings", which included the Thunderbirds and Underwater manitous. In the Winnebago version, following the formation of the waters and earth by the Earthmaker, four specific manitous, the four great winds, were created prior to the formation of the Thunderbird and Underwater spirits.²

Shortly thereafter, in Sauk legend, there emerged many polymorphic beings, in the heavens. The first two animalistic deities that were formed, perhaps after the wind spirits, were the Thunderbird manitou and the Underwater Snake manitou. In several Sauk versions, these anthropomorphic beings were formed from the ethers by the Great Spirit, Getchi Manitou. Getchi Manitou is a great white haired old man who smokes tobacco and watches the earth from above. After the polymorphous beings were created in the Universe, Getchi Manitou formed the Earth. He then placed the Water Spirits, the Underwater Serpents and the Underwater Panthers, both under the earth and underwater.³ Note the distinction between serpent and panther.

However, by comparing Winnebago to Sauk Creation myths one obtains a more complete understanding of the midwestern Native American view of Creation. In Winnebago legend, the great Earthmaker literally thinks himself into existence, within the Great Void. The Universe had not yet formed, only the Earthmaker, alone in the Void becomes aware of himself, hence thinks himself into a consciousness. He is very alone and begins crying, the tears fall below him to make the waters. Upon seeing the tears, he realizes that his sad thoughts can manifest objects, so he looks down to see the bright water and then commands that Light be formed upon the water. Hence from this first command, Light is formed. This creation of Light is Biblically accurate, as in Genesis, God commands "Light Be."

The Earthmaker then thought and wished for the earth to be formed from the ethers, and so it happened. Therefore, He manifested the material earth through His thought and His idea became matter. He then made the trees, grass, rocks and stones. Next, He created the four great manitous, the four great wind spirits, each corresponding to the four cardinal directions. They serve as weights, or anchors to the earth, which is viewed as a large floating island. They are placed in the corners of the earth's edges. The four great manitous are spirit winds of the North, South, East and West.

The Earthmaker looked down upon the Earth and saw that it was not quiet, so he thought and created four more large beings, which he hurled toward the Earth at a great speed. These entities penetrated through the earth with their heads facing eastward. These were the four great Snake

manitous. These beings are often interchanged with the Underworld or Underwater Spirits.

In the Sauk version of Creation, this Earthmaker sequence of the Creation is not recorded in written records, although some of this version can be verified through oral tradition. Instead, following the division of Light and Dark, and subsequent formation of Earth, Getchi Manitou created supernatural beings including the Thunderbird and Underwater dieties which include both snakes and panthers. These legendary beings existed for millenia prior to Man's appearance on Earth. The Thunderbirds are at continual war, and still are, with the Underwater panthers. In fact, described in Sauk oral tradition and Winnebago oral and written legend, there was a great battle between the Thunderbird and the Underwater Spirits that occurred prior to the formation of Man on Earth.⁴

According to Sauk tradition, in the beginning, following the formation of the Earth, placed underneath the earth were four great serpents which held the Earth on their backs, as the Earth was viewed as an island shaped pie plate. These four great serpents correspond to the four cardinal directions, as do the four great wind manitous, and are further associated with specific colors. In Sauk, the leader of the four great serpents, and thus all subsequent serpent manitous, was Kwa-gwa-shi-wa, or Fish with Eyes. Later in time, he was slain by the Sauk Original Man, Wisaka, but is now immortal.⁵ Wisaka is comparable to the hero Hercules.

The second great Serpent was called Skuta-na-siu, or Fire Serpent, who controls fire. In Sauk, skuta means fire. He was called the Master of Fire and is considered a great and powerful manitou. The third great serpent Sha-wa-na-ta-siu is the great serpent of the South, who controlled the warm winds. In Fox oral tradition he lives in a lodge in the South and frequently has manitou visitors.⁶

The fourth great serpent holds up the earth upon his back, is called Kui-ma-ma-ne-tu-wuk or Chief snakes. Manifested as a bull snake on earth, he is considered a most gentle snake, as he does not bite. The Underwater serpents control both water and fire and supply people with trees, fruits and plants.⁷

The Underwater Spirits include gigantic snakes and panthers that reside in lakes, seas, springs, swamps and waterfalls. The Underwater

Spirits may manifest as a snake, serpent with legs, panther, horned panther or horned-legged serpent in form. These serpents are hunted by the Thunderbirds, who eat them, causing battles between the two. Occasionally the serpents have revenge. One legend states that the Underwater Spirits hold a Thunderer captive beneath Niagara Falls. During storms, when he cries to his Thunderer brothers, lightning is seen in the east whenever there is a western storm. Yet the Thunderers cannot free him, as their lightning bolts do not penetrate the rocky ledge under Niagra Falls.⁸

In addition to the Serpent manitous, the Sauk also describe Underwater Panther manitous, including Nam-pe-ski-wuk, who has a spotted body and a very long tail. Pe-shi-wa, or wild cat, is another Underwater Panther god. These dieties are usually depicted in pairs. They are found facing one another in both Indian mounds and copper artifacts. The panther manitous are associated with fire dragons and the Great Lynx gens, which links them to fire dragon myths. One of the fiercest Underwater Spirits is Great Underworld Horned panther or serpent, Mah-she-ken-a-pek or Mi-shi-ki-ne-bik, who appears in later legends with Sauk warriors and Wisaka.⁹

Underwater panther dieties also exist in female form, as water is often associated with female dieties. Nam-pe-shik, or Underworld Panther woman, has a female companion underwater serpent diety called Ma-netu-ka, who manifests as a mermaid, in various stories. Feminine spirits are also found in the waves, such as surf woman manitou called Wite Kokwa, or regional names such as Green Bay Woman, Aski-puki-kumi, Great Sea Woman, Ketcu-kumi-kwa, and Wasi-kumi-kwa or moonlight on sea woman.¹⁰

Wame-soni, is translated as “all body”, is one of the serpents on earth which is eaten by the Thunderbird manitou named Tca-kena. It is the Sauk panther, not serpents, manitous Wame-soni and Tca-kena that are later depicted in effigy form.

Following the Sauk Creation of the four great winds and the four great Underwater Spirits and serpent manitous, the multilayers of heavens were formed, where more manitous appeared. The Heavens, or Sky Country, is where the Thunderbirds and Thunderers reside. There are four great Thunderbird gods in Sky Country. They reside in two heavenly places, in the clouds above, and in the land above the clouds, or the second layer of

Heaven called Sky Country. The Thunderbird manitous live above the blue sky in a “single long lodge at the end of a long white river.”¹¹ This is a reference to the Milky Way, as a similar story exists in the Sauk cycle of Death. Thunderbird spirits are ruled by a single Thunderbird chief. The Thunderers, or Thunderbird manitous, in Winnebago tradition are two distinct entities. The Thunderbird manitou being is a heavenly spirit, in both Sauk and Winnebago. However, in Sauk tradition, the Thunderers may manifest as half-bird and half-human, in later times, following the formation of Man. This tradition is also found in Egyptian and Japanese cosmologies.

In Sauk, the Thunderers are called Nane-mika-wuk and Che-che-mine-wuk, which may be the Thunders of the East and West, respectively. Nanemika-wuk, or Wamigo-wuk which means “The Feathered One,” refers to the Thunderer as a half-bird, half-human entity who wears fringed leggings, and resides in the western celestial sky. The Thunderers are further divided into sub-clans.

The Algonquian tradition considers thunder the voice of an immense invisible bird, whose eyes flash lightning in the sky when angered by humans. They are lead in flight by Nika-nuk-o-huk who is the leader in striking lightning. (Clearly, this is the name of the name of Ghost Eagle Mound leader.) The light in front of the Thunderers is called wase-ho-no-kwa and is considered an extremely powerful and sacred spirit.

Wakano is the Thunderer of the North and Cawano is the Thunderer of the South. The four Thunderers correspond to the four cardinal directions and have assigned colors of black, yellow, white and red. Sauk human names correspond to the individual Thunderer’s color or ability.

The Thunderers guard the people, dwell among us and beyond the clouds, move with a rumble, control the weather and, in anger, strike with fire. Their initial point of earth contact was on Beaver Island, in Lake Superior, which was formed from hurling (rock) eggs into the waters, prior to their battles. On Judgement Day, they will crack open the world and blow it to pieces.

FIRST WORLD DESTRUCTION BY FIRE, FROM BATTLE BETWEEN THUNDERER AND UNDERWATER PANTHER

Prior to the formation of Man, the supernatural beings had a great battle in which the entire world ignited in a terrible fire, which destroyed the first original earth. This story is not recorded in Sauk written tradition, but it does appear in Winnebago oral and written records. The site of this great battle was Devil's Lake, Wisconsin.

The Winnebago Tribe's ancient legend of Devil's Lake, Wisconsin, located near Sauk City, Wisconsin, is the ancient summer home of the Sauk Tribe. By the time this story was recorded in 1832, the Sauk had moved far away, due to the Blackhawk War. By 1832, the Winnebago Tribe had relocated to the Sauk City-Baraboo Dells area, which includes what is currently Devil's Lake State Park. (Figure 1) In legend, native guardian spirits still inhabit the great cliffs. (Figure 2)

The Winnebago Indians believe that the shattered rocks and jagged rocky bluffs were formed as the result of a great ancient battle that occurred between the Thunderbird Spirits and the Under-water Spirits (wa taxjeri), which still inhabit Devil's Lake.¹² The Winnebago believe that Devil's Lake has unusual echoing powers and therefore the bluffs have manitous. They believe that the shattered rocks were formed by the thunderbolts or eggs hurled by the gigantic birds. The Winnebago oral legend states that before Man appeared on Earth, the great battle between the Thunderbird manitou and the Underwater Panther (Wa-kja-kee-wa) occurred over either power or control of fire. The two dieties wrestled until the Underwater Panther collapsed and the wounded Thunderbird retaliated by sending thunderbolts that shattered the cliffs. In both Sauk and Winnebago cosmology, the Underworld Serpent holds the control of fire in his realm, but as the Thunderbird manitou needs fire to make lightening, they are continually at war. In Sauk, Wamesomi struggles against Tcekama. After the great battle, in which the earth was destroyed by fire, both manitous continue to exist, as they are immortal, but the world was reformed. In Winnebago, after the battle, the Thunderers retreat

to the North and the Earthmaker decided to create Man, from which their Buffalo Tribe originated on the shores of Devil's Lake.

ARCHEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE SUPPORTS WINNEBAGO CREATION MYTH

Archeological evidence supports the Winnebago Creation legend of Devil's Lake, Wisconsin. Geological evidence indicates that the Baraboo Mountain Range is one of the oldest mountain ranges in the world. Archean fire rocks that formed the earth's crust in the beginning of time, were molded by natural elements to form layers of stratified rocks. United States Geological Survey confirms these strata are composed of igneous rhyolite, diorite and granite, found at six different sites within the Wisconsin Devils Lake area, including the Baraboo River's Lower Dells and a site near Devil's Nose. The Devil's Lake and Baraboo Bluffs are composed primarily of quartzite layers placed on top of the igneous stratified rock. The quartzite Bluffs are the initial geological elements that were composed after the formation of the igneous rock layers. The quartzite Bluffs are covered by layers of slate, iron and dolomite. The Baraboo Bluffs were composed in pre-Cambrian times, perhaps thousands or millions of years ago, depending on one's concept of age and time within the Universe. As quartzite was formed prior to the appearance of coal, flora and fauna, they remain one of the oldest rock formations on earth. The Baraboo Bluffs were formed prior to the Allegheny or Rocky Mountain ranges, during an epoch when most of Wisconsin was underwater.

At the base of the fossil-less quartzite Bluffs are layers of Cambrian sandstone and limestone. The Cambrian sandstone contains thousands of small fossils from the Paleozoic era, roughly five million years ago. Niagra Limestone and other rock forms cover the Cambrian sandstone. The towering Baraboo Bluffs were reduced to their present height, after the Great Flood, the emergence of Man and the ravages of time. They remain the source of Creation, for the Winnebagoes, towering above Devil's Lake, the place where the Thunderbird fought with the Underwater Panther.

Following this great battle, in Winnebago cosmology, the earth was reformed and Getchi Manitou decided to create Man.

THE FORMATION OF WISAKA: SAUK ORIGINAL MAN

In Winnebago tradition, Earthmaker's desire to talk to someone inspired him to take a piece of clay and make Man in His own image, which he did. He then added a tongue, but saw that it had no soul, so he gave it a soul and then added intelligence and breathed life into it. A variation of this story is also found in Busby's version of the Sauk's formation from the Schawano-e. Here, the first world destruction by Underwater Panther and Thunderer are not mentioned¹³, rather, a battle between the Aiyam-woy or great giants, polymorphous beings and Wisaka, Sauk Original Universal Man, caused the great Fire of World destruction, that removed the Aiyam-woy from the Earth. In Sauk prophecy, it is Wisaka who will return on Judgement Day, bringing Venus and the seven stars, to deliver the Sauk from the White man's oppression.

In Sauk, in the beginning, after the Creation, the Universe contained other supernatural beings including the Aiyam-woy, or giant people, the Mah-she ken-a-pek (Great Horned Serpent), and the Nah-me-pa-she (Underneath Panther). These creatures were placed in the sea by Getchi Manitou, while Wisaka, Sauk original man, was placed on land to rule it. Wisaka was given control over the powers of the water, which may have been taken from the Underwater Spirits. Although not stated in the written, but referenced in Sauk oral legend, Wisaka's new power over the water may have angered the Underwater Spirits that caused the following conflict.

After some time, the Aiyam-woy giants plotted with the Underworld spirits and regained control of both earth and sea, from Wisaka, threatening Mankind with extinction. The Underworld powers and the Aiyam-woy giants had a meeting and planned a feast to invite Wisaka in order to kill him. The Underworld council then looked for a messenger amongst themselves, to tell Wisaka of the upcoming feast, when Yapato-e, Wisaka's brother, was found seated in the middle of the Underworld

council. (Note the sudden formation of Ya-pato-e.) Angered by the intrusion, the Underworld powers immediately killed Yapato-e. In Skinner's version, Wisaka mourns for his brother ten days, until the gods send back his brother, but Wisaka refused to receive him, and sent Yapato-e to another world, in the west, to rule the souls of the Dead.

At this point, Death enters the Universe, and Yapato-e rules over noganaw, or Man's spirit, which lives in his heart until Death. Upon dying, noganaw enters Tcipayaposw, the Death lodge, for four days, until it meets Po'kitapawa, the Brain Taker, who opens the skull and removes part of the brain. Po'kitapawa is also the bridge guardian spirit of the Spirit world. All souls must cross the western bridge before moving on to Spirit World. Thus, Death came to Mankind and the resurrection of the body was then prohibited.

In the Galland version, The Underworld Spirits return to the sea depths, after failing to capture and slay Wisaka. They then call upon Alemika, to send a great flood to destroy the earth. In the Skinner version, before this happens, Wisaka destroys all the Aiyam-woy giants in a great battle with Fire. Wisaka was then attacked by the Underworld Spirits with the aid of Papo-ana-tes-se-ah, the God of the North, who tried to freeze him, but failed.

In a version of Sauk creation recorded by A. Fulton, Wisaka destroys the Aiyam-woy by Fire and the Underwater Panthers flee beneath the earth. The Underwater panthers called upon the Thunderer, Na-nam-a-keh, who sent No-tah-tes-se-ah, god of the wind, to Papo-ana-tes-se-ah, god of the cold, who subsequently froze the entire earth with frost, hail, snow and ice from the North wind, until all Mankind, beasts, and gods were destroyed.¹⁴ Hence in both Sauk and Winnebago, there is one prior world destruction before the Great Flood. In Winnebago, the first world is destroyed by Fire, prior to the appearance of Man. In Sauk, after the great Fire caused by Wisaka killing all the Aiyamwoy, due to his brother's death, the Northern gods destroy the earth by a great Ice Age, prior to the great Flood.

In nearly all the versions, the next event allowed the Underwater Spirits to call upon Alemike (a sympathetic Thunderbird manitou), who heard their war cry and commanded the rain clouds to form together and pour out rain to cause the great Deluge. The rain covered the entire earth,

even the highest mountain peaks. In Sauk, Wisaka saw the rain coming and made a large bubble or Opeskwe, gathered certain animals and men, floated on the surface. After many days, when the storms were over, Wisaka told the tortoise, or in other versions, the muskrat, to dive for earth. Wisaka then spread forth the dirt to create the land where the Sauk now live. Wisaka and the Opeskwe's occupants now ruled the new dry earth. In one version, the muskrat, who drowned while finding dirt, clutched the earth with its paws, to form a nucleus with which Wisaka would build another world. A copper plate unearthed from a twin conical effigy mound contains an image of Wisaka and Yapato-e dancing, calling the rain, prior to the Great Flood. Found in Union County, Illinois, this ancient copper relic records this brotherly story. (Figure 3)

Once upon the new Earth, Wisaka divided the ancestors of the Sauk into two groups one called the O-ke-mau-uk or chieftains, the other Us-kaup-a, the servants or Mamishaum-uk or sacred bundle keepers. Wisaka then gave a miasham, a sacred war bundle, to each head of the family clan. Wisaka later then bragged that he himself had driven the evil spirits from the earth, forgetting that he was a creature of the Great Spirit. Getchi Manitou then opened his war bundle and showed Wisaka his origin. Although he fasted ten days in shame, Getchi Manitou banished Wisaka to the end of the earth, or to the North Pole in other versions, and placed the god of winter between him and mankind.

THE NEW EARTH: SAUK and SCHAWANO-E VERSIONS

The history of the Sauk, as recorded by Fox oral tradition, states that the first race on the new earth, formed after the Deluge, was the Red race. Wisaka was a pure Red man, and he formed people in his image, just as Earthmaker formed him. The first race on the new earth was the Sauk people. This ethnocentricity is also found in the Winnebago and Schawano-e tribes, although the Schawano-e believed they formed the initial priesthood.

Once upon the new Earth, Wisaka divided the Sauk Tribe into twelve gens and then split it further into two bands, each containing six clans. The

first is the Paukauhauo Band, containing the following clans; Alemike, or Thunderer, the Namaoi, or Sturgeon, the Makesis or Eagle, the Kitchekoma, or Great Water and the Mukquuk, or Bear. The second band is the Uskauppa Band, which includes the Nepe or Water Clan, Pusakisa or Deer, the Mukquoh-peneah or Bear Potato, the Pokkeo or Peasant, the Mowah or Wolf and finally the Waukoos or Fox Clan.

THE LAND BY THE SEA and THE FISH PEOPLE

Following the division of the twelve clans, the Sauk resided for millennia in the East, by the Great Sea. Wisaka, who created all things on earth, then invented the Fish people. As the Sauk were residing by the Great Sea in the East, a large fish swam ashore, head first, and transformed into a human being. The Sauk and Fox Elders were amazed when the fish lifted the head out of the water, it immediately changed to a human head, when its tail was lifted up, it became legs and feet. Soon more fish followed, transformed and began to copy the ways of the Sauk. The Fish people had one great leader, but had no memory of life before in the sea. They only knew that they were told to leave the sea and live a new life on land. These fish-like humans were then the manitous of the entire Universe. Fox oral tradition states that in the future, they will destroy the earth and then the world will begin all over again.¹⁵

Both the Winnebago and the Objibway tribes have a similar legend. The Objibway calls the Fish Clan, the A-wause. They incorporate the concept of “spontaneous Man”, a term Objibway informant, William Warren, believed was a direct translation of the Anishaugig or Red race, transforming from the sea. Much like Wisaka’s ability to instantaneously transform Man into an entity, following the Deluge, Warren’s version of the Objibway Creation myth clearly states that Wisaka, or Manabosho, created Man after the Great Flood.¹⁶

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