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NAA MS 2776, folder 3
Truman Michelson field notes from the Munsee in Kansas
and the Delaware in Oklahoma, 1912-1913
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There was once a gang of 12 who
didn't care to be sociable with any
tribe of Indians. So they always
wanted to go away off. Kill people,
and rob them. So these 12 one
day started out to hunt some people
& kill & scalp ^{them}. So they got a good
ways off. They had to camp several
times. They could find no trace
of any human beings. They were
going along & struck a trail &
wondered what in the world could
be. It must be a turtle. But
what a big one. It was marked
flat in the ground. It was big as
house. They followed him up.
Finally they caught up with it.
They found a very large turtle.
They got on top his back & examined
it. All 12 were on it at once.
They decided they could ride
him when they went anywhere
and save walking. The turtle
started when all were on his back.
They kept going several days on
the turtles back. When they got
to the big water - then could see

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nothing but water - the turtle kept
on going. So he went straight for
this big water. So when the turtle
was about ready to hit the water,
these men tried to jump off. But
they were stuck fast. They couldn't
get off. One managed to get
off before the turtle entered the
water. He went back and told
the people what happened. So he
told them that they had found a
big turtle. Meanwhile they rode this
turtle. This turtle went right to the
big water with them. He said
he managed to jump off but
the others went right along with
the turtle on his back. He said
"The last I saw of them was
when their heads went under
the water." So they got together &
concluded over it, wondering
how they could get the men
back, not believing they were
dead being carried away by
the turtle in the manner
they were. So the Shawnees
have always been right

next to the Delawares for a long time. The Shawnee told the Delaware he knew of a medicine + a song with this medicine that they could use which he thought would make the turtle come back with these men. This medicine is used principally for that purpose. It never failed. It worked all right. All the older people + the Shawnee went with the man who showed where he had last seen the turtle with the men. So then these Shawnees + Delawares, mainly old men, camped near the water where the turtle entered the water with the 11 men. So these Shawnees proceeded to make this medicine. They made bowls of bark. So they set this bark bowl with the medicine in it. The men sat in a half circle about, facing the water. They were on the north side. They began all singing a song calling this turtle

to return. During the time they
 were singing they heard a
 big roar as if some large
 water animal were coming.
 They thought it was the turtles.
 First one kind of ^{water} animal
 appeared then another, cray-
 fish. When the animal came
 it would make right for
 that medicine and stop right
 where the medicine was.
 Then one man pushed the
 one back, saying "We don't want
 you" or another would appear.
 They told him the same as they
 wanted the turtles to come. Towards
 the last of the other animals besides
 the turtles, a big snake - the largest
 in world with long horns on his
 head - appeared. All kinds of
 lightning, all colors, was every-
 where. They all said "We've
 got some great this time."
 May be it's the turtles with the
 power" they said as they saw
 him approaching. When he came
 to where the medicine

was and stopped + laid still.
 The men went up, examined
 him, + said he was the prettiest
 animal they ever saw. He was
 all decorated with different
 colors about the head. They de-
 cided to take off some of the
 scales off his neck or body
 some place. So when they were
 taking them off "You are
 going to make a mist as we
 take these scales off you". Some
 would wish one way another another
 Some would take a scale and put in
 split of wood. They could put that
 in a branch and when the water
 hit it, it could be taken up, then
 would be from enough [the scales
 cause the rain]. Those scales are
 with the Delawares yet. Elkhan has
 one; sold one. Some would use to have
 plenty, luck in killing deer, getting
 fur etc. When they got those scales
 off they spoke to the snake,
 and told him they didn't want
 him, + pushed him back
 into the water.

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after the snake went back, they
again heard a roaring in the water.
So the people knew very it must
be that turtle. "We have had every
thing else in the water ^{to this medicine} come, except
that turtle." This water made all
sorts movements as the turtle approached.
So directly they saw the turtle; then
they saw those men on his back
still living. The turtle came
right up to where this medicine
was. The great chiefs then told an old man
"How shall we proceed to let him
know what we want." The old man
said "We will use tobacco. God
put tobacco here on this earth to
be used for this purpose, namely,
whenever you want anything from
animals." So this particular old
man that was selected to do this, told
the turtle that they didn't want
him but wanted those men.
When the old man got through
talking to the turtle, "Here's tobacco
that I will give you, you can
take it along with you." So
he tied the tobacco around

the turtle's neck. After the old man
 did that these men on the
 turtle's back, began to look around
 as if they had come back
 to their senses the way they were
 before they were taken away.
 They saw the sun shining, and they
 saw the daylight. About that
 time they started to get off
 that turtle. They walked right
 away from him. They saw the
 men sitting around. At first
 they had not until the tobacco had
 been tied to the turtle's neck for he
 had taken them power away, but
 after he was given tobacco every-
 thing began to look natural.
 So the old man told the turtle
 that was all they wanted, so
 now he could go back. Then
 those men who got off the turtle
 said that where they come from
 in the water everything appeared
 to be the same in the water the
 same as it did here on the earth;
 except that they saw no sun.
 So they said they saw lots of people

there the same as here - There
was some animals under the
water + some people. It was 6 months
the men were on the turtles back
before they were brought back. This
turtle took the men because he
wanted the other animals + look
up to him because he had other
people with him. Then all went
home after the men were brought
back. The Delaware still have that medi-
cine today and use it.

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MICHELSON, TRUMAN

MUNSEE

&

Delaware

Ethnological and linguistic field notes from the Munsee in
Kansas and the Delaware in Oklahoma. [1912]. 170 pp.
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This field work is referred to in 34th Ann. Rept.,
B. A. E. (Washington, 1922), p. 16.



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