

**Ceremonial songs of the Tonawanda  
Seneca longhouse: tonal and rhythmic  
patterns and ritual functions [1936]**

**Circa 1936**

**Mss.497.3.K965st**

American Philosophical Society  
105 South Fifth Street  
Philadelphia, PA, 19106  
215-440-3400  
[manuscripts@amphilsoc.org](mailto:manuscripts@amphilsoc.org)

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository</b>	American Philosophical Society
<b>Creator</b>	Kurath, Gertrude Prokosch
<b>Title</b>	Ceremonial songs of the Tonawanda Seneca longhouse: tonal and rhythmic patterns and ritual functions [1936]
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<b>Call number</b>	Mss.497.3.K965st
<b>Extent</b>	1.0 Volume(s) 50 p.; 90 leaves of musical scores
<b>Extent</b>	1 volume, 50 p.; 90 leaves of musical scores.
<b>Location</b>	LH-MV-E-8
<b>Language</b>	Iroquoian (Other)
<b>Container</b>	1
<b>Abstract</b>	Musicological analysis of music, with attempt to relate musical patterns to "present ritual function," with some consideration of speculative questions of chronology and individual creativity.

## Background note

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Gertrude Prokosch Kurath (1903-1992) was educated at Bryn Mawr College (MA, 1928, History of Art) and at the Yale University School of Drama (1929-1930). She received extensive training in music practice and theory, and in several systems of art dance as well as folk dancing, in Germany and the United States. From 1923-1946, she was an active teacher of modern dance, as a concert performer with the stage name Tula, and as a producer of pageants and dance dramas. In the mid-1940s, she turned her focus to the study of the American Indian dance. From 1949-1973, with the assistance of field research grants from the Wenner-Gren Foundation, the American Philosophical Society, and the National Museum of Canada, she studied among the Aztec, Otomi, Tarascan, and Yaqui Indians of Mexico, and the Iroquois, Cherokee, Ottawa, Chippewa, Menomini, Fox, Tewa, Keresan Indians of North America. In 1962, she founded the Dance Research Center in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

## Scope & content

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From 1951-1965, Kurath was awarded various Phillips funded grants to study the songs and dances of the Algonquian and Iroquois. Her works include [Religious customs of modern Michigan Algonquians](#), with Jane Willets Ettawageshik (497.3 K965a, Film 1396); [Seneca music and dance style: songs and ceremonies of Coldspring longhouse](#), (497.3 K965s); Ceremonial songs of the Tonawanda Seneca longhouse: tonal and rhythmic patterns and ritual functions (497.3 K965st); [Observations of Michigan Indians](#) (497.3 Am4, no.55, Film 1257). Plus, audio recordings of songs and dances of the Ottawa, Chippewa, Keresan, and Tewa tribes. Kurath's other archival papers are held by the Cross-Cultural Dance Resources in Arizona, with some of her other Iroquois materials held by the Woodlands Cultural Center in Brantford, Ontario.

## Scope & content

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10 ink sketches of Seneca Indian musical instrument symbols used with scores. Referenced in the online [Daythal Kendall Guide to Native American Collections at the American Philosophical Society](#).

## Administrative Information

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### Publication Information

American Philosophical Society

## Restrictions

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### Restrictions on Access

This material has access restrictions. Please consult a curator for details.

## Provenance

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### Acquisition Information

Donated by Gertrude P. Kurath, Phillips Fund grantee.

## Related Materials

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### Related Material

See also [Martha Champion Randle, Ceremonial Songs of Tonawanda Seneca Longhouse \(Mss.Rec.82\)](#).

## Indexing Terms

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### Genre(s)

- Sketches.

### Subject(s)

- Eastern Woodlands Indians

- Indians of North America--New York (State)
- Rites and ceremonies.
- Seneca Indians--Music
- Seneca Indians--Social life and customs

## Other Descriptive Information

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