

lished some remarks on the religious life of the Bella Coola in 1886<sup>1</sup> which, however, contain so many misconceptions that they cannot be used to advantage. At the same time I published a brief description of the tribe, based on information received from a small group of members of the tribe who were travelling in Germany. In this description also there are a number of misconceptions. The Indians were shown a collection of masks from Vancouver Island with which they were not familiar. They gave, however, explanations of these masks judging by the similarity to masks of their own tribe, consequently the explanations given there are not correct.<sup>2</sup> In 1890 I fell in with a number of Bella Coola who were fishing for salmon in Fraser River. The information obtained from them was published in the reports of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, 1891.<sup>3</sup> A Jacobsen published a description of their ceremonies in 1891.<sup>4</sup> Philip Jacobsen described some of their traditions and customs in 1894 and 1895.<sup>5</sup> I published a collection of traditions in 1894 and 1895.<sup>6</sup>

### III

All the collections which have been made heretofore do not bring out clearly the principal characteristic of the mythology of the Bella Coola. The tribes of the North Pacific coast consider the Sun as the most important deity, but at the same time they believe in a great many beings of supernatural power. For this reason their whole mythology is very unsystematic. The Bella Coola on the other hand have developed a peculiar mythology, in which a number of supernatural beings have been co-ordinated. A system has been evolved which justifies our terming the supernatural beings "deities." The general features of this system are as follows:—

The Bella Coola believe that there are five worlds one above another. The middle one is our own world, the earth. Above it are spanned two heavens, while below it there are two underworlds. In the upper heaven resides the supreme deity, a woman who intercedes comparatively little with the fates of mankind. In the centre of the lower heaven, that is in the zenith, stands the house of the gods, in which reside the Sun and all the other deities. Our own earth is an island swimming in the ocean. The underworld is inhabited by the ghosts who are at liberty to return to heaven whence they may be sent down again to our earth. The ghosts

<sup>1</sup>Original Mittheilung, aus dem königlichen Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin, 1886, pp. 183-186.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 177-182.

<sup>3</sup>Seven's Report of the Committee on the Northwestern Tribes of Canada, pp. 218. Report of the 61st Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, held at Cardiff, 1891, pp. 498-449.

<sup>4</sup>Verhandlungen der Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte, 1891, pp. 387-395.

<sup>5</sup>Amer. Indskrift afvisen af Svenska Sällskapet för Antropologi och Etnologi, 1894, pp. 187-202, 1895, pp. 1-23.

<sup>6</sup>Verhandlungen der Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte, 1894, pp. 281-366, 1895, pp. 189-195.