

Besides this spirit, the crane, and the so-called "Hámaa," can become the geni of the cannibals. The right to become cannibal is hereditary in certain gentes, but every individual has to acquire it by being initiated. For this purpose he goes into the woods, where he lives for three or four months. After this time, he approaches the village, whistling and singing; then the people know that he has become a cannibal (Hámats'a). The next morning they go into the woods in order to fetch him back. They sit down in a square and sing four new songs which are composed for the occasion. The first song has a slow movement, the second is in a five-part measure, while the third and fourth have a quick movement. As soon as these are sung, the new Hámats'a makes his appearance. He is surrounded by ten men, who carry rattles, and is accompanied by them to the village. All those partaking in the ceremony wear head-rings and neck-rings made of hemlock branches. Four nights the new Hámats'a dances in the house of his father. On the fourth night he suddenly leaves the house, and after a short time returns, carrying a corpse. As soon as the old cannibals see this, they rush forward and cut the corpse to pieces, which they devour. This custom is principally practiced among all tribes of Kwakiutl lineage; but it is also found among the Bilqula and Komoks, who have evidently adopted it from the Kwakiutl. Similar customs prevail among the Tsimpshian. G. M. Dawson says that they have four different systems of rites of religious character, which he calls Simhalait, Mihla, Noohlem, and Hoppop. The third of these are dog-eaters, while the last are the cannibals.

According to my inquiries, this refers to the following tradition: A man went out hunting. After some time he saw a white bear, and pursued it until it disappeared in a mountain. The hunter followed him, and saw that it was transformed into a man, who led him through his house, which stood in the interior of the mountain. There he saw four groups of men, and what they were doing. The first were the Mëitla, the second were the Nootlam ("dog-eaters"), the third were the Wihalait ("the cannibals"), and the fourth were the Semhalaidet. Four days the man staid in the house. Then he returned; but when he came to his village, he found that he had staid in the mountain four years. The bear had told him to do as he had seen the men in the mountain doing. Since that time the Tsimpshian eat dogs and bite men. There are no reports that cannibal ceremonies exist among the Haida and Tlingit.

The masks which all these tribes use in their dances represent spirits or some of the heroes of their legends. Most of the winter dances are pantomimical performances of their traditions. At the great feasts other masks are used, which refer to the tradition of the gens of the man who gives the feast. The use of masks is most extensive among the northern tribes. The variety of masks of the Haida, Tlingit, Tsimpshian, and Kwakiutl, is wonderful, but the more southern tribes have only a very limited number. Among the Nanaimo their use is the privilege of certain gentes. The Lkungen of Victoria use only very few masks, which they destroy by fire as soon as a death occurs in their tribe.