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INTRODUCTION TO TRADITION OF THOMPSON RIVER INDIANS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA.

"REPRINTED FROM MEMOIRS OF THE AMERICAN
FOLK-LORE SOCIETY, V. 6"

INTRODUCTION.

BY FRANZ BOAS.

THE Thompson River Indians, whose mythology has been recorded in the following pages by M. James Teit, form a branch of the Salishan tribes which inhabit large portions of the States of Washington, Idaho, Montana, and of the Province of British Columbia. The languages constituting the Salish stock may be grouped in two main divisions, — the coast Salish and the Salish of the interior. While the former is divided into a great number of languages spoken by the tribes extending from Tillamook in Oregon to Bella Coola in British Columbia, the languages of the interior show greater uniformity. The Salish proper is spoken in the interior of Washington, Idaho, and Montana, and extends into southern British Columbia, where it is spoken by the Okanagon. The Shuswap, that is spoken in southeastern British Columbia, is closely affiliated to it. Between the Shuswap and the coast, two other languages are spoken, — the Lillooet in the north; the Thompson River language, or *NLak'a'pamux*,¹ in the south. The last-named tribe lives on Fraser and Thompson rivers, a little above and below their confluence.

The tribe is divided into five divisions, — the *Nkamtci'nemux* on the upper part of Thompson River, the *Cawa'xamux* in Nicola Valley, the *NLak'apamux'o'ē* or real *NLak'a'pamux*, around the confluence of Thompson and Fraser rivers, the *SLaxa'yux* on upper Fraser River, and the *Utā'mqt* farthest down Fraser River. The *Nkamtci'nemux* are neighbors of the Shuswap. The *Cawa'xamux* come into contact with the Okanagon, while formerly they were neighbors of a small Athapascan tribe which live on the upper part of Nicola River. The *SLaxa'yux* live next to the upper Lillooet, while the *Uta'mqt* come into contact with the coast Salish on the lower course of Fraser River.

The greater part of the following traditions were collected among the *Nkamtci'nemux* and *Cawa'xamux*.

The *NLak'a'pamux* are primarily hunters and fishermen. They subsist largely on venison and salmon, although berries and roots which are collected by the women constitute an important portion

of their diet. Of recent years their customs have somewhat changed, owing to the influence of the white settlers. They have learned to build log cabins, and begin to till the soil. They also work to a considerable extent for wages on ranches and in pack-trains. Formerly they spent the winter in the valleys of Thompson and Fraser rivers, where they lived in small villages, most of which consisted of a few houses only. In the spring they resorted to the mountains, where the women gathered roots, and where the men went hunting. In the summer, when the salmon ascend the rivers, considerable portions of the tribe erected their summer huts near the river courses, and engaged in curing fish for winter's use. Later on, they visited their hunting-grounds in pursuit of deer. In the spring, great numbers of Indians belonging to all divisions of the tribe assembled in some of the higher valleys of the country, particularly in a valley situated a short distance northeast of Lytton, which is called Beta'ni. The hillsides of this valley abound in plants the roots of which are eaten by the Indians. While they were assembled here, the men passed much of their time gambling, while the women were engaged in digging and curing roots.

The winter houses of the Indians were underground lodges covered over with a roof made of beams, mats, and dirt. A hole from eighteen to thirty feet in diameter, and about three or four feet deep, was dug, and four beams were placed on the rim of the hole, slanting upward towards the middle. They were supported by posts. These beams were covered with cross poles and mats and dirt. They did not come into contact in the middle, where a hole was left about three or four feet in diameter. Access to the lodge was had through this hole, in which a ladder was standing which led to the floor of the dwelling. The fireplace was at the foot of the ladder, which was protected from the heat of the fire by a slab of stone. The beds were arranged near the walls.

In summer the people lived in tents made of bark or of rush mats. These tents were either circular or square. In the latter case the smoke escape was along the ridge of the tent. Most of their household utensils were made of woven basketry or of birch bark.

They dressed mainly in deerskins. The clothing consisted of shirt, leggings, and robes. Their shirts were generally made of buckskin. Those worn by the men reached half way down to the thigh. The long leggings were attached to a belt. Moccasins made of buckskin were worn over socks made of sage-brush. The shirts of the women were longer, and were more elaborately ornamented, than those of the men. They also wore long leggings. Both men and women used to wear skin robes over their shirts. Deerskin, dogskin, and buffalo-skin were used for this purpose; but they also

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wore robes woven of rabbit-skins cut into strips. The Uts'mqt used blankets woven of mountain-goat wool. These were undoubtedly acquired from the coast Indians. The men used to wear a strap of skin tied on their heads to hold their hair back; but caps made of buckskin were also used.

The social organization of the Nlak'a'pamux is very loose. There are no definite village communities, but families settled at one or the other winter camp. Some of these consisted only of one house, which was occupied by several families; but the locations of the families were not permanent. It seems that there were no recognized chiefs, except in so far as wealth entailed greater influence among the tribe. There is no trace of clans and of totems, nor did any families claim the privilege of hunting and fishing in particular districts of their country. The only recognized divisions of the tribe are those enumerated above. There were no restrictions in regard to marriage inside and outside of tribal divisions; only marriages between near relatives were forbidden. On the whole, the woman followed her husband to his village, and she only returned to her parents to pay them a visit. Marriages were arranged on the principle of purchase, the man giving a certain amount of property to the bride's parents, which, however, was returned in full, or nearly in full, on later occasions.

During the early part of the century, before there was any contact with whites, the potlatch system, which plays so important a part in the social economy of the coast tribes, held sway among the Nlak'a'pamux as well. It did, however, never attain an importance as great as it had on the coast. It is interesting to note that in the myths recorded in the following volume, hardly any mention of it occurs, while it is of the greatest importance in the mythology of the coast tribes. I infer that the system has been recently introduced among the Nlak'a'pamux, and did not obtain in early times.

It seems that the religious rituals of the Nlak'a'pamux never attained any great development, and in this respect they differ fundamentally from the coast tribes, whose rituals are exceedingly elaborate. There are no secret societies, no extended ceremonials, in which dramatized myths play an important part. The tribe assembled at regular intervals to celebrate a ceremonial dance, in which it seems sacrifices were made to the sun. It may be that these ceremonials were more important and more elaborate than our present information would seem to indicate. If such was the case, these ceremonies must have resembled those of the Kootenay. The fundamental concepts of both seem to have been the same. They consisted in the worship of the sun, and appear to have been connected with the idea that the dead would return from the land of the shades.

The brief sketch of the customs of the tribe here given will be sufficient for an understanding of the tales recorded in the following pages; but it seems desirable to preface the collection by a short discussion of a few of the more important features that characterize the tales of the tribe. About one half of the volume is taken up by myths referring to transformers. While in most American mythologies there is only one transformer who is, at the same time, the culture hero, we find here several personages to whose actions the present shape of our world is due. These are: the Coyote, the three brothers Qoā'qlqal, Kokwē'la, and the Old Man. The first and the second of these are decidedly the most influential and important personages in the whole mythology of the tribe.

The Coyote as well as the three brothers are in a way the culture heroes of the tribe, and the general characteristics of the legends referring to these beings are very similar to legends of this class as found among other American tribes. The story of the so-called "Culture Hero," who gave the world its present shape, who killed monsters that infested the land, and gave man the arts that make life worth living, is one of the most widely distributed Indian myths. In what we might call the prehistoric era there was no clear distinction between man and animals. At last the culture hero appeared, and transformed some of the beings of those times into animals, others into men. He taught the latter how to kill animals, how to make fire, and how to clothe themselves. He is the great benevolent being, the helper of mankind. But the same great culture hero appears in other groups of tales as a sly trickster, who vaingloriously thinks himself superior to all other beings, whom he tries to deceive in all sorts of ways, and who is often punished for his presumption by the superior powers of his proposed victims. No method of warfare is too mean for him, if it promises to lead to victory; no trick is too low to be resorted to, if it helps him to reach his end. Neither is the end sought for one that we might consider worthy of this great being. It is selfish to the extreme, the possession of riches or that of beautiful women being his chief aim. It is very difficult to harmonize these two aspects of the myths of the culture hero. Some investigators, prominently Dr. D. G. Brinton, and also Dr. Walter Hoffman,² have held that the explanation is to be sought for in a gradual deterioration of a purer and more primitive form of the myth, and that the more vulgar tales are later additions to the old cyclus of myths. If this were so, the problem would still remain, why there is such a general tendency of making the ancient culture hero the principal figure in these tales. But it seems to my mind that the frequent occurrence of this phenomenon requires a different explanation. It does not seem likely that all mythologies

collected while still in more or less vigorous life should have undergone the same kind of deterioration. I am rather inclined to think that we have to deal here with a most important characteristic of all primitive religion.

The main features of the transformer legend appear very clearly in the Raven tales of the Tlingit and Tsimshian.⁸ The tale begins with the miraculous birth of the Raven. The faithless wife of a chief was killed and buried by her husband. After her death she gave birth to a child which was eventually found and raised by a chief. The boy made a blanket of birdskins, by means of which he flew up to the sky, where he married the Sun's daughter. They had a son who owing to an accident fell down from heaven and was found drifting in the sea. He was brought to an old chief, who loved him very much and worried because the child would not eat. By the advice of two old men who appeared in a miraculous manner, he was given a certain kind of food. As soon as he tasted it he became so voracious that he ate all the accumulated winter provisions of the tribe. Then the people deserted him. Now he assumed the shape of the raven and began to traverse the world in search of food. He came to the mouth of a large river, where he met some fishermen whom he asked to give him fish. They scorned him and refused his request. The fishermen were fishing in the dark, for at that time the sun did not shine on our world. He threatened them, saying that he would make the sun unless they would give him some fish, but they merely said: "We know you, Raven, you liar!" He flew away enraged, and went straight to the house of the chief who owned the daylight. Here he transformed himself into the spike of a hemlock-tree, in which form he was swallowed by the chief's daughter. In course of time she gave birth to a child who was no other than the Raven. The old chief dearly loved his grandson, and was unable to refuse any of his requests. One day the boy asked to be allowed to play with the box containing the daylight. As soon as he had obtained it, he resumed the shape of the raven and flew away. He returned to the place where he had left the fishermen, liberated the sun, and then saw that the fishermen were the ghosts. They fled frightened, leaving their fish for the Raven. He ate as much as he desired, and became very thirsty. But at that time there was no fresh water in the world. Therefore he set out to obtain the water, and deceived the old chief who held it in his possession. On being pursued he spilled the water, and for this reason we find water all over the world. At another time, when he was hungry, he set out to obtain the her-ring, which he obtained by fraud. He also cheated the cormorant, tearing out his tongue and thus depriving him of the faculty of

speech. For that reason the cormorant says *wulewulewule*⁷ up to this day.

It is not necessary to go into any further details. It will be seen that the main characteristic of these tales is the fact that the Raven gave the world its present shape while trying to satisfy his own wants, and that he employed fair means and foul to reach his own selfish ends. While his actions benefit mankind, he is not prompted by altruistic motives, but only by the desire to satisfy his own needs. I find that in most tales of the transformer, or of the culture hero, the prime motive is, as in this particular case, a purely egotistical one, and that the changes which actually benefit mankind are only incidentally beneficial. They are primarily designed by the transformer to reach his own selfish ends.

It will be well to illustrate the peculiar mental attitude of the transformer by giving a few other examples. Among the Chinook⁴ we find the Coyote as the principal transformer or culture hero. He was the first to catch salmon with nets. He was hungry and tried to learn the art of catching salmon. He made a little man of dirt, whom he asked about the method of obtaining salmon. This artificial adviser told him how to make a net, and informed him regarding all the numerous regulations referring to the capture of salmon. He obeyed only partially, and consequently was not as successful as he had hoped to be. He became angry, and said: "Future generations of man shall always regard many regulations, and shall make their nets with great labor, because even I had to work, even I had to observe numerous regulations." He used to drive his baskets filled with dry salmon to his winter quarters, but one day they all ran away and jumped into the river. Since he had failed in this attempt at making life easy, he cursed all future generations, condemning them to carry all loads on their backs and taking away their powers of making the loads go by themselves.

The Tillamook,⁵ a Salish tribe, tell the following story of the transformer: In the beginning there were two animals in each mussel, and one day the transformer overate himself. This annoyed him, and he threw away one of these animals, so that each mussel should not have too much meat. It will be seen from this that all the changes that these transformers made were in a way changes for the worse, and that they made them in anger at some disappointment that they had had, or at some discomfort that they had suffered, not with a view of benefiting mankind. While the Raven was regardless of man, the Coyote of the Chinook made most of the changes to spite him.

Among the Athapascan tribes of northwestern America we find also most inventions made and transformations accomplished by

a being who tries to reach his own selfish ends. Thus Petitot⁶ tells of Kunyan, who made the first arrows for defending himself. Later on he killed the people, and when the deluge was threatening he built a raft to save himself. It seems that on it he collected the animals for his future use. He then brought up the mud from the bottom of the sea, from which a new earth was created. Later on he found that there was no water in the world and he obtained it for his own use.

The Klamath myths of the "Old Man," recorded by Gatschet, seem to partake of the same character. The "Old Man" is the creator, but in ridding the country of malevolent beings he only tries to overcome his own enemies. He kills North Wind and South Wind in revenge for their having killed his brother.

I might add many more examples of this character, almost all from the tribes of the northwestern parts of America, but it may be well to add an example taken from another region. The god Kutka of the Kamchadal, according to the description given by Steller, corresponded exactly to the Raven creator of the Alaskan Indians.

It seems, therefore, that in this region at least, the being who gave the world its present shape and man his arts was not prompted by altruistic motives. He did so in the course of his personal adventures, often with the direct aim of harming his enemies. He is not what we ordinarily understand by the term "culture hero," a benevolent being of great power whose object it is to advance the interests of mankind, but he is simply one of many more or less powerful beings who gave the world its present shape. With this conception of the so-called culture hero the difficulty disappears of uniting in one person the benevolent being and the trickster. He helps man only incidentally by advancing his own interests. This he tries to do by fair means or foul, just as the Indian will treat his enemy. When he overcomes his enemies, the result of his labors must accrue to the benefit of his fellow beings or of later generations, while wherever he fails, he necessarily often appears as a foolish trickster. We have a condition corresponding almost exactly to the attitude of mediæval Christendom to the devil. The latter was considered as a powerful being, always intent to advance his own interests. Often he succeeds, but often his triumph is defeated by the cleverness of his adversaries. The difference between these two series of myths lies mainly in the fact that the devil in all his adventures had only one object in view, namely, the acquisition of souls, while the Indian transformer struggled with a great variety of enemies who infested the country.

This aspect of the transformer myths makes it also intelligible why failures as well as successes should be ascribed to the hero.

There was no psychological reason which made it more difficult to ascribe failures to him than successes; and since he was one of the most important figures of Indian mythology, it is quite reasonable to suppose that gradually more and more tales clustered around him.

It may be asked why, if the hero of these tales is not intentionally a benefactor of mankind, do his acts always result in advantages to man. I believe the explanation of this phenomenon must be looked for largely in the circumstance that the human mind has a tendency to consider existing conditions as the results of changes. The world has not always been what it is now. It has developed, either for better or for worse. On the whole, the progress of invention among a more primitive people is not so rapid that man is induced to speculate on the possible future achievements of his race. There is rather a tendency to consider the present accomplishments as the stationary result of a previous development. Therefore it is hardly likely that Indian traditions should speak of lost arts; they will rather refer to the introduction of new arts, and consequently the introducer must appear as the culture hero. The only exceptions that seem at all possible are such when the native imagines that previous races were able to accomplish certain feats by means of magical powers, which in course of time were lost. These ideas are embodied in many animal stories, and appear very clearly in the Coyote tales of the Chinook to which I referred before.

It is the same when we consider the relation of man to animals and plants. Everywhere he has succeeded fairly well in conquering ferocious animals and making others useful to himself. There is hardly any being that he is not able to overcome in some manner or the other. But still the difficulties are often so great, that we can easily understand how his fancy will create stories of animals that man was not able to subjugate, or conditions under which he was not able to conquer the animals that furnish food and clothing. His fancy cannot as easily invent conditions under which it would be possible to conquer the animal world more easily by natural means, than is done now, because he cannot foresee possible improvements in weapons of attack and defense. Therefore it seems intelligible why so many stories describing the primitive status of our world refer to the extinction of monsters by heroes.

It seems to my mind that the tales described heretofore do not contain the peculiar psychological discrepancy which is so puzzling, if we bear only in mind that the so-called culture hero is not considered by the Indian as an altruistic being but as an egotist pure and simple.

But there are many cases in which the natives have advanced to a

higher point of view, and ascribe to the hero at least partially the desire to benefit his friends. With the development of this point of view the incongruity of the various parts of the transformer myth becomes more and more striking. When the Algonquin, for instance, tell of their Manibozhoo, that he instituted all the secret societies for the benefit of mankind, that he is a great and benevolent being, and at the same time relate the most absurd stories of their hero, the psychological discrepancy of the two groups of myths becomes very evident.

It is very important to note that we find a gradual transition from the purely egotistical transformer legends, if I may use this term, to the clearly altruistic series. The transformer legend of the Kwakiutl of Vancouver Island⁷ is very instructive in this respect. The transformer meets a number of enemies who are planning his death. They do not recognize him and tell him of their plans. Then he transforms them into animals, and ordains that they shall be the food of man. He is thirsty, and in order to obtain water, he slays a monster that has killed a whole tribe. In all these cases he acts from egotistical motives. Later on he gives the laws governing the religious ceremonials of the tribe. This he does in the following manner: he meets the ancestors of the various clans, and they test their powers. Sometimes he is vanquished, and then his adversary obtains certain privileges as the fruit of his victory. In other cases he proves to be the stronger. Then he takes pity on his rival, and gives him certain ceremonials as a present. In all these adventures he appears as a powerful chief who is travelling all over the world, not with a view of making man happier, but doing so incidentally in the course of his adventures. Still the Kwakiutl look at him distinctly as the culture hero, and in this I see a fundamental difference from the manner in which the Tsimshian look at the Raven. They recognize the Raven as the creator, but his actions were so little dictated by considerations of the needs of man that they owe him no thanks for what he has done. The Kamchadal express this attitude very exactly when they say that the God Kutka was very foolish, that he might have arranged things very much better when he was creating the world. The transformer of the Kwakiutl, on the other hand, gave his gifts to the ancestors of the various clans, and these gifts were naturally intended for the benefit of their families, although they were not prompted by clearly altruistic motives. Therefore the Kwakiutl revere their transformer. The mental attitude has entirely changed.

Another instructive example is that of the transformer of the Blackfeet.⁸ It is stated that he taught many arts to man because he pitied him. But other important changes of nature and similar

events came about without any such intention on his part. Death was the result of a bet between him and a woman. Animals obtained their fat in a feast given to them by the transformer.

In short, we find that among various tribes the altruistic side is developed very unequally.

It seems quite intelligible that with the progress of society there should develop a tendency of substituting for the coarse motives of the primitive transformer higher ones. With the consciousness that the changes effected by the transformer were useful to man may have developed the idea that they were made with the view of benefiting mankind. The traditions of the Kwakiutl may be taken to indicate a transitional point in the ethical aspect of these myths, the changes being made not for the good of mankind, but for the benefit of a particular friend of the transformer. The less the altruistic idea is developed, the less will be the consciousness of a discrepancy between the tales representing the transformer as a benefactor and as a trickster. The higher it is developed, the greater will be the friction between the two groups of tales. Hence we find that wherever this idea is brought out most clearly, the tales of the trickster are ascribed to a different being. The personage of the transformer is split in two or more parts; the one representing the true culture hero, the other retaining the features of the trickster. This has been done in the mythology of the Micmac and Penobscot,⁹ where Glooskap retains almost exclusively the features becoming to the benefactor of mankind. Still I think that in a few of his adventures the more primitive conception of the transformer may be recognized. The higher the civilization of the tribe, the more sharply, it seems, is the line drawn between the culture hero and the trickster.

I am well aware that the theory here proposed does not clear up all the difficult questions connected with this subject, but I think that it at least does away with the troublesome psychological discrepancy between the two aspects of the transformer. I venture to suggest that perhaps this theory would appear much better established if all the Indian mythologies were recorded just as told by the Indian uninfluenced by contact with civilization. As a matter of fact, many were recorded by missionaries, who would naturally introduce in all tales of a culture hero the altruistic element much more strongly than it is mentioned by the Indian. Their whole training would tend to introduce this bias. The same is true to a certain extent of all white collectors, unless the traditions are recorded verbatim. I have examined the available literature quite closely, and find that very few collectors actually give the motive which led the transformer to carry out certain actions, although the latter is often

implied by the incidents of the story. I think that in all probability if Indian mythologies were available in their pure original form, the egotistic character of the transformer would appear very much more strongly than is the case at present.

Such criticism must, however, be applied most sparingly, because the plausibility of our theory may induce us to reject evidence on account of its incongruity with the theory. It seems, however, justifiable to suggest to collectors of myths the desirability of paying particular attention to the motives ascribed to the culture hero and to investigate if his character is that of a pure egotist in other regions and among other tribes than those mentioned before. If this should prove to be the case, I should be inclined to consider the theory that has been suggested here as well established.

The traditions of the Thompson River Indians, as recorded by Mr. Teit, show a peculiar development of the transformer myths. There are at least four distinct personages who may be considered as culture heroes or transformers. The most important one among them is the Coyote, around whom a great many traditions cluster. In his case the peculiar mixture of characteristics described on the preceding pages is very marked. He is a being of great power; he performed many feats in consequence of which the world assumed its present shape. A great many local features of the country inhabited by the Thompson River Indians originated through his agency. In many of his actions he appears as the trickster, and all his methods are based on sly cunning. The series of Coyote legends of this tribe resembles very much the Coyote tales with which we are familiar from a number of points on the western plateaus of our continent, and I do not doubt that they belong to this series. In all these tales he appears as a transformer and a culture hero, but he is not moved by the desire of benefiting mankind; he accomplishes all transformations of the world in the pursuit of his own ends.

The second series of transformer myths refer to the three brothers Qoā'qlqal. I do not think that we can interpret the differentiation of transformers in the legends of the Thompson River Indians as due to the developing desire of differentiating the altruistic and egotistic side of this being, because the tales of the Qoā'qlqal do not by any means bring out an altruistic point of view more clearly than those of the Coyote. It seems much more likely that the latter group of legends are simply new traditions introduced from the lower course of Fraser River. A comparison between these tales and the Xäls legends of the tribes who live at the delta of Fraser River and on southeastern Vancouver Island show that these two series are practically identical, except that the Xäls series is very much more elaborate.¹⁰

It is not so easy to explain the origin of the legend of the transformer Kokwē'la. This being is the son of the hog-fennel (*Peucedanum*), a plant which plays a most important part in the ceremonies of the tribes of lower Fraser River, but which, so far as I am aware, is not personified to any extent among them. I have not found any analogon of this legend among the neighboring tribes.

The fourth transformer is called "The Old Man," but it does not seem that there are many elaborate myths referring to him. The whole concept of the Old Man is so much like that of the Kootenay and Blackfeet, that I am rather inclined to consider these groups of tales as having a common origin. In order to establish this point, it will be necessary to investigate the transformer tales of the Shuswap and Okanagon, which are, however, only imperfectly known.

If the Qoā'qlqal legends and those of the Old Man are really of foreign origin, the numerous instances of contests between these beings may be explained very naturally as a result of comparisons of their powers. Numerous examples of this kind are known from the mediæval epics, in which the heroes of most heterogeneous groups of legends are made to struggle against each other. This is the leading idea of the tradition of the "Rosengarten," in which all the heroes of the old German tales appear, and compete against each other.

This theory is, however, acceptable only if we can prove that the tales of the Thompson River Indians really contain foreign elements. It may be well to discuss at least one of their legends rather fully with a view of establishing this important point. I select the Coyote tradition for this purpose.

We will begin our analysis with the story of Nli'ksentem (p. 21). It is not certain that the beginning of the story, in which it is told how the Coyote made boys out of clay, gum, and stone, has any analogy among the neighboring tribes. It is true that among the coast tribes a myth occurs in which the gum is presented as a man who is made to melt in the sun; but it occurs in entirely different connections, and it is doubtful if this incident in the Coyote tradition is directly related to the corresponding tale of the coast. The latter refers to the attempt of the Raven to obtain gum. He induces the gum-man to go fishing with him. He exposes him to the hot sun until he is melted.

The next incident of our tale, however, can be traced among many of the neighboring tribes. Coyote makes a tree, which he induces his son to climb. Then he makes the tree grow until it reaches the sky. The inducement held out to the boy is a nest of eagles on the top of the tree. The Ponca¹¹ tell the same incident. They relate, how Ishtinike makes a tree, and induces his friend to climb it in

order to recover his arrows. Petitot tells the identical story from the Hare Indians and from the Chippewayan.¹² Dr. Livingston Farrand has found the story of an ascent of the sky by means of a growing tree among the Chilcotin, who live northwest of the Thompson River Indians. The boy reaches the sky and travels over an extensive prairie. After a while he reaches houses in which baskets and other household utensils are living, and when he tries to carry away one of them, he is beaten by the others, and finds that they are the inhabitants of the house. This last incident has no very close analogon among the other tribes, although it reminds us forcibly of the visit to the house of the shadows, told by the Chinook, Tsimshian, and Tlingit.¹³ In these tales the traveller reaches a house inhabited by shadows, by whom he is beaten whenever he tries to take away some of their provisions and of their household utensils.

The Coyote travels on, and meets two blind women, whom he makes quarrel by taking away their food. They smell him, and are transformed into birds. This tale is found very extensively along the Pacific coast. The tribes of lower Fraser River tell of a boy who reached the sky, and met two blind sisters. He takes away their food and makes them quarrel. Then they advise him in regard to the dangers that he is going to encounter on his way to the house of the sun.¹⁴ The same incident occurs in the traditions of the Coast Salish, referring to a man who tried to recover his wife, who was carried away by a finback whale. He descended to the bottom of the sea, and met a number of blind old women, one of whom was distributing food among the others. He took it away and opened their eyes, and in return was given advice by the women.¹⁵ The Comox tell of a young man who visited the sky, where he met the Snail-women, whose food he took away. He restored their eyesight, and they advised them in regard to the dangers he would meet.¹⁶ The Kwakiutl have the tradition of a man who wanted to marry the daughter of a chief. On his journey he met a number of old women, and the same incident occurred as told before.¹⁷ In Nahwitti the same story is told of a great transformer, Q'a'nig'ilak¹⁸, who met four blind girls, whom he made quarrel in the same manner. He transformed them into ducks.¹⁸ Finally, I have recorded the same incident among the Bella Coola, who tell of a boy who reached the sky, and restored the eyesight of a number of blind women. He transformed them into ducks. All these incidents are identical with those recorded among the Thompson River Indians. Far to the east, in the collection of tales of the Ponca made by Dorsey, a similar incident occurs, which, however, bears only slight resemblance with the one discussed here, and which

may be of quite independent origin. It is told how an invisible visitor burns the cheek of the Thunderers, and thus makes them quarrel.¹⁹

The following incident, in which it is told how the boy visited the spiders and how they let him down from the sky, does not exhibit any striking similarities with the tales of the neighboring tribes, although the occurrence of a descent from heaven by help of a spider is an exceedingly frequent feature of the North American mythologies. The descent from the sky is remarkably similar to a descent told by the tribes of lower Fraser River, in which two spiders let the visitor down in a basket which is tied to a long rope. When he reaches the tops of the trees, he shakes the rope, whereupon the spiders continue to let him down until he reaches the ground.²⁰ The story of the Chippewyan²¹ may also be mentioned here: a person is let down from the sky by means of a rope.

The following incidents of the tale do not give any occasion for remarks, although they remind us in a general way of the tales of the neighboring tribes. When we confine ourselves to more complicated events, we are again struck by the incidents told on p. 26. The Raven is given deer-fat by a person whom he had helped before; he took the fat home and gave it secretly to his children. The attention of the people was called to this fact by the noise the children were making when being fed by the Raven. A person made one of the children disgorge the fat, and thus discovered that the Raven was well provided for, while the other people were starving. This incident occurs in the traditions of the Coast Salish, where a boy sends fish to his grandmother, who hides them until dark. The fish are discovered, however, when she begins to eat them. The same tale is told by the Kwakiutl, where the boy sends his grandmother whale blubber, which is discovered when she is eating it. The incident is also told at Nahwitti. Farther north the traditions agree with that of the Thompson River Indians, in that a child is made to disgorge the food. We find this tale among the Bella Coola and among the Tsimshian.²² Dr. L. Farrand has recorded the same tale among the Chilcotin.

The following parts of the tradition have very close analoga on the coast; more particularly with the mink tales of the tribes on lower Fraser River and with the As'ai'yahal tradition of the Tillamook.²³

Among the other Coyote tales the fourth and the last are rather remarkable on account of their distribution. Coyote meets a cannibal. He proposes that they shall close their eyes and vomit into two dishes, in order to see what kind of food they eat. Coyote exchanges the dishes before the cannibal opens his eyes, thus making

him believe that he himself is a cannibal. The Shuswap ascribe this incident to the Coyote and the Cannibal Owl, while far to the south the Navaho tell the same of Coyote and the Brown Giant.²⁴

The last story tells of the unsuccessful attempts of Coyote to imitate his hosts who produced food by magical means. We may compare with this tale that of the Chinook, who tell how Blue Jay tried to imitate his hosts; ²⁵ that of the Comox, Nootka, and Kwakiutl of Vancouver Island, and of the Bella Coola and Tsimshian of northern British Columbia, ²⁶ who tell the same story of the Raven. Dr. Farrand found the tale among the Chilcotin. Dorsey has recorded it among the Ponca, who tell of Ishtinike's vain attempts to imitate his hosts, ²⁷ and Rand tells it from the Micmac, among whom the Rabbit is the hero of the tale. ²⁸ Finally we find it told of the Coyote among the Navaho, although among this tribe the incidents are materially changed. ²⁹

The distribution of the various parts of the Coyote legend as described here is conclusive proof of its complex origin. It is quite inconceivable that all these complex parts of the tradition should have originated independently among the tribes among whom we find them now. This view is strengthened by the fact that the incidents are most nearly alike among neighboring tribes. In the notes to the various tales recorded in this volume, numerous additional instances of close resemblances between the tales of the Thompson River Indians and their neighbors are given, which corroborate the evidence brought forward in the preceding remarks.

It appears, therefore, that there is ample proof of transmission of tales to the Thompson River Indians from foreign sources and *vice versa*. It was suggested before (p. 12), that if such proof can be given, we may assume that the transformer myths originated from different sources, and have not had time to amalgamate. The similarity of the series of Coyote tales with the Coyote tales of the south and east, and with the animal tales of the coast, and of the Qoã'qlqal legend with the Xäls legend, point to the sources from which the various series of transformer tales sprang.

I doubt if it will ever be possible to determine the origin of all the parts of the tales of this tribe that have been woven into their structure. It may be that we shall better understand the history of their development when we shall have fuller collections than are now available from the tribes of Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. Their relation to the legendary lore of the coast tribes of British Columbia, however, seems well established. It appears that a considerable number of tales were borrowed bodily from the coast tribes, and were incorporated ready-made in the tales of the Thompson River tribe. It is, therefore, certain that these importations when

interwoven with mythical tales never have had any symbolic significance among the people whose property they are now. They are not nature myths, in the generally adopted sense of the term. While dealing with phenomena of nature and with the peculiarities of animals, they are not the result of tribal thought; they are at best adaptations of foreign thought, but much more frequently importations that have undergone little if any change. The present character of Indian mythologies can be understood only by historical studies regarding their origin. How much is due to independent thought or to gradual adaptation, under the influences of environment and of new social conditions, remains to be determined by detailed comparative studies.

We may trace the influence of environment in the modifications that the tales undergo, owing to differences in the mode of life of various tribes. Thus the tales of the fishermen of the seacoast who spend most of their time in their canoes, and whose villages are located near the shore, differ in many respects from the tales of the Thompson River Indians, who hunt part of the year in the mountains. The animals who are the heroes of the tales, also change from one locality to the other. In northern British Columbia the Raven takes the place of the Coyote; on Vancouver Island the Mink takes his place, while still farther south, among the Chinook, the Blue Jay assumes many of his functions.

But much more striking than the influence of geographical environment is that of the social status of the tribe. The clan organization of the coast tribes pervades their whole mythology and all their traditions, while the loose social organizations of the tribes of the interior gives their tales a peculiar character. This difference is brought out very strongly in the myths of the transformer as found among a number of coast tribes and those of the interior. Every clan has a legend expounding the events that took place at the time of meeting between the transformer and the ancestor of the clan, while there is no such personal relation between the Indians and the transformer in the interior. The rivalry between clans is one of the mainsprings of action in these tales. It is evident that in many cases tales which originally had no totemic bearing were appropriated by a clan and changed so as to become clan traditions. I have described a number of such changes in a fuller discussion of the social system of the Kwakiutl.³⁰ Other tales developed numerous variants among various clans, the more elaborate social organization acting as a stimulus for the development of traditions. The same is true in the case of ritualistic myths. The complicated rituals of the coast tribes are all part and parcel of traditions, and some of the latter are made to explain the ritual. Conclusions founded on

observation of the tribes of British Columbia and on that of the Pueblo tribes of the southwest²¹ agree, in that they tend to show that the ritual and, we may say in a more general way, the social system, have been foisted upon the myths, thus producing variations, which tend to establish harmony between mythology and social phenomena.

The Salish tribes, to which the Thompson River Indians belong, owing to their wide distribution and diversity of culture, offer a very interesting example of the influence of social organization upon mythology. The great body of the people have the same loose organization that we find among the Thompson River tribe; but among the tribes living on the coast more complex conditions prevail. They have been under the influence of the tribes of the coast of British Columbia for so long a time, that their customs and beliefs have undergone material changes. The loose village community has been replaced by one claiming common descent from one mythical ancestor.

This transition may be observed among the tribes of the Delta of Fraser River, who are closely allied to the Thompson River Indians. Each village has a mythical ancestor, and some of these are described as animals. It may be well to make clearer the peculiar character of these tales by means of a few abstracts of myths.

The ancestor of the Mā'sxui, a tribe whose village is near the mouth of Fraser River, was Sqelē'yil (derived from sqelā'o, beaver). When the transformer visited his village they had a contest, in the course to which they tried to transform each other. Finally the transformer proved to be the stronger of the two. He transformed Sqelē'yil into a beaver. It seems that in a few cases these traditions contain memories of historical events. Such seems to be the case in the tradition of the origin of the Stēē'lis, who live on Harrison River. The name of their ancestor is Ts'ā'tsemiltx. One of his descendants is said to have invited a chief named Qulqe'mex'i'l, whose ancestors were the marten and the mountain goat, to descend from the mountains and to live with him. Since that time the descendants of these two chiefs are said to have formed one tribe.²² I think the occurrence of these traditions must be explained in the following way: The coast tribes north of Fraser River are divided in totemic clans, each of which has a clan tradition. All the privileges of the clans are explained by the clan traditions, which, for this reason, are considered a most valuable property. That this is so is indicated by the jealousy with which the property right to certain traditions is guarded by the families of the coast tribes. When the Salish tribes began to be thrown into contact with the coast tribes, the lack of family traditions must have been felt as a great disadvantage. Their

lack made the tribe, in a way, inferior to their neighbors on the coast, and for this reason the tendency and the desire of evolving myths of this character becomes intelligible. But the tribe was organized on a different basis from that of the coast people. While the latter were divided into clans, the idea that was present to the minds of the Salish people was that of the village community; and it is clear, therefore, that the traditions which developed would be of such a character that each village would have one mythical ancestor.

The same change has taken place among the Bella Coola, whose mythology is much more thoroughly modified by the coast tribes than that of the Salish tribes of Fraser River.

These considerations have an important bearing upon the interpretation of the myths of primitive people, such as are recorded in the following pages. I have tried to show that the material of which they are built up is of heterogeneous origin, and that much of it is adopted ready-made. The peculiar manner in which foreign and indigenous material is interwoven and worked into a somewhat homogeneous fabric depends to a great extent upon the social conditions and habits of the people. Oft-repeated actions which are the expression of social laws, and which constitute the habits and customs of the people, may be expected to be more stable than traditions that are not repeated in a prescribed form or ritual, and have thus become intimately associated with habitual actions. This is probably the reason why we find that ritual moulds the explanatory myth, and why, in a more general way, the myth is made to conform with the social status of the people. Discrepancies between the two, in a general way at least, belong to the class of phenomena that are called "survivals." The discrepancy may consist in the preservation of earlier customs in traditions, or in fragments of early traditions under modified social conditions. The survivals themselves are proof of the gradual process of assimilation between social conditions and traditions which has wrought fundamental changes in the lore of mankind.

Both factors, dissemination and modification on account of social causes, must tend to obscure the original significance of the myth. The contents of mythology prove clearly that attempts at the explanation of nature are the primary source of myths. But we must bear in mind that, owing to the modifications they have undergone, we cannot hope to gain an insight into their earliest form by comparisons and interpretations, unless they are based on a thorough inquiry into the historical changes that have given to myths their present forms. It would seem that mythological worlds have been built up, only to be shattered again, and that new worlds were built from the fragments.

