Religious Conceptions of Native B.C. Tribes

By

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Religious Conceptions of Native British Columbia Tribes.

Introduction

To arrive at any definite idea of the religion of the British Columbia Indians is very difficult indeed. It is much easier to get at their language, arts, music, constitution, society, their government and their laws. The difficulty is increased by the natural reticence on the part of the average Indian to speak on religious matters, the mixture of their religious ideas with that of the Christian religion for at least fifty years and the consciousness now that their beliefs and notions are not approved by the white people. Investigations have therefore been largely confined to the watching of the performance of their religious rites and then seeking to ascertain what they mean.

Moreover, up to the coming of the white man, they have no recorded history. Their traditions were passed on through the medium of stories told around the camp fire by the head of the family or tribe. Their stories are related to the creation of the world, the origin of mankind, the great flood and a host of other things. These stories, written in the native dialects and translated by skilled interpreters form the basis from which our knowledge of the religion of these peoples has been derived. Not a very reliable source, some may say, but possibly just as reliable as the early history of Israel, regarded by many as authentie and indeed infallible. It is true that these stories are very tiresome to read and to the cultured mind appear very foolish but they contain the best information obtainable as to the nature of their religion.

The work of Franz Boas, J. R. Swanton and James A. Teit have been invaluable. The latter, who died in 1922, lived among the Indians for years, was adopted into one of their tribes, gained the confidence of the natives and, while not possessing the scholarship of Dr. Boas, supplied him with information he could scarcely have obtained in any other way.

The difficulty is further increased when one remembers the complexity of these peoples in British Columbia. Dr. Boas, speaking of the B. C. Indians in "The Fourth Report
of the British Association for the Advancement of Science of the N. W. Tribes" (1) points out that there are seven principal races of Indians in the province besides subsidiary ones and that each race has a number of tribes which occasionally have developed different beliefs and practices from those of other tribes.

Care has to be taken too on account of the fact that European influences have been at work and have colored some of their stories and that they have in turn changed European legends and Biblical stories and have given them an Indian setting (e.g.) In "The Mythology of the Thompson Indians" by Teit, (2) the following story is told which, it is quite evident, has been adapted from Biblical sources. It also betrays the fact that their original religious conceptions have been considerably changed since the advent of the foreigner and it is unfortunate that no work has been forthcoming on "Indian Religion" Teit, translating the story, says:—

"When the earth was very young, only two people lived on it — a man called Atam and a woman called Im. The chief (God) lived in the upper world and the outcast (Devil) lived in the lower world. They were enemies to each other and tried to do each other harm but God was the more powerful. He frequently visited the earth and talked with Atam and Im. One day the Devil created an animal like a horse and made it appear before the man and woman. When the latter saw it she said "That is God come to visit us", but Atam said it was not. At last, however, he believed it must be God and they went and spoke with it. Soon afterwards God appeared and then they recognized the difference. He was angry and said 'Why do you mistake the Devil for me and converse with him? Have I not told you that he is evil and will do you harm?' Then looking at the animal he said to the couple, 'Well since this beast is here I will so transform him that he will be useful to you.' He wetted both his thumbs, pressed them on the animals front legs and thus marked him saying, 'Henceforth you will be a horse and a servant and plaything of the people who will ride you and use you for many purposes. You will be a valuable slave of men.'

Now God departed telling the man and woman he would soon return and show them which trees bore the proper kind of food to eat. Hitherto they had eaten no fruit, for they did not know the edible varieties. At that time all trees bore fruit and the fir and pine in particular had

(1) P. 236
(2) P. 399
large sweet fruits. Then the Devil appeared and pretending to be God, he took the large fruit of the white pine and gave it to Im. She thought he was God, ate the fruit as directed and gave some to Atam. Then the Devil disappeared and all the fruit on the trees withered up and became transformed into cones. Some kinds shrivelled up to a small size and became berries. When God came and saw what had happened he sent the woman to live with the Devil and taking Atam he broke off his lower rib and made a woman out of it. This rib woman became Atam's wife and bore him many children."

The Folktales of God, the Flood, the making of languages, the dispersing of tribes and Su'sakuli are clearly, in some cases, intermixed with Bible Stories.

I. Supernatural Beings.

Most British Columbia Indians firmly believe in the existence of a supernatural being or beings. In fact everything that the Indian cannot explain he attributes to be the work of God or of Gods. Brinton says (3) "He (the Indian) investigates not because he doubts not. All events are to him miracles. If he is conquered in battle he explains the fact as being due to the inferiority of his Gods to the Gods of the enemy." The idea of God seems to be that of a great prevailing force who resides in the sky. The ideas of good and evil as we conceive them are non-existent. The Indian "good" merely implies everything which is to his advantage, evil that which injures or distresses him. His Gods are exempt from the laws by which humans are bound. Some of them are fond of practical joking as illustrated in many legends of the Raven common to a great many tribes. The Indian worships because he fears calamity might follow if he does not. He makes sacrifices to his God or Gods that a steady stream of prosperity may come to him.

Indian religion might be described as Animism, for mountains, trees, rivers, winds, etc., all possess for them the attributes of living things. The creatures of the animal world were placed upon a higher level making their religion also totemistic. Coveting the qualities of animals, they placed themselves under their special protection. If a tribe possessed in a marked degree the characteristics of some animal, they were called after such a bird or beast by their neighbours. After a lapse of time tribes came to regard this animal as their ancestor. Upon this rests a great many of their customs and laws especially

(3) Mythology of Thompson Indians P. 320
those relating to marriage. Eventually this system developed into the worship of the totem as a deity.

Fetishism developed among them as they came to regard certain things as possessed of special power to bring good luck. It is only definitely associated with religion at the point where the fetish evolves into a God.

In his investigations among the Lillooet Indians, Teit (4) reports them as saying that they formerly knew of no supreme being, except one called "the Chief of the Dead", who stood at the gate of the spirit land and admitted or turned back souls.

Concerning the Haidas belief in God or Gods we have much more information. James Deans, in his "Tales from the Totems of the Hidery," (5) who does not appear to be a very safe guide, seems quite sure that the Haidas believed in a supreme being whose name was "Me -Kilst -lass". Under that name he was the creator and preserver of everything, under other names he was the cause or originator of every discordant and evil action or principle. In all his works of creation and providence he assumes the form of a raven. He is the common father of all, and all mankind was developed from his connection with a cockle, and the evolution of the race was the natural outcome of every succeeding generation.

J. R. Swanton, a much more reliable authority, in his work on the 'Haida', goes into the question much more thoroughly. The Universe, he tells us, is, to them, inhabited by human beings and supernatural beings called collectively the Sgana Qedas. The latter were those for whom land was first created. They inhabit the atmosphere, the ocean, the woods, lakes and streams. He gives us four classes of supernatural beings.

(1) Beings of the Upper World. The chief, not only among these beings, but of all Haida deities, is "Power of the Shining Heavens." It has been claimed that the Skidegate Indians used to pray to this being as white men do to their God. This being gives power to all things and all other beings get their power from him. He holds the keys of life and death. He determines who is to die. Knowing this, it was customary for the Indian to pray to "Power of the Shining Heavens" in times of sickness, and Swanton gives several illustrations of this being done. The Indian goes to him, not only in time of sickness, but also in time of sorrow. The sun and moon were each thought to be inhabited

(4) The Lillooet Indians P.278 (5) P. 22
by supernatural beings.

Suspended in the air are several different abodes of the supernatural beings, the most important of which was Taxets house, whither went all who died a violent death. This house is said to be occupied by Taxet himself and his daughter.

Another house called the Shaman House is occupied by the "Above People". They desire to help the sick but often fail because they have not much power. They are subject to Wigit who keeps an account of all the people on the Islands. In his house he has a number of sticks and when a child is born he pulls one out of the bundle behind him. If it is long, the child's life will be long, and, if short, the life of the child will also be short.

All the winds are personified, and prayers frequently addressed to them.

(2) Beings of the Sea.

According to the Haida spirit theory, every animal was, or might be, the embodiment of a being who, at his own pleasure, could appear in human form. They seem to be looked at from two entirely different points of view. As animals, they were called birds, salmon, herring, etc., but as supernatural beings in disguise, as Forest People, Salmon People, Herring People etc. As animals they might be hunted or given as food to man by another animal who was a supernatural being; as supernatural beings themselves, they might entertain men in their towns, inter-marry with them, help or harm them.

There are various sorts of Ocean People. Devil-fish People, Porpoise People, Salmon People, etc. The one most dreaded was the Killer Whale. They were the most powerful and others seem to have been their servants. They had towns under the Sea as people did on the land. As the custodians of the principal food supplies of the people, they are most constantly in the thoughts of the Haidas, and, called upon and sacrificed to, most frequently of all Ocean People. They are divided into Eagle and Raven clans like the Haidas themselves.

Grease, tobacco and flicker feathers were offered to the Ocean People, and water and fire were the two media of their transmission. Stopping in front of a place where one of them was supposed to live, the suppliant put some
tobacco and a few flicker feathers on his paddle and said, "Now Chief give us food - Let us see good things to eat." Then he slid them quietly into the sea. When on shore they put their offerings into the fire. The return expected was generally a black whale, which would be found soon afterwards floating dead at that place. As a sign of respect to the supernatural beings, when certain of them were mentioned in the stories, all the hearers would raise their hands, palms upward, and then turn them outward.

Besides all these, there was one being greater than them all who dwelt in the lowest depths of the sea and was called "The Greatest-One-in-the-Sea."

(3) Beings of the Land.

The Sacred One Standing and Moving "was believed to support the Queen Charlotte Islands. There were Creek - Women at the head of the creeks. There were Grizzly Bear People, Eagle People etc., and trees also had similar designations.

(4) Patron Deities.

These dealt with their industries and property. There was the Orphan Spirit, the Spirit of Theft, the Spirit of Strength and the Medicine Spirit. Connected with their religious beliefs was also the belief in "wild men."

Dr. Boas, in "The Fourth Report of the British Association for the Advancement of Science", (6) gives a brief summary of the religion of the various tribes whose mythology he studied. He says: "A study of mythology and of customs shows that the Indians of this Province worshipped, principally, the sun or the heavens. The Tlingit and Haida pray to the moon and in praying blow feathers up as an offering. They also pray to mountains and believe that the animals of their crest protect them.

The Tsimshian have a supreme deity called Leqa. Prayers are frequently not addressed to him directly but to spirits - the Neqnoq - who convey them to him. Most of the prayers have conventional forms. In praying for clear weather (e.g.) they say, 'Neqnoq, Neqnoq, chief, chief, have mercy, Look down upon thy people under thee, Pull up, thy foot and wipe thy face'. They think that the existence of man is pleasing to the deity and that he enjoys the smoke rising from their fires. They pray, 'Have mercy

(6) P. 24
In his notes on the Tsimshian in "The Fifth Report of the British Association for the Advancement of Science" (7), Dr. Boas has this to say of their religion.

"The Religion of the Tsimshian is a pure worship of Heaven (Leqa). Heaven is the great deity who has a number of mediators called Neqnoq. Any natural object can be a Neqnoq, but the most important are sun and moon, spirits appearing in the shape of lightning strokes and animals. Neqnoq designates anything mysterious. It is the supernatural will of the deity, as well as the whistle which is used in the dances, and is kept a profound secret and is a mere slight of hand. In one myth the master of the moon, the pestilence, appears as a powerful deity. Heaven rules the destinies of mankind. Heaven taught men to distinguish between good and bad and gave them religious laws and institutions. Heaven is gratified by the mere existence of men. He is worshipped by offering prayer, the smoke rising from fires being especially agreeable to him. Murderers, adulterers, and those who behave foolishly, talking to no purpose, and making a noise at night, are especially hateful to him. He loves those who take pity upon the poor, who do not try to become rich by selling at high price what others want. His messengers, particularly sun and moon, must be treated with respect. Men make themselves agreeable to the deity by cleanliness, therefore, they must bathe and wash their whole bodies before praying. For the same reason they take a vomitive when they wish to please the deity well. They fast and abstain from touching their wives if they desire their prayers to be successful. They offer everything that is considered valuable. The offering is burnt. If a special object is to be obtained they believe they can compel the deity to grant it by rigid fasting."

The Kwakuitl worship the sun. The Coast Salish also worship the sun. They pray to him and are not allowed to take their morning meal until the day is well advanced. The "Wanderer" (a being common to most tribes, though not always a deity, but sometimes the son of the deity) is also worshipped. It is believed that he lives in heaven and loves the good but punishes the wicked. The art of Shamanism was given to the first man by the "wanderer" who brought it down from heaven.

The Kutonaq are more decided sun-worshippers than all the rest of the B. C. Tribes. They pray to the sun, and offer him smoke from their pipes before smoking
themselves, and sacrifice to him their first born in order to secure prosperity for their families. A common custom among them was the cutting off the first joint of the finger as a sacrifice to the sun. Breasts and arms were pierced and pieces of flesh cut off as a sacrifice to the sun.

In his notes on the Lkungen and Nootka, in "The Sixth Report of the British Association for the Advancement of Science among N. W. Tribes," Dr. Boas says,

"The Lkungen are also sun worshippers revealed in such customs as children avoiding eating till the sun is high in the sky, and in prayers being offered toward sunrise."

The Religion of Nootka is very interesting. Two men are said to have descended from heaven and transformed the semi-human "Transformers", and are said to have taught men to worship the deity in heaven. The name of the Deity is kept a profound secret from the common people. Only Chiefs are allowed to pray to him, and the dying chief tells the name (KATSHE) to his heir and teaches him how to pray to the deity. No offerings are made to Katse, only prayers, especially asked for food and for good luck in hunting. Both are believed to have human shape. Besides their higher deities, the Nootka believe the whole of nature to be animated. The rainbow was originally a man and still retains much of his power.

In "The Seventh Report of the British Association for the Advancement of Science among N. W. Tribes," Dr. Boas says of the Bilqula, "The principal deity of the Bilqula is Sng (the sun God.) The rays of the sun are his eyelashes - when prayed to he is called "TAATAU" and they pray looking heavenward - "Take care of us" is a frequent prayer offered. Sng is pre-eminently the ruler of the world and does not interfere with the actions and thoughts of men."

II. Creation.

In "The Thompson Indians" by Teit we have given to us the Thompson Indians' conception of the world. The earth was believed to be square with the corners directed to the points of the compass. Some are inclined to think the earth is circular. Lytton is believed to be the earth's centre, because here Coyote's son first landed when he
"A long time ago," so the legends
runs," the Coyote people inhabited the Thompson River East
of Lytton. Their chief was old man Coyote. A flood came
and all were lost except old man Coyote, who, assuming the
form of a piece of wood, was saved and as the waters receded,
the hollows in the mountains were filled with lakes from
which streams ran. Coyote longed for a son so he took a
lump of clay and transformed it into a boy. The boy, dis­
obeying his fathers command to enter the water, melted and
another boy was made out of gum and he melted when he basked
in the sunshine, a thing he was told not to do. Another
boy was made of a piece of white stone and became a man. He
marries Loon a Mallard duck whom Coyote covets, so he makes
an eagles nest on a tree and induces his son to climb and he
climbs higher and higher till he reaches the sky. On his
return he lands at Lytton on a huge stone, being dropped
down in a basket."

Mountains and valleys were given there present form
by a number of transformers the greatest of whom was Old
Coyote, who was sent by the "Old Man" to set the world in
order. Three brothers also travelled all over the country
working miracles.

Hot and cold winds are caused when people who live
in the North and the South open their doors to leave the
house.

Thunder is a little bird, and when he shoots his
arrows the rebound of his wings in the air makes the thunder,
and the blinking of his eyes causes lightning.

The sun is regarded as a cannibal, killing people
and carrying them away with him for food. Another tradition
says he was the chief of Lytton.

The moon was formerly an Indian - He would be as
bright as the sun if his sister, the hare or the frog, did
not sit on him.

Stars are transformed people. One legend says
they are roots growing in the upper world.

Rainbow was once a man in the habit of painting
his face all colors.

In the beginning there were no lakes or rivers,
they came into existence following a deluge which also
carried fish into the ponds. Only Coyote and three men
escaped the deluge.

The conceptions of the Shuswap are preserved for us in a volume by J. A. Teit — "The Shuswap". 

Concerning the world some of the Shuswap think it is circular and others that it is nearly square. It is surrounded by lakes to which the edges of the sky descend on all sides. At the beginning the earth was very small, but it grew larger as it gradually emerged from the waters.

Some personify the earth, and believe that it restores the elements and seasons thus enabling people, animals, birds, and plants to live. It is growing gradually but will one day die. When the earth spirit is too hot, he makes the weather cool; when dry, he makes rain. When he shakes himself there is an earthquake.

Some of the present features of the earth were made by transformers during the mythological age. During this period the earth's inhabitants took on the characteristics of both men and animals. Coyote was sent by Old one to perfect the earth and make it habitable. He and other transformers failed, however, to perfect it, and so Old one himself (the chief of the ancient world) finished the work. He came in the form of an old man and played many tricks which always resulted in good. He flattened the land in some places and raised it in others. Where it was too dry he made lakes and vice versa. He put the sun and moon in their proper positions and made rain and snow to fall at the proper seasons. He regulated the winds, and gave them their direction. He filled the rivers with fish, and made many new kinds of trees and animals, urging people to use them properly. He taught the people what was edible, how to make canoes, and baskets and introduced smoking. Wicked people he transformed into animals and rocks. Leading the different tribes into the country they now inhabit, he gave them the languages they speak.

When he finished his work, he disappeared toward the east and no one knows what became of him. Some say he went to the sky where he now watches the earth; others think he became chief of the dead and lives in the spirit land from which he sometimes sends messages. He is expected to return some day and make the world better than it is even today. Coyote may precede or accompany him.

In his volume on "The Lillooet", Mr. J. A. Teit gives us an account of their conceptions of the world.
They believed the earth to be round. East and West are the two important points of the compass. The former in their mind is associated with light and life and the latter with darkness and death.

In the mythological Age the world was inhabited by people who for the most part, had animal characteristics. Some of them were cannibals, and nearly all were gifted with magical power. They were transformed into animals, fishes and birds. Death, daylight and fire were introduced into the world by Raven. They have a tradition of a great flood and also of a great fire, which burned the greater part of the world. The heavenly bodies are transformed people. The sun and moon were once men who carried lights over the earth.

Concerning the SKgomic (Squamish) Indians Prof. Hill-Tout in his report (8) gives us the following legend gathered from these people.

"In the beginning there was water everywhere and no land at all so the great spirit determined to make the land appear. Soon the tops of the mountains showed above the water and they grew and grew till their heads reached the clouds. Then he made the lakes and rivers, and after that the trees and animals. Soon after this had been done "Ka - la - na", the first man, was made. The great spirit bestowed upon him the three things an Indian cannot do without, a wife, a chisel (or adze) and a salmon trap. Ka - la - na was a good man and obeyed the Great Spirits commands. His wife bore him many sons and daughters and the land became filled with people. Then one day the great spirit took away Ka - la - na and he was seen no more. The people, however, became very wicked and grieved the great spirit so, that he determined to destroy them. He made the waters rise over the tops of the mountains and only the first born of Ka - la - na (Cheatmuh) and his wife were saved. These escaped in their canoe, which floated on the water for a long time, and at last settled on the top of a large mountain which was not quite covered with water. When the waters subsided, they built there a home and in the course of time the land was repopulated again.

But the great spirit became angry with them a second time after Cheatmuh's death and this time he punished them by sending a great snow storm upon the land. It was remarkable for its fineness and penetrated everywhere. It came into their houses and put out their fires, and into their clothes and made them wet and cold. Cold and famine

(8) "Royal Society of Canada"
destroyed all except one man and his daughter who possessed a dog and by eating it bit by bit they managed to outlive the rest. But even this source of supply failed and they lay down to die. As they lamented their lot the man looked up, and a large fish hawk swooped down upon the water and rose with a large salmon in its claws. He shot it and secured both the bird and the salmon, which sustained them till the snow stopped and the sun appeared and a great and rapid thaw set in. The man took his daughter to wife and the land was re-peopled and from these the Squamish trace their tribal descent."

The Tlingit (#)(ref. Boas N. W. Tribes Report No. IV) say that the world was originally swinging to and fro in space. There was something underneath it that was to serve as a rest for the world, the latter approached it, but never succeeded in joining it. All animals tried in vain to fasten the world to it. At last a female spirit (The-Woman-Under-Us) smeared her abdomen with deer tallow, lay down under the world, and, when it approached the under-world again, the tallow held both together. The earth is thought to be square, the corners pointing to the N.S.E and W. respectively. In the North, it is said, there is an enormous hole into which the water of the ocean gushes and from which it returns thus causing the tides. Their creation legend is as follows, "In the beginning their lived a great chief and his sister. The chief killed all his sisters sons as soon as they were born. One day when the woman went to the beach, mourning the death of her children, a sea gull advised her to swallow three stones. She obeyed, and after a few days gave birth to three boys, the eldest of whom was Yetl (Raven). He wanted to avenge the death of his brothers, so he challenged his uncle and drowned him. He obtained the sun and fresh water. He made trees and mountains. Then he tried to make man. He shaped human figures out of wood and stone but did not succeed. Then he made man out of grass which was a success, for this reason they believe man is mortal."

The Tsimshians account for the origin of man in this way. A long time ago a rock and an elder, near the mouth of the Naas River, were about to give birth to men. The children of the elder were the first to be born, therefore man is mortal. From the rock, however, he received his nails and hands and feet. The Tsimshians also have a legend of the flood and, when I was in Port Simpson, they directed my attention to a place in one of the high mountains which took the shape of the bow of a canoe, where, so they said, the survivors of the flood had rested in their

(?) Strictly speaking the Tlingit are not a B.C. Tribe but they greatly influenced the B. C. Indians.
The flood was sent by heaven as a punishment for the wickedness of man; only a few were saved. Later a fire destroyed the people, but again a few were saved. Before the flood the earth was not as it now is. There were no mountains or trees. After the flood, however, Leqa created these too. The earth is considered to be round and rests on a pillar that is held by an old woman.

The most important of the Kwakuitl legends is that of the wanderer Kanikila. He is the son of the deity, and descended from heaven to earth where he was born again of a woman. He transformed his enemies into animals and made friends with the mighty chiefs.

The Bilgulas (Bella Coola) have a legend that two men came down from heaven and created man and gave him his arts. Raven created daylight. According to their traditions, before the world existed as it does today, four deities lived on the earth. Masnasalaniq, Yula-timot, Matlapeequk and Itlitlulek. "Raven wished to obtain the sun but he was unable to liberate it, so he went to these deities for their assistance. They ascended to the sky and tore the curtain which up to that time had stretched between heaven and earth, hiding the heavenly orbs. The sun appeared but shone dimly, as though by clouds. The raven ascended to heaven through the rift made by Masnasalaniq, and found there a beautiful prairie country in which all the birds lived. Masnasalaniq and his brothers painted them beautifully and sent them down to earth, giving each his song and arts. Raven was not content with the sun and resolved to try and find a better one. He flew to the house of a great chief, who kept "The-Place-of-the-Dawning-Day". This was a small round receptacle closed all around like an egg. The chief guarded it jealously and kept it suspended from one of the rafters of his house. Raven knew that he could not obtain it by sheer force and resorted to a ruse. He assumed the shape of the leaf of a spruce tree and let himself drop into the pond from which the chief's daughter used to take water. The girl drank from the pond, swallowed the leaf, and thus became with child. She gave birth to a boy who was Raven himself. The old chief loved the boy dearly and allowed him to play with the Munzuentu (the place of dawning day). This was what he desired. He ran out of the house, broke it, and flew away in the shape of a raven.

After the sun had thus been obtained Masnasalaniq said 'Let us make man'. He made the image of a man out of wood, but he was unable to endue it with breath. Matlapeequk and Itlitlulek tried likewise to carve human figures, and to give them life, but they failed. Finally
Yula-timot carved the figure of a man and endowed it with life. He made a man and a woman in each country and they became the ancestors of all the numerous tribes. Then Masnasalaniq gave them their arts. He taught them to build canoes, to catch salmon and to build houses. He made rivers everywhere that man should have water to drink, and that the fish might go up the rivers to be caught by men."

The Bilqula believe that Masnasalaniq and his brothers still continue to give new ideas to men. They say that any new design of painting, carving or any new invention made by a member of their tribe, has been given to him by Masnasalaniq.

To illustrate the beliefs of the Indians I here give a number of myths translated by J. A. Teit in his "Mythology of the Thompson Indians."

1. Creation of the World by Old One. (9)

"Formerly the earth we live on did not exist, in its place was a great lake. Old one, who lives in the upper world or in that part of it where now the highest snow-capped mountains reach the sky, got tired looking below him at the endless waste of water. He thought, I will make an Island in the middle of the lake, which will be nice to look at. Taking some clean earth - soil of the upper world - he formed it into a round ball, hollow in the centre, and threw it down into the middle of the lake. Here it formed a large island, the earth, upon which we live. The ball burst when it hit the water and, spreading immensely on all sides, it covered a large area in the same way that a landslide may not be very large when it first shoots out but, as it runs, it increases in size spreading out continually over a large surface. The earth remained in the water as a broken mass of flats, hollows, hills and islets, much as we see it now. As the world was still a bare mass of earth, not very pleasing to look at, Old One came down himself afterwards and commenced to improve it making trees, grass and other needful things, to grow."

2. Old one and the end of the World. (10)

"The earth is a round ball that revolves on a stick that is its axis. It is just like an Indian top. The lower end of the stick rests in another world, where Old one lives. He sits close by and watches it. At his right hand sits the Beaver. When Old one thinks it is time for (9) P. 320. (10) P. 320 Mythology of Thompson Indians."
the earth to stop turning around, he will tell the Beaver to gnaw the pole and the earth will fall over and stop revolving.

3. Old One and the Earth, Sun and People. (11)

"A long time ago, before the earth was formed, there lived a number of people together. They were stars, sun, moon and earth. The latter was a woman, and her husband was the sun. Earth-Woman always found fault with her husband and was disagreeable to him saying he was nasty, ugly and too hot. They had several children. At last sun felt annoyed at her grumbling and deserted her. The moon and stars, who were relatives of the Sun, also left her and moved over to where the Sun had taken his abode. When the Earth-Woman saw that her husband and his friends had all deserted her, she became very sorrowful, and wept much. Now Old One appeared and transformed sun, moon and stars into those we see in the sky at the present day, and placed them all so that they should look on the Earth-Woman and she could look at them. He said, 'Henceforth you shall not desert people, nor idle yourselves, but shall remain where you can always be seen at night or by day. Henceforth you will look down on the earth'. Then he transformed the woman into the present earth. Her hair became the trees and grass, her flesh the clay, her bones the rocks and her blood the springs of water. Old One said 'Henceforth you will be the earth, and people will live on you and trample on you. You will be as their mother, for from your bodies they will spring and to you they will go back. People will live as in your bosom and sleep on your lap. They will derive nourishment from you for you are fat and they will utilize all parts of your body. You will no more weep when you see your children.'

After this earth gave birth to people who were very similar in form to ourselves, but they knew nothing and required neither food nor drink. They had no appetites, desires, knowledge or thoughts. Then Old One travelled over the world, and among the people, giving them appetites, desires and causing all kinds of birds and fish to appear, to which he gave names and ascribed to them certain positions and functions. He said to the people 'Where you see fish jump, there you will find water to drink. It will quench your thirst and keep you alive.'

Old One, according to this legend, taught the people everything, even to the relationship of the sexes. In taking his farewell he said, 'I now leave you, but if you forget

(11) "Mythology of Thompson Indians" p. 321.
any of the arts I have taught you or if you are in distress and require my aid, I will come again to you. The sun is as your father and the earth as your mother. When you die you will return to your mothers body. You will be covered with her flesh as a blanket under which your bones will rest in peace."

4. The Creation of the Earth by Old - One (12)

"Old One, or Chief, came down from the upper world on a cloud, which, when it approached the surface of the great lake, became a bank of fog. He was tired looking at the endless and monotonous expanse of water underneath the sky, and thus had descended to create some kind of a world in the midst of the watery waste, where the earth is now. The cloud descended until it rested on the surface of the lake. The Old One pulled five hairs from his head, and, throwing them down on the clouds, they became endowed with life, and sprang up in the form of young women. They were all perfect women endowed with speech, sight and hearing. He asked the first one to speak and state what she preferred to be. She answered 'I wish to be a woman and bear children. I shall be bad and foolish and shall seek after my own pleasure. My descendants will fight, lie, steal, murder and commit adultery. They will be wicked.' Chief answered her saying, 'I am sorry you have spoken thus, for in this way death and much sorrow will arise.'

Now he asked the second woman to state what she wished to be. She answered, 'I wish to be a woman and bear children. I shall be good and virtuous. My descendants will be wise, honest, truthful and chaste.' The chief was glad when he heard her speak thus, and said, 'You have spoken well. Wisdom and virtue will eventually triumph over foolishness and evil. The process will be very long, however, and there will be much sorrow and misery meanwhile."

Now the third woman was asked to choose her lot and she answered, 'I wish to be the earth upon which my sisters will live. They will love me and draw their life from me. I will make everything fat and happy.' The chief answered, 'It is good. From you everything will grow. You will produce, nourish and give rest. When people die, you will receive them on your breast and will cover them. Trees, plants, grass, flowers, gold, silver and all that is good and beautiful will spring from you. You will make your sisters' children glad.'

(12) "Mythology of Thompson Indians" (Teit) p. 322.
Now he asked the choice of the fourth woman and she answered, 'I wish to be fire and will be in the grass, trees and in all wood. I shall make people happy by giving them heat and comfort. When they are cold and miserable they will seek me, and obtain warmth and happiness, and with my aid they will eat. The chief answered, 'It is good. You will render assistance and make your sisters' children rejoice.'

Then he asked the fifth woman to speak, and she replied, 'I wish to be water and from me people will draw life and wisdom. Coming to me they will be cleansed of filth and disease and, by seeking me constantly, they will become wise and obtain knowledge and riches. I will assist all things on earth to maintain life.' The chief answered, 'Good.' You will assist and make glad your sisters' children.'

Then he transformed them. The earth fell backwards, spread out her eyes and rolled off from the cloud into the lake, where she took the form of the earth we live on. The chief said, 'My daughter, you will be as you have asked. Henceforth you will be the earth in the midst of the great lake and people will live on you. They will call you mother.' Water he transformed into the present water we see in the shape of lakes, pools, springs, and streams, and it began to run over the top of the earth. Fire he transformed into the present fire or heat we see and feel when wood burns. He put the spirit of fire in all wood and plants.

The remaining two women he placed on the earth and, after endowing them with the power to bear offspring, he impregnated them. He told them, 'You will be sisters and from you all people will spring. Your children will be male and female, and your descendants will cover the earth. The offspring of Evil will be most numerous at first, but at last the children of good will outnumber them. Good will prevail and Evil finally disappear. Then I will collect all people both dead, and alive. Earth and her sisters will assume their original forms, and altogether will become changed and new. In this manner will come the end of the World. This is why both bad and good people are found in the world at the present day. The children of the two women were male and female. They married one another and from them all people are descended. None of them could live without earth, fire and water; therefore these are part of us and are related to people as if by blood.'

5. Origin of Light (13)

"A very large dead tree grew on a hill near

(13) "Mythology of Thompson Indians" (Teit) p. 324.
Spences Bridge. It was endowed with magic and in some manner possessed light. At that time the world was always dark. The chipmunk did not like the continual darkness and going to the tree set fire to its roots. He kept the fire going and as the tree burned light commenced to come. At last when it fell, light at once broke on the earth and since then there has always been daylight.

6. Light and Darkness. (14)

"Formerly the animals were undecided whether they should have constant light or constant darkness. Grisly Bear and many others wanted the latter, while chipmunk and many more wished the former. They strove, and Grisly Bear's party prevailed in magic and continual darkness settled over the world. Now chipmunk knew, if he burned the magic tree near Spences Bridge, the world would become light again, so he set fire to its roots, and poked the ashes away with a stick, that the wind should fan the flames. When the tree fell, the earth became light. Then Grisly Bear appeared in a great rage and commenced to extinguish the flame by throwing earth on the log and on chipmunk and saying, 'le pa, le pa.' Chipmunk would poke the log and say, 'Tse Ka, tse Ka", and light would stream up, but when Grisly Bear threw on earth darkness would come again. Thus they strove and neither together prevailed, so it was agreed that it should be part day and part night. Grisly Bear was angry at chipmunk and chased him into a hole, tearing his back and leaving the marks or strips we see on the chipmunk now."

7. The Great Flood. (15)

"Very long ago, when the world was very young, all the people were together in one country. They talked one language, knowledge and magic, while others knew very little. In some respects the people were very wise and in other respects they were very helpless, simple, and ignorant. In appearance they were similar to the people of to-day, and most of them were well-meaning and good. Besides these people, there were many others in the same country who were not altogether human, but more like animals with human characteristics. They were nearly all highly gifted with certain kinds of knowledge, and possessed of magical powers of many kinds, often of a high order. Besides these human and semi-human beings, there were many kinds of animals, some

(14) "Mythology of Thompson Indians" (Teit) p. 325.
of them of immense size, and different from any on the earth at the present day. Most of the semi-human beings were very wicked, and some of them were cannibals. There were also giants in those days.

A wise man of the people said, 'Something is going to happen, maybe a great flood will come, but the people would not believe him. Now the animals became very tame and came into people's houses. They seemed to have a foreboding of something. Then the people said to one another, 'Something is going to happen. See how tame the animals are.' Many people laughed. They said, 'Let the flood come. We shall save ourselves on rafts.' Others said, 'We shall climb the trees. We shall climb the mountains.' Yet others said, 'We shall subdue the flood with our magic. We shall escape by our magical powers.'

At last a heavy rain set in, and it rained for many days and nights. The creeks and rivers overflowed their banks, and the ocean rose and flooded the land. At the same time the earth tipped, and the water ran to that place where the people dwelt. Now there was a great flood, and the waters rose so rapidly that people were surrounded in many places and could not escape. Some climbed trees and rocks and hills and mountains; but the water overtook them, and they were drowned. For ten days it rose continually and rapidly. The rain and flood were accompanied by storms, high winds, and darkness. The sun, moon and Dipper stars were lost. The whole earth was covered by water, excepting the highest peaks. Only two peaks in the Tahltan country were not covered by the deluge, - Takitstsi-tla, on the West side of Chesley River; and Tse'toxtle, on the south side of the Stikine River. Some people tried to save themselves on rafts, large and small. In the darkness the wind and sea drove them hither and thither. They all became separated and lost. They did not know where they were. Some saw mountain-peaks exposed above the water, and tried to reach them. Some succeeded, and others did not. Some rafts were driven off a very long way; others went to pieces, and the people on them died or were washed off. Rats and mice got aboard some of the large rafts and gnawed the withes, binding the logs together so that they came apart, and the people were drowned.

Some people reached the two mountains in the Tahltan country and went ashore. Some others went ashore on the high peaks which were not submerged in other countries. However, only a few were saved, and they were at widely-sep-
arated points. They became the ancestors of all the people in the world at the present day. Very few of the wicked semi-animal people survived, and only a few giants. Some animals escaped by taking refuge on the high unsubmerged peaks in various countries, but most of them were drowned. Some kinds of animals became extinct. The surviving animals spread afterwards from the high peaks into neighboring parts of the country, and multiplied. They are the animals now known to us.

After ten days the flood subsided; the rain, storms and darkness lessened; and in another ten days the waters had receded completely. The survivors came down from the mountains, but everything was soaking wet. They could find no dry fire-wood, and could make no fires. They tried many different kinds of wood and bark, but they would not light. At last they tried the inside bark of the balsam-poplar. This was the only dry thing. Water cannot penetrate it. They made fire with it.

The people were very poor. They had lost almost everything. They had very few tools and clothes, and game was so very scarce. They came down into the lowlands to live by fishing. Being but remnants of the people, much of their former knowledge and magic had been lost. The few surviving bad people (semi-animals and giants, cannibals, and others) settled down and preyed on the good people. All were later transformed or killed by Raven, or their powers for evil were taken away by him. Raven also located and brought back the sun, moon, and Dipper, which had been lost. The people who survived the Flood increased in number at the several points where they had located and gradually spread over the country. In time some of them migrated here and there into other districts in search of better living-conditions; others did likewise when they became too many in one place.

After a long time, some people came into contact with others at certain points, and thus they learned that there were people in the world besides themselves. When they met, they found that they spoke different languages and had difficulty in understanding one another. This came about by their being separated and living isolated for a long period of time. That all the people were one originally, is evidenced by many customs, beliefs, and traditions which are common to all. These customs survived the Flood. The people who landed on Cone Mountain went down to the Coast, and became the ancestors of the Tlingit of the neighboring part of the coast. Those who landed on Chesley Mountain
went down the Taku River, and became the ancestors of the Taku Tlingit. Probably the Tahltan country was not inhabited for a long time after this, when the women from Naas and Tagish met at Tahltan; since then other people from east and west have come into the country. Some people say that the Flood came to destroy all the bad people that were on the earth long ago."

III. The Soul.

1. Thompson Indians.

According to the Thompson Indians every living person has a soul as have also animals, and every living thing, even rocks, fire and water are believed to have souls, for, in the Mythological age, they were all people. After death, they continue to live much as they do in this world, except that they have no sickness and know no want. Deer are always at hand waiting to be killed and berries to be picked. However, the growth and birth of children ceases with death. They believe that the setting sun draws the soul along, therefore they never sleep with their heads toward the sunset.

Every soul has a shadow which remains behind in this world when a person dies. It is the person's ghost. A horse shoe keeps the ghosts away. When a person is depressed a ghost is said to be troubling him. The souls of people who commit suicide never reach the land of souls. Shamans who have visited the land never saw such souls. They are either lost or die. People who are drowned either do not reach the land of souls or arrive there by a very circuitous route. All other people go to the land of souls. Warriors and good people go more quickly than others.

In very few cases do souls return in newborn infants. If a male child dies, the soul of that child returns in the next male child born.

All souls will continue to stay in the land of souls till Old Man and Coyote shall return to the world. They will come from the East and bring the souls back on clouds of tobacco smoke, or on red clouds, or on the aurora.

2. The Haida.

Everything possessed an undying soul, according to the Haida. There is however no resurrection of the
body. Until lately they professed to have communication with the spirits of departed relatives.

3. **Shuswap.**

Their beliefs are similar to the Thompson Indians. The soul can leave the body at any time and wander around like a ghost and proceed along the trail to the spirit land. This happens when a person is sick or crazy. Souls of suicides do not reach the land of souls for many years, some think they will never get there until judgment day. Souls of deceased children are occasionally re-born of the same mother or a near relative. Souls are never re-born as animals.

4. **The Lillooet.**

Also similar to the Thompsons. All objects, animate and inanimate, have souls. Every soul has its ghost, as everybody has its shadow. All animals and people are pre-destined to die at a certain time.

5. **Nootka.**

Among the Nootka Indians, the soul is said to have its seat in the crown of the head and to take the shape of a tiny man. If it loses its upright position its owner loses his reason. The soul leaves the body when its owner is sick and if it is not restored the person will die. Shamans are employed to restore souls.

6. **Lkungen.**

This tribe holds that the soul leaves the body in dreams and wander all over the earth. After death it takes on a human shape and becomes a ghost.

7. **The Kwakuitl.**

The ideas of the soul held by the Kwakuitl can best be illustrated by the following tale, translated by Boas, in "The Sixth Report of the British Association for the Advancement of Science among N. W. Tribes." "There were two chiefs among the Nak - oartok, Ank - oalayilis and Tseqeta. The former had given away many blankets and was the latter's superior. He was one of Twins and used to say that Ata (the deity) took special care of him and that he
would go to him after death. He had been accumulating property for a new festival for four years. When the tribe went Oolahlan fishing he hid his property under a stone in the woods. His wife helped him. Tseqeta followed them unnoticed, and killed them with his lance. He loaded the bodies with stones and threw them into the sea. Nobody knew what had happened to the chief and his wife. Ank-oalayilis had a son whom he had left to the care of one of his brothers. When the boy was grown up he married, and his wife had a son. It was Ank-oalayilis who was thus born again. The boy when a few years old cried and wanted to have a small boat made, and when he had got it asked for bow and arrows. His father made, and when he had got it asked for bow and arrows. His father scolded him for having so many wishes. Then the boy said, 'I was at one time your father and have returned from heaven.' His father did not believe him, but when the boy said, 'You know that Ank-oalayilis had gone to bury his property and nobody knows where it is. I will show it to you. He took his father right to the place where it lay hidden and had him distribute it. There were two canoe loads of blankets. Now the people knew that Ank-oalayilis had returned. He said, 'I was with Ata but he has sent me back.' They asked him to tell about heaven but he refused to do so. He became chief, but refrained from taking revenge on his enemy.'

8. Bilqula.

According to Bella Coola traditions, the soul is believed to have its seat in the nape. It has a similar shape to a bird, and is enclosed in an egg and when the shell of this egg breaks the soul flies away and its owner dies. Shamans have the power to see and recover souls. They lay their hands on the nape and are able to tell whether the soul is there or not. If a soul leaves a body without breaking the shell of the egg its owner becomes insane.


The Kootenay Indians held that all men have spirits. Some, especially great and strong men, have more than one. At death, these spirits may enter anything as a tree or a bear or a fish. While a man is alive his spirit may exist as a tomtit, a jay or a flower, etc. Spirits of the dead are able to return and pay visits to their friends.
When Dr. Chamberlain was collecting his information from this tribe, one member informed him that the night before the spirits of his children had called on him.

10. **Lower Fraser Indians**.

The Cowichan Indians held that a man has four souls. The main soul takes the shape of a Mannitin whilst the others are merely shadows of the first. The main soul leaves the body at death, and the shadows become ghosts and inhabit the places where their owner formerly lived.

**IV. Death.**

The Thompson Indians believed that every person and animal have a time appointed when they must die and nothing can destroy them if their time has not come. In this way they explain the escape or capture of a deer and their own rescue or otherwise from the jaws of death.

Among the Kwakuitl food was burned for the dead on the beach, whilst the bodies were placed in boxes among high trees. The Tsimshians had a similar practice. On the death of a person, especially a chief, a constant watch is kept over the body. Wailers are hired to keep up the wails to drive the evil spirits away. When I was in Port Simpson women wailers used to buy Pain Killer and put it in their eyes to make them weep. All who touched the dead body, or handled the casket, were separated. The funeral rites were performed with great pomp and profuse wailing.

**V. The Future Life.**

1. **The Thompson Indians**.

According to the Thompson Indians the land of souls is beneath us towards the setting sun. Shamans who have visited the land are able to give an accurate account of the trail leading there. At a certain spot on the trail they deposit their belongings. On the way three guardians are stationed who send back souls whose time has not yet come to enter the land of souls. The third guardian is an orator who often sends back messages with returning souls. When a soul is expected to reach the land, the friends of the expected one gather in the large lodge there to welcome the new-comer. It is a delightful land, and once within, he has no desire to leave it. He is carried around shoulder high by his friends.

Another legend tells us that a lake must be crossed by canoe e'er the land of souls is reached
The following is a sketch drawn by an Indian illustrating his conception of the world and the land of souls. (16)

a. Trail leading from the earth to the land of the Ghosts with tracks of Heads.
b. River or bay on which the souls cross.
c. Land of the Ghosts and dancing souls.
d. Lake surrounding the earth.
e. Earth with wood and villages.

N. S. E. W. Points of the compass.

There is a belief among them that certain animals have worlds of their own which are situated underground, the entrances to which are hidden from view.

2. Shuswap.

A belief in a land of souls was firmly held by the Shuswap Indians, most of them being of the opinion that it was in the South, some believed it to be towards the sunrise and still others toward the sunset. Their knowledge of the land of souls came from prophets, who after death, returned to life. The land is warm and full of sunshine, berries are always ripe, flowers always in bloom and the grass always green. The land is free from flies and mosquitoes. When the people of the land are hungry they sing and a deer falls down dead, they sing again and it is cooked ready for eating. When the meal is over they sing again and the deer comes to life again. There is no death, sickness bad weather or cold.

The Shuswap have a belief similar to the doctrine of the second coming of Christ held today among certain sects of Christians. It was believed that the old-One and coyote would come back again to earth and bring the shades with them. This event, it was held, would be preceded by the appearance of one or more transformers who were to make the world a place of happiness for the living and for the dead. The chief transformer to usher in these good times would be Coyote, who, after completing his good work, would disappear and again re-appear with Old One (or chief of the dead) and all the souls from the spirit land.

These old beliefs are very rapidly disappearing. A similar belief to that named above is held by the Ikungen, who believe that the great transformer, Kumswoot (our older brother) will again at some future time, descend from heaven and wander all over the earth to punish the wicked.

3. Lillooet.

The beliefs of the Lillooet Indians are similar to that of the Thompson Indians differing only in a few particulars.

Formerly they knew of no supreme being except "The Chief of the Dead," who stood at the entrance of the land of souls and admitted or turned back souls. They did not know if the dead would return or not but as they went to a happier place they considered it very unlikely that they would wish to return once they safely reached the land of souls. Some did believe that the Chief of the dead would
bring back again all the souls to this world. First he would come himself and search for the bones that had been burned, revive them and then re-unite the souls to their bodies again, and the people would live on earth as they did before Raven introduced death into the world.

4. Haida.

At death, according to Haida traditions, a man found himself at the edge of a huge bay. He called for help and a canoe appeared, self-propelled, and bore him to the land of souls where he was re-united with his wife (the first if he had more than one). As there are various towns in the land of souls, as on earth, he elected the town in which he had desired to dwell. After dwelling in the town of his choice in the land of souls for sometime, the dead man launched his canoe and passed to another land called Xada. This was the second death. Later he passed on to a third and a fourth and yet a fifth. At the fifth death he became a blue fly on earth.

5. Kootenays.

These held that the dead went to the sun. They will all return and the place at which they are expected to land is Lake Pend Oreille and there they assembled annually awaiting the return of the dead. The festival at the lake lasted many days and consisted chiefly of feasting and religious dances.

VI. PROPHETS.

Prophets occasionally made their appearance among various tribes of Indians, though it is from the Thompson traditions that I have gathered what information I have under this heading. They came with a special message from the land of souls which they claimed to have visited. The message was usually sent by the chief of the land of souls. People would gather in crowds to hear the message of the prophet. If the message brought glad tidings, the people offered prayers of thanksgiving, if one of foreboding, they supplicated for mercy. Some prophesied following visions. The coming of the whites, the advent of certain epidemics and the final extinction of the Indians have all been the subjects of prophecy. One chief named Palak, not only prophesied the coming of the whites, but went into details of the changes that would take place following their arrival. He was also reported to have worked several miracles. He put fish bones in the river which turned into salmon. The last prophet to appear among the Indians of the Thompson tribe was a woman of the Okanagan tribe from the tribal territory in the U.S.A. She appeared about 1891, and claimed to be the saviour of the Indians and wanted them to follow her in battle against the whites.
She met with much opposition from the chief and turned back on reaching the Nicola Valley and went home.

VII. Shamans and Shamanism.

No discussion of Indian religion is in any way complete without some reference to the Medicine Man and his practices, known in some measure to every tribe.

1. Thompson.

According to the Thompson traditions shamans accomplished their feats, through the aid of their guardian spirits. They were instructed by means of dreams and visions. They held power to cause as well as cure disease and could discern the future. Often contests occurred between Shamans.

2. Shuswap.

Shamans cured people among the Shuswap by exercising the disease, by prescription, by massage, by laying on of hands, by sprinkling water on the head and blowing it over the body. They could either pull sickness out with their hands, or suck it out with their lips.

3. Lillooet.

Among the Lillooet, Shamans were trained for their work by sleeping in burial grounds for years and receiving their knowledge of the art of Shamanism from their guardian spirits. Covering strings of dear’s hoofs around their ankles and knees, and carrying rattles made of basketry, they performed their cures by dancing and singing. Other Shamans lay with the sick person whom they desired to cure, and, thinking of the person and wishing the cure often proved successful. They caused barren women to bear children and had power to decide the sex of children as the mother might desire. Enemies were bewitched by shooting their spirits at them. They were used to detect thieves and to give success to the hunters. Some of them could perform miracles. The people generally stood in awe of them.

4. Haida.

According to J. R. SWANTON, "A Shaman was one who had power from some supernatural being who possessed him or who chose him as the medium through which to make his existence felt in the world of men". The profession of Shaman was usually hereditary from the maternal uncle to the nephew. Before a Shaman died he revealed his spirit to his successor.
When a person was sick among the Haidas, the Shaman was sent for. Presents were sent with the request that he come in order to secure his goodwill. The Shaman on his arrival blows through a long bone tube on the affected part. Next morning Shaman and relatives of the sick man drink salt water and fast four days. During all this time the Shaman sings, dances and swings his rattle reaching out his left hand to catch the spirit. Finally, he declares when the sick person will be well and retires.

Boas, speaking of Shamanism among the Haidas, in the "Fifth Report of the British Association for the Advancement of Science" says: "Shamanism Forms a most important part of their religion, and is closely connected with all their customs. All nature is animated, and the spirit of any being can become the genius of a man, who thus acquired supernatural powers. The secrets of Shamanism are confided to a number of secret societies which are closely connected with the clans of the tribes. It is not easy to get at the secrets of a secret society.

5. Lkungen.

Among the Lkungen are two kinds of Shamans higher and lower called respectively "Squanaam and "Sioua". The latter, as the term would indicate, is usually a woman. Her art, however, is not acquired by intercourse with a spirit, but is taught. The chief function of the Sioua is to approach hostile powers. She is a sort of priestess. She appeases hostile powers, by speaking to them in sacred languages which are handed down, for heavy fees, from one Sioua to another.

The Squanaam Class of Shaman, however, is able to see souls and catch them. As soon as the soul leaves a man's body and he becomes sick, the Squanaam goes after it and brings it back. When the soul is restored the man gets well. To become a Shaman the novice goes into the woods where he bathes and cleanses himself with cedar branches. He sleeps in the woods till he dreams of his guardian spirit who bestows supernatural powers upon him. When he returns he has power to cure disease and to see death and catch souls.


The process by which one becomes a Shaman among the Kwakiutl was a long and tedious one. It is thus described by Franz Boas; (17)

(17) "11th, Report of the British Association for Advancement of Science."
"The Shamans are initiated by animals, supernatural beings or by inanimate objects. Shamans initiated by the Killer-Whale or by the wolf are considered the most powerful. Only innocent youths can become Shamans.

A person who is about to become a Shaman declares he feels ill. For four days, or longer, he fasts in his house. Then he dreams that the animal or spirit that is going to initiate him appeared to him and promised to cure him. If he has dreamt that the Killer whale appeared to him, he asks his friends to take him to a lonely place in the woods. His friends dress him in entirely new clothing and take him away. They build a small hut of hemlock branches and leave him to himself. After four days all the Shamans go to look for him. When he sees them approaching, he begins to sing his new songs and tells them that the Killer-Whale (or whatever being his protection may be) has cured him and made him a Shaman by putting quartz on his body. The old Shamans place him on a mat and wrap him up like a corpse while he continues to sing his songs. They place him in their canoe and paddle home. The father of the young person is awaiting their arrival on the beach and asks if his child is alive. They reply in the affirmative and then he goes to clean his house. The whole tribe is called. The singers beat the boards and chant. Then the new Shaman begins to sing in the canoe and after a short time he appears in the house, dressed in head ring and neck ring of hemlock branches, his eyes closed, and he dances, singing his song. The people learn the song and next night when he appears sing it to him. On the fourth night he appears with his eyes open wearing a ring of cedar bark, to which a representation of the animal that initiated him is attached. He carries a rattle on which the same animal is carved. He looks around and says to one of the people you are sick. Then he makes his first cure. For four months the Shaman continues to make cures. Every fourth day he must bathe. After this time people whom he treats are expected to pay him for his cures.

The power of a Shaman may also be bought. Again quoting Boas, "The intending purchaser invites a Shaman from whom he is going to buy the power and the rest of the tribe to his house. There the people sing and the Shaman dances. During his dance he throws his power into the purchaser, who falls down like one dead and when he recovers is taken by the Shaman into the woods where both stay for four days. Then he returns and the same ceremony is performed as described above."
VIII. Religious Observances.

1. Thompson.

Their religious observances are all founded on the belief that spirits pervade all nature. They sought through these observances protection from danger and good luck in hunting and fishing. The first fruits of each season were given as an offering to the earth or the mountains. The oldest man of the tribe usually made the offering for the tribe and danced as he lifted the fruit toward the mountains. People with painted faces, also danced around him. Prayers were offered to rain, when they wished it to stop raining, and to the warm winds when they desired them to remain. The head of each household also prayed to the dawning day.

Here is a prayer addressed to the Sunflower root by all young people when eating the first fruits of the season. It is given by Teit in "The Thompson Indians of B.C." "I inform thee that I intend to eat thee, mayest thou always help me to ascend, so that I may always be able to reach the tops of the mountains and may I never be clumsy. I ask this from thee, Sunflower root." Thou art the greatest of all in mystery."

From the same source we get the following ceremony performed in each lodge after the first tobacco of the season had been gathered. The eldest, with all the men and women (that smoked) sat down in a circle, and spake thus: "Be it known to you that we will cut up the chief of the tobacco." He filled a large pipe, handed it to each of the individuals who took a whiff, and holding up their hands the palms close together, the tip of the fingers level with the mouth, blew the smoke downward between their fingers and over their breast, and rubbing their chest and shoulders with both hands, as if rubbing the smoke in, they prayed. "Lengthen my breath chief (tobacco) so that I may never be sick and so that I may not die for a long time to come."

They believed in prayer. A person who prayed would stand a better chance in times of danger than one who did not. Any who mocked at prayer would be punished by becoming lunatic or by some affliction. Certain places became sacred and would be supplicated by a suitable offering in passing. The offering might be a lock of hair, a piece of clothing or tobacco.

Women painted their faces when digging roots or picking berries and men when hunting or fishing. The paint was considered to be an offering to the spirits.

The dawn of a day was supplicated, through the medium of an adolescent girl, for the cure of hernia, in the
following manner as described by Teit "Just before daybreak the girl put some charcoal in her mouth, which she chewed up fine and spat out on the swelling. This she did four times and then addressed the dawn of day as follows. " 0 Day Dawn, thy child relies on me to obtain healing from thee, who art mystery. Remove thou the swelling of thy child. Pity thou him Day Dawn".

2. Lillooet.

The Lillooet Indians prayed to mountains and rivers without offerings. Their ceremony for the first fruits merely consisted in telling the mountain that they intended to eat the berries.


Prayers to the dead were offered by the Shuswap Indians. Frequenting graveyards, they would beseech the dead to protect them from harm and aid them. " We are one people with you" they would say, " and will join you soon". We will then be happy together". With the prayers they frequently offered food to the dead.

A feast of first fruits was an annual festival among them. They ate all the berries gathered, the chief prayed, asking that they might always have a bountiful harvest.

The number four was their sacred number.

IX. Religious Festivals.

1. Thompson.

Religious festivals were held among them at stated periods and took the form of feasting and dancing and praying. These festivals usually lasted a whole day and were held outdoors in the summer time. Two chiefs led the proceedings; one led the people in the prayers and delivered messages that came to him in visions; the other led the singing and roused the people in time for the early morning proceedings. Prayers were made before the dancing began, and before the food was partaken of. It took the form of asking special favors for the whole company, that they might always find an easy living, and live free from sickness. The speeches urged the people to be good and to be faithful in their attendance at the feasts.

Besides these public prayers, family prayers were offered by the head of the family or the oldest member inside the lodges.
2. Shuswap.

They held similar festivals to the Thompson Indians. Their festivals were held midsummer and midwinter or whenever a special message was received by one of these tribes from the spirit world. These ceremonies were supposed to hasten the return of the departed souls to earth and the beginning of the golden age of peace and plenty. The authority for the holding of these ceremonies was none other than the chief of the dead. Attendance at these events made the passage to the spirit world easier for the dying and strengthened the bonds between the living and the dead. Moreover, if these observances were neglected, all communications would be cut off between the spirit land and any members of their tribe.

3. Lillooets.

The Lillooet Indians give the following reasons, furnished by J.A. Teit, for holding these festivals which are also similar in form to the Thompson and Shuswap tribes.

1. They were told to hold them by the Chief of the dead.
2. They would live longer and meet with less harm.
3. They would be preserved from the evil influences of the dead and from witchcraft.
4. They would have a greater abundance of food.
5. They would be luckier in hunting and other undertakings.
6. They would become more acceptable to the Chief and to the dead.
7. Their dead relatives would make clothes for them for the next world.
8. Their spirits would have less trouble when they reached the spirit land.

X. Guardian Spirits.

1. Thompson.

Every person had a guardian spirit, which was acquired during the puberty celebrations, except Shamans, who inherited them. A guardian spirit might be any conceivable object, fish, bird, or animal, except that there were special objects and animals and parts of animals that were the guardians of Shamans, warriors, hunters, fishermen and women.
2. **Shuswap.**

The belief in guardian Spirits among the Shuswap was much the same as among the Thompsons. Persons partook of the characteristics of their guardians. These guardians told a sick person how to get well, and advised hunters how they might gain success, and gamblers how they might win.

**XI. Totemism.**

Franz Boas tells us that among the Kootenay and Salish of the Interior he did not find the slightest trace of the existence of totemism. (N.W. Tribes Report V.)

The **Haida** and **Tsimshian** have animal totems. The Haida have two Phratries: eagle (or wolf) and raven. The Tsimshian have four: Raven, eagle, wolf and bear. The clans among these people bear the respective names of their totem animal. One member of a clan may not take a wife of the same clan. Even today some Indians will not marry another of the same totem, even if they belong to another tribe. When I was in Port Simpson in 1944 an Indian couple broke this custom and married and everybody felt that some evil would befall them. The following legends by Boas will illustrate the origin of totems.

(a) **The Bear.**

An Indian went mountain goat hunting. When he reached a remote mountain range, he met a black bear who took him to his home, taught him how to catch salmon and to build boats. For two years the man stayed with the bear then he returned to his village. When the people saw him they were all afraid of him for he looked just like a bear. One man, however, caught him and took him home. He could not speak and could eat only uncooked foods. Then they rubbed him with magic herbs and he was transformed into the shape of a man. After this whenever he was in want he went to the woods and his friend the bear helped him. He built a house and painted a bear on the front of it. His sister made a dancing blanket with a bear design. Therefore the descendents of his sister use the bear for their crest.

(b) **The Whale.**

An Indian went fishing. He fished three days and caught nothing. He cast anchor at the base of a steep hill. His anchor fell upon the house of a whale which drew the boat to the bottom of the sea. He remained with the whale two years and then came back and built a house and painted the whale on its front. He used the blanket and mask of a whale when dancing. Since that time the descendents of his sisters use that design.
The ethical standards of the Indians were very commendable. Stealing, immorality, lying, laziness, adultery, boasting, cowardice, borrowing, meanness and quarrelling were all condemned; whilst it was considered good to be pure, clean, honest, truthful and brave, friendly, hospitable, energetic, charitable, religious, warlike and revengeful towards enemies.

Reasons for being virtuous were given. Your friends will be ashamed of you, people will laugh at you, they will talk about you. If you steal they will think you are poor. If you tell lies, they will soon take no notice of what you say. If you are lazy, you will always be poor and no woman will want to marry you. If you commit adultery your friends and your children will be ashamed of you. If you are boastful people will be liable to put you to the test and find you out and no longer have confidence in you. If you are a coward, nobody will honor you. They will call you "woman".

Thus it is seen, as with us, many of their ethical standards were due to the social pressure. Many whites are "moral" for the same reason.

Much more might be said upon this great subject. The Indians were a religious people, with very primitive ideas naturally, but as sincere and honest in their beliefs and as true to them as many Christians are today.
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