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NOTES ON THE COSMOGONY AND HISTORY

OF THE

Squamish Indians of British Columbia

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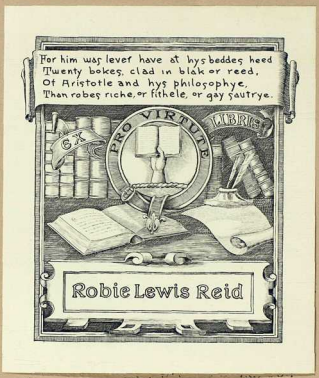

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II.—*Notes on the Cosmogony and History of the Squamish Indians of British Columbia.*

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The following notes on the cosmogony and history of the Squamish Indians of British Columbia, a sept of the great Salishan stock, were gathered by myself from an aged Indian of that sept some time last summer. Through the kindness of the Roman Catholic bishop of the district, Bishop Durieu, I received a cordial reception at the hands of the chief men of the tribe, and on learning what I wanted they brought out of his retirement the old historian of the tribe. He was a decrepit creature, stone-blind from old age, whose existence till then had been unknown to the good bishop, who himself has this tribe in charge. I am disposed, therefore, to think that this account has not been put into English before. I first sought to learn his age, but this he could only approximately give by informing me that his mother was a girl on the verge of womanhood when Vancouver sailed up Howe Sound at the close of last century. He would, therefore, be about 100 years old. His native name, as near as I could get it, is "Mul'ks." He could not understand any English, and as his archaic Squamish was beyond my poor knowledge of the language, it was necessary to have resort to the tribal interpreter. The account will, in consequence, be less full and literal. Before the old man could begin his recital, some preparations were deemed necessary by the other elderly men of the tribe. These consisted in making a bundle of short sticks, each about six inches long. These played the part of tallies, each stick representing to the reciter a particular paragraph or chapter in his story. They apologized for making these, and were at pains to explain to me that these were to them what books were to the white man. These sticks were now placed at intervals along a table round which we sat, and after some animated discussion between the interpreter, who acted as master of the ceremonies, and the other old men as to the relative order and names of the tallies, we were ready to begin. The first tally was placed in the old man's hands and he began his recital in a loud, high-pitched key, as if he were addressing a large audience in the open air. He went on without pause for about ten minutes, and then the interpreter took up the story. The story was either beyond the interpreter's power to render into English, or there was much in it he did not like to relate to a white man, for I did not unfortunately get a fifth of what the old man had uttered from him, and it was only by dint of questioning and cross-questioning that I was

enabled to get anything like a connected narrative from him at all. The old man recited his story chapter by chapter, that is, tally by tally, and the interpreter followed in like order. The following is the substance of what I was able to record :

In the beginning there was water everywhere and no land at all. When this state of things had lasted for a long while, the Great Spirit determined to make 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, "*Kā-lā'nā*," the first man, was made. The Great Spirit bestowed upon him the three things an Indian cannot do without, viz., a wife, a chisel or adze, and a salmon trap. Ka-la'na was a good man and obeyed the Great Spirit's commands, and in course of time his wife bore him many sons and daughters, who spread out over the land and peopled it. When the land was full of people and Kalana had grown very old, the Great Spirit took him away one day and the people saw him no more. Now, as Kalana had advanced in years the people had become very wicked and vexed the Great Spirit. And after he had left them they became worse. When this state of things had been going on for a long time, the Great Spirit made the waters rise up over all the land above the tops of the highest mountains, and all the people were drowned except one man named Cheatmuh, the first-born of Kalana, and his wife. These two escaped in their canoe, which floated about on the water for a long time, and at last, when they were nearly dead with hunger, settled on the top of a high mountain which was not quite covered with water. After this the waters subsided, and Cheatmuh and his wife descended from the mountain and built themselves a house, and in course of time repeopled the land again with their offspring. A long interval now went by and the people were happy and prosperous. Many salmon came up the Squamish every season, and there was food for everybody and to spare.

But the Great Spirit became angry with them again a second time after Cheatmuh's death, and this time he punished them by sending a great snow-storm upon the land. Day after day, and moon after moon, the snow fell in tiny flakes, covering everything and hiding all the land, and the streams, and the rivers, and the trees. The snow was remarkable for its extreme fineness, and it penetrated everywhere. It came into their houses and put out the fires, and into their clothes and made them wet and cold. (In this part of his recital the old man was exceedingly interesting and graphic in his description, the very tones of his voice lending themselves to his story, and I had gathered, long before the interpreter took up the story, that he had told of something that was very small and had penetrated everywhere.) Soon all the stores of fish and all available firewood was con-

sumed, and no more could be got. Starvation and cold assailed them on every side, and soon the children and old people began to die in scores and hundreds. But still the snow came down and the misery of those that were left increased. Dead bodies lay around everywhere, dead and dying lying together. (Here the old man's voice was hushed to a plaintive wail, and the faces of his audience were an eloquent index of the tragic interest of this story of their ancestors' misfortunes.) Everything that could possibly afford sustenance was eagerly sought out and eaten. The hair was scraped from their store of skins, and the latter, soaked in the snow to make them soft, were then torn into pieces and devoured. But soon even this source of supply failed them, and their only hope now lay in the approaching salmon season. But when this long-looked-for relief came it was found that the salmon were so thin that there was nothing on them but the skin and bones. It was impossible to cure salmon of this description; moreover, they did not come in their usual numbers, and soon this miserable supply failed them also. By the help of this poor diet the more hardy of them managed to keep body and soul together for some time longer, but all who were sickly and weak gradually died off, so that in a little time there remained but a few only of the whole tribe alive. All this time the snow had continued to fall, though it was long past the beginning of summer; and now even the salmon skins and bones were consumed, and all had died of starvation but two, a man and his daughter who lived apart by themselves. These two it seems had managed better than the rest. They were the fortunate possessors of a dog, which they killed after the salmon had failed them, and this they ate, bit by bit, as long as it lasted. They also burrowed down through the snow to the moss beneath, which they gathered, and, after wiping the slime of the salmon on it for flavouring, they then made soup from it. This, together with the dog, had enabled them to outlive all the rest of the tribe. But still the snow came down, and now they also had exhausted their resources and nothing remained to them but to lie down and die as the others had done. As they sat lamenting their lot, the man happened to look soundwards, and then he saw a large fish-hawk swoop down upon the water and rise again with a large salmon in its claws. Hastily getting out his canoe he launched it, and with his bow and arrows ready at hand, he paddled out to sea and presently got within range of the eagle and shot an arrow at it. The arrow went home and the bird fell with the fish still in its claws. He quickly secured both and returned to his daughter with them. By means of this fish and bird they were enabled to sustain themselves for some time longer, and by the time this food was consumed a great change began to take place. The snow at last stopped falling and the sun appeared, and a great and rapid thaw set in. In a short space of time the great white covering of snow sank down, and the long-hidden trees, and streams, and

rivers, and land were seen once more. The man now took his daughter to wife, and from those two the land was in course of time once more repeopled. Times of plenty came back, and the people learned to forget the terrible punishment the Great Spirit had sent upon their forefathers.

But once again a dreadful misfortune befell them. This time it happened in this wise. One salmon season the fish were found to be covered with running sores and blotches, which rendered them unfit for food. But as the people depended very largely upon these salmon for their winter's food supply, they were obliged to catch and cure them as best they could, and store them away for food. They put off eating them till no other food was available, and then began a terrible time of sickness and distress. A dreadful skin disease, loathsome to look upon, broke out upon all alike. None were spared. Men, women and children sickened, took the disease and died in agony by hundreds, so that when the spring arrived and fresh food was procurable, there was scarcely a person left of all their numbers to get it. Camp after camp, village after village, was left desolate. The remains of which, said the old man, in answer to my queries on this head, are found to-day in the old camp sites or midden-heaps over which the forest has been growing for so many generations. Little by little the remnant left by the disease grew into a nation once more, and when the first white men sailed up the Squamish in their big boats, the tribe was strong and numerous again. Following Vancouver's advent four generations have come and gone, the second of which was his own. What follows from this point is not of any particular interest, but before concluding my paper I desire to say that the name of this first Squamish man, as handed down by tradition,—*Kā-lā'nā*—suggests some thoughts for the ethnologist's consideration. The Haida term for God closely resembles it, viz., *Sha-lana*, the initial consonants being interchangeable throughout the tongues of this area. But if we go outside the district and language of British Columbia, and examine the genealogies of the Hawaiians, we there find this name "Ka-lana," or "Kalani," occurring again and again. For example, we have a fragment of a chant entitled "Kaulu-a-Kalana," which in English runs thus:

I am Kaulu,[1]
The child of Kalana,
Etc., etc., etc.

And Fornander, in his first volume of "The Polynesian Race" (pp. 199-200), writes thus: "It is almost certain that a number of names on the "Ulu" line were those of chiefs in some of the southern groups who never set foot on Hawaiian soil, but whose legends were imported by southern emigrants. . . . . The Maui legends, the Mani family of four brothers, and their parent, a-Kalana, Karana or Taranga, are

[1] This Kaula-Kalana was a celebrated navigator.

found upon all those groups in slightly different versions. . . . . It is just to conclude, therefore, that the Maui family and legends were not only not indigenous to Hawaiian soil or contemporary with any chiefs of the "Nanaula" line, but it is very questionable whether their origin does not date back to the PRE-Pacific period of the Polynesian race."

This view of Fornander's receives a striking accession of evidence from the use of these seemingly identical terms in British Columbia. I have shown that the term stands for God among the Haidas. It is also seen in the compound name of one of their ancient deities, "*Het-qwa-lana*," and from information supplied me by the Rev. H. H. Gowen, who was a missionary for some years among the Hawaiians, this term is used by the Polynesians in the same sense. 'Everyone,' he writes me, "of the Kamehameha line had the name Kalani forming part of his or her full designation. It appears to have been equivalent to "*exalted*," "*heavenly*," "*divine*."' Again, we find a remarkable resemblance to this term Kalana or Kalani in the name of the great chief who led the Yuch-chi across the Indus and conquered India about 20 B.C., whose name, as given by the Chinese historians, is "Karranos," or "Kalanos."

These facts will receive an accession of interest when I state that my studies of the languages of the natives of this province have resulted in yielding evidence of intercourse or relationship of some kind between the Kwakiutl-Nootka and Salish stocks and the Malay-Polynesians, between the Haida-Tlingit and the Japo-Corean, and between the Dené, or Athapascan, and the Chinese and cognate races. Of the Dené tongue it is no exaggeration to say that 50 per cent of its radicals are pure archaic Chinese. I append a short comparative vocabulary of these:

ENGLISH.	CHINESE.	DENÉ.
Water	tsui	thû, tsoo
Face	men	nin
Feet	gea	khe′
Mouth	how	fwa
Skin	p	eve
Mountain	tsan	tsal
Stone	tse	tse
Grass	to	tlo
Corpse	kle-zie	ezie
Sky	hen	ya
Star	slen, sen	shen, sen
Snow	sheat	t'si
Bird	dea, tea	ta
A fly	yain	tain
Wood	chi	chin
Tree	tsi	tsol
Small	thlo	tsol
Wet	tsil	tsil
Arrow	chi	kie

English.	Chinese.	Dené.
Bow	kuñ	in-thiñ
Bone	kwat	kwen
Boat	chau	t'su (canoe)
Child	tsi	tsi-ya
Breast	yu	t'su
Brother (elder)	hiung	unâ
" (younger)	ti	ché
Dog	kuen	t'len
Day	chen, tien	tzin
Eye	muk	woda
Fire	hwo	kron
Father	pa pa	apa
Mother	mo	emon
Man	yan, jin	dané, tiñ, ji, ya
Grandfather	tsu	etse-yan
Grandmother	tsu	etsu
Sister (younger)	tze	edeze
Summer	chañ-choñ	tañ-gron

I might extend this list almost indefinitely, but I think enough radicals have been given to show the marked lexicographical similarities between these two languages. Nor are these Chinese similarities confined to the vocabulary, they extend to the morphology of the language as well, and the characteristic methods of denomination in Chinese find their exact counterpart in the first three of the four classes of nouns into which, according to Father Morice,—than whom there is no higher authority—the nouns in the Dené language may be divided.

It is my intention to offer a fuller paper on these Asian affinities later. Our lack of analytical knowledge of the language of British Columbia makes it difficult at times to proceed and be sure of one's ground. The Dené radicals here offered are some of those given by Father Morice, and may, therefore, be considered correct. The Chinese terms are either from Edkin, or from local Cantonese, the dialect of which, as Edkin has pointed out, is a purer and more archaic form of Chinese than the court or literary forms.

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