

PART 10 SAPIR-THOMAS NOOTKA TEXTS

The Whaling Indians

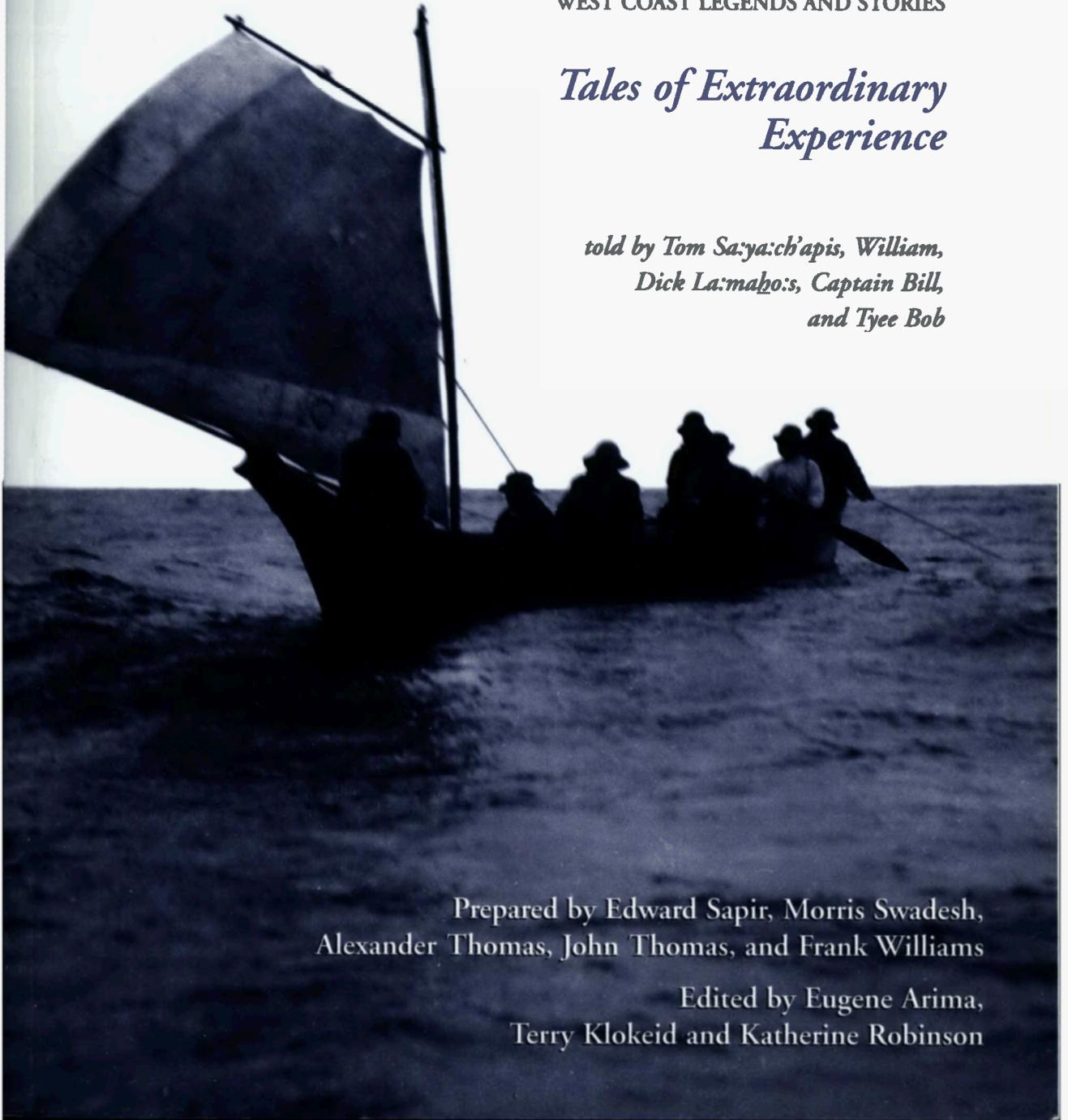
WEST COAST LEGENDS AND STORIES

Tales of Extraordinary Experience

*told by Tom Sa:ya:ch'apis, William,
Dick La:mah'o:s, Captain Bill,
and Tye Bob*

Prepared by Edward Sapir, Morris Swadesh,
Alexander Thomas, John Thomas, and Frank Williams

Edited by Eugene Arima,
Terry Klokeid and Katherine Robinson



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Alex Thomas singing in Ottawa in 1968
(Photo: Clarke Davis, MCM/CMC J-21201)

Abstract

“TALES OF EXTRAORDINARY EXPERIENCE” IS THE second of four parts in *West Coast Legends and Stories*, or *Nootka Legends and Stories*. These Native texts were collected between 1910 and 1923 by Edward Sapir and Alexander Thomas from the Nuu-Chah-Nulth — once known as the Nootka — of Vancouver Island’s west coast. This volume is part 10 of the extensive “Sapir-Thomas Nootka Texts”, and contains thirteen tales of supernatural encounters and spirit power. In addition to documenting thought and behaviour in Native ethnography, as Sapir intended, these tales are equally engrossing as simple stories from a world other than our own.



Résumé

« TALES OF EXTRAORDINARY EXPERIENCE » EST LA deuxième de quatre parties consacrées aux légendes et récits de la côte ouest (ou des Nootkas). Ces textes ont été recueillis auprès des Nuu-Chah-Nulths – jadis connus sous le nom de Nootkas – de la côte ouest de l’île de Vancouver, par Edward Sapir et Alexander Thomas, entre 1910 et 1923. Ce volume est la partie 10 d’une série plus grande de textes de Sapir et Alexander concernant les Nootkas et contient treize légendes qui ont trait à des rencontres surnaturelles et au pouvoir de l’esprit. En plus de documenter la pensée et le comportement des Amérindiens – l’intention réelle d’Edward Sapir –, ces légendes sont captivantes comme tout récit d’inspiration populaire provenant d’un monde différent du nôtre.

The Whaling Indians: West Coast Legends and Stories

TALES OF EXTRAORDINARY EXPERIENCE

Prepared by
Edward Sapir, Morris Swadesh, Alex Thomas,
John Thomas, and Frank Williams

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PREFACE

The Ts'isha:ʔath or "Tseshaht" of Barkley Sound and Alberni Inlet, Vancouver Island, are the people who are the primary source for the extensive collection of Nuu-Chah-Nulth or "Nootka" texts gathered in the 1910-23 period by the outstanding linguist Edward Sapir and his second chief interpreter Alexander Thomas. Sapir was the first head of the Division of Anthropology, Geological Survey, Canada Department of Mines, the institutional ancestor of the Canadian Museum of Civilization.

The collection of these texts was begun before World War I by Sapir who made two field trips to Port Alberni in 1910 and 1913-14. During fieldwork Frank Williams was the main interpreter and native collaborator, as is duly recognized in the authorship of this volume. Alex Thomas became the principal collaborator only toward the end of Sapir's visits. He was the grandson of the leading informant, Chief Tom Sa:ya:ch'apis. Most of *Tales of Extraordinary Experience* are Ts'isha:ʔath accounts by Sa:ya:ch'apis and others, though just texts nos. 116, 122 and 124 centre on them as subject. A lesser, though still important, tribal source for the collection are the Yo:loʔilʔath or "Ucluelet", thanks particularly to Chief Kwishanishim who furnished much of the already published vivid accounts of the fierce wars around Barkley Sound (Sapir and Swadesh 1955:356-443). In the present part which is not concerned with war, text 118 is about a Yo:loʔilʔath. Another group near the latter, the Tlaʔo:kwiʔath or "Clayoquot" feature in text 117 about a shaman doctor. Groups to the east featured in this part include the Ho:ʔi:ʔath or "Ohiaht" of east Barkley Sound in texts 113 and 114, and the Di:ti:dʔa:ʔtx or "Ditidaht" or "Nitinat" of text 123. Still others around Alberni Inlet who figure in the volume are and the Ho:choqtlisʔath or "Uchuklesah" around the inlet entrance of texts 115, 119 and 120, and the Ho:pach'asʔath or "Opetchesah" who provide text 125. These exotic sounding First Nations are but part of the many to be acknowledged as the ultimate sources of the texts.

The patient support of National Historic Sites over many years in the preparation of the last third of the Sapir-Thomas corpus is to be most gratefully acknowledged. The two other institutions to be cited especially are the Canadian Museum of Civilization and the American Philosophical Society Library so ready to help with copies of the original documents in their safekeeping. On the native side to be thanked in particular is John Thomas who translated most of what has long been known as the "Third Volume" of the "Nootka Texts" (nos. 85-147) in academic circles. Knowing all three West Coast languages, he was a godsend. Not long after completing his vital task he suddenly passed away, underlining the last minute nature of this undertaking. Alex Thomas must also be singled out, he who wrote down the majority of the texts with interlinear

glosses. His lively encouragement sustained the work through times of difficulty and doubt. Then there are the renowned linguists, Edward Sapir and Morris Swadesh, who brought out the first two volumes so masterfully, and for the third can alphabetically be nicely listed at the start of the authorship to aid library referencing. Lastly, let us remember with warmth the storytellers themselves for passing on these now rare accounts before they disappeared in the mists of time.