

SEA MONSTERS

Being-of-the-Sea (Gitrahla) (*gyædem-tse'oigyēt*), belonging to 'Nees-'mulrh, a Gispewudwade chief of Gitrahla. This family is related to Tawi-wælp of Kitkata, a southern coast tribe of the Tsimisyans.

Description. The first crest on this pole was the Being-of-the-Sea (*gyædem-tse'oigyēt* or *hagwelaw'q*), a human-like sea monster with the head of a fish; the second was the Grizzly Bear (*medeek*.)

Age. It had fallen down before the informant was born.

(Informant, Oswald Tolmie, an old Gitrahla chief; interpreter, William Beynon, 1939.)

The Snag and the Bear, totem of Clads-ah-Coon in Skidegate, Haida town, at the Columbian Exhibition in Chicago (1893), according to the description published by James Deans (36:90, 91).

The second column, at the middle of a Haida house, is a Haida carving. This house formerly stood in the middle of the Haida village of Skidegate's Town, so called from its chief always taking the title of Skidegate. His house belongs to a man whose name formerly was Chooeah, or raven. After the death of an uncle, his mother's brother, he inherited the uncle's property, and consequently took the uncle's name, which was Clads-ah-Coon. This house was the first house in the village belonging to the Cathlans-coon-hadry (point of the waves people), who came and settled in the town of Illth-cah-getla (hut between streams) called Skidegate's Town, as above mentioned. These people were driven from their home by tidal waves and by ravages of war. When they settled at Skidegat they lived all together by building their houses in a row; their descendants live all together in the same style as today. The figures on the post are: lowest, the bear with man's head downward; second is the spout-fish (lown); on each side of it is the chemouse (*tsem'aus*) of the Simshians, which is a symbolization of a river snag, a floating snag or often a tree. To an Indian sailing down the rapid streams of the Pacific slope these snags are dangerous, and a superstitious dread has painted them as monsters of the worst kind; so, in order to be safe, they adopted them as a crest. The Haida tribes borrowed this crest from the Simshians. The next figure is a head with large eyes. It is shown as holding on with its mouth to the tail of the lown. This is the head of a bear as is shown by the *tan gue* (bear's ears) placed on each side of the head. From this head upward is a large dogfish. It is shown as having a woman on its back. Above the woman's head is another bear's head, with *tan gue*. Above all is the tail of the dog-fish, shown between two little images. The following I consider to be a correct reading of the carvings on this post: First, the bear with a man's head downward; amongst the natives of southern Alaska this symbolized a strange custom. When any one built a house, a slave was killed and his blood sprinkled on the post, his body generally being buried beneath it, the bear on the post being the crest of the man who built the house, and the man being the slave who was killed. I have been unable to find that such a thing as killing a slave for such a purpose was ever done amongst the Haida. In this case I speak knowingly, as I helped to dig up the post, and I found that no slave had ever been buried there. In fact the man who built the house says he killed no slave.

The Snag and the Grizzly, Haida totem pole of Tladjankona, at Skidegate, seen at the Field Museum, Chicago, in 1916. 42 feet tall. Collected by James Deans, No. 17999, about 1893, for the Field Columbian World Exhibition.

The label contained the following information:

It formerly stood in front of a house at Skidegate, owned by a man named Tladjankoña, a chief of the old village of Gahlinskun near Cape Ball. The figures, from above downwards, are as follows: 1. At the top are two watchers (*rhæda-gia'-han*), and between them is the dorsal fin of 2. the Killer-Whale (*s'kana*) eating a drowned man. Its body is furnished with hand-like flippers and with a turned-up tail showing on the head of 3. Tcamaos, a mythical fresh-water drift log, the lower part of which is supposed to be alive and to have the power of swimming against current. In the mouth of the Tcamaos is the tail of a 4. Sea Centipede (*cha'hun starhemai*) which lives under large stones and has supernatural powers. 5. The lowest figure is the Grizzly Bear (*huadji*), eating a boy.

The Snag and the Sea Lion, of the Squahladas (Haidas), described by J. R. Swanton (97:131. Plate VIII, Fig. 3).

Plate VIII, Figure 3, illustrates a pole which was used for several members of the Squahladas family in succession. Both of the principal designs represent the tca'maos, or "tide-walker," which was supposed to have the power of taking on several different forms. Above he is represented as a sea lion "with blow hole and dorsal fin." Below he is in the shape of a black whale. Instead of representing a dance-hat, the banded shaft between the two is in this case the piece of driftwood or the "tide-walker".

The Weegyot Pole of Skidegate, now at the American Museum of Natural History, N.Y., described by J. R. Swanton (97:131, Figure 11).

The original of the memorial column shown in Fig. 11 was one of those obtained by Dr. Newcombe for the American Museum of Natural History. It was owned by a Skidegate man named Moses McKay, whose family, the Seaward Squahladas, was Raven. Below is represented Tsamaos, the personified snag referred to elsewhere. It is said that if this creature became angry, it would upset canoes by falling upon them or by raising a huge wave. It has no difficulty in ascending rivers against the greatest obstacles, even passing under log-jams if necessary. The special name of this being is Weegyot, which would identify it as a form of the "trickster" Raven. The upper figures on this pole represent persons who have been drowned by tca'maos and changed into killer-whales. When represented in their supernatural capacity, the dorsal fins of Killer-Whales were often perforated, as in the present instance.

The Water-Stick, Haida house post from Tanu on the Queen Charlotte Islands, seen at the Field Museum of Chicago (in 1915). It had been collected by Dr. C. F. Newcombe in 1903 (No. 87838). Its label contained the following information: "representing the Tsamaos or Water-Stick, a personified snag, the Haida stories of which were derived from the Tsimshian." It "is a crest of the Raven clan to which [the owner's] wife belonged."

Tcamaos. Haida totem pole from Xaina at Skidegate, Queen Charlotte Islands, seen at the Field Museum, Chicago, in 1916. 48 feet high. Collected by Dr. C. F. Newcombe, in 1902. (No. 79721.)

The label contained the following information:

"This is the upper part of the Tcamaos, a mythical Tsimshian water monster, the round upper portion of which floats above the water while the lower, with the head, is submerged."

The Sea-Grizzly. Haida totem pole from Xaina, Queen Charlotte Islands, seen at the Field Museum, Chicago, in 1916. In the Ayer Collection (No. 19339). The label referred to the: "3. The Sea Grizzly Bear (*cha'-hun-Huadji*)."

The Naden Crabs (Naden Harbour). At the head of Naden Harbour there is a small island called Chief Rock. Chief Rock had many servants. One of these servants was a big crab; so big and powerful was he that no living creature could hope to survive after a meeting with him.

Whenever a totem pole is erected by anyone he must also give a big potlatch, or people will class his children as slaves. One day Chief Rock planned to erect a totem pole and give a big potlatch at the same time. He invited many friends, and among them were the Whale-Killers from Rose-Spit. As the Whale-Killers entered Naden Harbour, they saw a pillar of smoke rising from Chief Rock's place. One of the servants overheard a Whale-Killer make a funny remark about the smoke, and at once notified his master of it. Chief Rock became angry and ordered his servants to punish these impudent Whale-Killers. As soon as the order was given the big crab went into action. He at once blocked the entrance to Naden Harbour, which was near his living quarters. Seeing that they were trapped, the Whale-Killers tried to get past the crab by brute force. In a short time half of their number was killed, and only those who wriggled their way over dry land escaped.

Stories of the crab's invincibility had reached as far as Dawson Harbour near the west mouth of the Skidegate Channel, where people of the Eagle clan had made their homes. These people moved to more suitable hunting grounds, but left behind one of their sisters and grandson.

Stranded at the old village with his grandmother, this young boy had nothing to do but play on the beaches day after day. One day he saw an eagle flying towards him, and as the eagle had something, he waited to see what it was. The eagle dropped a medium-sized halibut which it got near the rock at the mouth of Dawson Harbour. The boy, delighted at being given a halibut by an eagle, picked it up and brought it to his grandmother. She was overjoyed at seeing food once again, and picked up a knife to cut off the tail. But the trees, rocks, and the waters protested so much that she tried to cut the head off instead. Again the trees, rocks, and waters protested. So she began to skin it carefully. This time there was no protest. She skinned the whole halibut with the head and tail on, and hung it up to dry.

When the skin was dry the boy had an urge to put it on and play in the water. He went right into the water with it and, helped by some strange power, swam swiftly around the world.

When he finally came back to the Rock at Dawson Harbour this Rock spoke to him, saying, "You are now fast and powerful. Go and conquer the invincible crab at Naden Harbour".

The boy in the halibut skin started off around the west coast and reached Naden in a short time. He saw the crab at the entrance, and sneaked along the ocean floor. In this way the crab was unable to see him. The crab was unaware of him until he started to chew at him from behind. By this time the crab could not do anything about it, and the huge and powerful crab was a pushover for the little halibut.

After having chewed up the huge crab, the halibut spit the pieces into Naden Harbour, saying, "May these pieces turn into small crabs, and be a means of livelihood to the people in the future."

The Si-sa-kau-las of Kingcome Inlet, now in Stanley Park Vancouver, described by the Rev. G. H. Raley (118:18, 19).

This pole commemorates the Legend of See-wid. See-wid was a young chief living at Kingcome Inlet. He was weak physically and lacked the qualities required for leadership, so at an opportune moment, one of his tribesmen assumed the position of leader and arrogated to himself authority, which, by inheritance, rightly belonged to See-Wid. Humiliated by his failure, See-wid lived a secluded life. One day, strolling along the beach, thinking of his misfortune, he heard an unusual sound and noticed ripples disturbing the surface of the sea. He said to himself, "Even the water is laughing at me." Drawing nearer, he heard a voice call him by name, "See-wid, would you like to come with me?" Neither caring where he went, nor what happened to him, he willingly followed the voice into the centre of the ripples, which by this time took the form of a whirlpool. He was drawn down, down and down, till his feet touched something hard, and he found himself on the flat roof of a house built upon the floor of the ocean. The sea-chief who lived there, hearing a noise as of something falling on the roof, went out and found See-wid. The chief invited him into his house and adopted him into his family. The inhabitants of the town became See-wid's friends and taught him how to acquire strength and wisdom and how to use them.

After a lapse of years, this voluntary exile began to pall on him, and he became possessed of a great longing to visit his own people. When he could no longer hide the fact that homesickness was breaking his heart, the sea-chief gave him permission to return home.

Before he departed, the sea-spirit gave him three totems, whose magic power were for protection on his journey and afterwards to be crests for the use of his people. During the journey home he had many a thrilling adventure, and at his destination was received as one from the dead. Many seals were eaten in honor of his safe return. See-wid presented the gifts of the great sea-spirit to be used by his tribe as crests, and that is the reason the whale, sea-otter, and sea-bear are symbols on the totem pole.

This particular pole, before it was obtained by the Arts and Historical Society of Vancouver, for Stanley Park, was owned by Si-sa-kau-las, formerly of Kingcome Inlet, an aged and worthy chief who inherited the right to use the pole from his ancestor See-wid the hero of the legend.

The Crab Myth in Siberia, according to Waldemar Jochelson (116:20).

According to a third tradition, related to me by an Opuka Koryak, Miti was the daughter of the sea. This name designates a large sea-crab found in the Pacific Ocean. From what follows, it might seem that it is the spider-crab. Miti remained on the shore after high water. Big-Raven found her and took her for his wife.