

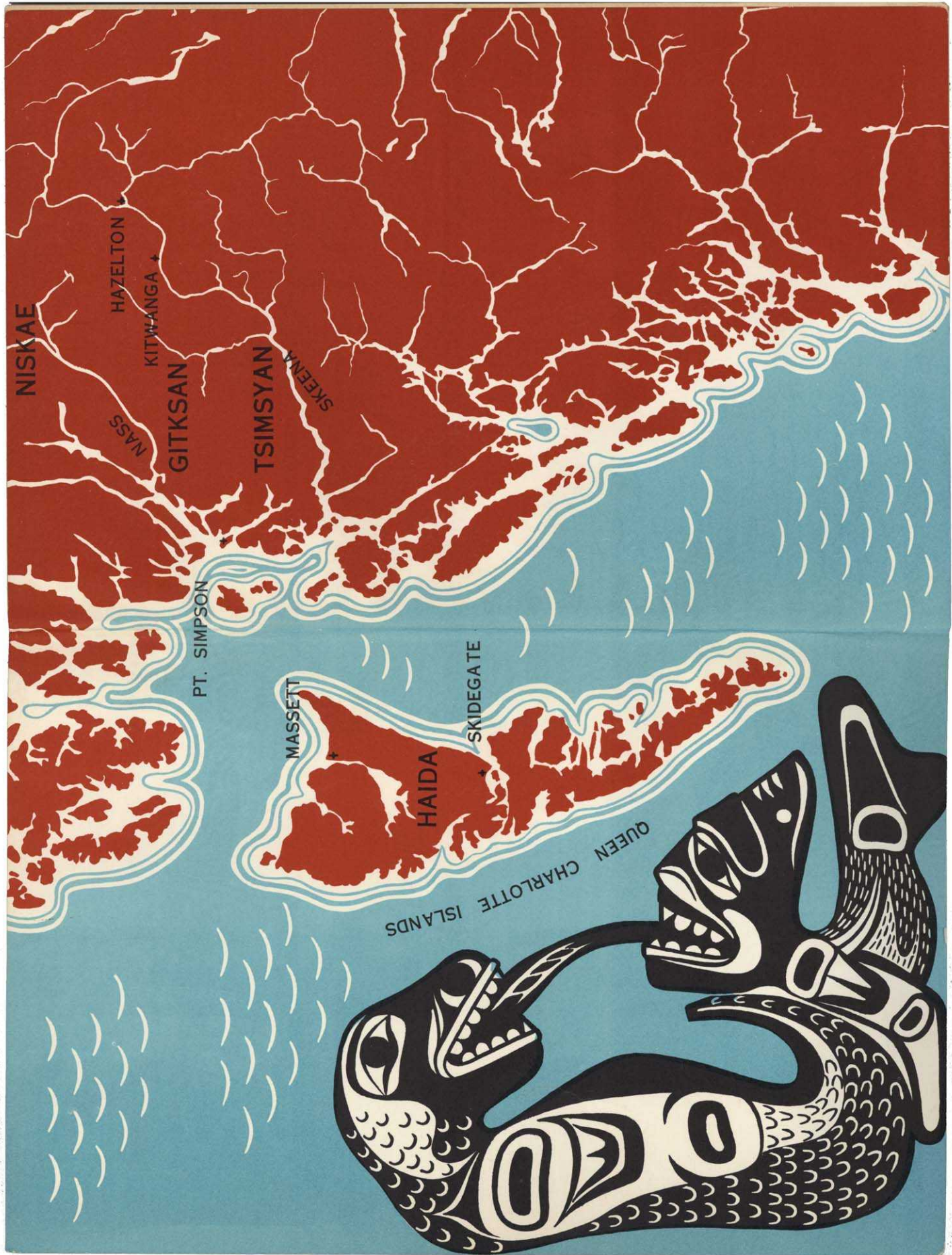
Tsimtsyan Myths

ILLUSTRATED



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MARIUS BARBEAU



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PREFACE

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the foremost carvers of the Haida, the Tsimshyan, and the Tlingit chose to illustrate their native mythology and folk tales. The Haida specialized in argillite, as is shown in *Haida Myths*, published in this series of monographs on North Pacific Coast art and mythology. And the Tsimshyan have been the main contributors of traditional narratives in so far as they were recorded from 1880 to the present. The Haida borrowed from them heavily in their need of materials for illustrations in totems and argillite.

William Beynon of Port Simpson, the author's native assistant since 1915, continued his work of recording until his death in 1960. He has taken down the fourteen versions of the present collection since the completion of *Haida Myths*. The sources of inherited knowledge have not yet dried up, at least not among the three sub-nations of the Tsimshyan, whose comparative isolation has sheltered their integrity for a longer period than it has their neighbours', the Tlingits' and the Haidas'. But inherited culture among them is bound to run out with the passing of the present-day elders. The younger generation has definitely turned its back upon the past.

The illustrations of these Tsimshyan myths and tales are all from the hands of Haida carvers in argillite except for a few Tlingit wood carvings. And most of them have been discovered recently by the author at the British Museum and elsewhere in Europe, or have been received from correspondents in the past two or three years. They are the product of outstanding Skidegate and Massett sculptors, from 1860 to 1900 or so, whose names were SKAOSKAY (David Shakespeare), WILLIAM DIXON, THOMAS COLLISON, THOMAS MOODY, and CHARLIE EDENSAW. Their work is also represented in *Haida Myths* and in *Haida Carvers in Argillite*.

Many of the illustrations, because of editorial economy, could not be reproduced here, although they are described in the text. Should anyone inquire about these omissions, the office of the Director, National Museum of Canada, at Ottawa, would endeavour to meet the demand from the files at hand and from further accessions as they keep coming from readers of illustrated monographs already in circulation.

TSIMSYAN MYTHS



The spirit-canoe folk in the visions of medicine-men (Drawing by Arthur Price).

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Illustrated

By

Marius Barbeau

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