

**PART II**  
**DESCRIPTION OF HAIDA**  
**ILLUSTRATIONS**

## THE MOUNTAIN GOAT OF STEKYAWDEN

The first illustration is on the theme of the *Mountain Goat of Stekyawden* which did not appear in the earlier volume, *Haida Myths*, as illustrations at that time were lacking. But three examples have since been discovered.

In the first example, a miniature totem at the American Museum of Natural History, New York, the Mountain Goat with two short curved horns stands at the top. A man sits below the Goat in the middle of the long slender shaft. A pair of wings replaces the body of the Goat, perhaps because it is known as a nimble runner on the mountainsides. The man under him, his protégé, is shown wearing long trousers like a white man's; yet he is barefooted, like an Indian. And the Beaver with his poplar stick in his forepaws sits at the base (Photo by A.M.N.H. 22713, Spec. 161/2331. No. 1).

In the second totem, at the Detroit Institute of Arts, a man with a conical hat on his head sits at the top over the Mountain Goat, whose short horns are bent sideways and backwards. The cloven hoofs of the Goat, sitting erect, are in full sight, as if they were displayed to leave no doubt as to its identity. The Raven and the Beaver below are other crests of the Skedans carver, Thomas Moody, whose work this fine column undoubtedly is. (28" x 3¼" x 3½". Without a base; concave back. Photo by M. B. 2144 in 1950.)<sup>1</sup>

The Skedans tribesmen, south of Skidegate, facing the mainland eastwards, have always acted as middlemen between the Haida and the Tsimshyan of the Skeena River and the coastal area to the south; Tseebasæ was the head chief of the Tsimshyan on midway Gitrhahla Island; and Klue, the head chief of the Skedans Haida. It is through this cultural channel that crests and stories have travelled westward into the islands. Among these crests are the Snag (*Tsemaus*), the Grizzly-Bear-of-the-Sea (*Wasco*), Nanasemgyet or Gunarhnesemgyet, the native Orpheus, and the Mountain Goat (*Matih*) of Stekyawden.

The myth explaining the crest of the Mountain Goat is, in mere outline, the following (Cf. the author's *Totem Poles of the Gitksan*, pp. 80, 81):

The people had become sinful. They no longer observed the rule of the Sky according to which animals must be an object of respect. They recklessly slaughtered herds of mountain goats on Stekyawden (now Rocher Déboulé, near Hazelton) and made fun of a young goat, which they had taken home alive as a trophy. A young man adopted the goat as a pet and saved it from abuse. The offenders were invited by Goats in human guise to a feast at the mountain lodge. There they perished by falling down the crags at night, all of them save the young man who was led down the peaks to safety by his grateful pet. His family adopted as a crest the Mountain Goat with a single horn on its forehead. This crest is still used by several families of the Sky clan, both among the Gitksan and abroad, who retained it after they had left Temlarham, in the course of their migrations down the Nass to the adjacent sea-coast.

<sup>1</sup>Photo in *Haida Myths*, p. 395.



21A. Smoking pipe of wood showing Bear Mother.



21B. Another view of No. 21A.

Another representation of the Mountain Goat occurs in a bird rattle, at the British Museum, London. On one side, its horn is recognizable. The Goat theme here is coupled with the Frog, with the man torturing a slave by twisting her long hair, and with the Crane (Photo by M.B. 72-5 in 1953. Not shown.)

### CARRIED AWAY, LIKE GANYMEDE, BY THE EAGLE<sup>1</sup>

The Ganymede or Roc tale of the *Arabian Nights* has spread from Asia to prehistoric America. Not so long ago it passed from the Tsimshyan of the mainland to the Haida of Queen Charlotte Islands, and it has recently cropped up again in two splendid Haida illustrations at the British Museum, London.

First, in a round plate of argillite: Inside are two compass rose designs surrounded by long leaves; the head of a bird in high relief exceeds the rim. The underside is more significantly treated. On both sides of the circular-beaded base, the Ganymede Eagle is in flight, and the man he carries on his back flies through the air. The feathers of the Eagle are drawn in relief, some of them almost like rose petals; others at the tip of the wings are elongated; two large eyes cover the wing bones of the bird. The two hands of the man reach within the ring. They give emphasis to his grip on the Eagle. The man's face denotes anxiety or fright (8" across. Br. Mus. 7685/17. No. 2).

The Ganymede theme is once more utilized at the end of an old dagger knife handle at the British Museum. The blade of this was made out of a steel file. Here the stone carving consists of the Eagle, whose eyes are of abalone insets; the wings are drawn close to the body, and the beak is partly open. The man, his protégé, lies on the bird, face upwards; the heads of both bird and man adjoin. The man draws his shanks back with his hands. Although only miniature in size, this is a splendid, forceful piece of work (14" for the full handle and ornament. 1933/3-15/37. Photo by M.B. 76-4, 1953. No. 3).

### THE BULBOUS DRAGON

The design was familiar among the carvers and engravers of the North Pacific Coast as far as Bering Strait.<sup>2</sup> It has cropped up once more in a painted outline with three balls or bulges in the long body within a small wooden dish, at the British Museum. The locality is not recorded, and it may have come from Bering Sea (6" in length x 2". In the Earl of Lonsdale collection, 1890. Photo by M.B. 84-1, 1953. No. 4).

<sup>1</sup>See *Haida Myths*, pp. 369-371.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.: "Tlenamaw or the Dragon," pp. 231-254; more precisely, pp. 246-248.