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## TRADITIONS OF THE LILLOOET INDIANS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

BY JAMES TEIT

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[THE following collection of traditions was made by Mr. James Teit during his researches on the ethnology of British Columbia. After Mr. Teit had closed his work for the Jesup North Pacific Expedition of the American Museum of Natural History and some other incidental work, Mr. Homer E. Sargent of Chicago became interested in Mr. Teit's valuable investigations, which he has liberally supported during the last six years. The present paper is one of the results of the researches thus conducted.

The comparative notes which will be found in the paper have been added by the editor. Only the material relating directly to Salish mythology has been included in these. A fuller discussion does not seem advisable until all the collected material relating to the folk-lore of the Northwestern plateaus and of the North Pacific coast has been published.

The principal interest of the Lillooet folk-lore, aside from the psychological character of the traditions, is found in the light which it throws upon the process of dissemination of tales. While the folk tales and myths of the Thompson Indians, who with the Lillooet belong to the inland branches of the Salish family, are not very deeply affected by the traditions of the coast Indians, and while they rather belong to the group of tales and myths characteristic of the Northwestern plateaus, the Lillooet tales show a strong infusion of coast elements. The same is true of the traditions of the Lower Thompson Indians, who inhabit that part of the Fraser River Canyon adjoining the Fraser River Delta. The collections made among the coast tribes by myself, and later on by Mr. Charles Hill-Tout, show clearly the close relationship between the myths and tales of all the tribes living around the Gulf of Georgia and those of other coast tribes. The Lillooet and the Lower Thompson Indians have adopted from these tribes the whole group of ancestor legends, which are entirely absent in the interior, and which are characteristic of the social organization of the coast tribes that have village communities claiming descent from a single ancestor; while in the interior no such subdivision of the tribes exists. The incidents belonging to the coast folk-lore have been pointed out in the comparative notes accompanying Mr. Teit's collection of traditions. It is interesting to follow the gradual dissemination of the transformer myths, telling of a group of several culture-heroes who travel through the country together, freeing the land of monsters, and giving man his arts. In the interior their place is taken by the Coyote; but, as has been pointed out before both by Mr. Teit and by myself, the idea of the group of transformers has penetrated far into the interior. Everywhere, however, the opinion is clearly expressed that in reality these transformers belong to the coast, and that their deeds east of the Fraser River Canyon were a trespass on the territory which belonged properly to

Coyote and to Old-One. Several of the Thompson River traditions end with the statement that at the request of Coyote, the coast transformers retired to the coast, and left the country to him to be put into proper shape.

In regard to these points the report of a conversation between Mr. Teit and a Lillooet over eighty years old will be of interest. Mr. Teit describes this conversation as follows:—

"My informant said that in the beginning the inhabitants of the world had animal characteristics. It is doubtful whether at that time real animals and real people existed as we know them to-day. The world was very sparsely settled. A number of transformers gave the world its present shape, and transformed the beings of the mythical period into real people and real animals. These transformers travelled all over the world for this purpose. None of them was born in the Lillooet country. They were strangers, most of whom came from the coast region. Among these was the mink. There is no story which accounts for the origin of the Lillooet tribe as a whole, although sometimes it is claimed that the Lillooet are descendants of the Black-Bear-Woman's children.<sup>1</sup> It is said that Black-Bear and Grizzly-Bear lived with their husband on the east side of Fraser River, north of Lytton, probably in Botani Valley. After the young Black-Bears had killed the young Grizzly-Bears, they escaped, and crossed Fraser River somewhere between Lytton and Lillooet, and took refuge in the Lillooet country near Pemberton. They became the ancestors of people speaking the Lillooet language, and their descendants spread up and down the rivers from this point, intermarrying with the mythical inhabitants; that is, the semi-animal people of the Lillooet country. Others say that the young Black-Bears became the Transformer brothers, the Qoa'qtqwet<sup>2</sup> (= "smiling") of the Thompson Indians, and that later on they visited the Thompson country, ascending the Fraser River from the Delta upward.

"Every band of the Lillooet originated from the union of a man with one of the semi-animal inhabitants of the country, perhaps from animals. Most of the traditions inform us that a Lillooet man went off and married one or more animal people whom he found inhabiting a certain part of the country; and the band that now inhabits this spot claims descent from these ancestors. Thus the Anderson Lake people are descendants of two Grizzly-Bear sisters. Most of the members of the Pemberton band are descendants of two men who lived at the places known as Tezi'l and Leqts, where one married a bear, the other a giant. The original inhabitants of Port Douglas are descendants of a Lillooet man who married a seal woman, who bore him a son and a

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 322 and 350.

<sup>2</sup> From .s-qwo'itl ("to smile").