

## ON THE CULTURAL TRACK OF THE SASQUATCH

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### Abstract

The Lower Fraser term *sésq̓əc*, which has been anglicized "sasquatch," is only one of a number of Coast Salish terms for beings said to have attributes more or less like those given to sasquatches in current non-Indian accounts. Do these native terms refer to beings of a single kind or of several kinds? Are the beings the terms refer to real or imaginary? To answer these questions, this paper brings together a number of native accounts and descriptions of native beliefs about sasquatch-like beings, offers a classification of such beings, and explores reasons why the Coast Salish may have held such beliefs.

John Green (1968:67-68) has criticized anthropologists for our treatment of Indian accounts of the sasquatch. He suggests that we have failed to recognize that our Indian informants have been talking about real animals because we are predisposed by our professional interests to treat "the Sasquatch by any of its various names" as a mythical being. He also implies, I think, that we must have more data than we have published and he expresses the wish that someone assemble and analyze these data.

Roderick Sprague (1970) evidently suspects Green's criticism is justified and has called for more data and more discussion. I agree that we have neglected the subject and I gladly join Bruce Rigsby (1971) in answering the call. I hope that these notes will contribute to the general compendium and analysis that Green and Sprague have asked for.

I will present here data that I have collected among the Coast Salish of southwestern British Columbia and northwestern Washington together with what I have found in the published works available to me from the larger Coast Salish area. But I should begin with my basic assumptions:

1) I am still unconvinced that there is a real animal there. I must admit that I will be delighted if it turns out that there is, but for that very reason I must be critical in looking at what is said to be evidence. I do not think, however, that scientific objectivity is served by ignoring the question. So if there is evidence in the native traditions and beliefs, I hope to try to see it.

2) I do not think we can assume from the outset that there is a single image for which "sasquatch" is only one of many names, unless we assume beforehand that the terms do in fact refer to a real animal of wide distribution. If

the terms "sasquatch," etc. refer only to imaginary beings then there may be as many images as there are names or even human imaginations. So let us start looking at what attributes have been associated with these various names and see to what extent they may refer to the same being.

3) I do not think we can assume that Indian categories are the same as Western ones. In fact, I see no evidence of a dichotomy of "real" vs. "mythical" or "natural" vs. "supernatural" in Coast Salish thought. There is a dichotomy "myth age" vs. "present age," but the beings seen then were "real" and those seen today are "real" to the Coast Salish. There is also a dichotomy "vision experience" vs. "ordinary experience," but the beings seen in both are equally "real." So I do not think that informants' statements on this matter are relevant to our enquiry.

I will develop this last point shortly and then go on to the variety of names for sasquatch-like beings and the attributes ascribed to them. Finally, I will consider the question of what these names may refer to. But first let me begin with the now-famous name "Sasquatch" itself.

The word "sasquatch" is an anglicization of the word  $s\acute{e}sq\acute{e}c$ , which occurs in the mainland dialects of the Halkomelem language. This language, a member of the Salish language family, is spoken in southwestern British Columbia in the Lower Fraser Valley from Yale to the mouth of the Fraser and on southeastern Vancouver Island from Nanoose Bay to Malahat. The word occurs in all of the mainland dialects I have data for but not in the island dialects. Phonetically, the Halkomelem /s/ is quite close to the English /s/; the Halkomelem /ε/ varies between the English /ae/ of "bat" and /e/ of "bet;" the Halkomelem /q/ is a glottalized uvular stop closest to English /k/ but produced farther back toward the throat and with the explosive quality of the glottalized sounds of Northwestern languages; the Halkomelem /ə/ is like the English unstressed /ə/ in "aside;" and the Halkomelem /c/ varies from the /ts/ of "gets" to the /č/ of "church." It seems to me that the Halkomelem  $s\acute{e}sq\acute{e}c$  should have produced an English \*/sáeskəts/ or \*/sáeskəč/ rather than the existing /sáeskwač/; possibly the current spelling is based on a misinterpretation of an anthropologist's or linguist's phonetic transcription rather than a direct perception of the Halkomelem word. Morphologically, the term  $s\acute{e}sq\acute{e}c$  cannot be analyzed in Halkomelem; I have suggested to my Musqueam teacher James Point a possible connection with  $s\acute{e}q$ , 'get split, get torn,' but he doubts the possibility. The term refers, of course, to a great, hairy, man-like creature said to live in the mountains.

The term may have been introduced into English as "sasquatch" in the 1920's. John Green (1968:1) identifies the source as J. W. Burns, "who was for many years a teacher at the Chehalis Indian Reserve, on the Harrison River near Harrison Hot Springs." Burns wrote articles in the 1920's and 1930's that "achieved wide circulation in newspapers and magazines in the United States and Canada." Burns introduced the "Sasquatch" to the public but at the same time, by quoting Indian stories with supernatural elements, stigmatized it as an "Indian legend." This was unfortunate, Green believes, because scientists in particular are inclined to dismiss the subjects of Indian legends as purely imaginary.

It is certainly true that we anthropologists have generally dumped sasquatch-like beings into a category "supernaturals" and let it go at that. We

may have done this because we are professionally interested more in native culture than in the facts of zoology, but I think it is more because we are operating with too simple a version of the Western dichotomy. In fact, if we were true to our earlier, Boasian objective of describing the native culture as seen by the participants, we ought not to categorize so freely the creatures our informants tell us about.

Let me explore this problem. The *sésq̄əc* is one of many creatures the Lower Fraser people believe (or used to believe) exist (or once existed) in the wilderness around them. Most of these creatures can, from Indians' descriptions of them, be matched with animals known to Europeans. A few, however, cannot. Since we Europeans, scientifically trained or not, operate with a dichotomy real/mythical or natural/supernatural, we are inclined to place these creatures that are not part of our "real" world into our category "mythical" or "supernatural." As Green has pointed out, most of us have done this with the *sésq̄əc* and we may be wrong.

But I believe we would also be wrong to imagine that the Indians have (or had) the same dichotomy and that they would simply draw the line differently, putting the sasquatch in the category "real animals" and leaving other, to our minds more fanciful, creatures in the category "mythical animals" or "supernatural beings." In fact, I see little evidence for any such native dichotomy at all.

Once years ago I was eliciting ethnozoological information from an aged Lummi friend, Julius Charles. I had gone through Dalquest's *Mammals of Washington* asking about everything from shrews to elk and when I had finished Julius said something like: 'There's another animal you haven't got there. They used to be around here but they've become pretty scarce and the white people have never caught one and put it in a zoo. It had a big body in the middle and two heads, one at each side. It lived in swamps where it swam about. But it could turn into a couple of mallards and fly away. It had three kinds of noises -- one was like the laugh of a loon, one like the hoot of a hound, and one like the hissing of a mallard drake. It was a great thing to get so you'd become an Indian doctor.'

This "animal" was called a *sʷínəṭqəy*. Such fierce and powerful things that were seen by men "training" to become "doctors" (in anthropological jargon "questing for shamanistic visions") were *sʷéləqəm*. Grizzly bears and killer whales were also good *sʷéləqəm* to get a doctor's power from. But any "animal" might be referred to as a *sʷéləqəm*.<sup>1</sup>

Evidently to Julius the Two-headed Serpent *sʷínəṭqəy* was just as much a "real animal" as the rest of those on my list. It belonged to a class *sʷéləqəm* that included most or all of my animals. For Julius, as for other Coast Salish I have worked with since, a distinction between "real" and "mythical" or "natural" and "supernatural" beings just is not there. Thus a description of Coast Salish culture that is truly "emic" -- that is, organized by native categories -- should describe whales and bears, sasquatches and two-headed serpents all under the same heading as part of the "real" world of the Coast Salish.

But this is not to say that they ought to have the same kind of reality for the Western scientist, who surely ought to go on seeking evidence and doubting what evidence does not support. But rather than trying to sort out

the beings Indians talk about into the "real" and the "mythical," it might be better to apply our dichotomy to the attributes that Indians ascribe to these beings.

For example, the creature called sqə́lɛ́w, translated by our informants as 'beaver,' is said to fell trees and build dams. Although on the face of it this seems to be an unlikely thing for an oversized rodent to do, we can see evidence for it and are inclined to believe it. Old Coquitlam William was said to have once sneaked up on a beaver colony at work and discovered that as beavers fell trees to build dams they whistle signals and shout instructions at each other like human loggers and teamsters. Without corroboration some of us may doubt this, but since some kind of signal that a tree is falling should have survival value for the beaver, perhaps we should suspend judgment. Old Pierre, the Katzie shaman, told Jenness (1955:51) that beavers and muskrats will respond to an incantation and change cold, icy weather to rain. Most of us would doubt this and give the label "supernatural" to the relationship Old Pierre asserted exists between beavers and the weather. But we would have to admit that we have not tested the relationship; we doubt it because it is contrary to empirical evidence about causes of changes in the weather and because of a more general proposition that incantations only work on people who believe in them, a proposition that is also untested. (Old William might have argued that since beavers talk they should respond to incantations. Unfortunately, it is likely that no one today knows the incantation and so we cannot know what responses beavers may once have made to it.)

As a second example, the creature called šxʷəxʷáʷas, translated as 'thunder,' is described as a huge bird that lives on high peaks, makes a great noise with its wings, and either hunts the scínkʷaʷ, a snake-like creature identified with lightning, or uses the scínkʷaʷ as a weapon in hunting whales. Since Ben Franklin's kite experiment, we Europeans have had an explanation of thunder and lightning that does not require birds and snakes (though most of us might find it harder to explain to an older Coast Salish how electricity does it) and so we are likely to doubt the existence of these creatures. Recently, however, it has been suggested (Holmes 1971; Ott 1971) that the thunderbird had a "real" basis in the California condor, a huge bird that once lived as far north as the Lower Fraser, nested on high crags, made a great noise with its wings, and fed on stranded sea mammals. So perhaps we will be left, as with the beaver, doubting only the supposed relationship between the animal and meteorological phenomena.

As a third example, the creature Julius Charles called sʷínəɪqəy seems wholly constructed of attributes we are inclined to doubt. Yet two-headed snakes do exist, as occasional viable mutants. So even this "animal" in the native bestiary may have some basis in our real world. I am not arguing, however, that all of the beings the Coast Salish talk about must have some basis in our reality. My point is simply that we cannot easily sort these beings out into "real" and "imaginary" and that the Coast Salish do not try to. But let me get back to the track of the sasquatch.

Or are there several sasquatches? In the beliefs of the Coast Salish in the area where I have worked, the sésqəc is not the only being that seems not really human and yet has a human shape and other human attributes. Speakers of the island dialects of Halkomelem and of Straits tell about the záməkʷəs or cáməkʷəs, which may or may not be identical with the mainland Halkomelem

sésq̄ac. For some there are also ciétk<sup>w</sup> and stítəɪ or stéyʔtəɪ, which may sound like the sésq̄ac or simply like feral men. Then there are wild women or ogresses who catch children and eat them. These are known especially from a Hansel-and-Gretel-like story where the ogress is outwitted and roasted in her own fire pit. The story is usually given a specific locale, but most people know more than one such story and assume that these refer to different ogresses and give evidence that formerly there were several or perhaps a whole population. There are also forest beings who knock down trees. And there are sea beings, also known especially from localized stories, who have taken human wives, as some say an occasional sésq̄ac has done. Finally, beings that usually have animal forms may appear in human form in the vision experience. If there is a real non-human primate here, his cultural track is obscured by a variety of semi-human footprints.

In the following pages I will present what I have discovered of Coast Salish beliefs that might refer to a real non-human primate, proceeding area by area on a linguistic basis.

*Mainland Halkomelem: Upper Stalo*

The Halkomelem-speaking people of the Lower Fraser Valley sometime call themselves collectively Stalo(stáʔləw̄, 'river') people. Wilson Duff (1952) used the term "Upper Stalo" for the people from Chilliwack upstream, with whom he worked in 1949 and 1950. He gives (1952:118-119) informants' descriptions and accounts of two man-like creatures, the sasquatch (Duff recorded the native term as sésx̄ač) and the cannibal woman (óuxia).

"Sasquatches," Duff reports, "are usually seen singly. They are described as men, covered with dark fur, more than 8 feet tall, who leave footprints about 20 inches long." Duff gives two older accounts of experiences with them and two more recent accounts with a generalized version of them. In the first, a "typical" older account (given by Adeline Lorenzetto of Ohamil), the sasquatches caused a person they touched to become unconscious; they stole women whom they kept as wives, had half-human children, and stole food from people for the women and their children. They had a language, which the women learned. When a woman escaped and re-entered human society, she became unconscious again "because she had been with the sasquatches and wasn't like a person any more." She had forgotten her language and hair was starting to grow all over her body, but Indian doctors worked on her and she became normal again. Many years later the sasquatches returned, but she could no longer communicate with them; however, she asked hunters not to shoot them because they might be her relatives. In the second older account a sasquatch murdered a group of women but left their children unhurt. In the accounts of recent encounters, Duff says, a person usually sees a sasquatch on a moonlit night, runs, is followed, but not overtaken, and escapes. In one account given, a man shoots a sasquatch. In the second, which is a brief version of the famous Ruby Creek incident, the sasquatch breaks into a house to steal dried fish.

The cannibal woman was described as a short, stout woman who caught children, gummed their eyes shut with pitch, carried them off in a basket, and ate them. She lived in a cave above Yale, which was blasted away when the railroad was built and the white people may have captured her at any rate a picture appeared in the paper that looked like her.

*Mainland Halkomelem: Katzie*

In 1936 Diamond Jenness worked with Old Pierre, a famous shaman at Katzie, near Port Hammond, in what in Duff's terms would be Lower Stalo country. In describing the creatures that might be encountered in guardian spirit vision experiences, Old Pierre mentioned two creatures that Jenness identifies as "timber giants." One is the *sésq̓əc*, which anyone, even a white man, might meet but which does him no good since the *sésq̓əc* "was an ordinary creature unable to confer any power." But the other was the *šiyé·y̓ə*, which "always carried a small stick, one stroke of which would topple down a small tree, three strokes the biggest tree in the forest." Old Pierre said that a Katzie man named *słéməx<sup>w</sup>* had obtained *šiyé·y̓ə* as a guardian spirit and could therefore perform great feats of strength (Jenness 1955:61).

It is not clear in what sense the *sésq̓əc* is "an ordinary creature." Other creatures that Old Pierre said might become guardian spirits include a number of mammals, birds, fishes, reptiles, and even insects, as well as inanimate things, all of which are "real" to Europeans, and also a number of beings that are "mythical" to Europeans; these last include beings that have human form but live far away where they are encountered by the wandering "vitality" of the power seeker (Jenness 1955:48-64). Perhaps what made the *sésq̓əc* "ordinary" to Old Pierre was its being human in attributes and nearby. Old Pierre evidently did not mention any cannibal ogress at all in this connection.

In 1952 I worked with Old Pierre's son Simon Pierre. Information I got from Simon differed from what Jenness was told by Old Pierre in several respects. Simon knew four terms for creatures of the sort Jenness identifies as "timber giants": *sésq̓əc*, *šiyé·y̓ə*, *stíʔtaʔaɫ*, and *ŋáməq<sup>w</sup>əs*. But he identified the last two as just being something like the first. He described all four as being able to disappear suddenly. Once up on Pitt Lake an old woman had a sturgeon hanging in front of her house; she saw a *sésq̓əc* wading toward it and so fired a rifle into the water ahead of him-- and he was gone. Simon described the *šiyé·y̓ə* as his father had, as a creature that knocks down trees, and added that it was "the meanest of them all." But in another context he mentioned, contrary to what his father had said, that the Katzie man *słéməx<sup>w</sup>* (a famous outlaw discoverer of a lost gold mine) had obtained power from the *sésq̓əc*. Simon also knew of the cannibal ogress, called *qəlqəlíɫ*. She caught children and took them home in a basket and ate them. There were perhaps only one or two of these, he thought, one of which had been overpowered at Musqueam and drowned in the middle of Georgia Strait. Simon identified the cannibal ogress as a "spirit" (a word few of my informants have ever volunteered); he also said that the *sésq̓əc* can disappear "like a spirit."

*Mainland Halkomelem: Musqueam*

The Musqueam live at the mouth of the North Arm of the Fraser River, in what is now the city of Vancouver. I have been working on the Musqueam dialect of Halkomelem, as I have had the time, since the late 1950's, principally with the late Andrew and Christine Charles and with James Point. The term *sésq̓əc* is well known at Musqueam as the name for a large, hairy, man-like creature that lives in the woods and mountains. My informants identified this word with the *zámək<sup>w</sup>əs* of the Cowichan of Vancouver Island. They also identified the mainland *qəlqəlíɫ* (from *qəl*, 'bad,' possibly 'evil seeker'), the cannibal ogress, with the *čəwx̄éʔləc* of the Cowichan.

James Point (born 1881) dictated a text in 1963 that consists mainly of a version of the story of how the cannibal ogress was roasted in her own pit. But as an introduction he explained that the *sésq̄ec* is the male and the *q̄elq̄elí* the female of the same species. A translation of the introductory part of this text follows:

It must have been long ago when there were still only Indians here and everywhere on up the river too there were only Indians. There were none of those who are called "white people" but only Indian people. According to the old people, walking in the woods, everywhere away from the water, were what are called the *sésq̄ec*. They were big, resembling a person but tall, far taller than the biggest people here. And it is said that their wives were what the people called the *q̄elq̄elí*.

It must have been that (now deceased) *q̄elq̄elí* who was the one who came down to the shore when it became evening and was nearly dark, carrying on her back what was called a *ápét* [identified as an open-work basket] as a container for everything that she was getting in the ground as she was roaming all over the woods. These were all sorts of lizards [the word includes salamanders], frogs [including toads], and snakes, just all sorts of things like that. They were inside the basket that she carried on her back when she was going around doing that. Whenever it had become evening and was nearly dark, she went from one to another of the houses of that time, sort of sneaking after the people, when the Indians had nearly gone to bed. And sometime she would catch a small child who was still outside. She would quickly jump to grab it and put it into the basket that she carried.

In the rest of the text the ogress speaks, dances, and sings possessed, activities that are to some extent required by the plot of the story.

Another Musqueam text, dictated by Andrew Charles in 1960, tells how he and two other men were hunting in the Gulf Islands when they heard noises that they took to be the sounds of the *k̄<sup>w</sup>ak̄<sup>w</sup>eq̄<sup>w</sup>náci·ls*, translated by Christine Charles as "The Little Choppers," felling a big Douglas fir. No description appears in the text. But James Point describes the *k̄<sup>w</sup>ak̄<sup>w</sup>eq̄<sup>w</sup>náci·ls* as follows:

It's supposed to be an animal that has the habit of knocking down dead trees. It has only one leg and something in its hand to strike dead trees with. You could hear it. It's gone out of existence. You don't see them any more.

When I asked him, in another context, about the term Simon Pierre had used for the tree-striker, James Point gave it as *syé·ȳε?* and said it was "some kind of a monkey or something."

#### *Island Halkomelem: Cowichan*

There are two main dialects of Halkomelem on Vancouver Island, Nanaimo and Cowichan. I have no data from the Nanaimo, but for the Cowichan area I have several taped texts as yet untranscribed of accounts of encounters with

the  $\acute{z}ámək^wəs$ , identified by my Musqueam informants as the Cowichan equivalent of their  $sésq̄əc$ , as well as stories of the cannibal ogress. In a Cowichan story known to my Lummi informant Patrick George, the cannibal ogress was originally the daughter of  $syálača$ , the "first man" at Duncan.

*Straits: Lummi*

The Straits language is or was spoken by the Semiahmoo, Lummi, and Samish on the mainland between Boundary Bay and Anacortes, by the Saanich, Songhees, and Sooke on southeastern Vancouver Island, and by the Klallam on the northern shore of the Olympic Peninsula and at a colony on Vancouver Island at Beecher Bay. I did ethnographic work with Straits informants in the late 1940's and early 1950's.

At Lummi I obtained information on sasquatch-like beings from Julius Charles (born c. 1860, spent some of early years at Semiahmoo) and Patrick George (born c. 1875, spent some of early years at Cowichan and some with the Samish on Guemes Island). Both knew the  $\acute{c}ámək^wəs$  (recorded variously), which seems identical with the Cowichan  $\acute{z}ámək^wəs$  and the Fraser  $sésq̄əc$ . I give my field notes almost verbatim:

The  $\acute{c}ámək^wəs$  is a great tall animal or whatever it was that lived in the mountains. It was like a man but shaggy like a bear, like a big monkey 7 feet tall. They went away when the whites came. (The Indians never killed any; it was a pretty wise animal, or whatever you call it.) If you saw one it made you kind of crazy. They throw their power toward you.

Over 40 years ago some fellow across the line went hunting deer early one morning when snow was on the ground. He saw one and followed it to the edge of a lake where it disappeared. He went home and got kind of crazy. His wife put him to sleep by the fire (they were living in a kind of smokehouse) and while she was out getting wood he rolled into the fire and died. (He was a half-breed named Arthur -- lived up toward the Fraser.) [JC]

The  $\acute{c}ámək^wəs$  are big, 7 to 8 feet tall. They whistle only, can't talk. They whistle when you go out in the evening. Once some white people caught one and tried to feed him. They gave him potatoes. He picked them up, looked at them, and threw them away. They gave him meat, and he did the same thing. I guess some make you crazy. They are real  $s\acute{x}éləqəm$ . They grow hair on the body. There are none here any more, but I guess there are some up in the mountains around Chilliwack. If a person could get one for  $x^wneʔm$  I guess it would be pretty tough. (No, I never heard of one with it. I don't know what they eat.) [PG]

Patrick George also distinguished the  $stéyʔtəɬ$ , which look like the  $\acute{c}ámək^wəs$  but are smaller, and the  $\acute{c}iétk^w$ , who were simply "wild Indians." Accounts of encounters with these follow:

The  $stéyʔtəɬ$  are like  $\acute{c}ámək^wəs$ , but are not as big, and can talk. Once we were camped at Warner's Prairie picking hops. We were camped



there about a week and one night we heard "wǎ•• wǎ•• 'ǎ••." When you see them, it makes you crazy. Lots of fish there, and they must have been fishing. People from the hop-fields were fishing and one man went fishing up where the dam is. He went up on horse-back with a hook and got his two saddle-bags full of fish. (He was greedy.) Coming back, he heard these people and whipped his horse to go faster, but the saddle-bags slapped the horse and he couldn't run fast. These people got him, and put him unconscious, ripped the saddle-bags and all off, breaking the bellybands, and the horse came home alone. The people at the hop-yards went up to look for him with horses and buggies and found him and brought him back. An Indian doctor worked on him. At first he couldn't talk at all, he just sat and turned his head from side to side. Later he talked slowly, just a little, and told what had happened. After about a year he got worse and died.

(I went up to Warner's Prairie [on the Samish River] once or twice while I was married at Guemes.) [PG]

David Crow, sk<sup>2</sup>wtá, was a slave. Nobody knew where he came from in the first place. He was raised here and he just spoke Lummi. Once when he was a young man, he was sold from here, south, perhaps to Squally people. He didn't like it there so he ran away. On the way he was caught by číétk<sup>w</sup>. These were wild Indians who had some kind of poison which they could throw at a person and make him crazy. They also had whistles with which they were able to make noises like the calls of various birds. They wore no clothes but had guns. They killed beavers and dried the skins and sold them to the whites. They left broken twigs along the road as a sign that they were out. They carried bags over their shoulders in which they kept their equipment -- the poison, which they threw by hand, and the little whistles made with two pieces of wood tied with cherry bark. They caught Crow and kept him by their campfire, but in the evening he got away and hid a short distance away in a willow tree that hung over the water. They looked for him and all night long he heard the calls of various birds which they made with their whistles. He kept thinking he was going to go out of his mind, but he would put his hand down into the water and after a bit it would revive him. In the morning they were gone. And soon an Indian with a survey party stopped and used their fireplace. Crow came out of his hiding place and spoke with the Indian in Skagit language: the Indian explained to the whites about the číétk<sup>w</sup>, saying that this was the month that they came out, and that you could tell when they were about by the broken twigs along and across the road. They directed Crow to where some other Indians and whites lived. He went there and he was given a canoe and some food and directions as to how to get back to Lummi. [PG]

Both of these informants also knew čəwǰé?ləc, a cannibal ogress who is clearly the same as the Cowichan čəwǰé?ləc and the Fraser qəlqəlǰ. Julius Charles described her as a huge fat woman who stole children, put them in a basket she carried on her back, took them off and roasted and ate them. One place where she "napped kids" was at a stream on Birch Bay. When he told me this, early in my field work, I assumed that it was just a story told to

children to keep them quiet, but both Julius and Mrs. Charles insisted that this had really happened. As proof, they said, there is a place on Vancouver Island where the ogress cooked the children; there were a lot of stones and a big pole she used that lasted many years without rotting so that it was pointed out as a local wonder. The ogress was finally killed, they said, by a number of people from several tribes armed with arrows and spears. It was not clear from this whether there was one ogress or several, but another Lummi I worked with only briefly, Elizabeth Malenberg, told two ogress stories; one accounted for how the ogress was destroyed at Lummi and the second for how she was destroyed at Guemes Island. Patrick George knew a Cowichan story accounting for the origin of the ogress and gave an account of how an ogress was captured.

Once we heard of it, it might be just a story. They were fixing the railroad tracks, slashing [This was the Esquimalt-Nanaimo RR]. There were lots of tents. Every time they came home, and there was no flour and no bacon, so they got more. This happened again. So someone got a rifle and waited by a hollow stump. An old woman came with a big sack on her back. She ate the flour, sometimes 2 or 3 bags, or she shook her back and a bag opened up and she put it in there. They followed her to a cave in the mountains. A blacksmith made a trap and they set it with a sack of flour for bait. It caught her with a sort of handcuff. When she pulled away, 10 men pretty nearly got beat, holding the line. One half-breed there claimed to understand her and said she said, "k<sup>w</sup>és, nəʔinəs" [let me go, grandchild?]. After that they got her locked up in a wire wagon. She bent it trying to get out. Then she started to cry. It rained a heavy rain. They got her down to camp and put her on a train for Victoria. They claim they sent her over to old Queen Mary [Victoria?] but they got tired of it, because it eats too much. After that she got tame. Maybe this is just a story. I heard it at Cowichan when I was growing yet. It was supposed to be čəwʔéləč. It was a little woman but awful strong.

Patrick George also told about a tree-striker:

There is a kind of person you sometimes see in the woods. He is a short and hairy man with a cane. He walks with it and hits trees with it. When he hits a tree it falls over. He is called šəčəčícələ in Lummi.

Once a Matsqui man named sx<sup>w</sup>əčšé·nəm went out to k<sup>w</sup>část [seek a vision] and saw a big tree fall with its top coming toward him. He saw something moving in the thick branches of the top and so he jumped in among them and caught the thing. It put him to sleep right away. When he woke up he was sitting nicely with his head against a log. It became his x<sup>w</sup>néʔm [shaman's guardian spirit].

Finally, Julius Charles and Patrick George each knew a story about a woman who married a man-like sea being and became a sea being herself. One was a Semiahmoo legend set at Point Roberts, the other a Samish legend set at Deception Pass. In the latter the woman gradually acquired the non-human attributes of her husband and so was told by her family not to return.

*Straits: Saanich*

At East Saanich, Louie Pelkey (born ca. 1870) told me about the *žáməkʷəs*, the cannibal woman, and the tree-striker.

The *žáməkʷəs*, he said, were wild Indians who lived on the high mountain behind Malahat. They look like people but they cannot bend their legs; they hop but they can go very fast. They "belong to Malahat." The Saanich used to call the Malahat people *žáməkʷəs* because they were husky and tall; perhaps the Malahat people were partly the descendants of *žáməkʷəs*. On the mountain behind Malahat they threw rocks at strangers. Once when he was hunting deer there rocks came down into camp. There is a hole in the mountain above and that must be where they live.

While the *žáməkʷəs*, in Louie Pelkey's view, may have become human, the ogress was a woman gone wild. He gave the following account of her:

Once a woman was lost up in the bush. She was gone a long time and people thought that she was dead. But pretty soon they saw that woman in the bush. She was small, but normal size, but she had turned into something like an animal. She must have had a place two miles or so away up from here. Pretty soon there were two of them. They came into houses and took things. People here saw them. They would come into the house and you wouldn't think they would be dangerous.

This sort of person is called *čuxélič*. They took dry salmon. Sometimes they made themselves very small and very old. At other times they were big, tall as the ceiling. They watched people fishing and when they saw them come back they came and loaded up their baskets with fish. They also came to the spit for crabs. Sometimes they heard talking and came like ghosts. They had a roasting ground up there but you can't find it.

They must have been killed out. They came from Saanich but they got wild. They ate persons too. They got children and took them up there. They got soft pitch and pitched the children's eyes shut in order to roast them. Once there were ten kids going to be roasted. One bigger boy closed his eyes very tight, I guess it was his help came to his mind to do that. The fire was red hot then. In a few minutes' time they were going to roast those children and eat them. All the other children were small and could not see. The one opened his eyes and the pitch was on his lids so he could see. There he saw *čuxélič* dancing in front of the fire. He saw a stick lying there so he raised it up between her legs and tripped her. Then with the stick he pushed her into the fire. The boy worked at his eyes so that he could see well and went down and told the people to bring up oil, ratfish or dogfish oil, to rub the kids' eyes with. They got the oil, came up, and saw *čuxélič* burned there.

That's how one was killed. There must have been more since one was drowned off D'arcy Island. A young man was out one fine day spearing crabs and flounders, singing as he went along. He saw a

woman walking way up here [south of the spit]. He knew it must be čuxélič. (The beach was clear then, no logs and driftwood.) The woman hollered, "What are you doing?" He kept on singing. "You better come over here; I'm going with you." He thought what should he do. Pretty soon he thought, "I'm going to get her." When he came close, she said, "Where are you going?" He said, "To D'arcy Island to catch fish. You can go along." So she got in. The young man was getting crabs with a spear. He told the old woman to lie flat with her arms and legs spread so as not to rock the canoe. The crabs were piled up beside the young man. The young man said to the crabs, "Go bite her behind." (Of course you know they didn't wear much clothes.) She said, "What did you say?" He said, "I told the crabs to be quiet." When he got way out he told the crabs again to bite her. They did so. She howled and turned over so he was able to push her out and under, crabs and all. That was way out past D'arcy; that's why we call that rock čuxélič. That was the last one.

The two stories of the destruction of the ogress are very like the two Mrs. Malenberg told at Lummi. I asked Louie Pelkey if this account was a sx̣wiyém, a myth. He said no, it was not and then told me a Star-Husband story as an example of a sx̣wiyém.

Louie Pelkey also knew of a tree-striker. He had once seen a tree fall and asked his uncle Harry what had happened. His uncle said it was "a person that you don't see" called šəččəlísələ, who hits trees and knocks them down. There were many, he said, on Pender Island and he told of an encounter with one.

Once on Narvaez Bay Harry wouldn't make a fire on the beach. He hung onto the kelp in a dark place and covered himself with a dark blanket. The moon shone. He never slept. His wife was along. He looked at the hill and pretty soon he heard a deer coming down. He watched with a Kentucky rifle. Then he saw a man coming. The man walked with a cane and came down towards him. About fifty feet above him was a tree. The man looked down and Harry thought, 'The man must know we're here.' He was almost going to shoot him, then said, "I'll wait," and told his wife to let go of the kelp, and they pulled up the bay. Then the tree came down right where the canoe had been. Harry looked to shoot but saw the man no more. (When a tree falls it means a close relation will pass away.)

### *Straits: Klallam*

The only Klallam person I have worked with any length of time was Henry Charles (born ca. 1875) of Beecher Bay. He told me briefly of two beings of man-like appearance, číétk̄w and stítəł.

The číétk̄w are giants. They have no joints in their legs so they are stiff. They are seen in the mountains on Vancouver Island and on the mainland. If they chase you, climb up because they can't go uphill fast; if you go down they would catch you in a few jumps.

The stítəɬ are like us but wild. They make you sleep. When the Klallam went fishing on Hood's Canal, they made people sleep and took their fish away. They can talk like an eagle, owl, screechowl, and bluejay. They say there are some yet there on that side [on the Olympic Peninsula] but they are hard to find.

These have the same names as two of the three beings described by Patrick George at Lummi, but Henry Charles' číétkʷ has the gait of the žaməkʷəs of Louie Pelkey at Saanich.

The Klallam also told stories about a cannibal woman, named slápu (Gunther 1925:148-151).

### *Puget Sound*

The Puget Sound language is (or was) spoken in several dialects from the Samish and Skagit valleys of northwestern Washington southward to the Puyallup and Nisqually drainages at the head of Puget Sound itself. I have no field notes from Puget Sound speakers on sasquatch-like beings, but there are references in the published works on the area that relate to the data I have already presented.

The speakers of Puget Sound seem to have known three kinds of -- or known three terms for -- man-like forest beings or "wild people." The terms are something like: 1) čyátkʷuʔ, 2) qəlúsabš, and 3) stítaɬ. One source goes back to the middle of the last century.

George Gibbs collected information on the Puget Sound area in the 1850's that was published in his *Tribes of Western Washington and Northwestern Oregon* in 1877. In the body of this work there is no mention of sasquatch-like beings, but there is in the appended "Dictionary of the Niskwalli." In the Niskwalli-English section (Gibbs 1877:305) is the entry: "Tsi-át-ko, a race of spirits who haunt fishing-places." And in the English-Niskwalli section, under the heading "Mythological Characters" (Gibbs 1877:308) there are mentioned as belonging to the myth age the "Ke-ló-sumsh or ke-ló-sām-ish, giant hunters of the mountains" and there is the further note: "Tsé-at-ko are a race supposed still to exist, haunting fishing-grounds and carrying off salmon and young girls at night."

Hermann Haeberlin worked in the central Puget Sound area in 1916-17 and his work was augmented and edited by Erna Gunther in the 1920's and published as *The Indians of Puget Sound* (Haeberlin and Gunther 1930). In this work, under "Intertribal Relations," we find the following:

The Sound tribes seemed to have some knowledge of the people of the interior. They mentioned the stē'taɬ, identified by Teit as the Thompson. They believed that these tribes lived on the Fresh River [Fraser River?]. They called these people "wild tribes" who traveled by night and attacked lone wayfarers. They were cowards, never attacking larger groups, so they had no real wars with the Sound Indians. They spoke a language unintelligible to the Snohomish. The Sound Indians said that the stē'taɬ used to be savages but they had become civilized now.

Another tribe they mentioned are the qlō'sabc, which has not been identified. These people were supposed to be "savages" living in underground houses.<sup>18</sup> The Snohomish did not know exactly where the qlō'sabc lived permanently, for they roamed over the country most of the time. They were supposed to be "built like giants" and were noted for their thieving. [The footnote reads, "This fact leads one to believe that this was an Interior Salish tribe, if it is not altogether mythical."]

An amateur folklorist Nels Bruseth also believes that beliefs about the stītaɪ were based on experience with real people. Bruseth collected folklore among the Stillaguamish and the Suiattle and Sauk of the Upper Skagit area, evidently beginning around 1910. According to Bruseth (n.d.:14-15) the "Steetathls" were regarded as

. . . strange and ghostlike Indians, who travelled about and had to be appeased or guarded against, to prevent thievery or murder. There were certain trails that were unsafe; strange tracks had been seen on them. There were noises in the night, chirping and whistling, not of birds. There were disappearances of Indian children, all charged to the Steetathls.

Bruseth finds the source of these beliefs in traditions of real conflict, which he estimates occurred around 1800, between the Skagit people and "King George Indians" over hunting territory above the mouth of "Steetathle Creek." Bruseth gives an account of the conflict based on several versions. The creek he refers to is probably Stetattle Creek, which flows into the Skagit just below the present Diablo Dam. This area was very likely used by hunting parties of Thompson and perhaps other Interior Salish (Spier 1936:39).

On the other hand, Marian W. Smith, who worked in the southern Puget Sound area in 1935-36, seems to have seen no real basis to similar beliefs.

In her ethnography *The Puyallup-Nisqually* (1940:129-130), under the heading "Mythological Beings" she describes a "race of tall Indians, called 'wild' or 'stick' Indians . . . said to wander through the forests." These were usually referred to as "tsiátko" though also as "stetá'ɪ, from ta'ɪ, spear." It was said that they were about mainly at night, they lived by hunting and fishing; their homes were like the dens of animals; their language was a kind of whistle, often heard when they could not be seen; they could not travel by water; they stole fish from Indians' nets and drying racks; they could paralyze human beings with their whistle and so could play tricks, such as removing a man's clothes and tying his legs apart; if harmed they would kill a man with their arrows; and they sometimes stole children or adolescents for wives or slaves. Smith gives an account of one giant boy that was captured and another of one that was killed. She also quotes a similar description of this being given by James Wickersham (1898).

At least two of the three terms given above have been in recent use. Warren Snyder (1968) in his dictionary of southern Puget Sound gives the entries "čyátko" and "stétai" both glossed as "wild men said to wander in the woods and be dangerous (Smith 1940)." Also, Thom Hess (n.d.), in an unpublished Stem List of Northern Puget Sound has an entry čyátk<sup>W</sup>u? or čí'átk<sup>W</sup>u? 'wild people.'

In Puget Sound beliefs there is also a cannibal woman (jé'g'wa), but as far as I know she has not been associated with the "wild people." In a story given by Snyder (1968:61), however, she removes a man's heart, like the sasquatch in one of the accounts Duff gives.

The Puget Sound people also believed in a race of dwarfs called "Little Earths," who could make people crazy and who had to be propitiated (Smith 1940: 130-133). They do not appear to be like the tree-strikers of the Halkomelem-Straits area.

### *Twana*

The Twana occupied the shores of Hood Canal and the drainage of the Skokomish River. W. W. Elmendorf, who worked with them beginning in the late 1930's, describes (1960:532-534) sasquatch-like beings as one of several kinds of dangerous beings that were not acquired as guardian spirits.

Mountain and forest giants (c'iá'tqo) were generally referred to in English as "stick Indians," the Chinook Jargon term stík meaning "forest." These creatures were of human form, taller than normal human beings, lived in the mountains or rough foothill forests, went naked except for a breech clout, had odorless bodies which enabled them to walk up to game and kill it before the animal scented them, and could climb vertical cliffs and leap great distances. They were usually invisible. People feared the c'iá'tqo but seem to have suffered little harm from them beyond occasional thefts of killed game. Henry Allen had heard they could "make people crazy" but did not know how this was done. They did not function as soul stealers.

Other beings of human form were the underwater people who lived in plank houses at the bottom of Hood Canal and who had occasionally taken human wives; the earth dwarfs ("little earths") who lived in nooks, crannies, and forest recesses and could control the game and steal human souls; and possibly (it is not clear how human the shape) the wet-cedar-tree ogre, who could put unsuspecting hunters to sleep and steal their souls.

### *Quinault*

The Quinault are one of several peoples who speak (or spoke) forms of the Olympic branch of the Salish family but they are the only one of this group for whom we have much information. Their villages were nearly all on the Quinault River, which flows into the Pacific about half way between the Columbia River and Cape Flattery. Their closest contacts were with their neighbors facing the open ocean but they also had some contact via the Chehalis River with the peoples of southern Puget Sound and Hood Canal, with whom they shared some notions about "giants." Ronald Olson worked with them in 1925-27; his oldest informant, Bob Pope, was born in the 1830's. Of the "giants" Olson (1936:170) says:

In the mountains live many giants, called tsadja'tko or tsa'áloh, who look almost the same as humans. On their right big toe a long

quartz spike grows up to six feet long. If a human is kicked with this he will likely die. They are great thieves. People avoid the creeks on which they live. Some still come around the village at night and borrow a harpoon or a drift net, but usually return it before morning. They are fond of playing tricks on humans, such as sneaking up and kicking them, tying them to trees with thongs lashed to the genitals, etc. Some even married humans, and even today there are people living who are half tsa'áloh. The giants can often be heard at night. Even if their whistling sounds far off it is certain that they are close.

Olson adds two narratives, one telling of an encounter where a man managed to surprise a giant, described as having a hornlike growth on his head with a light at the end, and frighten him away; the other telling of a giant who murdered five men and was killed in a mass attack by the men of several villages.

The Quinault term Olson recorded as "tsadja'tko" is almost certainly identifiable with the Puget Sound term Hess recorded as čyátkwu? and its Twana and Straits counterparts. Most of this description, except notably the toe spikes and the headlamp, sound like attributes of the čyátkwu?. The term "tsa'áloh" may have actually referred to a different being since it occurs again in another context.

Earlier in his ethnography, Olson (1936:145-150) gives his informants' descriptions of various beings that may become guardian spirits, some of which were referred to by the Chinook Jargon word skukúm, 'strong,' 'powerful being,' 'dangerous being.' But Olson says (1936:146) "there was no sharp distinction between the 'real skuku'ms,' who were cannibal women named oé'h and those called skuku'm ma'tikulc or heca'itomixw (devil of the forest), who live in the high hills and mountains." Some of these skukums appear as men or women and may marry human beings. (Once near the mouth of the Hoh a female skukum even came into a white man's cabin and climbed into bed with him; he had sexual relations with her but "at the moment of orgasm he fell dead" and she died too.) In this context Olson gives an informant's account of a "skukum spirit" called "tsa'áloh" (one of the two terms later identified as "giants") who had icicle-like toenails that he kicked people with; he was once a man, had become a monster, and was ultimately killed by human beings.

### *Squamish*

The Squamish live north of the Musqueam, formerly occupying the shores of Howe Sound and the valley of the Squamish River. They tell about a kind of wild people called smáy?iɬ. Aert H. Kuipers has recently (1969:23-28) re-elicited a story, originally recorded by Charles Hill-Tout before 1900, accounting for the origin of these wild people and he has recorded two more stories of encounters with them. These people are said to be the descendants of a chief's daughter and a slave who were abandoned but escaped into the mountains. They are described as big but otherwise there is nothing in the stories suggesting the sésq'ec of their neighbors to the south.



I have presented data on the beliefs of a number of Coast Salish peoples, but this is certainly not an exhaustive study. There are no doubt published sources that I have missed within the area I have tried to cover and there is unpublished material -- even in my own possession in the form of untranscribed tapes. Also, I have covered only a fraction of the territory that might be covered in the pursuit of native traditions about sasquatch-like beings.

I said at the beginning of this paper that I could see no real/mythical or natural/supernatural dichotomies in Coast Salish thought. I believe this view is supported by the material I have presented and also by the problems some ethnographers have had in presenting their data when they have tried to use these dichotomies. But there is in Coast Salish thought, I believe, a largely implicit dichotomy of human vs. non-human. I will return to this later.

I also suggested at the beginning that we cannot simply assume that the various terms for sasquatch-like beings refer to the same entity but must demonstrate it. How many sasquatch-like beings do the data suggest? Here is a tentative taxonomy:

I. The stítəɬ as described by all or nearly all sources appear to be unfriendly strangers. Smith derives the term from 'spear' (harpoon?), which could imply the strangers were fishermen, but I suggest that it is identifiable with Halkomelem stéytaɬ 'from upriver' and that it originally simply referred to the direction the strangers came from. The čyétk<sup>w</sup> of the Lummi informant Patrick George sound like his stítəɬ under another name. The Squamish smáy'íɬ are also simply strangers.

II. The Halkomelem and Straits tree-strikers, though called by various terms, sound somewhat similar and I would be inclined to equate them and suggest a common source for the belief, though not necessarily a real animal.

III. The Puget Sound and Twana "Little Earths" resemble each other but differ, I think, from the more northerly tree-strikers. (I should mention that throughout the whole area covered another dwarf people, called q<sup>w</sup>iq<sup>w</sup>estáyməx<sup>w</sup> or something of the sort, are known, but only in a story in which they live far to the north or off in the ocean.)

IV. The cannibal ogress has pretty nearly the same image throughout the area, stabilized no doubt by the roaster-roasted story. It seems that only James Point at Musqueam has explicitly connected her with any of the other beings.

V. If we subtract all of these, we are left with: 1. the Stalo sésqəc, 2. the Cowichan and Saanich zámək<sup>w</sup>əs, 3. the Lummi čámək<sup>w</sup>əs, 4. the Klallam čyétk<sup>w</sup>, 5. the Puget Sound cyátk<sup>w</sup>u?, 6. the Twana ciátqo, and 7. the Quinault cəjátko. Clearly 2 and 3 are cognate terms and so are 4, 5, 6, and 7. It is tempting to equate them all and conclude that they are simply different words for the same thing. However, the descriptions we have of them do not really give them many common attributes.

All are giants, human in form but bigger than ordinary human beings, and all live in the woods and mountains. But beyond these attributes there is not another thing mentioned by all accounts. The next most common attribute is nocturnal habits, mentioned by all but the Saanich and Klallam informants. Since their descriptions were brief, this may be simply an accidental omission. All but the Lummi, Saanich, and Klallam informants mentioned stealing food from people, which might also be an accidental omission, except that Patrick George at Lummi ascribed theft of food to the other two kinds of beings that sound like real human beings. Only the Stalo and Lummi accounts describe their giants as hairy. The Twana account, moreover, says their giants went naked except for a breech clout, which suggests to me that they were no different from ordinary human beings in pelage. Only the Saanich and Klallam accounts mentioned abnormal walking, but the Stalo and Twana accounts mentioned unusual speed. Lummi, Puget Sound, and Quinault accounts mentioned whistling; Stalo, Puget Sound, and Quinault the theft of women. Other attributes appear less often. I have tentatively listed them as Table 1. It is quite possible that further investigation would put more plusses on the list. But as things stand it seems we can only say that most if not all of the Coast Salish of this area seem to agree that there are large, man-like beings in the woods and mountains who differ from human beings in various ways.

Why should the Coast Salish believe this? Why should they have these traditions about giants in the woods and mountains? I see several possible answers, which are not mutually exclusive:

1. *There is a real animal there -- a big non-human primate perhaps -- and experience with this animal confirms and perpetuates the tradition.*

The existence of a large non-human primate would account for the image of the big, hairy sésq̄əc, the big footprints, the frightening encounters, possibly the theft of food, and the whistling. But a large non-human primate would not really steal women -- though the gorilla was once accused of this, nor trick people by tying them up, nor kick them with spiked feet, nor have some of the other attributes ascribed to one or another giant.

If there is a real animal, shouldn't there be better descriptions in the ethnographic literature? Not necessarily. Anthropologists do not consciously suppress information, but they sometimes do not know what to do with it. There are ethnographies of peoples whom I know to have traditions of sasquatch-like beings that make no mention of such traditions; I suspect that these omissions occur not because the writers had never heard of the traditions but because they did not know how to categorize them.

If there is a real animal, why should it be given fanciful attributes, like unbendable legs or odorless bodies? Because people make things up? Well, if people could have made up unbendable legs and odorless bodies, couldn't they have also made up seven-foot, hairy sasquatches? Of course they could have, but as I suggested earlier, we might think they made up beavers too, if we did not know better.

2. *There were real people there -- hostile strangers in the mountains -- who were so little known they could be given non-human attributes.*

Interior Salish and Sahaptins did cross over the Cascades into the upper drainages of coast rivers. At an earlier time, the ancestors of the Athapascans who lived in historic times in the hills near the mouth of the Columbia must have passed through Coast Salish country, probably as inland hunters, possibly not inclined to establish friendly relations with the river and salt-water people. Such inland hunters could easily account for the theft of women and children as well as food, perhaps for the mysterious whistling (Patrick George gave them whistles, remember) and even for tying people up. But they would not have been seven feet tall, nor covered with hair, nor leave giant footprints. Besides, there are names for real people -- stítəł, etc. as distinguished from giants. On the other hand, if there were several such incursions of real people, then possibly some became better known and recognized as human, while others remained mysterious and non-human.

3. *There are natural events that are better explained by the hypothesis of forest and mountain beings than by competing hypotheses.*

Rocks fall; trees fall; there are strange noises in the mountains; children and even adults do get lost; women do run away. How are these things explained? Marian W. Smith (1940:131-132) cites Wickersham's (1898) account of how the Little Earths cause a person to get lost and comments to the effect that the belief makes sense in "a culture where accident as such did not exist." Did the Coast Salish have no concept "accident?" I do not believe we can answer the question yet. Native theories of intention, responsibility, causality, etc. are matters for linguistics -- grammatical and textual analysis -- and currently a number of people are working on Salish languages so the question may be answered. But it has seemed to me that some of my informants, Patrick George for one, have operated without a concept "natural death." In his narratives (given in English) no one died but what some entity that in my tradition, but not his, would be called "supernatural" had entered or left the body. Perhaps there was simply no theory of deterioration of the body with age; so people just cannot die of natural causes.

Perhaps then in the native view, trees do not simply grow old and fall; they have to be pushed. Rocks do not simply loosen through erosion and fall; if you are below them, they are thrown at you; if you are above them, they are not rocks at all but beings capable of bounding away at great speed -- but only downhill since they cannot bend their legs.

In human relations perhaps sexual attraction and affection between husband and wife do not simply deteriorate through time; love potions, spells, and skukums steal them away. For both parties to a separation this hypothesis may be more satisfactory than the alternatives our culture offers.

4. *The belief in forest and mountain beings promotes behavior that helps perpetuate the belief.*

That is, the beliefs do not merely offer better explanations for observable events (as in 3) but reward the believers with something more than just the satisfaction of their curiosity. This is of course not an answer to the question of how the beliefs originated but only to the question of how they are maintained and modified once they are there.

Do, for example, beliefs in unreal dangers protect people from real dangers? Possibly if there are real people in the mountains who may steal women and children, there is survival value in imagining that they have super-human proportions and powers.

Perhaps too, beliefs in imagined localized dangers may promote the specialization in subsistence activities that seems to me to have been basic to Coast Salish social organization (Suttles 1960). I have been writing here as if beliefs were uniform within a village or dialect area, but they probably were not. Within a single village different persons followed professions requiring special skills and knowledge, which they closely guarded. Thus it may be that a mountain-goat hunter knew very well that certain whistling in the mountains came from marmots or pikas (animals that live only at high altitudes) but preferred to let others believe it was sasquatches; at the same time he might subscribe to the sasquatch hypothesis himself to explain less common events such as falling rocks.

As another, I hope not too far-fetched example, the Twana belief in the wet cedar-tree ogre (who stole the souls of hunters who loitered under wet cedar trees) may have kept some Twana hunters from spending too much time on rainy days under cedar trees and promoted their hunting success. This success gave the hunter an audience respectful of his beliefs, which got perpetuated. In this case the belief also provides an explanation of failure for the hunter who succumbed to the temptation of resting under a cedar tree.

5. *The existence of sasquatch-like beings makes the world more intelligible.*

This is to suggest that the beliefs do more than explain specific events like the falling of a rock or the loss of a woman but that they are "myths" in the sense that they reflect some fundamental truths about the world.

Two basic truths for the Coast Salish, as perhaps for all non-Western peoples, are: man stands apart from nature and yet man depends upon nature. (For Western peoples it seems to be man stands apart from and must dominate nature.) How can these truths be presented? More specifically, how can we define man as something apart from nature and how can we make his dependence on nature acceptable?

One way the Coast Salish separate man from nature is by showing how dangerous it is to cross the barrier that separates the human from the non-human. Thus the Upper Stalo woman who married a *sésqəc* became unconscious, first when she was captured by her non-human husband and again, after she had developed non-human attributes, when she returned to human society. The Samish woman who married a sea-being under Deception Pass began to sprout sea-weed and could not return at all. And that encounter in the cabin on the Hoh was fatal to both parties.

Perhaps another way of separating man from nature and defining humanity is through images of non-human beings that are minimally different from human beings. Giants, gnomes, etc. around the world may provide these images and our sasquatch-like beings may provide them for the Coast Salish.

Mary M. Young (1970) suggests that belief in these figures is akin to racism, since racism consists of defining other peoples as non-human. In this connection I should point out that although the Coast Salish terms that originally meant "person" or "people" now mean "Indian" as contrasted to "White," it seems that before Europeans arrived these terms were not reserved for members of one's own village, language group, or even the Coast Salish as a whole. This usage is quite consistent with the picture I get of a Coast Salish social organization consisting of overlapping networks established by marriage and containing no discrete, bounded social units. Thus the human/non-human boundary was much less restricted here than in parts of the world where there are we-groups who define themselves as the only true human beings. This means that the Coast Salish images of minimally non-human beings were not based on real neighbors of different customs, language, or skin color; it does not mean, however, that they always treated each other humanely.

For the Coast Salish, man's dependence on nature is shown in two ways, which are patterned after human relationships. First, there is the relationship between the individual human being and a non-human being seen in a vision (the "guardian spirit" relationship), which is a kind of partnership. Probably most persons had vision experiences and in a sense then there was a "myth" for every person. Sasquatch-like beings seem rarely if ever to have become guardian spirits. Perhaps they are too similar to human beings.

Second, there can be a relationship (in the Halkomelem- and Straits-speaking area anyway) between a local group and some non-human being or population, established by a mythical marriage and therefore an affinal relationship. Marriages with sasquatch-like beings establishing such ties seem rare. The Upper Stalo marriage with a *sésqac* was not permanent, though the woman did leave a child behind. The Quinault marriages with *skukums* sound more like guardian spirit relationships. But perhaps the real meaning of that fatal encounter in the cabin on the Hoh is that white men cannot establish affinal ties with nature.

I do not mean to suggest that people consciously invent stories and beliefs to illustrate great truths. I would suggest rather that when the people are presented with alternatives they choose the ones that make the most sense to them. Possibly they have chosen to believe some things about sasquatch-like beings in this fashion.

The problem with the kind of speculation I have just engaged in is that it has some of the same circularity of some kinds of functional analysis, e.g., we observe practice A, we postulate that there is a need X that it serves, we are asked how we know there is a need X, and we answer that it is obvious because there is a practice A to serve it. I may be simply inferring the "basic truths" from the beliefs I see as embodying them. Others may find quite different ones. They may also find the sasquatch-like beings playing a more central role in Coast Salish mythology that I have been able to cast them in.

#### 6. *People enjoy believing in scary things.*

There seems to be plenty of evidence around that people enjoy talking about scary things and appreciate a well-told story about a frightening

experience. Is the esthetic experience of listening to such a story heightened by belief? Are we tempted to believe because it makes life more exciting?

Also, if you are alone in the mountains and something bounds away from under your feet and the hair rises on the back of your neck, isn't it perhaps more comfortable to believe that it was something truly frightening than to admit that you were scared by a mere rock?

I have given all the possible and defensible reasons I can think of for the Coast Salish belief that there are giant man-like beings in the woods and mountains. There may be other possibilities that I have not thought of.<sup>2</sup> It does not seem to me that any one of these reasons is sufficient to account for the diversity of the beliefs. It seems more likely that these beliefs have grown out of several sources and have been maintained in several ways. One of the sources may have been a real man-like animal. But I must reluctantly admit that as I have presented the data and organized the arguments, I have found its track getting fainter. On the other hand, I have had some new thoughts about the Coast Salish, which is reward enough. I must agree with Young (1970) that studying people's beliefs tells us more about the people than about what they believe in. And of course, as Green (1968) was well aware when he challenged us anthropologists, we can neither prove nor disprove the existence of sasquatches by ethnography anyway, any more than we could use it to prove or disprove the existence of beavers.

Table 1

	Stalo sésqec	Lummi : camek <sup>2</sup> wes	Saanich : zamek <sup>2</sup> wes	Klallam : cyétk <sup>w</sup>	Puget Sound : cyátk <sup>w</sup> u?	Twana : ciátgo	Quinault : cejátko
giant size	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
in woods/ mountains	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
nocturnal	+	+			+	+	+
hairy	+	+					
breech clout						+	
stiff legs			+	+			
fast	+					+	
whistle		+			+		+
speak	+	-					
steal food	+				+	+	+
steal women	+				+		+
have half- human child	+						
steal children					+		
cause uncon- sciousness					+		
make crazy		+				+	
kill people	+						+
trick people					+		+
travel by water	+				-		
odorless						+	
spike on toe							+

## Footnotes

1. Werner Cohn (1962) has also used this incident to question the universality of our dichotomies.
  
2. I can also think of a few impossible and indefensible reasons, e.g., a. sasquatches exist but they are supernatural, b. sasquatches exist but they are extra-terrestrial. The latter sort of hypothesis, which I have not yet heard but expect to, seems especially appealing to those who, in the Western scientific tradition, reject the supernatural as such but do not want to give up myths as concretely real. For them, a comet causes the earth to stand still for Joshua at Jerico, angels descend from flying saucers, and Jesus Christ is Commander-in-Chief of Cosmic Affairs. Surely a better way of having your cake and eating it too is to look for truths about ourselves in myths rather than for truths about external reality -- providing of course that we know a myth when we see one.



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