

WAR HELMETS AND CLAN HATS OF THE TLINGIT INDIANS

This article, as well as the one following on "A Visit to the Tsimshian Indians," was written by Louis Shotridge, a native Chilkat Tlingit Indian. For some years Mr. Shotridge was employed at the University Museum and was sent to Alaska in 1915 to study the manners and customs of his own and adjacent tribes. He has just returned and these articles, aside from the valuable specimens which were collected by him for the Museum, are the first fruits of labor. His manuscripts are printed substantially as written by him.—EDITOR.

THE collection made by me among my own people, the Tlingit Indians, for the University Museum contains a number of objects that might best illustrate the conceptions, industries and arts of this particular tribe. The old pieces were obtained from chiefs of different clan divisions and house groups in Southern Alaska, who explained that their own right to use the crest objects was due to the fact that their legendary ancestors acquired them in their behalf.

The house groups have their definite order of rank within the divisions of clans, and are characterized by ownership of special crests. The animals of both land and sea and the birds also are used as individual house-group emblems or crests; these are usually represented in carvings and paintings on house pillars, batons, helmets and ceremonial hats. The pillars bearing the crests were placed in council houses, while the other objects of this class were used only when appropriate occasions called for so doing, such as special performances during important conventions or potlatches, peace dances, in wars and on all formal ceremonies. They are classed as community property, and unlike personal effects, each descends from a man to his sister's son; one's predecessor in the holding of any title or right is thus not his father but his maternal uncle.

Through changes of leaders with different distant relations, a variety of mostly borrowed crests were hoarded in the collections of some of the leading clans. Although these were taken usually for some acceptable reasons, they never occupy the same rank with the main crests among which they are found.

In the following article I will give a short history of the war helmets and clan hats that may be seen among the collections in

the Northwest Coast Hall of the University Museum. The stories as told, are incomplete, and offer only an outline of the well connected history related to the old pieces.

WAR HELMETS AND CLAN HATS

War helmets, aside from clan hats, were ordinarily designed to represent the crests of the ancestors from whom the paternal grandfathers of the warriors who use them had descended.

With the exception of a few, the crests represented by the helmets and hats mentioned in this paper were not necessarily the crests of the clans from whom they are obtained. They were taken and used by the individual war lords, each of whom was obliged to bear, along with his own, the history or record of his own grandfather.

From the leader of the "Drum-house" of Kluckwan, I obtained three old pieces: one is a wooden helmet carved to represent the "Under-sea Grizzly Bear" crest and the other two, also carved of wood, are called hats and were used by the different leaders of the house-group during important ceremonies. One represents the "Killer-whale," and the other the "Murrelet" crest.

UNDER-SEA GRIZZLY BEAR HELMET

The Under-Sea Grizzly Bear Helmet was made for Daqu-tonk of Kaguan-tan clan of Chilkat. This man is said to be the first successful leader of his house group. He also found the Grizzly Bear House of Kluckwan on Chilkat River. The crest was originally claimed by Tsimshian Tay-quadi clan, which like many others was fast disappearing, and had Daqu-tonk neglected to uphold this crest, it might have been completely lost, which would have been a disgrace for the other grandsons of Tay-quadi.

KILLER-WHALE HAT

When Daqu-tonk died, Gahi succeeded his maternal uncle. It was for him that the Killer-Whale Hat was made. The crest had been originally claimed by a Tsimshian clan, but after they were defeated in a war, it was taken as a spoil by the Nani-ya-ayi clan, the victors, who have used it since as an emblem of courage. Their grandson Gahi in his own domain was proud of the honorable birth of his grandfather's killer-whale.

MURRELET HAT

After Gahi's death, many male members of the group no longer lived up to the once well observed rules and began to take as wives women of groups which ranked lower in caste. The more conservative groups gave up their original homes and went to reside with those who were in accord with their beliefs. Yika-shaw, upon entering the office of his deceased brother, Gahi, built an annex to the Grizzly Bear House, and for some reason of his own, named it the Drum House. As soon as Yika-shaw attained power to command, he no longer neglected to uphold the traditions of his own grandfathers, so ordered for his personal use a hat to represent the Murrelet, the crest of the Nays-adi clan.

Although some of the helmets and hats, used as clan possessions, show none of the fine artistic carvings that may be noticed on some of the popular pieces, nevertheless, they hold the highest place among the objects, a position attained through the rich history of their acquisition.

Perhaps the most interesting history noted is the one relating to the helmet and hats contained in the collection received from the Luk-na-adi clan of Sitka.

BARBECUING RAVEN HELMET

"Barbecuing Raven" Helmet (Plate I) is rather a crude looking specimen, carved out of wood. The unfinished "top-stock" is made by connecting rings of woven spruce tree roots, and its wings are of painted walrus hide. The name given to this old piece is from one of the episodes in the "Raven-traveling," a Tlingit myth of Creation.

When the Raven killed the king salmon, a large crowd of small birds and squirrels rushed to the scene. Raven saw that one salmon was not sufficient for the crowd. He thought of a scheme. He made the crowd dig a hole in the ground large enough for the salmon to go in, and after this was done, he sent them after some skunk cabbage leaves to wrap around the salmon for the barbecue. They packed in a pile of this, but Raven said that what they brought was unclean because it was gathered where his mother was cremated, and he instructed them to go beyond two mountains for the kind he wanted, so they all went.

In the meantime, Raven cooked the salmon in the leaves that were brought, and ate it all before the crowd returned. When they came with what he ordered, Raven sat like a virtuous person pre-

tending to look like he was awaiting the cooking of the salmon. This is the part chosen for the name of the Luk-na-adi helmet, and the interpretation is, "No other (clan) has a right to lay claim to a man's own achievement." The story, of course, went on.

The old helmet is the same one which tells us the years of struggle between the Gana-tay-di clan of Chilkat and the Luk-na-adi. In the dispute between these two powerful clans to determine which held the legal claim on the popular raven crest, the Gana-tay-di is said to have shown most evidence. This dispute resulted in an internecine conflict, and not until Shku-wu-yetl, chief of the Gana-tay-di party, had taken to wife Yaku-hu-dayd-saku, daughter of Yetl-Tlan, "Big-Raven," a war lord of the rival party, did the intense anger abate.

The helmet was carried through only two ceremonies, and before it was brought up to the standard of recognition, it fell into the hands of the rival clan during one of the conflicts. It remained there until Yetl-Tlan, the father-in-law of the rival chief, entered his office as a head chief of his own clan, when his daughter was in a position to make an appeal to her husband for the return of the helmet to her father, which was immediately carried through. It was through the influence of this woman also that the persistence of her husband's party gradually subsided.

Although the Luk-na-adi admitted defeat, after it was returned, the Barbecuing Raven was kept in the bottom of the clan chest. It never saw real service. It was called a helmet because it was made preceding the war it had caused, and it was brought out during the councils to be pointed to as the goal of the clans' efforts.

RAVEN HAT

After peace was decided upon, the two clans met on more friendly terms. Luk-na-adi of Sitka were then permitted the privilege of the free use of the raven crest. After Sha-da-sikdj entered the office of head chief of the clan, he ordered Raven Hat (Plate II), which was woven from spruce tree roots with the designs painted on. Like the Barbecuing Raven, this ceremonial hat never reached any prominence, the clan failed before the completion of the number of potlatches that were necessary to bring it up to the standard. The number of ceremonies in which this hat was used is indicated by the number of basket-rings connected together on the top of its crown,

which was only three, whereas eight was considered necessary to establish the standard.

WHALE HAT

According to the Tlingit myth, during his journey to the west, Raven sighted a whale taking in a large quantity of eulachons. Raven was hungry, and for a moment he wondered what he should do to have some of the fishes that the whale was eating. Presently he thought of a scheme; he went to find some pine pitch wood and a piece of slate, and when he got these, he flew out to where the whale was feasting. When the animal came out of the water, it opened its great mouth to take in more fishes, and just then Raven threw himself right into the flow and went in with the fishes. Raven found himself in a large compartment, and here he started a small fire on the piece of slate that he brought with him, and cooked some fish for his meal. The parts of the animal that were hanging around was a great temptation to him, and after awhile he started to cut some off. By accident, he cut the great heart, and the animal, of course, was instantly killed and the exit was closed to Raven. To the adventurer's luck the dead whale drifted ashore, with him still inside, near a Tlingit eulachon fishing camp, and some youths playing with bows and arrows on the beach found the dead animal. When Raven heard their voices, he started to sing a call-for-help song which the youths recognized and they immediately notified the community.

When the people came to the scene the mysterious voice could still be heard coming from inside the dead whale, and before Raven was let out, different groups were formed at the different parts of the animal. The ancestors of the Gana-tay-di clan then took possession of the great head, and since that time the Whale crest, after the clan brought it up to the standard of recognition, became one of their emblems of high caste. Through their offspring, however, the crest has been found among other clans of the Raven side of the Tlingit tribe. A duplicate Whale Hat (Plate III) was found among the Sitka Luk-na-adi collection.

CEREMONIAL HEADDRESSES

A number of odd shaped women's headdresses, included in the collection, are good examples of bits of fine carvings. Three of these

are illustrated in this article and represent the "Sea-lion taking a plunge from its rock" (Plate IV), a "Marmot with its prey a bat" (Plate V), and the "Grizzly bear crest sustained by the wolf emblem" (Plate VI).

This style of headdress was borrowed from the Kwakiutl Indians of British Columbia, who were said, for some reason of their own, to have made first a headdress and then to have flattened the head during infancy to fit it. Only for a period of time or while the novelty of them lasted these odd shaped headdresses were used by the high caste Tlingit women, and with the exception of a few they were recognized only as works of art and thus were classed with personal property.

A brief note on two of the three mentioned may explain how these were taken into the clan and house group collections. The one representing the Marmot, like most headdresses of this style, was made more for show than for its history, hence it may not necessarily be classed as a possession of the house group who owned it. At the same time the one representing the sea-lion has been recognized as a clan possession, because it was made for a young lady who happened to be the only right heir to the head chief office of her clan, when an important ceremony was to be performed. Since there was nothing suitable for feminine use in the clan collection, it became necessary to have the foreign style of headdress made, and in order to have it worthy of her use it was carved to represent a sea-lion, the crest of her clan.

Many valuable slaves were given their freedom after they performed the crowning of the princess with the new "Head-top-ornament." This act is said to have been the beginning of providing headdresses for the women members of clans, which formerly had been a problem in many such cases as stated.

L. S.



BARBECUING RAVEN HELMET.

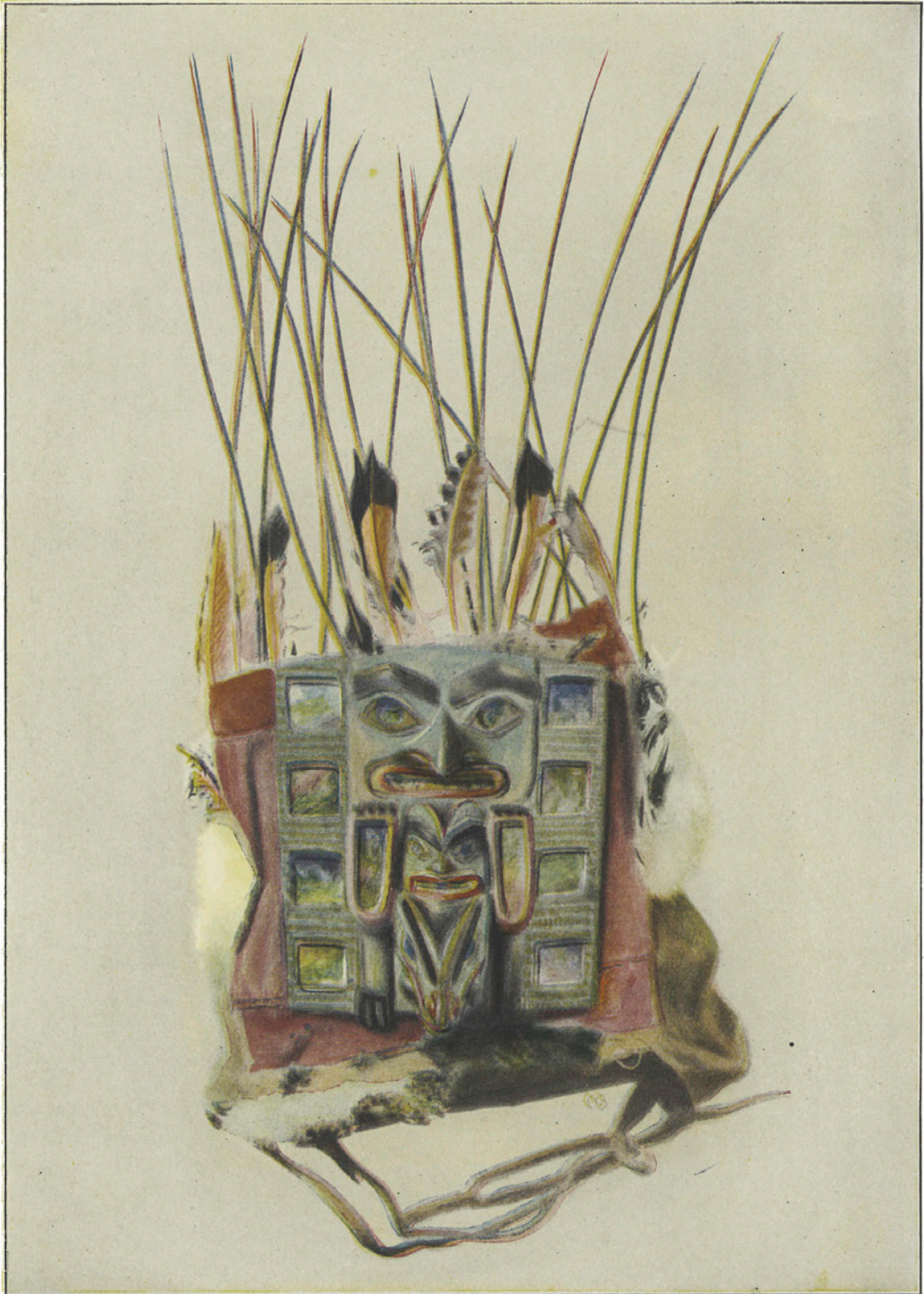
by M. L. Baker



CEREMONIAL HAT REPRESENTING THE RAVEN CREST.



CEREMONIAL HAT REPRESENTING THE WHALE CREST.



CEREMONIAL HEADDRESS REPRESENTING A SEA-LION TAKING A PLUNGE FROM ITS ROCK.



CEREMONIAL HEADDRESS REPRESENTING A MARMOT WITH ITS PREY, A BAT.



CEREMONIAL HEADDRESS REPRESENTING THE GRIZZLY BEAR CREST SUSTAINED BY THE WOLF EMBLEM.