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Dr. Duff
with thanks

G.T. EMMONS AND G.P.L. MILES

SHAMINISTIC CHARMS

Several years ago Mr Brasley wrote
me asking if I would identify a
-number of Shamanic charms which
had come to him as having been
collected by a British officer of a man-
-of-war on the N.W. Coast. I replied that
as a country I would be pleased to do
so & he sent me photographs as shown
in the books within. There was no
question of a collaboration with any
one. In the meantime he passed away
& I received several separates by a
Mr Miles in which even my name
was spelled wrong. Now if Mr Miles
had signed his name to his fore-
note that would have been his re-
sponsibility but including my writing
with his I have to disclaim any responsibility
for his introducing notes on pages
5 & 6.

J. G. Munro

Victoria B.C.

1940

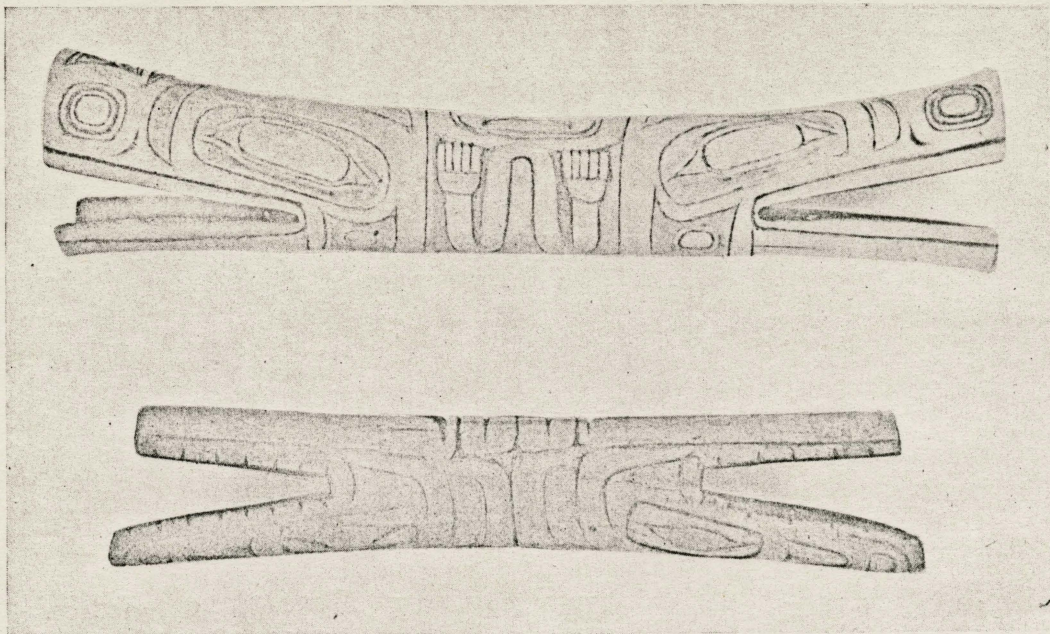


FIG. 1.

FIG. 2.

(21 cms. = 8.2 inches long.)

(18 cms. = 7 inches long.)

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SHAMANISTIC CHARMS

By G. T. EMMONDS & G. P. L. MILES, B.Sc. LOND.

ART among the tribes of the N.W. Coast of America has probably reached a higher level than in any other community of primitive people, and this may perhaps be accounted for by the security of existence to be associated with a congenial climate productive of a land teeming with plant and animal life, and incidentally with fish in the rivers and sea. The need for food is thus lavishly and easily satisfied, and the need for protection against the elements also is satisfied by an abundant supply of timber from which the people were able to construct their houses as well as their canoes for fishing.

There was no real struggle for existence, not even a necessity for agriculture, and the conditions are such as one might expect to give rise to contentment and a degree of leisure that is the forerunner of a well developed material culture and a high standard of art.

It was perhaps not only the environment of these people that was conducive to this artistic tendency, but their beliefs also, more especially in relation to their creation and the beginnings of life. Their legends and myths depict them as having descended from some particular species of animal which they take as their totem and preserve for posterity by means of elaborate and highly stylised carvings in wood and ivory. It is thus their natural wish for the preservation of these beliefs and the myths that are woven around them that leads to a desire for some form of symbolism, and particularly a form in which they can display a degree of achievement that forms a mark of reverence for their totem.

The manifestation of this desire is seen in their totem poles their wooden bowls, their dance masks and clubs as well as

Not descended from Animals although sometimes having relations with animals the result being animal or human. But their relations with animals are now in the nature of obligations to, contrast with physically & from which they ascend the totem,

The N.W. Coast is not a land teeming with animal (land) life and animals were considered our ancestors to be of elements that are (The belief) related for example in primitive days a rat for trader, the totem cooked to the leader for their food, seal, cod, salmon, etc.

The highest exposition of N.W. Coast art is symbolism in which a single fraction of the animal expresses the whole animal. This is shown in Carving of Totem poles, Boxes, masks &c. The small Shawan charms which so finely carved tablets show the intricate knowledge of animal anatomy in their woven blankets and the many other artifacts that serve to make up their material culture.

ETHNOLOGIA CRANMORENSIS

for each
one is a separate
figure which

It is perhaps in their carvings in ivory, sometimes inlaid with abalone shell, that we find the highest exposition of this art, and it is a series of these carvings, generally associated with the magical practises of their medicine men that forms the subject of this paper.

One of the outstanding culture products of this highly developed civilisation was that of the Shaman or priest who played a highly specialised role in giving confidence to the people in situations, such as illness, which they found beyond their own control. This opportunity of appealing to the supernatural played a very real part in the lives of these people and there is little doubt that its present day degradation has led to a disintegration of social structure. The absence of such a person in modern society is by no means a mark of progress but rather of a swing from emotionalism towards mechanism and behaviourism. Medicine has in many cases proved a more effective and speedy cure for the complaints that were ineffectively dealt with by the Shaman, and religion tends to replace the emotional side of the treatment. The enlightenment brought about by science has more recently caused a revulsion against the dogma of religion and neuroticism has increased. The demand for some form of individual psychotherapy has arisen and the Shaman of the past or the primitive is manifest in the scientifically trained psychoanalyst of modern society.

The Shaman was thus held in high esteem and had a position to maintain that could not always have been easy, especially under circumstances where he found himself impotent to effect a cure or to bring about a desired result. He had thus always to do all that was in his power to keep up appearances and to present a bold front; he wore a mask both literally and metaphorically, and embellished his person and his position by decorative objects of an unusual nature; and in general a

The Shaman was in no wise held in high esteem. He was held in abject fear & hatred. Shamanism was the curse of the N.W. Coast.

his
the term Shaman has never been used with the Shamans he practices
for them and a being as one Shaman do today
All the disquisitions of Science! Shamanism is a fine exhibition
of splendid big words which treat the reader.

SHAMANISTIC CHARMS

miscellaneous collection of paraphernalia usually associated with the practice of magic. *The index writing ends here*

The carved ivory objects herein described are thus not merely decorative but have functional ~~social~~ value in addition and are consequently all the more prized. A full appreciation of this ~~social~~ value and of the power obtained by the spectacular practices of the Shaman can be realised only by a visualisation of the stage setting in the communal house, with its sombre smoke-stained walls, hung with arms, spears, nets, furs and bundles of raw and coloured weaving materials. The great adzed tree trunks supporting the roof structure rest on the heads of giant figures still colourful in deep vermilion and pale azurite—each one a legend in itself of some ancestral deed: overshadowing the back the crest figure of a raven with outstretched wings and a conventional standing bear or a mythical sea monster.

*My index
continued
Lore
S.E.*

The central fire of yellow cedar logs like an immense incense burner spreading its fragrance through the air and just beyond—opposite the entrance—the patient on a bed of furs. Around the walls the many coloured, blanketed figures seated with knees drawn up to the chin, expectant and silent: the Shaman's followers with beating sticks in hand, seated before a long board ready to accompany him in song and movement. The Shaman, his long matted locks hanging down over his shoulders, dropping his robe—a weird figure—standing naked save for a narrow skin apron hung with deer hoofs, puffin bills and bits of bone, vibrant to the slightest movement, a necklace of pendants and carved ivory charms and one large carving, the most potent of all his medicines, suspended around his neck and hanging over his chest; a rattle in his hand and a mask over his face which is supposed to represent the human or animal features of the spirit he impersonates, that is his slave to summon but his master and guide when in control.

When the spirit enters his body he breaks into song or

commences to circle the fire and the patient to the accompaniment of beating sticks which become faster as the dance progresses. He may stop by the sick man, touch him or make passes over the body, each practitioner using different methods in locating the evil object, source of sickness or what would in modern medicine be called the septic focus. The dance may stop suddenly or another mask be put on to the accompaniment of a new song calculated to invoke a fresh spirit. Thus one spirit may succeed another, each one more insistent in action than the last.

Of the articles worn when in practice, the spirit charm about the neck was considered to be the most important. Among the southern tribes it consisted of a hollow bone carved to represent the mythical double-headed snake "sisiutl" with an open mouth at each end in which the lost soul when captured was confined until returned to the patient. (Plate XVIII). Among the Northern people one finds a carving of whale ivory, bone or horn in animal or human form or an intricate combination of both representing the conception of a dream. The explanation of the land otter is to be associated with a myth connected with the novitiate period of the Shaman. He is supposed to have met this animal in the woods, killed it with a motion of his hand and cut out the tongue to be used as a neck pendant when enclosed in a bundle of sticks.

In Plate XIX, fig. 1, we have a typical spirit charm of the type worn suspended around the neck and carved from a split whale's tooth, it is supposed to represent something seen by a Shaman when in a dream or trance but can never be explained. The whole figure represents a mythical sea monster like a sea lion. The minor figures consist of a human form in the mouth and another at the posterior end of the back. The latter is being reached for by an animal with a long arm and still another animal appeared dorsally to the head. Fig. 3, an inlaid piece, is used similarly, but represents a killer whale, the dorsal fin of which is in the form of an eagle that

FIG. 1.

(17 cms. long=
6.6 inches.)



FIG. 2.

(10½ cms. long=
4.1 inches.)

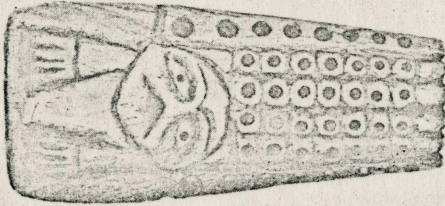


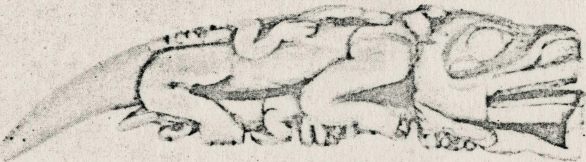
FIG. 3.

(13½ cms. long=
5.2 inches.)



FIG. 4.

(13½ cms. long=
5.2 inches.)



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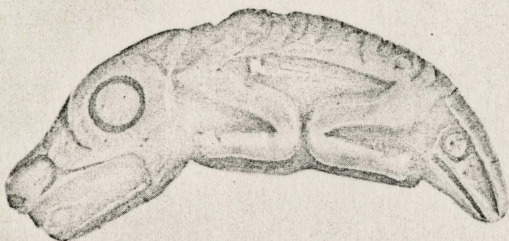


FIG. 1.
(10 cms. long =
3.9 inches.)



FIG. 2.
(12 cms. long =
4.7 inches.)

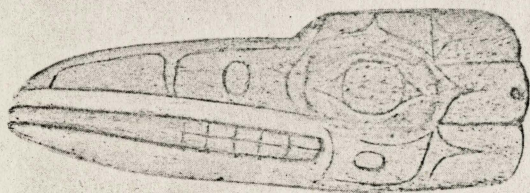


FIG. 3.
(10½ cms. long =
4.1 inches.)



FIG. 4.
(18 cms. long =
7 inches.)

PLATE XX.

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1138/E141

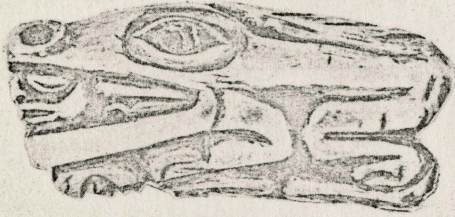


FIG. 1.
(9 cms. long=
3.5 inches.)

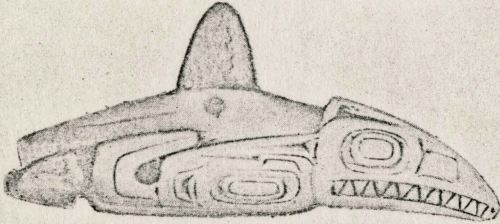


FIG. 2.
(8 cms. long=
3.1 inches.)

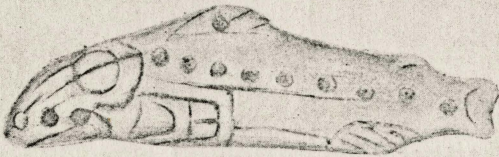


FIG. 3.
(8 cms. long=
3.1 inches.)



FIG. 4.
(10 cms. long=
3.9 inches.)

PLATE XXI.

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REG. NOS.: 1821/25437
E139/E117

SHAMANISTIC CHARMS

is so stylised as to be identifiable only by the symbolic beak. The function of Fig. 4 is similar, whereas its form is that of a land otter carved from the tooth of an Alaskan brown bear. The minor figures consist of a man lying ventrally to the lower jaw and clasping it with his hands at the posterior end of each ramus and with his feet near the symphysis. The bear (?) lying ventrally to the abdomen and held there by the limbs of the otter, and another human form situated dorsally and having the feet immediately posterior to the ears of the otter.

The specimen illustrated in Plate XX, fig. 1, is scarcely four inches long and is drilled with holes for attachment to the Shaman's apron of hide or a blanket. It represents a sea otter with a figure in the mouth. On the back are carved two human faces and tail is in the form of a fish's head. Fig. 2 is of a bear holding a land otter in its mouth and a salmon under each leg: following it is a bird. Plate XXI, fig. 1 also represents a bear with a human form in the mouth and another lying ventrally to the abdomen. Plate XX, fig. 3 represents the head of a raven and fig. 4 that of a crane, both being worn attached to the neck ring or skin dress.

Plate XXI, fig. 2, is a small three-inch but well-executed carving of a highly stylised killer whale. Fig. 3 is a salmon and Fig. 4 an elongated representation of a land otter.

Plate XIX, fig. 2, is an interesting representation of a squid or cuttle fish which is one of the animistic spirits associated with Shamanism. The numerous circular depressions represent the suckers.

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EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MR. SCHUYLER CAMMANN, a student of Tibetan Culture, visited the Museum on September 30th last, and examined the Tibetan Collection. He expressed interest in the two crystal masks about which we published some notes (H. G. Beasley. *Ethnologia Cranmorensis* I—1937) and has since made some comments which we publish below.

“When I read Mr. Beasley’s article, I failed to see why he thought that the first mask necessarily portrayed the features of Palden Lhamo, rather than any one of a number of fierce, three-eyed Dharmapala forms; and I also felt reasonably sure that the masks were not from the eastern districts of Tibet as he intimated in the last paragraph, but rather, from Nepal. I had seen in various collections, numerous Nepalese ikons which portrayed divinities, Hindu and Lamaist as well, in precious stones,—always with care to the precise iconographical colour (Vishnu or Krishna in lapis lazuli, Amitayus in coral, etc.) and among these, deities usually shown in white when painted had been given crystal faces. (Note Waddell’s description of the Lamaist Heavens, and the stones used to represent their colours, in *the Lamaism of Tibet*.) Though the ikon-faces were made to a smaller scale, there was no doubt in my mind as to similarities in workmanship and technique. By inference, then, as Palden Lhamo is always shown as a blue goddess, I assumed that the masks in your collection, if Nepalese, were more likely intended to represent the White Mahakala (Tib. mGompo Karpo), a god of Wealth, not only because crystal is synonymous for white in Lama-lore, but also because the water-stoups, similar to mask II, are said to represent Mahakala.

“This theory as to the significance of the colour received a setback when I visited the American Museum of Natural History, and found a phurbu dagger of some gold alloy, with a small crystal mask set into the handle, of exactly the same style as yours. The heads fashioned on such ritual daggers are generally supposed to represent Hayagriva—the

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

fierce Dharmapala who usually wears a horse's head in his headdress—and Hayagriva is always shown in red. I have seen exceptions (in dities) on phurbu handles, and this may be one, but if it is not an exception my colour theory is valueless. On the other hand the workmanship of the dagger as a whole was unmistakably Nepalese in style, though there was no mention of its origin in the museum's private catalogue.

“I am reasonably sure that no such work ever came out of Eastern Tibet—meaning the province of Sikang (Cham)—as while I have never actually travelled in that province, I have examined all the objects from there in the large collections of the West China University Museum, besides having had access to smaller private collections, and having visited a few lamaseries near the border, in W. Szechuan and N.W. Yunnan. The only kind of Cham-pa stonework I've ever seen was in the form of rough-cut, polished turquoise and coral chips neatly mounted to make head ornaments, knife-mounts, etc. The metalwork of Sikang, centring around Derge, is renowned, but the Cham-pa folk could never claim to match the Nepalese as workers in stone if the things I have seen are any criteria.”

SCHUYLER CAMMANN.

2, West Merrick Road,
Merrick, Long Island, N.Y., U.S.A.

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