

The Kidnapped Bride

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RÉSUMÉ

Il s'agit essentiellement d'une analyse de mythes tsimshian qui commencent par le ravissement d'une princesse par les Grizzly et qui se terminent par le ravissement de la fiancée de son fils par les Epaulards. Le héros, *Gunaxnesemgad*, va à la rescousse de sa femme et la sauve avant qu'on ne lui soude au dos une nageoire d'épaulard. On se propose de démontrer la nécessité logique du ravissement: les Epaulards essaient de transformer la fiancée d'incorrecte en correcte, mais le héros la secourt trop tôt. Cet article explore la relation entre mythe et structure sociale, et la nature des composantes de l'action mythique qui rendent possible l'analyse comparative des mythes.

GunaxnesEmgad, the son of *Tsagatilao*, gives his newly-wed bride the skin of a white sea-otter. When she goes to wash a spot of blood from the fur, she is kidnapped by the killer-whales. Her husband rushes to her rescue. Just before the killer-whales are to change her into one of themselves by welding a fin to her back, *GunaxnesEmgad* rescues her. Reunited with his wife, he takes the name, *Yagakunesk*, and gives a potlatch to the supernatural beings of the sea. He then leaves his people and returns to his father in the lake.

These are the final events in a Tsimshian myth (M1)* which begins with a princess being abducted by the grizzly-bears. She escapes, and arrives at the shore of a lake with the bears in hot

* For this and following references to the corpus (M1-M26), see below. Appendix.

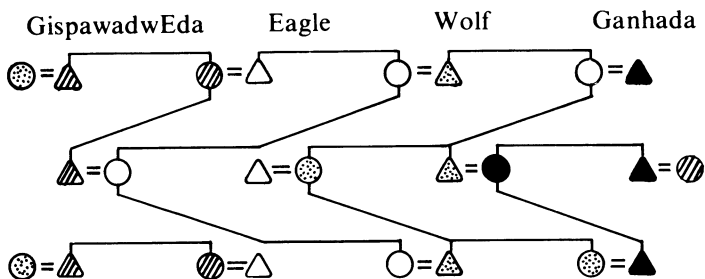
pursuit. *Tsagatilao* takes her aboard his copper canoe and kills the bears when she promises to be his wife. She dies through observing *Tsagatilao*'s first wife, Wolverine-woman, eating. Her husband slays Wolverine-woman and, using the heart, revives his young wife. She then bears a child, *GunaxnesEmgad*. When the young woman and her child return to her village, *GunaxnesEmgad* has diarrhoea. He and his mother are forced to live in the corner of the house among the poor people. He makes the copper canoe into copper shields, and marries his mother's brother's daughter. This is the kidnapped bride.

There is no immediately apparent logic that links this sequence of events together, although it is suggestive that killer-whales and grizzly-bears are both totem animals of the same clan, the *GispawadwEda* (Boas 1916:505). What I hope to show in the next few pages, is that the abduction is perfectly logical, in fact, necessary. I believe that this will reveal something about the nature of myth in general, when developed in the context of Tsimshian mythology and social structure. In order to do so, it is necessary to know something of Tsimshian kinship organisation, and to identify the actors in terms of their clan affiliations.

The Tsimshian Indians subdivided themselves into four clans (phratries, as per Boas (1916:488)), Eagle (*Lax-skik*), Wolf (*Lax-kebo*), *Ganhada*, and *GispawadwEda*. These were matrilineal and exogamous. It has been argued elsewhere (e.g. Ackerman 1975), that there was a rule of patrilateral cross-cousin marriage, linking the clans in the following manner.

Associated with these clans were a number of totem animals, plants and artifacts (Boas 1916:503-506), which frequently appeared in the names given to children. Although the names belonged to the matriline of the child, the totem animals referred to were those of the father (Sapir 1915:27). Two appropriate examples might be the following names belonging to one of the Wolf groups among the Nisqa, "eagle flaps his wings slowly" and "big belly of bullhead" (Sapir 1915:23). It is also stated (Boas 1916:507) that a boy would ordinarily take the name of his mother's mother's brother, a girl of, her maternal grandmother. As indeed they should.

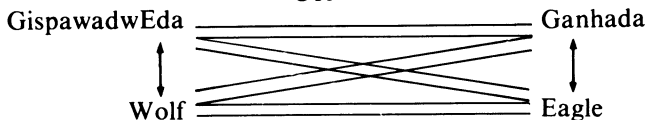
LOCI



LINES

- GispawadwEda
- Eagle
- Wolf
- Ganhada

OR



- interlocal exchanges of wives
- interlineal affinal relationships

FIG 1

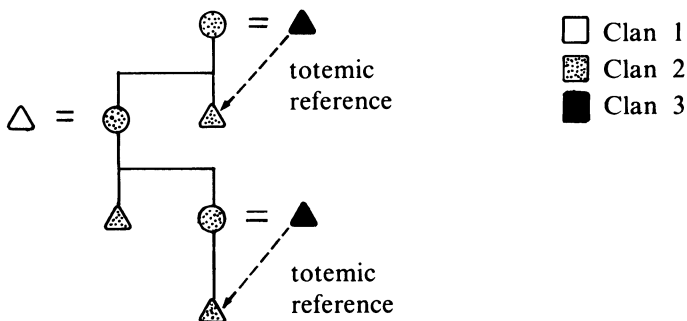


FIG 2

We can conceive of four chains of being, linking matrilineal males through their fathers.

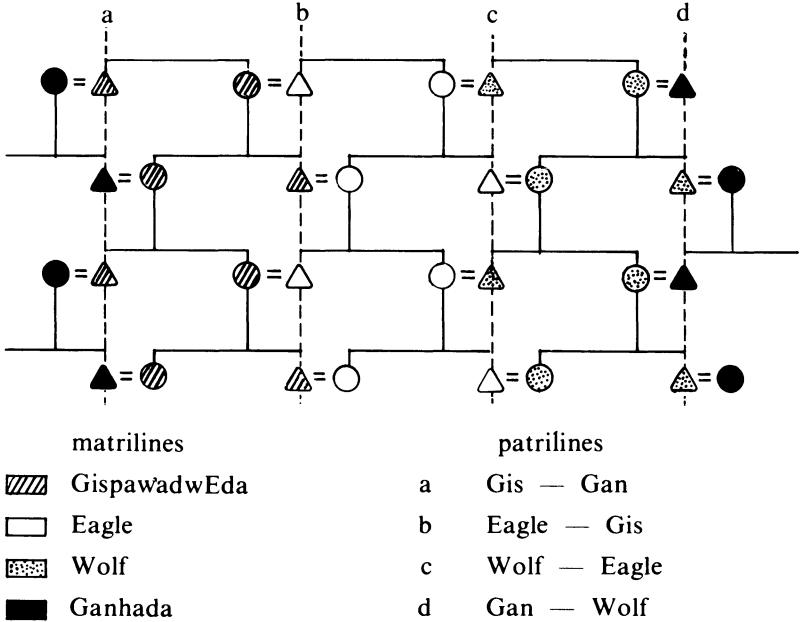


FIG 3

As has been argued previously (Campbell 1975), a recognition of this paternal connection is essential to an understanding of the process, and resolution of many Tsimshian myths. The following discussion will remain entirely consistent, both with the matrilinearity of the social system, and with the patrilinearity of the spiritual world. Let us return to the myths.

The first step must be the identification of the players in terms of their clan affiliations. That this is meaningful should become apparent in the following pages; for the moment, however, I will simply assume that the kinship relations between the actors provide one of the frameworks upon which the mythic action is founded. In the version of *GunaxnesEmgad* which has already

been encountered (M1), it is stated only that the myth belongs to the *Ganhada* (Raven) clan (Boas 1912:191). Myths were the jealousy guarded property of Tsimshian lineages, and their legitimate use received validation from the whole community, in terms of the participation of a lineage member or members in the events recounted. The participants in this story may be presented as follows.

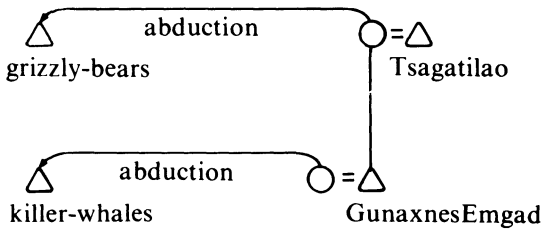


FIG 4

Grizzly-bears and killer-whales are totem animals of the *GispawadwEda*, and as such are certainly not *Ganhada* actors. Given that *GunaxnesEmgad's* mother married a grizzly-bear, and the marriage preferences (Fig. 1), it would seem likely that she, and hence, *GunaxnesEmgad*, were the *Ganhada* heroes of the piece. In *Dzaradilaw and his Copper Canoe* (M3) recorded by Barbeau, we find the same story of the princess captured by the grizzly-bears. She is saved by *Dzaradilaw* and bears a son, *Gamesnaerhl*. Barbeau concludes with the comment that the myth is continued elsewhere. *Gamasnaxl* (Neaby-killer-whale)¹ occurs in a myth recorded by Beynon (M4), where he is clearly identified as belonging to the *Ganhada* clan. In *The-Princess-Who-Picks-Up-Salmonberries* (M6), *GunaxnesEmgad's* mother is identified as *Ganhada*, further confirmation. What of *Tsagatilao*? *GunaxnesEmgad* (M1) takes a second name, *Yagakunesk*. We see this name again in M10, where he is the son of an underwater chief. His sister bears the name, "Killer-whales-are-ready-to-go-up", referring

¹ In the Beynon manuscript, only certain of the vowels are typed in, presumably those which appeared on an ordinary typewriter. Thus, what I have written as *Gamasnaxl* is recorded as *G m'asn x̄t*. Boas (1912:273) records the last part of the name as *n'a'x̄t*, meaning killer-whale. Beynon translates the name as "nearby black fish", synonymous with killer-whale.

to the phratric affiliation of her father. *Gamasnaxt* calls the killer-whale his “father”; for that matter, his name carries precisely that reference. What then of *GunaxnesEmgad’s* wife? Given that he married his mother’s brother’s daughter, that he is *Ganhada*, and that his father is *GispawadwEda*, we would expect from the model (Fig. 1) that she would belong to the Wolf clan. In M2, *Gunaqanesemgyet* has a slave, *Halus*. He sends *Halus* as an emissary to carry his proposal of marriage to his mother’s brother’s daughter. *Halus* betrays this trust and marries the woman himself. *Gunaqanesemgyet* takes her lame younger sister to wife. A series of tests of strength follow, in which *Halus* is exposed as incompetent and finally dies. This story occurs in another version, *Tsauda and Halus* (M5), where the sisters are identified as belonging to the Wolf clan. The identity of *GunaxnesEmgad* and *Tsauda* is further confirmed by M7 where the son of *Tsagatilao* is called by the latter name². The diagram (Fig. 4) may now be filled in.

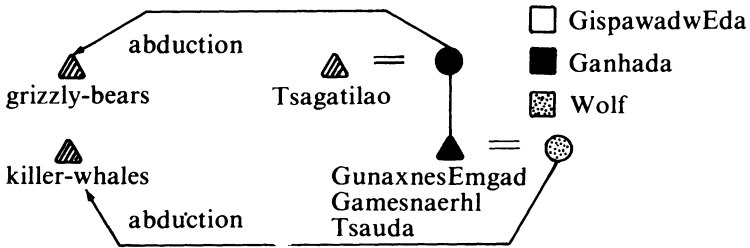


FIG 5

The meaning of the kidnapping episode should now be clear. As the myth (M1) states, “they cut wood to make a fin for your wife” (Boas 1916:177). The killer-whales wish to do so to make her into a killer-whale like themselves (Barbeau 1953:271). The Wolf bride will thus become a *GispawadwEda*, that is, the father’s sister’s daughter that *GunaxnesEmgad* should have married. *GunaxnesEmgad* succeeds in rescuing his wife before this transformation is effected. Then, as *Yagakunesk*, he goes to join his father in the lake, leaving behind a stone totem. Strangely reminiscent of *Asdiwal*, who goes away to his father’s home, leaving behind his stone body. *Asdiwal*, condemned by his trans-

² As above, *Tsauda* is only recorded as *Ts d*.

formation in the sea-lion's stomach (i.e., he becomes a "sea-lion"), dies (see Ackerman 1975). *GunaxnesEmgad*, by preventing the necessary transformation of his wife into a killer-whale, his correct bride, dies.

Tsauda (M5), however, acts correctly. He takes his wife under his shining wing and flies with her up to heaven. His father takes her and washes her in his tub. Thus she is transformed into a beautiful young woman. More than this, however, she is transformed into a *GispawadwEda*. I have discussed the imagery involved in the equation of box, stomach and womb at length elsewhere (Campbell 1974:32-39) whereby the flesh is removed and replaced. *Tsauda's* daughters are given by him to his mother-in-law to replace his wife's elder sister who was lost with *Halus*. This replacement by proxy, perhaps, adoption, is necessitated by the fact that *Tsauda's* wife is no longer a Wolf. The social continuity must be maintained by an artifice. *Tsauda* and his wife never came back.

In *The Myth of the Adventures of Gamasnaxt* (M4), the hero's wife is a member of the *GispawadwEda* clan. In this version he has married correctly, and as one might expect the story of the abduction is fundamentally different. *Gamasnaxt's* wife deceives her husband, taking a secret lover. *Gamasnaxt* finally succeeds in surprising the lover and slaying him. A storm arises, for this was the son of *Qwak*. His wife is kidnapped, not by the killer-whales, but by the sea-otter skin itself. *Gamasnaxt*, with the aid of a killer-whale, rescues her and they live happily ever after. If we reverse the action as in Fig. 6, the story line of another version of the story of *GunaxnesEmgad* appears, where his wife betrays him after he has rescued her from the killer-whales (M15).

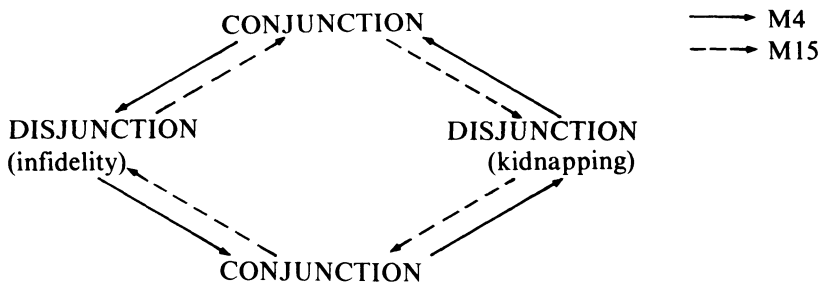


FIG 6

The story opens quite differently but congruency is soon established. A seal hunter and three companions set out in their canoe. His companions insult a supernatural sea-anemone, and as a result they are trapped on a small island by a storm. The three men die of starvation, and only the seal hunter is left. The storm abates, and he sets out with his three companions placed in the canoe as if they were alive. He encounters a man "all alone in a very bright canoe" (Barbeau 1950:277) who revives the dead men. He gives the seal hunter his canoe and a spirit club. Even though he is not named, this man in the shining canoe with the magic club is clearly *Tsagatillao*. The seal hunter becomes *Tsagatillao* by entering the canoe. He is prohibited from intercourse with his wife for four years, but breaks the taboo and impregnates his wife. She goes to her uncle. "He was not pleased to see them, and when the boy cried he chased them to one corner of the house, keeping them in great humiliation" (Barbeau 1950:278). Nonetheless, *Gunarhnesemgyet* becomes a great hunter and marries his mother's brother's daughter. The abduction, and rescue follow. The wife takes a lover. *Gunarhnesemgyet* kills him. His wife only eats the sexual organs of seals, so he feeds her those of her lover and she dies. It is the prince of the wolves that he has killed, and when they attack, he takes his son and flees. He comes to the home of a supernatural chief. They have a contest, and *Gunarhnesemgyet* kills the chief. "Now the dead chief's wife was a very beautiful woman, and *Gunarhnesemgyet*, in love with her, had intercourse with her. This was to be his downfall" (Barbeau 1950:281). He forgets his club, and is killed by the Stikine. If we diagram this ending, it is soon apparent why sexual congress with the supernatural chief's wife was terminal for *Gunarhnesemgyet*. As we already know, *Gunarhnesemgyet's* wife is a member of the Wolf clan. Thus, not only is she unfaithful, but she is unfaithful with a clan brother. In another version of the myth (M14), the supernatural chief has two monster wolves as helpers, and is himself a Wolf. Taking the model (Fig. 1), we know that this chief's wife was a *Ganhada*, *Gunarhnesemgyet's* clan sister. Small wonder "this was to be his downfall".

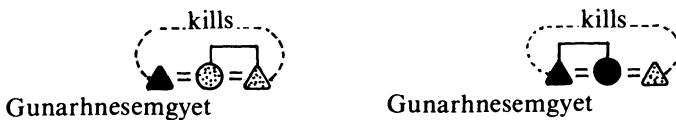


FIG 7

The story takes us inexorably from matrilateral marriage, reiterated by virtue of the rescue, through reiterated incest, to ignominious death. *Gunarhnesemgyet*'s head is impaled on the top of a cedar tree, giving warning of invaders (M15).

Boas collected another version of the story of the hero cuckolded by the prince of the wolves (M16). This myth also involves incest, but the difference between the two acts of incest is vital. *Gunarhnesemgyet* (M15) escapes the vengeance of the wolves. It is the bride of a supernatural being that he takes to wife. The hero of M16, on the other hand, is adopted by the Wolf Mother. She gives a feast to all the wild animals, saying,

"I will show you my adopted son, who has taken my own son's place. You shall honor him, and you shall not hurt him, and I will give my brother my two daughters to be his wives." (Boas 1916:320)

As an animal, the hero marries his two "sisters". That this is legitimate, is underlined by the myth in having the Wolf Mother give a feast where she announces the adoption and the marriage. Clearly, animals marry like, in contrast to men who must marry someone different. This dichotomy between the human and animal spheres lies at the base of the two different myths of the princess kidnapped by the bears. In *the Story of Part Summer* (M18) and its variants (M19, M20) the princess is abducted by the black bears. She goes with her black bear husband to his den in the mountains and waits to be rescued by her brothers. Finally, her youngest brother with his two dogs, Red and Spots (or his dog, *Maesk* (M19, M20), arrives at the base of the mountain where his sister is living. He kills the bear and returns to his village with his sister and her two cubs. The cubs are later insulted and return to their father. Black bears are totem animals of the Wolf clan to which Part Summer (*Xpisunt*) also belongs (Barbeau 1929:131). In contrast to the very human-like village of the grizzly-bears, the black bears live in dens. The princess does not escape, but must be rescued. Her cubs return to their father who is at one and the same time their "mother's brother".

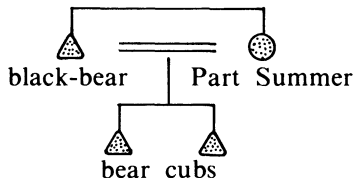


FIG 8

In the human world, this integration of matri- and patri- principles is accomplished across an intervening generation; the father's father is, at one and the same time, the mother's mother's brother. This is, of course, true only in the case of a patrilateral marriage.

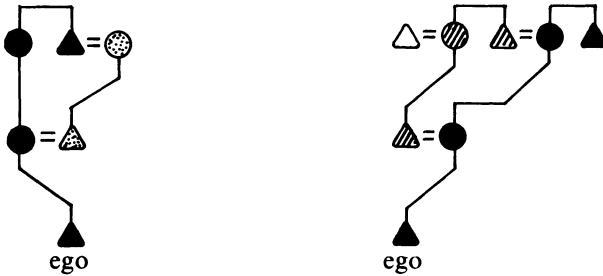


FIG. 9

Gunarhnesemgyet has married his mother's brother's daughter, and by rescuing her has prevented the realisation of the ideal state. As he is an incomplete continuation of *Tsagatilao*, that is, only of the semen, his incestuous relationship is counterproductive. It delays the reincarnation of *Tsagatilao*. By again denying his father, he is made to forget the magic club, and there is no happy reunion with his father. His head sits at the top of a tree and says, "This was the end of *Gunarhnesemgyet*" (Barbeau 1950:282).

This matrilateral marriage lies at the heart of the final action in the story of *GunaxnesEmgad*. It also lies at the heart of the confusion about Tsimshian marriage preferences, in that it was these mythic references to mother's brother's daughter marriage that led Boas (1916:440) to suggest that this was the normal pattern. There are those (M21, M22) wherein the aspiration or realisation of such a marriage clearly leads to disaster. On the other hand, there are the stories of the deserted prince (M23, M24, M25) which end with the marriage of the hero to his mother's brother's daughter. These bear striking similarity to part of the myth of *GunaxnesEmgad*. *GunaxnesEmgad* is rejected by his uncles, forced to live in "great humiliation" (M15) or even in a small hut, some distance from the village (M8). Unobserved, he becomes a great hunter. In one version (M2), there is an episode involving a slave woman who feeds her child with a piece of seal meat that she has smuggled back from *Gunaxanesemgyet*. The child chokes, and

thereby the chief discovers that *Gunaxanesemgyet* is a great hunter. Thence follows the marriage to the mother's brother's daughter, and the hero becomes a chief. Like the deserted prince, *Gunaxnes-Emgad* is in a state of isolation. In that state, he is successful during a period of famine. Through the agency of a slave's greed and deceit, he is discovered. With the marriage of his uncle's daughter, he is brought back into society, with his rightful status as a chief. *GunaxnesEmgad* is overgenerous with his excrement, the deserted prince, with his presents of food to the eagles. They both enter a state of social disjunction. They are both reincorporated. The role of matrilateral cross-cousin marriage in this reincorporation, I believe, is precisely that of negating the negation. If we assign a positive value to society and a negative one to isolation, then two negative acts are required to move the individual out of society into isolation and back into society. The state of isolation appears to be necessary for the acquisition or development of super-human powers. The reincorporation is essential so that society may benefit from those powers.

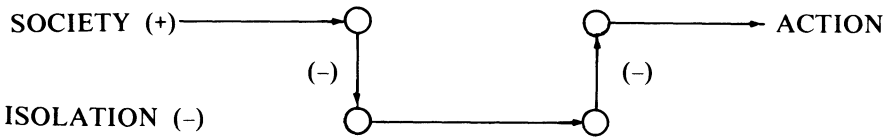


FIG. 10

In M26, the hero has already married his mother's brother's daughter. As a result, he is not fully reincorporated and turns into a monster.

Therefore, *GunaxnesEmgad* must marry his mother's brother's daughter as the price of his admittance into society. In so doing, however, he overstates the matrilineal connection at the expense of his father. When he rescues his wife from the killer-whales, and thus kills his "fathers" (M1, M2) *GunaxnesEmgad* loses his last chance. The gallant rescue is the last act of the tragedy. That it is tragic, and not merely the victory of the matrilineal principle over the patrilineal one, is evident when we turn to another myth of abduction. In *The Stars* (M17), a young boy is kidnapped by the

stars. His father goes to his rescue. With the aid of the slave, *Gixsantsantx*, who swells up to obstruct the pursuing star people, the father is successful in recovering his son. This same slave is seen in the *GunaxnesEmgad* story, and it is his swollen body that permits the hero to make good his escape. The myth of the stars, in close reading, is clearly about the conflict between avuncularity and patrilocality, with the victory apparently going to the father. As with the myth of *Asdiwal* noted earlier, matrilineal marriage and patri-filiation are associated. As with *Asdiwal*, the hero reaches a point of no return. There are no longer any means to escape his fate, and he goes to join his father.

The marriage to the wrong woman is not, however, an exploration in myth of the possibilities of an alternative marriage rule. This sort of exercise is performed in the case of M22, where the marriage leads to estrangement between the young man and his mother's brother, and in the end his rightful inheritance, and that of those to follow him, is lost to the lineage forever. His uncle bestows all of his property and prerogatives upon the child of his daughter. There is no way in which the myth of *Gunaxnes-Emgad*, or that of the deserted prince, may be so regarded. The matrilineal marriage is simply an event, which the myth attempts to erase. If, however, we look at the marriage as suggested earlier, as the negation of the negation, the means whereby the outcast may be reincorporated, another possibility emerges. *Gunaxnes-Emgad* may be seen as without any options. If he allows the abduction to achieve its desired result, he loses his chance for a social life. If he prevents the transformation, he loses his life. It is a statement about the quest for power and knowledge. To become powerful is to become marginal, and this marginality is revocable only at the expense of the power. *GunaxnesEmgad* is the prototypical shaman.

The direction that this sort of analysis seems to lead toward is a consideration of myths as expressions and explorations of fundamental human dilemmas. Although the means are clearly those of a certain type of logic, the motives are not necessarily so limited. As, for example, in the case of the myth of *Txämsem* (Campbell 1975), it is not the resolution of a dichotomy of two abstract notions, life and death, that provides the driving force

of the myth, but rather the profound psychological and emotional impact of individual death as a real and unavoidable "fact of life". I do not suggest that I have come to any such clear statement of the underlying motive for the myth of *GunaxnesEmgad*, which would certainly involve attempting to properly understand the meaning of the abduction of the princess by the grizzly-bears which is where the whole story begins. In fact, I think that I have only laid the groundwork for this kind of consideration at some later date.

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APPENDIX

Myths cited

- M 1 *Story of GunaxnesEmgad* (Boas 1912:146-191).
 M 2 *Tsagatilao* (Boas 1895:294-300).
 M 3 *Dzaradilaw and his Copper Canoe* (Barbeau 1961:60-62).
 M 4 *The Myth of the Adventures of G m'asn xl* (Beynon 100).
 M 5 *Tsauda and Halus* (Boas 1916: 297-306).
 M 6 *The Princess Picks Up Salmonberries* (Barbeau 1953:129-146).
 M 7 *The Myth of the Princess Taken by the Bear* and also *The Myth of Dzagadil, the father of Ts d* (Beynon 5).
 M 8 *The Young Woman Rhpisunt Who Married a Grizzly Bear* (Barbeau 1953:108-117).
 M 9 *Yagawono'osk* (Boas 1895:293).
 M10 *The Water Being Who Married the Princess* (Boas 1916:272-7).
 M11 *Gunarhnesemgyet* (Barbeau 1953:269-273).
 M12 *Gunarhnesemgyet* (Barbeau 1950:282-283).
 M13 *The Supernatural Woman Captured* (Barbeau 1953:296-300).
 M14 *The Myth of the Deer-Hoof Garment* (Barbeau 1953:273-286).
 M15 *Gunarhnesemgyet* (Barbeau 1950:276-282).
 M16 *The Prince and Prince Wolf* (Boas 1916:317-322).
 M17 *The Stars* (Boas 1902:86-93).
 M18 *The Story of Part Summer* (Boas 1916:278-284).
 M19 *The Princess Captured by the Grizzly Bears* (Barbeau 1953:117-129).
 M20 *The Myth of Bear Mother* (Barbeau 1950:193-202).
 M21 *The Princess Who Rejected Her Cousin* (Boas 1916:185-192).
 M22 *The Young Chief Who Married His Cousin* (Boas 1916:238-243).
 M23 *The Prince Who Was Deserted* (Boas 1916:225-232).
 M24 *Little-Eagle* (Boas 1902:169-187).
 M25 *Ts'enlaek (der Verlassene)* (Boas 1895:300-304).
 M26 *Growing-up-like-one-who-has-a-Grandmother* (Boas 1902:137-168).