A Bella Coola tale

Hank Nater

Abstract: Most Bella Coola stories belong in one of two categories: (1) *sma* ‘publicly shared parable (involving animals and/or animated objects)’ and (2) *sʔałac’i* ‘familially owned account (with human participants)’. However, in a few tales, we find, beside realistic (*sʔałac’i*) components (location, human participants and activities), purely imaginary (*sma*) elements as well (e.g. supernatural places, people interacting with animals in an unusual manner, transformations). The text presented in this paper provides a good sample of this intermediate category.

Keywords: Salish, Bella Coola, oral traditions, story genres, genre overlap

1 Introduction

The text displayed in Section 3 below is a transcription-interpretation of “The Frog Children”, a story told by the late Dr. Margaret Siwallace, and recorded, over forty years ago.

In terms of native genre, this tale is neither entirely realistic nor wholly otherworldly. The narrator initially identifies the story as a *sʔałac’i* ‘report’, but subsequently uses the verb *smsmayəm*k ‘to tell as a parable’ (← *sma* ‘parable’): see the underlined sequences in the text (lines 1–3). This story is a *sʔałac’i* insofar as it belongs to the narrator, yet it has – like a *sma* – a moral: **DO NOT DISDAIN THOSE THAT MAY APPEAR INFERIOR TO YOU.** Realistic elements are location (Kitlope), the main character (a chief’s daughter, though unnamed), and seasonal activity (Indian rice harvest), but the Frog Clan is certainly of a more fictitious nature, as are frog-human interaction and frog-to-human/human-to-frog transformations.

From a European perspective, this story might be considered a myth or legend, and is similar to “The Frog King or Iron Henry”, the well-known fairy tale (as recorded by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm) about a frog to whom there is more than meets the eye.

2 Symbols and abbreviations, grammatical information

The symbol .ASCII (“Combining Inverted Bridge Below”) follows proclitics and precedes enclitics, a hyphen follows prefixes and precedes suffixes, a colon precedes a reduplicated consonant; **ACC** accidentally, **APP** applicative, **ART** article, **BEN** benefactive, **CAUS** causative, **CL** enclitic or enclitic cluster, **CONN** connective, **DEF** definite, **DEM** demonstrative, **DIM** diminutive, **DIR** directional, **FEM** feminine, **HYP** hypothetical, **INCH** inchoative, **INDEF** indefinite, **INT** intensive-distributive,
MED medium, NOM nominalizer, OBJ object, PASS passive, PL plural, PREP preposition, PRG progressive-durative, PROX proximate, RECIP reciprocal, REFL reflexive, REM remote, REP repetitive, SEP separated, SG singular, SUB subject.

Prepositions (PREP) found in the text are: ?at/ʔat ‘at’, x ‘via’, ?at/ʔal ‘towards’.


3 The text

(1) way ?alac’i-c_suc’ x,t’ayx ʔcaytχʷ-t’ayx
    well tell.story-1SG_CL PREP ART Kitlope-from CL
    ti,s?alac’i_t’ayx ART story DEM
    ‘Well, I’ll tell you another story now, this story from Kitlope.’

(2) ?alʔaʔayk’ ?aʔt’ayx ʔcaytχʷ
    PREP ART old PREP Kitlope
    s-sm:ya-amk-im k’uʔk’u
    CONN-tell.parable.REP-APP-PASS.3SG_CL DEM
    ‘Long ago, such legends were often told in Kitlope.’

(3) tix-s_c’ taʔk’uʔk’uʔpi-1-c,t’ayx
    be.him-3SG_CL ART.grandfather-late-1SG_ART
    ti,s?sm:ya-amk-t’ayx ʔulʔnc
    ART tell.parable.REP-APP DEM PREP me
    ?aʔaʔpacal-1c,ck ʔaʔt’ayx ʔcaytχʷ
    PREP ART first-1PL_CL PREP Kitlope
    ‘It is my grandfather who told me stories that we inherited from our Kitlope ancestors.’
A long time ago, a number of women decided to go digging for wild rice, and they went to a place where they dug for wild rice.

And the chief’s daughter went along with these diggers.

And she started digging.

And she unintentionally proceeded to dig up a frog.

She threw away the frog.

But she seemed to be followed constantly by the frog, as she kept digging it up.

And she kept talking to it like that, over and over.
(12) ta:tyamk-i-s
discard.REP-3SG.OBJ-3SG.SUB
s-ʔixsxuuxʷc-m-i-s
CONN-INT-bad-mouth.REP-APP-3SG.OBJ-3SG.SUB
‘She kept throwing it away and swearing at it.’

(13) ?ux-uq’ʔ-tmaxʷ-aʔic’ičk tuxnas-uksʔ'tų
INT-call-RECIP-3PL_CL ART_woman-PL_ART
s-ʔc’usm-s_c’ ʔaʔac
CONN-dusk-3SG_CL PREP_ART DEM
‘Then the women called each other as dusk had arrived.’

(14) ƛ’aʔp-s_c’ s-ka_kl-s ta_snyʕicaid
start-3SG_CL CONN-HYP_fall-3SG ART_sun_ART
‘Now the sun began to set.’

INT-call-RECIP-3PL_CL CONN-HYP_return-3PL PREP_ART village_ART
‘They called each other and started going back to the village.’

(16) k’x-i-s_kʷc’ c’ayx ti_ya:yaasi ti_caacit
see-3SG.OBJ-3SG.SUB_CL DEM ART_handsome ART_young
s-ya:ya-liwa-s_kʷtuu ti_caacit t’ayx
CONN-good-…like-3SG_CL ART_young DEM
‘Then the girl saw this handsome young man, a well-built young man.’

(17) ?ay-uc_kʷc’ t’ayx s-ka_ʔaʔ-ka-n-i-s
be.thus-mouth_CL DEM CONN-HYP_PRG_take-3SG.OBJ-3SG.SUB
s-ka_kaw-ʔa-i-s ʔul_suʔu
CONN-HYP_deliver-foot-3SG.OBJ-3SG.SUB PREP_ART home-3SG ART
‘He said to her that he would take her, that he would walk her home.’

(18) k’il-txʷumat-tu-m_kʷmakʷuc’ c’ayx x_ła_mackʷ
without-direction-CAUS-3SG.PASS_CL DEM PREP_ART frog
TA_CAACIT ART_young ART
‘Then she was made to lose her way by the young man who was a frog.’
‘It was the frog that she had been casting aside who had become a young man to her.’

‘He now took her to his home, to the place where the Frog Clan resides at Kitlope’.

‘Then the young woman had two frog babies.’

‘Well, she told her children:’

‘Way over yonder is my father’s house, way over yonder.’

‘There are two totem poles in front.’
(26) “q’lum-apʔic’ikʔat,tim:mnnta,tx kaɬ’ap-ap s-kaʔanayk-ap
climb-2PL,CL PREP,ART,steps,ART HYP,go-2PL CONN-HYP,want-2PL
s-kaʔk’x-i-p
ta,uk,pi-l-ap,
CONN-HYP,see-3SG.OBJ,2PL,SUB ART,grandfather-SEP-2PL
?n lə,stan-l-c”
ART,father-SEP-1SG and ART,mother-SEP-1SG
“Climb the steps if you go and want to see your grandfather, my father
and mother.”

(27) cu:cut-s,k’tuu c’ayxʔat,tx
say.REP-3SG.CL DEM PREP,DEM
‘She told them this repeatedly.’

(28) ?ay-na,k’wiluc’ik tu,mn:mnk’w-i,tx s-kaɬ’ap-aw
be.thus-3PL,CL ART,frog-DIM,ART CONN-HYP,go-3PL
‘And the frog children did go on their way now.’

(29) k’x-i-t,k’alu ta,uk,pi-naw,tx
see-3SG.OBJ-3PL,SUB,CL ART,grandfather-3PL,ART
‘They tried to see their grandfather.’

(30) q’lum-a,k’aluk’wut’a,txʔat,ta,mn:mnnta,txʔu-ɬ’uk’
climb-3PL,CL DEM PREP,ART,steps,ART DIR-high
‘They tried to climb up the steps.’

(31) c’ɔl,tim,k’w,u t’a,tx
kick-3PL,PASS,CL DEM
‘But they were kicked [off the steps] over and over.’

(32)ʔatʔatelay-naw,tuʔatc
PRG,REP-be.thus-3PL,CL DEM
‘This happened to them again and again.’

(33) “qi:χyuØmack’wʔatc!”
useless ART,frog,ART
“These useless frogs!”

(34) cu:cut-m,tim,k’w
say.REP,APPL-3PL,PASS,CL
‘That is what they kept saying about them.’

(35) q’lum-a,k’aluk’w
climb-3PL,CL
‘But they kept on climbing.’
And they were treated the same way again and again.

The older brother tried to carry his little sister.

But again, they were kicked and made to fall [off the steps].

And every time they almost reached the top [of the steps], they were treated the same way.

They had to go back to their mother.

And they described to her what had happened to them.

Alright, maybe I should take you to them.

So she, their mother, spoke.

Then she changed herself into a human being.
(45) ?ic’ama-y-anm-s s-ka˽ƛ’ap-s
blanket-become-3SG CONN-HYP.go-3SG
s-ka˽ʔal-kʷn-ti-s
CONN-HYP-PRG-take-3PL.OBJ-3SG.SUB
‘She wrapped herself in a blanket and carried them with her.’

(46) c’kt-s˽kʷu ?ul˽ti˽ʔapsul˽t’aiy s-k’x-im c’
arrive-3SG CL PREP_ART.village_DEM CONN-see-3SG-PASS.CL
s-cix-s ?ił
CONN-be.her-3SG DEM
‘When she arrived at the village, the people saw that it was her.’

(47) wa-s s-ʔa˧-k’il-txʷumat-s c’aiy
who-3SG CONN-PRG-without-direction-3SG DEM
ʔal˽ta˽sul˽t’ų
PREP_ART.village_ART
‘That she was the one who had strayed from the village.’

(48) ?ay-uc-s˽kʷ c’aiy
be.thus-mouth-3SG_CL DEM
s-ka˽nu-t’xʷ-als-m-aw
CONN-HYP.inside-sweep-house-MED-3PL
s-ka˽nu-ʔyaw-als-m-aw
CONN-HYP.change-house-MED-3PL
ʔal˽a˽ka˽pacaɬ s-ka˽ʔustxʷ-s ?u˽t’ų
PREP_ART.HYP.first CONN-HYP.enter-3SG PREP_DEM
‘She told them to sweep and change [the sand in] the house before she would go in.’

(49) ?ay-na kʷ?iluc’ik s-nu-t’xʷ-als-m-aw
be.thus-3PL.CL CONN-inside-sweep-house-MED-3PL
‘And they did sweep the house.’

(50) ?ustxʷ-s
enter-3SG
‘And she went inside.’

(51) “χl:χl tu-ti-c wa_mn:mnnc_c_alu˽ʔac
sent.REP-CAUS-3PL.OBJ-1SG.SUB ART.children-1SG_CL DEM
ʔul˽ʔinu s-ka˽k’x-tap x˽c”
PREP.you CONN-HYP.see-2PL.PASS PREP_DEM
“One sent my children to you for you to be seen by them.”
(52) “c’ʔln-tim,kʷʔitkʷuk ʔaɬti₉mn:mnnta₉t’ayx siʔay-naw
kick-3PL.PASS_CL PREP_ART_steps_DEM CONN-be.thus-3PL
s-lip’cut-aw ʔuɬʔnc’
CONN-return-3PL PREP_ME
“But they were kicked off these steps over and over, that is why they
came back to me.”

(53) “ʔalac’-amk-cut-aw sʔal-kʷn-ti-c˽ʔic’ik ʔuɬʔini
tell-APP-REFL-3PL CONN-PRG-take-3PL.OBJ-1SG.SUB_CL PREPYOU
s-ka₉k’x-ti-xʷ”
CONN-HYP see-3PL.OBL-2SG.SUB
“They told me what happened to them, so I brought them to you for
you to see them.”

(54) cut-s₉kʷc’ ʔiɬcaacti🔗ʔiɬ ʔuɬta><?=sp t₉χ
say-3SG.CL ART_young_ART PREP_ART_father-3SG_ART
“That’s what the young woman said to her father.’

(55) skʷ-uut-m-s₉kʷc’ ʔiɬʔiɬ ʔuɬki₉kʷƛ’-ti-s
untie-garment-MED-3SG.CL DEM CONN-HYP place-3PL.OBJ-3SG.SUB
tu_mackʷ tu₉mn:mnmc-s₉t₉xʷ ʔuɬta_kʷʔululmx_t₉χ
ART_frog ART_children-3SG_ART PREP_ART_ground_ART
‘Then she opened the blanket she was wearing, and placed her frog
children on the ground.’

(56) xʷplˌχs t’ayx
end DEM
‘That’s the end [of the story].’

References

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