THE ORIGIN OF HERRING:
RE-EXAMINATION OF AN 1894 KWAKW'ALA TEXT

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> [T]he mythical value of the myth is preserved through the worst translation. Whatever our ignorance of the language and the culture of the people where it originated, a myth is still felt as a myth by any reader anywhere in the world (Levi-Strauss 1963:210).

On October 4, 1894, Franz Boas was told a dirty story and didn't know it.[1]

The story was a "myth"[2] which describes the origin, or at least a magical local manifestation, of herring. Boas dutifully transcribed and translated the text, but he didn't understand it. Boas' mistakes and misinterpretations are so numerous that, in the English version, the story seems incoherent.

The story is in fact perfectly coherent, if somewhat ribald. His translation, if not the worst conceivable, is at least a very bad one, and we are left wondering how much of the "mythical value" of a myth really does emerge in a bad translation. The truth about the origin of herring is bound up in word play and metaphor, and hidden in a word or two which Boas simply didn't understand.

Once its true content is revealed, this text points to some extremely interesting lines of inquiry for further research. The disingenuous sexual

[1] The date could be October 5th; dated through Boas' Field Notes and Letters of Franz Boas to Marie Boas, October 3, 1894 (1 and 2); Letters of Franz Boas to his parents, October 3, 1894 (1 and 2; see also Rohner 1969). My attention was first called to this text, and to the existence of field notes and correspondence from the time of the collection of the text, by Ralph Maud.

[2] Nuyem "myth, tradition" in Kwakw'ala.

humor in the text coexists with -- and indeed is a commentary on -- more serious topics, such as the nature of transformation, and the relationship between the animal-people who are story characters and their everyday counterparts in forest and sea.

1. Provenience of the text.

On that day in October, 1894, Boas was confined in bad weather on a steamship bound for Kincolith, British Columbia, to continue his survey of British Columbia Indians for the British Association for the Advancement of Science (Boas Letters; Rohner 1969:81-83). Boas was suffering badly from boredom, inactivity, and the expectation of seasickness. He was a workaholic deprived of his work, and the Barbara Boskowitz was so crowded with stacks of wood and oil barrels that he couldn't even pace the deck.

His only solace was an Indian hand on the boat who had promised to tell him some "folktales." Boas quickly pressed this Indian, a Kwakw'ala-speaking Ǩaǩemgilisala villager named Ǫumgiles, into the service of Science (Boas 1910: 186-7). He pumped Ǫumgiles for three days, rain or shine, ceasing only when the Indian left the boat at Alert Bay, with, we can imagine, some relief.[1]

In those three days of miserable autumn weather, Boas had obtained, among other things, a series of traditional stories in Kwakw'ala, most of which were eventually published some fifteen years later in a volume called Kwakiutl tales (1910:187-244). These stories recount certain of the cosmogonical efforts of Ǫániqilaǩ (Ǫániqilax̌), the Kwagul Transformer. They are rare in the voluminous Kwakw'ala material published by Boas in that they were collected in the field by Boas himself, rather than written down by George Hunt.

Boas' surviving field notes from 1894 show that his acquaintance with Kwakw'ala was as yet brief and superficial, and his transcription skills undeveloped. The fact that he did not transmit these texts for publication in 1900 with the others obtained by George Hunt (1905, 1906) seems to indicate that he was waiting for the opportunity to revise his

[1] Letter to parents, ibid. The port of departure may have been Fort Rupert.

transcription. He subsequently undertook such revisions, perhaps with the assistance of George Hunt, or perhaps with William Brotchie, a half-Ǩemgis resident of Alert Bay whom he had consulted extensively for the 1905 volume of texts (1905:3).

In these consultations Boas seems to have neglected translation to focus on transcription. He apparently felt confident enough to leave the glosses from his original field notes in place, and the eventual 1910 publication preserves a number of mistakes and misinterpretations. One error persisted in glossary and dictionary throughout his whole life (Boas 1921:1436-7; Boas n.d.: 441).

Figure 1 shows the text of on of these Ḳâniqîlaẍ stories, "Ḳâniqîlaẍ and Ċâċu," as it originally appeared in the 1910 volume (1910:190-1). I have altered it only to the extent of placing the Kwakw'ala above the English; the two were situated on facing pages in the original.

A casual glance leaves the reader with many questions. Why does Ḳaniqîlaẍ command Qolachen-Woman to stay off the beach? What is their relationship that Ḳaniqîlaẍ cares one way or another about her actions? What's the significance, whether in ordinary narrative logic or in non-logical mythical symbolism, of the dried herring? What do the herring have to do with gambling?

There are two methods for getting at the truth about the herring, either of which is sufficient by itself. One is retranslation, the other is "rhetorical" analysis (cf. Hymes 1981). Translation in the strictest sense looks at what words and sentences mean. Rhetorical analysis looks at the way the narrator uses words and sentences to tell a story, the way in which topic and setting are established and then change, the way in which imagery and the actions and responses of story actors are patterned. Though rhetorical analysis deals with a "higher" level of linguistic organization than translation, let us begin first with it.

3. "Ḳâniqîlaẍ and Ċâċu": Rhetorical structure.

The body of Boas' text is printed as a prose paragraph. As the first step in rhetorical analysis, let us rewrite text and translation (using an

Q!a'nēqi'lax" and Ts!a'ts'o.

"Gē'la," 'nē'x·'laē Ts!ā'ts!ō, "qan'nts a'mlē," 'nē'x·'laē Ts!ā'ts!ō lāx Dzā'dzaẋwitɛlāga. Lā''laē ts!ā'ɛ Ts!ā'ts!ō ylsēs klu'taaldē lāx Dzā'dzaẋwitɛlāga. Lā''laē klutā'al-'idɛsēs ëg·ā'nɛm. Lā''laē Q!ā'nēqi'lax" 'nē'x·'laē: "Gwa'-dzēs 'yā'lag·ills," 'nē'x·'laē Q!ā'nēqi'lax". Lā''laē yā'q!eg·a''lē Dzā'dzaẋwitɛlāga: "Gwa'la hë'k·!āla g·ā'xɛn, ā'g·anē," 'nē'x·'laē Dzā'dzaẋwitɛlāga. "'Tsē'y'östēs q!ɛ'mxɛxstix,' 'nē'x·la g·ā'xɛn, ā'g·anē." Lā''laē

"Tsē'xwistē', tsē'xwistē'; q!ɛ'mxɛxstē', q!ɛ'mxɛxstē'." 'nē'x·'la g·ā'xɛn, ā'g·anē'

Lā''laē !ā'psta lā'xē dɛ'msx·. Q!ɛ'mxɛxstē': s+ +xa'laē q!ā'ma; tsē'y'östēs lā'xē awī'nagwis. Ax'ē'ts!ū'wɛs g·ō'kulōt. Lā''laē lā'y'wilālaē gɛnɛ'mas Ō''māl, ylx ɛ'!ysÂayūgwa qa's k·inā'la lā'xē q!ā'ma. Lā''laē ax'ɛ'd lā'xēs habā'gaē' qa's ylx'ɛ'dēx qa's ax'ɛ'dēs lā'xē q!ā'max·.

Q!a'nēqi'lax" and Ts!a'ts'o.

"Come," said Ts!ā'ts!ō, "that we may play!" Thus said Ts!ā'ts!ō to Olachen-Woman. Then Ts!ā'ts!ō gave his blanket to Olachen-Woman. Then she put on the blanket that she had gained in gambling. Q!ā'nēqi'lax" said, "Don't go on the beach." Thus said Q!ā'nēqi'lax". Then Olachen-Woman spoke. "Don't say that to me, lord!" Thus said Olachen-Woman. "Say to me, 'Dried herrings are jumping on the beach,' lord." (Then he said,) "'Jump on the beach, jump on the beach! Dried herring, dried herring,' say to me, lord." Then she put the corner of the blanket into the sea. Behold! dried herrings made a noise, "Ssss!" Shoals of herrings were jumping ashore on the land. They were taken by the tribe. Then the wife of Ō''māl, Fog-Woman, found it difficult to scoop up the herrings. Then she took her pubic hair and netted a net to take the herrings.

Figure 1. "Ḳâniqîlaẍ and Ċâċu," from Boas 1910:190-1.

orthography somewhat different than Boas'),[1] so that each numbered English line corresponds with a single, numbered Kwakw'ala clause:

Q̓ániqilaẍ and Č̓áč̓u

(VERSION 2)

"G̓íla,"	1
ńíxłai Č̓áč̓u.	2
"qaénc ʔámɬi,"	3
ńíxłai Č̓áč̓u lax̣ Zázaẍitelaga.	4
Lálai č̓óa Č̓áč̓u yasis K̓éła?aɬ?idi lax̣ Zázaẍitelaga.	5
Lálai K̓éła?aɬ?idasis ʔigánam.	6
Lálai Q̓ániqilaẍ ńíxłai	7
"G̓ázis ẏ̓álagilas,"	8
ńíxłai Q̓ániqilaẍ.	9
Lálai yáq'aga?ɬi Zázaẍitelaga,	10
"G̓ála híkala gáx̣an, ʔágani,"	11
ńíxłai Zázaẍitelaga.	12
"'cíẍ?ustis q̓émx̣aẋstix̣,' ńíxła gáx̣an, ʔágani."	13
Lałai	14
"'Cíẍistí, cíẍistí,	15
q̓émx̣aẋstí, q̓émx̣aẋstí,'	16
ńíxła gáx̣an ʔágani."	17
Lálai k̓ápsta láx̣i dámsx.	18
Q̓émx̣aẋstɬ;	19
Sss...xałai q̓áma.	20
Cíẍ?ustis láx̣i ʔawinag̓is.	21
ʔAx?íca?is gúk̓alut.	22

[1] I am following the orthography used in Lincoln and Rath 1980. This substitutes ' for ɬ, ʔ for ʼ, c for ts, z for dz, ɬ for L, and so on. The only significant point of departure is in the usage of a (Boas E), which is non-phonemic in Kwakw'ala. Whether because of transcription errors or dialectal variation, the relationship of a and a is often difficult to determine in Boas' texts. Also, as Boas leaves out word-initial and intervocalic occurrences of glottal stop (ʔ), the placement of these may be somewhat irregular.

Lálai ɬáẍ?ilałai genémas Úmaɬ, yax̣ ?ɜ́lx̣so?yuq̓a,	23
qas̓ kinála láx̣i q̓áma.	24
Lálai ?ax?íd láx̣is habágai?	25
qas̓ yax̣?idix̣	26
qas̓ ?ax?ídis láx̣i q̓ámax.	27

"Come,"	1
said Č̓áč̓u,	2
"that we may play,"	3
thus said Č̓áč̓u to Oolachen-Woman.	4
Then Č̓áč̓u gave his blanket to Oolachen-Woman.	5
Then she put on the blanket she had gained in gambling.	6
Q̓ániqilaẍ said,	7
"Don't go on the beach,"	8
thus said Q̓ániqilaẍ.	9
Then Oolachen-Woman spoke:	10
"Don't say that to me, lord,"	11
thus said Oolachen-Woman.	12
"Say to me 'Dried herrings are jumping on the beach,' lord."	13
(Then he said,)	14
"'Jump on the beach, jump on the beach,	15
dried herring, dried herring,'	16
say to me, lord,"	17
Then she put the corner of the blanket into the sea.	18
Behold! dried herrings;	19
Herrings made a noise, "Ssssl"	20
Shoals of herring were jumping ashore on the land.	21
They were taken by the tribe.	22
Then the wife of Umaɬ, ?ɜ́lx̣so?yuq̓a,	23
found it difficult to scoop up the herrings.	24
Then she took her pubic hair	25
and netted a net	26
to take the herrings.	27

Let us begin by looking at changes in topic, setting and character.

The first few clauses of the text (clauses 1-6) appear to describe a scene in which two actors, Ċáċu and Oolachen-Woman, are gambling. We are not told where this gambling game takes place.

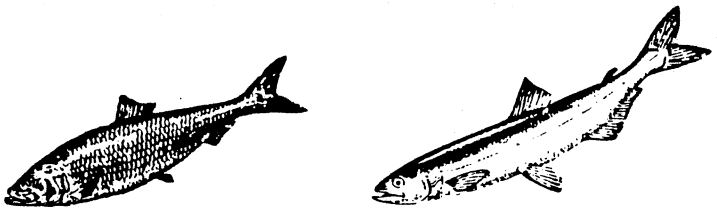
Then a new character is introduced -- Q̓ániqiłax̌ (clause 7). Seemingly out of the blue, he commands "Don't go on the beach!" We guess that he is addressing Oolachen-Woman, because she responds "Don't say that to me, lord!" The next few clauses (7-17) are taken up with the interaction of Oolachen-Woman and Q̓ániqiłax̌; Ċáċu is no longer on stage.

In the first part of the text, the narrator is not explicit about setting, but on the basis of changes in topic, and in the characters who appear onstage, we can divide the first part of the text into "scene A" and "scene B":

A: Ċáċu and Oolachen-Woman are gambling
B: Q̓ániqiłax̌ and Oolachen-Woman are discussing something

The topic of scene B is obscure. Q̓ániqiłax̌ and Oolachen-Woman are discussing something, but we can't tell exactly what it is or why they are discussing it. Yet there are several hints. Given the overall circumstances of the story, and knowledge of Q̓ániqiłax̌'s nature from other stories (e.g. 1906:192-5, 225-7), we suspect that Q̓ániqiłax̌'s speech has magical power. If he forbids Oolachen-Woman from going onto the beach, she will not be able to do it. But when Q̓ániqiłax̌ says the magic words, as it were, she is able go down to the water's edge.

Their argument and the events which follow it only make sense if we posit a metaphoric/magical identity between herring and oolachen. This is not a bizarre connection. Both herring and oolachen are small, silvery, oily ocean fish with forked tails (see Figure 2). Oolachen are more slender and somewhat smaller than herring, commonly measuring about 6 or 7 inches, while herring usually reach about 10 inches when mature. Both come inshore in vast numbers to spawn, the oolachen to fresh-water rivers in early spring, the herring to shallow salt water in spring or summer (Encyclopedia Americana 1986).



HERRING OOLACHEN

Figure 2. Herring and oolachen (Encyclopedia Americana 1986)

However, Q̓ániqiłax̌ is apparently ignorant of this magical relationship. This is how Oolachen-Woman is able to trick him, how she is able to go on the beach after he has sung his song, and how she is able to create herring once she is on the beach.

Scene A could be understood as a Speech-Response pair, an Invitation (clauses 1-4) plus a Consequence (clauses 5-6). At first glance, scene B appears to have two Speech-Response pairs, an Prohibition and a Protest, a Permission and a Consequence.

1. Q̓ániqiłax̌ forbids Oolachen-Woman to go on the beach;
   Oolachen-Woman protests.
2. Q̓ániqiłax̌ inadvertently permits Oolachen-Woman to go on the beach;
   Oolachen-Woman does it.

Dell Hymes has used words like line, verse and stanza to label various units of rhetorical structure. Here, let us refer to each numbered unit as a verse. The relationships could be represented in the following way (for brevity's sake the Kwakw'ala is omitted here):

A. 1. "Come," 1
said Čáču, 2
"that we may play," 3
thus said Čáču to Oolachen-Woman. 4

2. Then Čáču gave his blanket to Oolachen-Woman. 5
Then she put on the blanket she had gained in gambling. 6

B. 1. Q̓ániqiłax̌ said, 7
"Don't go on the beach," 8
thus said Q̓ániqiłax̌. 9

Then Oolachen-Woman spoke: 10
"Don't say that to me, lord," 11
thus said Oolachen-Woman; 12
"say to me 'Dried herrings are jumping on the beach,' lord." 13

2. "Then he said,) 14
"jump on the beach, jump on the beach, 15
dried herring, dried herring,' 16
say to me, lord," 17
Then she put the corner of her blanket into the sea. 18

In many oral narrative traditions, such rhetorical structures are linguistically marked. It will be noted that up to this point in "Q̓ániqiłax̌ and Čáču," each main clause except the very first has begun with the auxiliary form łałał. Boas translates łałał consistently as "then" (except for clause 7, where Boas omits translating it). "Then" is as good a gloss as any; łałał has no concrete meaning. The main function in narrative of łałał and other auxiliary forms is to mark the movement of the narrator's focus from one character, locale, or activity to another, and to relate them causally and temporally (Berman 1982). However, such auxiliaries do also function, in a limited way, as a marker of rhetorical units (Berman 1983). Explication of

these points need not concern us here; let it suffice to say that auxiliaries usually mark what could be called lines -- the most basic rhetorical element which forms verses and stanzas of what are often intricate patterns of four-fold and four-stage action (Berman n.d.). As a rule, auxiliaries are present in every main clause of a narrative. They are only absent from the very first line of a narrative and from the quoted speech of story actors, and, sometimes, during the climactic action of a story.

The next few clauses of the text, 19-22, lack auxiliaries. This is because they describe the climactic moments of the story -- the moments in which Oolachen-Woman is creating herring for her tribe. What is the place of these clauses in the story's overall rhetorical structure? Do they form a separate scene C or do they topically and organizationally belong to scene B?

Certainly clause 22 is the end of a scene, whether this scene is a scene B or a C. The following clause 23 introduces a new actor, Fog-Woman, and a new topic, Fog-Woman's inability to catch herring.

But there seems to be more than one possible analysis of the clauses describing the appearance and resuscitation of the dried herring. Consider a scene B which includes these clauses:

B. 1. Q̓ániqiłax̌ said, 7
"Don't go on the beach," 8
thus said Q̓ániqiłax̌. 9

2. Then Oolachen-Woman spoke: 10
"Don't say that to me, lord," 11
thus said Oolachen-Woman; 12
"say to me 'Dried herrings are jumping on the beach,' lord." 13

3. (Then he said,) 14
"jump on the beach, jump on the beach, 15
dried herring, dried herring,' 16
say to me, lord," 17

4. Then she put the corner of her blanket into the sea. 18

5. Behold! dried herrings; 19
Herrings made a noise, "Ssssl" 20
Shoals of herring were jumping ashore on the land. 21
They were taken by the tribe. 22

The foregoing analysis is unsatisfactory for several reasons. First, the preference of Kwagul narrators for the number four in all levels of narrative organization is quite striking. This is not to say that four-fold patterning is rigidly adhered to in absolutely every instance, and that no narrator would ever add a fifth verse. But clauses 19-22 do not seem to belong with the rest of scene B for other reasons. They have a different topic and different actors. In the rest of scene B, Q̓ániqilaẍ and Qolachen-Woman are arguing about whether she should go on the beach or not; in these clauses Q̓ániqilaẍ is absent and irrelevant and the main action is with the herring.

However, there are arguments against these clauses standing by themselves as a verse C. First, it would be unusual, I believe, for a Kwagul narrator to begin a major rhetorical unit, to make a scene shift, without some rhetorical marker. There is no such marker whatsoever in clause 19. Second, all other scenes in this text share an action-response pattern. In scene A it is Invitation-Consequence. In scene B, it is Prohibition-Response. In the final scene, clauses 23-27, it is Problem-Solution. Here, the action which provokes the magical manifestation of herring occurs in clause 18, which the previous analysis has put with scene B. An analysis which would seem to better reflect the organizational realities of the text is:

C. 1. Then she put the corner of her blanket into the sea. 18

2. Behold! dried herrings; 19
Herrings made a noise, "Ssssl" 20
Shoals of herring were jumping ashore on the land. 21
They were taken by the tribe. 22

In this scheme, scene C begins when Qolachen-Woman leaves Q̓ániqilaẍ and goes down to the waterside to dip her blanket in the ocean; a change of setting, character, and topic. Such an analysis, however, destroys the (previously argued) four-part action-response symmetry of scene B.

I believe the solution to these difficulties lies in reconsidering Qolachen-Woman's role in the story.

Though the title of the text leaves her out, Qolachen-Woman is surely the main character, the main mover of the action in this story.[1] If we look at the action from her point of view, the story becomes a series of her victories and accomplishments. First, she wins Č̓áč̓u's blanket. Second, she tricks Q̓ániqilaẍ so that it becomes possible for her to go on the beach. Third, she manifests herring for her tribe. In the final sentences of the text, another woman, Fog-Woman, achieves a minor victory of her own. From this point of view, the action is clearly and unambiguously organized into four scenes, and each scene has a two-part structure of Problem - Problem Solved. In the first verse of each scene (labeled 1 below), a problem or difficult task is presented, and in the second verse (labeled 2), the problem is solved or the task accomplished:

A. 1. "Come," 1
said Č̓áč̓u, 2
"that we may play," 3
thus said Č̓áč̓u to Qolachen-Woman. 4

[1] The title does not occur in Boas' field notes. It is probably a later addition by Boas, or, perhaps Hunt or Bretchie, with whom Boas would seem to have consulted in the revisions he made of this text before publication.

2. Then Č̓áč̓u gave his blanket to Oolachen-Woman. 5
Then she put on the blanket she had gained in gambling. 6

B. 1. Q̓ániqil̓aX̌ said, 7
"Don't go on the beach," 8
thus said Q̓ániqil̓aX̌. 9

2. Then Oolachen-Woman spoke: 10
"Don't say that to me, lord," 11
thus said Oolachen-Woman. 12
"Say to me 'Dried herrings are jumping on the beach,' lord." 13

(Then he said,) 14
"'Jump on the beach, jump on the beach, 15
dried herring, dried herring,' 16
say to me, lord," 17

C. 1. Then she put the corner of the blanket into the sea. 18

2. Behold! dried herrings; 19
Herrings made a noise, "Ssss!" 20
Shoals of herring were jumping ashore on the land. 21
They were taken by the tribe. 22

D. 1. Then the wife of Um̓aɬ, ʔə́lx̣soayuǧa, 23
found it difficult to scoop up the herrings. 24

2. Then she took her pubic hair 25
and netted a net 26
to take the herrings. 27

In scene A, the task at hand is to win in the game with Č̓áč̓u. In scene B, the problem is how to get round Q̓ániqil̓aX̌'s prohibition. In scene C, the

task is to bring the herring into being. And in scene D, the problem is how to catch the herring.

4. "Q̓ániqil̓aX̌ and Č̓áč̓u": Retranslation.

Close attention to organizational logic -- to rhetorical structure -- has brought the apparent incoherencies of the text into focus but has not converted them into sensible narrative. We still do not understand the significance of the first gambling scene. Does this supply the reason why Q̓ániqil̓aX̌ orders Oolachen-Woman to stay off the beach? Logically, it must. Oolachen-Woman's trick with the herring must also be related to her gambling, but how? What is the real substance of the conflict between Q̓ániqil̓aX̌ and Oolachen-Woman?

Boas went astray in his translation of this text because his narrator was playing with words, deliberately punning with sound and image. Each word-play has at least two interpretations. Boas consistently picked the superficial, playful meaning while consistently missing the underlying, substantive meaning. As a result, the individual sentences of his translation make sense but most of the overall logic and substance is missing.

The interpretive key to "Q̓ániqil̓aX̌ and Č̓áč̓u" is to be found in clauses 3 and 18.

In clause 3, Boas has Č̓áč̓u say, "Come that we may play!" From subsequent lines it is clear that Boas understood this as an invitation to gamble; however, the narrator surely intended it as a pun, with gambling as the playful but not the substantive meaning.

In Kwakw'ala Č̓áč̓u's speech consists of three words: Gila qaenc ʔam̓ɬi. The critical word is ʔam̓ɬ, which derives from the stem ʔam̓ɬ-. Boas glosses this stem as simply "to play." Now, in English, "to play" has multiple connotations, as is evidenced by such words and phrases as "children playing," "to play cards," and "foreplay." Though Boas does not acknowledge this in his glossary or dictionary (1921, n.d.), a comparable or even wider semantic range exists in Kwakw'ala. In fact, there appear to be four main uses of ʔam̓ɬ- "to play" in the textual corpus:

1. Child's play:[1] ?Ámɬəlai ẁiłi gánganəmasa núχnimisi, "All the children of the myth people were playing" (Boas 1906:81).

2. Gambling play:[2] ...lé?as gigamayasa... híka láxis gúǩəluti, "Wizoxəns ?ámɬəlála láxa gúǩəla lax Qáluǧisi, yásan Wáqalucamálagilisix kanaỳa, "The chief... said to his tribe, "Let us play with the tribe of Half-Circle Beach, with my rainbow gambling-stone" (Boas 1905:295).

3. Sexual play: Wɛ, láłai Ǩəlámgalilaxida čədáqi λəẁis la ɬəẁunəmi Qúmxəumgila...híx?idəəmláwisi ?amə́ɬəlax?ida. "Well, they lay down together, the woman and Qúmxəumgila, who was now her husband... at once they began to play with each other" (Boas 1905:65).

4. "Winter-dance" play: Wɛ, lákəsłaxai dúχəλəlakəsxi bəǩəmála λuǩási čədáxi ?iáχəmàlakəsxis ?ia?áwəmi... lákəsłaxai ?ámɬəliskəs mágəpəiskaci yáda?i. "Well, [Qániqilax] discovered a man and woman wearing head-rings of red-cedar bark... they were playing, throwing woodworms at each other [i.e. throwing supernatural power at each other] (Boas 1906: 210-1, cf. 195).

By far the most common use of ?amɬ- "to play" in Boas' texts is in its sense of sexual intercourse. Used in this sense, it often but not always takes the form ?ámɬəla "to play with each other."[3]

The second clue to the real meaning of this text, in clause 18, is not even a pun. Boas' translation of this clause, "Then she put the corner of her blanket into the sea," is simply wrong. The line consists of four words, an

[1] Compare ...líxəmi nágisi łáłẁəla hímənəla láxa Ǩásanəùsis gúǩi, "...they thought only of playing with dolls all the time at the side of the house" (Boas 1905:45).

[2] Compare "Ǩámǩəxoxəns, gast," híxlai Wáx?id láxis həmúǩi λámkix, "'Let us play (game with throwing sticks), friend,' said Wáx?id to his friend Scabby-Knee" (Boas 1905:105; see Boas 1966: 388), or láłai əxłəlaxis həmúǩi... gəš ǩpi λəẁi, "Now he asked his friend... to gamble with him" (ibid: 291).

[3] The reciprocal suffix -əla "each other" modifies the stem to produce ?ámɬ-.

auxiliary łałai, a verb Ǩəpsta, and an indirect object phrase, łəxi dəmsx "into the saltwater." The critical word here is is Ǩəpsta. It can be analyzed as a root Ǩəp- and a suffix -sta "into the water." Boas glosses Ǩəpsta in his 1921 Kwakw'ala-English glossary, and again in his unpublished dictionary (Boas n.d.: 441) as "to dip into water"; but the only reference he gives in each case, C190.24, is this very page and line.

Boas probably arrived at his gloss via a related story told by another Ǩəgəmgilisala man, in which Oolachen-Woman is Qániqilax̌'s mother. She keeps all the fish in her blanket, and Qániqilax̌, concerned that there should be abundance in the world, borrows it and dips it into the water. The fish are thus released into the ocean (Boas 1895). This version of the story was evidently collected in English. At any rate, Boas seems to have assumed that he already knew Qumgilas' story well enough to guess how Oolachen-Women would create herring. The mention of a blanket at the beginning of the story probably reinforced his assumption.

A glance at other occurrences of Ǩəp-, in Kwakw'ala and its closest relatives, shows that the meaning of the root Ǩəp- has nothing to do with blankets, or dipping, or water (Lincoln and Rath 1980:192; root # 1043). It means "to pull limbs close to the body." Boas does give examples with a correct gloss, "to climb a smooth pole, tree, or steep bank," in his glossary and unpublished dictionary, but with the stem spelled Ǩəp- (Boas 1921:1437; n.d.: 436). With his original misunderstanding in place, he never connected this Ǩəp- with Oolachen-Woman's Ǩəpsta .

Another meaning of Ǩəp- in Kwakw'ala is "to clutch something to one's body." A Heiltsuk word derived from the same root is ǨxǨòs "to squat on the ground outside." To repeat, Ǩəpsta has nothing to do with blanket corners, or dipping. The most literal translation of clause 18 would be "she pulled her limbs close to her body in the saltwater." The most probable interpretation of this is that Oolachen-Woman is squatting down. The next line makes the matter completely clear: "Sss... said the herrings." The dried herring are Oolachen-Woman's genitalia, and she is urinating into the water.

The gambling game has an underlying sexual meaning, and the dried herring has an underlying sexual meaning. In fact, the whole story is full of sexual humor. But it is so disingenuously phrased that, unlike many similar

stories in Boas' texts, he didn't need to translate it into Latin. Boas didn't realize it was the kind of story he would have had to translate into Latin.

Let us look back over the story in more detail.

In scene A, Oolachen-Woman and Ċáċu are not really gambling, they are instead indulging in sexual play. But the narrator plays on the polysemy of the word ?amɬi. Though he never actually mentions gambling, he slyly uses the idiom of gambling to describe the sexual transaction.

Clause 6 contains three Kwakw'ala words, Lálal Ḵ̕ətá?əɬ?idesis ?igónəm. The first word, lalal, is an auxiliary and contains no concrete meaning. The second word, Ḵ̕ətá?əɬ?idesis, is the verb, deriving from a stem Ḵ̕ətá?əɬ- meaning "blanket," and a so-called "inchoative" aspect marker -[x]?id expressing an incipient change in state -- in this case the blanket passing out of Ċáċu's ownership and into Oolachen-Woman's ownership.[1] Boas translates this as "put on"; but the Kwakw'ala says simply that the blanket changed state.

The third word in this clause is a noun in the oblique case, ?igonəm. This word is derived from a root ?ik- and a nominal suffix -anəm.[2] The root ?ik- has several meanings. The form ?ikə means "to be victorious." ?ikə, combined with the suffix -anəm "obtained by an action," creates ?igónəm, "the thing obtained through victory" -- i.e. "the prize, the thing won." In this sense, clause 6 is better translated as "she [took] the blanket she had won."

However, ?igónəm has other possible interpretations. ?ikə means "to be victorious," but the root ?ik- can also mean "good, nice, causing satisfaction, capable, etc." In the most literal sense, ?igónəm could be translated as "the thing obtained through [something] good/nice/satisfying..." In otherwords, Ċáċu gives Oolachen-Woman a blanket as a gift after intercourse.[3]

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[1] The remaining suffixes -as and -is are case and possessive markers referring to the following noun.

[2] There are some difficulties in morphology and grammar in the text which may be connected to the fact that the narrator spoke the Ti'esti'asiqvəla dialect of Kwakw'ala, which is less well described in the literature than the Kwagul dialect. In Kwagul Kwkw'ala, I believe one would expect either *?ikənəm (?ikə and -anəm); or *?iganəm (?ik- and -anəm).

[3] It is also possible that clause 5 refers to Ċáċu's disrobing before intercourse.

There are other minor problems with Boas' translation of these two lines. It is difficult to render Kwakw'ala phrases which are quite incompatible with English sentence structure. A technically correct translation would be:[1]

A. 2. Lalal Ċáċu yasis Ḵ̕ətá?əɬdi lax Záza̓ɣitalaga 5
Lalal Ḵ̕ətá?əɬ?idesis ?igónəm 6

A. 2. Ċáċu gave [it], the (visible) blanket (which up till now had been his), to Oolachen-Woman. 5
She [took] the (visible) blanket (it changed state) which she had obtained through something satisfying/nice. 6

Or, more idiomatically, "Ċáċu gave his blanket to Oolachen-Woman. She got that blanket because of something [she did that was] satisfying."

Given the real meaning of this "gambling" game, Q̓éniqilaɣ̓'s "Don't go on the beach!" would seem to be a order to Oolachen-Woman to stay close to home, not to "play" around. The narrator does not specify what relationship exists between them that Q̓éniqilaɣ̓ has the right and the need to control her sexual activities. In the related version from the Ḵ̕aqəmgilisala, Oolachen-Woman is Q̓éniqilaɣ̓'s mother. Because of the sexual theme in this story, I think it possible that Oolachen-Woman is instead his wife.

Q̓éniqilaɣ̓'s first command, in clause 6, merits closer attention. The phrase consists of two words, Ǧázis ɣ̓álagiles. The first term, ǧazis, is

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[1] Clause 6 is particularly difficult to translate. Gender is not marked in Kwakw'ala pronouns, and in any case the third-person pronoun is always unmarked. The only clue as to who is the subject of the sentence is the possessive marker -is at the end of Ḵ̕ətá?əɬ?idesis. This marker signifies that the possessor of the thing obtained through something satisfying, and the subject of the sentence, are the same person. Since the blanket is no longer Ḵ̕ətá?əɬdi "[Ċáċu's] former blanket," but Ḵ̕ətá?əɬ?id "the blanket which has just changed state," it would seem that Oolachen-Woman is now the possessor of the blanket, and Boas is right to make her the subject of the sentence. If that is so, because of word-order the verb of this sentence must be "blanket(which just changed state)"; though such a subject-verb combination seems bizarre it is evidently not impossible in Kwakw'ala. The "verbal" notion expressed would be the changing state of the blanket as it passed into Oolachen-Woman's possession.

relatively straightforward, an imperative meaning "don't you do it!" The second term is problematic. The stem could be yə-, meaning "to do, to be, to move." This is clearly what Boas had in mind. If the stem is yə- the word can be analyzed as following:

yə-	"to do, to be, to move"
-la	"continuative suffix"
-gəɬ	"continued or repeated motion"
-is	"beach, outside, the world, bottom of the sea"

Yə-la-gəl-is could be translated as "to move continuously/exist with continuous motion throughout the world," or as "to do something continously outside/on the beach." The first gloss has a somewhat cosmic ring to it, and in fact, Yálagalis happens to be a name of a Kwagul warrior deity (Boas 1895:713). Furthermore, the suffix combination -gəlis "continual motion throughout the world" is very often used as an epithet descriptive of divine nature. Given that Oolachen-Woman has magical powers, given that (in the context of the myth-age world in which these stories take place) she is a fish-supernatural, G̃áxis ẏálagilas might mean "Don't act according to your divine nature!" The more concrete and restricted meaning would be: "Don't be doing that outside/on the beach all the time!"

The tricks that the narrator plays elsewhere in the text suggests that something else might be going on here as well. The clue to this is a small mark (') over the /ẏ/ (Boas ᵉ). This mark is not found in Boas' field notes, but does, for whatever reason, appear in the published version. It represent glottalization, which is a distinctive feature in Kwakw'ala. It may be a simple error. However, there are dialectal differences between the thirteen Kwakw'ala-speaking villages, and this was even more true in the nineteenth century, and it may be that the form from the Kwagul dialect, yálagalis, was legitimately ẏálagalis in the Tl'astl'asiqwala dialect of the narrator of this text. However, it is also possible that the narrator was playing with the the sound of a stem similar to yə- "to do, to be, to move."

This stem is ẏəɬ- "to spread legs for intercourse" (L&R 1607). The form *ẏəɬagalis would be analyzed as follows:

ẏəɬ-	"to spread legs for intercourse"
-gəɬ	"continued or repeated motion"
-is	"beach, world, bottom of sea"

*ẏəɬagalis would mean "Don't fornicate all the time on the beach!" In Kwagul Kwakw'ala, at least, the form which occurs in the text, ẏálagalis, is halfway between this *ẏəɬagalis, and the standard yəlagalis "Don't be doing that outside all the time!"

The nature of the trick Oolachen-Woman plays on Q̓ániqilax̌ is becoming clear. "Cix̌ʔustis ḍəmxəxstix," Oolachen-Woman says, and Q̓ániqilax̌ repeats "Cix̌isti ḍəmxəxsti" -- the difference is subtle.

The first word in Oolachen-Woman's speech is cix̌ʔustis, which Boas translates as "jump on the beach." It can be analyzed as:

cix̌-	"to flap (like a fish when caught); to be stranded"[1]
-w, -ẇ	"(moving) out of"
-sta	"in the water"
-is	"outside, on beach, world, bottom of sea"

The second word, ḍəmxəxstix, can be analyzed as:

ḍəmx̣-	"herring, (dried herring?)"
-əx̣sta	"mouth, entrance, entrance to inlet, opening of hollow object"
-ix̣	"2nd-person demonstrative (this visible thing near you)"

The meaning of the stem ḍəmx̣- presents some difficulties. Lincoln and Rath (1980:361) note that it is an archaic form. They gloss it as "[live] herring," but do not list ḍəm-, which would seem to be the stem of ḍəma

[1] In Kwagul Kwakw'ala this would cəx̌- (see Lincoln and Rath 1980:148, root #707)

"shoals of [live] herring" in clauses 20 and 24.[1] Ḍemx- in the meaning "dried herring," and ḍem- in the meaning "live herring," may be Tl'astl'asiqwala dialect forms which are unattested outside this text. It is also possible that Boas' transcription and his translation were both in error here, that ḍemx- should be glossed as "[live] herring," and all occurrences of ḍema in this text should be ḍemax (the stem of which is ḍemx-).

The whole phrase is ciẍ?ustis ḍemxexstix, "the (dried?) herring at the entrance to the inlet -- these here near you -- are stranded, flapping as they move out of the water onto the beach/into the outside world." Note that the coordinates expressed by the locative and demonstrative elements of each word, ciẍ?ustis and ḍemxexstix, are apparently in conflict. The dried herring themselves are offshore, at the entrance to an inlet (-exsta). However, they are also at the beach (-is), stranded near the person Oolachen-Woman is talking to, that is, near Ḍániqiłaẍ.

However, once we realize that the herring are on the body of Oolachen-Woman, that the inlet they are stranded at is her vagina, this conflict is resolved. The herring are near Ḍániqiłaẍ -- nearer than he realizes.

Ḍániqiłaẍ does not repeat the phrase in exactly as Oolachen-Woman tells it to him. He alters it, perhaps to his song more euphonious. What Ḍániqiłaẍ says is ciẍisti ḍemxexsti. The difference lies in the suffixes. Ciẍisti is missing the locative suffix -ẇ found in the word as Oolachen-Woman says it, and ḍemxexsti has a different terminal demonstrative suffix. Ḍániqiłaẍ's speech can be analyzed as:

ciẍ-	"to flap (like a fish when caught), to be stranded"
-sta	"in the water"
-i	"prenominal 3rd-person subject marker"
ḍemx-	"(dried?) herring"
-exsta	"mouth, entrance, opening of hollow object"

[1] Ḍem- also appears in clause 27 in the form ḍemax, which must be an uncorrected transcription error. It can only be ḍema or ḍemax (with the back x). If the former, the stem is ḍem-, if the latter, the stem is ḍemx-.

-i	"3rd-person demonstrative (that visible or invisible thing over there)"

What Ḍániqiłaẍ sings is "Those herring over there -- in the water at the entrance to the inlet -- are stranded/ flapping."

The difference between the demonstrative suffixes should be noted. Oolachen-Woman says "these herring which you can see, near you." Ḍániqiłaẍ is saying, "those herring over there."[1] The consequence of this change seems to be that Oolachen-Woman is compelled to go down to the water to flap her herring, instead, perhaps, of doing it on the spot.

In Kwakw'ala, the moment in which the herring come to life reads:

Ḍemxexsti;	19
Sss...xałał ḍáma.	20
Ciẍ?ustis łáxi ?awínaǧis.	21

Clause 19 in its entirety is the same word as we saw in the magical song, ḍemxexsti "(dried) herring at the entrance to the inlet." Here it is used as a verb: "there were (dried) herring at the entrance to the inlet."[2]

Clause 20 consists of a verb followed by a subject. The verb stem is sss...xa, "to say 'sss...'"; the subject is ḍema "herring."

This clause describes the moment of transformation. Our interpretation of it depends somewhat on whether ḍemxexsti is legitimately "dried herring," or whether it only means "live herring."

[1] The two phrases may also differ syntactically. In Kwakw'ala, a third-person pronominal subject ("he/she/it/they") is unmarked; a third-person nominal subject is marked by a suffix -i attached to the preceding verb or auxiliary. Oolachen-Woman's speech might have a third-person pronominal subject, but the case marker we would expect in the Kwagul dialect for the noun (which is ḍemxexstix "herring in the inlet") is missing; we don't know whether the noun's case is subjective, objective, or oblique. The simplest analysis seems to be to treat the noun as a subject as it is in Ḍániqiłaẍ's speech.

[2] The final suffix on ḍemxexsti in this clause is the demonstrative -i, third person visible/invisible, because the frame of reference is the world of the third-person narrative, rather than a story actor's (first person) frame of reference.

If ḍəmxəxstɬ does mean "dried herring at the entrance to the inlet," then what is emphasized in this clause is the transformation of ḍəmx- "dried herring" into ḍəmə "live herring." Peter Furst (in press) has called attention to the magical powers of urine in Kwagul mythology: urine as the "water of life." Generally, the water of life is used to resuscitate the dead and to cure the mortally wounded. Here, on one level of meaning, Oolachen-Woman's urine turns dead herring into live jumping herring. The implication that herring are Oolachen-Woman's labia suggests a further level of interpretation: it is not so much dried herring as dry herring, and what transforms dry herring into wet, slippery, and flapping herring is the moisture of sexual arousal; another kind of water of life.

If ḍəmxəxstɬ means "(live) herring at the entrance to the inlet," then the emphasis in this clause is on their detaching themselves from Oolachen-Woman: ḍəmxəxstɬ becoming ḍəmx- (that is, ḍəməx).

An entry in Boas' unpublished dictionary supplies a clue to a possible solution to this problem (Boas n.d.). On page 349, the word ḍəmxəsdi appears with the reference C.190.21 -- this very text.

As he worked on his Kwakw'ala dictionary over the years, Boas must still have been trying to make sense of this text, and of his translation of it. Sometime late in his life, Boas seems to have decided that he had misheard the word ḍəmxəxstɬ in this text; that he really should have written down ḍəmxəsdi.

Now, there are good reasons for Boas to have made such an alteration. If the stem ḍəmx- means simply "herring," as it always does elsewhere, then a suffix is needed to arrive at a form which can be glossed "dried herring." The suffix -əsdi means very specifically "dried meat of something" (Boas 1947:319): compare zəẍəsdi "dried silver salmon" (zəẍ- "silver salmon"); gixəsdi "dried deer meat" (gix- "deer"). If ḍəmx- means only "herring," ḍəmxəsdi would presumably mean "dried herring."

There is a morphophonemic objection to such an analysis, however: because of the rules of stem-expansion for the suffix -əsdi, we ought to get *ḍəmxəsdi, which is even further from Boas' original transcription.[1]

If the narrator of this text gave "dried herring" for the word ḍəmxəxstɬ, he may have intended yet another pun. Ḍəmxəxstɬ/ḍəmxəsdi "the herring at the entrance to the inlet are dry." In other words, all interpretations given above of clause 20 are correct.

To continue, we can now see why Fog-Woman needed a net of pubic hair to catch the herring (clauses 22-26). This coda to the story, along with the other myths to which this story is related, points to a moral about proper containment of woman's sexuality and the proper role of her productivity.

There is one last point about the translation of this text to be raised, and that is the translation of names.

The three men named, Ċáċu, Ḍániqilaẍ, and Úm̓aɬ, have almost untranslatable names. Ḍániqilaẍ and Úm̓aɬ are characters found in a number if other myths. Ḍániqilaẍ's name can be translated only as "born to be ḍax-" where ḍax- is untranslatable (L&R 1980:371).

Boas translates ʔÚm̓aɬ as "Chief-of-the-ancients" (1905:322 et passim), probably deriving it from a stem ʔúm̓- "great, chiefly, high" and an undetermined suffix.

Ċáċu is a character who does not seem to be found in any other myths. The name is difficult to translate, but it may derive from either the stem ċəs- "to stretch out, be taut" (Lincoln and Rath 1980, * 835) or ċəs- "to dive deep (said of whale)" (Lincoln and Rath 1980, * 837); the only likely candidate for the suffix would be -ċə "inside, within." So his name could be "Stretching out taut inside," or "Diving deep inside"; either might be appropriate given his role in the story.

Boas' gloss of ʔǰ̓ɬxsəʔyuǧə as "Fog-Woman" is incorrect. ʔǰ̓ɬxsəʔyuǧə can be analyzed as:

[1] Though, again, the difference may be explained by the fact that the narrator spoke a different dialect of Kwakw'ala.

?el-	"secure, fast, tight, firm; to bury"
-xso	"[pass] through; through a hole or enclosed space"
-yuǧa	"woman"

It is difficult to interpret this name. In a later volume Boas glosses ?ǯ́ixso?ayuǧa as "Revenging-Woman" (1906:170), presumably deriving it from the sense in which ?el- means "to bury." I would suggest, however, a better reading might be "Something stuck inside a hole/ enclosed space" and that it has its origin in another story. In this other story, ?ǯ́ixso?ayuǧa uses an unorthodox place to hide her lover when they are surprised by her husband in flagrante delicto. Note that here it is the herring which would be stuck in -- or at least near -- the hole in question.

The most interesting of the names is Zázaẍ̌itelaga, which Boas translates as "Oolachen-Woman." The full meaning of this name is actually more subtle and suggestive:

zazaẍ̌-	"oolachen (distributive plural)"
-[g]it	"all over surface of body of person"
-ela	"multiplicity of parts" (Boas 1947:306)
-ga	"woman"

Oolachen-Woman is the "Woman whose body has oolachen all over its surface."

This name proves the metaphoric identity of herring and oolachen which we were forced to assume to make sense of the story's plot development. It also suggests that not only are Oolachen-Woman's genitalia made of herring/ oolachen, her whole body-surface is. Somehow Q̓ániqilaẍ̌ doesn't realize this, doesn't fully guess her powers.

5. "Q̓ániqilaẍ̌ and Ċáċu": Reprise.

"Q̓ániqilaẍ̌ and Ċáċu" is a coherent, well-formed story. It is concise, clever, and thematically unified.

To review, the story opens on Oolachen-Woman and her lover "playing." The lover is quite happy and satisfied with the "game," and offers a gift of a blanket to Oolachen-Woman.

Then Q̓ániqilaẍ̌ discovers what Oolachen-Woman has been up to. "Stay at home!" he orders. "Stay off the beach, stay away from the waters' edge! Don't fornicate! Don't act like what you are, a divine being who is constantly on the move!" He wants this fish-being to keep away from the water. It seems as if he intends her to become human.

But Oolachen-Woman is of no mind to obey. She wants sex and she wants the ocean. She knows that Q̓ániqilaẍ̌'s commands have considerable force in the world, and that even she is bound by what he says. She also knows, however, that being human, Q̓ániqilaẍ̌ might not really know the myth-people, might not know their nature or powers; perhaps he can't see that her skin is made of numerous small, silvery fish. "Oh, no, lord," she says, deceptively humble. "I think you could come up with a better Transformation than that. Try this one instead, lord: 'Dried herring are stranded on the beach, these herring here are flapping vainly at the mouth of the inlet.' Say that to me, lord."

This may sound confusing to Q̓ániqilaẍ̌, but perhaps he likes the image of fish helplessly stranded on land -- precisely the fate he is trying to impose on Oolachen-Woman. He decides to try it out, but he gets the words somewhat muddled. "Flapping in the water, flapping in the water," he sings. "Over there, over there. Herring at the entrance, dried herring at the entrance. Say that to me, lord."

The song is good enough for Oolachen-Woman. She walks down to the water's edge (surely to Q̓ániqilaẍ̌'s dismay?), and squats down until her vulva is in the water. She urinates -- "Sss....!" Water of life renews the herring. The ocean restores her divine nature, perhaps arouses her sexually. The multitudinous fish on her skin slip off into the water, multiplying fantastically. All around her in the shallows, little silvery fish are jumping, smacking, wriggling, flapping.

The whole village must come running to look. What an incredible abundance of food! Then ?ǯ́ixso?yuǧa has difficulty catching them; these fish show little affinity for ordinary nets. Thinking about where they came

from, she has an idea: in order to re-capture them, one needs the substance which kept them confined in the first place. So she makes a special net and with it manages to catch the herring.

And there the narrator ends his story.

6. "Q̓ániqilax̌ and Č̓áč̓u": Masks and blankets.

Boas was not one for interpretation or commentary, and it is often a frustrating task trying to make sense of his texts, or to relate them to anything else he said about nineteenth-century Kwagul culture. Fortunately, he did publish enough material, and enough in Kwakw'ala, that it is possible to say more about his texts than he ever did.

"Q̓ániqilax̌ and Č̓áč̓u" belongs to the Kwagul ethnoliterary category called nuyem "myth, tradition." The main criterion for membership in this category is that the events of the story must take place before the end of the myth-age (cf. Boas 1905: 111). The category nuyem is extremely diverse, and includes several subdivisions which had different functions in social life.

One of these subdivisions was sometimes called nuyemił, literally "tradition in the house" (Boas 1947:250). House-stories describe how the ancestors of descent-groups acquired in names, crests, and other important privileges in the myth-age. House-stories are owned by the descent group (or by the chiefly lines within the descent group).

A second major subdivision of nuyem are the animal stories (I do not know if this sub-genre is named). These tell about the adventures -- and misadventures -- of the nux̌nim̓is, the "myth-people,"[1] animals such as Mink and Deer and Merganser-Woman, who possess odd powers and abilities. The myth-people live in villages more or less like humans, lingering on the threshold between human and animal form. The stories about them do not mention crests or descent groups or often even tribal names, though many refer to particular village sites. If they have an etiological theme it

[1] This is Boas' translation. Hunt translates núx̌nim̓is as "History people" (Letters of George Hunt to Franz Boas, ff)

generally refers to something which affects a wide range of people: wind, weather, currents, tides, fish, and so on.

A third subdivision contains the stories about Q̓ániqilax̌. Q̓ániqilax̌ is the Transformer (not a Kwagul term) whose actions in sum bring an end to the myth age. Q̓ániqilax̌ journeys from village to village, encountering all kinds of characters on his way, including the animal-people and descent-group ancestors.

"Q̓ániqilax̌ and Č̓áč̓u" is a Q̓ániqilax̌ story in which the central dramatic conflict lies between Q̓ániqilax̌ and one of the animal people, viz., Oolachen-Woman. In the text, the conflict between them is expressed in sexual terms, as a conflict between her desire for sexual freedom and his outraged jealousy. There is a larger context, however, in which the action of the text takes place. Q̓ániqilax̌ and Oolachen-Woman have opposite natures, belong to opposite camps. The myth-people belong to an age when the most bizarre permutations of form are possible, when the sun is kept in a box, when a mink's musk-bag can talk, when a fart can cause a gale. Q̓ániqilax̌ was raised by myth-people, but he is explicitly human and secular (bax̌as). His purpose in life is to bring an end to these permutations, to "set everything right in the world" (hixhelisala), to create a world of order and plenty where humans can safely dwell. It is no coincidence that the words for "human," "secular" and "male," derive from closely related roots (bak̓-, bax̌-). Q̓ániqilax̌ exemplifies these qualities.

Q̓ániqilax̌ makes war on the myth-people, and tangles with the powerful non-secular ancestors, but he never succeeds in utterly ending the myth-age. What he seems to accomplish is a zone of order at the center of the world. Outside this zone, the myth-age still persists in the scattered, hidden villages of the myth-people in the forest or under the sea. Generally, though, Q̓ániqilax̌ gets the best of the myth-people he encounters. Oolachen-Woman is a rare case, an animal-person who bests Q̓ániqilax̌. It should be noted, however, that the outcome of their conflict is in accord with one of Q̓ániqilax̌'s overall goals, which is to create an abundance of food for humans.

The nuyem genre as a whole is most variable where the names, form and other attributes of characters are concerned. For example, there is no

"sea god" whose attributes are consistent over a wide range of stories, but instead a whole range of different supernaturals in some way associated with the sea, whose attributes overlap from story to story. Q̓ániqilax̌ is only a partial exception to this. He is acknowledged to be the same personage in the various versions of his life from different narrators and different villages. Certain attributes, for instance his human-ness, are consistent from story to story. Others very widely. It would be no surprise to find, as is evidently true in the two stories from Ǩaqemgilisala, that Qolachen-Woman is Q̓ániqilax̌'s mother in one story and his wife in another. In a story from the nearby Yuxinux̣, a character named Qolachen-Woman is Q̓ániqilax̌'s paternal grandmother (Boas 1906:188).

Plots and thematic material, on the other hand, tend to repeat from nuyem to nuyem. There are two stories in the Boas corpus which are thematically very similar to "Q̓ániqilax̌ and Ċáċu." We have already mentioned the first, the other Ǩaqemgilisala story featuring Q̓ániqilax̌ and Qolachen-Woman. To repeat, in this story, Qolachen-Woman is Q̓ániqilax̌'s mother, and keeps all the fish in her blanket. Q̓ániqilax̌ wants to see the waters of the world alive with fish, so he borrows his mother's blanket, and dips the corner of it in the water. Fish appear in the water and soon populate the rivers and ocean.

The second is from the Nax̌axdaʔx̌. This story is longer and more complex. The hero is Úm̓ił, a chief of the myth-people, who is troubled because there is neither river nor fish where they live (Boas 1905:322-330). He creates the river, and then plans to marry a twin, that is, a salmon-changeling (ƛax̌ayaċaya) who has incarnated among humans. He searches until he finds one among the dead. He sprinkles her with his water of life and she comes alive. Her name is Méisila ("fish-maker," from mɛ- "fish, especially salmon"). She is beautiful, and Úm̓ił's brothers warn each other not to think about committing adultery with her. She favors the brothers over her husband, however. She refuses to make salmon for Úm̓ił, but will produce them for his brothers when he is away. She makes salmon by putting her little finger in her mouth and then into a kettle of water. In the end, Úm̓ił finds out about it and he makes Méisila fill his river with salmon. She creates salmon in the river by walking into the water. If she were to

immerse herself entirely, she warns Úm̓ił, the river would dry up with such a huge mass of salmon. Now Úm̓ił has what he wanted, but his marital difficulties are not over. He grows proud from his new wealth, insults a salmon-bone, and then speaks angrily to his wife. She calls "her tribe, the dried salmon"; they all return into the sea (though salmon eventually come back again to Úm̓ił's river).

There are several elements shared among these stories. In each of them we find a woman with supernatural powers who hoards fishy abundance. She is either wife or mother of the male hero. In two of them, there is either a suggestion or fact of extracurricular sexual activity by this woman, which leads to friction with the hero. In each of them, the fish are created by dipping part of her body or clothing into the water.

Let us look more closely at this last element. In "Q̓ániqilax̌ and Ċáċu" Qolachen-Woman dips (dried) herring, that is, her labia, into the water. The herring are resuscitated by the water of life, magically multiply, and populate the ocean. In the related version from Ǩaqemgilisala, Q̓ániqilax̌ dips her blanket into the water to achieve a similar result. Now, Qolachen-Woman's full name, Zázax̌italaga, means "many oolachen all over the surface of her body." The name allows some ambiguity as to whether the fish on her body are attached to her skin, as they appear to be in "Q̓ániqilax̌ and Ċáċu," or merely covering her skin, as they would be if she wore her blanket full of fish in the related story.

That these two conditions are essentially the same is, I believe, an important insight into the notion of human and animal physiology which underlies all transformations in the nuyem. This notion comes into focus when we turn our gaze from Boas' English translations to the Kwakw'ala of the original.

Kwakw'ala has a poorly described shape-gender system which classifies all objects and beings into several shape-categories. The most important of these categories are long, round/bulky, flat, and hollow/dish-like. There are circumstances, such as counting, in which use of a shape-suffix is obligatory, but generally the system is used more in derivation than in grammar. For example:

1. mučəq "four long objects," from mu- "four," -čəq "long objects."
2. uǧɛxtoi? "headwaters of river," from u- "empty root," -qɛ (?), -xtə "end of long standing object."
3. dəbənd "to take hold of end (of long horizontal object)," from də- "to take hold of," -bə "end of long horizontal object," -nd "inchoative."
4. ƛ̓ənxstənd "to poke branch or pole in water," from ƛ̓ex- "long object is somewhere," -stə "in the water," -nd "inchoative."
5. hənizəs "where canoe is on beach," from hən- "hollow object/vessel is somewhere," -is "on beach," -əs "place of something."
6. həmčzu "food mat" from həmč- "to eat," and -zu "flat object."

Not only are there suffixes and stems which express the basic meaning of the shape category (long, flat, hollow, etc.), there are many suffixes and stems which express more specific ideas about shape. For instance, "to carry" is a different stem depending on whether one is carrying a long object (e.g. a pole) or a round, bulky object (e.g. a bundle). "Edge" must be either "edge of flat horizontal object," or "edge of vertical plane."

This topological specificity is quite idiomatic and is ubiquitous in Kwakw'ala. The suffix -(g)it used in Dolachen-Woman's name, which means "all over surface of person's body," is yet another example. By paying close attention to how these suffixes are used in Boas' texts it is possible to glean some hints as to how the narrators of the text conceived of human and animal physiology, and of the nature of transformation between the two.

Essentially, humans are classified grammatically as long objects,[1] animals as round, bulky objects. The basic classifying suffix for animals is -sqəm "round object," as in, for instance, musqəmi miǧət "four seals" (mu- "four," -sqəm "round object," -i demonstrative suffix, miǧət "seal").

Now, in the texts, animals generally appear in human form, and are described as such, standing on two feet (ƛəǩ-) as opposed to four feet

[1] In some instances, for instance in counting, humans are treated separately from inanimate long objects (-uǩ "human" and -čəq "inanimate long object"). For many verb stems which express shape categories, however, humans and inanimate long objects are merged.

(gəl-), and so on. Their animal nature -- their animal flesh -- is a costume which they can put on or take off as they please. This animal flesh-costume is usually called -(g)ləmɬ, glossed by Boas as "mask."[1]

We might think of a mask as portraying only the head of the animal, and indeed, there is a strong relationship between these two concepts in Kwakw'ala; the suffix -qəmɬ "mask" is almost certainly derived from the suffix -(g)ləm "face, head."[2] However, in Kwakw'ala, an animal flesh-costume is apparently concepetualized as including both head and body. The body of the flesh-costume is a removable blanket, pəs?ənl "skin blanket" in one text (Boas 1905:33). Interestingly, a blanket, which we would intuitively think of as a flat object (-xsə) is in Kwakw'ala a round object (-sqəm); for instance ƛ̓ələmsqəm "blanket of mountain goat wool" (from ƛ̓ələm "plucked wool").[3]

In other words, the head (-qəm) plus the blanket (-sqəm) together make the mask (-qəmɬ) of the animal (-sqəm). These suffixes are all linguistically as well as conceptually related.

There is a closely related fourth suffix, -qəmi?. "in front of, first of its kind."[4] This form would seem to derive from a close conceptual relationship between the head (-qəm), being first or in front of, and the animals (-sqəm) being first in time, as well as first in the hierarchy of power. Note the probably similar relationship between the stems gəl- "first, to come first, to lead, the ancestors" and gəl- "to crawl on all fours, animal."

The flesh-costume of an animal, its mask/blanket, is, in the conceptual topology of Kwakw'ala, a "covering." Clothing in Kwakw'ala is

[1] Examples are miǧəmɬ "seal mask" (from miǧət "seal"); nəmqəmɬ "grizzly-bear mask" (from nəm "grizzly bear").
[2] Examples of -qəm "face, head," are həməm "hairy face" (həm- "body hair"); ƛ̓əlqəm "white face" (ƛ̓əl- "white"); and ?əmɛqəƛ̓ "small face" (?əmɛ- "small").
[3] Also: ƛ̓əncəm "skin of black bear" (from ƛ̓ənɛ "black bear"); ?ələqəmsqəm "blanket of dressed deer or elk skin" (from ?ələkila "to tan deer or elk skin"); ƛ̓ələxɛləsqəm "white man's woolen blanket" (from ƛ̓ələxɛlə "fog"; this word means literally "round object of fog").
[4] For example, ƛ̓úlɛsʔɛqəmi? "eldest one," xəmɛqəmi? "head chief," ?ix?əqəlɛqəmi? "the most beautiful one." There is also a fifth suffix, -qəmənu, which is used only for "head of animal."

ḥəx̌ʔəni, literally "thing that covers." This is why Oolachen-Woman's blanket which is full of fish, and her skin which is covered with fish, are essentially the same. She is a supernatural being who can remove her shape, which then becomes a blanket.

But note that this "covering" from another perspective becomes a "hollow object." Animals dress -- ḍuxc̓ud, literally "[go] inside clothing" -- in their masks and then undress -- ḍuxud, ḍuxəɬc̓ud, literally "[go] out from inside clothing" (e.g. Boas 1905:165-6). These terms use the suffix -c̓o "inside hollow object"

The mask is a covering, but to human eyes, the mask appears as the flesh and bone of the animal. The mask is both the thing which transforms and the end result of the transformation. Only the core, the bones, intestines, blood, fins, etc., of an animal are substance separate from the mask (cf. Boas 1905:304-305.)

Since the mask is the food that humans depend upon for their sustenance, from the human perspective, the mask is the valued element of the transformation. It is the mask which signifies abundance and satiation. But the important thing about the mask is that it is in a sense disposable. The animal is not destroyed by human consumption. After its mask has been eaten, and it has been reduced to bones and offal,[1] after it becomes a "ghost," it can be reincarnated.

Consider the fate of Méisila, the Fish-maker. She begins as a salmon, incarnates among humans as a twin, and then dies. As a human, she is buried. Úm̓iɬ revives her by sprinkling his water of life (urine, salty like seawater?) on her bones. She calls her tribe, the salmon, and they are taken and dried by Úm̓iɬ's people. Later, Úm̓iɬ mistreats a salmon bone. Insulted, the dried salmon-tribe returns into the water, resuscitating, and swims away.

In the contract between humans and animals, so long as humans treat the essential remains -- bones and offal -- correctly, the animal can come

[1] This suggests a line of inquiry as to why the Kwakw'ala swearing recorded by George Hunt refers to death and bones, etc., instead of sex and body effluvia, as in English (Boas 1921: 793-4).

to life, return in mask-shape and feed humans again. In most of Boas' texts, the proper way to dispose of salmon bones is in the water. Once the bones are immersed in saltwater, the salmon come to life again.

Note the similarities of the following passage with "Q̓ániqiłax̌ and C̓ác̓u": the husband who orders his wife not to go on the beach, the immersion in water which brings a multitude of fish into being:

> Then she gathered the backbones, fins and the blood of all the salmon and put them into an old mat. She carried the mat out of the house. She walked to the beach. Thunderer [a Thunderbird] went out and called to her. He said, "Oh, mistress! Don't take it to the beach; just throw it down the embankment," thus he said. But Thrush-Woman just walked to the beach. She said [to Thunderer], "This is the way of our tribe,"... Then she waded into the sea. When her knees were covered with water, the pretty woman poured the contents of the old mat into the water. As soon as the bones, intestines, and blood went into the water, the little silver-salmon came to life again; and all the salmon came to life. All the salmon jumped in the [shallow] water on the beach. And then Thrush-Woman disappeared, because she was taken away by her [former] husband [who was wearing the mask of the little silver-salmon] (Boas 1905:307; e.g. also Boas 1905:390-2)).[1]

Actually, masks are not so much disposable as they are transitory representations of a durable transformative idea. The mask that is consumed by humans is but one iteration, one exemplification of this idea, which remains in the possession of the near-immortal animal. Such a mask-idea is not a Platonic ideal, because the idea has a physical, perceptible existence -- it is the ur-mask, if you will. It exists as part of the "supernatural" power of the animal, though of course it is not "super"-natural; it is the essence of nature.

That is how fish-women such as Oolachen-Woman and Fish-Maker create great plenty by simply immersing their body parts. Oolachen-Woman's blanket, her skin, is fish: it is the notion of fish, the form of fish. When placed in water, this ur-form creates thousands of representations, fish-masks which at the same time are part of the blanket itself, but different, transitory, expendible.

[1] Thrush-Woman is a being of considerable supernatural powers. Her special ability is to sing berry-bushes into blossoming and then fruition.

There are a number of texts in which male humans with supernatural power, such as Q̓ániqiłaẋ, create an abundance of fish. These men, though, create fish by placing rotten wood or wooden carvings in the water (e.g. Boas 1905:94-99, 390-2). In order to manifest some of the original ur-fishness, humans, even those with supernatural power, must "imitate" the animal, by making the closest possible exemplification of it.

There are two Kwakw'ala terms which Boas translates as "imitate," nanaxc̓o and hayigi?.

The first, nanaxc̓o, derives from the stem nea- "straight, to be straight, to go straightaway, to be correct, to coincide, to meet, the middle of something, half," and the suffix -c̓o "inside, inside hollow object." The form naxc̓o means "to do in the right way, to be correct inside." The reduplication of nea- to nanea- probably expresses the plural notion of "action occurring in all parts," as for instance in the word nanaxto? "end of long object is flush with something" (-[x]to "end of long standing object")--literally, "end of long object is straight/correct in all parts." Nanaxc̓o, then, is "to do in the right way in all parts, to be entirely correct inside in all parts, to do with all parts doing in the correct way, or to coincide or meet (internally) in all parts."

The second term, hayigi? derives from the Northern Wakashan root hi-, ya-, y-, meaning 'to be the case, to exist, to live, to go.' A number of Kwakw'ala verbs of motion are formed from this root, using the form of hay-: for instance, hayaga "to pass by" (using -aga "to pass, go by"); hayuɬ̓ala "coming out of the woods, moving seawards' (using -uɬ "continued motion," and -[x]ɬ̓a "seaward direction"); and so on. Hayigi? "to imitate" is formally similar. Literally it means "to follow in some action" (from -igi?, -iga, -ika "back, in back of, afterwards, to follow behind." To imitate is to follow behind some being's motion (existence).

It is interesting that "to obey" and "to reply" are formed from the same stem as "to imitate." Nanaxm̓i 'to reply' is nanea- "to coincide or be correct in all parts" and the discourse suffix -m̓, which on auxiliaries at least signifies that the action of the stem to which it is attached is not separate or discrete from a previous action. A reply coincides with or is correct after the question, it is an inseparable part of the question.

Nanagigi? "to obey" uses the same suffix -igi, -iga, -ika "back, in back of, following," which occurs in hayigi? "to imitate." It is instructive to compare some of the forms using this suffix more closely:

nea- "to be straight, correct, to coincide or meet, to do straightaway"
  nanagiga "to obey"

hay- "to be, to exist, to go"
  hayigi? "to imitate"

dua̓- "to look"
  dua̓gi? "to look back and imitate deeds of one's ancestors, to watch what others are doing"

ʔia̓- "to err, to miss, do wrong, disagree"
  ʔiła̓ika "to miss one's way, to not take after parents"
  ʔeła̓gi? "to disobey, to refuse" (Boas 1947:327).

It is clear that the suffix -igi? "to follow" has more than a purely locative meaning. The notion of "following" contains, or gives rise to, a political and a moral meaning. "To obey" is 'to follow correctly"; "to disobey" is "to follow wrongly." In all these forms with -igi?, the action taken is not original or authoritative, it depends upon a prior state of being or doing in another -- one's ancestor's, parents, rulers. First (gela) come the animals (gal-) and the ancestors (galasa), who lead (galaba). The chief (gigami?) is the one in front (-gami?). The others follow (-igi?). If they do it in the right way (naxc̓o), they approximate in all parts (nanaxc̓o) those who come first.

One interesting aspect of the Dolachen-Woman stories is the way in which fish are linked to female sexuality, and in which the ur-mask which creates an abundance of fish is a feminine prerogative. There is apparently a feeling of sensory similarity between fish and female genitalia. There are also hints of another symbolic linkage which derives from the role of women as food-preparers and providers. If women are food-providers, and food par excellence is salmon, then, perhaps, women are like salmon.

Interestingly, in one Kwakw'ala idiom appearing in Boas' texts, the sexual act is related to blankets and transformation. The stem of one common term for blanket, ḥəX̌ʔəni, ḥəX̌- "covering" is used to mean "to engage in sexual intercourse."

Wɛ. ləəmiawis ḥix gaš ḥəX̌alax̌ʔidi...wax̌ʔəmiaxaawusu ḍəmsi ʔƛ̓ixsoyuǧa... "Well, then [Great-Inventor] said he would copulate with her [cover her]. ʔƛ̓ixsoyuǧa tried to demur once again..." (Boas 1906:172).

This suggests an analogy between generation of plenty through the mask and generation of children through sexual intercourse.

A final comment is called for on the relationship of these ideas to the potlatch, which featured large-scale prestations of blankets (coverings). Such prestations accompanied the movement by chiefs and nobles from one status to another, giving up one name and seat and taking on another. It might be that these changes are analagous to the gift of masks salmon make to humans when they die and are reborn.

There is a term which encompasses both name-changing and animal transformation: X̌aỳu (also X̌aya). X̌aỳu means "to change, to exchange":

Awaẁa... aɬmàɬ ləi X̌aỳuX̌ɛi Gigəlgəm ... "the [descent group called] Awaẁa... just recently exchanged this name (X̌aỳu-X̌ɛi) for the name Gigəlgəm" (Boas 1935-43:189).

X̌aỳu also means "to transform." An example of this meaning is found in the word which Boas glosses as "Salmon twin," X̌aX̌aỳaċi. Literally, X̌aX̌aỳaċi is:

X̌aX̌aỳa-	"to change, transform (distributive plural?)"
-aċi	"hollow object, receptacle for some object or activity"

Or, "receptacle for transformation." The twin is the physical receptacle in which the transformation was accomplished: the salmon-being now in human flesh.

Some conclusions: Boas as a translator and interpretor.

This discussion has carried us a long way from somewhat unlikely beginnings. Clearly a number of roads lead onward from this point, but any one of them would take us further than can be traversed in an essay of this size.

Perhaps the main conclusion to draw is that Boas is not a reliable translator. "Q̓ániqiłaX̌ and Ċáċu" is a particularly egregious example, but there are many lesser instances which result from the same kind of mistake.

Because of Boas' eminence in the history of anthropology, his Kwakw'ala texts have been used time and again by scholars with no knowledge of Kwakw'ala (e.g. Locher 1932, Müller 1955, Reid 1974, Goldman 1975, Dundes 1979, Walens 1981, Sanday 1986), and thus no way to check their reinterpretations. They are forced to rely on Boas' skill and accuracy as a translator.

I don't believe Boas ever tried extremely hard to provide completely accurate, utterly reliable translations. Not that he was deliberately careless, either; but his goal was to record to native mentality, the Kwagul mentality (1909:309). For him, the texts were in themselves the end products of ethnography, and the translations were only an aid. The translations were never intended to be the primary source that they have become.

Levi-Strauss once claimed that it was unnecessary to read mythology in the original language, or even to have good translation, because the underlying structure emerged no matter what. Not, as a professor of mine once phrased it, to beat a dead horse to death, but it just ain't so. All translation is inevitably interpretation. What we see in Boas' translation of "Q̓ániqiłaX̌ and Ċáċu" is not le pensée sauvage, but le pensée de Boas.

And it is because this particular translation is so bad that we can see Boas' interpretive style so clearly. Like Q̓ániqiłaX̌, Boas was fooled into blindly repeating something without comprehending its intent. This is the flavor of his ethnography as a whole. The personality trait which stands in sharpest relief in Boas' work is literalness. While it led him to publish and preserve texts on everything from Kwagul dreams to Kwagul dinner menus,

it was an obstacle to ever really describing Kwagul culture. In fact, it is not clear that he understood how much he didn't understand.

In the end what can be said of Boas as an ethnographer is that he left these texts. We may no longer agree that texts without significant commentary or annotation serve a useful ethnographic purpose. Still, long after Boas and George Hunt and the Kwagul they talked to are gone, we have some words that were said by someone, rather than a record only of what Boas thought such words might have meant.

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