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> Albert B. Reagan "A story of the flood"

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**From "Some Additional Myths of the Hoh and Quileute Indians", Albert B. Reagan, Utah Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters, Vol. XI, 1934, pp. 17-37. Informants were Hal George, Luke Hobucket, Harold Johnson, Klakishkee, Bucket Mason, Elon Mason, M.B. Penn, Mrs. Jimmie Howe, Frank Bennett, Klekabuck, Kikabuthlup, Dixon Payne, Weberhard Jones, Arthur Howeattle, Eli Ward, Jack Ward, Beatrice Pullen, Mark Williams, and Carl Black and his wife, Sally Black.**

## Discussion

Albert B. Reagan (1871-1936) worked for the U.S. Indian Field Service. He was initially trained as a geologist, then became interested in ethnology and received his Ph.D from Stanford in 1925. From 1905-1909, Regan was government official in charge of the Indian villages of Quileute (now called La Push) and Hoh.

"A story of the flood" (Reagan, 1934) is a Hoh/Quileute tale strikingly similar to the Swan account. In fact, all the story elements from the Swan account are present. However, this version of the story is clearly set in mythic time, not the historical past of the Swan account, and includes many story elements not present in Swan. "A story of the flood" attributes the tidal phenomena to a battle between two supernatural figures; Kwatee and the Thunderbird. After multiple episodes of battle, Kwatee kills the Thunderbird. This story also adds a unique physical detail - it describes sea animals stranded on dry land when the water recedes.

Kwatee, who figures in this story is also known as the Transformer or the trickster; he is a central figure in many northwest mythologies. Stories about the Transformer deal with how he improves the imperfect world, through "the theft of fire, the destruction of monsters, the making of waterfalls, and the teaching of useful arts to the Indians" (Judson, 1916, p. vii). The Transformer is most widely known as Coyote. This character is called Speelyai in the Columbia River Basin, and appears as Yehl, the Raven, in Alaska.

## A STORY OF THE FLOOD

In the beginning Kwatee created the animals of the earth. Then by the union of some of these animals with a star which fell from heaven, came the first human beings. And from these sprang the various races of men.

Years came and went and all was good. Then Chief Thunderbird attempted to destroy all the good whales of the ocean. Kwatee then interfered, and a terrible drawn battle was fought between him and Thunderbird.

Enraged, that bird caused the waters of the great deep to rise. For four days the sea continued to rise. It rose till it covered the very tops of the mountains.

Again Kwatee joined his adversary in battle, and while the conflict was in progress, the waters receded. This engagement, too, was a drawn battle, and following it the waters again rose. The water of the Pacific flowed through what is now the swamp and prairie westward from Neah Bay on the Strait of Juan de Fuca to the Pacific, making an island of Cape Flattery.

Again Kwatee and Thunderbird engaged in terrible conflict, and again the waters suddenly receded, leaving Neah Bay, the Strait of Fuca, and Puget Sound perfectly dry. For four days the water ebbed out, and numerous sea monsters and whales were left on dry land.

The battle was again indecisive. Then without any waves or breakers the waters again rose till they had submerged the whole country. Then Kwatee killed Chief Thunderbird. The waters were then four days receding. And since then there has been no great floods on the earth. Also each time that the waters rose, the people took to their canoes and floated off as the winds and currents wafted them, as there was neither sun nor land to guide them. Many

canoes also came down in trees and were destroyed, and numerous lives were lost. And the survivors were scattered over the whole earth. One segregation of the Quileutes found themselves at Hoh, another at Chemakum (near the present Port Townsend), and a third succeeded in returning to their own home here on the Pacific.

## A HOH VERSION OF THE THUNDERBIRD MYTH

You know Forks prairie, Quillayute prairie, Little prairie, Beaver prairie, Tyee prairie and all the other prairies of our country. Well, these are the places where the great, elder thunderbird had terrible battles with the killer whale of the deep.

This whale was a monster destroyer of the whales that furnished oil to the children of men. It slaughtered the oil producing whales till none could be obtained for meat and oil. What were the people to do? There was no oil to drink and dip their bread and dried berries in. What were they to do! Were they to starve!

Thunderbird saw their plight and soared from her nest in yonder dark hole in the mountains. She soared far out over the placid waters and there poised herself high up in the air and waited for the "killer" to come to the surface of the water as it chased its fleeing prey. It came and as quick as a flash, the powerful bird darted and seized it in her flinty talons. Then above the watery surface she lifted it and with great effort soared away toward the land areas.

Passing beyond the oceans with her ponderous load, she, tiring, was compelled to alight and rest her wings; and each and every time the bulky beast was allowed to reach solid land there was a terrible battle; for it was powerful and fought for its life with terrible energy. In addition, each time they fought in desperate encounter, they tore all the trees up by the roots and since that time no trees have grown upon these places to this day; they have been prairies ever since. Furthermore, the great thunderbird finally carried the weighty animal to its nest in the lofty mountains, and there was the final and terrible contest fought. Here in this death struggle, they uprooted all the trees for many miles around the nest and also pulled the rocks down the great Hoh valley. Since then there has been no timber on the up-country; and the heap of debris they pulled down that valley is known as the bench; (the last terminal moraine of the Olympic glacier). Thunderbird, however, finally triumphed. It killed the beast and tore its great and mighty body to pieces; and, then, finding that it was not good to eat, it hurled the pieces from its nest in all directions, where the respective pieces turned to stone under the curse of the enraged bird. You can see them there now. They are the projecting points and rocky ridges of that high region. Before that time that section was practically level. Now you know what a broken-up rocky place it is.

That is not all. Killer whale had a son, called Subbus. So after thunderbird had killed the parent whale, it set out to capture and destroy this beast also.

This young monster was much smaller than its father, smaller on account of its not being fully developed. Nevertheless, it was more agile and wary. Consequently it took days and days of hovering over the sea before the bird of the upper sky could drop down upon it and seize it in its talons. But the unfortunate day came to it also, as it had to the parent, "killer." It was chasing a school of sperm whales and was just in the act of making an onslaught on the largest fellow of the school when there was a rustling noise and then before it could dive to the lower depths of the watery ways, it felt itself being lifted into the air, as at the same time it felt the excruciating pain caused by the huge claws of the bird being sunk deep into its body. It fought, but it was no match for its adversary.

High into the air the bird carried it over the land, finally dropping it to the land surface at Beaver prairie. Then at this place there was another great battle. Subbus was at length killed and his body torn to pieces; Moreover, its huge body damned the original channel of the Soleduck river and caused it to make the big bend to the southwestward at that place. And the huge pieces of blubber, now stone, cover the ground in the direction of its longitudinal extension. (This is a lateral moraine of the Selkirk-Mt. Baker glacier that crosses the region here--Reagan.) You can see the line of rock (boulder train) there at any time.

My father (father of the medicine man who related this story to the writer) also told me that following the killing of this destroyer of the food-animals of mankind, there was a great storm and hail and flashes of lightning in the darkened, blackened sky and a great and crashing "thunder-noise" everywhere. He further stated that there were also a shaking, jumping up and trembling of the earth beneath, and a rolling up of the great waters.

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