

The Hump Back Man Sculpture from the Beach Grove Site (DgRr-1)

Don Welsh

There is a detailed record of published and unpublished about the Hump Back Man sculpture (e.g., Duff: 1956a: 89, 149, Plate 226; 1975:37, Plate 169). There is an even larger record of it in unpublished documents that describe it as a transformation figure and document oral traditions that may relate to its creation. Among the unpublished records are Harlan Smith's field notes describing how he went about obtaining it for the National Museum of Canada in Ottawa, which was then called the Victoria Memorial Museum. Smith wrote:

A sculptured form representing a hump back, the largest unbroken human sculpture in stone known from Canada. People of the vicinity say it was found about seven feet deep in the shell-heap on the east side of the main road south from Ladners, B.C., to Point Roberts and Boundary Bay, and had been given by the finders to Chief Harry Joe living at Chewas-in perhaps a mile to the west. The point where the sculpture was found is in front of the schoolhouse at the place where the road leaves the low delta deposit and ascends to the highland of the tied-on island known as Point Roberts.

I visited Chief Harry Joe May 22, 1922, and found the sculpture in his possession. It is one foot, 4 1/8 inches high, 3 1/4 inches wide at the top of the head, 3 7/8 inches wide at the mouth, 4 1/4 inches wide at the chest, 4 5/8 inches wide at the feet: 8 inches thick from chest to hump and 9 1/4 thick from knees to small of back.

It was formed of a boulder apparently of tertiary sandstone, by pecking and rubbing.

Chief Harry Joe's address is Chewas-in Indian Reservation, via Ladners, B.C. He said in Chinook Jargon that he considered it a person turned to stone—the only one ever found—and that some one came from far away and turned the person to rock.

I asked him to present it to the Victoria Memorial Museum. He refused to sell it. After a long talk in which I told him when he died it would probably be lost and should be kept to show what Indians were, either in the Victoria Memorial Museum, the Provincial Museum, Victoria, or the British Museum, he called to me and said he would think it over. I visited his place to try again in September but he was not home (Smith 1937 [Box 10, File 3]:61-62).

The location from which the sculpture came is known today



Figure 1. Human Figure [Hump Back Man, Hunchback Man]; drawing by the author.

Height:	40.7 cm
Width:	12.7 cm
Length:	25.3 cm

Material:	Tertiary sandstone, Grey mudstone
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Nat. Mus. Canada:	# XII - B - 1563
Smith, H. I.:	Accession #267 1923

as the Beach Grove Site, DgRs-1. Additional information about the location was later given to Harlan Smith in a letter dated June 27, 1925 written by Ralph L. Roys:

The part of the shell heap where you found the image belongs to a Mr. Calvert, Customs Inspector, Boundary Bay Road, Ladner P.O. I suppose. You remarked that was more shell and midden. Up near the place you photographed, where the house sites show, it is a golf club. Also, it is not known yet whether that midden would yield enough to be worth digging. No one has ever dug there. (Smith 1937 [Box 10, File 3]:63).

Although Ralph Roys was Harlan Smith's assistant, he was not mentioned in Smith's Jessup Expedition publications. Roys was an interested amateur who apparently accompanied Smith to the Schoolhouse Road Site, known today as the Beach Grove Site, DgRs-1, and the Boundary Bay Site, DgRs-14. Smith first visited the Beach Grove Site in 1898. Roys must have entered the picture later.

In *Archaeology of the Gulf of Georgia and Puget Sound* which was published in 1907, Smith listed the sculpture and noted it was from "Surface Collection & general digging - 1898" (Smith 1937 [Box 10, File 3]:85). In an article that appeared in *Saturday Night* magazine in 1923, when the sculpture was acquired for the national museum, Smith contributed more information about it:

Ancient Bit of Indian Sculpture Discovered in British Columbia

The largest unbroken sculpture of the human form ever found in Canada has been secured for the Victoria Memorial Museum, the National Museum of Canada, Ottawa, by Harlan I. Smith, Dominion Archaeologist.

This was found under seven feet of refuse accumulated in an ancient Indian village. On top of the heap, which was composed largely of shells of edible shell-fish, were standing stumps of huge old trees. These are known to have been very old since the annual rings of growth were counted and found to number over four hundred, or four hundred years a year to a ring. Thus it is known that this bit of sculpture was made before Columbus discovered America.

This old Indian village site is about twenty miles south of Vancouver, near the mouth of the Fraser River. The chief of the Chewasin tribe had the sculpture and presented it to Canada in return for a small gift of appreciation. He did this at Mr. Smith's request that it might be saved for all to see what the Indians of that day could do. The Chief is of the opinion that his people lived on this location for a long period. This is indicated by the large accumulation of shells, to say nothing of the great trees which had grown after the heap had formed. The shells were the result of many meals and feasts and refuse of Indian kitchens.

The Chief, writes Mr. Smith, commends his tribe to the Canadian Government and wishes the Government representatives, when they visit British Columbia, to give ear to the needs of his people and respect their rights.

The figure is that of a hump back man. A larger figure has been discovered at Selma Park B.C., but it was broken when found. Photographs of it taken from front, rear and each side are left in the National Archaeological Archives in Victoria Memorial Museum Ottawa.

All such specimens of Canadian art should, says Mr. Smith, be given to the nation for preservation so that they may be of great value in supplying Canada with motifs for designs and trademarks needed by our factories.

Mr. Smith has in press an album of prehistoric Canadian art. When issued it may be obtained by addressing the National Museum, Ottawa, Ontario. It will be of use to designers and factory owners. (*Saturday Night*, July 21,

1923, Toronto; in Smith 1934 [Box 9, File 1]).

On the top of the page, *Saturday Night* ran a photograph (Figure 2; see Welsh article, in *The Midden* 37(2):13, Plate 3) with the following caption and text:

Where Canadian Sculpture Many Hundreds of Years Old was found.

Tree stump showing over 400 years growth on top of seven feet of Indian village refuse under which was found the largest unbroken sculpture of the human form ever unearthed in Canada, found on south side of Fraser delta near Vancouver (*Saturday Night*, July 21, 1923, Toronto; Smith 1934 [Box 9, File 1]).

According to Smith's description, this photo was taken at the north end of the Beach Grove site. Be that as it may, the description matches a point between houses five and six on Smith's sketch map of the site (Figure 3; see Welsh article in *The Midden* 37(2):10, Figure 1), with the direction of the photo being generally north. The sculpture appears to have been in the deep deposits between houses five and six, part way between the front and back of the house. There is a strong possibility that it was uncovered when the midden was excavated for road material or chicken scratch. Smith wrote the following in the Victoria Museum accession record:

XII-B-1563 Sculpture in fine grained grey mudstone, representing humpback human form. Found in shell-heap east of schoolhouse, on road south from Ladner to Boundary Bay at point where road rises from Fraser flat to highlands of Point Roberts, B.C. Collected by Harlan I. Smith on Anthropological Expedition of Victoria Memorial Museum, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, Oct. 15, 1923. Accession 267. Probably local tertiary. Bought of Chief Harry Joe for \$20.00, on condition that this is part price. In addition the government is to be informed (Smith 1930 [Box 1, File 3]:65).

Although this is the extent of the documentation provided by Smith, the sculpture is also referred to in a manuscript by Denys Nelson recording an interview with Chief Harry Joe:

The story of the stone, so far as I could understand, is that one of the chief's nephews was walking one day on the rocky bluff, covered with woods behind the village when he kicked a stone which proved to be the carved image. As to the origin, the chief said that for generations the Indians had handed down bits of information from father to son. Not much, but enough to act as history. He had heard from his father and would hand down to his son what he had heard. No embroidery, or additions. Just what he had heard. Long ago, before "the flood" there were great men who had the power of healing sickness, mending broken bones and so forth [We would call them "magicians" he agreed]. One such came wandering around the Fraser Valley and met people who tried to thwart him. It became a contest of strength, and the result was that the opponents were turned into stone. Thus it came about that there were a few of such stone figures throughout

the valley, being those who opposed the magician. In the clashing of two strong wills that which was the weaker fell down (Nelson n.d.).

This story seems to be an expansion of the story recorded by Smith. He is the only person to note that the story was presented in Chinook jargon but Nelson may be alluding to that fact when he begins his record with “as far as I could understand” (Nelson n.d.). The fact that Harry Joe did not speak English is also recorded in the McKenna and McBride Royal Commission on Indian Affairs in the Province of British Columbia, which records that Joe’s speech was translated by Simon Pierre of Katzie (McKenna and McBride 1913). It must have been difficult to express this Transformer story through the use of trade jargon.

Jenness’s (1955) 1936 interview with Old Pierre of Katzie adds another aspect to the story:

A rumour now reached the Indians on the Lower Fraser that three brothers, accompanied by twelve servants, were coming from the west to finish Swanaset’s work. Anxiously the Indians waited.

The mysterious strangers appeared suddenly at ciŕtánəm a little nook on the west side of Boundary Bay. In front marched the eldest of the three brothers, a being of marvelous power named Khaals [Xε’els] who could transport them wherever he wished by his mere thought. Khaals approached an Indian and his wife who were sitting on the beach and swept his right hand upward, restoring their souls to the Lord Above and changing their bodies to stone. To the woman he said: ‘You shall help the people who come hereafter. If they speak fair words to you, you shall grant them fine weather.’ What he said to the man, who sank into the ground deeper than the woman, we no longer remember.

[Not long ago the wife of Chief Harry accidentally stumbled on this stone man and ran away to tell a friend, but when he retraced her steps, the stone had vanished into the ground again. The stone woman, however, emerges fairly frequently. If the Indian who comes upon her rubs her with red ochre, lifts her up in his hands and prays for the weather he desires, she will grant him his wish.]

From Boundary Bay, Khaals and his party proceeded to Tsawwassen, which was then an island fastened to the mainland by a stout rope of twisted cedar. Among the Indians on this island was a greedy woman named sqəməθiə who was never willing to share her clams with her fellow-villagers. When Khaals suddenly appeared and asked her what she was doing, she answered sharply: “I am cooking clams for myself.”

“Then you shall dwell among the clam-beds for ever,” he decreed, and raising his right hand, he transformed her to stone.

Many Indians since that day have seen her in some shell-heap—a stone image about 1½ feet high. Invariably they ran home for a goat’s wool blanket in which to wrap her, for she is sacred, but she had always vanished when they returned. Not many years ago, however, an Indian whom a white farmer had employed to dig in a shell-heap at Tsawwassen unearthed a stone image which could only have been

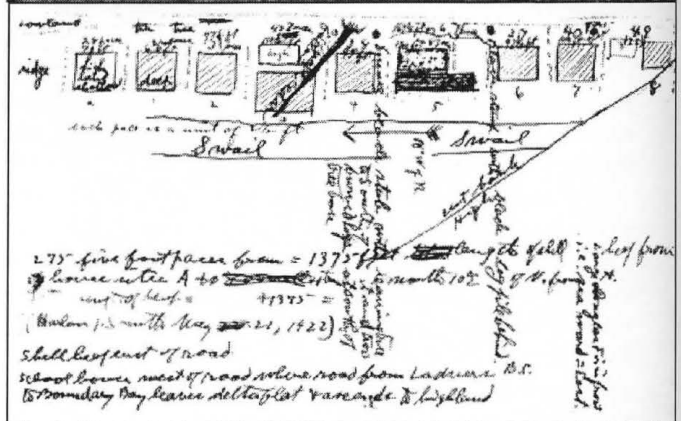


Figure 2 (top): Smith’s photograph printed in *Saturday Night*, 1923. Figure 3 (bottom): Smith’s sketch map of the Beach Grove site. Larger versions available in *The Midden* 37(2).

sqəməθiə. He carried it home and sold it to a white man for \$25, but within a few months he and all his family died” (Jenness 1955).

This story clearly includes the discovery of the sculpture and its consequent sale to Smith. The location is a little fuzzy, two sculptures being at ciŕtánəm (Lily Point) and the transformed woman, sqəməθiə, being at some shell-heap, or a shell-heap near Tsawwassen. Diamond Jenness has commented on Old Pierre’s apparent integration of Christian concepts with traditional Salish mythology (Jenness 1955:88). Similarly, in this case, I take the three brothers and twelve servants in Simon Pierre’s version to be equivalent to the Father, Son and Holy Ghost and the twelve disciples added to the traditional transformer story form. In addition, Simon Pierre seems to have added an “urban myth” of a curse to the story of Smith’s purchase that is equivalent to the Curse of King Tut’s Tomb. King Tut’s tomb was opened in 1922 and was quite well known. Smith, at least, did not die until 1940, four years after Jenness’s interview and many years after he had transacted the purchase. It is interesting to note that Simon Pierre described Tsawwassen as an island tied to the mainland by a cedar rope; this is quite similar to Smith’s “tied on island of Tsawwassen.”

A further record of this legendary sculpture, was recorded on

July 14th, 1952, many years after the sculpture had been moved to the national museum by Wayne Suttles, in an interview with Simon Pierre, son of Peter, "Old" Pierre. In this case, the name is recorded as sqəmáΘiə, and is associated with the "Blaine side of Point Roberts."

A Tsawwassen woman—a rock about 4 feet high—a fierce, desperate Woman. Xε'els was coming and she was going to k'əmá.ýs which means 'put his face into the water until he dies.' Mink asked for her but Xε'els said "Only if you [mink] are left, too" [that is, he would also turn Mink into stone] (Suttles pers. comm., 1988b; in Arcas 1991:169–170).

When asked by this author about the translated name of the site recorded in this interview as "put his face into the water until he dies" instead of "dog face" as he had translated it elsewhere, Suttles commented that he did mean "dog face" [q'əmá.ýs]. Suttles also commented that "Simon was missing some front teeth which made it hard for me to distinguish an "s" from a theta ["th" sound]. So I am not positive that the woman's name had an "s" or "theta" in it" (Suttles pers. comm., Oct 3, 2003). The name of the woman may well be identical to that used by Simon Pierre's father, Old Pierre as the name in the legend. In Suttles' 1952 notation of what Simon Pierre said, a rather large rock is indicated, rather than a smaller sculpture mentioned earlier. This larger size might be what Simon Pierre expected for a Transformer rock as they are usually not sculptures but rocks on the land [but see T'xwelatse, *The Midden* 39(2)].

Transformer rocks often get their significance from the associated legend rather than their appearance although some Transformer rocks have a superficial resemblance to some aspect of the legend, like Sp'ath the bear, and some have been modified by painting like Lhxeylex, the Doctor, on Harrison Lake.

The story of sqəmáΘiə fits well with the sculpture often referred to as the humpback man. The 'hump' or 'hunch' is more reasonably a clam basket, a very common item of equipment used in the past in the area where it was found as evidenced by the heaps of shell. Although the sculpture does not clearly indicate breasts and has been most commonly referred to as a man, lines incised on the chest could indicate breasts or basket straps. These lines could equally indicate a male chest or just be design elements that we don't understand from today's perspective.

It seems incredible that a myth or legend recorded within the last hundred years could refer to a specific artifact dating, most likely, from the Marpole Culture. That being said, legends recorded in the last century had been handed down orally for many generations and; over time, may have been embroidered with additions in order to make a point or to explain Transformer stones in contemporary terms.

The purpose of myths and legends within oral cultures is to provide cultural explanations for observed facts that cannot be explained otherwise. The important points from the teller's perspective may be that sculptures are associated with magical, spiritual acts (which include ochre and/or goats wool) and that if people act in a ritually proper manner toward certain stones, (for example sculptures such as this one, stone bowls, Transformer stones, etc.), then benefits will be received.

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