

THUNDERBIRD
AMONG THE TSIMSYANS

The Origin of the Thunderbird Crest as used by the Gitrhawn clan of the Haidas and the Tsimisyans, and their clansmen among the Tsimisyans of the Skeena and Nass Rivers, in particular Legyarh, and Nees-wa'mak. As recorded by William Beynon, in 1947, from Mrs. Ethel Musgrave (*Deeks*), aged 70, an adopted Eagle among the Gisparhlawts tribe, in the household of Kapligidæhl, who had heard it as told many years ago by her uncle Nees'wamak of the Legyarh household.

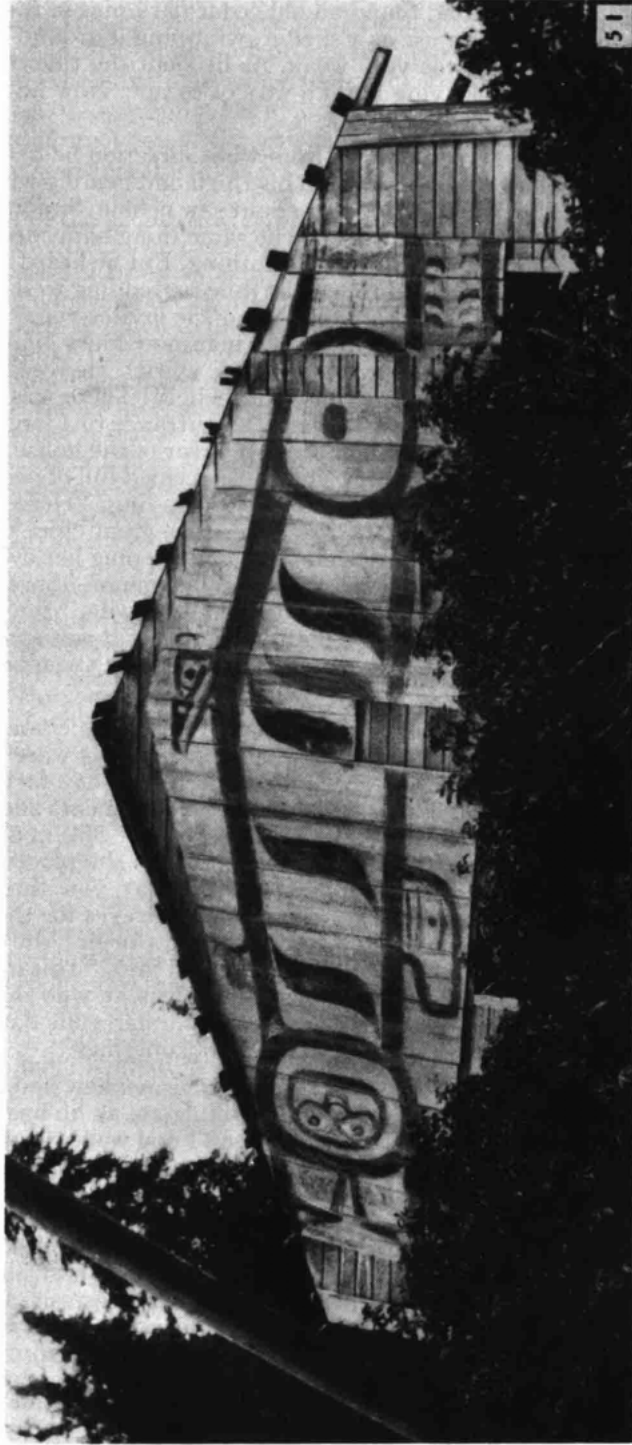
The chief of a great village on the Skeena River was becoming aged. His nephew was to be his successor, and would inherit not only all his wealth but also his house and wives. This young man mingled freely among all in the house. None could refuse him this privilege as he was to be the next chief. His social duties were many. He had to accompany his uncle to all feasts and gatherings, at which he sat either in front of him or behind, depending on the nature of the feast. If it was a *narhnorh* (spirit) feast, where a *narhnorh* would be dramatized, then he would sit behind the uncle. If it was a *yæuk*, then he sat in front.

The favourite among this chief's wives was a very young woman, and she quickly became very intimate with her husband's nephew. One day the chief came upon them as they were sleeping together. He was grieved and ashamed when he saw how his own nephew was so ridiculing him. He went away to think out a plan how best to punish him. He made a plank the width and length of his nephew, and put a thick coat of gum and pitch on it. This he placed beside his wife, he himself hiding close by.

His wife was asleep and did not know what her husband had done. When the nephew thought that all were asleep in the house, he came quietly from his own sleeping-place, and went to where his uncle's wife lay, stretching out flat on his back on the board that his uncle had prepared for him. In this way his uncle came upon him and, with his own close relatives, picked up the plank with his nephew upon it, and took him down to a canoe at the water's edge. They placed the board in the bottom of a canoe, while the chief said, "Let us push the canoe off, and let him who would bring shame upon my house go! He shall never return." With that the canoe was pushed off. It drifted down the river.

For many days the young man was carried by the current, and eventually the canoe began to roll and pitch as if in rough water. Glued as he was to the plank he was unable to raise himself and could not see where he had drifted. Soon the canoe scraped on a beach, and shortly after he could not hear the water any more. When the sun rose, it became very hot, and the rays beat down upon him. The intense heat began to melt the pitch, permitting him to move a little, and after much manœuvering he finally was able to sit up.

The canoe was beached high and dry on a small island; no other land was in sight anywhere. As he recovered his strength he stood up, and found that a very little food had been left in the canoe. This he ate, for he had been many days without food, and was very weak, barely able to drag himself up to the shelter of the island's only tree. There was little hope for him, and



Thunderbird and the Whale, at Tuxican

soon he would perish. He had found an old cedar bark mat in the canoe, and this he brought with him to use as a shelter, wrapping it around himself. He began to fall asleep as he was very weak. As he slept the tide came up and washed the canoe away, leaving him no way of escape. Now he must surely die.

He did not know where he was or from what direction he had come, but as he was dozing he felt something pinch his thigh and heard a whisper: "My uncle calls you!" He awoke, and looking about saw no one. Supposing that he had been dreaming, he again fell asleep. The same thing happened. Although he sat up and looked at once, he could see nothing. But he heard a rustling in the grass beside him. He decided to watch while pretending to sleep. A small mouse ran up and pinched him, saying, "My uncle invites you." Then it ran away into a crevice behind him. The young man now knew that this island must be a *spenarhnorh* (*spe*: abode of, *narhnorh*: spirit). He rose and went in the direction the small mouse had gone, and behold! There was an opening that led into the inside of the little island, an entrance to a large house. He went in and heard a loud voice calling from the rear of the house: "Bring my nephew here, and let him sit by me." The house seemed full of people moving about very swiftly. One of them came forward saying, "Here, come with me!" and led the young man to the rear where the great chief sat. His wife was also a very large person, hardly moving, and keeping her eyes closed all the time. Beside them sat a very beautiful young woman. "Spread a mat so that my nephew can sit by his cousin! She will be his wife," the chief called out, and a slave came forward with a mat. When the mat was spread in front of the chief, the young man seated himself, and the young woman sat beside him.

Then the young man heard a small squeaky voice — the voice of Mouse Woman: "Have you any wool or fat?" The people always wore woollen ear ornaments, and carried mountain goat kidney fat for use as a facial cosmetic. Remembering this, the young man took off his ear ornaments and gave them to Mouse Woman along with the piece of fat he had. She went away and returned with a huge quantity of fat and wool which she placed in front of the great chief, saying, "Your nephew has brought you these presents, chief." It was then that the chief's wife opened her eyes for the first time; in her eyes were small human faces. After looking at the gifts she closed them again. Mouse Woman came to the young man, and said, "This is the Eagles' home, and this is the chief of all the Eagles. It was he who directed your canoe here. He saw it drifting on the sea. You will marry his daughter. You were saved because you have brought fat and wool offerings."

When the chief saw the great offerings which his nephew had brought, he was very pleased. "Bring food! My nephew hungers, as he has travelled a long distance to visit me," he called to his slaves. Food was brought, and they ate. That night when they retired to sleep, the young man went down to the beach. He found a round stone, the size of the male organ, and he secreted it. Then he retired with the princess to their sleeping place. *Illa nocte, cum abierant omnes quo somnum caperent, juvenis ad littora descendit. Ubi, petram nactus rotundam quæ, mensura, mentulæ similis erat, illam abscondite secum tulit. Postea, cum muliere, in cubiculum secessit. Cum ab illa peteret ut coiret, petram quam absconderat in vaginam mulieris introduxit; cujus vaginæ subito petram includentis, dentes contriti sunt, eorumque exitica vis destructa fuit. Dentibus omnibus contritis, pro explorato tunc*

habuit juvenis sanam et innocuam idoneamque ad coitum factam esse mulierem quæ, antea, multos, dentibus illis, ceciderat amatores. Now very much in love, she gave a warning to her husband: "Be careful when my father bids you do anything. He will endeavor to destroy you, but I will do everything to protect you." Next day, all were surprised to see the young man alive, and he was henceforth on his guard.

The chief of the Eagles said to his daughter, the next day. "Give my son-in-law a garment that he can use when he travels long distances. We must find out how skilful he is as a hunter." She went to the chief's box, took out an Eagle garment, brought it to her husband and placed it on him. At once he became a different being. He could fly far up into the sky now, and he began practising for the severe trials which he knew his father-in-law would give him. Each day he would go out to sea and capture salmon swimming close to the surface, and every time he came back with something. One day when he saw a seal in the water he swooped down and drove his talons into its neck. After a long struggle he was able to kill it and return with it to the island. This had been the first time that a lone eagle had ever done this. Again, once, the young man saw a sea-lion. He pounced down in the same way as he had done with the seal, and overcame it.

While he was away on these hunting trips his wife would turn herself into an eagle and sit on the top of the only tree on the island, waiting for him. Afraid that he would meet with disaster, she continually warned him: "Be careful! My father is setting traps for you. Do not grasp at all things too recklessly." But her husband replied, "My supernatural powers are just as great as his. I will compete with him." He was not aware that the source of his power was his wife. One morning when he looked out, he saw many eagles, all struggling with something away out to sea. When he flew out he found the Eagles trying to capture a whale. They were just about overcome when he came upon them. He grasped the whale along with the others, and so strong was he that he lifted it from the sea, allowing them to fly to shore with it.

The great chief gave a feast. To it he invited all his fellow supernatural beings. As they entered, the young man heard who they were: some came from their abode on the Queen Charlotte Islands, some from Ligimiyu (Millbank Sound), Welhæhmilk (Queen Charlotte Sound): Weekyinu (Rivers Islet), and many other places. Each of the guests looked ferocious. None spoke but the great Eagle chief who, when all had gathered together, said: "Brothers, I have brought you to see my son-in-law, and to taste the fruit of his hunt." Turning to his slaves: "Bring forth my son's gift, and let my guests partake of it." Then the fat and the wool were brought out and shared with the guests. The quantity never diminished, no matter how much was eaten, all this because of Mouse Woman's supernatural powers. When all had feasted, the Eagle chief said in parting, "You all know my son-in law now. When you see him in your parts, safeguard him!" As they went out, great storms arose, the earth shook, and even in the feast house it became foggy, according to the special power of each supernatural being. When they had gone, the young woman beseeched her husband: "Be careful! My father is about to try his powers on you again. Should you see anything unusual, be very careful."

One morning, the young man saw, away out to sea, a huge octopus emerging from the waters. At once he went in for his garments, meeting his wife on the way. "Do not go out! It is a trap my father has set up. That is a monster Devil-Fish (*hrpi*: half; *hadzælt*: octopus). It may overcome you." The great chief had seen it, and declared tauntingly, "There is nobody brave enough to go out and bring in that Devil-Fish". "I will go at once to fetch it," said the young man, and he donned his Eagle garments. His wife flew up into the tree where she always sat to watch her husband when he was away. As soon as he reached the giant octopus, he swiftly flew down and pounced upon it. They struggled for a long time. Gradually the young man was being taken down into the water by the monster, and was about to be overcome. Then his wife, who was watching, flew out, and at the same time sent out her call to all the spirit Eagles. All flew to where the young man was sinking, and grasped the giant octopus. But they in turn were being pulled down. It was then the great chief's wife moved and waved her hand upwards, on hearing the voice of her daughter. As soon as she waved her hand, the giant octopus became weak, and the Eagles were able to fly to shore with it. The great Eagle chief now was overcome. His nephew had become great among the Eagles.

One day, he suddenly felt lonesome for his home village. He even refused food, and went to his sleeping-place, not speaking to anybody. Finally his wife came to him, asking, "What is the matter with you? Why are you so sad?" "I have been thinking to-day about my own people. I am lonesome for them," he replied. She said no more, but went to her father. "Why is my son-in-law sad?" the chief asked, "What has happened to him?" "He is lonesome for his own people," she answered. The chief did not speak for a long while, and then said, "Tell my son-in-law that he will get his wish. Ask him to come here. Soon he will be able to go back". The young woman went to her husband. "Cheer your heart!" she said. "You will have your wish. But my father says there are still some things you must learn and see, before you will go back".

Inside of this great chief's house were many things, among which was the Narhnarem-Trho (Supernatural-Halibut). (Wm. Beynon wonders whether the informant means the Hlkuwælksegem-Trho, Prince of Halibut, for he does not remember ever hearing of a Narhnarem-Trho). This was a huge halibut which stood at the rear of the house, alive to all appearances, with human faces all along its back, and one on its tail. On top of the house was the figure of the Whale with human faces all along its back. This was known as Hlkuwælksegem-Hlpoon (Prince of Whales). The Narhnarem-Trho and the Hlkuwælksegem-Hlpoon were two crests of this great chief. He said to his nephew: "You will take these with you on your return to your village, and you will use the Hrpi-hadzælt (monster Devil Fish) which you overcame as your own crest. Your wife will accompany you, and when you set out, many of my people will lead you to your village". Then the chief called his daughter: "Tell my son-in-law that to-morrow he will make ready to go back to his home. Let him wear the Eagle garment which you gave him!" When they were ready to start, the chief said, "Carry some pebbles with you. When you tire, drop one in the water. It will become an island. Then you may land and rest".

They started off in their Eagle cloaks, each carrying pebbles and a small package which the chief had given them with the words: "Before you enter



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Thunderbird and Whale house front, at Skidegate

your uncle's house, undo these packets and leave them outside. Then walk in. If they receive you well, send out slaves to bring in what you have placed outside as gifts to your uncle. Should he not welcome you, then return here".

After flying a long while, the young man's Eagle wife said, "Let us rest!" She dropped a pebble. An island appeared under them and they rested. They resumed their journey, and at nightfall the man said, "Let us rest again, and sleep here for the night!" So he let go his pebble, and they rested. Next morning, very early, they set out again and soon the young man saw what appeared to be high mountains ahead. They were familiar peaks. "We will arrive at my uncle's village before night," he said. Just before dark, they reached his village on the bank of the river.

When they had removed their Eagle raiment, they entered the village. Many recognized the young man who had been mourned as dead. Some were afraid that this was a ghost, and ran away at his approach. He and his wife went to the chief's house and, as the great Eagle chief had instructed, left the parcels outside. Together they entered the house. As they went in, the household recognized the young man. But, as they regarded him as dead, they ran away from him. The chief felt like them. He could not believe that his nephew was alive — and feared some sort of vengeance. "So you have come back, my dear man!" he said hesitantly. "Come, sit here in front of me as you used to do. Where have you come from?" "Yes, it is I," his nephew replied, "I did not perish, but have brought you many gifts. Send your slaves out to fetch in what my father-in-law has sent you." "Come, bring your wife here, that I may see my daughter-in-law," and turning to his head men: "Do as my nephew says. Have the slaves bring in the gifts my brother has sent me." The slaves went out, and behold! There was a huge quantity of food, garments, sea-otter robes, and many other valuable things. There was also a wooden Eagle with outspread wings. All this was brought to the chief, and put before him.

The young man then related his experiences, and described how the Eagle was to be his crest as well as the Hlkuwælksegem-Hlpoon (the Prince of Whales). He told of his battle with the Rhpi-Hadzælt (Devil Fish), now his own crest.

The young man took his place in his uncle's household. Every day he would take his Eagle garment and go away to distant places, returning with fur and food. Soon his uncle's house was filled to capacity with wealth, for his trade with other tribes. His father-in-law would always send in his Eagle people to bring more supplies for his daughter. In the course of time the young man acquired great wealth, which he shared with his people. He gave a great *yæuk*, where he adopted the Eagle as a crest, and his people became known as Larhskeek (Eagles). He also adopted for his own use the Half Devil Fish, and thus established the Eagle clan among his people.

The Eagle woman was very happy with her husband. Every day they went into the hills, flying with their Eagle garments. When they came back, he would take the water bucket, and she would dip a head feather into it before drinking it. Her husband did not know why she did this, and when he asked, she would reply, "It is to keep my supernatural powers strong". He always went for the water. On these occasions the wife of his uncle, his former paramour, would lie in wait for him, for she was still in love with him.

But he was able to resist her advances, for he loved his Eagle wife, and would have nothing to do with other women. Every day the chief's wife awaited for him, and he became frightened in the end. The woman was so insistent. No matter where he went she followed him about, and seemed to have no fear of her own husband, who was now very aged.

One day, when the Eagle woman had sent her husband for fresh water, the chief's wife was already at the water-hole. She came to him and said, "Come and rest with me! Come, no one shall know!" As she spoke she started to take off her clothes. As she was still young and beautiful, the young man could not resist her. Afterwards, he filled his bucket at the water hole and went back. When he entered he at once noticed a change in his wife's manner. She took the water bucket and dipped the feather in it. The water immediately became slimy and dirty. She arose, and said, "You only pretend to love me, as you associate with other women. I am now to go back to my own country, where all are faithful to one another." So saying, she took her Eagle garment, and walked out of the house. Her husband followed her, explaining, "I have made a mistake. Will you forgive me? For a long while I have tried to resist this temptation. Please, come back!" The Eagle woman kept on talking as she went, and without looking at him: "Turn back! Go to the one who has won your favours." The young man went on pleading, "Come back, come back, I want you!" But the Eagle woman donned her garment and flew away. Still her husband followed her, repeating, "Come back, come back, I have made a mistake, come back!" The young woman only answered, "Return to your own woman before I look back and make you fall into the sea, where you would perish." The woman kept on begging her husband to desist, but he would not listen. She then looked back and even as she did, he collapsed into the water, and perished. Saddened, the woman flew on until she reached her island home. Day after day, she lay in her sleeping-place, refusing all food and listening to nobody. As she was gradually dying, her father said to her, "Do not be so sad! I know what has happened and I will endeavour to bring back your husband." He went to the rear of his house and lifted a trap door. Looking down he could see the bottom of the sea. He took a large dip net and lowered it down into the water. After it had been there a long while, he brought it up, with human bones. These he placed on the floor of his house, and continued to lower his net until he had recovered all the bones. When he had finished, he jumped over them three times, and covered them up with a mat. Next day, the body of his son-in-law lay there as if asleep. Again he jumped over the body, and soon his son-in-law sat up. The man looked about, and recognized his wife lying in their sleeping place. He rose as if he had only been dozing and, going to his wife, embraced her. She said, "You have been away so long. At long last you have come back!" He replied, "Yes, I have come to fetch you. My uncle has died, and my people wish us to live with them." She rose from her couch, and they flew back to his tribe. When they reached the village the people were happy.

This is the myth that belonged to the Gitrhawn clan of the Eagles (Larhskeek).

The Gyaibelk of Menæsk, chief of an Eagle clan of Gitlarhdamks. It was the fifteenth in the row from the uppermost along the Nass river front.

Description. Its only carved figure, at the top of a round log, about

12 feet tall, was the mythical Gyaibelk bird that belongs to the tradition of the clan.

Function. In memory of a former Menæsk.

Carver, age. Carved about 60 or 70 years ago by a former Sqateen, of Gitlarhdams. It no longer exists.

(Informant, Dennis Woods, of Gitlarhdams.)

The Split-Eagle and Whale. The pole of the Sperm Whale (*ptsænem-rhlpin*) of Menæsk, head of an Eagle clan of Gitlarhdams. It was the fourteenth in the row from the uppermost along the Nass river front.

Description. It stood in front of the house of this chief; the house bore the names of either By-itself-stands-the-House (*kalihlkem-wilp*) or Nest-House (*anluhlkem-wilp*) or Whale-House (*hlpinem-wilp*). The whole length of this long round pole (*kan*) was carved to represent a whale. At the top sat the Split-Eagle (*pahlkuhl-rhskyæk*). By the tail of the Whale was the Otter (*watserh*), which held a cockle (*gaborh*) in its mouth. At the bottom, a Person with a bear-claw crown.

Function. It was erected in memory of a former Menæsk by a woman who had assumed this name after him and his rank.

Carver, length. It was carved by Oyai of Gitwinksihlk, the canyon of the Nass, at the time when the present Menæsk (an old man in 1927) was young—he could still remember this event. A controversy broke out at the village of Gitrhadeen, below on the same river, between Hladerh, head of a Killer-Whale clan, and the others. Hladerh wanted to own the tallest pole on the river. Upon hearing of the erection, by the Eagle of Gitlarhdams, of a pole taller than his, he sent word to cut it down. When later he heard that the pole was erected as first planned, he uttered a threat, and wanted his command carried out, but in vain. The “real” people whose privilege it was to plant the tallest pole were the Eagles (*larhskyeek-næremrat*).

Its length was 13 arms (double). It no longer exists.

(Informant, Dennis Woods, of Gitlarhdams.)

The Broken-Tree Pole (*andepkan*) of Tsaskoq, a member of the same clan as Menæsk. It was the twenty-first pole from the uppermost in the row along the river front at Gitlarhdams on the Nass River.

Description. The whole pole was carved to represent the Sperm Whale (*rhlpin*), and the Eagle, known under the name of Andepkan (broken tree), sat at the top. One of the later poles, it was erected fifty or sixty years ago.

Function. It was erected in memory of Tsasqowq.

Carver. Niskyin-wæth (George Eli).

(Informant, Dennis Woods, of Gitlarhdams.)

The Rhskyaimsem, the Totem Poles of Hlæq, of the Eagle clan at Gitlarhdams.

Description. 1. One of the two poles contained the Whale (*hlpin*), the Beaver (*tsemalih*), and the Thunderbird Rhskyaimsem. The whole totem

pole was the Whale head down; the Beaver appeared on the neck of the Whale; the Thunderbird stood at the top of the pole. It was a pole so tall that it took two days to cut it down and break it up, about 1918.

Function. It had been erected in memory of Hlæq by one of his oldest sons belonging to a Wolf clan, who succeeded him by adoption into his clan instead of his nephew, who was too young. But as soon as the nephew was grown up, he assumed his function and replaced the adopted son.

Carver, age. It was carved by Hladerh, the Wolf chief of Gitrhadeen and Angyadæ, about seventy years ago. It was destroyed.

2. The other pole is almost forgotten. The informant, when young, saw it still standing; its carvings were getting spoiled, and there was little but the shaft left. Some parts that were falling off were nailed on.

(Informant, John Davis, of the Fireweed clan of Gisransnat at Gitlarhdamks.)

The Thunderbird among the Tsimsyans, according to Herbert Wallace, Kanhade chief of the Gitsees tribe; J. Ryan acting as interpreter (1915).

A mythical bird of the mountains under the form of the eagle, but with a black tail, its beak bent farther back than the eagle's.¹ It was a crest of the Gispewudwade phratry. It was used by Lepkudziust (in the Ginarhangyik tribe) on his totem pole; by Sarhsarht and Lais (Gitwilgyawts); and also by Larhæ, of the same tribe.

Thunder-of-the-Air called Kalepleebem-Larhæ (Thunderbird-of-the-air) of Neeswærhs, Gispewudwade chief of the Gitrhahla tribe of the Sea-coast Tsimsyans, according to Herbert Wallace, head-chief of the Gitsees tribe; William Beynon acting as interpreter, in 1915.

Thunderbird-of-the-Air was a large mythical bird and a mechanical device used both as a crest and as a *narhnorh* (spirit). As a *narhnorh* for ceremonial occasions, the bird rested on the back of a performer of the Neeswærhs household, its wings rolled up at first, then stretched out by means of hidden strings controlled from within.²

The same mythical bird was a more or less general crest of the higher clans of the Gispewudwade phratry of the Tsimsyans. As such it was painted on the front or the rear wall of the house, the beak of this special Thunderbird being represented differently from that of the *Skaimsem*, another Thunderbird. The beak of Thunderbird-of-the-Air was long and the tip curved back under. The *Skaimsem* also had this same feature, and the roar of its voice was even greater. Painted black and red all over, its beak at the base was circled with a greenish band.

The head-chief of the Gitsees tribe, Neesyaranæt, also claimed the right to show Thunder-of-the-Air, but with rolled up wings only; and when he used it as a head-dress, only the head of the bird was shown. Actually chief Neeswærhs of the Gitrhahla tribe, first introduced it in this form.

¹ Here the informant states that the Hawk (*rhsu'ish*) is never used as a crest.

² After the introduction of gunpowder in later years, gunshots accompanied the opening of the wings to imitate the flash and noise of thunder.

Where-the-Thunderbird-Sits (*wilidærhskyaimsem*) belonging to Lepkudzeeus, chief of a Gispewudwade clan of the Ginarhangyeek tribe at Port Simpson.

Description. A Grizzly-Bear-of-the-Sea (*medeegem-dzawey'aks*) stood above another on the pole, and the Thunderbird (*rhskyaimsem*) sat at the top.

Function, carver, and age. Erected in memory of a former Lepkudzeeus, it had been carved by Lararhnitz of a Gispewudwade clan in the Gisparh-lawts tribe at Port Simpson, about 70 years ago, when the informant was a young man.

(Informant, Herbert Wallace; interpreter, William Beynon, in 1926.)

Thunderbird, Whale, and Beaver, totem pole of Gamrhnarh, of the Fireweed clan of Gitlarhdamsk.

1. The Beaver (*tsemalih*) was used on the totem pole of this family, without an explanation as to its origin.

2. The carved Head-of-the-Whale (*hlpin*) jutted out at the top of the house front, the house bearing the name of Whale-House (*hlpinen-wilp*), and it was built to represent a whale; the tail stuck out at the back of the house, as the head and the tail formed the two ends of the large ridge beam. The other beams under the roof were also heavy.

3. The Thunderbird (*Rhskyaimsem*), like the mountain eagles feeding on groundhogs.

(Informant, John Davis, of the Fireweed clan of Gitlarhdamsk.)

The Asewælgyet Red-Garment, the Thunderbird of Hlerem, a chief of a Raven clan in the Gitsees tribe at Port Simpson. This pole was also called Red-Garment (*guswamase*: garment-of-red).

Description. It was a tall round pole, with perhaps a carving of the Thunderbird at the base. The other name of this totem was due to the lower half of the pole having been painted red with ochre. According to our informant: "If the house of Hlerem were to erect a totem pole, the Asewælgyet would be at the base or foundation. This would be painted red, of the same colour as the house itself. The colour formed the dress (*'ayæoks*) of the house — every house had a dress. The Asewælgyet, as well as the Raven and the Bullhead fish, were used as totems by this household. They could be carved outside on the pole. The Asewælgyet particularly would have been the proper house-front painting."

Function. Erected by a new Hlerem in memory of his predecessor of the same name.

Carver, age. It was carved by Larahnitz, a Gispewudwade of the same tribe, and cut down at the time the school was built — other poles were destroyed at the same time. The pole of Hlerem was sold to Mr. Morrison of Metlakatla (this white man sold at least one Tsimshyan pole to the Field Museum of Chicago).

(Informant, Herbert Wallace; interpreter, William Beynon, in 1926.)

The Asewælgyet Grizzly of the families of Hlerem and Weesaiks houses of the Gitsees and Ginarhangeek tribes of the Tsimisyans, according to Herbert Wallace, head-chief of the Gitsees tribe; William Beynon acting as interpreter, in 1915.

As explained in the clan myth of Hlerem (a Kanhade chief), a monster bird whose body resembled that of the Grizzly Bear (*medeek*), had large wings, which caused a noise like thunder. The ancestors of this family, according to their tradition, once had seen it at Warks Canal to the north, where it originated.

Chief Weesaiks, head of the Ginarhangeek tribe, once displayed the same crest on the bow of his large war canoe, which bore the name of Asewælgyet.

The Asewælgyet of Sarhsarht, head of the Gitwilgyawts tribe of the Tsimisyans, according to informant Edmund Patalas, a southern Tsimisyan chief; recorded by William Beynon, in 1947.

The Thunderbird belonged to the Gitwilgyawts people. It was seen by one of the Gitwilgyawt's hunters, whose name was Gæ'yæ, belonging to the house of Sarhsarht. This man was a great hunter and used to go to Dundas Island for seals and sea-lions. These were much sought after as the best materials for waterproof moccasins.

One day the hunter was near Kwærhl (Beaver-Tail — because the island resembles a beaver tail), when he saw a huge bird sitting on a nearby rock. Beside this huge bird were several forms resembling men; they appeared to be seated there. Then the bird flew away to the vicinity of Dundas and waited there. Soon a canoe came from the island and made for Dundas Island but as it passed this island its occupants saw what they thought were human beings. They went to make sure about it. When they landed they heard loud shrieks and a noise like thunder with flashes of lightning. They saw a huge bird-like figure flying towards them, which immediately took the men that were in the canoe.

Gæ'yæ, who had been watching this very closely, saw that it was a real Thunderbird, and that it was using the human figures on the island for bait. When it shrieked it called out “*’ihi ’ihi*,” so they now call this island Larh'ih (Green Island). When Gæ'yæ got back he narrated all that he had seen and took it as the exclusive crest of the Sarhsarht group. He called it 'Asewælgyet', and when using it as a crest, always showed it as a giant Eagle shooting lightning from its eyes, and with wings that made a thunderous noise when they moved.

The Lightning of Nadzi'awelks, a Kanhade of the Gitrhahla tribe of the coast Tsimisyans. It is said to be still standing. The relatives of this family were of Gidestsu, to the south.

Description. 1. The Horse-Fly (*kyegem-qerh*) at the top;

2. The Lightning or Flashes (*tsetsamte*), a human figure at the base of the pole. This mythical being emitted flashes from under its wings. It was also used as a *narhnorh* in dramatic performances.

Carver. It was carved, about 1900, by 'Weethwaw, member of a Wolf

clan, who was engaged only because of his ability, not as belonging to the paternal side of the owner.

(Informant, Oswald Tolmie, an old chief of the Gitrahla; interpreter, William Beynon, 1939.)

THUNDERBIRD AMONG THE TLINGITS

The Thunderbird in Alaska, according to the Descriptive Booklet, Alaska Historical Museum (p. 8).

There was once a brother and a sister. The brother was Echo. The sister ascended Mount Edgecomb and disappeared within. The brother shakes his immense wings and produces thunder. . . .

The Thunders according to a Tlingit tale recorded in English at Wrangell, Alaska, by J. R. Swanton (119:175).

The four brothers now left their own village, because they said that their sister had disgraced them, and they became the Thunders. When they move their wings, you hear the thunder, and, when they wink, you see the lightning.

At the time when these brothers first went away, the people at their father's village were starving, so they flew out over the ocean, caught a whale and brought it to the town, that it might be found next morning. So nowadays people claim that the Thunder is powerful and can get anything, because they know that it was powerful at that time. After the famine was over, they left the world below, went to the sky to live, and have never been seen since.

The Tqaisteena claim the Thunder, because those brothers belonged to that family.

THUNDERBIRD AMONG THE HAIDAS

Belief in the Thunderbird (Swan) (96:7).

The belief in the Thunderbird is common with all the tribes of the northwest coast, and is pictured by each tribe according to their fancy. I have traced this allegory from the Chenooks, at the mouth of the Columbia, through all the coast tribes to Sitka. The general idea is the same throughout; it is belief in a supernatural being of gigantic stature, who resides in the mountains, and has a human form. When he wishes for food he covers himself with wings and feathers as one would put on a cloak. Thus accoutred, he sails forth in search of prey. His body is of such enormous size that it darkens the heavens, and the rustling of his wings causes thunder.

The lightning is produced by a fish, like the Hypocampus, which he gets from the ocean and hides among his feathers. When he sees a whale he darts down on one of these animals with great velocity, and the lightning comes from the creature's tongue, which is supposed to be like that of the serpent. This is the general idea of the mythological legend, slightly altered in the narrative by different tribes and differently depicted by various painters.

The Thunder-and-Lightning House, the Haida house of Skidegate with Six Heads hanging down from the roof-beams, according to the description given by James Deans (36:15, 16).

Many years ago a rich Hidery, named Ellzu-wuss, was building himself a second house on which was placed an image of himself. Looking over it when finished, he was so pleased with it that he exclaimed, "I have the best house in town, a regular thunder and lightning one." So there and then it was named *noo-gah-deelans* — thunder and lightning house. The two images had on long hats or taden skeels, representing high social standing. In the miniature village in Chicago (World's Fair) is a house which has on the ends of its six roof-beams six heads all hanging down; in the original house at Skidegat, each head had hair fixed on it, which waved in the wind. On that account it got the name of six heads house,



Grave on posts, in a southern Haida village (to left)

cadzo-clou-oonal-nass. The owner of this house and his forebears have taken that name but shortened to *clads-ah-coon*. The family bearing this name was *ellzu-cathlans-coon-hidery*, or chief of the Point of the Waves people.

While this chief and his people were building on the point he was unable to settle on the plan of his new house. In this dilemma, he one night dreamed of or saw in a vision, a plan of a complete house with totem post and all, with this difference; he saw on the ends of the six roofbeams the same number of human heads placed upside down, their long hair waving in the wind. He was told in the dream to go and build his new house like it. This he did, and ever after, both at the Point of the Waves and later at Skidegat, his descendants have used the six heads for the same purpose. This was so until a few years ago, when the house was pulled down, in order to be reproduced after the white people's style. The model of this house, which I got for the great Fair, was made by a descendant of the chief who first made the six heads.

Thunderbirds of Skidegate, at the Columbian Exhibition, Chicago (1893), as described by James Deans (36:93,94).

It is a Haida post worthy of the Haidas. This post has for its figures, first and lowest, a scamsum [Skyaimsem-Thunderbird] or sparrow-hawk, the doorway to the house being



Thunderbird and Whale (Haidas), at Tanu (to left). Coast Salish (right)

in the belly of the bird. The next is a frog; the next a being with a bear's head and a human body, holding on to the dragon fly; the next a crane; on the top is the taden skeel of three men, showing the chief's successors. This one, as well as No. 3, is exhibited by Mr. E. D. Ayer, of Chicago, Illinois, to whom, I believe, it belongs. The description given of this post is rather imperfect, and a stranger could glean but little information from it. The large bird on the bottom can hardly be called the sparrow-hawk. It should be called the mosquito-hawk.

The Haida legend of its origin is as follows: long ago the land was mostly covered with water, and when the water left it was very swampy. Then the sun was very hot, far hotter than it is nowadays. This swampy ground bred mosquitoes of an enormous size; they were as large as bats. These bats are well known to most people from their habit of flying about by night. These insects were so large, and their bite so deadly that many people died from them. The country was depopulated from this cause. The people complained until the god Ne-kilst-lass heard their cry, and sent the butterfly to investigate. On its return, it gave a woeiful account of the people's condition. Hearing this, Ne-kilst-lass sent the mosquito-hawk to live on them and drive them away, which it did. Now that the sun is less hot, and scamssums plentiful, the people can live.

One legend is that the scamssum was an enormous bird, which still lives in the mountains from which it flies over the sea, in order to destroy the killer-whales, or, as the Haidas call them, the scannah. Its body is the thunderbird, the clapping of its wings the noise, the lightning a fiery dart sent out of its mouth in order to kill these whales. The next figure is

evidently a frog, showing that the party who had this house was allied to that crest or gens, or they might have been connected with Skidegat's family. The next is rather difficult to decipher, owing to the head, which is evidently a bear's, being upside down. It has the *tan gue* (bear's ears) on it plain enough, showing it was connected with the bears. From its mouth to the mouth of the figure above is a band, which is held by the under figure. This shows a connection between the two. In the third post it shows friendship existed between the two figures — that it, the bear and the frog. In this case the animals shown are different. The lower figure I consider to be a bear, and the upper I believe to be either a butterfly or a mosquito, and doubtless symbolizes the old story of the butterfly sent out by the ancient god Ne-kilst-lass. The figure above seems to be intended for the dragon fly, which also is an enemy to these pests; although I consider this portion of the carvings to be neither more nor less than a rendering of the above legend.

A number of years ago I saw in the old village Yukh, Queen Charlotte Islands, a rendering on a very old totem post of the same myth. The figure with the long beak is a crane, or heron, and doubtless was the crest of the wife of the man who built this house. The three figures on top belong to the family of Skidegat. The first chief of that name adopted it in order to have it on top of his column. It is a mythological tale of the west coast, and is as follows: long ago the god Ne-kilst-lass, for a frolic, turned himself into a beautiful woman, and three men fell in love with her and, some say, married her, although this totem post shows it belonged to one of Skidegat's family.

A Beaver and Thunderbird Totem of the Haidas, persumably at Skidegate, as described by James Deans (33:343).

One pole has three different figures on it. The one at its base is a beaver (*Tsing*). It is carved in a sitting posture, with the entrance, or oval hole, in the lower part of his belly. This symbolizes an ancient legend of the Haidas. Next above, and sitting on the head of the beaver is the Thunderbird (*El-anga*), which also has an ancient story. The next and last on the column is an old woman carved as sitting on the bird's head. She is represented as having an enormous labret placed on her lower lip, which is stretched until it disfigures her face, and is highly characteristic of old women amongst these people. This may be said to represent the typical woman of the Haidas, as her name Itl-tads-dah or perhaps more correctly, Iiltuh Inotoch (Typical Woman), would imply, which, in reality, she is shown to be on the carving. First, her large lip piece shows her to hold the highest rank possible to obtain among the ancient Haidas. Again her Tadn Skeel of four degrees above her head shows her to be a chieftainess of as many degrees as there are bands or circles on her long hat. These she seems to have had in her own right. Again she is carved as holding another Tadn Skeel of six degrees, one end of which is resting between her feet on the head of El-angu, while the other end is held by her hand under her chin. This Tadn Skeel, I think, would give her a claim to six degrees of nobility, obtained by inheritance. This column must, I think, have been erected to the memory of a woman who ranked high amongst the nobles of Haida Land.

The Thunderbird and Mountain-Goat of Skedans, now in Stanley Park, Vancouver, described by the Rev. G. H. Raley (118:21).

This post was erected originally at Skidegate, Queen Charlotte Islands, to the memory of Chief Ske-dans, by his sister, about seventy years ago. It is called by the Haidas "The Grave of Ske-dans." Only the body or ashes of chiefs or members of their families found a resting place in such posts. The frontal board at the top covers a cavity in the post five feet deep and three feet in diameter, which is the grave.

The use of the moon as a crest amongst his own people was the exclusive right of Ske-dans. The other crests could be used by all people of the Raven clan. The crests on this post are heraldic and not legendary.

A unique feature is engraved on the back of the pole, a hieroglyphic record of the cost of carving and erection. This is indicated by twenty-three parallel horizontal lines and two shields, each line representing ten blankets, the larger shield forty blankets, and the smaller shield twenty blankets. (The smaller shield is partly hidden by a support.) When this pole was erected blankets were currency. According to our modern method of reckoning, the account reads 290 blankets at \$2.00, \$580.00. This amount in blankets was paid the men who procured the cedar tree, did the carving, and erected the pole.

This pole was obtained from the present Chief Ske-dans (Henry Moody), of Skidegate, as a Golden Jubilee project.

The Eagle and the Whales. How the old Eagle saved the others who had caught a whale, as recorded by Mr. Jean Ness Findlay, in 1947, from "Captain" Andrew Brown, of Massett, Queen Charlotte Islands.

This story explains how the Eagle chief once was taken into Eagle town (all birds and animals have spirits).

In the course of time he married one of the Eagles. He was there for a long time and every day saw eagles going down to sea for whales. He wanted very much to go out and catch whales but his father warned him — 'if you go, be sure not to catch whales with two spouts'. But when he went after the two-spout whales and took hold of one too big and strong to pull out, another eagle came to help, then another and another; the whole town came to help. One old eagle watching was preparing for the time when he would have to go to help. He was sharpening his claws and was the last to help. He was the one to pull the others. Through him all were saved, just wings spread on water and head showing. The Frog, although small, is terrifying to grizzly and brown bears.

THUNDERBIRD AMONG THE KWAKIUTLS

The Kwakiutl Thunderbird (Dawson) (31:24,25).

The belief in the "Thunderbird" being the most prevalent and unchanging myth of the west coast tribes, is naturally not wanting among the Kwakiutl. Lightning is caused by the twinkling of its eye, and thunder by the flapping of its wings. Mr. Hall informs me that, under the name of Kwunusula, it is regarded as the special protector of the Nimkish. "It is said to have made its appearance when the first house was being built at the village on the river. A large stone in front of the village is named after it, 'the place where Kwunusula alighted.' 'What are you doing?' he said. The chief of the Gigilkum was trying to raise the log which supports the roof of all their houses. He saw they were unable to lift it, and said in answer to their appeal for help: 'This is why I have come from above.' He then seized the immense log with his claws and placed it on the two posts. Before he left them, he said, 'You will always have a friend in me to watch over you; when any of you die, I shall weep with you.' This bird is represented as carrying a whale in its claws. Whales' bones are said to have been found on the tops of the mountains, the remains of Kwunusula's repasts."

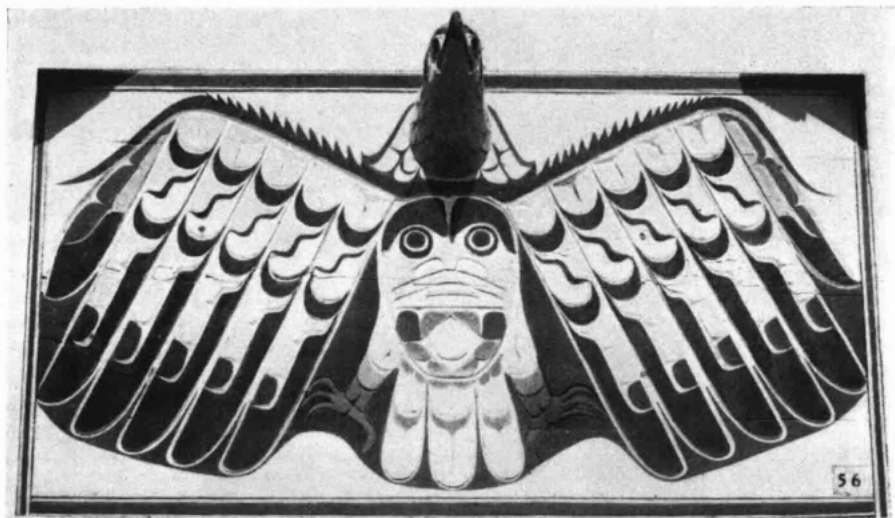
The Nimkish Thunderbird, of the clan to which Daniel Cranmer belongs in the Nimkish tribe of the Kwakiutl, at Alert Bay (recorded in 1947).

In the beginning, there was a man named Gyd'ee going round the country shaping things as they should be. Starting from the north near Nawitsee, he journeyed down to the other side of the bay where he found another man by the name of Gwawnalalis. Gyd'ee asked Gwawnalalis: "What would you rather be? Would you like to be a big mountain?" Gwawnalalis answered, "No, I don't wish to be a mountain. I might break apart." "Would you like to be a big solid rock?" "No, that would not be much better than the mountain. I might not last very long." "Would you like to be a river? Every kind of fish would swim up stream, and you would flow down forever." Gwawnalalis liked the idea and answered, "All right, let me be a river! I want to flow forever; there will be no end of me." Gyd'ee then bade him to lie down: "Be a river forever!" So Gwawnalalis became a river, and his name was changed to Gwawni, the name of a river to-day.

A salmon then swam up the river, went ashore for a rest on dry land, and became a human being, at a spot up the river called Odzawles. But his sojourn there did not last very long. Came the flood. The best he could do was to don his fish skin and change back to a salmon. He went up behind a mountain to keep away from a strong current and to find shelter.



Two house frontals. Thunderbird and the Sun



Thunderbird on a grave house, at Bella Coola

When the flood subsided, the salmon came down the mountain stream, looked for the same river as before, went ashore for a rest on dry land, and once more was changed into a human being. He found a stone on the bank of the river which he shaped into an adze. Then he began to build a house of hewn timber for himself, the name of which was Rhwarhwakesee. First he erected the posts, and then hewed the big timbers which he meant for the roof beams. But he did not know how to raise them up into place, as he was all by himself.

While still working he heard a rumbling noise, turned his head, and beheld a huge bird. It had alighted on a big rock. Its name was Thunderbird — Kwinkwinkulegi. "I wish you were a human being," he said. "You might then help me in my work." The bird pushed up his large beak, and showed his face, and said, "I am a human being too, and I have come to help you in your work." Then he put back his beak into his face, flew up, planted his strong talons into the heavy timber, rose into the air, and rested it on top of the base posts already standing. Then he alighted at the same place, stepped out of his feathers, and became a man.

Gyd'ee put the coat of feathers and the beak on him and said, "You are Kwinkwinkulegi, and you shall thunder only when one of my descendants dies." Meanwhile the bird changed into a man named Kwenusaile, and together they built other houses for the people that were still to come.

(The informant added in a humorous comment: I used to ask the older people telling this story where these two men found their wives, since the tribe increased so rapidly. Nobody could give an answer.) The Thunderbird is the legend of the Nimkish, our people. In rank it is (as are those using it for the emblem) always the first to receive gifts in a potlatch, because this mighty bird comes from above.



Thunderbird carving at Campbell River. (Emily Carr)

The Horhoq, totem pole of the Crane-like Thunderbird Horhoq among the Kwakiutls, according to Dr. Franz Boas (21: 336-337).



Thunderbird as a house post, among the Kwakiutls. (Walter J. Phillips)

A good example is the following tradition of the clan Larhsai of the Qomoyue or Kuerha, I give here a translation:

The first Kuerha lived at Tsarhoyo. Their chief went bear hunting up the river. After he had been away four days, he saw the Horhoq (a fabulous bird, supposed to be similar to the crane), and heard its cry. It was larger than a man. Then he hid. The Horhoq tried to find him, and finally discovered the place where the chief was in hiding at one side of a cedar tree. It tried to peck him with its beak, but missed him. He merely jumped to the other side of the tree, and the Horhoq could not kill him. He came home at night. Then he carved the crane out of yellow cedar, and now it is the carving of his clan. He invited all the tribes, and gave away cedar bark blankets, all kinds of skins, canoes, and slaves. Then he placed the image of the Horhoq on top of a pole outside of his house. Later on, a chief of the Querhsotenorh wanted to have the carved Horhoq. He tried to find out how to obtain it, and learned that he had to marry the daughter of the owner in order to obtain it. Then he engaged himself to marry that chief's daughter. The chief agreed, and they were married. Still later, a chief of the Kukwakum of the Guetela obtained the Horhoq by marriage.

The Qolus, two carved poles including a portal, of Q'wadee (Charlie Knowles) of Fort Rupert.

These were purchased, in 1947, for the University of British Columbia, and removed. They were lying on the ground near the large roof beam of

the community house in front of which they stood. (Only one of these, the shortest — the portal, could be photographed.)

Here is the information then given by Charlie Knowles, the owner. His emblem is Thunderbird whose name is Q'olus — a smaller form of Thunderbird, the larger being Kwinkwinkulegi. He formerly owned a large community house — the largest ever erected at Fort Rupert — the main beam of which was 16 fathoms long, and the width of the house front, 48 feet. It was built when he was married. The two poles stood in front of it; one of them a portal through which was the ceremonial entrance. (Knowles was 77 years old in 1947.) He lived in it for thirty years, but left it when the law against the potlatch was enforced. There were carved totem and house posts. Both poles were portals "to walk into the house." The larger one is 33 feet tall.

These poles were carved by George Hunt (well-known for his prolonged collaboration with Dr. Franz Boas) for the people at Fort Rupert who had come from Deer Island. The figures on the poles bear no significance. They were selected by the carver Hunt, who alone knew them. They presumably "belonged to the story of his mother's people up north, at Tongas" (in the southern Tlingit area). The same as in the taller pole of the Hunt family, it was made flat instead of round. Informant Knowles stated that, long ago, he had worked for Dr. C. F. Newcombe, and obtained totem poles and specimens for him.

The Sea-Lion and Thunderbird House (*liqawskem* — Sea-Lion or *liharheuku* — Sea-Lion-House) of Fort Rupert, formerly belonging to Mellas, partly of the Nawitsee (*yarhlen*) tribe of Hope Island, and partly of Fort Rupert. The complete structure, consisting of the posts, the transverse beam and the ridge beams, was purchased for the University of British Columbia, and removed in 1947.

Description. The two posts at the front represent the Sea-Lion, and at the back, the Thunderbird (*kwunkunekuliki*). The roof beam at the back is Way-Down-Under (*leeqen*) — a sea-lion. The upper beams are called *kyatewi*. The owner, Mellas, married the daughter of the Nawitsee chief named Hurhaitsemgwe, who at her death gave the house (it was her dowry from her family) to Spruce Martin, because he had married her daughter. The house was purchased from them.

Builder, age. It was built and carved forty or forty-five years ago. The carver was Rhirhaniyuhl, from Tenarhtauh at Knight's Inlet.

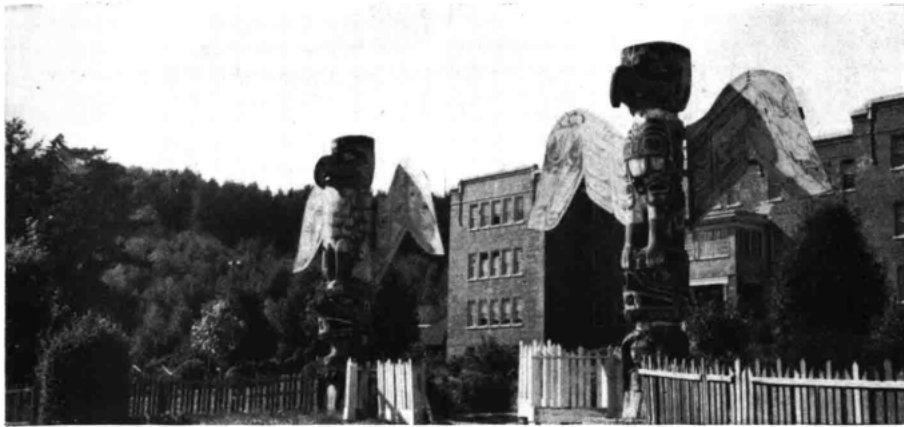
(Informant, Mrs. Elizabeth Wilson, Fort Rupert, 1947.)

Two Thunderbird House Posts inside the house of L'arhotlas, the head chief of the Nimkish tribe (Alert Bay). They now stand as gate posts in front of the Government School.

Carver, age. These house posts stood as supports of beams in a house that was never finished, as the chief died before the roof and the walls were put on. Jos. Harris, the oldest chief still living, may have been responsible for the construction, may even have carved the posts, as he succeeded the first owner. The informant, Daniel Cranmer, born in 1885, was a child when this happened.



Thunderbird, on a grave of the Kwakiutls at Alert Bay. (Walter J. Phillips)



Thunderbirds and Bear Mother, at Alert Bay

The Thunderbirds of Alert Bay, according to the Rev. Mr. Corker, to H. P. Corser (28:73).

Another totem quite famous is one showing a bird with a hooked nose at the top, and at the bottom a bear with what appears to be a mummy of a man in a coffin. There are two of these just alike.

The Thunderbird gave a man strength to build houses, and afterwards stayed with him to help him. This gave the family a right to use the Thunderbird totem.

The founder of the Alert Bay tribe was Numpkish. He was shown how to get water, and so he filled bladders with it and made the Nimkish River, where salmon could spawn.

THUNDERBIRD
AMONG THE NOOTKAS

Suayuk of Tetacus (1792), Thunderbird among the Nootkas of Vancouver Island, as described in 1792 in the "Voyage of the Sutil and Mexicana" (108:242, 243).



Thunderbird and Bear Mother, at Alert Bay

Thunderbird and Whale carved on a house post of the Clayoquot Nootkas, collected in 1905 by Dr. C. F. Newcombe for the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago (No. 87327).

The label, copied by the author in 1915, read: "The Eagle stands for the Eagle mask work by an ancestor (Wikananish I). Four hundred men hauled up onto the beach an immense whale he had just killed and was about to distribute to guests. He himself is represented by the Killer-Whale below."

Suayuk, the bird like an eagle which Tetacus drew . . .

We noticed that the canoe had a great carved young eagle at the prow, the like of which we had also seen in other war canoes. These Indians, it seems, connect a certain idea of fear or veneration with the image of this bird, just as the natives of California are particularly grateful to it for having . . . drawn an Indian from a well. Tetacus having taken a pencil, which lay on the table, drew for us admirably an eagle in flight, among other sketches he made on a sheet of paper. It had a very large head with horns on it. He represented it as carrying a whale in its claws, and assured us that he had himself seen a bird of that kind descend rapidly from the sky to the sea close to his hut, seize a whale and, rise up again. Valdes told him that he must have been asleep when he thought he saw such a strange thing, but he asseverated that he was then as wide awake as when he related it.

The Thunderbird among the Nootkas, according to Camille de Roquefeuille, about 1816 (38:101).

They are extremely afraid of Mattoch, a fantastic being, dwelling in the mountains, whom they believed to be a hideous and ferocious monster covered with black hair, having a human head, with an enormous mouth, furnished with teeth longer and more formidable than those of the bear, and both his hands and feet armed like that animal. The thunder of his voice throws down who hear it, and he tears in pieces all who have the misfortune to fall in his power.

Thunderbird and Snake among the Nootkas as recorded by Edward Sapir, for the National Museum of Canada, in 1910, at Alberni, B.C.

One "menstrual board" [or partition board at the rear of the house] used as a screen for girls [reaching the age of puberty] had two Thunderbirds and two Snakes (*he'ilik*) in the corners. A whale was held in the talons of each Thunderbird. The Disk with a man inside, under the birds and in the contour represented the Sun (*hopahl*.)

Thunderbird Crests introduced among the Nootkas, according to field notes made by Dr. Edward Sapir at Alberni, in 1910.

The earliest chief, Tapuchau'a, had no emblem. Later on after the Flood, the head chief, Tsakwasiqhmik, saw the Thunderbird. He did not paint the bird on his house front, but only on his *aitsaqso'ihlim* (a board inside?). On it he painted one Thunderbird, and a Snake (*he'ilik*) at both the upper corners. The Thunderbird carried the whale, just as had been seen.

Tsakwasiqhmik, when out hunting whales, saw, after spearing one, the Thunderbird come down and catch it. This whale was "Hole-through-its-*tsakwasi*," a variety rarely seen. The bird had lifted it a little out of the water, then had dropped it. The Snake was coiled on the surface of the sea, and hail was falling as big as eggs. Only the chief had had this vision, because, afraid of the thunder, the people had bent down in fright. This is why Chief Tapuchau'a owned the Thunderbird as his own heirloom (*topatih*).



Thunderbird, at Provincial Museum, Victoria



Thunderbird and Whale of the Kwakiutls

Thunderbird and Snakes at Alberni. Crests on the house of the head-chief's family among the Nootkas of Alberni, recorded by Dr. Edward Sapir, in 1910.

The head-chief's house had, on the side of the house facing the beach: round holes cut through boards (*narh-as*) representing Moons; two Thunderbirds facing each other; two snakes (*he'itlik*) also facing each other on top of the Thunderbirds. Over the round hole serving as entrance doorway, at the upper sides, were two large Cod-fish (*tuckasitlik*) with heads toward each other.

Thunderbird and He'itlik, according to the Rev. Chas. Moser (72:86, 87).

The Indians maintain that it is an immense bird — the Thunderbird. One of the young men told me that Koninah, the third chief, was in possession of one of its wing-feathers. So I sent for the feather, but the young fellow came back disappointed, the chief having stated that he had not nor ever had such a feather. The noise of the thunder is explained by the fact that the Thunderbird takes hold of a whale, and in a struggle with the monster of the deep causes all the thundering reports.

The lightning is a reflection of the bird's eyes which it opens and closes in rapid succession. Others have it that the neck of the bird is surrounded by a being (*he'itlik*) of the shape of a snake which breaks loose and inflames, and goes about scattering what we call the lightning. Others again say that the light comes from under the wings of the bird which becomes visible as it flaps its wings.



Tracing of Painting of Totem
Memorial Hall Victoria B.C.

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Thunderbird and Whale of the Kwakiutls, at Memorial Hall, Victoria

The Grave Monument of Maquinna, according to the Rev. Chas. Moser (72:159).

The wood carving of a large bird with wings spread, over a whale, is shown in an illustration. It is described as a "Grave Monument of Chief Makwinna, Friendly Cove, Nootka. Died 1902".

THUNDERBIRD AMONG THE SALISH

Thunderbird at Prospect Point in Stanley Park, Vancouver, described by the Rev. G. H. Raley (118:8, 9).



Nootka Thunderbird, in Thunderbird Park, Victoria

This pole, erected on Prospect Point, the highest eminence in Stanley Park, is commemorative of the meeting of the Squamish people with Captain Vancouver in Burrard Inlet, off Capilano River, on June 12th, 1792.

Its carved and painted symbols tell the story of the mythical creation by the supernatural Thunderbird family.

The carver, Chief Matthias Joe Capilano, gives the following interpretation of the symbols:

The topmost figure is Swi-ve-lus, whose highly ornamented body depicts many things. For instance, on his chest is the creator of the world, the wide open eye signifying daylight and work, — the sightless eye, night, moon, stars, rest and sleep. The wing feathers symbolize rain, snow, hail and wind, while fire is seen under the great beak.

The right leg shows the eye of the sea monster, who is both father and mother of all the sea people, or fish, while the eye on the left is that leg of the land monster, who produces human beings, animals and birds.

The left side of the tail shows the water marks of the high and low tides, while the right side symbolizes the flow and drip of mountain water which makes lakes and rivers.

The second figure, Kah-mi, controls the storms of rain, snow, sleet, hail and wind.

The third figure, Tsa-itch, concerns herself especially with the season's growth of grass, herbs and trees.

The fourth, Great Thunderbird, hiding in the clouds, blinks his eye and shoots forth lightning; a gentle shaking of his feathers produces little disturbance, but when he flaps his wings there is violent thunder and forked lightning. When he is angry with the people of the earth he makes the lightning and sets fire to the forests, and at times warns his own crest people of approaching death.

The fifth figure on the pole is somewhat shrouded in mystery. He is called the great dragon or the giant lizard, Tchain-koo. This amphibian is supposed to be the principal food of the Thunderbird. He is of a bright color and his fins and scales are of gold. The scales are worn as a charm by anybody who has the good fortune to find them when they are shed.

THUNDERBIRD AT LARGE AMONG THE CHUKCHEES OF SIBERIA According to Waldemar Bogoras (113:322, 328.)

Thunder is said to be produced by the passing of the Thunderbird.

A "giant Thunderbird" is sometimes regarded as the same as the supernatural Raven; but more frequently it is a kind of "giant eagle" of supernatural strength. In one tale a female "giant eagle" appears as mistress of good and bad weather. When visited in her own world by two mortals, she undertakes, at their request, to clear the sky, and begins to scrape it with a large brass scraper. Noticing that one of the visitors looks at her naked legs, she grows angry, and hurls them both back into our world. Even now the eagle is protected by a taboo, and the killing of one is supposed to bring on bad weather and famine.

The Asiatic Eskimo also say that the Thunderbird is a "giant eagle".

IN AMERICA AND ASIA

The Thunderbird is perhaps the most widely diffused of all folklore themes, and is familiar under different forms in every part of North America. W. J. Wintenberg: *Representations of the Thunderbird in Indian Art* (121:3-15).

It was a common feature in the beliefs of the natives on the north Pacific Coast, in the northern Rockies, and also of the totem poles. The following instances emphasize its local characteristics, which do not deviate much from their Asiatic prototypes. Quotations from *Thunder* (Vol. IV. Chapter XIV, pp. 439-444: *The Mythology of All Races — Finno, Ugric, Siberian*. By Uno Holmberg).

Like most of the North American Indian tribes, the peoples in the farthest north of Siberia imagine thunder to be something resembling a large and mighty bird. The Forest Tungus speak of it as such and explain that the rustle of this mighty bird's wings is heard on the earth, when it flies, as the terrific rumbling of thunder.

A similar conception of the nature of thunder is found among the Chukchee and all the primitive peoples of the District of Turukhansk. The Eastern Samoyeds liken the Thunderbird to a duck, (like of Horhoq of the Kwakiutl), whose sneezing is the cause of rain.

The Mongol tribes, many Altai peoples, and some Eastern Tungus tribes, such as the Goldes, believe that the phenomenon of thunder is caused by a large flying dragon [the Double-Headed Snake of the north Pacific Coast]. The Mongols say that this dragon has wings and a body covered with fish scales. At times it lives in the water, at time flies in the air. When it moves in the sky the rumbling of thunder follows. In some places the rumbling is explained to the dragon's voice and every movement of its tail to be a flash of lightning. It never comes sufficiently near to the earth for people to see it, and in the winter it hides in lofty mountains.

This conception, in which the creator of thunder is introduced in an exceedingly mythological shape, is not an original Altaic one, but, as its geographical area already denotes, comes from China. As we know, the Chinese and, following their example, the Japanese, imagined the Thunder god to have the shape of a peculiar dragon, which is represented in their art in many different ways.

Could this be the Vrtra or Ahi ("snake") of the Veda, from whose power the Thunder god Indra releases the waters?