

THE SALMON TOTEMS

The Salmon of Meelas, a young native of Skidegate, on the Queen Charlotte Islands, as recorded by James Deans. (36: 80).

Sometime in the early seventies there was raised in the grave-yard at Skidegat, a mortuary column to the memory of Meelas, a young Hidery, a native of Skidegat town. This tomb is twenty-five feet in height, and still stands — 1897. The carving is as follows: First, a salmon, and close above it a boy's head. Further up, a fishing net is shown. Perched on top of this column is an eagle. This eagle shows his connection with the eagle crest and phratry. As this eagle has no bearing on my story, I shall say no more about it — only of the net, the boy, and the salmon. This young man Meelas made the acquaintance of a young Indian of his own age, who was a native of a village on a river named Skeena. This Indian (I never knew his name) invited Meelas to live with him on the Skeena. This he did; and three years passed before he returned to his native Queen Charlotte Island. While living on the Skeena his friend, who belonged to the secret society of the Salmon, had Meelas initiated into his society. His initiation entitled Meelas to have a mortuary column with the above mentioned carvings, and the following story:

Long ago an Indian family lived in a village on the banks of the Skeena. How many in the family there were, tradition has not preserved. Only a boy, the hero of our story, is mentioned. One time his father made him a present of a copper collar to wear around his neck. After wearing it several years, he suddenly disappeared. His parents, joined by all the neighbours, searched for him everywhere without success. Tired and disheartened they all gave up the search, expecting never again to see him alive. Even his father, although unwilling to give up the search, had to do like the others. When any one spoke of him, it was of the boy who went away and never returned. His parents still fondly hoped to find him, believing him still to be alive. Winter, like other winters before, had come and gone. Summer once more had returned, bringing along with it leaves and flowers, the salmon to the rivers. The old man one day took a fish net and placed it in the river. After awhile he hauled it in and found a good-sized salmon, which he took home to his wife. She commenced to cut off its head. To her surprise, she found, while cutting around its neck, a copper collar. This discovery led to the restoration of their long lost son, who by the enchantment of some evil genii had been turned into a salmon and placed in the river. To resuscitate him the old man went into the timber, where he gathered a few sprigs of a potent herb. These he dried before the fire and rubbed into a powder between his hands. This he blew over the fish. It broke the spell and liberated the boy, thus restoring him to his parents as good as new.

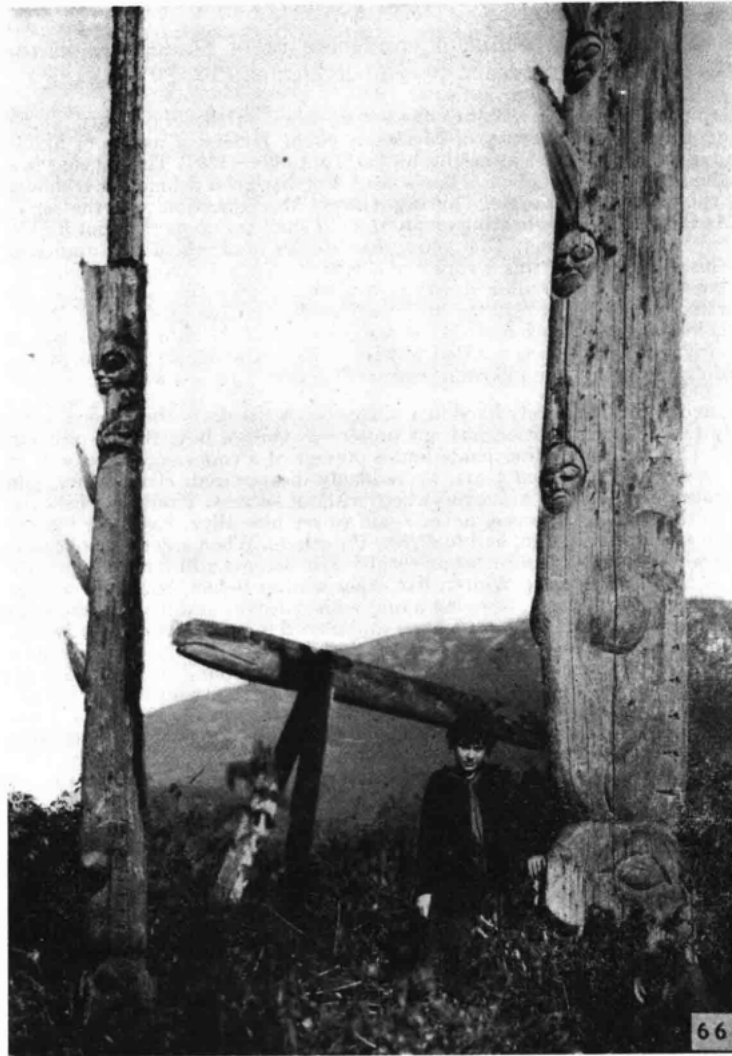
The Qanis Pole of Gitsalas (A Tsimshyan village), totem pole and house ridge pole of the Eagle household of Kakaotsken of the Gitrhtsærh tribe, at the canyon of Gitsalas on the Skeena River. This old deserted village used to stand on the river-bank opposite the Fortress (*ta'awdzep*).

Description. The fairly tall and splendid pole of the Dog Salmon (*qanis*), still standing in the bush in 1947, was erected in circumstances that have been forgotten. It consists of a tall salmon with four dorsal fins, with human faces on the pole at the base of the fins, and stands head down. It occupies the whole length of the pole. At the base near the ground is the Eagle, rather small, with wings folded. Near the tail of the fish and embodied in it is a man squatting. One side of the tail of the fish runs forward and upward, from the nose of the man to the uncarved top of the pole.

The long ridge pole of the communal house nearby (to one side) represents the same fish resting horizontally on props or house posts. It still stood in 1929.

Myth of the Dog Salmon, as related by informant Walter Wright, Neestarhawq, chief of a Killer-Whale clan at the canyon of the Skeena.

In the Spring, when salmon was very scarce among the people, and there was much ice on the river, a young man was very hungry. He went to his



Dog Salmon, at Gitsalas Canyon

mother's salmon box and broke off a piece of a spring salmon. The piece he broke off was from its private organs. His mother was angry because he had stolen the food, and the young man was incensed at his mother's rebuke. He went away up the river and sat beside the running waters at Gitaos. While he was sitting there, he heard strange noises, as if canoe folk were handling many poles in a canoe, pushing their way upstream. Then he thought he heard some one say. "This is the one! This is the one!" and the canoe hit the shore below the spot where he was sitting. The canoemen called to him, "Come, my son, come on down with us!"

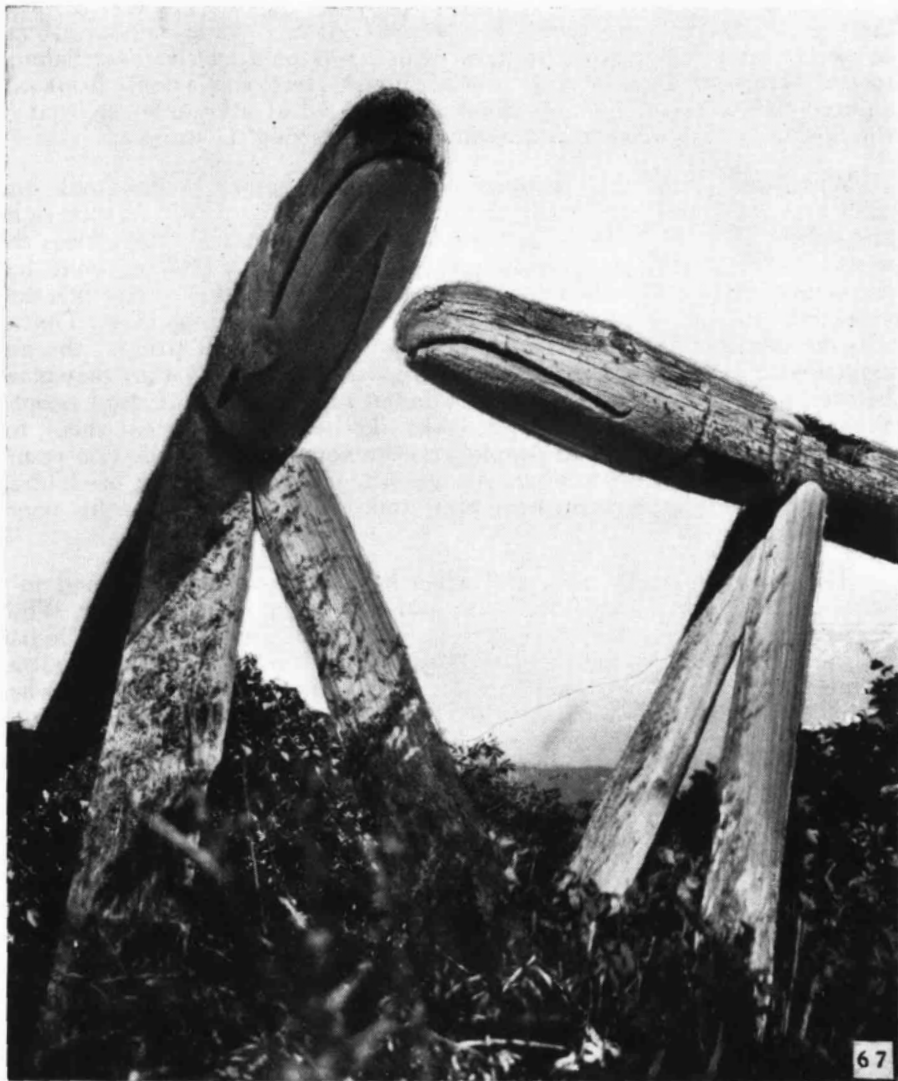
The young man followed them and stepped into this canoe — it was a large dug-out. They proceeded up the river. After a while, he saw a huge house. It had a wonderful front on which was painted the Dog Salmon (*qanis*). Then they passed on to another house. Here on the house front was painted the Steelhead-Salmon. Soon they arrived at a large house, that of the Spring-Salmon, with a front painting representing this salmon.

When the young man entered the house, a young woman took him aside and said, "Burn the wool you have stuffed in your ears!" As soon as he had done this, she enquired, "Do you know where you are!" "No," was the reply. "The salmon have taken you to their house. This is what has happened: when you pulled the salmon from your mother's food box and straightened it out, you cured the crooked leg of the salmon chief. That is why he has sent for you. He wants to give you compensation," the girl explained. This was Mouse Woman in disguise. "Do not eat what they place before you," she added, "It is not salmon, but the belly of dead people. When they place before you what looks like berries, do not eat them, for they will be the eyes of dead people". So the young man fasted. The young woman said, "Tomorrow when you go out, you will see a lot of children playing. Take one of them, beat him, and eat him. Then take his bones and burn them all".

The young man did this, and when he beat the child, it turned to a salmon. He ate it, burned the bones, and came back into the house. While he was sitting there, the children ran in. One of them ran in crying. He had lost an eye. Mouse Woman appeared again and said, "You have forgotten to burn one eye of the fish you ate". So the young man went out, and when he had found the eye, he burned it. The child consoled, went out again.

After the young man had stayed there some time, the chief of the house said to one of his nephews, one day, "Go to the Skeena and find out how the salmon is, whether it is ready for us to eat or not." The chief meant that he should see whether the leaves were beginning to change since some of the seeds from the trees were used as food. So the nephew did as he was bid. Later he returned and said, "No, the old salmon is still in the river," indicating that last year's leaves were still there. So they stayed on in their village. After a time, the chief sent one of his nephews on the same errand. His nephew went far up the river, and when he returned said, "Everything is right now. The food has ripened." So the chief declared, "Tomorrow we move once more."

The people then made ready for a long journey, and were all overjoyed about it. The young man was taken along with them in a canoe and given a garment of salmon. He dove into the water, following the salmon tribe upstream. When they came to the junction of the Ksan (Skeena) and the Kalem rivers, they stopped swimming, and divided into two companies. One said, "We're going up here (the Ksan)," and the others, "We are swimming up to Gitsalaser." The salmon going up to Kalem shouted out, "Go, go where they throw you around like wood!" This meant that the Gitsalas tribe threw the first catch onto the sand, after packing it on their shoulders like so much wood. The band of salmon people going to the Ksan (or Ksyæn) River called out to the others going to the Kalem river, saying, "Yes, and you are going to the place where you will get maggots in your



Dog Salmon, at Gitsalas Canyon

mouth." With these parting words they separated. By this, they meant that the Kalem River was so swift in the canyon that the mouths of the spring salmon are torn to shreds, giving them the appearance of maggots. This gives them their name.

The early fishing season was now on, and chief Kakaotsken was fishing at the canyon of the Skeena. While he fished here, he caught a monster spring salmon, and was barely able to land it with his dipnet (*bane*). After landing it, he realized that it was an unusual salmon, a huge *qanis*. The

women took it to the house, and when they cut it open a child came out of the belly of the salmon. This is why the Dog Salmon (*qanis*) was adopted as a crest. It was shown thereafter as the ridge pole of Salmon in the house of Kakaotsken, and on his totem pole beside it. Both are still standing in the bush.

The Salmon Myth (Asaralyæn), chief of a Wolf clan in the Gitsees tribe of the coast Tsimisyans. This narrative is claimed as its property by the Wolf clan of Asaralyæn.

Variant No. 1 was given to William Beynon by Mrs. Emma Wright, whose native name is Hlaik, member of an Eagle clan.

While the Gitsees were living at Hrætsek (geographical name: Kayeks), a group of young men set out one day to gather salmon-berries. Among them was the only nephew of the chief of the Gitsees. They had not gone far when the canoe upset, and the only one to drown was this young man. The chief and his wife were very sad. Every day the mother would come to the river's edge and weep.

A long time went by, and it was the salmon season again. Among the people catching salmon was the chief's slave. He caught a very large spring salmon with a swollen belly, and took it to the chief. His wife cleaned it, and as she cut it open, behold! there was a male child in it. The chief and his wife knew that this was their son returned to them.

They were very happy, and every day the chief would take the child and stretch his limbs, making the boy grow rapidly. Soon he was a young man, and then the chief selected four sons of his tribesmen to be his son's companions. Very clever and industrious, the young man went every day down the river to a sandbar where he had made a small hut, here to snare eagles. He caught these birds for their down, which was hard to get, and was therefore very valuable. When he had gathered a great quantity of eagle down, his father would trade it to other tribes. In this way they became quite wealthy.

The young man had his companions hide outside the hut, and when he snared an eagle, one of them would come and take it. He had instructed them not to look into the hut while he was there, since that would be the cause of his death. His companions carefully observed this behest, but soon one of them became curious. He wanted to see how the young chief caught the eagles. So this day when his leader had gone into his hut and a big eagle flew down, this companion looked into the hut and behold! there was a live salmon, with the eagle trying to grasp it by the throat. Even as he looked, the salmon changed into the young chief who had died as he had warned.

The old chief and his wife were again grief-stricken. They took the body of their son to Metlakatla. Here a burial pole was erected, and a box containing the body was placed on its top. His four companions took it upon themselves to watch the burial box and guard it so that no *haldaoget* (sorcerer) would interfere with it. Every night they kept guard. Then one of the companions gave up watching, then another, and another, until only one companion was left. He kept on. One night he heard voices coming towards



Dog Salmon totem pole, at Kitwanga

him. He saw a beautiful canoe with many people in it, and though they went by where he sat, they paid no attention to him. They kept saying, "He lies here. It was here they placed him." When they went to the burial pole, the dead prince arose, and came down the pole. It was then that the one still guarding him tried to stop them, but they paid no attention.

Before he had died, the young man had given each of his companions a pebble, telling them that, whenever they wanted him to think of them, they should put it in their mouth, and he would be with them. The young guard thought of this stone and put it in his mouth. The prince came to him

and said, "What are you doing here?" "I am watching your sleeping-box," the young man replied. "Come with me, for I am now going to my own country," the prince said.

They went off in the strange and beautiful canoe. Just as if it were alive, it travelled swiftly, with little effort on the part of the people in it. They were heading north, and had travelled for a long while when they arrived at a large river. Whenever the young man put the pebble in his mouth during the journey, his young chief would speak to him. They passed by a fine village, and all the people came running down to the shore, calling out to them as they went by, "Did you get what you were seeking?" "Yes, he is here with us," replied the steersman of the canoe. They continued their journey until they went by another village which was even more beautiful than the first. When the young man put the pebble in his mouth, his leader said, "That is the village of the dog salmon people." The inhabitants, whose house-front paintings were of many colours, wore rich garments. They, too, ran to the shore as the canoe passed, and shouted, "Did you find what you were seeking?" "Yes, he is with us in the canoe," the steersman answered. They journeyed upstream, passing other villages, the village of the coho salmon people, and that of the sockeye salmon. Each was more beautiful than the last, and at every one the people ran down the shore asking, "Did you get what you were seeking?" "Yes, he is with us here in the canoe."

Soon they reached a very large village. As they approached, the people came running down and shouting, "Have you brought what you were seeking?" "Yes, he is here with us. Make ready to receive him." As they landed, the young man noticed that the people were wearing bright silvery cloaks. Many children ran around. Houses were numerous, and in the middle of the village was a very large one with beautiful house-front paintings. Very real, these represented the rainbow and stars. The young man went to the large house, his friend following him. They entered and beheld a great chief sitting at the rear. With him were his wife and their beautiful daughter. The prince went to the chief and sat by him.

His companion, meanwhile, walked about, and became very hungry. Since no one paid any attention to him, he put the pebble in his mouth, and his young chief said, "This is the village of the spring salmon. Stay with me!" Whenever hungry, you must take your club and knock over one of the children you see running about. It will change into a salmon for you to prepare. When you have finished eating, gather up the remnants and burn them, bones and all." So he went out, and seeing some children playing, caught one, and clubbed it. It turned into a salmon, and he roasted it by the fire. When he had finished eating, he gathered up all the bones and scraps, and burned them. Soon a cry came from the children. One of them was in agony. His back was bent in pain, and he was limping. The prince came and said to his companion, "You are the cause of his agony. Go back and find out whether you dropped any remnants of fish where you were eating." The companion returned to the place where he had eaten, and there was a piece of backbone on the ground. He picked it up, together with other pieces, and burned them. The child was well again.

This went on day after day. The people did not seem to be doing any work, though all were getting ready to go somewhere. The young visitor

took his escort aside and said to him, "When you wish to talk to my father, you must go to him and hold on to his neck ornament. Grasp it firmly, and then speak with him."

The young man had fallen in love with the chief's daughter, and wanted her as his wife. When he was on the point of speaking to the chief one day, a little old woman appeared to him and said, "Give me your ear ornaments and any mountain-goat fat you have. I am Mouse Woman, and may help you." The young man had a little mountain-goat fat which he used as a cosmetic. He gave it to Mouse Woman, as well as his wool earrings. When Mouse Woman took these presents, she said, "You want to marry Woman-of-the-Sea, whose name is Ksemgiyæks. She is a great *spenarhnorh* (supernatural being) who lives away out to sea. Ksemgiyæks in matrimonium ducere tibi licet, sed concubinos occidit omnes. Etenim, vagina ejus est armata dentibus qui copulanti mortem inferunt. Priusquam nupseris, ei politam introduces petram quae letalis vaginae dentes conterat. Ex quo, indemnis cum ea conjunges".

The young man went to the great chief and, taking a firm hold on his neck ornament, squeezed it hard, and said, "Chief, I want to marry your daughter." The chief did not reply at once. The young man squeezed the neckornament so hard that he almost strangled the chief. "Agreed," he said at last, "she will take you to her own abode out to sea. Come, my daughter, sit by your husband." The woman, who seemed very pleased with her new suitor, sat by him. *Illa nocte, sic egit ut admonitus fuerat; et dentes esse contritos expertus, tunc illæsus cum Ksemgiyæks conjunxit.* She said, "We will move to my own home". They set off in a canoe to her home in the sea.

Since the canoe was supernatural it travelled quickly, and in a short time they reached a small island, just big enough to hold a large house. On entering, the young man saw a pile of logs which turned out to be seals. He and his wife built a fire, and his wife opened a trap door in the floor. Looking down, the young man saw the bottom of the sea. She put a dipnet down and pulled it up full of halibut and other fish. She gathered all the food they needed, and they were very happy.

Then one day the young man remained very quiet. He stayed on his bed and would not eat. Finally his wife went to him, saying, "Why are you so quiet? What is wrong?" "I am lonely for my own tribe." "I know!" his wife said, "Let us go to your people! I will accompany you, but be faithful to me". Next day they set out in their canoe, and quickly reached the outskirts of a village which the young man recognized as his uncle's. The canoe was loaded with a huge quantity of food and other things. All of these were brought into the house of Asaralyæn. Here the man and his supernatural wife were very happy. The woman, through her great supernatural powers, was able to gather great quantities of food for the people at a time of near-starvation.

One thing the woman made her husband do each and every evening. He had to draw water for her from the water-hole, and when he brought it in, she took a feather from her head and dipped it in the water before using it. Many beautiful women were jealous of the young stranger's wife. Some of them had drawn his attention before he went away, and now they planned

to attract him again. They waited near the water-hole. Finally, one more daring than the others led him into the bushes. When he returned to the house with his water bucket, his wife dipped the feather into the water. Behold! it turned to slime and muck. At once she knew that her husband had been unfaithful. She stood up angrily and left the house. He followed her, right out into the water, where she hastened out of sight. He sank into the sea and perished. A number of the Gitsees people, of the Wolf house of Asaralyæn, also disappeared at the same time.

Variant No. 2 as told by informant Mrs. Eliza Marsden, 75 years old, of the Gitsees tribe.

It all happened when the Gitsees people were living at Hræidzeks, a river flowing into the Skeena. (Kaiyaiks is the geographical name.) One day, all the young people of this village set out after salmon-berries, and among them was the son of the Gitsees chief. When they were returning, one of the canoes upset, and the young prince was the only one to lose his life. His parents were very sad, since he was their only child. Day after day they would sit on the shore, mourning their only son.

It was now a year since they had lost their son, and again the salmon were coming back to the streams. The chief's slave went to the water's edge and saw a huge spring salmon. It had a large belly, and when the slave took it and cut it open, behold! There was a live male child in it. When the chief took the child, he knew that it was his son who had drowned and was now returned to him. He and his wife were very happy. The child grew rapidly, and every day the chief would take and stretch him, so that in a very short while the child was a full-grown young man. His parents then chose four companions who were always to be with their son.

As eagle feathers were very much in demand, the young man made an eagle trap so that he could gather the feathers of these birds. He was very successful, and soon his people were very wealthy from this trade with other tribes. The prince had made a small brush house in which he would lie hidden, and when the eagles came down he would catch them and take the feathers. His companions were always near, but could never see how he overpowered them.

One day, one of the companions hid himself near the entrance of the small brush house and behold! he saw a live salmon lying on the floor. That was what the eagles tried to get! The prince had transformed himself into a salmon. But even as the young companion saw this, an eagle came in. This time the young man could not grasp it in time, and he was killed. The corpse resumed human form. Thus the old chief and his wife were in great sorrow again at the fate of their son. They took the body and put it on a burial pole, under the constant guard of the four companions. For a long while these four young men watched, then one by one they gave up until only one remained.

As he was watching one night, a canoe came up near where he was sitting on the shore. He took the little pebble that had been given him by the prince and put it in his mouth. Now he could see everything clearly. Many people were in the canoe. The man in the stern spoke, saying, "This is the place where they put him." So saying, they landed, went to the burial pole, and



Totem pole of the Dog Salmon of Angyadae

opened the burial box. The prince rose and said, "I have been waiting many days for you," and they all went to the canoe at the water's edge. No notice was taken of the young companion, so he got into the canoe with them. They now set out in a northward direction.

Soon they came to a village where the people wore beautiful garments of many colours. As they were going past, someone shouted out from the shore, "Did you find whom you were looking for?" "Yes, we found him. He is here with us," replied a man in the canoe. They passed another village and again there came a shout from the shore, "Did you find whom you were looking for?" "Yes, he is here with us," was the reply. Finally they came to another village where the same question was asked, and this time the prince's companion saw that it was a beautiful place. The house-front paintings were many-coloured, and the garments worn by the people and even the children were alike bright with colour. When the canoe landed, many came down and asked, "You found whom you were looking for?" "Yes, he is with us."

They all went to the largest house in the village. When they entered, the young prince went to a man who was lying very ill at the rear of the house and said to him, "It is I, my uncle. I have returned to you." As soon as the young prince came in the great chief began to feel well. The prince then turned to his companion and said, "You are now in the land of the salmon. That was my uncle who was ill. Should you become hungry, take your club and knock some one down. Then you can roast him, as he is a young salmon. Any remnants you must gather and burn".

The young man was then left very much to himself. When he became hungry, he did as he had been told. With his club he struck what seemed to him a child, and as he struck it, it suddenly became a small salmon. He took it, toasted it by the fire and ate it, burning the remnants as he had been told. Then behold! he saw the same boy running about again, this time shouting as if in great pain, and holding his hand over his eye. "My eye, my eye, it is gone!" he cried. The prince came up to his companion, "Go back to where you were eating, find the other eye of the salmon you ate, and burn it." So he returned and hunted until he found the lost eye, and threw it into the fire. As he did this, the eye of the little boy was restored.

So for many days the young man lived here, until he began to be lonesome for his relatives at Larhwelgiyæps. "Why do you seem to grieve, my friend?" the prince asked him. "I am lonesome for my other friends," he replied. He thought he had been gone only a few days, but actually it had been many years. The prince said to him one day, "Tomorrow we will return to your village. Observe everything here and use whatever you like in your home as crests. You have seen where the salmon come from, and the respect the people must have for them. If salmon bones are not burned immediately after eating, then that salmon will be lost, and will suffer much pain until it dies. So make sure that all bones are gathered up and burned. Do not feed our flesh to dogs. You will take this pebble and place it in your mouth; it will protect you from harm". So saying, he went down to the canoe, followed by the young man, and they set out for the villages of the people.

They passed four villages, and the prince said, "These are the villages of *Iyai* (spring salmon), *Mesaw* (sockeye), *Werh* (coho), and *Stemawn* (pink). The one you left is the village of the *Qanees* (chum or dog salmon)".

They travelled for many days, and one night the canoe came to a beach. "We are here now," the prince said, and his companion recognized his own village again. This young man was the nephew of the chief Asaralyæn (Wolf, Gitsees). That is why the house of Asaralyæn uses the *Qanees* as their crest. It served as a head-dress, and was also carved on a pole.

A Burial Pole and House-Front Paintings of the Spring Salmon (Gidestsu) — related by Edmund Patalas of Hartley Bay, recorded by William Beynon, in 1948 (Extracts from a long narrative).

When the Gidestsu tribe lived near Laredo Channel and were fishing salmon, the Gispewudwade chief Rhæng caught a huge salmon and took it home in his canoe. His wife cut it open with a mussel-shell knife and found a child struggling inside. She took it out, placed it inside her garments, and pretended she had given birth to it. The chief was surprised but very happy at the event, for they were both aged. The child, a boy, grew rapidly. He was given eight boy companions to play with, and they were held responsible for his welfare.

Their first plan was to build a hut at the mouth of a stream where they would snare eagles. The boy was very successful in catching the birds, but he did this by changing himself to a salmon. He did not disclose his secret to his friends, whom he kept from looking on... (The theme of the pebble in the mouth is then developed.)

Through an indiscretion of one of his companions, the chief's son died, and his body was placed in a burial box on a pole.

His friends in town would keep watch at the foot. At night the presumably-dead salmon boy climbed down from his burial box. . . . He went to the river and slipped into a canoe manned by young men wearing red collars around their necks. They started off at once, and moved quickly. The chief's son sat in the middle of the canoe.

They travelled upstream for many days and nights just as salmon do. Then they arrived at a beautiful village. The house-front paintings there appeared to be alive. As they paddled by, someone called out from the shore, "Did you get what you were seeking?" "Yes, he is with us." This was the village of the Steelhead-Salmon (*Mailit*).

In brief, they went by other villages, those of the sockeye (*Mesaw*), the coho (*Werh*), the humpback (*Stemawn*), and the dog-salmon (*Qanees*). All the people in these villages wore beautiful, coloured garments, and at each village the house-front paintings were very bright and life-like . . .

At the end of the run the young travellers arrived at the head of a river. There stood a great village with many houses, and in the centre, a large

dwelling. Every house was decorated with house-front paintings, and many small children played at the water's edge . . . (And the narrative goes on.)

The Dog-Salmon of the Nass, according to Qawq, an Eagle chief; interpreter, Charles Barton, in 1927.

[Some ancestors in Qawq's clan] at one time in the past were at the place where Ketchikan now is, and they saw the supernatural Dog-Salmon (*qa'it*) there. They took it [as a crest] and moved to the Nass. This happened at the time when the people now belonging to Gitlarhdams lived at Wilarhkap. While they were still there [that is, before they had settled on the upper Nass] the volcano erupted, and the Wilarhkap tribe moved on. When the eruption was over, the tribe settled first at Place-of-strawberries (*larhkunmegunt*); then, before very long, they moved up the river to the Fortress (*larhsarhsnærh*) where Gitlarhdams now is. It was at that time that the Dog-Salmon people joined the earlier occupants on the Nass.

Barton added: The Tlingits of Kilesnoo, some hundreds of miles north of Ketchikan, own the Salmon crest, which they call *Stin*, and their house is called *Stinhit* (Salmon-House). They belong to the Raven phratry, and are related to the Neeshot group of Kanhades, whose fairly recent origin is Tlingit, among the Tsimsyans.

The Eagle and Salmon Pole (Tlingit) at Wrangell, Alaska, as described by Dr. J. R. Swanton, in *The Tlingit Indians* (119: 434).

Another Wrangell pole, carved to represent an eagle holding strings of fish on a rope, illustrates the story of Man-that-dried-fish-for-the-eagle (*Tcaqediatqangu*) told by Katishan.

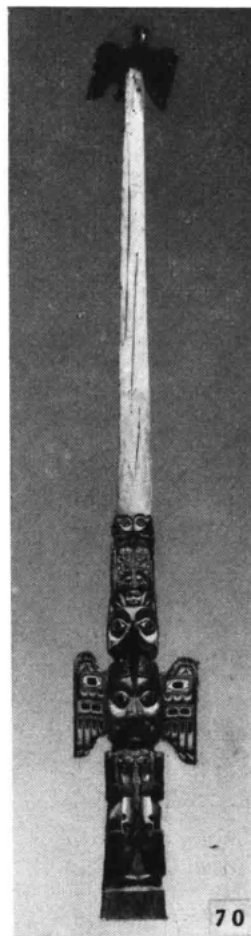
The Nhe-is-bik of Rivers Inlet, now standing in Stanley Park, Vancouver, described by the Rev. G. H. Raley (118: 16, 17).

This pole illustrates the legend, "How the Salmon Came to River's Inlet."

Chief Gal-gum-gas-su and his tribe were the first people to inhabit River's Inlet, and before there were fish in the river they settled at Wanook, now called Whan-nook.

Gal-gum-gas-su had a little daughter named Yeda. Soon after Yeda had learnt how to talk, she told her mother she was hungry for salmon. On being told no one knew what a salmon was, she commenced to cry and refused all foods. Fearing she would die if her crying was not checked, in desperation Gal-gum-gas-su called his wise men to a council and demanded of them, "What are salmon?" and "Where can they be obtained?" The wise men had to admit their ignorance. No one knew.

At that moment, the supernatural Raven, who was always travelling, entered the council and said, "Chief and wise men, I know salmon. They are the fish for the people, and I



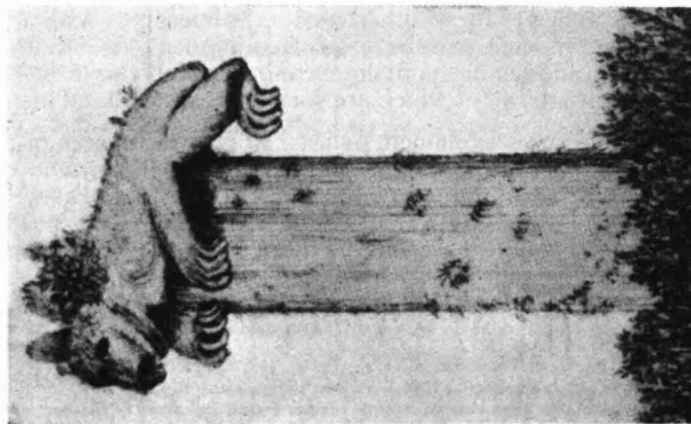
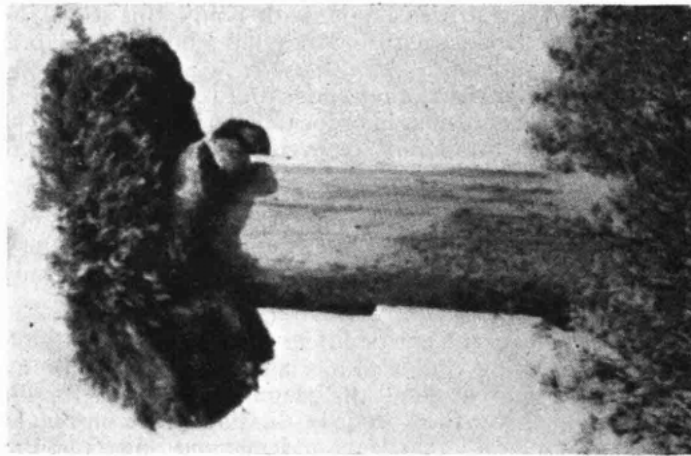
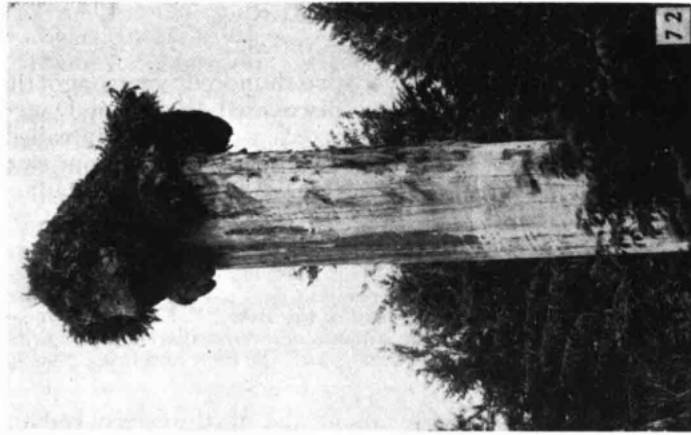
Salmon-Woman totem pole, at Ketchikan



Salmon totem pole of Tongas

will find out where they live." Upon saying this he left them and flew for days till he located the home of the salmon. Now the salmon had a chief called Meah-si-la, whose little son was always playing and jumping in the water. Raven watched his chance, and when no one was looking he seized the little fish and flew off with it. Whereupon Meah-si-la commended his people to help him retrieve his son. They swam fast but could not overtake Raven, who arrived at the mouth of Wanook river in time for Gal-gum-gas-su to have a net made and the little fish safely confined in a shallow pool before Meah-si-la was sighted. Then the Wanook women hastily made long ropes of shredded cedar bark, and when the salmon people ascended the river, the men captured them. They held them in captivity by tying them side by side through the gills to the rope, and fastening the end of each rope to the totem-pole in front of Gal-gum-gas-su's house. Hence the Nhe-is-bik, which means tethering pole. When Yeda saw the salmon she ceased crying. In his joy, the father held the first salmon feast. Since then, the yearly run of salmon has never failed.

The present pole, nearly 60 feet high, was carved in 1892 by a skillful craftsman named See-wit, of Blunden Harbor. In 1936 it was obtained from Chief Wakus of the Oweekano people, a direct descendant of Gal-gum-gas-su, and placed in Stanley Park.



(Left) Sketch by John Muir of the Bear totem, at Old Wrangell