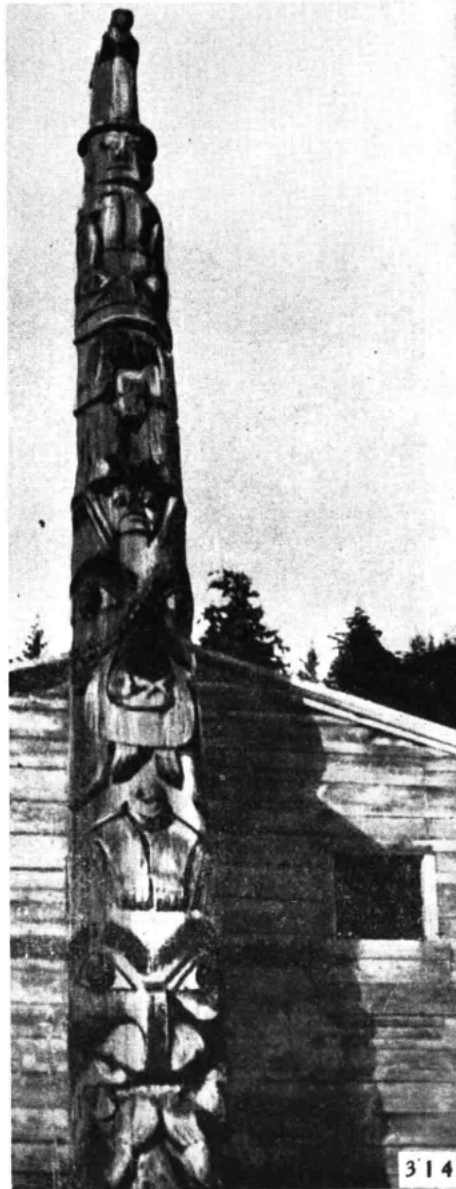


## KAIGANI HAIDAS

*(Southern Alaska)*

**The Kaigani Haidas** of Prince of Wales Island, according to A. P. Niblack (78: 385, 386).

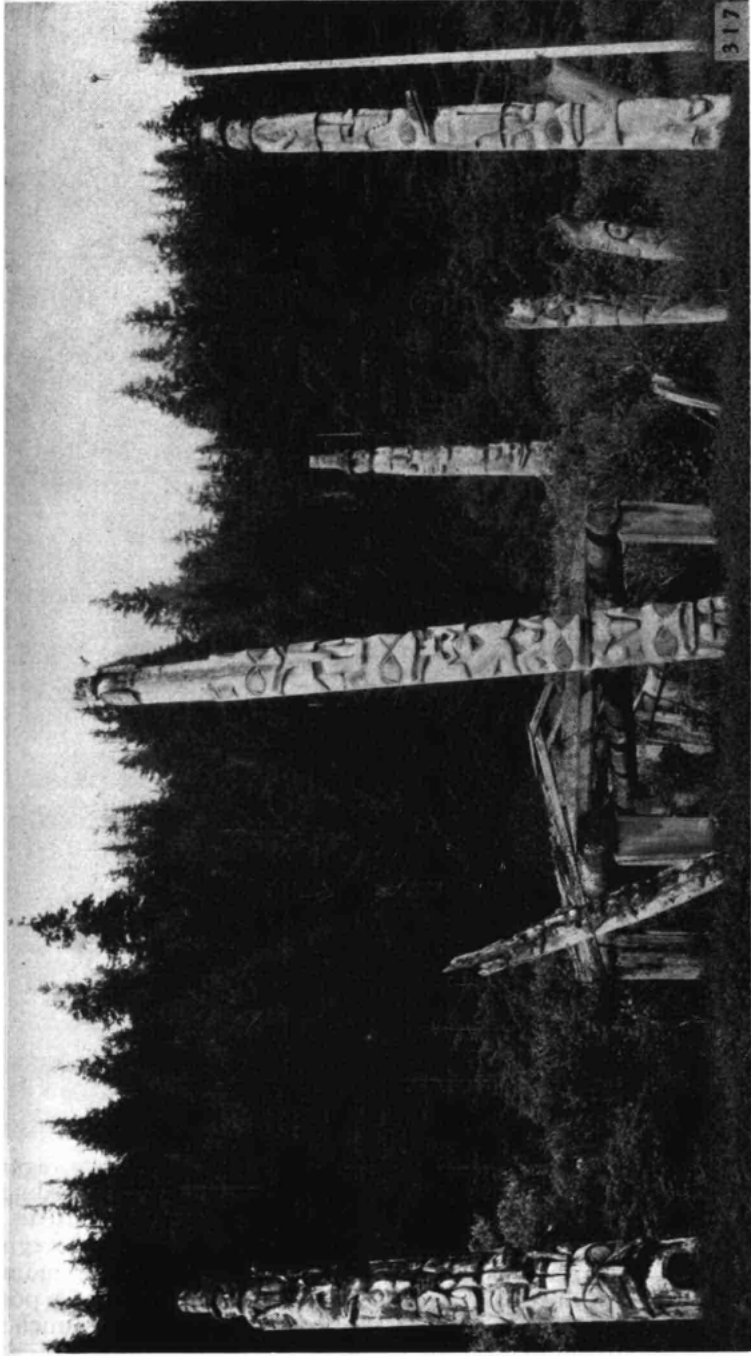
The Kaigani are a branch of the Haida of Queen Charlotte Islands having, for some cause or other, split off from their brethren and settled across Dixon Entrance on the southern end of Prince of Wales Island and adjacent archipelago. As near as can be figured from the Indian accounts, this must have happened at the least one hundred and fifty years ago. Their three principal villages now are Howkan, Klinquan, and Kasa-an. The Indians are gradually building an American village at the rear of the old-time lodges. Many of the totemic columns have been cut down, and the native characteristics are fast disappearing. It is to be said in favour of the new order of things that Mr. Gould has impressed upon this village the stamp of his own personal qualities of thriftiness, industry, fair dealing, sobriety, and enterprise. Just below Howkan is the village of Koianglas, consisting of three houses and several interesting totemic columns. The population, made up of a few families, will soon be absorbed in that of Howkan. Nearly opposite Koianglas, on Dall Island, and also situated on Kaigani strait is the site of the old-time village of Dat-ghaya. On the southern end of Dall Island, just north of Cape Muzon (the extreme southern point of Alaska) is the small village of Kaigani. The winter residence of the former population is now at Howkan. There are seven or eight houses, which are occupied only at certain seasons of the year, but there are no totemic columns. Klinquan is said to be about half as large as Howkan, but to have retained its native characteristics almost intact. At the southern entrance to Cholmondeley Sound is the site of the abandoned village of Chasina or Chachina. There is only one house there now and the stumps and remains of mortuary columns. Early voyagers describe it as a populous village in the early part of this century. At the head of Kasa-an Bay, at what is called Karbo Bay, is a small village called by some authorities Kasa-an. Kasa-an proper is, however, on Skowl Arm, a branch of the bay. Being somewhat off the steamer route and the missionaries never having settled there, Kasa-an has preserved its native characteristics more markedly than any other village in Alaska.



Totem pole, presumably of chief Skowl



Poles and house posts at Old Kasaan



At Old Kasaan



Old Kasaan

**Origin of the Kaigani Haidas** of Prince of Wales Island, Alaska, according to J. R. Swanton (97: 88).

This brings us to the great migration to Alaska. Statements regarding the location of the several families before they moved and regarding the movement itself are so definite that it can have occurred only in very recent times. The explorer Douglas speaks as if Dadans was a regularly inhabited town at the time of his visit. If it is true, as they now maintain, that Dadans was never regularly occupied after the migration, it is possible the latter did not occur until after white contact. This would be much more recent than the date (about 1720) fixed by Dawson; otherwise I should have said that his estimate was about correct.



Old Kasaan



Old Kasaan



Old Kasaan. White man at the top of the pole to the right  
represents the figurehead of a ship

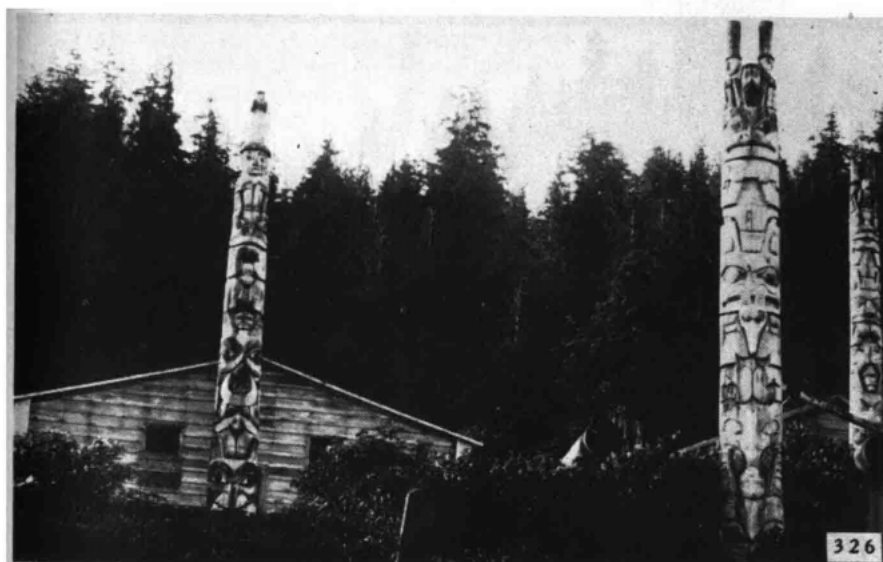


Old Kasaan

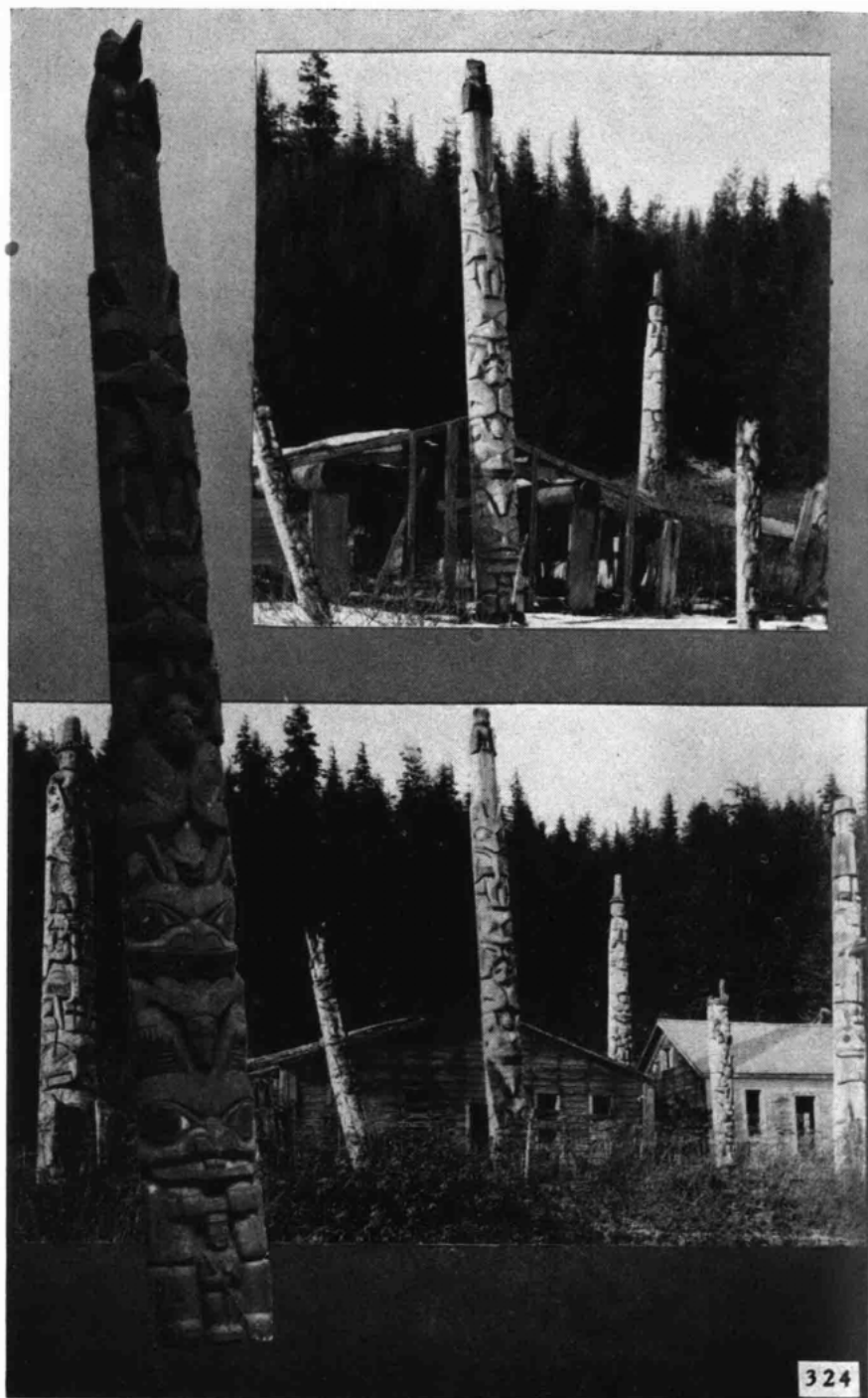




Old Kasaan at a later date



Old Kasaan



Old Kasaan. (Inset) Kasaan pole at the Museum of the American Indian, N.Y.

**Migrations of the Haidas**, according to William Beynon (recorded in 1939).

Cape St. James people (of Anthony Island, at the southernmost point of the Queen Charlotte Islands) within a very few generations migrated north on the western side to Frederick Island (off the west coast of Graham Island). Frederick Island is still worth visiting; Beynon was there in 1927. Remnants of old habitations and house shafts are still to be seen. From Frederick Island the Cape St. James tribesmen proceeded to Prince of Wales Island in southern Alaska and established Hlinkwan, Howkan, and Kasaan. Moving into Tlingit country, they preserved most of the earlier Tlingit names, e.g., Hlinkwan and Howkan.

Beynon was told by James Peel, a Haida of Kasaan (a fact also confirmed by others at Hydeberg), that at a later date a war party of the Tsimshyans invaded the Prince of Wales country of these northern Haidas. This party consisted of twelve large caneloads of warriors who had journeyed together from their country northwestwards to Cape Chacon at the southernmost tip of the Prince of Wales island. There they camped at Bear's Point (*wilakstahl-medeeek*: Where-close-to-shore-sits-the-Grizzly). Before parting, they drew V-shaped lines for a plan of campaign. Seven canoes would travel to one side on the left, the other five to the right, the number of paddles being equally divided between both parties. Then they both went on their way. The outcome was not recorded.

**Kasaan village** with totem poles, on Prince of Wales Island, Southern Alaska, as represented on Plates II and III in "The Coast Indians of Southern Alaska and Northern British Columbia," by A. P. Niblack, about 1885 (78).

Plate II gives a view of the eastern part (right-hand half) of the village of Kasaan, where lived Chief Skowl (-1887). The two carved columns at the lower right-hand corner are views of two commemorative mortuary columns.

Plate III . . . Graveyard of the village of Kasaan, with carved posts, usually one figure each at the top.

**The Totem Poles of Old Kasaan**, as they were before their removal, described by the Rev. H. P. Corser (28: 51-53).

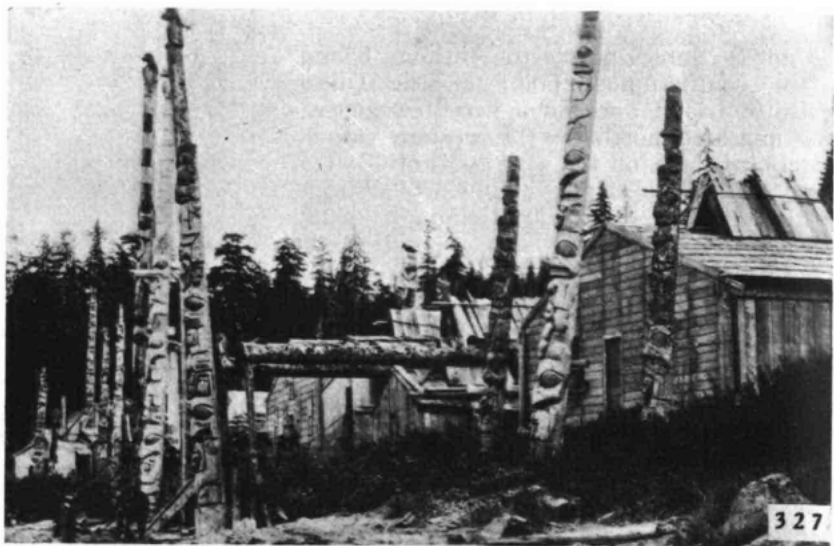
A colony of Haidas from Massett on Queen Charlotte's Islands settled near where Old Kasaan now is.

What prompted them was trouble at home. First a few set out, but on account of the rough, wide waters of what we now call "Dixon's Entrance," they were compelled to turn back. But they, as the legend says, "found many friends and secured a big canoe, and in



Old Kasaan

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Old Kasaan



Old Kasaan



The old house of Chief Son-i-hat at Old Kasaan



Old Kasaan

it they worked hard and succeeded in crossing the big water where they found a good place and had peace many days."

This good place was not the present Old Kasaan, but a place not far away. After some years, for a trivial reason, they deserted their first resting place for the present site of old Kasaan. They called it "Beautiful Town." That is what the word Kasaan means.

Of these legendary days there is a story of a man digging clams who was caught there by a large bivalve and held until he was drowned by the incoming tide. This so excited his kinsmen that the family migrated northward to Stikine River and joined their fortunes with the Thlingets, learning their language and becoming virtually a part of the Thlinget people. These immigrants were finally divided into two families, the Kosoquidi and Telequidi. The sacred songs of these two clans are in the Haida-Kasaan dialect.

The chief house of old Kasaan is Chief Skowel's. It is one that has

two similar totem poles shown in the accompanying illustration on each side of the steps in front of the house. They are surmounted with the figures of the Raven. These are placed high up to show the great dignity of the family. The carved figure below is the Raven. He has the moon in his mouth to commemorate the time he stole the moon from the Creator to give it unto men. Below is the wife of the Raven. He, after he stole the sun and moon, went out to and fro on the earth, teaching men to obey certain customs. He was a great joker, so much so that each Thlinget word that means deceit has its root in their word for the raven . . .

The lowest figure of all is the Whale. This is the Raven's "Jonah" story. One time the Raven jumped into the mouth of the whale. He made it so unpleasant for the whale that the whale was glad to go ashore and die. The Raven, however, still imprisoned in the belly of the Whale, began to sing; and this attracted the attention of some Indian braves who were passing by. Their curiosity was aroused and they began to dig into the sides of the Whale. Out stepped the Raven, and then, as a thank offering for his rescue, he cut up the Whale and divided it among the people, thus making a great feast.

The larger of the two poles was erected in 1872. The totem at the right of the two just described is similar to the one last mentioned and was erected in honour of Chief Skowel's nephew.

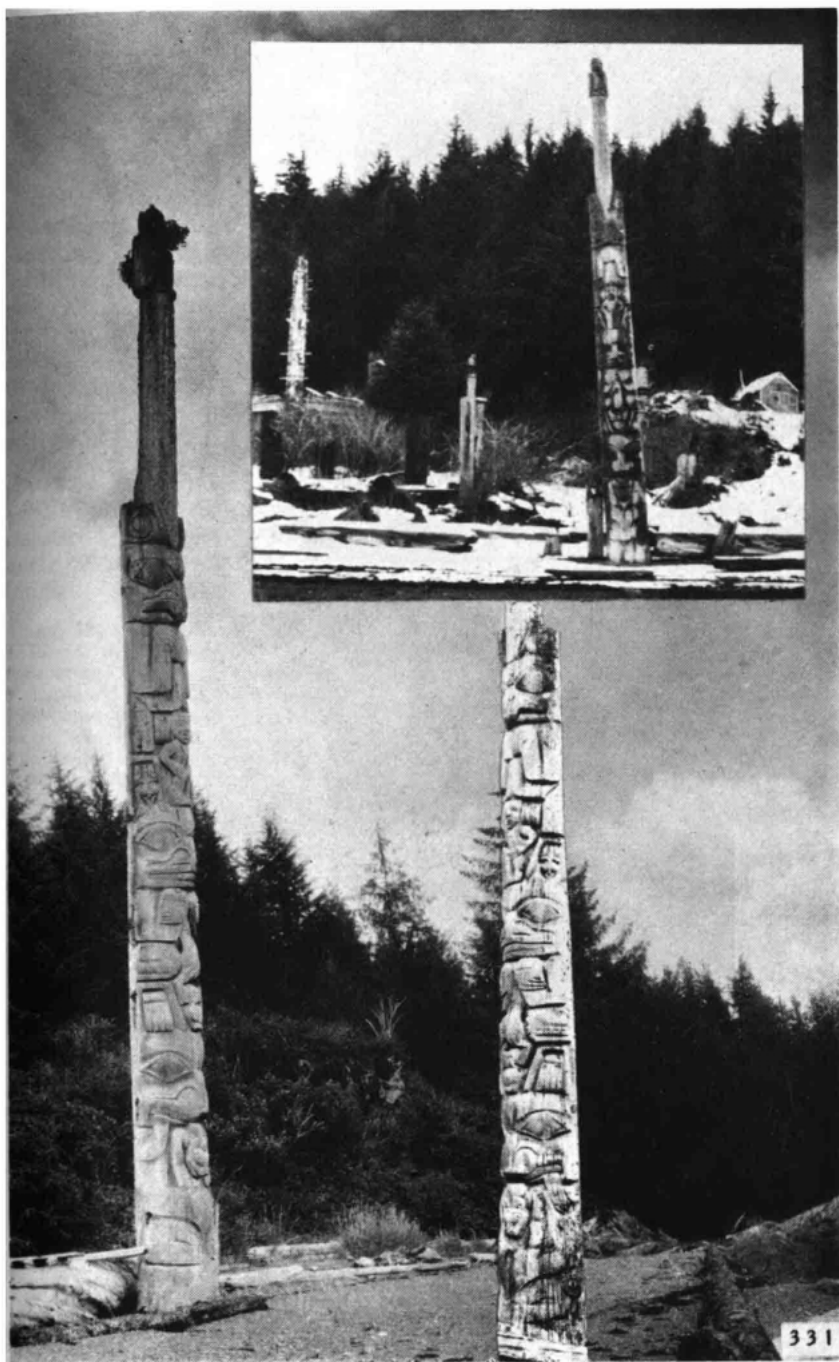
At the extreme right of the village is a totem erected by Chief Skowel for his daughter. She married a white man, and so this pole is surmounted by the American eagle.

Behind and a little to the left of Chief Skowel's house is a totem surmounted by the Fog Mother and her two children, and below is her husband, the sun.

To the left of Skowel's house is the house of darkness. Next is Chief Sunny Heart's house. It was he who gave the Memorial totem to Governor Brady to be placed in the park at Sitka.

The totems at the extreme left are grave totems. Those who erected these totems were usually first initiated into the "Dog Eaters" fraternity . . .

Old Kasaan was deserted in the year 1900 for new Kasaan, where the natives have built up a modern and prosperous village.



Old Kasaan



Old Kasaan



**House at Old Kasaan** (Kaigani-Haida), as recorded by Edward L. Keithahn (62: 122, 123, with an illustration).

These fine interior house pillars have been restored and incorporated into Haida community house restoration at Kasaan by U.S. Forest Service (Photo by U.S. Forest Service).

(M.B.) Two side posts at the rear show the Duk-toothl, the strong man, tearing up a sea-lion. A taller pole, also at the rear, is surmounted by a bird, possibly the Raven, holding a long quadruped, head down; at the base is the Grizzly Bear. These are fine carvings in the Haida style.

**House Posts in Chief Skowl's house** [Haida] at Kasaan on Prince of Wales Island, as shown by A. P. Niblack (78: Plate LXVII).

Chief Skowl died in the winter of 1882-83, and, according to the custom of the region, his body was first displayed in state dressed in the ceremonial robes of a chief. Later it was enclosed in a casket and deposited, as shown, on a pile of boxes containing his clothing and ceremonial dance paraphernalia. The group is at the end of the building, opposite the entrance, between the two carved posts holding the rafters of the house.



A totem from Old Kasaan now in the park at Sitka

(M.B.) The carved figures on both house posts obviously are those of the Raven and his Son; the Son stands between the folded wings of the mythical bird. (See the myth elsewhere.)

**Mortuary Columns near Howkan** (Haida), Alaska, described by A. P. Niblack (78: Plates LXIX, figures 357, 358, 359).

Figure 358, with the spruce tree growing out of the top, illustrates the decay of these wooden carvings through the encroachment of the vegetation, which flourishes wherever it can get the least foothold.

Number 357 contains two figures. The top seems to be the Raven, head down on the column, flying; its tail is in the form of a human face.

Number 358 is covered with three figures from the top down: presumably the Eagle; a man holding a cane ending with a human face under his feet.

Number 359 — A semi-human figure, or perhaps the Grizzly Bear, with the Bear on its head. This post seems to have stood about twenty feet high.

Number 360 — Mortuary or commemorative column at Fort Tongass, southern Alaska. The Raven rests at the top. Under it is the Killer-Whale, head down; at the bottom, a man. This is a regular totem pole.



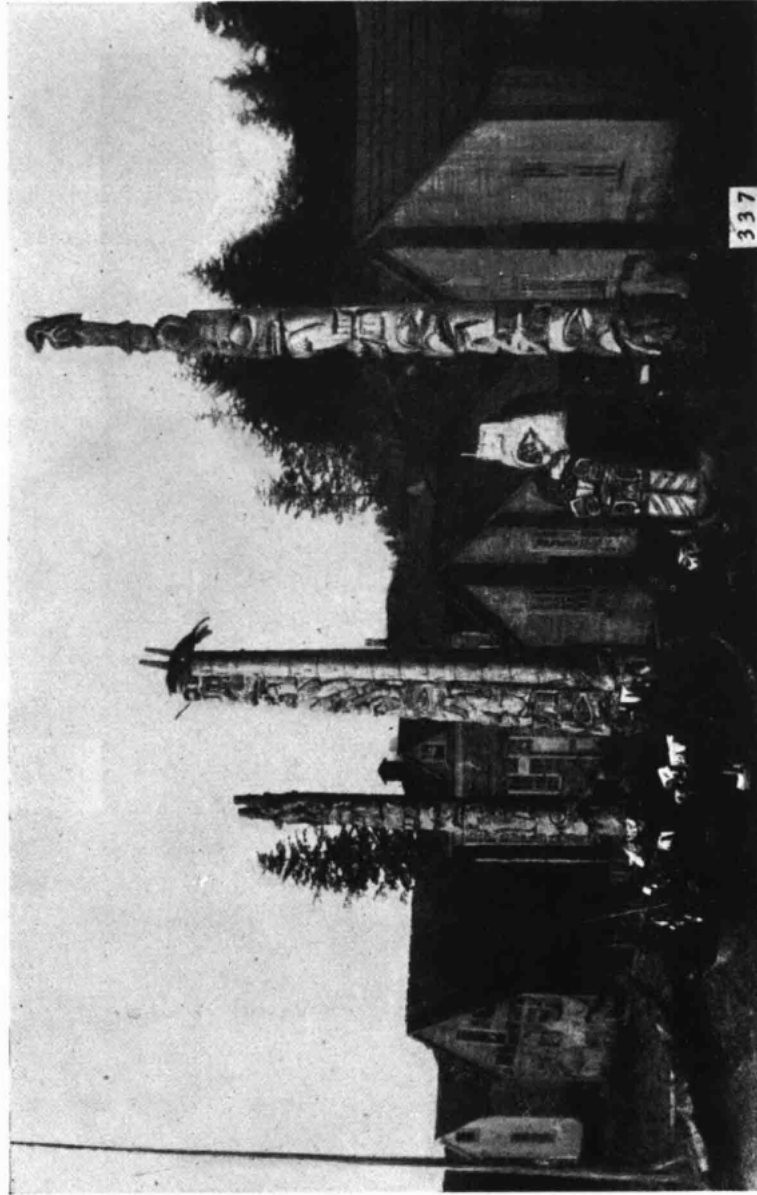
(Left) Old Kasaan. (Right) Chief Son-i-hat's Halibut house at Old Kasaan



Kaigani poles of Prince of Wales Island



Eagle totem of the Haidas on Prince of Wales Island



At Howkan, a Kaigani village of Prince of Wales Island



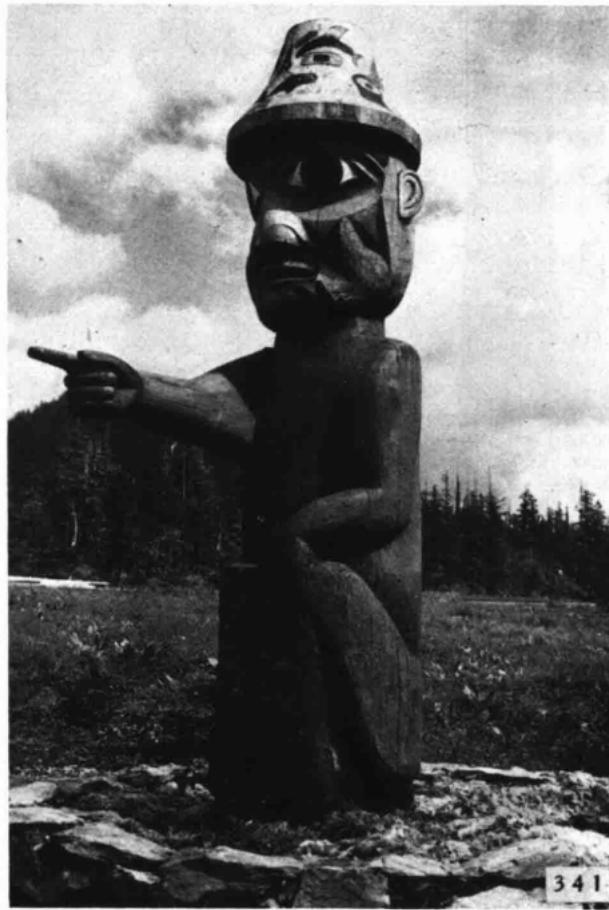
Totems of Howkan



Howkan house and totems



Old Sukkwan village, Prince of Wales Island



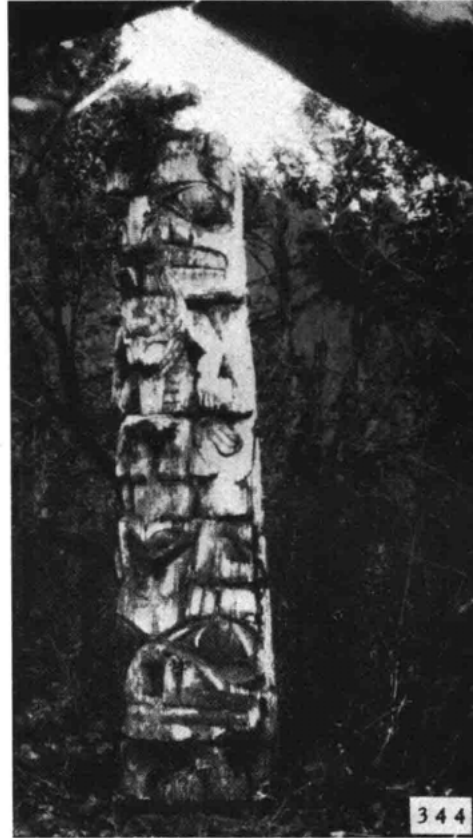
The Old Woman of Saxman





Village of the northern Haidas

Inside pole of Edward Edensaw's house at  
the Haïda village of Kung →



**Poles at Sukkwan** (Kaigani-Haida), recorded by Edward L. Keithahn (62: 60, with illustration).

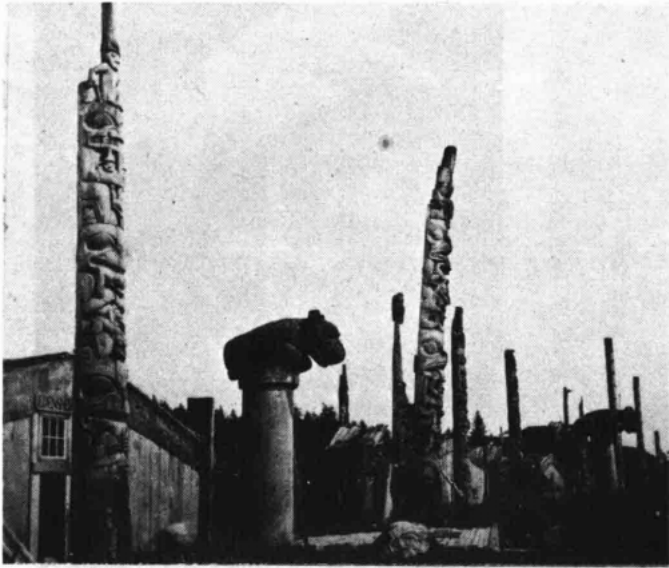
(M.B.) A tall hexagonal pole in the background representing the Fireweed, a crest familiar elsewhere only on upper Skeena River, where one of the phratries is the Gistræst — Fireweed, and a few totem poles show this wild, flowering plant.

In the foreground, a smaller pole with a man wearing a tall "skil" hat (with six cylinders) holds on with both hands to a spike or a fin on the head of a sea monster, unidentified.

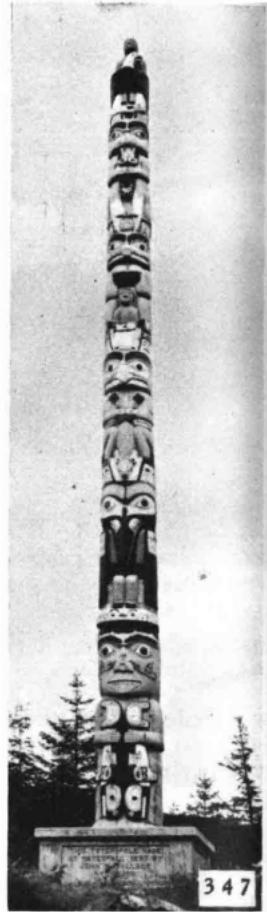
**The Old-Witch Pole of Sukkwan** (Kaigani-Haida), as recorded by Edward L. Keithahn (62: 152, with an illustration).

The Old Witch totem pole now standing before the Nugget Shop at Juneau is a fine Haida pole from Sukkwan near Hydaburg.

[M.B.] This stately pole was obviously carved by the same craftsman as the Russian priest pole of Chief Skowl now in Ketchikan Park. The style is identical. A small human figure sits at the top, about 40 feet high, with a pile of "skil" cylinders on his head. Under him is an animal with wide mouth (unidentified) holding on to the "skil" cylinders of the figure below. The main emblem in the centre is the mythical Fog Woman holding as usual two salmon in her hands. And, at the bottom, is Bear Mother with her two Cubs, one on her head, the other in front of her body, both with human features.



Villages of the northern Haidas or Kaiganis



Totem pole carved  
by John Wallace,  
a Kaigani Haida,  
in 1937



Totems of the northern Haidas



Kaigani pole from a village on Prince of Wales Island. (Right) Northern Haida pole at the Museum of Modern Art, New York