



Bella Coola grave post

BELLA COOLAS

House Portal at the Old Pagan Village, now at the National Museum of Canada. Collected by Dr. C. F. Newcombe, in 1910 (No. VII. D. 18).

This pole, as can be seen in two photographs taken after the village had been abandoned and before the pole was removed, stands about 25 feet high and is about a yard wide. Its broad opening at the base served as an entrance to an old potlatch house. The figures, in so far as the author can interpret them, were non-totemic and probably were not emblematic in the same sense as such figures would be farther north. They are (from the top down): (1) Qomoqoa, a mighty spirit of the sea, ruler of the whales and the seals. Once he may have carried an ancestor of the owner to his undersea home and conferred supernatural powers upon him and the right to use him as an emblem. The same mythical being may be the Whale-Person (*trahkawl*) of the Gitlhawn or Salmon-Eater of the Tsimshians to the north. Over the Qomoqoa's large head are (2) two small Snake-like figures, presumably the Caterpillar or the Woodworm of the Tsimshians and the Tlingits; (3) a small human-like face, the identity of which is doubtful; perhaps a person being carried by the mythical Eagle on his back, as happened in the myth of the

Eagle; (4) Thunderbird or the Eagle with spread wings; (5) Eagle or Thunderbird holding the Sun, with a human face inside, in his talons; (6) Grizzly Bear at the bottom; over the Bear's ears, on one side, the Raven; on the other, the Whale.

This pole was painted all over, with yellow and white the predominant colours.

House Frontal Pole of Tallio (Taliho), South Bentinck Arm, now at the National Museum of Canada, collected in 1923 by Harlan I. Smith (VII D 400). The photograph here reproduced was taken by Mr. Smith in 1920, before the pole was removed.

The figures on the pole, which is about 25 feet high, are, from the top down, and in so far as they can be interpreted without the aid of the contemporary natives: (1) Eagle or Thunderbird with the Sun; (2) Cannibal Giant or Glass-Nose or Sharp-Nose of the north, whose ashes, when he was burned to cinders, changed into mosquitoes; (3) Beaver, showing his incisors, here a small figure under that of the Giant; (4) large unidentified face of a monster, perhaps a bird, as the wing feathers on both sides indicate; (5) large face with Glass- or Sharp-Nose, and open mouth serving as a ceremonial doorway to the house. This is again the Cannibal Giant of the north.

Two Doorway Carvings of the Bella Coola, at the Columbian Exhibition, Chicago (1893). As described by James Deans in "Tales of the Hidery" (*Archives of the International Folk-Lore Association*. Vol. II, 1899, p. 95).

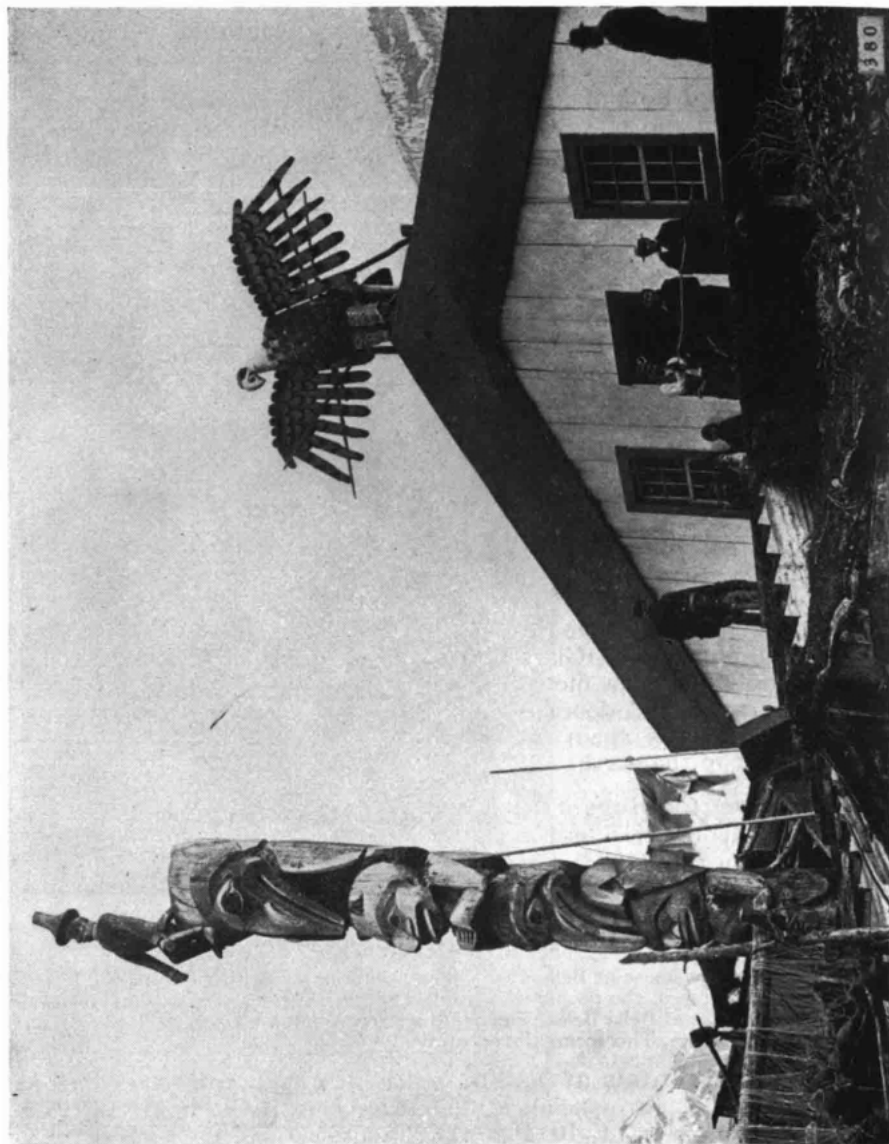
A doorway from a house at Bella Coola in the interior of British Columbia. It is a Bear and was the crest of the people who lived in the house. The next carving also was the doorway of a house at Bella Bella. The paintings are as follows: Upper part, the Raven; next, the spirit of the sea. This forms the doorway.

Two House Frontals at Tallio, South Bentinck Arm, according to W. A. Newcombe. (Provincial Museum Report, B.C., 1930: "British Columbia Totem Poles," C 10, Plate IX, Figure I.)

Two house frontal poles will be noticed with the high arch at their base, which served as the main entrance to the house. The pole on the right is now P.M. No. 2308. I have only records of similar poles from Bella Coola Salish and the Northern Kwakiutl villages of Bella Bella and Owikeno. The houses on posts should also be noted. The first reference we have to this

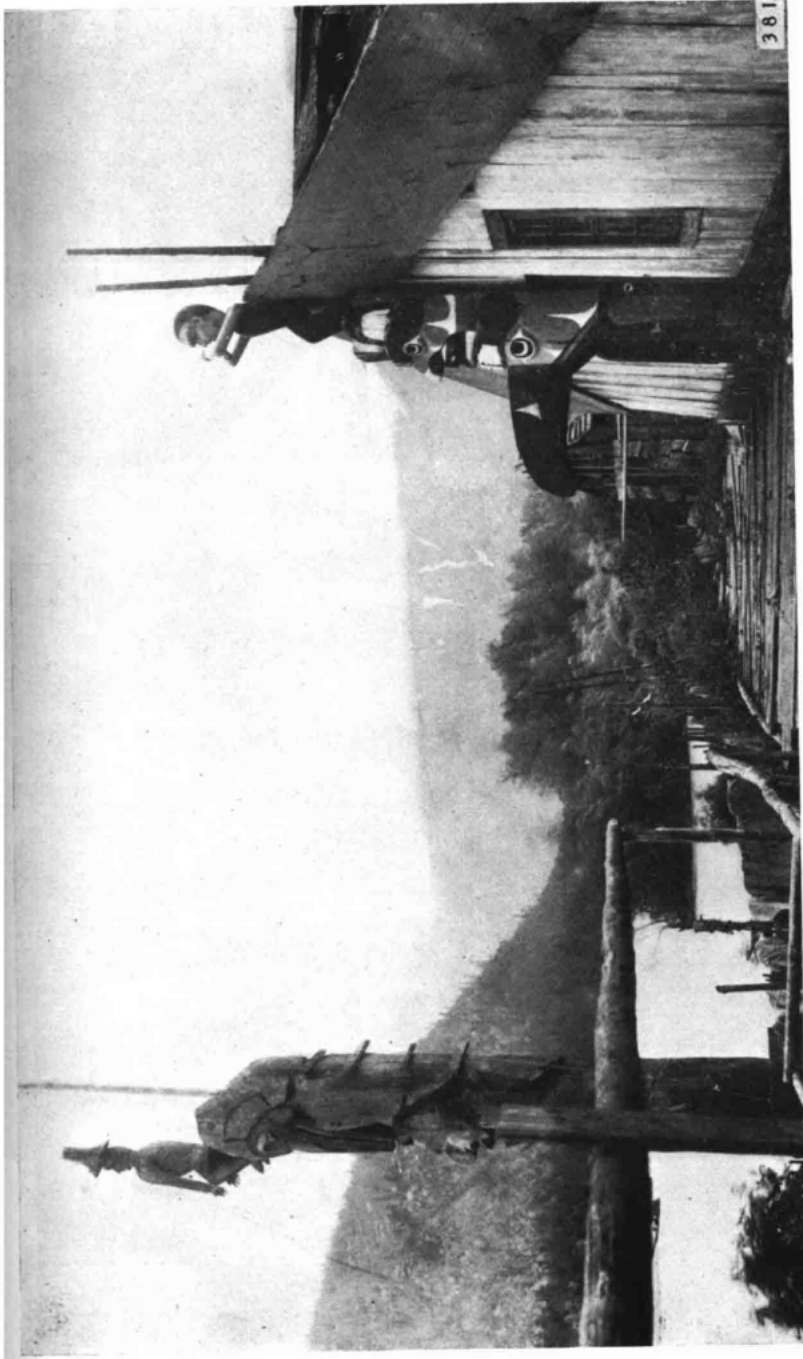


Bella Coola

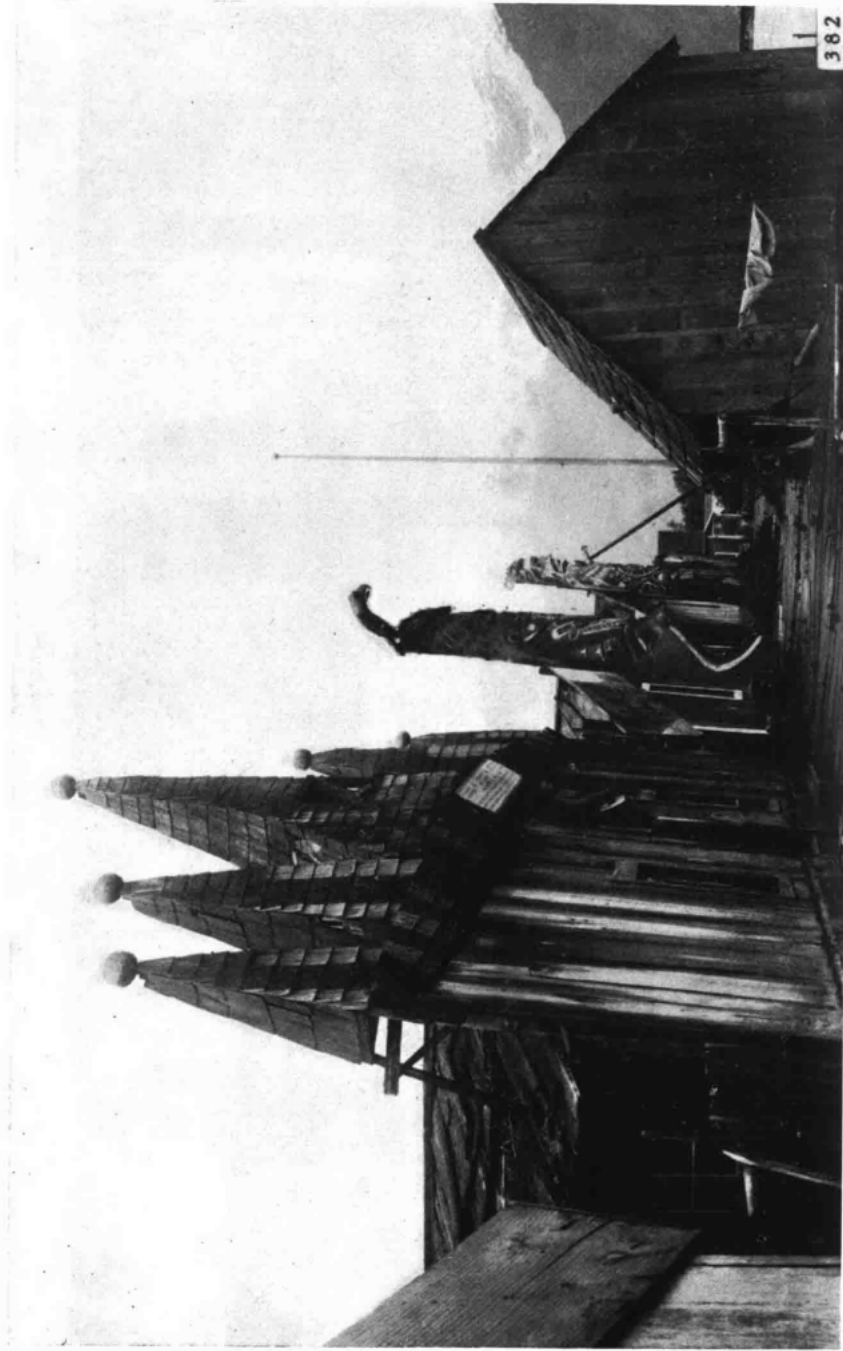


Bella Coola pole and house at Komkotes

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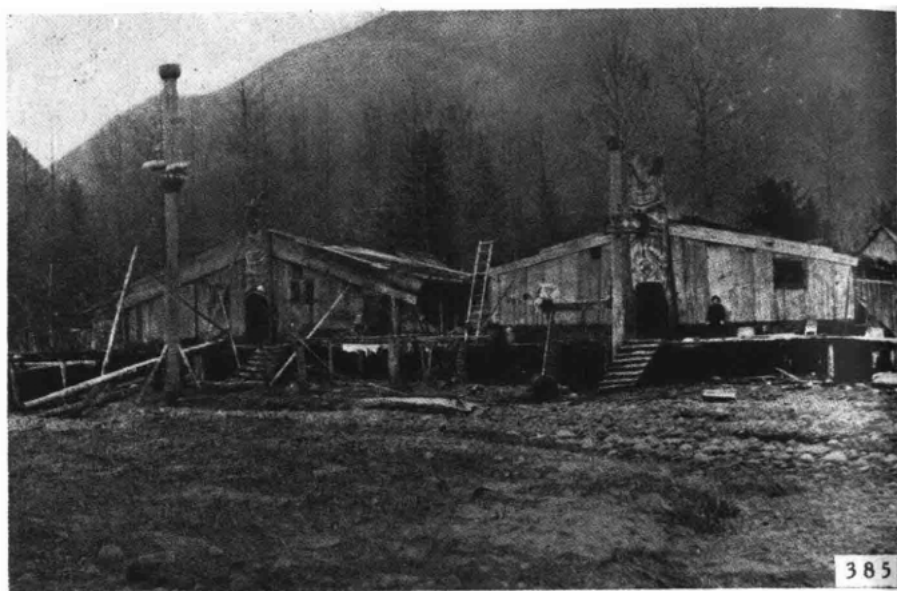
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Bella Coola



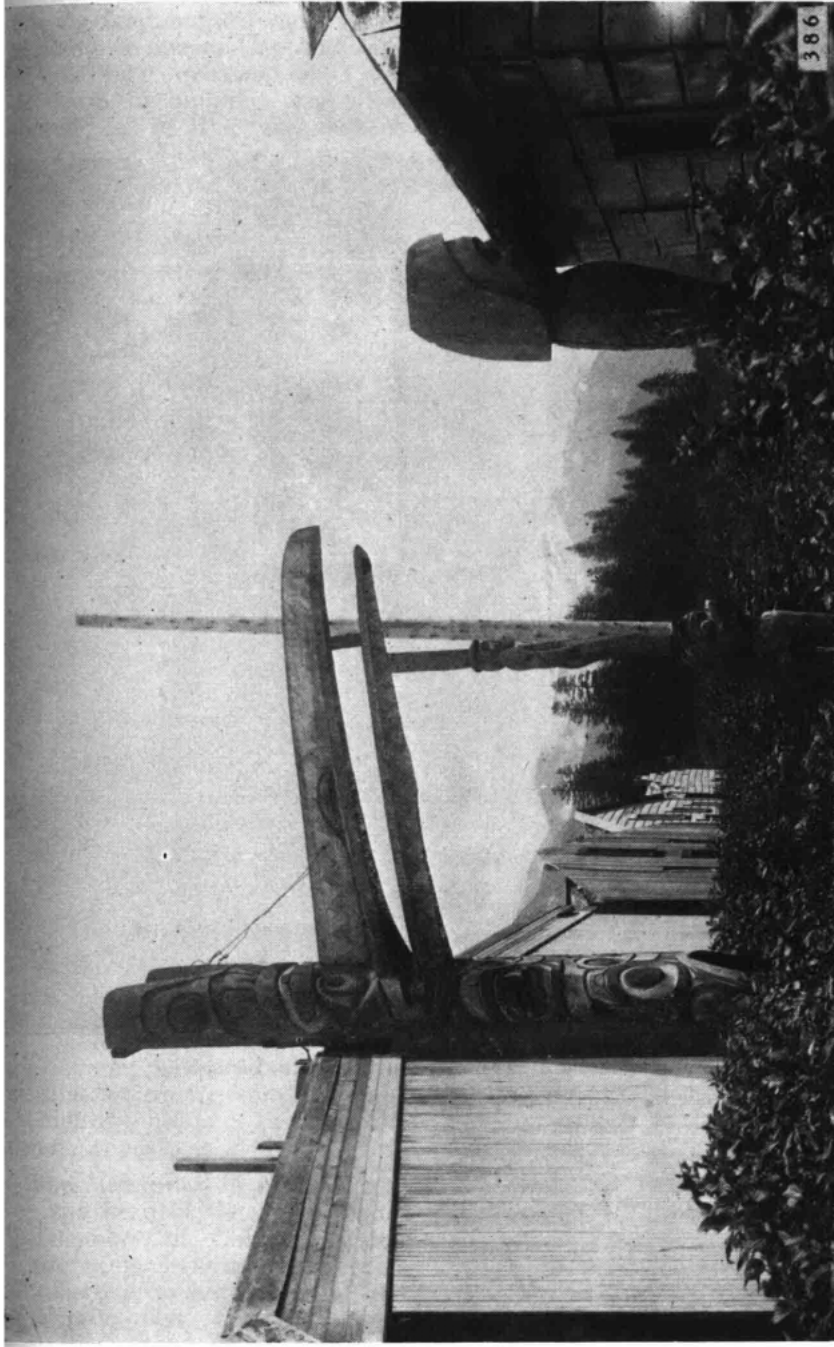
The house of old Cleman in Bella Coola



Talio village, Bella Coola



Talio, Bella Coola



Bella Coola



Pole from Tallio in Thunderbird Park, Victoria

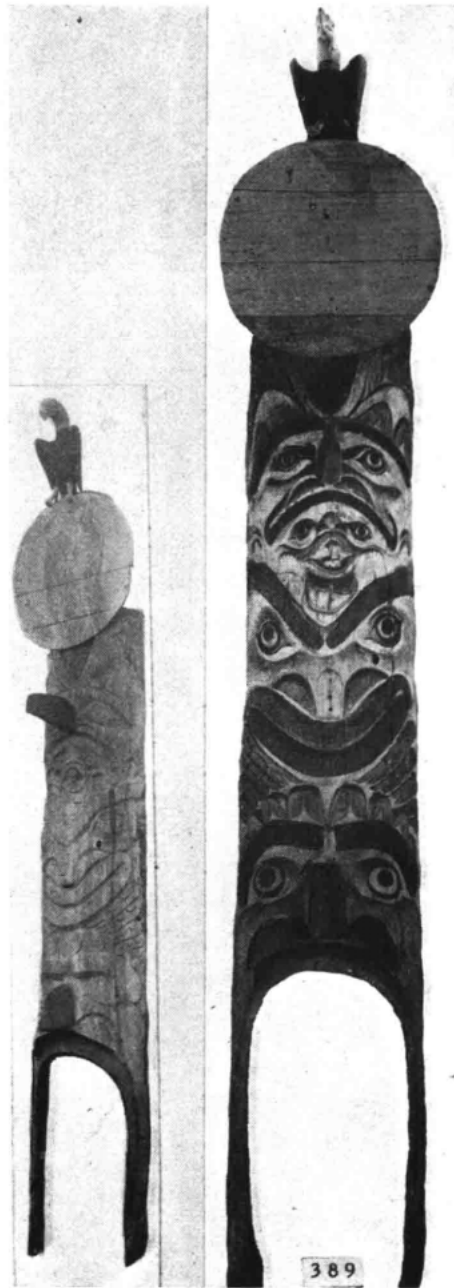
village with houses on "stilts" was made by Lieutenant Johnstone, in command of one of Captain Vancouver's boat parties, in 1793. This form of building was often resorted to in the area where houses were built on river estuaries, as these situations are subject to freshets and, occasionally, a form of "tidal wave."

House Post collected by Jacobsen for Chicago. House post of Bella Coola, collected by Phillip Jacobsen (for the Field Museum of Natural History (No. 18633), where the author saw it in 1915). The label read, as follows: "The lower figure is a supernatural being (*Qomoquo*), the deep sea chief. The upper figure is a mythical Raven. Both appear in the clan traditions and are represented in the ceremonial dances."

Chief Clelaman's Memorial at old Bella Coola village, photographed by H. I. Smith for the National Museum of Canada in 1920.

This memorial consisted of a small wooden house with front door and, at either side, a window. Over the house stands a man with chin beard, seaman's cap, and long English trousers, and holding a pestle-like tool in both hands. This figure was collected for the National Museum of Canada where it is now conserved. A strange belfry-like gable, four-faced, cone-like, and covered with cedar shingles, contains two square front openings, in which the heads of two dog-like animals appear, as if howling.

The inscription in block letters over the head of the sailor reads: "In memory of Chief Clelaman [to the upper left, Maltese crosses are inserted on both sides of the name] who died July, 1893, aged



Bella Coola house portal



Bella Coola house posts

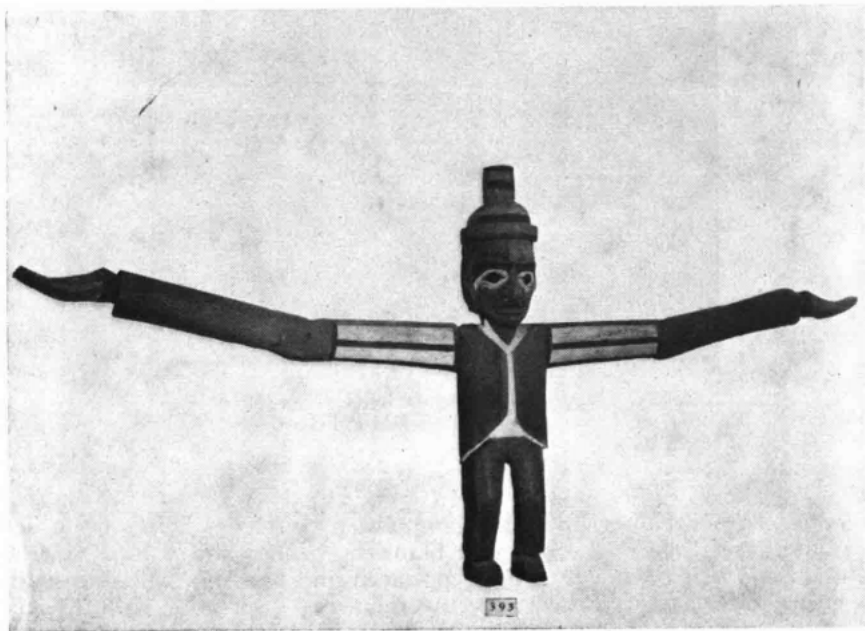


Bella Coola grave box collected by H. I. Smith for the
American Museum of Natural History

50 years. In December 1892 he gave away, with the help of his sons Alexander and Johnny, property in blankets, canoes and valued at 4,000 dollars. This being his eighth large potlatch and feast that he had held." On either side, at the top corners, the following inscription was inserted: "He was honest and well disposed" [to the right]: "and respected by whites and Indians."



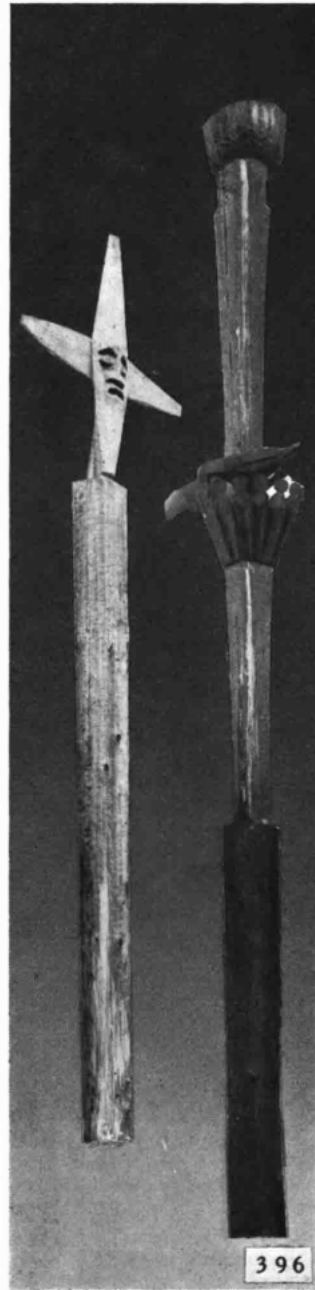
Grave house posts from the Bella Coolas



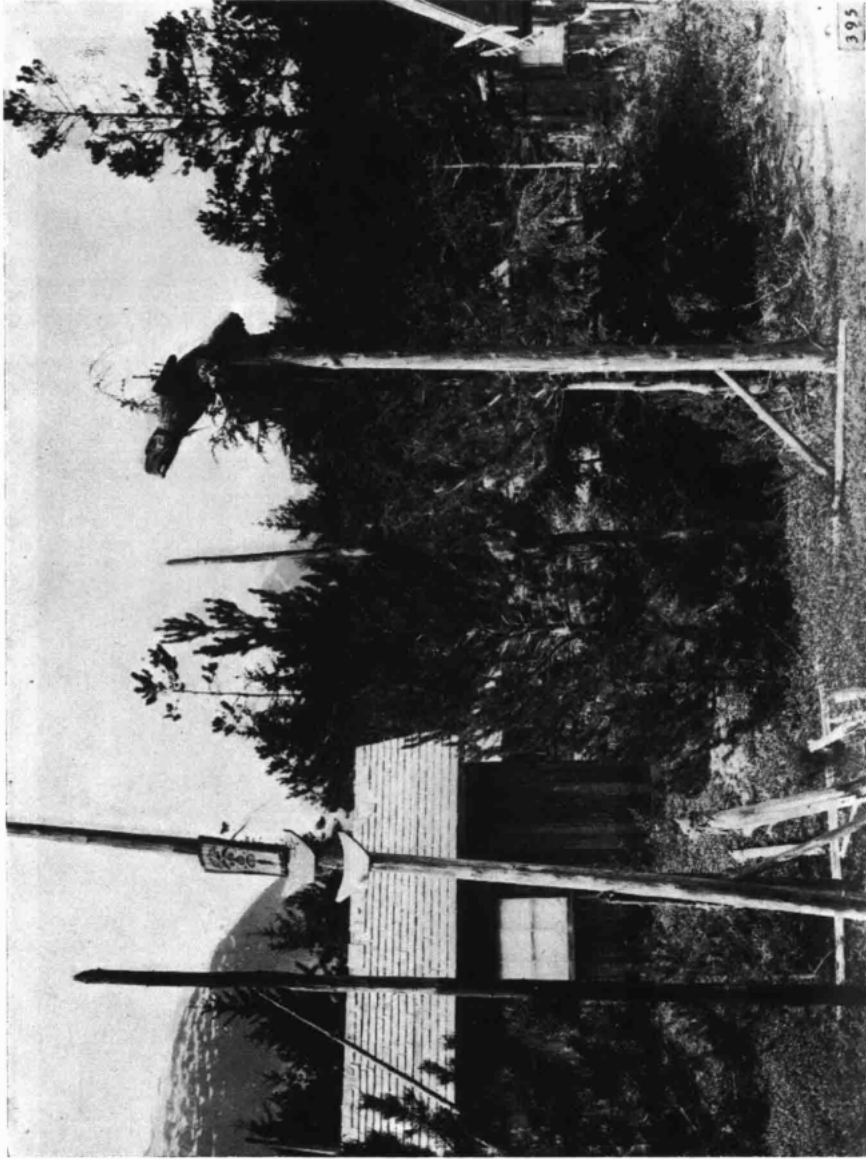
Bella Coola human figure (now at the National Museum, Ottawa)



Totem from the neighbourhood of Hartley Bay,
in the Raley Collection, now at the museum of
the University of British Columbia



Graveyard carvings of the
Bella Coolas



In the Bella Coola country