

5. House crest of the Giglignam clan, Nimkish tribe. The design is the Thunderbird eating the whale. Kwakiutl.

**House-front paintings among the Coast Salishes**, recorded by Dr. Franz Boas (19: 408-412).

Figure 1. House front of the gens Tokoais (two Killer-Whales painted face to face on the upper part of the house front).

Figure 2 (p. 410). House front of the gens Tlak'aumoot, representing the Moon.

The crest is represented in paintings on the house front and on dancing implements. The gens Tokoais has a Killer-Whale painted on the house front (Figure 1). The tradition says that the ancestor of this gens, when hunting in the mountains one day, found a house on which a Killer was painted. The chief who lived in the house invited him to enter and presented him with a crest for himself and for his descendants. The crest consists of the Killer-Whale, Eagle, swan, and heron (p. 411).

The gens Spatsatl have breakers painted on the house front . . . (p. 412).

The gens Salostimot of the TaliomH use the raven, robin, eagle, whale, the bird Tehtlala, and Satsaots, the flood-tide. They have sun, moon, and stars painted on the house front and the nusqemta suspended from the beams of the roof (p. 412).

The highest gens of Nutlaih has the name Smooen (the north wind). They have the mountain Suwakh, surmounted by a mackerel sky, and with clouds on its sides, painted on the house front (Figure 3). Another object belonging to his crest represents waves (p. 412).

#### MONUMENTAL CARVINGS

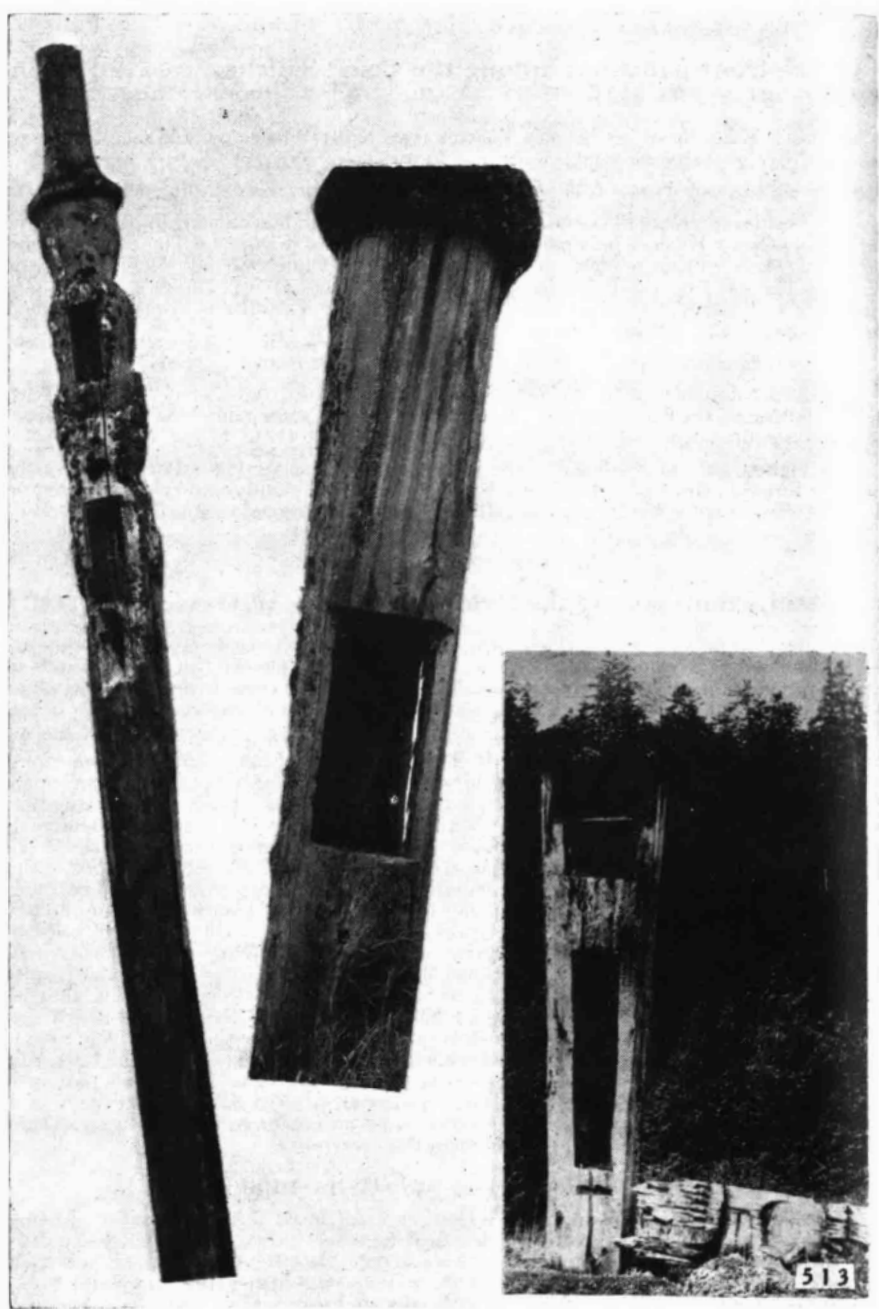
**Classification, among the Haidas**, by George M. Dawson (30: 148B).

The peculiar carved pillars which have been generally referred to as carved posts are broadly divided into two classes, known as *kerhen* and *rhat*. One of the former stands in front of every house, and through the base, in most instances, there is the oval hole which serves as a door. The latter (*rhat*) are posts erected in memory of the dead.

The *kerhen* are generally from 30 to 50 feet in height, with a width of 3 feet or more at the base, and tapering slightly upwards. They are hollowed behind in the manner of a trough, to make them light enough to be set and maintained in place without much difficulty. These posts are generally covered with grotesque figures, closely grouped together, from base to summit. They include the totem of the owner, and a striking similarity is often apparent between the posts of a single village. Comparatively little variation from the general type is allowed in the *kerhen*, whereas in those posts erected in memory of the dead, and all I believe called *rhat*, much greater diversity of design obtains. These posts are generally in the villages, standing on the narrow border of land between the houses and the beach, but in no determinate relation to the buildings. A common form consists of a stout, plain, upright post, round in section, and generally tapering slightly downwards, with one side of the top flattened and a broad signboard-like square of hewn cedar planks affixed to it. This may be painted, decorated with some raised design, or to it may be affixed one of the much prized 'coppers' which has belonged to the deceased. In other cases the upright post is carved more or less elaborately. Another form consists of a round, upright post with a carved eagle at the summit. Still others, carved only at the base, run up into a long round post with incised rings at regular intervals. Two round posts are occasionally placed close together, with a large horizontal painted slab between them, or a massive beam, which appears in some instances to be excavated to hold the body. These memorial posts are generally less in height than the door posts.

**Types of carved poles**, according to J. R. Swanton (97: 122).

It is said that formerly planks for the front and rear walls of houses, instead of being run in slots, were laid upon the ground, fastened together with cedar withes, and raised into their places in one piece. There were no house poles; but the front of the house itself was carved, or a heavy carved plank or block of wood was fastened to the house front. In course of time this plank was increased in height, and evolved into the house pole that formed until recently a distinctive feature of all the principal houses in this region. Although in some instances the house fronts, the projecting ends of the roof-timbers, and the corner posts were carved even after the introduction of the high house pole or "totem post,"



Graves and graveyard posts of the Tsimshians and Haidas

the decorations of this pole were always most significant and were considered of great importance. In houses of wealthy chiefs the inside house posts and the screens at the rear were also carved.

Speaking generally, there were two varieties of house poles — the ones that merely bore crests and those that illustrated some story.

In the former class, crests belonging to the family of the house-owner and to that of his wife were usually placed together upon the pole, although occasionally all the crests were taken from one family; but there was no fixed rule for the order in which these should be arranged.

**Totem poles and mortuary columns**, a general definition by A. P. Niblack (78: 324, 327; Plate LV).

Amongst the Tlingit the phratry totem often surmounts the column with the clan and other totem represented below it. None but the wealthy can afford to erect these carved columns. (Page 324)

*Mortuary columns.* A broad distinction is drawn here between columns that in themselves form a mode of sepulture and those which are commemorative and erected at some distance from the site of the grave in which the body is interred.

These are erected usually near the corner of the house at one side and consist, as a rule, of a short stout post or column surmounted by a carved representation of the crest or totem of the deceased. The erection of these columns takes place at the ceremony known as the "glorification or elevation of the dead." After the body has been entombed, it is incumbent on the heir of the deceased, if the latter has been a person of any importance, to make a feast and erect one of these commemorative columns. In the southern part of the Queen Charlotte Islands a very common form of this column is a short stout post with a signboard-like square formed of split planks carved on the outer face. This kind is rare to the north, and not seen at all amongst the Kaigani, so far as known to the writer.

**Types of carved columns**, according to W. A. Newcombe (76: C8, C10; 9 plates).

Totem poles have been grouped into the following classes: "The Memorial," a crest pole erected by the heirs of the deceased; the chief type of the Tsimshian. Among the Haida, though they had many of this kind, the "house frontal" poles were found in greater numbers; the carvings either denoting crests or characters in stories. A hole about 2 by 3 feet was often made at the base which served as the only entrance to the house. A Haida custom was also the use of "mortuary poles;" these were solid logs sometimes over 4 feet in diameter, about 30 feet high. At the top, in front, a section was removed to receive the coffin. Wide horizontal boards, often carved, were fastened over this opening. The carvings represented the crests of the deceased. A fourth group, the carved inside house supports; these, together with various forms of grave figures (often called totem poles), were formerly used over a much greater area than the memorial and house frontal poles.

The inside-house poles were found in most of the Coast villages from Victoria, B.C., to Lynn Canal, Alaska. In the north many were elaborately carved with the crests of the owner or occasionally illustrated legends. Among the Kwakiutl they were heraldic, referring to the traditions of the house-owner; those of the Salish and Nootkan, if carved at all, represented an event that had happened to the owner.

The grave figures have been noted from Washington State to the Yukon, those used by the Interior Salish and Déné as well as the Coast Salish generally taking a human form; though among the northern coast tribes large carvings of animals or birds served the same purpose.

**Kaigani mortuary columns** at Kasaan, Prince of Wales Island, described by A. P. Niblack (78: Plate LXIV, figure 341).

With compartment boarded up. This contains the remains of the dead in a box, and represents a departure from cremation to inhumation, or aerial sepulture, in imitation of the former custom of thus depositing the cremated remains.

**Memorial poles among the Tlingits**, according to J. R. Swanton (119a: 374).

Some morning just at daylight, the chief who is about to erect the pole and give the feast, no matter how great a chief he is, passes along in front of the houses of the town, singing mourning songs for the dead. Then the people know what is wrong and feel badly for him. The memorial pole seems to bring every recollection of the dead back to him. Now is the time when the story of Raven is used.

Speeches made when the pole is erected (Pp. 374 . . . )

**Types of totem poles among the Tlingits**, as described by Livingston F. Jones (59: 176, 177).

Of these (poles) "there are four classes — the genealogical, historical (or commemorative), legendary, and memorial (or mortuary).

The genealogical pole is usually erected directly in front of its owner's house and, as the name indicates, gives the genealogy of the family. The wife's totem crowns the top, next the husband's, and so on down. Any native walking along and seeing the pole can tell at a glance the clan of the mother, which is the ruling one of the house. From this he will know whether or not he would be welcome to enter and stay there. If the ruling family of the house is not of his totem he passes on. As he reads on down the pole, he learns the totemic connections of the entire household.

The historic or commemorative pole, as the term implies, recounts some special and important event (as regarded by the owner of the pole) in the history of the particular family or the chieftain of the house. Usually such events as thrilling conflicts with man and beast, and courageous triumphs are chronicled on these monuments for the consideration of future generations.

The legendary pole, as the term indicates, relates some happy legend particularly prized by the clan of the one who has erected it. Not only are there legends, but songs, that are peculiar to each clan, and the members or votaries of one clan are not allowed to use the legends and songs of the others.

The memorial or mortuary pole, as may be inferred from the term, is a monument erected in the burial-ground to the memory of the dead. It usually carries the single image of the patron animal of the deceased. When cremation was the universal custom of disposing of the dead, cavities were made in the back of the mortuary tablets in which to deposit the ashes of the deceased.

As soon as burial became the general custom, the totem pole began to decline, and to-day there are practically no totem pole builders, and no new ones are erected.

Totem poles vary in height from a few feet to fifty or more. They are usually very costly, not because of their intrinsic, but for their sentimental value. In some instances they are valued at \$3,000 or \$4,000 each.

**Grave posts among the Haidas**, as described by George M. Dawson (30: 133 B).

After the body has been entombed it becomes necessary sooner or later, if the deceased has been a person of any importance in the tribe, to erect a carved post. The Indians again collect for this purpose, and are repaid by a distribution of property, made by the brother of the deceased or other relative to whom his estate has come down as next in order of descent. The post erected, though sometimes equally ponderous with the carved posts of the houses, is not generally so elaborate. In many cases it consists of a plain upright, tapering slightly toward the lower end or that inserted in the ground, whereas the upper bears a broad board, on which some design is carved or painted; or any 'coppers' formerly belonging to the dead man are attached.

**Types of totem poles**, as classified by Edward L. Keithahn (62: 41).

The six types in order of their probable development are: (1) The house pillar and false house pillar; (2) Mortuary pole; (3) Memorial pole; (4) Heraldic pole; (5) Potlatch pole; (6) Ridicule pole.

**Inside house posts among the Tlingit**, according to Edward L. Keithahn (62: 43).

Owing to the fact that the house pillars were indoors and therefore protected from the

elements, many of them of considerable age are still preserved and intact in the native villages.

At Klukwan, seat of the Chilkats, no less than four houses still retain their house posts, although the houses themselves are now of modern construction. In the "Whale House" are four handsome posts . . . in the native section, although this fact is not generally known, even to resident Sitkans. These pillars are beautifully inlaid with blue-green abalone shell, and in some cases decorated with human hair and ermine. At Wrangell, in the rehabilitated Chief Shakes community house are four house posts from an earlier house at Old Wrangell or Kotslitan. It was once considered a chiefly act to chop a figure from one of these priceless pillars, and one of the Wrangell pillars has been thus defaced. To the natives, a post thus disfigured increased in value, and the owner gained importance by his vandalism.

**Types of Haida totem poles**, according to Charlie Gladstone, an old carver of Skidegate (1939), a nephew of Charles Edensaw, the reputed Haida carver of the former generation.

The hollow-back totem poles were called *gyalken*; the round poles, *rhaat*.

**Names for totem poles among the Niskæ**, according to Dennis Woods, of Gitlarhdamks.

*Kan* is the name applied to a solid stick or pole, uncarved. *Ptsæn* is the word referring to a hollowed back or a carved pole.

**Tlingit name for totem pole**, according to L. Jones (59: 169).

The native name for totem is *Ko-tea*, meaning image or likeness.

#### **Comparisons between Tsimsyans and Haidas.**

The Haidas mixed their crests on their totem poles, but the Tsimsyans never did, using only their own crests.

(Informant H. Wallace, chief of the Gitsees tribe at Port Simpson; interpreter, J. Ryan, 1915.)

**Definition of totem pole** by the Rev. G. H. Raley (118: 5-7).

What is a totem-pole?

It is a tall pole, cut from a carefully selected cedar tree, and could be described as the text-book of a primitive people, who, having no written language of their own, communicated to posterity their crests, genealogy, history, and traditions by carving and painting, using representative symbols, chiefly animal designs, in doing so. To those who understand, these symbols relate to an age when all nature appealed to man in terms of human endeavour, and animals could think men's thoughts and perform men's actions and were referred to as human protectors. That is, man believed in dual personality.

Although there is a religious element in totemism, there is little or none to the totem pole, and it is a mistake to think of them as idols. So far as can be ascertained they were never worshipped as gods. They were revered because some of the crests were symbols of guardian spirits.

The totem pole would be unintelligible unless we connected it with the social system of which it is the manifestation. These tall monuments were not common to every man, but to the nobility and gentry, as it were, for the class barrier amongst the Indians was as distinct as in any land. They had their "Who's Who" and were a people of clans and crests. The hereditary chiefs were as dominating a power as any Scottish chieftains and had rights in their clans according to a well-defined order of precedence. Crests convey the idea of heraldry, and within limits, the totem pole is a heraldic column in that it records crests, genealogy, historic events, and legends.

There were two main types of totem poles. The house post, which proclaimed the social standing of the chief or head of the house, was attached to the front of the building, and an egg-shaped entrance, sufficiently large to admit one person at a time, was cut

through the foot of the pole. The other type was the memorial pole; this had a double significance. Its erection meant a memorial to a deceased chief when the days of mourning were ended. "The drying of tears," it was called. At the same time it was the public proclamation of his successor. The accession of the new chief was acclaimed by the assembled tribes. "The chief is dead. Long live the chief!"

**Definition of totem pole**, given by Mrs. Alfred Dudoward, a tribal leader at Port Simpson, in 1915.

The totems are monuments to the dead. A chief may have all his crests displayed on his pole. For a pole has no other purpose than just for the dead.

When a chief passes away, his successor will put up a monument or a totem pole in his memory.

**Stone pillar of Gitsalas** (*ptsænem-lawp*) at the Fortress (*ta'awdzep*) at the canyon of Skeena River, according to Herbert Wallace of Port Simpson, interpreted by William Beynon, in 1926.

Planted on the inner side of the rocky ridge forming the fortress, it still stands in memory of the extinct household of Neestsee or Tæhln, an Eagle family living here before the coming of the Gitrhawn or Salmon-Eater group of Eagles from the Haida country. These earlier Eagles possessed the same myth of migration from the north as Gitrhawn. According to the tradition, this monolithic pillar was brought over from farther up the river by the niece who was to succeed the chief. In this enterprise she was assisted by the people on both sides of the river at the canyon. This stone once was the object of a war between the Gitsalas and the Tsimshians who tried to acquire it. The pillar, still to be seen, is only the smaller part of the whole, as it is gradually sinking into the ground.

**Models of poles and posts among the Haidas**, reproducing actual heraldic carvings among the Haidas, as shown and explained by J. R. Swanton (97: 122-135).

A considerable number of examples given here throw much light on Haida totem poles and house posts. These models were carved for Dr. Swanton at his request to illustrate the subject which he was studying from 1900 to 1901 with native informants.

**Substitutes for totem poles**, marble and granite monuments, according to Mrs. Viola E. Garfield (50: 212).

There has been a tendency to substitute other forms of ostensible display for totem poles. Marble and granite stones have replaced them to some extent, particularly as monuments. There are three such monuments in Port Simpson, erected in the village on property occupied by the chiefs whom they were set up to honour. These are not always grave markers, though stone has largely replaced the wooden mortuary posts familiar in native burial grounds of the last century. Flagstaves have been raised as substitutes for totem poles and with similar ceremonies. A chief at Klemtu, Tsimshian village on Swindle Island, had a concrete pavement laid in front of his house, with appropriate ceremony, and announced that according to new customs totem poles were no longer being set up, and he was taking this means of showing his wealth and perpetuating the memory of himself and his ancestors.

In 1929, Alimlarhæ, sub-chief of the Ginarhangik tribe, and his two brothers gave a flagpole-raising ceremony, endeavouring to observe the old traditions of totem pole raising as far as possible without incurring the criticism of the Indian agent. The man for whom this pole was raised had been dead over twenty years when the brothers decided to honour his memory. Alimlarhæ, a nephew, had taken the name and position at his uncle's death, along with the land rights, including hunting, berry, and fishing grounds on Skeena River.

The hunting grounds were the exclusive property of Alimlarhæ. He opposed the ceremony on the grounds that totem poles are a relic of their past that they should forget, but was overruled by the other lineage members and his tribesmen.

The brothers prepared the pole themselves, and collected the food and gifts required for their potlatch, with the aid of lineage relatives and their tribesmen. Their father assisted them with a money contribution. When they were ready, the entire village was invited to lift the pole into place. A spokesman for Alimlarhæ told the guests of the crests and privileges of his lineage and announced that the pole was to be named the 'Pole of the Sand Place,' commemorating one of the exclusive crests of the chief's lineage which had appeared on totem poles belonging to his ancestors.

#### TOTEM CARVERS, TECHNIQUE



A Tlingit totem pole carver

**Types of carvers among the Kitka'ata Tsimshyans** of the sea-coast south of Skeena River, according to H. L. Clifton, chief at Kitka'ata; interpreter, William Beynon, in 1939.

There were two divisions of carvers, first the Gitsontk (People-secluded), who carved nothing but *narhnorhs*, spirits, and worked in utter secrecy; second, the ordinary carvers, who carved crests.

I. The Gitsontk were specially trained for their secret calling. If any outsider unexpectedly came upon them while they were at work, the only outcome was death for the intruder. The Gitsontk also had charge of manipulating the spirit when it was brought out in a public ceremony. No mistake could be tolerated, and the penalty for any lapse was the same.

Occasionally the Gitsontk were engaged by a foreign tribe. For instance, a reputed secret carver of Alaska might be hired by the Bella-Bellas to