

# ABSTRACT

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The aim of the study is to lend ethnological importance to a collection of material culture, by revealing the relationship of Bella Coola ceremonialism and art with other aspects of society, and offering an analytical summary of Bella Coola art style. The project centred around the collection of Bella Coola ceremonial art held by the National Museum of Canada, with library research, collections in other museums, and field work contributing data.

Following background material about traditional social organization, mythology and ceremonialism, the nature and meaning of Bella Coola "art" and the role of the "artist" are discussed. Sketches of the roles of several mythological characters are offered, with analysis of the components evident in masks of each character. Common characteristics of the style are summarized, and compared with Northwest Coast style. Contemporary ceremonialism and art are described and analysed. Finally, the Bella Coola are related to other primitive groups, concerning acculturation and subsequent loss of traditional heritage.

BELLA COOLA CEREMONY AND ART

by

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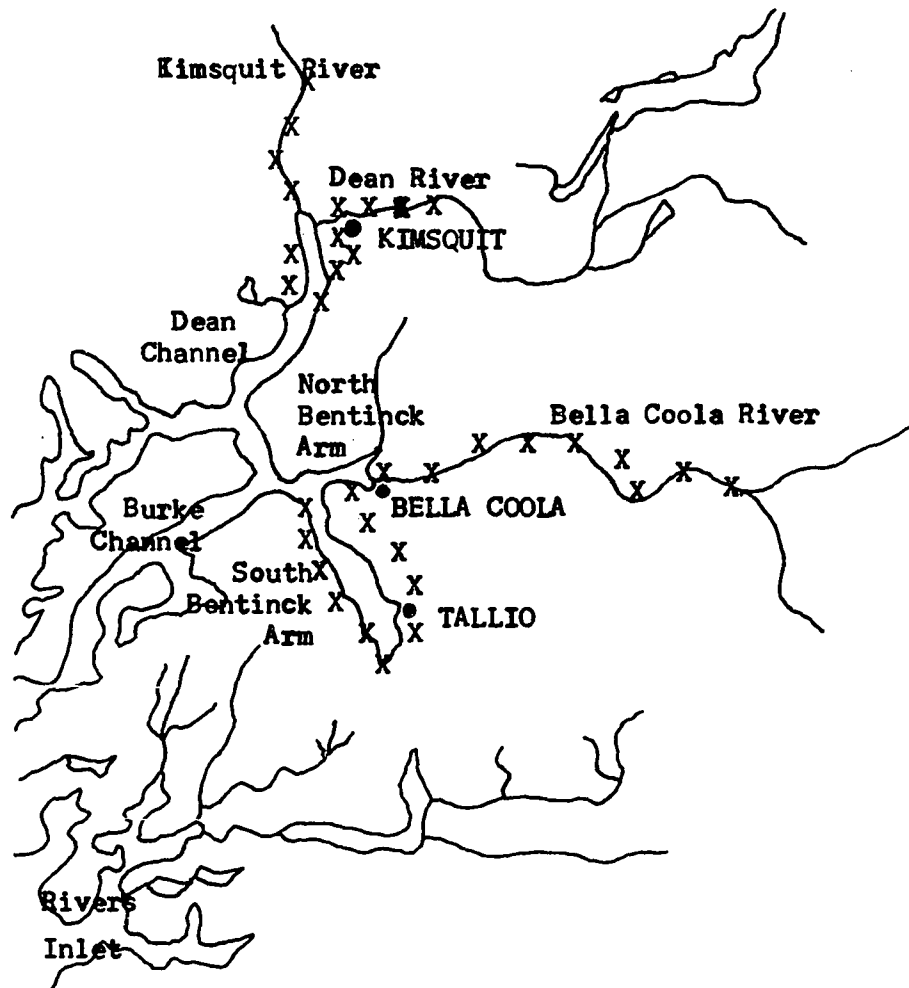
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Figure I



xxx - Area once occupied by Bella Coola Indians.

(Sketch Map adapted after that in McIlwraith, 1948, Volume I, The Bella Coola Indians)

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## INTRODUCTION

### The Study of Material Culture

In their field studies of primitive groups, anthropologists have filled museums with collections of tools and implements, ritual equipment and ceremonial paraphernalia from all over the world. Only recently has concern been directed towards the role of these collections of material culture in anthropology and their significance in relation to ethnology. Surely the masses of objects in museums - the products of so many cultures - should be regarded as more than mere collections of curios!

Material culture provides another important perspective from which to view a society. The problem lies in delineating the methodology which will allow the employment of that perspective.

The aim is to reveal the significance of material objects in relation to other aspects of society. Unfortunately, the information pertaining to museum collections is often scanty. In such cases fieldwork is necessary where possible to supplement existing records.

In the study of ceremonial art, socio-cultural analysis necessarily must precede stylistic analysis, to ascertain the relevant components that result in an object having a particular meaning and significance in society. In this way, stylistic studies can become relevant



to anthropology and contribute to the important integration of material culture with ethnology.

### The Research Project

This project centres around the collection of Bella Coola ceremonial art held by the National Museum of Canada. The bulk of the material was collected by Harlan I. Smith who accompanied T. F. McIlwraith on a field trip to Bella Coola in 1922. As is the case with many collections of Northwest Coast material culture, and particularly that of the Bella Coola, only somewhat sparse and random notations of the collectors accompanied the artifacts. There was little information to interrelate the items and place them into their social and cultural contexts. Consequently, the collection was of little ethnological significance.

The Bella Coola are a small Northwest Coast Indian tribe whose material culture has either been ignored as inferior or else grouped with that of their neighbors, the Kwakiutl. While there are many similarities between the carving and painting of the Bella Coola and those of the Kwakiutl, and much evidence of diffusion, Bella Coola nevertheless is identifiable as a distinct culture - one that has borrowed, yet has uniquely interpreted what it borrowed. It seems, therefore, both meaningful and important to study and seek to describe the nature and significance of Bella Coola ceremonialism and art, and to

record here an analytical summary of the art style that is recognizable as distinctly Bella Coola.

### Research Methods and Procedure

With the support of the Wenner-Gren Anthropological Research Foundation, I spent three months surveying the literature pertaining to Northwest Coast art and the Bella Coola. I then travelled to Bella Coola and lived for two months in that community with members of the tribe. Using photographs of the collection of Bella Coola material in the National Museum, I interviewed informants and made inquiries about traditional art and ceremonial life. I found that traditional ceremonialism was a part of a distant past; that only a few aged informants were able to remember significant details of ceremonies they had witnessed around the turn of the century. However, the field trip yielded a considerable amount of information pertaining to specific artifacts, which can be added to the documentation in the museum. I think that the general information that I obtained from my few good informants, while certainly not as extensive as it would have been following a field trip to Bella Coola forty years ago, is nonetheless vital to understanding some general aspects of Bella Coola ceremony and art. Discussions with informants impressed on me the importance of the total context in a ritual (i.e. the song, the rhythm, the dance, and all aspects of the costume worn by the dancer). Recognition of such integrated

complexes is the key to understanding Bella Coola ceremonialism, and the concept casts great doubt upon analyses which isolate for study one mask, one carving. My conclusions concerning the traditional meaning and significance of the art products were derived from an analysis of existing literature on the Bella Coola and from my field data.

In Bella Coola I was present one evening during the performance of a number of songs and dances. The information I collected about those performances served as the basis for comments on contemporary ceremonialism. Many of the masks used were of recent manufacture, and analysis of the photographs of those specimens provided information about contemporary Bella Coola art, facilitating an interesting comparison with older Bella Coola objects.

After returning from the field I toured the British Columbia Provincial Museum, the American Museum of Natural History, and the Museum of the American Indian and photographed their Bella Coola specimens. An analysis of the objects in these museums is presented in the portion of the thesis dealing with Bella Coola traditional art. Again the value of field work is apparent. In surveying collections of Bella Coola masks existing in the museums, two general types seem obvious - a painted type with a convex profile, i.e. forehead protruding quite markedly, nose and mouth extending out even further, and chin sloping sharply back, and a crudely executed, more sharp-featured and relatively slightly painted type with a concave profile, i.e. forehead and chin the most prominent features, curving sharply into eyes, nose and mouth

that are relatively recessed. Comments from informants and analysis of the literature indicate that these distinctive forms relate to two distinctive types of ritual performance - a fact which I suspected but could only confirm through conversations with informants.

The stylistic analysis of Bella Coola art is essentially concentrated on the sculptural and painting technique employed in masks, simply because masks comprise the greatest portion of museum collections. The framework is a relatively simple one - a process of examining each item and recording details of features, design elements, etc. as well as the relationships evident between these elements.

Literature on the Bella Coola is limited, but good. Boas provided excellent accounts of mythology and some ceremonial practices; McIlwraith wrote a careful and amazingly complete ethnography of the tribe. As mentioned above, in addition to information collected during interviews with informants, photographic records (and a few tapes) are supplementary data.

Techniques used in the field were those of informal interviewing and participant observation. Tape-recording and photography were also utilized.

#### Contents Following

Part I of the study provides a model of the relationship between traditional social organization, mythology, and ceremonialism. The relationship is documented with details of traditional Bella Coola

society, which provide a background sketch of aspects of the Bella Coola way of life.

In Part II, the ceremonial year of the Bella Coola is outlined, with description of potlatch, sisak and kusiut rites. Much of this information is drawn from the works of T. F. McIlwraith and Boas.

Part III comprises a discussion of the general nature of Bella Coola "art", the meaning and significance of the products, and the role of the "artist".

Part IV offers sketches of the traditional roles of a number of mythological characters, followed by an analysis of the components evident in the masks representing those characters. Common characteristics of Bella Coola art are summarized and the relationship of Bella Coola art to Northwest Coast style is discussed.

In Part V a contemporary ceremonial program is described and analyzed in comparison with traditional rites. The nature and role of contemporary ceremonialism are discussed. More recent art products are examined and comments offered on contemporary artistic activities.

In conclusion, comments are offered on the relationship of the Bella Coola to other primitive groups, concerning acculturation and subsequent loss of traditional heritage. The difficulties in conducting a study such as this one are outlined, and the importance of reliable ethnography from earlier periods noted in Appendix I.

PART I

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION, MYTHOLOGY AND CEREMONIALISM

The relationship between social organization, mythology, and ceremonialism in traditional Bella Coola society was an important one. So important that, while this is a study of Bella Coola ceremony and art, it would be both difficult and undesirable to isolate completely the ceremonial aspect of the triumvirate. Part I contains a discussion of the relationship between these three major aspects of traditional life.

The problem of the role of mythology in society has been a popular one in anthropology. Of the numerous approaches to this problem, the functional one seems to be most relevant in the case of Bella Coola mythology. This approach is outlined most lucidly by Malinowski in his essay "Myth in Primitive Psychology":

Myth fulfills in primitive culture an indispensable function; it expresses, enhances, and codifies belief; it safeguards and enforces morality; it vouches for the efficiency of ritual and contains practical rules for the guidance of man. Myth is thus a vital ingredient of human civilization; it is not an intellectual explanation or an artistic imagery, but a pragmatic charter of primitive faith and moral wisdom. (Malinowski, 1948, page 79)

As I will attempt to illustrate in detail later, the relationship between the social organization of the Bella Coola and their mythology was directly and mutually supportive. The particular form of the village-oriented social structure was believed derived from and patterned after the units described in origin myths. At the same time,

as McIlwraith suggests, it is not unlikely that over generations the mythology underwent modifications in order to serve as explanation for the existing social structure.

The relationship between Bella Coola mythology and ceremonialism was of a slightly different nature. The latter drew directly from mythology for the content of its rituals and for aspects of procedure. On the other hand, while the nature of mythology was not directly influenced by ceremonialism, rituals which acted out mythological events involving mythical characters served to make known details of mythology<sup>1</sup> and to reinforce universally-held beliefs.

Finally, since the primary ceremonial unit coincided with the basic social, economic, and political unit of Bella Coola society - the village group - ceremonial occasions which mobilized that unit and encouraged a sense of membership in that unit reinforced the existing social organization.

Information drawn from the work of McIlwraith and Boas, and from my own observation at Bella Coola, serve to explain further the relationship described above.

Today there are 577 registered Bella Coola Indians, with 518 living on the reserve at Bella Coola, B.C. Before the turn of the century, when the remaining members of the tribe congregated permanently<sup>2</sup> at the site of the current settlement, mere handfuls of survivors were scattered in three villages located on the North and South Bentinck Arms, and Dean Channel. Kimsquit was the name of the village at the

end of Dean Channel; the settlement on South Bentinck Arm was called Tallio. Bella Coola is situated at the head of North Bentinck Arm. Prior to the epidemics that ravaged the Bella Coola in the latter half of the Nineteenth Century, reducing a population of thousands to a few hundred struggling to survive at Tallio, Kimsquit and Bella Coola, there were forty-five villages in Bella Coola country. (See Figure I.)

The forty-five village groups are usually designated as a tribe but the tribe was primarily a linguistic unit, although the groups scattered along the North and South Bentinck Arms and Dean Channel areas also shared similar mythological beliefs and ceremonial patterns. The "tribe" never functioned politically, socially or economically as a unified group.

The important social, political and economic unit amongst the Bella Coola was the village community. The village group cooperated in preparations for the ceremonial season, and potlatches and ritual performances were presented before an audience comprised mainly of members of other villages. Inter-village disputes were common and, although they were not as prestigious as were those taken from other tribes, slaves were often captured from enemy Bella Coola villages. Economically important hunting and gathering territories, as will be discussed later, were owned and utilized by the village units.

The village community was usually made up of one, or possibly more than one, ancestral family, as well as slaves and visitors from other tribes and villages. These ancestral families, which formed



unilateral groupings with emphasis on patrilineal descent, <sup>3</sup> had individual myths which explained their origins.

Originally Atquntam, the chief deity residing in the "land above", Nusmat·a, sent down to earth the first Bella Coola settlers, equipping them with all the necessities for daily life. There were forty-five groups of these first settlers, and each formed a village community.

The ancestral family (minimnts) of more recent generations was composed of "those individuals who believe themselves to be descended from one of the first groups that populated the earth". (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. I, p. 119) Ties through time were maintained with original ancestors primarily through the system of naming. It was believed that when the first settlers came to earth, they brought with them certain names from Nusmat·a. Once on the earth, new names were created and conferred on descendants in conjunction with important and impressive events. The inheritance and validation of both the names brought from Nusmat·a and those created on earth by the first people and their descendants was an important aspect of Bella Coola social life.

Early in life each child was given at least one name derived from the myth telling the story of the arrival of the group of first settlers from which he was believed to be descended. The designation was the obvious mark of the child's position in the ancestral family. Without it he would be without status in the community. His importance depended largely on the value of goods distributed by relatives when

the name was bestowed. Since the bestowal as well as the receipt of names was a matter of pride, a child often received several from the ancestral family of which he was a member.<sup>4</sup>

Although the receipt and validation of an ancestral name gave the recipient a status in the community, this remained relatively divorced from the "social class" distinctions that pervaded the villages. These classes, consisting of "commoner", and "chief" statuses, were based on the acquisition of goods and the subsequent public display and distribution of the wealth (acquisition). Slaves comprised another category in the society but benefitted from no mechanisms whereby to obtain upward mobility in the social system. A slave's status was permanent. Once named, the individual was still a "commoner". The possibility of rising to the status of "chief" depended on an individual's ability to give potlatches. Only after he had exhibited his superiority<sup>5</sup> through these public displays would his name be elevated from a "commoner" to a "chief" name. The attainment of the status of "chief" resulted in little increase in authority or privileges in everyday life. However, great prestige and public respect were associated with chieftainship and special deference was paid to "chiefs" on ceremonial occasions.

The ancestral family was a loosely organized unit held together primarily by a belief in common ancestry; there was, however, no accepted head of the family. Since the ancestral family unit coincided with the village settlement, the leading chief of the village was accordingly regarded as an important person in the ancestral family. The chief lacked judicial authority and his position of importance might

be overridden by other chiefs surpassing him in potlatching and ultimate social prestige.

The primary prerogative related to an ancestral name was the knowledge of the myth in which it was embodied. Other privileges were sometimes included, however, such as the right to display a particular totem-pole design or the right to perform a particular dance or ceremony.

Mythology also provided sacred sanctions to the possession of land, thereby affecting the economic system and maintaining economic order. The economy of the Bella Coola was based on hunting and gathering, which relied on the availability of game, roots and berries, fish and molluscs. Northwest Coast environment is essentially a bountiful one, and it was the easily obtained abundance of food that enabled the Northwest Coast tribes to develop a sophisticated social and ceremonial life. However, as was noted earlier, the primary economic unit was the village and with so many villages occurring in a relatively small area, economic and political chaos would have reigned if there had not been some charter by which desirable hunting and gathering territories and fishing locales were apportioned. It was believed that when the groups of first settlers descended to the original village sites, they appropriated hunting and collecting grounds, as well as desirable fishing spots along the rivers and by the sea. It was the common belief in these mythical declarations of ownership that determined a rightful claim to the same economically productive locations amongst more recent generations.

Hunting and gathering areas were not the property of individuals but belonged to the group of first settlers of each village and thereby became the property of their offspring, the ancestral family. When a man was planning to give a potlatch he was sometimes given, temporarily, exclusive rights to the hunting ground, but otherwise the territory was collectively owned and utilized. Ancestral family claims were recognized universally and reduced inter-village disputes over such territories to a minimum.

Conversely, fishing spots were not collectively owned, but were originally claimed by individuals. Consequently, they became the property of those who carried the names of the original owners of the particular spots. However, this individual right to choice fishing locales was not rigidly enforced. "Although individual ownership is thus recognized with regard to sections of salmon-weirs and suitable places for olachen-nets, the owner is bound to share his haul. When he catches a large number of fish, anyone, whether related to him or not, can demand some. He cannot refuse, since to do so would brand him as selfish." (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. I, p. 136)

As unorganized and intangible as it may have been, the ancestral family "is a very real unit to the Bella Coola, and pervades their life. Each individual knows those to whom he is related. In many cases the exact kinship is lost, but it is remembered that a man from such-and-such a village married a woman from another village and it is proved from the use by their descendants of names from the same origin myth ....

A man without ancestry, without sol'olam, is a miserable creature; he has no home in this world, or, theoretically, in the world to come." (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. I, p. 138)

Mythology, and the belief in characters described in those myths, served as the moral and legal code under which the Bella Coola lived. The threat of punishments meted out by mythical characters prevented many misdemeanors. And punishments exacted on "criminals" were prescribed and sanctified by mythology. One contemporary informant, Andy Schooner Sr., commenting on the delinquency rampant in Bella Coola today explained that it had not always been so. "The village was good then, because they had law. No kids can run around the village at night, because Bahootla would chase them home. That's the law."

In summary, then, the important social, political, and economic unit amongst the Bella Coola was the village community. The core of this village community was comprised of members of usually only one ancestral family, or those believed descended from the same group of original settlers. Members of the ancestral family were held together by the belief in common ancestry, a system of naming, and the system of allotment of economically important properties. The answers to questions of moral, social and economic organization could be found in the commonly recognized mythology of the Bella Coola.

The marked relationship between social reality and mythology was expressed by McIlwraith in this way:

The elaboration of Bella Coola mythology may be due in part to their desire to explain their social organization; but without question these myths, now accepted as facts, have had a great influence on the lives of the people. In fact, the social structure of the tribe has tended to conform to the myths. (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. I, p. 118)

The relationship between the mythology and the ceremonial life of the Bella Coola, as suggested earlier, was of a slightly different nature than that between the social organization of the Bella Coola and their mythology. At any ceremony "the host is really displaying the glories of his ancestors before the eyes of guests present." (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. I, p. 163)

It is not surprising to find that the key events depicted in Bella Coola ceremonial rites were drawn from mythology. At potlatches the purpose was to publicly display part of the donor's ancestral myth, thereby reinforcing both his name and myth. At the same time, of course, this elevated the social position of the donor, and moved him further along the path to chieftainship.

Rituals of the sisak society, one of the two "secret societies" of the Bella Coola, which was closely related to the concept of chieftainship, also revealed mythological content. The sisak dancer, who performed at potlatches and funerals, and occasionally at less important gatherings, displayed the dance and song, and any other prerogative to which he was entitled, thereby revealing both the nature and importance of the name which was validated in his favor. Like those discussed earlier, these names had mythical origins, and conse-

quently each sisak performance reinforced once again the close ties  
6  
between mythology and the sisak society.

Kusiut functions seem to have been based less on verbal accounts of past ancestral events, or mythology, and more on relationships with supernatural beings believed still to have resided in the "land above", Nusmat'a. Kusiut dances were believed to be duplications of events that occurred in Nusmat'a. Certain individuals, bearing particular kusiut names, had the power to ascend to Nusmat'a and witness the winter ceremonial dances that were in progress there. They then returned to earth, and in performing their kusiut dance or prerogative, they revealed to the audience what their supernatural counter-parts had done.

But it is not fair to consider mythical histories as unimportant in kusiut affairs. After all, mythology rests on a supernatural base - the original ancestors of the Bella Coola formerly resided in Nusmat'a, and many of the characters included in ancestral myths later returned to the "land above" and continued to be involved in supernatural life there.

Mythology and the supernatural not only supplied the content of Bella Coola ceremonial rites, but also influenced procedure. One of the more important aspects of procedure in Bella Coola ceremonies concerned the seating arrangement of the people present. Positions in the house were closely related to names, and like names, had to be duly

validated, or "made strong", with the distribution of goods. As with names, mythology supplied the answers to questions of appropriate seating.

McIlwraith summarized the relationship as follows:

In the beginning of time, when the first people were sent down to populate the earth, it is assumed that each who established a village, consisting of a single house, seated himself in the best spot within the dwelling, namely the central position behind the fire; his younger relatives ranged either beside him or sat in two rows, facing one another, on opposite sides of the central fire, parallel to the side walls of the house. When these first ancestors died, the name of each was passed on to some descendant. The Bella Coola feel that he who bears the name of the first settler in a village should have his ancestor's seat. (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. I, p. 167.)

To summarize briefly, mythology supplied content and prescribed aspects of procedure for Bella Coola ceremonial occasions.

Ceremonial practices conform well with our previous discussion of the important social unit amongst the Bella Coola. The primary ceremonial unit was the village community. Members of one ancestral family and village performed potlatches and dances for members of other villages. This spread the fame of an ancestral family and reinforced a sense of membership within that family amongst even non-performing members. Ceremonial village unity thus strengthened the existing social structure in Bella Coola society.

I have tried to show the close inter-relationship between the social organization, the mythology and the ceremonial practices of the Bella Coola. This inter-dependence and system of mutual influences should be kept closely in mind in studying any aspect of traditional Bella Coola life.



PART II

THE BELLA COOLA CEREMONIAL YEAR

The Bella Coola year can be divided temporally according to the general nature of activities carried out at different periods. Because they lived in the same lush environment enjoyed by other Northwest Coast Indian tribes, the economy of the Bella Coola was based on seasonal fishing. Thus in the summer months, men caught quantities of fish which women preserved to provide sustenance for the rest of the year. From the first olachen run in late March to the last profitable weeks of salmon fishing in September, the Bella Coola were mainly concerned with collecting food.

But once the fish were preserved and put into storage for future consumption, consideration turned to ceremonial activity. At that time the important men of each village met together at some secluded spot<sup>1</sup> to decide which individuals would be permitted to hold ceremonials, to increase the fame of their ancestors and to elevate their own social positions. With matters of subsistence no longer of prime concern, the Bella Coola embarked upon a season of ceremony and ritual, of secular entertainment and sacred performance. From early October till late February, ceremonialism of one sort or another pervaded the atmosphere of the Bella Coola village.

Hank King, one of my contemporary informants, described these seasonal activities:

In the spring the people are all together in one smoke house. The young go out to hunt goats. The women smoke fish. Some of the women pick berries. In June and July the women get wool off of the goats. They don't kill them, but catch them in nets of cedar bark. They comb out the hair with big combs, and then the men let them go. Most of the men go out fishing. In the fall they trade around the things that they have got. In the winter, when things are all stocked up, there is the feasting. The family chief names the boys what made his own mask. You have to make your own mask. Then in around February there is the final. They have made all their birds, whales, and things. And after they have played with it, they put it in the fire.

And he added, "Before he died, Captain Bob said that it would all change, and that there would be no more masks."

A definite temporal order was observed in the performance of ceremonies. Potlatches were mostly given in October, when food was abundant. Sisaok society rituals and memorial mortuary rites were performed during these potlatches. Early November was the beginning of the kusiut season, at which time members of this society planned their ceremonial events. Following the kusiut season, which ended usually in February, "play potlatches" were sometimes staged to serve as practise for children who had to learn the details of potlatching activity.

### The Potlatch

Since goods were distributed at each Bella Coola ceremony, each such occasion was a "potlatch" in terms of the common usage of the word. McIlwraith, however, chose to restrict the designation to those elaborate events at which aspects of the host's ancestral tradition

were displayed and reinforced by the distribution of gifts to an audience comprised of his fellow villagers and members of neighboring villages, as well as guests from other tribes.

As with so much of Bella Coola tradition, the origin of the potlatch (tłm) was traced back to the time of the arrival of the first people on earth.

By the splendour of his gifts each of the first people able to give a potlatch spread the knowledge of his name and fame to the towns whence his guests had assembled. Further, those who had received dances from Ałquntłm were able to demonstrate them. In course of time those who had first given potlatches died, but on taking their fathers' names, the sons, or other descendants, endeavoured to uphold the parental tradition by inviting guests from afar and giving them valuable presents. At such a ceremony the family history, or family myth, was recounted, so that the donor of a potlatch not only increased his own prestige, he incorporated therewith the traditions of his parent. (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. I, p. 183)

Certain requisites were necessary for giving a potlatch. One needed to possess an ancestral myth containing a name or names which the individual had validated in his favor by the distribution of goods to members of his own and of other villages. An occasion for the potlatch was required, the most common being a commemorative mortuary rite to celebrate the return of the dead. Great quantities of wealth had to be amassed for the potlatch; the prestige of the host relating directly to the value of gifts distributed. And to help insure the success of the event, supernatural assistance was sought by means of prayer and sexual abstinence.

A brief discussion of the types of rites carried out at the potlatch, with particular emphasis on those events in which material culture was integrally involved, may prove illuminating. The four days of the potlatch provided occasions for the following events.

1. The return of a dead ancestor to visit the living.

2

The basis for this ritual, which occurred on the evening of the second day of the potlatch, was the return of the deceased relative of the host to visit the living. Such a mortuary rite was staged only once, usually one year after the death of the relative. For this, masks representing one or more of the crests of the deceased were prepared, as well as possibly a number of "human face" masks to be used by ghosts. McIlwraith notes that for the funeral potlatch held for

3

Jessie King in 1922 "It was decided that the dead woman should return as a composite figure consisting of Eagle, Raven and Blackfish, three of her crests of which the masks were available." (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. I, p. 476) My contemporary informants repeatedly mentioned the post-mortuary rite as an impressive one, and told me how often a number of ancestors returned to visit. They described the way in which each one entered the host's house, made one circuit of the fire, and then left. One woman identified a number of masks in the National Museum collection as those of such visitors, or "ghosts", because they had only traces of black paint on the faces. A number of masks were documented as having been involved in the "King potlatch of 1922",

amongst which are the crests of the deceased described above, as well as four masks with essentially human features and similar facial painting in blue, with touches of white, red and black (See Plate 7, page 73.) Although they are not mentioned by McIlwraith, it is likely that these were the faces of "ghosts" that were involved in that ceremony.

The primary object behind the staging of this rite was not so much the enhancement of the status of the potlatch donor, as the desire to inspire esteem for the deceased relative and to assure that relative's well-being in his after-life.

2. The initiation of young people into the sisaok society.

In many family myths dealing with the first settlement of the earth there were, as well as the ancestral names that individuals received as children and sought<sup>4</sup> to elevate to social importance, a number of names designated as sisaok names. Each sisaok name carried with it the prerogative of performing a type of dance also called sisaok. "These names, like ancestral ones, are the potential property of members of the ancestral family, but can only be assumed when duly validated by presents." (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. I, p. 180)

Every individual who had received such a name felt related to the other Bella Coola who had obtained sisaok privileges; the group was known as the sisaok society. There was a close connection between this society and the village chiefs, probably due to the presence of both types of names in the same myths. Apparently for this reason the

sisak members were sometimes known as the society of chiefs. Bella Coola informants remember the sisak society as the group of greatest prestige in the community.

Membership traditionally followed a period of seclusion and a formal initiation procedure. Both men and women were eligible. It was possible to acquire more than one sisak name over the years, but the necessity of having wealth to validate the acquisition was a limiting factor. The performance of sisak dances occurred on different types of ceremonial occasions. Prior to the arrival of the white man, potlatches were rare and sisak members were often initiated at local gatherings. It was considered best, however, to have the bestowal of a name occur at a potlatch so that the fame of the initiate would be spread to foreign tribes. Often more than one individual was initiated into the society at a single potlatch.

Initiation of sisak novices began at a ceremonial gathering before the commencement of the potlatch. At that time, the names that were to be bestowed were announced, and then two songs were prepared for each novice. The novices were rushed into seclusion at the back of the host's house. Soon a whistle was heard at intervals, gradually drawing nearer until it sounded right outside the door. This signified the approach of a supernatural being. At that point a siki, an individual whose sisak name was accompanied by the power to communicate and deal directly with supernatural beings, rushed outside and returned, followed by a masked figure.

The form of the mask represented one of the novice's crests or one of the creatures with which his ancestors had come into contact. The mask was carved and worn by a member of the sisaok society. The figure made a circuit of the house, then left. The character, or tutwinam, while in the form that had been assumed by an ancestor during his descent to earth, was apparently not considered to be the actual forefather of the novice, but merely a representation of him. This aspect of initiation provided the novice with a mask, or two, if two figures had appeared. "He guards them jealously, though secretly, throughout his life and uses them only on rare ceremonial occasions. It is one of these masks which will be brought out if one of his family gives a dramatic representation of his return after death." (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. I, p. 202)

Following the appearance of tutwinam, the songs were practised, food was distributed to the guests by the host, and the secrets of the society were revealed to the new initiates, although they continued to remain in isolation.

The next event was the validation of the newly acquired names of the initiates. This occurred at a subsequent gathering, when goods were distributed once more by the host, who declared that to "give strength to the name ...." he would distribute a particular amount of wealth. The songs were practised once again; the guests feasted, then departed.

On the eveing of the third or sometimes the second day of the event, depending on the number of initiates, the new members of the society performed their sisaok dances. The tune of one initiate was beaten out and all the novices appeared. They danced with their left hands held behind their backs, a bird rattle held belly uppermost in the right hand. They moved counter-clockwise, with their heads moving downwards and from side to side with each jump. While women uttered droning cries, assistants blew eagle-down over the dancers.

The dancers wore uniform costumes comprised of a blanket, a collar of dyed and pounded cedar-bark with weasel skins attached, and a carved headdress. The headdress consisted of a circlet of grizzly bear claws surmounted by a small forehead mask, a head carved with a hooked nose or beak. Sea-lion whiskers rose above the head, and weasel skins hung down the back of the wearer.

Following the dancing, the initiates returned to their secluded quarters and removed their costumes. The supernatural power was dismissed, releasing the initiates from their concealment to a normal life.

Preceding the potlatch and on other ceremonial occasions, initiated sisaok and kusiut members often performed their songs and dances. However, it was believed that since the supernatural beings, signified by the whistles, were not present, the dances at these times were for entertainment, not of sacred significance.



3. The payment by the wife of the donor and her family of goods to "rebuy" her from her husband.

Another important event often planned to occur during the potlatch was the payment to the host of goods by his wife and her family as a ritual "rebuying" of her from her husband, in order to assure the status of their children as potential inheritors from both sides of the family. This occurred during the second day of the potlatch, and was called the payment of łtsamhniłmtłm.

At this time a prerogative was given to the host, perhaps "the use of a spoon carved, for example, with the shape of a beaver; or a carved box, or a totem-pole, with certain figures on it, or the right to use a painting of a grizzly bear on the wall of his house, or an ancestral name." (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. I, p. 191) Apparently, the latter was the most common gift. The husband subsequently used that name at potlatches as his most distinguished title, although he did not possess the ancestral myth in which the prerogative was incorporated.

In this fashion elements of family myths became scattered, and one of the considerations in choosing a wife is to select a woman able to bring back some missing part of the husband's myth. (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. I, p. 191)

The giving of any prerogative by the wife's family was validated by the public giving of gifts to the husband. He usually added these gifts to his own wealth amassed for the occasion, and distributed all of these goods to reinforce and raise his own social status later in the potlatch activities.

Talks with contemporary informants in Bella Coola suggest that, while no trace of the practise of repayment is evident today, the tradition remained in modified form in Bella Coola culture until recent times. One woman told me that at the time of her wedding about 35 years ago, everybody gave her clothes. "I was heaped up with clothes." And the next year her mother and father bought great bolts of cloth and cut it into two and three yard pieces and gave it to everybody in the village, even to the little ones. "Now they don't do that anymore. When someone is getting married we still all give them something, if only a cup. It's sort of like a shower. But they don't give anything back anymore."

4. The strengthening or establishment of seats.

As outlined in Part I, the acquiring of a seat was an important prerogative sought by socially ambitious Bella Coola. Although the seat often accompanied a name prerogative, its acquisition, as with all privileges, had to be validated. After a man had potlatched four times, he was entitled to have a wooden seat constructed as material evidence of high social status.

It was on the third day of the potlatch that gifts were distributed by the host in order to "strengthen" his seat. At the same time he might similarly strengthen the seats of a number of young men, or establish new seats for them. These might be, but were not necessarily, the new young sisaok initiates.

A privilege associated with potlatches was the erection of a totempole. This was a feature embodied in many, but not all ancestral myths. A pole was believed erected by the first people either following a design given directly to them by Atquntām, or one relating to an experience they encountered here on earth.

It is the privilege of a chief descended from that group to erect such a pole, under the same restrictions as apply to the portrayal and use of other features belonging, not to him individually, but to the ancestral family as a whole. Totem-poles are also frequently erected to depict incidents connected with the ancestors of a chief, even if there is no mention of one in his ancestral myth. In either case, the setting-up is a source of pride to the chief; especially as it emphasizes the importance of his ancestors, and its display must be duly validated. Theoretically this may be done at a gathering of less importance than a potlatch, but in practise it occurs at no other ceremony, since a chief naturally desires it to be seen by as many persons as possible. (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. I, p. 249)

Often details of the pole were not included in the myth. Common practise was to place at the top of the pole the bird or animal cloak in which the erector's first ancestor, traced patrilineally, had descended to earth. Beneath that, usually appeared the cloak of his mother's first ancestor, if it differed from that of the father. The rest of the figures were entirely a matter of choice. It is important to note, however, that the value of the poles rested neither on the artistic merits, nor on their significance in connection with ancestral myths, but on the amount of goods distributed to validate the display.

As well as the various forms of totem-poles (free-standing poles, entrance poles, inside corner posts, etc.), a chief might display his ancestral cloaks in painting on the front wall of his house.

The potlatch served to spread the fame of the host's name, as well as the myth in which it was incorporated, to distant villages, thereby increasing the renown of the host's ancestors, "a source of intense pride and gratification." (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. I, p. 185.) It also served to elevate the social position of the host within his own and neighboring communities. Finally, it was believed that successful potlatching "smoothed the way" for the potlatcher after death.

After death the individual was remembered in terms of his prowess at potlatching. Wooden replicas of coppers were placed at graves not as crests, but "saying how great a person was there - how he had potlatched." Similarly, canoe forms were sometimes mounted on poles over the grave of a chief, symbolic of the quantities of wealth that he had distributed at his potlatches.

Although the law forbidding the potlatch on the Northwest Coast resulted in almost total disintegration of the practise amongst the Bella Coola, knowledge of the potlatch remained alive. In the 1920s Samuel King, who disliked the surname which he had received from either white employers or from the church,<sup>7</sup> changed his name to Pootlass, the surname of the last "great chief" of the Bella Coola. While he didn't hold a potlatch in the traditional pattern, he donated \$1000 to the Native Brotherhood of British Columbia to validate the acquisition of his new name.

### The Kusiut Society

In addition to the sisak, another secret society was an integral part of Bella Coola ceremonial life. This was the kusiut society, membership in which depended on the validation of an ancestral kusiut name and of the prerogative to perform one of the many kusiut dances. As with other types of ancestral prerogatives, validation of a kusiut privilege was achieved through the distribution of goods, although not an amount comparable to the quantities of wealth required for a potlatch.

In fact, the emphasis and rewards of the society were somewhat different from potlatching and sisak practises. The prerogatives, according to McIlwraith, were not considered as valuable as ancestral rights. And because relatively poor men, and sometimes even slaves, were admitted into the society, important kusiut were not esteemed by the community in the same way as were the donors of many potlatches. ".... membership in the society brings limited ceremonial and semi-religious advantage, not social prestige of a public nature." (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. II, p. 3)

Although the rites performed by the kusiut were dramatic performances, and members were aware of the deceptive techniques employed to delude the uninitiated, they believed "in the supernatural origin of their rites, and that their ancestors actually had the abilities which their descendants of today imitate. In time this undoubtedly

leads them to believe in the powers which they claim." (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. II, p. 22) Kusiut prerogatives and practises were believed either to have been brought down by the first people or to have resulted from an experience of a descendant with a supernatural being on earth.

Each member of the society possessed a kusiut name, which he had probably been given by a relative. He also had a supernatural patron from which he received the power necessary to perform and which was described, in mystical terms for the uninitiated, in the words of his song.

If the supernatural associate performs any type of dance at the gathering above, so can his protege perform on this earth, otherwise his power is limited to singing of the being. If an individual inherits prerogatives with the same patron from two different relatives, he can merge these to give a composite dance, with consequent additional power. (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. II, p. 21)

Finally each member had a "repository", which was the particular spot on earth where his power was located. The power was deposited there from the land above and was tended by a supernatural woman, "Ano<sup>o</sup> likwot-s<sup>h</sup>ix, and sometimes by her husband. Her function was to guard the names and to keep in touch with the supernatural patrons. Each kusiut name had a different repository, and "Ano<sup>o</sup> likwots<sup>h</sup>ix was believed present at each one. She also appeared at every kusiut dance and, in a high-pitched voice, explained to the uninitiated the significance of the performing figures.

"Ano<sup>o</sup>likwotsix's duties were carried out in the Bella Coola communities by a number of marshals who guarded the kusiut knowledge with great care. Each village had four or five such individuals, who watched for any errors or signs that uninitiated had stumbled upon secret information. Negligent kusiut were punished, sometimes with death, and non-members who were for some reason suspicious of kusiut secrets were hastily initiated into the ranks of the society.

#### The Kusiut Season

While preparations began four days after the September full-moon, the kusiut season did not officially begin until early November. Dancing continued from then until late February or March. The advent of the kusiut season imposed some restrictions on the behavior of the members; the presence of the supernatural was felt by all. Members were urged to behave with dignity; idleness and loitering were discouraged. Initiated were expected to reveal the gravity of kusiut rites in their appearance; quarrels between members were avoided.

During the ceremonial season the whole fabric of social life is altered; .... distinctions between rich and poor, slave and freeman, become of slight importance; all that really matters is whether a person is or is not a kusiut. Membership in the society seems to the uninitiated the most desirable thing in life, although their fears are always so strong that they never cease to dread actual admission. The feeling of class consciousness which exists in a somewhat mild form at other seasons of the year, gives place to a powerful sentiment of superiority on the part of members of the society over those who are not so fortunate. Even the respect normally shown to chiefs is submerged since they, too, are subject to the rule of the marshals. (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. II, p. 256)

Each kusiut dance was believed to be an imitation of a performance given by one of the supernatural beings in Nusmat·a, or possibly some other aspect of his activities which the member had the awesome ability to witness and imitate. To perform, it was believed that the kusiut dancer had to receive a yex, or call, from his patron above. "Moreover, not only is each patron a supernatural being, but each is guided by Atquntām in the performance of the kusiut rites in the land above, which indirectly increases the prestige of the protege." (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. II, p. 6)

Masks were worn by almost all dancers in a kusiut performance. Large masks were made of beechwood; smaller faces were carved from alder. In preparing a mask ".... each carpenter endeavours to make a striking effigy of the being portrayed. Ano°likwotsāix is present at every dance and has become so well standardized that she can always be recognized. This is true also for Thunder, Echo, the Haohao, the Laugher, the Hermaphrodite, and a few other supernatural beings, but so much variation occurs in others that even a kusiut of much experience cannot always tell what being is represented." (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. II, p. 27) Sometimes the designs painted on the face indicate the particular supernatural being intended.

According to McIlwraith, the employment of masks was successful in retaining the faith of the non-kusiut.



It seems clear that the uninitiated do not realize that the representations are produced by means of masks, the work of human hands; instead, they believe that the figures displayed are really those of supernatural patrons who have come to earth to assist their proteges. (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. II, p. 7)

As with the sisaok rituals, whistles signified the presence of supernatural beings at kusiut functions. The whistles used were not the large cone-shaped type used for sisaok events, but were small pieces of wood glued together.

In addition special dramatic props were sometimes used. Puppets were often involved in the kusiotgm dance series. Wooden representations of birds, animals or miniature human beings were employed in other dances.

When it had been decided that someone should be initiated into the kusiut society, either because relatives wished to endow a name or because it was suspected that he might prove a threat to the reputation of the society due to some knowledge he had acquired, the <sup>8</sup>kukusiut gathered and the marshals announced the identity of the neophyte, what his name should be, and who would be his patron. The neophyte was then escorted to the appropriate repository, or sometimes into the woods for the night, where he was told about much of the ritual of the society. Those who accompanied him did not forget "to emphasize the trust put upon him, and the fate which will befall him if he should communicate his knowledge." (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. II, p. 32)

When the neophyte was returned to the village, he declared that he had met with Äno<sup>9</sup>likwotsäix. Planks were arranged across a canoe, and members of the society performed their dances on the platform, grouped around him. After this, the whistles were heard and it was announced to all that strange powers had come to someone. Everyone gathered at the neophyte's house and witnessed a ritual performed by two sikis.<sup>10</sup> They alternatively produced and ritually injected rock crystals into the neophyte; which they then withdrew again and produced for the audience once more. The uninitiated were asked to leave at that point, after which a siki drew out the neophyte's spirit through a place in the back of the neck. When he inserted the spirit back again, he announced that he had altered it to become the spirit of a kusiut.

Whistles were heard once again and the origin of the sounds were revealed to the new initiate. The relative who was bestowing the privilege announced to the house the origin of the name conferred, the name of the supernatural patron and the locality of the repository.

Goods were distributed to the audience for each part of the initiate's costume, at which point he donned the appropriate article. He wore a blanket, anklets and a collar of dyed cedar-bark, and a headdress consisting of a circular round role of dyed cedar-bark covering a grass frame. Although he was then a member of the society, he was still regarded as a novice and could not participate in dances until the next kusiut season, one year later.

Each kusiut dance performance took place over four nights. The first night, ('tsixtɬlaix or 'tsixtɬmem) the call came to a particular dancer. Whistles were sometimes sounded, or there was some other indication of supernatural presence, which caused the dancer to utter a low call and begin to act in a peculiar manner. All uninitiated were removed from the house immediately, and were told that something unusual had come upon the dancer. The kukusiut gathered in the house to practise the appropriate song and sometimes the dancer practised his performance. Novices and those who had already performed that season moved into the dancer's house and remained there for the four days and nights.

The second day (nusiutɬlsap) the kukusiut gathered to prepare a second song. Wood was cut for masks. That evening the songs were practised once again and the task of making the required masks was allotted. The dancer or a relative gave gifts to every person asked to work.

The third day (gotɬm) the masks were carved. On either this day or the second day, a raised enclosure was built behind the fire to conceal the dancer. The kukusiut gathered in the evening to practise the songs once more before the uninitiated were called in. Amongst the Kimsquit group of Bella Coola, one or more of the masks were sometimes displayed on poles behind the fire. The songs of a number of kusiut were tapped out, one after another, and each member

danced his own privilege. The uninitiated were dismissed and, following a meal, the host dancer performed to one of his songs.

On the fourth and final day (ngbusam) the carpenters completed the masks, and arrangements were made who should wear them. That evening, the uninitiated watched the masked figures in their dramatic presentation. Then they were excluded once more, and the masks usually were burned. The kukusiut gathered outside the dancer's house; his song was sung once more to send the call back to the land above. "Frequently another kusiut now receives a call, so that the ngbusam of one dancer is likewise the tsixtmem of another." (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. II, p. 27)

There were so many different prerogatives and dramatic presentations conferred on kukusiut, it is impossible to describe them all.<sup>11</sup> A summary of details of some of the rituals will be given in Part IV in conjunction with an analysis of mask characters.

Although the society was not graded according to the performance of its members, some of the dances were considered more complex than the others. Among the series considered more difficult were the Cannibal, Scratcher, Breaker, Fungus and kusiutem dances. Usually a kusiut with one of these privileges performed only three or four times during his lifetime, while less complicated ones might have been presented more often.

In addition to the right to perform a certain dance, kusiut initiates sometimes received another prerogative which was unrelated

to their dance patrons. The privilege might be the right to use a material object; if so, it was prepared on the first night of the kusiut series. On the first and second nights the object, for example, a carved sun, would be displayed. The object was ritually captured and concealed, and later thrown back to Nusmat'a. The prerogative was not always material, for example, fog was one privilege. It was ritually captured, tossed to a number of individuals in the audience, and then withdrawn from them and returned to Nusmat'a.

McIlwraith described the participation in this aspect of kusiut ceremonialism.

The kukusiut enter whole-heartedly into the spirit of the affair, regarding it as a game in which they must acquit themselves creditably. Each recipient endeavours to excel his fellows in the realism of his performance .... The Bel-la Coola delight in acting, and this is an occasion on which they can indulge their tastes to the utmost, without fear of the disaster if an error should occur, such as hampers them in the presence of the uninitiated. Moreover, each strives to assist the performer, and these two reasons combine to make the whole a success. (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. II, p. 248)

These additional prerogatives were also used during interludes in the ceremonial season, between kusiut dance series. On such an occasion, called a "Restful Ceremony", the marshals had an opportunity to stimulate group interest and to encourage members to dance.

At the end of the kusiut season, the enclosures were destroyed and a short ritual served to remove the taboo from each house.

The importance of the kusiut society depended on the continued belief of the uninitiated in the supernatural powers of the members.

This in turn depended on the ability of the kukusiut to inspire awe, an endeavour which resulted in close cooperation and unity in the society. The common desire to carry out kusiut ceremonials effectively acted as a bond not only between the members within one village, but between those in neighboring villages as well.

It is difficult to speculate what percentage of the population were members of either the sisaok or kusiut society. The necessity for quantities of wealth to validate sisaok names probably limited the number of members of that society. McIlwraith notes that traditionally one did not become a member of the kusiut society until he was a mature adult; one of his informants suggested that grey hair was a prerequisite for membership! McIlwraith also notes that following the turn of the century the number of members in the two secret societies increased rapidly. When he was in Bella Coola in the 1920s almost everyone was a kusiut, even babies being initiated.

#### The "Play Potlatch" (nus<sup>u</sup>yk<sup>u</sup>mx)

Following the serious semi-religious rituals of the kusiut season, the Bella Coola ceremonial year ended during the month of February with a ceremony of less serious nature. This was the "play potlatch", or nus<sup>u</sup>yk<sup>u</sup>mx, during which young Bella Coola had the opportunity to become actively involved in potlatching activity. This served as practical example of how to conduct a potlatch; participants being instructed in the correct procedure by more aged Bella Coola.

Over the winter, models of canoes, boxes, and all types of objects distributed at "genuine" potlatches were built. The names which were validated or esteemed at these "practise potlatches" were drawn not from ancestral myths, but from commonly known stories. A song was prepared to go with the name. Young boys were trained as singers. Similarly, young men were chosen to serve as heralds.

The usual host or donor at the nus<sup>u</sup>kk<sup>u</sup>mx was the child of a chief, usually about 10-12 years of age. The necessity for food and presents made it practically impossible for any but the children of chiefs to experience this training.

These ceremonies account for many of the model objects that are included in museum collections today. Their possible involvement in nus<sup>u</sup>kk<sup>u</sup>mx should be remembered in addition to usual explanations of their origins as toys for children or as products of idle wittling.

### PART III

#### THE MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE OF TRADITIONAL BELLA COOLA CEREMONIAL ART

The material objects produced in Bella Coola society and involved in the ceremonial events described in Part II are categorized as "ceremonial art". This section contains a discussion of the nature of these artifacts, and attempts to reveal their socio-cultural significance. It is only through relating objects to their socio-cultural contexts that museum collections become comparatively and ethnologically meaningful.

"Ceremonial art" is a descriptive label used by "outsiders" to distinguish between the domestic tools and implements that were manufactured for daily use and those less utilitarian objects, usually decorated with carved and painted motifs, that were involved in the religious and ritual aspects of life. In a study of Bella Coola material culture the latter category includes masks, rattles, headdresses, blankets, and other parts of dance costumes, dramatic props such as curtains and puppets, as well as mortuary, totem and house frontal poles.

#### The Notion of "Art"

Although the ceremonial items are often elaborately carved and/or painted, and are much appreciated throughout the world for their



artistic merits, their existence as works of art is not their most important and relevant role in terms of Bella Coola culture. While a mask may have been admired for its fine craftsmanship, it was not displayed as we might display a fine painting or a piece of sculpture, to be admired at our leisure. Ritual accoutrements, depending on the aspect of ceremonial life with which they were associated, were either destroyed or carefully concealed following their use, or else were kept in storage boxes. Today when masks and other parts of the costumes used in the ceremonial dances are not in use as dramatic props, they are either stored in attics, or are left lying about to serve as children's toys.

Thus we must be careful to recognize that when we speak of the artistic qualities of a carved mask, we are not necessarily emphasizing attributes of prime importance to the Bella Coola. The art of the Bella Coola can best be described as the art of drama, and most of these objects, with perhaps the exception of the carved poles, took on their greatest significance and were most greatly appreciated when<sup>1</sup> they were functionally involved in dramatic performances.

It seems significant that the word "artist" is never used by the Bella Coola in discussing the process of manufacturing a mask or a pole. The craftsman is called a carver, or a carpenter - "They needed a mask .... And the carpenters tried and tried ...." Perhaps this reveals again the attitude towards the products as functional items, not

as "objets d'art". Skill and expertise are appreciated, yet they are not the ultimate consideration.

It seems that in the past carvers might have cast a critical eye upon their own work and on the work of others, and rated objects according to the fineness of their execution. But generally speaking, the majority of the population was not so discriminating. This is particularly evident amongst contemporary Bella Coola, who displayed for me and used in their dances both finely-made old pieces and obviously recent, not too successful copies. Yet an equal amount of pride of ownership was evident; Charley Snow treasured his fine old Hao Hao mask<sup>2</sup> no more than he did his relatively "poor" Thunder.

#### Who Might Have Been the "Artist"?

There is a growing trend in studies of Northwest Coast art to try to discover the work of prominent carvers and to trace the influence each had on the work of his contemporaries and successors. Such a study was inspired by the "Arts of the Raven" show of masterpieces<sup>3</sup> of Northwest Coast art. This show indicated not only that a large percentage of fine argillite carving apparently was a product of Charles Edensaw, but that his influence can be discovered in the style of other Haida carvers. Thus it seems important to try to determine who produced particular items, and to identify individual styles.

During my interviews with Bella Coola informants I continually asked them "Do you know who might have made this mask?", "Can you remember

who carved this headdress?" My inquiries were either ignored in impatience or confusion, or else prompted vague suggestions of the names of people who were known carvers living during the period from which the item probably dated. Finally one of my better informants explained, with some exasperation, that it was practically impossible for individuals in the audience viewing some ceremonial to know which carvers had produced particular objects that were being used.

She explained that on the last day, after the masks and other accoutrements had been used, various members of the tribe who had rendered services to the host in preparation for his ceremonial, were publicly acknowledged and paid for their efforts. "Whenever someone carved a mask, he was paid during the ceremonial. The speaker would give him some money and announce that 'he cut wood for this feast'. Since a number of carvers would have made masks for the ceremony, no one might know exactly which mask he had made."

She continued to explain that when someone had lent his crest to the host, or even one of his own masks for the ceremony, the same statement - "he cut wood for this feast" - was made. For this reason also, it was next to impossible to know for certain who carved each item. No wonder informants didn't like to suggest who were the individual carvers and what were their products. No one knows for sure!

It was difficult even to gather information about who were known carvers in the past, particularly since the quantity of objects produced during the lifetime of my informants was probably far less

than that which would have been prepared and used in past generations. However, some names of craftsmen were obtained and, while definite ascriptions are practically impossible, they probably manufactured some of the material found in museum collections today.

Those remembered as the oldest, and greatest, carvers were a Tallio man named Snuhietwa and a Bella Coola man named Captain Bob. The former was the grandfather of a contemporary carver, Charley Snow (aged approximately 40 years), and he was mentioned by several as one of the greatest craftsmen. He died early in the Twentieth Century, and was most likely productive during the latter half of the Nineteenth Century. Captain Bob, who was alive although elderly, in the 1920s when McIlwraith was in Bella Coola, had lost his eyesight in his later years. He probably carved as a contemporary of Snuhietwa.

The great-uncle of one of my informants, Mrs. Margaret Siwallace (aged 60 years), originated in Kimsquit. He was called King George, and carved around the turn of the century. Mrs. Siwallace told me that he had probably carved the head on her mother's gravehouse "because there weren't many around then that could carve." Her mother died in 1917.

Four men were still remembered who had been carvers in the 1920s when McIlwraith arrived. A Kwakwaka carver, Willie Johnson, apparently lived and worked in Bella Coola at that time. Similarly, Johnny Leslie was said to have done "a lot of carving around then."

The sons of Snuhietwa, Timothy and Dick Snow, also carved. In connection with the funeral potlatch for Jessie King in 1922, McIlwraith notes that "They agreed that Timothy Snow was the best carpenter available and that he should be commissioned to put them (the masks) in shape and arrange their use." (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. I, p. 476.) Hence, we know that the crest masks used for that event were probably repainted by Timothy Snow. Dick Snow, who died just two years ago, left all of his possessions to his son Charley Snow. I photographed many of his masks and some will be included in Part V in the discussion of contemporary Bella Coola art and ceremony.

Traditionally the right to become a carver was inherited, as were many rights and privileges in Bella Coola society, in association with the assumption and validation of an ancestral name. "Professional prerogatives rest on the belief that a man's skill as a .... woodworker, .... does not rest in his innate skill, but upon an inherited right which must be confirmed and validated by the distribution of presents." (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. I, p. 261)

In the old days, before the coming of the white men, carpenters were always respected as esteemed members of the community. Chiefs always cared for them, and they received abundant food at every ceremonial. None the less, they were not wealthy and only in recent years, since the Bella Coola have realized the value put upon good craftsmanship by the white men, has it become customary to give valuable presents to carpenters. (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. I, p. 269)

But, while the prerogative to be a carver ideally was associated with the rightful possession of an ancestral name, it appears that

this rule was not always strictly observed. An element of pragmatism seems to have been evident. One man told the story of "the poor man who carved. They needed a mask just like somebody's face, and the carpenters tried and tried but it wasn't right. Then somebody told about a poor man up the valley who wasn't supposed to carve but he was really good at making the face of somebody. So finally they went and got him and he carved the face. And after that he was allowed to carve."

#### The Meaning of the Objects

Bella Coola ceremonial art was similar to that of other Northwest Coast tribes in its over-all purpose - to display individuals' inherited prerogatives. In so doing, the items reminded spectators of the particular privilege, and enhanced or affirmed the social status of the individual. But unlike those of other Northwest Coast groups,<sup>4</sup> the figures and faces depicted on Bella Coola poles and masks were not the crests of clans cross-cutting the village organization of the entire tribe. Instead they were representations of the crests of particular ancestral families, units which, as was noted in Part I, coincided with the villages of the Bella Coola.

At the beginning of earthly time, when the Sun sent down the first human beings who became the original ancestors of all those on earth in more recent times, each ancestor descended to earth in the temporary assumed form, or "cloak", of a particular bird or animal. Each "cloak" became the crest of the ancestral family that descended from that original ancestor.

5       The bird and animal "cloaks" that became Bella Coola crests  
were:

raven	blackfish
bald eagle	merganser
grizzly bear	loon
black bear	<u>skamtsk</u>
wolf	<u>sisiutl</u>
whale	deer (possibly)

Sun and Nuł t̄nikta, the posts that stretched from the earth to the land above, down which some ancestors descended, also became Bella Coola crests. McIlwraith notes that the ancestors of more than one village were believed to have descended in the same form of "cloak", with the result that the number of crests does not equal the number of ancestral families.

Bella Coola crests were associated with creatures and events of a distant past, and were not related to the animals of the same species that lived in Bella Coola country in more recent times. "The Bella Coola have no totemic beliefs concerning their crests. There is not the slightest trace of respect towards the animals ..."  
(McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. I, p. 80)

The portrayal of a particular crest indicated "the ownership of an ancestral myth describing that particular bird or animal. A wealthy chief is proud to display his crest on a totem-pole, or as a painting on the front wall of his house. Anyone seeing such a design is impressed with the glories of the family history of the owner, to the latter's gratification." (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. I, p. 80)

As well as in house painting and on frontal poles and totem poles, the Bella Coola crests were displayed on mortuary poles. These consisted usually of a wooden post carved with the design of one or more of the crests of the deceased. The practise was to portray the crest inherited through the father of the deceased on the right side, the crest inherited through the mother on the left. These mortuary poles were raised by a relative of the deceased and served "to remind all beholders, especially foreign guests summoned to the memorial potlatch, of the ancestral myth of the deceased." (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. I, p. 462) Sometimes, instead of such a mortuary pole, a totem-pole that had been erected by the deceased during his lifetime was moved to the cemetery to serve as a memorial. Or instead of a representation of the crest being placed in the cemetery, "one is sometimes painted on broad boards and placed on some conspicuous promontory where all who pass by will see it, and think of the person commemorated." (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. I, p. 462)

Let us now move to a discussion of the meaning of masks, which comprise by far the largest portion of all museum collections.

As noted in Part II, there were two major aspects of the ceremonial life that flourished around the turn of the century. The kusiut society performed highly esoteric rituals and masked dances, the dramatic techniques of which were carefully concealed. The other aspect was the potlatch and sisook ceremonies, which related more



directly to ancestral names and symbols. Both types of performances drew on the uniform mythology of the Bella Coola for their characters and the stories on which they were based. The majority of masks depict characters appearing in the elaborate mythology.

As well as being representations of mythological characters in dance performances, masks were also utilized in the post-funeral ceremony described in Part II. After a relative died, one of his kinfolk might hold one of these "mortuary rites" during which the deceased and other deceased relatives would make brief circuits of the room as "ghosts". The figures were masked, and while these masks were not portrait replicas, they displayed more human features than did most other carved masks.

On the whole, Bella Coola masks were non-naturalistic. As noted above, they usually represented mythological characters. Even the masks used in the post-funeral ceremony were not naturalistic representations. One informant told me that masks used in such ceremonies were only roughly shaped and slightly painted. Others said that the series used at Jessie King's potlatch were "ghost" masks, who "danced a circle around the fire, visiting the living, and then left." Three of these masks are in the National Museum Collection, and while they resemble human faces, they are close to identical in features and painting, and are obviously not portraits. (See Plate 7, page 73.)

Portrait masks were used, however, in the kusiotfm series. (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. II, p. 128) Informants remembered and described the ceremonies during which the individual's head came right off when he was hung, and where the individual was immersed in water and supposedly drowned before the spectators. For events such as these, convincing portrait heads or masks were necessary, the production of which required special skill as a carver.

One informant recalled that "Captain Bob was the best at carving the exact face of somebody. You know the story where they hang a man? He had the mask above his head, and then they pretend to hang him, and the people watch the head come right off." Apparently such skill was rare and much appreciated by the Bella Coola. Referring to the story related earlier about the "poor man who carved", my informant didn't know the name of the carver, but seemed impressed by the fact that the man had been so especially skilled, so that he was "allowed to carve".

As it was virtually impossible for my Bella Coola informants to tell me who had carved a particular object, they also had difficulty telling me with any certainty exactly which characters were represented in many masks. This possibly results from three factors: failure of the informants memory, the freedom granted the carver in his depiction of mythical personages, and the fact that much of the mythology was not common knowledge, and hence, only a knowledgeable few would readily recognize certain characters.

The traditional carver was allowed considerable "artistic license" in his work. When an individual was preparing for a feast or ceremonial, he went to one, sometimes to many carvers, and commissioned the preparation of whatever masks, etc. he required. Masks were prepared from images in the carvers' minds and from the description offered by the individual who was commissioning the work. Andy Schooner explained to me that nobody really ever saw the mythical beings, but "they just thought about it and thought how the face should look in comparison to the other faces. That's why it takes a good carver to do it." The carver may have witnessed the use of the character in ceremonies hosted by others. While there were some restrictions, the creative imagination of the carver was left considerable room for expression. The ideal was to create a mask that displayed the features characteristic of the particular being, yet one that was in some way unique and more spectacular than any other that had appeared before. The result was a wide range of variation in masks - it seems that often only the carver knew for certain the identity of the mask.

As was suggested above, many details of mythology were not general knowledge. The details of many of the myths from which the sisook privileges were drawn were not known beyond the village whose members were descended from the same ancestor. And as described in Part II, kusiut events were never completely public. Only certain aspects of the rituals were attended by non-members, and there they

witnessed events with which they were totally unfamiliar. It was necessary for Ano<sup>o</sup>likwots#ix to explain who each character was and what was occurring.

In spite of this element of mystery surrounding the recognition of masks, each one had a definite identity. And often the features of a particular character were so distinctive and universally known that the mask could be identified as that character by almost every informant. Depending on these identifications by contemporary informants and on documentation concerning the meaning of the masks in the museum collections, it is possible to arrive at a list of characters the identity of which we can be fairly certain. These mythical characters, which correspond closely to the list of Bella Coola crests given earlier, are:

Thunder	Echo
Eagle	Eagle Incubus
Raven	<u>Hao Hao</u>
Sun	<u>Atgunt#m</u>
<u>Ano<sup>o</sup>likwots#ix</u>	Rainwater
Ghost	Killerwhale
Bear	

The distinctive features of these characters will be discussed in Part IV.

#### The Importance of Context

As suggested earlier, Bella Coola ritual equipment, which comprises the most representative surviving sample of their ceremonial

art, assumes its primary significance not as objets d'art, but as an integral part of ritual. The most important things for consideration are not merely a carved mask or rattle, but the part that the item plays within the integrated ritual complex in which it is involved. Each part of a costume contributes to the creation of a particular personage or character and that character is unmistakably linked with a song and a dance. The mechanical props and curtains involved in the performance of that dance, and the drums and rattles that create the correct rhythms for the performance are all integral parts of the dramatic complex. How meaningful then is it to isolate one mask and try to say something about it? It is certainly not very meaningful to do so in terms of Bella Coola culture. Even today this is apparent; when a man brings out a carved and painted mask, and shows it proudly, he says "I dance that". Some comments may be made, such as "this is a good mask", but on the whole little is said about the merits of the mask, while long descriptions of the dramatic movements of the masked dancer are readily offered.

The importance of context becomes evident in the identification of particular characters, a problem noted earlier in this section. This was obvious when one elderly woman informant explained to me that one mask which we were discussing might be a particular character, "the one who calls to the dancers", but she couldn't be sure because if it was, it had to have a carved staff with it. Similarly she thought that

another mask might be Carpenter, Musmusalanik, but couldn't say so definitely. Carpenter masks always appeared traditionally in quartets, and one in isolation was difficult to recognize. "... if it is the carpenter, then it is wrong - the people who sold it did wrong - because there should be four of them."

More abstractly, what is significant is not a single carved mask or one aspect of the costume of a dancer. It is the integration of a number of features and the gestalt of these aspects of drama that is recognized and remembered with pleasure and admiration by both audience and performer. Even the performer himself is but one component of the whole. He is the actor who responds to certain aspects, or stimuli - the rhythms produced by rattles and drums, the song - and who in turn activates others - the steps of the dance, the mask and other aspects of the costume he wears.

#### PART IV

##### TRADITIONAL BELLA COOLA ART

Studies of Northwest Coast material culture to date fall into one of two categories, neither of which constitutes an ethnologically satisfying approach. The first is that of catalogues of Northwest Coast collections, usually offering some comment on the history of each item. The second consists of stylistic studies of Northwest Coast art, usually concentrating on a general analysis of the underlying principles of Northwest Coast art style. On the whole, stylistic studies have isolated the specimens from their social and cultural contexts, thereby minimizing the ethnological significance of the resultant analysis.

The ideal is to combine these two approaches, which I have attempted to do in this study. In the first three sections I have presented ethnographic information about the Bella Coola in an effort to reveal the social and cultural significance of the masks and other ceremonial items in terms of Bella Coola society. Now I propose to provide a characterization of Bella Coola art, concentrating on the analysis of sculptural technique, design elements employed, and materials utilized.

##### Analytical Technique Employed

While purely analytical studies of style are meaningful to students of art, they do not contribute much to making material culture

ethnologically significant. The tendency is to impose Western analytical terms onto the material, resulting in a collection of attributes or components which (as pointed out in Part III) are not necessarily meaningful in terms of the culture that produced the objects.

If it were possible, the analysis would be conducted entirely within the frame of reference of the Bella Coola. In this way the researcher would be certain of results that would be meaningful to the Bella Coola themselves, and therefore ethnologically significant. The ideal would be to obtain a characterization of the art from craftsmen operating within the traditional environment and following the old practices. However, the absence of such craftsmen in contemporary Bella Coola culture makes such an approach impossible. Moreover there is no guarantee that even a master craftsmen, if one were available, would be able to recognize and communicate the essential artistic components. It is possible that many of the principles of the art might be so internalized and unconscious that the artist would be unaware of them.

We are forced in dealing with material collected decades ago to restrict study to the data that is available. That is the basis of the analytical technique employed here. Gathering together those objects that can be positively identified as known mythological characters, we can work from specific identity and meaning to an analysis of the common elements of each kind of mask. What features are found in every Thunder mask? In every Hao Hao? From the summaries of the common



attributes of these known characters, though they represent but a small portion of the corpus of Bella Coola work, we can offer generalizations<sup>1</sup> about the art.

One moves, then, from ascertaining meaning, to analysis of the elements commonly related to that meaning, and finally to generalizations about attributes and techniques. This is more likely to produce generalizations that are significant in relation to Bella Coola culture, and not simply irrelevant statements meaningful only in terms of our own. Of course, there undeniably remains an element of speculation.

Using the collections in the National Museum of Canada, the British Columbia Provincial Museum, the American Museum of Natural History, and the Heye-Foundation - Museum of the American Indian, and relying on existing records and information from my own informants, I was able to gather enough information to include here a number of Bella Coola mythological characters. As mentioned above, these do not form a representative sample of the variety of personages involved in traditional ceremonialism; a glance through the works of Boas and McIlwraith reveals how large the supernatural community was. However, the following analysis should lead to a meaningful discussion of Bella Coola art style. Hopefully the information organized and presented here will lend greater significance to collections of Bella Coola material elsewhere. The traditional role of each character in Bella Coola ceremonial life will be presented first, followed by an analysis of features common to masks representing that character. Accompanying photographs

will help to illucidate the discussion, as well as to reveal the unique characteristics of each representation. The characters are presented in alphabetical order.

"Ātquntām

Known by a variety of names, "Ātquntām was considered the supreme deity by the Bella Coola, the most important of the supernatural creatures and the creator of all men and animals on earth. He was human in form. "Ātquntām had the ability to enter the sun and use it as his canoe. When he did so, he wore a cloak lined with salmon. When he reversed the cloak, the rivers on earth were abundant with salmon.

"Ātquntām assumed an important role in terms of kusiut society rituals. In the land above, when he wasn't travelling within the sun, he lived in a house called Nusmat·a.

It resembles those constructed on earth, but it is boundless in size .... Every autumn the supernatural beings gather there to wait the coming of "Ātquntām at the winter solstice; while waiting they pass the time by performing the equivalent of the earthly kusiut dances. (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. I, p. 34)

With the arrival of "Ātquntām at Nusmat·a, the heat became so intense that all the supernatural beings but three advisors rushed out of the house. The remaining quartet

.... arrange the fate of human beings during the coming year; who shall be made a kusiut, who shall be born, who shall die. In each case the decision rests with "Ātquntām, though he is influenced by his counsellors. (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. I, p. 38)

"Ātquntām was regarded as the leader of the supernatural kusiut; each supernatural patron was guided by him in the performance of the kusiut rites in the land above.

"Ātquntām was involved in many of the earthly kusiut dances, but usually played an inactive role. McIlwraith describes him thus: "Ātquntām stands in state behind the fire, sometimes announcing his own name." (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. II, p. 91) Or as he was involved in the Stomach Cutting dance of the kusiotām series:

He always wears a huge mask and the actor must have a powerful voice for at intervals he bellows out:

" 'Mortals! See me, I am Ātquntām.' while the heralds and Ano<sup>o</sup>likwotsāix echo and confirm his remarks. He stalks from one of the enclosures to the central position behind the fire, where he remains standing. (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. II, p. 145)

### The Masks of Ātquntām

Shape: almost rectangular face.

Profile: human-like with slightly high forehead.

Features:

Eyes - circles cut-out within carved rounded Northwest Coast eyes.

Brows - almost straight across; slight curve downwards at sides.

Nose - human-like, slightly curved bridge; with pronounced nostrils.

Mouth - open; top lip straight across, bottom lip slightly curved.

Facial Painting: unpainted except for additions of red and black.

Brows - black.

Nostrils - red.

Mouth - red.

Size: about 30 inches high.

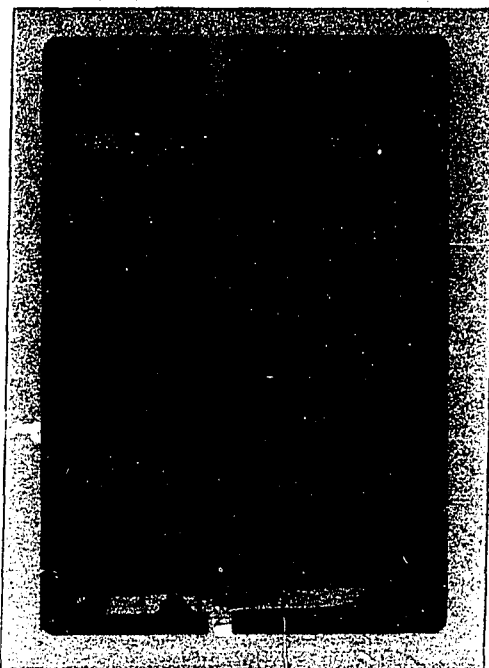


Plate 1  
AtqumtAm

16  
1398

American Museum of Natural History Collection

"Ano<sup>o</sup>likwotsHix

"Ano<sup>o</sup>likwotsHix was the spirit present at every repository of a kusiut prerogative. There, sometimes accompanied by her husband, she guarded the names and maintained contact with their supernatural patrons. An encounter with her was necessary for an individual to be initiated into the kusiut society.

Nostrils - red.

Mouth - red.

Size: about 30 inches high.

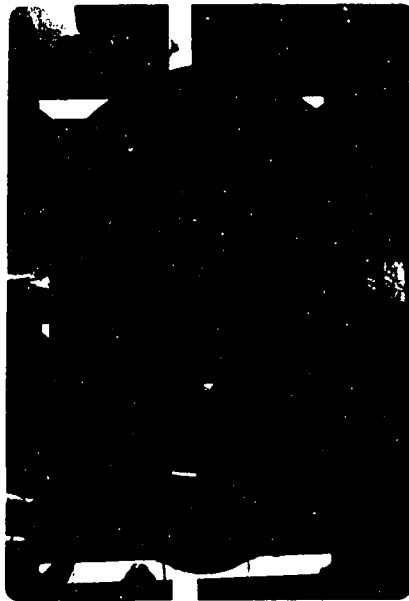


Plate 1  
Ätquntäm  
16  
1398

American Museum of Natural History Collection

"Äno° likwotsHix

"Äno° likwotsHix was the spirit present at every repository of a kusiut prerogative. There, sometimes accompanied by her husband, she guarded the names and maintained contact with their supernatural patrons. An encounter with her was necessary for an individual to be initiated into the kusiut society.

The mask of Äno° likwotsHix was the only one that was prepared for every kusiut dance performance. It was worn by a man who could speak well, and imitate the high-pitched voice of a woman. At kusiut events Äno° likwotsHix publicly scorned uninitiated for stumbling near to her in the woods but not recognizing her, thereby missing an opportunity to become a member of the society. Her role during the dance performances was as that of a narrator. She explained to the mystified uninitiated the identity of the characters they saw before them, and told them about the events that were occurring.

#### The Masks of Äno° likwotsHix

Shape: extended oval shape with almost pointed top and bottom.

Profile: concave, with forehead, nose, and mouth with chin comprising equal portions of face.

#### Features:

Eyes - holes cut through wood - no other eye-area cut-out or carved.

Ears - present sometimes; small, relatively undetailed extensions at side of head at eye-level.

Brows - always pronounced sloped downwards; this creates a saddened, mournful effect, almost frowning.

Nose - long and usually straight bridged; human-like, with well articulated nostrils.

Facial Painting: varies; always predominantly black; majority of face unpainted.

Brows - painted black.

Nostrils - red.

Cheeks - usually some streaks across or under eyes, adding to mournful effect; black.

Mouth - not always painted; sometimes red or black.

Chin - sometimes beard or moustache-like designs around or under mouth; black or red. This might relate to the husband of Ano<sup>o</sup>likwotsHix, although there is no documentary evidence to suggest this.

Size: usually about 10-12 inches high.

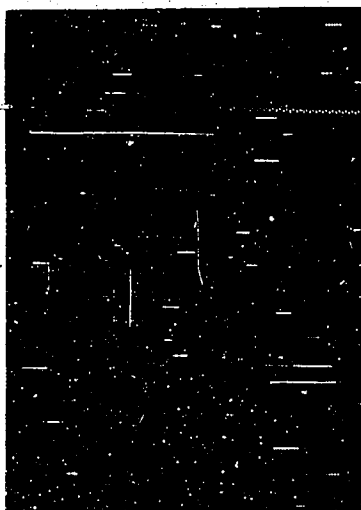


Plate 2  
"Ano<sup>o</sup>likwotsHix

16  
1111

American Museum of Natural History Collection

Bear

It was believed by the Bella Coola that bears performed kusiut dances as men did, though bears did not have the power to become shamens.

Cheeks - usually some streaks across or under eyes, adding to mournful effect; black.

Mouth - not always painted; sometimes red or black.

Chin - sometimes beard or moustache-like designs around or under mouth; black or red. This might relate to the husband of Ano<sup>o</sup>likwots<sup>Hix</sup>, although there is no documentary evidence to suggest this.

Size: usually about 10-12 inches high.

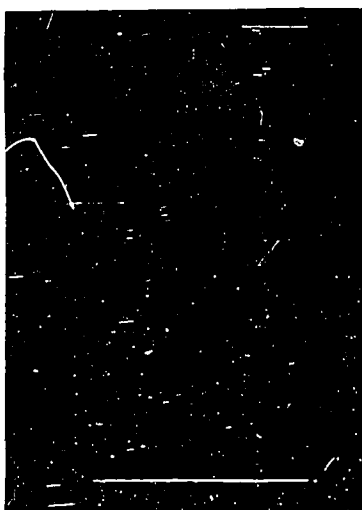


Plate 2  
"Ano<sup>o</sup>likwots<sup>Hix</sup>

16  
1111

American Museum of Natural History Collection

Bear

It was believed by the Bella Coola that bears performed kusiut dances as men did, though bears did not have the power to become shamens.



Some kusiut dancers received the privilege to perform the Dance of the Grizzly Bear, under the patronage of a grizzly bear resident in Qomoqwa's house. (Qomoqwa was considered the king of the sea.) Unfortunately McIlwraith does not describe this dance.

### The Masks of Bear

Shape: shortened face with slight squashed effect - probably a supernatural bear.

Profile: convex and bulbous.

#### Features:

Eyes - circles cut-out; within rounded Northwest Coast eye.

Brows - flattened V-s.

Nose - flattened snout that has pushed-up, pug effect; nostrils flared.

Mouth - wide straight lips; jaw moveable; carved or painted teeth.

Ears - sometimes appear at top of head; large and squared.

Hardly any chin.

One mask had hair of cedar roping.

Facial Painting: completely painted, with green or blue predominant; red, white and black additions.

Brows - black; separated by white bar.

Eyes - circle may be accentuated by ring of black; eye painted white.

Nostrils - red.

Lips - red or white.

Motifs on face - design in red and white on forehead, cheeks and chin; carved and painted streaks or split-U points; concave triangles common on cheeks.

Size: about 12 inches high.

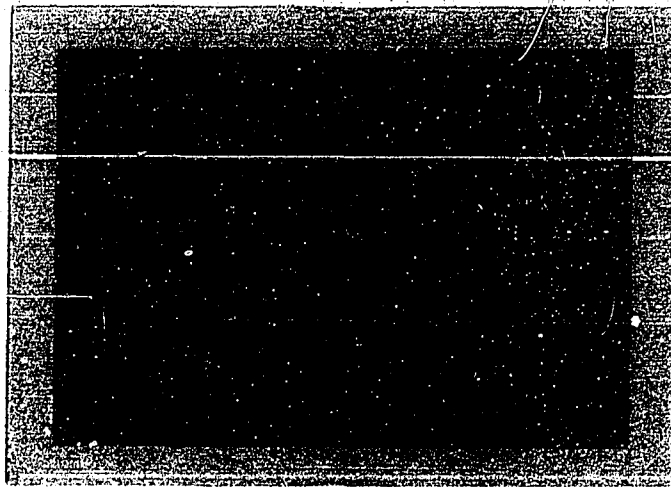


Plate 3

Bear

VII-D-197

National Museum of Canada Collection

Eagle

The Eagle, who played a role in Bella Coola mythology as a creature almost as powerful as Raven, was an important crest. Masks of the Eagle, were prepared in association with sisook names and were involved in funeral potlatches. (See Part II, page 21 )

McIlwraith makes no note of Eagles being involved in kusiut performances.

The Masks of Eagle

Shape: bird shape head with fairly short, sharply curved beak and head usually extending from beak.

Profile: broad upper beak curved at almost 90 degree angle at end to pass before, though not touching, end of shorter, lower beak.

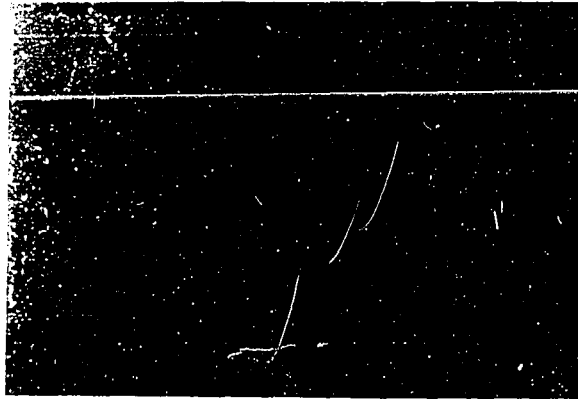


Plate 3

Bear

VII-D-197

National Museum of Canada Collection

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The Masks of Eagle

Shape: bird shape head with fairly short, sharply curved beak and head usually extending from beak.

Profile: broad upper beak curved at almost 90 degree angle at end to pass before, though not touching, end of shorter, lower beak.

Features:

Eyes - circles painted in rounded Northwest Coast eye.

Brows - slightly curved; angling downwards; natural rim of head form rising above eye.

Nose - broad upper beak curved as described above over narrower and shorter lower beak; nostrils usually appear as semi-circles or flared shape mid-way along upper beak just above lip-line.

Mouth - painted edges of beak.

Some have additions of shredded cedar bark along top of head.  
Hinged lower beak.

Facial Painting: at least half-painted; usually completely so; black, white and red most common; blue sometimes used in place of black.

Eyes - black within white eye-shape.

Brows - black.

Nostrils - red.

Mouth - red.

Beak - either portion in centre of mask painted solid color and then the end of the beak unpainted or white OR series of split-U-s painted along entire beak.

Head area sometimes displaying series of dashes, or split-U-s, or variety of motifs in red or white on black.

Size: varies from about 12 inches long and 5 inches high to 34 inches long and 10 inches high.



Plate 4

Eagle

16

1521

American Museum of Natural History Collection

Eagle Incubus

It was believed in association with the Cannibal Dance of the Bella Coola that an eagle, wolf, or bear was implanted within the Cannibal protege, causing him to devour strange foods. The most common and feared prerogative of these dancers was the right to bite the flesh of living human beings, although they might eat corpses, bite dogs, the bodies of salmon, or themselves.

McIlwraith gives this vivid description of objects such as the Eagle heads discussed below, as they were involved in the initiation of the Cannibal dancers.

.... there suddenly appears beside X the head of an eagle, wolf, or bear, according to his prerogative. This is his cannibalistic incubus, driven from him by the successful



Plate 4

Eagle

16

1521

American Museum of Natural History Collection

Eagle Incubus

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McIlwraith gives this vivid description of objects such as the Eagle heads discussed below, as they were involved in the initiation of the Cannibal dancers.

.... there suddenly appears beside X the head of an eagle, wolf, or bear, according to his prerogative. This is his cannibalistic incubus, driven from him by the successful

beating of time. The head, usually a real one, has been carefully fixed by the carpenters, so that it can open its mouth, move its eyes, and give other signs of life .... The incubus vomits pieces of meat, presumably the pieces of human flesh which X has devoured; in reality they are morsels passed into the back of the head by carpenters, concealed behind the row of kukusiut. The uninitiated see the flesh fall into a box placed before X's feet and watch steam rising from it, but they do not know that hot stones have previously been laid within to cause this. As the meat passes out through the creature's mouth, X bends down and bites at it like an animal ... while all the kukusiut present stand up and call out ye .... four times. After the fourth shout the animal's head is concealed, though the uninitiated believe that it has returned to the land above whence it came to enter X. The Cannibal is now tolera by sane; his guardians no longer press so closely around him and non-members and many of the kukusiut leave the house. (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. II, p. 79)

#### The Masks of Eagle Incubus

Shape: not actually worn as masks but carried and manipulated under the arm. Smaller than eagle masks, with more pronounced curved beak, and teeth evident in mouth.

Profile: short head with short beak curving in front of lower beak.

#### Features:

Eyes - round; sometimes made of glass.

No evidence of brows.

Nose - curved beak described above; nostrils pronounced and flared.

Mouth - carved and painted edges of beak. Thicker and more pronounced than with eagle masks, and those of other birds; teeth of a bear often in mouth.

Hinged lower beak.

Head covered with animal fur or the skin of an eagle's head.

**Facial Painting:** usually only mouth and end of beak exposed wood and painted.

**Mouth - red.**

**Nostrils - red.**

**Beak - either natural or soft yellow.**

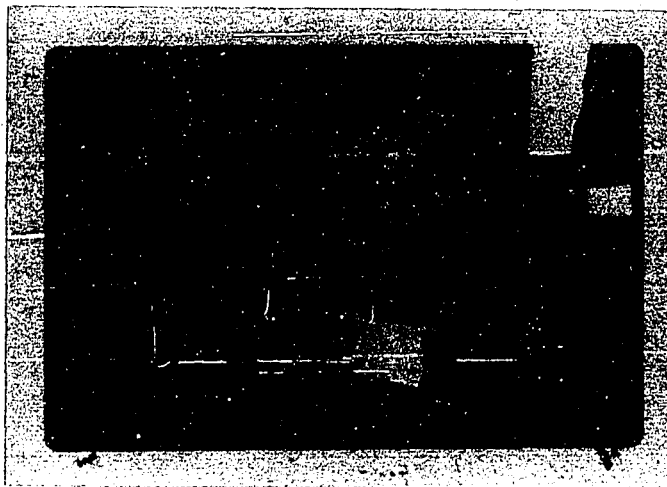


Plate 5  
Eagle Incubus

16  
1464

American Museum of Natural History Collections

Echo (s&tsal&nt)

Echo was considered an influential figure, although he was a supernatural being resident on earth. He was regarded as a male being when in human form and his presence was acknowledged whenever sounds reverberated. McIlwraith notes that he sometimes appeared as a masked figure in kusiut or sisak dances. He does not give any detailed description of the appearance of Echo.



Facial Painting: usually only mouth and end of beak exposed wood and painted.

Mouth - red.

Nostrils - red.

Beak - either natural or soft yellow.

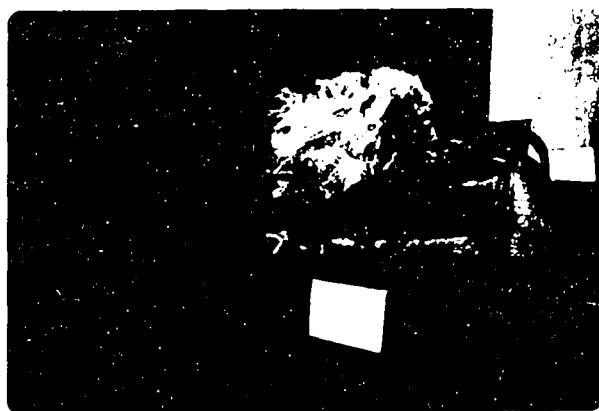


Plate 5  
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16  
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American Museum of Natural History Collections

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Echo was considered an influential figure, although he was a supernatural being resident on earth. He was regarded as a male being when in human form and his presence was acknowledged whenever sounds reverberated. McIlwraith notes that he sometimes appeared as a masked figure in kusiut or sisaok dances. He does not give any detailed description of the appearance of Echo.

The Masks of Echo

Shape: massive oval face, sometimes a little squared off top and bottom.

Profile: fairly convex, with slight impression of brow coming down to meet pushed up nose portion.

Features:

Eyes - circles either cut-out of face or painted on. Curved Northwest Coast eye sometimes carved and/or painted around circle.

Ears - sometimes present at eye-level; varying shapes.

Brows - usually slightly carved; sometimes only painted on. Curved, sloping downwards at sides.

Nose - varies; sometimes straight, human-like; sometimes fairly short and curved bridge; nostrils almost always pronounced and wide - distinctly carved.

Mouth - each Echo mask has multiple mouths - usually 5 - that can be inserted into the mask to have it become a different character.

Sometimes Echo has cedar rope or horse-hair forming hair across top.

Facial Painting: usually covers most of face; blue and green predominant, with black, red and some white.

Brows - usually black.

Nostrils - red.

Mouths - usually red.

Cheeks - usually painted; varying motifs - one feather-like design, another series of curves of black with short blue lines between.

Size: quite massive. About 12-15 inches long and 10-14 inches wide.



Plate 6

Echo

VII-D-410a

National Museum of Canada Collection

Ghosts

Ghosts of deceased Bella Coola lived in the land located just below the earth. The environment and life of ghosts were similar to that of men. It was believed that the ghost did not enter the land below until four days after death.

On the fourth day after the funeral, the relatives of the dead person burn the remainder of his property, which passes through the earth to the ghost for whom it is intended. Ghost-singers have taken their places and begin to beat out music, and presently the recently deceased appears, stepping backwards from the backroom in time to the beating of sticks.



Plate 6

Echo

VII-D-410a

National Museum of Canada Collection

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He is at once surrounded by his fellows, each anxious to learn the latest news of relatives still alive. This dance is really to welcome the new arrival, and takes place irrespective of his rank. After it has been held, it is hopeless to attempt to rescue a dead person, although that has been done several times during the four days immediately succeeding death. (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. I, p. 498)

The types of "ghosts" described in the following analysis are those that were involved in the post-funeral potlatch as was outlined in Part II.

#### The Masks of Ghosts

Shape: slightly squared, relatively human-like face.

Profile: human-like profile; nothing accentuated.

Features:

Eyes - round holes cut-out through wood.

Brows - arched to peak over each eye; only slightly carved; practically meeting except for painted lines at centre of brow.

Nose - human-like, slightly curved bridge; accentuated nostrils carved at bottom sides.

Some have additions of shredded cedar bark as hair.

Facial Painting: entire face painted; blue predominant, with additions of black, white and red.

Eyes - rounded Northwest Coast eye in white outlined with thin line of black.

Brows - black, outlined and separated by line of white.

Nostrils - red.

Mouth - red.

Forehead - concave triangles of red; or scallops of white.

Cheeks - split-U points of white; concave triangle at middle of cheek in red.

Area below nose and around mouth painted white with chin area almost completely covered with short strokes of black in beard-like effect.

Size: about 10-12 inches high.

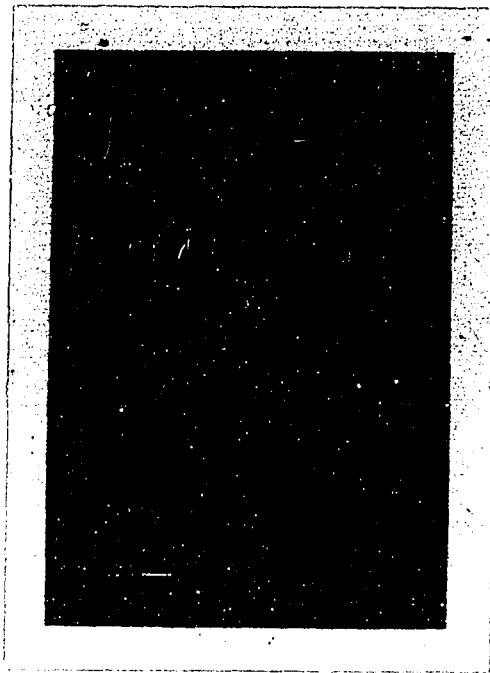


Plate 7

Ghost

VII-D-200

National Museum of Canada Collection

Hao Hao

The Hao Hao appeared at kusiut dances. McIlwraith describes them as they were involved in the Stomach-cutting dance of the kusiottm series:

Forehead - concave triangles of red; or scallops of white.

Cheeks - split-U points of white; concave triangle at middle of cheek in red.

Area below nose and around mouth painted white with chin area almost completely covered with short strokes of black in beard-like effect.

Size: about 10-12 inches high.

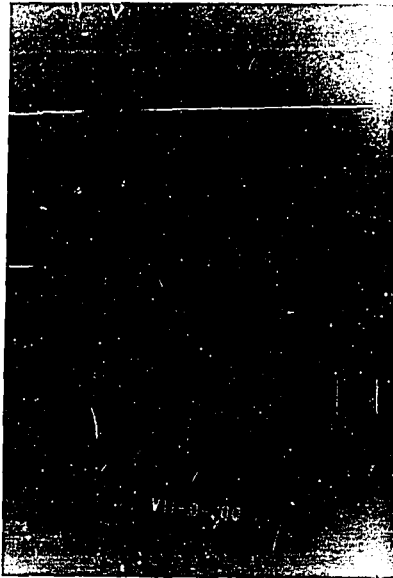


Plate 7

Ghost

VII-D-200

National Museum of Canada Collection

Hao Hao

The Hao Hao appeared at kusiut dances. McIlwraith describes them as they were involved in the Stomach-cutting dance of the kusiote series:

.... in the form of an enormous bird with long beak and bony wings. The mask worn with the disguise is usually about three feet in length, in the shape of a bird's head with long beak. A stick passes from its butt down the wearer's back and is held in place by his belt, thus balancing the heavy projecting bill. It is hinged so that the performer can make the mandibles snap together by pulling a cord concealed under his blanket. A good actor ... bends forwards and downwards so that the snapping beak almost brushes the floor; then he rises and pauses like a bird when listening and half startled. Next he runs a few steps, in a mincing manner, thus slowly circling the fire, and ultimately passes from sight into the enclosure other than that from which he has emerged. Several kukusiut accompany the actor, blowing eagle down over him, the women drone, and Ano<sup>o</sup>likwotsHix keeps up a string of comments. After a short pause a second hao hao appears and circles the fire with its attendant kukusiut. The same procedure is repeated for a third and a fourth. (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. II, p. 146).

Hao Haos also appeared in the Mystery dance.

.... the announcer calls impressively: 'Take care! The hao hao are coming.' From within the enclosure there is heard the clacking of beaks, and presently a hao hao back out .... Another hao hao likewise comes out backwards, then a third and a fourth. The four dance around the fire, snapping their beaks and uttering their cry, Hao, Hao, Hao, in unison to the stamp of their feet on the floor. (The host), with three assistants, accompanies them, apparently out of respect to the supernatural visitors, and to guard the uninitiated from them in case they should become ferocious, but in reality to direct the steps of the actors whose cumbersome masks prevent them from seeing where they are going .... When the hao hao have disappeared, Ano<sup>o</sup>likwotsHix explains who the visitors were. (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. II, p. 186)

Hao Hao was one of the zoomorphic beings believed to exist on earth and which were involved in Bella Coola religion. Hao Haos were enormous birds, with huge bony wings that rattled and flapped as they flew. Their cries of "hao hao hao" were often heard by the Bella Coola, and they were feared for their practice of drawing forth the



entrails of careless sleepers. This could be prevented by the placing of a staff upright in the ground before retiring.

### The Masks of Hao Hao

Shape: long, narrow with head merely a prolonging of the straight beak.

Profile: relatively straight, long beak extending outwards, sometimes slightly curved downward at tip.

#### Features:

Eyes - circles carved and/or painted within rounded Northwest Coast eye.

Brows - incorporated in naturally formed brow-ridge over hollowed eye-position and rise of head. Very slightly curved, angled downwards.

Nose - large flared nostrils on beak in variety of positions; sometimes a scalloped rim along top of beak.

Mouth - painted along rim of moveable beak.

Some have additions of shredded cedar bark along top of head. Hinged lower beak.

Facial Painting: predominantly black, with red and white additions. Completely painted.

Eyes - black circles against white background.

Brows - always black, sometimes outlined in white.

Nostrils - red.

Mouth - red.

Either plain, solid black beak or else covered with elaborate split-U motifs of white on black. N.B. This results in two distinct types of Hao Hao masks.

Size: about 2½-3½ feet long; 9-15 inches high; approximately 12 inches wide at head end.

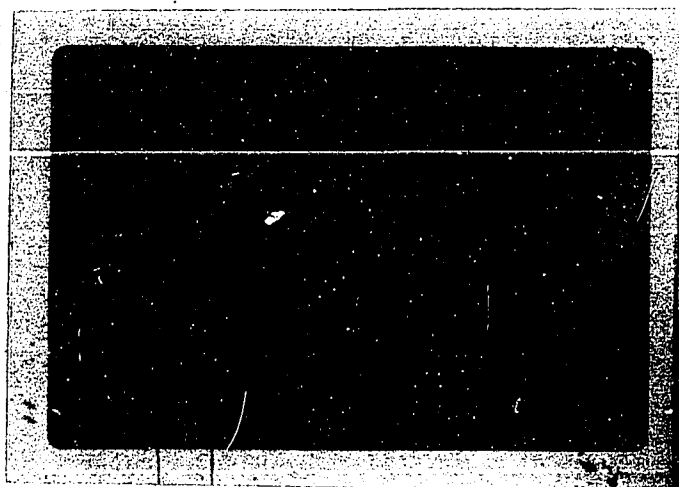


Plate 8  
Hao Hao  
British Columbia  
Provincial Museum Collection

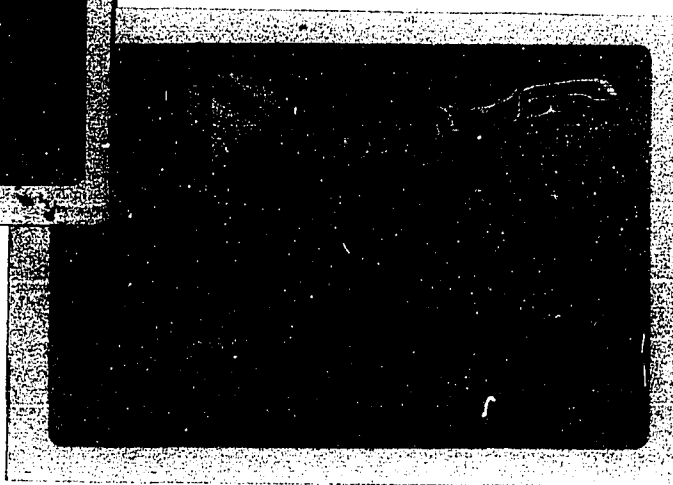


Plate 9  
Hao Hao  
Owner: Hank King  
Bella Coola, B. C.

### Killerwhale

The Killerwhale was another important crest of the Bella Coola. Masks or carvings of whales were made and used in association with sisaok names. McIlwraith discusses their involvement in funeral potlatches. As outlined in Part II, on the evening of the second day the dead returned in the form of their crests to visit the living.

### The Masks of Killerwhale

Shape: fairly massive with rounded blunt snout.

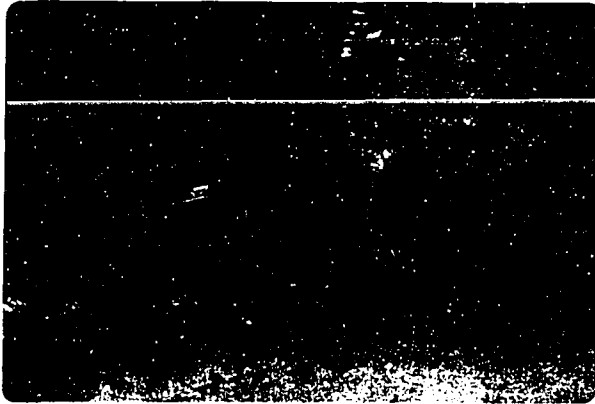


Plate 8  
Hao Hao

British Columbia  
Provincial Museum Collection



Plate 9  
Hao Hao

Owner: Hank King  
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### The Masks of Killerwhale

Shape: fairly massive with rounded blunt snout.

Profile: rounded rectangular profile.

Features:

Eyes - series of circles painted within rounded Northwest Coast eye.

Brows - fairly thick, extending from centre of head and curved slightly, angling down sides.

Nose - rounded though squarish snout; nostrils carved and/or painted semi-circles above mouth.

Mouth - straight lips along bottom of snout; hinged lower lip.

Facial Painting: almost entirely painted in blue, red, black and white.

Eyes - black centre, white circle, then black circle, within white Northwest Coast eye. Large disc surrounding eye usually blue.

Brows - black, outlined in white or natural.

Nose - snout and head either solid color (often blue) or with red or white curves or split-U motifs; nostrils red.

Mouth - red.

Size: about 2 feet long and 1 foot high.



Plate 10  
Killerwhale  
VII-D-187

National Museum of Canada Collection

Profile: rounded rectangular profile.

Features:

Eyes - series of circles painted within rounded Northwest Coast eye.

Brows - fairly thick, extending from centre of head and curved slightly, angling down sides.

Nose - rounded though squarish snout; nostrils carved and/or painted semi-circles above mouth.

Mouth - straight lips along bottom of snout; hinged lower lip.

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Mouth - red.

Size: about 2 feet long and 1 foot high.

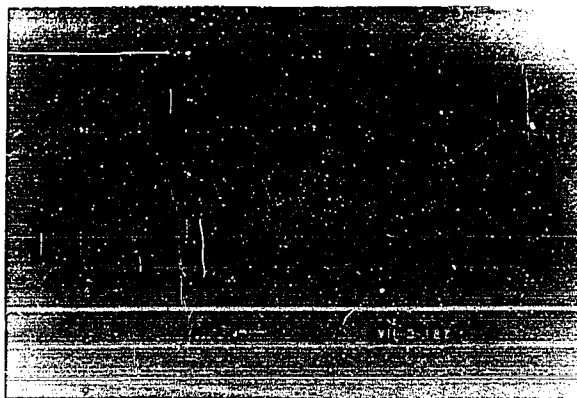


Plate 10  
Killerwhale  
VII-D-187

National Museum of Canada Collection

Raven

It was believed that in the beginning of time the Raven received from Aitquntam greater powers than did any other creature. He was sent down to earth to be the guide and teacher of the others. Unlike the others his cloak remained on earth so that he could resume it whenever he desired. Raven was instructed to study the arts and crafts of other people on the Northwest Coast and to bring back the most desirable to the Bella Coola.

Raven was mischievous and conceited, and Bella Coola myths told of his many exploits. He once stole the sun, he brought the salmon to the Bella Coola River, and the herring to Kimsquit. He introduced the making of nettle-fibre olacken nets - he was credited with almost every invention in Bella Coola culture.

.... the Bella Coola regard Raven as an explorer, teacher, and inventor, whose power, obtained from Aitquntam, enabled him to construct and outwit his maker, but not to create. Much of his work was for the good of mankind, but much was evil and malicious, an aspect which belongs to mythology. Essentially human ... he differs from most of the supernatural ones in belonging entirely to the past, as his descendants have none of the first Raven's powers. It is doubtful whether he still exists, but in any case he long since ceased to take any interest in the affairs of the Bella Coola, who consider him only as a figure of mythology and ancient history. (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. I, p. 91)

Like Bear and Killerwhale, Raven was a Bella Coola crest and representations of him were prepared in connection with sisack practices.

The Masks of Raven

Shape: bird head with beak shorter than that of hao hao but longer and thinner than that of Eagle.

Profile: both upper and lower beak curved downward at tip - upper curve more pronounced; head an extension of beak; usually an additional small V-shaped bump at base of beak.

Features:

Eyes - round circles painted in rounded Northwest Coast eye.

Brows - only slightly curved on ridge of head rising from above eye-space.

Nose - upper beak at least twice the thickness of lower beak, curved as described above; nostrils either flaring or semi-circles above lip line - sometimes only painted on.

Mouth - painted edge of beak.

Some have additions of shredded cedar bark or cloth above head.

Hinged lower beak.

Facial Painting: entire mask painted blue, black, red, and white.

Eyes - black on white.

Brows - black.

Nostrils - red.

Mouth - red.

V - shaped on bottom - red.

Area around eye usually blue.

End of beak often painted black split-U's on white.

Size: varies from 20-38 inches long and about 11 inches high.

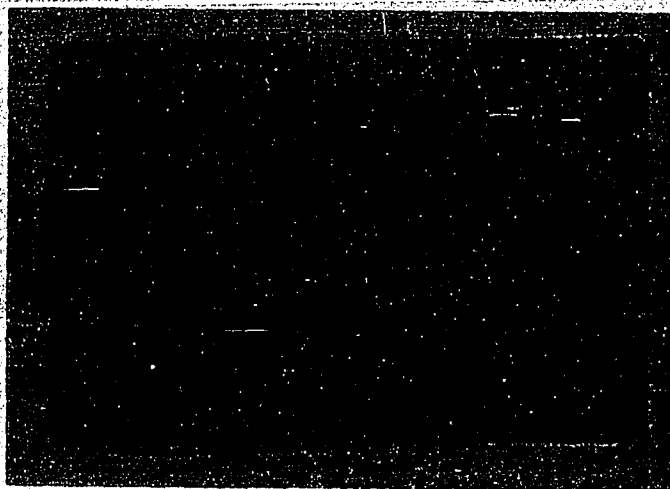


Plate 11  
Raven  
12318

British Columbia Provincial Museum Collection

Sun

The dance of the sun was a prerogative received from Atquntum. The theme of the dance "is of Atquntum, describing his manifold functions, and particularly that of guiding the sun." (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. II, p. 222). For the dance of a large disc with a human face in the centre was prepared to represent the sun. On the evening of the fourth day:

.... the ... disk appears against the back wall near the roof, slowly passes sunwise across the house, and disappears .... Again the sun 'rises', and crosses the back wall, only to disappear from sight. This is repeated twice more, making four times in all. (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. II, p. 223)





Plate 11  
Raven  
12318

British Columbia Provincial Museum Collection

Sun

The dance of the sun was a prerogative received from Ätquntäm. The theme of the dance "is of Ätquntäm, describing his manifold functions, and particularly that of guiding the sun." (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. II, p. 222). For the dance ~~of~~ a large disc with a human face in the centre was prepared to represent the sun. On the evening of the fourth day:

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The Sun Dance was performed on a variety of occasions, many of them during the non-ceremonial season.

The Masks of Sun

Shape: broad, fairly round face, sometimes with circular corona behind head.

Profile: slightly bulbous, convex effect with mouth and nose pushed upwards to slightly protruding brow.

Features:

Eyes - circles cut-out or painted in rounded Northwest Coast eyes.

Brows - fairly straight across eyes, then curving downwards at sides.

Nose - quite curved bridge with pronounced nostrils.

Mouth - always open with fairly thick lips; turned down at corners almost in pout.

Some have additions of horse-hair or shredded cedar bark as hair.

Facial Painting: face usually completely painted; blue predominant with red, white and black additions.

Eyes - black on white eye shape.

Brows - black.

Nostrils - red.

Mouth - red.

Forehead, cheeks and chin, as well as corona, often painted with split-U points and concave triangles in white and red.

Area around mouth sometimes painted white.

Size: usually about 14 inches tall; corona an additional 5-6 inches height.

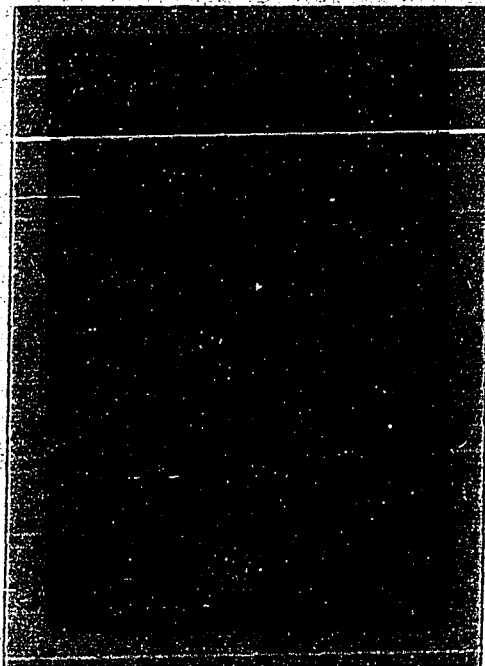


Plate 12

Sum

16

1506

American Museum of Natural History Collection

Thunder

Thunder was regarded as the most powerful and feared of the supernatural dancers; he was the senior kusiut. Accordingly, the dance of his human protege was considered one of the most important kusiut rituals. The essential feature of the prerogative was the ability to <sup>2</sup> summon all the supernatural beings to witness the dance.

<sup>3</sup>  
On the fourth day, n̄busam, ʼAno° likwots̄ix emerged from the dancer's house and chased all of the uninitiated back to their homes.



Plate 12

Sun

16

1506

American Museum of Natural History Collection

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On the fourth day, <sup>3</sup>nɛbusam, <sup>2</sup>ʼAno<sup>o</sup> likwotsHix emerged from the dancer's house and chased all of the uninitiated back to their homes.

Thunder's herald, Atxwolhtinim, called on everyone to prepare for the dance of Thunder, and summoned the supernatural to attend. He was followed by Tlogots, the Defamer, who insisted that he was the senior of the supernatural kusiut and urged everyone to stay away from the dance of Thunder. These invitations and denials were repeated four times during the day.

In the evening the kusiut gathered first, then they were joined by the uninitiated. A mat curtain was drawn back to reveal Thunder standing on a raised box. "He wears a huge mask, with hooked nose and bulbous forehead, which is so heavy that the wearer must have pads of soft cloth to ease the weight against his skin. The upper part of his body is entirely covered with dyed and undyed cedar-bark, his wrists and ankles are similarly adorned, around his stomach is a dance-apron, and in either hand he carries a stick embellished with more bark." (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. II, p. 183)

Thunder stood for sometime, waving and shaking his arms to the corners of the room, concentrating his power. Then he leapt down amidst a great din produced by the sticks and rattles of the singers, as well as the thunderlike sounds of stones rolling about in a wooden box. He danced a circuit of the fire and then leapt back up onto his box. After being handed a perforated rattle, filled with smouldering bark, he jumped down and danced once more about the fire, shaking smoke and sparks at the impressed audience. Following this, he climbed back onto his box and the matting was drawn to conceal him.

After each circuit of the fire, Rainwater appeared and drenched the audience with water. Rainwater was followed by the appearance of Nixps<sup>i</sup>, the expert dancer, who came as a ghost from the land below, in answer to the summons by Aixwol<sup>i</sup>ttinim. Nixps<sup>i</sup> was accompanied by his time-beater. "The uninitiated look forward with eagerness to witnessing a remarkable dance, but after a few violent contortions the performer withdraws, followed by the musician." (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. II, p. 207)

Following this, a number of supernatural beings appeared. Some were considered especially appropriate to the Thunder dance, and were shown on almost every occasion. Winter Wren, Rabbit and Mosquito were three such creatures. Rainwater-Dripping-from-the-Roof walked slowly about the fire, while Ano<sup>o</sup>likwots<sup>i</sup>Hix explained that his is the water which drops from a hole in the planking. The Clowns also appeared. "One after another, the supernatural beings appear from the enclosure, circle the fire, and withdraw, accompanied by the sage remarks of Ano<sup>o</sup>likwots<sup>i</sup>Hix. Finally there is a long pause, broken when a masked figure slowly toddles forth. It is Snail, who started at the same time as the other supernatural beings, but arrived too late to be present at the dance of Thunder. Snail circles the fire and disappears. At this point the uninitiated are expelled and the rite concludes as usual." (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. II, p. 208)

The dance of Thunder was sometimes performed as a non-sacred<sup>4</sup> rite, whenever the natural phenomena of thunder occurred. The supernatural were not believed to be in attendance at such performances.

### The Masks of Thunder

Shape: oval face mask.

Profile: very bulbous, convex; forehead protruding downwards, nose protruding further and hooked to chin, which bulges slightly upwards.

Features:

Eyes - round holes, cut-out, within unusual carved eye-shape - oval with one pointed end.

Brows - sharply arched over eye; almost touching nose at centre.

Nose - hooked, as described above; nostrils very pronounced.

Mouth - straight with carved and/or painted teeth filling it.

A corona of twigs and eagle down attached around top and sides of mask added for performance.

Squared ears sometimes occur at top; carved in eye and mouth motifs.

Facial Painting: face entirely painted; predominantly black, with red and white additions.

Eyes - outlined in white.

Brows - black, outlined in red or white or natural line.

Nose - sometimes white but usually black; nostrils red, outlined in white or natural.

Mouth - teeth white or black; mouth sometimes left natural.

Sometimes arcs or concave triangles carved and painted red on cheek.

Size: about 12 inches high and 8 inches wide.

N.B. In field study a mask that resembled Thunder in most respects but had a scalloped corona around the face was consistently identified as not being Thunder. Although informants couldn't tell me which character it represented, the presence of the corona signified another creature. See Plate 14.

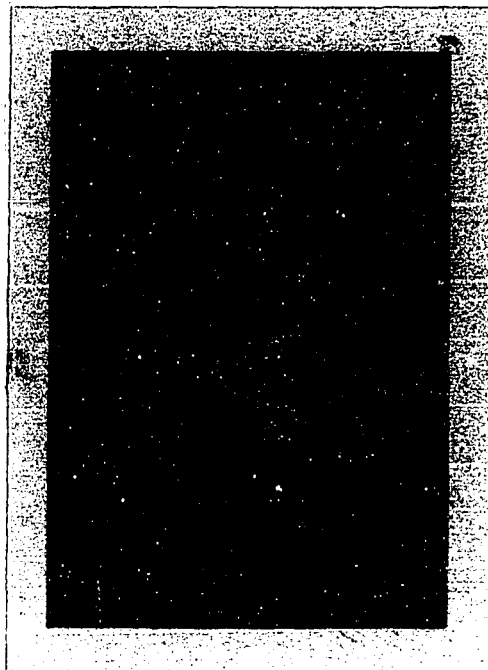


Plate 13  
Thunder  
VII-D-414

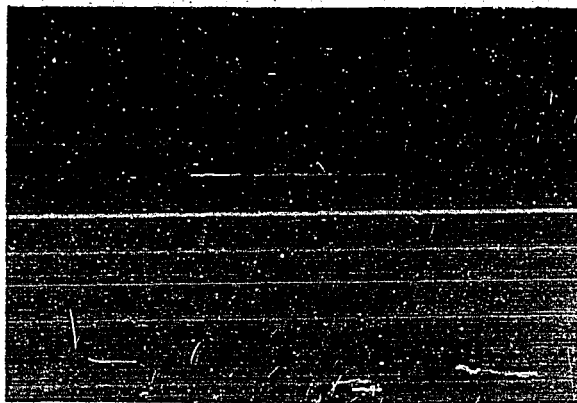


Plate 14  
Identity unknown  
VII-D-167



N.B. In field study a mask that resembled Thunder in most respects but had a scalloped corona around the face was consistently identified as not being Thunder. Although informants couldn't tell me which character it represented, the presence of the corona signified another creature. See Plate 14.

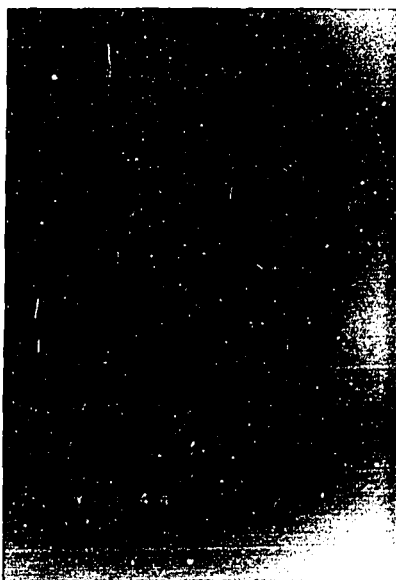


Plate 13  
Thunder  
VII-D-414



Plate 14  
Identity unknown  
VII-D-167

The Masks of Rainwater

Shape: extended oval face.

Profile: slightly concave with prominent forehead sloping back to eye and long nose; mouth slightly protruding and chin sloping downwards.

Features:

Eyes - circles cut-out.

Brows - sloping sharply downwards.

Nose - long and quite straight; nostrils carved, though small.

Mouth - open with pronounced bow to upper lip; mouth held as though blowing bubbles or whistling.

Ears - sometimes present; small, at sides of head.

In almost all cases a top-knot of cedar bark or feathers is in the top centre of the head. N.B. This feature is often all that distinguishes the mask from that of Ano<sup>o</sup>likwotsix: they share most other features.

Facial Painting: most of face unpainted, with additions of black, red, or blue.

Eyes - sometimes trip of black or blue extends beneath brows and across eyes, adding to mournful effect.

Brows - black.

Nose - usually unpainted; nostrils red.

Mouth - unpainted or red.

Sometimes beard and/or moustache-like forms in black added. In other cases the entire face is repeatedly crossed with lines and short dashes in black and red, perhaps resembling falling rain.

Size: about 12 inches high and 7 inches wide.

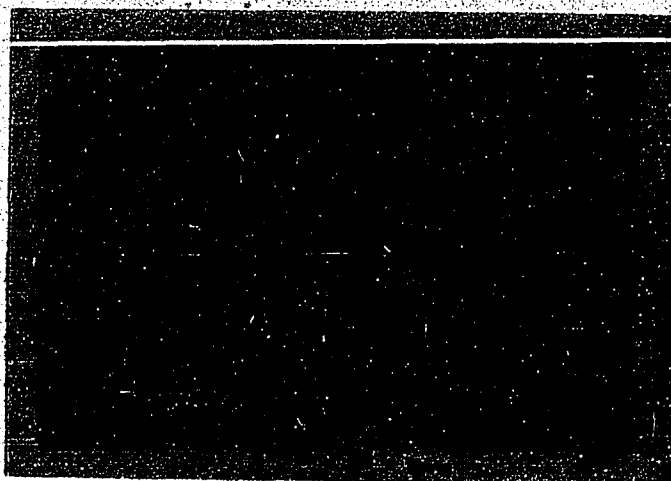


Plate 15  
Rainwater

6394

6395

British Columbia Provincial Museum Collection

General Comments

From the analysis of the characters just discussed, and from an examination of a number of museum collections, some general comments can be made about Bella Coola masks. Hopefully this will reveal some common characteristics, and provide a summary of the elements discovered in the masks and the basis for subsequent discussion of the relationship between Bella Coola masks and those of other Northwest Coast groups.

Bella Coola masks fall automatically into two general categories. Many elaborately carved and painted bird heads and face masks conform to the Northwest Coast art tradition, while displaying some distinctive Bella Coola characteristics. There are, on the other hand, a



Plate 15  
Rainwater

6394

6395

British Columbia Provincial Museum Collection

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Bella Coola masks fall automatically into two general categories. Many elaborately carved and painted bird heads and face masks conform to the Northwest Coast art tradition, while displaying some distinctive Bella Coola characteristics. There are, on the other hand, a

number of masks that are less elaborate - they are roughly executed and only slightly, often carelessly painted. There might be a tendency to consider the latter unimportant to a study of Bella Coola art, but looking at the nature of Bella Coola ceremonial life, these plainer masks possibly assume great importance. So much so, that to ignore them might result in an incomplete, one-sided analysis.

In the materials prepared for ceremonials, there was a major difference between sisaok and kusiut practices. For sisaok performances, masks of the characters that the host was entitled to use or that he had borrowed for the occasion were carved by a number of individuals whom he commissioned. They were made before the time of the celebration, and were retained to be used again after the dancing had ended.

In contrast, masks for kusiut performances were not made prior to the time of the celebration. Kusiut ceremonies took place over four day periods; the preparation of masks being part of the ritual. On the second day, the kusiut host requested individuals to carve masks and other paraphernalia for him. Wood was cut for the masks, and the carving began. On the third day, the carving was completed, and the masks were painted. The knowledge of their production was a secret shared only within the ranks of the kusiut society. The masks were used during the public dances performed on the fourth day and were burned at the secret closing rites that night. Their destruction helped insure that the secrets of the society would remain the property of the initiated.

In light of these facts it does not seem unlikely that there would be differences between masks prepared and kept as sisaok privileges, and those secretly and hastily executed, and ultimately burned, as part of the kusiut ceremonies.

It was difficult to gain much information relating to the kusiut society amongst contemporary Bella Coola, because once the secret nature of the organization disappeared, many of the rites fell into disuse and others were confused with remaining sisaok practices. Today, dances from both societies are performed at the same time and most members of the community know little about either.

However, two of my most aged informants designated some of the masks as kusiut prerogatives with such comments as "because it is plain and only painted a little."

Consequently, while there remains some elements of doubt, it seems likely that those plain and often roughly carved masks, painted only slightly in black and sometimes red, were prepared and used for kusiut performances. Those in museum collections today were preserved contrary to tradition because carvers were scarce and, following the turn of the century, the secretive nature of the kusiut society began to diminish, making the destruction of the masks unnecessary. On the other hand, many of the masks that were carved more carefully and more fully painted possibly originated as sisaok properties. If we could ascertain if particular motifs or figures were associated with the societies, it might be possible then to check this sisaok/kusiut dis-

inction against the patterns to reinforce or discredit the argument. However, as noted later, little information could be obtained about painted motifs, hence no such distinction can now be investigated.

### Shape

In terms of shape, Bella Coola masks can be grouped into the following categories:

1. bird or animal heads conforming fairly closely to features of actual specimens in nature.
2. face masks
  - a) those displaying human-like features and profiles.
  - b) extended ovals with angular features and essentially concave profiles, e.g. Ano<sup>o</sup>likwots<sup>u</sup>ix. See Figure II.
  - c) massive broad faces with bulbous, heavy features and essentially convex profiles. e.g. Sum. See Figure III.

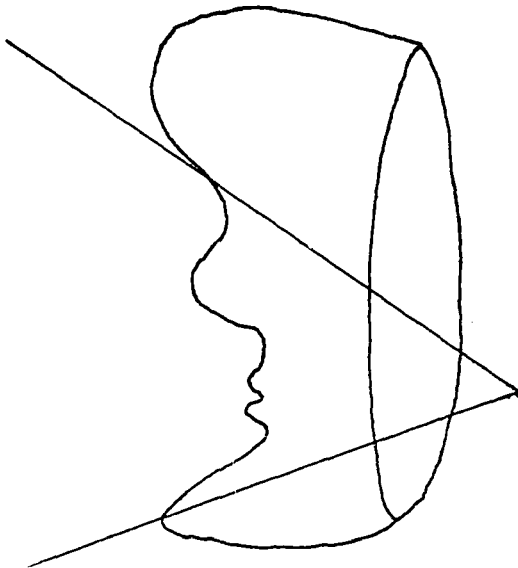


Figure II

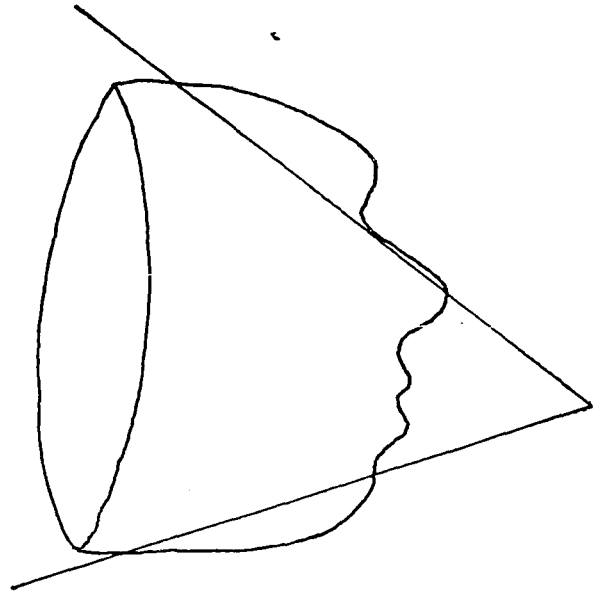


Figure III

Types 2 (b) masks are usually of unpainted, natural wood decorated with black brows and other minor additions of black paint, and sometimes with touches of red. The masks of this type often appear hastily, sometimes crudely, executed. Type 2 (c) masks, however, are almost entirely painted in the colors widely utilized in Bella Coola painting - black, red, white, and blue. It appears that on the whole greater care was observed in their manufacture. While the conformity is not absolute, there is possibly a relationship between the profile types and the sisak-kusiut distinction suggested above.

#### Common Bella Coola Features

Eyes - round circles either cut-out or painted. Sometimes series of concentric circles. Usually within what I have described as a "rounded Northwest Coast eye". This is the rather square-cornered ovoid form  
5  
common in Northwest Coast art. (See Figure IV)

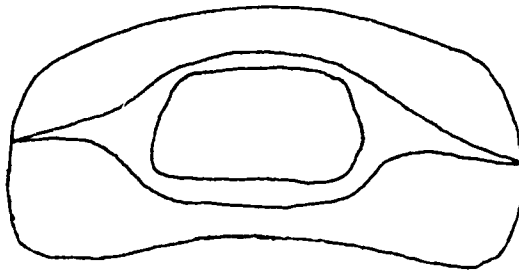


Figure IV



In all Bella Coola masks this is modified - the interior eye-shape becomes more rounded; the surrounding ovoid is absent. (See Figure V)

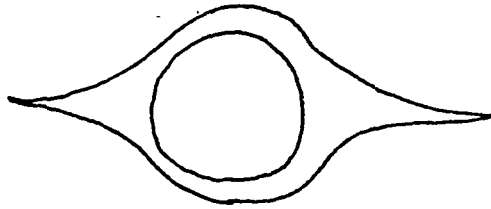


Figure V

Brows - variety of angles and shapes. Usually almost continuous across the face but separated by a carved and/or painted vertical line.

Nose - variety of shapes. Nostrils consistently emphasized, however. Usually carved but occasionally painted on the sides of bird beaks. Of roughly a semi-circular shape or else "flared." (See Figures VI and VII)



Figure VI  
Semi-Circular Nostril



Figure VII  
"Flared" Nostril

Mouth - variety of shapes. On other than bird heads, the mouth is usually open in pout-shape or stretched across with rows of carved or painted teeth.

Ears - not always present. Variety of shapes and position.

### Facial Painting

The painting of masks seems to follow three discernable patterns:

1. Natural wood, with additions of paint on brows, nostrils, and mouth; perhaps some motifs on cheeks. Otherwise unpainted.
2. Completely painted in solid colors coinciding with different features and carved elements.
3. Completely painted as above (#2) but with additional multi-colored motifs on most surfaces as filler.

### Colors Utilized

The colors used by Bella Coola craftsmen were those found throughout the Northwest Coast - black, red and white. Characteristically Bella Coola, however, is the prevalent application of blue or green, used to a far less extent by other tribes.

There seem to have been no rigid rules regarding the employment of color in the painting of masks. However, the brows were usually black, and the nostrils and mouth red.

### Carved and/or Painted Motifs

A wide variety of designs appear on the masks, many of them seemingly "unique" to one object. However, there are a few motifs which occur repeatedly on Bella Coola masks.

On bird masks, short painted strokes often cover the exposed surfaces, creating a feathered effect.

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Curves of facial features are often outlined or accentuated by a motif common also among the Kwakiutl, a series of short parallel dashes. Often this becomes modified so that the dashes, while remaining parallel, occur randomly rather than in neat series.

The chins of many masks are covered by a patch of short vertical black dashes resembling a neat beard. As noted in some of the cases above, moustache-like designs also occur.

6

The common Northwest Coast motif called by Bill Holm and others the "split-U" motif, occurs on many Bella Coola masks. An interesting procedure of modification is evident here, however. Often there is a joined series of "split-U" points, as in Figure VIII. These become separated, as in Figure IX. They continue to appear in series, however. A possible final stage in the evolution of this motif is what I have described as the "concave triangle". (See Figure X) This occurs frequently in isolation on the faces of Bella Coola masks. This shape is usually found in the centre of each cheek of a face mask, either carved and/or painted red.

Almost total absence of the ovoid form so widely used in the motifs of the Northwest Coast tribes is an important aspect of Bella Coola masks.

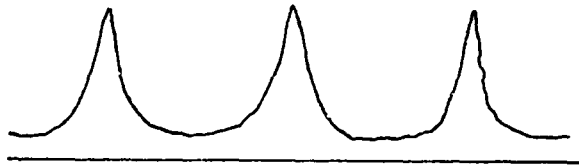


Figure VIII

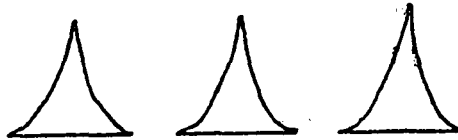


Figure IX

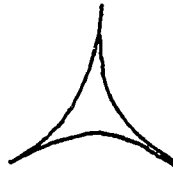


Figure X

Symbolism

While it is apparent that the signs<sup>7</sup> signifying particular Northwest Coast creatures, were not so widely recognized by the Bella Coola as amongst other tribes, it is difficult to be certain of the extent of symbolism in Bella Coola art. I do not feel that at this stage the recognition of consistent features or characteristics warrants uncontrolled speculation as to what may have been the symbolic meaning

of such features or characteristics. The dangers are too great and the rewards too uncertain.

The only signs that are evident and may be considered as symbols are the multiple mouth-pieces which are distinctive of Echo. While the appearance of several characters was very familiar to many of my current informants, i.e. Thunder, Ano<sup>o</sup>likwotsHix, etc., the familiarity did not seem to arise from a knowledge of signs or symbols. Unfortunately, it was not possible to arrive at any synthesis of the criteria by which informants did identify characters. In most cases they were unable to say "why" a particular mask was Thunder - they just knew from experience that it was. If the traditional culture were not in such a stage of decay, informants might have been able to distinguish the aspects of a mask that resulted in its identification and this would be an important avenue of analysis.

The suggestion that signs or symbols may have once been of greater importance arises from the series of masks such as the Carpenters or the Stages of the Moon; whose facial marking determine their identity.

#### Materials

Masks were manufactured out of wood. A variety of materials were added - feathers, twigs, cedar bark, horse or human hair, metal, shell, cloth, furs or skins - to create unique desired effects.

Mechanical Devices

Moveable parts or additions contributed to the dramatic versatility of the masks. Beaks of birds were hinged so that the mouths could open. As noted above, separate mouth-pieces might be used to indicate different characters.

Eyes might be set in masks, in a manner that allowed them to roll open or shut. Similarly, the upper portion of masks were sometimes hinged to allow the eyes to be opened or closed. (See plate 16) Lower jaws were also hinged in this fashion.

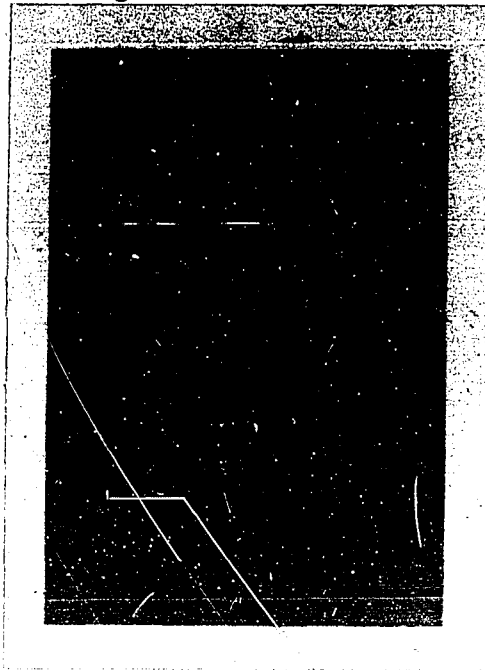


Plate 16

Identity unknown

VII-D-216

National Museum of Canada Collection

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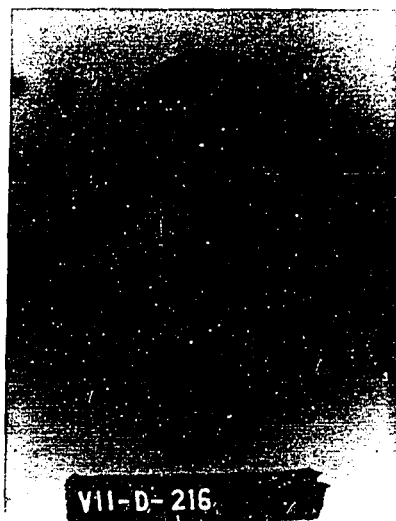


Plate 16  
Identity unknown  
VII-D-216  
National Museum of Canada Collection



On "Style"

The dilemma arises of ascertaining exactly what is meant by the term "style". Generally speaking, style comprises the integrated whole - the gestalt - of aspects of the art product.<sup>8</sup>

The term "style" is used in two contexts. One is concerned with the work of an individual artist or craftsman. The style of an artist results from his personal interpretation and use of techniques and elements, that ultimately communicate something uniquely his. The word "style" is also used to describe the characteristics of the art of a cultural group. Characteristics of such group styles become universally familiar; one comes to recognize the products of one tribe or culture area, e.g. Northwest Coast art style. It is this latter application of the term "style" that a study such as this one utilizes.

What comprises such a group style? A survey of material culture collections yields a list of what seem to be the basic components of style.

MEDIUM	e.g. wood
FORM	e.g. face mask
SHAPE	e.g. round, bulbous
FEATURES	e.g. types of eye, nose, mouth
COLOR	e.g. predominant colors and how they are utilized.
MOTIF	e.g. specific designs such as split-U.

It is unnecessary to list the specifics of Northwest Coast art style. Many authors have discussed the principles of the art, from the early work of Boas<sup>9</sup> to more recent works such as that of Bill Holm.<sup>10</sup> What is important is to compare the basic elements of Bella Coola art

with those of Northwest Coast art to determine what can be stated about Bella Coola art style as manifested in the masks.

The art is comprised of many of the same specific components as is the Northwest Coast art style in general. Differences arise not so much from the introduction of new elements but through the modification and emphasis of some of those elements common along much of the Northwest Coast.

Briefly, both the medium and the form of Bella Coola masks are the same as other Northwest Coast masks. The shape of the masks is perhaps the most distinctive aspect - the angular and the bulbous faces do not occur in such frequency elsewhere. (Types 2(b) and 2(c)) However, the shape of many Bella Coola bird heads and what I have described as human-face masks are common along the coast. The features, use of color, and motifs of Bella Coola masks are all part of general Northwest Coast style. However, as noted above, some features are emphasized or modified with consequent differences in effect. Bella Coola eyes are round; nostrils are always accentuated. Blue is a favorite color. The split-U motif appears, but is modified in Bella Coola carving and painting; the ovoid is almost entirely absent. Finally, signs or symbols seem less prevalent but this may be a result of either the date of the masks in museums (most collected between 1871 and 1925) or the current state of Bella Coola culture, i.e. informants do not know the meaning of signs or symbols if they are present.

To summarize, the masks we have been discussing are undoubtedly recognizable as the products of Bella Coola craftsmen, due to the unique interpretation, modification and emphasis of cultural elements common to the Northwest Coast. The integration of unique shapes with modified features and motifs, and the special color emphasis result in the unique Bella Coola effect. Yet the work relates closely to that of the entire Northwest Coast community, remaining within the bounds of Northwest Coast style.

PART V

CONTEMPORARY BELLA COOLA CEREMONIALISM AND ART

Traditional ceremonialism and art have not yet died out amongst the Bella Coola. Despite the disruptive ravages of disease that devastated the population, some interest in ceremonialism remained with the survivors. And although legislation discouraged continuation of traditional patterns, remnants of the old ways were retained. Renewed interest has served to stimulate traditional activities; perhaps impetus has been gained from recent concern on the part of white people with native arts and practices. Mrs. Siwallace expressed her amazement at the contradictory attitude of white people in the Bella Coola community.

Sometimes I wish the white man had never come to the valley. I just don't understand you people. Used to be the church - everybody kept telling us to forget everything. So pretty soon nobody does anything anymore. Nobody carves, nobody dances, we forgot the songs. And now all of a sudden a woman comes - it wasn't you, it was a woman in the church - and keeps saying 'Why don't you make baskets like you used to? How can you forget it?' I just don't understand you white people.

When I was in Bella Coola I was fortunate to witness a performance of native dances, organized primarily for my benefit because I had expressed an interest in seeing the masks in use. Here is a description of events that occurred that evening, to be followed by analysis of the dances, and a discussion of contemporary Bella Coola art.

An Evening of Bella Coola Dances

I arrived at the steps of the Nuhalk Hall on the dark and windy November evening. That evening many of the members of the Bella Coola community joined their efforts, put aside the rivalry and hostility that is often prevalent, and performed for me and an audience composed of a handful of white spectators and many more Indians the songs and dances that were still remembered and meaningful to them.

<sup>1</sup>  
Hank King, the blind man who had been instrumental in arranging the evening's activities, had agreed to meet me at the hall at 7 p.m. so that I would have time to set up my tape-recorder and camera equipment before the others came. Hank wasn't there when I arrived and I stood shivering in the east wind, in anticipation. Before long I saw him crossing one corner of the field that surrounded the hall. He walked slowly, accompanied by his wife and children, other relatives, and several dogs. They brought with them masks and blankets, and Hank's tape-recorder.

We went inside. Someone found the light switch, and I saw for the first time the interior of the hall. It was like many community centres - a small rectangular building with a stage at the far end and a promenade-like balcony along both sides. On the face of that balcony were six paintings - three evenly spaced on each side. These depictions of familiar characters from Bella Coola mythology were the only signs that this was more than a basketball gymnasium.

Preparations for the performance began. Sheets were suspended along the back of the stage as a backdrop. A make-shift curtain was created by two more sheets strung along a wire that allowed them to be manually drawn back from the center at the introduction of each new performance. The tape-recorder was set up on the left front of the stage, directly above the corner where the singers would sit. I set up my own recording machine on a table close to this corner, hoping to benefit from both the voices and rhythms of the singers as well as the supportive sounds of their tape-recorder. I also retained a privileged position beside the singers, at the side of the area just below the stage, where many of the dances were performed.

Rough-backed benches were set out in rows parallel to the stage, filling the back two-thirds of the hall, but leaving the floor space before the stage uncluttered. The audience began to arrive.

Two days before, hand-printed posters had appeared in the windows of the Co-op store and the Post Office in the white community. They advertised that the U.C.W. (United Church Women) of Emanuel United Church<sup>2</sup> were sponsoring an evening of Bella Coola Indian dances to be held November 11, at 8 p.m. in Nuhalk Hall. Admission was to be \$1.00, and proceeds were to go to the U.C.W. fund for the purchase of a much-needed furnace for their church. Perhaps it was this limited publicity, or perhaps it was the fact that there was a movie showing in town that resulted in a pitifully small white audience. Or perhaps it was disin-

terest and apathy. "Oh, I've seen those dances before. Why don't they learn some new ones?" was the reaction of most to my inquiry the following day. But whatever the cause, four teachers, four nurses, the United Church Minister and his wife, and myself comprised the white audience. They seated themselves on the left front benches, and the rest of the hall was filled with Indians, many of whom were actively involved in the dancing at some point in the evening. There must have been at least twenty small children who formed an appreciative, somewhat vocal audience.

The program began. About fifteen women, wrapped in blankets decorated with buttons, shells, bits of metal, tufts of wool, and designs painted or sewn on the backs, began to file in from the door at the end of the hall opposite to the stage. Each wore head, ankle and wrist bands of wool or cloth. They were led by Dinah Schooner<sup>3</sup>, who held upright in each hand painted plywood in the flat and tapered form of a small paddle. This entrance dance was supposedly a canoe formation and I was told by one informant that a large paper canoe was usually carried alongside the dancers, but "this time they didn't have it." None of my informants knew about the background or significance of the dance, but some relationship seems likely with the Spirit Canoe (described by McIlwraith, Vol. II, page 41) that traditionally occurred at the beginning of the winter ceremonial season. Many of the dancers were singing and they moved forward slowly with bent knees and a shuffling, sliding step each turning slightly first to one side, then to

the other. They moved their hands in graceful twisting motions, almost at shoulder height. The Bella Coola<sup>4</sup> song to which they danced urged the people to join in the singing, and conveyed the message "People from the outside are coming to Bella Coola to visit - the chief gives them a feast." After making one circuit of the empty space before the stage, they halted in a line across the front of the hall. The song ended, and there was a pause of a few seconds before the singers began a new song.

There were only four singers present at the performance - Mrs. Agnes Edgar<sup>5</sup> and Mrs. Reuben Schooner<sup>6</sup>, Dan Nelson<sup>7</sup>, and Hank King, Mrs. Edgar's son. They tapped out the rhythm of each song with bits of kindling wood struck against the floor. Dan Nelson, speaking in Bella Coola, preluded each song with the decree "Yao, listen now to the song of \_\_\_\_\_." Mrs. Siwallace<sup>8</sup> served as Master of Ceremonies and in English introduced each subsequent song and dance. She sometimes joined the singers in their corner.

The second song was a "play song", saying that the dancing would begin.<sup>9</sup> I was told that this was really a Squamish melody. "The Squamish people used to come up here all the time to fish, or they were invited to the feasts, and that's how the Bella Coola got that song." The women made two circuits of the dancing area, moving with motions similar to those of the first "entrance dance".<sup>10</sup> The dancers then disappeared through the doorway to the right of the stage.



A masked face with leering grin and many teeth poked out from between the two front curtains. With great shrieks of maniacal laughter it whipped open the curtain and the figure, clad in a black rubber rain-slicker, leaped down from the stage. He was joined by another "clown" or "copy-cat" wearing a brown sack-cloth blanket and a similar mask. With hunched shoulders and ever-renewed shrills of laughter, the two teased and cavorted with each other. One crept up behind the turned back of the other, who sensed his presence and whirled to face him. With a shriek the former fell to the floor and rolled about, while his cohort filled the hall with ridiculing mirth. They then turned their attention to the audience and stalked warily towards the children seated near the front. The children, enjoying the frolic, spontaneously grouped together and crept toward the "copy-cat", only to run with uncalculated shrieks back to their seats when the pair leapt suddenly toward them.

These "copy-cats", so called because of their habit of interrupting and mimicking the announcer as she tried to introduce the dances, appeared several times between performances.

When the "copy-cats" had retreated to a corner and the excitement had died down, Mrs. Siwallace announced that Chief Sam Pootlass' song was to be sung next. It was danced by Mable Hall<sup>11</sup> who stood in the center of the stage wearing a carved sisaok-type headdress with a small raven's head in the center, only parts of it painted. She was accompanied by the other women dancers who moved on the stage behind her.

All were clad in the costume seen earlier - blankets, and head, wrist, and ankle bands. I was told that this "chief's song" said that all the people are coming to Chief Sam Pootlass' feast. Another informant explained somewhat contradictorily that the song "actually belongs to the village more than to one person. It was used anytime a chief from somewhere else visited, the village."

12

This was followed by Andy Schooner's song, a Tallio "chief's song", which he had inherited from Reuben Schooner, his father. Although it had been originally planned that someone else would take Andy's place as he had recently been released from hospital and wasn't feeling very strong, he decided at that last moment to perform his own dance. He danced on the floor before the stage, wearing a headdress, painted red and black with a black velvet piece that hung down the back. He wore no blanket, but carried a bird-shaped rattle. He was attended down on the floor by Dan Nelson, while the women danced in accompaniment on the stage, led by Andy's granddaughter, Mary Moody.

Andy's song was followed by the Echo dance. The curtain parted to find a figure wrapped in a blanket, crouched with his back to the audience. He was attended on the stage by Charley Snow. 13 The dancer turned, with one knee on the floor until his side was towards the hall, and he peered over a blanketed arm with his large masked face. The mask was predominantly painted a dark green, with large circular eyes and other detail accented in red, white and black. Great

tufts of white hair sprang from the top of the head and fell down over the big ears. The dance consisted of two distinct rhythm patterns - one for times when the dancer turned once again with his back to the audience (to change the mouth-pieces, as Echo has six different mouths), and another for when he half-turned to the hall and revealed his new face. Two informants spoke of an Echo whistle that used to be heard during the performance of the Echo dance. "It repeats everything that is said. One of the old women brought one out last year, but it was too dry and wouldn't work. Andy Schooner is supposed to be the only one who knows how to do it. It's like those whistles you have in your book (my book of photographs of the Bella Coola collection in the National Museum), round but quite short." Following the performance, Andy stood up on the stage and told about the Echo dance, which was his privilege and the mask for which he owned. He said that the mask would never be sold, but he publically willed it to his granddaughter<sup>14</sup> Mary, upon his own death."

This was followed by Tallio Hans' song, danced by Mable Hall because Hazel Hans, who had originally planned to dance the part, was not present. The dance was very similar to that of Chief Sam Pootlass, although the song was, of course, completely different. It was a "chief's song" originally from Tallio.

After the women had left the stage and silence had fallen, great cries of "Hao hao hao" could be heard from backstage. Then out

leapt the crouched figure of a Hao Hao bird, with huge long bird-beak mask, painted wooden feathers, and ankle bands of red wool-fringe. With each "Hao hao hao" the figure took great strides, and then squatted once again, as the singers rapped out a frantic rhythm with their sticks. Another Hao Hao appeared, and then another. Each was attended by a blanketed figure, who guided the movement, which was essentially circular, around the floor. The three bird-forms halted in a row with their attendants in front of the stage, and then exited as the rhythm ceased.

Andy Schooner Sr. then went up onto the stage and told the story of how the Bella Coola first saw the Hao Haos who lived up on the mountain close to the present settlement, Mt. Nuhaohaoda. Then Mrs. Siwallace announced the next song to be that of Mrs. Agnes Edgar, one of the singers. The song said, "Somebody is coming to visit. Let's go to see who it is. Let's go to look in the box to see if there are  
15  
any feathers." It was danced by Alice Tallio, and resembled the previous sisaok type dances. Following this, Mrs. Siwallace told the story of the Thunder(bird) dance. While she was talking, a wail was heard from behind the curtain, announcing that the Thunder dance was coming. "Kusiut is coming pretty soon. Whistles used to be heard too. When I was a young girl, over on the other side, we used to hear the whistles in the evening and be scared because we didn't know what was going to happen."

When she had finished speaking, the curtains parted and Jeffrey Snow, Charley's son, was seen on his knees, with his back to the audience. Cries of "hoip" were heard. He turned his head, which revealed the beautiful black face of Thunder, with his prominent forehead, nose and chin and the corona of twigs and white fluff that surrounded it. Finally he leapt down from the stage and was joined by his father, who attended him. Wailing was heard from behind the curtain and then another Thunder, danced by another teenager, Caleph Hans, in similar attire, but with painted wooden feathers around his body, also came onto the floor. The two faced each other and staged a mock battle where they charged forward and tried to knock each other to the ground with their shoulders. Finally the smaller of the two, Jeffrey, was flung onto the floor in defeat. But then he rose and the two were handed painted wooden paddles. I was told that in the old days these would have been carved bolts of lightning, but since none could be found, the paddles, which had been used in the first "Entrance Dance", were substituted. The sounds of metallic peals of thunder were heard from the singers' corner, and the two ended their dance, each making sliding circuits of the dance area before exiting.

After the Thunder dance a "copy-cat" ran before the audience, spraying them with drops of water. One informant said that this always occurred. "You know, after Thunder comes rain." He said that in the old days they would have containers of water under their arms, and hoses,

and would spray everybody. Then they would have seals' stomachs full of feathers and blow them at people.

Then Felicity Walkus danced her song, which she had received  
16  
from her mother. She wore a sisaok-type headdress and was accompanied by the other women.

Next was the dance of the two "Happy Boys" (Anuk't mullalt), Charley Snow and Charley Moody, Mary's husband. They wore masks painted green and white, with tufts of cedar bark that rose from the foreheads. Charley Snow carried an improvised rattle of a plastic ball, with stones in it, taped to a stick. I tried to learn the significance of the dance, but no one seemed to know the meaning. They just said that they were "happy boys". One woman said that the "Happy Boy" dance is the beat of the rain - "when it gets faster, that is the heavier rain fall. The rhythm is the dripping of the water." But others said that they had never heard that story before.

This was followed by Captain Bob's song, which was danced by all the women. Then Captain Bob's Hao Hao dance was performed. It was almost identical with that of the Hao Haos earlier.

Then the dance of the other female singer, Mrs. Reuben Schooner, was performed. Her song was originally from Tallio. Dancing was led by their daughter, Dinah, since Mrs. Schooner was too elderly and suffered from a crippling disease. This dance involved all the women and consisted of them moving in a line twice around the floor space in front of the stage, with movements similar to the first dances.

This was followed by the "Bear Dance", which was greatly enjoyed by both participants and audience alike. Girls formed pairs and danced holding onto each other's hands for support. They crouched facing each other on the stage and proceeded to kick first one foot out in front of them, then the other. This was accompanied by much giggling and laughter, and more than one unbalanced tumble. Mrs. Siwallace said that this dance came from Kitlope and had belonged to Paul Pollard, Jim<sup>17</sup> Pollard's father.

Then Charley Snow's song was danced by the women. He had received this song from his father, Dick Snow (Sonkumai). I was told it was Bella Coola words set to a River's Inlet tune. And then Charley Snow performed his privilege, the "Man-Eater Dance" (Spexspexwandinook-siwae). He moved with his huge masked face with long hooked nose across the stage, first one way, then the other. Then he knelt down with his back to the audience. As the rhythm quickened, he whirled around and the great beak of the creature's face opened slowly. He turned back once again but whirled about when the rhythm quickened once more. He did this three times, before leaving the stage.

That was the last of the planned dances. To end the program the people insisted that the anthropologist join them in a dance, and so I went up onto the stage, suffered while they dressed me in full regalia, and then stood in their midst, in the position of honor, while they danced around me. All of a sudden I wished for some experienced

assistance in executing what looks like a simple step, yet is not. Somewhat overcome by their kindness, I participated in this, the finale of the program.

### Analysis of the Dances

The evening of dancing described above revealed a fragment of past tradition -a skeletal representation of the hearty and robust ceremonial life that flourished amongst the Bella Coola less than 100 years ago. When we compare the incidents witnessed with those described in the works of Boas and McIlwraith, the vast gaps and discrepancies become evident.

### Changes in Procedure

The performance of ceremonial dances no longer occurs over three or four day periods, as they traditionally did with potlatch or kusiut events. The Bella Coola have adopted common Western procedures for an evening of entertainment. The program consisted of a series of relatively unrelated performances, integrated by the introductions and comments of the Master of Ceremonies, or "Toast--Master", as Mrs. Si-Wallace described herself.

Performances that were drawn from potlatch and sisook rites, and from kusiut events occur, one following another, on the same program. In the traditional culture such different types of dances were never performed at the same event, when supernatural were present and the occasion was considered a sacred one.



As noted in Part III, certain sisak and kusiut dances were performed in that order during non-ceremonial seasons, at informal gatherings which were not regarded as sacred. The whistles were not heard, the supernatural were not assumed to be in attendance, nor were the performers believed to be operating with supernatural assistance; the dances being purely of entertainment value.

The masked dances of the sisak or kusiut were never performed at such times, however, since these masked performances usually were the climax of a mortuary rite or a kusiut event and thus necessitated the presence of the supernatural. Consequently, the successive presentation of a number of masked dances by the contemporary Bella Coola revealed the lack of a knowledge of over-all ceremonial context in current life. The ceremonial knowledge that remains in the Bella Coola community today is of a random and unintegrated nature and performances that once were dramatic peaks in a ceremonial cycle are now isolated from their original contexts and are grouped and presented in arbitrary sequence.

The religion and similarly the sacred element of Bella Coola ceremonial practices has all but been destroyed. Consequently, although some practices such as the supernatural cry of "hoip" are continued, there is no evidence of the belief in the presence of the supernatural beings at contemporary dances.

While little can be said regarding the procedure followed in the individual sisak-type dances, McIlwraith's careful descriptions

enable a comparison to be made between those masked dances witnessed and their counterparts prior to 1922. They are discussed in the order that they appeared in the program described above.

1. The dance of Echo: Since we do not have detailed description of a traditional Echo dance, it is impossible to comment on the specific content of the contemporary performance. However, two speculative comments might be offered.

First, it seems most likely that Echo seldom performed individually. Probably he appeared in series of supernatural beings involved in dances such as the Mystery dance or Thunder dance - occasions when a number of characters appeared briefly and then exited.

Also, it is important to note the similarity in form between the Bella Coola Echo mask and Kwakiutl Echoes. In both groups Echo has several mouthpieces, and changes these during a performance to become  
18  
different characters.

2. The dance of the Hao Haos: The performance of the Hao Haos in the ceremony described above resembled quite closely McIlwraith's description of their appearance during the Mystery dance (See Part IV).  
19  
The only obvious difference aside from the absence of Ano<sup>o</sup>likwots~~ix~~, was the involvement of only three dancers and their attendants instead of four as described by McIlwraith.

3. Thunder(bird) dance: the dance of the two Thunders revealed many similarities with the traditional practices, as described

by McIlwraith. There were, however, some modifications. The actions of each dancer as he first appeared on the stage, while not identical, were similar in effect. As with the traditional dancer, each Thunder remained for some time shaking his arms out toward the corners of the room, before leaping down to dance about the floor.

The two Thunders, who danced together rather than individually, each had an attendant. However, no eagle down was scattered, nor were the dancers handed the smoking rattles described in Part IV.

The battle staged between the Thunders seems to be a dramatic innovation. No basis in tradition or myth could be found for the event, however it is possible that it is a portrayal of a fight described in a myth concerning one individual's encounter with Thunder.

Rainwater did not appear after the exit of the Thunder dancers. However, the "copy-Cat" performed the rite of sprinkling the audience with water.

The events preceeding the dance of Thunder were not, of course, performed. However, I found that the character of Tioqots, the Defamer, has not been forgotten. He was described to me by one informant as:

The one who thinks that it knows everything, and always wants to be the winner, to be on top. When it dances, it just makes the sound of "oo oo", because one day Raven got fed up with it and took away its language.

While Tioqots was not involved in the dances I witnessed, he performed individually during the centennial celebrations in the summer of 1967.

One interesting development has arisen in connection with the name "Thunder". I was told by many informants, and McIlwraith confirms that the name of this black-faced character is Saiuti, or Thunder. And certainly the nature of his performance suggests his relationship with the natural phenomena. Yet continually the performance was referred to as that of "Thunderbird", and stories of encounters with Thunderbird were offered in discussions of the character and dance witnessed. To some informants this is a confusing problem; they too wonder why Saiuti is inaccurately translated as "Thunderbird".

I can only speculate that stories of Thunderbird, an important figure in Northwest coast mythology, became confused with the character Thunder, who appears to have been unique to the Bella Coola in that form, being regarded as a senior supernatural being. Similarly, the fact that carved figures on totem-poles that are undistinguishable from Bella Coola eagles are sometimes categorized as "Thunderbird" suggests a relatively recent arrival of this character in Bella Coola mythology, at a time when the mythological order was crumbling, making confusion and error probable.

4. The dance of the Happy Boys: As mentioned earlier no explanation for the dance of the Happy Boys could be obtained from informants. A search through McIlwraith's work reveals no such characters. It is likely then, that this is a dance obtained from someone other than a Bella Coola, either through inter-tribal marriage or as a result

of such a performance being witnessed elsewhere and then copied back in Bella Coola.

5. The dance of Spexspexwandinooksiwae: Charley Snow's performance as Spexspexwandinooksiwae was openly acknowledged as a prerogative obtained from the Kwakiutl. It is not certain how the privilege was obtained, although it is interesting to note a comment made by McIlwraith about the Kwakiutl character Baxbaxqwanalociwa:

All informants agreed that this creature was not a part of the Cannibal rites of the Bella Coola and one man suggested that the cannibalistic incubus rendered it unnecessary. The Bella Coola believe that this Cannibal spirit is used in Bella Bella. During 1923 there came to Bella Coola an old Kimsquit Indian who had left his home many years ago, and had since been living in Smith Inlet (?). With him came his son, a grown man, who had inherited from his mother a Kwakiutl Cannibal prerogative which he displayed in the winter of 1923-4. After the dancer had, theoretically, returned from the regions above, a large masked figure representing Baxbaxqwaiwa entered through the front door. As the singers beat time, it hopped to and fro, up and down, with snapping beak. The Bella Coola were intensely interested, and one had only to listen to their remarks when wondering what it might be, to be convinced that the Cannibal spirit is a strange concept to them. (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. II, p. 117)

6. The performance of the Copy-Cats: McIlwraith describes the appearance of "clowns". These are probably the "copy-cats" who have added so much humor to the recent performances of the Bella Coola. Here is his description of their role in the Mystery Dance:

Two clowns now appear together. Each wears a mask, representing a man whose mouth is open and whose face is wrinkled in a grin spreading from ear to ear. They go around the fire laughing and playing, rolling on the floor and indulging in all kinds of antics, with constant fits of laughter, so deep that it seems to come from their stomachs .... They are en-

titled to make witticisms, often of an obscene nature, at the expense of any of the spectators, and the kukusiut always join in laughter at the victim. Sometimes the singers beat out a short tune and the performers dance clumsily, to the amusement of all. When they have withdrawn, the announcer explains that these two spend their time in the land above playing and jesting. If the preliminaries are long delayed, the clowns may be sent out to keep the audience amused while waiting for the more important beings. (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. II, p. 179)

The "clowns", or "copy-cats" as they were described, obviously have assumed a more important function in the Bella Coola performance. They appeared during almost every interval between dances, filling the gaps and supplying delightful comic relief. They also assumed the role of Rainwater, who traditionally appeared following the dance of Thunder. In the contemporary ceremony a "copy-cat" ran toward the audience, sprinkling drops of water on those seated before him, thereby usurping the role of this other character.

#### Ceremonial Rights and Prerogatives

As well as changes appearing in the actual procedures of dances, there has been a notable breakdown in the once rigid system of ceremonial rights and prerogatives. In the past, members of ancestral families inherited certain privileges related to the dancing societies, and only by a process of borrowing and payment could one individual include another's privileges - a mask, a song, a name - in his ceremonies. This was a serious matter, and the rule was seldom if ever violated.

Today claims to such prerogatives are far less strictly defined. Now the possession of a mask generally seems to include the

right to perform the dance associated with it. During my stay among the Bella Coola, I discovered a very limited number of masks still retained in the village. Thunder, Echo, Hao Hao, Spexspexwandinooksiwae, "clowns", and "Happy Boy" masks were all that I found, plus recently carved Ano<sup>o</sup>likwotsHix and Tlogots masks. (I saw 23 masks which were owned by only 7 of the 24 families visited. However, in many cases one representative of an extended family kept all the masks together. I am inclined to believe, also, that other masks and carvings were in the village but their owners were reluctant, out of disinterest or distrust, to show them.) These masks and dances seem still to be passed down within family groups; during the performance Andy Schooner Sr. publicly willed his Echo mask to his granddaughter upon his own death. Yet it is doubtful that they all were originally obtained by their present owners in the traditional manner, that is, at a time of naming and initiation into the society, when a song would be specially prepared for each new owner.

Ordan Mack proudly possesses Thunder, yet tells how he found the mask in a box of discarded ceremonial items at the deserted village site across the river and he is perfectly aware of the previous, rightful owner. Charley Snow has prepared two copies of Thunder masks and has taught his fifteen year old son to dance, although he himself dances Spexspexwandinooksiwae. It is interesting to note that the name associated with the Thunder prerogative was Saiks<sup>i</sup>, and "the last

to use the name died about 1910." (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. II, p. 211)  
This suggests that none of the recent Thunder dancers obtained their privilege in the traditional manner.

There is also the substitution of dancers for different performances, something which probably did not occur in earlier times. It seems more likely that traditionally Mrs. Schooner would have either given the dance to her daughter, Dinah, or else the dance would have gone into disuse, rather than having Dinah perform for her.

Some songs and dances seem now to have become communal property. I saw the dance of Captain Bob, who has been dead for some time, performed by a number of women who stood in no direct relationship to him. Thus it appears that the notion of individual rights to ceremonial prerogatives has diminished, and what little remains of Bella Coola ceremonialism is kept alive through cooperation and group endeavour. In the past the knowledge of details of an individual's prerogatives was jealously retained by that individual, but now it is essential for everyone to contribute his special knowledge or recollections, if the performance is to occur at all. There is a feeling of group involvement to a far greater extent than there would have been in the past, when all but a very few present would have comprised only the audience and would not have been involved actively in preparing or assisting the performer in his dance.



Modern Dancing Paraphernalia - A Process of Substitution

In the material culture involved in modern dances, one finds a great amount of substitution in the materials that comprise the paraphernalia necessary for the performance of a dance.

Red wool yarn replaces the traditionally widely used shredded red cedar bark in head bands, wrist and ankle bands, and in additions to other aspects of costume. In place of the relatively rare and expensive otter skins, strips of white flannel cascade round the shoulders of a dancer, suspended from his wooden headdress. Bits of white cotton batting serve as an easily obtained substitute for the eagle down previously scattered through the twigs that rise high above the wooden heads of Thunder and Hao Hao. Instead of regular batons, singers use bits of kindling wood to beat out the essential rhythms. They sit side by side on benches, tapping the sticks in unison against the floor. A stick striking against a metal pie-plate produces peals of thunder.

In the dance recently witnessed, the rattle held by Charley Snow as a "Happy Boy" dancer had been constructed of a plastic orange-juice dispenser containing stones, taped to a short stick; while it was a far cry from a traditionally carved and painted bird or spherical rattle, it well served its rhythmic purpose.

While watching a battle staged between the two Thunder dancers, I was surprised to find them suddenly produce painted model paddles which they held each in their hands at arms length in front of them.

I was puzzled at this development and asked a friend beside me for an explanation. He told me, with some amusement, that the dancers used to hold small bolts of lightning, but since there weren't any of these around, the paddles were used instead.

In the one evening of dancing, a variety of other substitutions appeared. All manner of body coverings were used, from blankets to a black rubber raincoat. Bed sheets suspended from a string served as both back-drop curtains and a more Western draw-curtain at the front of the stage.

#### The New Role of Ceremonialism

It seems that the desire to perform ceremonial dances such as those I witnessed arises from two not unrelated motives. For the elderly members of society it is akin to reminiscences of days gone by. The performance reaffirms ties with a distant past. For the younger individuals the motive seems to be the desire to have some involvement in things which belong to the Bella Coola traditional past. This appears to be incongruous with the findings of the researchers who prepared A Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada, Volume I, who report that ".... many of the young in particular would prefer to see the past transferred to the pages of histories and ethnographies rather than have it continue into the present." (Hawthorn et al., 1966, Vol. I, p. 10) In Bella Coola there seems to be considerable interest amongst

young people in participating in the dances. Although they had to be taught all the movement of the dances and the words of the songs, about fifteen teenaged girls were involved in all the womens' dances I witnessed. I was told that they had been practising every night for a week, under the guidance of Felicity Walkus, in efforts to learn their parts. As noted above, two teenaged boys performed the dance of Thunder, and while others were not actual performers, a number of boys helped in the preparation of the hall for the performance, set up the tape-recorder, took admissions at the door and formed an appreciative audience. While I did not talk to many to hear their views on the matter, there was considerable evidence of positive interest on the part of young people to learn of parts of traditional life and to retain their cultural heritage within the Bella Coola community.

The ceremonial unit is now the entire village; the audience is comprised of members of the white community. As far as I could ascertain the dances are never spontaneously performed at all-Indian gatherings. They are planned to be presented to white people - an exhibition of something Bella Coola presented with pride - no matter how small the white audience proves to be. And as might be expected, at times the efforts of some to remain spot-lighted causes hostility. Hank King said ".... many people don't want to dance anymore because some people try to own the whole night by getting up on the stage and saying they own the masks and things. They steal things. So many people just get up and walk away and never come back."

Contemporary Bella Coola Art

My search through Bella Coola in 1967 revealed a few carvings proudly kept by the residents, as well as a few carvers who continue to produce occasional carvings. Here is a brief inventory of the objects I was shown.

<u>Owner</u>	<u>Objects</u>
Hank King	2 <u>Hao Hao</u> masks 1 Thunder mask and painted feathers 1 <u>sisaok</u> -type headdress
Charley Snow	1 bird-form rattle 1 figure of Thunder (bird) 1 <u>Spexspexwandinooksiwae</u> mask 1 <u>Eagle</u> incubus 2 Thunder masks 2 Happy Boy masks 2 "Clowns" 1 <u>Hao Hao</u> mask
Ordan Mack	1 Thunder mask
Dan Nelson	2 unfinished <u>Ano<sup>o</sup>likwotsdix</u> masks 1 <u>Tloqots</u> mask
Andy Schooner Sr.	1 Echo mask
Ralph Freeman (non-Indian)	3 bracelets (2 copper, 1 silver)
Cliff Kopas (non-Indian)	1 <u>sisaok</u> -type headdress 1 "clown" mask 3 unidentified masks
Grave monuments	1 carved and painted Killerwhale 1 figure of bird over cross-board with painted serpent.
Paintings	6 paintings on interior of hall
Poles	2 totem poles outside Indian agency

Although they were not particularly secretive about what they owned, there may have been other objects in the possession of residents of Bella Coola. I saw only those listed above.

#### Contemporary Carvers

Very little art is produced in Bella Coola today, and what there is tends to be of a spasmodic nature. No one was carving while I was there in 1967.

However, Dan Nelson showed me the masks which he had carved - Tlogots and two unpainted Ano<sup>o</sup>likwots<sup>Hix</sup> masks. His work was quite crude, but particularly interesting, since there apparently were no other masks of such characters in the village and he must have relied on his memory for their creation.

Ordan Mack was praised for his skill as a metal worker. Two copper bracelets owned by Ralph Freeman had been purchased from Ordan about ten years ago.

Charley Snow also carves in metal, but prefers silver or gold. Ralph Freeman owned one of his silver bracelets. Charley also showed me two Thunder masks which he had carved in the past few years for his son's use. (See Plate 17)

Apparently Willie Mack carved model poles and masks. The storekeeper said that on occasion he has received masks from Willie, and they always sell immediately. Unfortunately Willie was away working at a logging camp during my stay in Bella Coola, so I was unable to talk with him.

Charley Snow attributed many of the things he owned to his  
20  
father, Dick. It is possible that he, or his brother, repainted the  
motif on the bird and serpent grave monument on the reserve. A photo-  
graph in the archives of the British Columbia Provincial Museum shows  
the monument very weathered and faded, yet the painting on it today is  
quite fresh; it must have been repainted during the last 30 years.  
McIlwraith notes that Timothy Snow was the most active artist in the  
1920s.

Contemporary art - as limited as it is - is produced for two  
reasons.

Masks are occasionally carved, usually as copies of existing  
pieces, to be used by individuals in the infrequent presentations of  
ceremonial dances, e.g. Charley Snow's Thunder masks used by Jeffrey.

The most common motive for carving today, however, is the  
prospect of economic gain. The local store-keeper accepts items to  
be sold on commission, and members of the white community at Bella  
Coola are anxious to buy the pieces. The result is, unfortunately,  
that carving is only inspired when there is an economic need or desire.  
"Ordan Mack carves when he gets hungry - but he hasn't been hungry lately."  
Not much is produced unless food (although welfare services supply  
21  
families with regular incomes) or liquor is needed.

Contemporary Masks

Since Thunder was such an important mythical personage and because he is among the rather sparse mythical population still well remembered, contemporary Thunder masks will be analyzed as typical examples of the sort of work being done today in Bella Coola.

Shape: rounded, though squared face.

Profile: unusual, squared effect of forehead and extended hooked nose.

Features:

Eyes - circles cut-out within rounded Northwest Coast eyes.

Brows - extremely arched, meeting low over bridge of nose.

Nose - slightly protruding but just to same point as brow. Squared off bridge with hook extending straight down to tip of chin. Nostrils extremely wide and accentuated.

Mouth - wide, squared grin with rows of carved teeth.

Twigs and shredded cedar bark added around head.

Facial Painting: completely painted predominantly in black with red and white additions.

Eyes - eye-shape white.

Brows - black, outlined in white.

Nostrils - red, outlined in white.

Nose - narrow tip painted white where it crosses in front of mouth and joins chin.

Mouth - red with white teeth.

Rest of face painted solid, glossy black.

No motifs or decorative designs.

While the features comprising the Thunder masks are ostensibly similar to traditional carvings, the differences in the shape of the contemporary masks results in a much-modified version of the character. The accentuated mouth and the startling contrasts in the painting create an impressive face, but the squared facial shape, coupled with the absence of protruding bulbous features produce a less dynamic effect. It seems as though the craftsman, lacking creative imagination and conviction, allowed the shape of the medium to delineate his product, resulting in a colorful, almost grotesquely effective mask - but one lacking traditional vitality and creative genius.

#### Some Personal Comments

At first glance one might be moved to say that Bella Coola art is, in fact, dead. The carvings of the early twenties reveal the creative genius and life-spark of earlier times, but through the span of two life-times, its decay is more than evident. Masks purportedly produced by the hand of Snuhieliwa display traditional skills; the work of his son reveals a knowledge of the characteristics required in a carving, but lacks the movement or originality evident in earlier products. The carvings of Charley, Snuhieliwa's grandson, are relatively unsuccessful attempts to copy those of the past.





Plate 17  
Thunder mask  
Owner: Charley Snow  
Bella Coola, B.C.

Yet the fact that the activity of carving has not disappeared entirely from the village merits further discussion. Some carvings, masks and jewellery in gold, copper, and silver, are produced for sale to the white population. The bracelets produced by Charley Snow and Ordan Mack are fairly well executed, but are a new craft - etching on thin bands of pre-cut metal - rather than being related to traditional Bella Coola art practices. They favor the "American Eagle" motif, common in metal work by Northwest Coast Indians during the past few decades.

I think it would not be unfair to say that on the whole, the current carving is the work of copyists, who choose pieces of older art as their models and labor to produce replicas of them, whether for sale or in an effort to preserve what remains of the old tradition. Often the process of copying is a conscious one and is not concealed.

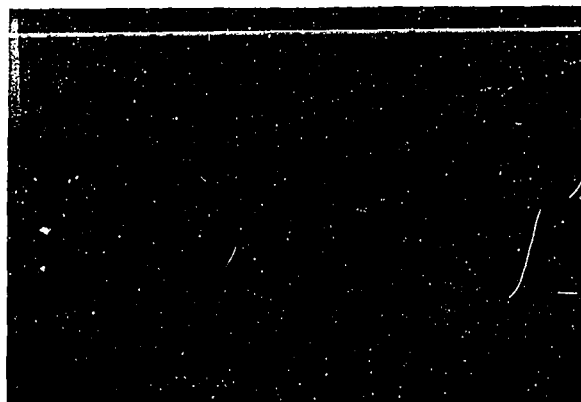


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There seems to be no stigma attached to such activity. Mrs. Siwallace spoke of urging young men to copy the masks that are in their possession, in an attempt to try to prevent them from selling the originals to visiting tourists and collectors, thus losing them forever. These men may have shown no special ability to carve, but she urges them to at least try. The most startling example of copy work that has been done recently is one of the two totem poles erected on the reserve in celebration of British Columbia's Centennial in 1958. In the preparation of this pole, it was necessary to resort to a photograph published in a British Columbia government ethnography of the Bella Coola produced for the use of teachers in the provincial schools. The pole is a fairly close, if somewhat lifeless copy of the one found in the photograph.

Andy Schooner explained how things once were. He said that in the old days people got their names from the beings that danced in Nusmat'a up above. And when they took such a name, they had to have a mask carved. And that was why it took a really good carver - the owner would tell him about the personage and he would have to think hard and decide what the face would look like, and then carve it from his imagination. So perhaps by the old standards, a really good carver did not copy. Memory of masks and carvings seen in past years would undoubtedly comprise part of that "imagination", lending some measure of consistency to the characters portrayed.

Traditionally the task of a carver was reinforced because the role of dancing in the culture made the masks a vital part of Bella Coola religion. Now that the over-all ceremonial context of many masks has disintegrated, leaving them in isolation, the creator of new masks is faced with a problem irrelevant to the old culture. Today there is no real basis or material for the "creative imagination". The most immediate solution is to copy the products of an earlier period.

## CONCLUSION

### The Bella Coola and Other Cultural Groups

It is important to compare what has happened to the art of the Bella Coola with what has also occurred among other Northwest Coast Indian tribes, or primitive groups in other parts of the world today. One would not necessarily expect to find the same decline and modification of ceremonial life and artistic activity amongst all groups that had experienced extensive culture contact for over one hundred years.

There is a striking contrast between the Bella Coola and their close neighbors. Amongst the Kwakiutl, particularly the Alert Bay group, ceremonial life has not disintegrated as markedly as it did in Bella Coola society. Moreover, both ceremonial activity and artistic production have begun to flourish once more, in accordance with conscientious efforts to retain traditional accuracy.

Certain distinctive features of Bella Coola social organization and ceremonial life, as well as outside forces, combined to reduce the likelihood of the survival of traditional ceremonialism. As I discovered during my interviews with informants, the nature of the kusiut society was such that even in the traditional culture many Bella Coola were unaware of the rituals and unfamiliar with the materials associated with them. Since the secrets of the society were carefully guarded and the materials either hidden or destroyed, it is not surprising

that knowledge of this society disappeared quickly once the fabric of ceremonial life began to disintegrate.

Similarly, the traditional emphasis on the village as the ceremonial unit, and the absence of inter-village clans such as were present among the Kwakiutl, rendered the Bella Coola more vulnerable in the face of encounters with outside forces. After the arrival of large numbers of white men in the second half of the Nineteenth Century, disease ravaged the population, reducing villages to groups of but a few individuals. The centralization of survivors in three locations, and ultimately in the single village of Bella Coola, eliminated the structural basis of ceremonial life, the autonomous village communities which hosted ceremonials and comprised the audiences. And with no universally represented clans to bind the remnants of former villages together, it is little wonder that interest in ceremonial activity waned.

Outside forces other than disease encouraged the demise of traditional life in all tribes of the Northwest Coast. The various churches that invaded the area regarded Indian ceremonialism and art as dangerous, and they went to great lengths to stamp them out. The Potlatch Law of 1884 making potlatching on the Northwest Coast illegal, which was finally repealed in 1951, contributed greatly to the decline in ceremonial activity. As mentioned earlier, some groups such as the Kwakiutl seemed to withstand these pressures to abandon their heritage. But the Bella Coola, because of their social structure and shocking decrease in population, bowed to those pressures.

The question arises as to why, when some cultures retain much of their traditional belief system despite the pressure of zealous missionaries and their religions, the Bella Coola lost their belief in the powers of the supernatural creatures they once respected. Once again one must recognize the combination of an outside force - the Christian church - and the particularly vulnerable nature of aspects of Bella Coola society.

Once the population dwindled and ceremonialism suffered such a decline, two of the important functions of mythology became unnecessary. With the disintegration of the social structure based on a number of autonomous villages, mythology's role as a charter explaining the traditional social organization became meaningless. And with the decline of ceremonialism, myths were no longer drawn upon as characters of ceremonial rites. Once they were not publicly enacted, there was nothing to reinforce existing myths and many were quickly forgotten.

APPENDIX I

Difficulties Encountered in This Type of Study

Difficulties in relation to technique and accuracy arise in pursuit of information pertaining to materials drawn from a traditional pattern of life of at least fifty years past. Technically, problems arise in dealing with aged informants. The only knowledgeable people are very elderly, and if they haven't forgotten entirely, an interpreter is necessary during the interviews. Language changes over time, so that often the younger members of a society do not fully understand the old, particularly if another language such as English has replaced the native tongue for much of the daily communication throughout the community. This was apparent in my work with the Bella Coola. I could often hear distinct differences in pronunciation of what was supposedly the same word. And I was thwarted in my efforts to obtain word for word translations of the traditional songs that I had recorded. My informants finally admitted that they couldn't understand all of the songs themselves, and I was forced to be satisfied with paraphrases of the general theme or message.

In relation to the accuracy of the data gathered, the usual cautions concerning reliability of informants apply. But studies such as this rely not just on initial knowledgeability, but as well on memory, which must search back several decades for information. Memory



may fail informants, in which case gaps occur in the data. But more problematical is the possibility that what the informant remembers may not really be "traditional" patterns at all, but rather more recent, modified customs. This was evident in the testimonies of some of my younger informants who remembered the sisaok society as of greatest prestige, and the kusiut society as something that one went through when very young. Some of them may have been initiated to the kusiut as babies. McIlwraith describes how the societies were undergoing drastic changes during the 1920s.

I was fortunate to have the careful descriptions of McIlwraith by which to assess the reliability of my informants. And it is my belief, as a result of my field work, that a reliable source of some details of traditional life is necessary in conducting any study such as this one - a study of the role and nature of materials long removed from their traditional contexts, seeking information from a group of people to a great extent influenced by another culture.

Field work supplementary to existing ethnography can supply some additional details but more important, offers new perspectives or points of view for general interpretations. Data collected from contemporary groups also facilitates comparative studies, revealing areas and aspects of social change.

## NOTES

### PART I

1. This function was particularly important amongst the Bella Coola since, unlike most societies according to Malinowski, myths were not commonly owned and shared, but were maintained as secret prerogatives of members of extended families. In ritual performances some of the details of the myths were revealed to an otherwise un-informed audience.
2. The settlement is at the site of the old village of Qomoqotes on the south side of the Bella Coola river. Immediately prior to 1936 the Bella Coola resided on the north side of the river but a severe flood forced a move back to the former village site, which stands on higher ground and is less directly threatened by the flooding river.
3. When inter-village marriage occurred, the women and children joined the village of the men. Theoretically children had full rights in the village of the mother as well as that of the father, and could receive various privileges from the two groups. However, emphasis tended to be on the father's village group as an ancestral family.
4. The high regard held for prerogatives received from forebearers caused the ancestral families to usually restrict marriage choices to within the ancestral family. However, it appears that latterly there was a trend towards exogamic marriage in efforts to obtain new foreign privileges. This was facilitated by the establishment of peaceful conditions on the Northwest Coast after the arrival of the white populations. The result was that offspring could claim descent from more than one group and could receive ancestral names from any or all of these. However, as noted above, emphasis of membership remained on the father's ancestral family.
5. It usually required four potlatches before one was considered a "chief".
6. The nature and significance of both the sisak and kusiut societies will be discussed in Part II.

### PART II

1. These secret meeting places were feared by lesser members of the society, due to the believed presence of supernatural powers at such

locations. Hank King told me about such a place along Thorsen Creek, where a number of petroglyphs are evident. He said "It is a place where they went to make up songs, and while they did it, they carved their own marks." Another such meeting place was referred to as the "chief's ledge", a site close to the present village, which was unfortunately destroyed by blasting a few years ago during the installation of a small Hydro electricity plant.

2. See McIlwraith, Volume I, page 220 for a detailed description of the event, as well as page 474, for notes on a funeral potlatch which he witnessed in 1922.
3. This was held immediately after her death, not the traditional one year later.
4. According to McIlwraith the Bella Coola did not know the exact meaning of the term "sisack". See page 180, Volume I.
5. McIlwraith notes that "this design is said to have been introduced to Bella Coola from the north a few generations ago; before that time, the head-dress consisted of a circular band of dyed cedar bark, decorated with the tail feathers of one of the large woodpeckers." (Vol. I, p. 205). This may explain the significance of the head-gear worn by the Bella Coola who travelled to Germany in the company of Boas in 1878.
6. Her description seems to combine elements of the giving of gifts to validate a marriage, as well as the practise on the part of her parents of distributing goods on her behalf one year later. The fact that they gave the goods not to her husband but to all the members of the village again recalls potlatching-like gift-giving.
7. Hank King explained how many of the Bella Coola received their names. "The people who ran the cannery just chose names for many of their employees. And then when they were baptized by the church across the river, many of those names were changed again. Joe Saunders was once Stikine Joe; George Nelson was Skeena George; Peter White-wash was named that because he was painting a fence when the boss saw him; Captain Myers, Bob, Schooner, Harry, etc. were captains of particular boats and so their names were officially made Captain." The name "King" was probably conferred on the members of the Pootlass family, due to their relationship to the great chief.
8. The plural of kusiut.
9. Kimsquit kusiut believed that the neophyte also saw her husband.

10. "In every village there are at least two kukusiut who have, embodied with their kusiut names, the professional prerogative of acting as healer to every novice; it is believed that the ancestor of each obtained a name and this right through a revelation from some supernatural healer. Since that time the owner of the name has been able to insert some of his own ever-present power into a neophyte to enable him to sustain the dangers of admission to the society.... The profession of siki can be transmitted by willing like any other prerogative and it occasionally happens that the same individual is siki for both kusiut and sisook." (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. II, p. 34)
11. McIlwraith lists over 40. See page 41, Vol. II and following for detailed descriptions of the ritual of specific dances.

### PART III

1. Throughout this thesis the term "function" is used following the definition offered in Webster's Dictionary: "Any specific power of acting or operating that belongs to an agent, or the specific work accomplished by it."
2. In a conversation with Mrs. Audrey Hawthorn in January 1968 she recounted similar experiences with the Kwakiutl. She said that Chief Mungo Martin, a Kwakiutl carver, used to critically evaluate the work of others. Yet years ago in her travels to Kwakiutl settlements, she saw the objects owned by villagers and witnessed ceremonials in which both old and new, fine and relatively crude masks, etc. were proudly displayed.
3. This show appeared at the Vancouver City Art Gallery from June 15 to September 24, 1967. See Catalogue: Arts of the Raven.
4. With the exception of the Coast Salish, who, like the Bella Coola, did not have clans but a social structure based on the extended family unit.
5. McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. I, p. 79.
6. Two other types of memorial poles were used, but these did not display the crests of the deceased. One consisted of a series of plain poles set in the cemetery, one for each major ceremony given by the deceased. The other consisted of representations of the goods given away by the deceased. "These are usually painted on boards attached to a post set up near the grave. On this are pictures of canoes, coppers, slaves, and other valuables distributed at potlatches

or memorial potlatches. Alternatively, there may be a series of small poles, each surmounted by a model canoe manned by miniature human figures, symbolic of a canoe and slaves given away. So, too, wooden representations of coppers are often affixed to an upright post." (McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. I, p. 462.)

#### PART IV

1. I am grateful to Mr. E. Arima for the suggestion of this analytical approach.
2. A similar prerogative was exercised by the individual entitled to present the Mystery Dance. See McIlwraith, 1948, Vol. II, p. 167.
3. For all kusiut dances the procedure is much the same for the first three days, as described in Part II. We are concerned here with the masked dances which were performed on the fourth day of the proceedings.
4. The dances of Echo, Sun and Moon were also performed whenever a manifestation of their patron appeared in nature.
5. Holm, 1965, p. 37-38.
6. Holm, 1965, pages 32, 42-43.
7. A distinction is made between "signs" and "symbols". Signs common in Northwest Coast art are those distinctive features such as the cross-hatched tail and two teeth of the beaver, the dorsal fin and blow hole of the Killerwhale, etc. The appearance of these particular features automatically identifies the character represented, and are therefore "signs" of that character. On the other hand, symbols more abstractly suggest ideas than signify things. An example is the distinctive cross which has come to universally symbolize Christianity. Carved and/or painted motifs on masks might be symbols.
8. See Inverarity, 1950.
9. Boas, 1955.
10. Holm, 1965 and Inverarity, 1950.

PART V

1. Hank is a man of about 55 years, the son of one of the few aged singers, Mrs. Mary Edgar. He has spent much of his time during the past ten years since the gradual decay of his vision began, recording the Bella Coola songs and talking to village elders about the traditional way of life. He has a wife and several children, is unemployed, and depends on his yellow Labrador dog to guide him about the village.
2. This is the church located on the reserve, which has almost an entirely Indian membership.
3. Dinah Schooner is the daughter of Mrs. Reuben Schooner. She is about 30 years old and lives with her mother and two children in a house on the reserve. She finished elementary school in Bella Coola and is unemployed. She sings in the United Church choir and is very involved in the activities of the U.C.W. group.
4. Most, if not all Bella Coola understand and speak the Bella Coola language. While children attend English speaking schools, in the homes I visited Bella Coola seemed to be the language used by members of the family in everyday life.
5. Mrs. Edgar is a widow of 70 years who lives alone in Bella Coola. She was one of the few individuals who remembered quite a great deal about traditional life. She speaks only Bella Coola and during our interviews Mrs. Siwallace acted as interpreter.
6. Mrs. Schooner, aged 70 years, is the widow of Reuben Schooner, one of McIlwraith's informants. She lives with her daughter, and grandchildren. She speaks only Bella Coola and Dinah or Mrs. Siwallace acted as interpreters during our interviews. She was invaluable as an informant, and as well as offering much information about the masks and ceremonial life, she consented to my recording of a long myth she recalled. Mrs. Siwallace provided the English paraphrase of the myth.
7. Dan Nelson was another valuable informant, but our interviews were hampered by the heart trouble which leaves him periodically short of breath. He is a grandfather of about 70 years, very proud of his 10 children. He does not work. Although Dan speaks some English, he preferred to speak to Andy Schooner, Sr. in Bella Coola, who translated his comments.

8. Mrs. Siwallace, a grandmother of 60 years, seems to be one of the more influential members of the reserve. She ~~lies~~ lives with her unemployed husband, Stephen, and she was very busy smoking fish in the fall and mending nets. She is apparently one of the few who fishes for olachen during the spring run. A daughter of Joe Saunders, who was considered a "witch doctor", she was rumored to still possess knowledge of herbal remedies, but was reluctant to discuss the subject. Much of her influence on the reserve probably stems from her strong and dynamic personality. She was very helpful as an informant and interpreter.
9. Aside from those explanations contained in Mrs. Siwallace's introductory remarks, many of these details were obtained after the dance from informants.
10. The women danced the same sort of step for every dance in which they were involved. With bent knees, they jerkily slid first to one side, then to the other. For most dances (except the "entrance dance") their hands were held stationery with the outer wrists resting on the hips.
11. I was told that Sam Pootlass was Mable Hall's mother's brother. She is a housewife of about 45 years and the President of the U.C.W.
12. Andy Schooner, Sr., aged 70 years, was son of Reuben Schooner, by an earlier marriage than that with the present Mrs. Reuben Schooner. Andy was Chief Band Councillor when I was in Bella Coola and spent much of his time supervising the building of a house on the reserve. He lives alone in his tiny house. He was very helpful as an informant and interpreter.
13. Charley Snow is a man in his early 40s, the son-in-law of Mrs. Siwallace. He is unemployed but occupies some of his time with carving masks or etching silver and gold bracelets. His wife, Pearl, works at the Co-op store. They were both very helpful as informants and in arranging meetings with other members of the community.
14. This same mask was photographed by H.I. Smith during his field work with T.F. McIlwraith in 1922-23.
15. With the exception of Mrs. Siwallace's introductions, all the songs and cries were in Bella Coola language. All such quoted statements are merely paraphrases of the words of a song, etc. obtained later from informants.

16. Felicity Walkus was the woman, probably in her 60s, who the others said knew the dances best. She taught many of the young girls who performed that night.
17. He was a Kimsquit man who married a Kitlope woman and brought back the dance with him.
18. I feel that with all characters except those which are unique to the Bella Coola it is important to consider the possible relationship with the role of the same characters in Kwakiutl ceremonialism. It is impossible here to enter upon what would be a monumental task - to trace those aspects of Bella Coola culture borrowed from their neighbors and those indigenous to the Bella Coola, while possibly modified by diffusion and contact.
19. As noted in Part III, "Ano'likwotsHix" traditionally was an important part of every kusiut dance, where she introduced and explained each masked figure involved. Contemporary informants remembered her role well, but she was not a part of their contemporary performance. The characters were introduced instead by Mrs. Siwallace.
20. It is possible that some of the material was made by Dick Snow's brother, Timothy, who died before his brother and probably left some of his possessions to him. This possibility is strengthened by the difference in carving technique manifest in the objects.
21. The storekeeper pays the craftsmen in dollars, but the regard for money is not unlike the traditional attitude towards wealth. When the fishermen are paid, \$2000-\$3000 per summer - most of them immediately convert most of it into semi-status items - new trucks, rifles, record players, liquor. There certainly is no notion of profit-savings-security. Welfare services offer the "security".
22. Hank King talks of carving copies of two of his old masks so that in the event of fire and the destruction of the originals, replicas will still exist.



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