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Haida Totem Poles: Reflections of a Society

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Abstract

The Haida were a First Nations group located on the Northwest Coast of Canada. They were exceptional wood carvers that produced various types of works, the most monumental of which were their totem poles. This dissertation analyses 26 of these open architectural structures, each of which belonged to one of the following five types: frontal, mortuary, memorial, house post, or corner post. Of the representations found on poles, 28 different figures were identified. However, individual poles were found to contain between one and fourteen different figures with frontal poles generally featuring the most. The predominant figures on the inventoried poles proved to be birds, humans, and bears. An iconographic structure of a tripartite character was detected that reflects the religious ideology of the Haida population with birds being featured at the top of the poles, humans in the middle, and bears at the lowest point. It also suggests the possible transition from a hunter-gatherer economy to a food producing economy.

KEYWORDS: Haida, totem poles, mythology, Northwest Coast, First Nations

Resumo

Os Haida foram um grupo das Primeiras Nações que habitaram a costa Noroeste do Canadá. Eram excepcionais escultores de madeira, tendo produzido variados tipos de artefactos, dos quais os *totem poles* eram os mais monumentais. Na presente dissertação são analisadas 26 dessas estruturas arquitectónicas de exterior, sendo que cada uma delas pertenceria a um dos seguintes cinco tipos: frontal, funerário, memorial, trave-mestra, ou postes de esquina. Das representações encontradas nos postes, foram individualizadas 28 figuras. No entanto, em postes isolados foi possível identificar entre uma e catorze figuras distintas, sendo os postes frontais os que apresentavam, geralmente, o maior número. A análise destes postes permitiu detectar uma estrutura iconográfica tripartida que reflectia a ideologia religiosa das populações Haida, representando-se as aves no topo, os humanos a meio, e os ursos na base dos postes. Por outro lado, foi possível sugerir, para estas populações, a transição de uma economia baseada na caça-recolecção para uma economia de produção alimentar.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Haida, postes totémicos, mitologia, Noroeste do Canadá, Primeiras Nações

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Objectives

This dissertation will attempt to better understand totem poles produced by the Haida, a First Nations group of Haida Gwaii; objects that not only served a religious purpose but a social one as well. It will endeavor to understand the complex symbolism of the poles as well as possible origins or influences that may have resulted in their development. This will be done by performing a structural analysis of the poles' iconography in order to grasp the religious, social and cultural significance attached to them. By attempting to observe their iconographic repertoire and organisation will assist in better comprehending the cognitive process behind the choice of such images and the symbolism of their location on the pole. These complex structures are difficult to read, can vary from tribe to tribe, and much of their original meaning will never be understood as those who produced them are now gone. However, with an in depth analysis of the poles and learning about the Haida through surviving mythology, which was recorded by the first European visitors, one can try to interpret them. Information that has been gathered through archaeological excavations will also be used.

Totem poles are the only monumental traces left by old Haida generations. Today, some (number) still exist *in situ* or conserved in museums serving as examples of elements that interpreted life, which we could refer to as open architectural objects generating forces of a ritual character and with great social importance and symbolism that is expressed through the figures and decoration that exist. Totem poles are great wooden structures like others belonging to pre-historic times and in which we can observe similarities on other continents such as large rock structures of a social and religious character full of metaphoric significance. One can attempt gain a better understanding of this through a structural analysis of the poles combined with the oral information that is available today which could help to clarify their meaning and provide us with more data about the conceptual and ideological matrix of the Haida way of thinking

1.2 Methodology

The dissertation will begin with an overview of Haida Gwaii, the archipelago on which the Haida lived. It will look at the environment and the natural resources that would have been available at the time including both flora and fauna on land and in the sea. As the environment in which people live always plays a part in the human experience and would have been an important influence.

It will then briefly discuss the archaeology of Haida Gwaii covering works that have been carried out as well as the environmental conditions to which artefacts are exposed and how the poor conservation has resulted in difficulties preserving totem poles.

In order to appreciate those who created these impressive structures, the Haida will also be presented in a chapter which discusses what we know about their family organisation, social structures and interaction, crafts and techniques, religion, mythology, hunting techniques, ceremony, and their crafts. How the poles were produced, with what tools, by whom and with what purpose will also be touched upon.

Photographic documentation surviving from the late nineteenth century records roughly 500 totem poles *in situ* of which only around 50 were taken to museums to be conserved. Replicas of some of these poles have been carved and some of the poles that were removed have also been damaged or destroyed over time, therefore in order to study the poles this dissertation will include not only poles that survive today in museums but also those that survive in photographs or as replicas which were based on earlier originals (MacDonald, 1983, p.ix). A variety of poles were chosen which comprises of numerous types in order to best understand the differences that can be seen not only amongst poles of the same type but also those of different styles. A structural analysis of these poles looking at the iconography, that is, crests, and common patterns that can be observed in terms of their layout will be studied. Afterwards, a reading will be done that looks at the poles' single images and association or composition in terms of their meaning as would have been understood according to Haida mythology, culture and society. One could never grasp the meaning of these monumental constructions simply through visual contemplation; therefore, an understanding of the cultural and ideological context is needed. These poles can be used alongside other methods of studying the past such as archaeological, anthropological, ethnographical and historical research in attempt to better understand First Nation's cognitive life.

The methodology that we will try to follow has been used since the 1950s namely in the study of Palaeolithic art by A. Leroi-Gourhan (1968), and A. Laming Emperaire (1962), and also by more recent authors in what is known as cognitive structuralism. Twenty-six totem poles of varying types will be presented in a catalogue.



Fig. 1 *Map of Haida Gwaii (Haida Nation, accessed 5 June 2013),* <1>.

Chapter 2. Haida Gwaii

2.1 Natural environment, geography wild plant and animal species.

Haida Gwaii, formerly known as the Queen Charlotte Islands, consists of a group of islands found along the north-western coast of British Columbia, Canada found at 52 º 0'0' North and 131 º 12' 0' West. Lying 240 kilometres north of Vancouver Island and separated from the mainland by about 50 to 150 kilometres by Hecate Straight, Haida Gwaii are the most isolated islands in Canada. The archipelago, which consists of around 150 islands, is roughly 9,940 square kilometres in size making it much smaller than Vancouver Island but twice the size of Prince Edward Island, Canada's smallest province (Horwood, 2006, pp.11, 13). Despite having numerous islands, most of these are quite small being hardly more than large rocks and therefore would not have been spaces occupied by the Haida as living spaces but perhaps hunting spaces as they provided ideal locations for nesting sea birds and nursing marine mammals.

The name Haida Gwaii, which means 'Islands of the People' was only officially recognized by the provincial government of British Columbia in 2012 and many find the Haida name more suitable than the previous name given by European explorers, the Queen Charlotte Islands (Bringhurst, 2011, p.3).

The present morphology of Haida Gwaii and the surrounding seabed is the result of tectonics, glaciation, sea level changes and dynamic oceanography that took place over the late Quaternary geological period, roughly the last 30,000 years. Today, climatic events such as El Niño and earthquake activity along the Queen Charlotte Fault continuously influence coastal change. Earthquakes occur frequently as a result of the Pacific plate sliding northward into North America which in turn leads to occasional tsunamis (Fedje, 2005, p. 7).

Haida Gwaii is located in a wet hyper-maritime subzone of the Coastal Western Hemlock Biogeoclimatic Zone. With a number of varying environmental and geographical areas, the inland consists of several raised bogs and wetland forests which are covered by mosses, lichens, liverworts, herbs and shrubs while the coast is surrounded by many long-dune backed sandy shorelines (Wolfe, 2008, p. 2). The temperate rainforests, endemic species and globally significant seabird populations

make the islands ecologically unique and the ecosystems and species found here are recognised as globally significant (Holt, 2004, p.4).

Haida Gwaii is dominated by old forests which can be affected by large fires, windstorms and landslides and while these do occur, they occur rarely and usually over long time scales meaning their influence on the landscape is minor (Holt, 2004, p.12). Of the tree species found there, red cedar is thought to be the longest lived species in Canada with life expectancies of 600-1200 years (Holt, 2004, p.15).The relatively warm maritime climate that receives large amounts of rain enables the tree and plant species of Haida Gwaii to flourish (Horwood, 2006, p. 20).

Haida Gwaii has roughly 993, 000 hectares of land area and about 12,500 hectares covered by lakes. Most of these lakes are small, roughly a thousand being merely ponds less than one hectare in size, over 100 are between 10 and 100 hectares, and only 22 are larger than 100 hectares. The small lakes provide habitats for species of tiny fish while the larger lakes that are connected to the sea by river provide spaces for large populations of salmon and river otters (Forest, 1996).

As previously mentioned, the islands of Haida Gwaii archipelago are found far from the coast of the mainland making it difficult for animals and plant species to arrive there resulting in fewer species than can be found on the mainland. However, there are still some endemic subspecies of birds, mammals, fish and invertebrates (Horwood, 2006, p. 13). The islands are sometimes referred to as the 'Galapagos of Canada' though some argue this is misleading as Haida Gwaii has fewer species than can be found on the mainland (Horwood, 2006, p. 24). Nonetheless, it does help to understand that the island contains several subspecies not found on the mainland or species that can be found on the mainland but contain some differences in size, colour or behaviour; the black bear, for example, on Haida Gwaii is generally much larger than the rest of North America with an orange tint to its undercoat (Horwood, 2006, p. 42).

While fewer than on the mainland, there are still numerous bird species that visit or nest around the archipelago every year (Horwood, 2006, p. 25). Many of these are sea birds that prey on rich sources of fish, and plankton which reside in the nutrient rich waters surrounding Haida Gwaii; the result of the Alaskan current which sweeps along the west coast blending with tidal currents, and river runoff. These nutrient rich waters have also attracted a known 23 species of marine mammals and one reptile including cetaceans (whales, dolphins, and porpoises), seals, sea lions, and sea otters and the

world's largest species of turtle, the leatherback has been seen off Haida Gwaii, although sightings are rare. The grey whale is the most commonly found and most predictable of the whale species to pass through inshore waters of Haida Gwaii while it travels between artic summering areas and Baja breeding lagoons (Horwood, 2006, p. 35). However, the orca remains a popular tourist attraction as they are incredible hunters that travel in large pods providing a spectacle for those visiting the islands.

Regarding the land mammals present on Haida Gwaii there are several species that were introduced after the arrival of the first Europeans in the late 18th century. At the time of their first visit there were approximately eleven species present on Haida Gwaii but today there is an equal number of native and foreign species found on the islands (Horwood, 2006, p. 42). Indigenous species include Keen's mice (*P. keeni prevostensis)*, dusky shrew (*Sorex monticolus elassodon)*, ermine (*Mustela erminea haidarum)*, marten (*Martes Americana nesophila)*, river otters (*Lontra canadensis periclyzomae)*, black bears (*Ursus Americana carlottae)*, Dawson caribou (*Rangifer tarandus dawsoni)* (extinct), little brown bats (*Myotis lucifugus alascensis)*, silver haired bats (*Lasioncycteris noctivagans)*, and western toads (*Anaxyrus boreas)* (Golumbia, 1999). Animals unintentionally introduced include black rats (*Rattus rattus),* Norway rats *(Rattus norvegicus)* and house mice (*Mus musculus)*, which most likely arrived on European ships, and other species which were purposely brought to the archipelago including red squirrels (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus lanuginosus)*, raccoons (*Procyon lotor vancouverensis)*, beavers (*Castor canadensis leucodontus),* muskrats (*Ondatra zibethicus osoyoosensis)*, Sitka mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus sitkensis)*, European red deer (*Cervus elaphus elaphus)*, and elk (*Cervus elaphus nelson)* (Golumbia, 1999). While some of these animals seem to have little to no effect on the environment, others have drastic effects including Sitka deer, which have seen a population explosion due to lack of predators, that eat cedar seedlings faster than they can be planted, raccoons, that eat the eggs of ground nesting birds, and beavers, that build damns which have raised water levels (Horwood, 2006, p. 42).

In terms of plant species, there are dozens unique to Haida Gwaii, many of which are mosses that have relatives as far off as Japan, Asia and Scotland which probably found refuge on an un-glaciated part of the islands during the Ice Age (Horwood, 2006, p. 23).

Today, approximately 5000 Canadians live on Haida Gwaii relying mainly on the forestry industry which is the biggest single employer (Horwood, 2006, p. 15). Large forests enable the forestry industry to survive off of sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*), shore pine (*Pinus contorta*), western red cedar (*Thuja plicata*) which dominate the forests, as well as various herbaceous species including large-headed sedge (*Carex macrocephala*), dune grass (*Leymus mollis*), and Pacific alkali grass (*Puccinellia nutkaensis*)(Wolfe, 2008, p. 2).

Part of Haida Gwaii was declared a National Park Reserve and Haida Heritage Site in 1987.

2.2 Human Presence

While glaciation has occurred several times in Haida Gwaii, after the most recent period, deglaciation was under way by 15,000 BP (Wolfe, 2008, p. 2). Long cores of lake sediments have been taken from Gwaii Haanas National Park in Haida Gwaii to help study the interval between 15,000 and 10,000 BP which includes the probable period for human migration from the north. Evidence suggests that by 12, 500 BP, forests of pine and spruce expanded over the landscapes but these would have been flooded in the lowlands when sea levels rose around 12,000 BP (Fedje, 2005, p. 4). The sea levels around Haida Gwaii reached the levels of the present shoreline by about 9400 BP but by 8900 BP had reached a maximum of 13-16 meters above the current level. It was only by 2000 BP that they returned to the present level. This should be taken into account when considering possible locations of human settlements in the archipelago over the last 10,000 years as the discovery of prolific stone tools on former shorelines suggests that early inhabitants of Haida Gwaii lived in close proximity to coasts (Fedje, 2005, p. 12).

It is suggested that the optimum interval for human migration to Haida Gwaii would have probably been between 13,500 and 12,000 BP when the landscape was open and climatic conditions supported a diverse and productive plant cover (Fedje, 2005, p. 4). Although archaeological research from the area has revealed occupation from about 10,000 BP, many believe that it may have actually been much longer but evidence has been lost as a result of sea level change and other factors (Fedje, 2005, p. 21).

The arrival of the first people into Haida Gwaii is something often debated by archaeologists. There is evidence to suggest that the earliest migration of humans to the Americas could have occurred along the coastal corridor during deglaciation if not earlier but afterwards it is difficult to find out exactly when and how people arrived in the archipelago (Fedje, 2005, p. 3). Up until the 1960s, many archaeologists believed that much of the Northwest coast including Haida Gwaii was not occupied until 5000 BP and thought that earliest populations were most likely derived from interior people moving down river valleys and adapting to coastal environments or from a late arrival of a maritime people associated with the Northwest Stone Microblade tradition. In these paradigms, it is believed that Haida Gwaii was one of the last lands to have been occupied by humans. However, Fladmark (1979) who agreed with this theory also presented a paleoecological model which supported a Pacific coast migration route for the first entry of humans into southern North America at the end of the last Ice Age. This model is centred on the fact that during the terminal Ice Age, sea level would have been much lower than it is at present exposing a broad coastal plain along the British Columbian and Alaskan coast which could have formed a coastal migration corridor prior to 10,000 BP (Fedje, 2005, p. 150). While uncertainties still exist regarding this matter, the coastal corridor concept proposed by Fladmark (1979) has been widely considered lately, though still not by everyone.



Fig. 2 *Possible migration routes from Siberia to North America* (after Kramer J.H. 1999; copyright Crow Canyon Archaeological Center *)* www.crowcanyon.org Web. 15 February 2014.

Chapter 3. History of Investigation

Archaeology of Haida Gwaii dates back to the late 19th century but poor preservation conditions such as bacterial degradation of organic components caused by the acidic nature of forest soils means that many of the artefacts have been lost over the years. Fragile remains like wood, skin, bark and leather are poorly preserved at most sites and last only a few years to decades in the ground at Haida Gwaii. Bones and shells are more durable but they too are vulnerable to acidic and bacterial degradation, thus, the best sites that allow for preservation are shell middens, composed of large quantities of shell build up in places like campsites and villages where they were consumed in large numbers. Shell middens can reduce the soil acidity in immediate soil and can allow for the preservation of bone for thousands of years. Waterlogged environments known as 'wet sites' are also useful in terms of the preservation of wooden artefacts but in most cases, the only materials that will survive for vast periods of time are those with extremely durable material such as stone tools, highly burnt bone, post moulds and other depression or pit features (Fedje, 2005, p. 147).

There has been an increase in the number of archaeological investigations across Haida Gwaii in the past decade, partially due to the creation of Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve and the Haida Heritage Site which require as full an inventory of archaeological sites as possible. Current research has prioritised the search for pre 10,500 human occupation on Haida Gwaii and most sites that have been excavated are situated chronologically in the early to mid-Holocene. The period between 5000 to 2000 BP is in need of reporting on because it is believed to have been an important period in terms of transformations taking place in Haida Gwaii and the period post 2000 BP is surprisingly, largely unknown. Studying this period would help to shed light on the historical Haida way of life with the monumental architecture and sculpture and the interaction with mainland communities. Research conducted on the coast has presented some evidence to suggest that there may have been some kinds of semi-sedentary life in plank houses developed as early as 3000 years ago from a highly mobile to a more settle way of life which could have been caused by social or technological developments such as extensive food storage, social stratification, semi sedentism and development of settlement hierarchy (Fedje, 2005, pp. 147,150). However, little has been done in terms of research on this problem.

Northern Northwest Coast Culture is separated into two main divisions: the Lithic Stage and Development Stage. The Lithic Stage refers to the part of the prehistoric record which dates prior to the development of the Northwest Coast cultural pattern where we observe characteristics such as large shell middens, an emphasis on salmon procurement and storage, extensive woodworking and development of art. The Development Stage which is set between 5000 and 250 BP has been broken down into three sub stages: early, middle and late. During the early stage artistic sculpture of organic objects is rare and evidence of structural remains points to small dwellings and an absence of housepit features; the period from 3500 to 2500 is thought to have been transitional; the middle development stage saw a full attainment of a general northwest coast cultural pattern (Fedje, 2005, p. 157). This includes the gradual appearance of a complete Northwest Coast woodworking tool kit, large plank houses, numerous art objects suggestive of complex ideology and craft specialization, frequent ornaments, exotic goods and other primitive valuables indicating a concern with wealth accumulation and display, increased evidence of status differentiation in burials, the full development of complex and diversified fishing and sea-mammal hunting equipment, first population aggregates and strong indications of warfare. We also find larger villages and houses, and larger house features. Finally, the late Development Stage which corresponds to the period between 1500 and 250 BP is applied to prehistoric coastal assemblages that compare closely to those ethnographic populations of the North Coast area. It seems that during this time, changes in material culture record were not as substantive as between previous stages and data supports a ranked village structure as expressed in structural evidence and associated artefacts, and art styles display a close affinity with those documented from the ethnographic northern Northwest Coast (Fedje, 2005, p. 157). Haida settlements seem to have primarily been found on the coastline and are often found near fortified or defensive sites, also appearing in the ethnographic and historical literature, in fact, the defensive sites were so numerous that they were one of the defining traits of Northwest Coast. However, while Haida settlements seem to have always been found in close proximity to shorelines, these defensive structures appear to have been used only in the last 2000 years coinciding with the apparent growth in village size and the dimensions of individual households (Fedje, 2005, pp. 320, 321).

Oddly, the more recent past is poorly known through archaeological research and while later sites are more common, few of them have seen any substantial archaeological excavation or reporting (Fedje, 2005, p. 147). Much of what is known comes from historical and ethnological records from this period. While archaeology is important as a source of knowledge about the day to day life, it is best considered along with other kinds of history as well for example oral history which was often dismissed as mythology until scientists discovered some links between the events in these stories and scientific evidence of the same events such as prehistoric tsunamis (Fedje, 2005, p. 119).

As previously mentioned the environmental conditions of Haida Gwaii result in poor preservation of the large wooden structures that generally lasted no longer than 100 years. It is for this reason that totem poles can be difficult to conserve. The different degrees of degradation of those which survive today limit their study and comprehension. Regardless, there are many replicas made by modern day carvers who have reclaimed their culture and attempted to draw on techniques and motifs of the past. However, these will never be the original poles nor will they have the same functions and meanings. Some important studies that have been essential in writing this thesis were done by Bill Holm and Bill Reid in collaboration with Wilson Duff (1967), Hilary Stewart (1993), and George F. MacDonald (1989, 1994). Marius Barbeau, an Anthropologist, had already begun studying and writing about the poles in the 1920s along the Upper Skeena River(1929) and he also completed one of the most complete surveys of Northwest Coast totem poles in 1950. These studies tend to address the poles in terms of their style, the techniques used to carve them, the people they represented or that commissioned them, and finally, how they represent mythology. In one aspect, this is likely due to the renewed interest and attempt at re-establishing Haida traditions and culture amongst their descendants today who wish to learn about their ancestors' stories and practices. Totem pole can hardly fail to create interest given their monumental appearance and it is not surprising that when the Haida population numbers dropped and people began vacating the villages, that the poles were quickly bought up and shipped off to museums around North America and the world. This was particularly popular at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century and then again in what was the 'final harvesting' of the standing and fallen poles of the 1950s throughout

British Columbia. Some of these poles survive today, others have been lost, and some lasted long enough for other carvers to create replicas.

Poles have long been appreciated for the carving techniques used to create them and the artistic styles though many fail to consider the cognitive process behind them and how this can be a reflection of mythic thinking and the structure of a society with primitive artefacts but a very developed spiritual life.

Chapter 4. The Haida

4.1 The social organisation and first contact with Europeans

The Haida are a First Nations group whose territory was mainly Haida Gwaii, though modern day they can also be found on the southernmost islands of Alaska. They are a distinct language family whose members recognized four dialectic territorial divisions, some of which survive to this day (Fedje, 2005, p. 304). The geography of the land made it easy for its inhabitants to develop and the surrounding water provided an abundance of food aiding them in the development of a self-sustaining hunting and gathering society (Horwood, 2006, p.21). The rich region, in terms of marine resources, provided for a level of settlement stability uncharacteristic of small scale or kinship based societies (Fedje, 2005, p.304). Their proximity to the sea not surprisingly helped the Haida to become a very strong maritime power and there is growing evidence of their boat building skills and marine foraging strategies (Fedje, 2005, p. 3). Their canoes varied in length from 22 metre crafts that could transport two tonnes of supplies or up to forty people, and smaller, 4 to 7 metre models that were more manoeuvrable, all of which were carved from massive cedars (Horwood, 2006, p. 21) Evidence suggests that they travelled as far as Victoria and Puget Sound, Washington on trading and raiding forays through potentially dangerous waters along the coast of British Columbia.

The Haida had a rich tradition of oral histories which was an integral part of their culture and key to their identity as a people (Fedje, 2005, p. 119) It provided a link to the past for the Haida for individual families and entire villages. Levi-Strauss (1963, p.56) argues that the oral histories were often used to unlock high level culture constructs or as illustrations of theories.

Their stories were never written down and so were not designed by appear in books. John Swanton, a linguist who travelled to the island of Haida Gwaii in 1900 and 1901 on behalf of his mentor, intended to stay for half a year. He was so impressed by the literature that he encountered on the island and in the end stayed for a full three year desperately trying to transcribe what he could of Haida mythology. His work failed to impress his colleagues and peers and so much of it remained unpublished. It is due to him that we are fortunate to have records of the stories we do, however, these fail to capture what would have only transmitted by hearing the stories in person. The myth tellers were well trained individuals who carefully relayed these stories to those who would hear them (Bringhurst, 1999, pp. 14, 15).

The stories told included all aspects of their lives and as they kept to written record, the oral tradition was extremely important. Many Westerners who have come to study the Haida oral tradition believe that these myths would have changed over time, from person to person to meet the current needs or wishes of the people. On the contrary, others argue that the Haida had methods for maintaining accuracy from generation to generation which included choosing the most able children of the clan (usually one or two of the brightest) who were selected to receive all of the information of the elders. The children were trained until they could repeat it word for word, including the inflections used to accurately tell the story. Haida stories were designed to teach histories or lessons and could take several hours or even days to tell, and often difficult for westerners to understand is the relationship between animate and inanimate objects, as according to the Haida, all things were animate so interaction could take place between them (Fedje, 2005, p.123)

These myths have the ability to tell us about not only past culture and also past events and environmental changes. Recently more value has been placed on these stories as accurate sources of knowledge as scientists have begun to recognise correlations between these oral histories and archaeological and geological evidence. There are also oral accounts of what appear to be Pleistocene environmental conditions which even tell of a time when Haida Gwaii was joined to the mainland, a time when it was much warmer and a time when it was much colder, prior to the appearance of the first trees (Fedje, 2005, p. 119).

Though much of these stories and histories have been lost since the arrival of the first Europeans, they are still highly valued especially when considered alongside archaeological evidence as they can tell us a lot about culture and customs. Stories provide us with knowledge about origin of lands, resource ownership, crests, songs, names, how medicinal plants were used, facial paintings, names of locations and places, travels, marriage patterns, relations between groups, motivations for actions and events, spiritual beliefs and practices, and various other types of information unavailable to us through other sources of information (Fedje, 2005, p.122).

The Haida were a kin-based society, therefore all of their relationships were legitimized and regulated by kinship ties and stratified by rank and they were also stratified according to a historically well-defined socioeconomic class structure. Members of society belonged to one of two matri-moieties, the Raven or the Eagle

which governed their marriages and exchanges of property. Marriage was an extremely important means of securing alliances which could strengthen kin groups and an individual's social rank and cross cousin marriage was preferred with the tendency being for both males and females to marry into their father's lineage (Fedje, 2005, p. 327). This fact makes sense when one understands that descent was reckoned through the female line so that if a chief were and Eagle, his wife and children would be Ravens (MacDonald, 1989, p.16).

The Haida recognised two classes of people: the nobility or upper class, those whose parents had provided 'potlatches' to enhance their prestige and slaves, who were usually captives from rival villages or native groups who were considered to be outside the social order. For the Haida, wealth, which belonged to the lineage, meant the ability to access both natural and supernatural resources and could include the rights to hunting lands or fishing streams, berry-picking areas, fine timber etc. (MacDonald, 1989, p.16)

Names were very important to the Haida as they helped to define a person's position in the community and validate their status. Individuals could acquire new names at different times in their lives linking them to their lineage and ancestors. A chief possessed a name which served as the title of his office that would be conferred upon the new chief once his predecessor died (MacDonald, 1989, p.16).

Regarding living arrangements, settlement archaeology is concerned with three components consisting of the individual house, the arrangements of the houses within settlements, and the distribution of settlements; all of which offer information about social forces (Fedje, 2005, p. 310). The size and complexity of individual houses in a settlement can tell us about the social status of the families living in those houses; the layout of a settlement can also tell us something about kin, class affiliations and the status of the residents of a particular house and finally, settlement distribution can be affected by factors such as trade networks and defensive capabilities (Fedje, 2005, p. 310). Haida houses functioned in the spiritual and secular realms as a dwelling and as a ceremonial centre (MacDonald, 1989, p.20)

Although they build villages, the Haida did not always reside in these villages. Ethnographic and historical literature describes the settlements as winter dwelling places for a number of lineage groups residing in large cedar plank houses. It is believed these groups would disperse through spring, summer and autumn months in order to

take advantage of seasonally available resources which they would gather and store for winter months (Fedje, 2005, p. 304).

Villages could be very small, consisting of just one house at times and it was believed that at the time of the arrival of the first Europeans there were as many as 35 permanent villages within the extreme southern region alone (Fedje, 2005, p. 310).There were an estimated six thousand Haida living on the archipelago at the time the first Europeans came (MacDonald 1983, p. 2). It wasn't until the decline of much of the population that these villages joined together into multilineage communities (Fedje, 2005, p. 307).

As mentioned, from spring through autumn was a time of gathering food to store for the winter; time of activity amongst the inhabitants of Haida Gwaii. Winter on the other hand, was a time of feasting, celebration and sharing. These celebrations were known as potlatches. Potlatches were extremely significant events in which the host group would announce that an important even had or would occur in the near future- These celebrations included recitation of oral history, dancing, feasting, singing and the distribution of gifts to the visiting guests. Latent functions of the events included the redistribution of wealth through gift giving, the maintenance of alliances, opportunities to put on public record all of the important changes in a group such as marriages, births, deaths, transfer of rights and it also confirmed the identity and status of those who hosted them (Muckle, 2006, p.58).

The arrival of the first Europeans had a great impact on the Haida as they seemed like something out of their mythology. They viewed their ships as great houses carrying wealth sent by ancestors and manned by ghosts and greeted them with ritual greeting gestures and songs of welcome which were intended for meetings with supernatural beings (MacDonald, 1989, p. 20). The first to make contact was Spanish explorer Juan Perez on 17 July 1774 on the ship the Santiago. Although he himself never visited Haida Gwaii, Captain James Cook traded for sea otter pelts in Alaska which he sold for high prices in China which led to the maritime fur trade (Horwood, 2006, p. 18). Initially the Haida enjoyed the wealth that came with trade and experienced and economic boom as a result of their new relations with Europeans. They were also introduced to metal woodworking tools which had a major influence on their material culture and what they could do in terms of their monumental art and architecture (MacDonald, 1989, p. 20).While they already had established styles and

prototypes, their newfound wealth and tools allowed for larger and more impressive works.

While trade had started out peacefully, traders such as Captain Robert Gray initiated violent reprisals by the natives and trade methods became ruthless as sea otter populations began to decline almost to the point of annihilation (Horwood, 2006, p. 18).

British traders of Hudson's Bay Company began constructing more permanent trading posts on the north coast in 1831 and were able to re-establish less hostile relations but diseases, illegal alcohol, firearms and money all played a part in the destruction of the Haida (Horwood, 2006, p. 19).

By 1830s the first series of smallpox epidemics struck the northwest coast killing roughly half of the Haida population by the end of the decade (MacDonald, 1989, p. 20). The first outbreak of smallpox was followed by more including a series of epidemics in 1862, which was the worst, and in 1875 and they were also affected by the measles (Bringhurst, 2011, p. 33).

By 1884 Methodist missionaries had arrived in Haida Gwaii in attempt to start a campaign to convert smallpox survivors this coincided with the year Potlatch was outlawed in Canada (Bringhurst, 2011, p. 33). In the beginning, the impact on the first nation's cultures was negligible but towards the late 19th century with the decline of the population and severe disruptions to their traditional way of life, many had been converted to Christianity (Muckle, 2006, p. 69). Missionaries hoped to change the traditional ways of the First Nations people and encouraged them to abandon these. The residential school system was set up in British Columbia which acted under the presupposition that assimilation was best for first nation's people and the best method of assimilation was to remove children from their homes and teach them the ways of the Euro-Canadian society in schools they could live in (Muckle, 2006, p. 70). These schools attempted to cut cultural ties such as language, family and traditional ways of life and re-educate children in a Christian, Euro-Canadian way (Muckle 2006, p. 71). There are numerous accounts of children being physically abused for speaking their native language and also being taught that their parents were evil which caused many family breakdowns (Muckle, 2006, p. 70). In the end, these schools were seen as a failure and many churches that were involved have since apologised, however, the last residential school did not close until 1984 (Muckle, 2006, p. 71).

4.2 Mythology and socio-religious practices

According to the Haida, the Cosmos were divided into three zones: sky, earth and the underworld. They believed in the existence of two lands: the mainland and Haida Gwaii which was supported by a supernatural being called Sacred-One-Standing-and-Moving who rests on a copper box supporting a giant cedar that grows at the centre of Haida Gwaii. This tree is a living being that unites the three cosmic zones as the roots reach into the underworld, the trunk comes from the earth and the braches reach into the sky. To them, it was extremely important that harmony was kept between these cosmic zones or it would have disastrous consequences on the world (MacDonald, 1989, p. 16)

The Haida classified and ranked all creatures, natural and supernatural. In the mineral kingdom, copper was at the top of the hierarchy and the most important object of symbolic wealth; in the vegetable kingdom it was the red cedar which provided houses, poles, clothing, utensils and canoes; and in the animal kingdom, which was of great importance to the Haida, killer whales were the chiefs of the sea, bears of the land and eagles of the sky (MacDonald, 1989, p. 16). Humans gave prayers and offerings of food to these animal chiefs to ensure successful hunting, fishing and gathering.

It was also believed that animals possessed souls like those of humans and each had their own groups which were also organized into moieties. Animals were thought to have their own territories, houses, canoes and chiefs and when they were in their own dwelling places, they lived in their human form, using masks only when they went outside. When Haida wore masks and mimicked animal sounds, they were actually trying to enter the mental state in which they believed they had become a part of the animal society (MacDonald, 1989, p. 17).

The belief in reincarnation was also accepted as what happened after death and the souls of the dead made their abode between incarnations on earth and in the houses of supernatural chiefs. Children were usually carefully observed in an attempt to understand who they were reincarnating (MacDonald, 1989, p. 17).

Shamanism was another integral element of first nation cultures. The shaman who was usually a male was believed to possess the ability to deal with supernatural beings. They could obtain their expertise through birth, training or a special encounter with a supernatural being and their responsibilities included the interpretation of events, ensuring successful foraging or warring expeditions and curing people from unknown

illnesses or those that did not respond to ordinary treatment (Muckle, 2006, p. 53). Fire was also important spiritually to the Haida as a means of communication with supernatural beings and for this reason, the shaman walked around the fire to communicate with the power that possessed him (Boelscher, 1989, p. 177).

Shamanism is practised throughout the Northwest Coast, parts of Asia, Northern Europe, Siberia, Australia and the North American Arctic. In North American literature 'shaman' is synonymous with 'medicine man'. Some evidence suggests that the Haida were not quite as dependent on shamanism as their neighbours the Tsimhshian, they most definitely held them in high regard which is evident in certain burials such as that of a shaman who was buried at Image Point known as Linagit Tla which is translated as Mother of the People or 'town mother' which is another name for the chief of a town (Lillard, 1995, p. 22).

Initially, when studying the mythology of First Nations groups of North America, authors such as Jacobs (1894), and Boas (1916) found the stories to be unstructured and void. However, later on authors such as Alan Dundes (1963) would analyse the myths more carefully and argue that, in fact, there were clear structural similarities in their mythology. Dundes observed that a large number of these myths moved from disequilibrium to equilibrium which may simply mean having too much of one thing or not enough of another for example a flood causing too much water or not enough land. He also noted a common motifeme sequence with the following four motifemes: Interdiction, Violation, Consequence, and an Attempted Escape from the Consequence (optional) (Dunes, 1963, pp.122, 123). In the Interdiction, someone is warned against doing something which they do anyway in the Violation. The Consequence is what happens after the person violates the rules, and finally, there is an Attempted Escape which is sometimes possible.

Haida mythology is based on grand themes found throughout the Northwest Coast area but as with their painting and sculpture, there are particularities unique to the Haida. The most important myths were those of the raven cycle which began with chaos, portrayed by the existence of a single reef piled high with supernatural beings that was surrounded by nothing but sea and sky. Raven used black pebbles to create Haida Gwaii and white crystalline ones to create the mainland and the supernatural beings swam from the reef to the shores. Raven was no the prime creator in these myths but rather someone that obtains elements of the universe from other beings in order to

transform or transport. Haida mythology also attributes the Raven as having been the one to release them from a giant clamshell which he dug out of the ground (MacDonald, 1989, p. 20).

The second cycle of raven myths is related to the acquisition and control of food sources and in these myths the raven is often accompanied by an eagle while travelling. This is the basis for the moiety divisions of raven and eagle. As Raven was tied to the creation of the world, these myths belonged to everyone but individual myths were based on archetypal themes, many of which involved marriage alliances and access to wealth (MacDonald, 1989, p.20)

There were several names used to refer to Raven including *Koyah*, the most common, *Nankilslas* (Slender One) and as *Weget*, a powerful supernatural chief (MacDonald, 1994, p. 4). The variety of names given to Raven helps to understand the importance and varying roles attributed to him.

Although the Raven cycle was dominant in Haida myths, Swanton (1905) identified another type that included individual myths based on archetypal themes he had encountered in other parts of the Coast but were still unique to the Northwest Coast. Several of which recur in the crest carvings on poles. Swanton recorded over two hundred and fifty of these myths including The Bear Mother, The Bear Hunter, The Kidnapped Wife, The Supernatural Helper and many others (MacDonald, 1994, p. 4) suggests that many of these myths involve marriage alliances and access to wealth and contain underlying messages that relate to the appropriate distances at which one should marry. Marriages involving humans and supernatural beings usually result in disaster and marriages too close within one's group are often considered incestuous and may be taken as an insult by the supernaturals, which as a result, withhold wealth and control. MacDonald (1994, p.10) also notes that more needs to be done in terms of a structural analysis on Haida myth which would help understand basic principles of their culture.

Chapter 5. Totem Poles

5.1 Definition

Totem pole is the name given by Europeans to the carved wooden pillars made by First Nations people of the Northwest coast. Although the name is sometimes seen to be incorrect, it has become generally accepted after frequent usage and for lack of a better term (Halpin, 1981, p.16). The concepts of totem and totemism have been applied to beliefs and practices among different peoples and are used to refer to a symbolic relationship that exists between wild animals and the natural world and human groups. However, totem poles come exclusively from the Pacific Northwest coast area (Halpin, 1981, p.2).

It is not known exactly when the Haida people first began carving totem poles as the wood decomposes easily and rarely lasts for over 100 years making it difficult to find any surviving remains of early poles. Nonetheless, oral histories indicate that the monumental carvings predate contact with Europeans. The earliest recorded sighting of a carved pole was made by John Bartlett, a fur trader from Boston, in 1791.

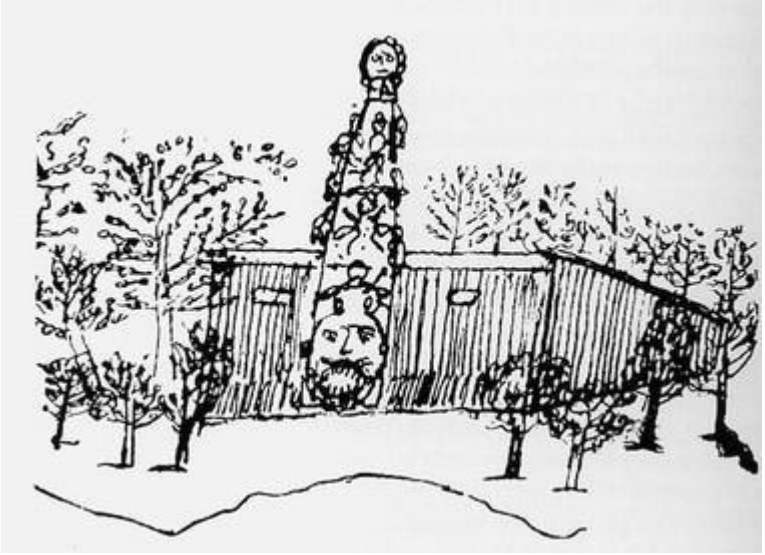


Fig. 3 Dadens house with frontal pole. From the Journal of John Bartlett, 1791 (Bartlett, 1973).

The figures on a pole are usually interpreted as statements about the group membership and identity of those who erected them and are often referred to as crests.

These crests can depict animals as well natural phenomena (e.g. clouds or rainbows), and supernatural beings, most of which were rendered into the animal form (Horwood, 2006, p.20).

Poles were typically erected during potlatch ceremonies when their stories could be told and the right of the family to claim the crest was publically witnessed. If a pole had fallen, it would take another potlatch to raise it again so they were usually left where they had fallen to decay back into the earth. Of greater importance were the poles raised in honour of chiefs by their successors. Those who commissioned the poles told the artist which crests to depict but evidence suggests that artists were given freedom in how they chose to portray these and often put in their own hidden meanings and visual puns (Halpin, 1981, p.17). Therefore, to fully understand the meaning of a pole, one would have to know the owner as well as the carver.

Totem poles were meant to keep pretenders in their place. A good totem pole was often terrifying; a concentration of enormous tensions as if something were trying to break out (Gill, 2004, p.11) They were treated with respect and honour (Stewart, 1993, p.9)

While people often refer to a low ranking individual as being 'the lowest man on the totem pole', this is considered to be incorrect. It is commonly accepted that the most important figure on the pole was actually the bottom figure. The importance given to the figure could be due to the centralised position; it would be the first figure that one encountered upon approaching a pole. This figure was generally the largest as well and often carved in greater detail or with more care as it would be viewed from the closest point. The importance could also be attributed to the fact that the bottom crest or representation supported all of the other figures on a pole. However, there is the possibility that this is not correct. In art found throughout history and various geographical locations it is generally the top figure that holds the position of greatest importance.

When one first encounters totem poles their eyes are immediately drawn to the top. This is not unique with poles but a natural human response to grand structures. It happens when one observes other open architectural structures such as the stones of Stonehenge, menhirs, as well as modern day buildings and even natural occurrences like mountains, trees, and cliffs. Perhaps this is due to the vastness of these objects or our fascination with the sky, the heavens, solar bodies, and the great extent of it. It is an

unknown world that is, or at least until recently, was off limits to humans. The idea of life and death, the sun and the moon, are linked with transcendence. This could explain why a high position is one of great importance. Of a more practical nature, those in high positions have a more advantageous viewpoint of the world around them. It is possible that this is a misinterpretation of totem poles; an idea that was misconstrued over time.

5.2 Cedar as a raw material

Western redcedar (*Thuja plicata).* was well established in the area by 3000 BP. Between 5000 BP and 2500 BP there was an expansion of western red cedar in coastal forests and this strongly correlates with the development of massive wordworking technology (Fedje, 2005, p. 56). Cedar was believed to be the tree of life. It was supreme among trees and nearly every part was used by the Haida. Cedar spirits, such as the Long Life Maker and Sister were spoken to and treated with respect and gratitude. Shamans even wore cedar bark as neckrings (Halpin, 1981, pp.26, 27). It was used not only for poles but for houses, clothing, utensils, canoes, masks and other artefacts.Cedars played an important role in mythology as well. As previously mentioned, according to stories the cosmos were divided into three zones: the sky, the earth, and the underworld. The world was said to be supported by a supernatural being that rests on a copper box and on his breast a pole supports the Haida Land and extends into the sky world above. This was a great cedar tree that was believed to be a living being that united the three main zones of the cosmos with roots penetrating the underworld; a trunk extending from the earth; and branches reaching into the sky (MacDonald, 1989, p. 16).

Cedar was the raw material used in all 26 poles studied in this dissertation. This confirms the fact that it was of vital importance when producing totem poles and the material of preference. This would have been due to a number of factors. The practicality of the wood would likely be one of the factors that contributed to its popularity. There are other tree species found in large number on Haida Gwaii and these also grow to heights that would be conducive to creating totem poles. Mountain hemlock (*Tsuga mertensiana)* and yellow-cedar or cypress (*Chamaecyparis nootkatensis)* are trees found at higher elevations and as the Haida people resided mainly in coastal villages, these would have been less accessible and more difficult to

transport to villages. However, other tree species such as western hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla),* and Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis),* can be found growing in the same low elevations as western redcedar (Pojar, 2008, p. 3). While the other trees may have had the right size, cedars have other appealing traits. It is an extremely resistant type of wood. Even today, cedar is used in home building for roofing, siding, decks, in parts of building structures where water repellency is important. The wood resists decay as well as fungi, termites, and wood borers and it also has excellent dimensional stability as a result of its low wood density and low shrinkage factor meaning it shrinks and swells minimally compared to other wood types. It is also an extremely workable wood because of its straight grain and uniform texture requiring little energy to saw or work.

The western redcedar also lacks pitch and resin and contains a low percentage of sapwood making it cleaner to work with (Forestry, 2004, pp. 5, 6). The resistance to decay also means that after falling, if undisturbed the tree can often survive for great periods of time on the forest floor as it slowing degrades providing nutrients to new growth. In addition to these factors, as previously mentioned, all living things were ranked by the Haida including animals as well as plants and also some non-living things such as metals. In the plant world, cedar was believed to be the most important, the chief of all plant species. This importance and cedar's high ranking position in the plant world would have lent itself to the greatness of the poles. In a setting that would have lacked tall skyscrapers or even buildings several stories high, totem poles would have been the tallest structures that Haida people would have come into contact with. While there are large natural features on Haida Gwaii such as rocks and mountains, trees were the largest that could be worked and incorporated into buildings and other large structures. However, trees were not strictly valued for their ability to be worked into architectural structures.

Trees have long provided the humans and animals that consume them with a source of food, medicinal substances, and raw building materials, which, as Mario Varela Gomes points out, has led to the recognition of their supernatural qualities. This is not restricted to the Haida either; trees have often been linked to different divinities and cosmogonies and this along with their mystic force is universal constant. They are tied to concepts of regeneration, evolution, ascension, and power (Gomes, 2010, p. 211). Trees, while obviously living species, if left undisturbed live far longer than any human and connote ideas of regeneration, eternal youth, health, and immortality. M.

Eliade notes the use of trees in religions from various periods and cultures and their symbolism such as cosmic trees like Yggdrasil in Germanic mythology, trees of life such as in Mesopotamia, immortality (Asia, Old Testament), knowledge (Old Testament), youth (Mesopotamia, India, Iran) as well as others (Eliade, 1987, p. 149). It is not only the size of trees, their lifespan, their nutritional, healing, and sheltering properties that make them appeal to man. Trees also have the ability to stretch over three worlds. In Haida mythology we see an appreciation for animals such as frogs that live in two worlds. Trees should have been no different. Their roots stretch deep into the underground, their trunks occupy the space of man, and their branches reach high into the sky, the realm of the heavens and divine.

5.3 Carving techniques and implements

Totem poles were carved from a single trunk of a western red cedar. This tree was pivotal to Haida society. The immense size, straight grain, soft wood, colour, and resistance to rot made it ideal for pole carving and house building (MacDonald, 1989, p. 21). While yellow cedar can also be found on Haida Gwaii, it exists in smaller numbers and cracks more easily than red cedar which is why the latter was preferred for carving large poles and canoes. The trees were carefully selected by a knowledgeable person who knew how to choose the right raw material, a straight one without convolutions and close to the sea for easy transport. Before the tree was cut down, it was addressed in prayer to its spirit asking for it not to split (Stewart, 1993, p.26) It took a knowledgeable person to choose the right tree because cedars often grow in twisted or bent shapes and have branches all the way up making it difficult to find large sections of clear wood needed to carve canoes or poles. Archaeological evidence that demonstrates trees were chosen carefully can be seen in Culturally Modified Trees or CMTs which are defined as a tree which has been intentionally modified by aboriginal peoples as part of their traditional use of the forest. These may contain still visible features such as test holes or evidence of bark stripping. Test holes were used to check the quality of the wood before going through the effort of falling the tree as cedars often have hollow, rotten centres. There are also various types of CMT stumps depending on the technique that was used to fell the tree. These include ‘flat-topped’ and ‘basin-topped’ stumps that result from a technique that involved girdling the tree with chisels, wedges and stone mauls. Another

technique was to make a massive unidirectional undercut in the tree to produce a flat-bottomed hole with a sloping top and the tree would be left to fall on its own. A third technique involved an initial undercut and then a backcut resulting in a 'stepped' stump with two relatively level planes separated by a vertical step (Stryd, 1998, pp 8-10). Fire could also be used to help fell trees by placing hot rocks in a chiselled-out cavity or setting fire to the base of the tree and putting wet clay on the trunk to prevent it from spreading (Stewart, 1984, p.39).

Although the Haida were capable of carving realistically, which is seen in smaller carvings, totem poles seem to have certain rules or guidelines for carving abstract figures. One can usually recognize the animals from stylised clues such as large clawed feet, large teeth and the lack of tail on a bear or the raven's long straight beak as opposed to the eagle's down-turned one. In the totems we often see signs of transformation from animals to humans such as the sitting, standing or kneeling posture of the animals in the manner of humans (Halpin, 1981, p.37). Also, the placement of the facial features is somewhat human and the eyes and ears often remind the viewer of these transformations. Poles were usually carved in low relief almost as if they had been wrapped around the pole (Halpin, 1981, p.40)

As already noted, Northern Northwest Coast culture history is often divided into two great divisions which include a Lithic Stage, approximately 9000 to 3500 B.C., and a Developmental Stage (Martin and Debra, 1998, p.270). The Lithic stage is when archaeological records start to show extensive woodworking. However, it was later, in the period from about 2500 to 1500 BP that the gradual appearance of the Northwest Coast woodworking tool kit can be seen (Fedje, 2005, p.226). Evidence from excavations in the site Blue Jacket Creek, on the east coast of Masset Inlet, revealed woodworking tools such as wedges and hammers for splitting planks from the straight-grained red cedar, and adze and chisel blades for finishing the planks (MacDonald, 1999, p.15). Traditional tools included bone-pointed drills, stone hammers, wooden and antler wedges and chisels, adzes, and knives with blades made from stone, bone, antler, and shell. It was with the introduction of European metal woodworking tools that allowed the Haida to achieve what is believed to have been the greatest period in terms of pole production both terms of size and number (MacDonald, 1999, p.21) Hammers were originally oval stones left unmodified that were held in the hand and used for pounding. Later, groups like the Haida and Tlingit devised the hafted maul; a heavy

stone head lashed onto a long half that could be used like a sledge hammer. Some of these were sculpted with bird or animal figures which Hilary Stewart (1984, p. 31) suggests may have been representations of spirit helpers. Wedges were used to create planks by hammering them into cedar logs. While normally made of wood, these were sometimes made of antler, usually elk, which are frequently found in archaeological sites where the wooden wedges have already disintegrated. Adzes were used to cut and shape wood but as metal versions have been used several hundred years it is difficult to know much about the use of adzes with stone blades. During the archaeological excavation of Pitt River site an adzed plank was found, possibly a few thousand years old, and therefore possibly done with a stone-blade tool. However, this is currently unavailable for study as there was not sufficient time to remove it from the site (Steward, 1984, pp. 29-31).Woodworking tools were very important to carvers and quite personal items. Carvers made their own to fit their hands and would sometimes create new tools specifically for one purpose such as carving an intricate crest figure.

After being carved, the poles were often painted with earth pigments ground in salt and mixed with binding agents such as salmon eggs, the primary colours being red and black, though blue, blue-green, white and yellow occasionally could be found as well (Halpin, 1981, p. 5).

5.4 The carvers

The artist commissioned to carve a pole usually belonged to the opposite moiety from that of the chief building the house and the craft was hereditary learned from the maternal uncle (Bringhurst, 2011, p.21). While today one may find female Haida carvers, in the past it was strictly the work of men. As they did not produce ceramic objects or objects of metal, people relied on wood to create objects used on a daily basis such as fishing and hunting gear, plain boxes for family use, and small dugout canoes. Although these more basic objects could be made by any man for his family, major objects were made by craftsmen who specialised in one type of work. Master carvers held a prestigious position in society and received payment in food, clothing and other items for the work that they did. If a master carver was commissioned to produce a canoe or carve a pole, a task which took some time, they and their family would be invited to stay in the house of the commissioner who would provide all of their food. At a young age, children interested in carving would observe and attempt to copy a

specialist and they would also seek the help of a spirit power. Haida believed that particularly gifted carvers possessed a supernatural talent inherited from an ancestor. New apprentices learned from an experienced carver how to make and use tools and practised until he was able to work on a major project like a totem pole. Masters carved on side of the pole while pupils copied their work on the other. This was a practical way of teaching as poles are symmetrical (Stewart, 1984, pp. 28-30).

Impressive woodworking skill can be seen not only in the poles but in other objects. As already discussed, any individual could carve objects of everyday use for themselves and their families but larger and more elaborate items or structures were the work of specialist carvers. Early European visitors commented on these fantastic projects marvelling over the expertise of the craftsmanship. These works included large canoes, houses, specialised boxes and chests, bentwood bowls, and masks depicting birds, animals, supernatural beings and family ancestors that were used for ceremonial purposes (Stewart, 1984, pp. 49-100).

5.5 Location

Haida Gwaii totem poles have been observed and collected from villages ranging from the north to the south of the archipelago. Those taken into consideration for this dissertation come from the villages of Masset, Skidegate, Cumshewa, Skedans, Tanu, and Ninstints. However, there were other villages which would have produced their own poles such as Kiusta, on the northwest coast of Haida Gwaii, Kung, Yan, Hiellan and Kayung (all on the north end), and Cha'atl and Kaisun on the west coast. The majority of the totem poles seen on a map were found to the north and the east coast. This is related to the location of the villages as this is the area that contained the majority of settlements. One must consider that this would have been a more sheltered and protective area as opposed to the open west coast. There are large inlets, bays, and rivers which would have allowed for fishing and hunting, as well as provide protection from elements. The following map shows the location of the totem poles studied here along with the villages they came from. The dots do not indicate that these villages had more poles, but rather, that this is where the poles found most suitable for observing and trying to understand the crests for the purpose of this dissertation were found.

5.6 Types

Normally poles are considered to belong to one of eight main types: frontal poles, memorial poles, mortuary poles, house posts, corner posts, welcome figures, shame posts and grave markers. Frontal poles stood at the front of a house and sometimes contained an opening through which the house was entered. Memorial or Commemorative poles were those erected in honour of someone who had died by their new successor. Mortuary poles were those containing the remains of the dead: House posts were carved posts that supported the main beams of a house. Corner posts held up the edge of a house serving a supportive function much like house posts. Welcome figures sat on the beach to welcome guests arriving by canoe. Shame posts were carved to bring shame or ridicule someone, most often a rival chief of the one who commissioned the pole. This could be due to an unpaid debt of other incident but publically acknowledged it for all to see and know. These were taken down if restitution was made. Grave markers were placed where people were buried. (Halpin, 1981, pp.17-23, Stewart, 1993, p. 25). For the purpose of this dissertation, we will study only five of these eight types; those which are more common and contain more information. The five types studied will be frontal poles, memorial poles, mortuary poles, house posts, and corner posts.

As was explained earlier, the coastal climate did not permit poles to last for long period of time and they usually lasted no longer than 100 years before they succumbed to wood decay and fell.

The tallest known examples from the 19th century was 24 metres tall and can be found in the Royal Ontario Museum but most were smaller, between three and eighteen metres (Halpin, 1981, p.23). Of the pole type studied in this dissertation, the tallest on average are the frontal poles which reach between six and twelve metres and seem to average at around ten. Memorial and mortuary poles are similar in size with the examples of memorial poles studied here reaching roughly ten metres in height and the highest mortuary pole approximately nine metres. However, memorial poles seem to have a greater range as we have an example in the catalogue that measures somewhere around three metres in height. Corner posts are the second smallest with the examples here being roughly four to five metres. Finally, house posts are the smallest with a range from two to four metres. The size of house and corner posts would have been limited by

the size of the house that they supported or were found in and therefore it is expected that we would find such heights.

In terms of the figures featured on a pole, those with the greatest number are frontal poles whose total number spreads from 7 to 14 depictions. Mortuary poles contain the second most figures with an example containing five and one containing six. In house posts studied we find examples of poles with four and six figures. Memorial poles tend to have fewer with examples containing between two and five figures. Corner posts tend to contain the fewest figures. While we have one example of a corner post with six figures, this is an unusual case. The other pole contains only one which seems to have been a more common number for this type of pole.

Another issue caused by the coastal climate is the poor preservation, previously referred to in this work that makes it difficult to know how long ago the first totem poles were carved on the Northwest Coast. A problem related to poles around the time of the arrival of the first Europeans is related to whether or not all of these forms existed as historical writers wrote about 'totem poles' but rarely which types of poles they are referring to (Halpin, 1981, pp.24). Most agree that the poles increased in size and number around the time of the fur trade due to the increase in wealth the First Nations experienced and the introduction of new metallic tools brought by European traders (Halpin, 1981, p. 24).

5.7 Chronology

The antiquity of totem poles is a complicated subject matter. As has already been explained, the acidic nature of the soil of Haida Gwaii and environmental conditions meant preservation of the poles for extended periods of time was not possible. The lack of written record by First Nations groups of North American also means that we have little to go on before the arrival of the first Europeans in 1774. Something that was often debated is whether or not the poles existed at the time that the first Europeans arrived, or that is, whether or not they existed as we know them today. Writers who spoke of totem poles usually failed to mention what type they were referring to. However, most have now agreed that the free standing poles were already in place based on readings from the journals of early visitors. What remains unknown is for how long the Haida had been building these impressive structures. It is agreed that poles underwent a

change in the nineteenth century when trade with Europeans brought new wealth and new building instruments. The totem poles that have been studied here are mainly from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as these are the examples that have survived up until today either in museums, *in situ,* or in photographs.

Chapter 6. Crests

Crests are representation of various figures found on totem poles and each has a different meaning. Each of the figures selected would have had some personal significance for the family or owner of the pole as well as the carver who was able to take some artistic liberties in the selection of the images. However, there was also social and religious significance attached to each figure and these would have been understood by the Haida in relation to their religion and beliefs. There are also animal traits and characteristics that would have been appreciated by those who shared their environment. As the Haida interacted closely with nature, they would have observed these behaviours on a day to day basis and this most definitely would have had some impact on not only what they chose to depict on poles but also how they chose to depict them. This chapter will explore some of the stories, characteristics, and religious beliefs that should be taken into account when trying to understand the crests on a totem pole.

6.1 Anthropomorphic figures

Ancestors were extremely important to Haida as is the case with the vast majority of human societies, and so many of the anthropomorphic figures depicted on poles may be representative of ancestors. Many are representative of guardians, such as the watchmen, and others are welcome figures. They may also be personifications of environmental phenomena like the sun, weather such as wind, geography such as a local mountain, etc. Things like water may be represented as a human like figure but with small details such as a fin to indicate its supernatural nature. The human face appears in crests but also shamanic, story, and decorative art. Humans represented alongside other creatures such as animals may be representative of birthright, kinship, supernatural status, and / or spirit alliances (Shearar, 2000, p. 57). Although they can be quite similar, one can usually distinguish a human head from an animal one by the ears. Human ears sit on the side of the head while animal ears were usually figured on the top of the head. Sheryl Shearar (2000, p. 58) suggests that the position of the mouth may be important in helping to understand who the figure is and what they are doing: '*Pursed lips often represent singing. Such mouth positions may also suggest talking, wind, shamanic curing techniques that involved sucking and blowing, or whistling (a form of communication sometimes used to summon spirits and popular among ghosts). Tongues may symbolize transformation, shared knowledge and power, and the ability to speak with creatures of different species.'* (Shearar, 2000, p. 58).

Characteristics such as wrinkled visages, emaciation, and gnarled limbs may represent and aged individual, a symbol of wisdom and someone close to death that suggests the power of transformation.

Upside-down human

This figure may be indicative of a bear protecting a human or carrying it in a motherly way representing characters from the Bear Mother myth. However, it may also suggest that the bear is eating the human or a role reversal with the hunter being hunted. It is also possible that this represents a ritual of passage such as the rebirth of a human through natural forces, represented by the bear.

Woman figure holding frog

This figure holding a frog may be a depiction of *Dzelaqons* who was important in Haida lore and went by several names including Frog Woman, Mountain Woman, Copper Woman, and Volcano Woman. In Haida mythology, many stories mention boys who cruelly kill a frog and in revenge, this woman destroys their home village because the people do not share her outrage nor attempt to restore balance through sacrifice.

Weeping Human figure

This figure has several interpretations and recorded names including weeping woman, volcano woman, sea anemone, salt water or sea chief. The eyes of the figure are suspended from a ligature and its lids are closed over the sockets. On the creatures chest one can observe a downward facing frog. There are several legends which the image may represent. One of these is a legend of a chief who took a hunting party to Tanu in order to hunt the fat and plentiful deer. While away with the hunting party he charged two of the younger children to remain and care for the fire. Upon returning from the hunt, the fire was out and when he asked what had happened, the two boys explained that they had thrown toads on the fire which then exploded causing the fire to go out. The chief knew that this would cause the Great Spirit to become angry and the boys would be harmed in a like way so they tried to flee from the island. As they were trying to escape, the ground opened up and swallowed the entire hunting party; all but the chief. He returned home and forever became known as the chief who wept for his children. The single pole from the catalogue that depicts this figure is said to have been erected in this chief's memory.

Another interpretation of the figure disputes the former and claims that this is a depiction of a Sea Chief who lived on a rock off the north end of Banks Island across from Tanu. Every night his eyes fell from the sockets and hung from a ligature with the eye lids closed over the sockets. His friends put the eyes back in place and held them there so he could see while he ate (Stewart, 1993, pp. 98-99). This interpretation of the figure seems to make sense when we consider the figures hanging at the bottom of the eyes. These could be the friends of the chief who helped him to hold his eyes while he ate.

Human with frog in its mouth

Generally, when human figure is carved with smaller figures such as Mouse, Wolf, Bear, Frog, Land Otter, etc. these are meant to be representations of spirit helpers. They suggest that the individual had shaman's ability and gifts including the powers of transformation and sacred knowledge (Shearar, 2000 pp. 57-58). It is not unusual to see frogs touching tongues or in the mouths of other animals. This may be related to the fact that they were seen as great communicators often representing common ground or voice of the people (Shearar, 2000, p. 48).

Shaman Mother-in-law

This figure is a depiction of a character from the lazy son-in-law story. In this myth, a boy who always sleeps late is constantly harassed by his mother-in-law for being lazy. He tries to escape her by going into a lake where he kills a monster in a trap he's made. He uses the skin of the monster to help him catch whales that he leave on the beach for his mother in law. She believes that she is a powerful shaman that attracts dead whales and when she discovered the truth, she dies from the shame of it (MacDonald, 1983, p. 10).

6.1.2 Male

The Watchmen

House frontal poles often carried one to four watchmen on the top. These small crouched human figures are always found wearing hats with high crowns. They are supernatural powers with the ability to look out in several directions over the village and out to the sea and could protect those in the house by warning the chief of

approaching dangers such as canoes arriving from the sea (Stewart, 1979, p. 36). The watchmen figures were not generally a family crest but the figure was valued for its protective qualities (Halpin, 1981, p. 39) As we have seen, watchmen figures generally sit on the top of totem poles in groups of two or three.

The hats on the watchmen figures were also very symbolic. They were representations of the hats worn by ranking Haida people (Stewart, 1979, p. 39). The cylinders topping the crown were called *skils* by Haida and it is thought by some that the number of rings represents the number of potlatches given by the owner of the pole (Stewart, 1979, p. 39). Other theories suggest that the rings themselves are crests, but all seem to agree that the poles that included these hats were representations of the status of the chiefs who owned them (Stewart, 1979, p. 39).

6.1.3 Supernatural beings

Snag

This crest was a personification of a piece of driftwood or a deadhead which are obstacles to seafarers. The Haida call the Snag Ttsaamuus and this being they believed was an alternative form of *Taangghwanlaana,* the One in the Sea. The crest was associated with *Sea Wolf, Sea Bear, and Beaver.* Crests which depict the Snag can usually be recognised by a long hook extending from the top of the head or spikes on the shoulder. The facial features are human in nature and the figure often carries a stick to represent driftwood or a deadhead. Snags were typically depicted on Haida boxes and counterbalanced by ravnes to which they had a close relation. One often observes snags below ravens on Haida poles that bring to mind the original 'house pole' which was Snag's tone post at the bottom of the sea at the time of the formation of the world (Shearar, 2000, p. 99).

Sea Bear

Sea bears, sometimes known as Sea Grizzlies were supernatural beings of the undersea world. Hunters respected them as talented whalers and they were closely associated with the Sea Wolf and Snag who loved at the bottom of the sea. Their presence on poles may have indicated the prowess as a hunter of the pole's owner, or a willingness to accept responsibility for holding up the world. The Sea bear is a hybrid

with the head of a bear and marine features like a whale tail and fins (Shearar, 2000, pp. 94).

Moon

The moon is a celestial body that controls tides and provides a source of light during the night time. It was often associated with transformation and thought to be important as a protector and guardian spirit. Shamans often called upon it as a spirit guide. While the moon was a popular image in Northwest Coast art, it was not commonly used as a crest. The characteristic features of moons include a rounded face with flat human or bird-like features. The moon is most commonly depicted in its full form. However, it does appear in its crescent form at times (Shearar, 2000. P.72). The moon was included in the Raven crests along with others such as orca, grizzly bear, thunderbird, black bear, and mountain goat (MacDonald, 1983, p. 25).

Thunderbird

The Thunderbird was a proud, powerful, and noble being in Northwest Coast mythology. This giant supernatural bird was believed to be responsible for thunder and lightning, hence the name. Thunder was caused by the beat of its wings and lightning from the blinks of its eyes. It is often depicted carrying an orca as this is what they hunted. They would then carry these to feed on high in the mountains where it ruled keeping watch over its dominion. The Thunderbird often appears in legends where humans try to outwit it and fail due to its intelligence. Like the orca, when at its home in the mountains, Thunderbird was believed to take the form of a giant man and it was only when he put on his bird-like costume that he because a Thunderbird. Typical features of the bird include a hooked beak, prominent curly ears (always associated with supernatural power), and large legs and talons (Shearar, 2000, p. 105). The Haida version of the Thunderbird is sometimes known as the Mountain Hawk. To avoid confusion, both will be referred to as Mountain Hawks in this dissertation.

6.2 Zoomorphic figures

6.2.1 Mammals (Class Mammalia, L. 1758)

Sea lion (*Eumetopias jubatus)*

Sea lions are large brown sea mammals that can weigh up to a tonne. They are known to reside out of the water near Rose Spit, Skedans Rocks, and Reef Island.

During the summer over 1,100 sea lions return to a remote southern point to breed with males arriving in May to defend a territory and females arriving shortly after. Females usually give birth to one pup at a time and will often raise these along with a yearling. After breeding, the social structure breaks down and the males separate along the B.C. coast. The animals feed on fish. Their behaviour can be spontaneous and they often appear at the surface splashing around and watching activities above the surface (Harwood, 2009, pp. 39-40). In mythology, sea lions functioned as house posts and held the prestigious position of head guards at the chief of the undersea world (Shearar, 2000, p.93).

In Haida art the sea lion can be identified by a mammalian head that appears bear-like, a rounded snoud, short sharp teeth, small ears, and a thick body with flippers at its sides. The teeth can often be used to distinguish the sea lion from the seal (Shearar, 2000, p- 93).

Harbour seals (*Phoca vitulina)*

These animals are the most common seal species and males can measure between 1.4-1.9 metres in length and females 1.2-1.7 metres. Their coat of short thick hair can range in colour from white to black-dark brown with dark spots or white rings on the dorsal side. They have five webbed digits on their pectoral flippers that they can use to groom, scratch or in defence and their hind flippers also contain five digits. This is a characteristic that they share in common with humans. They spend equal time on land and in the water. They settle on sheltered rocks or islets throughout Haida Gwaii but especially Rose Spit, Masset, Skidegate, and Cumshewa inlets (Horwood, 2009, p.40). Harbour seals can live from 20-30 years. They generally stay within 25 km of shore. They eat crustaceans, molluscs, squid, and fish. Females usually give birth to one pup a year that can swim and crawl almost immediately after birth. The animals primarily mate in the water and males attract females using aquatic displays, vocalizations, and fighting (Marine Bio, 2013). Seals were an important resource to the Haida who used them to provide food, oil (for fuel), and their tough hides could be used for items such as whaling floats. In Haida art the harbour seal represents wealth and plenty. They do not appear often as crests but frequently in stories (Shearar, 2000, p.94).

Bear *(Ursus* sp)

The bear is one of the most prevalent figures in shamanic art and myths and as previously mentioned, was believed to have been the chief of the land animals. The bear is easily identified by prominent ears, round or flared nostrils, a display of teeth and is commonly seen sitting upright in a human stance with large clawed paws on its four legs. Haida considered bears to have a close relation to human kind, possibly because of physical characteristics such as similarities in size and behaviours like standing on its hind legs, and also the relationship they had with their offspring. It was the link between the human and animal realm as well as secular natural realm and the divine or supernatural. They were often seen as protectors and helping spirits of warriors and bear cloaks were often worn in ritual performances while claws and teeth jewellery were worn by shaman. (Shearar, 2000, p. 20).

More than one bear species are depicted on totem poles. The American black bear (*ursus americanus)* is a large mammal found everywhere in Haida Gwaii with the exception of a few small islands so it was probably the most familiar to the people that inhabited the archipelago (Shearar, 2000, pp.19-20). While this bear does exist on the mainland, on Haida Gwaii it is the largest of its kind in North America given the large availability of food sources and few other competitive predators.

Grizzly bears (*Ursus arctos horribilis)* like beavers were animals that inhabited the mainland rather than Haida Gwaii. The fact that they also appear as crests on totems reaffirms the belief that the Haida frequented the mainland, or at least some of the population did (Shearar, 2000, p. 20).

The bear figure holding a frog in its mouth is a common devouring and biting figure seen in Haida art. It may suggest the power to vanquish or consume rivals and enemies or could also be protecting another creation and holding it in its mouth could be a symbol of guardianship and devotion. Some believe these represent death, rebirth, transformation or communion (Halpin, 1981, p. 123).

Bear Mother

Another common crest is one showing a mother bear with a human in her arms or positioned somewhere in close proximity and two bear cubs below her. The Bear Mother was feature in a very well-known Haida legend in which a woman was

kidnapped by bears and then tricked them into thinking her excrement was copper. The bear chief then allowed her to marry his nephew and the two had twin bear cubs. Eventually, the woman's two human brothers came looking for her with dogs and the bear father agreed to let her go with her brothers and establish a bear clan. They adopted the bears in their crest and eventually the bear cubs went back with their kind and the woman had two human children to continue the bear clan (Stewart, 1993, p.44).

Families who had earned the right to display bear crests could also address the creatures as relatives and hope to develop reputations as skilled bear hunters (Shearar, 200, p.20)

Bear holding human

The bear holding the human, which could be a corpse, could suggest the role reversal of the normal relationship between man as hunter and animal as hunted (Halpin, 1981, p.30). Or, as previously discussed with the frog, it could be holding the human as if protecting or guarding it.

Bear eating hunter

According to MacDonald,this figure is most likely a representation of characters from the Bear Hunter story. In this story, a hunter is taken into a bear's cave where he kills the bear and marries his wife, eventually fathering several bear children. After some time the hunter continues relations with his human wife and as a result he is killed and his bear children attack his village until they are also killed (MacDonald, 1984, p.9).

Bear with frog in mouth.

As previously mentioned with the frog in the mouth of the human, frogs frequently appear in Haida art in the mouth or touching tongues with other figures. This is related to their vocal ability and the exchange of power or knowledge. They are also representative of shamans and the spirit helpers of these beings. As bears were the chiefs of the land animals, this may be the representation of the exchange of knowledge or power between the human and animal world; the bear, who acts on the part of the animal kingdom and the frog, who is acting on behalf of a shaman.

Bear Cub

As discussed earlier. A popular Haida myth that is that of the Bear Mother who gave birth to two bear cubs after marrying a bear after she had been kidnapped by them. The cubs that frequently appear on poles may be characters from this story.

Grizzly bear with extended tongue

It is not unusual to see bears with protruding tongues as crest figures. This could be an attempt to convey the act of conversing or speaking. Often when tongues are shown this is a depiction of shared knowledge or spoken word, thus it is likely that this crest is doing the same. Perhaps it is an attempt to demonstrate the importance of the poles owner as they are someone who can communicate with the great Bear chief.

Beaver (*Castor Canadensis*

Beavers were one of the species introduced to the island in the early twentieth century. However, it is possible that Haida would have been familiar with the animal from the mainland before they were introduced especially when considering that they appear on poles from the late nineteenth century. The animal is known for building dams which can often manipulate the landscape as they cause severe changes in water levels. One observing beavers may notice that the animals are quite busy feeling and gnawing trees with strong large teeth and they create log, branch, and mud structures that block streams. They are known for their building skills. Their homes, mud structures made of wood and mud, serve as dwellings for extended families of monogamous parents, kits and yearling. This is another animal characteristic that the Haida likely compared to the way they lived, particularly the building material and the fact that families resided in the same dwelling. Beavers are herbivores that while slow on land, are graceful in the water using large paddle-shaped tails to help them swim. They were widely hunted for their pet for some time in the Northwest Coast region and their teeth were used to make knife blades before the introduction of iron tools (Shearar, 2000, p.20).

Beavers appear often in Northwest Coast mythology including from groups other than the Haida. One myth claims that the first beaver was a woman whose husband was forced to prove himself as a great provider. As a result of him constantly going on extended hunting trips his wife was left to swim in her pond which she

enlarged with a dam and built a water dwelling. She eventually became a beaver and her children were beaver people. In Haida mythology he is often connected to *raven, snag, sea wolf, sea bear,* and other powerful beings in the undersea world. In Haida art the beaver generally has a bear-like head, a short, wide rounded snout; short ears, two large teeth and a wide flat, cross-hatched tail that is flipped up in front of the body. It also usually features a stick in its mouth or front paws (Shearar, 2000, pp.21,22).

Mountain goat (*Oreamnos americanus)*

These animals live in high altitudes and rocky terrains in the mountainous regions of the Northwest Coast. As they lived on peaks they were often seen as special as they could touch the sky world and move through different realms. The horns of these animals are used in traditional art materials Depictions most commonly appeared in shamanic, story, and crest art (Shearar, 2000, p- 74).

Whales (Class Cete L. 1758)

Gray whale (*Eschrichtius robustus)*

Cetaceans (whales, porpoises and dolphins) can all be found around Haida Gwaii but of these, the gray whale is the most commonly seen. Reaching lengths of up to 14.9 metres these would have been impressive to see. Their name comes from the grey patches and white mottling on its darker skin. They travel biannually from the Artic summering areas and Baja breeding lagoons and during this time pass through inshore waters. They make the journey alone or in small groups and due to energy stored in fat reserves, they rarely stop to eat. The grey whale eats by sucking in mud from the seabed as it has no teeth for chewing. The animals occur most frequently in the waters around Haida Gwaii throughout the months of March, April, May, and June which is the period in which people spent most of their time gathering resources for the winter and would have been more likely to see them. The area of Skidegate Inlet is an excellent viewing area (Horwood, 2009, pp 35-36). The Haida hunted these animals and the practice of whaling was considered a prestigious, noble, and dangerous task.

Orca (*Orcinus orca)*

Orcas, also known as the killer whale are among the most popular of whale species around Haida Gwaii even today. They are distinctive in their appearance being black on top with a white underbelly and white circles around the eyes. Rarely, white orcas occur in the wild. Despite the fact that they are called killer whales, orcas are

actually the largest member of the dolphin family ranging from 6 to 8 metres in length. They contain sharp lines and clearly defined markings which one could compare with the style of Haida art. They contain rounded pectoral fins which resemble paddles and tall triangular shaped dorsal fins. These animals were poorly understood during some time in which people thought they ate anything including humans. However, a study by Dr. Michael Bigg proved that there were no known acts of aggression ever observed towards humans. Dr. Bigg also observed different types of orca groups including a group he referred to as *residents* made up of 10 to 25 animals that ate only fish, a group he called *transients* consisting of 2 to 5 animals that ate marine mammals and a third group called *offshores* which less is known about. This aspect alone makes the species of whales interesting and unique in comparison with other whales (Horwood, 2009, pp. 37-38). Pods of orcas usually develop various hunting techniques making each group different. They act in cooperation when hunting and are often compared to wolves in their behaviour. In fact, only elephants and higher primates like humans have social structures that are comparable to orcas with complex social bonds. They are also extremely protective of their young and other adolescent females may assist other mothers in caring for offspring (National Geographic, 2014). These aspects, the fact that they live in groups and cooperate together and the assisted mothering, are characteristics they share with humans and may have been one of the reasons the Haida thought so highly of them. Other traits they share with humans are their average lifespan which ranges from 50 to 80 years as well as their diet which consists of marine species that the Haida also would have consumed such as salmon. They are also known to attack large marine mammals including the grey whale. Male orcas mate with females from other pods to avoid inbreeding and mothers usually have a single calf which can occur at any time of year. Another aspect that they share in common with humans is the fact that females are known to go through menopause and live for decades after they have finished breeding. Orcas are apex predators and therefore have no natural predators somewhat like humans on land. The day to day activities of orcas include foraging, travelling, resting, and socializing. Spyhopping is commonly observed amongst the animals where they stick their heads up above the surface to view their surroundings. The whales also communicate with calls and pods use similar calls known as a dialect composed of specific numbers and types of calls (Kremers, 2012, pp. 433–445). According to the Haida, Orcas were chiefs of the sea and it is not difficult to see why they may have attached this importance to the orca given not only their impressive

appearance, intelligence, uniqueness, and hunting skills, but also the similarities they share with humans in terms of their social structure, birth rate, life span, communication, and their position in the food chain.

In mythology, these creatures first appeared when they were carved in wood by a human or *Raven* and then infused with a life force. They are one of the most commonly depicted crests in art and were widely recognised as clan ancestors in shamanic, story, and crest art. They are usually associated with strength, dignity, prosperity, and longevity. They are also associated with copper, the most important of metals to the Haida, and wealth. The Haida believed that orcas lived in villages deep in the ocean where they would remove their skins and live like humans. Some believed that they were the reincarnations of great chief. Many stories tell of orcas flipping canoes and taking people to their underwater villages but there are also others which tell of the help they provide to people caught in rough weather while out on the sea. The whales were believed to have been closely related to both people and wolves who they resemble in many ways as previously mentioned (Shearar, 2000, pp. 63,64).

Amongst the Haida, the orca belonged to the Raven clan. The presence of multiple fins usually signifies that the animal is a supernatural or divine entity and they sometimes had between two and five. Normally the killer has features which include a large, long, snub-nosed head, elongated nostrils, a wide, toothy mouth, a blowhole, a prominent dorsal fin, and a fluked tail. On poles the orca is carved along the length with its head above or below its body (Shearer, 2000, p.21).

Porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena, Phocoenoides dalli, Lagenorhynchus obliquidens*

Several porpoise species, also cetaceans, frequent the waters around Haida Gwaii. These include blunt-nosed harbour porpoises (*Phocoena phocoena)* that are commonly found in sheltered shorelines and waterways such as that near Skidegate. They travel in small groups and are difficult to see as they usually avoid people.

Dall's porpoises (*Phocoenoides dalli)* are sleek and thick-bodied. These fast marines mammals are more curious in nature and will often follow boats when travelling so would have been likely more visible to the Haida.

Pacific white-sided dolphins (*Lagenorhynchus obliquidens)* can also be observed in the area. These travel in groups of up to 50 or 100 though they prefer to stay farther away from boats than do Dall's porpoises.

While they are rare in Haida art, porpoises do occasionally appear. They generally have a more rectangular head and pronounced snout than the whale and lack teeth.

Whale with woman

This may be a depiction of the story of *Nanasimget.* In this myth, a young man who is married to a beautiful wealthy woman went seal hunting and his grandmother noticed a white sea otter, a rare and valuable animal for its pelt. The boy carefully speared it below the tail to avoid getting blood on the fur. However, the grandmother noticed a spot of blood and so the boy's wife decided to wash the pelt. As she was washing it, the pelt slipped into the water and when she reached for it, Killer Whale appeared and swam off with her on his back while she clutched his dorsal fin. Nanasimget tried to follow in his canoe but Killer Whale dove below the surface. Nanasimget prepared himself ceremoniously and then returned to the spot where the whale had descended and dove into the sea following the trail left behind on the sea bed. He encountered various creatures on his journey who told them that his wife was going to marry Killer Whale as soon as a dorsal fin could be made for her. Nanasimget managed to convince Killer Whale's slave to poor water on the fire and when the steam filled the air, Nanasimget ran in and grabbed his wife. They reached his canoe and managed to paddle back to the village without Killer Whale capturing them. There are many poles that contain depictions of a killer whale with a figure clinging to its back and another human figure connected to them somehow (Stewart, 1993, p. 42).

6.2.2 Birds (Class, Aves L. 1758)

Eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus Linnaeus*

The bald eagle is common along the coast. These birds are known for their incredible hunting and fishing skills and can easily see prey from a great distance. It is one of the most important beings in art and mythology and in many regions eagle clan families were the most prominent and eagle chiefs the most powerful. Their spirits are associated with lofty ideals and the pursuit of freedom (Shearar, 2000, pp. 43, 44). They range throughout Canada, the United States, and northern Mexico normally near large bodies of water. They use very tall, old growth trees for nesting and build enormous

nests up to 4 m deep and 2.5 m wide. These two aspects usually make them easy to spot. The name is due to the white colour of the head and white tail in contrast with the dark brown body. Their yellow beaks are hooked. They are large birds with bodies ranging from 70 to 102 cm and wingspans from 1.8 and 2.3 m in length. An eagle's 'screech' or call can be heard from a great distance with its high pitch.

It is not surprising that they were respected as powerful hunters and some myths tell of groups of mythical eagles that gathered for whale hunting expeditions as unlike the Thunderbird they could not do it alone. Eagles are often displayed next to or carrying salmon which is one of its favourite foods. Eagle feathers could be used in Haida masks and they were thought to be sacred (Shearar, 2000, pp. 44).

Eagle and Raven are the two moieties which Haida can belong to. They are two halves of the great whole and close companions in Haida myth. Although they are equals, the Trickster Raven is better known. In artwork the Eagle can be identified by a large beak which curves downward at the tip and sometimes hooks towards the body. They have no ears or small ones and are usually shown with ovoid eyes. They were thought to be spiritual helpers (Shearar, pp. 44).

Hawk (*Accipitridae)*

Ten or more hawk and falcon species, members of the Accipitridae family, live throughout the Northwest Coast region but they are not as prominent in art as the eagle is. Perhaps this is due to the fact that they are less impressive visually generally being only one colour. Like eagles, they are large birds with great intelligence and they have an impressive range of sight.

Hawks are often associated with the sun and they are appreciated for their superior hunting skills and vision. They usually appear smaller than eagles in artwork with a shorter beak that is dramatically hooked (Shearar, 2000, p. 56).

Owl (*Strigiformes)*

Two species of owl live year round along the Northwest Coast: the great horned owl (*Bubo virginianus)* and the Western screech owl (*Megascops kennicottii)*. They are nocturnal hunting birds known for their excellent hearing abilities, great vision, silent flying abilities and they have a haunting call. Not unlike other stories from around the world, the Haida associated owls with the powers of wisdom, foreknowledge and

perception. They were powerful spirits that often signified the approach of death. They sometimes were thought to help shamans in the pursuit of good (Shearar, 2000, pp. 81).

In art, owls can usually be identified by their large eyes, short, hooked beak, and ears.

Raven (*Corvus corax)*

Ravens are incredibly important crests and figures in Haida mythology. They are one of the two moieties that one could belong two, the other being Eagle. They are large, intelligent birds that are blue-black or jet black in colour and though much larger, are often mistaken for crows. They are infamous still today for their thievery and mischievousness which makes it understandable that the Haida would have identified them as the Trickster who helped move things from one place to another helping with the creation of Haida Gwaii. White ravens, while rare, due exist and are revered by Northwest Coast peoples. They are believed to be magical and good omens (Shearar, 2000, p. 89). Like the orca, eagle, and bear, the raven is an extremely important figure in Haida mythology and all families belonged to either the eagle or raven moiety. The raven was an easily identifiable figure as it was often used on totem poles and can be recognised by its straight but not overly long beak. It is not as long as the thunderbird's (mountain hawk's) beak and not curved at the tip like the eagle's. It also is featured with eyebrows which is a common feature of Haida birds and was painted black as was also common (Stewart, 1993, p.31).

The raven was one of the most important beings. It was the original trickster, transformer, organiser, teacher, catalyst and chief spirit (Halpin, 1981, p.30). It was seen as the relentless schemer and practical joker that was able to transform himself into other beings, even inanimate objects. The raven was often thought to have the power of the prophecy and the Haida referred to ravens as *Nankilslas* or *Nanagkilstlas* which means 'he whose voice is true' (Halpin, 1981, p.30).

The raven was not the supreme creator but was the creator's chief and original agent and his myths are accessible to all unlike other stories which are the property of only certain families. Two myths, central to the creation of Haida people and the world they lived in involved the raven: *The Raven Cycle* and *How the Raven Stole the Sun.*

In the Raven Cycle, the world was in a time of chaos and only a single reef existed in a boundless expanse of sea and sky. All of the supernatural beings were piled on the small

reef. Raven created Haida Gwaii out of black rocks and the mainland out of a white one. All the supernatural beings then swam to the islands. The Haida were then born or released from a clam shell the raven dug out of the ground at Rose Spit (Halpin, 1981, p.31).

In the legend *How the Raven Stole the Sun*, the raven is the trickster that brings daylight to the world from a greedy chief who kept the sun, moon and stars hidden in a box. The Raven transformed himself into a hemlock needle and the chief's daughter drank him with her water. She then became pregnant and gave birth to a small dark child that constantly cried. The chief eventually grew tired of the crying and allowed the boy to play with the box of sun, moon and stars. The raven then transformed back into a bird and carried the light through the smoke hole and spread light around the world (Halpin, 1981, p.31).

Unlike many other crest figures, raven myths were customarily accessible to all families.

Raven with a human between its wings.

As with other crests that are represented with human figures, this may symbolise a protective nature with the raven protecting the human. The human could be a depiction of the person who commissioned the pole or a member or their family. It could also represent a figure from a personal family myth.

Raven with frogs and man in bill.

Both frogs and ravens were important figures in Haida mythology. The frog is associated with shamans and the raven with the origins of man and it is one of the two moieties. This could depict the connection between shamans and important animals and their ability to communicate with them as the frog is pictured coming out of the mouth of the raven.

Cormorant (*Phalacrocoracidae* sp.)

There are two types of cormorants found on Haida Gwaii; Pelagic cormorants *Phalacrocorax pelagicus,* and Brandt's cormorants *Phalacrocorax penicillatus*. Both types breed along the Northwest Coast. They are long-necked, sleek, black and white birds that have the ability to dive into the water which has often led to their appearance in shamanic contexts, like the frog that also lives in two realms. The crest belongs to the

Eagle clan and they are generally depicted with long flat beaks that are square rather than tapered at the end like the Raven.

6.2.3. Amphibians (Class, Amphibia L. 1758)

Frog (*Anaxyrus boreas)*

The frog was another important figure in Haida mythology. Those that live on Haida Gwaii are in fact western toads (*Anaxyrus boreas)* and are the only native species of amphibian on Haida Gwaii. The Haida name for frog means 'crab of the woods'. The species of toad is a large one between 5.6 and 13 cm long with a white or cream dorsal stripe and dusky grey or greenish dorsally with skin glands concentrated within the dark blotches. They breed between March and July though sometimes as early as January in lower-elevation regions in a wide variety of warm, shallow aquatic habitats such as ditches or lake margins. Females return to the same sight every year but do not always breed when doing so. During the winter months these animals descend into the ground where they hibernate until the temperatures rise again in the spring. They likely seem to be reborn at the time they emerge from the ground. Toads can live for up to ten years and sometimes longer (Pearson, 2012).

Toads was respected as an animal that lived between two worlds, the land and the water and also because of its adaptability, knowledge and power to traverse worlds and inhabit diverse realms; both supernatural and natural. It was also a spirit helper for shamans. The frog was thought of as a great communicator that was believed to have contained divine magic and power. They were often associated with copper and great wealth.

Frogs may also represent a great communicator and can be used to represent common ground ro the voice of the people likely due to the fact that they are vocal, singing creatures. Their voices were thought to contain divine power and magic. Art works which depict toads with their tongues extended touching another creature demonstrate the exchange of knowledge or power (Shearar, 2000, p. 49).

Haida mythology tells of one of the wives of raven who is *Creek Woman* whose familiar is a frog, and another story explains that frog is raven's wife, child, or alter ego.

The frog can be recognised by its flat nose, broad toothless mouth, large round eyes, short body and lack of tail and ears (Halpin, 1981, pp. 47, 48). Although they appear frequently on poles, they are not generally large crests but rather small details placed in the mouths of other creatures or peeking out from their ears or hands. Shearar (2000, p.48) suggests that these depictions '… may represent an eruption of aspects of unseen interior and other worlds.'

6.2.4 Fish (Class, Pisces L. 1758)

Sculpin *Cottus gobio*

Sculpin, also known as bullheads, are spiny, large-headed, wide-mouthed, bottom-feeding fish. They were not consumed as a food source but as they occur frequently in Haida art, they must have been appreciated. It is another creature that is depicted as a spirit helping, frequently carrying shamans on its back. Like the frog, it is associated with copper. It is a family crest of the Eagle clan (Shearar, 2000, pp. 25).

The characteristics of these figures include a short, thick, rounded snout, an elongated, down-turned mouth, round, widely set eyes, dorsal spines, and spines over the eyes and nostrils (Shearar, 2000, p. 24).

6.3 Objects

Skil

These objects which are sometimes referred to *potlatch* rings, are cylindrical objects associated with wealth and status. They appear often on the top of a chief's hat, totem poles, and the hat of watchmen figures which we can observe on all of the watchmen figures in the catalogue of poles. Usually these objects contain cylinders marked into a number of skils. It has been suggested that the number of segments may be representative of the number of potlatches that were hosted by the hat wearer, or pole owner.

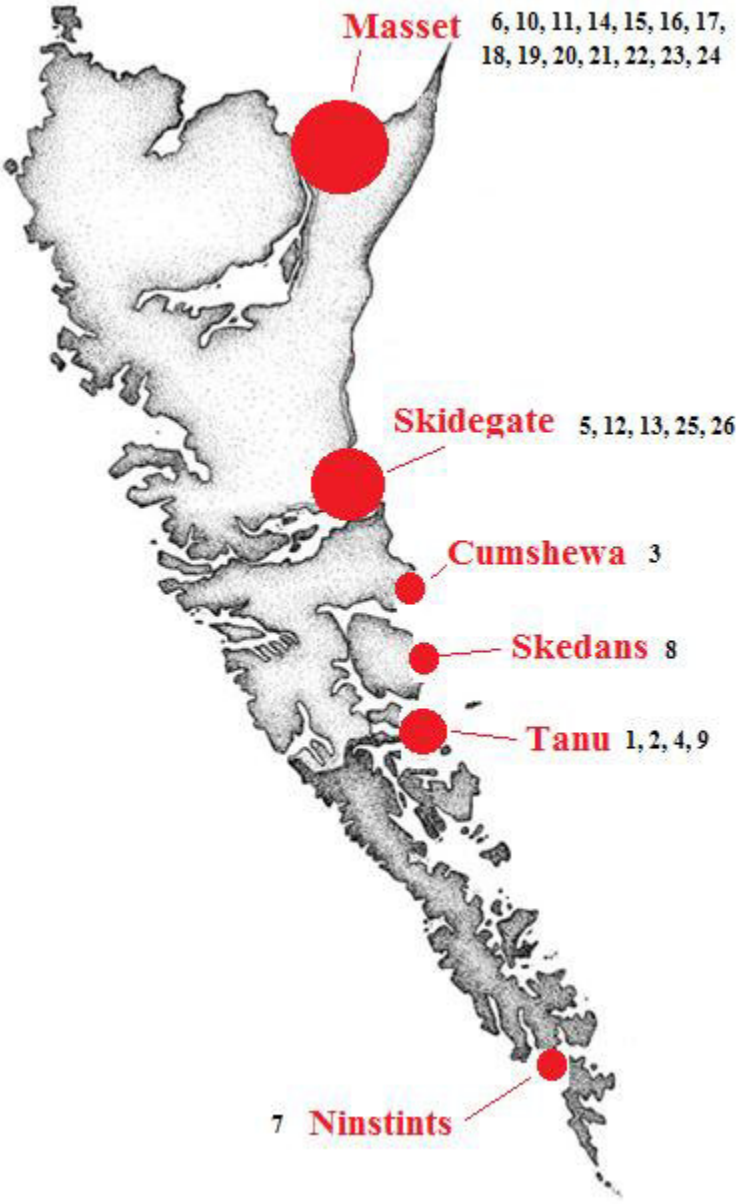
Puffin-beaks

Puffins, or rather the tufted puffin (*Fratercula cirrhata),* breed throughout the Northwest Coast. They are diving water birds of which images are often found in

shamanic art objects to symbolize journeys through mysterious watery realms. In terms of appearance, they are quite unique with the sharp contrast between their black bodies, white heads, and bright orange beak. The beaks in particular were used by the Haida to 'decorate' clothing and artetfacts with the symbolic purpose of transforming a shaman or individual into a bird, and were placed in bunches to form rattles (Shearar, 2000, p.86). Rattles, like drums, served as percussive instruments in shamanic and ceremonial contexts. They were often finely carved or painted and could vary in size. They usually are used in art along with shamans, cheifs, and dancers and thus with individuals of a high social status or importance. The noise from rattles were traditionally thought to contain magic which could be used to call the spirits (Shearar, 2000, p.88).

Chapter 7 - Catalogue of Totem Poles

1. **Tanu House Pole**
2. **Tanu Mortuary Pole**
3. **Cumshewa Frontal Pole**
4. **Tanu frontal House Pole**
5. **Skidegate Mortuary Pole**
6. **Masset Pole**
7. **Ninstints Frontal House Pole**
8. **Skedans House Portal Pole**
9. **Tanu Village Frontal House Pole**
10. **Massett Village Star House Pole**
11. **Massett House 26 Frontal Pole**
12. **Skidegate House 22 Interior Housepost**
13. **Skidegate House 23 Corner Post**
14. **Moon House Frontal Pole Masset**
15. **Masset Killer Whale House Memorial Pole**
16. **Masset Grizzly House Memorial Pole**
17. **Masset Monster House Corner Post**
18. **Memorial Pole Star House Masset village**
19. **Monument for Stilta Frontal Pole Masset village**
20. **Frontal Pole Property House Masset Village**
21. **Memorial Pole, Masset Village.**
22. **Memorial Pole from House 27 Masset Village**
23. **Frontal Pole Drum House Masset Village**
24. **Masset Frontal Pole**
25. **Skidegate Village Interior House Post**
26. **Skidegate Memorial Pole**



Legend

Village Name	Poles	Total number of poles
Masset	6, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24	14
Skidegate	5, 12, 13, 25, 26	5
Cumshewa	3	1
Skedans	8	1
Tanu	1, 2, 4, 9	4
Ninstints	7	1

1. Tanu House Frontal Pole



The original pole, a house pole, was located in the Haida village of Tanu. The pole was removed in 1939 after the village had been abandoned and was taken to Prince Rupert where it was on display for 17 years. It was later moved to Victoria to be housed in the Royal British Columbia Museum. A replica of the pole (pictured here) was carved by Freda Diesing, a modern Haida carver. It measures roughly 10 metres in height

Read from top to bottom, the crests on the pole depict the following:

Three watchmen. The three human figures wearing large high-crowned hats, which are nearly the size of them, are depicted in a seated position with their arms hanging at their sides and legs folded towards their chests. Each figure is nearly identical with ovoid shaped eyes, large eyebrows, small noses and mouths which are downturned at the corners. Their heads are roughly the same size of their bodies. The legs of two of the watchmen seem to form part of the ears of the eagle below.

Eagle. The eagle, also in a seated position with its wings folded at its sides holds a staff in its human like hands. It has the same characteristic ovoid eyes that are observed on the watchmen and thick eyebrows. The Eagle's upturned tail displays a human face. The staff of the eagle rests on the human face almost like a hat of the watchmen figures.

Bird. This is most likely an owl or possibly a hawk. Like the eagle it has large eyebrows, and ovoid shaped eyes. However, its beak is downturned at the tip. It holds an unknown object in its human like hands.

Whale. The whale is displayed only in part but is recognizable by its upturn tail flukes and round snouted head. It also features ovoid shaped eyes, although these are slightly angled in comparison to those of the eagle and bird. These are topped by thick eyebrows.

Bear. Bottom figure on the pole it is figured in an upright position similar to that of the watchmen figures but with its arms folded to its chest holding an upside-down frog. It also has ovoid shaped eyes, thick eyebrows and a protruding tongue.

Frog. This figure sits between the bear's arms and legs facing downwards. It also features the same ovoid eyes and large brows that can be seen on the other figures. The hands of the frog are somewhat human like in appearance.

Bibliography:

Stewart, Hilary, 1993.

Image source:

Stewart, Hilary, 1993 p.155.

2. Tanu Mortuary Pole



The original pole was located in Tanu village on Haida Gwaii. It was erected for a high ranking woman whose remains were cremated and then placed in the cavity behind the frontal board. By 1911 the village had already been abandoned for some years and so the pole was taken to the Provincial Museum by Dr Charles F. Newcombe. It is one of the only poles this type to have been preserved in a museum. A replica was carved in 1955 by Mungo Martin along with Henry Hunt and David Martin. It measures roughly 9 metres in height.

From top to bottom the crests are as follows:

Eagle. This is perched atop the pole. The original had copper leaning against its chest. The eagle appears more realistic than the other figures on the pole and is not connected in the way that the other figures are joined together;

Mountain Hawk (frontal board). This mythical bird is seen in perspective staring straight out towards the viewer. It is recognisable by a recurved beak and wings folded at its sides. Only the head and wings can be seen from this figure. It has the characteristic ovoid shaped eyes seen in most Haida art and thick eyebrows above them;

Whale. This crest only features the head and tail flukes. The flukes wrap part way around the pole on each side. The eyes, like those of the hawk above are ovoid-shaped though angled upwards at the outer edge rather than downwards;

Small human like figure. This figure sits between the ears of the beaver at the base. A small face topped by a hat with three skils (rings). The figure may be a representation of the deceased;

Beaver. The lowest figure on the pole sits in an upright position with its tail folded upwards towards its midsection. It holds a stick in its hands which is raised towards its mouth as commonly seen in beaver crests and has the characteristic large two front teeth. The eyes are also ovoid in shape and topped by large thick eyebrows.

Bibliography: Stewart, Hilary, 1993.

Image source: Stewart, Hilary, 1993 p.108.

3. Cumshewa Frontal Pole



The original frontal pole was carved sometime after 1878 in Cumshewa on Haida Gwaii. It was purchased by the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago in 1901 then sold to the Salvation Army for a children's camp in Illinois. In 1960 it was sold to a collector and finally, in 1982 the Canadian Museum of Civilization bought it and returned it to Canada. A replica was carved by Gerry Marks and Richard Hunt along with Tim Paul in 1984 which is located in Thunderbird Park, Victoria British Columbia. It measures roughly 10 metres in height.

Read from top to bottom, the pole features the following crests:

Three Watchmen. The three human like figures are depicted in a crouched position with their knees folded towards their chests and their arms at their sides. Each wears a tall hat with four skils (lines). The figures have ovoid shaped eyes and mouths turned downwards at the edges;

Cormont. This bird has many human and animal characteristics such as human like arms with hands and fingers with feathers at the elbows. It has a long straight beak, ovoid eyes and thick eyebrows;

Whale with human woman. This this complex interlocking design features a whale with a woman clinging to its tail flukes that lie on either side of her face. The whale's dorsal fin protrudes above its blowhole carved as the head of a small upside down human. This may be a depiction of the story of *Nanasimget;*

Grizzly Bear. The bear seated in an upright position similar to that of the watchmen holds two humanlike twin cubs between its knees and arms. Of one of these we can only observe the head which is upside down and it almost appears as if the body of the figure is held inside the bear's mouth. The bear has humanlike fingers, ovoid shaped eyes and thick eyebrows.

Bibliography: Stewart, Hilary, 1993.

Image source: Stewart, Hilary, 1993 p.103.

4. Tanu frontal House Pole



This frontal house pole (which no longer survives today) from the village of Tanu on Haida Gwaii was collected in 1911. It was replicated in precise detail by Mungo Martin and assistants. The replica now stands outdoors at Thunderbird Park in Victoria, British Columbia. It measures approximately 6 metres in height. From top to bottom it features the following crests:

Three Watchmen. The three humanlike figures wearing tall ringed hats are seated with their legs folded towards their chests and arms at their sides. As with the other figures on the pole they feature ovoid shaped eyes. The lower limbs of two of the figures protrude through the ears of the eagle below;

Eagle. This figure, which is recognisable by its curved beak and wings folded in at its sides, contains the same characteristic ovoid eyes and thick eyebrows seen on other bird crests. It has a personified tail that fits between the ears of a humanlike figure below;

Human figure. This figure, holding a frog up under its chin, has a wide flat nose and downturned mouth. It also contains the ovoid shaped eyes and thick eyebrows seen on the other crests. As it is holding a frog it may be a depiction of *Dzelaqons* who was important in Haida lore and went by several names including Frog Woman, Mountain Woman, Copper Woman, and Volcano Woman;

Whale. This large animal at the base is recognisable by its pectoral fins on each side, a dorsal fin and tale flukes turned upwards onto its body. The blowhole is defined by the upside-won human figure. This may represent the *Nanasimget* story or may have been an attempt to ridicule a person or family who were in debt to the pole's owner. The whale has large ovoid shaped eyes, thick eyebrows and ovoid shapes on its body.

Bibliography: Stewart, Hilary, 1993.

Image source: Stewart, Hilary, 1993 p.10.



5. Skidegate Mortuary Pole

The original version of this mortuary pole was raised in Skidegate village on Haida Gwaii sometime prior to 1878 to honour chief Sedans. It was bought by the city of Vancouver in 1936 to celebrate the golden jubilee but over time it deteriorated and was repaired badly using plaster and cement and was repainted using non-traditional colours. Well-known carver Bill Reid was commissioned to carve a replica in 1964. The original pole had 23 short horizontal lines carved into it to record the number or blankets given away at a potlatch with each line representing twenty blankets. It measures approximately 6.5 metres in height.

The crests on the pole from top to bottom are:

Moon with Thunderbird face. The large circular moon figure feature the face of a Thunderbird with ovoid shaped eyes, a downward turned mouth and a curved beak. Its wings, legs and claws are painted on each side in a split-design;

Mountain Goat. This figure could be recognised by its cloven hooves and two horns above its head which have now fallen off (not displayed in image). It is pictured in an upright position with its arms pulled in towards its chest and its legs folded inwards. As with the other figures it has ovoid shaped eyes and thick eyebrows topping them. Its hooves rest on the head of the grizzly bear below;

Grizzly Bear. This is the bottom and largest figure on the pole. From its ears peak two humanlike figures that seem to hold its thick eyebrows. It is seated in an upright position with its legs and arms folded inwards. In its arms it holds a figure which rests between its legs. This is most likely a seal although this is uncertain. It may also be a frog as we frequently see frog figures with bears on other poles such as the Masset house frontal pole or on the Masset pole.

Bibliography: Stewart, Hilary, 1993.

Image source: Stewart, Hilary, 1993 p.90.

6. Masset Pole



The pole, which now survives only in pieces in the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia, once stood against a house in Masset village, Haida Gwaii. The house was abandoned before 1878 and in 1901 the pole was bought by Dr Charles F. Newcombe who brought it to the Provincial Museum in Victoria, British Columbia. The Pole stood on Beacon Hill Park for years until it was knocked over by a windstorm and broke beyond repair. The pieces of the pole were given to the Museum of Anthropology and are now displayed on the walls of its foyer. A replica (imaged here) was carved by Jim Hart and is on display outside the same museum. Its height is situated between 7 and 8 metres.

The figures from top to bottom are:

Raven. The raven sits atop the other figures and appears almost separate from the others being carved much deeper in the pole. It is seated on the pole with its wings resting at its side. The raven's head is facing upwards towards the sky. The bird is much more naturalistic looking than the other figures on the pole. Its feet rest on a frog below;

Frog. Small figure seated between the raven and sea bear looking downwards;

Sea Bear and Cub. This figure is depicted in an upright position with holding its cub between its arms and legs. The crest has the characteristic ovoid eyes seen in most Haida creatures and its tongue protrudes from its toothed mouth.

Upside-down human. This figure is directly below the sea bear cub. Its face looks out towards the viewer and its body is hidden, perhaps in the mouth of the bear cub. It has ovoid eyes and an open mouth;

Bear with frog in mouth. This is another bear with similar features to that of the first with the exception of its mouth which is closed around the body of a frog. Of the frog's

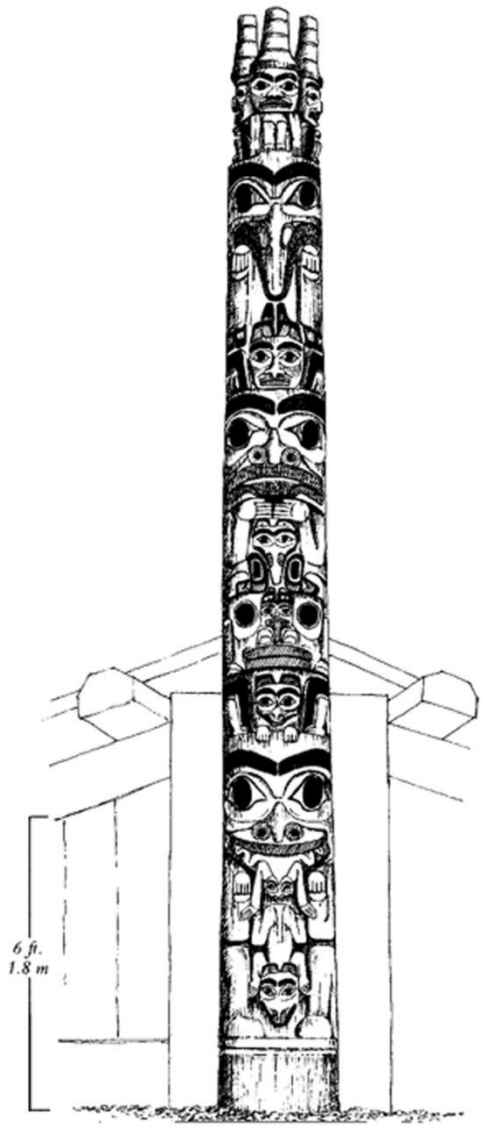
body we can only see the front arms pulled in to its sides and its rear feet protruding from the mouth of the bear. The frog also has ovoid eyes and a wide toothless mouth.

Grizzly Bear holding Sculpin. The lowest figure on the pole, this bear is similar to the other two in an upright position, although its mouth and nose are much larger. The bear holds a sculpin (fish) in its arms that hangs upside down between its legs.

Bibliography: Stewart, Hilary, 1993.

Image source: Stewart, Hilary, 1993 p.58.

7. Ninstints Frontal House Frontal Pole



This frontal house pole was found on an expedition to Ninstints by Bill Reid in 1957. The pole had some rot and a long crack but the carvings still remained. It had broken off at the ears of the bottom crest figure. The pole was taken to display in the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia where it remains today. A scaled down replica of the pole was made by Bill Reid also on display at the museum. It measures approximately 6.5 metres in height.

From top to bottom, the pole contains the following crests:

Three watchmen. Seated with their legs pulled towards their chests and their arms hanging at their sides. Each one is wearing a tall hat with three skils (rings) and all display the same ovoid shaped eyes. They are seated above the Raven and the legs of two of the figures are connected to the ears of the bird;

Raven. The seated Raven has its wings folded in at its sides. The wings end in human like hands giving it human qualities. It also has ovoid shaped eyes and thick eyebrows above. A small face occupies the raven's upturned tail. The hands at the bottom of the wings emerge through the ears of the grizzly bear below;

Grizzly Bear. This figure is seated in an upright position with its hands held up under its chin. Between the arms and legs sits a small raven figure with a wing on each side of its downward facing beak. The bear has a wide mouth, ovoid shaped eyes and thick eyebrows;

Frog. This figure has a wide mouth and wide eyes that are much more circular in appearance than the other ovoid forms observed on the pole. Of the frog we only see the

face which contains a small mosquito that sits between its eyes. It sits above a bear cub below;

Bear Cub. This small crest sits between the ears of a larger bear below. It crouches with its legs gripping the top of the larger bear's head.

Grizzly Bear. This is the lowest and largest figure on the pole. Like the other bear it is shown in an upright position with its arms raised to below its head and with the characteristic ovoid eyes and wide mouth. However, unlike the other figure this bear holds a frog in its mouth and a wolf cub fills the space between his front and hind legs.

Bibliography: Stewart, Hilary, 1993.

Image source: Stewart, Hilary, 1993 p.55.

8. Skedans House Portal Pole



This pole is a house portal pole (frontal) that was collected in 1954 from a Skedans village in a decayed house. It was taken to the Royal British Columbia Museum. Its size is somewhere between eight and nine metres. From top to bottom, the crests on the pole include:

Three watchmen. The figures are seated with their legs pulled in to their chests. They feature the characteristic ovoid eyes commonly seen in other figures and each figure is topped by a tall hat. The legs of two of the watchmen figures join the ears of the bird below;

Mountain hawk. The mountain hawk was the Haida version of a thunderbird. The bird has thick eyebrows above its ovoid eyes and figures a downturned beak. Its wings are folded in at its sides and a small whale can be observed with its head down between the hawk's wings and a bird's tail which is personified by an upside down human-like face;

Mythical animal with human figure. This animal is depicted holding a man wearing a high crowned hat who could be the owner of the pole. The animal has a human like face with thick eyebrows, ovoid shaped eyes and a wide nose and mouth. It is in an upright position with its legs and arms folded in towards it. The human figure between its arms and legs resembles the watchmen atop the pole with the same style of hat and a similar position;

Grizzly bear. The bear at the base guards the entrance to the house. The original pole would have had an oval opening in it for the doorway. The bear is in a similar position to that of the other figures, that is, upright with its arms pulled in towards its chest and its legs folded in at the bottom. As with the other figures it contains thick eyebrows, ovoid eyes, a wide nose and protruding tongue. Its hands contain long claws.

Bibliography: Stewart, Hilary, 1993.

Image source: Stewart, Hilary, 1993 p.47.

9. Tanu Village Frontal House Pole



This pole is currently on display at the Royal British Columbia Museum. The pole measures nearly 10 metres in height.

From top to bottom the figures are as follows:

Three watchmen. These human figures are seated with their knees pulled in to their chests and arms at their sides. Like the other watchmen they each have a tall hat with three skils and ovoid shaped eyes. The knees of two figures link with the ears of the eagle below;

Eagle. This bird has a long straight beak, thick eyebrows and ovoid shaped eyes. It is in a seated position with its wings folded in at its sides. Between the wings of the bird is the head of a hawk or horned owl and in its talons there is a hair seal;

Human figure. This figure has several interpretation and recorded names including weeping woman, volcano woman, sea anemone, salt water or sea chief. The eyes of the figure are suspended from a ligature and its lids are closed over the sockets. On the creatures chest one can observe a downward facing frog;

Human figure with killer whale. The human figure with its ovoid shaped eyes, and wide nose and mouth is holding the tail of a killer whale whose dorsal fin rests between the knees of another human shown upside down riding the whales back. The downward head of the killer whale becomes a sea bear at the base of the pole;

Sea Bear. The bear is figured in a seated position with its arms and legs pulled in to its chest and sides. The head of the animal faces downwards and it is swallowing a sea mammal head first. The flippers of the animal protrude from the sides of its mouth. The bear has thick eyebrows and ovoid shaped eyes. Its hands have human characteristics with long fingers clenched towards its palms. In the sea bears ears one can see small animals which were used as filler to occupy the empty space.

Bibliography: Stewart, Hilary, 1993.

Image source: Stewart, Hilary, 1993 p.98.

10. Massett Village Star House Frontal Pole



The Star House pole is 11.36 metres high and currently on display in Pitt Rivers museum in Oxford. It was hallowed out in the back to reduce the weight and make it easier to transport and erect. It was built around 1882 and belonged to chief Antelas (c. 1816-1893). The pole is well documented in its original village and there are several pictures of it outside the house. It went to the Pitt Rivers museum in 1901 and was donated by Professor E.B. Tylor, C.F. Newcombe and Reverend J. Keen and the Hudson's Bay Company who purchased it for thirty-six dollars.

From the top to the bottom, the images on the pole are as follows:

Three seated figures or watchmen. These figures are seated with their knees pulled in towards their chests and arms at their sides. Each wears a tall ringed hat (skil), one with an extremely high hat. The legs of two of the figures link with the ears of the crest below;

Bear with a frog in its mouth. The bear with its characteristic ovoid eyes and wide mouth holds a frog in its mouth and a bear cub between its legs. The bear cub faces downwards with its face directed towards the raven below;

Bear holding human figure. The bear in this crest also features the wide mouth, flat nose and ovoid shaped eyes. It holds a human figure in its teeth which is tightly clutched towards its chest and between its legs. At the bear's feet a cub also sits between its legs;

Raven with a human between its wings. The crest also contains the characteristic ovoid shaped eyes, a long straight beak, wings folded at its sides and a human figure sitting between them.

Bibliography: MacDonald, 1989.

Image source: MacDonald, 1989, p.71.

11. Massett House 26 Frontal Pole



This pole was the frontal pole of a house belonging to the most famous shaman of Masset called Dr. Kude by Europeans or K!oda'-I by the Haida meaning 'Beak'. The pole comes from sometime around 1880s when it appeared in several photographs along with its owner. It was roughly nine metres in height. The crests on the pole read from top to bottom are as follows:

Three watchmen. These typical figures appear on the top of the pole as is often seen on similar frontal poles. Each appears wearing a tall hat with the central figure's being the tallest. The central watchmen is perched on a fish-like head with a stick coming out of it. This is probably a supernatural snag;

Eagle. The eagle has a downturned beak as is common of this type of crest. It features wide ovoid shaped eyes, thick eyebrows and its ears are partially formed by the legs of two of the watchmen above;

Bear like figure. This figure with the characteristic ovoid shaped eyes, wide nose and mouth holds a frog figure in its mouth whose body hangs down between its arms and legs. The bear is in an upright seated position with clawed hands. The frog holds a human-like figure which could also be a supernatural snag;

Beaver. The figure in this crest also contains ovoid shaped eyes, a wide flat nose and mouth. It holds a stick in its hand held up towards its mouth. Its tail is folded upwards and features a human face on it;

Bear. This large standing figure also with ovoid shaped eyes, is depicted with bear cubs in its ears and it is shown eating a person. This may be a representation of the Bear Hunter story.

Bibliography: MacDonald, 1983.

Image source: MacDonald, 1983, p.149.

12. Skidegate House 22 Interior Housepost



This housepost was carved in the late 19th century and stood inside a Haida dwelling in the village of Skidegate. It stood in Raven's House and was owned by Skidegate VI whose wife was 'High up in the sky.' It was bought by James Deans who took it to the British Columbia Provincial Museum. As this pole sat inside a house, it probably measured around two or three metres in height.

From top to bottom the pole contains the following figures:

Raven with frogs and man in bill. This figure contains the typical features of a Haida raven with its thick eyebrows, curved beak, ovoid shaped eyes and small ears atop its head. In its mouth, hang two frogs with their heads facing downwards, seen from above. It also holds a human figure which is seated between the ears of the thunderbird below. The human figure wears a hat typical to that seen on watchmen;

Mountain Hawk. This crest belonged to the house of the chief. The bird sits in a perched position with its wings folded at its side. Like the raven, it has thick eyebrows, ovoid shaped eyes, a wide beak, and ears above its head. Its talons, which are quite human like, are raised to its chest and it carries a whale. This is a common image as it was believed that thunderbirds preyed on whales when they came down from the mountain.

Bibliography: Duffek, 1986, MacDonald, 1983.

Image source: Duffek, 1986, p.11

13. Skidegate House 23 Corner Post



This post is one of two corner posts from House 23 of Skidegate. The pole, identical to that on the other front corner, appears in photographs from the late 19th century. The house was considered new at the time as it was built in 1875 and was known as 'House Chiefs Peep at from a Distance' because it was considered too great to come near. The house was inhabited by chief Skidegate VIII and his wife. The pole was likely around four metres in height.

The pole, while completely worked, contains no images on the bottom and only one figure on top.

Watchmen. A single watchmen tops the pole. It is a typical figure wearing the tall hat containing three *skils.* The figure has a wide nose and mouth, ovoid shaped eyes and sits with its arms and legs pulled in towards its chest.

Bibliography: MacDonald, 1994, Royal British Museum, 2009.

Image source: Royal British Museum, 2009.

14. Moon House Frontal Pole Masset



This frontal pole came from Moon House in Masset village. The house was owned by a man named 'Dwelling in a town' and the name of the house came from the Tsimshian. The pole can be seen in a photograph taken in the late nineteenth century. The pole was approximately 11 or 12 metres in height.

The pole contains the following crests from top to bottom:

Sea Grizzly. This figure has ears which extend into pectoral fins and a killer whale sits between them. The bear has the characteristic ovoid shaped eyes, wide mouth and thick eyebrows commonly observed and it is seated in an upright position with its arms and legs pulled in at its sides. The bear's tongue is protruding and joins the beak of a small raven, which sits between its arms and legs;

Bear with human face. This bear, like the other contains ovoid shaped eyes and it is seated in a similar position with arms and legs pulled towards its chest. Unlike the other bear, however, it contains a much wider nose. The bear holds a small animal in its mouth, possibly an otter whose tongue joins the human face on the bear's abdomen. The human face represents the moon and like the other figures it contains wide, ovoid shaped eyes, a wide nose and wide mouth;

Bear with two cubs. The figure on the bottom of the pole is another bear; this one also has a wide human like nose and typical, ovoid shaped eyes and a wide mouth. The bear, sitting upright like the other two, holds two small bear cubs, possibly representing the bear mother myth.

Bibliography: MacDonald, 1983, Newcombe, 1897-191, unknown author, Simon Fraser University, 2014.

Image source: Photograph by R. Maynard, ca. 1884 from Unknown author. Simon Fraser University, 2014.

15. Masset Killer Whale House Memorial Pole



This pole came from a house in Masset village known as Killer Whale house. It belonged to Chief Sigai. The house was closely related to its neighbour, Moon House, belonging to the same family and with identical frontal poles. The house chief died by 1880. It is difficult to speculate at the size of the pole as there is nothing in the photo to give us reference. However, if the bottom figure is similar in size to crests on other poles have have analysed, roughly two metres, this pole is likely between four and five metres in size.

The memorial pole contained only two crests which, from top to bottom are:

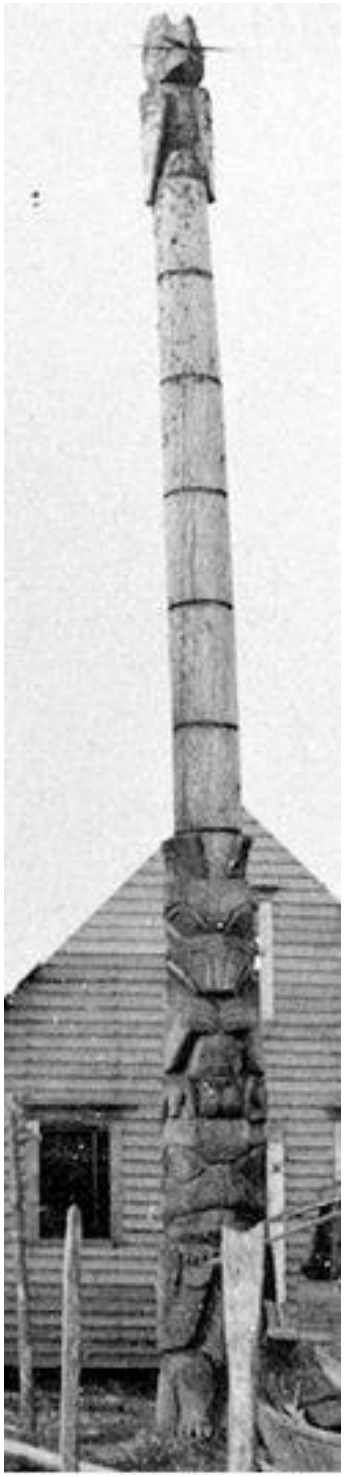
Eight Potlach cylinders. Similar to those seen on memorial poles from Grizzly Bear House and atop the hats of watchmen figures, these encircle the smooth post occupying more than half of the pole;

Standing Grizzly Bear. This figure, seated in an upright position with its arms and legs folded in towards its torso, contains the characteristic face frequently observed amongst bear representations. It has a wide nose and mouse, ovoid shaped eyes and ears on top of its head. Between its ears one can observe a small human figure.

Bibliography: MacDonald, 1983, Newcombe, 1897-1912, unknown author, Simon Fraser University, 2014.

Image source: Photograph by R. Maynard, ca. 1884 from Unknown author. Simon Fraser University, 2014.

16. Masset Grizzly House Memorial Pole



This pole came from Grizzly Bear House, a large house in Masset village which may have belonged to one of the head chiefs of Masset. The surviving photograph of the pole was taken in 1884 by R. Maynard. It was a memorial pole containing the following crests from top to bottom: The pole was most likely around 10 metres in height.

Raven holding star. This figure, sits at the very top of the post. The bird is resting with its wings folded at its sides, staring straight out. It contains a characteristic pointed beak, ovoid eyes and ears atop its head;

Six potlatch cylinders. Similar to the top of a watchman figure's hat, the pole contains six potlatch cylinders below the raven. These cylinders encircle the smooth pole and the crest makes up nearly half of the pole;

Grizzly bear with human figure. This crest, like most bears depicts the animal sitting in an upright position with its arms folded in towards its chest. The face also contains characteristic ovoid shaped eyes, a wide nose and a wide mouth. The bear holds a human like figure at its chest and its knees seem to be tucked in between the ears of the lowest figure on the pole;

Standing beaver. This figure, like the bear, is in an upright position with its arms and legs folded inwards towards its chest. It also has wide, ovoid shaped eyes, a wide nose and a wide mouth. The hands appear somewhat human like in appearance

Bibliography: MacDonald, 1983, Newcombe, 1897-1912, unknown author, Simon Fraser University, 2014.

Image source: Unknown author, Simon Fraser University, 2014.

17. Masset Monster House Corner Post



This pole was a corner house post of Monster House from Masset village. It was the largest traditional style house on Haida Gwaii and was owned by Chief Wiah. The house was built in 1840 by the chief to solidify his hold on the town chieftainship. The house was probably around 21 metres wide and the pole approximately four or five metres in height. The house was left to deteriorate after Wiah's death in 1883 and was demolished in 1901. The corner posts of the house were unique in that they were the only of this type to be fully carved. The two were similar but vary in terms of the figures on them. The crests are believed to have belonged to Wiah's wife and relate to the Bear Mother story (MacDonald, 1983, p.142). The figures on the post from top to bottom include:

Bear. This figure, seated in an upright position, wears four cylinders on its head which resemble the *skils* on the top part of a watchman's hat. It contains a broad nose, ovoid shaped eyes, and a wide mouth. The bear holds a cub in its mouth whose tongue joins the small figure of an insect, possibly a dragonfly. Both of the smaller figures sit between the bear's arms and legs with the cub held tightly to the chest. The large bear is kneeling on a small human figure whose face can be seen between the ears of the large bear below;

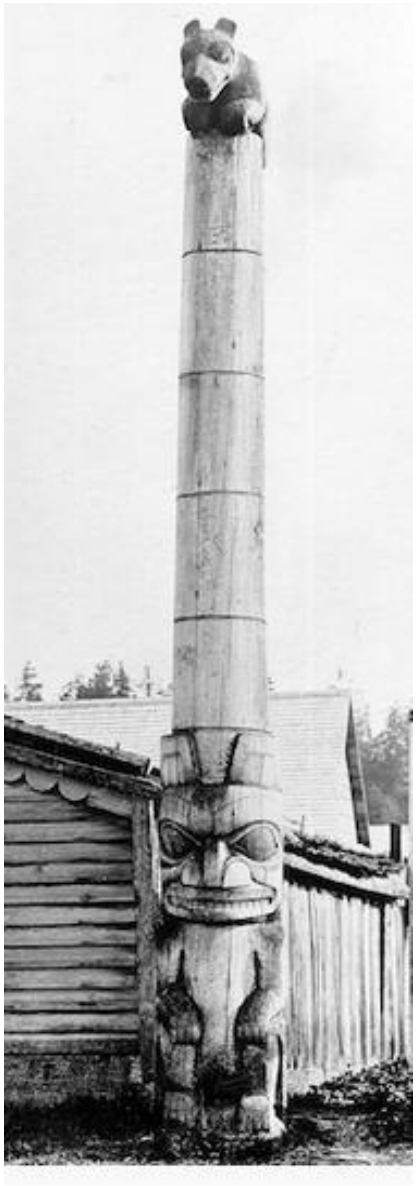
Bear eating beaver's head. Like the figure above, this large bear is seated in an upright position with its arms and legs pulled toward its chest. It has the characteristic wide, ovoid eyes, and wide nose and mouth. The bear holds a beaver's head in its mouth and a small frog in its hands against its torso;

This pole is unusual not only for the fact that it is a fully carved corner post but also for the insect and bear eating beaver crest. Both crests may be a reference to Wiah's Tsimshian wife.

Bibliography: MacDonald, 1983, Newcombe, 1897-1912, unknown author, Simon Fraser University, 2014.

Image source: Photograph by R. Maynard, ca. 1884 from Unknown author. Simon Fraser University, 2014.

18. Memorial Pole Star House Masset village



This memorial pole stood outside of a house which belonged to Chief Anetlas who died in 1893. It was photographed by Maynard in 1885. The top figure, unlike some of the other poles, was carved separately and added to the pole rather than carved as one piece. Based on the photograph, it is probably around six metres in height. The pole contains only two figures which from top to bottom are as follows:

Bear. This separately carved figure sits crouched at the top of the pole with its arms gripping the front. It is fully carved, not simply in relief like the figures that one normally sees on Haida poles. It appears more animals like and recognisable than many of the others. However, like the others it contains typical Haida style with ovoid shaped eyes and curved ears. The bear sits on top of a stack of five cylinders;

Grizzly bear. Below the five cylinders a grizzly bear sits in an upright position with its arms resting on top of its folded knees. The bear contains ovoid shaped eyes, a wide nose and mouth, and appears somewhat human-like.

Bibliography: MacDonald, 1983, Newcombe, 1897-1912, unknown author, Simon Fraser University, 2014.

Image source: Photograph by R. Maynard, ca. 1884 from Unknown author. Simon Fraser University, 2014.

19. Monument for Stilta Frontal Pole Masset village



This pole was photographed by Dawson in 1878 shortly after it was carved. It stood in memorial of Chief Stilta and was erected by his brother. It was placed in front of Eagle house which was demolished around 1890. The pole was purchased by Jacobsen for the Volkerkunde Museum in Berlin but was destroyed when the storage chamber was burned during the siege of Berlin in 1945. It is possible that the pole was carved by Charles Edenshaw (MacDonald, 1994, p. 146) Again, it is difficult to give an accurate size for the pole but it was likely around eight to ten metres in height if we assume that the bottom figure is two metres.. The figures from top to bottom are as follows:

Eagle. The eagle sits facing frontwards with its wings folded at its side. It has a characteristic curved beak and ovoid shaped eyes. The talons of the bird clutch the head of the figure below;

Whale. This crest has its head directed downwards and its tail curved up touching its chin. The the tail, as seen with other whale crests, contains a human face. The eyes of the whale are typical in their ovoid shape and slant outwards;

Human with frog in its mouth. This figure has ovoid shaped eyes, a wide nose and mouth and a row of teeth from which the frog protrudes. The figures arms and legs are folded towards its chest and its hand come together between the head of the frog and the figure below. The frog is facing downwards and one can only see its front limbs as the back are enclosed in the mouth of the human figure;

Shaman Mother-in-law. This figure is likely a depiction of a character from the lazy son-in-law story. The figure has the characteristic ovoid-shaped eyes, wide nose and wide mouth. She holds a puffin-beak in her hand and sits atop a whale. The whale resembles the second figure on the crest with its head turned downwards and its ovoid-

shaped eyes. From the front of the pole one can only see its head and not the tail end. The head sits between the ears of the bear below;

Bear. This figure resembles many of the bear crests seen on other poles with its thick eyebrows, ovoid-shaped eyes, wide nose and mouth, and row of teeth on display. Unlike some of the others the figure has an extended tongue.The arms and the legs of the crest are pulled in tightly towards its chest.

Bibliography: MacDonald, 1983, Newcombe, 1897-1912, unknown author, Simon Fraser University, 2014.

Image source: Photograph by R. Maynard, ca. 1884 from Unknown author. Simon Fraser University, 2014.

20. Frontal Pole Property House Masset Village



This pole was the frontal pole of Property House which belonged to Chief Albert Edward Edenshaw. Later the house belonged to Albert Edward's nephew; renowned Haida artist Charles Edenshaw. The pole was elaborate and well carved (MacDonald, 1995, p.147). The pole is from the late nineteenth century. It is roughly seven to eight metres in height. From top to bottom the pole contains the following crests:

Watchmen. A single figure that sits atop the pole with a tall hat representing the tide-walker stick. The figure has its knees folded in towards its chest and its arms curve at its sides and hold the head of the figure below. The facial features of the watchmen are typically Haida in style with ovoid-shaped eyes, a wide nose and a wide mouth;

Supernatural snag. This figure is a depiction of a snag. A supernatural being that is often seen as the personification of a piece of driftwood. The figure, with a human like stance, contains the ovoid-shaped eyes, ears atop its head, wide nose, and wide mouth commonly seen in other crests. In its arms it holds two children which were associated with the snag and a tide-walker stick. It sits on the ears of the figure below;

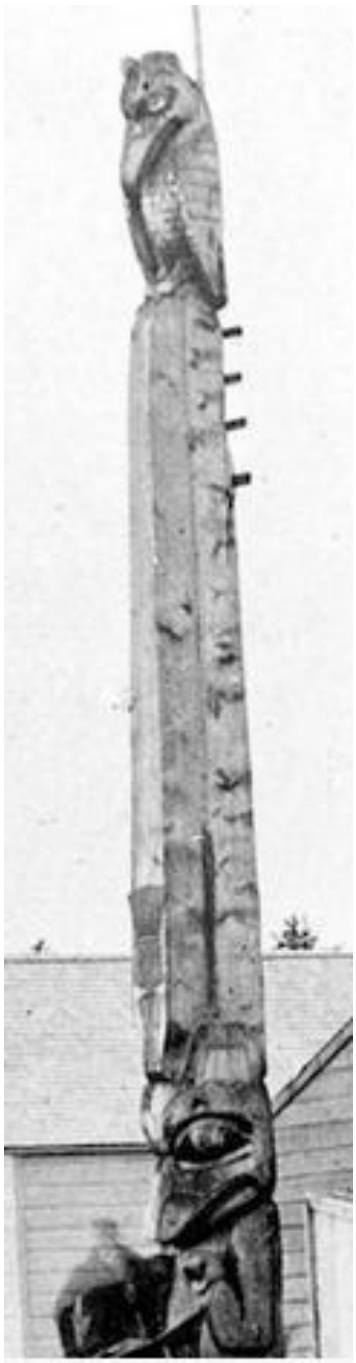
Bear eating frog. This large bear, with characteristic features such as ovoid shaped eyes, ears on top of its head, a wide nose and wide mouth, sits in an upright position with its legs folded underneath it and its arms pulled in towards its chest. It holds a frog in its mouth which hangs face down and in its arms the bear holds a raven and two human heads, one of which is upside down;

Bear eating hunter. This figure is a representation of characters from the Bear Hunter story. This large crests resembles the other bear which its ovoid shaped eyes, ears above its head, wide nose, wide mouth, and its upright posture. In its arms, however, it holds a hunter which hangs upside down from its arms, looking out in the same direction as the bear.

Bibliography: MacDonald, 1983, Newcombe, 1897-1912, unknown author, Simon Fraser University, 2014.

Image source: Photograph by R. Maynard, ca. 1884 from Unknown author. Simon Fraser University, 2014.

21. Memorial Pole, Masset Village.



This pole was erected in Masset village for the son of the *Ginaawan* family. It stood in front of House Child, a northern type house which was torn down shortly after Dawson's visit and the poles likely stood for a few more years by themselves. A model of the pole was obtained by Swanton for the American Museum of Natural history. The original pole contained abalone shells set in the eyes and feathers of the raven figure and on the front fin there were two coppers, one of which was sold for 275 dollars (MacDonald, 1995, p. 148). The pole was probably around eight or nine metres in height. The figures on the pole are few in number and from top to bottom appear as follows:

Raven. This crest is carved in a more realistic style than those usually seen carved in relief. Although the figure contains the same characteristic ovoid-shaped eyes, ears atop its head, and straight beak that we normally see on a raven, it is fully carved and appears more bird-like. The head of the bird is folded towards its chest and it is perched with its wings at its side. It sits on top of a long flattened shaft that rests on the head of the figure below;

Grizzly bear. This crest is less realistic than the raven as it is carved in relief and is the style typically seen of Haida figures on totem poles. The bear is in an upright, human-like position with its arms pulled towards its chest. It has ovoid-shaped eyes, a wide nose, and a wide mouth which is closed not revealing any teeth;

The two figures combined represent the mythical killer whale, Raven-Fin.

Bibliography: MacDonald, 1983, Newcombe, Field Notes 1897-1912, unknown author, Simon Fraser University, 2014).

Image source: Photograph by R. Maynard, ca. 1884 from Unknown author. Simon Fraser University, 2014.

22. Memorial Pole from House 27 Masset Village



This pole sat in front of an unnamed house from Masset village and was erected sometime in the late 19th century and the photograph below was taken by R. Maynard in 1884. The house contained no frontal pole which MacDonald suggests may mean that the family arrived late in Masset (MacDonald, 1995, p. 149). It was accompanied by another pole of the same type (memorial). Based on the photograph, it is difficult to guess at the height of the pole but it may have been around six to eight metres in height. The following figures appear on the pole from top to bottom:

Seven potlatch cylinders. This is a long, smoothed out section of the pole that contains no detail other than the seven lines encircling the pole. These sit on the head of the large figure at the bottom;

Unidentified figure. This figure resembles a bear in terms of its facial features with a wide nose and mouse and ovoid-shaped eyes. It also has the characteristic ears on its head. However, the figure contains a segmented tail, arms and legs which MacDonald believes might actually indicate a crayfish (MacDonald, 1995, p. 149). The figure is seated in an upright position with its limbs pulled in towards its chest.

Bibliography: MacDonald, 1983, Newcombe, 1897-1912, unknown author, Simon Fraser University (2014).

Image source: Photograph by R. Maynard, ca. 1884 from Unknown author. Simon Fraser University, 2014.

23. Frontal Pole Drum House Masset Village



This pole belonged to Drum house and closely resembled the pole from the house next door. The pole was erected in the late nineteenth century and was eventually removed and taken to McGill University. It is now conserved in the McCord Museum in Montreal (MacDonald, 1995, p. 152). The pole is just over 10 metres in height. The images on the pole appear in the following order from top to bottom:

Bear. This figure is more fully carved than the other crests on the pole and holds a protruding section on the top with potlatch cylinders as if climbing them. It faces out in the same direction as the figures below. This figure, like the others contains a wide mouth, wide nose and ovoid-shaped eyes;

Grizzly bear with extended tongue. This figure is in a standing position with its arms raised towards its chest. It has ears on top of its head in which one can observe human like faces. The facial features are characteristic with ovoid-shaped eyes, a wide nose and a wide mouth with a row of teeth. The tongue of the animal protrudes and rests on the head of the human figure below;

Human figure and eagle. These crests sit between the bear's arms and legs. The view can only see the head and face of each but both contains typical features such as ovoid shaped eyes. The human face contains a wide nose and wide mouth and the eagle has a curved beak at the tip;

Grizzly bear holding frog. This figure closely resembles the first grizzly although its head is tilted slightly more downwards. The first grizzly sits on this figure's ears. Like the first it has ovoid-shaped eyes, a wide nose and a wide mouth lined with teeth. Its tongue also protrudes from its mouth and rests on its hand below which are pulled up towards its chest holding a frog. The bear sits on the ears of the raven figure below. The frog faces downwards, seen from above;

Raven with human figure. This lowest figure on the pole is typical with its ovoid-shaped eyes, thick eyebrows and straight beak. However, it most closely resembles the raven figure seen on Masset village's Star House frontal pole with a beak that extends in length from the pole. The raven has its wings folded to its side but also has human like hands with which it clutches the head of the human figure pulled in to its chest. This figure has ovoid-shaped eyes, a wide nose, and a wide mouth.

Bibliography: MacDonald, 1983, Newcombe, 1897-1912, unknown author, Simon Fraser University (2014).

Image source: Photograph by R. Maynard, ca. 1884 from Unknown author. Simon Fraser University, 2014.

24. Masset Frontal Pole



This pole from the late nineteenth century was moved from its original position and photographed in the Masset cemetery. It is approximately six to eight metres in height. It is a frontal pole but, as it was moved, it is unknown which house it originally belonged to. The pole was eventually taken to the University of Pennsylvania. The figures on the pole from top to bottom are as follows:

Watchman. This single figure sits clutching his knees towards his chest. The figure contains the same ovoid-shaped eyes, wide nose, and wide mouth consistently seen on watchmen and human figures and also wears the same tall hat with *skils.* The figure sits on the head of the bird below;

Raven. This raven sits with its wings folded at its sides. The ears on top of its head contain small human-like faces. It has thick eyebrows, ovoid-shaped eyes, and a long straight beak. The raven is holding a figure in its talons which could be a seal;

Bear. This large figure at the base of the pole contains the same characteristic ovoid-shaped eyes, wide nose, wide mouth, and protruding tongue that we have seen on many other bear crests. It is seated in an upright position with its knees and arms pulled in towards its torso. It holds another figure in its arms.

Bibliography: MacDonald, 1983, Newcombe, 1897-1912, unknown author, Simon Fraser University (2014).

Image source: Unknown author. Simon Fraser University, 2014.

25. Skidegate Village Interior House Post



This pole was found in a house in Skidegate village known as *House in Which People Must Shout to be Heard.* The post faced the front door of the house. It is roughly four metres in height. Originally, it was painted blue, red, white, and black. Deans collected the pole in 1892 for the British Columbia Provincial Museum (MacDonald, 1995, p.50). The figures on the pole from top to bottom include:

Raven with broken bill. This raven contains the same characteristics as other Haida raven crests with the ears atop its head, thick eyebrows, and ovoid-shaped eyes. However, this figure has a broken beak which curves downwards holding the tail of a whale crest below. The raven appears to have bear like claws on its hands which hold the tips of the tail. Between the Raven and the whale's tail a humanlike figure grips the tail and its legs are wrapped around it below;

Whale. This crest's tail curls up so that it appears above the figure's head. The head and face can be seen at the base of the pole. The figure has typical ovoid-shaped eyes, thick eyebrows, a wide nose and long ears above its head. Between its ears and holding on to the top of the whale's head one can observe another human face with two hands below its chin.

Bibliography: MacDonald, 1983, Newcombe, 1897-1912, unknown author, Simon Fraser University (2014).

Image source: British Columbia Provincial Museum, 1909. p.1.

26. Skidegate Memorial Pole



This old pole is one of the oldest still remaining at Skidegate. At the time that MacDonald wrote about it in 1995, the pole was still standing. It was erected in 1882 Plate 28. The only old pole still standing in Skidegate and was erected in 1882. It was built as a memorial pole (MacDonald, 1995, pg. 35). Assuming that the primary figure is around two metres in height, the pole was probably three metres tall. It contains only one primary crest with smaller figures positioned around it.

Beaver. This crest sits in an upright position with its arms held tightly towards its chest. Between the ears on top of its head one can see the face of a small bear figure. The bear is topped by a long smooth section of pole with one cylindrical line at its top. The beaver figure has ovoid-shaped eyes, a wide nose and mouth, and large characteristic teeth usually seen on beaver crests. In its human like hands it holds a raised stick as if about to chew it. The cross-hatched tail curls upward under the figure sitting against the figure's abdomen between its folded legs. On the bottom of the tail one can make out what appears to be a human face.

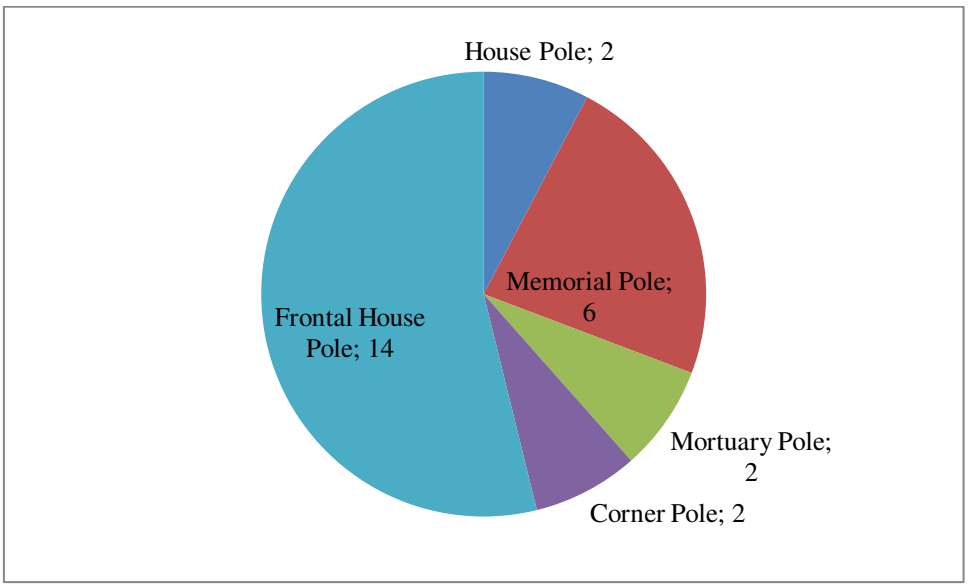
Bibliography: MacDonald, 1983

Image source: MacDonald, 1983, p. 39.

Chapter 8. Associations and Structures.

The 26 poles studied fall into the following five types: House poles, memorial poles, mortuary poles, corner poles, and frontal house poles.

Total number of pole types studied



The figures observed in each of the pole types studied along with the total number of each can be observed in the following graph:

Total number of pole figures identified

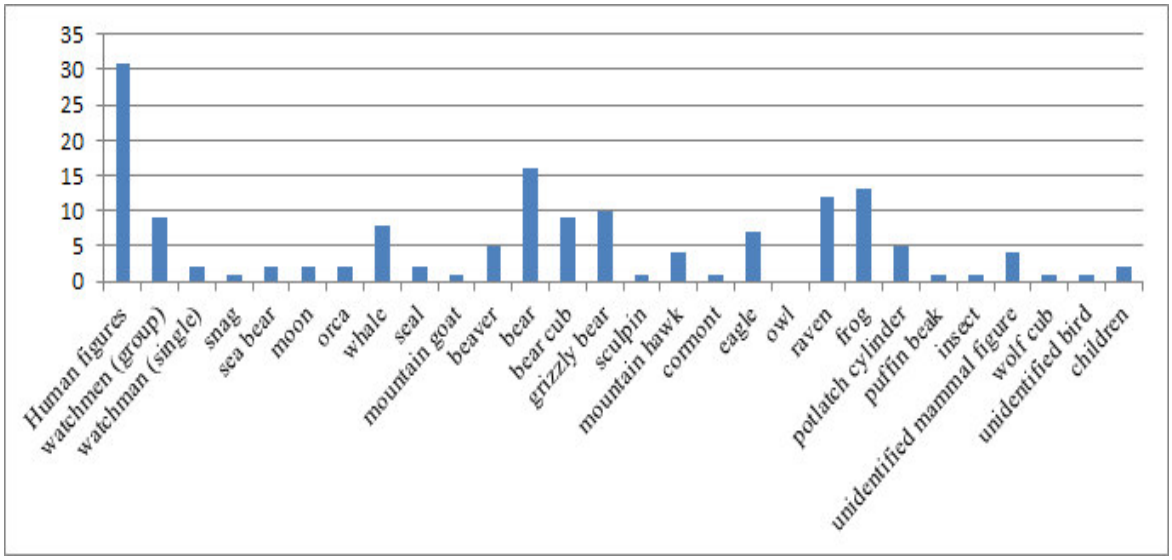


Fig. 4 From this chart we can observe that the most prevalent figures on the poles are anthropomorphic figures, followed by bears, and finally birds.

Predominant Figures

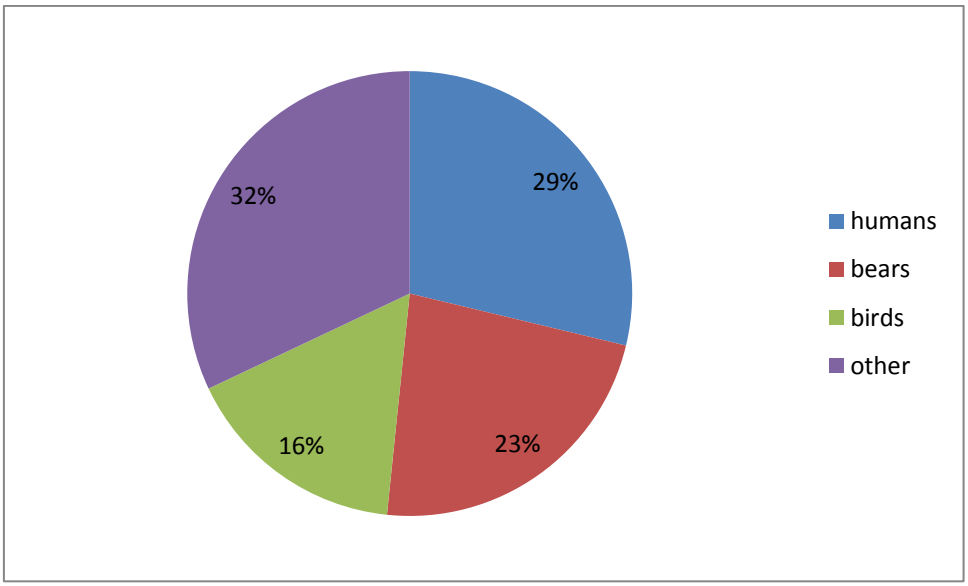


Fig. 5 Anthropomorhic figures account for twenty-nine percent of the total number of figures found on poles. Bears are not far behind making up twenty-three percent of the total and various bird types form sixteen percent of the total.

Mortuary poles: figure types

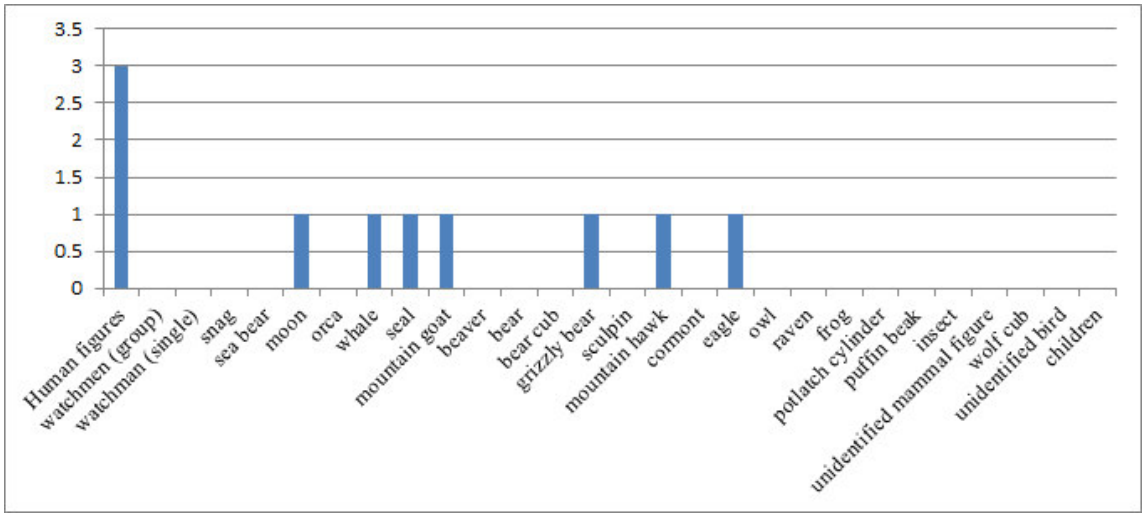


Fig. 6 On mortuary poles anthropomorphic figures make up the majority of the total. The second most common representations are birds. Of the poles inventoried, the other figures represented include mountain goats, seals, whales, and a moon figure.

Frontal house poles: figure types

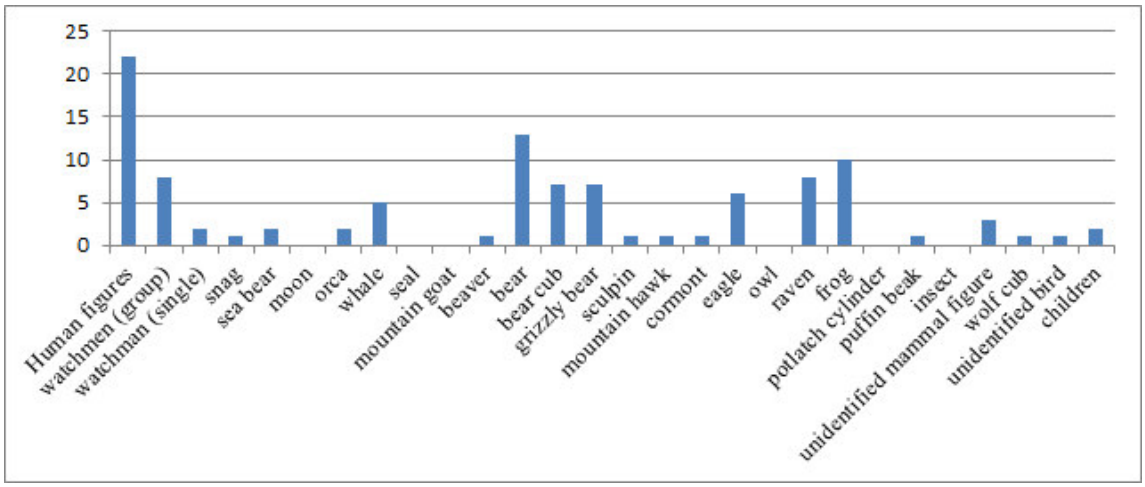


Fig. 7 On frontal house poles one can see that the most prevalent figures are again anthropomorhic figures, bears, and birds. Here we can also see a number of frogs and whales.

Memorial Poles: figure types

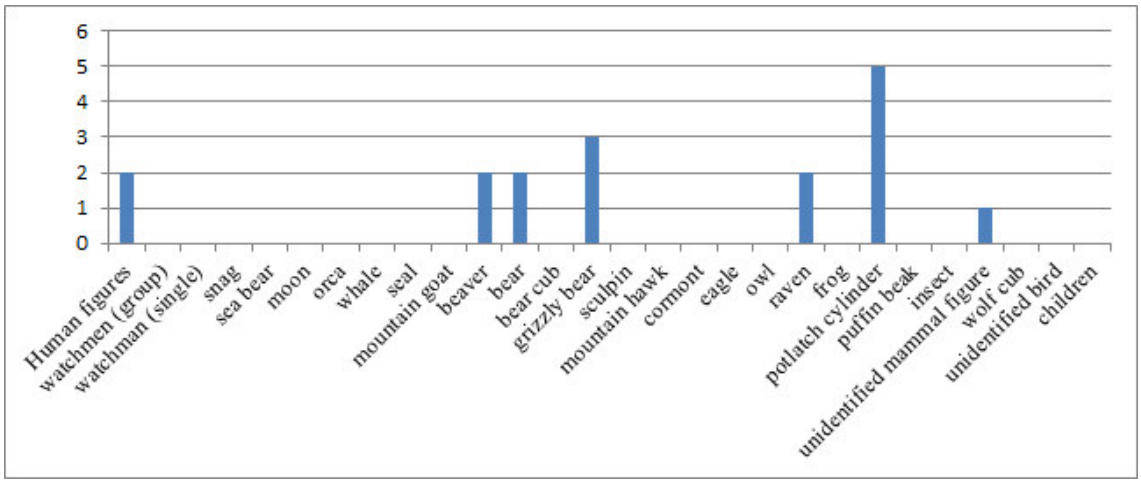


Fig. 8 On memorial poles we normally find few figures. The potlatch cylinder is commonly featured, however, the number represented on the chart refers to the total number of rings and not the total number of potlatch cylinder crests. Once again human figures, bears, and birds are the most common depictions as well as beavers.

Interior house Poles: figure types

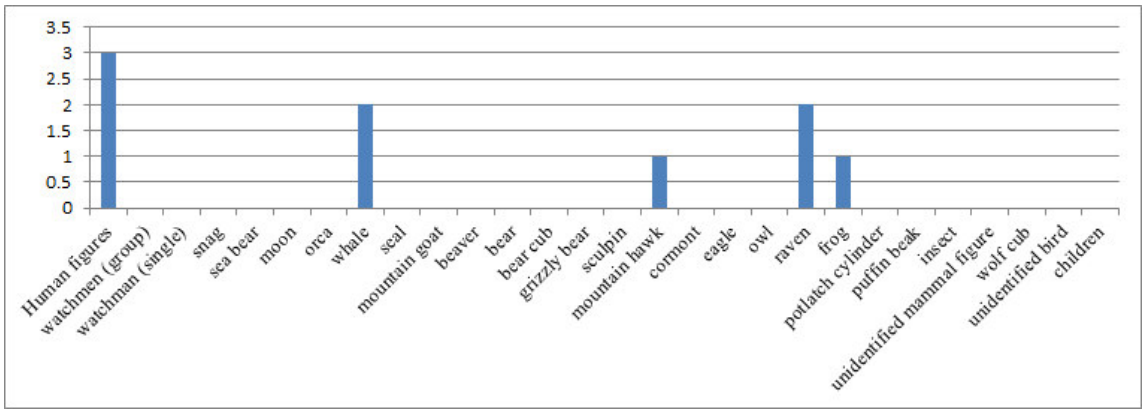


Fig. 9 Birds followed by anthropomorphic figure are the most commonly featured on the interior house poles of the catalogue. Afterwards we find whales and finally frogs.

Corner pole: figure types

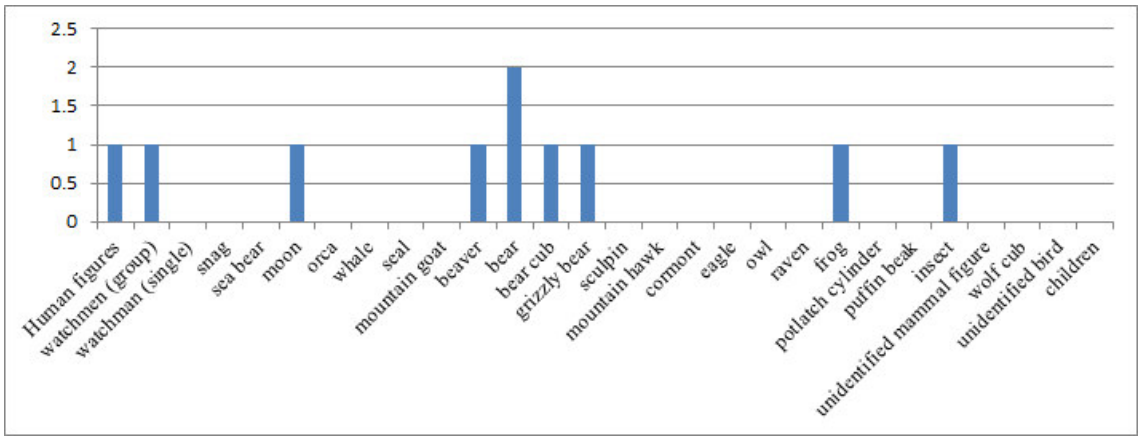


Fig. 10 On corner poles we find that bears account for the most represented figure. Humans are the second most common. We also find frogs, beavers, insects and a moon figure.

Number of figures on each pole type

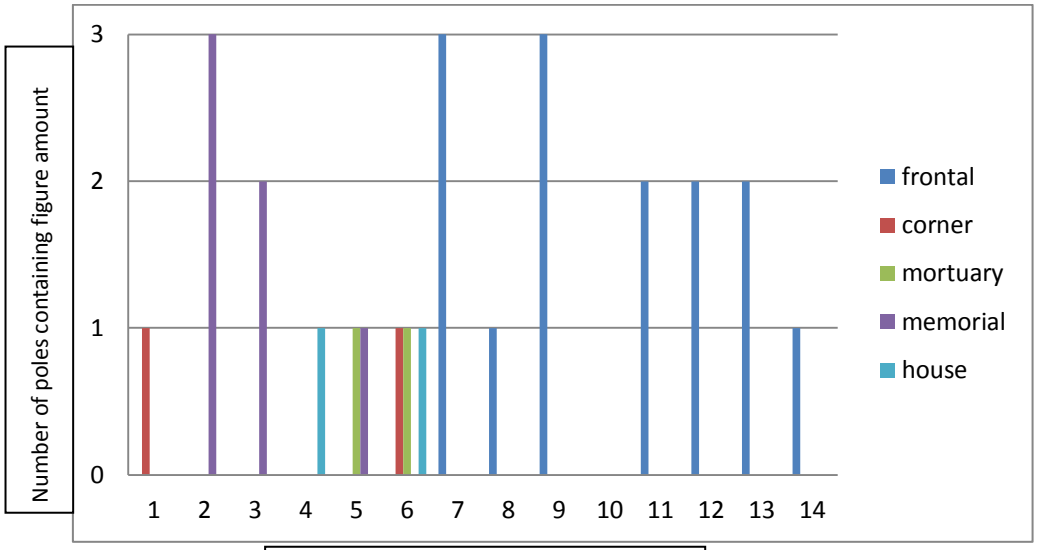


Fig. 11 Total number of figures on pole

As previously mentioned, frontal poles are the busiest in terms of figures containing between 7 and 14 figures on each pole. Mortuary poles inventoried contained five and six figures. Of the House poles inventoried, one contained four figures and another contained six. Memorial poles studied featured few figures ranging from two to five at most. Corner poles contained the fewest figures with one pole depicting only one figure. One of the corner posts displayed six figures but this is not a common feature for this pole type.

Fig. 12 **An analysis of figures: Mortuary poles**

	Tanu (2)	Skidegate (5)
Top	eagle, mountain hawk	moon with mountain hawk face
Middle	whale, human fig.	mountain goat
Bottom	Beaver	grizzly bear

Fig. 13 **An analysis of figures: Corner poles**

	Skidegate house 23 (13)	Masset monster house (17)
Top	single watchman	bear with cub and insect
Middle	NA	human fig.
Bottom	NA	bear eating beaver head

Fig. 14 **An analysis of figures: Memorial poles**

	Masset killer whale house (15)	Masset grizzly house (16)	Masset star house (18)	Masset (21)	Masset house 27 (22)	Skidegate (26)
Top	potlach cylinders	Raven	bear	Raven	potlach cylinders	NA
Middle	NA	potlach cylinders	potlach cylinders	uncarved pole	NA	NA
Bottom	grizzly bear	grizzly with human fig., beaver	grizzly bear	grizzly bear	unidentified fig. (resembles bear)	beaver with several small figs.

Fig. 15 **An analysis of figures: Interior house poles**

	Skidegate house 22 (12)	Skidegate(25)
Top	raven with frog and man	raven with human fig.
Middle	NA	NA
Bottom	mountain hawk	whale with human fig.

Fig. 16 **An analysis of figures: Frontal poles**

	Tanu House (1)	Cumshewa (3)	Tanu (4)	Masset (6)	Ninstints (7)	Skedans (8)	Tanu village (9)	Masset Star House (10)	Masset House 26(11)	Moon House (14)	Monument for Stilta(19)	Property House (20)	Drum House (23)	Masset (24)
Top	3 watchmen, eagle	3 watchmen, cormont	3 watchmen, eagle	raven	3 watchmen, raven	3 watchmen, mountain hawk	3 watchmen, eagle	3 watchmen	3 watchmen, eagle	sea grizzly	Eagle	single watchman	Bear	single watchman
Middle	bird, whale	whale with human woman	human fig. With frog	frog, sea bear and cub, human	grizzly bear, frog, bear cub	mythical animal, human figure	human fig., human fig, with whale	bear with frog in mouth, bear holding human	bear, beaver	bear with human face	whale, human with frog in mouth, shaman mother-in-law	supernatural snag, bear eating frog	grizzly, human fig. and eagle, grizzly holding frog	raven with seal
Bottom	bear	grizzly bear	Whale	bear with frog in mouth, grizzly bear with sculpin	grizzly bear	grizzly bear	sea bear	raven with human fig.	bear, beaver	bear with 2 cubs	bear	bear eating hunter	raven with human fig.	bear with unidentified fig.

These charts display the positioning of the main figures found on each pole inventoried. Figures of the same species have been highlighted in the same colour to show the similarities in the structural layout of poles.

An analysis of figures

Looking at the above charts one can easily observe several common features regarding the structural layout and position of figures on a pole. While no two are identical (unless replicas) and some seem to follow a different set of rules, it is most common to find watchmen and birds (eagles, ravens, and mountain hawks) on top of poles. Humans and other figures are found in the middle and bears are generally found dominating the lowest position at the bottom. Poles seem to have a clear division into three parts based on this positioning with three distinct classes of images, each with obvious symbolism.

As one can note we do find exceptions and there are differences among pole types such as corner poles or house poles which purposely often fail to display any figures in the middle. The groupings of figures appear as categories in a tripartite conception of the universe. So, while different parts or figures on a pole may be read as individual myths or stories, or representations of a family, the entire pole must also be read as a reflection of the Haida understanding of the world in three parts and their mythology in its entirety featuring the sky and the heavens, earth, and the subterranean or underworld.

Chapter 9. Totem poles – Translating the world.

As has already been discussed, in Haida mythology and religion the world is understood to be divided into three: sky, earth and the underworld. They believed that harmony and balance must be kept between these cosmic zones so that the world could continue functioning as it should without slipping into chaos and destruction. The structural layout of a totem pole reflects this mythology. Naturally, the highest point on a pole would represent the sky and it is on this section that we commonly find birds such as eagles, ravens or the mythical mountain hawk, and watchmen. The raven appears in Haida myths like *How the Raven Stole the Sun* and in this myth becomes almost symbolic of the sun itself and therefore a cosmic figure. The middle, that is, the earth, is where we observe human figures and other animals found on land.

Finally, the bottom of the pole, the underworld, is typically occupied by bears or even whales. It is not only the three zones that we see represented but also the idea of balance and harmony. While the size of crest figures may vary, there is a fairly uniform composition with the three parts being roughly equal in size.

How can we account for choice of figures and the placement of each of these figures and why do certain crests seem to repeatedly appear in the same position or 'zone' of the pole?

A quick look at the inventoried totem poles will allow one to see animals featured on each one. Some of these are supernatural beings with animal characteristics and most feature anthropomorphic characteristics such as ears, hands, or are seated in an upright almost human-like position. Nonetheless, these are animals. Why place such an importance on animal figures and feature them in such great works of art? Not simply totem poles but other religious or mythological artworks like masks contain images of animals clearly demonstrating a great importance to the Haida such as the prey of a hunter-gatherer society.

Writers have often attempted to understand why animals emerge into prominence as objects of magico-religious beliefs and others and disregarded or less important. It is believed that this is because of some special relation that the animal had to man or something that stimulated his imagination. This is something that has been

debated by some. Authors such as Frazer (1912, pp. 190, 191) for example, suggested it is fear that stirs this interest while others including King (1910 p. 247) and Toy (1913, pp. 104, 105) believed it is the recognition of certain superior or mysterious capabilities.

In the early 20th century anthropologists such as Radcliffe-Brown (1929) thought that this was due to their importance as a food source and, because man ate them, they naturally aroused his spontaneous interest. However, this same author in 1951 would later recant this and accept that the reason for the interest in animals was related to the fact that they were 'thinkable' as described by Lévi-Strauss (1963, p.2). The first theory, much more limited in nature, views the practical utility and physiological need of animals. The second theory is more abstract but accepts that animals or properties of animals can be put to use as symbols. This second theory forces as to ask why one animal has been selected over another (Lévi-Strauss, 1963, p.2).

Lévi-Strauss suggests that these images or figures can be read almost like a language which we use to convey meanings 'totemic ideas appear to provide a code enabling man to express isomorphic properties between nature and culture' (Lévi-Strauss, 1963, p.2). He explains that the decision to use animals, celestial bodies and other personified phenomena comes not from their utilitarian properties but from their ability to serve as symbols of expression. This is also related to the use of animals, and other personified phenomena in mythology as animals usually play a leading role, particularly in stories of creation or time before the world was as it is today (Boas, 1914, p.410).

How something becomes symbolic when it implies something more than its obvious and immediate meaning is explained by Carl Jung (1968). He states 'they have acquired a recognisable meaning through common usage or deliberate intent' (Jung, 1968, p 20). The Haida would have been very familiar with the crest figures both from observing them in their natural environments and also from listening to myths and tales recounting stories about their past. Some would have had a more personal meaning to the family and others would have been understood by all. Jung also suggests that we use symbolic terms to represent concepts that we cannot define or fully comprehend. He also suggests that man uses symbols to help give his life meaning and to enable him to find his place in the universe (Jung, 1968, pp 80-89).

Regardless, Hallowell (1926, p.18) was not wrong in writing 'it is only when we comprehend specific cultures in terms of their own range of values and concrete expressions that the role of animals in their life and thought becomes intelligible.

Of the three most prominent figures on totem poles, bears are animals that have obtained a universal importance in art. It is not just amongst the Haida that they feature as an important figure in art and mythology but in North American and Eurasia as well. Of all of the hunted animals and carnivorous creatures they are the most revered. Some authors, e.g. (Hallowell, 1926, p. 148), have suggested that this is because they have characteristics that lend themselves more readily to anthropomorphization than other animals. These include sagacious qualities; their omnivorous habits; the ability to raise themselves on their hind legs in a human-like manner or sit down against a tree with their arms at their side; their plantigrade locomotion which leaves a mark similar to that left by a human foot; and even their excrement is similar in appearance, though larger, to a human's. Looking past the physical traits that bears share with humans, there are emotional connections as well. Bears have a range of facial and bodily expressions that are quite human in nature such as the whining and pleading that can be observed when they are being attacked by another animal. It is said that tears may even appear in their eyes. Bears in captivity are even known to masturbate (Hallowell, 1926, pp. 148, 149). Bear mothers typically have around two or three children, thus a similar number to what would be observed in many human families. A bear's ability to hibernate and live without food for months on end and then re-emerge from what would seem to be death to be reborn in the spring is another aspect that likely lead to human fascination with the animal. From an economic perspective the bear was never of vital importance to the Haida but they provided food, warmth (furs), and bones which could be used for creating tools. Perhaps these human-traits, their ability to hibernate, and their usefulness all contributed to their attraction to the Haida as well as other First Nations groups.

Birds are undoubtedly important to the Haida and this accounts for their inclusion on the pole. As we have already explained, families belonged to one of two moieties in society; that of the raven or eagle. Their inclusion in one or the other dictated how they carried out certain important aspects of their life such as who they were allowed to marry. An observation of two of the most commonly featured birds and those which make up the two moieties: eagles and ravens, reveals interesting characteristics that would likely have engaged the Haida and created interest. Eagles

have the ability to see from great distances and to watch them hunt from the sky is fascinating. This bird can circle high in the sky and then swoop down to catch a large fish from under the surface of the water. Even from a position directly above the water it might be impossible for a human to see the same fish. Their call, as already noted, is high pitched and piercing and could be compared to that of a human child or woman. Their physical size is also impressive and intimidating.

Ravens, while smaller, are one of the most intelligent bird species and these along with crows have been studied and appreciated for their problem solving abilities even today. These birds have been known to adapt in quickly to new situations. Ravens have been known to mimic other species including humans to develop effective techniques to acquire food. They also have the ability to develop tools but means of curving a metal wire for example into the form of a hook to fish food out of a tight space. Ravens are also capable of imitating human sounds and voices and even go as far as repeating words or phrases after spending enough time with people. In mythology ravens are associated with creation myths and it is responsible for much of why the world is the way it is. These aspects would have made the bird appealing and may play a part in the selection of these animals to be included on totem poles and in mythology.

Regarding the placement of these figures, it seems quite logical that some of the predominant figures would be positioned at the top of the pole. For example, the watchmen figures were meant to look out and act as protectors or guardians to those who inhabited the dwellings in front of which the poles were placed. This high position would put them at the ideal position to carry out this task. It has been noted that on Haida Gwaii as well as throughout the world, high points have always been used as look out points to scope out potential prey or danger. The Haida used these advantageous positions to look out over the sea and observe potential attackers that came by boat from the mainland. Birds are flying animals that one often finds perched on top of trees and in the sky and therefore the position on top of the poles could be seen as quite practical. Some figures are more difficult to explain in this simple manner, however, such as bears which have no place in the sky.

On the other hand, when one observes the base of the pole, the figure closest to the ground, one most frequently sees bears either holding another figure or alone. However, other figures also appear including beavers, whales, and occasionally, birds.

This position is connected with the subterranean world; the land of the dead and chthonian. As noted, the position may be simply attributed to where one would actually observe these animals in nature. Bears are land animals that reside on the earth but that hibernate underground or in caves, as well as beavers who not only reside on land but dive under water; whales are also found under the water and in a deeper realm than other animals. However, once again we find it difficult to explain why birds would appear in such a position.

This simple explanation fails to take into account the animals that are found out of position and it also fails to appreciate why the Haida might associate each of these particular figures with one of the three zones which their mythology is comprised of.

The heavens or sky section of a totem pole is represented by birds as well as other figures that appear on top such as the occasional celestial body. The placement of birds at the top, as already has been suggested, could be viewed in simplistic terms as a reflection of where one observes them in nature. However, it could also be related to their importance. As has also been discussed, a high position is often associated with importance and power. This placement at the top of the pole may reflect the importance of the animal in society.

The pole section in the middle which we could associate with earth is situated, naturally, in the centre of the pole between the heavens and then underworld. This section of pole is where we find the greatest number of human figures which is a clear reflection of the realm of men or the living. The other animals that are contained here are a mix but it is common to see them linked to human figures in some form or another. One representation that is featured quite commonly amongst the others either next to them, in their mouths or in between is that of the frog. As we have already discussed the frog is often representative of shamans in Haida art as they were seen as an animal that possessed the ability to cross over to realms: earth and water. A shaman had the same ability, that is, the ability to communicate with all three of the universal divides. The frog is not only found in the middle but frequently in the mouth of bears at the bottom. This interspersion of frogs throughout poles may represent the shamanic ability to speak with beings from these three worlds. This becomes even more likely when we consider that the frog is most commonly found in the mouth of other beings which is often said to be symbolic of the sharing of ideas or speaking. The fact that the

frog then could be seen as a representation of a shaman who despite his importance is still human, would help explain his being found in the middle which we associate with the space of man.

Poles sat on the earth appearing as if extending from the earth like a tree. The roots of a tree reach down under the ground and this is our first tie which may make us associate with base of a pole with the underworld. As already touched upon in this chapter, bears are animals that hibernate throughout the winter and reappear in the spring. Hibernation takes place in caves or under the ground which provides us with a link between the animal and then underworld. To those who did not fully understand the explanation behind hibernation, it likely would appear as if the bear died, not moving, eating or drinking for several months. Afterwards, during a period of new growth and procreation, bears left their winter dwellings as if being reborn from the earth. The position at the base of the pole and an association between them at the underworld may partially result from this specific behaviour.

This tripartite conception or idea of a triune God has been existed in major religions throughout history around the world. The idea reflects mainly the family structure (father, mother, and child) and it has a symbolism connected to eternity and the cycle of regeneration of life. The concept of time with a division into three parts, past, present, and future is also linked to tripilsm (Gomes, 2010, pp. 459,460). Even early in Egyptian religion, Rā was often grouped with Khepera and Temu to form a solar trinity with Khepera representing the rising sun, Rā the midday sun, and Temu the setting sun. Later, the Egyptian trinity of Osiris, Isis, and Horus became anthropomorphised gods with Osiris acting as the archetypal father, his wife Isis the archetypal mother, and Horus the son or the future. In Greece, Plato (428-384 BCE) had already noted ‘threeness’ in all creation and Plotinus of Alexandria (204-270 CE) formulated a trinity consisting of Monad, Nous, and Psyche. The trinity in Christianity consists of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Nash, 2005, pp. 33-36). In some populations in Asia such as Siberians, there is a belief that man has three souls that separate when he dies. One stays in his grave next to the body, the second goes to the subterranean world of spirits and shadows, and the third rises into Heaven where it is reunited with God (Eliade, 1982, pp.202, 203, 423).

Tripilism can therefore be seen not only in the division of poles into three main spaces: top, middle, and bottom, but also be noted in representations of the watchmen which are placed in groups of three on the majority of the poles we have seen.

Top	Eagle = Raven = Sun(?) = Watchmen (3)
Middle	Human = Frog
Bottom	Bear = Beaver = Whale

Fig. 17 **Totem pole division into three parts and equivalency of principle figures found in each of them.**

Normally, in hunting and gathering societies it is common to find a binary vision of the universe that is concerned mainly with the past and present or masculinity and femininity. However, in agricultural communities there is an understanding of ternary values (Gomes, 2010, p.467). Therefore, if the Haida were a hunting and gathering society, how could we account for this 'threeness' in their religious imagery and conception of the world?

As has already been addressed, the Haida were unique in the fact that although hunters and gatherers, they managed to remain on the archipelago for thousands of years and develop a sustainable hunting and gathering system. They lived in more permanent structures during the winter in villages off of the food that they had collected during the summer. This food was carefully stored, dried, and kept not only for consumption but for trade. Planning and preparing food storages indicates an awareness of future and looking ahead similarly to what someone does when planting a crop for the future. It is not only in their food storage and winter preparations that we see this future planning but also in the way they harvested cedar from trees. There are many instances where we can observes techniques used that take a part of the tree without actually killing it or cutting down the entire cedar. This may be a result of concern with preservation of the tree which suggests that they planned to go back to and reuse it at a later date and were

concerned with its growth and continuity. The selection of examples of conservation and acquisition of raw materials indicate a behaviour similar to that of food producing societies with an agricultural economy.

Conclusions

Totem poles constituted the most expressive structural testimonies of Haida culture. As with any other artistic structure produced by prehistoric ethnographic societies, they translated aspects of mythology and Haida religion. These aspects are reflected in a complex iconography and their structure most likely reflects the conceptual understanding of the world of those who produced such monuments.

We can consider that the dimensions, iconography, colour, and places that poles occupied all suggest that they were meant to be seen by all as important public monuments with a significant presence on the landscape. They were able to organise the space both in physical and psychological terms, and they transmitted messages of a social-religious character.

Previous investigations have identified eight main pole types with distinct functions that are all related in terms of location, dimensions, and iconographic structure. Despite the apparent polymorphism, all of these have stylistic similarities and reuse common iconographic aspects such as featuring mostly the same animals.

The distribution of totem poles is seen not only throughout Haida Gwaii but amongst other Northwest Coast societies as well including the Salish, Nootka, Kwakiutl, Tsimshian, and Bella Coola. While poles from the different First Nations groups contain similarities, they are all stylistically varied and those of the Haida are fairly easy to recognise due to their being carved in such low relief. These poles make up a great complex of open architectural structures in this particular region. However, many other prehistoric ethnographic societies from different continents also constructed large wooden posts with diverse iconographies, often before rebuilding or building new versions of such monuments out of stone. In the case of the Haida, the poles are situated in villages normally found on the east coast of Haida Gwaii, next to the sea. The sea played a very important economic role for these people which is reflected on the pole through the addition of sea mammals and diverse fish species.

The iconography detected on the 26 inventoried poles demonstrates that the most represented figures were humans, at 29 percent, bears at 23 percent followed by birds (most ravens and eagles) at 16 percent. The human figures include watchmen who

were more supernatural in nature. The animals depicted correspond to local fauna species.

It has been verified through their study that the distribution of different representations on the poles showed an organisation that placed certain types of iconographic figures into three distinct spaces on the pole: top, middle and bottom. This could be treated as a tripartite structure resulting in a display of the Haida's conception of the universe. On the top we most frequently find eagles, ravens, and watchmen crests. In the middle there are humans amongst other creatures which vary from frogs to bears to sea creatures to important characters found in Haida mythology. Bears seem to dominate the space at the bottom of most poles with other crests appearing sporadically.

Sacred structures of tripartite are known in different great religions belonging to food producing societies. In the case of the Haida, it is possible that this type of understanding existed from cultural influences that came from the mainland or elsewhere before the arrival of the Europeans. In whatever form, despite the fact that they constructed these tripartite structures, the Haida were a hunting and gathering society but these aspects perhaps suggest that they were in a transitional period to a type of food producing society. Or perhaps it is related to the fact that the Haida functioned differently than other hunting and gathering societies with more of a view towards the future as they moved from temporary structures in the summer in a period of work and food gathering into permanent, larger structures in villages during the winter in which they lived off food storages. Haida mythology also reflect this transition with stories such as How the Raven Stole the Sun that features a cosmogonic character, the Sun, which is important to all food producing societies.

We are aware that the present work covers the first steps taking into account the comprehension of the ideology of ancient Haida and the messages that they transmitted through such a unique and complex iconographic set that was engraved on their totem poles. Unfortunately, these still remain fairly unknown internationally. In our opinion, these works deserve further study and investigation. Their importance is reflected by the inscription of the village of SGang Gwaay, on Haida Gwaii, as a World Heritage site in 1981 which places it next to art of Palaeolithic Europe and the sculptures of the Easter Islands.



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Figure 8. Memorial Poles: figure types

Figure 9. Interior house Poles: figure types

Figure 10. Corner pole: figure types

Figure 11. Total number of figures on pole

Figure 12. An analysis of figures: Mortuary poles

Figure 13. An analysis of figures: Corner poles

Figure 14. An analysis of figures: Memorial poles

Figure 15. An analysis of figures: Interior house poles

Figure 16. An analysis of figures: Frontal poles

Figure 17. Totem pole division into three parts and equivalency of principle figures found in each of them.