

THE DOUBLE-HEADED SERPENT IN THE INDIGENOUS
ART OF THE NORTHWEST COAST

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of our thesis is to establish an iconography and iconology for the double-headed serpent, as imaged in the native art of the Northwest Coast of North America. In order to identify cultural and formal contexts through which to analyze the image, we made a survey of the Northwest Coast collections of five museums, recording all available visual and historical data concerning those artifacts bearing the double-headed serpent configuration. We also recorded the occurrence of images which appeared to be morphologically or thematically related to the double-headed serpent. Through prior and concomitant readings of the ethnographies and ethnologies, we laid down contextual divisions which formed the framework for our analysis. Thus, double-headed serpent artifacts are identified and discussed in Chapter 2 according to these divisions: mythological occurrences, material occurrences (subdivided into heraldic art, totem poles, architectural fixtures, potlatch accessories, masks and winter ceremonial accessories), and shamanic occurrences, with a special discussion of the relatedness of the double-headed serpent to the northern soul catcher.

Chapter 3 reflects our style analysis, worked through general and particular form and style conventions on the Northwest Coast. The double-headed serpent is identified as proliferating in an area in which two major style impulses, Northern Graphic and Old Wakashan, meet. Also discussed here is the significant design principle of split representation, which is uniquely appropriated by the double-headed serpent. The image's thematic and formal precursors in the prehistoric art of the Northwest

Coast are also discussed, with a particular focus on the portable rock art of the Fraser Canyon, Vancouver Island petroglyphs, and a ceremonial whale fin excavated at Ozette. In this chapter, we also review indigenous faunal forms of the Northwest Coast and investigate the correspondence between referents and evolved symbols. The psychic imperatives of the double-headed serpent's diagnostic features are also treated, in an attempt to understand the existential tensions which the image seems to articulate.

Chapter 4 compasses our iconographic and iconological analysis, developed out of the preceding cultural and formal conclusions, and introduces the concept of the integrative nature of Northwest Coast culture. Subsuming the more obvious heraldic and myth-telling intentions of the image, we identify themes which the double-headed serpent consistently evokes, such as ambivalence, duality, and paradox. Certain significant characteristics emerge and are categorized: transcendence and transformation, serpent and World Tree, magical and ceremonial weaponry, wealth guardian and wealth purveyor, the double-headed serpent as devourer, and the double-headed serpent as sexual/bisexual being. We propose an ultimate identity for the double-headed serpent as archetypal dragon, with reference to occidental and oriental dragon lore and traits, and find in the dragon the consolidation of other significant, contrastive qualities, such as fertility/destruction and menace/apotropaic.

We conclude that the double-headed serpent functions as a multi-valent and integrative image on the Northwest Coast, especially among the Kwakiutl for whom it has developed as a deeply felt religious symbol. We also conclude that the double-headed serpent had a prehistoric seat in the southern area of the Northwest Coast, whence it migrated into Kwakiutl

territory as a two-dimensional and intrinsically split image. That its original context on the Northwest Coast was probably shamanic is also concluded, as is evident in the many shamanic evocations and associations of the double-headed serpent and in the shamanic understructure of fundamental Northwest Coast social and ceremonial systems.

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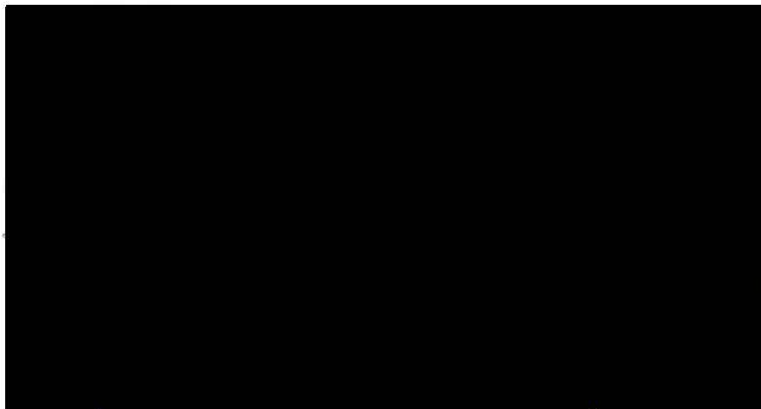


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GUIDE TO ABBREVIATIONS USED

Abbreviation	Museum Signified
BCPM	British Columbia Provincial Museum
TBM	Thomas Burke Memorial Washington State Museum
UBC MA	University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology
VCM	Vancouver (Centennial) Museum
Glenbow	Glenbow-Alberta Institute

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The double-headed serpent has been identified in art and architecture throughout the western Americas, in the Pacific basin, and in the Old World. Diffusionists have seen correlations between the ancient Chinese dragons or rain deities which evolved out of twin snake deities found in Chinese creation myth, and Pre-Columbian double-headed serpents found in Mexico and Peru, among the Olmec, Aztec, Chavin and Paracas cultures. The image of the double-headed serpent is also found in culture areas peripheral to Mesoamerican and Andean high culture centres: West Mexico, Central America, northwestern Argentina, and southwestern United States. The most striking and conspicuous manifestation of the double-headed serpent, however, is found on the Northwest Coast of North America, and it is upon this creature in art that our study is focussed.

For the purposes of our research, the area designated as the "Northwest Coast" is that mountainous and convoluted stretch of land which extends more than a thousand miles along the north Pacific coast of North America, from Yakutat Bay in the north to the mouth of the Columbia River in the south. The Northwest Coast is comprised of hundreds of narrow beaches, steep inlets, and rugged islands, and its indigenous peoples were largely homogeneous in the culture which their environment dictated. However, Northwest Coast peoples are differentiated and identified according to linguistic divisions as the Tlingit, Tsimshian, Haida, Bella Coola, Kwakiutl, Nootka/Nuu-chah-nulth¹ and Coast Salish (see Figure 1).

From a preliminary review of relevant literature, we identified the Kwakiutl Sisiutl as the most frequently depicted double-headed serpent among the native groups of the Northwest Coast. In art, as in myth, the entity Sisiutl is made known by its principal diagnostic traits, notably its central human or humanoid face from which two truncated serpents radiate, horizontally and symmetrically. Both the serpent heads and the central human head are surmounted by knobbed horns, and the serpents are further distinguished by their curled or raised snouts, large mouths, and often-extended tongues. The central human head, which may or may not have an extended tongue, is always displayed frontally, and the serpent heads are always displayed in profile.

Using the Sisiutl as prototype, we made a survey of all double-headed serpent artifacts in the collections of the British Columbia Provincial Museum in Victoria, the Thomas Burke Memorial Washington State Museum in Seattle, the Vancouver (Centennial) Museum and the U.B.C. Museum of Anthropology in Vancouver, and the Glenbow Museum (Glenbow-Alberta Institute) in Calgary. These institutions were chosen on the basis of the size and quality of their Northwest Coast collections and their accessibility from our research base in Victoria.

Identification of double-headed serpents among Kwakiutl artifacts was an elementary matter, since Sisiutl's diagnostic traits were literally and consistently rendered in all but a few examples. The non-Kwakiutl artifacts were somewhat more difficult to identify, and those included in our survey related to Sisiutl either morphologically or thematically (the former being based on a visual analysis and the latter, on both pertinent museum documentation and our readings in the mythologies and ethnographies of all the Northwest Coast groups).

The intention of the survey was not the compilation of formal or regional characteristics towards a componential analysis, but rather the accumulation of a sufficient number of examples, together with accompanying documentation and related literature, to establish both an iconography and an iconology for the double-headed serpent on the Northwest Coast. The historical scope of the museum collections (which themselves reflect the pattern of post-contact florescence and subsequent decline in Northwest Coast native cultures) dictated the time period which could be compassed. The artifacts upon which this study was built were largely from the historical period, extending from the late eighteenth century through to the mid-twentieth century, with a preponderance of pieces from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Prehistoric examples (pre-1770s) reviewed in the literature were included to establish whether the double-headed serpent image predated white contact, and whether there were also thematic continuities in serpent imagery from prehistoric through to historic times. Modern period art and artifacts (post-1950) were reviewed but were not incorporated into this study because of the complicating nature of the native-western interface and the many aberrant features of the so-called "renaissance" in Northwest Coast Indian art which is taking place in our own age.² A condition of this study was to identify, as far as possible, traditional or relatively non-aculturated contexts and meanings for the double-headed serpent.

On the basis of considerable background reading, contextual divisions were created by which the mass of material surveyed could be analyzed. These divisions then formed the framework for the second chapter, which attempts to locate the double-headed serpent within the

the oral, material and ceremonial matrices of Northwest Coast culture. Once the "physical" survey of double-headed serpents was completed, the image was then analyzed in terms of Northwest Coast visual art conventions, in order to reveal the "system of inner logic"³ governing those style and design elements most frequently associated with the double-headed serpent. Then, employing functional, mythological and formal allusions, we elaborated an iconographical and iconological analysis of the double-headed serpent, thus realizing our principal aim in undertaking this study. At the same time, we were able to draw some conclusions concerning the origin of the double-headed serpent image on the Northwest Coast.

A Discussion of Methodologies

As defined by Kleinbauer, this thesis is "art historical" in that it is a "scholarly investigation of specific works of art."⁴ While some writers in the area of primitive or ethnographic art discriminate between "high art" and "crafts,"⁵ our study does not attempt to make that kind of distinction, and includes all artifacts upon or within which the double-headed serpent is visually manifest, given the historical and regional parameters outlined above. This kind of objectivity was deemed necessary in order to preclude any sexual bias (given the sexual divisions of labour among Northwest Coast groups) or deceptive emphasis upon one particular form or medium. Further to Kleinbauer's definitions, our study is both "extrinsic," that is, involving "an examination of the various conditions surrounding and influencing"⁶ the double-headed serpent image, and "intrinsic," describing and analyzing the image's form, style and function.⁷

Apart from "coffee table" books and exhibition catalogues, whose

texts vary in length and intellectual compass, contemporary literature on Northwest Coast native art consists principally of scholarly articles in anthropological journals and a few descriptive, discursive or analytical studies by artists, journalists and the rare art historian. The dearth of secondary literature indicates that the student of Northwest Coast art must review a mass of original ethnographic records in order to evaluate and interpret the visual evidence found in museum collections (where much of today's "field work" must be accomplished). Our study makes particular use of Boas's ethnographic records, as well as his pioneer analysis of Northwest Coast art. Boas's ethnographies describe the "classic" period of historical Kwakiutl art, and record both oral histories of families and spontaneous descriptions and interpretations provided by native informants. Although Boas was an anthropologist, his work incorporated elements of aesthetics, formal analysis, religious symbolism and psychology, all of which he saw as significantly informing studies in primitive art.

While the ethnographies are valuable in their first-hand recording of the uses and manufacture of Northwest Coast art, enabling us to discuss social and magico-religious functions, they suggest an anthropological bias to which some readers may object. However, as Fraser has written, the process by which the art historian makes use of ethnographic material is one of "sifting and studying,"⁸ incorporating and synthesizing. As a discipline, that is, as one of many tools for studying the many manifestations of culture, art history often intersects with other disciplines. In ancient art, it overlaps with archaeology, in popular art, with sociology, and in primitive or tribal art, with anthropology. Rather than being either seduced or inhibited by the offerings of other disciplines,

we have chosen to incorporate germane elements from anthropology, sociology, aesthetics, the philosophy of symbolic form, and the history of religions into the art historical process. This methodology is entirely consistent with the writings of such outstanding art historians as Gombrich, Read, Kubler and Panofsky, all of whom advocate "how significant a contribution can be made toward a deeper and fuller understanding of the visual arts by removing the barriers between the various branches of humanist learning."⁹

Most art historians working in the area of tribal art pursue a contextual approach, since

...primitive art can not be understood without systematic examination of the structure of social relationships and concepts of the specific societies in which it was produced.¹⁰

Thus, our second chapter attempts to identify and correlate mythical, heraldic, ritual and shamanic elements of the double-headed serpent in Northwest Coast culture. (Additionally, a social-function approach to art history also reveals the need for a workable synthesis between the methodologies of the art historian and the anthropologist in the study of tribal art.)

The third chapter of our thesis operates out of the premise that a "detailed study of a work of art also requires investigation of its structure, and thus of the mutual dependence and interaction of material, technique, purpose, content and form."¹¹ The formal elements manifest in the double-headed serpent representations which we surveyed were analyzed "with the aim of discovering the rules of their combination and apposition"¹² and the symbolic implications of this image's particular morphology. As Gombrich writes, the solving of an image in art involves the investigation of its formal elements, since the "psycho-

logical tendency to translate or transpose ideas into images" in art parallels the tendency to construct "metaphors in language."¹³ Because idea and structure are integral, "it is clearly impossible to separate the content of the symbol from the manner of its presentation."¹⁴

Iconography, the "historical inquiry into the content of...visual arts"¹⁵ is worked through the heraldic and mythical associations of the double-headed serpent in this study. We have also chosen to pursue the image's iconology, that is, we have sought to "decode and interpret the ideas that underlie"¹⁶ the double-headed serpent as a visual symbol. For the purposes of our thesis, we have accepted the definition of "symbol" as "an object or action" that represents something other than itself, by "virtue of some arbitrarily assigned conceptual relation between them."¹⁷ Through the examination of over two hundred artifacts and through our contextual and formal analyses, we were able to establish, in our fourth chapter, the symbolical implications of the double-headed serpent. To this end, we developed an approach which we later found articulated by Eliade, that is, "by multiple cross references between what is clearly established (texts, rituals...) and semi-veiled allusions," we were able to demonstrate "bit by bit, what this...symbol 'means.'"¹⁸ Thus, we were able to push past our initial undertaking, of recording and describing, to a point of abstraction and conceptualization, in order to decipher iconologically the double-headed serpent in the native art of the Northwest Coast.

Chapter 2

MYTHOLOGICAL AND MATERIAL OCCURRENCES AND CONTEXTS OF THE DOUBLE-HEADED SERPENT

As with most tribal art, historic Northwest Coast Indian art was integrated throughout both the secular and religious aspects of existence. Despite its powerful visual impact, this art cannot be fully understood as distinct from its cultural context. And this cultural context cannot be disentangled from the lush yet circumscribed natural environment which fostered it.

Isolated by mountains, forests, and long, wet winters on the narrow, broken margin of the sea, Northwest Coast peoples evolved a sophisticated fishing, hunting and gathering technology unique in North America. Museum collections of Northwest Coast Indian art can contribute only a small sense of the area's material wealth, a wealth which was unmatched in native American cultures anywhere north of Mexico. The abundance of food sources--salmon was especially pivotal--allowed for a seasonal division of the year. Summers were spent accumulating and processing food and winters were spent evolving and performing social and religious rituals and dramas, and in producing the art which served that intense ceremonialism.

Mythology lay at the heart of Northwest Coast native culture. Myths recounted ways in which primal ancestors garnered special privileges through encounters with supernatural animals and personages. These privileges, including dances, songs, masks, and the right to display crest images, were regarded as private property. Fiercely guarded, they were

passed from generation to generation through properly observed public rituals. Both the oral mythology and its complementary crest art served a pre-literate people by making visible a complex social order and recording important family histories.

The Northwest Coast peoples shared a homogeneous environment which linked them and saw the elaboration of similar technologies and common mega-cultural traits. Yet each of the eight major coastal groups ("tribe" is a convenient if inaccurate word often used to designate Northwest Coast people of the same linguistic group) developed stylistically distinct art traditions, as manifest in the equally distinct development of double-headed serpent imagery through the region.¹⁹

The Double-Headed Serpent in Myth

If myth is a universal "charter for human behaviour,"²⁰ it is also, on the Northwest Coast, the mandate and resource for an intense artistic production. Myth registers the area's peculiar strain of "totemism" by which primal ancestors were granted socially essential privileges in encounters with, rather than by descent from, mythic animals and personages. The "stylistic complexity"²¹ of Northwest Coast mythology, suggestive of the precarious existence of an isolated, stone-age people, is reflected in the extreme elaboration of material culture.

Northwest Coast peoples differentiate between mythic times and historic times. Mythic times were those when the earth was inhabited by supernaturals and semi-divine ancestors,²² when animals and men were kindred and moved from realm to realm, effortlessly discarding the superficial distinctions of feather, fur and skin. In mythic times, men began to resolve existential dilemmas, began to comprehend the mysterious

through the familiar abstraction of symbol. Historic times, which integrate into our contemporary age, are those when men, their traditions established and their ancestors accounted for, still depend on the benevolence of tides and salmon runs, still understand the brotherhood by which men and animals are charged with the possibility of transformation, still solicit the good will of the shadowy spirits which occupy all things and places, still esteem the earth which is a "live thing."²³ By the present entanglement of the natural and supernatural, it is still necessary for shamans to travel among the shadows to retrieve errant souls, and for young initiates to revivify legend through ecstatic encounters with spirit protectors.

A strong thread of paradox and dualism is woven through the fabric of Northwest Coast native belief. Just as a shared environment stimulated a common technology along the entire Northwest Coast, a common sensibility--a thematic cohesiveness--is also evident throughout Northwest Coast mythology. In both mythology and cosmology we can identify multiple concepts, spirits and supernatural agents similarly imaged throughout the area, but we must still bear in mind that

...notwithstanding the wide distribution of identical elements in the mythologies of the Northwest Coast the general character of each has its own individuality according to the differences in social structure and literary interest.²⁴

Thus, cosmological elements and mythological details of character, voice and setting may vary from group to group, out of social peculiarities and specialized environmental adaptations.²⁵ So, too, the double-headed serpent is flamboyantly developed and formally explicit in some areas, and transmuted, transformed, split or reduced in others.

The popular name for the double-headed serpent, Sisiutl, has come to us from the Kwakiutl, whose art suggests that this fabulous creature is an entity of encompassing importance for its people. From the evidence of myth, art and ritual, and from their own ethnological reflections, a number of scholars ascribe to Sisiutl a status of great and compelling power in Kwakiutl religious thought.

The Sisiutl of Kwakiutl myth embodies a series of significant attributes and aspects. In its familiar form, the creature is described as having a human head in the centre of its legless body, with tongue-flicking serpent heads at each end. Each of the three heads is characteristically horned or plumed. Travelling through all the realms of land, sea and sky, transforming itself at will, impervious to spears, Sisiutl is a creature of fierce power--an extreme danger to the unwary but also a potent apotropaic (amuletic or evil-averting accessory) for the supernaturally favoured few. Sighting the Sisiutl can cause fainting, contortion or death; an enemy looking upon it would be instantly killed or disabled, turned to stone, his joints dislocated, his head twisted backward. The supernatural serpent can sink canoes by petrifying them; its flesh, though the food of the Thunderbird, is poisonous to mortals. There are, however, antidotes to Sisiutl's drastic powers: one can be delivered unharmed from an encounter with the serpent by spitting either hellebore juice or the blood from one's tongue upon it, thus rendering it innocuous. One's weapons, "even...a cane,"²⁶ will kill the creature at a single stroke if treated with the blood of one's tongue.

In its positive aspect, Sisiutl is the warrior's supernatural assistant. Bathing in its blood makes one's skin impenetrable as stone, and its hide, "worn as a belt, enables the owner to perform wonderful

feats of daring at the hunt and in war."²⁷ The Sisiutl belt is a special apotropaic: in an origin myth of the Koskimo of Cape Scott, a chief bid a young woman to fetch water at a well guarded by a murderous, all-devouring monster; the girl donned her Sisiutl belt, was swallowed, but then was disgorged, along with the ancestral Koskimo people, when the belt in combination with the chief-wizard's incantation burst open the monster.²⁸ The double nature of the double serpent in Kwakiutl myth is this: that which deals death can also deflect it, that which acts as an agent of destruction can be converted and controlled, to the good of the individual and his society. Sisiutl's eyes, used as ammunition discharged from a sling, can kill large game, even whales, and its iridescent scales can work as unfailingly true arrowheads. These same magically charged scales may be sources of rivers when buried in the ground.

Wealth is both a mythic attribute and a thematic correlative of the double-headed serpent in Kwakiutl mythology. In one recorded legend, a Sisiutl mask is named "Abalone Shell from One End of the World to the Other."²⁹ Since abalone shell is a conspicuous symbol of wealth on the Northwest Coast, this denomination betokens extravagant affluence. Mythic connections have also been made between Sisiutl and the ceremonial copper, which was the most treasured medium of exchange in trade and ritual along the coast. The treasure-filled house of Tsonokwa, the forest-dwelling giantess who, in her positive aspect, is considered a wealth-bringer, is guarded by a Sisiutl, whose tongue-flicking heads flank the entrance. Here the connotation of wealth is complemented by another of Sisiutl's important roles: guardian to or wondrous living house post on the dwelling places of the supernaturals. Sisiutl as a frontal post, gable or

cross-beam serves as an enhancement of a supernatural's power and prestige. Barbeau narrates a Fort Rupert legend of a visit to the home of a supernatural:

...When the people arrived in front of the house, the mouth of the door of Qa'watiliqala's house opened. They jumped in all at the same time, and it bit only a corner of Lolatsa's blanket. Then the posts at the sides of the door spoke, and the one to the right-hand side said: 'You made them come to your house, Qa'watiliqala;' and the post on the left-hand side said: 'Now spread a mat and give your guests to eat, Chief.' It is said that the cross-beams over the rear posts were double-headed snakes...which were constantly playing with their tongues...³⁰

The Sisiutl, as a vivified heraldic device, is also seen on a settee in the house of the ghosts, and as a facade decoration, in conjunction with sun, moon and Thunderbird, in the Upper World.³¹

Sisiutl is both the food of the Thunderbird--"They say that the Thunderbird lives on the Sisiutl and always looks for it"³²--and its lightning-generating weapon in hunting the whale (a creature which is also eaten by Thunderbird). Sisiutl and whale, both powers of the sea, are traditional inferiors to their enemy of the Upper World, Thunderbird. The phenomenon of lightning is generally a consequence of a Thunderbird-serpent connection, although along the coast descriptive details vary to incorporate a serpent-fish synonymity. Although Barbeau records that Sisiutl is Thunderbird's "mystic...belt with which the mighty bird, in a storm, causes the lightning by flinging it down onto the Whale,"³³ both Boas and Hill-Tout record that lightning comes from the tongue of a serpent, or a fish, flung down at the whale.³⁴ A pervasive Northwest Coast belief is that "Thunderbird gets power from a fish which he seizes and hides in his feathers."³⁵ In myth, this phosphorescent fish relates to Sisiutl, both through the attribute of the serpent's magical scales,

refulgent with light and power, and through the serpent-fish substitution in the Thunderbird/lightning scheme.

The Sisiutl-fish synonymity is also found in Kwakiutl myths of transformation:

...Sometimes, according to Daniel Cranmer of Alert Bay, the Sisiutl appeared to the people just as an ordinary salmon swimming up a river. Then, in a flash it changed into the Sisiutl, double-headed, with tongues protruding and horn-like protuberances on the head.³⁶

A man, finding this "salmon" in a fish trap and eating its flesh, would be mortally poisoned, but to Thunderbird, Sisiutl is sustaining food, that is, the true salmon.

Sisiutl's principal mythological transformation is that of self-propelling canoe, its motion provided by either its fins³⁷ or its "darting tongues."³⁸ In canoe form, it can be ridden by hunters or warriors; it can convey mortals between the realms of the profane and the supernatural. It is a canoe with a voracious appetite and is known to devour seals.

A Sisiutl-like presence can be seen in Nuuchah-nulth mythology in the form of Haietlik, the Mountain Snake or Lightning Snake. Many of Sisiutl's attributes translate directly into Haietlik's: it is characteristically horned and possesses a flicking tongue; it is the source of lightning in association with the Thunderbird, whose special whale-hunting device it is; as Thunderbird's adjunct, it is variously a belt and a fish with a darting tongue; it is both land-dwelling and sea-going; its iridescent scales are the source of magical powers for those hunters and warriors who fortuitously find them. Barbeau postulates that the Nuuchah-nulth Mountain Snake, a "double-headed" monster which "brave ancestors attacked in its lair,"³⁹ is a manifestation of the "New World Dragon," and mythic and visual equivalent to the Kwakiutl's Sisiutl.

Fraser, too, equates the Haietlik with the Sisiutl.⁴⁰ Clearly these serpent creatures are related, but among the Nuu-chah-nulth, Haietlik's more frequent form is single- rather than double-headed.

Haietlik is much elaborated in Vancouver Island legend, as exemplified by an Alberni tale, originally recorded by Indian agent A.W. O'Neill in 1910, of an ancestor's battle with the great serpent.

...This animal or reptile is supposed to be the maker of lightning. At night it gives out a luminous sheen from its scales and this man's attention was called to it one night as it was on some rocks close to shore. He went out and attacked it with his spear and broke off some of its scales and after a fearful battle the reptile escaped but left these portions of its scales in the Indian's possession. This gave the Indian immense powers of strength and endurance so that he excelled all others.

...The mere possession of the scales of the reptile was sufficient to give the great powers possessed by Bob's great grandfather. These powers were bequeathed to Bob's grandfather but (were) lost in some way at his death, though even without the precious relics enough of their power descended to Bob's father...

...The lightning reptile vomited the lightning...and but for the valour of Bob's ancestor, would have set the whole village on fire.⁴¹

The vomiting of lightning by the immense serpent is only one variation on the theme; other Nuu-chah-nulth myths attribute lightning to the blinking of Thunderbird's eye, to the flashing fish held under Thunderbird's wing, to the breaking up of the serpent belt (which Ernst recorded as double-headed⁴²), or to the casting down of the serpent as whale-slaying harpoon. Generally, lightning's concomitant, thunder, is given to be the unearthly din of the struggle between Thunderbird and whale, in which the serpent is the significant third of the trilogy, as weapon or accoutrement, or merely as witness, coiled on the stormy surface of the sea.

The Salish, too, lay mythical claim to an apparently Sisiutl-related "dragon," and as with the Nuu-chah-nulth variation, it is described as both single- and double-headed. A categorical distinction is not always made, although different names have been assigned, and sometimes the creature is described as a giant lizard rather than a serpent. Once again, the magical serpent is a principal in the Thunderbird and lightning correspondence: in one account, lightning occurs when the Thunderbird pursues the serpent, which splits trees in its overland flight, leaving behind a dangerously charged trail of burnt bark and iridescent scales.⁴³ Squamish carver, Chief Matthias Joe Capilano, described the serpent as the food of the Thunderbird, and as possessing brightly coloured scales which, when shed, could serve as magical charms for those who find them.⁴⁴ The attributes of both double- and single-headed serpents are essentially similar, according to Barnett.

...Both are whizzing, whining, flying beasts that lived in the water, but they sometimes appeared on land. They could split rocks in passing through them. If an unprepared person saw one or even crossed its trail on land, his arms, legs, and neck contorted awfully and he died. Both serpents had scales. Some thought that they had small feet; others said that they had wings; still others described them as having horns or a mane...⁴⁵

Significantly, this serpent/dragon creature is mentioned as the most powerful of spirits and "specifically a shaman's spirit."⁴⁶

Sisiutl has slithered, too, into Bella Coola myth. Described as both single- and double-headed and as sometimes possessing the aspect of a fish, this creature lives in a salt-water pond in the Upper World,⁴⁷ a pond in which bathes the prevailing supernatural, a "goddess" characterized as "the female aspect of the serpent."⁴⁸ The Bella Coola Sisiutl is the shaman's assistant and its skin, which cannot be penetrated by

spears, is a powerful curative. The Sisiutl's descent to the mortal realm causes great rocks to slide and rumble on its downward route; the massive rifts it leaves in its path become riverbeds.

Although the myth of the Thunderbird is familiar to the northern tribes of the Northwest Coast, it is manifest more rarely in northern art and ceremony than in southern and central.⁴⁹ Correlatively, the Sisiutl character is very much modified among the Haida, Tsimshian and Tlingit; its attributes are transfigured, its powers are diminished as it is incorporated into the local scene. The Haida Thunderbird is said to hunt the whale with a fish which, when cast down, darts out its snake-like tongue, producing lightning. A Tlingit myth adapts the serpent-Thunderbird opposition: a young woman offended the Great Snail (a serpent variant--the Kwakiutl Sisiutl leaves a snail-like trail of slime behind it); the following morning, she was sighted atop a high cliff, the Snail coiled around her; in order to rescue her, her brothers donned carved wings and, although they flew up to the cliff and succeeded in their struggle with the Snail, they were thenceforth transformed into thunderbirds.⁵⁰

Boas sees a "faint echo"⁵¹ of the Kwakiutl Sisiutl in the Tsimshian bisexual being, "Was-at-Each-End" (or "Mouth-at-Each-End"), the creature that makes Raven greedy and that is, itself, greedy in a familiar transformation, that of double-headed, self-propelling canoe. The voraciousness of Mouth-at-Each-End and the devouring concept manifest by Sisiutl create a thematic link with a legend shared by and popular as a crest source among all the northern tribes--"The Princess Who Suckled the Woodworm" (also "Scrubworm," "Grubworm," or "Caterpillar"). Although they do not make the devourer connection, both Locher and Barbeau insist upon the essential sameness of Sisiutl and Woodworm. Locher writes that one

of the translations of "Sisiutl" is "Woodworm" and that Sisiutl as Thunderbird's lightning blanket is the analogue to the northern "lightning blanket of the woodworm of the upper world."⁵² Barbeau elaborates at length the woodworm/double-headed serpent/New World dragon synonymy, apparently persuaded less by mythic attributes than by a similar morphology in art.

The Woodworm is known as Tlugurh among the Tlingit, and its legend has been recorded by a number of people, including Swanton, Keithahn, and Emmons. The essential story is this: at the time of her pubescent seclusion, a chief's daughter found and adopted a woodworm, which she nursed at her breast and towards which she developed a deep, maternal attachment. The worm grew prodigiously and was hidden by the princess beneath her parents' house. Burrowing under all the houses of the village and gnawing through wooden storage boxes, the increasingly voracious creature stole quantities of food and oil, reducing the villagers to a state of starvation. Eventually the monstrous thief was discovered, but the princess could not be induced to relinquish her pet/child. Finally, however, she was drawn away from her house by ruse so that the desperate villagers could attack the creature and, after a long struggle, slay it. In acknowledgement of this extraordinary episode, which in some areas is used to explain clan migration, the cradle songs composed by the princess for her pet were preserved, and the princess-suckling-worm image became a familiar heraldic device.

A fundamentally similar story is told by the Tsimshian, with additional significant likeness to the supernatural serpents of central and southern myth: the worm was phosphorescent, described as "glowing" when picked up by the chief's daughter, and when the villagers dug it

out of its burrow to slay it, they found that "it had a head at both ends of its snake-like body."⁵³ A single-headed worm monster is known to the Tsimshian as Rhtsenawsuh; double-headed, it is Larah'wais, whose body, chopped up in battle, created the mountains behind Prince Rupert.

In a similar legend found among the Haida of Massett, the chief's daughter is banned from marriage "because of her baneful fancy,"⁵⁴ until finally, as an old woman, she is allowed to marry an equally old man. His wedding gift of food to the villagers transforms into snails, worms and frogs, creatures which appear to function as serpent synonyms in northern Northwest Coast myth and art.

As the anomaly of monster or "dragon," the double-headed serpent is not exclusive to the mythology of any one tribal group, but has much of the continuity of the Thunderbird throughout the Northwest Coast. Just as Thunderbird is pre-eminent in the south and is a much less considerable personage in the north, so the supernatural serpent is significant in the south, but is transfigured and demoted in the north, though still retaining connecting, Sisiutl-like characteristics. This suggests a southern origin for the double-headed serpent (as is also evident in art, discussed in Chapter 3 below), and illuminates the process by which mythic personages and themes were exchanged and adapted among the linguistic groups of the Northwest Coast.

...all legends of this region are of complex origin, and they must have been carried over enormous distances from tribe to tribe. This is true of the more insignificant tales as well as the most important myths...⁵⁵

The Double-Headed Serpent in Heraldic Art

The double-headed serpent in art functions out of a system of distinctive crests whose purpose it was to differentiate a complex social order, to record the history of groups and individuals, and to enumerate privileges. As mentioned above, the subjects of displayed crests are family legends which chronicle descent from myth-age ancestors who derived magical or material powers and ceremonial entitlement in encounters with supernatural birds, animals or other mythic personages. The right to display a crest is one of the prerogatives sanctioned by the legend which the crest itself depicts.

Ancestors might have contacted supernaturals fortuitously while involved in daily occupations of hunting, fishing or travelling, or purposefully through a concerted vision quest. (Their descendants might, in recent or contemporary times, connect similarly with concessional supernaturals and spirit protectors.) Crests are a significant aspect of legacy wealth. Generally speaking, inheritances (thus the passage of crests) are matrilineal in the north, patrilineal in the south, and transitional in the central region of the Northwest Coast. (The Southern Kwakiutl have a non-unilineal system of descent, as do the Bella Coola and Nuu-chah-nulth.) Each successive generation might supplement inherited tales of more remote ancestors, either mythic or historic, with "ordinary and marvelous experiences"⁵⁶ of contemporary members. Additionally, crests might be acquired through marriage, war or rare gift. The consequence has been an astonishing complexity and diversity in heraldic art, which can be read, too, as a natural response to increasingly complex social and economic conditions during the historic period.⁵⁷

Although the right to display given crest figures in a given manner is socially exclusive, according to which tribe, numaym, phratry, clan, house, lineage group, or secret society one belongs, the fundamental crest iconography is exoteric, within a given formal tradition. The artist is, of course, especially cognizant of the rich store of legend and imagery which is the common cultural heritage of the community.⁵⁸ Crests may be displayed on any material possession, from the lineage house front muralized on a grand scale to the smallest berry spoon. As a significant crest entity, the double-headed serpent appears repeatedly throughout the crowd of Northwest Coast native ornamentation.

Mythological creatures may also be represented on utilitarian objects, such as bark choppers and harpoon valves, although they do not necessarily function as crest components in this context. While it is generalized that the creatures depicted in Northwest Coast art work as social rather than religious signs and symbols,⁵⁹ it appears that the double-headed serpent could operate as an image both declarative and persuasive, an image working within the constraints of the social-heraldic system, perhaps, but also magically enhancing an act of hunting or fishing. One of the most evocative occurrences of the supernatural serpent motif is finely etched, in either linear or pointillistic fashion, on the bone valve of the Nuu-chah-nulth harpoon (see Figure 2). This serpent, which may be either double- or single-headed, is typically horned and its zigzag body reiterates the serpent-lightning theme. The fact of its representation on harpoons used in the hunting of whales and other sea mammals recalls its role in myth as Thunderbird's infallible whaling harpoon, and suggests sympathetic magic as a motivation as compelling as crest prerogative. Heraldically, Wikananish II, a Clayoquot

chief, incorporated Haietlik into his crest; magically, his success in hunting whales was attributed to his possessing the skin of the supernatural snake, which he "concealed in a box in the bottom of his whaling canoe."⁶⁰ That is, in the case of these emblematic harpoon heads, magical and social implications interweave: the serpent here may bestow both privilege (the prerogative of depicting it) and power (its legendary efficacy as whale killer).

Another medium for dual socio-magical enhancement is the canoe; an outstanding Kwakiutl example can be seen in Curtis's 1914 film In the Land of the War Canoes. The double-headed serpent as canoe adornment or enhancement appears to be almost exclusively Kwakiutl, for whom tales of ancestors riding in Sisiutl canoes are most vivid. Long, flicking tongues and tall, spiny fins--the serpent's means of propulsion--would seem to bestow legendary swiftness and water-sheering qualities upon the appropriately decorated canoe, while asserting claims of heraldic connection. Additionally, the painted serpent might serve as a protection against malevolent spirits, as Boas has recorded.

When a canoe builder leaves his work in the evening, he paints a face on each side of the canoe to frighten away the spirits of the dead canoe builders who will try to split the canoe...⁶¹

More broadly "decorative" and less particularly magical are the double-headed serpents which appear on women's implements, such as a Kwakiutl bark beater of incised and painted whalebone in the BCPM collection (see Figure 3). Our survey also turned up Salish and Nuuchahnulth mat creasers, carved in the form of double-headed zoomorphs with apparently derivative formal reference to canoes (see Figure 4), but because of their generalized design features and the dearth of accompanying documentation

the creatures remain unidentified. Another such problem of unnamed but suggestively serpentine imagery is found on men's tools, specifically on Nuu-chah-nulth D-adzes, which frequently incorporate representations of wolves or serpents, or both. (The wolf-serpent morphology is dealt with below, in the discussion of Nuu-chah-nulth ceremonials.) And ophidian or reptilian creatures are frequently found on Salish spindle whorls, whose dragon-like images have been identified (by writers and museum cataloguers) as otters, mink, and lake monsters as frequently as lightning or mountain snakes. Ex post facto interpretations in Salish art are frequently problematic, since one creature often merges with another and much of the symbolism is exclusive or ambiguous, determined as it is by "individual guardian spirits and private experiences with supernatural powers, unrelated to tribal mythology."⁶² However, when the supernatural serpent's diagnostic attributes of curled horn, bulged nose, protruding tongue and spiny fins are present, a lightning serpent/Great Lizard identification may be made unequivocally (see Figure 5).

Figurative Nuu-chah-nulth baskets constitute a substantial portion of Northwest Coast native art collections, and these baskets are often elaborated with images of Haietlik in all its aspects: specifically serpentine (i.e., legless) with supernatural horn and protruding tongue; generically reptilian, with two legs and a long, thick tail or with four legs and looking incongruously like a crocodile; and in isolation or juxtaposed with its mythical associates, whale and Thunderbird. It is difficult to ascribe more than a "decorative" intent to these images, since many of these Nuu-chah-nulth baskets were made around the turn of this century, mostly for commercial consumption. Davis claims that native women on the Northwest Coast habitually worked in geometric designs and

that other, such as naturalistic, images represent a debasement of tradition for the tourist trade.⁶³ However, naturalistic whaling scenes on woven basketry hats are recorded in ethnographic literature and illustrations from the time of earliest white contact, so that supernatural serpents in basket weaving seem to be part of an evolved figurative tradition among the Nuu-chah-nulth rather than a modern corruption. It does seem true that the nature of the medium would discourage figuration and that these fetching little dragons and whales and thunderbirds are anomalous to weaving's spontaneous tendency to geometric abstraction. Whatever its history, the only basketry on the Northwest Coast on which double- or single-headed serpents appear is Nuu-chah-nulth.

The Totem Pole Context

One of the most blatant and prestigious vehicles for display of crests (thus of rank and privilege) on the Northwest Coast is the so-called "totem pole," whose origin and evolution have been disputed by scholars. Generally, "totem pole" connotes the elaborately carved, free-standing, exterior pole, erected as an heraldic declaration near a lineage house. The free-standing pole is usually a "memorial pole," raised ostensibly to commemorate a deceased chief, but in actuality to record the rightful descent of his heir. Its purpose is to publish at large the history which sanctions an individual's claim to prestige, power and prerogative and, in a broader sense, to make visible and accessible the cultural traditions of the community. This kind of free-standing pole can mark also the acquisition of crests and legends by other means than inheritance, for example, marriage or conquest.

Other "totem poles" include the inside house post, which is often

an integral part of the house structure and which usually bears ancestral figures (and, as an indication of the esteem with which it is regarded, the inside house post is often named, as if it were animated, a personage); the house-frontal post, set flush against the facade of a lineage house and incorporating in its ground-level figure(s) the carved aperture which serves as entrance to the house; and the mortuary pole, which is essentially a grave post, either marking or containing the remains of the dead.

In Northwest Coast studies, a view was forwarded that the free-standing pole, which undoubtedly reached a material florescence (in both numbers and elaboration) in the second half of the nineteenth century, was a post-contact phenomenon, whose existence was contingent upon the availability of steel tools and the impetus of fur-trade wealth, leisure and rivalries.⁶⁴ However, the claim that the detached pole emerged out of prototypal interior or house-frontal posts, and then only in the nineteenth century, is disputed by many, including Vastokas, who cites Vancouver's 1795 journal as evidence of the pole's pre-contact existence. Vastokas also writes that

...ritual, mythology, and cosmology of the Northwest Coast peoples...reveal even more clearly that the totem-pole is not only pre-contact and indeed indigenous as an art form, but that it has a central place in the ideological system that underlies and patterns the whole of Northwest Coast culture...⁶⁵

Vastokas goes on to prove that the totem pole of the Northwest Coast is a secular elaboration of the simple shamanic pole which is, itself, an image of the Sacred Tree. This is significant to our study of the double-headed serpent, since serpent and bird are archetypally conjoined with the Sacred Tree⁶⁶ (as developed in Chapter 4). The totem-pole-as-World-Tree argument for the antiquity of the form accords with the cosmology

of many Northwest Coast groups, including Kwakiutl, Haida and Tsimshian, who envision a pillar, pole or tree supporting the sky and joining the three cosmic realms.

Evidence points to a significantly simpler prototype, predating the "baroque" totem pole of the late nineteenth century. The early pole was characterized by one or few figures at the base, an expanse of bare post at the centre, and a single crest figure, most commonly a bird, surmounting all.⁶⁷ By far the greatest number of Kwakiutl totem poles that feature Sisiutl (and this survey includes the thematically useful if aesthetically suspect model totem poles which swell most museum collections) bear the apparently ancient serpent-bird configuration of Sisiutl at base and Thunderbird at crown (see Figures 6 and 7). Some poles consist simply of these two arch-personages, with or without a stretch of bare pole between; others embody the later impulse to elaborate by interposing secondary figures. A few rare poles dispose Sisiutl vertically, as seen on a Fort Rupert example, carved by Charlie James (1876-1948) as a record of a large potlatch (see Figure 8). From top to bottom, we can identify a mythical ancestress, Q'olus (Thunderbird's brother), the double-headed serpent (its humanoid head at its apex, its serpentine bodies extending down the pole) transforming itself into the next figure, a man holding a copper, and ending with Raven at the base. Even given the formal exception to the archaic rule that this pole represents, we note that a supernatural bird characteristically surmounts the supernatural serpent.

Evocative of those myths which describe Sisiutl as an architectural feature on the houses of the supernaturals, are double-headed serpent cross-beams, both interior and exterior, in which Sisiutl's central head may be surmounted by either a bird or sun figure (see Figure 9).

The serpent-bird juxtaposition is also found on Nuuchahnulth poles, where bird figures (variously identified as thunderbirds, eagles and owls) rise above Haietlik figures. Unlike the generally horizontal disposition of serpents on Kwakiutl poles, however, Nuuchahnulth serpents usually incline and twine vertically along their posts. Two Nuuchahnulth crests systems are remarkable for the flamboyance with which they encompass supernatural serpent imagery: that of Maquinna of the Clayoquot, and that of "Captain Jack" of Friendly Cove. Chief Maquinna's privileges were displayed originally on his house front and, after his death, on a memorial pole. His heir, Napoleon Maquinna, commissioned a new set of inside house posts about 1902, which were executed in the emphatic, highly stylized, brilliantly coloured and ersatz-Kwakiutl manner of late Nuuchahnulth art, and which featured the Serpent-Whale-Thunderbird trilogy. Similarly, Captain Jack's inside house posts were also executed in the Kwakiutl-influenced, late Nuuchahnulth style (see Figure 10). The Captain Jack poles are unusual in their juxtaposing both single- and double-headed serpents within a single crest system. Single-headed Haietliks undulate in generally vertical, Nuuchahnulth fashion, but the double-headed serpent with central anthropomorphic head which forms the base is clearly borrowed (style and morphology) from the Kwakiutl. (The late-nineteenth century impact of Kwakiutl art upon that of Salish and Nuuchahnulth neighbours is discussed below in Chapter 3, with reference to style development.)

"Totem pole" examples of the double-headed serpent do not exist among the Salish, whose carved interior posts, ranging in height from six to twelve feet, are the most "monumental"⁶⁸ of their sculptural productions. The lone example of the supernatural serpent surveyed on a Salish pole is

that depicted on a standing figure house post from Cowichan, Vancouver Island (see Figure 11). Here, a human figure grasps against his chest a legless creature with long, bulged, "crocodile-like"⁶⁹ snout, similar enough to those supernatural beasts on Salish spindle whorls to persuade of a lightning serpent identification. However, as with other Salish examples, the image is obscure and thus controversial--it could equally signify an otter, a creature heavily invested with supernatural traits on the Northwest Coast. (There are thematic links as well, as discussed below.)

The "faint northern echo" of Sisiutl, the Was-at-Each-End recorded in myth by Boas, does not appear to figure on totem poles or houseposts produced by any of the northern native groups. Neither our own survey through museum collections nor Barbeau's dragon-oriented search through the northern area has exposed a concretely authenticated sculptural manifestation of that legendary being. Barbeau does record and discuss what he considers to be a material expression of the Northwest Coast "dragon" or "hydra," a double-headed "Blackfish" (killer whale) on a Tsimshian house frontal pole at Port Simpson.⁷⁰ However, we are not convinced that this image either thematically or morphologically relates to other double-headed serpents on the Northwest Coast. We are more concerned with the Woodworm which, with nurturing maiden, frequently manifests itself in northern pole art, particularly among the Tlingit where it is a popular crest figure of the Raven phratry. The gorgeous and famous nineteenth-century Woodworm house post from the Whale House at Klukwan (see Figure 12) depicts the worm as both a single- and double-headed entity, the former grasped vertically against the maiden's body (somewhat reminiscent of the Salish post described above), and the latter flanking her

head. The addorsed woodworms, not integrally joined to but rather draped over the human head, are still vividly suggestive of the Sisiutl morphology, and the likeness is reinforced by the curled snouts, long mouths, large eyes and (in this case, recumbent) horns of the woodworms. These accumulated traits in Kwakiutl art would be obviously diagnostic of Sisiutl, and it appears that the compelling image of the Kwakiutl serpent makes a modified statement in northern art, through both the mythological and visual metaphor of the woodworm.

A Klawock, Prince of Wales Island, pole is engaging in its anthropomorphizing of the worm, whose human face evokes the cradle song which the princess composed for her monstrously transforming "child"--"It has a face already. Sit right here! It has a mouth already. Sit right here!"⁷¹--and which makes the same kind of allusions as the addorsed serpents with central human face.

Haida totem pole representations of the woodworm myth are limited in this study to model poles in argillite. Dickason writes that while monumental totem poles display exclusive family crests, miniature argillite poles are more broadly historical; making reference to shared stories which are not the specific property of any one family.⁷² Although model argillite poles were made almost exclusively for sale to non-natives, they are worthy examples of Haida art in their general adherence to the formal rules and traditions of monumental carving, and the best of the miniature poles are, indeed, monumental in feeling and in their diagnostic depictions of characters from myth and legend.⁷³ A Haida miniature from Massett, of the maiden nursing the worm, the whole surmounted by an eagle, bears a great resemblance in both subject and sensibility to the Tlingit pole at Klawock. Another argillite carving depicts the fully

grown worm-child as a great serpent, coiling up the pole to be fed at the hands of the hapless-looking woman. From the material and photographic evidence surveyed here, it appears that neither serpent nor worm has found a significant place in the monumental sculpture of the Haida.

Supernatural Serpents as Two-Dimensional Architectural Fixtures

House-frontal painting on the Northwest Coast is the two-dimensional equivalent to the totem pole, inasmuch as it makes public rank and privilege assertions. As heraldic device or sign, it identifies the lineage house by displaying the principal crest of the family living within. Graphic correspondent to the sculpted interior post is the painting on inside wall or partition screen, which might concern itself with primary crest personages or might deal in fine with a particular incident from the legendary line.

The Kwakiutl double-headed serpent accommodates readily to its given ground: when not disposed in a traditionally linear horizontal, it adjusts by turning or curving up or down against the vertical margins, sometimes resolving its design into a mandala scheme. Sometimes, as on the front of the Hunt house in the BCPM (see Figure 13), the serpent is disposed as a guardian image, its tongue-flicking flanking of a doorway replicating its role in myth. Salish and Nuuchahnulth house paintings, either frontal or interior, also allude to supernatural serpents; again, the double-head Salish examples encountered in this survey seem to link, stylistically, with the Kwakiutl. Large, two-dimensional Nuuchahnulth serpents, though characteristically single-headed, are often paired, making a thematic connection out of the same heraldic flanking impulse as the double-headed Sisiutl.

As with the monumental sculpture of the northern Northwest Coast, there is a dearth of double-headed serpents or "dragons" on northern house fronts. Either these images have not existed or they have not been documented in historic photographs and museum collections. The extreme abstraction of the graphic art of the northern Northwest Coast often obscures its symbolism, so that even the most seasoned scholars have difficulty identifying what may be serpents or worms. However, since we have established already the secondary nature of the serpent in both the myth and sculpture of the northern area, we can generalize a correspondingly rare occurrence of the motif in its two-dimensional art.

A more fruitful field for serpent-searching is that of the portable (thus collectable and preservable) partitions, screens, and curtains of the Kwakiutl and Nuu-chah-nulth areas. Two such nineteenth century Nuu-chah-nulth paintings, on cedar board, are described as having originated in Chief Quantough's house at Mookhulth, an Opitchesaht village near Alberni⁷⁴ (see Figures 14 and 15). They are recorded as having stood against the inside wall at the back of the house, the area in which the most highly ranked individuals lived, for exhibition "at potlatches and on important family occasions."⁷⁵ These boards display the encounters of a legendary ancestor, Sin-set, with the lightning snake, Haietlik. A somewhat misleading caption accompanying the text states that Sin-Set "portrayed his experiences" in these two cedar board paintings, but it is apparent that these were commissioned works, by different artists. A comparison of individual motif elements, like eyes, beaks and feathers, shows a strikingly different handling of detail, quite apart from the obviously dissimilar gestalt of the figures.

Barbeau describes a similarly painted board, with two serpents and two thunderbirds holding whales in their talons, as having functioned as a Nuu-chah-nulth "menstrual board,"⁷⁶ that is, as a partition used to seclude pubescent girls at the rear of the house. This association of the serpent with secluded adolescent females makes exciting, thematic connections with the northern myth of the woodworm, since the chief's daughter is in seclusion when she takes the monster as her pet/child.

Double-headed serpents on interior painted boards do not all fall into distinct and discrete categories; many museum examples are broadly catalogued as "ceremonial screens," but the specific context, whether social or religious, is rarely given. In some instances, the secular attribution of "potlatch screen" is recorded, but even with an attached ethnographic record, sacred and profane intent may overlap to cause confusion and to blur the tidy lines between which we have attempted to lay our survey material. Here, again, we may cite Vastokas, who speaks of the cultural dualism in which "the sacred ceremonial order mirrors the profane social order,"⁷⁷ so that the double-headed serpent, itself a potent symbol of cosmological dualism, works as an image bridging sacred and profane realms or institutions. (That the profane is also, in a profound sense, sacred, is developed below, in Chapter 4.) Among other examples of sacred-secular objects are Sisiutl belts and bows, which usually are categorized as pertaining to Winter Ceremonials, but which also are recorded by Boas as accoutrements to secular potlatch entertainments among the Haanalino clan⁷⁸ (see Figure 16). These belts and bows are discussed below, in the context of the Winalagilis ritual.

Potlatch Paraphernalia

Some artifacts, especially from the Kwakiutl, are ostentatiously social, obviously intended to materially overawe at a potlatch. And it is among the Kwakiutl that the double-headed serpent is bound up so flagrantly with the excesses of potlatch meaning and method.

It is by the event and agency of the potlatch that prerogatives are first publicly asserted: heirs are presented, marriages are contracted, chiefs are mourned. Changes of status are witnessed and thus confirmed, becoming social history. On the Northwest Coast, wealth is honorable, and the potlatch is an elaborate and conspicuous vehicle by which wealth is displayed and through which ritually delivered, ritually reciprocated gifts are exchanged. If the impulse to "display one's achievements" is "innate" to mankind,⁷⁹ then this prestige-seeking impulse has been developed to a near-fanatical degree on the Northwest Coast. One is given, ultimately, the spectacle of a twenty-foot long potlatch dish in the shape of Sisiutl.

The feast dishes of the Southern Kwakiutl are the most hyperbolic food vessels on the coast. The serpent-as-feast-dish in historic Northwest Coast art appears to be culturally specific to the Southern Kwakiutl, just as the immense size of the Sisiutl vessels is an excess peculiar to the extravagant Kwakiutl ceremonial style. The legendary figures chosen for feast dishes are asserted to be "the great custodians of provender from the realms of sea, land and sky."⁸⁰ Thus, a feast dish may function simply as another conspicuous ground for the household crest, or it may reverberate as a mythologically significant form. (As with outstanding house posts, important dishes are named to suggest personage.) In feast-dish form, the wealth-bringer and supernatural-intermediary connotations

of Sisiutl may take precedence over its crest-component connotations.

A dish as huge as the twenty-foot, wheeled vessel, carved by Charlie James in 1907 (see Figure 17) would have been rolled in splendour into the scene of the festival. Large ladles would then have been employed to serve the food into smaller containers, from which four or six people might eat. (This intermediate sized feast dish is also frequently a vehicle for Sisiutl imagery.) The spectacular Charlie James feast dish makes a formal and functional pun: Sisiutl's extended tongues detach to become spectacular ladles. Often potlatch ladles bear crest figures matching those of the potlatch dishes, an example being a pair of Sisiutl ladles, now in the TBM, in which the serpent head "is conceived as an extension of the handle, bent back upon itself and joined to the neck of the spoon"⁸¹ (see Figure 18). As Holm notes, the form of these immense ladles is "exactly that of the ordinary small wooden spoon of the Kwakiutl, enormously enlarged."⁸²

Holm's description sets off the intriguing notion of skeuomorphs, particularly because the huge Sisiutl feast dishes seem to owe their form and size to the canoe. Design here may have been influenced by method: such an enormous food vessel may have been burned out, gouged out, steamed and stretched by the process characteristic of canoe building. Thus, in the Sisiutl feast dish, which is canoe-like in size, shape and manufacture, Sisiutl's mythic role as self-propelling or wealth-filled canoe is firmly reiterated.

Other supernatural through social allusions are made by a Kwakiutl settee in the TBM collection (see Figure 19). While it evokes the mythic image of the Sisiutl settee in the house of the ghosts, as a secularly oriented artifact, it was "probably made for a favoured child."⁸³ A

"Sisiutl"-decorated chest, seemingly related in social intent, is slightly problematic in its tribal identification (see Figure 20): Barbeau identifies it as Kwakiutl while the VCM catalogue states "Coast Salish." A double-headed serpent, without a central human face, is represented on the lid, and a conglomerate "dragon," with Sisiutl-like head, ophidian body and tail, and reptilian feet, creeps along each side.⁸⁴ Given that a legged Sisiutl has not occurred in any of the Kwakiutl art or legends surveyed for this thesis, Barbeau's designation is unconvincing. The style strikes us as closer to Kwakiutl-influenced, late Nuu-chah-nulth, and this attribution could be substantiated by the occurrence of similarly crocodile-like figures on Nuu-chah-nulth basketry. Both the Kwakiutl settee and the Nuu-chah-nulth chest are, apparently, isolated and somewhat eccentric manifestations of the supernatural serpent, about which little more can be said.

Sisiutl imagery occurs popularly on the ceremonial clothing of the Kwakiutl. Again, the distinction between social and sacred intent is fuzzy when one is confronted with meagrely catalogued artifacts, isolated within museum walls. Dance aprons, for example, were worn by secret society members and by shamans, as well as by potlatch hosts and attendants.

On Kwakiutl dance aprons, button blankets, hats, and coats, crest images generally appear to be confined to one or two isolated figures; thus, Sisiutl occurs on such clothing either alone or in conjunction with Thunderbird, whale or copper, as is consistent with the mythical associations we discussed above. The button blanket is a post-contact phenomenon, whose materials were acquired entirely through trade. Although its intent and inspiration are traditional, the button blanket's design motifs suffer

an unfortunate distortion out of the limitations of the chosen medium. As Bill Reid complains, "the spirit of the design," the essential Northwest Coast "precision of line" and "beauty of curve"⁸⁵ are lost in the inappropriate and accultural media. It is apparent in looking at serpent designs on button-blanket garments, especially on the smaller aprons and hats, that legendary awesomeness and impressiveness--the sense of supernatural presence--have been relinquished. Because of the unlikely and antithetical accommodation to stroudcloth applique, floral embroidery and round buttons, many Sisiutl depictions look like dopey jack-o'lanterns (see Figure 21). Characteristically crisp Northwest Coast design elements, such as ovoid eyes and feathers, sharp teeth and claws, have been forfeited, presumably because of the unsuitability of the materials. Still, and this is an indication of their symbolic importance, Sisiutl's diagnostic horns, curled snouts, and protruding tongues have been preserved.

Crispness and beauty of line have been maintained in the Chilkat blanket, but no serpent or worm variants of the Sisiutl have been identified in this highly abstracted form of northern weaving. Again, there is the possibility that extreme abstraction has obscured a serpent or two, but the findings of this survey are that serpents and serpent variants are rare in northern graphic art, despite the woodworm correlative in sculptural art of that area.

Masks: The Double-Headed Serpent as Dramatic Accessory

Establishing an absolute context for masks, thus for double-headed serpents in masks, is problematic, since museum records are often inadequate and writers in Northwest Coast art tend to assume patently contradictory stances. For instance, Gunther generalizes that masks were not

worn in strictly social situations,⁸⁶ although other ceremonial regalia, as discussed above, might serve dual profane and sacred undertakings. But Swanton and Boas both record that, among the Kwakiutl, masks were worn at feasts and potlatches.⁸⁷ This would corroborate a modern interpretation that quite "apart from their use in ritual, masks were worn to add impressiveness to secular occasions."⁸⁸ Given the integration of sacred and profane elements in Northwest Coast society (another example being the incorporation of "social" potlatching to present and validate an heir into the "religious" cycle of secret society dances), and given significant tribal variations in mask manufacture and use, differentiating specific masking intent continues to be a complicated process in such a survey. Generally, though, serpents on masks can be understood to function broadly to designate "a man's place in the circle nearest him" and to "assure him henceforth a separate and unquestioned role" within his society.⁸⁹

We might also characterize masks generically as accessories to drama, and the most dramatic of Northwest Coast masks is certainly the transformation mask, a form to which the Kwakiutl Sisiutl is remarkably suited, both morphologically and mythologically. The transformation mask is a formal concept unique to the Northwest Coast of North America;⁹⁰ as with the extravagant feast dishes, transformation masks are most exuberantly and prolifically developed by the Kwakiutl, so that they are popularly associated with that group. As for double-headed serpent transformation masks, these manifestations are exclusively Kwakiutl.

A transformation mask might simulate the myth-age event of an ancestor's arrival on earth from another realm and his subsequent metamorphosis into human form by the removal of his animal mask. It might

also dramatize a legendary transformation witnessed, undergone or initiated (as in tales of transforming heroes) by an ancestor. The Sisiutl, with its many mythic guises, is a self-transformer, ideally suited to such masks. Sisiutl flashes between human and supernatural realms, exchanging guises not imperceptibly, as the soul leaves the body, but with a precipitous burst which is distinctly Kwakiutl. Strings are pulled, exterior aspect falls away, and Sisiutl's central human face is revealed, its serpent heads radiating from it--as instantaneous as the serpent's strike or the lightning's flash. In the open transformation mask, second and third dimensions integrate completely: each of the serpent heads, streaking away from the centre, fits with peculiar ease into the discharged beak or snout of the exterior, pre-transformed animal (see Figures 22 and 23). It is a truism that Northwest Coast artists are masters of accommodating form to the design field available, but in this antithetical instance, the design field seems to accommodate itself to the Sisiutl. (This observations is elaborated below, in Chapter 3.)

Both the intensely felt drama of ritual occasions and the artistic vigour of Northwest Coast masks worked to persuade as early and socially distanced an observer as Captain James Cook of the potency, the imminent reality, of a transformed world.

...if travellers or voyagers, in an ignorant and credulous age, when many unnatural or marvellous things were supposed to exist, had seen a number of people decorated in this manner...they would readily have believed...that there existed a race of beings partaking of the nature of man and beast...⁹¹

Cook's journal entry gives a skeptically qualified sense of the universal kind of impact that a seemingly culturally circumscribed art may have.

The compelling aesthetic of a masterfully-wrought mask, the drama explicit

in the form itself, the archetypal evocations, whether obvious or subtle, may set up a vivid response in the alien observer, a response which may conflict with or complement its functional identity within the culture that produced it.

The Double-Headed Serpent and Winter Ceremonials

The Kwakiutl Sisiutl is obviously the most proliferated serpent image in Northwest Coast masks. It is also the most accessible, for a number of reasons: Boas' extensive record of Kwakiutl ceremonials and ceremonial regalia is unmatched in contemporary ethnographies of other Northwest Coast groups; the Kwakiutl are heavily represented in museum collections, since they were the most active, ceremonially, of the coast tribes at the time that collectors were most active, that is, in the latter part of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century. And the Kwakiutl continue to preserve "much of their ceremonial culture essentially intact; old masks are still retained and used, and new masks...are continually being produced."⁹² Further, Sisiutl is of great importance as an integrating, intermediary or centering supernatural entity to the Kwakiutl, so that in winter ceremonials, this double-headed serpent is far more popular as a dramatic agent or image than any of its variants among other coastal peoples.

While understanding, as given above, that masks could function on strictly secular occasions, we must recognize that they were designed most frequently among the Kwakiutl to portray or call up the supernatural patrons of secret (or dancing) societies during winter ceremonials. Variations on winter ceremonial masks were worn during the Klasila, the four-day "carnival interlude"⁹³ which marks the changeover of seasons, from

profane to sacred. During this time, Dlukwalakha masks of ancestral and contemporary crest figures are worn, and Sisiutl masks signify socially here, among such legendaries as Thunderbird and Q'olus. According to Hawthorn, these same Dlukwalakha masks might be used in secret society dances, "but in minor roles" and not as "a strongly integrated part of the winter dance complex."⁹⁴

Whatever the exceptions and variations, it would appear that the flourishing art of mask-making among the Kwakiutl, and the consequential proliferation of Sisiutl masks and related Sisiutl regalia, owed much of its motivation to the equally flourishing development of the winter ceremonials of the secret societies, in which a novice would simulate, through ritual drama, an ancestral encounter with the presiding supernatural of the society. The novice would undergo a period of isolation and deprivation, during which time he was possessed by his spirit patron; his return to the community as a frenzied and non-human creature, supernaturally charged, was climaxed by his ritual capture and subduing (exorcism) by already initiated members of his group. At this time he would display the dance, song and crest prerogatives which had been granted him by his supernatural encounter.

The complex of secret society rituals, dramatizations and feasts, known to the Southern Kwakiutl as Tsetseka (a name derived from the Heiltsuk word for "shaman"),⁹⁵ takes place during the winter months; the summer season, Bakoos, is the secular period devoted to travelling and food gathering in family units. During the supernatural season, secular alignments are superceded by ceremonial/dance society affiliations. There is a consistency, however, in the emphatically hierarchical structure of the community over the seasons, despite the apparent winter rearrangement of

allegiances. Since hereditary (that is, familial) privileges determine admission into a secret society,

...it is clear that the rituals emphasize the gradation of status. Far from realigning the social structure, the ritual organization almost precisely duplicates the ranking of the secular season. The chiefs of highest rank own both the highest [i.e., most esteemed] dances and the greatest number of ceremonial prerogatives.⁹⁶

The dances involve the costly sponsoring of feasts: gifts and payments must be made, masks and other expensive paraphernalia must be commissioned. Thus, the economic component of ceremonies serves to further reinforce secular privileges and exclusiveness. The quotidian distinctions between nobility and unranked commoners are replicated between initiated and non-initiated, the latter group being largely prohibited from attending the secret society rituals, or the potlatches which conclude these rituals.⁹⁷ Underlying the winter dance cycle was the universal "primitive" impulse to social continuity, met by the initiation of novices into the cultural scene, into communities both sacred and secular. Continuity works on a few levels: the indoctrination of youth into adult social order through the staged recreation of the legendary encounter which determined his legacy of power and privilege, and, on the other side of the footlights, the education of the spectators in both the history and cosmology of their culture.

These features are general; what is distinct to Northwest Coast secret society initiations, and especially blatant in Kwakiutl ceremonies, is the secularizing, at least in historic times, of the sacred nature of the ritual, which otherwise shares many thematic features with pan-American guardian spirit quests. The Kwakiutl winter ceremonial has become an appurtenance to the social system, an agency to promote and display wealth

and privilege.

The dances of this ritual complex...the 'Winter Ceremonial,' are in a sense considered sacred, but the main motivation for them in historic times has been a social one, the public display of valued family privileges. Kwakiutl winter dances, in contrast to the religious dances of many other American Indian groups, are staged dramatic performances.⁹⁸

However, although the tendency on the Northwest Coast was to "capitalize upon religious concepts in the furtherance of personal and family prestige,"⁹⁹ and although contrivance and dramatic strategem were and are employed to convince the spectators of a supernatural endorsement, it is possible that the conviction and awe of the audience, no matter how manipulated and deceived, and the ecstatic frenzy of the novice, no matter how contrived and choreographed, constitute a very genuine religious experience. The supernaturals presiding over the winter rituals, however their attendants might choose to embellish their presence and manifest their power through legerdemain theatrics, must be drawn to patronize a house so filled with creative energy and psychic expectation.

The pattern of secret society ceremonials up and down the coast significantly parallels the appearance of the serpent, double- or single-headed, as ceremonial adjunct. From readings of both Garfield and Drucker, this generalization might be made: the Kwakiutl and Nuu-chah-nulth focused transmission of hereditary rights and powers in their secret society performances, to which potlatches were celebratory adjuncts,¹⁰⁰ while the northern groups, the Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian, "emphasized transmission of lineage and house group prerogatives in potlatches," to which secret society dances were a later, dramatic augmentation.¹⁰¹ In the most southerly region of the coast, initiation rituals preserved a more shamanic and solitary route to spirit possession and revelation. Thus the winter

dances of the Salish, especially of the southern Salish, were social expressions of the intensely personal guardian spirit quest, imaging the establishment of the sacred cooperation between supernatural benefactor and individual. Salish spirit quest dances are largely devoid of serpent representations, the principal masked dance of the Salish being the inherited one of the Swaixwe healers. (The Swaixwe mask is a round, peg-eyed face surmounted by two zoomorphic heads in the place of ears.)¹⁰² The only occurrence of lavish social display in winter ceremonials among the Salish is found among the Comox, a group considerably influenced by their Kwakiutl neighbours. An ephemeral expression of the ceremonial serpent occurred during the Comox's tohwot dance, in which a man impersonated the double-headed serpent (aixos). The serpent's familiar morphology was developed through the dancer's painted face and outstretched arms, which simulated serpents.

As he spread his arms outward, his painted face became visible and on the insides of the arms were revealed numerous shell spangles which glittered as he moved his shoulders and wrists in a writhing, undulatory motion...¹⁰³

Because of the amaterial nature of the tohwot dancer's disguise, there is no representation of this manifestation of the double-headed serpent in any of the museum collections surveyed.

Our researches also indicate that the highly secular winter ceremonials of the Haida, Tsimshian and Tlingit have not been pervaded by the presence of either the double-headed serpent or its northern variant forms, although other aspects of secret society tradition have made the northerly migration from an apparent Kwakiutl seat of origin. Among the northern groups, initiates into dance societies sought to imitate rather than re-create the ancestral-supernatural connection. The northern experience

was plainly acknowledged as a state apart from the sacred by those involved. Thus, the spirits "called forth among the secret societies by means of initiation rites...were sometimes even referred to as 'false powers.'"¹⁰⁴

The reported appearance of the Sisiutl in Northern Kwakiutl and Bella Coola winter ceremonials remains unsubstantiated by either the museum collections or illustrations surveyed. The Northern Kwakiutl possessed two or three dance complex divisions (whereas the Southern Kwakiutl elaborated a single ceremonial system), the members of each constituting "an exclusive society"¹⁰⁵ and the two most significant societies being the "shamans" society and the dluwulaxa. The ritual pattern and principal function of these Northern Kwakiutl societies are essentially the same as those of the Tsetseka of the Southern Kwakiutl; as Drucker puts it, "clearly all the Kwakiutl societies were cut of the same cloth."¹⁰⁶ Somehow, though, the double-headed serpent is not the conspicuous character in Northern Kwakiutl ritual that it is in Southern. Among the Southern Kwakiutl, the double-headed serpent dancer is, according to oral tradition, an ancient, and it appears that among this group the serpent in ritual predates the adoption of the more spectacular Hamatsa dance complex, and perhaps predates the entire Tsetseka complex into which it would have been incorporated.¹⁰⁷

Both Boas and Drucker have written that the dancing complexes of the various Northwest Coast tribes "are in the main derived from the same source,"¹⁰⁸ that source being Northern Kwakiutl culture. Proof of this assertion exists in the many ritual elements held in common, in linguistic evidence (dance cycle names throughout the coast clearly derive from the Northern Kwakiutl; as we noted above, the Southern Kwakiutl Tsetseka is a Heiltsuk word), in the multiformity and elaborateness of

the various Northern Kwakiutl dancing societies, and in the oral traditions of the Northwest Coast peoples.

Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian informants are unanimous in attributing such of the dances as their people have to relatively recent borrowings from their Kwakiutl neighbours.¹⁰⁹

The relative importance of the rituals dissipates north and south of the Kwakiutl centre from which they apparently diffuse, and gives way to the stronger predecessor of local tradition. The date of diffusion of these rituals is fixed by Boas as sometime "during the eighteenth century."¹¹⁰ Even the intensely developed Hamatsa or Cannibal dance, now popularly conceived of as an exemplary Southern Kwakiutl ritual, was acquired by murder from the Northern Kwakiutl as recently as 1835, when a group of Nimpkish from Matilpe ambushed a travelling company of Heiltsuk. The Heiltsuk had in their possession at the time Hamatsa whistles, cedar bark rings and other ceremonial accessories, to which the Nimpkish then laid claim. The Hamatsa ritual was further transmitted and adapted up and down the coast by marriage, gift, and other means less drastic than murder.

It is by establishing a matrix of ethnohistory and ritual contexts that we hope to substantiate further material and iconographic analysis of the double headed serpent, because it is at the place where a particular motif and a particular ritual collide that there is the most brilliant burst of double-headed serpent imagery.

Sisiutl and the Hamatsa Complex

The most important and prestigious dance complex of the Southern Kwakiutl winter ceremonial is that of the Hamatsa, said to have originated among the Haisla at Kitlope¹¹¹ and to have been acquired later, as descri-

bed above. The Hamatsa drama is patronized by the most powerful of supernaturals, Bakbakwalanooksiwae, the man-eating spirit at the North End of the World, and compasses

...the novice's kidnapping and transformation by the cannibal spirit, his return to his village as a wild man-eater, his capture and taming by means of dances and songs, and his ritual purification.¹¹²

The large and elaborate masks connected with the Hamatsa dances are representations not of Bakbakwalanooksiwae, but of his associates, the flesh-eating, skull-cracking bird-monsters of the Upper World. And although Sisiutl does not figure as a masked personage, or even as an accoutrement, in the Hamatsa drama, both Locher and Goldman allege that the serpent is the central supernatural image of the cannibal ritual and thus, of the entire Kwakiutl winter ceremonial.¹¹³ This claim is somewhat difficult to countenance, even though, in its mythological context, Sisiutl does connect directly or indirectly with a number of supernaturals of the Upper and Lower realms. We have encountered no firm evidence, either in myth or material culture, which would pair or ally Sisiutl with the specific and pivotal man-eater, Bakbakwalanooksiwae. The curious thing here is that both Locher and Goldman appear to have overlooked the rituals in which Sisiutl is indisputably the supernatural patron's principal representative and the dancer's paramount accessory, the rituals that claim a greater antiquity among the Southern Kwakiutl than those of the usurping Hamatas, that is, the Winalagilis dance cycle.

Sisiutl and the Winalagilis Complex

Kwakiutl dancing societies have derived significant inspiration from other facets of Northwest Coast culture, especially from shamanism and warfare. The former has contributed the archaic pattern of the

ecstatic shamanic phenomenon (initiation through supernatural possession, understanding through spiritual death and rebirth), and its supplementary features of power or disease "throwing," magical healing, sleight-of-hand theatrics to persuade the audience of a supernatural presence, and traditional ceremonial accessories: "even the dyed cedar bark used as society insignia is really part of a shaman's regalia."¹¹⁴ As to the latter, both Boas and Drucker recognize that the origin of secret societies is bound closely to warfare, from which have been borrowed numerous references and symbols. The most striking is the image of the double-headed serpent, which is the warrior's legendary assistant and, even in its lightning-bolt aspect, is the "traditional" symbol of war.¹¹⁵ Sisiutl is the special associate and incarnate representative of Winalagilis, who is the peripatetic (his name means "making war all over the earth") but eternally remote (he never leaves his canoe) warrior spirit from the North End of the World. He is second only to Bakbakwalanooksiwae in the hierarchy of dancing society patrons; that is, the ritual of Winalagilis was the second-ranking dancing order in the Southern Kwakiutl winter dance complex. It appears that before it was displaced by the younger Hamatsa ritual, the Winalagilis drama was the most venerated by Southern Kwakiutl. Despite the Man Eater's popularity, Winalagilis is recorded as being "the deity to whom the opening of the sacred winter season is ascribed"¹¹⁶ and "the bringer of the winter ceremonial."¹¹⁷

The dancers of the Winalagilis order are characterized as "brutal, violent, impervious to pain."¹¹⁸ Fierce, aggressive and unkempt, these dancers no doubt "represented the warriors of an earlier day."¹¹⁹ Just as, in the legendary realm, warriors might gain extraordinary powers from Sisiut's blood or skin, in the more practical present, those Kwakiutl

who aspired to become warriors rubbed themselves with snake's blood and wore snakeskin neckbands.¹²⁰ If a man wanted to insure that his newborn son would acquire warrior attributes, he concocted a charm to be worn on a string around the infant's neck; this charm included animal tokens and exuviae, as well as the tongue of a snake. The father's ritual chant reiterates the image of Sisiutl as death-bringer and supernatural weapon:

Now, my son, you are going to keep this supernatural power...

The reason why I took out your tongues, snake, toad and lizard, is that I want my son to be a warrior, for at the points of your tongues you keep a death-bringer. Now you will give this to my son...¹²¹

The dancers of the Winalagilis society have their power from the double-headed serpent; among the principal performers of the complex are Mamaka, Tokwit, Si'llis, and Hawin'alal. As with Bakbakwalanooksiwae in the Cannibal ritual, Winalagilis is never himself materially represented. Instead, his associate and intermediary, Sisiutl, manifests his presence. Sisiutl serves as ambassador between the realms, as evoked in this song by the Si'llis dancer:

My protector the Sisiutl goes right up to the greatest chiefs...

He said to me: 'You will take counsel with Winalagilis'

He said to me: 'You will be friend to Winalagilis...'¹²²

According to Hawthorn, the warrior dancers wear little more costume than cedar bark skirts, hemlock neck or head rings and black body and facial paint; they are usually unmasked, but often wear Sisiutl headdresses.¹²³ These serpent headdresses recur in museum collections as regularly as the Sisiutl theme must have recurred through the Winalagilis series of dances. One such warrior headdress, from Fort Rupert and now in the UBC MA collection, was carved by Dick Price (1880-1936). (See Figure 24.) Its morphology is exemplary: the horned central face has a frontal ori-

entation over the forehead, and the two-dimensional, radiating serpents, their tongues and horns protruding, fold flatly back along the side of dancer's head. The red cedar bark fringe on this headdress is a primary indication that the artifact was intended for use in a Tsetseka ceremony; dyed red cedar bark betokens a sacred dance context, while bleached white cedar bark or feathers indicate a Bakoos or profane context.

According to the catalogue notes, anklets, bracelets and belt, all in the form of Sisiutl, were worn as complements to the above headdress. Double-headed serpent belts were popular apparel of warrior dancers, and recall legends in which Sisiutl-skin belts girdled those fortunate enough to have been granted the serpent's powers of invulnerability. This kind of belt (for example, that seen in Figure 25) is usually carved in three or more wood segments and hinged together with leather thongs or, latterly, cotton strips; it wraps around the body like a scraped hide. Most Sisiutl belts, if assigned a context by writers or museum workers, are generalized as sacred-ceremonial but, as discussed above, such paraphernalia is not necessarily exclusively sacred. Thus, Boas recorded that

...the clan Haa'nalino have the tradition that their ancestor used the double-headed serpent for his belt... In their potlatches the chief of the gens appears, therefore, dancing with a belt of this description...¹²⁴

A highly abstracted serpent symbol, that is, a double-headed serpent by implicit rather than explicit imagery, is the specially knotted cedar bark neck ring of the Na'naqauail, another of the Winalagilis dancers who receives his power from the Sisiutl. (Unfortunately, because of the obscurity of its imagery and scarcity of documentation, we were unable to fully enumerate such examples in our survey.) A seemingly related but less esoteric Sisiutl artifact--a piece of rope wrapped with

cedar bark strips and bearing carved wooden serpent heads at each end (see Figure 26)--is given in the UBC catalogue notes as a "belt" used in the "bear dance" (perhaps referring to Nanes Bakbakwalanooksiwae, the supernatural, man-eating grizzly bear). Given its dimensions, it is more obviously a neck ring (it is twenty-two inches in length, while characteristic Sisiutl belts vary in length from three to four feet) of the sort worn by Hawin'alal, the most aggressively self-destructive of the Winalagilis dancers. His diagnostic Sisiutl neck ring was often jointed and strung so that it could be pulled straight into a "sword or lance"¹²⁵ with which he wounded himself; he also carried a Sisiutl knife to similar purpose.¹²⁶

Other of the warrior dancers carried double-headed serpent ceremonial weapons, "death bringers" which have relinquished their mechanical office as functional weapons in order to embody the greater power of the supernatural. As Sisiutl incarnations they are "images of much greater potential destructiveness"¹²⁷ than any unfigured instrument of battle. A Kwakiutl club from Kingcome Inlet (see Figure 27) bears an image of Sisiutl as single-headed entity and appears to be a Winalagilis society accessory. The single-headed variant here is used selectively on Kwakiutl clubs, staffs, and knives, and is possibly an expedient formal solution demanded by a handle-shaped design ground, a ground which must allow for grasping and manipulating and a frequently vertical orientation. Because the non-addorsed, single-serpent image of Sisiutl is undifferentiated in ceremonial context from the more familiar double-headed manifestation, it appears to be a merely formal variation rather than a reference to a separate supernatural entity with separate symbolic intent. That is, the single-headed serpent on Kwakiutl ceremonial paraphernalia operates as an

acceptable shorthand image of the double-headed serpent in myth.

A ceremonial bow from Alert Bay (see Figure 28) accommodates the complete Sisiutl morphology, but in a distorted and thus somewhat esoteric fashion: the two eyes of the central humanoid face are widely separated by the grip of the bow; the horns of the creature, both central and terminal, are incorporated graphically into the body of the weapon, although the serpent's tongues protrude in diagnostic fashion. Boas describes a similar bow (earlier alluded to in Figure 16) as

...a long carved and painted stick to which a string running through a number of rings and connecting with the horns and tongues of the snake is attached. When the string is pulled, the horns are erected and the tongues pulled out. When the string is slackened, the horns drop down and the tongues slide back again...¹²⁸

This artifact is evidence of a clever and characteristically Kwakiutl solution to the problem of using the weapon in a ceremonial context while displaying all of Sisiutl's diagnostic features--and in a dramatic way.

Sisiutl staffs (such as those carried by the Mamaka dancers) assigned warrior-ritual connotations by native informants, collectors and later museum cataloguers, may appear to differ little in form from Sisiutl staffs said to be chiefs' staffs or speakers' staffs (oratorical accessories or symbols of rank at potlatches). But this survey would indicate that most Winalagilis ritual staffs, spears and batons bear only the isolated image of Sisiutl, while potlatch-context staffs, like totem poles, tend to compass a number of family crest figures.

The Mamaka dancer (or "thrower") was a ritualist whose shamanic performance included the casting of his "disease" into the audience. This dancer would run about the ceremonial house,

...looking for his supernatural power to come to him...
All of a sudden he claps his hands together and holds

the palms flat one to the other... Now he is holding his supernatural power, 'the worm of the mamaqa,' between his palms... Gradually he takes his palms apart, and between them is seen the 'mamaqa's worm.' This is either a small carved sisiul, or snake, or it is a stick which is covered with bark...¹²⁹

Here, the designation of Sisiutl as "worm" makes another thematic connection with the woodworm of the northern coast.

Winalagilis ritualists made convincing, legerdemain use of Sisiutl effigies, including jointed puppets which were manipulated by strings to create the effect of supernatural soarings about the house. Through sleight-of-hand, another serpent image comprised of a series of either wooden or kelp tubes (the latter props being too ephemeral in nature for representation in museum collections) could be collapsed, so that the Mamaka might appear to swallow the serpent, then convulse and vomit blood (a small bag of blood was hidden in the dancer's mouth, to be burst at the appropriate moment), thus expelling his "disease." The Sillis ("snake in belly") dancer was supposed to bring the serpent up from his stomach; he effected this by blowing up and out a piece of kelp to simulate the serpent's emerging. The Kwakiutl were masters of theatrical allusion and illusion: among the plethora of ceremonial accoutrements were movable, hinged and strung figures, ranging in size from huge to miniature. Sisiutl effigies could be made to flick tongues, wave horns, and undulate with thrilling immediacy. A beautiful, many-jointed Sisiutl puppet is illustrated in Barbeau (see Figure 29) and described as an independent marionette.¹³⁰ It is, however, displayed at the BCPM, fitted to and surmounting a sun face and evoking the mythological reference of the sun's Sisiutl mask¹³¹ (see Figure 30). Here, though, the sun has taken Sisiutl as its headdress and is itself the mask, creating a formal arrangement extremely

reminiscent of the double-woodworm draped over the head of the Tlingit princess (as in Figure 12, cited earlier). Catalogue information on this striking piece, collected at Tlaoitsis by C.F. Newcombe, states that the legendary ancestor, whose effigy surmounts the serpent, possessed the Sun as crest and added the Sisiutl; Barbeau writes that this masks represents the merging of a Sun crest with a Sisiutl crest, through marriage.¹³²

The high sense of theatre among the Southern Kwakiutl was coupled with the necessity for marking the division between sacred and profane space in the mawihl, a painted curtain which hung or stood at the rear of the dance house. Behind the curtain was the "dressing room" in which dancers changed costumes, donned masks, and retreated when it was necessary for them to effect a disappearance.¹³³ The novice also emerged from and withdrew into the space behind the curtain, the sacred space from which the uninitiated were strictly excluded on pain of severe punishment. Traditionally, the mawihl was constructed of painted cedar planks which were burned ritually at the end of the ceremonies; these were seldom collected and thus are seldom seen in museums. By the turn of this century, however, the wooden partitions had been replaced by more wieldly and less costly curtains of canvas or muslin, painted with the traditional designs of the spirit patrons of the dance houses. These curtains are available for study in museums because they were folded up and saved for use in later seasons and ceremonies.

Sisiutl representations on painted curtains make familiar allusions and evocations: Sisiutl as manifest and mediating spirit between the realms of the natural and the supernatural, and Sisiutl as guardian of a spirit place, that is, on the housefronts of supernatural beings. One such Sisiutl mawihl, of complicated aspect, was collected at Fort Rupert

or Kingcome Inlet (see Figure 31) and depicts the double-headed serpent centrally surmounted by a copper, from which radiates downward a double-salmon rainbow, symmetrically flanked by ravens. Here, Sisiutl seems to take the distinct shape of the magical canoe, the wealth container and divine conveyor of beings between realms, which connotations accord with the sense of the winter ceremonials. Another curtain, attributed to Arthur Shaughnessy (1884-1945), makes a spherical disposition of Sisiutl, a formal arrangement already encountered in house frontal paintings and seen, too, on Kwakiutl skin drums. But while the circular ground of a drum might dictate a circular resolution in disposing the double-headed serpent, the circular Sisiutl on the large, rectangular mawihl (see Figure 32) appears to be the product of something other than an expedient solution to a formal problem. Shaughnessy's serpent seems to answer a psychic demand toward the mandala or primordial circle (as developed below in Chapter 4), and this symbol is well served by the generous and impressive dimensions of the large ceremonial curtain.

The duntsik, a kind of fretted wooden screen, is a formally difficult, winter ceremonial manifestation of the Sisiutl. It was used in the performance of the Tokwit, a female war dancer who was the "most dramatic"¹³⁴ participant in the Winalagilis series. Her thrilling performance included acts of pseudo-violence--having herself burned to death, decapitated, stabbed through with a sword--before her eventual resurrection. During her ritual, the Tokwit conjured up the spirit of Sisiutl from underground; in fact, the duntsik screens were concealed in a pit along with the men who operated them. She then struck the serpent with her sword, "causing the two halves to split apart and seemingly disappear."¹³⁵ The duntsik or "power board" is an oddly abstract Sisiutl, unlike any other Kwakiutl

representations of the mythical serpent, and comprised of a series of flat, shallowly carved and perforated boards, painted and shimmering with mica flakes (see Figure 33). These fretwork screens are

...connected on their narrow sides by plugs which pass through rings of spruce root or through tubes cut out of cedar. The joints are somewhat loose, so that the whole can be given an undulating motion forward and backward.¹³⁶

Despite the serpentine undulations of the duntsik, despite the supernatural shimmer of the mica flakes in the fluttering light of the fire, it is difficult to understand these power boards' having convinced an audience of the presence of Sisiutl. They are abstract to the point of unintelligibility; even Boas could not "interpret the carving in detail."¹³⁷ Of all the duntsiks surveyed, only one bears a broadly diagnostic, although scarcely stylistic, resemblance to the Sisiutl familiar to us in most Kwakiutl art (see Figure 34). The central, human face (and it is "human" only by arbitrary implication) is surmounted by the two serpent faces, which are seen frontally rather than in profile. Characteristically enough, each of the serpents is horned, but the horns of the central face are fixed to the side of each serpent head, since the H-configuration precludes the accustomed positioning of the central horns. Most of the remaining duntsik forms surveyed are singular and vertical, with highly abstracted faces; only the horns remain distinctly and legibly Sisiutlish. This has posed problems in identifying the topmost heads of these vertical boards; most writers have given them as Sisiutl's human face, but this appears to be a confused reading. The example from the Milwaukee Museum (again refer to Figure 34) and the descriptions of the duntsik's having been split in two by a blow from the Tokwit's sword suggest that the individual boards and fragments are the upright serpent extremities of what originally would have been an H-shaped Sisiutl, the whole loosely

joined by strings or cords during the Tokwit ritual. Evidently as many as six men were needed to operate the power boards;¹³⁸ this is comprehensible if the boards were raised as a group, in an H-configuration.

A collection of nine duntsik boards and fragments, now at the UBC MA, was found in a rock cavern on Loughborough Inlet, an interesting area in that it was interstitial between Salish and Kwakiutl territories.¹³⁹ Since "the Salish there were Kwakiutl in culture,"¹⁴⁰ we can safely assign the boards a Kwakiutl context and intent, especially since nothing else corresponding to the duntsik boards has been encountered among Salish artifacts.

The mica on the Sisiutl power boards may symbolize magical scales which, in myth, may take the form of quartz crystals, once shed by Sisiutl. Such crystals could bestow upon the shaman the gift of flight, or could serve the hunter as a deadly accurate weapon. Or, more literally, the mica might convince the audience of the legendary iridescence of the serpent, since Sisiutl's scales were said to "shine like mica."¹⁴¹ Whatever the degree of duntsik abstraction, there would have been high dramatic impact in its shivering, shimmering emergence from the dark underworld.

Duntsik boards curiously overlap with gisukstola or marriage boards when they are used

...during the special ceremony by which the inherited privileges of the wife's ancestors were transmitted to her husband by gift from her father...not for his own use but to be transmitted through him to his children...¹⁴²

Just such a secular use of the duntsik boards is demonstrated in Curtis' film In the Land of the War Canoes and is also recorded in UBC MA museum notes with regard to a power board made by Frank Walker and displayed as a gisukstola by Gloria Cranmer Webster in 1942.¹⁴³

Serpents in Nuu-chah-nulth Ceremonials

As has been observed above, Kwakiutl winter ceremonial patrons lose their pre-eminence on the outward route of diffusion; although they may be adapted to local roles, their borrowing and transmutation make them necessarily peripheral. In Nuu-chah-nulth territory "it is the Wolf who holds the scene,"¹⁴⁴ who presides at the principal ceremonies of the ritual season and is chief initiator of novices, and whose image is most frequently displayed on masks, headdresses, and ceremonial accessories. Other mythological characters may assist at the rituals and, as well, during the course of the dance cycles, family crests may be employed and displayed. For instance, on the fifth day of the Nuu-chah-nulth Klukwana (Wolf Ritual) dances are performed by various family members who wear ooshinek masks representing any of a number of crest animals: wolf, raven, eagle, Thunderbird, and, of course, Haietlik, the Lightning Serpent. However, few such Nuu-chah-nulth serpent masks appear in museum collections, and these few often bear mistaken identifications. They are diagnostically and formally very similar to the prolifically manufactured, highly abstracted, box-type wolf masks of the Nuu-chah-nulth, but are distinctive in their sharply pointed, rather than squared-off, snouts (see Figures 35 and 36). The sharp snout signifies the legendary razor cut of the lightning serpent as it slashes through the sky and into the sea.

The only writer in our bibliography who analyzes the features which distinguish the serpent mask from the much more familiar wolf mask in Nuu-chah-nulth art is Ernst; she is unspecific in this, however. That a "longer eye and certain traditional symbolic markings"¹⁴⁵ differentiate serpent from wolf is tantalizing, and begs the questions "How long an eye?" and "What are these markings?" A consequential confusion results in cata-

loguing what may well be Haietlik masks (if the "razor" snout is consistently diagnostic) so that, in the absence of an informant, they are described as wolves or, more vaguely, as "zoomorphs." The flat-sided Haietlik masks were

...worn on the forehead, with a long cedar-bark fringe at the back, together with the two white eagle feathers of the Klukwana headdress. The dancer carries with him a sharp stick, supposed to be the tongue of the creature, and, holding both hands high on the chest, close to his mouth, goes about crouching and playing, and poking out this sharp stick to the Thunderbird...¹⁴⁶

The morphological fraternity of wolf and serpent in Nuuchahnulth art (consider that Haietlik in the graphic art of the Nuuchahnulth appears to be a formal hybrid of wolf's head on serpent's body) may signify an original and integral rather than recent and incidental sameness. The serpent-war metaphor so vivid in Kwakiutl ceremonial art may be equally appropriate to the Nuuchahnulth wolf dance. The Klukwana, it appears, has roots in an ancient warrior order, although in recent times it has been informed by the socio-material impulses of wealth display and prestige enhancement. The warrior qualities of courage, strength, and endurance which the wolf suggests to his initiates are enhanced, no doubt, by the mythological weapon of celestial warfare, the lightning bolt, Haietlik. The serpent-as-adjunct in what is, at base, a warrior-order ceremony among the Nuuchahnulth, promotes obvious comparisons with Sisiutl's role in the Winalagilis dances of the Kwakiutl. And although double-headed serpents are manifest in surviving ceremonial artifacts from the Nuuchahnulth much less frequently than are single-headed serpents, written evidence of their manufacture and use is more abundant. The literature suggests that double- and single-headed Haietliks were iconographically interchangeable. As with the Kwakiutl examples, they function synonymously.

Shamans in a Quileute Wolf dance carried double-headed serpent wands;¹⁴⁷ a Thunderbird dancer in a Makah wolf ritual wore a double-headed serpent belt¹⁴⁸ (the Lightning Serpent is also the Belt of the Thunderbird); a complex, two-headed mask from Vancouver Island is identified as the "belt of the Thunderbird;"¹⁴⁹ Quileute wolf masks are often decorated with small double-headed serpent images.¹⁵⁰ All these images of the Nuuchahnulth Haietlik reverberate with Sisiutl characteristics and associations. The legendary quartz crystal, bestowed by Sisiutl, is, among the Nuuchahnulth, the "supernatural treasure of the wolves,"¹⁵¹ their most potent weapon. Moreover (as elaborated in Chapter 3), the double-headed serpent has particular whaling ceremony connections:

Early-day notes mention a huge double-headed snake symbolizing the lightning, used by the Makahs in their winter dances, though here associated with Thunderbird...¹⁵²

As marked by the double-headed serpent, diffusion of myth and symbol on the Northwest Coast seems to have worked backward and forward and backward again, over time and through space. For instance, whatever the material impact of the Kwakiutl Sisiutl upon the Nuuchahnulth Haietlik in art and ritual over the last two centuries, one should bear in mind that Nuuchahnulth and Kwakiutl winter ceremonials

...appear, from their general order form and many specific resemblances, to have had a common origin, but have diverged considerably from that ancient pattern.¹⁵³

It appears to us that in the double-headed serpent image, there has been a split of the original, a subsequent diffusion and acquisition of alien characteristics, and a reconvergence.

As has been described in the context of Nuuchahnulth whaling harpoons, the Thunderbird-Haietlik-Whale association is an important one. This triumvirate appears as frequently on the ceremonial curtains of the

Nuu-chah-nulth as it does on more profane, heraldic art; such curtains perform the same function as the Kwakiutl mawihl, facilitating the costuming of dancers and describing a sacred space. (As with the whale imagery on Nuu-chah-nulth house-frontal painting, the whale imagery on Nuu-chah-nulth ceremonial curtains corresponds to the economic and cultural importance of whaling among coastal peoples. The Nuu-chah-nulth were the only group on the Northwest Coast to actively hunt whales.)

Shamanism and the Double-Headed Serpent

Possibly the original--certainly an ancient--context for the double-headed serpent is that of shamanism and shamanic art. Shamanism has been identified as the source of the creeds and conceptions from which the entire religious (and by extension, social) complex of Northwest Coast life evolved.¹⁵⁴ During the historic period, out of which were produced the majority of artifacts surveyed here, shamanism represented only one aspect of a complex religious life, and the shaman himself was not the sole practitioner of magico-religious arts. He was distinguished, however, from the antisocial and fugitive witch/sorcerer by his positive and professional social function, and from the secret society initiate or spirit-questing layman by the profundity of his supernatural encounters and by his "ecstatic capacity."¹⁵⁵ The powerful spirits intersected by the shaman, whether in a miraculous dream, a sickbed vision, or the privation delirium of an isolated spirit quest, bestowed upon him or her the magical ken of curing and divining, of casting disease into his enemies or into the enemies of his chief or patron, and of detecting sorcery. The shaman was a figure both charismatic and fearsome, a professional to be summoned in times of physical or psychical crisis (i.e., in

situations clearly beyond the control of the layman), a possibly eccentric and certainly psychically charged personality to be otherwise avoided. This was especially true in the north, among the Tlingit for example, where the shaman was a dangerous, powerful individual who lived apart from the community and, out of the same dread association of his powers, was buried apart too.

On the Northwest Coast, the shamanic vocation was inaugurated either by a deliberately contracted spirit quest, involving fasting and other ritual privations and purifications, and isolation from the contamination of humanity and the profane world; or by an apparently spontaneous spirit visitation marked by severe illness, fainting spells, seizures, or "harrassing"¹⁵⁶ dreams and visions. In either case, the novice shaman would have been in a state of crisis, both physical and spiritual, a state identical to or symbolic of death, and would thus have been projected into the realm of the supernatural. Among the Kwakiutl, mysterious recovery from an apparently mortal illness signalled the calling to shamanism--this is the "sickness vocation."¹⁵⁷

Like the sick man, the religious man is projected onto a vital plane that shows him the fundamental data of human experience, that is, solitude, danger, hostility of the surrounding world. But the primitive magician, the medicine man, or the shaman, is not only a sick man; he is, above all a sick man who has been cured, who has succeeded in curing himself.¹⁵⁸

Eliade cites one such example of sickness vocation among the Kwakiutl from Boas' record of the man Lebid, who lies ill for a lengthy period of time and is left as dead in a blizzard; he is surrounded by howling wolves throughout the long midwinter night, and rises in the morning, revived and singing a sacred song.¹⁵⁹ His miraculous resurrection signifies his metaphysical transformation from ordinary mortal into shaman, whose powers

and presence extend into the spirit world.

Essentially the same pattern of shamanic initiation is worked through the privation and isolation of the shaman's spirit quest. Garfield records that the questing Tsimshian novice might pass "into a coma in which the heart beat and breathing were so imperceptible that observers believed him dead."¹⁶⁰ Again, as Eliade summarizes, "All ecstatic experiences that determine the future shaman's vocation involve the traditional schema of an initiation ceremony: suffering, death, resurrection."¹⁶¹ "Death" is the ecstatic, the out-of-body experience by which the shaman transcends "the profane human condition;"¹⁶² resurrection is his delivery back into the human sphere, where he can translate the knowledge of that transcendence into curing, prescience, and other magico-religious practices.

The serpent as symbol is as ancient and universal a shamanic image as the related shamanic phenomena of

...the ecstatic trance, divine election, animal transformation, bird-like flight of the soul, knowledge of the worlds of the spirits and the dead, mastery of fire, rebirth from the bones, the magic arts of curing, and the guardianship of the psychic and physical equilibrium of the community.¹⁶³

The serpent which wonderfully renews itself by sloughing its dead skin is a visual metaphor of resurrection of the body, of the physical regeneration effected by the shaman out of his initiatory illness. It is, as the shaman is, "master of the mystery of rebirth."¹⁶⁴ The double-headed serpent is a Northwest Coast elaboration of this archaic shamanic image.

The shaman's novitiate was marked not only by his experience of death, but also by his obtaining a tutelary spirit or spirits (also described as "power"). Whether in the form of a natural or supernatural animal or being, the spirit instructed and qualified the shaman to perform magico-religious acts; it rendered him "capable of 'visions' and augmented

his reserves of the sacred."¹⁶⁵ The shaman's spirit encounter differed from the layman's in degree rather than kind; shamans' spirits were more powerful, more fearsome, than those met by the ordinary mortal, and they bestowed a greater magico-religious capacity. The double-headed serpent, where familiar in myth, was also a familiar tutelary spirit to the shaman; in some areas of the coast, it gave power and vision exclusively to the shaman. Other guardian spirits especially inducive to the shamanic vocation include wolf, Thunderbird, killer whale, frog, mink, and land otter. Although the shamanic hierarchy of spirits differs even within the homogeneous culture area of the Northwest Coast, the underlying symbolism throughout the region is consonant with the more universal assumptions of shamanism. For instance, in the north, where the double-headed serpent is not overtly manifest in either myth or art, the killer whale apparently assumed its intent as shamanic initiator and as a magical power of the sea. As developed below, the killer whale is also featured on the shaman's special curing device, the "soul catcher."

Boas, Curtis, and Barnett record tales of the double-headed serpent's directing its power to and through shamans: a Salishan shaman is instructed in a dream to cut a double-headed serpent in half, which act gives him the power of revivification;¹⁶⁶ another encounter bestows the serpent's petrifying, Gorgon-like glance upon a shaman who also has the gift of restoring life to anyone he so afflicts;¹⁶⁷ a Koskimo shaman acquires supernatural control by striking a Sisiutl and reducing it to a pile of quartz crystals, one of which he reserves for himself as his magical accessory.¹⁶⁸ That power may be acquired through killing the Sisiutl (or other supernatural entity) reveals the "religious logic of the hunter," which is

...brutally concise: life demands death. From this binary opposition rooted in the nature of organic life and understood by all mankind, the Kwakiutl have drawn a variety of logical extensions.¹⁶⁹

A central premise of shamanism is that "man and animal are close kin;¹⁷⁰ by logical extension, and because of their place, too, in mythic first times, animal syntheses (monsters) share the same existential bond of kinship through transformation. The death of a supernatural creature signifies, to the hunter's mentality, the birth/rebirth of a shaman, since he thus assumes that entity's powers of death-dealing and death-defying. (Here we should consider that since some spirits are vocation-specific, the predisposition to meet a double-headed serpent or some other equally portentous supernatural may be the simple function of the hereditary line of the shamanic vocation, such as that passed down from one's mother's brother.)

Among the guardian spirits of the Northwest Coast, land otters create a particular, formal complication with serpents in shamanistic art, either out of visual punning, metaphysical synonymity, or intentional ambiguity. On the Northwest Coast, the land otter was considered a dangerous and potent creature to whom a number of supernatural traits were attributed. It was characterized as a treacherous spirit, stealing people away and reducing them to "land-otter men" (walking dead or zombies). The encountering of a land otter and the taking of its tongue as amulet are often special features of the shaman's quest. Carved representations of shamans in wood and argillite often depict a seemingly serpentine creature draped over the shaman's head, hat, or shoulder (see Figures 37 and 38). Although some museum cataloguers have been seduced by the "snake-like" or "reptilian" appearance of this flaccid little being, others register it as the

pelt of an otter (or, at times, a mink), which would accord with some ethnographic descriptions of shamans' costumes and headgear. In any case, there is rarely a substantial enough account accompanying the artifact into the museum and identification becomes, again, a matter of conjecture. (Texts to illustrations in books usually settle for a vague "animal helper.")

Whatever the resolution of this iconographic problem may be, there exists more than a formal resemblance between serpent and otter in Northwest Coast art. Prehistoric stone carvings from Vancouver Island, identified by Duff as shamanic in theme,¹⁷¹ depict snakes draped down the heads and backs of seated human figures. The species of these animal helpers is not a matter of disputation, since identity here is established by the serpentine details of scales and rattles (see Figure 39). Steatite shaman figures of this kind appear to be strongly prototypal to the argillite shamans of the historic period. Equally suggestive is a shaman's legend, recorded by Boas among the Kwakiutl but with possible wider implications along the coast:

A young man of the Gwawaenox...was hurt by a falling log. He dreamed that he was ordered to bathe. He obeyed. Then he found many land otters in his traps. Finally, he found an animal with a human head. He killed it and fainted...When he awoke from his swoon, he saw that the animal was a salmon...¹⁷²

The two-headed otter, the human-faced creature, the transformation to salmon, and the magical pond--all of which led to this man's becoming a shaman--are strongly reminiscent of Sisiutl legends. The land otter, like the Sisiutl, is a power in two realms, equally at home in water or on land. In water, too, it moves with an undulating, serpentine motion. These evocative qualities of the otter could suggest its logical visual succession to the serpent's place in shamanic representations on the northern coast.

The woodworm, which we earlier viewed as a visual and mythological northern equivalent to the Kwakiutl Sisiutl, appears again in this survey as a minor guardian spirit on shamanic art of the Tlingit. Each shaman's mask "represents one main spirit and usually contains effigies of several subsidiary spirits as well."¹⁷³ Each spirit represented was summoned up by the shaman to give him specialized aid and to consolidate his powers and talents in a given undertaking. Thus we have an extraordinarily beautiful curing ceremony mask, collected by George Emmons from the Tlingit before 1893, on which woodworms curl as living eyebrows over the penetrating eyes of the principal spirit (see Figure 40). The mask is not simply a discreet, abstracted symbol of the shaman's auxiliary spirits; the religious logic by which "one becomes what one displays"¹⁷⁴ prevails here and the mask is one of the shaman's most potent accessories, as both vehicle and image of transformation. It "plays the same role as the shaman's costume," which "constitutes a religious hierophany and cosmography," and

...the two elements can be considered interchangeable...
 the mask manifestly announces the incarnation of a
 mythical personage...the costume transubstantiates the
 shaman, it transforms him, before all eyes, into a
 superhuman being...¹⁷⁵

The woodworm is a metamagically appropriate presence for hovering over the shaman's eyes at a curing ceremony. Because of the worm's ability to bore through solid wood, it bestows upon the shaman powers of clairvoyance, that is, the perception which delves past the physical appearance of things, past the prohibitive surface, to locate the fundamental cause of the affliction. The shaman's peculiar approach to medicine is "the applications of his special knowledge of the mechanism and theory of illness"¹⁷⁶ rather than by the treatment of symptoms alone.

Another shamanic office of the woodworm, and another case of serpent-worm synonymy and of the shamanic inspiration to Winter Ceremonials, is recorded among the Kwakiutl. Kwakiutl shamans would compete with each other in power-throwing contests, each trying to overcome the other with his magical missile. "Two shamans," writes Boas, "may throw woodworms or harpoons at each other, thus showing their powers..."¹⁷⁷ Ernst recounts a Quileute healing ceremony in which two shamans throw spirit powers described as snake spirits.¹⁷⁸ These examples of disease- or power-throwing evidence an important gradation of serpent-in-myth down to serpent-in-magic. Shamans and sorcerers alike were said to have made use of body parts of the double-headed serpent in their enchantments but, as Goldman articulates, present "reality compels a compromise with the extravagant promises of myth."¹⁷⁹ Thus, in historic times, spells are actuated by using the skins of mortal snakes rather than of supernatural ones. Prescriptions for casting love or death (analogous bewitchments) may be filled by snakeskins, snake heads, snake tails, or the live creatures. In one account of sorcery, tangible/profane and intangible/sacred serpent aspects interweave: a warrior, attempting to murder a personal enemy by sympathetic magic, wraps various specimens of the victim's exuviae and excretia in snakeskins, and immerses the bundles in a bewitching pool believed to be inhabited by Sisiutl.¹⁸⁰ Although the black magic fails, the integrated image of serpents natural into serpents supernatural succeeds.

Material Evidence of the Shamanic Serpent

Our survey located very few unequivocal double-headed serpent images on important shamanic accessories like rattles and staffs.

(Because of their perishable nature, we could not tally those serpent representations which would have been realized in fur, feather and plant materials.) Shamanic artifacts are, again, problematic; identification is often obscured by the apparent versatility of many ritual artifacts. Ceremonial accoutrements may have been used in quite disparate contexts within a given community; trade between neighbouring groups may have further blurred the carver's intent. Thus a Nuu-chah-nulth rattle, in the form of a bird with a supernatural serpent on its back (see Figure 41) appears to be shamanic in form and feeling, but has no accompanying ethnographic documentation to substantiate that interpretation. And what could well be a shaman's staff, elaborately carved with symbols of his tutelary spirits and images of his visionary experiences, may be catalogued as a "speaker's staff." It is difficult to isolate a specifically shamanic origin where collection records are inadequate. A cedar-bark neck ring may be a cryptic symbol of the double-headed serpent, as we have observed in the context of the Winalagilis rituals, but since a shaman's neck ring is identical to that used in secret society initiations, a museum cataloguer may be satisfied with assigning it a winter-ceremonial context.

Even given the certain circumstance of shamanism, there are further difficulties in identifying what spirits are represented, especially those seen on the tiny, potent carvings in bone and ivory which served as shamans' charms. Shamans, of the northern tribes especially, wore such amulets on their costumes, and the Tlingit were particularly prolific in the production of these "polished bone charms carved in low relief."¹⁸¹ As we might anticipate, these charms make visible, in an esoteric way, beings encountered in the shaman's visionary travels among the throngs of minor

spirits. Swanton writes that the number of these subsidiary spirits (yek to the Tlingit) is "simply limitless."¹⁸² And while a projectile-shaped bone charm, from the Haida, may be catalogued as "suggesting a serpent or worm," it might also depict a bird or dragonfly. That which is suggested is not necessarily that which is represented. However, such a charm can be seen as a generic disease- or power-throwing accessory, given its missile shape, and those qualities align it with the serpent as the shaman's helper.

Two Northern Kwakiutl shaman's accessories which we surveyed were identified as serpents; in one case, the form of the twisted root out of which the serpent was carved must have suggested the subject to the artist. Although described as "charms," these two large and somewhat crudely shaped figures may have been healing staffs. (Gunther differentiates between "pendants," carved or uncarved bone pieces which hung from the shaman's necklace of twisted cedar bark and served more an acoustic function than an imaging function, and "charms," which not only embodied magical power but inevitably were virtuoso artistic pieces: "these charms are among the most beautifully carved bone pieces found in these cultures."¹⁸³)

The small boxes in which shamans secreted their charms and other occult tidbits could take any shape; the one compassed by our survey is described by Gunther as "representing some double-headed creature, perhaps Sisiutl..."¹⁸⁴ (see Figure 42). However, it could depict that culturally specific supernatural only if it were Kwakiutl, or perhaps Kwakiutl-influenced, and it is identified by Hawthorn as being of Tlingit origin.¹⁸⁵ The morphology is somewhat Sisiutl-like--two addorsed creatures with open mouths and curled snouts, and with a human head at centre--but the human face stares out of the top rather than the side of the configu-

ration, and the style is that of the northern rather than central coast. If the Tlingit identification holds, as we believe it should, it would preclude absolutely a Sisiutl subject--and this brings us to the special problem of the soul catcher.

The Serpent-Soul Catcher Connection

Soul loss is a theory of disease universal to "shamanic epistemology."¹⁸⁶ (The other shamanic diagnosis of disease is that of a "sickness projectile," a disease-emanating object thrown into the victim's body by accident or sorcery; we have seen serpents/worms function as such projectiles in shamanic and secret society rituals. To effect a cure, the shaman must locate the object, through clairvoyance, and withdraw or expel it.) The soul, which is likened to a "bird residing in the nape of the neck,"¹⁸⁷ may slip out of the body during sleep, may be dashed out by a fall or other jarring accident, or may be forcibly abducted by nefarious spirits. The instrument with which the Northwest Coast shaman recovered the errant soul of his patient, the soul catcher, is a hollow container or tube, usually of bone, usually carved from the femur of a bear, and often inlaid with abalone shell. (Green California abalone shell, which became abundant on the Northwest Coast only through post-contact trade, is evidence that all the inlaid soul catchers in this survey were produced during the historic period.) The magical powers of the soul catcher seem to be enhanced by the jewel-like inserts of abalone shell, and the whole effect is that of a great, supernatural treasure. The soul catcher was carved, in almost every instance, with considerable care and skill;¹⁸⁸ it remains an object of exceptional and evocative beauty. A kind of holiness emanates from it and it is no accident that

the carving medium is, in almost every case, bone since bone "represents the very source of life."¹⁸⁹

It is an axiom of shamanic belief that the essential life force animating man and animals resides not in the perishable flesh or vital organs but in the bones...¹⁹⁰

With the soul catcher slung on a cord around his neck, the shaman would pursue the fugitive soul, visible only to him, as it "fluttered toward the horizon."¹⁹¹ Through beguiling chants and magical petitions, he could approach it, then seize it and deposit it in the bone tube, plugging the ends with cedar bark. Returning to the ailing patient, whose strength was diminishing seriously (soul-loss is a potentially fatal affliction), the shaman would blow the soul back into its rightful human habitation.

Carved bone soul catchers seem to be a distinctly northern phenomenon, with a preponderance being Tsimshian. Those that have been collected from the Haida and Tlingit bear no discernible formal or stylistic differences from those known to be Tsimshian. Whether they were all of specialized Tsimshian manufacture, covetously traded among the northern tribes, or whether the Tsimshian model was the prototype which Haida and Tlingit carvers imitated, is unclear. Unfortunately, we could find no ethnographic record of the origin of the soul catcher, which thus raises the same questions of ultimate source as the inlaid frontlets which were worn by chiefs of all the northern groups but which also appear to be of Tsimshian origin.¹⁹²

Our museum survey compassed only four artifacts identified as soul catchers from the southern and central Northwest Coast: two large wooden specimens from the Nuu-chah-nulth and two smaller wood carvings from the

Northern Kwakiutl, all four varying in form and style from the northern convention. Soul catchers are among those object categories, such as boxes, raven rattles and coppers, which display a "standardized surface design organization."¹⁹³ The formal convention dictates a shallowly incised, horizontally oriented, double-headed animal, whose profile heads are addorsed and whose mouths and eyes are wide and long. Usually, the carving is much more shallow on the reverse side of the soul catcher, that is, on the side worn against the shaman's chest. The sense of the image on the back of the object is that of a "casual sketch by a good artist;"¹⁹⁴ it is not an exact or concrete representation, but merely a subtle reminder of a supernatural presence. The majority of the carved creatures have open jaws, providing an orifice for the entrance of the soul as well as a formal accommodation of the natural flare of the bone. Many, as mentioned above, are inlaid with abalone shell (see Figure 43).

Only three of the dozen soul catchers encountered in our survey have a frontal face or figure interposed between the profile heads; of these, two have human or humanoid faces, effectuating a Sisiutl-like arrangement of features (see Figure 44). The formal likeness to the double-headed serpent of Kwakiutl myth and art apparently has deceived numerous writers, distinguished ethnologists and dilettantes alike. Barbeau, Emmons, Hawthorn, Coe, Wardwell, and Dickason, among others, all have identified the soul catcher as a representation of "Sisiutl." This thinking apparently operates out of a fallacious premise which involves viewing a specifically Tsimshian art convention and assigning it a specifically Kwakiutl mythological identity. Even those who claim that the "Sisiutl-like" motif is related to all the Pacific Rim occurrences of the double-headed serpent image (in this group are Covarrubias, Fraser,

Furst, and Katzenstein) seem to be predicating their thinking on the diffusionist assumption that the double-headed animal is a serpent, or at least a "dragon." We have encountered no ethnographic and scant artistic evidence for either claim. Rather, we perceive what seems to be a strong, collective wishfulness, possibly incited by the vision of one man, Marius Barbeau. In a 1964 evaluation, Duff makes an attempt to separate fact from sophistry in Barbeau's ethnological writings;¹⁹⁵ while recognizing Barbeau's "monumental contribution as a collector of ethnographic information,"¹⁹⁶ Duff draws our attention to a few of his questionable hypotheses. Barbeau's dragon-questing is not mentioned in the essay, but certainly could qualify as one of his whimsical obsessions. Consider that Barbeau treated serpents, whales, bears, sea-monsters and random, anonymous spirits and entities generically, as manifestations of the "Old-World Dragon in America."¹⁹⁷ Barbeau's assumptions may be at the source of the Sisiutl-soul catcher confusion.

What we have come to recognize as characteristic features of the double-headed serpent (curled snout, protruding tongue, knobbed horn or plume) do not figure on any of the soul catchers surveyed, nor do we find similarities to the northern woodworm variant. Although we might hypothesize that the creature depicted is the mythical being, Was-at-Each-End, this would be construing an identification from myth without any other substantiating evidence. Formally, these bone carvings display more likenesses to double bears or killer whales. Gunther makes the bear identification,¹⁹⁸ which is corroborated by Holm,¹⁹⁹ a man recognized as one of the outstanding interpreters of the cryptic graphic art traditions of the northern Northwest Coast. A bear identification is further strengthened by the evidence of other shamanic accessories, which include bear-claw

necklaces and bearskin robes; further, the soul catcher itself is carved from the femur of a bear. However, other writers (including cataloguers at the BCPM and the UBC MA) have chosen a killer whale interpretation, which is made reasonable by the killer whale's power-of-the-sea correspondence to the Sisiutl as a tutelary spirit of northern shamans.

There seem to be as many diagnostic traits to convince one of a killer whale intent as of a bear intent, and either identification is supportable through a formal analysis of features (as elaborated below). As for the double-headed serpent, even among the Kwakiutl samples where one could look most hopefully for a Sisiutl soul catcher, one finds either symmetrically addorsed whales, wolves or bears, if one finds soul catchers at all. Of those surveyed, two were collected from the Northern Kwakiutl and none from the Southern Kwakiutl. This paucity of samples accords with Boas' description of a Koskimo curing ceremony, in which the shaman captures the soul in his bare hands, presses his hands to the patient's head, and blows upon them to restore the soul to its owner.²⁰⁰ Hawthorn makes the killer whale identification on a Kitamaat artifact, and this is confirmed by the formal evidence: blunt nose, long mouth, large rounded teeth, and folded-down dorsal fin. However, she then describes a Kitlope soul catcher as a "finely carved Sisiutl,"²⁰¹ a patent error given the long, flattened (not curled) snout, the numerous carnivorous fangs, and the broad, flat ears (rather than knobbed horns) which would all dictate a bear or wolf presence (see Figure 45). Further, there is not a human face interposed, but an entire human figure, and this does not form the central body, but is perched upon it. By the consistent rules of Northwest Coast art convention, this is clearly not a Sisiutl.

Of the Nuu-chah-nulth soul catchers surveyed, one is apparently a double wolf, with a bird perched at centre, and the other is more problematic. The VCM catalogue suggests that it is a double-headed wolf, but drawing formal inference from the double-headed Haitlik figures on Nuu-chah-nulth basketry, a double-headed serpent representation could be argued also (see Figure 46). However, if it is a double-headed serpent, it is the sole example of a double-headed-serpent soul catcher in all the collections surveyed; further, its large size and peculiar shape establish it as far from typical of its kind.

It is possible, though, that the northern soul catcher establishes a spirit presence, not so much through the artist's rendering specific an animal or supernatural, but through a later assignment of identity. That is, we may be dealing here with a purposeful ambiguity of the type employed in Chilkat blankets, which are further analogous to soul catchers in their specialized manufacture by one group of people of the Northwest Coast, and their presence, through trade, among all the northern peoples. Thus, even the attempt to conclude a bear or killer whale identity may be treacherous, since there is little in the subtle engraving of the soul catchers to distinguish between the wide, toothy mouths, characteristic of either creature, or to differentiate between a bear's ear, horizontally aligned along the axis of the bone, or a killer whale's dorsal fin, abstracted and folded down along the same tubular ground. Just as the Tsimshian language was a kind of ceremonial lingua franca between all northern shamans and their supernatural connections,²⁰² the soul catcher might have been a universal charm through its potent Tsimshian origin and its imagery would have been necessarily versatile to accommodate whatever guardian spirit was appropriate.

The soul catcher speaks a metaphorical rather than literal language. The shamanic seance was a play of illusion and allusion, manifesting the unseen spirits through legerdemain performance and through evocative renderings on shamanic accessories. Only the shaman can see the soul, but the entire audience can see the soul catcher; its imagery is that of the "fabulous"²⁰² world of supernaturals, its message is from a closed beyond. Barbeau quotes Isaac Tens, a Gitskan shaman: "All the medicine men eventually die a very hard death, because they are not truly human."²⁰⁴ The soul catcher compasses the same kind of cosmological dualism which the double-headed serpent symbolizes, the same kind of travel between the realms. That is, although its imagery cannot be Sisiutl-specific, its intent is sympathetic with the intent of the double-headed serpent as symbol. Duff speaks of soul catchers as "best understood as pure expressions of sets of relationships."²⁰⁵ The precariousness of the little human figure perched between two fantastic bears (see again Figure 45), the look of melancholy surprise on the human face that peers out from the space narrowly relinquished by a Janus-faced spirit (see Figure 44), the grasp of tiny, perfectly articulated fingers upon the invisible line running between the commonplace and the extraordinary (see Figure 47), these all work as images of the ecstatic shamanic experience. That these soul catchers are images of astonishing physical beauty is not such a wonder: a pleasing aesthetic is not incidental to, but at the service of symbolic intent.

Chapter 3

FORMAL ANALYSIS AND POSSIBLE SOURCES OF THE IMAGE

Art style is a distinguishing feature of any culture. Style bespeaks particular preferences through both distillation and accretion, significant choices which are symptomatic of prevailing social, economic and religious value-systems. Style reveals a "system of inner logic,"²⁰⁶ and a style analysis of the double-headed serpent as it occurs in the art of the Northwest Coast is thus a logical next step in our study. In any "articulate symbol"²⁰⁷ in which there is an expressive and consistently comprehensible organization of graphic and plastic elements, "the symbolic import permeates the whole structure, because every articulation of that structure is an articulation of the image it conveys."²⁰⁸ We shall consider below the "symbolical intent" specific to the formal, plastic and graphic elements of the double-headed serpent in the indigenous art of the Northwest Coast.

Form and Style Distinctions in Northwest Coast Native Art

General style components and formal features in Northwest Coast native art have been analyzed by Boas, Haeberlin, Adam, Levi-Strauss and, most recently, Holm. However, while a fairly comprehensive chart of the pan-coastal visual art system has been developed, a correspondingly detailed analysis of individual group styles has not yet been put forward.

Tlingit, Tsimshian and Haida art displays a compelling unity known as the "Northern Graphic"²⁰⁹ tradition, whose strict system of "highly

conventionalized decorative designs"²¹⁰ makes tribal identification among these groups, based on style alone, extremely difficult at the present time. The two-dimensional art of all the Northwest Coast groups is "much more closely related than is their sculpture,"²¹¹ and thus two-dimensional art of the northern Northwest Coast is especially problematic for alien viewers. Northern carving is subtle, shallow, and so graphically oriented that it seems to be wrapped around, rather than chiseled into, the sculpting medium; given that generalization, very little else has been written to differentiate amongst the sculptural traditions of the three northern groups. Haida poles may be characterized by their "multiplicity of detail" and their formal "verbosity,"²¹² and Haida masks may display an exclusive eye configuration, composed of a "carved, raised eyelid line [and a] concave orbit whose outline sweeps in a defined curve from the bridge of the nose past the temple to the nostril."²¹³ Tsimshian and Tlingit poles may be less elaborate, their figures less inclined to interlock, while embodying a greater sense of movement²¹⁴ and possessing a characteristic ear which Haida figures lack (a "tab ear" with an "engraved chevron-shaped inner ear"²¹⁵). The formal simplicity and subtlety realized by the virtuoso Tsimshian carvers have prompted a number of observers to pronounce Tsimshian art the "most refined,"²¹⁶ the most "classic"²¹⁷ art of the Northwest Coast. But these mixed particles of ethnographic observations and art historical value judgements tell us little more than this: we can learn to recognize the "tribal" differences which have come to exist as a consequence of emphasizing or elaborating one or some of the "commonly shared style elements,"²¹⁸ but we are still dealing with a forcible, unifying style overall--the Northern Graphic tradition.

The Northern Graphic tradition holds absolute sway among the three

northern groups, is incorporated in a more transitional way by the Bella Coola and Northern Kwakiutl, is given some play, latterly, by the Southern Kwakiutl, and disappears altogether "about the middle of Vancouver Island."²¹⁹ Against this surface-oriented northern style, which was well established before the time of contact,²²⁰ works what is assumed to be the archaic, underlying art impulse along the entire coast,²²¹ the "Old Wakashan"²²² tradition. The Old Wakashan is strongly sculptural, employing a simplified naturalism, and is best exemplified by Kwakiutl and Nuu-chah-nulth wood carvings collected at the time of white contact. Since contact, Southern Kwakiutl art has acquired a more flamboyant expression and a more exuberant colour--Kwakiutl art makes the most extensive use of paint over all its surfaces--and has become inventive and eclectic, bound less by the rules of any style orthodoxy than by the imperatives of theatricality and extroverted display. Where naturalism weaves into subtle abstraction on the northern coast, it gives way to fantastic embellishment in the central area. Where northern artists formally recognize the spatial constraints of the given medium, molding into the slender curve of mask or pole, Kwakiutl artists freely and unabashedly append limbs and beaks, and incorporate hinged and strung, moveable parts with dramatic insouciance. Kwakiutl poles are comprised of fewer and larger figures than northern ones; planar transitions are abrupt rather than smooth. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, three-dimensional art of the central area of the coast was more strongly influenced by two-dimensional art of the northern region. Thus, later Kwakiutl sculpture is "covered by a veneer of surface decoration which has elements drawn from the northern graphic tradition."²²³ By this same process, highly stylized graphic decoration was adapted to the flat sur-

faces of Kwakiutl storages boxes, ceremonial screens and house fronts. It is onto this busy network of Northern Graphic, Old Wakashan, and post-contact Kwakiutl Eclectic styles that the double-headed serpent is most brilliantly projected.

Although Nuu-chah-nulth carving undoubtedly derived from the "ingenuous representational"²²⁴ Old Wakashan tradition which is at the source of Kwakiutl art, it had declined, since the time of contact, into a more crudely and brusquely abstracted and austere flattened style, as evinced by the "harsh" forehead masks of Wolf and Haietlik. These masks are merely intersecting, painted boards. They are two-dimensional but scarcely graphic, since they owe nothing to the subtle surface decorations of the northern area. However, by the end of the nineteenth century, there was a strongly Kwakiutl, "late exuberant development"²²⁵ in the crest art of both the Nuu-chah-nulth and the Salish, and it is after this time that the most Sisiutl-like double-headed serpents occur in the southern area. Boas attributes this synthesis to a social/prestige impulse--the "strong endeavor to raise by possession of art forms the standing of the social units to which the individual belongs."²²⁶

Except for the latter-day instances named above, Salish art has made little accommodation to the evolving styles of other Northwest Coast groups. It manifests a distinct, intensely conservative carving style, austere and broadly sculpted, static, frontal and devoid of the "elaborate surface carving"²²⁷ and linear articulations of the northern tradition while also shunning the dramatic overstatement of most Kwakiutl art. It is the exception to most of the generalisations made upon formal principles and design elements common to the art of the Northwest Coast. The decorative impulse in Salish art is met generally by geometric ornamentation, a

surface style convention of apparently greater antiquity than the representational style of the northern and central regions but which, however, owes its base features to natural forms.

Plastic and graphic traditions in Northwest Coast art have become so integrated over the centuries that the second dimension and its attendant design principles slip elusively into the third. This is especially true in the northern area, where relief carving appears to be an adjunct to painting. Holm has reasoned that the basic elements of northern relief carving are more suited to the brush than the adze, so that the logical artistic progression would have been that of carving into an already-painted surface, thus creating the noted effect of wrap-around rather than pure form.²²⁸ In the central area, the reverse process holds: painting appears to be the adjunct to a carving which has a much greater density and volume (although it is still affected by the linear tradition).

Integral to the Northwest Coast graphic tradition is the "formline"²²⁹ --the calligraphically modulating, line-like element whose flow and compass describe and define features and body parts within the design. The formline is fundamentally northern graphic, but has made its way, as an element both "aesthetic" and "expressive,"²³⁰ onto the principal sculptural forms of the central Northwest Coast. And, as mentioned above, what can be recognized as Northwest Coast native design imperatives apply to both painting and sculpture and to all the gradations of artistic expression between them. Thus, the general style characteristics by which the double-headed serpent operates in art include: a scrupulous feeling for symmetry, so that form disposes itself bilaterally on either side of a vertical axis, which division may be either smooth and subtle or sharp and abrupt; a consistent emphasis upon the head, which is much enlarged with respect to

the body, and upon other significant features such as eyes and eyebrows, mouth (lips, teeth and tongue) and nose; a purposeful abstraction which ranges from understated stylized naturalism to extreme distortion; an accommodation of form to the design field, combined with a compulsion to represent the whole figure, with the consequential splitting or breaking up and isolating of related features and the juxtaposition and overlapping of disparate parts; an expressive indifference to natural scale and proportion; an "intellectual"²³¹ approach by which normally invisible knowns (such as skeleton and internal organs) may be displayed on the same plane as the figure's external features; and an achievement of continuity through formline and other interlocking design elements. While these general rules hold for all media, they are executed with a greater degree of abstraction in two-dimensional art, and this fact we may relate to the rule of form accommodation to the decorative ground. The more completely a form is made to fit and fill the given space (and Northwest Coast aesthetic dictated its own version of horror vacui), the more highly abstracted the design becomes through "distortion and rearrangement of parts."²³² Three dimensions make less severe demands upon form, thus expediting a greater naturalism.²³³

The social imperative of heraldic display in Northwest Coast art is facilitated by a system or "schematization"²³⁴ of symbolic design elements, an encapsulated visual language by which popular crest figures can be identified readily throughout the central and northern areas. Thus, by the minimal diagnostic clue of a dorsal fin or a pair of enlarged incisors, a killer whale or beaver identification can be made. The basically exoteric, communicative intent of this system of symbols may be thwarted, however (and this is especially true in northern two-dimensional

art), by the artist's overriding formal and stylistic preoccupations:

...it can be seen that the formal element of the designs very often takes on such importance as to overshadow the symbolic element to the point where symbolism becomes very obscure.²³⁵

Fragmentation and distortion may thus obliterate diagnostic clues, rendering abstruse and ambiguous what should be clear and unequivocal to those who speak the metalanguage of Northwest Coast native art. Ethnographers have been dismayed to find that two native informants, lacking the collusion of artist or owner, may offer widely divergent interpretations of an artifact produced within the culture circle of their own group. Boas cites the example of a Haida pole figure, designated by one Haida informant as a bear, and by another as a whale. Given the bear-killer whale ambiguities of the northern soul catchers discussed above, this is a particularly salient case.

Uncertainty of interpretation may have screened a few northern serpents or woodworms from our survey, but because the principal manifestation of the double-headed serpent on the Northwest Coast is the Kwakiutl Sisiutl, and because of the flamboyant and largely unambiguous Kwakiutl style, Sisiutl's presence is almost always obvious. Protruding tongues, curled or spiral snout, knobbed horn, and the presence of one frontal and two profile faces, all sculpted or painted "configuratively,"²³⁶ preclude any other identification. As mentioned, northern variants of the Sisiutl may relinquish their identities to obfuscating style and southern variants, when single-headed, may mistakenly be assigned wolf, otter, or other generalized zoomorphic interpretations, but Kwakiutl style consistently renders up legible double-headed serpents.

Recurring in Northwest Coast art are a number of symbolic motives

(generalized design expedients rather than heraldic clues) which comprise the "pan coastal design vocabulary,"²³⁷ and whose appearance on the pre-historic stone art of the northern coast confirms their antiquity. These motives are composed, on the whole, of basic ovoid and U-shaped formline elements,²³⁸ signifying eyes, ears, feathers, fins and joints. The Northwest Coast eye, for example, is inevitably an ovoid, flanked by organic triangles, the whole outlined by a formline and enclosing one or more inner ovoids. A whole feature is the sum of a few unchanging motives and a whole figure is the sum of a few abiding features, so that the decorative devices with which Raven or Bear is described are the same devices which serve Sisiutl's surface. Sisiutl depictions may be further elaborated by secondary motives ("aids to psychic recall"²³⁹) such as crescent slits or scallops in parallel configurations, raised hands, and claws. Many of these secondary elements are ornamental fillers, for whose symbolic intent it would be fruitless to search, since their ultimate aim appears to be decorative.

The building-block sameness of the design units, the ovoids and U's and tapering lines, lends itself to the visual punning or "kenning"²⁴⁰ which is so characteristic of Northwest Coast art, and which reiterates the duality mentality of native artists. By the busy insertion of eyes into joints, faces into breasts and tails, and birds' heads into claws, the compulsions of horror vacui and of thematic dualism or paradox are met. The use of numerous fillers can, of course, deeply obscure the crest figure--another style vogue by which generally exoteric design motives are employed to create an esoteric image. It could be that these symbols have been manipulated, in much the same way the winter ceremonials have, to enhance the exclusive status of a patron, so that rather than making

explicit public declarations, the implicit intention of a highly abstracted, highly complex image may promote an aura of sophistication around those few privileged enough to be initiated into its secrets. That Northwest Coast visual puns may be executed with either a mythologically meaningful or decoratively and possibly humorously illogical intent is illustrated by two Kwakiutl house frontal paintings encountered in the literature. In one example, Thunderbird grasps Whale in its talons and the familiar supernatural association is completed by eight tiny Sisiutl faces encapsulated within the ovoid wing joints of the Thunderbird. Here, the Sisiutl clues are minimal: a curled line signifying the spiral snout of the serpent. In the second example (see Figure 48), what appears to be a tiny Sisiutl face is insinuated into the joint of a dislocated tail belonging to Raven. In the absence of a binding or relevant myth, we might attribute the presence of Sisiutl to a decorative impulse.

Split Representation and the Double-Headed Serpent

The peculiar, dualistic morphology of the double-headed serpent, especially of the Sisiutl, compels us to consider one of the most significant style principles of Northwest Coast native art, that of split representation. This is a means of reducing the ungainly three dimensions of an animal or supernatural subject to a two-dimensional surface, while adhering to the aesthetic dictates of bilateral symmetry and repetition of form. Although the principle of split representation operates frequently on flat, rectangular design fields like housefronts, screens and boxes, it makes a sculptural traverse onto poles, bowls, hats and bracelets by wrapping the flat, split image around the three-dimensional object. (This is a kind of visual recycling, in which graphic and plastic elements merge.)

Various means of splitting the image have been devised, paralleling the hunter's experience of skinning an animal and laying the pelt flat or draping it around a person or object. "Either the animals are represented as split in two so that the profiles are joined in the middle, or a front view of the head is shown with two adjoining profiles of the body."²⁴¹ The creature depicted may be split front and back, from head to tail, and vertically disposed so that, unfolded and pressed flat, the centre back of each side parallels or rests against the right and left border of the design field. The degree of split in the face is variable, and the two profiles may join at the mouth and the nose, or through to the forehead. A deep depression from ears to forehead or nose is a formal clue that the facial representation should not be considered frontal, but an amalgam of two profiles. A variation of this method is that of splitting the creature along its belly and splaying it, so that its centre back is the central vertical axis of the design and its legs and feet extend toward the right and left borders. The animal design may also be disposed bilaterally to fill a long, low design field. On silver bracelets (horizontal bands in the round), as on some hats, bowls and boxes, the configuration has been split "from head to tail so that the two halves cohere only at the tip of the nose and at the tip of the tail."²⁴² This design is slipped around and over the surface of the curved object.

Boas uses the engraved bracelet as an exemplary transition medium in the process of split representation; the image, he theorizes, would have been worked from three dimensions down to a rounded or curved surface, and from that curved surface to an entirely flat one. In the case of those animals whose identification is dependent upon a frontal view of the head--here Boas cites the shark, whose high, domed forehead and

gill slits above the brow or beside the mouth are diagnostic--the cut may be made from the back, behind or below the head, so that when the creature is laid flat, the head remains frontally disposed (see Figure 49). This is the variant split representation that produces the greatest morphological resemblance to the Sisiutl, with its frontal face at centre, and its two serpent profiles streaming off to either side.

Sisiutl's significant idiosyncrasy is that it is the only crest figure out of the entire Northwest Coast pantheon of animals and supernaturals that can be symmetrically wrapped around a curved surface or splayed across a flat one without having to go through the rigours of splitting. That is, Sisiutl is a formal anomaly, an intrinsically split image. Its entire anatomy can be accommodated to any design field without distortion or dislocation. Given its horizontal nature, it is suited to a design band, but when asked to fill a rectangular or spherical space, it merely takes a serpentine twist or turn into a U- or mandala-shape. As with the transformation masks discussed above, Sisiutl bracelets persuade us that the double-headed serpent as mythological entity was invented out of an antecedent, two-dimensional image. That this cut-out entity has been vivified in art and ritual so energetically and successfully may have to do with its formal appeal to a people who had already learned to value bilateral symmetry and split representation so profoundly.

Boas and Haeberlin lead those who argue a largely technical motivation for split representation; it is seen by them as essentially a function of design prerogatives²⁴³ that the representation must describe the entire crest figure, and that the "given surface is the primary condition of composition."²⁴⁴ It is from within the inhibiting convention that the surface to be decorated dictates the organization of artistic

form that the Northwest Coast aesthetic is realised. The artist "must have been more interested in designing than in representing;"²⁴⁵ thus, in split representation, a formal technique has become a requisite style.

Levi-Strauss proposes a structuralist motivation for split representation in Northwest Coast native art. Since

...art is intimately related to social organization
 ...there must...be some fundamental element...which
 accounts for the continuity and rigidity with which
 the technique of split representation is applied...²⁴⁶

The dualism evinced by split representation, he reasons, is a function of a masking tradition, and masking on the Northwest Coast is ultimately a function of the dualism between "community and hierarchy."²⁴⁷ While masks here "validate social hierarchy," split representation further "expresses the strict conformity of the actor to his role and of social rank to myths, ritual, and pedigrees."²⁴⁸ Haida artist Bill Reid makes a comparable suggestion when he speaks of the sense of "precariousness" which pervades the work of the great historic West Coast artists, who were obliged to work within

...a society that had been highly structured over a
 long period and had developed to a point where all
 its parts had to fit together perfectly to function
 as it did.²⁴⁹

In Reid's view, too, the split representational element in an art image would have to conform to and function within the total social construct.

The sensibilities of the hunter-artist, whom Levi-Strauss calls the "butcher draftsman,"²⁵⁰ may have contributed to establishing an aesthetic in split representation. The split image is strongly evocative of a flayed skin, and the process of wrapping an animal design around a bracelet, or of flattening it onto a garment which is intended to be wrapped around a body, is conceptually synonymous with wrapping the actual

skin (i.e., animal) around limb or person. This establishes an art-making impulse which is nothing like mere "decoration" in the deprecating sense of the word. The Northwest Coast artist's formal and technical preoccupations perfectly complement his patron's hunting and hierarchic sensibilities.

Formal Prototypes to the Double-Headed Serpent:
Prehistoric Art of the Northwest Coast

Complementary archaeological and ethnological discoveries have yielded evidence of an ancient and accomplished stone-working tradition on the Northwest Coast, one which apparently was lost along with all knowledge of its content and context about the time of white contact. An inverse and parallel loss, through the ruinously wet climate of the area, is material evidence of what was, presumably, an equally ancient woodworking tradition. Because of the dearth of prehistoric artifacts in wood, some observers have been prompted to declare that there is no prototype, "no sense of development of an art style,"²⁵¹ on the Northwest Coast. We would argue, however, that prototypal qualities and features are clearly discernible.

Whether the oldest of the petroglyphs and portable lithic sculpture in the round were produced by men of "different stock"²⁵² from, or by ancestors of the historic peoples of the Northwest Coast culture area, has not been established satisfactorily. Nor has an uncontroversial dating been secured, although we can construe an archaic tradition directly from the degree of sculptural proficiency and stylistic certainty evinced by these works. Broadly speaking, the transportable stone carvings of the southern region, "dominated" by the Fraser and Columbia rivers,

may be up to "thirty centuries"²⁵³ old. Three dimensional art of the northern region, dominated by the Skeena River, is probably many centuries younger.²⁵⁴ The coast petroglyphs also have been estimated to date back one to four thousand years,²⁵⁵ although they were produced, more rarely, into the time of white contact, as evidenced by images of European sailing ships in Clo-oose rock art. Intriguingly, "ceremonial bowls and rounded cups carved in the solid rock"²⁵⁶ at some notable petroglyph sites suggest that petroglyphic and detached sculpture (e.g., bowls and mortars) may be thematically and developmentally linked through common ritual intent.²⁵⁷

The two distinct style traditions which we isolated within the body of historic Northwest Coast art can be traced backward into the pecked and ground stone sculpture of prehistoric times. The oldest carvings from the southern coastal and river regions seem to anticipate the Old Wakashan sculptural style which underlies the whole of historic Northwest Coast art, while ancient northern art bears the style elements of the graphic tradition with its familiar images, motives and formline combinations. Within the sculptural tradition of the southern area, distinct style and subject impulses can be discerned, so that Columbia River art may be described as "schematic-abstract"²⁵⁸ and Fraser River-Puget Sound art might possess a "more realistic and narrative character."²⁵⁹ This latter allusionistic art seems to have culminated "about twenty centuries ago in the emergence of the seated human figure bowls."²⁶⁰

The Fraser River-Puget Sound artifacts are of peculiar interest to this study, since the anthropomorphic figures, integrally clasping the bowls and mortars, are frequently complemented by serpents, often identifiable as rattlesnakes. The distribution of these configured bowls

...centres on the mouth of the Fraser River, extending to Vancouver Island from Victoria to Courtenay, and upriver as far as Lillooet and Kamloops...They are made predominantly of steatite (soapstone) which occurs as natural boulders in the Fraser River above Hope...The artists who made the best ones seem...to have been upriver people, and the style seems to have reached its high point in a number of small and complex bowls from the vicinity of Lytton...²⁶¹

Although the Pacific rattlesnake does not occur naturally outside the interior dry belt, whose western limit is marked by Lytton,²⁶² a couple of outstanding soapstone rattlesnake bowls (whose positive identification is fixed by the articulated rattles on the creatures' tails) have been found on the east coast of Vancouver Island, presumably as a consequence of downriver trade or migration. These images seem to presage some of the formal and thematic characteristics observed in historic art: encircling serpents swallow each other's tails (see Figure 50); a split serpent, its frontal face bilaterally disposed over the central axis of the piece, enwraps a bowl, as if it were a belt of flayed or discarded skin (see Figure 51); an elaborately carved, upward glancing, human figure--possibly a shaman--is draped down head and back with a conspicuous snakeskin head-dress (see Figure 52). As mentioned in the context of the historic argillite carvings which they anticipate, these bowls may have been used as "ritual and divining vessels by shamans and ritualists."²⁶³

Prehistoric mauls, clubs and other phallic implements of the southern region may also bear serpentine embellishments, an example being a stone maul from the Columbia River valley, whose knob-ended handle is carved with three interconnecting heads, one humanoid, one zoomorphic, and one serpentine. A steatite spindle whorl, recovered from a site near Yale in the Fraser Canyon and dated at about 800 A.D., appears as a lithic precursor to the historic Coast Salish specimens in wood (see Figure 53).

Its entwined serpents are a direct lead, it seems, into the fantastic snakes and otters which commonly ornament the later wooden spheres. A predilection, complementary to that for serpents, evident in the ancient stone sculpture of British Columbia is double-headedness, an example being a double-headed, vulviform bowl from the Lillooet area (see Figure 54).

Duff suggests that the dualistic theme and presence of the death-dealing and immortal serpent has been assumed by the frog in the precontact art of the northern Northwest Coast: "the ambiguous rattlesnake... of the south [is] succeeded by the double-ambiguous 'Frog'...of the north."²⁶⁴ This is a plausible argument since the frog, like the snake, is a creature that travels between realms and that appears to embody both a bisexual and self-transforming capacity. Again, the prehistoric art of the Northwest Coast is consistent with the area's historic art, since our survey found only serpent variants (thematic synonyms) among the northern groups, rather than the double-headed serpent itself.

Although precontact petroglyphs contribute to the sense of continuity in Northwest Coast art, there are more thematic than stylistic connections with historic sculptural traditions in general and with double-headed serpents in particular. The absence of familiar style principles and motives, along with the technical crudity of execution of many of the petroglyph configurations, suggests either an extreme and alienating antiquity for many works or--and this seems more likely--manufacture by other than professional artists, that is, by either religious specialists or spirit-questing novices. This latter conjecture accords with the popular thinking on the intent and context of the petroglyphs, that they mark spirit quests by shamanic or lay (i.e., winter ceremonial) novices.²⁶⁵

The connection is borne out by the nature of the imagery: mythical monsters abound in the rock art of this coast and many of these monsters incorporate bird and/or serpent features associated with shamanism. For example, Nanaimo River petroglyphs manifest a number of bird-serpent and man-serpent transformations, including a bird-serpent hybrid which emerges from the open mouth of an anthropomorphic figure (see Figure 55). This particular image is extremely evocative of the Kwakiutl *Sillis* dance in which a serpent is expelled from the dancer's stomach, which dance is itself evocative of a shamanistic disease-expelling ritual. At the Harewood Plain site, there is a stick figure of a "dancing man,"²⁶⁶ above whom hovers a single-headed serpent with a long, backward-curling plume on its head, again suggestive of shamanic rituals or winter ceremonials.

Vancouver Island petroglyphs are rife with "dragons" and "sea serpents," some of which could be transported directly into historic representations of the Nuuchahnulth *Haietlik* or transliterated into the *tcinko* of Salishan myth (see Figure 56, a Nanaimo River "dragon" whose age has been approximated at one thousand years). The Nanaimo River site creature displays a diagnostically curled snout, long and toothy mouth, protruding tongue, tall ear (which seems to be evolving into a horn or plume) and long, serpentine body.

The lithic traces of Northwest Coast prehistory exhibit not an exact prototype of, but rather a predisposition toward the double-headed serpent in art. Serpent-enwrapped mortars, bicephalic bowls, fantastic sea serpents--all manifest a sensibility consistent with that of the historic period, without actually establishing a pre-contact presence for the creature. The shamanic dialectics of duality and transformation which we can read into precontact imagery comprise a thematic prevision of

Sisiutl as legendarily transcendent intermediary or self-transformer. If not for an archaeological fluke, a village preserved in mud against the ravages of coastal damp, our speculations on formal and thematic continuity from pre-historic to historic times would have ended here. However, the site of Ozette serves as an illuminating denouement.

Ozette: Proof of the Double-Headed
Serpent's Pre-Contact Existence

Ozette, on Cape Alava, the westernmost point in the state of Washington, was one of five principal villages of the Makah, a Wakashan-speaking people. Because of its proximity to marine-life migratory paths, Ozette was "perhaps the most important sea mammal hunting site on the entire west coast of North America, south of Western Alaska."²⁶⁷ Four hundred and fifty years ago, in late spring, a massive mud slide covered part of the village as it slept, preserving from decay all ligneous and plant-matter artifacts, including a singular, striking whale fin replica.

Comprised of several pieces of cedar sewn together, the fin is inlaid with some seven hundred sea otter teeth (see Figure 57). The inlaid teeth delineate a Thunderbird with wings outstretched, grasping in its talons a double-headed serpent. Neither serpent nor Thunderbird is articulated in graphic detail; despite the necessarily meticulous application of the sea otter teeth, the figures are rather vaguely and crudely drawn (not unlike figures worked in buttons on historic button blankets). This serpent, though, does appear to possess horns or plumes and curled snouts without, however, the central human face of the Kwakiutl Sisiutl.

Daugherty writes that, with the obvious exception of this fin, it is difficult to isolate "strictly ceremonial" art at Ozette,²⁶⁸ masks or drum frames have yet to be mucked out of the Ozette excavations. It may

be that the inundated houses were provisionally occupied by hunters and their families from other Makah villages who came to Ozette in the spring in pursuit of sea mammals and whose presence temporarily doubled the population of the village. If so, the transients would have left the bulk of their ceremonial accoutrements at their winter village sites. However, Ozette artifacts demonstrate that "art was a pervasive element in the lives of the prehistoric occupants of the village."²⁶⁹ Just as in post-contact, fur-trade days, an entrenched materialism demanded the skilled ornamentation of such secular implements as "spindle whorls, weaver's swords, combs,...seal or fish clubs,...boxes, bowls, harpoon shafts and valves, and loom uprights."²⁷⁰ Ozette art incorporates influences from Nuu-chah-nulth, Salish and Quileute neighbours into its own distinctive style (which operates within the Old Wakashan sculptural tradition).

From descriptions given by a Vancouver Island informant of a now-extinct whaling ceremony, it has been surmised that the inlaid wooden fin may have been one of a number used to describe a ritual configuration, possibly a canoe, within which a ceremonial head whaler would have performed.²⁷¹ That the fin is not ornamented on the back would corroborate a use in which the audience viewed the artifact from one side only (as they would the exterior aspect of a magical canoe). The association of Thunderbird and magical serpent with whaling enchantment, so powerful in historic Nuu-chah-nulth art, was no doubt a function of a profoundly rooted, prehistoric religious thought in the southern area of the Northwest Coast.

Formal Inspiration in Nature

Many scholars insist that "life forms served as basic subject matter" for the artists of the Northwest Coast and that even "purely and semi-fantastic" heraldic entities made allusion in some measure to coastal faunal sources.²⁷² Thus, a comprehensive study of the double-headed serpent must include a herpetological or natural-history overview of the region.

In British Columbia there exist eight species of snake,²⁷³ most of which are found, for climatic reasons, south of the fifty-first parallel, and some of which (for instance, the Pacific rattlesnake) are found only in the interior dry belt. Garter snakes, however, through a breeding adaptation, inhabit very nearly the whole of the province, with a northern range which would extend, however sporadically, even into Tlingit territory. Not only is the garter snake the most ubiquitous of British Columbia reptiles, but it manifests chthonic and aquatic characteristics embodied by the mythological double-headed serpent. It hunts and forages along the shores of lakes and streams and on ocean beaches; a strong swimmer, it slips rapidly and habitually into water when alarmed, and it may also search out prey in this alien realm, taking frogs and tadpoles in fresh water, and even small fish stranded in tidal pools along the coast.

Two herpetological references suggest that the highly aberrant occurrence of double-headed snakes in nature (see Figure 58) may have been the source for Sisiutl-type imagery on the Northwest Coast,²⁷⁴ but we have reason to doubt this somewhat simplistic hypothesis. A two-headed snake, a genetic freak, would have been sighted as rarely in ancient and historic

times as in our contemporary age; additionally, the two-headed example given is morphologically dissimilar from Sisiutl, since both heads are located at the same end of the creature's body. Neither Carl nor Fromm cited what seem to us more plausible instances of double-headed serpents in nature. One image source might have been the Pacific Rubber Boa,

...often known as the 'two-headed snake' since the tail is short and almost as blunt as the head. When it is threatened, it rolls itself into a ball, exposes the blunt tail, and conceals its head in its coils as a protective measure. It is also said to make striking movements with its tail.²⁷⁵

Although less numerous, thus less conspicuous, than the garter snake on the Northwest Coast, the rubber boa is certainly a more prevalent entity than any bicephalic mutant.

Another possible source of two-headed serpents in nature is a snake in the last stages of shedding its skin, since the scaly, translucent garment--the snake's pale twin--is shed in one piece, inside out, from the front of the body to the back. However, we do not necessarily endorse either of these instances as the ultimate wellspring of the Sisiutl image in art or legend; we merely present them as having greater formal affinity with Sisiutl than would the rare, twin-headed offspring of a garter snake.

Image-making, that is, the correspondence between referents or significata and their evolved symbols, is a complicated process, a process which is especially and nebulously complex where a mythical monster or dragon has emerged out of the psychic rather than the natural realm. A fat little snake, curled into a ball and shaking its stumpy tail, cannot fully suggest the dark order of non-empirical knowledge out of which a Sisiutl might have been called. It simply does not fit the metaphysical

bill. Sisiutl as symbol is not about nature, in which a haplessly two-headed reptile randomly occurs, but about supernature, in which two-headedness is a psychic imperative, a necessary image of transformation and transcendence.

While Beaver is made known in art by its incisors and its broad, scaly tail--secular notes out of a distinctly terrestrial empiricism--Sisiutl's presence is proclaimed by its factitious horns which, like Thunderbird's, announce its supernatural status and afford it membership in the universal fraternity of horned or plumed serpents. It is also announced by its spiral snout, which seems to owe much less to nature, to the narrow, slightly rounded snout of the Northwestern Garter Snake, than to the impulse toward curled snouts found in dragons world-wide. And it is also known by its protruding tongue, which flicks, in myth, in ophidian fashion, but which is never split in veristic imitation of any local reptile. Sisiutl's tongue is, by its conspicuous extension, "symbolic of supernatural powers,"²⁷⁶ and is associated with "voraciousness and aggression."²⁷⁷

Sisiutl is finally diagnostically fixed, of course, by its central human face. (Although some writers have attempted to establish an alternate or supplementary identity for Sisiutl's central face, we encountered no evidence to justify such an undertaking.²⁷⁸) The important dynamics of this central face, which is as anatomically integrated within Sisiutl's form as each serpent head, are visual and attitudinal. That is, what is compelling about Sisiutl's central face is not who it is but how it is--an image regardant, an en face image which "enhances the sense of personal contact with the divine power."²⁷⁹

It may even be said that the frontal rendering in two-dimensional art transforms the image from an abstraction sketched on a surface (and viewed therefore with some detachment) to a reality--a being that observes the viewer constantly and demands a fitting response from him. In a sense it robs the viewer of his volition and manipulates him through the hypnotic power of its own glance.²⁸⁰

Even in those cases in which Sisiutl is wholly signified by a single serpent, for example, on dance sticks or ceremonial staffs, the dancer himself provides that compelling and manipulative presence; his face works as the original image regardant.

A formal arrangement which universally complements a powerful frontal face or figure is that of horizontally symmetrical flanking by profile figures. This morphology is elaborated by Fraser, who traces the diffusion of the heraldically flanked, displayed female from the Old World into the New, by a circum-Pacific route.²⁸¹ Vastokas, too, speaks of the antiquity of symmetrical flanking in art and of its association with the Sacred or World Tree from as early as 3500 B.C.²⁸² (Recall the World Tree connotations of Northwest Coast totem poles, as discussed above.) Since Sisiutl's horizontally radiating, profile serpents can be viewed as heraldically flanking its frontal face, we are given an extremely potent image, consolidating two ancient and powerful, complementary traditions. Further proof that the northern and southern coastal variants of the double-headed serpent have been imbued with Sisiutl characteristics is their formal accommodation to this archetype: Nuu-chah-nulth Haietliks often hover on either side of the central Whale and Thunderbird configuration, and the Tlingit woodworm drapes its twin selves on either side of the Princess's frontal face.

In Sisiutl we have a fantastic image whose formal components are

so powerful as to appear original, and whose representational, serpentine characteristics may well have been secondarily appended to or perhaps reiterated from the hunter's observations of local fauna. Interestingly, the most directly snake-like attributes of the double-headed serpent--undulating movement, predilection for water, voraciousness--are manifest in legend and ceremonial drama rather than fixed in visual art form.

Minor image variations which we have connected with the double-headed serpent in this survey--the woodworm of the Tlingit, the lightning snake or "dragon" of the Nuu-chah-nulth--demonstrate to us the adaptation of visible, local life-forms to a powerful, consolidating art form. For example, it is possible that a small lizard, indigenous to southern British Columbia, informed the lightning serpent variation since, as we discussed, the two- and four-legged, "crocodile-like" creatures of Nuu-chah-nulth art seem to function synonymously with the more serpentine Haietliks. (In some cases, especially when the depiction is bereft of supernatural horns and raised snout, these "crocodiles" might be, quite simply, decorative and symbolically uncharged representations of lizards. In basketry art especially, Northwest Coast artists make no formal acknowledgement of natural scale.)

Levi-Strauss has asserted that, in the process of fixing totemic symbols, a need such as that for social order is felt, to which a symbol is assigned, and that symbol is then identified with and as some creature "present" and "accessible" in the local scene.²⁸³ That is, the symbolic impulse comes first and the natural form follows. Holm and Boas address themselves to the Northwest Coast artist's particularly great "eidetic powers,"²⁸⁴ and it may be that it is this intuitionist ability to produce strongly naturalistic images in art, with brilliant facility and without

preliminary sketches, which has persuaded observers that all Northwest Coast art forms derive from nature, when it appears more likely to us that they have been profoundly informed by nature. By the human process of image-making, content may be read into form; it may be that "form is first, and the representational function accrues to it."²⁸⁵

It appears that the largely synthesized image which became the entity Sisiutl underwent just such a process of symbolization and mythologization. On the Northwest Coast, a borrowed form could be spliced to an improvised myth and invested with heraldic legitimacy through a solemnly undertaken, solemnly received potlatch.²⁸⁶ The image so validated might be as extraneous and as recent as the double-headed eagle of Imperial Russia which was encountered in post-contact trade and absorbed into the Tlingit crest system.²⁸⁷ Or, as in the case of the double-headed serpent, it may be much more ancient. However, as Eliade writes, symbols bound to more recent phases of culture are formed or adopted out of the same existential tensions which govern the most archaic symbols.²⁸⁸

Chapter 4

ICONOGRAPHIC AND ICONOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

...the symbol is capable only of interpretation, not of solution.²⁸⁹

Having established the cultural and formal systems within which the double-headed serpent functions, we shall now attempt an interpretation of its symbology, using both iconographic and iconological approaches. As defined by Panofsky, the latter method requires a process of "synthetic intuition,"²⁹⁰ especially where the symbol operates "above the sphere of conscious volition."²⁹¹

Symbols, through their nature, are paradoxical. They attempt to express the inexpressible, to know the unknowable, to make conscious and collective the unconscious and disparate. The whole complex of associations through which the double-headed serpent works is made orderly and congruent by the reductive nature of the serpent's imagery. Yet the double-headed serpent as symbol is also the opposite of reductive, it is "multivalent"²⁹² because it expresses so many contrastive states and concepts simultaneously. On the Northwest Coast, it makes comprehensible a range of essential dualities, of binary oppositions.

The Integrative Nature of Northwest Coast Culture

Although, in order to review the large body of data which we had accumulated, we found it necessary to isolate the double-headed serpent within specific social and structural contexts, it is obvious that such discrete categories cannot really exist in Northwest Coast culture. For

instance, we saw heraldic art as a means of broadcasting legendary ancestral encounters with animal and supernatural patrons, of differentiating a complex social order, of recording lineage histories, and of asserting privileges and status. For these reasons, Northwest Coast art has been characterized as quite simply being comprised of crest representations. But, as Duff writes, "the simple answer does not explain the complex structure of the images, which seems to be a symptom of a deeper interplay of meaning, beneath the guise of crests."²⁹³ Heraldic art makes visible a whole complex of cultural principles, including those governing lineage, rank, marriage and potlatching, and these principles are "so closely identified with religion as to be conceived of as religious expressions."²⁹⁴ All stem from a core, shamanic belief that certain powers and privileges have been granted to certain people by mythical animals and supernaturals, and that people are thus bound into an "allegiance with their donors."²⁹⁵ Therefore, images which appear to function merely socially, images which record these allegiances, must also be read as religious symbols. Symbols in tribal art, writes Eliade,

...are always religious because they point to something real...on the archaic level of culture, the real--that is, the powerful, the meaningful, the living--is equivalent to the sacred.²⁹⁶

We earlier discussed the evidence of secret society rituals' being integrated into the matrix of Northwest Coast culture, incorporating aspects of shamanism, mythology, warfare, heraldic display, and potlatching. Because the principal elements of Northwest Coast culture interacted with and informed each other in this profound way, the double-headed serpent as significant symbol operates similarly, through many levels of thought and manifestations of existence.

Dualism in Northwest Coast Mythology

The double-headed serpent speaks to us first through myth, where it is a comprehensive entity of ambivalence, of duality. Its dual nature is consistent with the pervading tone of Northwest Coast mythology. Paradox is a keenly appreciated story-telling device in this region, as is evident in tales of transformation and in the incongruous juxtaposition of coarse and refined characteristics of legendary heroes. The double-headed serpent, with its profile heads flicking in opposite directions, is a powerful metaphor of the mythic process of transformation and the mythic paradox of the "thing that is also its opposite...one that is also two."²⁹⁷

Both Coomaraswamy and Eliade describe an archaic (prescientific or shamanic) conception of existence in which life and death are profoundly interwoven oppositions and in which the individual's experience of duality is projected onto an entire universe of contradictions, paradoxes, binary oppositions.²⁹⁸ To the Paleo-hunter on the Northwest Coast, the essential rhythms would have been those of light and dark, summer and winter, earth and sky, sun and moon, warmth and cold, wet and dry, establishing a pattern congruent with the narrower conditions of humanity: birth and death, male and female, pleasure and pain, sickness and health. In a cosmos of contraposed impulses or powers, a unity-totality can be revealed and comprehended through certain religious symbols. In myth, the double-headed serpent--especially the Kwakiutl Sisiutl with its central human face--articulates what it is to exist between polar oppositions. It attempts to compass and reconcile a partitioned world.

Sisiutl's explicitly contrastive morphology reinforces its mythi-

cal roles as death dealer and death averter, shamanic tutelary/trans-former and self-transformer, dweller in both the Upper and Lower realms, \ visible supernatural emissary of an unseen supernatural, guardian of wealth and wealth-bringer, Thunderbird's food/salmon and mortal's poison/unsalmon. The double-headed serpent works in Northwest Coast myth as a significant formal device, a "union of contraries...[a] coincidentia oppositorum."²⁹⁹

The Double-Headed Serpent as Image of Transcendence and Transformation

As described in myth, the double-headed serpent (whether the Kwakiutl Sisiutl or its Nuu-chah-nulth, Salish or Bella Coola variant) possesses the ability to travel between natural and supernatural realms, thus evincing the shamanic capacity for transcendence. Not only is the serpent the archetypal "lord of the waters,"³⁰⁰ dwelling in water courses and moving with the undulating progression of waves and streams but, as we have seen on the Northwest Coast, it also may be a chthonic and sky-dwelling supernatural. Its extraordinary compass and capacity thus make it the ideal intermediary, as is most clearly demonstrated in the mythology and ritual of the war deity of the Kwakiutl, Winalagilis.

Materially, Sisiutl dance accessories manifest the presence of the war god who can never be depicted; psychically, Sisiutl functions as mediator between Winalagilis and his human initiates. Ceremonial Sisiutl weapons realize the complex metadynamics of power: Sisiutl knives, swords and staffs signify both Sisiutl's death-dealing powers and the drawing down of the mightier powers of Winalagilis into the dance house and the dancer. The power of the supernatural first possesses the ecstatic novice

in a dangerous and destructive way--as frenzied violence. Sisiutl acts as a medium of that power but also as a guiding presence, so that eventually the initiate is exorcised and cleansed and can function as a fully adult member of his or her society, capable of wielding Sisiutl weaponry with wisdom and control. Ritual echoes myth in war deity dances, in that Sisiutl may be both adversary and accomplice, slave and master. The chopping up of Sisiutl in duntsik form by the Tokwit dancer wielding Sisiutl weapons is a vivid, dramatic form of shamanic exorcism. One must employ a supernaturally charged weapon in order to destroy or expel a supernatural, and as with many psychic phenomena, controller and controllee shift back and forth across the slender line of mediumship.

As we have discussed, winter ceremonials appear to have evolved both structure and symbolism from an ancient shamanic base, through which is enacted an eternal crisis of transcendence--death and resurrection. The double-headed serpent's role in the Winalagilis ritual conforms to a universal shamanic system, a system whose fundamentals

...seem to be rooted in an ancient lifeway that reaches back well into the upper Paleolithic and that have corresponded to some very basic needs of the human psyche to have survived in different parts of the world over tens of thousands of years.³⁰¹

Although far outnumbered by Winter Ceremonial manifestations, shamanic double-headed serpents have been identified in collections of Northwest Coast art, and apparent precursors to the double-headed serpent have been seen to occur in vessels and petroglyphs associated with shamanic initiations. Sisiutl as self-transformer in myth and Sisiutl in material transformation masks significantly parallel the shamanic experience of transformation/transcendence. Also connected with shamanic experience is the double- or single-headed serpent as lightning bolt on the Northwest

Coast, since the lightning flash is symbolic of the shamanic revelation. "The swift flash of lightning rending the darkness has been given the value of a mysterium tremendum which, by transfiguring the world, fills the soul with holy terror."³⁰²

The vigorous production of Sisiutl images for secret society rather than shamanic use can be seen as further proof of the absorption of shamanic theory and practice into the more secular Winter Ceremonials before and during historic times. But in both shamanic and secret society rituals, the double-headed serpent is consistent as an image or agent of the rites of passage, initiation and transcendence, since the universal symbology of the skin-sloughing serpent as resurrection symbol is sustained in both contexts. Sisiutl qualifies as initiator/tutelary by its serpent-hood and by its double-headedness, both of which are symbolic of the shamanic powers of transcendence and mediation.³⁰³ Although we refuted the identification of the northern soul catcher as specifically "Sisiutl," we saw that its morphology and ambiguity are Sisiutl-like, allowing for an analogous intermediary role in shamanic healing.

Double-Headed Serpent and World Tree

As touched upon in our discussion of Northwest Coast totem poles, the serpent as Underworld power is complemented by the bird of the Upper World, through the agency and metaphor of the shamanic Tree of Life or World Tree. The "familiar totem-pole is at once the Center of the World, the Axis upon which the Universe turns, a Tree of Life, and, finally, symbolic vehicle of communication."³⁰⁴ As imaged on numerous Kwakiutl and Nuuchahnulth poles through Sisiutl or Haietlik and Thunderbird or Eagle, the serpent dwells among the Tree's roots and the bird perches at

its crown, and together they signify the shaman's or initiate's ecstatic experience of death and resurrection. In conjunction with the tree, serpent and bird symbolize "cosmic unity," the bird being an archaic symbol of the solar realm and the soul transcendent and the serpent, of chthonic darkness, but also resurrection, regeneration.³⁰⁵ Associated with shamanic ritual and power, apparently anticipating historic double-headed serpents, ancient bird-serpent-tree images have been identified in petroglyph art of the Northwest Coast. Although the bird-serpent configuration found on totem poles in historic times has traded a sacred shamanic intent for a more secular heraldic orientation, it may continue to function as a symbol of transcendence at a subliminal or subconscious level. The bird-serpent-tree conjunction still acts as a "cipher...[of] the world grasped as a living reality, sacred and inexhaustible."³⁰⁶

The bird-serpent opposition has also been located on exterior and interior cross-beams of the Kwakiutl, where it seems not only to declare social status but also to describe the mythic Sisiutl which functions as an architectural feature on the houses of the supernaturals. From a cross cultural perspective, the horizontal and overhead disposition of these crossbeams is further suggestive of other celestial serpents, such as the Sky Canopy serpent in pre-Columbian Mesoamerica, especially as found in the art and architecture of the Maya Indians.

Double-Headed Serpent Weaponry

As mentioned above, double- or single-headed serpents as lightning bolts can signify shamanic revelation. Again indicative of the profound integration of all aspects of Northwest Coast life and belief, however, is the lightning serpent's function as weapon or weapon adornment in both

warfare and hunting, actual and ritual. As Sisiutl or Haietlik, the lightning serpent is essential in the Thunderbird's hunt for the Whale. And where whaling is most significant on the Northwest Coast, that is, among the Nuu-chah-nulth, the lightning serpent motif is engraved on harpoon heads. Thus, while making visible ancestral claims to supernatural serpent encounters and serpent weaponry, these depictions may also bestow the speed and piercing qualities of the mythic lightning serpent upon functional tools. The integration of social display (serpent as crest image), religious impulse (prayers offered before and during the hunt), and sympathetic magic (serpent as allusion to supernatural weaponry) is characteristic. Boas recorded the impossibility of drawing a

...sharp line between prayers combined with symbolic actions and symbolic actions without prayer. These may be purely magical acts unaccompanied by any feelings of religious awe...The line between magic and religion is always fluid.³⁰⁷

Supernatural serpents on harpoon heads, clubs, knives, etcetera, also illuminate the Northwest Coast native concept of spirits inhabiting all things. As Bill Reid has observed, the careful carving or painting of images on weapons suggests a respect for and relatedness to the animals whose deaths the weapons will bring about.³⁰⁸

Again among the Nuu-chah-nulth, the hunting and warring aspects of the serpent are most noticeably meshed, as manifest in the visual and functional synonymy of wolf and serpent in Nuu-chah-nulth warrior rituals.

Although among the Nuu-chah-nulth, depictions of single- and double-headed serpents allude to the blade-like quality of Haietlik's snout (described in myth as being "sharp as a knife"³⁰⁹), among the Kwakiutl, greater attention is paid to the serpent's protruding tongue. Metaphorical tongues comprise the blades of Sisiutl knives used in the self-torture

rituals of the Hawin'alal dancers, and tongues are a particular focus in a number of ceremonial serpent weapons. It is not incidental that the protruding tongue is one of Sisiutl's diagnostic traits since, on the Northwest Coast, the tongue was regarded as "an instrument of power, voraciousness, and aggression...and...symbolized those qualities when depicted."³¹⁰ That the tip of the land otter's tongue was seen as particularly potent, especially in the context of shamanism, further enhances the apparent synonymy we observed between land otter and serpent in art and myth. Similarly, the serpent-wolf synonymy in Nuu-chah-nulth ritual is strengthened through the attributes of power, voraciousness and aggression common to those two creatures.

Wealth and Guardian Connotations of the Double-Headed Serpent

Sisiutl's tongue-flicking attributes are also incorporated into its role as the Symplegades-type guardian of the supernatural domain. As with other manifestations of Symplegades symbolism throughout the shamanic world (such as clashing rocks, colliding icebergs, snapping jaws), the Sisiutl doorway or housefront can be negotiated through a "trick" of either speed/instantaneousness (leaping through the doorway) or magic (subduing the Sisiutl with hellebore juice or blood from one's tongue). According to Coomaraswamy, the wide distribution of "Active Door" symbology (to which Sisiutl accommodates) is an indication of the motif's "prehistoric antiquity."³¹¹ The double-headed serpent on doorpost or house front can designate a division between realms, as is also true of serpents on the mawihls, which we saw used as sacred-profane partitions in Northwest Coast dance houses. More generally, the double-headed serpent functions as an

essential median between a number of fundamental oppositions. In the case of the shaman or mythic ancestor who negotiates the Active Door, the oppositions are reconciled by the understanding that has been achieved through initiation. The two heads of the supernatural serpent express the "polarity that necessarily characterizes any 'conditioned' world."³¹²

On the housefront of the treasure-filled dwelling of the giantess, Tsonokwa, Sisiutl is guardian or withholder of wealth. But true to its ambivalent form, Sisiutl is also the wealth bringer, and we have seen this allusion developed by its mythic and material elaborations as both treasure-filled canoe and potlatch feast dish. Not only is the feast dish obviously emblematic of the household which sponsors the feast, but it also specifically symbolizes a "canoe-load of food"³¹³ as it is presented to potlatch guests. Formally, the allusion is amplified by the probably skeuomorphic derivation of the giant feast dish from the canoe.

Most of Sisiutl's other wealth connotations have been identified above: its synonymy with the highly valued copper and its association with abalone shell; its identification with not only Tsonokwa but also Qomogwa, the sea chief whose name translates as "wealthy;"³¹⁴ and its repeated representation in potlatches and winter ceremonies in which wealth is ritually exchanged.

Serpent-Devourer Imagery

Double-headed serpent imagery compasses another duality as the agent of provender in its Kwakiutl feast-dish form versus its role as monstrous devourer. In myth, Sisiutl is described as voracious and seal-eating and, as mentioned above, Goldman and Locher have argued Sisiutl's thematic connection with Bakbakwalanooksiwae, the man-eating

spirit at the North End of the World.

The serpent, with his two mouths and his natural character of one who swallows creatures whole, is a devourer by implication...the imagery of devouring is so powerfully lodged in the Kwakiutl religious imagination that the double-headed serpent cannot escape it. Sisiutl is inevitably fused or else paired with Man Eater...³¹⁵

Although we showed that Sisiutl is only tenuously associated with the deity Bakbakwalanooksiwae (being much more directly associated with Winalagilis and his ritual), its devourer qualities are evident in art: long, open mouths, large teeth, protruding tongues. Sisiutl's connotative appetite parallels the legendary appetite of its northern variant, the woodworm which consumed so much food that it brought an entire village to the point of starvation. This parallel is made explicit by the formal features that northern woodworm representations share with Sisiutl representations (curled snout, addorsed heads on either side of a human head, horns) and the mention, in Tsimshian myth, that the monster woodworm was found to be two-headed.

Double-Headed Serpent as Sexual/Bisexual Image

Voraciousness is not the only thematic link between the northern woodworm and the double-headed serpent of the central and southern regions. Equally compelling is the association between supernatural serpent and pubescent female. As mentioned, the connection between serpent and fertility in the south is implicit in the serpent's depiction on Nuu-chah-nulth "menstrual" boards and in the central region, on Kwakiutl marriage boards. It is explicit in both the mythology and crest art of the north, in which the secluded princess is seen to suckle the worm until it has grown into

a ravaging, community-threatening monster. (Another typically Northwest Coast paradox here is present in the juxtaposition of nurturing and destroying.)

The serpent-fertility metaphor is even more powerfully developed among the Kwakiutl in the world renewing dramas of the winter ceremonials (held over the period of Winter Solstice). In the Winalagilis ritual, the serpent operates out of a fertility-war opposition, which also bespeaks its bisexuality. Although the ceremonials accruing to Winalagilis are largely masculine in orientation, a strong element of women's sacralities is also present. The Tokwit dancer, whom we have described as the most dramatic participant in the series, is a woman. She engages in a number of acts of pseudo-violence against herself, including the enactment of her own death, her resurrection, and her battle with Sisiutl (in the form of duntsik boards). As a woman warrior, she is a ritual androgyne, perhaps modelled after the greater, hermaphroditic serpent (whose image of two-headedness, of universal bisexuality, achieves a kind of "perfection...a unity-totality"³¹⁶). Other ritual androgynes connected with Sisiutl are the male warrior dancers, Si'lis and Mamaka, whose performances were discussed above. The vomiting up of the serpent by the Si'lis dancer and of blood by the Mamaka dancer is not only a dramatic inversion of the serpent-as-devourer image, but is also a startling image of the paradox of bisexuality. Through their ritual birth-giving, the male dancers enact one of woman's greatest prerogatives and mysteries, thus augmenting their own magico-religious powers. That the Sisiutl incorporates a scheme of fertility and childbirth together with aggression and death again enforces its powerful duality, and elucidates the shamanic logic which sees opposites as equivalent and thus interchangeable.

Form Symbology

As discussed in Chapter 3, a symbolical structure in art is discernible through the formal and technical elements which comprise style. Duff speaks of the "system of inner logic which resides in the style and in the internal structure of individual works of art."³¹⁷ The double-headed serpent (especially Sisiutl) is in art an emphatic formal restatement of its character in myth. Both the extended tongues of the two serpent heads (and often of the central human head) and the central "en face" human head visually reiterate the powers which are known to be Sisiutl's through legend. Further, the Northwest Coast storyteller's inclination toward paradox and the Northwest Coast artist's fondness for split representation are both realized in Sisiutl's diagnostic traits-- those essential features by which the viewer first apprehends, then comprehends, the image. Since the art of the Northwest Coast is "an arena for abstract thinking...a self-conscious system for diagramming logical paradoxes,"³¹⁸ the split representation intrinsically embodied by Sisiutl must certainly function on an iconographic and iconological plane, above and beyond any expedient design intentions. The essential split of Sisiutl in art augments what we have seen to be its male/female, creator/destroyer, benefactor/malefactor, guardian/intermediary roles.

Shamanic ideology, the root of Northwest Coast social and religious systems, can also be seen as the source of the "urge to abstraction"³¹⁹-- that is, the impetus for abstracting concept into form through art. The shamanic healing vocation is thus also evoked by Sisiutl's morphology. Like the ancient Greek caduceus, to which it appears to be formally related, Sisiutl can signify a metaphysical homeopathy. The symmetrically

opposed serpent heads between which a human head is eternally suspended create an explicit image of psychic and physical equilibrium, the same equilibrium which is evoked by some of the northern soul catchers which we surveyed.

Sisiutl's central human face also may be an image of the "boundary situation...which man discovers in becoming conscious of his place in the universe..."³²⁰ The activity of distinguishing between opposing principles is a human one, and the boundary or limit "that simultaneously unites and divides the contraries,"³²¹ is of human construction. The familiar humanity of Sisiutl's central face is a reminder that our immediate and personal experience of duality is projected onto an absolute system through symbol and that our symbols organize our world "along lines congruent with" the experience of our own conflicting feelings.³²²

We spoke of split representation as a possible development out of the paleo-hunter's experience of skinning animals; we can extend that analogy further to the symbolic actions of skinning and wrapping, that is, of flaying and enveloping. Not only is Sisiutl in art an intrinsically split image, but Sisiutl in myth is often characterized as a belt--a wrap-around skin. Thunderbird's belt, the belts of privileged ancestors and, as enacted in historic ceremonies, the belts of secret society initiates are all split and enveloping images. This wrapping or enveloping role is seen again in Sisiutl feast dishes, which are both physical and metaphorical containers for food. Again there are visual reiterations in art of Sisiutl's nature in myth: as Goldman writes, a food container signifies a "form soul"³²³ for the slain animal being consumed. Form soul implications also work explicitly through northern soul catchers--which can operate as serpent surrogates. Pre-historic precursors to the

the historic double-headed serpent also conform to the containing or enveloping notion, since many of them appear on or around ritual vessels or bowls.

Variations on the conventional, horizontal disposition of the double-headed serpent in art extend its iconological range. Graphic representations of Kwakiutl, Nuu-chah-nulth and Salishan serpents may be arranged in circular or mandala fashion on drums, housefronts, screens and spindle whorls, bringing with them all the psychic force of the primordial circle. Furthermore, serpents on Salishan spindle whorls possess other universal traits: as Uroborus-like World Serpents, they encircle the globe of the spindle whorl and swallow their own tails, and they can also be seen as heraldically flanking displayed human figures. (Recall the image of the heraldically flanked, displayed female, traced by Fraser from the Old World to the New.³²⁴)

The large U-shape which can be projected from the many fragments and the solitary whole example of Kwakiutl (and Kwakiutl-Salish) duntsik boards appears to reiterate the popular "split U" decorative device found within the Northwest Coast northern graphic tradition. Although difficult to define symbolically, the U-shape obviously appeals to the Northwest Coast artist's style sense--which leads us to the concept of enhancing utilitarian or ceremonial function through aesthetic means, such as beauty of design and accomplishment of finish. Recently, scholars and contemporary artists working in the Northwest Coast tradition have begun to broach the notion of a connoisseurship aspect to the manufacture and reception of those native objects which formerly have been designated by anthropologists as wholly functional. Whether or not this view is a by-product of acculturation is not the province of this thesis, but it

should be noted that on the Northwest Coast, the impulse to beautify and the impulse to enhance one's status through material display were and are complementary. An accomplished aesthetic is integral to the social and, by extension, religious efficacy of an object, and is thus integral to its symbolic function.

During historic times, when fur-trade wealth stimulated the demand for both ritual and utilitarian objects, a concomitant need for elaborating and expanding existing myths and legends was also felt. Both proliferating material culture and burgeoning ceremonial culture fed off and into an increasingly complex oral tradition, and all three were reviewed constantly by an exacting and critically perceptive audience. With the exception of some articles produced for white consumption, native aesthetic criteria were not sacrificed during this hectic period.

The Double-Headed Serpent as Dragon.

That the double-headed serpent is a peculiar breed of dragon has suggested itself to us throughout this study. The dragon, essentially an elaborated serpent, is a symbol that has penetrated numerous cultures through history and across the world, and in many cultures, dragon and serpent are formally and conceptually interchangeable. The dragon belongs to that "large body of cultural material" encountered over wide stretches of time and space and "best subsumed" by the expression "archetypal image."³²⁵ Its origins may be lost and its meaning may be complex and diffuse, but it is always suggestive of great and ambivalent supernatural power. The universality of the dragon as symbol is not necessarily a "what," which may vary from place to place and time to time, but rather a "how." The double-headed serpent on the Northwest Coast manifests both

physical traits (curled snout, protruding tongue, horns or plumes, magical scales) and psychical characteristics (discussed below) which align it with dragons worldwide and which suggest either an early diffusion of a significant prototype or a universal human need to assert these features in dragon form--or both.

We earlier described Sisiutl's Gorgon-like traits, its glance that can kill, contort, or petrify the unwary. That the Greek Gorgon Medusa, a "curious kind of dragon,"³²⁶ is part human and part serpent (serpents radiating from its human head) stimulates another comparison with the Kwakiutl Sisiutl. Other human-serpent hybrids are seen in Chinese, Egyptian, Babylonian and early Christian art, and frightful as all these dragons may be in their fantastic entirety, their composite parts seem necessarily grounded in prosaic experience--the recognizable.

As in western myths in which the hero-slayer of the dragon acquires some of its attributes,³²⁷ the Northwest Coast warrior or hunter can also derive supernatural talents and apotropaic powers from the serpent he has overcome. By either a divinely inspired trick or superhuman burst of strength or speed, human ancestors of Northwest Coast native may have acquired the serpent's hide as protective belt, its blood as armour, its scale as weapon. The same qualities of power/speed and magic/strategem have long served the dragon-slaying heroes of numerous occidental legends (such as Jason, Perseus and Murgis). Dragon-slayers of Graeco-Roman, Nordic and European legend are often rewarded with the treasure which the monster hoards and protects, and the Northwest Coast double-headed serpent as guardian of wealth again accommodates to this dragon scheme.

As Eliade writes, the theme of the swallowing monster is an insistent one through initiation rites worldwide.³²⁸ It is also a feature of

much dragon lore, as in the swallowing and disgorging of Jason, Jonah and St. Margaret. In the Kwakiutl myth of the origin of the Koskimo people, Sisiutl is associated with a devouring monster, but in inverse form, as the agent of protection and disgorgement. In another such inversion of the archetype, the ritual of Si'lis, who himself disgorges the serpent, is one in which the paradox of swallowing and expelling is also an image of death and rebirth, an enactment of bisexuality. The serpent/dragon, Locher says, "is the bisexual power which contains life, but as master of death...is also the dreaded enemy of life."³²⁹ The voraciousness-fertility opposition, as embraced in Tlingit, Tsimshian and Haida myths of princess and woodworm, is seen in Graeco-Roman and Christian legends of dragons threatening and devouring maidens, and is associated with heroes like Perseus, Ruggiero, Lancelot and St. George. The fertility connotation of dragons/serpents was profoundly developed in China and Mesoamerica, where the dragon/serpent symbolized the phenomenon of rainfall and was also associated with wells, springs or pools. On the Northwest Coast, we saw that the supernatural serpent might dwell in a pool in the Upper World, might create riverbeds by its travels through the earthly realm, or might provide the sources of rivers through the burying of its magical scales.

The theme of a tiny worm which grows into a monstrous serpent is not exclusive to the northern Northwest Coast; worm aspects of dragons abound in Chinese lore and are found in English folk tales, such as that of the Lambton worm. Curiously and distantly paralleling northern Northwest Coast carvings of the maiden suckling the woodworm is a twelfth-century German manuscript illumination which depicts a young woman nursing two serpents (see Figure 59). Again, the dragon/serpent-fertility asso-

ciation is powerfully explicit.

The double-headed serpent/dragon cannot be made to conform to a single function or disposition. As Underwater or Underworld numen and skin-sloughing or self-renewing supernatural, it images the regenerative principles of nature, in continuous and dualistic opposition to its potentially destructive aspects.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS

The double-headed serpent has been seen to function as a profoundly integrative image within a system of profoundly integrated social and religious impulses. Most popular as a crest image among the Southern Kwakiutl, the double-headed serpent appeared, in our survey, on tools, weapons, vessels, totem poles, architectural fixtures, and ceremonial accessories. It was observed to be a principal image in Kwakiutl winter ceremonials where it represents Winalagilis, the deity of war, and where it marks, both materially and metaphorically, periods of critical transition. The hazardous journey from childhood to adulthood which the secret society novice undertakes parallels his community's passage from the profane summer season to the supernaturally charged season of winter festivals. Both individual and group transition take place at or around the time of winter solstice, when the sun descends into and then ascends out of darkness--a solar enactment of the death and resurrection drama of initiation. From the evidence of both pre- and post-contact art and of the archaic symbology of the double-headed serpent, we may conclude that shamanism was the earliest Northwest Coast context for the image, from which its later heraldic circumstances evolved.

Although our researches could not hope to uncover the original (possibly trans-Pacific) source of the double-headed serpent, we could conclude a pre-contact, aboriginal seat for the image in the southern region of the Northwest Coast. We found proof of this assertion in the precursory nature of the split-serpent, sea-serpent, bird-serpent and

dragon-type imagery of the ancient stone art of the Fraser Canyon and southern Vancouver Island, as well as in the 450-year-old double-headed serpent which was excavated at Ozette. We have seen that elements of ritual, style and image were traded as virtual objects among all the Northwest Coast peoples, whose separate tribal cultures were enriched significantly by this "borrowing and mutual inspiration."³³⁰ We also have seen, in the evolution of winter ceremonials and the adoption of the Northern Graphic style, that the Kwakiutl were an especially eclectic and determined people, eager to enhance their prestige and elaborate their crests and dramas by whatever means and forms were available, and also able to preserve their art and ritual against the onslaught of the modern age. It is not surprising, therefore, to find a predominance of Sisiutl samples out of all the single- and double-headed serpents surveyed in the historic art and mythology of the Northwest Coast. The numerous Sisiutls encountered establish what initially appeared to be the case--that the double-headed serpent was realised most fully within the cultural boundaries of the Kwakiutl. Our survey showed, further, that north of the Kwakiutl area, diffusion of the double-headed serpent was limited and modified, adapted to other mythological and faunal forms, and that along the southern coast, serpent imagery was somewhat vitiated by the time of contact and was only latterly revived and reinforced by the exuberant impact of late nineteenth-century Kwakiutl art.

Out of the material evidence surveyed, as judged against established formal principles, we also conclude that the double-headed serpent migrated into Kwakiutl territory in a two-dimensional form, a form which possibly had evolved from splitting an earlier serpentine form. As we have emphasized, Sisiutl intrinsically incorporates the dynamic of split representa-

tion, and it is the sole creature or personage out of the entire Northwest Coast pantheon to do so. That is, the Northwest Coast artist's convention of splitting and abstracting a three-dimensional form to accommodate it to a two-dimensional ground is redundant when applied to Sisiutl, an essentially split and two-dimensional image. Because of this inherent two dimensionality, Sisiutl adapts to house fronts, drums, boxes and screens with graphic ease and without the distortion or displacement of any of its parts. Even in its most deeply sculptural form, on Kwakiutl feast dishes, Sisiutl adheres to the flayed-skin metaphor, the wrap-around or enveloping entity. In Kwakiutl art, the double-headed serpent inverts the technical convention: it works up to three rather than down to two dimensions.

Rather than being superficially and simply a design prerogative, split imagery appears to function on an iconological plane for a Paleo-hunting people. The animal-skin metaphor which has been applied to split representation may also be applied to the double-headed serpent. Thus, through its form and style metaphysic, the split image is symbolically consonant with the split imagery by which it is displayed. Sisiutl's intrinsic split is especially remarkable in the context of the transformation mask, as if the necessity for the transformation mask had been dictated by Sisiutl's peculiar morphology. What in any other representation would be negative space in the open interior of the transformation mask is, in Sisiutl's case, fully and positively occupied by Sisiutl's diagnostic parts.

Whether Sisiutl's central human face was a formal elaboration effected by a Kwakiutl artist (here we should recall the Northwest Coast stylistic convention of inserting faces into unclaimed spaces) or was part

of a pre-formed image when it came into Kwakiutl territory remains uncertain. Nevertheless, the human head interposed between twin serpents creates a morphology which is symbolically replete for the Kwakiutl people. If, as Eliade says, religious symbols have the capacity "for expressing paradoxical situations or certain structures of ultimate reality, otherwise quite inexpressible,"³³¹ the Kwakiutl Sisiutl is the most emphatic, audacious and extroverted of such religious symbols on the Northwest Coast. Its diagnostic morphology is more blatantly paradoxical, more vehemently dualistic, than that of any comparable crest motif from this area. It is this audaciousness which appears to account for Sisiutl's great appeal and success among the Kwakiutl, whose art and ritual we have seen to be flamboyant and, at times, histrionic. The immediacy of Sisiutl's impact, the forceful expressiveness of its formal components, in addition to its capacity to resonate on many levels, to be symbolically multivalent, have ensured its honorable and enduring place in Kwakiutl culture.

The double-headed serpent functions as a "figure of thought"³³² for a whole complex of interconnected reciprocities and antitheses. In those artifacts which bear double-headed serpent images, as in those myths which reveal the workings of the double-headed serpent, conceptual dualisms are manifest in structural and formal dualisms. Function is constantly reiterated--enhanced--by form. Double-headedness reinforces the serpent's many polarized emanations: male/female, creator/destroyer, peril/apotropaic, benefactor/malefactor, guardian/intermediary, transformer/self-transformer. That the double-headed serpent can be the warrior's assistant, the hunter's weapon, the shaman's tutelary spirit, the formal and symbolic synonym to

other potent creatures, and--in a world scheme--a dragon, communicates to us both its success as a symbol and the impossibility of isolating or concretizing a single meaning for it. The double-headed serpent is about paradoxes, puns, "bundles of meanings."³³³

The double-headed serpent as symbol on the Northwest Coast contributes substantially to a cosmological concept, a revelation of the world. As a comprehensive image, the double-headed serpent gives form and coherence to that human impulse which seeks to reconcile opposing principles, to transcend polarities, and, ultimately, to achieve what it is religious symbols seek to achieve--"order, balance, mediation, wisdom."³³⁴

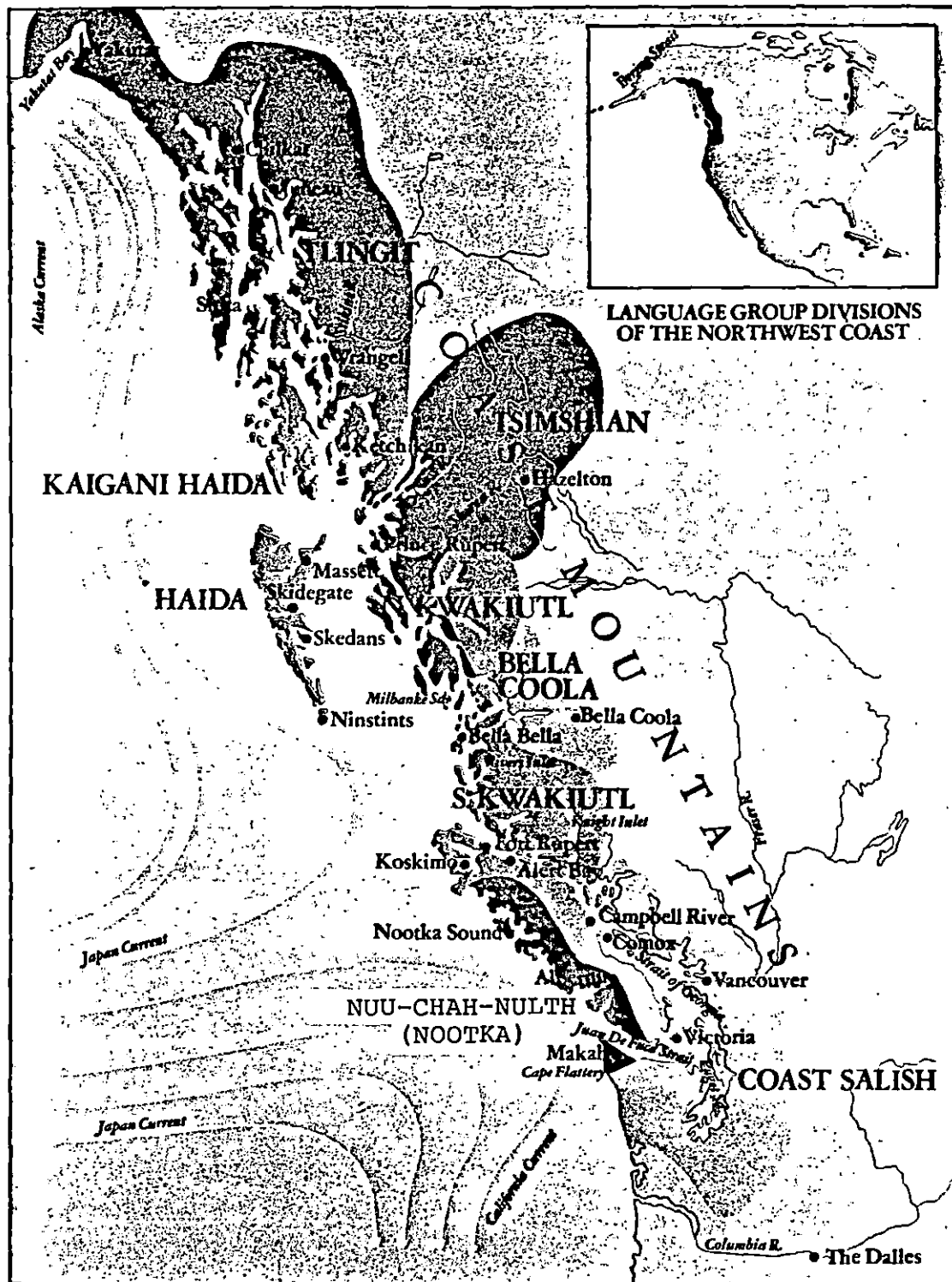


Figure 1

Language Group Divisions
of the Northwest Coast

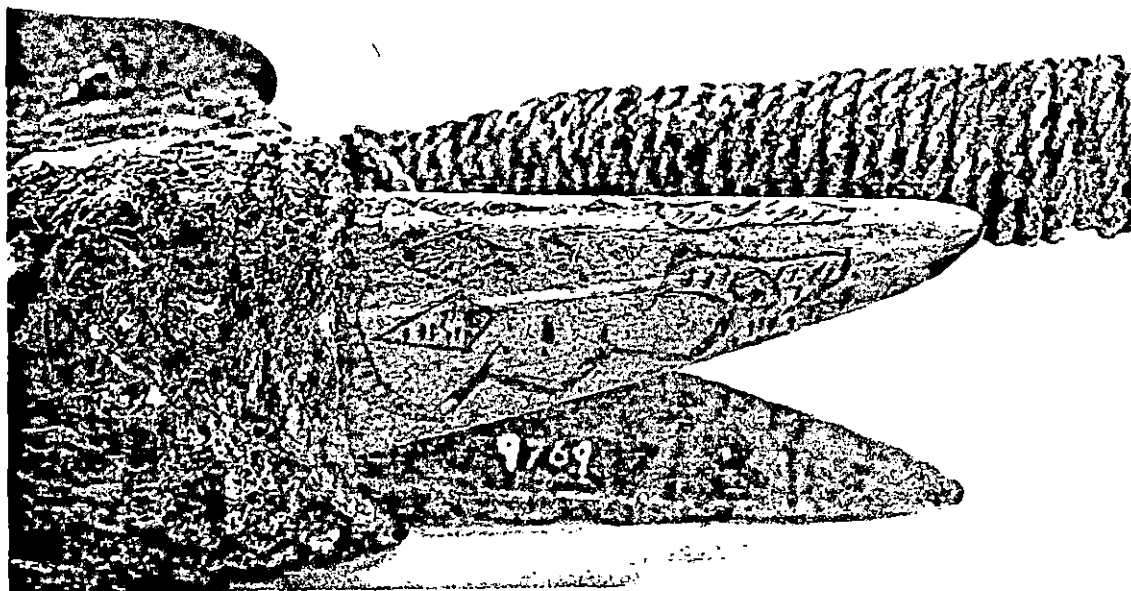


Figure 2

Nuu-chah-nulth Harpoon Valve
(Ucluelet)



Figure 3

Kwakiutl Bark Chopper

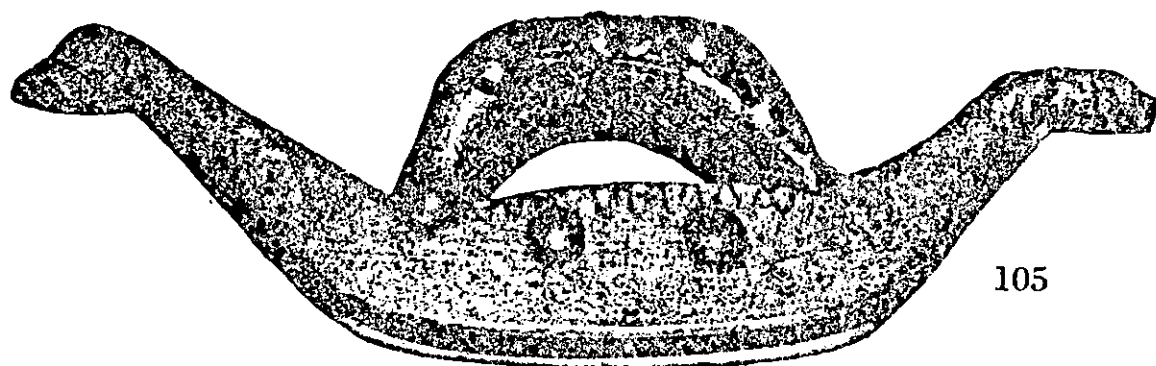


Figure 4

Coast Salish Mat Creaser
(East Vancouver Island)



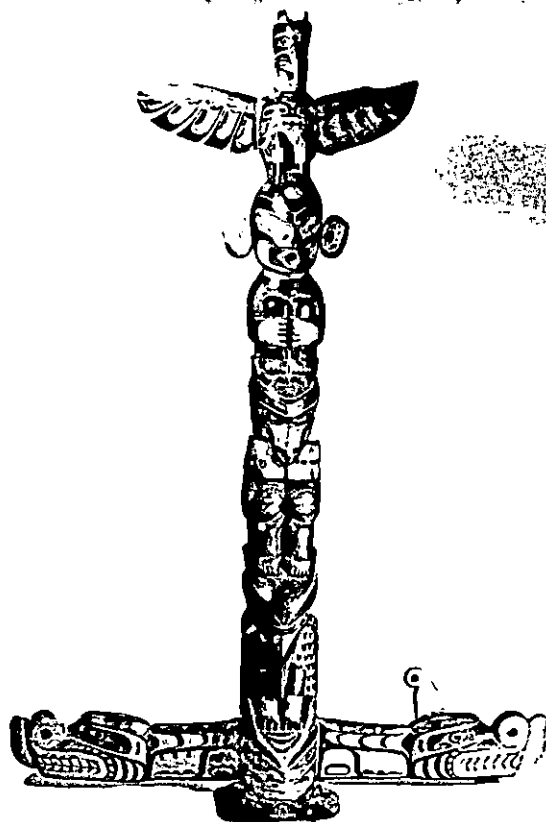
Figure 5

Coast Salish Spindle Whorl
(Cowichan)



Figure 6

Kwakiutl "Totem" Pole
(Echo Bay)



AA595.

Figure 7

Kwakiutl Miniature Totem Pole
Carved by Mungo Martin
(Fort Rupert)

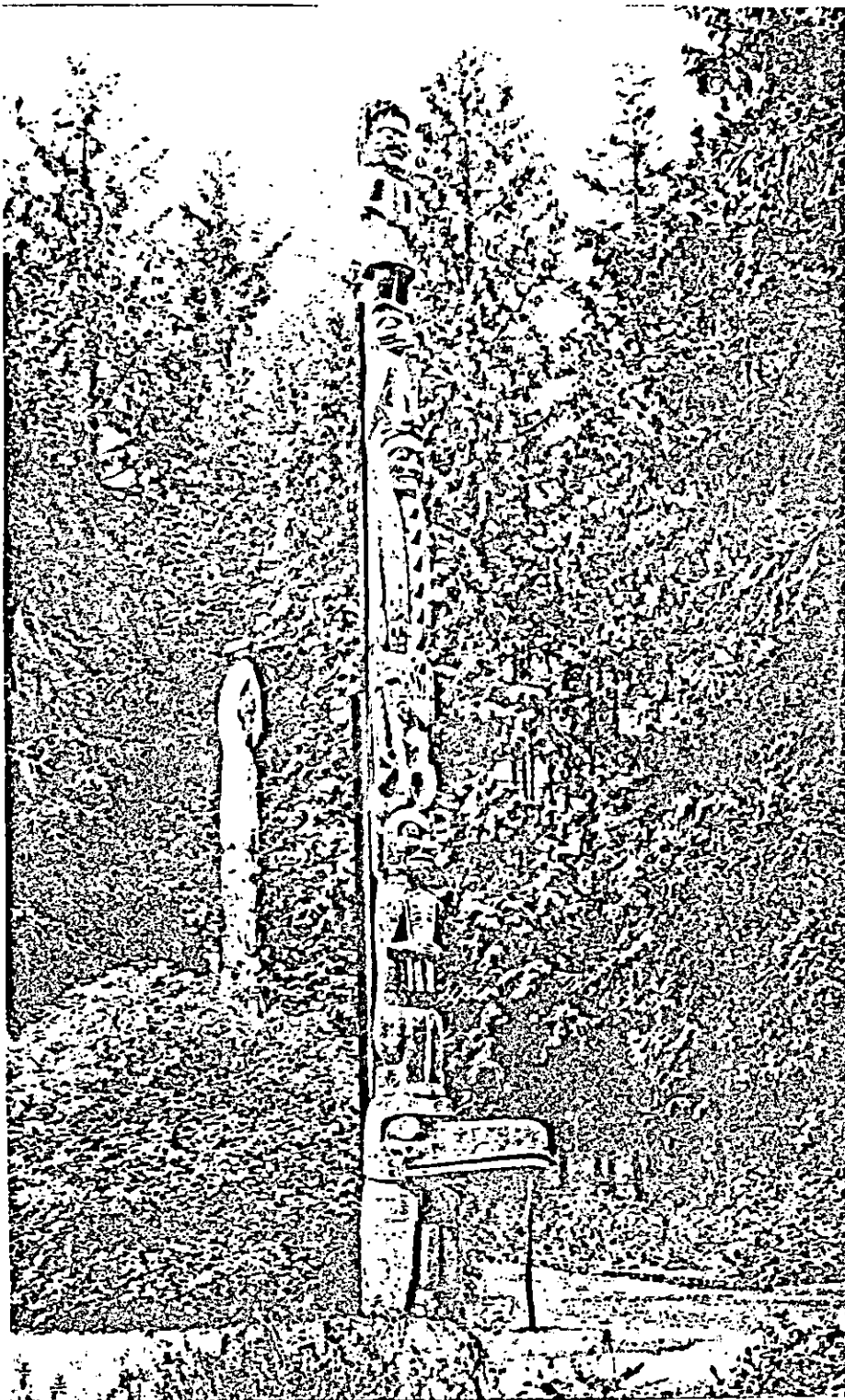


Figure 8

Kwakiutl Pole Carved by Charlie James
(Fort Rupert)

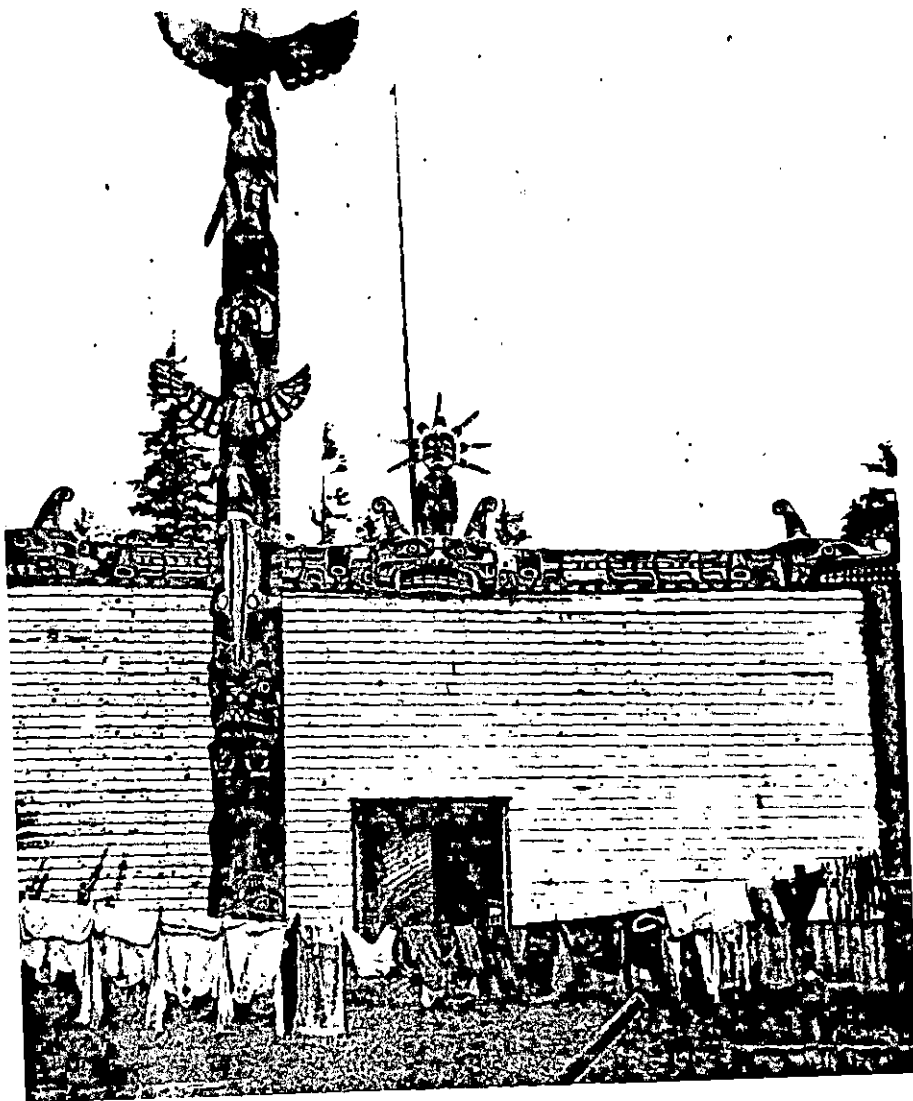


Figure 9

Kwakiutl House Front with
Sisiutl Cross Beam
(Memquamlees)

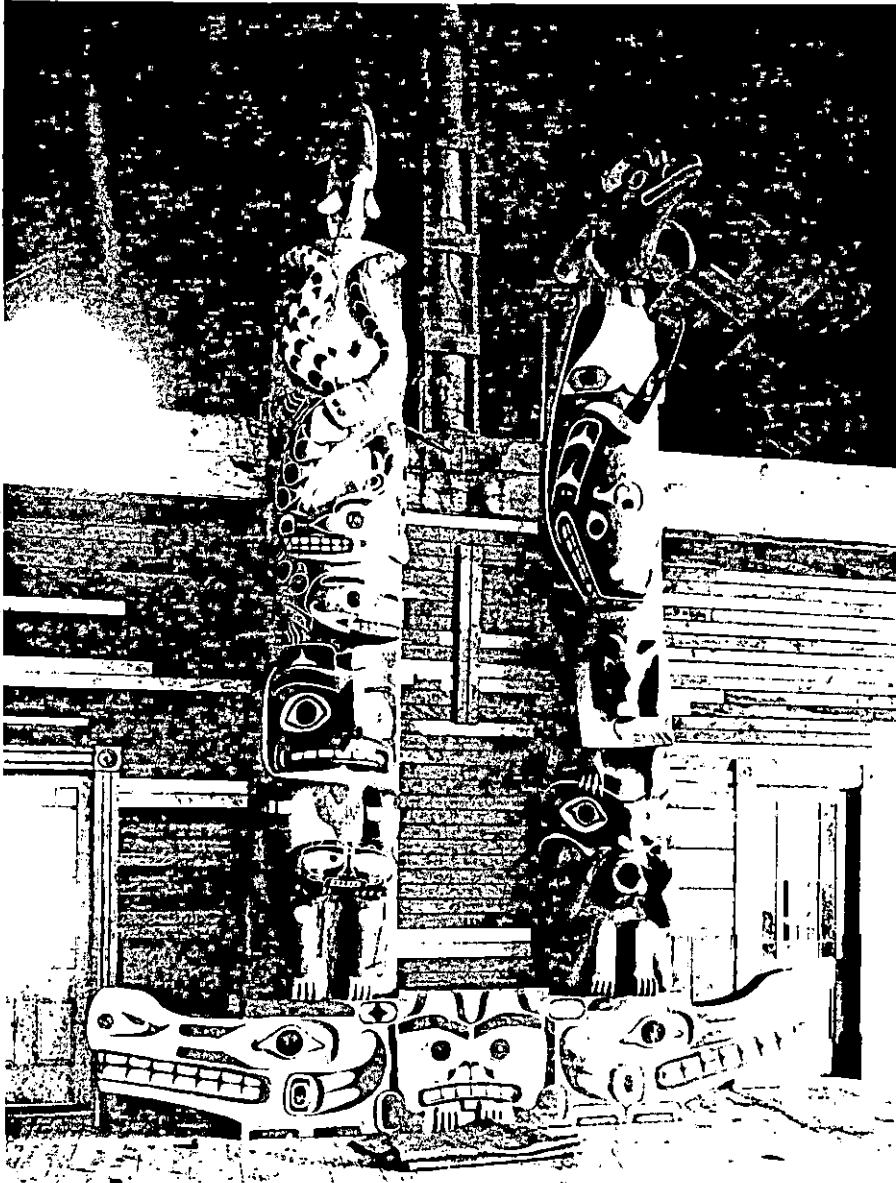


Figure 10

Captain Jack's Inside House Posts
(Friendly Cove)



Figure 11
Coast Salish House Post
(Cowichan)



Figure 12
Tlingit Housepost
(Klukwan)

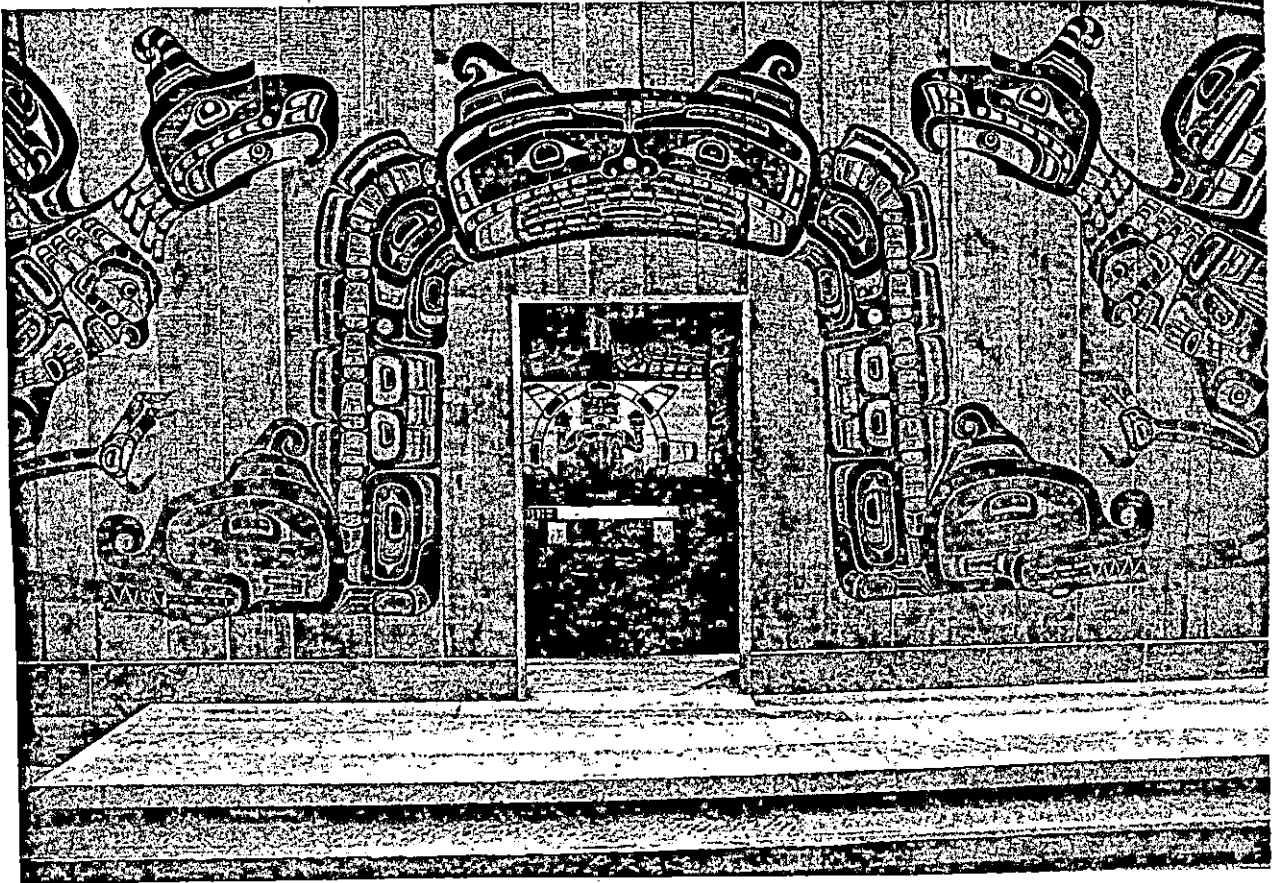


Figure 13

Kwakiutl House Front
Hunt Family Crest
(BCPM)



Figure 14

Nuu-chah-nulth Painted Panel
(Moohoulth)



Figure 15

Nuu-chah-nulth Painted Panel
(Moohoulth)

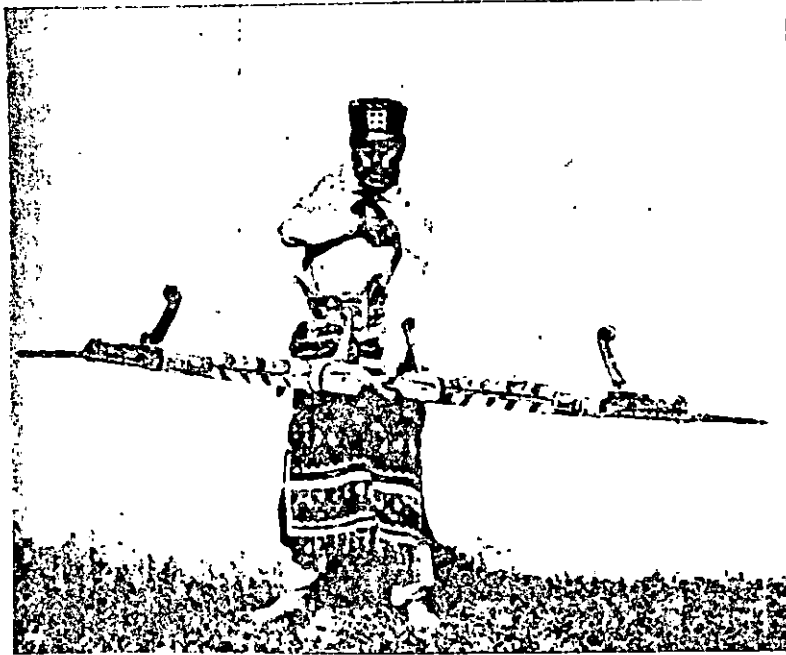


Figure 16

Chief of the Haa'nalino Clan
Dancing with Ceremonial Bow

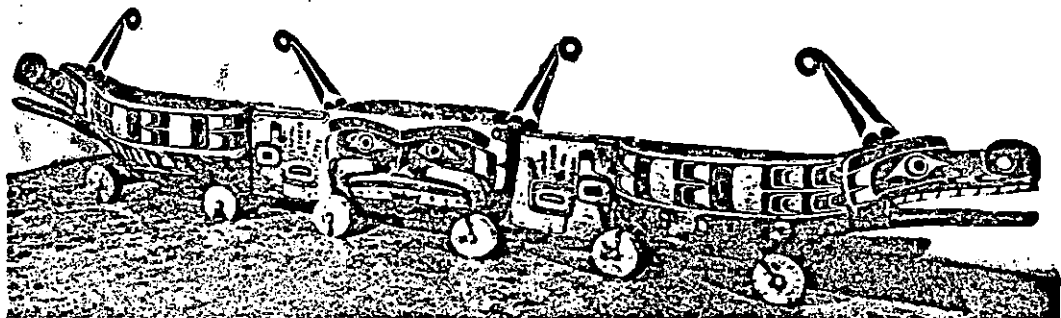


Figure 17

Kwakiutl Feast Dish Attributed to Charlie James
(Turnour Island)

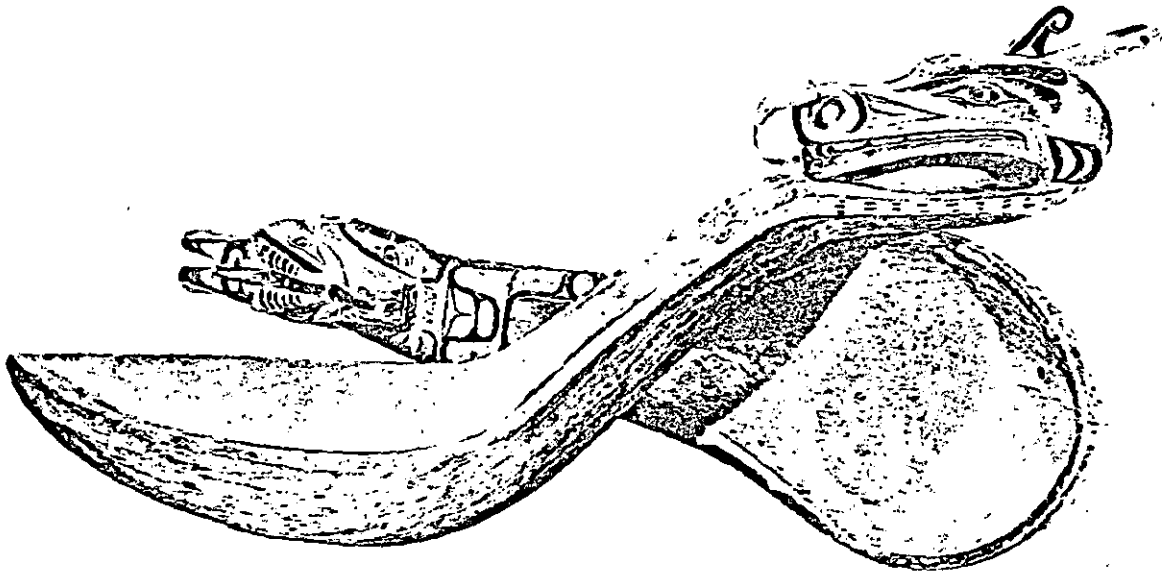


Figure 18
Kwakiutl Feast Ladles



Figure 19
Kwakiutl Settee Carved by Willie Seaweed

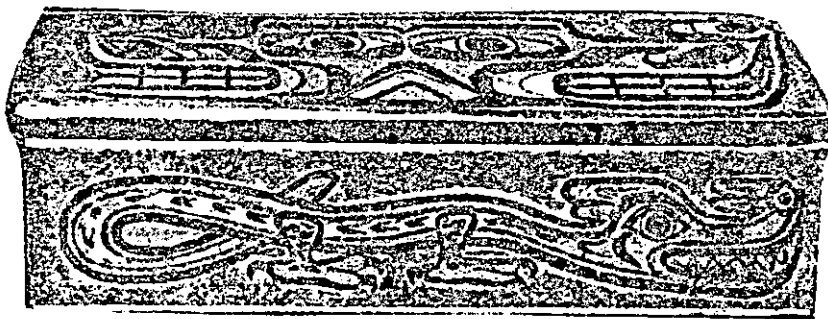


Figure 20
Coast Salish or Nuu-chah-nulth Chest

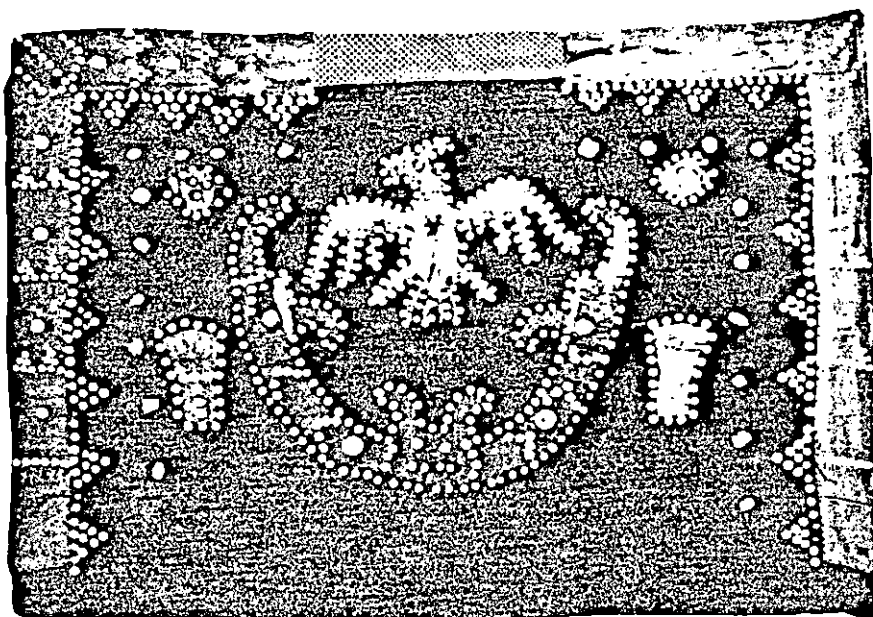


Figure 21

Kwakiutl Button Cloak
(Fort Rupert)

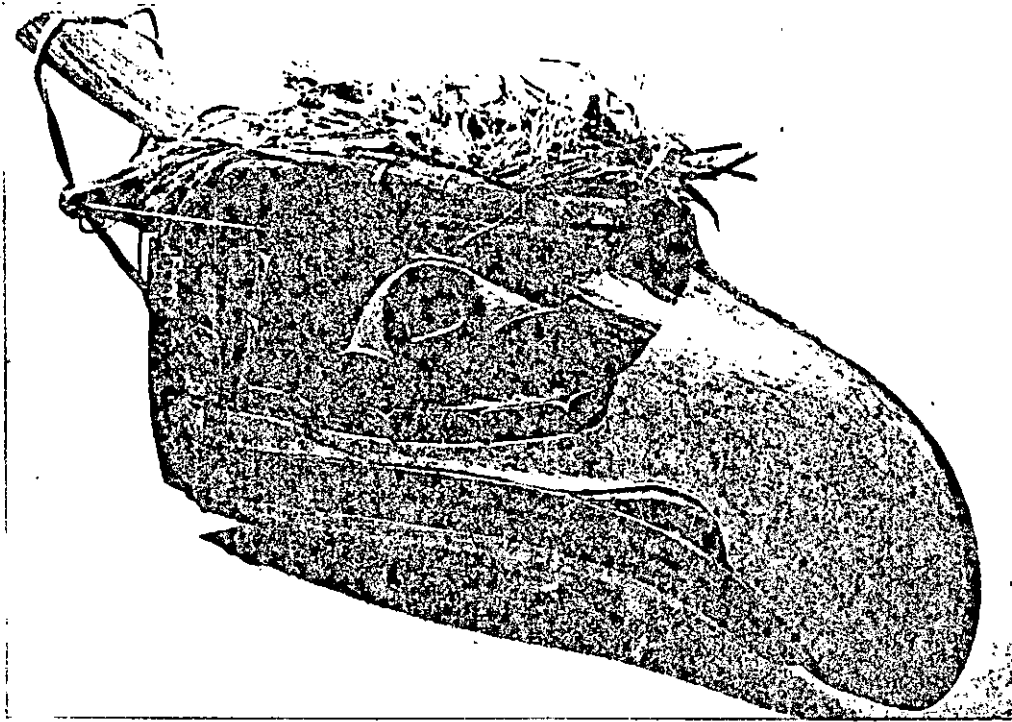


Figure 22

Kwakiutl Transformation Mask
Closed Aspect
(Kingcome Inlet)

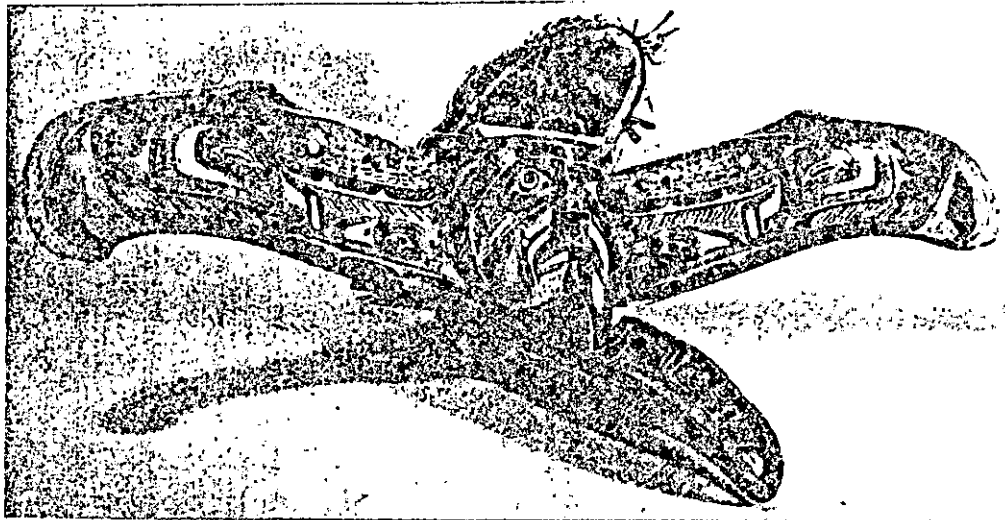


Figure 23

Kwakiutl Transformation Mask
Open Aspect
(Kingcome Inlet)

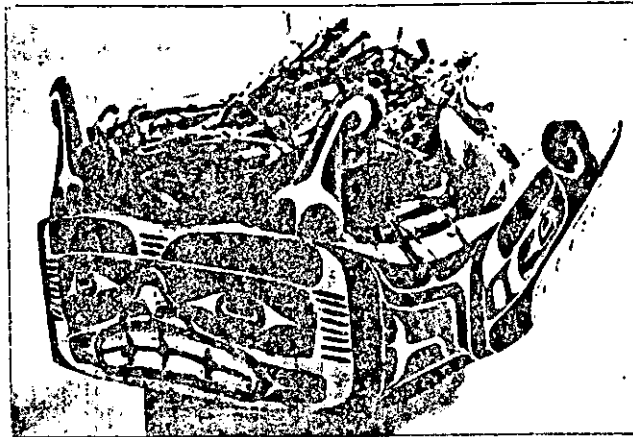


Figure 24

Kwakiutl Headdress Carved by Dick Price
(Fort Rupert)

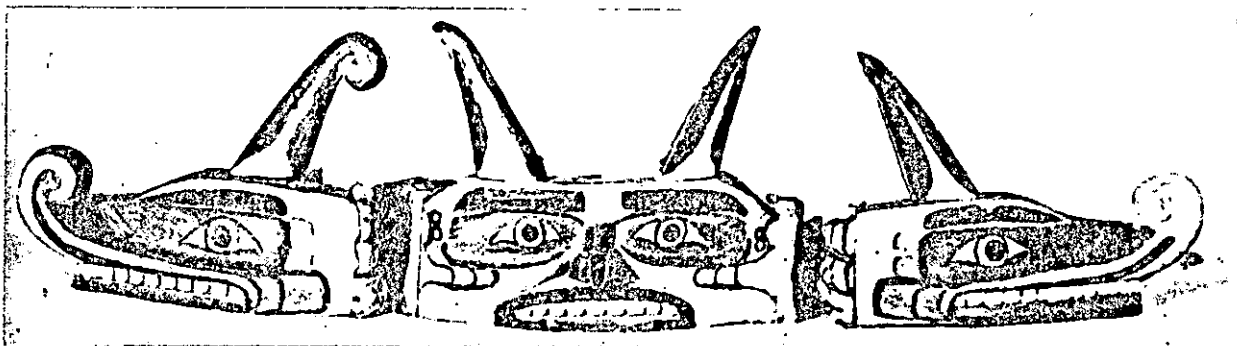


Figure 25

Kwakiutl Ceremonial Belt
(Alert Bay)

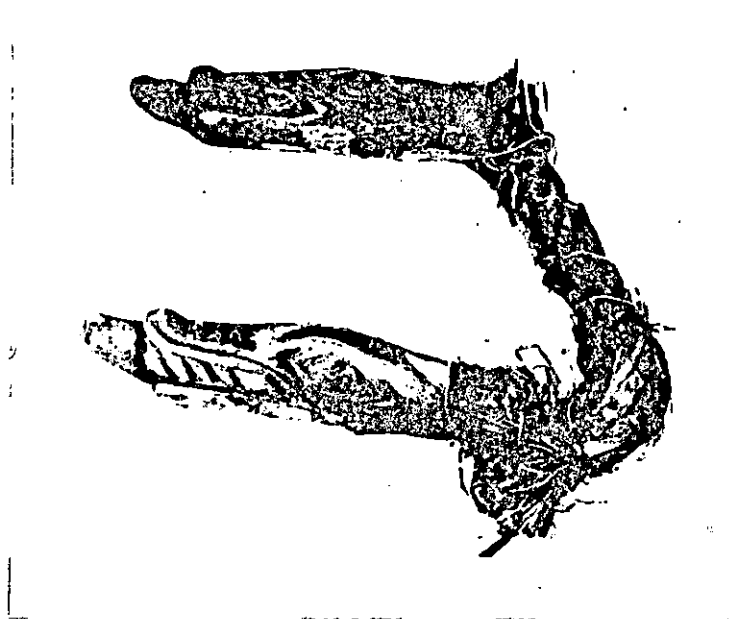


Figure 26

Kwakiutl Ceremonial Neck Ring
(Simoom Sound)



Figure 27

Kwakiutl Club
(Kingcome Inlet)



Figure 28

Kwakiutl Ceremonial Bow
(Alert Bay)



Figure 29

Kwakiutl "Puppet"

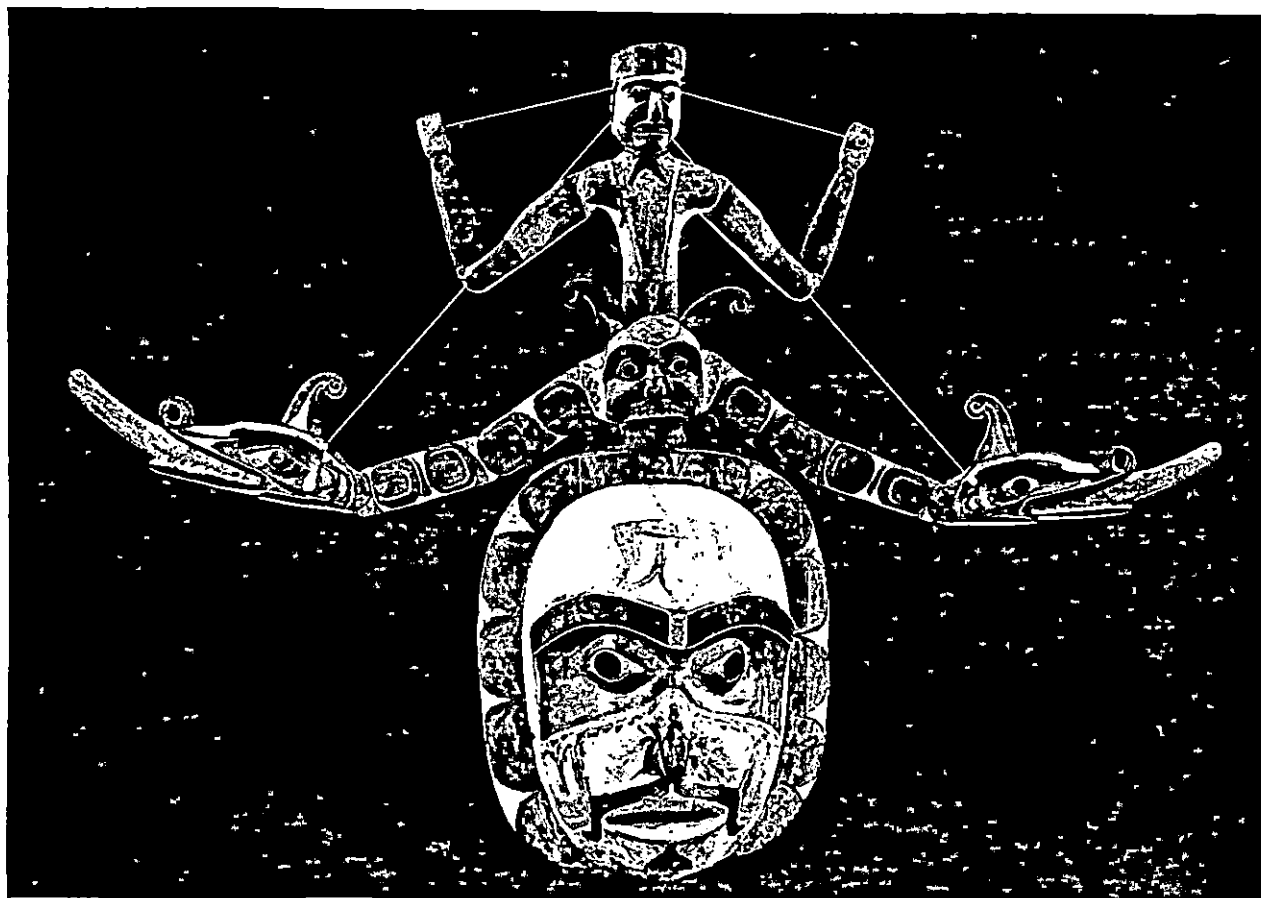


Figure 30

Kwakiutl Sun Mask Surmounted by Sisiutl
(Tlaoitsis)

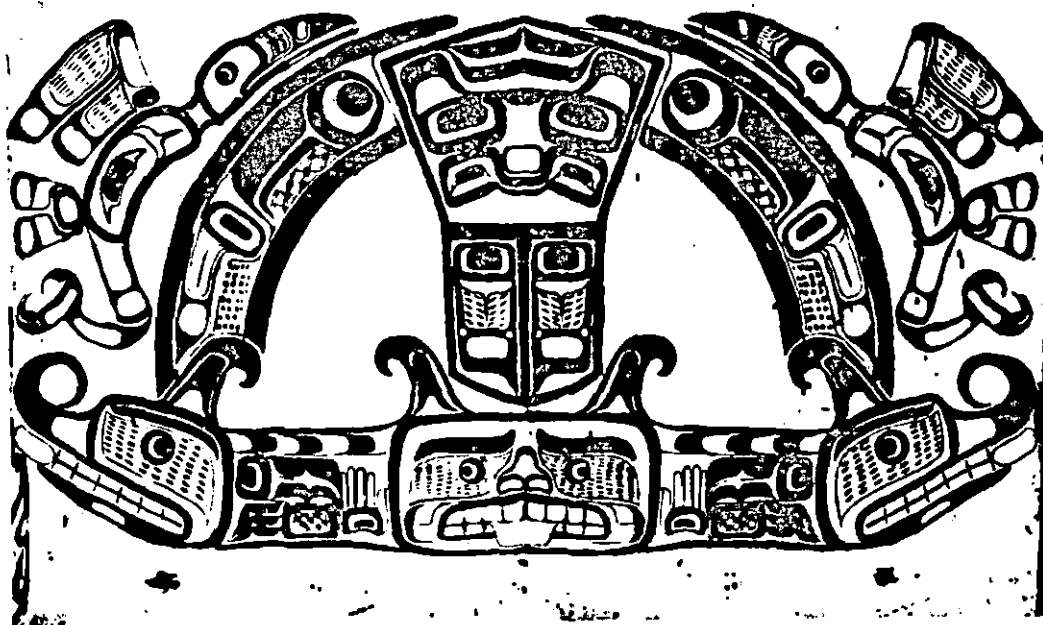


Figure 31

Kwakiutl Mawihl/Ceremonial Curtain
(Fort Rupert or Kingcome Inlet)

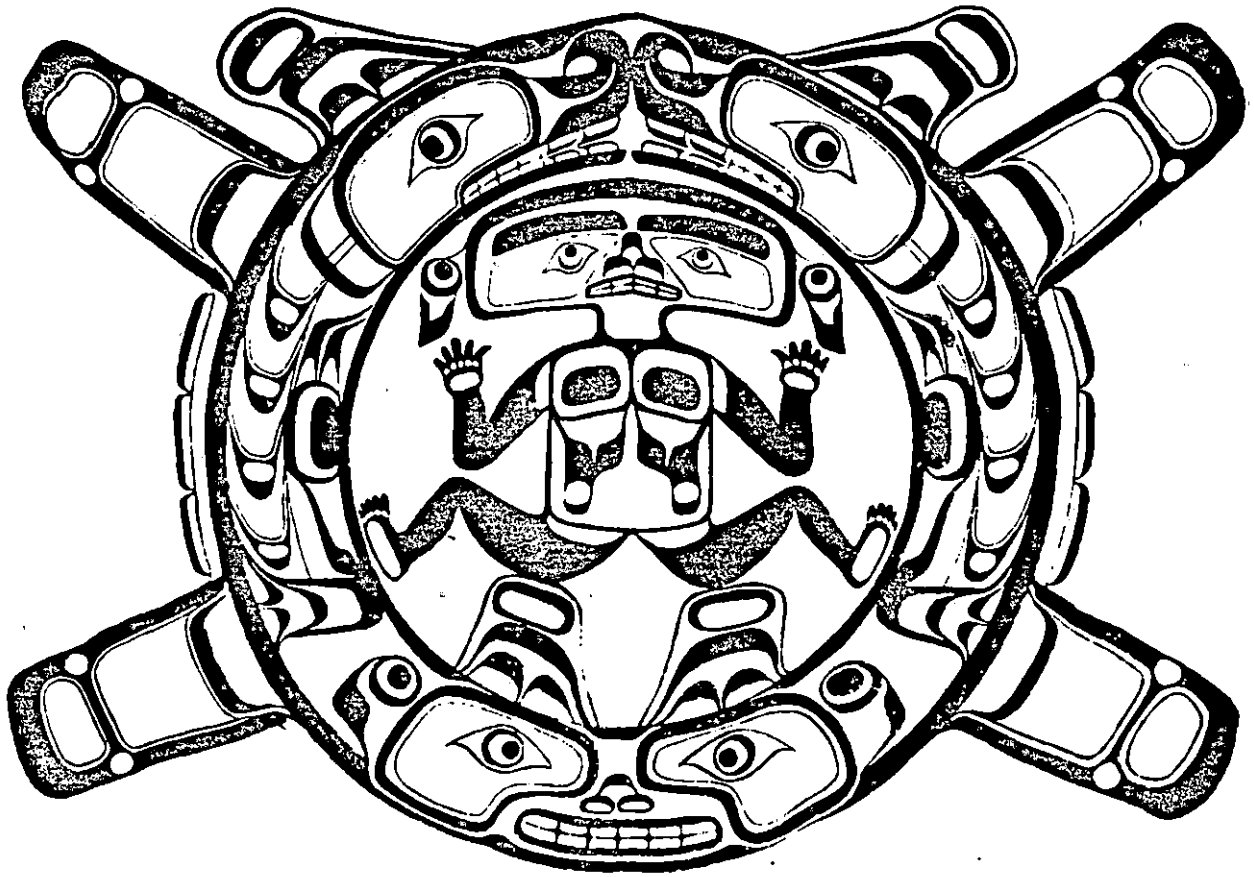


Figure 32

Kwakiutl Mawihl/Ceremonial Curtain
(Kingcome Inlet)

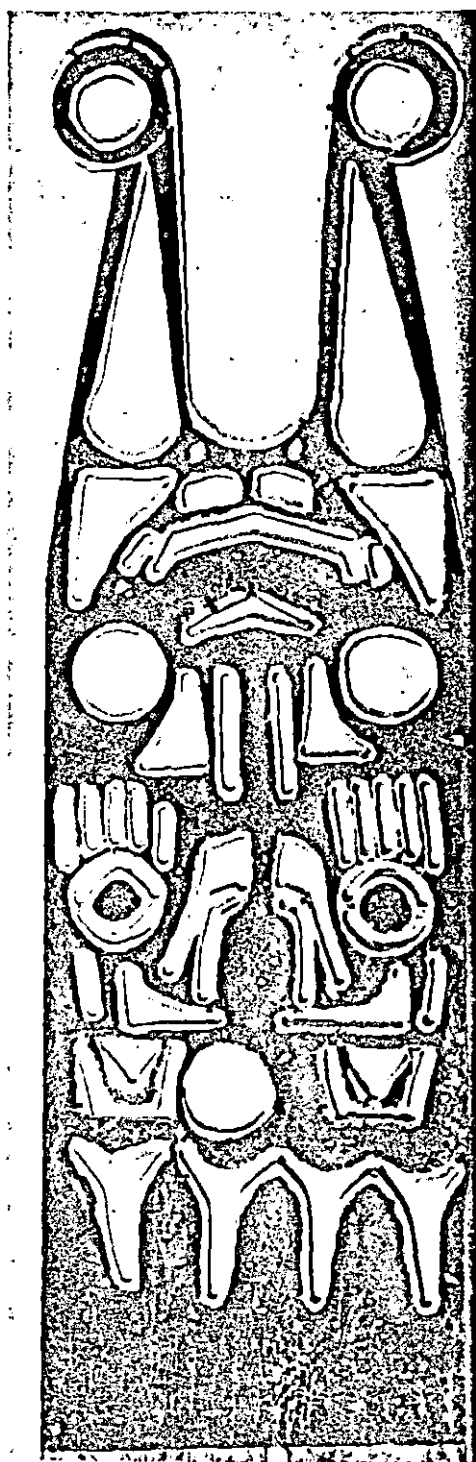


Figure 33

Kwakiutl Duntsik or Power Board
Attributed to Frank Walker
(Fort Rupert)

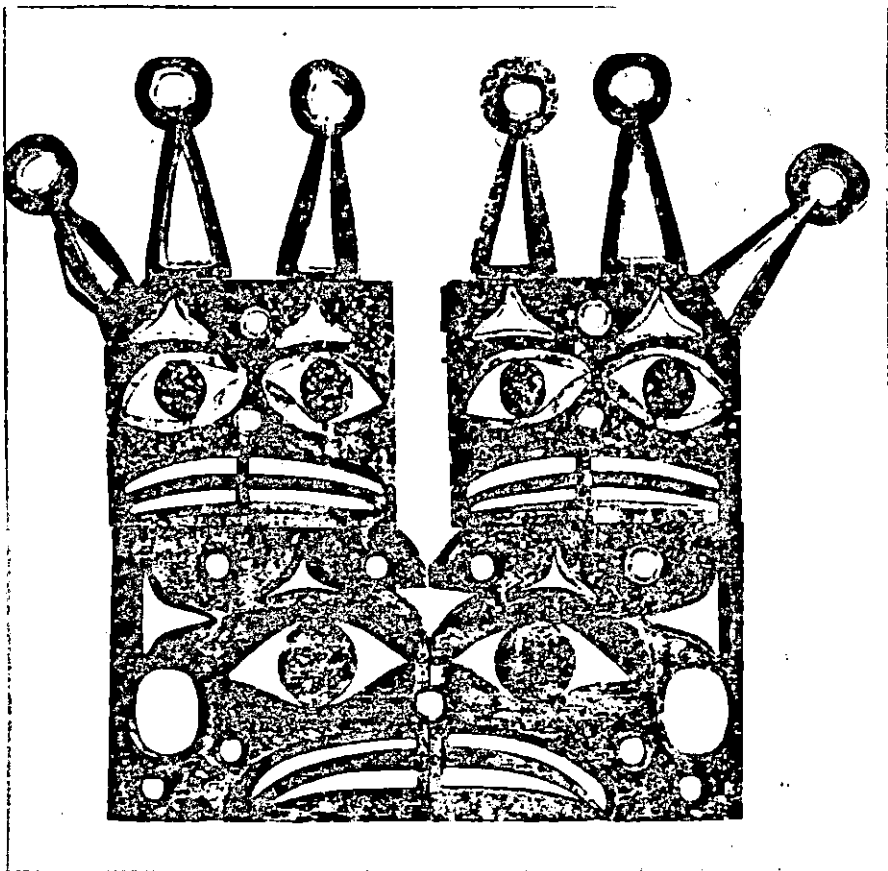


Figure 34
Kwakiutl Duntsik

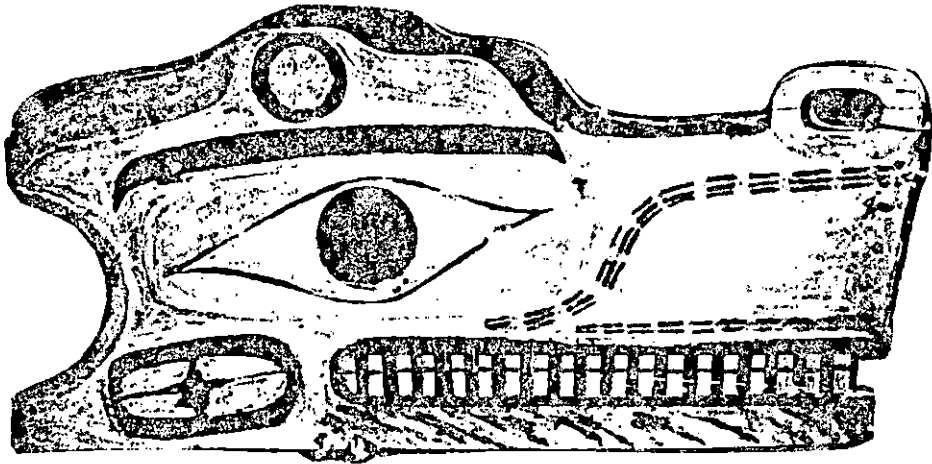


Figure 35

Nuu-chah-nulth Lightning Serpent Mask
(Clayoquot)

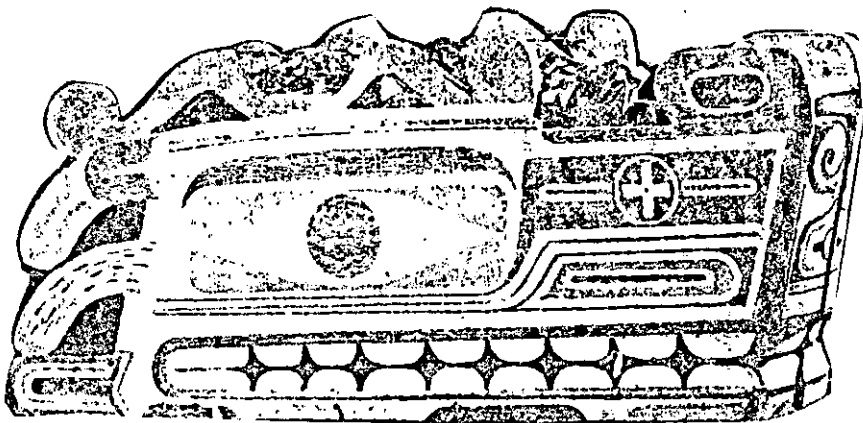


Figure 36

Nuu-chah-nulth Festival Wolf Mask

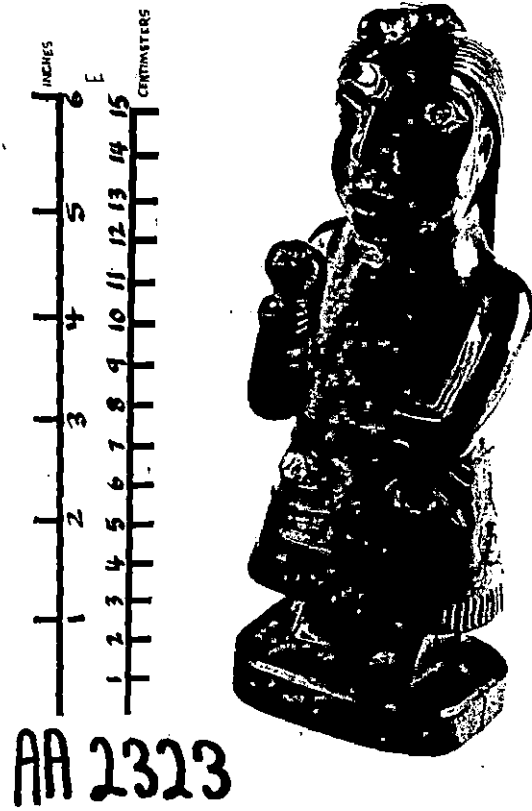


Figure 37
Haida Shaman Figurine in Argillite
Front View

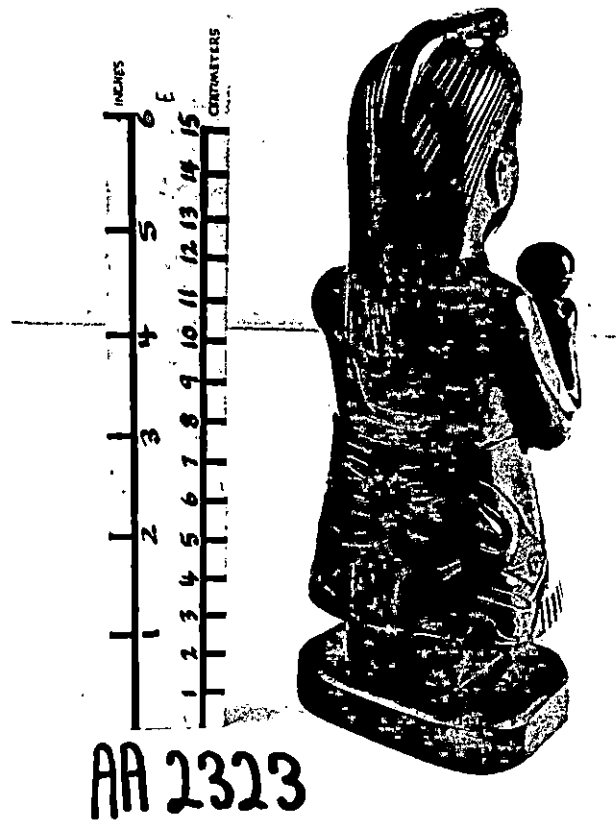


Figure 38

Haida Shaman Figurine in Argillite
Rear View



Figure 39

Seated Human Figure Bowl with
Snakeskin Headdress
(North Saanich)



Figure 40

Tlingit Shaman's Mask

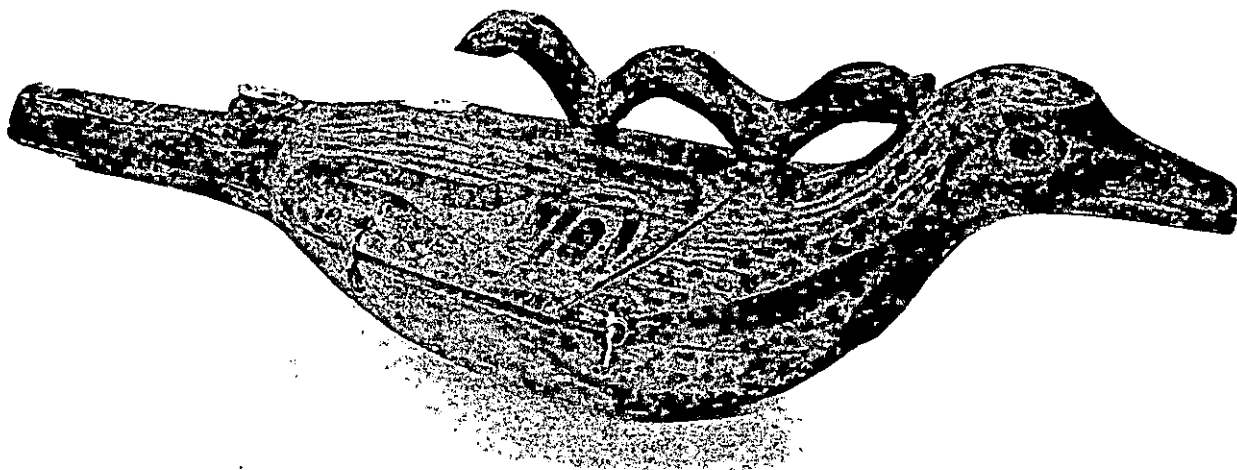


Figure 41
Nuu-chah-nulth Rattle

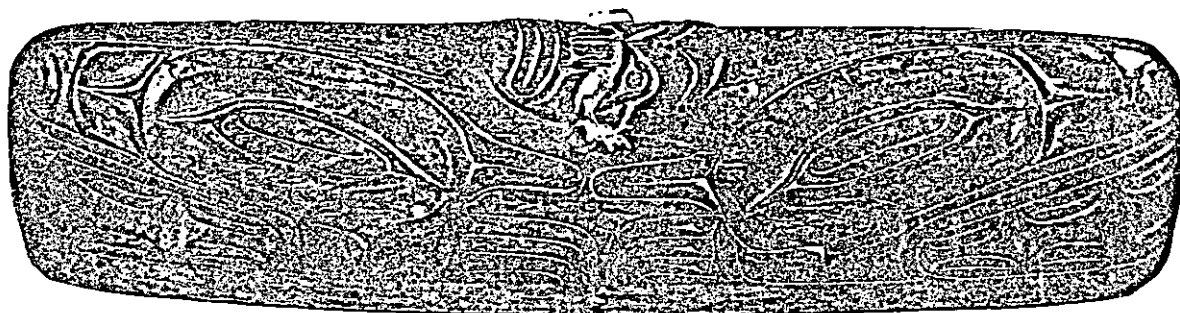


Figure 42
Box of Unknown Origin

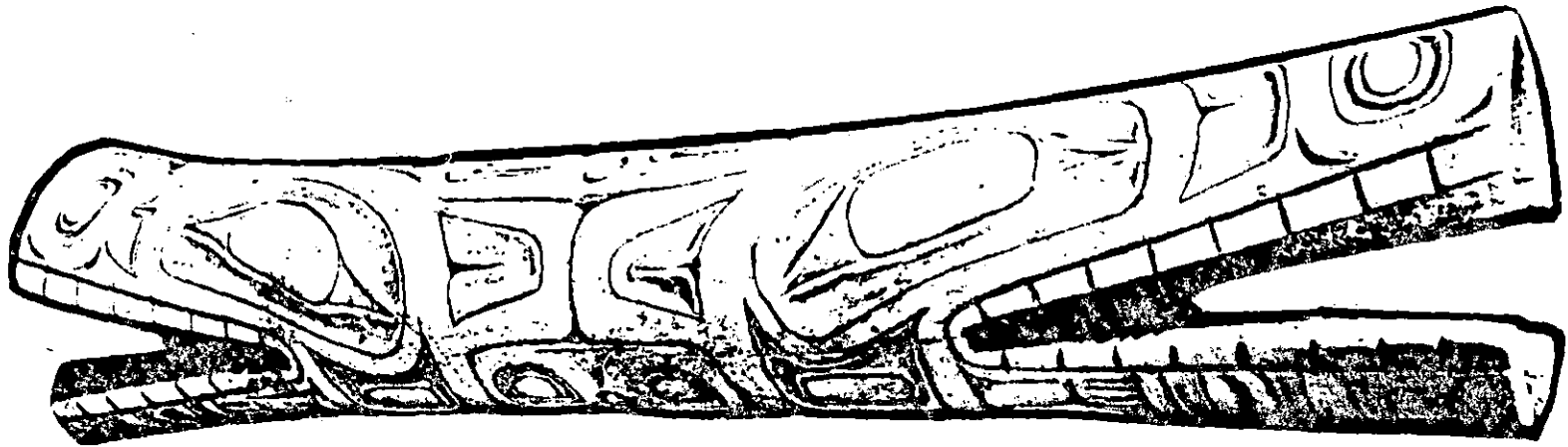


Figure 43
Tsimshian Soul Catcher

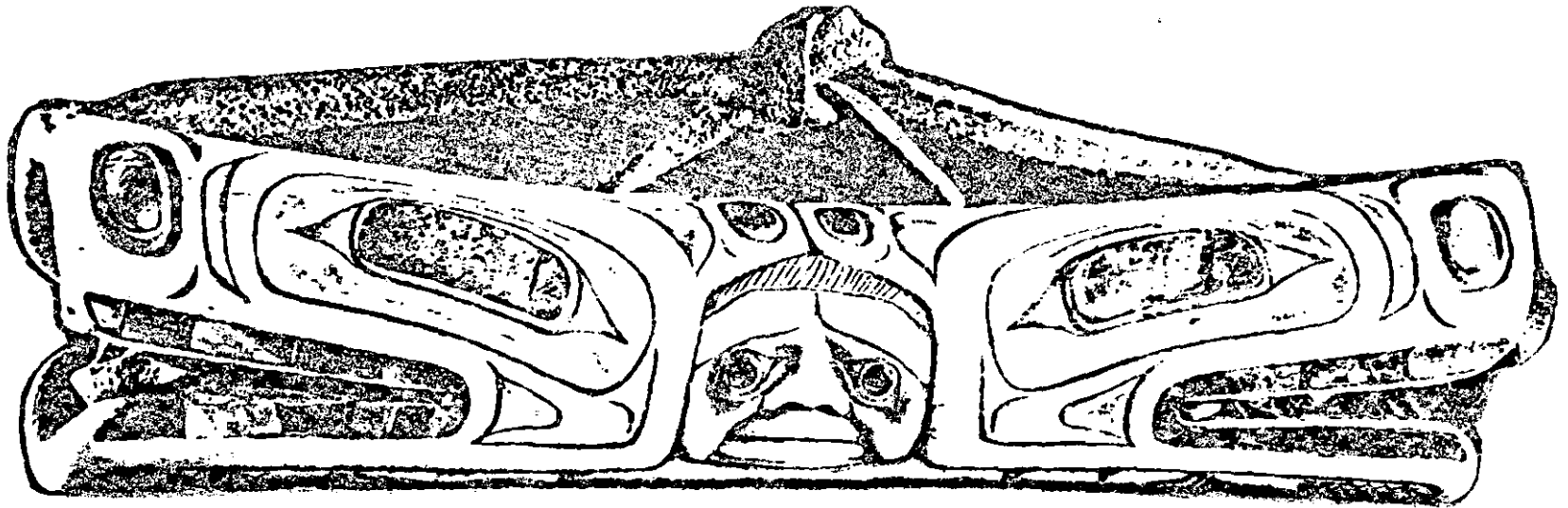


Figure 44
Tsimshian Soul Catcher

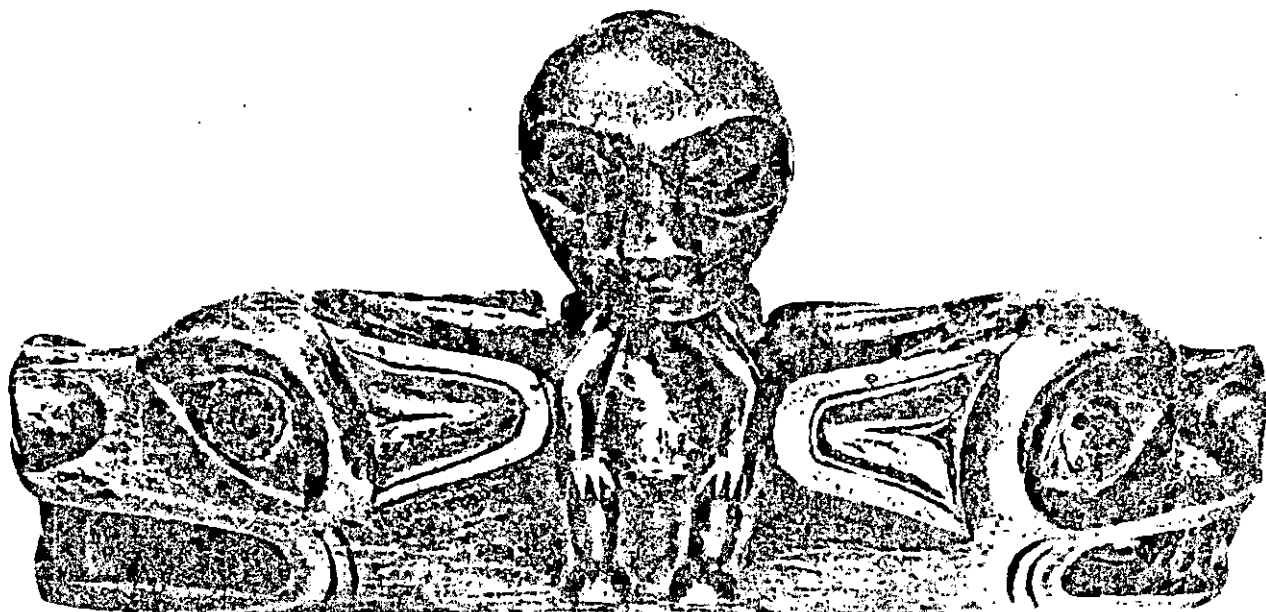


Figure 45

Kwakiutl Soul Catcher
(Gardner Channel)

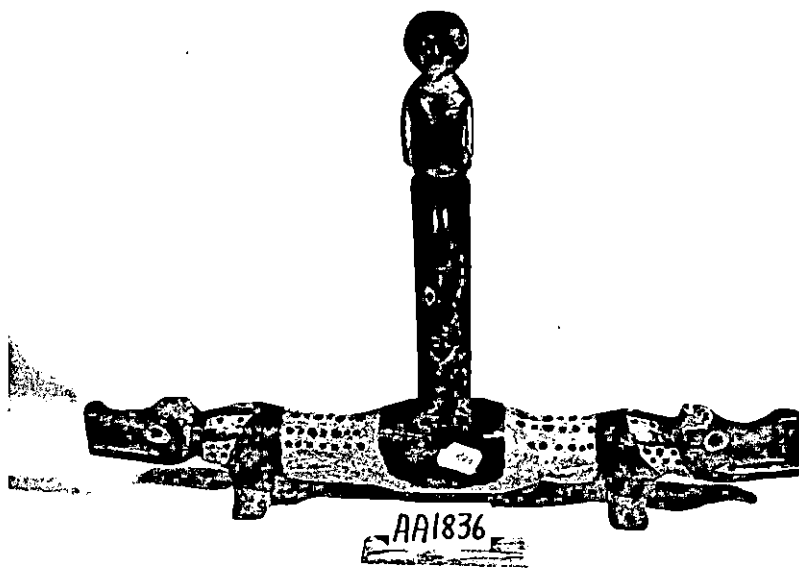


Figure 46

Nuu-chah-nulth Soul Catcher



Figure 47

Tsimshian Soul Catcher
(Nass River)



Figure 48

Rendering of a Kwakiutl
House Frontal Painting



Figure 49

Rendering of a Haida Painting
of a Dog Fish



Figure 50

Seated Human Figure Bowl with
Snake and Bird Heads
(Alouette River)



Figure 51
Seated Human Figure Bowl
with Split Snake
(Lillooet)

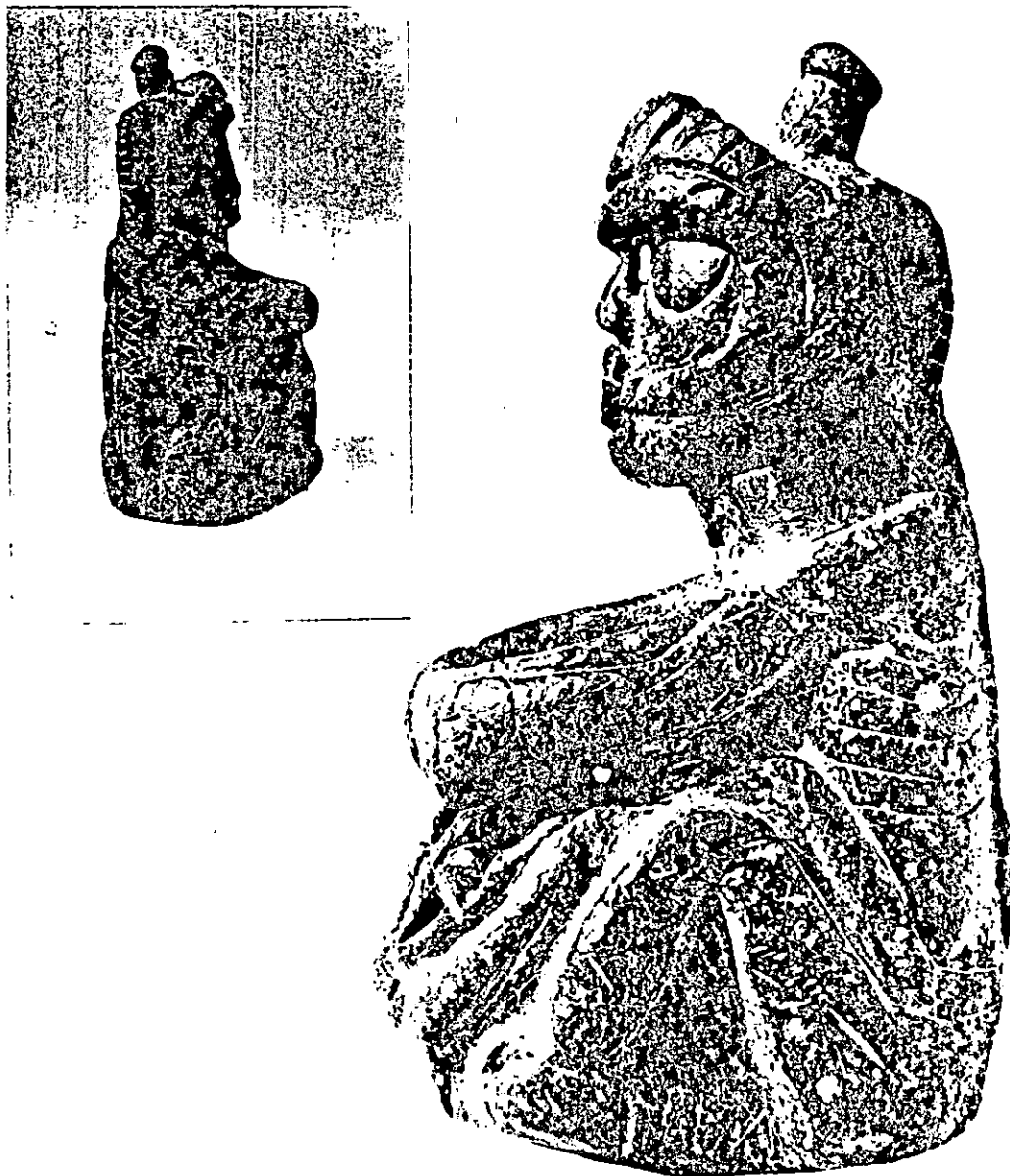


Figure 52

Seated Human Figure Bowl
with Rattlesnakes
(Victoria)

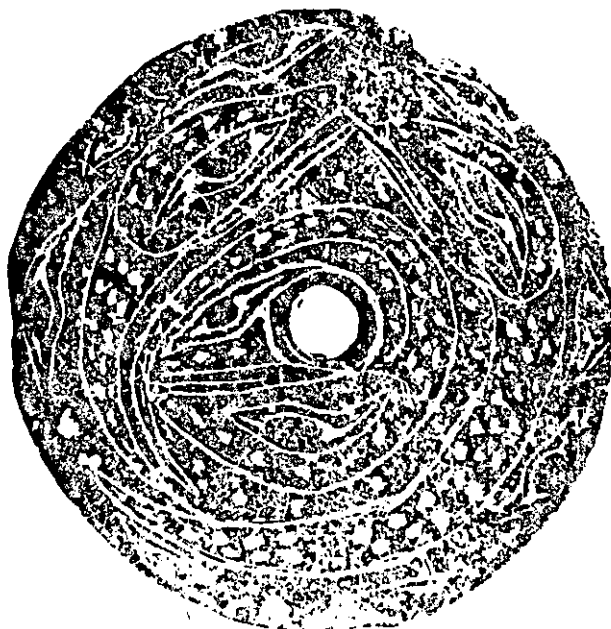


Figure 53

Steatite Spindle Whorl
(Milliken Site,
Fraser Canyon)

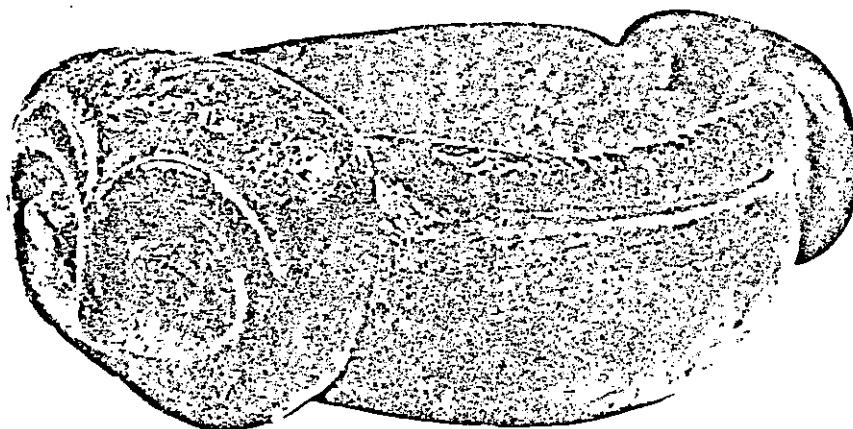


Figure 54

Double-Headed Vulviform Bowl
(Seton Lake, near Lillooet)



Figure 55
Nanaimo River Petroglyph



Figure 56
Nanaimo River Petroglyph

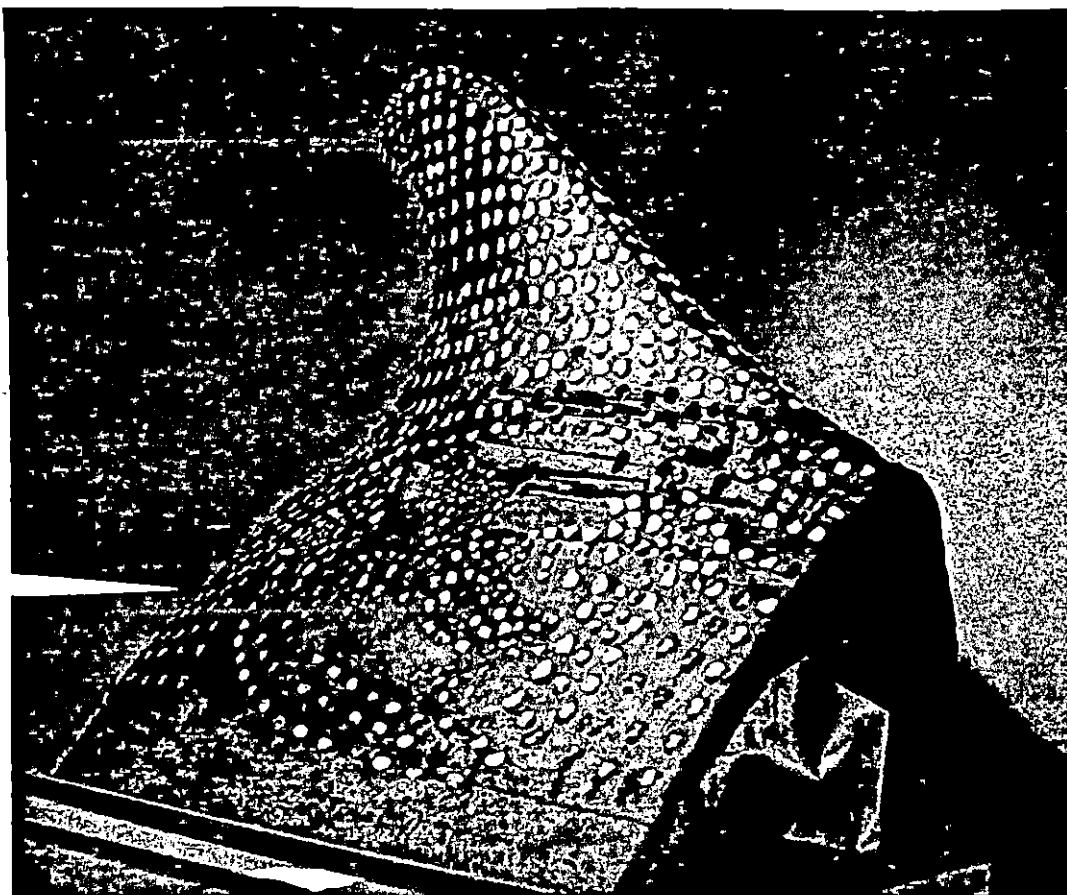


Figure 57

Makah Ceremonial Whale Fin
(Ozette)

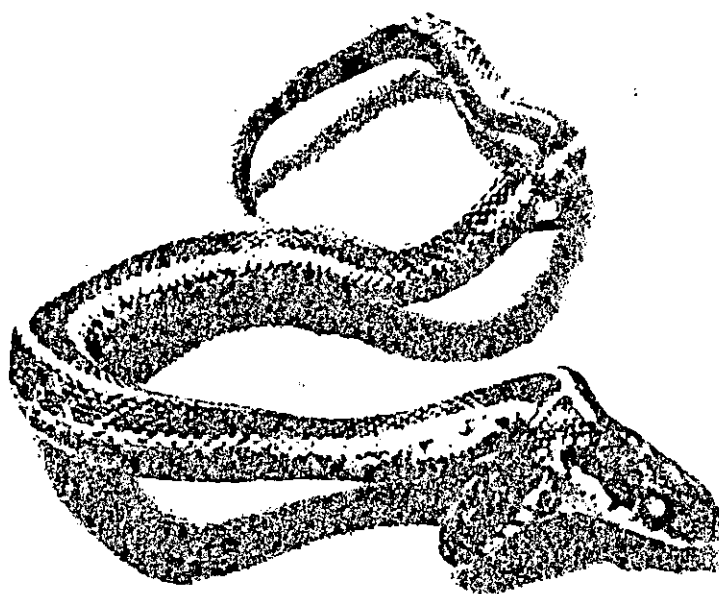


Figure 58

Baby Two-Headed Eastern Garter Snake



Figure 59

Detail of the Third Day of Creation
Manuscript of St. Ambrose
(Regensburg, c. 1170)

FOOTNOTES

¹The term "Nootka," assigned by Captain James Cook to the people occupying the west coast of Vancouver Island, has been repudiated by their descendents and replaced with "Nuu-chah-nulth" or "Westcoast." We have chosen to use "Nuu-chah-nulth" wherever applicable in our study.

²For a further discussion of the complicating circumstances of contemporary Northwest Coast native art, see our article, "The New Old Face of Northwest Coast Indian Art," Interface, 5 (February, 1982), 9.

³Wilson Duff, Images: Stone: B.C. (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 14.

⁴W. Eugene Kleinbauer, Modern Perspectives in Western Art History (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), p. 1.

⁵Douglas Fraser, Primitive Art (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1962), p. 7.

⁶Kleinbauer, p. 37.

⁷Kleinbauer, p. 37.

⁸Fraser, Primitive Art, p. 7.

⁹Kleinbauer, p. 34.

¹⁰Anthony Forge, ed., Primitive Art and Society (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. v.

¹¹Herta Haselberger, "Method for Studying Ethnological Art," Current Anthropology, 2 (1961), 347.

¹²Forge, p. xix.

¹³E.H. Gombrich, "The Use of Art for the Study of Symbols," Psychology and the Visual Arts, ed. James Hogg (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969), p. 150.

¹⁴Gombrich, "The Use of Art for the Study of Symbols," p. 150.

- ¹⁵Kleinbauer, p. 51.
- ¹⁶Kleinbauer, p. 52.
- ¹⁷Douglas Fraser, ed., The Many Faces of Primitive Art (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966), p. 28.
- ¹⁸Mircea Eliade, Images and Symbols, trans. Philip Mairet (London: Harvill Press, 1961), p. 24.
- ¹⁹Laurence, p. 7.
- ²⁰Mircea Eliade and Joseph Kitagawa, ed., The History of Religions (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), p. 103.
- ²¹Viola Garfield and Paul Wingert, The Tsimshian Indians and Their Arts (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1973), p. 51.
- ²²Garfield and Wingert, p. 50.
- ²³John R. Swanton, "Social Condition, Beliefs, and Linguistic Relationship of the Tlingit Indians," Bureau of American Ethnology 26th Annual Report (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1908), p. 451.
- ²⁴Franz Boas, Kwakiutl Ethnography, ed. Helen Codere (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 301.
- ²⁵Boas, Kwakiutl Ethnography, p. 301.
- ²⁶Franz Boas, Kwakiutl Culture as Reflected in Mythology (New York: The American Folk-lore Society, 1935), p. 147.
- ²⁷Mino Badner and Robert Heine-Geldern, Two Studies of Art in the Pacific Area (Vienna: Ferdinand Berger & Sohne, 1966), p. 16.
- ²⁸Marius Barbeau, "The Old-World Dragon in America," Indian Tribes of Aboriginal America, Selected Papers of the 29th International Congress of Americanists, ed. Sol Tax (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), p. 120.
- ²⁹Franz Boas, The Social Organization and the Secret Societies of the Kwakiutl Indians (New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1970), p.411.
- ³⁰Boas, The Social Organization and the Secret Societies of the Kwakiutl Indians, p. 387.

³¹G.W. Locher, The Serpent in Kwakiutl Religion (Leyden: E.J. Brill, 1932), pp. 6-9.

³²Marius Barbeau, Haida Myths Illustrated in Argillite Carvings, Anthropological Series No. 32, Bulletin No. 127 (Ottawa: National Museum of Canada, 1953), p. 244.

³³Barbeau, Haida Myths Illustrated in Argillite Carvings, p. 245.

³⁴Badner and Heine-Geldern, p. 17.

³⁵Badner and Heine-Geldern, p. 16.

³⁶Barbeau, Haida Myths Illustrated in Argillite Carvings, p. 244.

³⁷Marius Barbeau, Totem Poles, I, Anthropological Series No. 30 (Ottawa: National Museum of Canada, 1950), p. 372.

³⁸Badner and Heine-Geldern, p. 16.

³⁹Barbeau, "The Old-World Dragon in America," p. 119.

⁴⁰Fraser, The Many Faces of Primitive Art, p. 57.

⁴¹Barbeau, Totem Poles, I, p. 377.

⁴²Alice Henson Ernst, The Wolf Ritual of the Northwest Coast (Eugene: University of Oregon, 1952), p. 147.

⁴³Homer Barnett, The Coast Salish of British Columbia (Eugene: University of Oregon Press, 1955), p. 147.

⁴⁴Barbeau, Totem Poles, I, p. 163.

⁴⁵Barnett, p. 147.

⁴⁶Barnett, p. 147.

⁴⁷Franz Boas, "The Mythology of the Bella Coola Indians," Memoirs of the American Museum of Natural History, 1, No. 2 (1898), 44, 66.

⁴⁸Locher, p. 33.

⁴⁹G.T. Emmons, "The Art of the Northwest Coast Indians," Natural History, 30 (1930), 285.

⁵⁰Marius Barbeau, "The Hydra Reborn in the New World," Detroit Institute of Arts Quarterly, 12 (1949), 162.

⁵¹Boas, Kwakiutl Culture as Reflected in Mythology, p. 178.

⁵²Locher, p. 11.

⁵³Barbeau, Haida Myths Illustrated in Argillite Carvings, p. 238.

⁵⁴Barbeau, "The Old-World Dragon in America," p. 120.

⁵⁵Boas, The Social Organization and the Secret Societies of the Kwakiutl Indians, p. 662.

⁵⁶Garfield and Wingert, p. 43.

⁵⁷Joan M. Vastokas, "The Shamanic Tree of Life," Stones, Bones and Skin (Toronto: Society for Art Publications, 1977), p. 115.

⁵⁸Robert Tyler Davis, Native Arts of the Pacific Northwest (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1954), p. 22.

⁵⁹Wilson Duff, Bill Holm and Bill Reid, Arts of the Raven - Masterworks by the Northwest Coast Indian (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1967).

⁶⁰Barbeau, Totem Poles, I, p. 375.

⁶¹Boas, Kwakiutl Ethnography, p. 32.

⁶²Bill Holm and Bill Reid, Indian Art of the Northwest Coast: A Dialogue on Craftsmanship and Aesthetics (Houston: Institute for the Arts, Rice University, 1976).

⁶³Davis, p. 11.

⁶⁴Barbeau, Totem Poles, I, p. 5; Garfield and Wingert, p. 70.

⁶⁵Vastokas, "The Shamanic Tree of Life," p. 111.

⁶⁶Locher, p. 112; Eliade and Kitagawa, p. 102.

- ⁶⁷Vastokas, "The Shamanic Tree of Life," p. 114.
- ⁶⁸Paul Wingert, American Indian Sculpture (New York: J.J. Augustin, 1949), p. 43.
- ⁶⁹Wingert, American Indian Sculpture, p. 43.
- ⁷⁰Barbeau, Totem Poles, I, p. 369.
- ⁷¹Barbeau, Totem Poles, I, p. 362.
- ⁷²Olive Patricia Dickason, Indian Arts in Canada (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1974), p. 43.
- ⁷³A comprehensive and illuminating study of Haida argillite imagery was published recently by the Glenbow Museum. Its author, Carol Sheehan, divides argillite carving into four periods, according to the kinds and contexts of the images used: 1810-1835 (Haida "non-sense"); 1830-1865 (white "non-sense"); 1865-1910 (Haida "sense"); and 1910 to the present (Haida "sense"). It is during the third of these periods that miniature totem poles in argillite begin to appear. According to Sheehan, Haida carvers in the latter decades of the nineteenth century were making desperate bids to record their traditional way of life against the devastation and cultural near-obliteration caused by smallpox, Christianization, and other forms of encroachment and acculturation. Thus, Sheehan's conclusions accord with our original generalization, that the imagery on Haida argillite poles is mythologically legible, diagnostically and stylistically consistent with monumental heraldic art, and thus a legitimate expression of Haida sensibility. Carol Sheehan, Pipes That Won't Smoke; Coal That Won't Burn (Calgary: Glenbow Museum, 1981).
- ⁷⁴Emmons, p. 288.
- ⁷⁵Emmons, p. 288.
- ⁷⁶Barbeau, Totem Poles, I, p. 159.
- ⁷⁷Vastokas, "The Shamanic Tree of Life," p. 111.
- ⁷⁸Boas, Kwakiutl Ethnography, p. 84.
- ⁷⁹Paul Wingert, Primitive Art (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 30.
- ⁸⁰Wingert, Primitive Art, p. 30.

⁸¹Bill Holm, Crooked Beak of Heaven (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1972), p. 59.

⁸²Holm, Crooked Beak of Heaven, p. 59.

⁸³Holm, Crooked Beak of Heaven, p. 57.

⁸⁴An interesting peculiarity of this serpent is that it is plumed rather than horned: both head and nose bear feathers. (Nuu-chah-nulth serpents are sometimes--apparently randomly--feathered.) This casts a diffusionist likeness to other New World feathered serpents, such as those found in the American Southwest, in the ancient American Southeast, and in Pre-Columbian Mesoamerica. Quetzalcoatl, the feathered serpent of the Toltecs and Aztecs, was a culture hero, an intermediary between gods and humanity, a symbol of transcendence, and also an embodiment of the theme of divine twinship. An Aztec representation of his celestial mother, the moon goddess Coatlicue, is also compelling, since her head is depicted as a double serpent.

⁸⁵Holm and Reid.

⁸⁶Erna Gunther, Art in the Life of the Northwest Coast Indians (Portland: The Portland Art Museum, 1966), p. 113.

⁸⁷Swanton, p. 436; Boas, Kwakiutl Ethnography, p. 98.

⁸⁸Michael J. Harner and Albert B. Elsasser, Art of the Northwest Coast (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), p. 10.

⁸⁹Ernst, p. 91.

⁹⁰Holm, Crooked Beak of Heaven, p. 48.

⁹¹James Cook, The Voyages of Captain James Cook Round the World, ed. Christopher Lloyd (London: The Cresset Press, 1949), p. 328.

⁹²Holm, Crooked Beak of Heaven, p. 10.

⁹³Audrey Hawthorn, Art of the Kwakiutl Indians and Other Northwest Coast Tribes (Vancouver and Seattle: University of British Columbia and University of Washington Press, 1967), p. 34.

⁹⁴Hawthorn, Art of the Kwakiutl Indians, p. 34.

⁹⁵Hawthorn, Art of the Kwakiutl Indians, p. 33.

⁹⁶Philip Drucker, "Kwakiutl Dancing Societies," Anthropological Records, 2, No. 6 (1940), 227.

⁹⁷Drucker, "Kwakiutl Dancing Societies," p. 227.

⁹⁸Holm, Crooked Beak of Heaven, p. 10.

⁹⁹Barnett, p. 272.

¹⁰⁰Drucker, "Kwakiutl Dancing Societies," p. 227.

¹⁰¹Garfield and Wingert, p. 38.

¹⁰²The Swaixwe mask, traditionally known as the gift of the people "under the lake," was worn on secular and healing occasions. Its form is generally a round, peg-eyed face surmounted by two zoomorphic heads in the place of ears. Hawthorn, Art of the Kwakiutl Indians, p. 297.

That the surmounting heads, most often identified as birds, may occasionally represent serpents was revealed to us by Bill Holm, but unfortunately at too late a time to include Swaixwe serpents in our museum survey and subsequent observations and conclusions. Statement by Bill Holm in a personal interview, Seattle, Washington, July 24, 1979.

¹⁰³Barnett, p. 296.

¹⁰⁴Gunther, Art in the Life of the Northwest Coast Indians, p. 147.

¹⁰⁵Drucker, "Kwakiutl Dancing Societies," p. 201.

¹⁰⁶Drucker, "Kwakiutl Dancing Societies," p. 227.

¹⁰⁷Drucker, "Kwakiutl Dancing Societies," p. 227.

¹⁰⁸Boas, The Social Organization and the Secret Societies of the Kwakiutl Indians, p. 661.

¹⁰⁹Drucker, "Kwakiutl Dancing Societies," p. 227.

¹¹⁰Boas, Kwakiutl Ethnography, p. 305.

¹¹¹Hawthorn, Art of the Kwakiutl Indians, p. 50.

¹¹²Holm, Crooked Beak of Heaven, p. 11.

¹¹³Locher, p. 17; Irving Goldman, The Mouth of Heaven (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1975), p. 114.

¹¹⁴Holm, Crooked Beak of Heaven, p. 11.

¹¹⁵Goldman, p. 114.

¹¹⁶Ernst, p. 4.

¹¹⁷Boas, The Social Organization and the Secret Societies of the Kwakiutl Indians, p. 494.

¹¹⁸Hawthorn, Art of the Kwakiutl Indians, p. 54.

¹¹⁹Hawthorn, Art of the Kwakiutl Indians, p. 54.

¹²⁰Boas, Kwakiutl Ethnography, p. 106.

¹²¹Boas, Kwakiutl Ethnography, p. 107.

¹²²Boas, The Social Organization and the Secret Societies of the Kwakiutl Indians, p. 494.

¹²³Hawthorn, Art of the Kwakiutl Indians, p. 54.

¹²⁴Boas, Kwakiutl Ethnography, p. 100.

¹²⁵Boas, The Social Organization and the Secret Societies of the Kwakiutl Indians, p. 496.

¹²⁶Reminiscent of the torturous initiations of Plains Indian groups, the Hawin'alal ritual involved passing ropes through the dancer's back and thighs and hoisting him up to the housebeams. A further parallel ritual of self-mutilation may be observed in the Pre-Columbian art of Mesoamerica. Both Mayan and West Mexican sculptures depict initiates or penitents passing ropes and tubes through their tongues and cheeks.

¹²⁷Duff, Images: Stone: B.C., p. 17.

¹²⁸Boas, Kwakiutl Ethnography, p. 100.

¹²⁹Boas, The Social Organization and the Secret Societies of the Kwakiutl Indians, p. 485.

- 130 Barbeau, Haida Myths Illustrated in Argillite Carvings, p. 251.
- 131 Badner and Heine-Geldern, p. 16.
- 132 Barbeau, Haida Myths Illustrated in Argillite Carvings, notes to illustration #214.
- 133 Hawthorn, Art of the Kwakiutl Indians, p. 67.
- 134 Hawthorn, Art of the Kwakiutl Indians, p. 55.
- 135 Harner and Elsasser, p. 19.
- 136 Boas, The Social Organization and the Secret Societies of the Kwakiutl Indians, p. 491.
- 137 Boas, The Social Organization and the Secret Societies of the Kwakiutl Indians, p. 491.
- 138 Harner and Elsasser, p. 11.
- 139 University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology catalogue information sheets.
- 140 University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology catalogue information sheets.
- 141 Boas, Kwakiutl Culture as Reflected in Mythology, p. 147.
- 142 Hawthorn, Art of the Kwakiutl Indians, p. 23.
- 143 University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology catalogue information sheets.
- 144 Ernst, p. 5.
- 145 Ernst, p. 75.
- 146 Ernst, p. 75.
- 147 Ernst, p. 58.
- 148 Ernst, p. 40.

- 149 Wingert, American Indian Sculpture, Plate 72, No. 2.
- 150 Ernst, p. 82.
- 151 Ernst, p. 53.
- 152 Ernst, p. 104.
- 153 Drucker, "Kwakiutl Dancing Societies," p. 225.
- 154 Goldman, p. 6.
- 155 "Ecstatic capacity" connotes the shaman's special ability to leave his body at will. Mircea Eliade, Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 297.
- 156 Marius Barbeau, Medicine-Men on the North Pacific Coast, Anthropological Series No. 42, Bulletin No. 152 (Ottawa: National Museum of Canada, 1958), p. 7.
- 157 Peter Furst, "The Roots and Continuities of Shamanism," Stones, Bones and Skin (Toronto: Society for Art Publications, 1977), p. 27.
- 158 Eliade, Shamanism, p. 27.
- 159 Mircea Eliade, From Primitives to Zen (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 429; Franz Boas, The Religion of the Kwakiutl Indians (New York: AMS Press, 1969), pp. 46-50.
- 160 Garfield and Wingert, p. 40.
- 161 Eliade, Shamanism, p. 33.
- 162 Eliade, Shamanism, p. 95.
- 163 Furst, p. 2.
- 164 Joseph Campbell, The Masks of God: Occidental Mythology (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1978), p. 9.
- 165 Eliade, Shamanism, p. 298.

- ¹⁶⁶Barnett, p. 304.
- ¹⁶⁷Barnett, p. 304.
- ¹⁶⁸Edward Curtis, The Kwakiutl, X, The North American Indian (New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1970), p. 280.
- ¹⁶⁹Goldman, p. 3.
- ¹⁷⁰Furst, p. 14.
- ¹⁷¹Duff, Images: Stone: B.C., p. 58.
- ¹⁷²Boas, Kwakiutl Ethnography, p. 131.
- ¹⁷³Swanton, p. 452.
- ¹⁷⁴Eliade, Shamanism, p. 179.
- ¹⁷⁵Eliade, Shamanism, p. 145, p. 167.
- ¹⁷⁶Furst, p. 22.
- ¹⁷⁷Boas, Kwakiutl Ethnography, p. 145.
- ¹⁷⁸Ernst, p. 61.
- ¹⁷⁹Goldman, p. 105.
- ¹⁸⁰Boas, Kwakiutl Ethnography, p. 151.
- ¹⁸¹Garfield and Wingert, p. 67.
- ¹⁸²Swanton, p. 452.
- ¹⁸³Gunther, Art in the Life of the Northwest Coast Indians, p. 157.
- ¹⁸⁴Gunther, Art in the Life of the Northwest Coast Indians, p. 242.
- ¹⁸⁵Audrey Hawthorn, People of the Potlatch (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1956), Figure 108.

- ¹⁸⁶Furst, p. 22.
- ¹⁸⁷Boas, Kwakiutl Ethnography, p. 139.
- ¹⁸⁸Soul catchers are rare, and the dozen surveyed in five museums do not constitute a very significant sample. However, the observations gleaned from them are consistent with the further sixteen soul catchers illustrated in the literature.
- ¹⁸⁹Furst, p. 2.
- ¹⁹⁰Furst, p. 16.
- ¹⁹¹Hawthorn, Art of the Kwakiutl Indians, p. 367.
- ¹⁹²Gunther, Art in the Life of the Northwest Coast Indians, p. 105.
- ¹⁹³Bill Holm, Northwest Coast Indian Art: An Analysis of Form (Vancouver: J.J. Douglas, 1978), p. 79.
- ¹⁹⁴Holm and Reid.
- ¹⁹⁵Wilson Duff, "Contributions of Marius Barbeau to West Coast Ethnology," Anthropologica, N.S. 6 (1964), 63-96.
- ¹⁹⁶Duff, "Contributions of Marius Barbeau to West Coast Ethnology," p. 64.
- ¹⁹⁷Barbeau, "The Old-World Dragon in America," pp. 115-122.
- ¹⁹⁸Gunther, Art in the Life of the Northwest Coast Indians, p. 157.
- ¹⁹⁹Holm, personal interview.
- ²⁰⁰Boas, Kwakiutl Ethnography, p. 139.
- ²⁰¹Hawthorn, Art of the Kwakiutl Indians, p. 368.
- ²⁰²Gunther, Art in the Life of the Northwest Coast Indians, p. 130.
- ²⁰³Eliade, Shamanism, p. 511.
- ²⁰⁴Barbeau, Medicine-Men on the North Pacific Coast, p. 56.

- 205 Duff, Images: Stone: B.C., p. 14.
- 206 Duff, Images: Stone: B.C., p. 14.
- 207 Suzanne Langer, Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 52.
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- 236 Holm has identified, in the two-dimensional art of the northern coast, three design categories: "configurative," in which a creature "is shown with an essentially animal-like silhouette, perhaps occupying a great part of the decorated field, but not distorted so as to fill it completely;" "expansive," in which the figure is "distorted, split, or rearranged to fit into the given space, but the identity of the essential body parts is apparent;" and "distributive," in which the "parts of the represented animal are so arranged as completely to fill the given space, consequently destroying any recognizable silhouette." By this system, it appears that the double-headed serpent in two-dimensional art is always represented in a "configurative" manner--this is a design constant, irrespective of the heterodox nature of Kwakiutl art adaptations. Holm, Northwest Coast Indian Art, p. 11.
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- 265 It has also been theorized that petroglyph manufacture was an attempt to gain "supernatural power over the inhabitants of the sea;" to declare "boundaries of family hunting territories," or to records myths. Hill and Hill, p. 286; Meade, pp. 7-11; Beth Hill, Guide to Indian Rock Carvings of the Pacific Northwest Coast (Saanichton, B.C.: Hancock House Publishers, 1975), p. 41.
- 266 Meade, p. 73.
- 267 Richard Daugherty and Janet Friedman, "An Introduction to Ozette Art" (unpublished article to be issued in a forthcoming publication entitled The Prehistory of Northwest Coast Indian Art, ed. Roy Carlson, Simon Fraser University). Permission to quote given by Roy Carlson and Richard Daugherty.
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- 272 Garfield and Wingert, p. 74.
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²⁷⁵Froom, p. 72.

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²⁸¹Fraser, The Many Faces of Primitive Art, p. 94.

²⁸²Vastokas, "The Shamanic Tree of Life," p. 94.

²⁸³Claude Levi-Strauss, Totemism (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), p. 60.

²⁸⁴Holm, Northwest Coast Indian Art, p. 67.

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NORTHWEST COAST

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