

Productivity and its Constraints: A Coast Salish Case

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On the Northwest Coast in historic times the area to the south of the Kwakiutl seems to have produced far less carving and painting than the area to the north. But a number of carvings of high quality—both naturalistic and stylized—produced in a part of the Coast Salish area suggest that neither technical skill nor stylistic tradition was a limiting factor. Why then did Coast Salish carvers not produce more? This is the question asked recently by Bill Reid in a discussion (Holm and Reid 1975:58-61) of an especially fine Coast Salish spindle whorl. Reid asked, in effect, when they could produce such a well designed and executed piece as this, why did the Coast Salish not produce more such pieces and more kinds of art? Bill Holm commented that the answer must lie in the whole Coast Salish area, trying to show what features of their way of life may have limited productivity, and I shall try to show what I think this analysis implies for the reconstruction of Northwest Coast culture history.

But first let me dispose of a couple of answers to Reid's question that might easily occur to anyone who has read the general and popular works on the Northwest Coast. One of these might be: The Coast Salish did not produce much good work because the whole of Northwest Coast art was a northern development that has only recently diffused southward; the peoples living south of the Wakashan were merely imitating Wakashan (Kwakiutl or Nootka) versions of northern art (cf. Drucker 1955a:162,181). But several facts argue against this view. The area in which people decorated some of their containers, canoes and houses with carvings and paintings representing human or animal forms extended southward at least as far as the Chinookans of the Lower Columbia Valley. There the earliest European visitors, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, saw house fronts "painted in the form

of a human-like face with open mouth, or legs, straddling the doorway, holding up the roof" (Silverstein Ms). In 1846 Paul Kane painted the interior of a "ceremonial lodge" somewhere near Fort Vancouver, showing a housepost carved in the form of a humanoid face and a carved wooden screen topped by confronting animals (Harper 1971, pl. xxxvii). Before the great epidemic of 1830 the Chinookan area was probably more densely populated than the Wakashan area and the Chinookans were probably not in direct contact with any Wakashans, but certainly received from Nootkans, in trade through intervening Salishans, dentalia shells. They may also have received Wakashan slaves and decorated objects, both of which could have been sources of Wakashan influence. But to suppose that a population numbering in the thousands could produce no art that was not mere imitation of Wakashan art is preposterous. Also, there is a prehistoric tradition of stone sculpture on the Lower Columbia (Wingert 1952, Butler 1957) that seems to have a respectable antiquity, perhaps beginning c. A.D. 200 (Pettigrew 1976), which could more easily be the source of historic carving in wood. Moreover, some distinctive styles have been identified in the historical materials from the Coast Salish and Chinookan areas, by Wingert (1949a, 1949b) and Holm (1972), which are clearly not simplified versions of something Wakashan.

Another answer to Reid's question might be: The Coast Salish did not produce much good work because they were "johnny-come-latelies" recently emerged from the interior who had not yet had time to shed their Plateau heritage and acquire a decent foundation in Northwest Coast art from their Wakashan neighbours. Or, considering that art may be old on the Lower Columbia, we might add—from their Chinookan neighbours. But this theory of recent

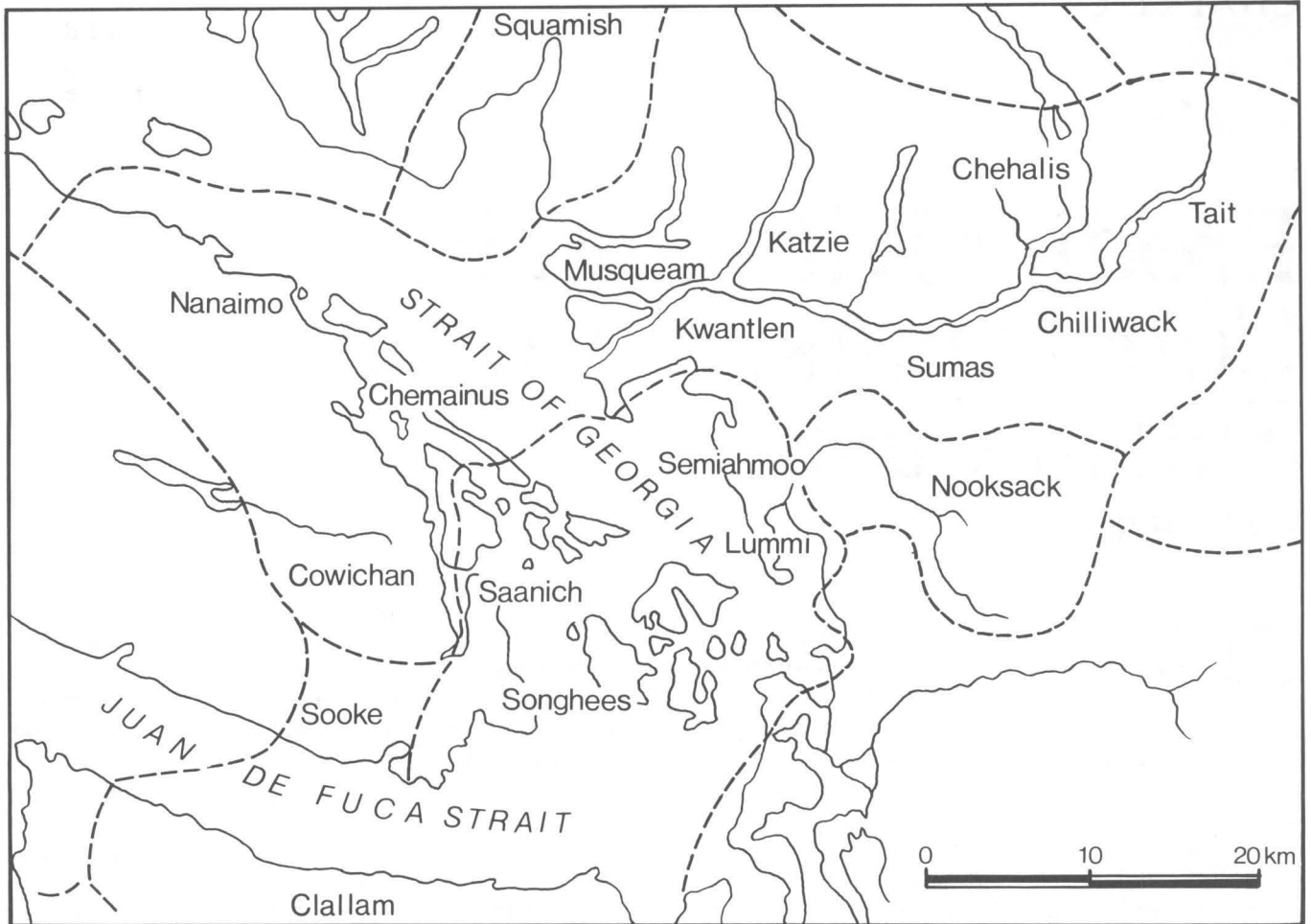


Fig. 4:1. Map showing the locations of the Central Coast Salish.

Salish emergence from the interior, which goes back to Boas, has little to support it. The supposed evidence for it from physical anthropology seems to have been an illusion; the archaeological evidence can be read either way (to support cultural replacement or cultural continuity); and the linguistic evidence is, if anything, against it, suggesting rather a homeland for Proto-Salish on the coast and an early movement into the interior. For all we know, the Salishan languages have been spoken on the coast for as long as the Wakashan languages. Without the biological, archaeological and linguistic evidence for Salish emergence from the interior, the ethnological arguments become very weak. With no proof that there was a time when the Wakashans had plank houses, sea-mammal hunting and social stratification while the Salish did not, we cannot argue that the Salish got these things from the Wakashans except by begging the question. And if we try to use such supposed borrowings as evidence of Salish emergence, we may find ourselves arguing in a circle—the Coast Salish must have borrowed these features of coast culture from the Wakashans because they came from the interior

where they could not have had them; the Coast Salish must have come out of the interior because they have these features of coast culture they borrowed from the Wakashans. This circular arrangement seems to be supported by presuppositions about Wakashan creativity and Salishan imitiveness. (I am expanding this discussion elsewhere.) Now, I am not saying that the Salish have never borrowed anything from the Wakashans or other neighbours. Borrowing in all directions has probably occurred many times. But in each case only careful study will show which direction the trait went. Art is no exception.

But before I return to art I must establish clearly *which* Coast Salish I shall be talking about and what position they occupy within the Coast Salish area. This is essential because from the literature one might also easily get the impression, on the one hand, that the whole Coast Salish area was culturally homogeneous, or on the other, that the Coast Salish of Puget Sound were somehow the most typical or true Coast Salish while those living farther north were peripheral deviants. Neither of these impressions would be correct. There were a dozen or more Coast

Salish languages spoken through a continuous area extending from Johnstone Strait in the north to the Columbia River in the south. The speakers of these languages seem to have formed a biological and social continuum, which may have extended far beyond in all directions. But within this continuum there were some pretty clear cultural differences, seen especially in the distribution of ceremonial activities (cf. Barnett 1938, Smith 1941, Elmendorf 1960:298-305).

I am especially concerned with the speakers of two languages, *Halkomelem* and *Straits*, who occupy one segment of the Coast Salish continuum, a region extending from the Lower Fraser Valley to the Strait of Juan de Fuca (Fig. 4:1). These people are better known under a number of "tribal" names, each of which designates a village or group of villages sharing a dialect of one of these languages. The *Tait*, *Katzie*, *Kwantlen* and other Lower Fraser people collectively called *Stalo*, the *Musqueam* at the mouth of the Fraser, and the *Nanaimo* and *Cowichan* of Vancouver Island all spoke dialects of *Halkomelem*. The *Semiahmoo*, *Lummi*, and *Samish* to the south of the mouth of the Fraser along the mainland shore and the *Saanich*, *Songhees*, and *Sooke* of the southeastern end of Vancouver Island all spoke dialects of *Straits*. *Clallam*, on the southern shore of the Strait of Juan de Fuca is either a divergent dialect of *Straits* or a closely related language. The *Nooksack*, inland to the south of the Fraser, and the *Squamish*, to the north, spoke their own separate languages but culturally seem to have been somewhat closer to the speakers of *Halkomelem* and *Straits* than to their neighbours beyond. In spite of this linguistic diversity, the absence of any formal political organization, and occasional conflicts, the people of this region were linked together by continual inter-village marriage and participation in economic and social activities and the exchange of foods, goods, information and personnel. Such ties extended beyond this region, of course. But the *Halkomelem* and *Straits* people shared patterns of subsistence activities relying especially on salmon runs ascending the Fraser (see discussion in Mitchell 1971:19-29). And within the region, I believe, certain concepts and values were held and expressed more frequently than they were outside it.

It would be useful to have names without linguistic connotations for culturally distinguishable regions within the Coast Salish area. Elsewhere (Suttles 1968:58) I have used "Central Coast Salish" for the *Halkomelem*-*Straits* region. Geographically, *Straits* was at the very centre of the total Coast Salish area. Demographically, *Straits* and *Halkomelem* territories together seem to have been a peak, perhaps the most densely populated region on this part of the Northwest Coast. Mooney's (1928) estimates, accepted by Kroeber (1939) and not yet superseded, give it more people than the rest of the Coast Salish area combined and also more than the entire *Wakashan* area.

Thus "Central Coast Salish" might be justified on two grounds. I should note that in using the term I do not mean to imply that other Coast Salish were peripheral deviants nor that the people to whom I apply the term were a unit in all things. I do think we can make some generalizations about these people and we need a collective name.

Art, Power and Prestige

During the nineteenth century the Central Coast Salish carved and/or painted ritual paraphernalia of several kinds, house posts and (in some places) house fronts, grave monuments and several kinds of implements of practical use. Discovering what this art meant to the people who made it and used it is now very difficult. But perhaps we can make a start by sorting it out by its association with some native concepts. It seems to me that, while some Central Coast Salish art may have been purely decorative, much of it can be related to four sources of power and prestige—the vision, the ritual word, the ancestors, and wealth. (I believe I have considered most of the available ethnographic data—works by Boas, Hill-Tout, Jenness, Barnett, Duff and others, but inevitably I have been guided most by my own field experience, which began in 1946 and has continued now and again over the years.) I shall discuss these four sources of power and prestige first and then return to the kinds of things that were carved and painted.

The *vision* was the unique experience of the individual, the source of his or her skill at subsistence activities or crafts, and the essential basis of professional status as warrior, seeress or shaman. In theory, though not always in practice, the exact nature of the vision experience was something one ought to keep secret, perhaps until old age. The vision experience inspired a unique individual performance in the winter dance, but its nature was only hinted at by the words of the song and the movements of the dance (cf. Jacobs 1959:13 on Clackamas Chinookan, Collins 1974:145-146 on Upper Skagit, Barnett 1955:146 on Georgia Strait secrecy). Any other representation of the vision experience we might expect also to be vague, ambiguous or covert.

The *ritual word* was for some purposes more important than the vision. It too was an aid in subsistence and crafts and was the basis of a profession, that of "ritualist" (Barnett's term, Jenness says "priest"). The ritual word was the heart of the first salmon ceremony, of incantations to quell wounded bears and sea lions, and of the "cleansing rites" used at life crises and to wipe away shame. These cleansing rites included the use of masks, rattles and several illusions—one in which stuffed animals appeared to climb a pole, another in which a basket appeared to float in the air, etc. The ritual word was also associated with designs, which the ritualist painted with red ochre

on those he protected or purified (see especially Jenness 1955:37-39), the rites and the designs were the property of individuals, who kept to themselves the knowledge of the ritual words that made them efficacious, but they could be used on behalf of descendants, descent being reckoned bilaterally, of an ancestral owner.

The *ancestors*, for the Central Coast Salish (perhaps with a few exceptions), had always had human form. Some of these first humans dropped from the sky at the beginning of the world. Others seem simply to have been here. In a few myths they were created by the Transformer. Some animal species are the descendants of people, as the sturgeon in Pitt Lake came from the daughter of the first man there; some are the affines of people, as the sockeye salmon are for the *Katzie* through a marriage of another first man (see Jenness 1955:12, 18-21). But people are not the descendants of animals. In the most common kind of myth, when the Transformer came through the world and brought the Myth Age to an end, he transformed some of the First People into animals but left others, who pleased him, to become the founding ancestors of villages. Some of these founders received, from the Transformer or from other sources, the ritual words, incantations and ritual paraphernalia of the cleansing rites, which have been transmitted generation after generation to their present owners.

The value of the vision, the ritual word, and the ancestors was reflected in *wealth*. In native theory, they were responsible for one's having wealth and so having wealth demonstrated their presence and efficacy. Giving wealth, as Barnett (1938b) and others have pointed out, was a necessary step in validating claims to status, ultimately confirmed by being given wealth. Wealth for the Central Coast Salish included slaves and dentalia obtained from elsewhere but consisted mainly of items made within the area by skilled craftsmen and, more importantly, craftswomen. Probably the most important item of wealth was the blanket woven of mountain-goat and/or dog wool. These blankets had several advantages as wealth; they were made of materials of practical value and available in large but finite amounts and they were divisible and recombinable, since they could be cut up or unraveled and the material rewoven into new ones.

When I began work on this paper I did not see wealth as something I might discuss in relation to art in the same way I saw the vision, the ritual word and the ancestors. But I have come to see it this way, for reasons I shall return to later. But now let me go on to the art itself, taking up in turn each of the main classes of things that were carved and painted.

Ritual Paraphernalia

The Central Salish did not have very much in the way of decorated ritual paraphernalia associated with vision

power. Shamans evidently had little or nothing of the sort. Winter ("guardian spirit") dancers of a few types had a few items. In recent years, and perhaps earlier, dancers with the type of song called "male," once sung by the professional warrior, have induced possession by shaking staffs that are often decorated with animal forms (see Stern 1934, frontispiece; Hawthorn 1967:214, fig. 250, centre). These forms may have vision-related meanings, but I have no information on this. There were also men and women, perhaps mainly among the Salish and Lummi, with the vision-empowered boards, poles and duck-shaped floats that were used more often in the Northern Puget Sound region and generally known by their Lushootseed (Puget) names, respectively *sg^wədílic*, *tástəd* and *čájú* (Suttles 1951:370-378; Jenness 1955:6164; Lushootseed orthography as in Hess, 1974). I have no information on the decoration of these items in the Central Coast Salish area, but on Puget Sound some *sg^wədílic* boards were painted with designs symbolic of the songs revealed by the vision (Waterman 1924, pl. 1) and *tástəd* poles were decorated with red ochre, cedar bark and deer-hoof rattles (Hess 1974:495). While these items appeared in the winter dances, they were also occasionally used in a form of divination to find lost objects or persons, though the owners were not regarded as shamans.

In not having any portable representations of their visions, Central Coast Salish shamans differed markedly from those of two other Coast Salish regions to the south. In the centre of the Puget Sound region the best known works of art are the posts and boards used in the famous "spirit canoe" ceremony in which several shamans dramatized a trip to the Land of the Dead to recover a lost soul (*Fig. 4:2*). This ceremony seems not to have been performed in the Central Coast Salish area and the styles of carving and painting seen on the "spirit canoe" paraphernalia do not closely resemble anything in the Central Coast Salish area. To the southwest, among the Quinault (and others?), shamans used small boards and "wands" carved with representations of their "guardian spirits," the wands with deer-hoof rattles attached (Olson 1936:148-150; Wingert 1949a, pl. 1-7). Again, nothing like these has been reported for the Central Coast Salish area.

In the Central Coast Salish regions the most important decorated objects of ritual use were the rattles and masks used to "cleanse" (*z̄x^wát*, in Halkomelem, Musqueam dialect, orthography mine) persons worthy of that honour. Such a rattle or mask, or perhaps the physical object together with the ritual words and acts that it was used with, is called a *z̄x^wtén*, literally "cleansing instrument." I shall refer to a ceremony in which the rattle, mask, etc. is used as a "cleansing rite" (Jenness 1955:71 calls them "community rituals," Barnett 1955:154 "privileged performances"). These rattles and masks are instruments empowered by the ritual word and used by the ritualist.

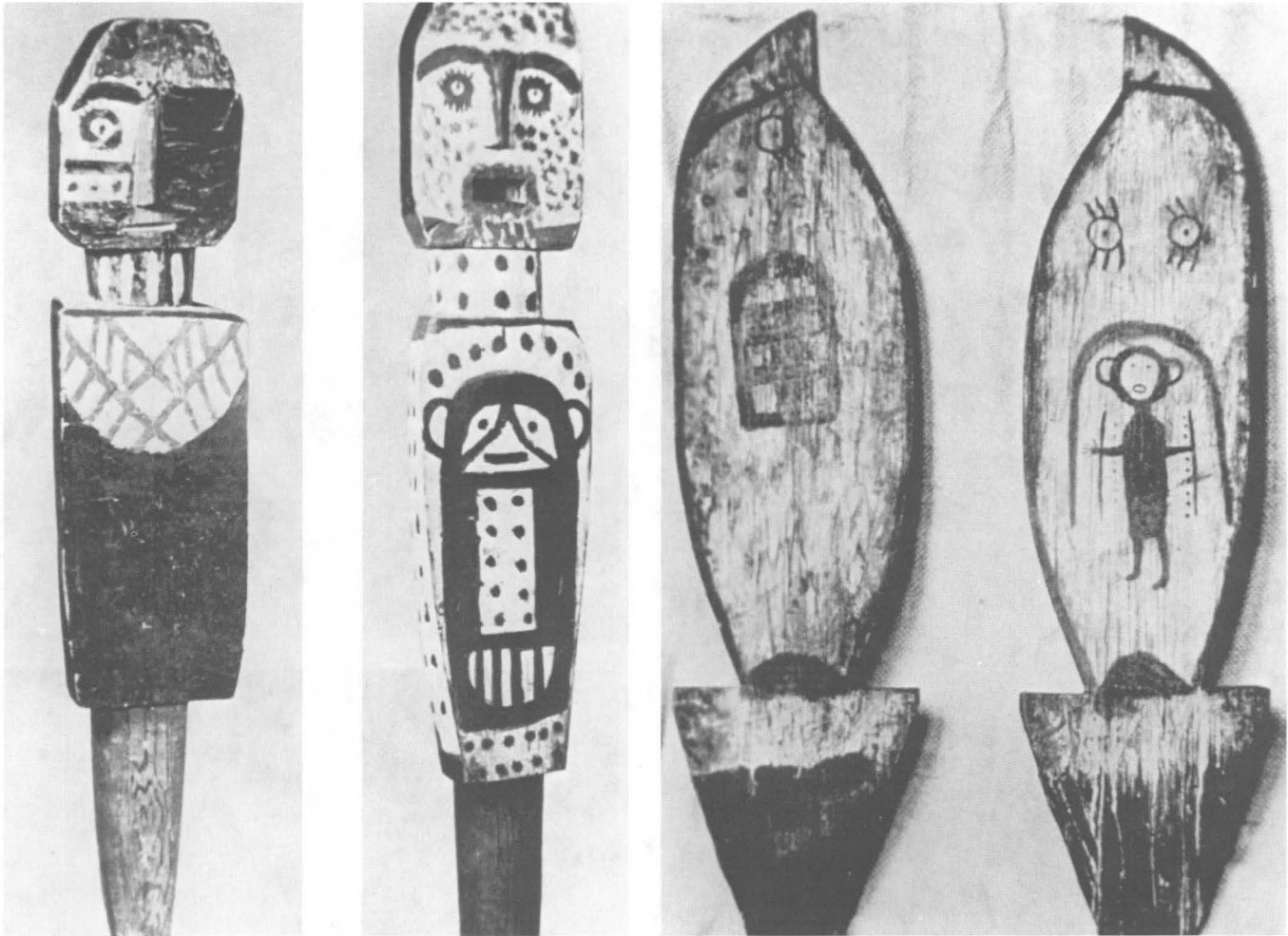


Fig. 4:2. Spirit canoe figures and boards from Puget Sound. These objects were used by shamans in a dramatized trip to the Land of the Dead to recover lost souls.

They belong to a cultural complex that is separate from, though not altogether unrelated to, visions and shamans. The use of the cleansing rites is not confined to the winter dancing season. In fact, at one time they were used most often in the potlatch, which was most often a fair-weather gathering. But recently they have appeared most often at the larger winter dances.

The Rattles (Fig. 4:3). The ritualist's rattle is called *sxYélməx^wcəs* in Halkomelem (Musqueam dialect). This word is certainly Salish and specifically Halkomelem in form but cannot yet be wholly analyzed. It may mean simply "something round held in the hand." A number of ritualist's rattles that are known to be old are made each of a sheet of bighorn sheep horn bent over and sewn along the edges to form a bulging triangle (like the pastry called a "turnover"), provided with a wooden handle extending from the apex, and having strands of mountain-goat wool attached to the sewn sides. Both surfaces of the bulging horn usually have incised designs and the end of the wooden handle is usually carved. There are also some uncarved horn rattles and a number made in

about the same shape but of metal, said to be a modern substitute. In pre-contact times the California bighorn sheep ranged westward to the eastern edge of Central Coast Salish country (Cowan 1940:554, 558, 574) and so some coast hunters may have hunted it. But the animal is little known among the Coast Salish today and probably most of the horn was imported from the Plateau.

In recent years ritualists with rattles have appeared as participants in the "work" (the potlatch-like activities) that accompanies the winter ("guardian-spirit") dancing. Acting in pairs they usher into the big house the young people to receive names or the photographs of the dead to be honoured. The audience first hears the chanting of the ritualists, coming faintly and then gradually louder, from outside the house, and then sees them enter, walking slowly and pausing every few steps, chanting with a slow steady beat of the rattles. After the young people are named or the dead honoured, many members of the audience receive blankets or silver coins as thanks for their witnessing the event. Such "work," once part of the summer potlatch, seems to have been only recently

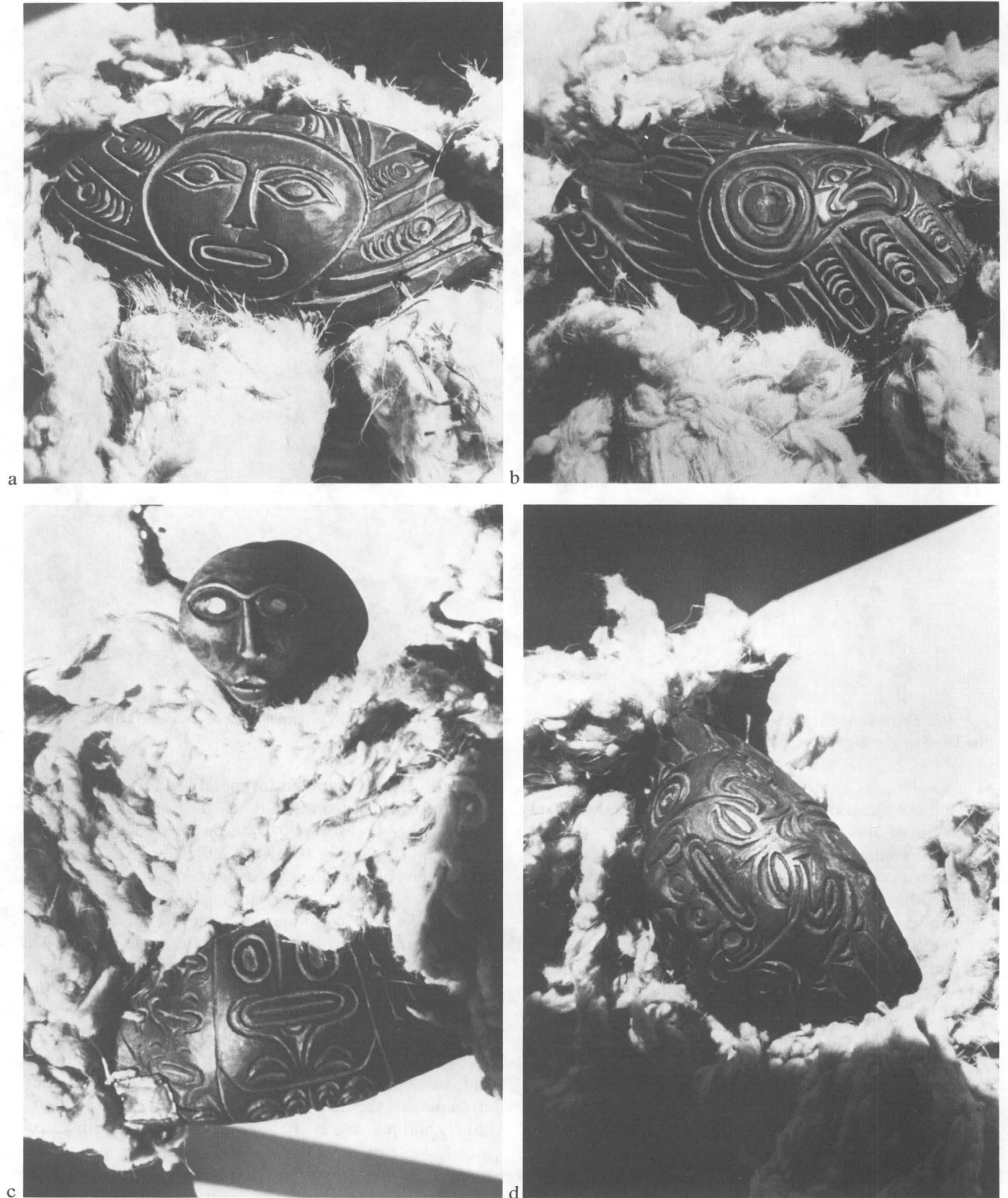


Fig. 4:3 a,b,c,d. Coast Salish ritualists' rattles made of horn and carved on both faces. Mountain goat wool is attached to the sides of the rattle.

inserted into the winter dance and is still only an optional adjunct to it (Suttles 1960b).

But at one time the ritualist's rattle had another use directly related to the winter dance. In a text dictated in Halkomelem, one of the Musqueam teachers describes her great-grandmother's work as a ritualist. That woman had four rattles, one of which she used to induce possession in a person expected to become a "new dancer." She would first simply paint designs directly on the body of the initiate, reciting the proper ritual words. But if that did not work, she would choose the rattle that had a face carved on it, put red ochre on it, and then stamp it onto the body of the initiate, at which point he would become possessed with his song. She used this method to bring out songs of one of the several categories of "spirit songs." She also used a rattle for a girl who had reached puberty. After painting the girl four mornings and four nights, she led her down to the river, recited the ritual words to the water and bathed her.

The designs (*Fig. 4:3*) carved on the sheep-horn rattles vary in complexity. But several I have seen appear similar in features of composition and style. Three I have seen have on one side a clearly defined, roundish humanoid face. On one, the face has what seems to be bunches of hair, feathers or rays radiating from it; on the other side are what appear to be fishes. The second has a face with radiating rays and fishes and on the reverse a bird with fishes. On the third, the face has fishes above it and facing birds enclosing it, while on the reverse another pair of birds face each other to enclose a space in which the features of another face appear. As recurrent elements of style there are circles, concentric circles, crescents and elongated wedges that I have been tempted to call "cuneiforms." Bill Holm has suggested to me, and I am convinced he is right, that the crescent and cuneiforms are "holes in the donuts" between formlines. Holm's analysis of the northern two-dimensional style seems to work for this style too, yet this style generally lacks the ovoids that are such a prominent feature of the northern style.

(A rattle of unknown provenience shown in the *Art of the North* show in 1973—see Collins et al. 1973:262, *Fig. 341*—is clearly the same kind of rattle in form and style, though the design is somewhat more complex than any known Central Coast Salish rattle that I have seen and it seems to contain an ovoid.)

I do not know what these designs represent, nor do I expect to find anyone who does. Forty years ago Diamond Jenness (1955:37-39) learned that ritualists painted the faces of those they worked on, every ritualist having "his own hereditary set of designs that varied with different functions," such as healing the ghost-struck and recovering lost "vitalities" as well as performing puberty rites for both sexes. Jenness worked, in 1936, with Old Pierre of Katzie, perhaps the most famous shaman in the Central Coast Salish region. To Pierre, all power came from "Him

Who Dwells Above" and the ritual words, which Jenness identifies as "prayers," were initially addressed to this deity, though they have come to have power of their own. The rattles too, according to Pierre, came from the deity, who gave one with a different design to each of several village founders. However, "No one now knows the meanings of the patterns."

Are the designs on the rattles related to the designs painted with red ochre by ritualists on their patients? It seems reasonable to suppose so, in view of Pierre's attributing them to the same source and the use by one ritualist of her rattle as a stamp. Were the designs the ritualist drew on their patients the formlines or the crescents and cuneiforms—the donuts or the holes? If the unincised surface of the horn transmitted the paint, the ritualists must have been drawing formlines. Holm (1965: 92-93) has compared the flow of movement that produced the Northern formlines with the flow of movement of the Northern dance. Did the ritual painting of esoteric designs among the Central Coast Salish provide a link here between dancing and carving?

What about the recurring face on the rattles? Is it "He Who Dwells Above?" Probably not. That name is Jenness's translation of *cícəł si'ém*, a phrase that appears to be a loan-translation of the Chinook Jargon *sáxali táyi* "chief above," perhaps better "Lord Above," used by the missionaries as the term for "God." Similar loan-translations can be found in several other languages along the coast. A "Lord Above" does not play any role in other origin myths collected in the Central Coast Salish or neighbouring regions. So it appears to me that the "Lord Above" is a post-contact concept and that Old Pierre's theology is a synthesis that post-dates the rattles (cf. Suttles 1957:377-381). But there are at least three other possibilities. First, the face on the rattle may be the face of the Daylight (*swéyəl* in Musqueam, *sk^wéyəl* or *sk^wéčəl* in some other dialects of Halkomelem and Northern Straits, *sk^wáčəy* in Clallam), seen as something of very great power to which—or to whom—people who knew the ritual words addressed them as spells—or prayers; I have the impression that to some the Daylight was simply a very powerful impersonal force, while to others it may have been a deity-like entity. Second, the face may be that of *xé'ís*, The Transformer of the mythology of the region and the source, according to some myths (e.g., Stern 1934:107), of ritual words. Third, the rattle may have been used in the first-salmon ceremony, and so the face and the fish on the rattle may represent an ancestor and the species he made a compact with, a compact to be maintained through the ceremony. But this is sheer conjecture. The face on the rattle may represent no particular person or being at all. Perhaps a human face simply symbolizes consciousness and purpose, which are, at least, attributes of the ritualist that should be reassuring to the patient.



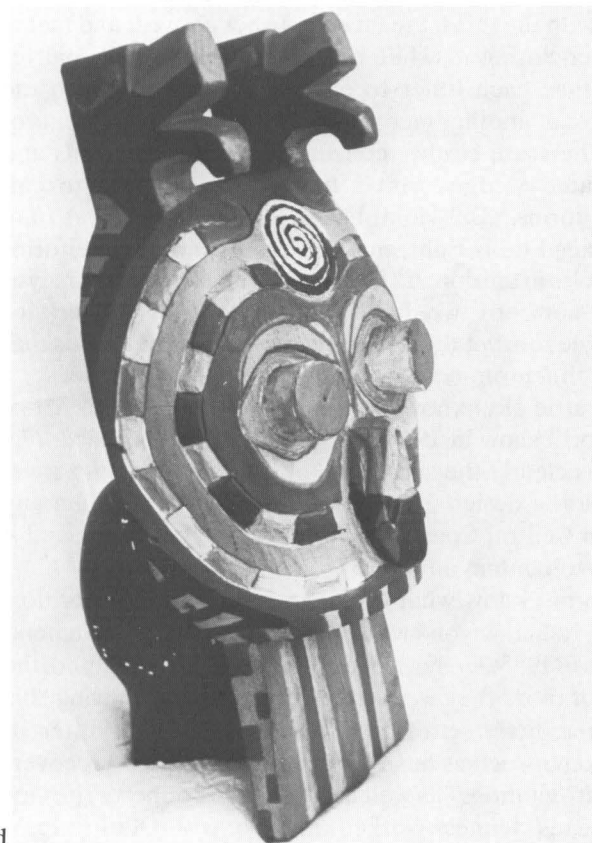
a



b



c



d

Fig. 4:4. Sxwayxwey Masks. a Snake sxwayxwey from Musqueam. b Raven sxwayxwey from Cowichan. c, d Masks from Squamish.

The distribution of the ritualist's rattle is not altogether clear. Its centre seems to be the Halkomelem area but some ritualists among the Northern Straits people to the south and among the Squamish and perhaps others to the north also used rattles. The decorated rattles that I know of are from the Halkomelem and Vancouver Island Straits area.

The Masks (Figs. 4:4, 4:5). The mask used in one of the cleansing rites is known in the literature under a variety of representations of the native name, which seems uniform throughout the Central Coast Salish region and which I record as $s\dot{x}^w\acute{a}y\dot{x}^w\acute{e}y$ and will spell "sxwayxwey." The name appears to be Salish but I can give no etymology for it. I know nothing to justify identifying it with "whirlwind" as did Emmons (Notes in the Provincial Archives and Catalog of the American Museum of Natural History) nor with "earthquake" as Boas (1897:497) did for its Kwakiutl counterpart. Recently Levi-Strauss (1975: 1-39) has followed an earlier suggestion by Codere (1948:7) that there is a relationship between this name and the word used on Puget Sound for "potlatch," but this is highly unlikely.

The name refers, I believe, to the whole character portrayed by the dancer in his costume rather than to the mask itself, which exists in several named varieties. As it appears in a performance, the mask is worn high on the head, surrounded by plumes and a bib-like collar. The dancer's whole "outfit" includes a cape worn over the back of his head and shoulders, lines of large white feathers wrapped around his middle, leggings of downy swan-skin and deer-hoof rattles at his ankles. In his right hand the sxwayxwey dancer carries a rattle made of perforated scallop shells strung on a wooden hoop or pair of hoops.

The mask itself is carved of wood. Most now in existence may be of red cedar but at an earlier time they may have been made of maple. Most are painted with three colours—black or blue, red and white. Masks used in the Halkomelem area, with a few exceptions, conform to a standard pattern (Squamish and Lummi carvers have produced some different types, to which I shall return later.) The mask consists of a fairly round face, the most conspicuous features of which are a pair of projecting cylinders representing the eyes, or more precisely the eyeballs or irises, since the lids appear in low relief around the bases of these stalks, which look like the eyes of a crab or snail. Rising from the top of the head is a pair of horn-like projections carved in the form of animal or bird heads. (I use "animal" in the sense of a creature with a snout rather than a beak; "animals" may include reptiles and amphibians as well as mammals.) With the possible exception of one type, the face seems to lack a mandible, the straight lower margin of the face appearing as a maxilla. Projecting downward from the face is a long, broad, flat, grooved surface that appears to be a tongue.

Perforations at the root of this tongue, under the maxilla, allow the dancer to look out. The "nose" of the face and the area surrounding the eyes vary with the type of mask.

List of types of sxwayxwey given by Jenness (1955:72, 91), Barnett (1955:158), Emmons (n.d.), and my own informants add up to some thirteen names: Thunder, Raven, Sawbill, Snake, Two-headed Snake, Beaver, Spring Salmon, Owl, Ghost, Buzzard, Eagle, Bear and Clown. The actual number of types may be somewhat less, since "Owl" and "Ghost" may be the same, as may "Bear" and "Clown." Some of these named types are identifiable with masks in museum collections; some are not. I will not try to present all of the data here. I will describe briefly only the most clearly identifiable types.

One type (*Fig. 4:5d*) was identified at Musqueam, by Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Charles from photographs, as "Sawbill-Face" ($\dot{x}^w\acute{a}\cdot\acute{q}^w\acute{e}s$, from $\dot{x}^w\acute{a}\cdot\acute{q}^w$ "sawbill, merganser, fish duck," $-\acute{e}s$ "-face"). This name appears in every other list that I have. On the masks so identified, a fully carved head of a merganser forms the "nose" of the mask as a whole, while the rest of the bird may be shown in low relief, the wings and feet appearing around the eyes of the mask and the tail on the forehead. There are variations: on several Sawbill-Faces the "horns" are birds, but on one so identified they are animals; and while on several the body of the merganser is shown in a clear though stylized fashion, as just described, in one mask the body of the bird is much less clearly indicated.

In the type the Charleses identified as "Snake-Face" (*Fig. 4:4c*) ($\dot{x}^w\acute{e}l\acute{q}\acute{e}y\acute{e}s$, from $\acute{e}l\acute{q}\acute{e}y$ "snake"), an animal head facing upward forms the nose of the mask. In some examples, two feet extend upward from the head toward the eyes of the mask. In all, ridges I take to be the snake's body extend from the head in an arc up and around either side of the face of the mask. A spiral or set of concentric circles appears on the forehead of the mask. The horns are animal heads.

In a type identified as "Ghost-Face" (*Fig. 4:5b*) ($\acute{p}\acute{e}l\acute{q}^w\acute{e}\acute{z}\acute{a}y\acute{e}s$, from $\acute{s}\acute{p}\acute{e}l\acute{q}^w\acute{i}z\acute{e}?$ "ghost, corpse, screech owl") the nose of the mask is neither an animal nor a bird head but a simple triangular projection with an inverted V incised in the flat end, which looks (to me, anyway) like the nasal aperture of a skull. If the identification with a skull is correct, the lines on either side of the nose may represent the malars and the few simple incised lines above the eyes may represent the sutures. In two masks but not in a third, the upper jaw seems to be painted with teeth.

Photographs of two masks with similar triangular noses were identified as Ghost masks by the Charleses but one was identified as a Beaver by Emmons. The latter identification may be correct, since they have nostrils cut in a different form and they have pairs of wide incisors projecting downward from their upper jaws.

On a mask Emmons identified as a Raven (*Fig. 4:4b*),

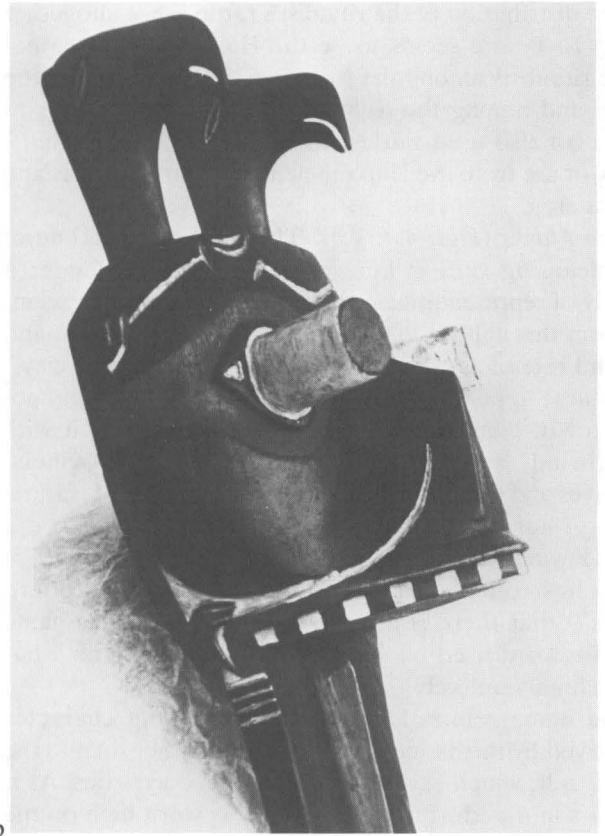
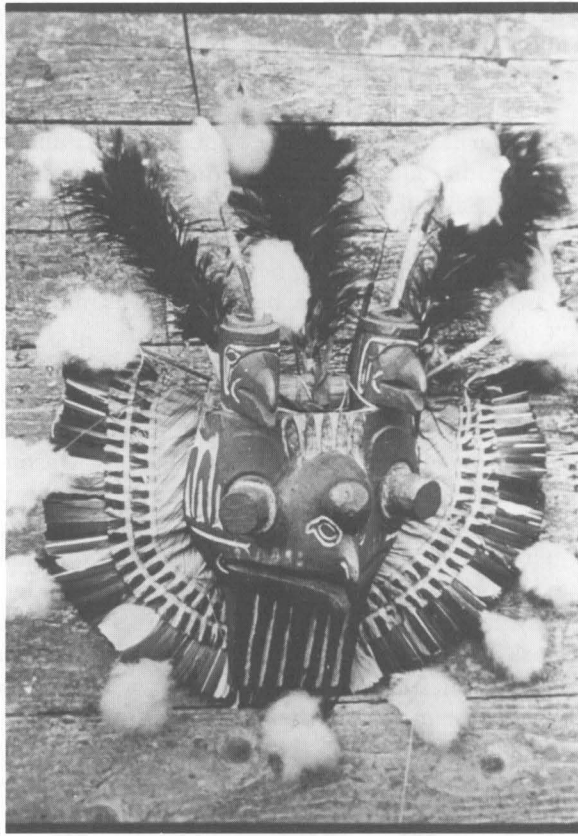


Fig. 4:5. a Raven mask from Nanaimo. b Ghost mask from Musqueam. c Mask showing plumes and ruff. d Sawbill mask from Katzie.

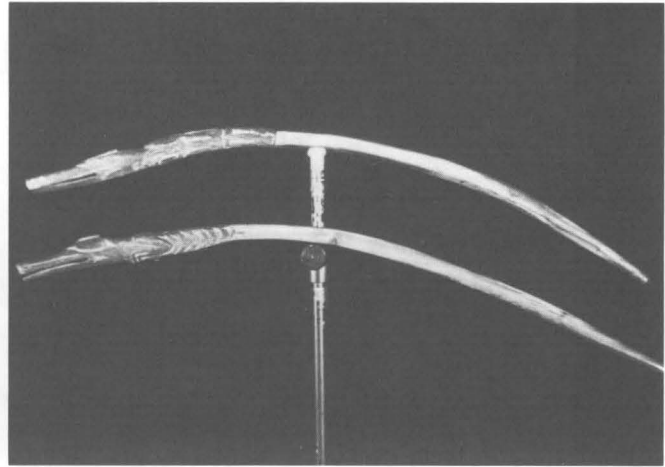
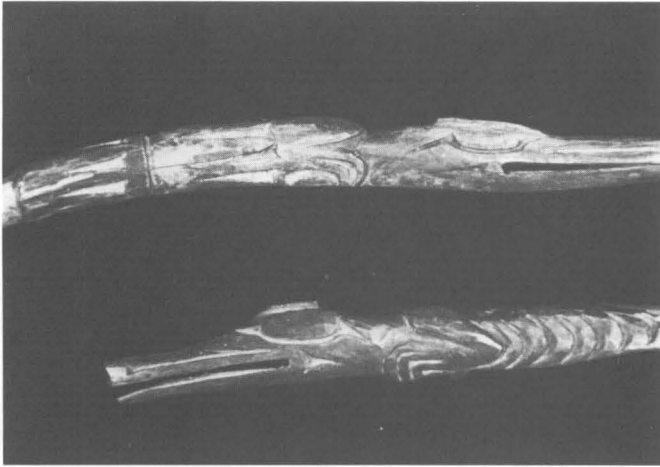


Fig. 4:6. Wands used with the sxwayxwey mask.

the nose is the bird's head, facing downward, with its mouth extending nearly across the width of the mask. If we focus our attention on the Raven's mouth, it may appear that it is also the mouth of the mask itself. But the Raven's eyes are not identical with the eyes of the whole mask and so I am inclined to think that the Raven's mouth is still the upper jaw of the whole mask. On this type of mask, the Raven's mouth is cut all the way through the wood, providing a slit the dancer may see through, which suggests that this mask was worn a bit lower on the face than the others.

In style, most of these masks share two organizational principles with the art of the more northerly Northwest Coast peoples: the bird or animal (the snake, anyway) is spread out and wrapped around the space available to it; and, a part of one creature may be simultaneously a part of another, as when the head of the sawbill is also the nose of the mask (a relationship Laura Greenberg and Bill Holm have called "visual punning"). Also, elements of the northern style are present; we can certainly see formlines created by the cutting away of the "holes in the donuts" (cf. Ch. 2 by Holm). But just as in the ritualist's rattles, the incised elements are cuneiforms, crescents, circles and arcs; rarely, if ever, ovoids.

When the sxwayxwey mask is worn, various things are attached to it. In the top of the mask there are holes into which are thrust large feathers (Golden Eagle tail feathers?) or Chinese feather dusters. (Photographs dating back to the turn of the century show that the latter have been in use at least that long.) Behind the top of the mask is attached a roll of rushes into which are thrust a number of flexible stalks, earlier sea-lion whiskers but now usually (I believe) wood and wire, tipped with tufts of white down. The bib-like affair that surrounds the rest of the mask consists of a fan of feathers cut evenly at the perimeter and covered with patterned or embroidered cloth. A mask in the American Museum has a carved wooden attachment projecting from either side, perhaps

originally to hold up the "bib." The British Columbia Provincial Museum has a pair of slender "wands" (Fig. 4:6) said to have been attached to a sxwayxwey mask; the end of each is carved in the form of an animal and very much in the style that appears on the ritualist's rattles and, as we shall see, on the spindle whorls. I shall come back to the identity of these animals later.

The sxwayxwey, like the ritualist's rattle, is a cleansing instrument. And like the rattle, it was formerly used in the summer potlatch but has recently been used in the "work" accompanying the winter dance and for the same purposes. An even number of sxwayxwey dancers, usually four or six, dance around the person, persons or photograph for which they have been hired. The owner of a mask may dance with it himself or may engage someone else to wear it. Men only dance with sxwayxwey masks, in contrast to the winter dance (the "guardian-spirit" dance), in which both sexes participate equally. However, women are hired to sing as the dancers perform. A sxwayxwey dancer moves with high, short steps, raising the right arm with the right foot and the left with the left ("like a pacer"). The style of dancing does not resemble those of the winter dancers. At one time, it is said, the different types of masks were used with appropriate movements. I have also been told that at one time the masks were much heavier and hard to breathe through so that the dancers engaged in a kind of endurance contest. Two kinds of songs are associated with the sxwayxwey. In the past, at any rate, on the morning of the day of the potlatch when the sxwayxwey was to be used, at dawn the owner beat a box drum and sang an incantation (*széləm*) that announced the event and, I believe, empowered the sxwayxwey with the ritual word. Later, as the sxwayxwey danced, the chorus of women sang a "song for a person" (*stələmíeyəł*), which is either an inherited song or one composed for the occasion in order to wipe away an insult.

The box drum used for the sxwayxwey was another

piece of decorated ritual paraphernalia. A Lummi man who saw one used at a Quamichan (Cowichan) potlatch said that it had animals on the front of it but he could not make out what they were. The Field Museum's box drum from Cowichan that has four little human figures on it (Wingert 1949, pl. 44) may have been used for the *sxwayxwey*.

Two generations ago a Musqueam man, and perhaps no one else, owned the *q^wi niye* (probably "hairy thing") identified as a "clown." This character appeared with the *sxwayxwey* dancers, wearing a somewhat different type of mask and a costume of cured bearskin. The "clown" chased the *sxwayxwey*, poking at their eyes with a stick, and threatened the women in the audience. The owner of the "clown" is said to have lost the costume and so abandoned the practice. Old photographs (e.g., Barnett 1955, p.XIX) show it as having less projecting eyes than the *sxwayxwey*, proper and a single "horn" on the head. (Barnett 1955:178-179 discusses the clown. See also Stern, 1934:57-59, but note my later comment on Stern's work.) This figure of the "clown," with its dark fur and audience-oriented behaviour, contrasts sharply with the figure of the *sxwayxwey*, with its white feathers and down and behaviour oriented toward the subject of its purifying power.

What does the *sxwayxwey* really represent? I do not really know. The myths that account for its origin usually identify it as a mask and costume worn by a human being or human-like being. There is no evidence that I can see that it represents a "spirit" (there is no equivalent of "spirit" in Halkomelem) or some non-human species of bird or animal (cf. Suttles 1972 on "natural" vs "supernatural" in relation to the "sasquatch"). Perhaps the question is misguided. Feathers are themselves a ritual substance, like red ochre and hogfennel seeds. Central Coast Salish ritualists scatter feathers as they purify dance floors. The purification would not be effected, I believe, without the ritual words used by and known only to the ritualist, but the feathers evidently help make them efficacious. Perhaps the *sxwayxwey* is not more than an elaborate use of the magical powers of feathers and patterns, which increase the efficacy of the ritual word. If so, it need not represent anything. It is just what it is called, a "cleansing instrument."

The *sxwayxwey* has a much wider distribution than the ritualist's rattle, but it too may have been spreading, on the coast at least, from the Halkomelem area. It has been used northward as far as the Kwakiutl and southward as far as the immediately adjacent Saanich and Lummi. But the conclusion that it originated in the Halkomelem area or more specifically among the Lower Fraser people, reached by Barnett (1955:167, 178-179), Duff (1952:123-126), and Levi-Strauss (1975:1-44ff), is based largely on judgements about the historicity of myths and traditions of who got the *sxwayxwey* from whom (especially in Duff's

case) or on a structuralist theory of myth applied to insufficient data (as in Levi-Strauss's cases). I see serious problems here but cannot go into them at this time. The *sxwayxwey* may indeed be old in the Upper Stalo area. But I do not believe that myths and traditions prove it. Some ethnographic evidence seems to support it. Inland neighbours of the Upper Stalo used carvings of the *sxwayxwey* as grave markers; this is reported for the Nooksack by Fetzer (n.d.) and for the Lower Lillooet by Teit (1906:272-273). Teit also reports (253-254) that both the Lower and Upper Lillooet used various kinds of masks. But most important is the archaeological evidence. Among materials taken from a prehistoric site at Chase, in the middle of Shuswap country, Sanger (1968) discovered pieces of scallop shells used as rattles and a broken mask that looks like a *sxwayxwey*. A scallop-shell rattle was also discovered in the Lochnore-Nesikep locality (Sanger 1970:94, 101). In both places there was other evidence of trade with the coast. This does suggest that the *sxwayxwey* was in use on the Lower Fraser in prehistoric times.

Another object that must be mentioned in this context of art relevant to the ritual word is the stone bowl. Wilson Duff, in his thorough treatment of these bowls (Duff 1956), has summarized the scant ethnographic evidence that they were used by ritualists in historic times. I have nothing at this time to add to what Duff has said. Still other objects that we may be able to consider in this context when more is known about them are the paraphernalia of the Nootka-style secret society that has flourished at the western end of Straits country. Whatever members think, non-members have seen it as a kind of cleansing ritual. Finally, among decorated ritual objects we should include painted drums. These used to be less common than unpainted drums, but are fairly often seen today at big dances. I have no information on the meaning of the designs.

The Central Coast Salish house was a long, shed-roofed structure consisting of a sheath of huge planks over a frame of posts and beams. The posts were often decorated and in rare cases so were the beams. Also, early European observers saw decorated house fronts on the Lower Fraser. In 1808 Simon Fraser saw one in what may have been a Kwantlen village. The 640-foot long house he visited had, in "the chief's" section, a post with an oval opening serving as a door, above which on the outside "are carved a human figure as large as life, with other figures in imitation of beasts and birds" (Masson 1889-90:197). Fifty years later, in 1858, Charles Wilson saw decorated houses in the same area. He wrote (1865: 287-288):

The buildings at Langley and Chilikweyuk are the only ones on which there is any attempt at ornament, the former being adorned with some curious pictographs, in which a bird something like a crow figures conspicuously; the latter with

some grotesque carvings, apparently representing tortoises, large snakes, and some animal of the crocodile type.

In his journal (1970:37) he mentions not being able to copy the “pictographs on the lodges because of the rain,” so we can assume they were on the outside. In the same year (1858) James Madison Alden visited the same area and produced a series of watercolours of the country, several of which show native houses with large circular designs on their fronts, but at too great a distance to give any details (see Stenzel 1975, plates 37, C-21, and 40). Alden also produced a watercolour of the village at Nanaimo (pl C-24), which does not show any external decoration. Probably features of structure and use worked against the decoration of house fronts. The heavy wall planks were held horizontally, overlapping, between pairs of upright poles. The planks covering a section of a house might be owned by the family occupying it. They were easily removed so that they could be laid across a pair of canoes as a “raft,” taken to cover a frame at a summer fishing site, or taken to another village by a family changing residence. It seems likely that houses with decorated fronts would be only those whose owners would not have to remove the planks seasonally or could be assured of getting them back in the right order. Perhaps there was less moving of planks on the Lower Fraser than elsewhere in the area, where decorated house fronts have not been reported. Paul Kane in 1847 sketched two carved house entrance posts he must have seen at or near Victoria (Harper 1971:260, *Fig. 195*) but shows no decorated house fronts in his scenes of villages (e.g., p.254).

The posts that stood inside the house, holding the beams and constituting part of the frame, were often decorated. In the Northern Straits area, it seems, they were decorated with representations of vision powers. One that survives (*Fig. 4:7*) (at the Whatcom Museum of History and Art in Bellingham) is as stark as a Puget Sound shaman's figure. It belonged to Chowitsut, who was the wealthiest Lummi in the early 1850s, and it is an incised pair of concentric circles linked with two smaller circles. In the 1940s my oldest Lummi teacher identified this design as representing one of Chowitsut's wealth powers—“sun carrying two valises of expensive things.” Other posts with carvings representing visions stood in Victoria and Boas tells us (1891:564) that the Songhees owner kept them covered except during festivals because he did “not like to be constantly reminded of these his superhuman friends and helpers.”

In the Halkomelem area, it seems, house posts were carved to represent ancestors and ancestral heritages related to the ritual word. A post at Musqueam (*Fig. 4:8*) represented the famous warrior named *qeyəplénəx^w* (“Capilano”). Another Musqueam post represents *čsimlénəx^w* (*Fig. 4:8 right*), a descendant of the man who bore that name, according to Old Pierre, at the beginning of the present world, who became the founding ancestor

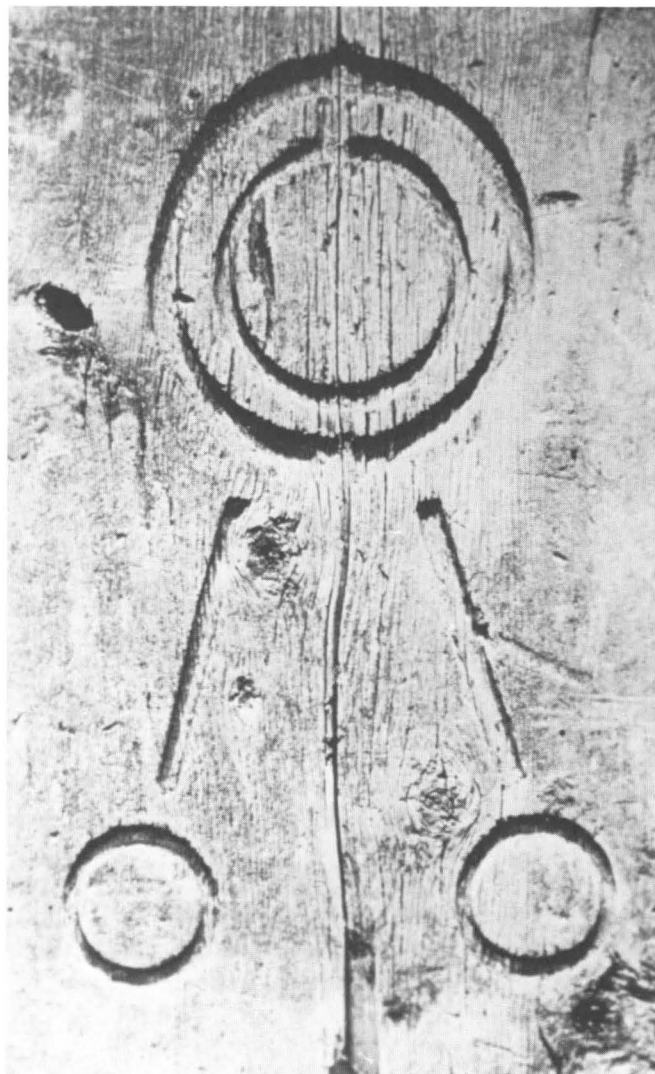


Fig. 4:7. Carving on house post of Chowitsut at Lummi. These figures symbolize the sun carrying his two valises of valuables.

of a Musqueam village, and received a ritualist's rattle, a *sxwayxwey* mask, and the empowering incantations from the Lord Above. On this post the bearer of this famous name is seen quelling a bear by shaking the rattle and chanting the incantation (cf. Barnett 1955:54). The post honours both the ancestor and the heritage.

A house post that once stood in a Nanaimo village (now in the Field Museum and illustrated in Wingert 1949, Pl.40) portrays a *sxwayxwey* dancer and thus illustrates that a house post can represent a cleansing rite alone.

A cleansing rite is probably also the source of a number of animals that appear on house posts (and also grave monuments) in museum collections, several from the Cowichan village of Quamichan but others from Musqueam, Saanich and Songhees. On some posts there are only animals; on one set of posts there are six to a post



Fig. 4:8. left. Housepost at Musqueam depicting "Capilano".

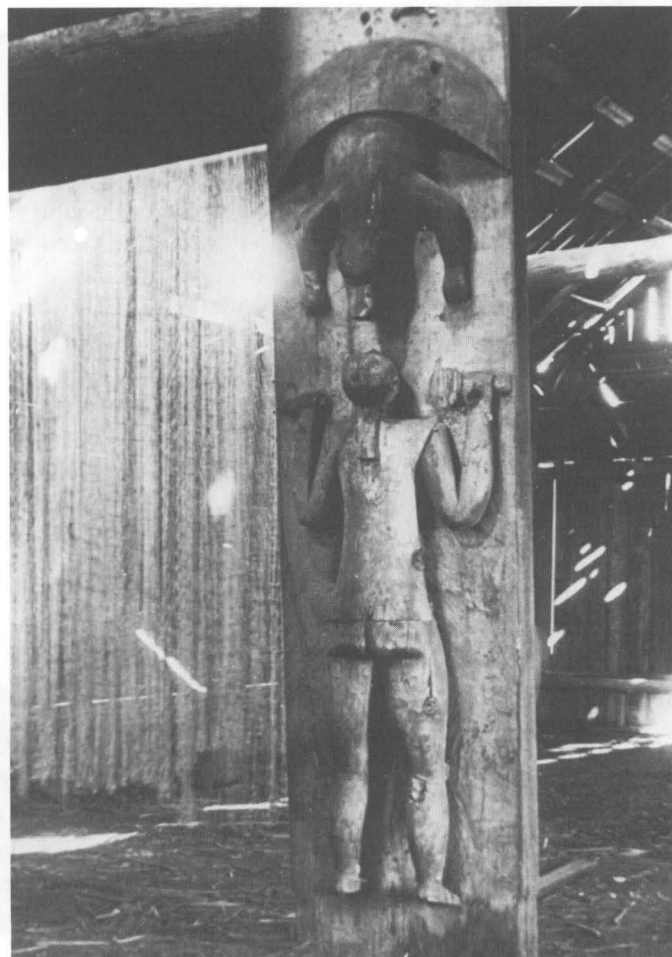


Fig. 4:8. right. Housepost at Musqueam depicting Csimlenax.

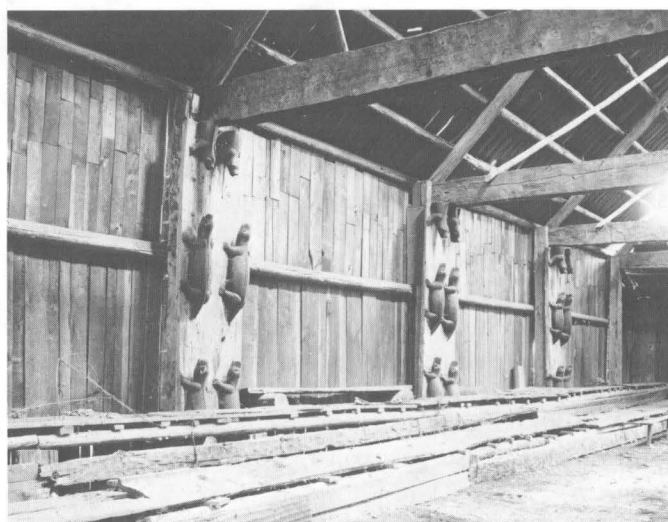


Fig. 4:9. House interior at the Cowichan village of Quamichan showing posts with mustelids.

(Fig. 4:9). On other posts the animals appear on the fronts of large human figures, two or four to a post; on still others a large human figure holds a small animal (Fig. 4:10). Recent informants have identified these animals as some kind of mustelid (member of the weasel family)—minks, otters or fishers. Early collectors recorded a name for them as "scowmidgeon" or "sq̄-mit-chen" (Wingert 1949:39; Barbeau 1950-51), which must represent the Halkomelem $\check{s}x^w\acute{a}m\acute{a}c\acute{a}n$, "fisher," an animal that does not live on Vancouver Island (Cowan and Guiguet 1965: 308). I have been told of cleansing rites using several kinds of stuffed animals. But the most detailed information was given to Jenness (1955:72-73) by Old Pierre on the use of stuffed fishers. In this rite they cleansed a dead youth by climbing up a pole set up to represent him or cleansed a pubescent girl by climbing up and down her body. Thus the posts show the animals only and those that show them climbing on a human figure may both commemorate a cleansing rite. The posts that show a human being holding a single animal may have some other significance.

At Musqueam there were once posts that are much harder to interpret. In 1963 I showed photographs of



Fig. 4:10. Exterior houseposts at Quamichan. The weasel-like animals on these posts are associated with curing ceremonies.

them to older people at Musqueam but could learn nothing about them. These are posts that were collected at Musqueam in 1898 by Harlan I. Smith for the American Museum (Fig. 4:11). According to a note in the museum's catalogue, three stood in the house of "Kaplänux, the old chief." The people I talked with thought this most likely; that would have been Capilano the Second, the son of the First, who was the famous warrior portrayed by the post mentioned earlier. A catalogue note that may refer to post 16/4652 reads:

Top row of circles they say represents stars, then moon, sun, then row of stars. The sun with moon it in. Below represents ancestors who taught them of sun, moon, and stars—a carved woman.

Perhaps somewhere a Smith journal note will tell more. Two other posts (Fig. 4:12) (16/7947 and 16/7948) that evidently came from the same house portray, among other things, two-headed creatures that are probably the *sʷi·lqəy* or *sʷinəlqəy*, the two-headed serpent, which is as important in Coast Salish traditions as its Kwakiutl counterpart is in theirs. It is a very important source of vision power for a shaman. But it also appears in a Musqueam legend

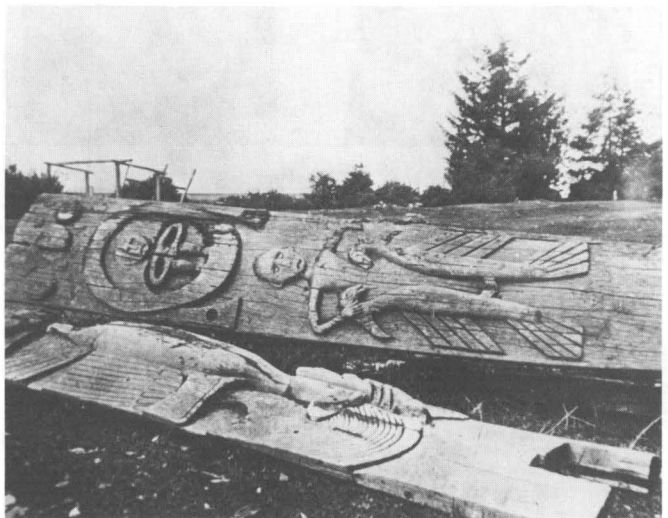


Fig. 4:11. Houseposts collected in 1898 at Musqueam.

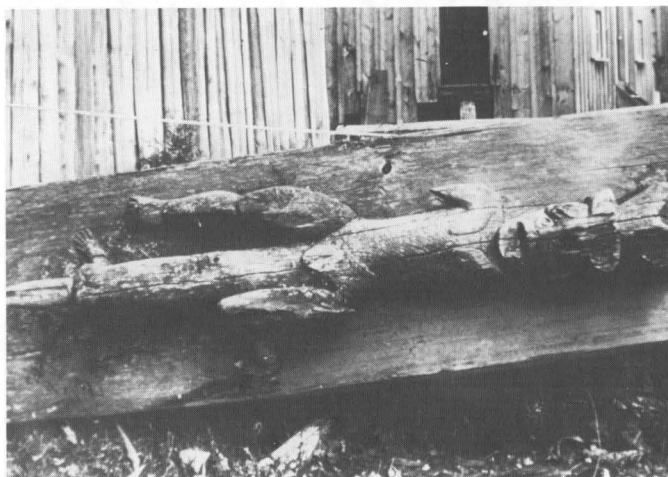


Fig. 4:12. Houseposts from Musqueam dating to 1898. The lower post has since disappeared.

that accounts for the winding stream that ran through the village and the growth of rushes that gives the village its name and symbolizes the capacity of the Musqueam to multiply again after a catastrophe. The being holding the two-headed serpent (on 16/7948) may be thunder, also an important figure in Coast Salish tradition and a source of shamanistic power. But in view of the absence of representations of shaman's visions generally in the Halkomelem area, it seems more likely that these represent something else.

Another post that Smith photographed at Musqueam with the previous three seems to have disappeared, perhaps through someone's censorship (Fig. 4:12). It was a striking piece of sculpture that, informants agree, must have represented a man being attacked anally by a giant "lizard." In Central Coast Salish belief, this "lizard" (to judge from one description, probably really a salamander, the Pacific newt), if stepped over in the woods, will follow you home, creep into your bed and attack you in this fashion, ultimately destroying you from within. But why should this kind attack be portrayed, with a giant "lizard" as the attacker, on a house post? Did this post belong to a shaman or ritualist who could remove the intrusive amphibian? Or did it belong to someone who could direct one to attack an enemy? And did the owner have this post covered except on festive occasions?

At the time of first contact with Europeans, the Central Coast Salish disposed of the dead in wooden coffins and in canoes set up in graveyards. In some places, at least, the coffins were decorated with carvings and in some places carved figures were set up as monuments. As Duff (1952:51) points out, in 1808 Simon Fraser saw "tombs" carved with "figures of birds and beasts" near Yale, where the Halkomelem and Thompson met. In 1847 Kane sketched a single human figure standing beside a group of graves at Port Angeles in Clallam country (Harper 1971:251, Fig.179). In 1854 Alden sketched a group of grave posts near Victoria. The sketch (Stenzel 1975:33, Pl.9) shows five human figures, two of which each hold a pair of animals and look very much like the house posts that seem to show purifying mustelids, while another is holding what looks like a cedar-bark hoop. (What appear to be the identical grave posts are shown in a watercolour, Pl.23, but the location is given as Departure Bay.)

Photographs taken by Harlan I. Smith in the late 1920's at Saanich and at Musqueam show grave carvings of animals and men holding animals. A carving (Fig. 4:13) that stood at Patricia Bay is described as a "grave figure of a man holding a scowmidgeon" (National Museum Neg. No. 72,843, caption on back of print). If this is the *sx^wáməcən* used as in Old Pierre's description, the carving must represent a man being cleansed by having a stuffed fisher climb up his body. A grave box at Musqueam had four animals on its front and is probably the one men-

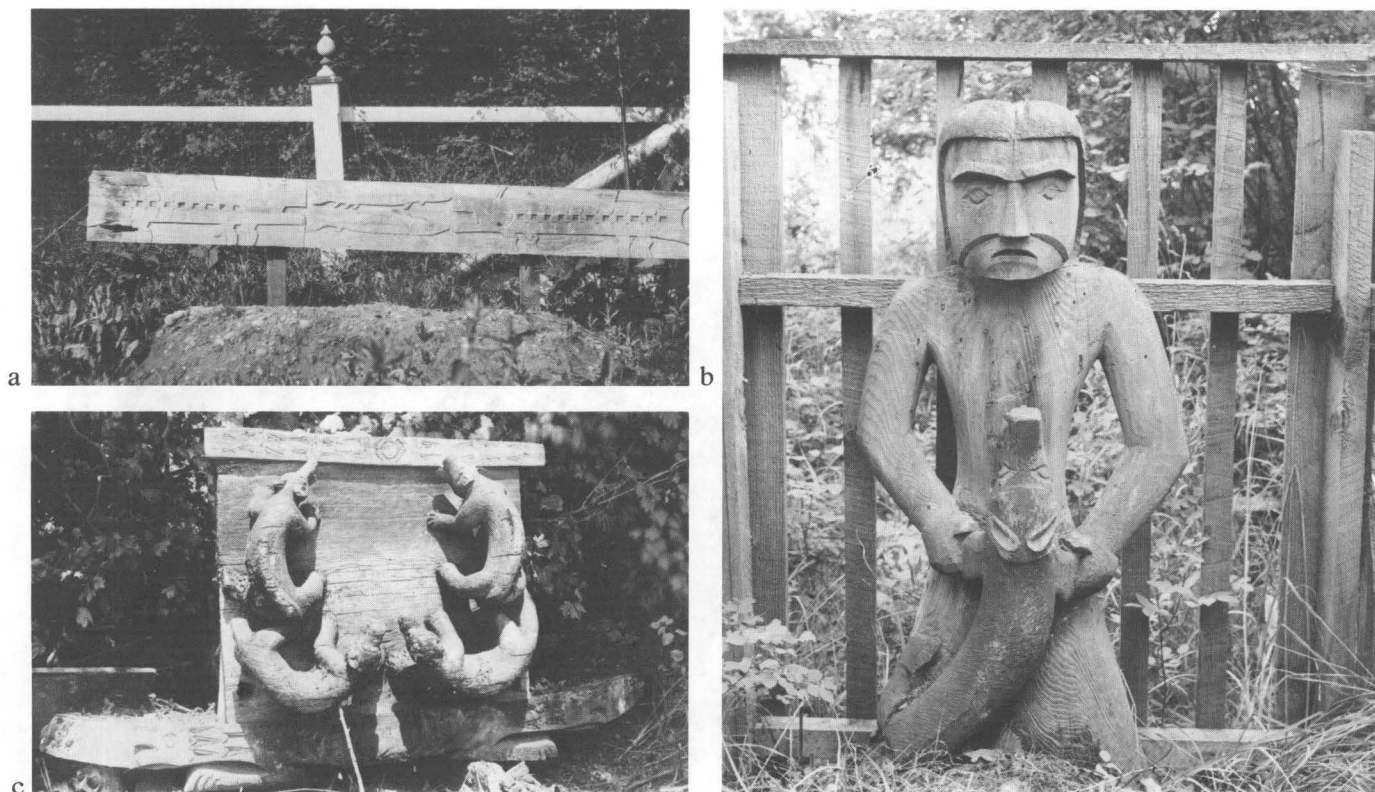


Fig. 4:13. Coast Salish grave monuments. *a* Carved board at Musqueam showing sturgeon. *b* Monument at Patricia Bay showing man with a scowmidgeon. *c* Carved grave box at Musqueam showing fishers (scowmidgeon).

tioned by Jenness (1954:73); according to Old Pierre, the ancestor of a village that merged with the Musqueam was given a fisher cleansing rite by the Transformer, but

The last priest [ritualist], having no descendant to whom he might impart his knowledge, hired a skilled wood-carver to make him a coffin showing on one face four fishers in full relief. This coffin is now in the National Museum of Canada.

Above the slab with the animals, on this coffin, is a board decorated with concentric circles and cuneiforms, while below it is a longer board carved with a head at each end, forefeet and a scaly body; both boards are done in the style that appears on rattles and spindle whorls.

Another grave at Musqueam had on the upper part of its face a large board (Fig. 13) carved in low relief with a pair of sturgeons flanked by two larger creatures with snouts and ears, short legs, fish-like tails and dorsal fins and what seem to be fish-like backbones. I was told at Musqueam that the grave of a famous sturgeon fisherman had a sturgeon on it; this may be it. But I do not know what the flanking creatures might be.

Could some grave carvings represent visions? A few statements in the literature suggest it. Jenness (ms, p.66) says that the National Museum has "a carved wooden coffin depicting a man's guardian spirit flanked by two wolves," the coffin of a famous Saanich warrior who died early in the nineteenth century. But I have no

indication of what the "guardian spirit" (vision) looks like. Hill-Tout, writing on the Chilliwack (1902:364-365) says

On the exterior of the coffin were painted the family crests or totems, called *sahúlia* (collective of *súlia*) = 'the dream objects'. Among these figured the bear, goat, and beaver. Human effigies roughly carved in wood were also sometimes placed nearby, similar to those found among the N'tlaka'pamuQ [Thompson].

When Hill-Tout writes "family crest" he is usually referring to the *sxwayxwey* or some comparable possession but the native term he gives is "vision", which is puzzling' but in general it is hard to disentangle Hill-Tout's ethnographic data from his theorizing about "totemism." Writing on the Chehalis of the Harrison River (his "StEélis"), Hill-Tout says informants told him that grave boxes were "never decorated with paintings or carvings of the *súlia* of the owner." But he supposes this to be because they had only recently adopted the practice of putting the dead in boxes or slab shelters.

As noted above, the Nooksack and the Lower (Douglas) Lillooet both set up grave monuments carved to represent the *sxwayxwey*. One of Fetzer's informants at Nooksack, a woman originally from Matsqui on the Fraser, said that "high-born" families had "totem-poles" called



a



b



c



d



e



f

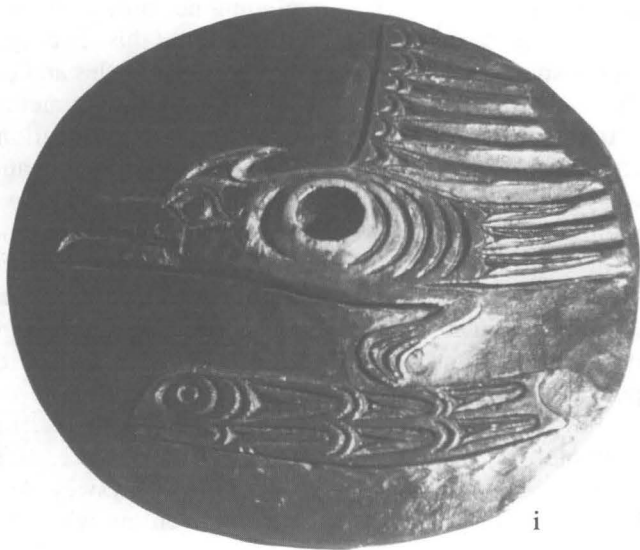
Fig. 4:14. Twelve Coast Salish spindle whorls. *f* Katzie *i* Sardis *j* Chemainus *k* Becher Bay.



g



h



i



j



k



l

“sx^wáyx^woi” (and described as sxwayxwey-like) set up at their graves, while other families had “totem-poles” with other things—“sometimes animals were used, especially those that are scarce (among these šx^womáćəl, ‘like otter but walks in the woods’).” This animal would be the fisher. The informant did not mention any purifying function for either the sxwayxwey or the animals. But she told a myth accounting for the origin of the Matsqui “totem,” presumably the sxwayxwey, unlike any other I know of: the people of a certain house swept it out with hemlock boughs; after many years a great pile of debris had accumulated away from the house, and the “totem” emerged out of this pile of sweepings. A purifier out of impurities? A cleanser to reward the cleanly?

The tools, weapons, canoes, etc. made by men and used by men seem to have been usually undecorated or decorated sparingly, e.g., an adze handle might bear just the suggestion of an animal form. Perhaps this was because of the association of skill and success with vision power and the dangers inherent in revealing or calling up the source of that power.

Household equipment of wood, such as boxes, buckets, dishes and spoons, things that were used by both sexes, were also usually undecorated. (The Museum of the American Indian has three decorated dishes, but one is said to have been used at a wedding; perhaps none is an ordinary household utensil.)

In contrast, implements made by men but used by women, such as mat creasers, spindle whorls, swords for beating wool, the posts of weaving frames (“looms”), etc. were often, though not always, decorated with carving and/or painting. These decorations included both geometric patterns and representations of birds, animals and people. (The women themselves, of course, produced geometric patterns on blankets, mats and baskets.) I have looked at one time or another at seventy or eighty spindle whorls. Some are wholly undecorated. A good many (*Fig. 4:14*) are decorated with simple curvilinear designs, either painted or incised in the surface that faces the spinner as she spins. And a number are decorated with incised representations of bird and/or animal figures or human figures with subordinate birds and/or animals. The design may be radially symmetrical or it may consist of a pair or quartet of creatures pursuing each other around the circle, a single animal chasing its tail or a single figure crossing the circle, facing either right or left. The direction of the spinning seems not to be relevant. In both composition and design elements these spindle whorl designs resemble the incised designs on the cleansing rattles. And as we have seen this is a style that also appears on some sxwayxwey masks and grave monuments.

How can we interpret this disparity in the decoration of implements? Why should men, or some men, be more interested in, or more willing to, decorate women’s implements than their own? And why should they use what

appears to be the most structured style on one particular article, the spindle whorl? Are the designs on the spindle whorls purely decorative, do they symbolize the power of the vision, or do they symbolize the power of the ritual word?

My guess is that the answers lie in the use to which these implements were put, producing that other, essential source of power and prestige—wealth. It seems unlikely that the designs are purely decorative, though the circular form of the whorl may have challenged the artist. It also seems unlikely that they represent vision power, though it is possible that the production of wealth gave the artist the courage to portray something he might not dare reveal elsewhere. Moreover, since he is not doing the spinning, he might portray his “superhuman friends and helpers” (Boas on p.184) without being constantly reminded of them. Could he create something relating to the spinner’s vision power? As long as she is spinning it would be an invisible presence for her, reminding her only when she stopped and so driving her on. But I doubt this. The style on the spindle whorls is associated, on the rattles and on the masks and perhaps too on the grave monuments, with the power of the ritual word as used in purification. Ritual words may have played a part in the spinning and weaving processes, for example, the spinner may have recited them to the wool or to the spindle, but I have no information on this. There may, however, be a more direct association between spinning and purification. Mountain-goat wool, one of the substances spun though not the only one, seems to be itself associated with purification; it appears on the ritualist’s rattle and on costumes worn by persons undergoing crisis rites, for example, the “new dancer” at the winter dance. It is white, like the feathers and down of the sxwayxwey. And it is the stuff of blankets, which are given out when the purifying rattles and masks are used.

(Laura Greenberg and Marjorie Halpin have suggested to me that a structuralist analysis would show a parallel between the rattle and the spindle whorl: both are involved in transformations, the rattle in the transforming of human beings from one state into another, the spindle whorl in the transforming of wool into wealth.)

Constraints on Productivity

Let me return to the question I started with. Why did the Central Coast Salish produce some great works of art yet neither the range of kinds of things nor the quantities of things produced farther north? Were there constraints at work here restricting and channelling productivity? It seems to me that there were. Clearly there were limits on the representation of visions (“guardian spirits”). In native theory, everyone (or every male perhaps) ought to “train” and have a vision. But it was dangerous to reveal too

much about it. If you talked about it, you could "spoil" it; it might leave you or even make you sick or it could be taken away from you by an enemy shaman. Yet eventually you wanted others to know that you "had something." Probably all of us who have worked in the area have heard hints and half-revelations about what people "have." Possession by a song at the winter dance is, of course, evidence that you "have something" and the words of the song and movements of the dance may hint at what it is. But it must be tempting to hint in other ways, though dangerous to go too far.

Sources vary on the strength of the prohibition. Barnett (1955:146), referring to the whole of Georgia Strait from the Saanich and Musqueam northward, says flatly that visions were not concretely represented in carvings on house posts, etc., though they were portrayed in the song and dance. But this contradicts what Boas says for the Songhees and Hill-Tout for the Chilliwack. It is my impression, from both my own field work and this survey of the art of the area, that all are right. There were very likely differences within the region, perhaps especially between the Halkomelem and Straits areas, not of an absolute sort but statistical differences—in the frequency with which visions were concretely portrayed.

Farther south, in the Puget Sound region, visions were more commonly portrayed but still, I think, with constraints. The Puget Sound shaman's guardian-spirit figure used in the spirit-canoe ceremony, that seemingly crude stick of wood, was perhaps deliberately made stark and empty because it only hints at the secret, invisible, unique power of the shaman it belonged to. Probably asking the man who made it, "Why don't you produce the kind of explicit forms the Kwakiutl made?," would be like asking a Protestant who has just set up a rugged cross, "Why don't you decorate your church with all those nice plaster images the Catholics use?" The ideological difference is not really analogous but it may be as great.

The dangers that lie in portraying a vision too clearly may have affected artistic expression generally unless it was clearly identifiable with some other source of power. It may be that men refrained from decorating tools and weapons in order not to suggest even falsely the source of their vision powers. Or if they did decorate things they may have done so vaguely and ambiguously so that they could hint vaguely and ambiguously about what they had.

With art related to the power of the ritual word, the constraints must be different. The viewers of a rattle or mask know that its efficacy depends not on the private experience of a vision but the private knowledge of ritual words that have inherent power. That power cannot be diminished by concrete representation. You can lose it only through revealing (or forgetting) those carefully guarded words. Yet you may want to suggest their power or that you are the possessor of esoteric knowledge. The

style that appears on the rattles and in the masks may be a useful medium for expressing this. (I am following a suggestion that Wilson Duff has made about the Northern art in supposing that it may imply esoteric knowledge.)

In the portrayal of ancestors there may have been a still different kind of constraint—fear of ridicule. When the man carved the house post at Musqueam portraying the ancestor confronting the bear, a Musqueam friend told me recently, he introduced something into the carving that was a covert insult to the subject. Whether this is true or not I do not know. Nor is the truth important for my argument. Covert insults were certainly a part of native life. When the *sxwayxwey* is dancing, an old Lummi friend told me years ago, if the dancer shifts his scallop-shell rattle even for a moment to his left hand it signals to the spectators who have received the proper "advice" that the person for whom they are dancing has some lower-class ancestry. In the old days, I suppose, a man thinking of having a carving made of an ancestor must have had to consider whether he had the wealth or influence to protect that carving from slurs. Probably no one was permanently safe from such slurs. In native society, leadership was specific to an activity; there were no all-purpose leaders and no great concentrations of authority. Perhaps few men could live without fear of ridicule.

I have tried to show how the people of one region had different forms of art related to different concepts and limited by different constraints. It appears to me that within the region there were local differences in the degree to which each of these concepts might be expressed, depending on the strength of fears about the harmful consequences of concrete representation versus desires for the useful consequences. These constraints are such that they may have varied in intensity through time and so may account for variations through time in kind and amount of artistic output. We need not, therefore, interpret qualitative or quantitative changes in prehistoric art as evidence of cataclysmic culture change or population replacement. They may have been the result of shifts in importance, back and forth, between the power of the vision and the power of the ritual word or shifts in the concentration of wealth and authority.

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