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THE TSIMSHIAN RAVEN RATTLE:
AN ICONOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS

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AN ICONOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS

by

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ABSTRACT

The hypothesis examined in this thesis is that the raven rattle is a meaningful reflection of some of the underlying principles of Tsimshian cosmology. Based partly on Panofsky's (1962, 1955) procedures of iconographical analysis, and partly on Boas's (1927) characteristic trait distinction the method applied entails an analysis of the composition of the rattle. It explores the relationship between the component parts of the rattle from different structural levels and from different positions. Following Panofsky the meanings of the parts and their combinations are derived by relating them to mythology, ceremonialism, social structure and chiefly roles. The next step is to "discover" the underlying principles which, according to Panofsky, reveal the "basic attitude of a nation" but which in a more general sense can be regarded as the cosmology of a culture.

The iconographical analysis of the raven rattle revealed five main cultural principles: namely transformation, anti-structure, contradiction, control and initiation. Since these five principles constitute also a part of the cosmology of the Tsimshian one infers that the iconography and the functional contexts of the rattle do reflect and are congruent with the cosmology. This is an argument which supports the hypothesis. I argue that whether the rattle is examined in

terms of its iconographical organization or its social and ceremonial function, it can be shown to reflect some of the same principles which underlie the cosmology of the Tsimshian.

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CHAPTER I

THE RAVEN RATTLE AND TSIMSHIAN COSMOLOGY: PROBLEM AND METHOD

Introduction

Considered as a sacred art form, or as a symbol of chieftainship or even as a trade item, the raven rattle was for the Tsimshian one of a very few widely distributed objects that reflected and expressed their artistic tastes as well as their socio-cultural world view. The idea of a sacred object expressing the world view of a culture is stated by Clifford Geertz in his discussion of sacred symbols.

..... sacred symbols function to synthesize a peoples ethos - the tone, character and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood, and their world view - the picture they have of the way things in sheer actuality are, their most comprehensive ideas of order.
(Geertz 1965:167)

While it can be argued that the raven rattle is more than a sacred symbolic object this does not necessarily blurr or diminish its expressive qualities. Quite the opposite is true: it brings into focus and expands the range of its associations to include those seemingly ill-defined and inherently ambiguous principles which also comprise the culture's world view. When viewed from an artistic standpoint, the problem as Panofsky (1962, 1955) sees it, is to interpret what these underlying principles are when manifested in the forms, motifs and images of a particular

work of art. To this end he states:

... the intrinsic meaning or content of a work of art is apprehended by ascertaining those underlying principles which reveal the basic attitude of a nation, a period, a class, a religious or philosophical persuasion - qualified by one personality and condensed into one work. (Panofsky 1955:30)

If, in fact, a work of art reflects and expresses a culture's world view, then it is reasonable to assume that the raven rattle must reflect aspects of Tsimshian cosmology. Assuming this, the problem is to discover a means of approaching and examining the relationship. Towards this aim, I outline a method that will help provide a link between art object and cosmology. Briefly, the method entails the following:

1. Analysing the composition of the rattle, and studying the relationship between the component parts of the rattle from different structural levels and from different positions, and the combinations to which they relate.
2. Relating the meanings of the parts so analysed to the mythology, ceremonialism, social structure, and chiefly roles.
3. Exploring how, in the rattle's three positions, various mythic, ceremonial and social themes are expressed.

The Raven Rattle: Contributions to its Analysis and Meaning

The only other work that deals solely with the raven rattle is Jennifer Gould's (1973)"The Iconography Of Northwest

Coast Raven Rattles". Gould interprets the meanings of the rattle of the three Northwest coast northern groups - the Haida, Tsimshian and Tlingit.

The iconographic approach utilized by Gould, involves identifying the artistic motifs of the rattle, matching them with associated cultural themes and concepts, and interpreting their interrelationships in the context of the throwing dance. As a result three dominant motifs are isolated, the 'reclining figure', the raven and the creature on the 'belly' of the rattle, which are interpreted separately and related to the ceremonial context. It is here that Gould presents a major contribution to the study of art and anthropology. The identities of the dominant motifs are clearly defined, especially the creature on the 'belly' of the rattle, whose identification as a sea monster, clearly contradicts the meanings offered by such Northwest Coast scholars as Boas, DeLaguna, Hawthorn and others. This suggests the need for a re-evaluation of much of what has been said about these complex and ambiguous creatures given their number and importance throughout the Northwest coast (Halpin 1973). Considerable insights are revealed by the emphasis on what these creatures represented by the dominant motifs 'do' in the culture, that is their significance as an integral and vital part of the spiritual, social and ceremonial orders, and their relationship to the chiefs who used the rattle.

Her conclusions rightfully indicate the importance of the raven rattle as a "general symbol whose thematic referents were assumptions basic to Northwest Coast culture." (Gould 1973:iii) There are however other basic assumptions such as transformation, death, birth and rebirth, expressed by the rattle, and perhaps Gould's 'caution' in this regard can be attributed to the geographic scope of the paper.

Another weakness lies in the ambiguity of the one to one relationship between the motifs comprising the rattle and their meanings. Given that Gould uses Panofsky's iconographic model, a well defined inventory of identified motifs would have alleviated a great deal of confusion. It must also be noted that a 'motif' according to Panofsky, has only a general meaning: it is the 'image' that has a specific and abstract meaning - a point that is not clarified by Gould. Nevertheless, her study of the raven rattle is of particular significance since it is one of a very few works devoted strictly to the iconographic analysis of a 'non-western' art form, and the only one thus far to tackle one of the most complex art forms on the Northwest Coast (M. Halpin personal communication).

The Method

Analysis of the meanings of the rattle and its component parts is approached through an examination of the ethnographic data provided in large part by Halpin's (1973 and 1975) work on the Tsimshian crest system and naxnoq

mask ceremony, and Gould's (1973) iconographical analysis of the raven rattle. Other ethnographic sources include Barbeau/Beynon's unpublished field notes referred to by both of the above authors, works by such prominent Northwest Coast scholars as Boas (1897, 1927, 1970), Barbeau (1927, 1950), Drucker (1955), Garfield (1939, 1966), and Duff (1975), and catalogue notes from the Royal Ontario Museum and the National Museum of Man. The analysis of the rattle's form is approached through the frameworks of Panofsky's iconographic model of analysis and Boas's theories concerning the structure of Northwest Coast art.

Interpretations by specialists including native informants were considered the most reliable, while interpretations by laymen, that is by collectors and the like, were regarded as reliable whenever their statements were confirmed or supported by native informants. The thrust of the thesis is to seek a congruence between the available data, and the interpretations of the rattle's component parts and their associations, so that as far as possible the interpretations are reasonably grounded in the culture.

The structural analysis is based in large part on the method outlined by Panofsky (1962:1-15) in his first two iconographical levels of analysis: the pre-iconographic description, and the iconographical analysis 'in the narrower sense.'

In the pre-iconographic description, the primary or natural meaning is attained by identifying forms, that is, "certain configurations of lines, colour and volumes" (ibid:3) as representations of objects, that is, "human beings, plants, animals, tools and so on" (ibid:5). The identity of the contextual relationship between objects are seen as events. The world of pure forms recognized as carriers of primary or natural meanings are called the world of artistic motifs (ibid:5).

There are, however, two significant problems in applying Panofsky's method to the raven rattle.

1. According to Panofsky's method, a correct identification of the pure forms is a necessary prerequisite to identifying correctly what the forms represent. On this basis a form such as the one on the 'belly' of the rattle (Fig.1) cannot be readily identified as representing an object, human being or non-human creature, since the form is a composite, made up of human traits and non-human traits, of both an animal and an imaginary creature.
2. Since Panofsky's iconographical analysis in the narrower sense, is based on the relationships presented in the pre-iconographic description, and the specific identity of an object results from ascertaining the general identity of an object that a form represents in the pre-iconographic description, the specific identity of the creature on the 'belly' of the rattle for example, cannot be attained nor

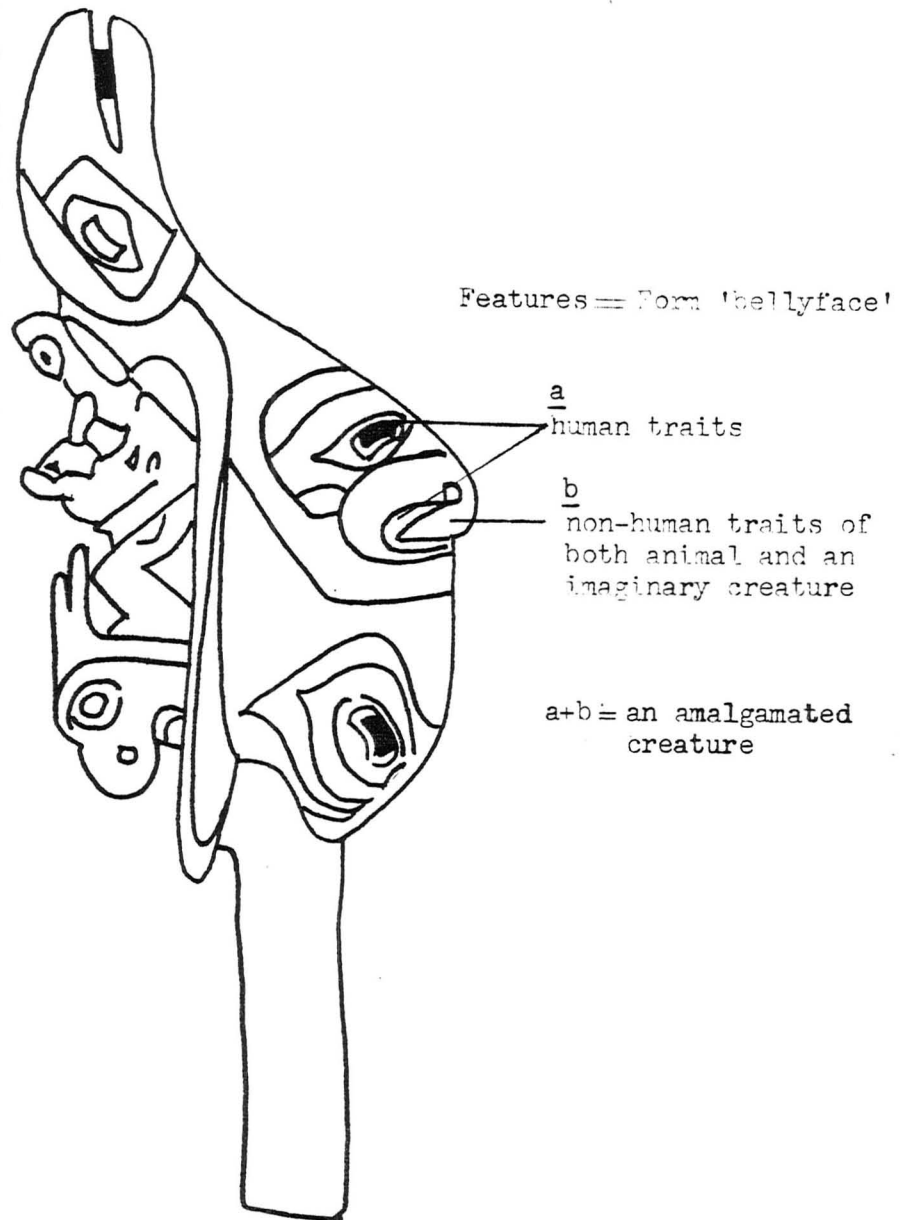


Figure 1. The Problem of Correctly Identifying the Form on the 'Belly' of the Rattle

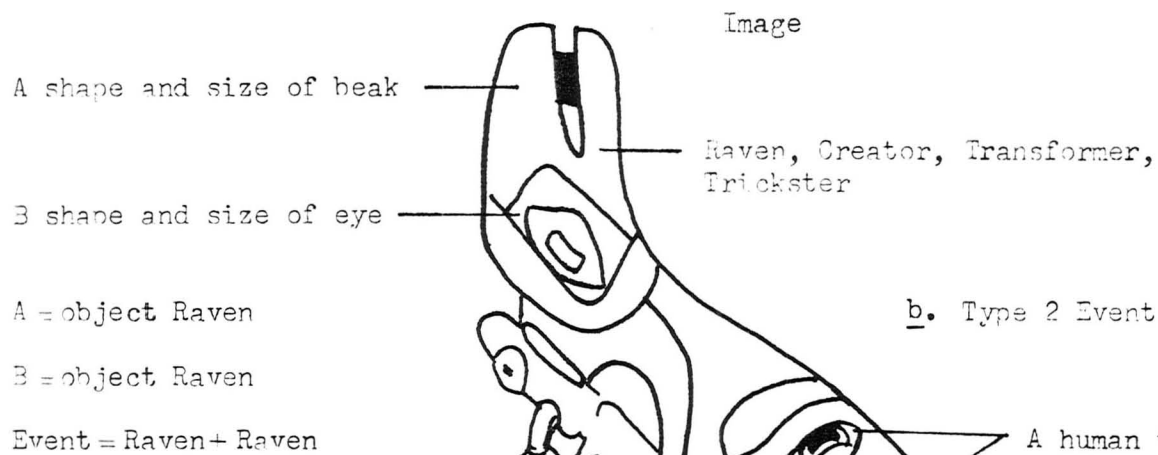
can an iconographical analysis in the narrower sense be attempted.

One is therefore required to determine what constitutes a 'form' on the rattle, and what the factors are that would allow one to correctly identify the 'form' and the object it represents. Boas's (1927) analysis of the significant traits of many creatures portrayed in Northwest Coast representative art, furnishes the basis upon which the ambiguity of the forms can be clarified. According to Boas each creature, whatever its configuration may be, is depicted by a number of recognizable 'symbols' that establish its identity (ibid:217). The 'symbols' are the significant features of a creature, and as such are considered by Northwest Coast artists to be the permanent, significant and characteristic traits that represent the creature ((ibid:183) see also Garfield 1966: 59-60). It should also be noted that unlike Panofsky's forms whose shapes and volumes are identical to the objects they represent, the features represent objects that are of a different shape and volume.

In the case of the creature on the 'belly' of the rattle, (Fig. 1b) the feature (the nose or beak that in this instance curves back upon itself) denotes that the form is a non-human creature (ibid:217). This together with the other features - the human eyes and mouth (Fig 1a) - denote that it is also human, and thus a composite creature.

Having established the basis for a correct identification of the form through an analysis of its composite parts, a feature can in turn be analysed in the same manner as a form, outlined by Panofsky. The features can be seen to represent 'objects' such as non-human creatures, human beings or both. One can identify the object's mutual relations as events of which there are two types. This first type is the relationship between the object-creatures that are identified as the same by the representative features. In the case of the creature with the 'object' in its mouth, (Fig.2) the two primary features - the shape and size of the eyes and the beak - represent the same non-human objects. The mutual relationship between the object, the non-human creature represented by the feature, 'eye,' and the non-human creature represented by the feature 'beak,' constitute an event. The fact that the two different features represent the same object or creature does not negate the fact that a mutual relationship exists between them. Or to put it another way, whether the objects are the same or different in no way destroys the contextual relationship between the creatures so represented by their features. In the second type exemplified by the 'belly creature,' an event is the mutual relationship that exists between the objects, human being and non-human figure represented by the respective features (Fig.2). Thus an event is a defined contextual

a. Type 1 Event



b. Type 2 Event

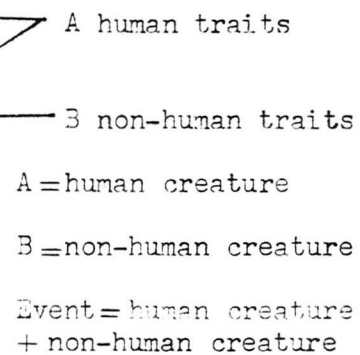


Figure 2. Two Types of Event (a and b) at the level of Features

relationship between the objects or creatures the features represent. The relationship between the creatures becomes an artistic motif only when it is injected with the meanings 'carried' by the respective representative features and forms as outlined by Panofsky (1962). Thus an artistic motif is a meaningful relationship between the features and as such expresses general meanings.

In Panofsky's second level of analysis, the iconographical analysis in the narrower sense, the secondary or conventional meaning, (that is the culturally significant meanings), are attained by connecting artistic motifs and combinations of motifs (compositions) with themes and concepts. Motifs recognized as carriers of secondary or conventional meanings are called images. Combinations of images are called stories or allegories (ibid:6). Images convey "the idea of concrete persons or objects and abstract and general notions. Abstract and general notions are symbols or personifications, whereas allegories are combinations of symbols and personifications" (ibid:6).

Artistic motifs consisting of features in a meaningful relationship also conveys 'the idea of concrete persons or objects and abstract or general notions.' In the case of the creature at the 'head' of the rattle (Fig.2), the motif when connected with themes and concepts, identifies this image as the specific mythic animal being Raven, the creator, transformer and culture hero of the Tsimshian world.

However in order to show that there are other images and combinations of images that convey additional and far reaching ideas of abstract and general notions, it is necessary to enter into another level of analysis that deals with 'whole forms' and their relationships.

Forms as they exist on the rattle are of two types: (1) the six creatures represented in part or in whole on the rattle, that is to say those creatures represented only by their heads and/or facial features, are considered 'whole forms' in the same way as those creatures in which the whole body is shown, and (2) those items that are an integral yet independent part of the whole forms, that are not considered characteristic traits of the creature. For example, the object that extends from the mouth of the human figure on the 'back' of the rattle (Fig 3) is a form of the second type, since it is an integral part of the creature yet exists as an independent form, and is not a characteristic trait of this or any other creature (Boas 1951:198-217, 233-254).

In turn the forms that exist on the rattle, when seen in the context of Panofsky's pre-iconographic description, all represent various objects. The subsequent mutual relations between the objects represented by the forms produce three types of events; (1) the mutual relations between the creature and those items that are an integral yet independent part of that creature, (2) the mutual relation between 'whole creatures,' and (3) the mutual relation between the creature and its

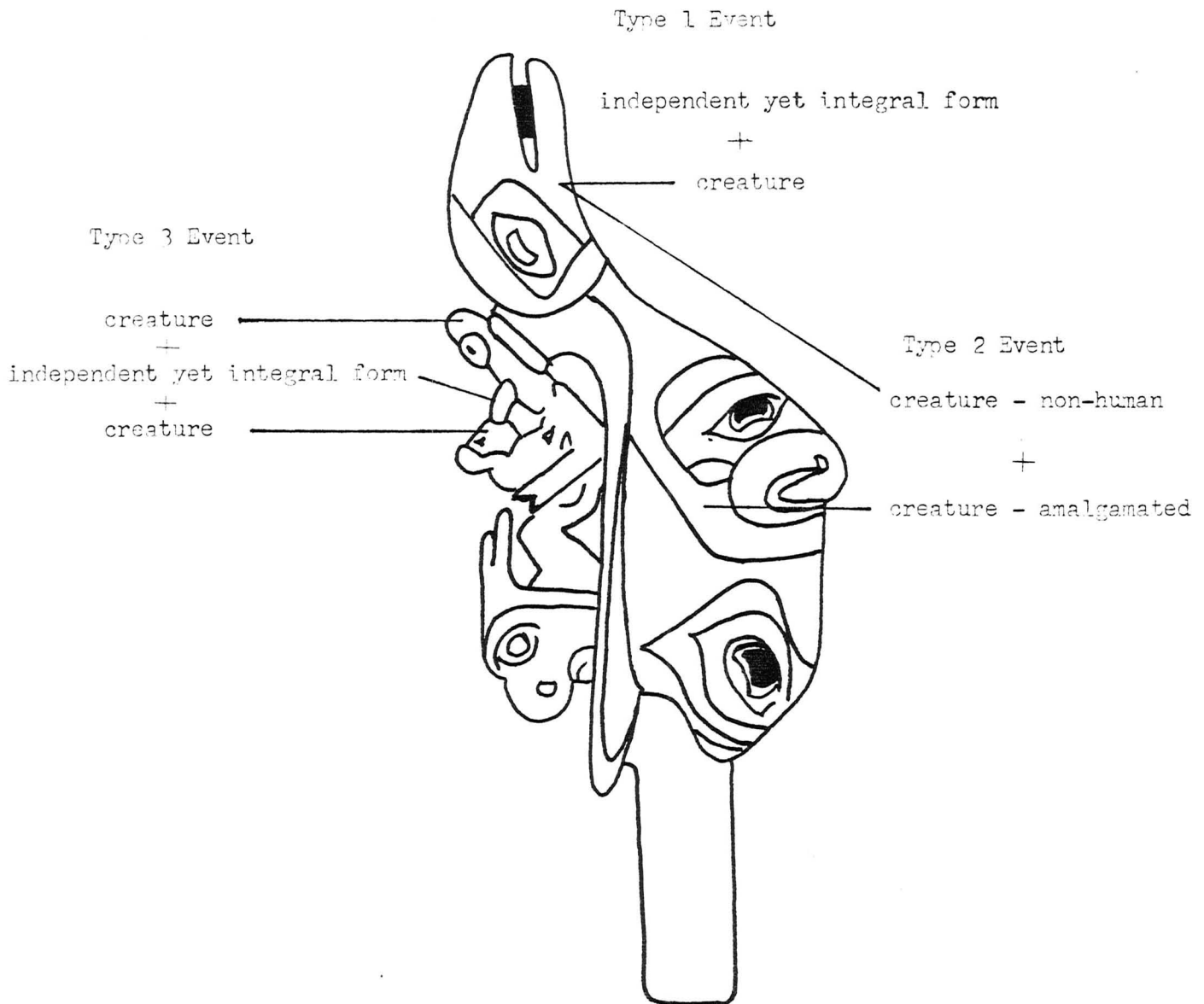


Figure 3. Three Types of Event at the Level of Forms

integral yet independent part, plus another creature, such as the relationship between the 'human creature' and the 'extended object' plus the amalgamated creature (Fig.3). The meaningful relations generated by these three types of events constitute artistic motifs of the same three types, which in turn form images in the context of Panofsky's iconographical analysis in the narrower sense.

Problems of the Method

From an historical perspective the dating of the rattles poses a number of problems. According to native informants the date when the first rattles were made is unknown. Catalogue collections of the rattles give only the date when the rattle was collected. It is impossible to discover whether the rattles were made earlier and passed on from generation to generation as was sometimes the case, or whether they were carved just prior to being sold to collectors. We do know the Nisq'a of the Nass River made a sizeable business out of carving and selling raven rattles during the annual eulachon fishing season each spring (Gould 1973:97). Compounding the problem of dating the rattles is the difficult, if not impossible, task of tracing the original owners of the rattles. As a trade item and chiefly symbol, many rattles were traded to Tlingit and Haida groups as well as to low and high ranking Tsimshian chiefs of the three Tsimshian divisions (ibid:100, Barbeau 1927 notes to Museum of Man VII-C-1394). This together with the failure of the majority of

collectors to note the ownership of the rattles, the clan membership of the owner, or the specific geographical location of the rattles when collected, ensures that the majority of the rattles will remain without provenance. This temporal limitation does not allow the placing of the overall form of the raven rattle into a definite temporal chronology. Generally the rattles under discussion date from the middle to late 1800's, that is at the time of collection.

The problem of defining a stylistic basis for the Tsimshian raven rattle clearly limits using one of Panofsky's controlling principles of interpretation - 'the history of style', which for Panofsky is "the manner in which objects and events were expressed by forms under varying historical conditions" (Panofsky 1962:11). Being able to control the interpretations of objects and events by means of this historical comparative method can be accomplished only if one can trace the 'historical locus' of the work of art, and its stylistic variations through time. Such is not the case with the raven rattle, given the comparatively recent dates of the Tsimshian rattles, and the lack of illustrative evidence clearly indicating an 'historical locus' or revealing a sequence of stylistic change in the Tsimshian raven rattles.

Panofsky's other controlling principle of interpretation is the 'history of types,' which provides "insight into the manner in which under varying historical conditions specific themes and concepts were expressed by objects and events" (ibid:15). In Panofsky's example the fact that he had at his disposal a readily available wealth of identifiable literature directly related (historically and contextually) to the work of art, from which the consistencies and inconsistencies of the painting's content could be checked, underlies the basic problem of identifying the content of Northwest Coast art in general, and the raven rattle in particular. Not only is there a dearth of information by native informants, ethnographers and collectors dealing specifically with the spiritual, social and religious meanings and function of the rattle, but there are also very few themes and concepts in the literature that are directly related to the images comprising the rattle. Pertinent themes and concepts can however be inferred from the general body of myths, from the ceremonial context in which the rattle is used, and from the roles of the chiefs who used the rattle in a specific ceremonial context (see also Gould 1973:1-5).

Gould's comment that Panofsky's approach was developed for an artistic tradition very different from that of the Northwest Coast merits consideration in light of the problems outlined above. I find that Panofsky's basic method is in large part applicable to the analysis of the rattle. His

first two levels of analysis provide both a way of identifying the composite parts of the rattle and their relationships, and permit an ordering of the relationships according to the type and range of association. This in turn provides a precise and structured framework from which the pertinent general, specific and abstract meanings can be associated. Not only does Panofsky's method allow one to see what the components of the rattle 'are', but also what it is they 'do', from both a structural standpoint and from the standpoint of their associated meanings and significance within the culture.

As has been mentioned above, Panofsky's method is only applicable when either 'whole forms' can be shown to exist in a work of art, or when some other item or aspect comprising a form functions in the same capacity as a 'whole form.' Boas's analysis of the significant characteristic traits of the creatures comprising Northwest Coast art, provides a means of 'getting at' those items on the rattle that cannot be considered 'whole forms' in the Panofskian sense. The identification of the features as a representative part of a specific creature or 'whole form' furnishes the basis for a correct identification of the form and its subsequent general, specific and abstract meanings. Thus the analysis of the features provides the necessary step for an interpretation of the forms' meanings and an interpretation of the meanings of their various relationships, since it is necessary to interpret the specific and abstract meanings of each and every form,

before attempting an interpretation of the meanings of the forms' relationships.

In Chapter 2, I describe the socio-political and ceremonial structure of the Tsimshian society at the apex of their development in the late 1800's, and I include those aspects of the culture that are pertinent to the analysis of the raven rattle, such as: examining the three fundamental structural divisions of the Tsimshian society; the significant distinction between the two structural orders in Tsimshian ceremonialism; and the dual role of the chief.

Chapter 3 examines the raven rattle from five perspectives; a detailed description of the composite parts of the rattle, a classification of the rattle into three main types, based on the variations of the component parts on the 'back' of the rattle, a structural analysis, an analysis of the rattle according to three positional variations, and a history of the rattle's origin and use. This chapter provides the basic background for the iconographical analysis of the rattle discussed in Chapter 4.

In Chapter 4, I examine in detail the meanings of the artistic motifs and images, in terms of the two levels previously mentioned, the level comprised of features and the level comprised of forms. This chapter will also explore the additional meanings that are the result of the associations between the images in the rattle's Displayed and Mythic positions. The third position, the Ceremonial position and

its subsequent meanings, that is in context of the Throwing Dance in which the rattle is used by chiefs, will be dealt with in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5 examines the rattle in the context of its ceremonial function and meanings through a detailed description and analysis of the Throwing Dance and the 'Ritual Series' of which this ceremony is a part. An investigation of the social and religious role and significance of the chief in the ceremony follows. In this chapter I will attempt to identify the intrinsic meanings or underlying principles of the Tsimshian social and ideological structure and beliefs, and as such, principles such as initiation transformation and the reversal of the socio-cultural norms will be dealt with.

In the concluding chapter, I synthesize the various principles and concepts that constitute the underlying aspects of Tsimshian cosmology. Such a synthesis is a basic requirement of an 'iconographical analysis in the deeper sense' (Panofsky 1962:7).

CHAPTER II
THE CULTURAL BACKGROUND

The Area

Among the Tsimshian there are two linguistic groups, the Coast Tsimshian who spoke Tsimshian, and the Nisq'a and Gitksan who spoke Tsimshian dialects. These two divisions shared a general similarity in ideology, social structure, art styles and religion although differences occur in clan designation and rank structure (Halpin 1975).

The Coast Tsimshian inhabit the central areas and islands from the mouth of the Nass River south to Millbank Sound, and the Skeena River up to and including the Skeena River canyon (Halpin 1973:12), (Fig. 4). There were three geographical divisions, the southern Tsimshian, the lower Skeena Tsimshian, and the Canyon Tsimshian.

The Nass River Tsimshian or Nisq'a inhabit the upper reaches of the Nass River, from the canyon to Portland canal. There were two geographical divisions, the upper Nass River and the lower Nass River (ibid:12).

The Skeena River Tsimshian or Gitksan inhabit the upper reaches of the Skeena River and its tributaries. In the literature the Gitksan were referred to as 'people of the Upper Skeena' (ibid:12).

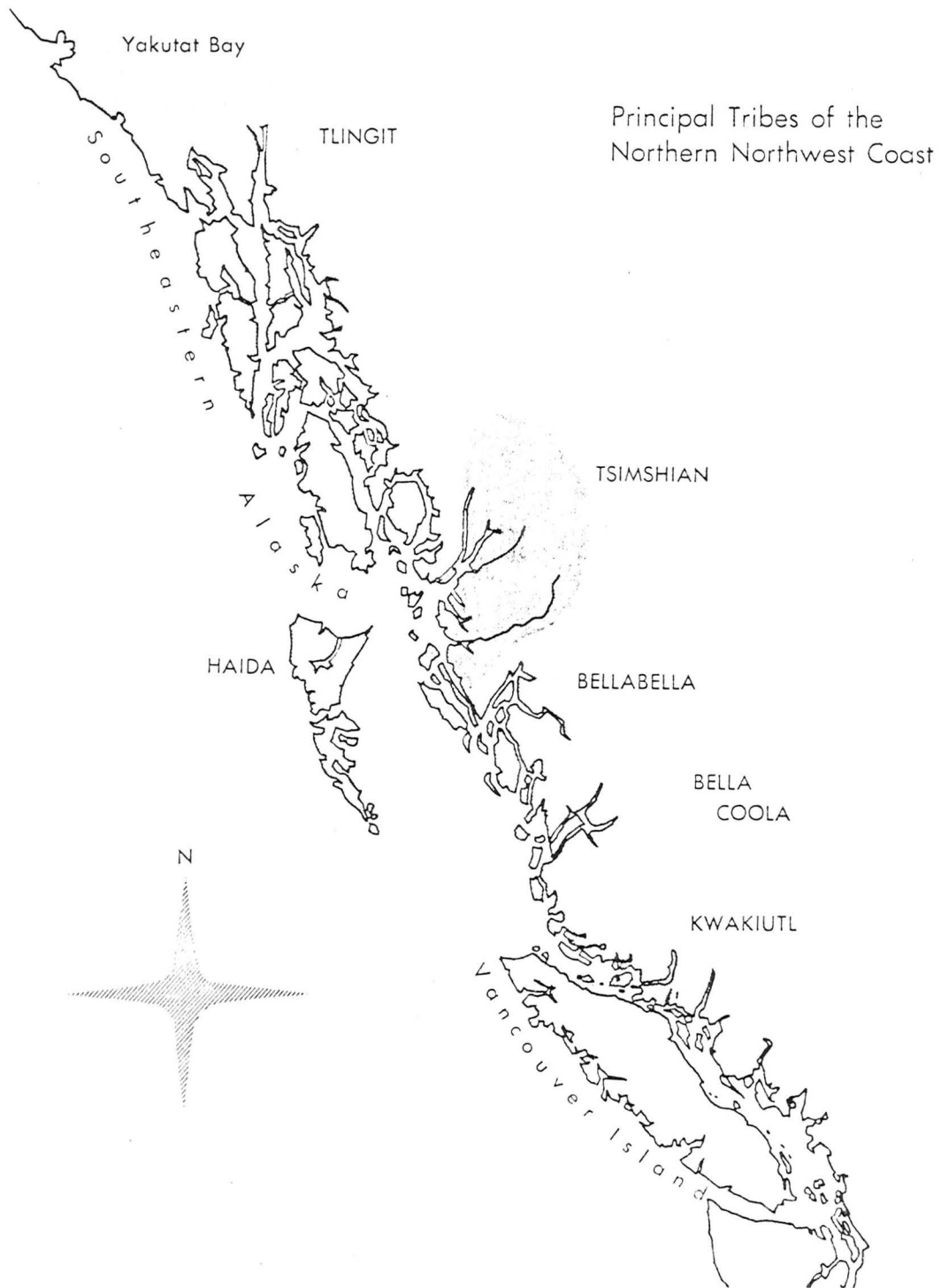


Figure 4. Principal Tribes of the Northern Northwest Coast
(Holm 1965:2)

The seasonal runs of salmon and eulachon set the pattern for the yearly economic and resource gathering activities for both the Coast Tsimshian and the Nisq'a of the lower Nass River. The eulachon arrived in the greatest numbers at the mouth of the Nass River around late February or early March. Their vast numbers precipitated the annual migration of both these groups to the Nass estuary along with Haida and Tlingit fishermen and traders. As many as two thousand people congregated at the Nass (Garfield 1966:10), making it a prime trading centre and meeting place. The production of surplus eulachon oil by the Nisq'a and Coast Tsimshian resulted in the establishment of two primary trade routes, one into the interior and another along the coast (ibid:16). The seasonal run of eulachon marked the end of the winter season and initiated the movement from the permanent winter settlement.

The salmon runs begin in May or June, ending in late October. Unlike the concentration of eulachon at the Nass estuary, salmon were plentiful in the numerous rivers and streams all along the coast, such that a 'migration' of people like the one to the Nass did not occur. Each May lineage groups re-established their exclusive rights to a prescribed territory and then set to work to exploit the natural resources of the area. Each territory included a designated area from which to catch and dry the salmon (ibid:13-14).

The dependence on marine animals as a basic food resource by the Nisq'a of the lower Nass and the Coast Tsimshian had a significant impact on their seasonal settlement patterns as well as on the relationships between the three Tsimshian divisions. Their annual migration to the Nass estuary for eulachon clearly distinguished these two groups from the interior Nisq'a and the Gitksan who rarely travelled outside their territories, relying instead on land animals as a major food source (Drucker 1955:49, Boas 1966:1-4). Thus the Tsimshian's traditional dichotomy between land and sea is clearly discernable in the context of their different resource priorities (Levi-Strauss 1967:1-3), which served to differentiate and identify the interior groups from their coastal neighbours.

Although recent archeological studies have dated Northwest coast occupation from 3,500 to 4,000 years ago, especially in the Prince Rupert site in Tsimshian territory (MacDonald 1969, Duff 1975), it is approximately the last 200 years of the Tsimshian's cultural development that is of concern here. According to Gould (1973:99) the Tsimshian were contacted fairly late compared with the other Northwest Coast tribes. The northern coastal part of the Tsimshian territory was first visited by the Russians in the late 1700's and very early 1800's (Drucker 1955:32). The first permanent trading post inside Tsimshian territory was established by the Hudson Bay Company at Fort Simpson, on the Nass River estuary in 1831 and

moved to the Tsimshian Peninsula in 1834 (Garfield 1966:7).

The temporal context in which we are dealing, consists of the 30 or 40 years before any significant white contact was made, that is the very late 1700's and the early 1800's through to the middle 1800's. It is in this time period that the Tsimshian traditional values and concepts were still developing to the point at which the coast Tsimshian in particular reached their cultural 'apex' at around the mid 1800's. It appears that traditions that were formulated many years before contacts were intensified and modified during the early stages of white contact in order to meet and adapt to the varying demands of the white man.

Social Structure

Tsimshian society is comprised of three basic structural divisions which are described by Halpin (1973:59-71) as the house or wəlp, the clan and the sub-clan. In the literature, these divisions have been variously termed lineages, phratries and clans respectively, (Garfield 1966, Drucker 1955, Boas 1970). Regardless of one's choice of terms, the importance of the divisions remains basically the same. The basic divisions were not only a significant part of the ranking structure, but were also a means through which the various specific groups defined their religious, political and affinal differences and commonalities.

A house was the fundamental social unit in all three Tsimshian divisions (Halpin 1973:59). It was a corporate matrilineage, comprised of a hereditary head, his biological kin, and in some cases relatives by 'rationalization', commoners and slaves, who lived and worked under the leadership of the house chief, whose name was often used for the house name (ibid:59, Garfield 1966:22).

There is evidence that at the house level fission took place among the larger lineages resulting in the creation of branch lineages "each named after its own house chief, but subordinate to the highest ranking chief of its major branch or segment" (ibid:59). The economic prerogatives of the house consisted of: (a) resource territories, in which to hunt, fish and gather, (b) dwellings and (c) assorted equipment/structures necessary for the successful exploitation of the resources at hand. Houses also owned ceremonial paraphernalia, songs, names of various types and derived from various sources, crests, myths, and ceremonial prerogatives. The house's political prerogatives depended on the past stature of the chief's family and on his own status, power and wealth.

The ranking structure within a house consisted of first and foremost the chief and his immediate relatives. 'Distant' relatives on the other hand were ranked individually according to their relation to the house chief and 'rationalized' relatives were ranked accordingly below them. Below this second group were the 'commoners' or 'poor people' (Garfield

1966:39) but there is some confusion in the literature regarding who exactly constituted this group (Drucker 1955:134-145). There is also considerable 'debate' concerning whether the structure of the ranking system was one based on "class" or "status level." Below them were the slaves who occupied the lowest status level, having no rights or privileges. It must be noted that aside from the two groups who comprise the 'top' and 'bottom' status levels, there appears to be a fair degree of flexibility in the ranking of individuals belonging to the intermediate levels. A house was ranked according to the social and political position of its guardian representative, the house chief, within the clan to which it belonged and in turn within the village or tribe.

In accordance with this ranking structure each house belonged to a "larger exogamic matrilineal kin group," the clan (Halpin 1973:60). Clans cut across the tribal and linguistic divisions and as such were considered the 'largest defined composite kinship divisions' amongst the Tsimshian (Garfield 1966:19). As has been noted above, an individual's rank within a clan is only applicable at the tribal or village level, and as such depends on where that individual stands within the house, and thus within the clan and lastly within the tribe. A clan is therefore ranked within a tribe according to the status and power of its highest ranking house chief, vis-à-vis the other house chiefs of the other clans making up the tribe.

In the three Tsimshian linguistic divisions there are four clans. Among the Coast Tsimshian and Nisq'a, there were the g.anhadə (untranslatable), laxk.ibú ("on the wolf"), g.ispəwudwa'də (untranslatable), and the laxsk·i'k ("on the eagle"). Among the Gitksan were the laxsé.l, laxk.ibú, gist.ást ("people of the fireweed"), and the laxsk·i'k. The principal crests of each were Raven, Frog; Wolf, Bear; Killerwhale, Grizzly; and Eagle, Beaver, respectively (Halpin 1973:61).

The clan structure not only regulated spouse selection, at the house level, but also provided a basis upon which group identification and group unity could be clearly distinguished. The clan together with its crest, clearly distinguished an individual or group's identity as uniquely different from any one of the other individuals or groups belonging to the other clans. Conversely, a clan provided a basis for unity in that it bound the various houses and sub-clans each with their own distinctive myths, songs, traditions, and crests together under one affinal 'roof'.

According to Halpin, sub-clans were "lineages which shared the same myths and crests, and considered themselves to be more closely related than other clan members, and forming a distinct intermediate category of Tsimshian descent groups," not uniformly distributed or discernable throughout all three Tsimshian divisions (ibid:68, see also Garfield 1966:20). Among the Tsimshian gispəwudwadə clan, two sub-clans existed.

The Nisq'a laxsk·i^hk and laxk·ibú clans also had two important sub-clans (ibid:68-69). Although there is no indication that 'distinct named sub-clans' were formed among the Gitksan, they did specify that certain houses had closer ties than others, by virtue of shared myths and crests (ibid:69).

The single most significant characteristic of the sub-clan division was the type of relationship that united the sub-clans together. Sub-clans were ritually corporate, in that they shared the same general rituals. However, from an economic point of view "they like clans potlatched to each other rather than with each other, that is they stood in relation to each other as host to guests. Unlike clans however, they did not intermarry (ibid:70).

Ceremonialism

The winter months were the ceremonial time of year, when the supernatural spirits were believed to inhabit the forests surrounding the permanent winter villages.

Winter was a time when new members were initiated into secret societies, when the successor to a chief publicly validated his new rank and status, when individuals had their first communication with the supernaturals in the initiation ceremonies and throwing dances. A time when hereditary privileges were transferred and distributed. A time of pomp and ceremony. Naxnoq mask dances, secret society dances, potlatches, and throwing dances all took place within this festive yet sacred time of year. A time when people from all over Tsimshian territory attended the potlatches of great chiefs (Halpin 1973:10).

The ceremonial or sacred time of year was also called 'gwEnd-səm hala.ít' (arrival [on earth] hala.ít), which refers to the arrival of the supernaturals into the villages (ibid:78). The beliefs upon which the ceremonial season is founded are expressed in their myths and ceremonial performances which are based on the importance of the powers and the various forces of their supernatural beings. These beings could take a variety of forms, human, animal or both, which are believed to be able to transform themselves into any one of these forms at will, each possessing varying degrees of supernatural power. In addition, they consider practically all animals to be of similiar intelligence to human beings and with similiar village organizations. The fact that the supernaturals could take animal or human forms when consorting with men, clearly illustrates the important relationship that existed between man and animal and supernatural beings. Supernatural beings then were considered to be real and concrete, and as such could be communicated with face to face - a communion that was sought after by all Tsimshian as the most profitable way of obtaining supernatural power, protection, guidance and social prestige and status.

It is during the winter ceremonial season when the supernatural beings were thought to surround the forests of the villages and when the various forces and powers of the supernatural spirits were integrated into the mainstream of the Tsimshian winter ceremonials to ensure

the perpetuation of the tribe, the lineage, and indeed their culture, through their union with the supernatural world.

According to Halpin (1973) an important distinction existed between the two structural orders in the Tsimshian society. One was ritually expressed in the potlatch, the other in the hala.its. "The potlatch reflects and celebrates the order of descent groups and affinal ties of clanship and exogamy" (ibid:51), while also presenting and publicly validating the economic power, status and rank of the house, its members and especially its chief (ibid:78). However the potlatch was more than an economic exchange of a redistributive nature linking kin groups: it also linked humans with other realms of life especially animals (Drucker 1955, Garfield 1939, 1966). Halpin distinguishes two defining features of the Potlatch: "the division of people into two groups, hosts and guests, and the public distribution of wealth by the hosts to the guests" (ibid:78), which applied to the house building, marriage, cleansing and the 'oix or proclaiming potlatch (ibid:117). The 'oix potlatch (to proclaim, to make known) was the most frequent and the most important and it was a "... feast of assuming a name, when assessing or exhibiting a new name, crest, or erecting a totem pole" (Joshua Tsibasa in Halpin 1973:117).

The hala.it order on the other hand, was "conceptually opposed to the potlatch order and based on a totally different structural principle, that of controlling supernatural power

which resulted in sodalities cutting across clan structure" (ibid:51). The word hala.it not only meant dancer, shaman, dance power, power dramatization, initiation and sacred but also signalled the involvement of supernatural beings and forces (ibid:74). All the tribal members had to participate in the hala.it system and should they fail to comply with this obligation they would be killed by the hala.it powers at an early age (Beynon 1939:2). Beynon describes the hala.it system as a process of elevations through which an initiate is put, each elevation designating the initiate's higher level of supernatural power or acquisition (ibid:1-7). Moreover, Beynon indicates that the hala.it system has four stages or elevations - the two preliminary stages, the tsi.k, assumed while a child, and in some cases a babe in arms, (see also Garfield 1939:298), and the amgat. There is considerable confusion concerning the name and order of the two preliminary stages (see Halpin 1973:78-79, Garfield 1939:298-9, Boas 1897:651-2, 1895:575). The third and most important stage was the hilaxa, which was the time when the youth became a member of the mi.tka or nukim group. Among the Coast Tsimshian, the mi.tka and nukim were the two largest and most important subdivisions of the hala.it system and the last stage in the elevation process (Beynon 1939:7). All the members of the different houses of the tribe including the chiefs, belonged to either one or the other of these dancing societies, the membership being distributed

equally (Halpin 1973:80, Beynon 1939:4). Among the Nisq'a (Barbeau in Halpin 1973:89, Boas 1897:160) there were five dance societies in a ranked order while among the Gitksan there were two (Drucker in Halpin 1973:92).

According to Halpin the 'ritual series' is a large scale event in which the potlatch and hala.it performances such as the naxnoq mask dance, secret society initiation and throwing dance were brought together. The hala.it rituals were performed individually prior to the potlatch ceremony, which was included as a separate event (ibid:78). It appears that the significance of the ritual series was not only to present the supernatural status and powers of the house by means of the various hala.it performances related to the stage at which the house members belonged or were to be initiated into, but also to publicly validate the individual's newly acquired social status as a result of his present or newly acquired hala.it position (Tate in Boas 1970:514, Garfield 1966:37-39, 45, Gould 1973:93-96). The only time in which the potlatch and the hala.it orders are so associated is in the context of the 'ritual series'. It is in this context that the supernatural powers and forces and the socio-political tenets of rank and status are related and expressed as an integral part of an all encompassing order. Under any other circumstance rank and status are assigned to the separate orders of the hala.it and potlatch with their own discrete performances, rules, and hierarchical structures.

Function of Chiefs

The rank, status and authority of the chiefs amongst the three Tsimshian divisions differed considerably, especially the Coast Tsimshian when compared to the other groups. According to Halpin, (1973:71) the Coast Tsimshian were "characterized by a higher degree of social integration than elsewhere on the Northwest coast," due in large part to the integrative functions of the tribal chiefs. The tribal chief was the headman of the highest ranking house in the tribe, with all the houses of all the clans ranked under his (ibid:72). He had great power, prestige and influence as well as being the tribe's representative in intra-tribal affairs. Among the Nisq'a, the chiefs were clan and sub-clan leaders from within the tribe, which had no "institutionalized office of tribal chief" (ibid:87). The individual considered the most powerful was the chief of the highest ranking clan or sub-clan possessing influence and power comparable with the Coast Tsimshian tribal chiefs (ibid:87). The Gitksan chiefs were clan chiefs, the chief of the highest ranking house within the clan being the clan chief for his tribe (ibid:91). It appears that all the clan chiefs within a tribe were generally considered equal, which was reflected by their ranked order of dwellings the clan chiefs' houses were positioned side by side in the middle of the village, with other clan houses ranked on either side of the chief's houses (ibid:91).

It is among the Coast Tsimshian tribal chiefs that the full measure of chiefly power and prestige can be clearly seen. A tribal chief had two primary roles; one, as the economic and resource manager and potlatch giver and two, as the spiritual leader and initiator of his tribe, which corresponded to the two structural orders of Tsimshian ceremonialism, the potlatch and the hala.it. In the economic and potlatch context the chief was called the samo'əig·Et (səm:'real', g·Et:'person'), as were the other high ranking chiefs of his and other upper status level houses (ibid:72). As the spiritual leader, he was called wihala.it, 'great dancer'. Among his various secular duties as samo'əig·Et, he was not only responsible for initiating the annual spring movement to the Nass for eulachon, but also for the economic welfare of all the tribe. He was also responsible for utilizing and mobilizing raiding parties. While he would expect constant support from his tribesmen, he was not obliged to contribute to the potlatches given by them (Garfield 1939: 182). He was however,

expected to potlatch to chiefs of other tribes, in which he was supported by contributions from all of the houses in his tribe regardless of their clan membership. In turn, he distributed wealth and food he received at potlatches to his tribe regardless of his or their clan membership (Halpin 1973:73).

According to Halpin, (1973:74) "the chief's strongest control over the tribe and source of considerable wealth was in his role as wihala.it or great dancer". Certain prerogatives were afforded the chief in this role, from deciding when the winter ceremonial should start, to conveying the first supernatural power to a child in a throwing dance for which he was most adequately paid (see also Garfield 1939:182). As a wihala.it, he had pre-eminence over all other hala.its (Gould 1973:109) and as such functioned as the spiritual benefactor to his tribe by controlling and imparting this power to and for the benefit of his people regardless of his or their clan membership.

There were two primary groups that advised the tribal chiefs, the g.it's)'ntk and the ləkag.it·Et. The ləkag·ig·Et were a council of housechiefs whose consent was necessary for the implementation of important matters, such as the choice of a successor and selection of wives. The Git's)'ntk were a group of artists and stage managers who carved the highly sacred hala.it ceremonial paraphernalia and choreographed the hala.it performances themselves. According to Herbert Clifton (in Halpin 1973:74),

the g.it's)'ntk were the song composers, the naxnoq makers, the makers of contrivances used by initiates on their return from the sky. They were advisors to the chiefs, hala.its and were a most powerful group. Their influence was much greater than any other group in the tribal organization. They had powers of life and death.

CHAPTER III

THE STRUCTURE OF THE RAVEN RATTLE

The Raven Rattle and Its Parts

In order to distinguish and describe its composite parts, the rattle is discussed in terms of the 'upright or displayed position'. When viewed in this position, the wings can be clearly seen to extend the length of the rattle joining the head of the creature at one end, with the handle at the extreme other end of the rattle. At the same time it divides the rattle into two halves: the 'top' on which three creatures are positioned and the 'bottom' where another two are present.

Starting from the right and going in a counter-clockwise direction there is a head of a bird-like being whose beak is partially curved and has an object in its mouth (Fig. 5 a). Directly to the left of the 'bird-head' is the 'reclining figure' (Fig. 5 b). It is shown with arms bent, and hands either touching the knees, or grasping the top inside part of the knees. The knees are bent and the legs are apart, with its feet either touching the bird-like creature to the left or positioned on either side of this creature. The lower torso is raised so that it does not touch the 'body' of the rattle. The face in some cases has

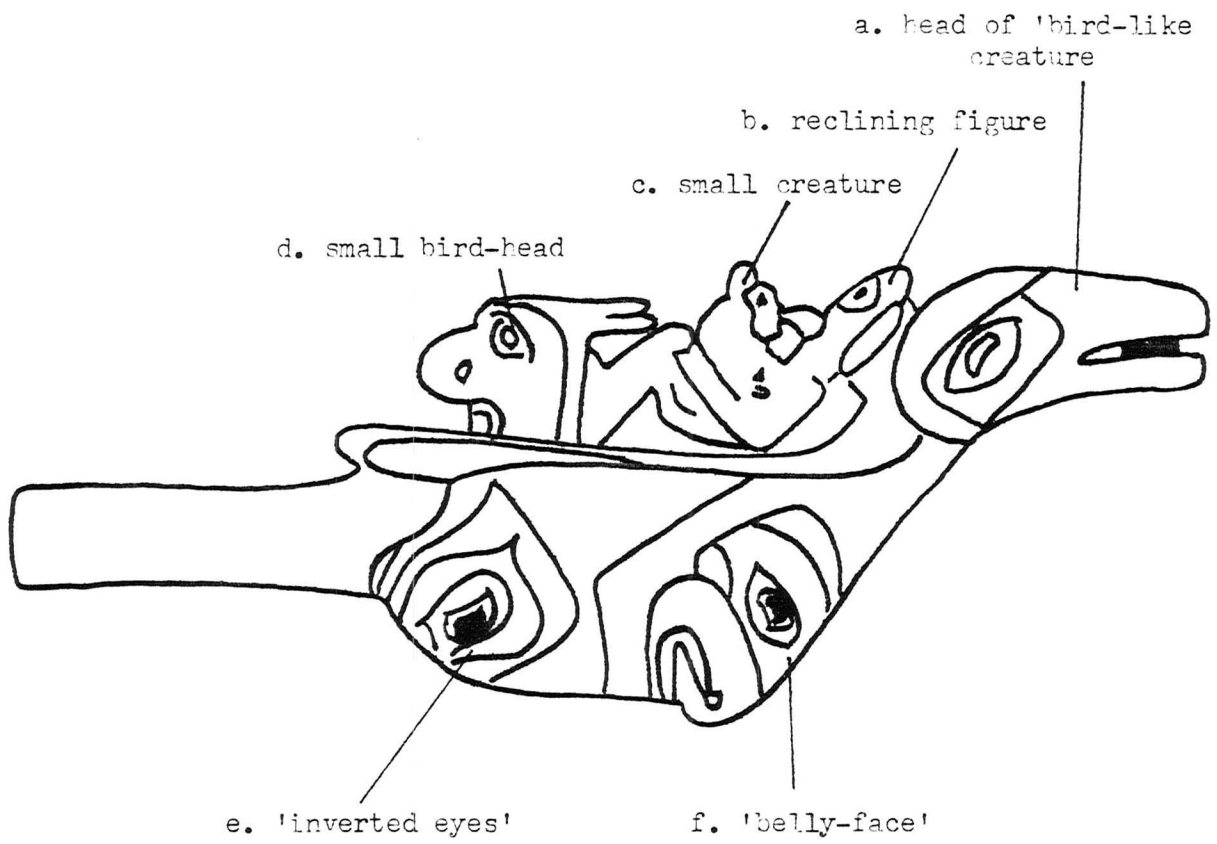


Figure 5. The Raven Rattle and Its Parts

human characteristics and in others non-human, suggesting a mask of sorts. The small creature on top of the 'reclining figure' (Fig. 5 c), has large eyes and a mouth, and is generally positioned either on the chest of the figure or with its front legs resting on the chest and its back legs on or between the figure's knees.

The figure and the small creature are in turn joined by a 'tongue'. Although it is generally impossible to tell to which of the two forms the tongue belongs, there are some instances in which the tongue appears wider at the mouth of the 'reclining figure'. According to a myth related by Frank Bolton, a Thunderbird clan chief at Gitiks on the lower Nass River (Barbeau 1927), the tongue belongs to the reclining figure with the small creature 'biting' the end.

The third and final form in this grouping is the head of a bird-like creature (Fig. 5 d) possessing human facial characteristics, with the exception of the 'nose' or beak which is generally of three types: a) a short and slightly curved projection which can be viewed as either a nose or a beak, b) a long tapered beak, c) a beak that recurves back to touch either above the mouth or into the mouth. In all cases a crest or plummage is present, which extends horizontally away from the face. Directly below this form are a pair of 'inverted eyes' facing the handle (Fig. 5 e).

In a significant number of cases a mouth which extends from both sides of the handle is situated between the wings and the 'eyes' themselves. With the mouth in this position the handle takes on an added function, that of a nose or beak. With the exception of the 'handle-nose' or beak, the facial characteristics of this creature are human. Directly to the right of this creature is a face with human characteristics with the exception of the 'nose' which is recurved back upon itself into its mouth (Fig. 5 f).

Typology of the Rattle

The following typology of the Tsimshian raven rattle provides a general classification which is based on variations of the forms on the 'top' of the rattle. The 'bird-head' with the object in its mouth and the forms comprising the 'bottom' half of the rattle remain constant.

The Type A rattle (Fig. 6 a) is the same type of rattle described above with the small creature on the chest or between the knees of the reclining figure and the bird form facing toward the handle. In the Type B rattle, the small creature is held in the beak of the 'bird-like' creature and is suspended between this form and the reclining figure (Fig. 6 b). The beak of the 'bird' is in this

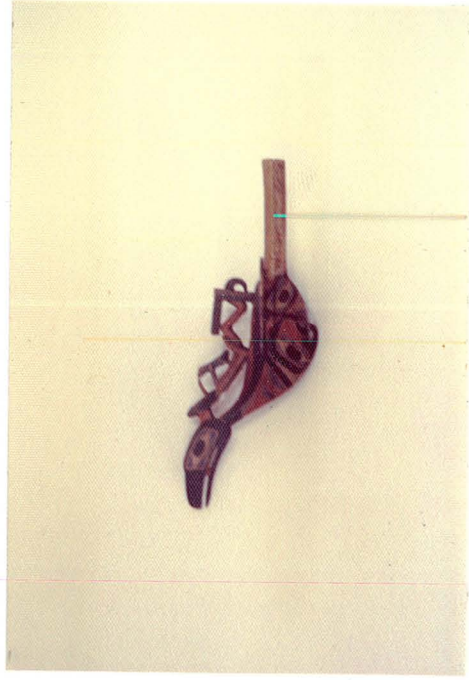


Figure 6. The Three Types of Raven Rattle

instance always elongated and is positioned directly above the spread legs of the figure. The reclining figure and the small creature are again joined by the tongue. In the Type C rattle, the reclining figure and the bird form face each other and are connected by the extended tongue that belongs to the figure (Fig. 6 c). The small creature is not present in this type.

Structural Analysis

As has been noted in the "Introduction", the rattle can be analysed at two primary structural levels: the level of feature and the level of forms. The six creatures that comprise the rattle have their own representative features.

Starting from the right and going in a counter-clockwise direction the primary features as they make up the six creatures (cf Fig. 7 1) are given below. It should be noted that there are eight forms listed below, two of which (B and D) do not have features since they are classified as integral yet independent forms (see introduction). Of the six other forms I give first the form and then the features associated with each form.

A. The head of the 'bird-like' creature; (a) the shape and size of the eyes, (b) the length and curvature of the beak which is continuous with the top of the head.

<u>Features</u>	<u>Forms</u>
a. shape and size of eyes	A. bird head
b. length and curvature of beak	
no features	B. object in its mouth
c. human body	C. reclining figure
d. facial features	
no features	D. extended tongue
e. wide toothless mouth	E. 'small creature'
f. absence of tail	
g. recurved beak	F. small bird-head
h. human facial features	
i. plumage	
j. human eyes	G. 'inverted eyes'
k. stylized beak or nose (handle)	
l. human eyes	H. 'bottom or belly face'
m. human mouth	
n. recurved beak or nose	

Figure 7. (i) The Primary Features of the Six Creatures

(ii) The Eight Forms That Comprise the Rattle

- B. The object in its mouth; (no features).
- C. The reclining figure; (c) the human face, (d) the human body.
- D. The extended tongue; (no features).
- E. The small creature; (e) a wide toothless mouth, (f) the lack of a tail.
- F. The small bird head; (g) the recurved beak, (h) the human facial features, and the rounded feathers protruding horizontally away from the face.
- G. The 'inverted eyes'; (j) the human eyes and mouth, (k) stylized beak or nose (handle).
- H. The 'bottom or belly face'; (l) the human eyes, (m) human mouth (n) the recurved beak or nose.

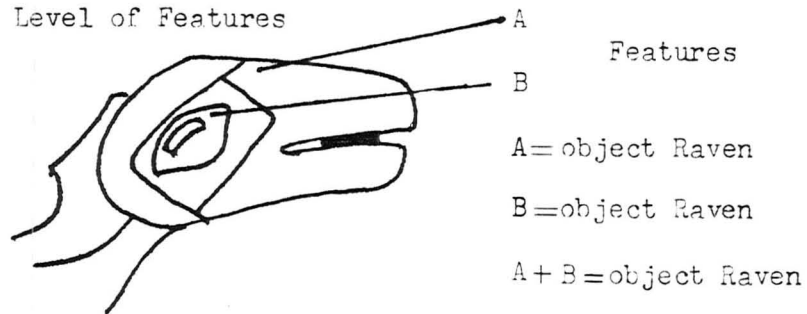
With the exception of B and D, the above six forms consist of two or more features that in turn represent creatures that are either non-human or human or both at the same time. In forms A and E above, the features each represent a non-human creature, whilst the features of the C form each represent a human. Thus the relationship between creatures comprising the form, designated the same by each feature in all of the first three forms, constitute the first type of event outlined in the introduction. In F, G and H forms, the features each represent both a non-human and human creature. It is this relationship

between creatures so designated as different by each feature in the last three forms that constitutes the second type of event. Thus an event designates only that a relationship can be seen to exist between creatures that are defined the same or different by their respective features (Table 1, Fig. 8).

Table 1. Types of Event, Motif and Image as defined by Features

	<u>Event</u>	<u>Motif</u>	<u>Image</u>
Type A	relationship between the similar creatures contained within the single forms <u>A</u> , <u>C</u> , <u>E</u> , represented by different features. $(\underline{a}=\underline{A} \ \& \ \underline{b}=\underline{A})=\underline{A}:\underline{A}$ $(\underline{c}=\underline{C} \ \& \ \underline{d}=\underline{C})=\underline{C}:\underline{C}$ $(\underline{e}=\underline{E} \ \& \ \underline{f}=\underline{E})=\underline{E}:\underline{E}$	meaningful relationship between (<u>a</u> & <u>b</u>), (<u>c</u> & <u>d</u>) and (<u>e</u> & <u>f</u>)	specific & abstract meaningful relationship between the same features
Type B	relationship between the different creatures contained within the single forms <u>F</u> , <u>G</u> , <u>H</u> , represented by different features. $(\underline{g}=\underline{F} \ \& \ \underline{h}=\underline{F} \ \& \ \underline{i}=\underline{F})=\underline{F}:\underline{F}$ human:non-human creature $(\underline{j}=\underline{G} \ \& \ \underline{k}=\underline{G})=\underline{G}:\underline{G}$ human non-human creature $(\underline{l}=\underline{H} \ \& \ \underline{m}=\underline{H} \ \& \ \underline{n}=\underline{H})=\underline{H}:\underline{H}$ human:non-human creature	meaningful relationship between (<u>g</u> & <u>h</u> & <u>i</u>), (<u>j</u> & <u>k</u>) and (<u>l</u> & <u>m</u> & <u>n</u>)	specific & abstract meaningful relationship between the same features

1. The Level of Features



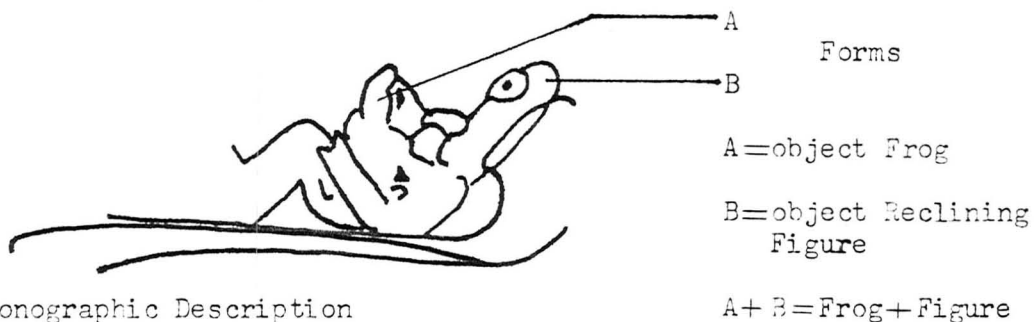
Pre-iconographic Description

A:B=event (as representations of object Raven)=artistic motif
 → general meaning

Iconographical Analysis

A:B=image → specific and abstract meaning
 Paraphrase given in Chapter 4

2. The Level of Forms



Pre-iconographic Description

A:B=event (as representations of Frog and Figure)
 =artistic motif → general meaning

Iconographical Analysis

A:B=image → specific and abstract meaning
 Paraphrase given in Chapter 4

: as related to

→ generates

Figure 8. A. Relationships at the Level of the Features

B. Relationships at the Level of the Forms

The meaningful relations generated by these two types of events constitute artistic motifs of the same type. In the first three forms A, C and F above, three artistic motifs of the first type exist, and are the meaningful relationship between the two features that comprise each of the three forms. In turn the meaningful relationship between the two or three features that comprise each of the last three forms F, G, and H constitute the three motifs of the second type. Thus the general meanings of the six forms are expressed by their respective motifs which do no more than designate that a relationship with a general meaning can be seen to exist between the features that represent the creatures (Table 1 Fig. 8).

The images consist of the six motifs that have been connected with culturally significant themes and concepts expressed for example, in the myths and social and sacred ceremonials. The images in turn convey the specific as well as the abstract meanings of each of the six forms which are dealt with in Chapter 4. Thus an image designates that the artistic motif when connected with significant themes and concepts expressed in myths, etc., also has specific and abstract meanings (Table 1 Fig. 8).

Using the same directional technique for the features, the forms as they exist on the rattle are as follows (Fig. 7ii).

- A. The bird head
- B. The object in its mouth
- C. The 'reclining figure'
- D. The 'extended tongue'
- E. The 'small creature'
- F. The 'small bird head'
- G. The 'inverted eyes'
- H. The 'bottom or belly face'

As outlined in the "Introduction", the events are of three types. The first type of event consists of: 1) the mutual relation between the non-human creature and the rectangular item in its mouth that is an integral part of the creature (A and B above), and 2) the relation between the human creature and the 'tongue' (C and D above). The second type of event includes the relationships between all the creatures with the exception of the rectangular item and the tongue (that is B and D above). In the third and final type of event, the mutual relation exists between the creatures and their integral parts plus another creature, that is between the creatures or objects represented by the forms A, B and E above or any other combinations of this type.

The artistic motifs, in this case the meaningful relationships between forms, are based on these three types of events, and as such follow the same format. This also applies to the individual images but it breaks down when these individual images are variously combined, (Table 2).

Table 2. Types of Event, Motif and Image as defined by Forms

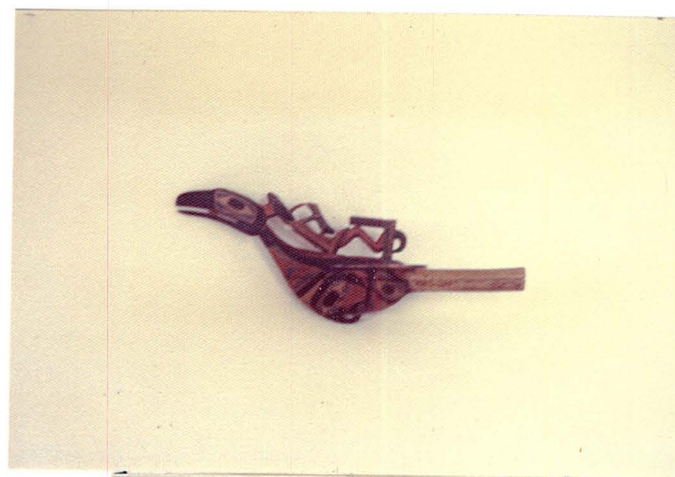
	<u>Event</u>	<u>Motif</u>	<u>Image</u>
Type	relationship	meaningful	specific &
A	between (<u>A</u> & <u>B</u>) and (<u>C</u> & <u>D</u>)	relationship between (<u>A</u> & <u>B</u>) and (<u>C</u> & <u>D</u>)	abstract meaningful relationship between the same forms
Type	relationship	meaningful	specific &
B	between (<u>A</u> & <u>C</u>), (<u>C</u> & <u>E</u>), (<u>E</u> & <u>F</u>), (<u>F</u> & <u>G</u>), and (<u>G</u> & <u>H</u>)	relationship between (<u>A</u> & <u>C</u>), (<u>C</u> & <u>E</u>), (<u>E</u> & <u>F</u>), (<u>F</u> & <u>G</u>) and (<u>G</u> & <u>H</u>)	abstract relationship between the same forms

	<u>Event</u>	<u>Motif</u>	<u>Image</u>
Type	relationship	meaningful	specific &
C	between (<u>A</u> , <u>B</u> & <u>C</u>)	relationship	abstract
	or (<u>C</u> , <u>D</u> & <u>F</u>) and	between	meaningful
	various	(<u>A</u> , <u>B</u> & <u>C</u>)	relationship
	combinations	or (<u>C</u> , <u>D</u> & <u>F</u>)	between same
			forms

Positional Variations

There are three positions in which the rattle will be examined here: the Displayed, the Mythic and the Ceremonial (Fig. 9). The Displayed position is the position used by museum personnel to display the rattle, and the way in which it was used prior to its flying away through the smoke hole in the roof (Holm 1972:30). The Mythic position is based on three origin myths recorded by Barbeau (1927, in Gould 1973:114-115, notes to Museum of Man VII-C-1394), describing how the rattle appeared to the individuals during a supernatural encounter. The Ceremonial position is the way in which the raven rattle is used by the chiefs during the throwing dance.

In each of the three positions there is a dominant form that defines the particular order in which the other forms relate to each other as well as to the dominant form



a



b



c

Figure 9. The Three Positions of the Rattle,
a. The Displayed b. The Mythic c. The Ceremonial

itself. In the Displayed position (Fig. 10 a), the head of the non-human bird-like creature is at the 'front' of the rattle, together with the body of a bird, with its wings partially spread. In this position the head of the bird-like creature strongly suggests that the body and the wings belong to it, and as such all of the other forms can be seen to be related to this creature by virtue of their positions on its body. Thus the 'reclining figure' and the small non-human creature on its chest are on the 'back' of the bird, the small 'bird-head' is this creature's 'tail', and the 'inverted eyes' and the face of the forms below the wings constitute its belly. In the process of identifying the motifs one can also see a pattern that is similar to the relationships between the forms and this creature's body. Thus the motif 'tail bird' to 'belly face' is in this position the same as the relation between tail and belly. The 'tail bird' also stands in relation to the reclining figure and the small creature on its chest by virtue of their being part of the bird's 'back'. In turn this distinct grouping relates to the 'inverted eyes' and the 'belly face' by virtue of the relationship between the 'back' and the 'belly'.

According to the descriptions of the rattle given in the three origin myths, the dominant form in the Mythic position is the 'belly face' (Fig. 10 b). Included in these accounts

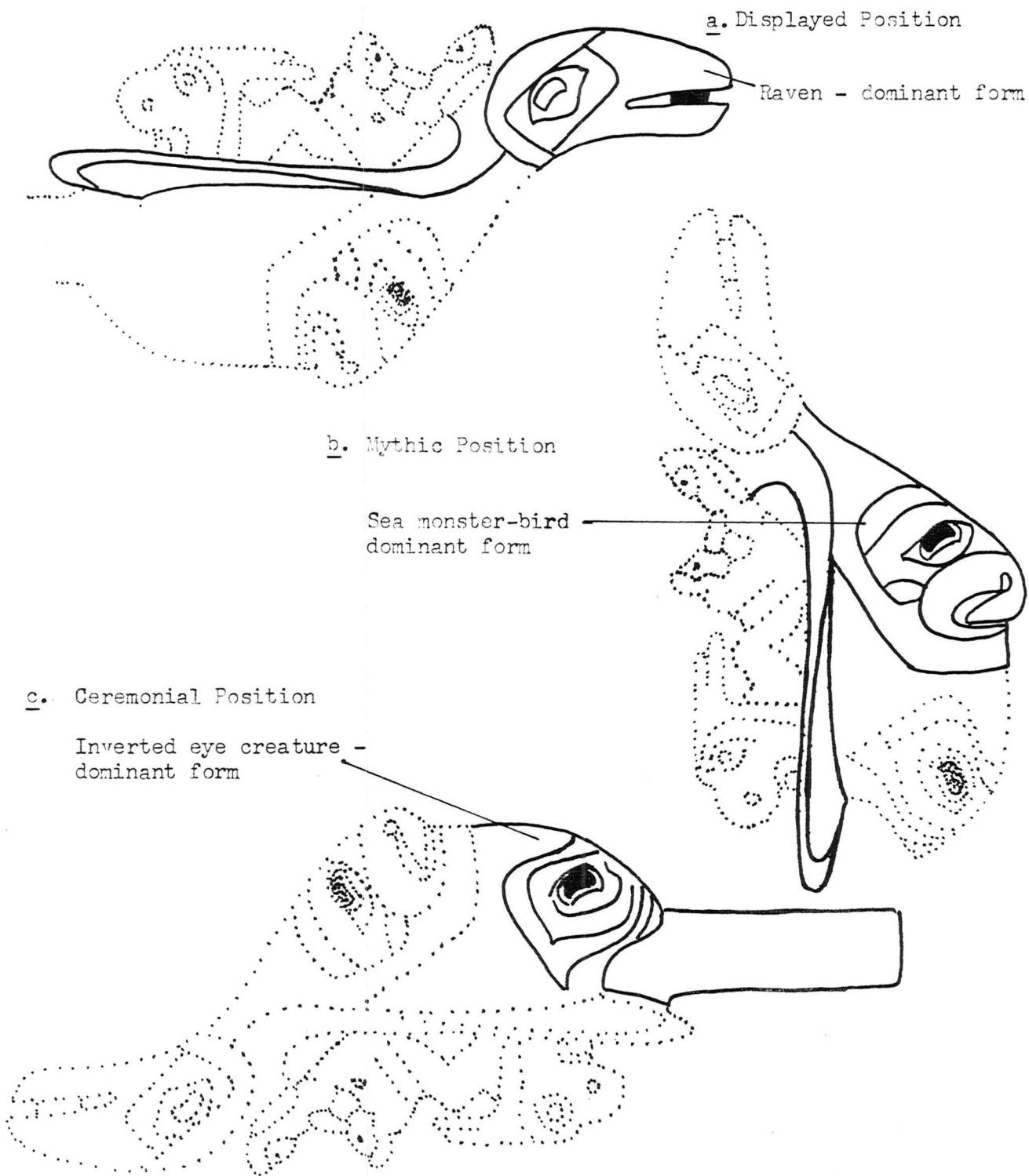


Figure 10. The Dominant Forms in the Three Positions

are references made to the way in which this creature presented itself for example " it stood on or out of the water and shook itself" (Barbeau 1927 in Gould 1973:114 and notes to the Museum of Man VII-C-1394), that is, in the Mythic position it stood out of the water (Fig. 10 b). The face of this amalgamated creature is the condensed form of the whole creature, in that it is both body and face at the same time. This creature's wings therefore extend on either side of its body-face. In this position the other forms are related according to their positions on its body. The reclining figure, small creature and small 'bird's head' are on the 'back' of this creature, with the small bird form again in the 'tail' position. The head of the non-human form with the object in its beak, is positioned on top of the being's head. In this position the non-human form is strongly reminiscent of a crest hat or headdress worn by chiefs (Kew and Goddard 1974:79,51 respectively). The motif 'tail bird' to 'amalgamated creature' is the same as the relation tail to body. Similarly the three forms stand in relation to each other by virtue of their being part of this creature's 'back'. In turn the non-human form stands in relation to the amalgamated creature as 'top-of-the-head' does to face. There are also other motifs and combinations of motifs that follow the pattern defined by their position vis-à-vis the dominant form.

In the Ceremonial position (Fig. 10 c), the rattle is held upside down, that is the inverse of the displayed position. The reclining figure, small creature and 'tail-bird' are all upside down, with the bird-head and the 'belly face' lying on their backs facing upward. The only form that makes 'visual sense' in this position is the ambiguous 'inverted eye' creature, with the handle as a nose or beak. This together with the belief that turning the rattle upside down controlled "the rattle's coming to life and flying away" (Holm 1972:30) is directly linked to the chief's control over the supernatural powers during the throwing dance. The only form not 'controlled' or made immobile, is the ambiguous creature, suggesting that its significance is in relating the chief, who holds its beak (handle) to the other controlled beings on the rattle. From a structural standpoint the forms relate to each other by virtue of their inverted positions vis-à-vis the ambiguous creature. The motifs in turn follow the same pattern.

CHAPTER IV

THE HISTORY AND ICONOGRAPHY OF THE RAVEN RATTLE

History of the Raven Rattle

From all accounts of their history it is generally agreed that the rattles originated with the Nisq'a (Tsimshian) of the Nass River. However, the precise date of their inception is not known. Many ethnographers and collectors alike suggest the date to be the early part of the nineteenth century. According to one of Barbeau's Nisq'a informants, however, the rattles were being carved and used long before the arrival of the white man (Barbeau 1927 in Gould 1973:98). According to Tsimshian informants, carving the rattles was not the monopoly of any clan (Gould 1973:101), yet the Nisq'a made a sizeable business out of the sale of these rattles to foreign chiefs, notably of the Coast Tsimshian, Gitksan, Tlingit, Haida, and Kwakiutl, and later to white men (ibid:97).

The evidence indicates that most of these rattles were made on the Nass River by from fifteen to twenty carvers at least (whose names Barbeau compiled). They were then sold, most at Fishery Bay during the eulachon fishing season and exported elsewhere for the use of foreign chiefs. They were as fashionable as an object indicating chieftainship as were the chillcat and the amhalaits (headress), (Barbeau 1927, notes to ROM HN-747 (120) in Gould 1973:100).

The above account suggests that rattles were an important piece of chiefly paraphernalia. The chillcat blanket and amhalait (headress) were worn by the chiefs only on ceremonial occasions, indicating both their rank and status and their role in the ceremonials. Moreover, in an account given by Barbeau (1927, notes to Museum of Man VII-C-1394), the individual who ordered the rattle often had the 'bird-head-form' with the object in its mouth changed to an Eagle, Grouse, or Crane, depending upon his clan affiliation. Although the artifactual evidence does not support the variation of this form it does, however, support the variable forms of the 'small bird-like creature' in the 'tail' position. The relationship between the small 'tail bird' and the clan affiliation of the rattle's owner, strongly indicates an association between the rattle and the clan organization.

In addition, Barbeau states that in the 'old days' the rattle's ceremonial function was directly associated with the presence of a naxnoq (spirit).

Adyaigwerh introduced dancing with the narhnorh (naxnoq spirit), where these rattles were used. He was a Kanhada (Raven) of the Gitrhateen (tribe). When he gave a narhnorh to the chiefs he gave them a rattle, and it is then that the rattles were used, not otherwise. The Larhkibu (Wolves) of Gitrhateen tried to make a narhnorh themselves, without the permission of the Kanhada, and (one of them in consequence) was killed. This was Adinaw, who was the first one (of them) to try. Adiyaigwerh introduced

this (kind of) dancing long before the arrival of the white man. Old Mathew Nass (was among those) who saw the white people come. His brother was Hlederh, who saw the whiteman arrive, at the time when the Hudson's Bay Company was established at Graveyard Point (in 1831)...

The strangers who used the Hasaerh, bird rattles, must have got them from Sqateen, on the Nass. A little before my time, and when I was a boy, there was quite a number of Gitksan (of the upper Skeena River) who lived among the Nass people, about 30 or 40 years ago. They learned the fashion (of using rattles) here. Angyeda and Gitwinksihl (village) were full of them (Barbeau 1927, in Gould 1973:98).

In the above account not only is Adyaihwerh a Nass River Raven chief of the Gitrahateen tribe, but in dancing with a spirit, and giving the spirit and a rattle to the chiefs, he is acting in an initiatory capacity, very similar to the chief's role in the throwing dance. It is indeed possible that this 'original' ceremony was the forerunner of the throwing dance, given that the chiefs in this ceremony and the initiates in the throwing dance both receive a spirit, and that the initiator in both rituals dances with the naxnoq while holding the rattle. Also of significance is the relationship between the spirit and the rattle, suggesting that the raven rattle in some way expressed or reflected the power of the spirit being bestowed upon the initiate chiefs.

The rattle then has both social and spiritual significance. On the one hand it is not only an important

piece of chiefly paraphernalia that together with the chillcat and the amhalait identify a chief's status, rank and power, but it can also reflect the clan association of its owner. On the other hand, the rattle is an important and integral part of a very early type of initiation ceremony in which it is directly related to the dancing with, and giving of, the spirit to the initiates.

The following three origin myths not only provide the basis for the origin of the raven rattles but also give an insight into the meanings of their composite forms.

There was a hunter on a lake in a canoe. Many were they who wanted to hunt and fish on this lake. But the Whirlpool (Ant K'wililaboks) would draw their canoes down. This hunter always watched how many times the whirlpool was bad; then it would move more quietly. That was the time when he went by. While he was out there one time, the little bird - now represented on the rattle - came out of the waters, from the whirlpool. His name was al'e'o, anaxnoq. It looked exactly as the rattles look now: a man on the back of the bird, a frog on the tail of the bird, biting the tongue of the man. All at once the little bird stood out of the water and shook himself, and when he shook himself, it made the noise of a rattle in movement. When the man went away he began to carve what he had seen into a rattle. This is how these rattles began. The head of the Raven is also included on the rattle. The man spoken of in the myth was a Gispowudwido, of the Nass, who saw the being under the water. His name was sag.amse gisk (a Gispowudwido) and he was the grandfather of Ni:syu'st (of Gwunuog village). He was the one who began to carve them as soon as he had his supernatural experience. (notes to Museum of Man VII -C-1394, Barbeau 1927).

A second account of this same myth is recounted by Chief Trahahait, 'head chief of a leading Thunderbird clan at Gitiks on the lower Nass' (Barbeau, 1927, in Gould 1973: 114). The reference to the hunter watching the whirlpool wreak havoc is identical to the first account and has therefore been omitted from this account.

While he was out one day, the little bird as it is represented on the body of the rattle came up. The carving of a man was found on top of the bird, and a frog on the tail of the bird, biting the tongue of the man, the tongue sticking out. The bird is called allaeo, a narhnorh or spirit. All at once this little bird stood up on the water and shook itself. Its shaking produced a noise like a chief's rattle. It was then the hunter knew what the bird was. After he had gone back home he began to make a rattle just like it, exactly as he had seen it. This is how it all began.

Another version recounted by Chief Trahahait tells of a hunter being taken down to the bottom of the sea by a Sea-monster.

The grandfather of the Gispewudwado.... Neesyooost was taken down to the bottom of the sea by the hagweloq, the monster of the deep. It was there that he saw this being (of the rattle). As soon as he got back, he began to carve a rattle, just like the kind he had seen; it was the sagamsee'gysk of the Gispewudwado.... And he went on afterwards making more rattles. Later the rattles were carved by some of the Gitrhateen and the Gitarnwilks tribesmen (of the Nass) (ibid:115).

Explicit in the myths is the position of the reclining figure on the 'back' and the 'Frog' on the 'tail' of the bird. However, in the illustrated examples and in

the artifactual evidence the Frog is not in the 'tail' position which suggests that the small bird form replaced the Frog in this position sometime after the original rattles were made. The Raven is also included as part of the rattle, yet its position on the rattle is by no means clear, nor does it appear to be considered a dominant form.

The most interesting feature of these accounts is the 'little bird' on the 'belly' of the rattle, known as al'e'o, a naxnoq or spirit. It is said to have stood out of the water and shaken himself, which implies that the rattle is a representation of this animated spiritual being.

In addition, according to another of Barbeau's informants (1927 notes to Museum of Man VII-C-1394),

The man and the bird were always the same... The bird of the rattle is not really a bird, but a monster under the water, the hagwelarh, able to swallow a canoe with the people aboard. The liliboks or whirlpool is this monster's own 'power'.

Identification

Before a detailed discussion of the forms' meanings can be attempted, it is necessary to give the general meanings of the motifs as determined by their features. Beginning again at the right and going in a counter-clockwise direction the general meanings are as follows (Fig. 11):

1. a non-human creature, a bird
2. a human being

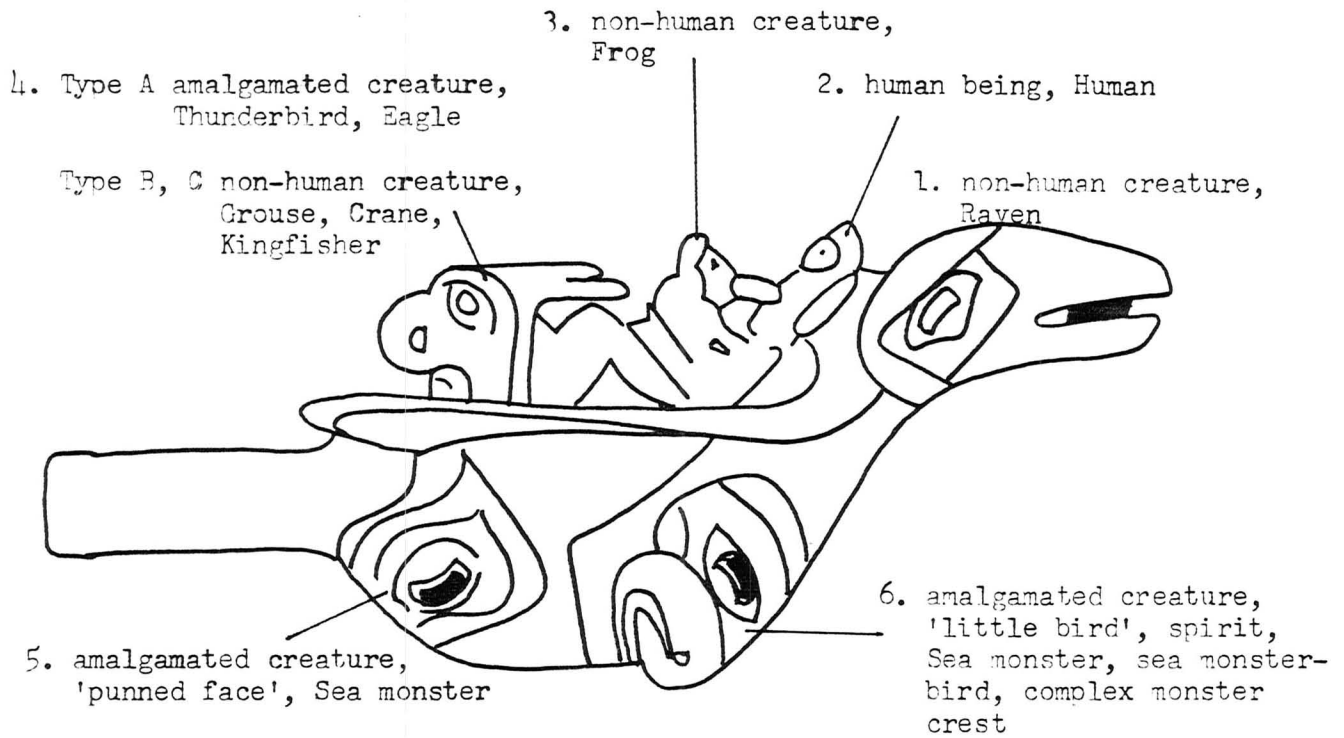


Figure 11. a. The General Meanings of the Motifs Consisting
of Features

b. The Specific Meanings of the Images Consisting
of the Features

3. a non-human creature
4. an amalgamated creature in the Type A rattles,
and/or a non-human creature, a bird in the
Type B and C rattles
5. an amalgamated creature
6. an amalgamated creature

According to the above myths, the catalogue notes of the Museum of Man, the Royal Ontario Museum (see also Gould 1973:110-113), Halpin (1973:iii, 156), and Gould (1973:117-131), the specific meanings of the images consisting of features are generally identified as follows (Fig. 11):

1. non-human creature = Raven
2. a human being = Human
3. a non-human creature = Frog
4. an amalgamated creature in the Type A rattles =
Thunderbird, Eagle; a non-human creature in
the Type B and C rattles = Grouse, Crane, or
Kingfisher
5. an amalgamated creature = 'punned face' or 'Sea
monster'
6. an amalgamated creature = 'little bird', a spirit,
Sea monster, Sea monster-bird, and complex
monster crest

Raven holds a prominent position in Tsimshian mythology. He is the culture hero, the trickster and the transformer. As the culture hero, he is considered

responsible for the creation of the present Tsimshian world, its natural, social and spiritual orders, and "to fill the wants of the new people whom he had made" (Boas 1970:67). However, in his role as trickster, Raven is a selfish and manipulative buffoon. His important gifts to man are the by-product of his insatiable search for food and sex (Halpin 1975:25). Being a manipulative and deceitful benefactor, Raven personifies one of the fundamental paradoxes of the Tsimshian's conceptual framework which also extends to their tribal chiefs and supernatural beings.

In the Raven Cycle Myths, (Boas 1970), there are many instances in which Raven transforms himself into a number of varied animals, human beings and natural objects, when the situation necessitates such a change. For example in the Origin of Daylight myth, in order for Raven to steal the sun he transforms himself into a cedar leaf, and then into a child. Once he has achieved his task he then transforms himself back into his original Raven form to make good his escape (ibid:641). This adventure documents and exemplifies the significance of the underlying principles of transformation, the act itself. According to Halpin (personal communication), the act of transformation is among the Tsimshian a major theme that pervades the whole culture from the ranking structure through to and including the acquisition of supernatural power.

In Raven's case, the transformation process enabled him to create the Tsimshian world and as a result facilitated the necessary communication between the supernatural beings in human and animal form, and the 'new people whom he had made'. Thus as the transformer and creator Raven is the symbol of the transformation process.

In light of the above it seems almost fitting that Raven's last act is to turn himself into stone. With respect to this event Duff states, "in the myths the beings who are turned into stone live everlastingly as reminders of the circumstances that caused their transformation, and of their lasting implications for man" (Duff 1975:18). Indeed, it would seem that for the Tsimshian, Raven's transformation into a permanent and everlasting form, consolidated and preserved for future generations this symbol of the all pervading internal paradox and act (the transformation process).

The human figure shows no signs of being either male or female, nor is there any indication to suggest that it is a shaman (usually indicated by long hair) (Gould 1973:51), or a chief. The human form then, is sexless and provides no distinguishing features to suggest that a specific individual is represented. The fact of its being human in the most general sense and because its specific meanings are defined by its relationships to the other beings on the rattle

(such as the Frog and the Raven) suggests that it stands for both the collective identity and particularized identities of the Tsimshian.

According to various myths, the Frog on the chest of the human being possesses a number of meaningful associations. The most prominent is the Frog's association with death and destruction, and the Tsimshian's apparent fear of, and respect for, the dangerous powers of the Frog. One version, the Salmon Eater clan myth (Frogs Cast into the Campfire), (Barbeau 1950, Vol. 1,70), tells of five young men who while on a fishing trip, throw a Frog into a fire. Shortly thereafter a woman's voice (that of Frog Woman), tells them that they will die because of their misdeed. On the way home each young man dies, except one. As soon as the survivor reaches the village he tells the story and immediately dies and the village is destroyed by fire. A young girl and her mother or attendant are the only people saved - the young girl had reached the age of puberty and was in isolation away from the village. The association of her survival with womanhood implies that the Frog represents the procreative powers of woman. In all the stories, the young woman marries into another tribe and bears many children. Thus, the Frog can be said to represent both life and death.

The moral implications of the young men's deed described above directly relate Frogs to the moral code.

By throwing the Frogs into the fire, the young men violate the rules of behaviour and bring about their own deaths as well as the destruction of their village.

There is also a link between the Frog and the Tsimshian's matrilineal organization. After the holocaust the young woman is the sole survivor of her mother's lineage group and by giving birth to many children is responsible for the perpetuation of the lineage and its clan affiliation. The procreative power of the survivors of a similar holocaust is also referred to in the Tsimshian Deluge Myth. The only two survivors of the flood among the Tsimshian become the ancestors of the recent tribes (Boas 1970:469).

According to Boas, the Frog is also associated with wealth. "A frog with copper claws and copper eyebrows is caught by individuals who obtain wealth through its help. The skin of the frog is removed and later on worn by the captor who thus acquires the power of the supernatural animal" (ibid:459). By wearing the Frog's skin the captor gains access to watery realms which enables him to catch sea animals and thus increase his wealth (Gould 1973:127). Being an animal of both the land and water the Frog acts as a link between these two realms. It is an intermediary as it belongs solely neither to one nor to the other.

In the Type A rattles, the 'tail bird' is generally a Thunderbird or Sea Eagle, and in the Type B and C rattles, a Grouse, Crane, or Kingfisher. As noted above, the

artifactual evidence indicates that the 'tail bird' is the creature that can be changed to Grouse for the Gispewudwade clan, Eagle for the Thunderbird or Crane for the Wolf clan, and not as was stated by Barbeau's informant the 'raven part' of the rattle. To this end Gould (1973:129) hypothesizes that "the tail face is the only phratric specific reference on the rattle, the only feature that identifies the rattle with the social identity of the holder of the rattle". Her hypothesis is born out in the case of the Thunderbird or Sea eagle. According to Barbeau (1950 Vol 1:134), the Thunderbird is used as a crest by the Tsimshian and Haida Gitrhawn clans. Interestingly enough, the Thunderbird is considered to be a spiritual Eagle that is known for his killing a specific type of sea monster - the devil fish (*ibid*:134). Gould adds "to the extent that in all cultures 'you are what you eat' Thunderbirds are the sea monsters that they catch. They have sea monster power" (Gould 1973:119). Along with the Thunderbird/Sea eagle, the Grouse, Crane or Kingfisher are "spirits or messengers of large sea creatures or monsters" (*ibid*:130). Their significance as spirit helpers possessing supernatural power is that they are intermediaries between the three realms of land, sea and air, (*ibid*:131). Aside from Gould's identification of the 'inverted eye' creature as a 'punned face' or 'standing for a sea-monster in general' (*ibid*:120), there is no additional

information in the literature pertaining to this form. As I have stated earlier, the physical characteristics of the form, are both human and non-human, and is thus an amalgamated creature. I would argue however, that because of the ambiguous nature of this creature, it could stand for either one of the creatures on the rattle or all of them. On this basis it would appear that this form is an intermediary between the collective meanings and powers of the supernatural beings on the rattle and the supernatural power of the priest-like initiator, the wihala.it or chief, who holds the rattle in the throwing dance.

The creature of the 'belly' of the rattle has been variously identified as a Sea monster, Sea monster-bird, spirit and complex monster crest. Assuming that this creature represents the above, and there is ample evidence to suggest that it does (Barbeau 1950, Vol I:134, 20-21, Barbeau 1927, and notes to Museum of Man VII-C-1394, Gould 1973:117-123, Halpin 1973 iii,156), we can begin to discuss its varied meanings in light of its composite identities.

In the origin myths, it is explicitly stated that as a Sea monster, this creature is associated with death and destruction - 'the whirlpool is this monster's own power' (Barbeau 1927). However, as Gould (1973:119) and Barbeau (1950 Vol 1:134, 20-21) point out, the Sea monster is also

a Thunderbird and/or Sea eagle. The Sea eagle and/or Thunderbird are according to Barbeau (ibid:134) interchangeable. Also the Tsimshian call them by the same name - Rhskyaisem. They are powerful, spiritual beings that are a source of beneficial supernatural power and great wealth. Interestingly enough, both are known for their ability to kill Sea monsters. This fact reveals the paradoxical nature of this creature, evidenced by the opposition between the destructive powers of the Sea monster and the beneficial powers of the Sea eagle-Thunderbird. Furthermore, the Sea monster-bird personifies the very essence of the transformation process by constantly transforming and retransforming into its varied composite forms (see also Halpin 1973:157). The Sea monster-bird's domain is extended to the natural realms of land, sea, and air, and as such provides access to all three realms. According to Halpin (1973:156) the complex monster crest is a composite animal form, of which there are no natural prototypes found in nature. Crests of this type were owned by houses, and a source of significant pride as they were "a legacy from myth-time acquired by the ancestors and held in perpetuity by their lineal descendants" (ibid:115).

The myth crest association is an interesting one. The crests were the visual representations of clan migrations and ancestral encounters with supernatural beings. In being

displayed in the potlatch ceremony they related the past, mythic-time as well as the lineage and clan traditions to the present clan structure and the social tenets of rank and status. In this light, the complex monster crest is not only composed of animals that were used as crests by different lineages and clans (Barbeau 1950 Vol 1:11) but also is itself a crest of numerous clans among the three Tsimshian divisions (Halpin 1973:157-161). Hence as a conglomerate crest, it 'stood for' (a) the traditions of individually different clans and lineages, (b) the different clans themselves, and (c) the clan system as a whole, without which the Tsimshian's identity as a people could not be validated. In addition, Halpin states that monster crests are also crests of integration in that they "express social integration of formerly separate groups. They help bind conglomerate groups together - groups that perpetuate myths, traditions and crests of independent origins - by providing symbolic statements which combine their disparate origins into a new entity" (ibid:166). Thus, in functioning as both a 'crest of integration' by uniting conglomerates together and as a crest of differentiation by dividing groups according to their uniquely different myths, crests and traditions, the complex monster crest also expresses the underlying structure of the Tsimshian crest system.

Barbeau has noted that "a crest without a myth to explain its origin and its connection with the owner was an impossibility, and such a myth was in the patrimony of a clan of a family. Persons who had no myth had no past, no crest and no identity" (in Halpin 1973:119). To ensure that this did not happen, the meanings of the crests were validated by specific crest-myths in the potlatch ceremony. This association between the crests and the potlatch is significant in that it links the complex monster crest to the potlatch: as the potlatch expresses the Tsimshian social structure, so the complex monster crest expresses the Tsimshian's social organization (see also Halpin 1973:144).

Prior to discussing the images and their relationships I now identify the specific meanings of the two independent yet integral forms on the rattle. Based on the Raven Cycle myths, the object in the mouth of the Raven is the box of daylight. The object extending from the mouth of the human being is a tongue that belongs to the individual (see Barbeau 1927 above).

Relationships and Their Meanings

The relationship between Raven and the box of daylight refers to Raven bringing daylight to the Tsimshian world. This act marks the beginning of Raven's creation of the natural,

social and spiritual order and as such the beginning of the Tsimshian present world order.

The significance of Raven's action in liberating daylight into the world is that its consequences parallel those associated with the Frog on the back of the rattles (Gould 1973:124). Raven obtains the box of daylight from the chief of heaven by becoming the grandson of the chief. He then transforms himself back to his Raven form and escapes back to the mouth of the Nass River with the box of daylight in his mouth.

He went to the mouth of the Nass River. He went on and went up the river in the dark. A little further up, he heard the noise of the people, who were catching olachen in bag nets in their canoes... Giant who was sitting on the shore said, 'throw ashore one of the things you are catching, my dear people!'...Giant had repeated his request four times, but those on the water had refused what he had asked for. Therefore Giant broke the mā. It broke and it was daylight. The North wind began to blow hard and all the fisherman, the Frogs, were driven away by the North wind. All the Frogs who had made fun of the Giant were driven away down river until they arrived at the large mountainous islands. Here the Frogs tried to climb up the rock, but they stuck to the rock, being frozen by the north wind and became stone. They are still on the rock. The fishing frogs named him Txämsem, and all the world had daylight (Boas 1970:62).

In this account, by breaking the box of daylight, Raven is responsible for the Frog people turning into stone and

thus rendering them harmless (Gould 1973:126). In general, Raven is responsible for making the 'frog people' and their activities in the old world order, non-existent in the new world order.

There is also a relationship between the Sea monster and Raven, who invites the former to the first potlatch.

This was the first potlatch to which he invited all kinds of sea monsters; and when they came into the bay, Txámsem stood in front of his house and began to address his guests. "O Chief! I am so glad to see that you have come to my potlatch. I have been away from this country for a long time, therefore I am glad to see you again. I want to say something else. I wish you would stay there and become rocks." The people were much pleased because all the monsters - whales, killer whales, sharks and so on, had been turned to stone (Boas 1970:100).

The reference to Raven turning the Sea monsters to stone within the context of the first potlatch, warrants a re-examination of Duff's (1975:18) statement concerning the implications of beings who are turned into stone.

The beings who are turned into stone live everlastingly as reminders of the circumstances that caused their transformation and of their lasting implications for man.

The fact that the creature on the rattle is a Sea monster, a bird and a crest, associated with death, wealth, and the Tsimshian social organization respectively, suggests that the Sea monster's transformation implies the transformation

of the bird and the monster crest. In turning the Sea monster to stone, Raven not only destroys the destructive and death bringing power of the Sea monster, but also eternalizes this power. The implications of this creature's malevolent power is readily apparent in the rattles' origin myths, in which the canoes and people aboard are destroyed by the whirlpool (Barbeau 1927). Raven is also in complementary opposition to the Sea monster, a relationship that also exists between the Sea monster and the Thunderbird/Sea eagle. In turn, the wealth-bringing attributes of the bird and man's access to the three natural realms are also eternalized.

The association between the Sea monster and the potlatch in the above myth is significant in that in making the transformation, the social organization expressed by the monster crest is eternal and constant as are the social tenets of rank and status expressed in the potlatch. The crest and clan systems are also eternalized in the most important of all secular ceremonies, the potlatch.

The tongue of the reclining human figure on the back of the rattle associates it with both the Frog and the Thunderbird, Grouse or Crane. The tongue is also associated with a shaman who acquires the power of four supernatural beings. In one of Boas's accounts (1970:473) a shaman enters a cave inhabited by four supernatural beings who give him their supernatural

powers by taking them out of their own mouths and putting them into the shaman's mouth. The transferring of power from one mouth to another suggests that the tongue of the reclining figure is a means of transmitting the spirit's supernatural power. Thus the Raven - tongue - Frog image can represent the acquisition of spiritual power. The spiritual relationship between these two beings not only reveals one method by which a Tsimshian can acquire supernatural power, but also reveals the necessity of spiritual aid if an individual is to be socially mobile and enhance his rank and status.

On all the Type A and B rattles, the Frog is positioned either directly on the groin of the reclining figure or just above it. The reclining figure is in the "prone position, it's legs spread apart," (Gould 1973:54), strongly suggestive of sexual intercourse. There are a number of Tsimshian myths dealing with the sexual union between supernatural creatures and human beings, particularly woman. The offspring of this union, possess the supernatural being's powers and upon returning with the mother to the village become excellent hunters, fishermen, etc., bringing to their lineage and sometimes to their village wealth, fame and status. The sexual union between the reclining figure and the Frog on the rattles can therefore, represent another method of acquiring supernatural power. This time however, the power resides in the offspring.

In the Type C rattles, the reclining figure and the Crane/Grouse are joined by the tongue. The image is similiarly representative of the spiritual union between man and spirit.

In the Type A and B rattles, the 'tail bird' is positioned at the feet of the figure while in the Type C rattles it is in between the feet of the figure. The prone position, the spread legs, and in some cases the elevation of the back of the figure is highly suggestive of the birth of the 'tail bird' by the 'human figure'.

As has been noted above, the offspring of the sexual union between a supernatural creature and mankind possess supernatural powers. The 'tail birds' (the Thunderbird, Crane and Grouse), all possess beneficial supernatural powers. Because the Thunderbird/Sea eagle is known for his destruction of Sea monsters he is regarded as the source of much wealth. The Crane and/or Grouse are messengers and intermediaries and allow man access to the natural realms of land, sea and air and are also beneficial spiritual helpers.

Thus, sexual union links man with natural realms of land, sea and air, thereby extending the domain of man's accessibility. In general, the image indicates the consistent link between the world of man and the world of the supernatural and the perpetuation of this link through birth. Having the supernatural power reside in the offspring also indicates the

significance of spiritual power acquisition as a necessary and integral part of the social structure and organization in the past, present and future generations.

Thus the image can be said to represent: (a) the accessibility of the supernatural beings to man, (b) the acquisition of the being's supernatural power, either directly by verbal communion or indirectly through sexual intercourse when the power resides in the offspring and (c) the birth of a supernatural creature as a result of the spiritual union (see also Gould 1973:128).

In the displayed position, the relationship between Raven and the other creatures on the rattle is defined by their position on Raven's body. In this context, the rattle can be said to express the significance of Raven's creations as each form signifies the results of creation. Raven's liberation of daylight marked the beginning of the Tsimshian new world order and the creation of the natural, social and spiritual orders. The Thunderbird, Sea eagle, Sea monster, Crane/Grouse and Frog are all spirits which belong to both the natural and spiritual orders. For the social order to exist and for the basic tenets of rank, power and status to be upheld and passed on, supernatural aid from one or more of the spirits must be acquired. Thus on Raven's back is

symbolized the acquisition of supernatural power and the spirit quest, while on his belly, the malevolent and benevolent supernatural powers available to man in all three natural realms. Thus Raven, the creator of the social order and of the animal spirits necessary for its existence is directly related to the perpetuation of the Tsimshian social order. This is exemplified by the complex monster crest on its belly, that signifies the social structure and the principles of social organization.

The rattle's orientation with respect to the origin myths reveals that the relationship between the Sea monster-bird and the other creatures on the rattle is also defined by their position on this creature's body. Together the Sea monster-bird and complex monster crest express the conceptually opposed structures of the Tsimshian culture, the social structure and the spiritual or hala.it structure. In turn, the image on the back of this creature presents specific aspects of their opposition, namely the particular clan affiliations exemplified by the 'tail bird', the three methods of acquiring supernatural power, and indeed the acts themselves. As has been noted above the Raven on top of the Sea monster-bird's head is similar to a crest hat or head-dress worn by chiefs and specifies the particular clan affiliation of its owner. In light of this association Barbeau's comments (1927

notes to the Museum of Man VII-C-1394) concerning the Raven being changed to a Thunderbird, Grouse or Crane, is particularly revealing.

CHAPTER V

THE RATTLE IN CEREMONIAL CONTEXT

The Throwing Dance

There are very few descriptions of the Throwing Dance in the literature, the following two accounts by Boas's Tsimshian informant, Tate, are by far the most complete.

On the fourth night all the different chiefs are assembled in the house of the head chief to perform what is called the throwing dance. Then each chief of each of the tribes dances by himself with his own mask. The first chief, after the dance of his own mask will dance with his dancing garment and his carved head-dress inlaid with abalone, wearing his dancing apron with the bills of beautiful puffin leggings of the same kind, and carrying the welcome rattle. Then while the chief's own people are singing, and while he is dancing, he catches the supernatural power in the air and goes toward the child of the chief, holding the supernatural power between the palms of both hands, and throws it into the chief's child, or into his niece or nephew. Then all the chiefs who are guests, have each one night for their own throwing dance. Each has the name of a supernatural power, besides his own chief's name. So, when they call one of these chiefs to dance, they will call him by his sacred name. The dances end when it is nearly daylight and then all the princes and princesses have supernatural power and have become dancers. Therefore after the four days have passed and all the children have dances, their father kills some slave, or gives away much property or breaks a costly copper. The child pays each chief who performed a throwing dance with three or four elk skins.

If there are seven or ten children in a chief's family, then each of the visiting chiefs performs his dance seven or ten times, once for each of the children."
 (Tate in Boas 1970:515, see also Beynon Vol A 1939:2, 6-7)

Another account given by Tate indicates the names of the spiritual helper of specific chiefs performing the 'dance',
 "(Chief Dzeba'sa of the Gispewudwade phratry of kitkatla;
Lege'ox, an Eagle of Gispakioats village, and Sasks,
Gispewudwade of Ginakangiek): (Gould 1973:105)

Dilogil 'Boiling Words' was the chief supernatural helper of Dzeba'sa. When any chief made a great potlatch, and the people were assembled in his house on the evening preceding a great distribution of property, this helper of Dzeba'sa was called to initiate a candidate. The mask would appear, and the people would sing its song. At the end of this song it would disappear again, and Dzeba'sa, dressed with his head-mask, the puffin-beak apron, puffin-beak leggings, and with a ceremonial blanket, came forth. The song-leader started the dancing-song and the chief danced, jerking his head with the beat of the wooden drum, so that the eagle down would fly out of the hollow receptacle formed by the top of the head-dress. He accompanied his dance with the rattle. Before the end of the dancing-song, the chief caught his supernatural power above his head and closed his hands over it. Then the people clapped their hands, beat the drum and shouted. When they stopped, Dzeba'sa shouted, "Ohi!" to which the people replied, "Houstst!" This was repeated four times. Then Dzeba'sa walked up to one side of the door, where the children of the chief's family (that is, the nephews and nieces of the host) were sitting, and threw his supernatural

power on one of the children. At once the whistle of Dilogil was heard among the children. Then the chief's nephews (Boas footnotes, "I believe the host's nephews are meant.") paid Dzeba'sa for his dance, saying, "Your supernatural power walked over these costly things, sir." This speech was repeated four times.

Then the people would call for Txa-g·a'kaEm lax-ha', 'Heavenly Body', the supernatural helper of LEg·e'ox, to initiate several of the young people. This helper was used only for youths of high rank.

When LEg·e'ox gave a great potlatch among the Tsimshian, his people would call for the supernatural power of Man-ks-ga'gum lax-ha' 'Who Was The First To Go Up To Heaven', who belonged to Chief Saoks, to initiate the young people (Tate, in Boas 1916:514).

The throwing dance, then, was first and foremost an initiation ceremony through which all individuals passed in order to acquire supernatural power and protection. As has been noted earlier, the ceremonial order consisted of four hierarchical stages: the higher the stage the more supernatural power and protection the initiate acquired (see also Garfield 1939:298-9, Boas 1897:660). Therefore, the throwing dance had two important functions: (1) it was the ceremony in which the initiate received his spiritual power, and (2) when the initiate was considered ready to advance to another stage or elevation it marked the individual's initiation into that other stage, each stage necessitating a throwing dance (Beynon 1939:2-7).

In Tate's second account of the initiation ceremony, his reference to the chief's throwing dance being part of 'making' a great potlatch, is significant in that it obviously refers to a ritual series of events in which hala.it performances - the throwing dance being one of many - are associated with and precede the potlatch ceremony itself. As recorded by Tate, the throwing dance is held on the evening or successive evenings before the potlatch ceremony. Also, according to Spradley (in Gould 1973:106), the throwing dance was a ceremony "that the people went through at the time of a big potlatch in which they were to assume hereditary rights and privileges".

Explicitly stated in both of Tate's accounts is the division of the throwing dance into two parts. The first part consists of a naxnoq mask dance in which the chief "dances by himself with his own mask, and the people sing its song". Halpin (1975:6) adds that, "most recorded naxnoq dramatizations were simple impersonations which the performer, often assisted by attendants and a chorus, impersonated the being signified by his or her name". The name is the spirit helper of the chief, and the mask its form. The chief in dancing with his mask, not only impersonates his spirit helper, but also reveals the power of this spirit. According to Tate, the mask is sometimes the source of much terror among the

common people and a great cause of pride among the princes and princesses who are allowed to touch it (in Boas 1970:555). Halpin (1975:5,23) cautioned however that naxnoq dramatizations generally could and did invert or reverse the normal rules in order that the dangerous or threatening beings and powers could be controlled. In her explanation of why hala.its precede potlatches, Halpin (ibid:28) states: "in the hala.it, whether naxnoq or dancing societies initiations, the Tsimshian play the sacred game of 'releasing' elements of anti-structure. Just as opposites define each other, they follow this release with the potlatch, the assertion of structure par excellence for the entire Northwest coast".

In the second part of the throwing dance, the supernatural powers of the chief are thrown into a youth only when he is dancing in his full ceremonial regalia. As it is an integral part of the chief's ceremonial regalia, the rattle is directly associated with the transfer of supernatural powers to an initiate. The relationship between the rattle and the giving of supernatural powers refers to Barbeau's earlier statement concerning the rattle's importance as part of dancing with a spirit and giving a spirit to other chiefs.

The Function of the Chief

Clearly the chief's primary role in the throwing dance is to act the part of a wihala.it, that is of the spiritual leader and initiator. However, Barbeau's earlier reference to Adyaiwerh's dancing with the spirit becomes clear when the chief's spiritual role during the throwing dance is examined. When a chief is called to dance, that is, to "throw" his supernatural powers "into" the initiate, he is called by his sacred name which is that of his spiritual helper. Since he is addressed as his spiritual helper, the chief may be construed as the embodiment of the spiritual helper, who then throws his supernatural powers into the chief's sons or daughters (see also Halpin 1975:1)

It is also clear that the chiefs, who were called to initiate the youths were not related in any way to them. In this context the chief performed an integrative function in that by "throwing" his supernatural power "into" youths belonging to different lineages and clans he cuts across clan lines. What was important was that he was a chief and not a representative of one particular clan. Moreover, the ceremonial costume emphasize further the integrative function of the chief. According to Halpin (1973:213) "although certain crest associations might still have been present on the costume, it was not a crest costume, but expressed the chief's high rank and control of supernatural power", and thus his social and spiritual role in the throwing dance.

The Significance of the Rattle in the Ceremony

According to Holm (1975:Fig 80) there is a convention in their (the raven rattle) use fairly consistent over a good part of the Coast: they are held and shaken upside down, at least upside down in our view. Someone said that was because they sometimes came alive and flew off, if held the other way. I have seen them in use. Rather than shaking the rattle up in the air, keeping time, the dancer holds it down and to the side. He keeps vibrating it all the time.

In this position the Raven and Sea monster-bird face upward, and the image (Frog-reclining human-Thunderbird, Crane or Grouse) faces the ground. The 'inverted eyes' face the chief's hand.

Turning it upside down allows the chief to control the supernatural power of the beings on the rattle. The ability to control a spirit helper underlies the basic relationship the Tsimshian have with their spirits. It is believed that a man must control and manipulate his acquired spiritual helper, and that to allow the spirit helper to control and manipulate its owner would cost the owner his spiritual power and his life. In the dance, itself, the initiator is first and foremost a chief with considerable supernatural power. His transformation into his spirit helper not only allowed him to control himself but also to control the amount of supernatural power thrown into the initiates. To have given

the initiates all of his power would have endangered their lives and negated his function as a beneficial and protective source of power.

As has been noted above, the hala.its could and did reverse the general social norms. The throwing dance is no exception. Perhaps the most obvious example is the inversion of the rattle itself in the throwing ceremony. In this inverted position the creatures on the rattle are either on their backs facing upward or upside down. The exception is the 'inverted eye' creature who makes 'visual sense' only in this position.

Rules governing the sponsoring of the initiates are also reversed in the throwing dance. According to Beynon (1939:1-7) "the father may if in a more powerful standing, finance the entire hala.it process himself." Julia White's (Barbeau/Beynon 1915-1957) account of her own initiation into the mi'tta suggests, however, that this was the rule rather than an exception. The father's sponsoring of his children through all four hala.it stages reversed what was normally the responsibility of the initiates' maternal kin.

An important corollary of this inversion principle is the presence of internal contradictions in Tsimshian cosmology that links the throwing dance with the raven rattle. In general, the most significant example of this contradiction is

the throwing dance itself. It was clearly an initiation ritual wherein the youths acquired beneficial and protective supernatural power. Yet at the same time it was also a preparation ceremony wherein the hereditary rights and privileges that were subsequently assumed in the potlatch ceremony were spiritually defined and validated. In this dual function the throwing dance combined the two conceptually opposed orders of the Tsimshian society: the sacred order expressed in hala.its and the social order expressed in the potlatch. This inherent contradiction relates the throwing dance directly to the Sea monster-bird on the rattle. Embodied in this single form is the same inherent contradiction between the Tsimshian social and sacred orders: expressed on the one hand by the Sea monster-bird - the spiritual source of beneficial supernatural power - and on the other hand by the complex monster crest - the visual essence of the clan and crest system and the Tsimshian social organization.

As the initiator in the ceremony, the chief is the spiritual source of beneficial and protective power. However, according to Halpin (personal communication) in his role as the tribal chief he is haughty, manipulative, and selfish. So too is Raven, whose creation of the present Tsimshian world is offset by his insatiable hunger for food and sex.

The chief's transformation in the Throwing dance corresponds with the Sea monster-bird and Raven who is the transformer par excellence. Thunderbird, Sea eagle and Sea monster, the powerful spirits of the sky, sea and land personify in a single form, the act of transformation and unification of all three realms. Furthermore, by transforming himself into his spirit helper the chief is able to transmit his supernatural power to the initiate, and as such parallels the function of the reclining figure on the rattle. The reclining figure transmits the supernatural powers of the Frog to either the Thunderbird or Grouse through birth. In turn the birth of the supernaturally powerful 'tail birds' is parallel to the transformation of the young initiates in the Throwing dance. After receiving their supernatural power, the initiates were no longer considered children but instead were adults who took their place in the ranked society.

In turn the chief and the Frog are alike in one respect: they are both capable of transferring supernatural power. Thus the Frog can stand as a metaphor for the chief, that is as a spiritual initiator. In this context, the reclining human on the rattle corresponds with the youth in the Throwing dance, as both receive power from their respective spiritual sources. In their capacity as potent initiators the chief and Frog also align themselves with Raven, who in breaking the box of daylight initiates a new world order.

The raven rattle visually expresses in both specific and general terms aspects of Tsimshian cosmology. In this capacity it is alligned with both the wihala.it chief who personifies the social and spiritual orders, and the ritual series of events which embodies both the hala.it and potlatch orders.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

The hypothesis examined in this thesis is that the raven rattle reflects some elements of Tsimshian cosmology. Based partly on Panofsky's (1962) iconographical analysis and partly on Boas's characteristic trait distinction the method applied here entailed an analysis of the structural composition of the rattles. More specifically it required a study of the component parts of the rattle, their combinations and their relationships to mythology and ceremonialism.

Two analytical levels were established - that of features, for example an eye, or shape and size of beak; and that of forms, for example the Raven or reclining figure. In each level features and forms are capable of representing particular creatures on the rattle.

When a represented creature appears on visual evidence to be in some relationship with another (for example, reclining figure and Frog) the combination is referred to as an event. Once an event has been defined, features within it are logically related one to another. Features related in this way are called artistic motifs. They are of prime importance in identifying correctly the general meanings (in Panofsky's sense of pre-iconographic

description) of a particular artistic motif. Similarly, when forms are so related they, too, are regarded as artistic motifs which carry a general meaning. It is only when an artistic motif can be linked to a "text" (for example to mythology or a particular ceremony or to some aspect of social organization) that it can have culturally significant meanings. Once a link is established the artistic motif becomes an image. Thus the artistic motif with the general meaning of non-human creature becomes the image with the specific meaning of Frog. Associated with the image Frog are abstract meanings such as benevolent and malevolent power.

Each feature can participate in one of two types of events. In the first type, the diagnostic features though different refer to the same creature. For example, the shape and size of the eye (one feature) and the shape and size of the beak (a different feature) both represent Raven. In this instance the event is the relationship between the creature Raven as represented by the first feature and Raven as represented by the second feature. In the next type the diagnostic features identify different creatures which are superimposed on the same form. For example the feature, human eye and mouth, identify a human form whereas the recurved beak refers to a non-human creature. Both creatures, however, are contained within the form Sea monster-bird. The event in this case is the relationship between the human and

non-human creature.

Eight forms were isolated in raven rattles: Raven, the box of daylight in its mouth, the reclining figure, the tongue which links 'tail bird' and the Frog to the reclining figure, Frog, 'tail bird', the 'inverted eye' creature and the Sea monster-bird. Of these, six are identified as creatures and two (the box of daylight and the tongue) are independent yet integral parts of two of the above creatures.

Every form can participate in at least one of three types of event. The first type is the combination of creature and independent yet integral form, such as Raven and box of daylight, and reclining figure and tongue. Type two includes the pairing of creatures, as in the examples Raven-Sea monster-bird and 'tail bird'-reclining figure. The third type includes a combination of two creatures and one independent yet integral form, a prime example of which is reclining figure-tongue-Frog. Artistic motifs made up of forms are classified in the same way and so, too, are images.

Three types of raven rattles were identified, each defined by the variable positions and forms of the creatures on the 'back' of the rattles, notably of the 'tail bird'. Diagnostic features were the absence or presence of the Frog, and the variable positions of both the 'tail bird' and the Frog. Regardless of type the iconography of each rattle could be analysed with respect to three specific orientations - the Displayed, the Mythic and the Ceremonial. In

each orientation there was a dominant form which determined the relationships between it and the other forms, and influenced the interpretation of the specific and abstract meanings of the relationships themselves.

The iconographical analysis of the raven rattle revealed five main principles or dominant concerns: transformation, anti-structure, contradiction, control and initiation. These principles constitute some of the underlying aspects of Tsimshian cosmology. Perhaps the most significant is the transformation principle and its corollary the act of transformation itself. Both Raven and the Sea monster-bird on the rattle personify transformation as well as the act of transformation. Raven is the transformer par excellence for the whole of the Northwest Coast whose transforming capabilities and transformations into objects, humans and animal forms are documented in the Raven Cycle of myths. When transforming and retransforming itself Sea monster-bird might assume any one of the following forms: Sea eagle, Sea monster and complex monster crest.

The chief's transformation into a spirit helper in the Throwing dance signifies not only the importance of this principle as an integral and vital part of Tsimshian ceremonialism, but also the importance of the Raven and Sea monster-bird as reflections of the transformation process. Both of these forms also mirror the significant application of the transformation principle within the spiritual order as expressed

in the Throwing dance.

The inversion of the social norms in hala.it performances, as exemplified by the replacement of the initiates' matrilineal with patrilineal sponsors is an example of the anti-structural principle. The application of this theme is reflected by the inverted position of the raven rattle in the Throwing dance. In the upside down or ceremonial position Raven and the Sea monster-bird are both on their 'backs' facing upward with the Frog, reclining figure and 'tail bird' upside down pointing downward. All five creatures do not make 'visual sense' in this position nor can Raven or Sea monster-bird 'fly away through the smoke hole in the roof' while on their 'backs'.

Allied with anti-structure is the principle of internal contradiction. This paradox is expressed by the integration of the conceptually opposed social and spiritual orders in the Throwing dance, and by the social and spiritual role of the chief in his capacity as an initiator and as a tribal chief. On the rattle the inherent contradictions expressed by these two culturally significant examples are reflected by the Sea monster-bird, Raven and Frog. Raven is the ultimate contradiction in his role as the creator and the trickster. The Frog as a spiritual initiator possesses both benevolent and malevolent supernatural power as does the Sea monster and Thunderbird. Being also a complex monster crest, Sea monster-bird personifies the spiritual

order as well as the social order.

Another principle is one of control or balance of power. On the rattle itself, the destructive powers of the Sea monster and Frog are controlled by the Thunderbird who is known for his killing Sea monsters and by Raven who turns the Sea monsters and Frogs to stone. In this case the creatures included in the iconography of the rattle balance one another so that there is no excess of malevolent or benevolent power. The rattle reflects the main concern of individuals in their relations with the supernatural that is predicated upon the proper control of supernatural power. To allow the spirit helper to control and manipulate its owner would result in that individual losing not only his supernatural power but also his life. This is precisely the concern of the chief in the Throwing dance who in turning the rattle upside down indicates that its potentially dangerous powers are under control. Thus when he throws his power 'into' the initiate the amount given the youth is controlled and safe.

The final principle is that of initiation. Initiation is ritually expressed in the Throwing dance and it is personified by the wihalait. Raven and Frog are both associated with initiation: Raven is the initiator and creator of the present world together with its natural, social and spiritual orders. In creating these various orders he makes initiation a necessary rite of passage for all individuals who desire to

increase their supernatural power as a means of gaining additional social rank and status. Frog is the beneficent source of supernatural power for the reclining figure and in this role he is similar to the wihalait chief in the Throwing dance.

Thus, the raven rattle expresses in general and specific terms Tsimshian social and sacred orders. The image, reclining figure-Frog-'tail bird' expresses both the acquisition of supernatural power and specific Tsimshian clan crests - notably by the 'tail bird'. The image Sea monster-bird-complex monster crest-Raven presents two diametrically opposed sources of supernatural power which are available to all Tsimshian. It also symbolizes the clan and crest system which, in effect, is the social organization and also represents the three distinct yet integrated orders: the social, spiritual and natural orders.

The raven rattle reflects principles of the social structure that on the one hand serve to unite conglomerate groups together, and on the other differentiates them according to their individual and independent origins, traditions and hereditary prerogatives. In addition, it also emphasises the importance of the relationship between man and the supernatural; a relationship that is a prerequisite for an individual's social identity, status and rank. That the raven rattle is a meaningful reflection of

certain aspects of Tsimshian cosmology is further exemplified by its use in the hala.it performance (in both the Throwing dance and in the ritual series) and also by its direct association with the chief.

The results of the analysis support the usefulness of the hypothesis I set out to explore. Whether examined in terms of its iconographical organization or of its social and religious function it can be demonstrated that the raven rattle does reflect some of the same principles which underlie the cosmology of the Tsimshian.

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