



21. A Totem-Pole from the Nass River, British Columbia

R. Kerr

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I have, of course, submitted these suggestions in due course to M. Marin, as President of the *Institut*, and to the other members of our "little committee"; and when I receive their replies, I propose to communicate them to our Fellows in the same manner as this interim report.

JOHN L. MYRES.

British Columbia : Totemism.

Kerr.

A Totem-Pole from the Nass River, British Columbia. *By R.*

21

Kerr, M.A.

The totem-pole illustrated in the accompanying figure has recently been added to the ethnographical collection of the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh.

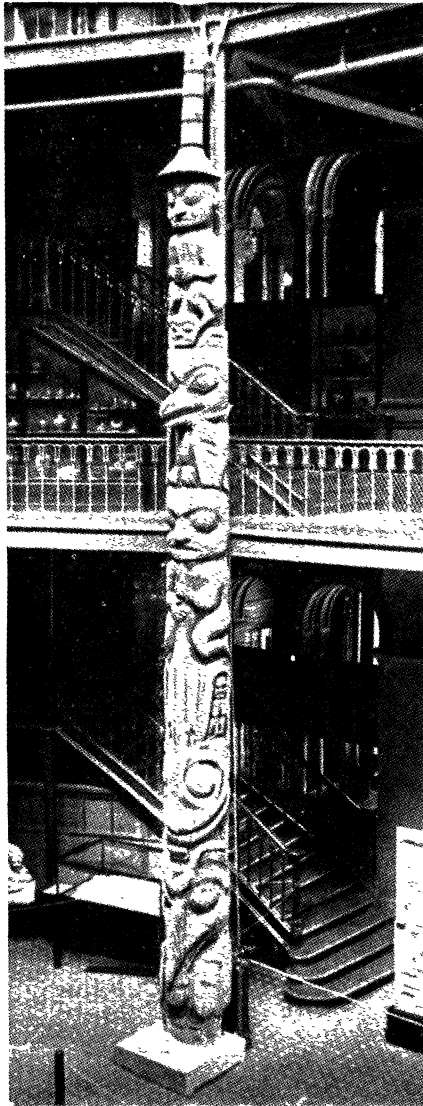


FIG. 1.

Gwanes. Both carvers belonged to the Fireweed (*Gisrast*) phratry. The carver of

In connection with this acquisition, the Museum is indebted firstly to the Government of Canada, for permission to remove the pole from that country; and secondly and more particularly to Mr. Marius Barbeau, of the National Museum of Canada, for his services in arranging the purchase of the pole from its Indian owner, supervising its removal from its site, and despatching it on its long journey to Scotland. Mr. Barbeau also collected much valuable information, recorded in the following notes, as to the pole's history and meaning.

The pole has been carved from a log of red cedar, hollowed out at the back. It is in one piece, except for the upper extremity, and certain projecting portions, which have been carved separately and fitted on. Traces of the paint with which the pole was no doubt originally covered are to be seen here and there. The total height is 37 feet.

The pole was erected some 70 or 80 years ago at the village of Angyada, on the lower Nass River, British Columbia. It was amongst the oldest in the country, no poles being known which are more than about 80 years old.* The pole was the property of Neestsawl, a chief of the Nass, and head of a family of the Raven phratry (*Kanhada*). It was erected as a memorial to Tsawit, a chief in the family of Neestsawl, soon after he had been killed in a raid by the Tshimshian against the Niska of the lower Nass. Tsawit was next in line to the head-chief Neestsawl, who was one of the wealthiest chiefs of the Nass; consequently one of the finest poles was set up in his memory.

The carving was executed by two men: Oyay, of Gitwinksihik ("People of Lizards") at the canyon of the Nass, and his assistant

* M. Barbeau: Totem Poles (Geographical Review, New York, April, 1930, p. 262).

a pole had to be of a different phratry from that of the owner, who was in this case a Raven. Oyay was the foremost carver of the Nass River district, at the best period of totem-pole art (about 1840-1880). The pole given last year by the Canadian National Railways to the Trocadéro, Paris, is also from his hand, and stood next to the specimen described in these notes.

The pole was known by two names: (a) *Hlkwarœt* ("Small-hat") from the hat worn by the figure at the top; or (b) *Masrayait* ("White Bullhead") from the fish represented on it. The figures carved on the pole were in effect family crests, illustrative of the largely mythological history of the family. From the top downwards the figures carved on the pole are as follows:

(1) *Hlkwarœt* ("small-hat"), the old-fashioned ceremonial hat which was a crest of some of the North-West Coast families of various clans. The rings on such hats differed in number according to the owners. It is said that the rings corresponded in number to the ceremonial festivals and distributions of goods ("potlatches") given by the owner concerned.

(2) A human figure wearing the hat. This is Towedstsatukt, an ancestor who came to the Nass from Wedstæ, a village of the West Coast, south of the Skeena, belonging to a northern Kwakiutl tribe, from which this family originated. It is exceptional to find a West Coast family migrating north like this. The usual drift of migrations in these parts is from north to south.

(3) The raven (*kaq*), the principal emblem of the phratry to which the clan concerned belongs. Its special name here is *hlkwilksegem kaq, i.e.,* Prince of Ravens.

(4) A human figure, representing an ancestor whose name is forgotten.

(5) *Masrayait* ("White Bullhead"), a fish which is one of the principal crests of the family. Some say that this figure represents the Salmon, which is a spirit (*Narhnoq*) owned as a name in this family. It is more probable, however, that it is intended to represent the White Bullhead, which is as a rule a crest of the Ravens, while the Salmon is owned by the Eagles in other places.

(6) Another representation of the Prince of Ravens.

Mr. Barbeau's principal informant was Lazarus Moody of Gitrhatin, Nass; his wife 'Ntsitskaos ("Grandmother-scalp") was the owner of the pole. R. KERR.

Anthropology: Applied.

Hobley.

Practical or Applied Anthropology. Some of the Problems. By **22**
C. W. Hobley, C.M.G.

Native Laws and Customs.—Nowhere are the general principles found, nor has any codification been attempted. The Colonial Governments have given a sort of blank cheque to the native authority to exercise judicial authority over their fellows according to native law and custom. The powers of a trained European magistrate are rigidly defined, procedure is codified, the penalties for offences are codified, and so on. Not so the native courts, they can usually try any offence except that of murder and one or two other matters; there can be no uniformity of practice, but no one seems either to know or even to mind, unless there is unrest. The contrast is remarkable.

Native Education.—More imagination has during the last few years been directed towards this question than any other in this field. A great deal is due to the attitude taken up by the Education Committee at the Colonial Office, and one who has done much to inspire this Committee is Dr. Jesse Jones.

Even in this branch more team work is needed, more co-operation between the Education Departments and the Executive and also the Agricultural and Forestry Departments. Applied Anthropology will help in this field.

Native Economics.—Since the war a great revolution has been in progress with regard to native trading methods. Even before the war the Indian "bunnias" in