

"Seeing" in Stone: Tsimshian Masking and the Twin Stone Masks¹

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Several times in his *Images Stone B.C.* (1975), Wilson Duff uses the Tsimshian "twin" stone masks (Figures 1 and 2) as capstones for his discussions of the meanings inhering in Northwest Coast prehistoric stone sculpture. For example, he says that "Life is a pair of twin stone masks which are the very same but have opposite eyes" (*ibid.*:59). The masks are the "supreme masterwork of the exhibition [in which] everything comes into focus in the eyes" (*ibid.*:162); they are the "culminating image of thirty centuries of stone sculpture. . . ." (*ibid.*:165). What Wilson saw as the "living paradoxes in myth and life" explored by Northwest Coast artists were for him to be found as self-evidently in these masks as they were to be found: "They are, with full self-consciousness, a paradox. What the paradox is about is whatever 'Masks' are about, and

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whatever 'seeing' is about (*ibid.*:162). The paradox, for Wilson, was about "self-recognition" (*ibid.*:166).

In this paper I will attempt to find and say in more explicit terms what masks and "seeing" were for the Tsimshian. This will be based on how masks were used by Tsimshian-speaking peoples as revealed by ethnographic evidence. The paper thus buttresses Wilson's statements in a way that he did not live to do—by providing some of those kinds of evidence more normally acceptable to anthropologists than what he called "my most audacious imaginings about the meanings of the images" (*ibid.*:13). His most audacious imaginings were, of course, based upon twenty-five years of sustained attention to both the images and the ethnography of the Northwest Coast, including most of the ethnographic evidence used in this paper (much of which was made available to me by him). That he preferred to call his knowledge "imaginings" was part of his own paradox, and the paradox of anthropology as well.

Power

Since I will describe masks later as the *faces of power*, a general discussion of power, revolving around the Tsimshian terms *halait* and *naxnox*, will be presented in order to locate the wearing of masks within a broader religious framework.

Halait refers to any shamanic or ritual manifestation of power. It is both the dance and the dancer, the person manifesting power as well as the ritual event within which the manifestation occurs. *Naxnox* is a personification of power, or that which is manifested in *halait*. While it can be inferred from mythological contexts and ritual action that power in its pure or generalized aspect is the light (heat) or potency of Heaven (which is personified as the Chief of Heaven or Chief Sun), it seldom appears in this form, but is refracted into numerous concrete personifications—animals, monsters, shining youths, crystals, and the myriad humanoid beings to be described below who were impersonated by means of masks. According to Boas (1916:543), *naxnox* are the "helpers" of Heaven; in more modern terms they mediate the divine and human. In *halait*, humans become *naxnox* (participate in divinity) either through possession or the wearing of masks. Several kinds of *halait* can be distinguished.

1. *Shamanism*. The shaman is called *swensk* ("blowing") *halait*, referring to the opposite but similar practices of sucking and blowing through which his cures were effected. "The name is derived from the *halait*'s practice of sucking the portion of his patient's body where the

pain is, after he has finished his dance, and then blowing the thing which he is supposed to have removed out through the smoke hole" (Beynon, 1956-57, Vol. 2). Masks representing shamans (who do not themselves wear masks while curing) show the mouth with pursed lips which could be interpreted as either sucking or blowing. Tsimshian shamanic possession is of the classic North American Indian form in which a novice was afflicted by a mysterious illness during which he became unconscious and had visions of animal helpers whom he would later be able to call upon to help him diagnose and cure others. During the illness, which was possession by his *naxnox* or tutelary, he seemed as if dead. When he recovered he had received power songs, called his *ksenek* or "breath." Chiefs sometimes performed in the manner of curing shamans in ritual halaits.

2. *Initiation.* Initiation is the ritual possession of different novices by the same initiating power. Unlike shamanic possession, it was planned, managed, and regularized in form. There were several initiating powers among the Tsimshian, two of which created ritual moieties in the society and were open to (and apparently required of) anyone whose family had enough wealth to finance an initiation. The moieties were the *nutim* (Dog Eaters) and *mitla* (Dancers). The others, which were exclusive and inherited chiefly privileges, were the *ludzista* (Fire Throwers), *winanat* (Destroyers)², and *xgedet* (Cannibals). All were said to have been acquired from the Bella Bella, and a myth of their origin recorded by Garfield (1939:294-95) provides good characterizations of four of them.

Four men from Kitamaat attempted unsuccessfully to kill a lake monster which they followed to the head of the lake where they saw four houses emerge from the water with bright housefront paintings and cedar-bark rings hung over the doors. A man came from one of the houses. "He started to dance, and the dancing was as of a crazy man, and the movements were those of a lame man. When they saw him dancing as though he were lame they called the dance *mi'tla'*" (*ibid.*:295). From the next house came another man, "dancing with actions crazier than those of the first. He jumped about like a dog, and the song he sang and calls he made sounded like the noises of puppy dogs. The Gitamat called this dance *nu'em*, meaning in Bella Bella, crazy person, in the sense of being possessed by animals, as the Tsimshian speak of one under the influence of the land otter spirit" (*loc. cit.*). The third man's "dance movements were even crazier than the first two, and they recognized from the words of

his song that he was a chief. This dance they termed *ludzistE*; very crazy person, one who goes about destroying at random" (*loc. cit.*). Then, "from the fourth house came a man who started to dance and sing in a strange manner. He sang in a tongue unknown to the Gitamat. Suddenly he sprang into the air and in his hands there was a small child which he began to devour" (*loc. cit.*). In another version of the myth recorded by William Beynon (1957, Vol. 3), the men are told that "those of your people whom you thought to be dead are the ones that you hear singing, and it is they that have given you these dances."

In ritual performance, initiation into either the Dancers or Dog Eaters was known as the *hilaxha* ("going to the heavens") stage in power acquisition, and followed one and, preferably two, childhood power strengthenings by the chief's personal power (see 3 below). Each society was headed by a chief in his role as *wihalait* ("great dancer"), who "threw" the initiating power into the novices, who then disappeared through the smoke hole into heaven, there to "acquire wisdom" (Beynon, 1957, Vol. 3). When they returned nude, they were in a wild or possessed state (dancing as if lame or eating dogs) and were kept apart from the uninitiated until ritually tamed, again by the *wihalait*. In one account, the final act of taming was effected when the chief sucked the back of the initiate and blew what he had removed through the smoke hole (*loc. cit.*). That is, he imitated the actions of a curing shaman removing illness. The initiating chief was liberally compensated both for throwing his power into the initiate and for the taming following the return from heaven. After the *hilaxha* initiation, the person was called a "made person" as opposed to his or her previous condition as an "ordinary person" (*amget*: *am* - "serving for"; *-get* "person").

Inherited chiefly initiations also involved ascent into heaven and possession upon return, during which the initiates (depending upon the possessing power) destroyed valuable property, handled and attacked others with fire and excrement, and, in the most extreme and feared form of possession, sought to devour human flesh. In the latter case, the initiates are reported to have satisfied their spiritual hunger with corpses and by taking bites from the arms of women who had been ritually bestowed with the right to be so bitten. All such destructive and frenzied attacks required liberal compensation to the persons who had been the recipients of them and who were themselves always from chiefly families.

3. *Personal power demonstrations.* Part of the intangible wealth of each lineage was a stock of inherited *naxnox* names that were assumed by its adult members at halait rituals during which the defining characteristic or quality

² Although the myth characterizes the *ludzista* as the destroying dance, both Garfield (1939:295) and Tate (in Boas, 1916:55) call this dance the *winanat*



Figure 1. The twin stone masks. The closed-eye mask (left) was collected at "Kit-Katla" by I. W. Powell in 1879. NMC VII-C-329. The open-eye mask (right) was donated by Alphonse Pinart. Said to have been collected at Metlakatla. MH 81.22.1. Drawings based on photographs by Hilary Stewart.

Figure 2. The open-eye stone mask.

of the name was dramatized. These rituals were the only occasions at which masks were worn by the Tsimshian (although occasional references are made in the literature to the wearing of masks in other halait contexts, these are not supported by systematic investigation of masks and their documentation in museums). These names and their dramatizations will be described in detail in the body of this paper, but a special sub-class will be identified here.

3a. *Chiefs' personal power names.* Among the Coast Tsimshian there appears to have been a special kind of wihalait name which contained some reference to heaven (*laxha*) or the sun (*gemk*). In a list of power names belonging to ten chiefs which was recorded by Henry Tate (in Boas, 1916:513), eight of the ten had at least one such name, and some had more than one (there is also reason to believe the list was incomplete). The three examples of wihalait names given by one of Beynon's (1939, Vol. A) informants all contained references to heaven. These names gave the chiefs special and direct access to the power of heaven, whereas the powers acquired by others were mediators between heaven and man, and thus weaker in potency. With direct access to heaven, the chief himself mediated its potency for others. For example, the power First of Heaven was the first power called upon in initiations. The chief bearing the name was asked to "open the powers of heaven for the supernatural beings of these great chiefs" (Tate, in Boas, 1916:557). The chief then came in and danced and shouted to heaven, after which he said "now the supernatural powers of heaven are ready to come down" (*ibid.*:558). The power named Who Was The First To Go Up To Heaven was called upon to "open the sky and to let the power of the sky come down and initiate the chief's children and nephews" (*ibid.*:555).

The last reference is probably to the two strengthening power acquisitions of children, during which the chief threw his power into them in order to prepare them for their own ascent to heaven in the hilaxha or third stage of power acquisition. The first strengthening was called the *t'sik* (possibly meaning "dentalium"); the second was called *semhalait* ("real" halait). During these halait, the children were hidden under (protected by?) cedar-bark mats and taught to cry as if "expressing pain from the power which had entered them" (Garfield, 1939:300). Most recorded accounts of *t'sik* and *semhalait* mention chiefs as having "heaven" power names, although other powers were used as well (cf., Garfield's accounts, 1939:300-03).

4. *Reception halait.* When the guest chiefs arrived for a potlatch, their host performed a peace dance, or *himga'awa* ("to catch") (Beynon, 1956, Vol. 1). In this dance, he wore

a frontlet headdress from which he shook eagle down on his guests; "if it was not done the guests could and would expect treachery" (*loc. cit.*). Barbeau (1951:135-36) recorded a song sung by a chief at such a reception. It included the following striking references to his relationship to heaven (the sky):

Who will pursue me into the sky... Are you trying to bring down the pillars of the sky? Who will follow me through the hole in the sky into the bright mirage beyond? When they see my footprints white as those of the Raven (in the snow), they will try to imitate me.

5. *Chief's power demonstration.* Chiefs were described as engaging in halait rivalry to demonstrate their superior power. The most spectacular such demonstration was staged by Legaic, the ranking chief among the Coast Tsimshian, whose purpose was to "show the gitxala that I have greater halait powers than they" (Beynon, 1956-57, Vol. 2). He found a slave among the Chilkat who was his double, and his people paraded the man as Legaic while the real chief went into hiding. Finally, the halait season arrived "when all the chiefs showed their halait powers to all the others" (*loc. cit.*) and the Kitkatla and other guest were invited to Legaic's halait. In front of the guests, the double was cremated. His ashes were placed in a box over which Legaic's people sang and from which he finally arose, restored to life (see also Garfield's 1939:219, account of the return to life of another chief).

The preceding abbreviated descriptions of the kinds of Tsimshian halait permit formulation of the relationships between sources and manifestations of power, which in turn permit tentative formulation of its nature. Two basic sources of power can be identified as *chiefly* and *shamanic*. The source of chiefly power is the "bright mirage" of heaven which is reached through a hole in the sky (= smoke hole in the house). It can be opened by certain chiefs who receive its power directly and "throw" it into others. Once strengthened by mediated chiefly powers, ordinary persons can themselves be thrown through the opening into heaven to acquire wisdom (= enlightenment) from its denizens and achieve full humanity (becoming human + divine) as "made persons" (chiefs are called *semoiget* or "real persons"). The direct encounter with heavenly beings is, however, too strong for humans who become overwhelmed or possessed by their power. This state of divine possession causes humans to become "ill" (lame, crazy). The illness can be conceptualized as an excess of power. (It is said to be similar to non-ritual possession by land otters, which in Tsimshian belief causes insanity and death to non-shamans.) The excess power is removed by the initiating



Figure 3. White Man mask. Collected at Greenville, Nass River, by C. F. Newcombe in 1912. PM 1517.



Figure 4. Slave Woman mask. Collected at Kisgegas by C. M. Barbeau in 1927. ROM HN-757.

chief who sucks it out of the person and blows it back to heaven through the smoke hole (i.e., he acts in the fashion of a curing shaman). The initiated person is then "healed" and restored to normal human condition.

Certain chiefs can ascend to heaven for encounters with even stronger possessing powers and return with such an excess of divinity that they are extremely dangerous to both property and other humans: throwing fire and excrement, destroying wealth, and ultimately seeking to devour their fellow men (significantly, they are appeased by taking bites out of women). In the words of the myth, they become "very crazy." Goldman's (1975:191) interpretation that the man eating power is the great devourer Death itself, is the obvious one for such an extreme religious action.

Shamanic power is acquired unsought and outside the ritual framework through possession by animals which causes "temporary" death. Through the ancient medical formula that to cure one must be cured, the shaman reverses his own power encounter, moving back from illness to health, and death to life. Non-shamans can endure power illness, but only shamans can endure power death. In the greatest chiefly power demonstration recorded for the Tsimshian, Legaic simulated the same ability to reverse his own death. Comparison of shamanic and chiefly power sources and manifestations leads us directly to the equation that animals are themselves divine, or that the ultimate source of power is cosmic nature itself. Then, encapsulating a more lengthy argument than can be made here, we might conclude that it is through transcendence of his normal cultural condition by direct encounter with and possession by his animal/divine *nature* (i.e., his own death) that man achieves enlightenment and power. In typically Northwest Coast fashion, this process for non-shamans required expenditures of wealth and was expressed through the use of art and artifacts.

Halait Art and Artists

Ritual halait performances were arranged and managed by a council to the chief known as the *gitsonk* ("people secluded").³ They are described by Garfield (1939:304) as "the professional group of artists, song composers and organizers of the dramatizations [who] were all men who had received supernatural powers. . . . The ability to carve, plan and operate novel mechanical masks or other

³ Beynon (1956-57, Vol. 2) says that "literally this means an inner chamber or secret chamber to which only members of the particular group are permitted entrance. Each chief had such a particular group and also such a chamber in his house in which the secret conferences were held."

objects, or compose songs was considered a manifestation of the powers which the individual had received." Thus, although the use of masks and mechanical devices to manifest power was indeed theatrical simulation through artifice or "trickery," the ability to manifest the simulation was *itself* a manifestation of power. Barbeau (1950:789) wrote that

The *Gitsonk* were specially trained for their secret calling. If any outsider unexpectedly came upon them while they were at work, the only outcome was death for the intruder. The *Gitsonk* also had charge of manipulating the spirit when it was brought out in a public ceremony. No mistake could be tolerated, and the penalty for any lapse was the same.

Not only was death required of an intruder, or one who might expose the illusions of the *gitsonk* as human trickery, if their devices failed (thus also exposing trickery), death was also required of the *gitsonk*. Beynon (1947-48) recorded a spectacular failure as an example that "any misuse of the halait powers was punishable by death." A woman chief who was going to the heavens for power asked her *gitsonk* group to arrange her return upon a mechanical whale. The *gitsonk* constructed a whale from sea-lion skins which was made to dive and swim by means of ropes pulled from each end by men hidden on shore. They also contrived to make the whale spout by using hot stones inside of it to make water turn to steam which emerged from the whale's blow hole. When, during its performance, one of the hot stones was dropped and burnt through the whale's skin causing it to sink, all of the attending halait and the *gitsonk* committed suicide in the knowledge that they would be put to death for the failure. Soon after the warrior halait from Bella Bella arrived to so punish the offenders.

The burden of creating illusion was heavy indeed.

Power also resided in the objects made by the *gitsonk*. Boas (1916:514) reported that "masks and carvings [used in halait] were kept strictly hidden from those who were not entitled to use them. They were only exhibited at ceremonies." Henry Tate (in Boas, *ibid.*:555) said of a mask named Boiling Words that "it was considered a very terrible object" and that "it was a very terror among the common people, and it was a great cause of pride among the princes and princesses to be allowed to touch it." For the contemporary Gitksan, Adams (1973:43) reports as follows:

Dancing masks, especially, contain great supernatural power and can make people both in and out of "its" lineage ill. Native tourist guides at the Skeena Treasure House in Hazelton, for instance, complained of aches and pains which "must be caused by a mask because of something (that the guides) said about it which wasn't quite right."



Figure 5. Owl mask. Collected at Kisgegas by C. M. Barbeau in 1920. NMC VII-C-744.

The suggestion is, of course, that once created by the powerful artists of the *gitsontk*, masks and other *halait* objects *became* *naxnox* or beings of power themselves. Unfortunately, I know of no further ethnographic elaboration of this point. But perhaps ethnography is not needed for those who are sensitive to these things. Speaking of the carved stone images he and Hilary Stewart assembled from museum storerooms and other hidden places into one exhibition, Wilson wrote that "the accumulated power that these have held should surely blow the mind. It is perhaps a mercy that we glimpse their meanings only faintly" (Duff, 1975:24).

The Data

The primary data used in this paper are unpublished field notes of Marius Barbeau and William Beynon, his Tsimshian associate, collected between 1914 and 1957. They are preserved in the National Museum of Man of the National Museums of Canada. These have been augmented by museum pieces and their documentation collected by Barbeau, G. T. Emmons, C. F. Newcombe, and I. W. Powell between ca. 1879 and 1929.⁴ These data establish unequivocally that the Tsimshian wore masks in the ritual dramatization of *naxnox* names.⁵ Barbeau and Beynon recorded some 650 names from all three divisions of the Tsimshian (Coast Tsimshian, Niska, Gitksan), although those from the Gitksan are the most numerous.⁶ In a number of instances, they also recorded brief descriptions of how the names were dramatized, including some sixty cases in which masks were specifically mentioned (in only two cases did the informant specify that no mask was worn in the dramatization). Additionally, Barbeau collected data about *naxnox* name dramatizations for most of the masks he acquired for the National Museums of Canada and the Royal Ontario

⁴ Museum initials used in referring to masks in the figure captions and the body of the paper are as follows: NMC (National Museums of Canada), ROM (Royal Ontario Museum), PM (British Columbia Provincial Museum), FM (Field Museum), MAI (Museum of the American Indian), PMH (Peabody Museum, Harvard), CM (Centennial Museum, Vancouver), and MH (Musée de l'Homme).

⁵ The *naxnox* naming system was briefly characterized by Duff (1964:68-69) in his description of the Barbeau/Beynon field notes. More recently, J. Adams (1973:41-47) has presented some data from these field notes in which several *naxnox* performances are described. He does not, however, deal explicitly with the *naxnox*/mask relationship, nor does he describe the *naxnox* system in the detail required to understand this relationship. *Naxnox* masks are briefly mentioned in Guédon and MacDonald (1972). I have also described the *naxnox* system in my unpublished doctoral dissertation (Halpin, 1973).

⁶ The names and other information related to them (details of performances, owners, etc.) were extracted from Wilson Duff's copies of the field notes and put on 3" x 5" cards. Precise locations in the original field notes were not recorded. I am especially grateful to Wilson for having made these notes available to me.

Museum. In those instances where either museum collectors recorded the names of the masks they acquired, or details about the performances in which they were worn, these names or performances can be either matched with *naxnox* names recorded independently by Barbeau and Beynon, or the names of the masks can at least be seen as congruous with the general nature of the *naxnox* naming system. Finally, Beynon (1945) recorded an eye-witness account of some two dozen masked *naxnox* name dramatizations performed in connection with potlatches held at Kitsegukla.

That the stone masks were used in the same ritual as described in this paper is an assumption that probably cannot now be "proved." It is, however, not too audacious an assumption, and one that Wilson shared.⁷ The stone masks were collected, without supporting documentation as to their use, in 1879 at Kitkatla (the "blind" mask) and prior to 1897 at either Metlakatla or on the Nass River (the "sighted" mask; see Duff, 1975:164, 188). The ritual process described below is the only context within which masks are known ethnographically to have been worn by Tsimshian-speaking peoples and it is similar to the masked performances witnessed in 1792 by Jacinto Caamaño and his men, who were probably the first white observers of Tsimshian ritual (Wagner and Newcombe, 1938). The stone masks could have been heirlooms kept from the time of some earlier and different masked ritual, but their congruence with documented museum pieces will, I hope, prove obvious enough that their placement within the same ritual context is convincing.

Naxnox Names and the Wearing of Masks

Naxnox names were owned by "houses" (corporate matrilineages) and assumed by their adult members, after which they were often used as regular names. Not all adult names were *naxnox*, although my impression is that most were (the various naming options available to the Tsimshian have not yet been well described). Duff (1964:68) was of the opinion that *naxnox* names "are somewhat more common among the Gitksan than the other divisions." One Coast Tsimshian informant said that they were not as a rule adopted as regular names by members of the "royal houses" (which comprised an upper status level), implying that they were so adopted by members of the *lekagiget* (middle status level) of this division (Barbeau and Beynon, 1914-1957). The lower

⁷ "My best guess is that they were worn by a single performer in the winter rituals known as 'halait' (sacred), and were secretly switched, in the blinking of an eye, to demonstrate a kind of power that logic alone finds incredible" (Duff, 1975:164).



Figure 6. Bear Man mask. Collected at Kispiox by G. T. Emmons
ca. 1916. MAI 5/5027.

Figure 7. Land Otter Woman mask. Bossom collection (probably
collected by G. T. Emmons *ca.* 1900-1910). NMC VII-C-1778.

status level was composed of persons who, by definition, had not ritually assumed honoured names. Neither myths nor other details about how the names were originally acquired have been recorded.

Naxnox names were dramatized when they were assumed and thereafter as demonstrations of the spiritual wealth of the lineage (and of its corresponding material wealth as well, since wealth was required to stage the dramatization). They were dramatized in halait rituals held in the potlatch context but, significantly, *before* the actual potlatch itself took place. That is, naxnox dramatizations were performed for and by the guests invited to a potlatch, but they were performed in the days and nights preceding potlatch speeches and distributions which both created and celebrated what might be called the normal social order. This halait-before-potlatch sequence is clearly established for the Coast Tsimshian by Tate (in Boas, 1916:539-41) and for the Gitksan by Beynon (1945); presumably it obtained among the Niska as well. Held thus back-to-back, naxnox halait and potlatch were conceptually distinct, opposed ritual events. It will be argued later that the naxnox halait created a ritual chaos or topsy-turvydom which required the subsequent balancing order or structure of the potlatch.

Naxnox dramatizations ranged from the simple to the spectacular, depending apparently upon the rank of the owner and the wealth he could invest in a performance. Henry Tate (in Boas, 1916:556) describes a remarkable performance of the name Crack of Heaven, owned by Legaic, highest ranking chief of the Coast Tsimshian.⁸ It was dramatized by a transformation mask in which an outside face opened four times to reveal an inside face. The fourth time the mask opened "it makes the large house crack. One side of the large house moves backward from the other. It goes with the half of the large fire, and the whole congregation is still sitting on both sides. The roof is assunder, and the large beams go backward. This is the great wonderful enchantment among these chiefs in the Tsimshian nation." Then the mask closed again, the house came slowly together.

Most recorded naxnox dramatizations were simple impersonations, in which the performer, often assisted by attendants and a chorus, impersonated the being signified by his or her name (chiefs sometimes hired others to perform for them). Each naxnox had an associated song or "breath" (*ksenelk*) that was sung, and whistles, representing the voice of the naxnox, were

blown. The entire performance consisted of establishing the identity of the naxnox. There was an element of suspense as to whom the being was until the master of ceremonies announced the name that was being dramatized.⁹

Other naxnox performances involved the interaction of the performer and the chiefs in the audience. In some, the performer struck, clawed, insulted, or otherwise abused the visiting chiefs, who were then compensated. For example, several performances have been described in which the performers used trick knives with receding blades to stab the chiefs. In these dramatizations the performers are treated by the attendants as highly dangerous beings. In others, which were called *sedulsa* ("to restore life") naxnox, the performer died, or was killed (or killed someone else) and the chiefs were called upon, one at a time, to try and restore the body to life, until the last one succeeded. The chiefs dramatized (called upon) the powers of their own naxnox and sang their associated songs, or performed in the manner of a curing shaman over the body. They were compensated for their performances. In his account of one such performance at Kitsegukla, Beynon (1945, Vol II:20) reports that "many of the spectators thought it was a real murder and many of the children and women started weeping and there was some terror among some of the people."

The names themselves do not seem to fall into any kind of native taxonomy, but constitute a single class or category of power beings. It is, however, useful to separate them into loose and arbitrary categories for purposes of discussion. The most obvious categories are those of human and animal. Well over seventy per cent of the names recorded by Barbeau and Beynon refer to human attributes and actions. This is paralleled by the preponderance of human face masks attributed to the Tsimshian in museum collections.

In some instances, the named attribute refers to kinds of persons, usually foreigners or strangers. Examples of such names are Stranger, Tsetsaut, Bella Bella, White

⁸ Tate actually said that the Crack of Heaven was "not often shown, only in the house of the great chief LEg.e^ox" (Boas, 1916:556). Yet in his list of power names (*ibid.*:513), the name Crack of Heaven is said to belong to Sa^asa^oxt, a chief of another clan.

⁹ Drucker reports a similar suspense hinging on the revelation of the name of the being being impersonated in Northern Kwakiutl lower ranked dances. Regarding a *kumogwa* performance, he writes: "The attendants have been pretending great terror, because they could not learn what the spirit is. As soon as the master of ceremonies reveals the spirit's name, they become assured, and assume a pompous I-told-you-so attitude" (Drucker, 1940:208). There was also in both naxnox dramatizations and Kwakiutl dances an aspect of what Drucker (*loc. cit.*) calls "buffoonery." However, there is no suggestion in the literature on the Northern Kwakiutl that the spirits involved in these dances were also taken as personal names, nor was the range of spirits involved anywhere near as large as in the naxnox system. Further, those who participated in the Northern Kwakiutl dances were organized into societies and the dancers were initiates who were possessed, disappeared, and returned with supernatural powers, much as in the higher ranked Shaman's Series (Drucker, 1940:202-03). Still, there does seem to be a relationship between the two ritual systems.



Figure 8. "Monkey" mask. Collected by G. T. Emmons *ca.* 1914. Niska. PMH 85877. Based on photographs by Hillel Burger.

Figure 9. "Monkey" mask. Collected at Gitlaxdamiks by C. M. Barbeau in 1927. ROM HN-687.

Man, Babine, Niska, Tlingit, Man of the Woods, Shaman, Slave.¹⁰ These names sometimes include modifying adjectives, as in the names Stupid Tlingit, Thoughtless Niska, Fighting Like Haidas, Woman Haida, Tsetsaut Warrior. There may have been certain stereotyped ethnic actions used in the dramatizations of these names; for example, Tsetsauts (Athapascans) are consistently reported to carry and shoot bows and arrows. A revealing dramatization of the name White Man was reported by C. F. Newcombe in documenting a White Man mask (Figure 3) collected at Greenville, Nass River, in 1912. He wrote that the performer wearing the mask carried a whiskey bottle from which he poured out drinks for the attending chiefs. When his bottle was empty, a barrel of whiskey was rolled in.

Barbeau collected a mask named Slave Woman from Kisgegas in 1927 (Figure 4). He identified it as a "naxnox or spirit name," and wrote that it was dramatized as follows. The masked performer, dressed as a woman, came into the feast house and walked around to each chief, begging him to marry her. She was consistently refused. Finally, the master of ceremonies said, "Who would care for you, slave woman. The chiefs despise you," and she disappeared behind the screen at the rear of the house. "Thereafter," wrote Barbeau, "the name belongs to the *man* who has thus dramatized it."

The largest group of naxnox names are those referring to either physical or personality attributes of persons whose rank or cultural identity are not specified. Some examples of names referring to physical attributes are Hermaphrodite, Old Person, Blind, Deaf, Dumb, Dumb Person, Skeleton, Corpse, Big Person, Dying of Hunger, Headache, Spotted Face (from a rash, possibly smallpox), Crippled, Itching (from sores). Some examples of names referring to personality attributes are Selfish, Gluttonous, Proud, Troublesome, Covetous Person, Mannish Woman, Foolish, Thoughtless, Crazy, Careless, Lazy.

Within the entire corpus of 650 names, there is almost no duplication, with the significant exception of one attribute that appears in thirteen names. This is the attribute of *axgot*, which means literally "without mind or heart" (Boas, 1912:280)¹¹ and which Barbeau and Beynon variously gloss as "thoughtless," "reckless," "crazy," or "foolish." This is clearly the same semantic field as the "crazy," "crazier," "even crazier," progression applied to the powers of the initiation halait in the origin myth summarized above. Barbeau collected a mask of *axgot* at Kitwanga in 1923 (NMC VII-C-1058) and translated the

name "without mind, foolish." In describing the performance, he wrote that the masked performer came out of a large canvas spread at the back of the house and danced and sang before the audience, which sang in response. The song, which was in the Coast Tsimshian language (a prestige language on the Upper Skeena), is as follows:

Performer: I am foolish, I am foolish.

Chorus: The foolish man will eat the heart of all the people.

Barbeau collected another mask from Kitwancool in 1924 named Thoughtless [*axgotem*] Little Slave Woman (NMC VII-C-1177) dramatized by a performer with a trick knife who went around injuring the chiefs and then compensating them. The aggressive and dangerous qualities of *axgot* are directly reminiscent of the more powerful chiefly initiating powers.

Other naxnox names refer to kinds of human actions, most of them seemingly nonsensical. Examples of these are Always Making Mistakes, Speaking Gruffly, Talking to Oneself, Continually Laughing, Stumbling, Nodding Continuously, Drowsy, Choking While Eating, To Sell Tongue, Selling His Face, Throwing Mud, To Prop Up All Around.

Henry Tate (in Boas, 1916:556-57) describes the naxnox performance of Changing Mind in which a masked performer representing a man stands on the right of the house and a masked performer representing a woman stands on the left side of the house. During the singing of the associated song the name of the naxnox is mentioned, at which point the masks of the two performers change, the man becoming a woman and vice-versa. This happens four times while "the people of the chief's lineage [owning the naxnox] change their faces also. Men have women's faces, and women have men's faces, during the singing. This is the work and power of Lu-na-gisEm gad [Changing Mind]." This naxnox is especially interesting in view of contemporary sex role reversals still practiced on the Nass River. Steven McNeary (pers. comm., 1977) reports that although naxnox dances as such have not been practiced for over sixty years, "funny" dances are still performed at feasts. He writes that the most common practice "is for women to dress like men (hard hat, lunch pail, etc.) and, especially for men to dress like women, usually [wearing] an outrageous getup with lots of makeup. Sometimes the masqueraders wear stockings over their heads, so people have to guess who they are." At one performance witnessed by McNeary, a man wearing a dress went through mock labour pains and "gave birth" to a doll (see the name Snake below).

Most of the animals used as naxnox are not crest animals. They include moose, caribou, porcupine, trout,

¹⁰ Barbeau and Beynon recorded each name in the native language with an English translation. For the most part, I will use their English translations in this paper.

¹¹ *ax-* "without"; *-got* "mind, heart"; see Boas, 1912:259, 280; and 1910:328.

spider, snake, rat, butterfly, mouse, wolverine, bat, and monkey. Crest animals used as *naxnox* include bear, wolf, raven, frog, eagle, owl, and mosquito. However, crest animals were owned as *naxnox* by "houses" which did not have the right to claim them as crests. For example, the *naxnox* Owl (Figure 5) was owned by a Kisgegas Wolf "house," even though the owl was a crest of the Fireweed clan. That is, the animal *naxnox* violated normal crest rules.

Since animal *naxnox* names were not crests, the animals used must have had other, non-crest, associations which were being expressed in the *naxnox* context. Data on Tsimshian peoples' beliefs associated with various animals are scanty, but revealing. For example, owl was a common shaman's helper and believed to be a cause of death when it flew over a person's head (Boas, 1916:452). Shamanic death was, of course, animal possession and power acquisition. The *naxnox* name Part Porcupine was also the name given to children who were born with deformed feet. In other words, the animal *naxnox* name in this instance connotes the same kind of physical infirmity as do many of the human *naxnox* names.

Some of the animal *naxnox* names do not refer to animals in the ordinary sense, but to what might be called *animalized humans*, as in Woman Raven, Black Bear Man, Wolverine Woman, or Mother of Rat. These names were sometimes represented by animal face masks, sometimes by human face masks. For example, a mask of Wolverine Woman (NMC VII-C-1107) collected by Barbeau has an animal face while a Bear Man mask collected by Emmons has a human face (Figure 6). It might be argued that all animal face masks and *naxnox* names represent animalized humans, insofar as the audience knows that there is a man or woman behind the mask. What these names and performances seem to make especially evident, however, is the idea of man/animal transformation or even simultaneity of being. The Kisgegas name Grizzly Man was said in the Barbeau/Beynon name lists to be dramatized by a performer who wore a whole grizzly skin, but had the face of a man. He was said to alternate walking erect like a man and on all fours like a bear. The transformation involved in dramatizing the name Snake was even more explicit. The masked performer "sat on a platform at the rear of the house, representing a woman in the pains of childbirth. When she arose a snake was seen, as though she had given birth to it, and it was exhibited to the guests" (Barbeau and Beynon, 1914-1957). This performance becomes an even more powerful image of transformation and reversal when we learn that Snake was listed as a man's name.

The meanings of *naxnox* become even clearer in the

insanity, and human/animal transformations are explicitly conjoined. The Tsimshian word *mawatsw*, which literally means "like land otter," is consistently glossed as "crazy" (see Boas, 1910:317). While the association between craziness, or insanity, and land otters can be established lexically, contemporary Gitksan have also told me that meeting a Land Otter Person can cause insanity, and that the animal can transform itself into a simulacrum of a relative or loved one to entice its victim. A Kitkatla informant told John Dunn (pers. comm., 1976) that once an otter who appears as a sexually enticing person embraces someone "they go into you and straight to your brain and gnaw away at it so that you become mindless and a were-otter too. You don't live too long after that happens to you. You start acting crazy; then you get sick and die." Boas (1916:345-46) published a Tsimshian myth of the classic northern type that deals with the attempts of the Land Otter People to catch a man who has capsized in his canoe and to transform him into one of themselves. The myth includes an incident in which one of the Land Otters is transformed into a human woman who coaxes the man to eat. The assumption of such myths on the Northwest Coast is that the human who eats the Land Otter's food becomes one of them. They are veritable agents of transformation.

Shamans, on the other hand, are strong enough to use the land otter as a spirit helper. Boas (1897:580) reports that Chief Mountain of the Nass acquired a Land Otter Woman as his shamanic helper (see also Barbeau, 1958:44-45). He said she was a "beautiful girl" who "wanted to have intercourse with him" (Boas, 1897:580). Beynon interpreted a Gitksan shaman's song about the land otter as meaning that the shaman "became part of the Otter, during his trance" (Barbeau, 1951:122).

There is a mask of Land Otter Woman in the National Museums of Canada (Figure 7) which resembles a human skull. Unfortunately, the relationship between land otters and the human dead is somewhat difficult to establish from the literature, although Gitksan informants have said that the Land Otter People take away the souls of those who have drowned. For both the Tlingit and Haida, however, beliefs associated with land otters are much better reported. Swanton (1908:456) reports for the Tlingit, for example, that "the land otter was dreaded more than any other creature. This was on account of his supposed supernatural powers, fondness for stealing people away, depriving them of their sense, and turning them into land otter men." De Laguna (1972:727-56) devotes a whole section in her recent ethnography of the Yakutat Tlingit to Witches and Land Otter Men, in which she concludes as follows:

In the last analysis, it would seem that the transformed Land Otter Man (kucda-qa), the "ghost" or revenant of the drowned person (yuk qahe yaqu), the soul of the land otter (kucda-qwani), and the shaman's land otter spirit (kuca yek or kucda qu yek), were all actually or potentially one and the same entity, that which one ordinarily encounters in its animal form or fleshly "clothing" as a land otter (kucda).

For the Tlingit, then, the human dead and the land otter can indeed be considered to be "one and the same entity" as suggested by the Tsimshian mask. Since similar associations are reported from as far south as the Southern Kwakiutl,¹² it seems reasonable to assume that they obtained among the Tsimshian as well.

Obviously related to the Land Otter is a late addition to the naxnox ritual—Monkey. The naxnox name *pa'gwus*, translated as "monkey," was reported for the lower Nass in the Barbeau/Beynon name lists.

Their description of the performance associated with the name sounds very much like descriptions of the land otter: "they had a story that this monkey would confuse their minds and turn them crazy if they met it in the woods. The man using it imitated a regular monkey." The Monkey is confirmed by two Niska "monkey" masks in museum collections. Emmons collected a quite reliable primate mask (Figure 8) which he said represented "a mythical being found in the woods and called today a monkey." Barbeau collected another one (Figure 9) which he said was named *pi'kis* or "monkey" and for which he recorded the following performance:

The performance of this naxnox, when the name was assumed began in another house. The performer does not wear the mask at first. But when he comes into the feast house, he begins to act as a monkey, irresponsibly. He throws the headdress of some chiefs into the fire, and it does not matter how costly the misdeed may be to him, as he will have to compensate the owners. The next day he calls the people to his house, wears the mask, with long hair on, and pays for the damage caused on the first day.

Dunn (pers. comm., 1975) has elicited the gloss "monkey" for *bá'wəs* at Kitkatla, Prince Rupert, and Metlakatla, Alaska, although he does not believe the English and Tsimshian words precisely correspond in meaning, i.e., there is a poor semantic fit between them. What *bá'wəs* basically means, he writes, is "creature with the ability to

imitate humans." The word *bá'wəs* (*pa'gwus*, *pi'kis*) is obviously a borrowing from the Kwakiutl word *bukwus* or Man of the Woods (see Rigsby, 1971:154). Boas (1935: 146N) believe the *bukwus* "evidently corresponds to the land-otter spirits of the northern tribes," confirming again the monkey/land otter association. Additionally, both Dunn (*loc. cit.*) and Rigsby (1971:154) were told by different Tsimshian informants that *bá'wəs* was the Sasquatch, a zoologically unverified creature popularly believed by both Indians and non-Indians to be an erect man-ape or a being somehow intermediate between human and animal.

We can perhaps now begin to see in naxnox the nature of the paradox of "whatever 'masking' is about." Naxnox masks are instruments of transformation which turned their wearers inside-out to reveal those attributes of person and action normally denied, especially to those of high status. These attributes, including "foolishness," insanity, physical deformities and infirmities, animality, and death, inhere inescapably in the human condition, most of them in human *nature* rather than *culture*. While some naxnox seem to reveal relatively trivial foibles or misbehaviours, they are as a whole personifications of (1) those behaviours which break the normative rules of Tsimshian culture, and (2) the mortality which all men share with the rest of nature. Naxnox transform chiefs, members of their families, and other high-ranking people, into rule-breakers, foreigners, animals, and the dead—all of which are *outside* the boundaries of Tsimshian culture. This is perhaps most easily seen in the "new" naxnox monkey (and its alternate identity, Sasquatch). This is an animal in the Tsimshian experience which most closely approaches the condition of man without (outside of) culture. The Tsimshian are reported by Barbeau and Beynon to refer to someone who had no honoured name or lineage (e.g., one who was essentially outside the social order) as being "like a wild animal." Also, the land otter, which, previously to the monkey, was probably perceived as the most human-like animal in the Tsimshian environment, was symbolically associated with death and insanity, the two conditions which most ineluctably remove humans from the cultural order.

Anthropological theory provides a relatively simple formulation for explaining the relationship of such boundary transgressions as naxnox and the acquisition of power, which has been most succinctly expressed by Mary Douglas (1966:161):

The danger which is risked by boundary transgression is power. Those vulnerable margins and those attacking forces which threaten to destroy good order represent the powers inhering in the cosmos. Ritual which can harness these for good is harnessing power indeed.

¹² The Southern Kwakiutl Wild Man of the Woods takes away drowned people; whoever accepts his food cannot go back to human habitation; his crew are land otters (Boas, 1935:146). Boas and Hunt (1905:249-70) collected a myth about the Wild Man or *bukwus* in which his stare can drive people "foolish" and his crew of Land Otter People transform into the relatives and loved ones of a man who has nearly drowned and whom they are attempting to transform into one of themselves. In the same myth, the *bukwus* or Wild Man is said to be Chief of the Dead.



Figure 10. Cold mask. Collected by Mrs. O. Morrison in 1892. FM 18124.



Figure 11. Sleep mask. Collected by Mrs. O. Morrison in 1892. FM 18129.

In this context, it is surely significant that the Coast Tsimshian word for "mask" (*aak* or *gaa'ak*; Dunn, 1977: entry 11) means also "mouth," "edge," or "rim." While performing, and freed to do so by the mask and the name which contained both his instructions and his new identity as a boundary transgressor, the lay Tsimshian briefly transcended his culture—although he did not take the risks of a true shamanic journey into the chaos that lay outside those boundaries. His journey was partial and, as it were, charted for him. Furthermore, and this is one of the defining characteristics of all masking, he did not perform alone but in front of an audience, in this case an audience of those with whom he lived and those from whom he wished prestige. Masking is a collective activity, and the audience, seated and dressed according to normal conventions, could participate in the comedy, drama, danger, and power of boundary transgression in the security of knowing (1) that it was ritually sanctioned, and (2) that it was being simulated *for their benefit* by one of their own most respected members.

From this I think we might consider Wilson's decision to quote, at the end of his discussion of the stone masks, what Raven's grandfather said to Raven in one of the Haida creation myths: "I am you. That is you." So also was the naxnox performer to those watching him. When we reveal ourselves with masks, we are all Raven and he is our spectator, laughing at us as we laugh back at him. A cannibal, a trickster, full of cunning and deceit, with voracious appetites for food and sex, Raven is the very embodiment of boundary transgression. He stays permanently in mythtime (although there are stories that he will return again when he is needed), continually transforming and retransforming himself from man to woman to animal and back again. Humans, by domesticating themselves through culture, left mythtime and moved into the present in which they are separate from animals, although retaining (or repressing) animality inside themselves, just as they contain death from the moment of birth. Naxnox, their names and masks, are highly charged but channelled and controlled, eruptions of those same primal energies as constitute Raven himself. When man moved into the time of the present, when he domesticated himself through culture, he lost those primal powers, and must now periodically recharge (or re-cognize) himself through ritual. Masks are indeed simulated faces of wood or, exceptionally, of stone or copper, but they are also the faces of power.

Still to be explored is Wilson's second paradox of "whatever 'seeing' is about," which will bring us back again to the twin stone masks. Fortunately, there are a few descriptions of naxnox performances in which eyes, seeing, and light are defining actions or attributes. I will

attempt to demonstrate that these performances are metaphoric of the "vision of a purer kind, eternally open to the inner light," that Wilson (1975:165) saw in the eyes of the twin stone masks.

In myth, light (the condition of sight) was originally the exclusive possession of the Chief of Heaven, and the world and men (who were then frogs) were in darkness (Boas, 1916:62). The primary act from which the present state of the world resulted (and which turned the frogs to stone—thus ending for all time man's natural powers of transformation?) was Raven's theft of daylight from the Chief of Heaven. The most important mythological mediators between heaven and humans are shining youths, usually identified as the Chief of Heaven's son, who appear to humans, usually women whom they take to heaven where they have children who return to earth with special powers (see Boas, 1916:460). In one myth (Boas, 1902:224), a woman married Chief Sun (or Heaven) himself and conceived from his rays, which struck her every morning through a chink in the house. Light is thus a principal attribute of divinity, and implies power and (male) potency.

Light and seeing are direct oppositions to such naxnox qualities as death and darkness, although in a religious sense they may be the same. The relationship can be examined in three open/closed eye naxnox masks. The first (Cold) is a "normal" naxnox in which the negative quality is left unreversed; the second (Sleep) is reversed by the chief; and the third (Broken by the Sun), which was said to be a naxnox but not used as a name, contains a clear statement that "behind" naxnox lies sight, which is liberated by the Sun when it "breaks through" blindness. However, the action of the mask, as will be seen, suggests that the blind/sighted opposition is in process of continual alternation suggestive of simultaneity.

The mask of Cold (Figure 10) with movable eyes and lower jaw, was collected by Mrs. C. Morrison in 1892. She described its performance as follows: "with its teeth chattering and its eyes protruding and rolling, the masked performer went close to the big fire in the centre of the house 'not being afraid of heat' and finally put the fire out with a concealed hose, leaving the house in darkness." In typical naxnox fashion, the condition of darkness was not reversed.

She also collected the mask of Sleep (Figure 11) at the same time. Boas (1897:655-56) described the performance (probably based on information supplied by Mrs. Morrison, but which is more complete than contained in the Field Museum's documentation for the piece) in which the mask first appeared with closed eyes: "then a chief steps up and tries to awaken him by hauling the drowsiness out of him with both his hands. Then the



Figure 12. Broken by the Sun mask (closed). Collected at Kitwanga by C. M. Barbeau in 1923. NMC VII-C-1056.

Figure 13. Broken by the Sun mask (open).

eyes of the mask are opened and roll, while the man who wears the mask rises." The chief who took the drowsiness from the mask opened his hands and Sleep then entered the audience, who all closed their eyes. Then he gathered it up again, and the people opened their eyes and sang:

"Oh, how sleepy we are; oh, how sleepy we are,
When the heat of the heaven strikes me, drowsiness comes upon
me, brought by the husband of the sleep.
Oh, how sleepy we are; oh, how sleepy we are" (*ibid.*:650).¹³

The song seems to say that an excess of the heat of heaven causes sleep. What is significant is that the condition is removed by the chief, reminiscent of his removing excess power from novices in the initiation halaits.

The Tsimshian naxnox most relevant to the twin stone masks seems to be an unusual transformation mask (Figures 12 and 13) which reveals, for me, the very essence of the relationship between seeing and masking. The mask was collected by Barbeau at Kitwanga in 1923 and is named Broken (in two) by (rays of) the Sun. It consists of a larger outer human face, highly stylized, and an inner human face, quite realistic. The inside face has blue hair painted on it and a mustache; these are lacking in the outer face. The outer face has the blue (sometimes black) eye band and stylized bird feathers found so often on naxnox masks. The inside halves of the outer mask are also painted with feathers. The eyes of the outer mask are closed; those of the inner mask are open. According to Barbeau's documentation, the being represented by the outer mask is blind. While the performer went around the house "incessantly opening and shutting the outer mask," the chorus sang "the sun will shine on me and break through." The mask of Blindness was "broken" by the superior power of the sun to reveal an inner mask of sight. The "incessant" opening and shutting of the mask, however, in which sight and blindness are brought as close together in time as possible, suggests simultaneity and perhaps the logical similarity in opposition that Wilson kept talking about. This, I suggest, is that same similarity more directly visually stated by the twin stone masks, which are alike in every respect, even to seemingly random scratches, except for their "eyes."

If we look closely at the twin stone masks, we can see that their "eyes" are not eyes at all. The outer mask has

no eyelids to close; the inner mask does not have typical Northwest Coast eye forms, but rather two perfectly cylindrical openings, as if they had been "bored." And this is perhaps the very metaphor the artist was using when he made the "eyes" that shape. The evidence is light, but convincing. In 1863 the Bishop of Caledonia reported the following statement made by a Christianized Tsimshian shaman:

I have given up the lucrative position of sorcerer. Been offered bribes to practice my art secretly. I have left all my mistaken ways. *My eyes have been bored (enlightened).* I cry every night when I remember my sins. The great Father Almighty sees everything. (Davis, 1904:101).

The Bishop himself added that word "enlightenment," and we must assume that he received the association from the Indians. A supporting piece of evidence is Swanton's (1908:464) statement that a favourite animal helper of the Tlingit shaman was the woodworm "because it can bore through wood and so typifies strong perception."

Another suggestion that the masks are statements of divine or inner sight can perhaps be found in what Wilson (1975:166) called the "hints of parentage of Frog" that can be read in their lips (when these are compared with the lips of frogs in northern Northwest Coast art). Recalling that men were frogs before Raven brought light and they turned to stone, that hint of frog in those stone lips points back to the theft of light from heaven.

Conclusion

Naxnox which reverse from the negative (blind, asleep, dead) to the positive (sighted, awake, restored to life) are rare in the name lists and other evidence available. When they were presented, they were probably special privileges of high-ranking chiefs. Most naxnox present only a culturally disruptive or endangering image. The performer leaves as he entered; the blind still blind, the crazy still crazy, the slave still a slave. The ritual cosmos remains in topsy-turvydom, the equation incomplete. Anthropological theories of religious symbols instruct us to look for the restoration of structure and order, for some ritual process whereby "socially negative and destructive images and impulses may be domesticated into the service of the social order" (Turner, 1969:21). The answer is prefigured in the speech by a Tlingit chief who is to erect a totem pole. Just at daylight he walks through the village singing songs for the dead. "The memorial pole seems to bring every recollection of the

¹³ In an earlier publication (1895:577-78), Boas translated the song differently: "Oh! how sleepy we are. Oh! how sleepy we are. Whenever strikes me the heat of heaven, ya! again comes sleep to the husband of sleep, kua! Oh, how sleepy we are. Oh! how sleepy we are." In the first version, *sleep comes to the husband of sleep*; in the second it is *brought* by the husband of sleep. Boas must have felt his second translation to be more accurate, while I prefer the first.

story of Raven is told and then he makes the following speech:

"My father's brothers, my grandparents, people that I came from, my ancestors, my mother's grandfathers, years ago they say that this world was without daylight. Then one person knew that there was daylight with Raven-at-the-head-of-Nass, and went quickly to his daughter. When he was born he cried for the daylight his grandfather had. Then his grandfather gave it to him. At that time his grandchild brought daylight upon the poor people he had made in the world. He pitied them. *Darkness is upon me. My mind is sick. Therefore I am now begging daylight from you my grandfathers, my father's brothers, people I came from, my mother's grandfathers. Can it be that you will give daylight to me as Raven-at-the-head-of-the-Nass gave it to his grandchild, so that day will dawn upon me*" (*loc. cit*) (italics added).

After the pole is raised, the chief tells the people "You have brought daylight upon me" (*loc. cit*). The erection of a totem pole in honour of one's ancestors was not only the cultural act *par excellence*, it was also a statement of continuity. "The prime role of culture is to ensure the group's existence as a group, and consequently, in this domain as in all others, to replace chance by organization" (Lévi-Strauss, 1969:32).

Thus, naxnox were followed by the potlatch and the erection of totem poles, the celebration of order, the affirmation of social relationships, and the continuity of both culture and lineage. The same chiefs and their retinues participated as had participated in halait, as hosts and guests, but their masks were removed and all the proprieties of rank and position were observed. Whereas in naxnox they had played the sacred game of boundary transgression and power release, in the potlatch they celebrated the boundaries. But they did so in the knowledge that underneath the formality of their roles, opposing the pomp with which they asserted status, was the mask. Or, as Wilson (1975:59) said, "Things are only seen in the mirror of their opposites. We are constantly being reminded that the opposite is equally true."

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