

## FACES ON HAIDA CHESTS

An innovation in iconography but not symbolism  
- a playing with design elements to create faces -  
not faces with any great significance or other real  
meaning, just faces for fun.

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## Faces on Harda Chests

Among the most abstract and firmly conventionalized of northern coast designs are those painted and carved on chests of the type shown in Figure X. In such a fixed kind of design it might seem that there is little room for individual variations, the compositions more or less fixed by convention and the elements standardized and in some cases traced from templates. The designs in general, <sup>are</sup> representational, depicting animal forms. But the artist was also fully conscious of them as design per se, as he constructed the depiction out of a small repertoire of fixed elements. It is this aspect that provides the key to at least one individual's style.

Constructing his abstract design with the limited number of forms, the artist was tempted to play in subtle ways with their arrangement, and we find something—not at all uncommon in such arts — he tended to construct human faces. These are faces where no face is meant to be, extra faces filling odd spaces, full faces and profile faces. Some are explicit and easy to find — if not explain. Others are punned, so that you are not always sure that you are not 'reading in' a face that the artist himself did not see as such. But some of these punned faces, as we can show, were put there on purpose. It is in this playful by-product that we may in this chapter <sup>find a key to</sup> distinguish individual styles. Here the artist may reveal himself in his wit and sense of humour.



Before focussing on the beaded, pummed faces in the chest designs, it will be helpful to clear up some things about these chests and the designs on them. Boas approached an interpretation of their meaning in his studies (Boas 1927, pp. 1-10; Boas in Emmons, 1908, pp. 1-10) but left many aspects in the dark. Holm has analysed them admirably from the point of view of form and composition. The bulk of the published information on them is in the form of brief captions in books dealing with specific collections, or illustrated catalogs of specific exhibits, and these add up to an overall picture which is in many ways misleading. As an introduction to an inquiry into individual styles, it is instructive first to look at the available information on their distribution and uses, and on the meaning of their designs.

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## Harda Chieft

- meaning - see John White's drawing in Boas 1927, from 1858

Aspects of design:

1. No two alike
  - no fixed proportions
2. Approaching abstraction
3. Not coats at Masset (freed of coat connotations, so could develop as free designs)

Uses

1. Hold valuables (men) Masset
  - Tlingit, Kaigani
2. Chieft's coffins - Capt Gold?
  - shape of southern Harda mortuaries?

- Bella Bella

3. Nass River - a) on totem poles
  - b) dancing on, sitting on

Newcombe never asked who made them. He listed them as Harda, Tsimshian, Bella Bella.



Chest Designs  
divorces "form" and "meaning"

In Harada art, the plane of "form" and the plane of "meaning" were probably never completely divorced (the designs probably never became 'purely abstract')

For one reason, the artists probably had their own vocabularies for the elements of design, such as those for which Bill Holm has coined the words "formline", "ovoid", "split-U", etc. It is unfortunate that the vocabularies of the artists did not get recorded. However we have a few hints of the terms used by CE.

When Dr Newcombe collected a set of templates from him in 1902 he recorded the names for them. With the exception of one, the eyed pattern, which was naturally enough called "eye", the rest were ovoids of different size and proportions. The largest was called "female breast". Others were called "tail joint of whale", "large joint", "shoulder joint", "knee (?)", "wrist of bird", "eye of raven", "raven wing joint", "inner part of ear". Though <sup>verbal labels</sup> simply ~~sounds~~, they carry implications of iconic meaning, derived from - and predisposing to - animal designs (just as our geometric terms "triangles", etc. tend to predispose to geometric designs)

The design we call "cross-hatching", and conceive as a geometric design, he called "stump cabbage head", from the pattern it shows in nature. This is more purely a verbal label divorced from iconic meaning.

Yet having to draw their vocabulary from nature they were predisposed to <sup>draw</sup> nature's forms.

Perhaps the abstract chest designs, which are said not to symbolize crests, still represent designs verbally - iconically animal in nature.

Like Emmons' list of Chilkat blanket design elements



Box designs were an unconscious attempt to convert squariness to roundness again.

Attempted to treat flat surface as though it were curved.  
Irony is that the result shows only when you actually curve the surface

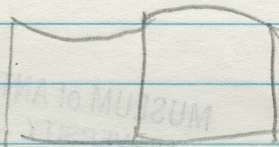
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Boxes made like boxes became quite round (got away from the squariness)

Sides were curved round



Concave - convex tops may also be attempts to get away from L





On "Reading In" (Chests)

People imbued with the idea that designs represent animals, most likely crests, are apt to "read in" such meanings. Given an art becoming more abstract and conventionalized, original meanings may at some point be lost, and new meanings <sup>imbued</sup> added.

Chest designs look to me like this kind of ventriloquism. Their prototypes, probably, are dishes or boxes representing animals, usually but not necessarily crest animals. The front and back represented those ends of the animal; the sides, the <sup>animals'</sup> sides or profile. Some dishes and older boxes retained this arrangement. But these chests do not. The ends do not - or only rarely - <sup>are</sup> <sup>rep</sup> not related to the "front" and "back". The "front" and "back", when they are interpreted, seem most often to represent different animals.

(I think the conventional form of front and back retain vestiges of face and hind quarters. The "front" - with double-eye motif and "eyebrows" touching the top margin - also has a nose structure, which the "rear" (single eye, lower down) aspect does not have.)

The indications are that the artists thought of them as animal designs but not as crests. Their value was in the decorative design, and their saleability to chiefs all along the coast. The buying chief (of chests as of Chilkats) might conceivably specify an animal design which was his crest, but - - - . Or he might choose



to interpret the design as his crest — an abstract all-purpose chest crest — (or collectors, anthropologists, Indian informants, museum curators might apply their knowledge of the art to interpret them). Or they might, more honestly, just acknowledge them as designs — as did chief \_\_\_\_\_ of the Haida, whose chest design bought from the Harda — was just "addahis".

The first step of "reading in", then, as the designs became more abstract, was to forget the front-rear-sides arrangement and reinterpret the rear end as a new beast, on a more abstract platform of arrangement. [If the owners wanted to read in their own crest, that was another step].

Maybe another step yet again was in process. Faces were being put where faces didn't belong. Panned faces, upright, profile, and even inverted, were being consciously put in (even if not read in).

Here is another frontier of the style where we may discern innovations destructive enough to serve as indicators of personal styles.

Let us look at the face-making and personal panning of design elements to see if they are indicators of personal style.

Faces on Harda Chests



Distribution of Chests in space & time.

Have been collected from Kluckwan to Isaac River, but not made over that area. In greatest numbers from Thuyet, Haida, Tsemchian and Bella Bella, and assumed by collectors (CFN) and writers (eg Hblm) to have been made over that area (at any rate, they let the place of collection stand as place of origin). CFN, for example, collected them from Masset, Nass R, "Tsemchian", Bellefleur (ex Landsberg), and Ruby Creek: not even in latter case did he comment that it couldn't be of local origin - he let Haida, Tsemchian & Bella Bella origins stand; while at same time collecting data from CE on how made, and statements from CE indic Haida origin, see pp ). Emmens a bit more acute. Kluckwan box (WSM 2291) he recorded <sup>recorded</sup> was obtained from OCI, but he let others (AMNH) stand as "Thuyet".

"Thuyet" ones @ Kluckwan Emmens WSM 2291 (photo have been) recorded as coming from OCI. (b) Emmens "Chilkat Blanket" says they went south annually and got chests from Tc. (could be Haida) (c) Pitka 2 - O Sheldon Jackson (d) Pooler - recorded as "Haida". (e) 2 ex ASM no data. (f) Wrangell - Makes DAM OTI-117 stands as Thuyet - Roomises PAM said to come from "Tsemchian".

Summary: some implied to be made there, but indications they were obtained from Haida or Tsemchian.

"Tsemchian" - CFN - "WN's 6, 9, 16, 26" "Tsemchian" ??

CFN PM 1635 March 1912 Note: Ross CMB 1929 from Nasayog said to be Ederchaw. Re Nass: Deabean accounts chest makers, but his list of Neke carvers doesn't name one, and he lists only a few Neke chups who owned chests. Also Grofield's Brown Peul made a very poor chest design. Chests on totem poles: Kwaxsi. Evidence sparse that they made in Tlulch "St Simpson" - St Simpson was main depot for Haida carvings, etc and great centre of trade - so easy to get Haida boxes → TL → down coast

Use - not coffee, but treasure boxes

Use: treasure boxes, preservative preservative suits interferences, as they ornament



Carved & painted chests - type 1.

Type I

1p

Type II

- "Thagyt"
- Sheldon Jackson. Conf. Thoms of Sitka
  - ASM - front & back boards
  - ASM chest
  - DAM DTI-117 Shelko, Wrangell, Walter
  - APNH - "Thagyt" Emmons

Alaska, actn. Haida  
Boalen, near Sitka, "Haida"  
- WSM 2291 Kluckwan, Emmons. "OCI"

- Kargani
- 6 Kasan chests (Skowl's house 1885)
  - Chest designs on Kluckwan house planks.
  - Chest design on Kasan Totem pole

- Maset
- NMC VII B 457 CFN ex CE 1901
  - PM 1295 CFN ex CE 1901
  - EC 27 CFN 1901
  - CFN 1906 to Coten
  - (2) - NMC - RB1 1930 "OCI"
  - ROM - Nass R CHB 1929 - Edenshaw

1p RB1GW2 - atypical  
1p PM 1399 CFN 1911

Colleen box CE? 1884 Maset

- Skedigate
- Chas. Kild's Coffin TP?

Kild's coffin  
Skedigate coffin } c 1880

- "Tamshean"
- NMC VII C 128 CFN "WN's 26"
  - EC 162-3 WN's 6 or 9
  - EC 163-4 WN's 6 or 9
  - EC 161-162 WN's 16
  - PM 1635 Nass 1912 CFN
  - USNM photo 638 1855-57 "H Simpson"
  - Portland, Roemer, "Tamshean"

1p Klemke - Carter

Kutwanga box CE? Cusimck 1918

- "Bumkilla"
- PM 220 Jackson 1893
  - CFN Coffin of Chief Thakamiti [ex Landsberg?] Chicago

1p NMC VII EE29 Kelm  
1p Chas - EC 231

- FThorpeot
- VCM - front only - Caldwell

1p front & back VCM

- Rasmuch
- NMC - VII G 342a HIS 1929

- Ruby Creek
- PM 1398 CFN 1911 [CFN did not comment upon base]

11 no data on provenience


1p v6c



Bella Bella - Klumtee - Ute Coffins  
PM 220 called a coffin, so as Takamuti's.

Sentron strops - 2 Ft Repeat (and then quite a few poor copies)

Search & Ruby Creek no data -

Haida: 2 types 1 - Masett - treasure boxes - (2 coffins?)  
2 - South  coffins

Type I Greatest numbers: Skowl had 6!!

No hint of import from Ta or TL. (Skidgate - only 1, as TP.)

Information on making from CE Concentrate Masett  
prototype Kineta

Rom attrib. Edenshaw. Klukwen attrib "OCI" Paalen attrib Haida

Information on meaning of designs CE → CFN

Type II - centres southern Haida - so do similar slate chests - exc 2 CE  
who copied Skidgate chests anyway by 1885.

General Summary - all consistent with idea that they originated  
Kineta - Masett (Kargani?) → traded mostly via Tanahmiah  
& Ft Simpson to Tlingit - Ta - BB. Some traded directly  
to Sitka, Stikine, Kasaan, Tlax, (Bella Bella?).

(a few could have been made by Haidas at these places, or by artists who by <sup>style</sup> ~~style~~

Date - 1857 Ebbts fully evolved - older prototype Kineta. Moscow 1862-7  
- what was 1799 chest like?

- not earlier - none got in American collections  
" " " Welles, Yankee collections

- not as late as 1820's - no collectors saw them made

- merge with great Masett box andometry  
- none collector spanning new  
- place of origin not clear

1929  
70  
1859

1855-1880

1855 Ebbts?  
1870? - Klukwen/Haida?  
1885 - Skowl 6  
1860?  
1880 copy



## Chests

Differences between Type I

all purpose designs  
non-Crests  
all-purpose chest  
flat  
trade diet<sup>n</sup>  
prototype Kiyata chest  
with telescope lid

made for trade

Type II

crest designs  
coffins  
figure on relief  
Southern Haida only  
prototype Haida Mortuary pole  
casket - coffin

made for use as <sup>Haida</sup> coffins

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## Slate Chests

CE's have relief centre carving, but flanking designs are like attempt to carve Massit type

- CE then made casket (Spencer box) from Mt. London Haida.

TP's - more as though prototype was coffin?

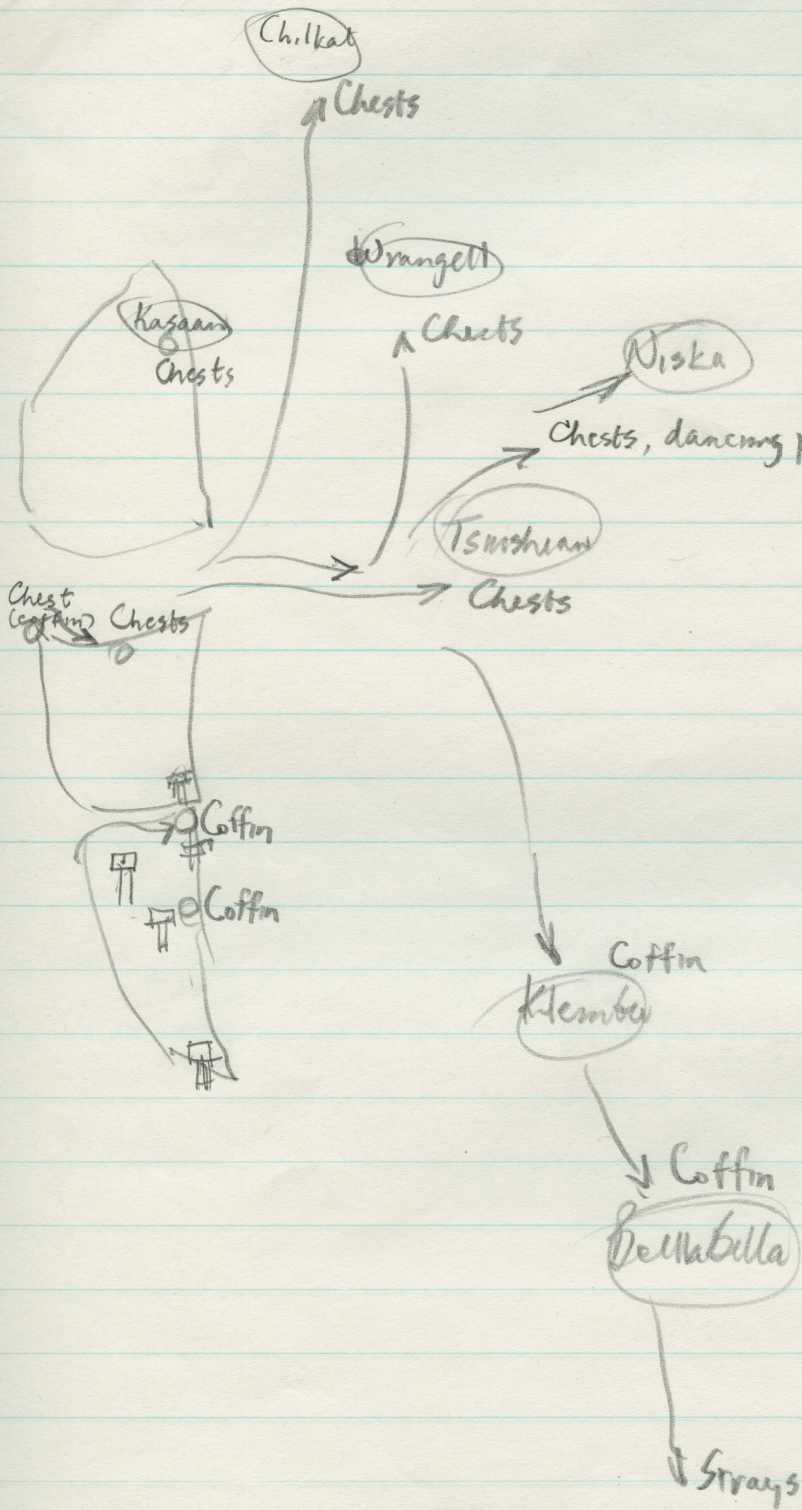
- no "caskets"



# Uses of Chests

## Designs

Thought: Interpreted as coats



Niska: just "designs"

- Lai'i - ketika - casket - TP I p 51
- 3rd piece of <sup>anyone</sup> Kwakwaka'nan TP I p 231 - called grave box but body not put in it

Museum: had not to be coats but identified anyway as animal designs

Collectors interpret as coats



# Distribution of Mortuary Poles with simulated sheets

Type I



Type II



1. Kardas only a few make a Kitwanewol poles show sheets on poles, or bring cat on  
Grassy pole at Tozassa

2. Villages:

Kasaan } absent  
Klekwam }  
Newkwan }  
Suffkwan }

nil?

?

Absent (both types)  
from Alaska

Old Kwesta

no?

?

Dadass

no.

Yan

? no?

double ✓ TP1, p 219

Masset

? 2 present

present?

Kargang

Hellen

Skedigate

many  
simple and complete

present 2+

Mande Is

present 4+

no?

Chaath

?

?

Karsun

✓

I

?

Cumshewa

many

absent?

Skedans

many

2-3

Tanoo

many

?

Kwestinta

c. 18?

nil

Type I

Large numbers in Kwestinta, Cumshewa, Tanoo, Skedans, Skedigate,  
some also Karsun, Chaath, Xarnas  
represented in Masset by (2, 2) but generally absent from no. 3 Kargang village

Type II

Absent Kwestinta

Present Skedans, Skedigate, Masset, Yan

much fewer, in center of range



Chests on Totem Poles

Wika, a few, and at least one at Kitwancool (undecorated?)

1. Pole of Ladin at Lataks (now VBC) (TPI p 51) had real carved chest design (was it transferred to Kwaxon pole at NMC?)

2. 3rd pole of Kwaxon (TPI p 331) at Angida had 2 chests - undecorated called pockets by Bartram. - in NMC with carved front of Ladin chest on it.

1929 field notes of Baynon from Kwaxon (Matthew Base) who erected the pole, called the 2 boxes had g.anam laxe "box of the sky".

First (oldest) of 3 Kwaxon poles had a bottom figure cut off and supports added for a chest - Bartram says "poffen" (TPI pp 224, 228)

Tongass - Gov. Brady sits on a <sup>simulated</sup> chest (a seat of honor?)

Kasaan - One figure memorial pole sits on a simulated chest.

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AM 925 112

pool

Carved box { (Tsemiyomks) } of Misyoq  
in post (of river)  
(Wolf phratry, Sittahdanks). It was used  
as a dancing platform in feasts; the box was filled  
with moose skins, which were distributed after  
the chief had danced on it. It was twice  
used by Misyoq.

A few Nass River chief enjoy the  
privilege of using dance chests: Siatin of  
Sittahdanks (Wolf); Negwawon, of  
Sitravai (Raven); Weech, of Sitwinksilka  
(Fireweed); Kwaxsu, of Sittakini (Wolf);

This box was carried by Kutensue (Eden-  
shaw), a Haida, before the present Misyoq  
was born (He seems now 75 years old).

The carvings are not meant for crests;  
they are sa-dabisost "to butterfly" or "to  
beautify" (a dabis = butterfly); or again  
'a work of art.'

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Haida:

1929  
75  
1854



"Evenshaw" chests

Define the type:

- oblong, folded, heavy base and heavier lid
- design: Painted, or more often painted & carved on front & back
  - "Front" - general outline fixed. - 'face' with large double-eye nose, mouth. 'Brows' touch top of field.
  - "Back" - also fixed general outline. 'face' (?) single eye, brow not touching top of field.
  - Ends - design not integral with front & back rarely carved, sometimes painted with all over design, sometimes partial design. Extreme variability contrasts with fronts and backs

Design discussed more later

Who made them? this is one of the things I hope to 'put straight'

- have been collected from Chilkat to Ruby Creek on Fraser River.
  - : few from Coast Salish area (Ruby Creek, Soanish), but nobody has given impression made there.
  - : few from Southern Kwak. - same applies.
  - : Belle Bella - Southern Tsimshian area, a few, and accepted as local made
  - : Chilkat Thlingit had quite a few, but impression is not made there, and Emmons (1907, p 342) says of them: "Southward they made annual trips to the country of the Tsimshian to purchase slaves, war-canoes, and red-cedar chests." (This sounds more like Haida) WSM 2291 Klukwan. Emmons said obtained from Haida
  - : More southerly Thlingit had numbers; mostly labelled Thlingit in collections. <sup>Shaker coll<sup>n</sup></sup>
  - : Most numerous Haida also Kaigani - <sup>see Skow's collection</sup> I know of no suggestion that they imported them from elsewhere.

Tsimshian - not many collected from them <sup>Kanakunguk are said to have specialised in 'carved wooden boxes'</sup>

Niska - whom Barbeau credits with earliest making of them <sup>T.S. Murie p. 398</sup> even though not prehistoric (HC p 56) but all evidence negates this

- ① In unpub ms. "Emblems of Nobility" is long section on Nass River carvers, from informant Charles Barton in 1927. Ten carvers are named, as makers of totem poles, rattles, masks, chiefs headdresses and spoons, but not one is mentioned as carver of boxes.
- ② On Nass these chests were so few that they were the prerogative of a small number of chiefs (socially restricted) - who had privilege



of sitting on them at feasts. Burton named 4 chiefs among  
Niska and Tsemshian who claimed this privilege (of Howal)

Another privilege owned by a few Nishga chiefs was to  
use these chests as "dancing platforms". ROM HN 925 is one  
of these, collected by Barbeau in 1929 from Chief Neeyog of  
Kittlakdamiks. Barbeau's notes in ROM read:

Carved box (Tsem'iywinks - in pool (of river)) of Nisyog  
(Wolf phratry, Kittlakdamiks). It was used as a dancing platform  
at feasts; the box was filled with moose skins, which were  
distributed after the chief had danced on it. It was twice  
used by Nisyog.

A few Nishga chiefs enjoy like privilege of using  
dance chests: Sgatin of Gitlarkdamiks (Wolf); Negwa<sup>son</sup>  
of Gitxatin (Raven); Weleeks, of Gitwinksiik (Fireweed);  
Kwaxsa, of Gitxatin (Wolf)

This box was carved by Wutensu' (Edenshaw),  
a Haida, before the present Nisyog was born (he seems  
around 75 years old).

The carvings are not meant for crests; they are  
said to be "to butterfly" or "to beautify"  
(adabis = butterfly); or again "a work of art".

In summary, three chests were rare and valued chiefs prerogatives  
among the Tsemshian. and the one on which we have the most  
information was made by Edenshaw.

- ③ Viola Garfield in 1934 had one of the last Niska artists, Boyan  
Piel, apprenticed in the house of Skatien, make a box design  
for her (Dawson Journal). It is a pretty and design, showing  
little affinity with the Edenshaw crests.

Haida: CFN between 189 and 19 - collected several chests from  
the Maut area, from CE. CE in 1902 told him how they were made.

CFN's comment based on this is very revealing:

"The designs on the two larger sides have no significance as  
crests, but are considered appropriate for chiefs ranging from  
South-East Alaska to the farthestmost limits of the Kwakwilt. (1909, p 9)  
(emphasis mine). This sounds like the phrasing of a specialist and  
distributor, making a line of all purpose crest crests.

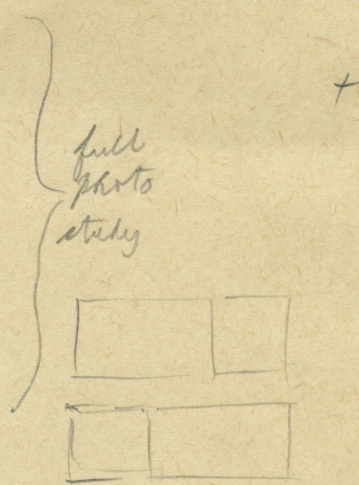
The present chief Neeyog confirmed this information to me. "Adabis" seems to  
refer to any decoration (he pointed to my striped neck tie as being 'adabis').  
From other sources I have learned that the village site at Matlakatla  
was called Adabis, because of the twinkling of the sun on the rippled  
water.



# FIVE NORTHWEST COAST CHESTS

(+ 2 Tom Price)

1. Tlingit
2. Tlingit (Haida made)
3. Haida
4. Tsimshian
- PM? 5. Bella Bella (cotton of Takamuti)



Give CF Newcombe material - on designs from CE not correct  
OK Kwak to Tling

- on box making from CE - no fixed proportions

Analyze designs: Fronts

- Holm re primary, secondary, tertiary  
formline patterns - junctions of ovoids  
main face - double eye  
main intersp  
Subfields - infinite variety  
Color

Backs - same as fronts

Sides - relations to fronts

- clues on painting:

Design - why  $\wedge$  ? curvilinear

## Conclusions:

1. Can't believe collectors provenience
2. All made by same hand.
3. That hand was Haida
4. " " " CE ? Was it CE? discuss Newcombe notes, CE templates
5. Clues on these tie to a great body of chests, boxes, dishes. Tling - Kwak.



## Jackson Haida Chests

The type of painted and carved chest shown here has been widely - and rightly - admired as one of the pinnacles of NWC art. The meticulously composed designs on their front and back represent <sup>traditional</sup> pure Haida composition at the peak of its perfection. These are the designs Bill Holm had most in mind in describing how the entire field and all its segments, positive and negative, were under full control. In quality of line, perfection of design elements, and overall composition, they are peaks of the art. Chests of this type have been collected from Tlingit, Tsimshian, Haida, <sup>and</sup> Kwakiwilt villages, and the general impression one receives from the literature is that they are of a type made <sup>widely</sup> along the northern coast, and so highly conventionalized in design that it is difficult to distinguish local variations - let alone individual variations - in style.

To my knowledge, nobody has made much of a study of their distribution, uses, and meanings of their designs and their relationships to other NWC art.

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# Chests

## 1. Distribution

a) make a list of known chests <sup>of this type</sup>, with museum nos and proveniences.

- Haida Mortuary poles → Chest designs

2. They were made to <sup>trade</sup> sell more than to use - so you wouldn't expect them all to be where made.

(Just as Chilkat blankets got all down coast)

Hence designs non-coast & abstract (quote Howcombe)

So go on style which is Haida | Look at reverse: do Thingit chests collected from Haida  
Flow was one way  
"Coast to Howcombe"

## 3. Type

: shape oblong

: lid 2 types, telescoping or heavy

: "front" 2 eye, nose, brow touch top

: "back" 1 eye, no nose

: ends: not related to sides

: design: abstract

Shade into older Kwakwaka'wakw style chest, also painted only

## 4. Numerous 'reading in' of meaning of designs

- eg Bessyog's "on whirlpool"

- eg Shakes Konakadate, etc (Olson, Genthner)

had an animal in mind.  
Artist imbued with idea that must be animal, and using animal motifs, must have had an animal in mind - but not a coast animal. [all readers try to read it - like an abstract painting]

Owner, anthropologist, etc, imbued with idea that designs must be coasts, read as coast animal.

prototype -  
must be  
chest?



- As we arrive at rouches: how to get at personal styles
- "splitters" (Holm) see few differences in elements like column heads → several covers.
- "lumpers" (Duff) see their minor variations within range of individual (in an art where variation is <sup>conventional</sup> compulsory)
- Designs so abstract that it is difficult to distinguish indiv. style.

So move to a slightly different plane of inquiry -  
 PUNCHED FACES.

- a) Tom Power (take as already established)
- b) Other fellow.

Not CE - any such faces on his date chests or silver? no.

5 DAM  
 6 TP chest

1. Opocula chest - shows that what we read in as faces were faces to artist
2. NMC chest - upside down face - read by nonconcentricity downwards
3. Bella Bella chest - upside down faces - (same man)
4. Wudnew - Neeyog chest.

Using this as indicator - what is ascertained?

- end designs of all kinds (reads not identical, minor variations)
- " " like box designs (true in god knows how many boxes)

design elements to tie in with next chapter?

- painted profile faces with hatched eyes
- overlap red on black



On Skidans TP chest: Cf. Mortuary pole designs

used only by Harda  
single double

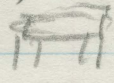
} these are chests when  
used as coffins by Harda  
are not chests --- by Gullakell

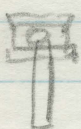
Retain concept of layout on slate chests which have  
relief head (Holme <sup>state</sup> chest)  
(John Welch design for Boes)

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Go on Tiska poles as chests, not chests

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The chest type of mortuary is solely Harda, and  
somehow Harda (except for 2 pole type  at <sup>Yan</sup> ~~least~~)



This type usually has central face in relief

Design is on front only (no sides or back)

[When chest proper, something has to be done about  
backs & maybe ends]

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Now, what is relationship to Haverfont designs?  
is he of the prototypes of flat type?

What is relation to Chelkat?

(Chest is said to be prototype)



62244  
NMC magazine

46694  
Tow Hill Pole

Rasmussen Chest

Rasmussen #95  
Kamther p. 12 (color)

p. 16. "the great carved storage chest in which precious ceremonial garments were stored and which in itself was regarded as a family heirloom...."

The figure on the chest here represents Gona'k A'de't, a water monster occurring in the mythology of the Tlingit, p. 19. . . (gives Swanton 1909, p. 170, 253 story of Gona'k A'de't)

p. 19. "This myth is illustrated in a very abstract way in the paintings on the chest. The central panel on the chest is composed of the head, eyes, ears, and nostrils of the monster; and below, the body with the paws on each side. The lateral panels are similar to the Chilkat blanket design but not as extensive. At the top and bottom are eyes and between them is a tall fin-like shape used as a space filler.... The same design is repeated on the back, while on the shorter sides are designs which are painted without carving. These seem to be a contraction of the main pattern in having no lateral panel but showing the head, body, and paws of the monster with some fillers at the top. Mr. Rasmussen stated in his notes that Professor Olson (then of the University of California), who saw the chest in 1930, regarded this design as the cliff where Gona'k A'de't lived. This interpretation is difficult to justify when comparing the painted with the carved sides.

(Chief Johnson ident. design and said 'the piece was made by the Tsimshian. - he claimed it was 300 years old')

p. 198 (Catalog) Tsim - exact place of origin unknown  
36 7/8 x 18 1/8 high x 20 7/8 wide.

represents a  
myth!!



'Edenshaw chests' (cont'd)

How old? I am convinced that the bentwood box with lid is definitely prehistoric on the NWC as far south as the hootka. Chests as coffins and storage for valuables also. Some complex, with "lid" a second box telescoping down over the box. Immediate predecessors also carved design on front & back, rather like 'Edenshaw chests'.  
(PM ---, Russian book pls 78, 80, 81, <sup>collected</sup> 1862-67 prototype)

The Edenshaw type: Earliest from date of collection is Gibbs 1855-7 in USNM. None in earlier coll<sup>ns</sup>.

No type in post contact. How much affected by Chinese or Russian? I don't know, but grows out of aboriginal predecessors.

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Col. No.



To put it another way:

The art was becoming more abstract - why?

what about coffins?  
cheap suits?

- formal, design aspect dominating artists' minds?
- losing crest aspect and need for client ident<sup>n</sup> of crests, why?
  - for export where duplicability was saleable (all purpose crest chest?)

As it became more abstract and lost former crest significance, it lost the clear visual presentation (symbols, front back sides)

- front and back, by necessary 'reading-in' by artists, took on new names <sup>as designs</sup> ~~not crests~~ (Killer Whale, Sea Eagle, etc)

As the process was ongoing, new formal changes led to new experimentation and 'reading-in' (faces)