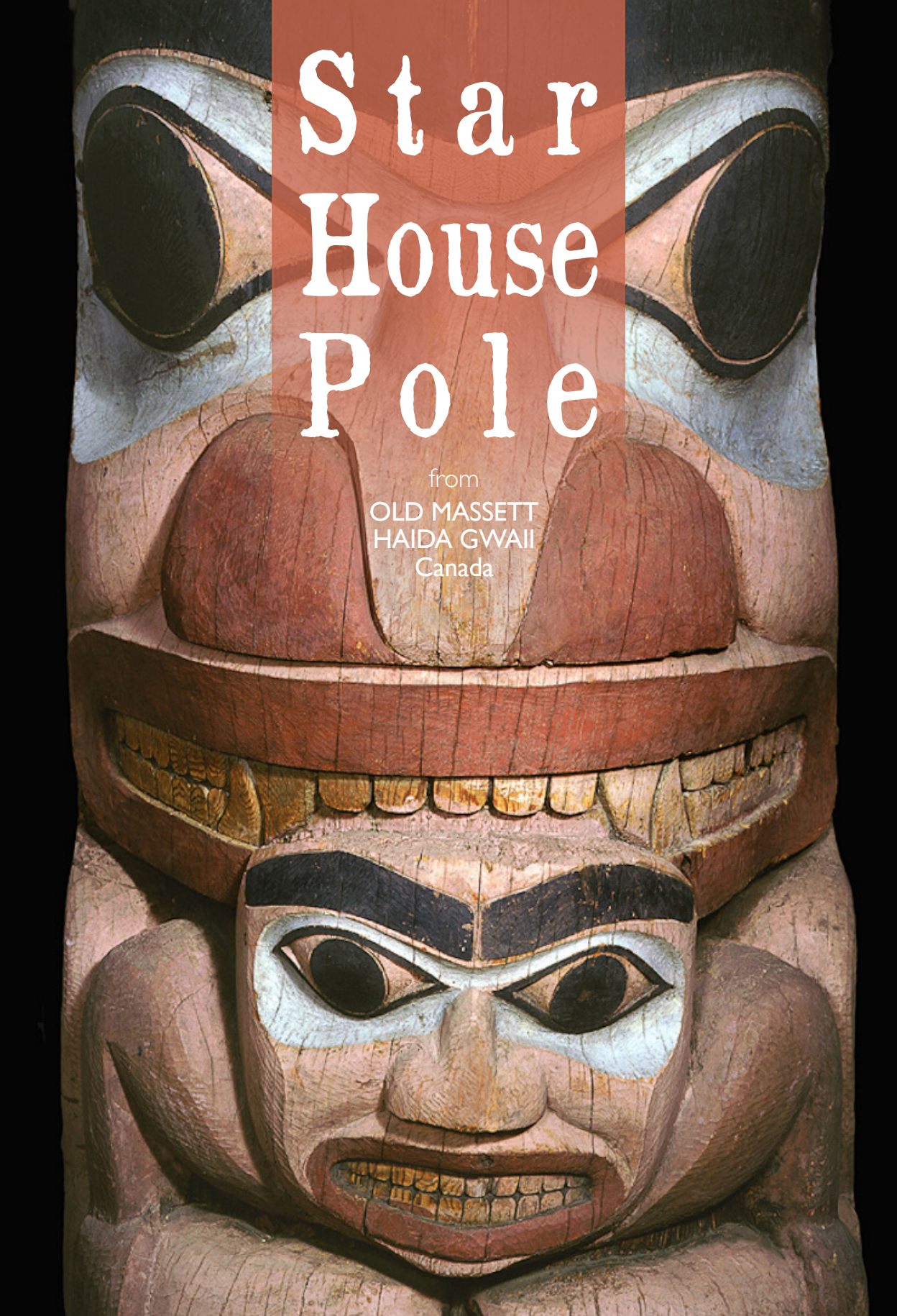
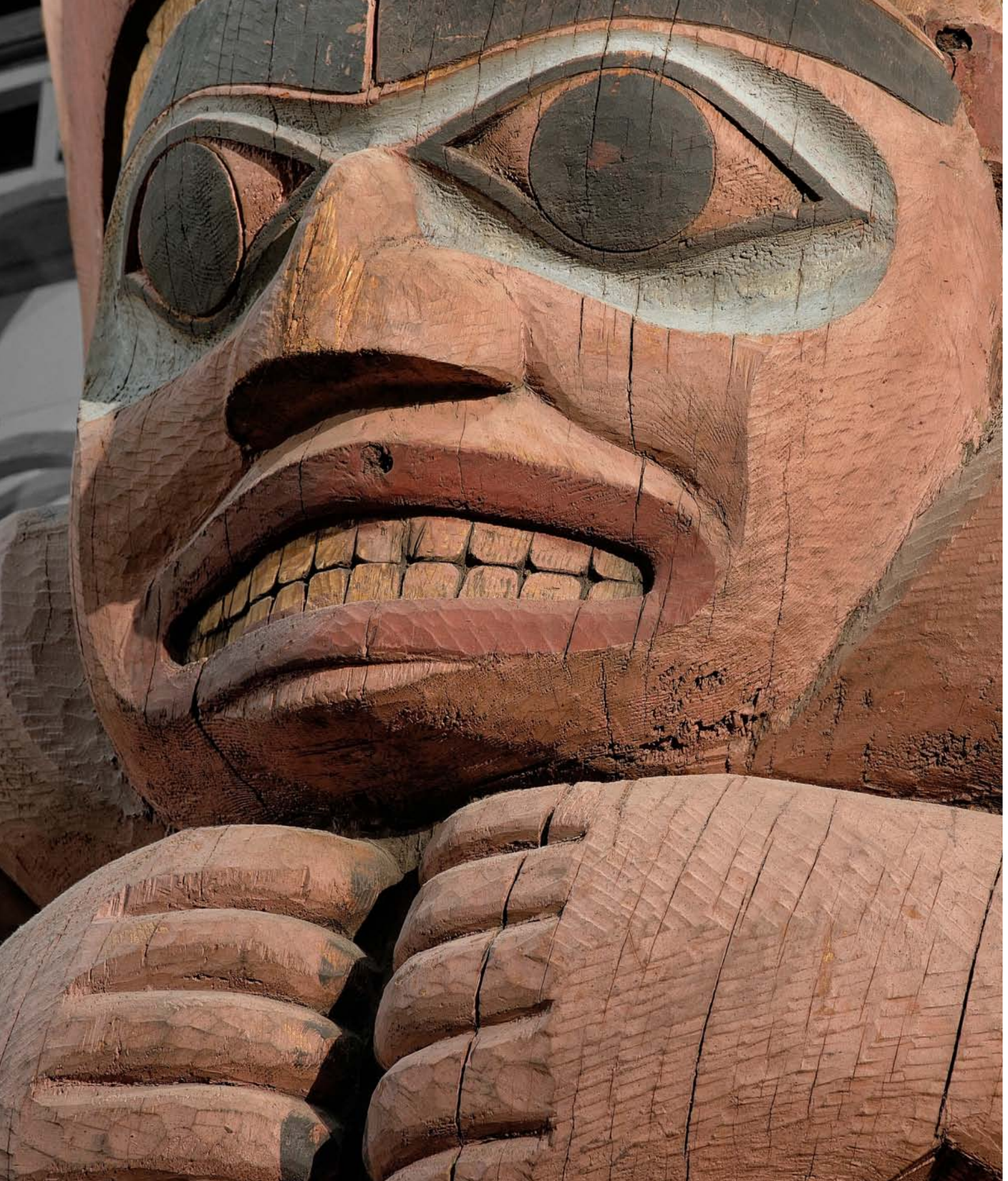

Star
House
Pole
from
OLD MASSETT
HAIDA GWAII
Canada



Star House Pole

Old Massett, Haida Gwaii, British Columbia, Canada

Carving attributed in part to Albert Edward Edenshaw

Erected by Chief Anetlas, 1879

Acquired by the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, England, 1901
PRM 1901.39.1

Laura Peers with contributions by Jisgang (Nika Collison), Philip Grover, Cara Krmpotich and Christian White

THE totem pole in the Pitt Rivers Museum is from the Haida Nation, people who occupy a group of islands off the coast of northern British Columbia, Canada. This house frontal pole came from Star House in the village of Old Massett. It was raised by Chief Anetlas at a potlatch before July 1879 when he and his wife, until then childless, adopted a young girl. The figures on the pole show the histories, ancestral crests, social status and privileges of the family whose house it marked. Anetlas died about 1893. The pole was removed from Star House in 1901 and has been in the Pitt Rivers Museum since then.

The Pitt Rivers Museum works with Saahlinda Naay (the Haida Gwaii Museum) and Haida people to care for Haida collections and to make them accessible to Haida people. We are grateful to Jisgang (Nika Collison), Curator of the Haida Gwaii Museum, and to members of the Haida families associated with Star House, for input into this booklet, which tells some of the pole's stories and meanings historically and today.

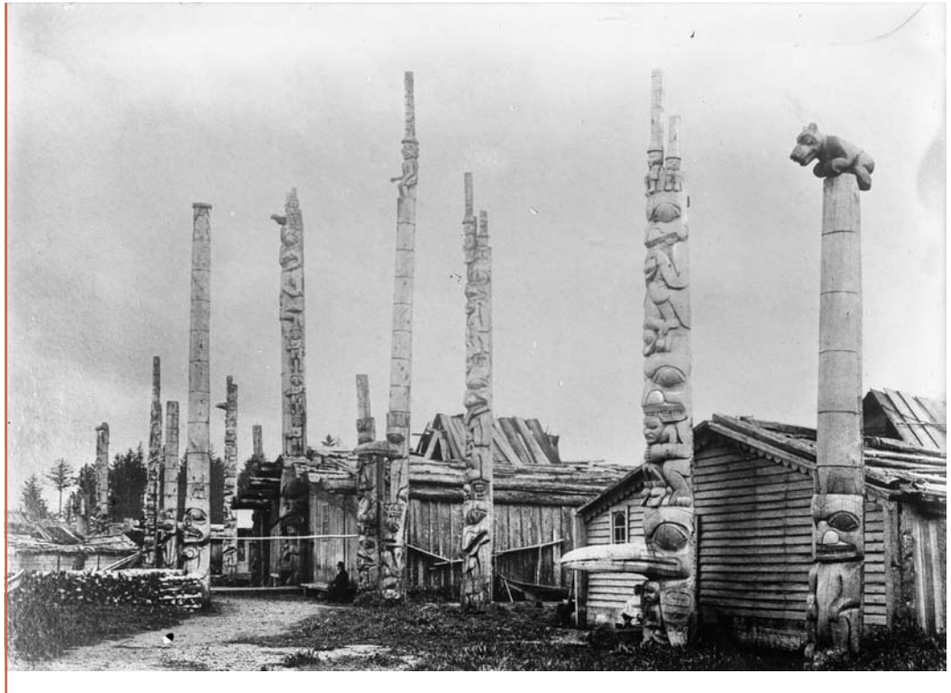


Figure 1: Pole in front of Star House. Photograph by Bertram Buxton, taken in Massett, Haida Gwaii, Canada, 1882. (Courtesy Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford, 1998.473.1)

Figure 2: Star House was built in Old Massett between about 1878 and 1881. Oregon Hastings' 1878 photo of Massett shows Anetlas' house with only the interior house posts in place, and the frontal pole already raised. (Courtesy Royal British Columbia Museum, PN5540)

The Star House pole: Haida perspectives

Jisgang, Nika Collison

HAIDA art is the visual companion to the Haida language, both of which are born from an inextricable connection to the lands, waters and supernatural beings of Haida Gwaii. Haida art represents lineage, rank and history through the depiction of crests (which serve a similar function as a coat of arms) and oral histories on finely made objects.

The Star House pole is one of the finer representations of nineteenth-century Haida monumental art. The pole was commissioned by Anetlas (c.1816–1893), then Chief of the K'ouwas Eagle clan; he and his wife (of a Raven clan) raised this pole at a potlatch, held to adopt a young girl.

The potlatch is the legal system, and an essential part of the social, economic and political systems, of all coastal First Nations. Guests are invited to witness new clan business as well as reaffirm the hosts' oral histories, rights, privileges and alliances. These massive events can often involve up to a thousand people and last many days. Guests are paid for attending and witnessing a potlatch with food, ceremonial exchange and entertainment. When the potlatch comes to an end, guests are given gifts in accordance to their status.

Haida society, including the arts, was highly developed at the time of European contact. Like everything in Haida culture, carving and design was introduced to early Haida by supernatural beings. European contact afforded our ancestors more iron, new materials and economies. With this, our arts advanced even further, classical Haida art reaching its pinnacle during the latter half of the nineteenth century. This was an amazing feat considering it was also during this time that over 95% of our population was lost to smallpox, and between 1884 and 1951 the expression of Haida culture could lead to imprisonment under the Indian Act.

About totem poles

TOTEM poles were, and still are, raised by Haida people for several reasons. Haida society is matrilineal, and crests representing ancestry and rights – including the figures carved on totem poles – are passed down along matrilineal lines of kinship. People belong to matrilineal clans, or lineages, which are affiliated either with the two halves of the Haida nation, or moieties: every Haida person is either an Eagle or a Raven and marries someone from the opposite group.

Each moiety contains many matrilineal clans, and has crests belonging to those groups that are shown on totem poles and other regalia. Each of those clans or lineages has a chief and is made up of many separate households. Historically, each of these households occupied a large house together under the authority of a house chief. Totem poles were erected outside these large houses, such as Star House, and the crests on them referred to the ancestry and rights or wealth held by that clan. Such rights and wealth included stories, songs, and harvesting rights to particular resources in specific places. House poles, like the Star House pole, commemorated the crests of a lineage and its chief. Historical photographs of Haida villages show rows and rows of house posts along the beachfront, each house with its post (see Figure 1, showing the Star House pole with other houses and poles in Massett).

Poles were also raised to mark significant events, such as Chief Anetlas adopting an heir into the clan. Mortuary poles and memorial poles were also raised to honor the dead. These showed the clan crests of the deceased. Mortuary poles were made to hold a large bentwood box containing the remains of the deceased.

The animal figures on totem poles, which represent supernatural beings, call to mind those beings and their relationships with specific clans, and also songs and stories about these beings which are the privileges and wealth of those clans.

How are totem poles made?

Jisgang, Nika Collison:

> The Star House pole stands 11.36 m. high and is carved from an approximately 600-year-old red cedar tree, or *ts'uu* in Haida. The artist who carved the Star House pole would have spent a great deal of time searching for and selecting the right tree – ancient, tall, straight grain with tight rings – then felled and halved it, hollowed out the back and transported it back to his village to carve the pole as dictated by the crests and stories associated with Anetlas and his family. Executed in classical Haida design, the artist would have carved the pole with iron acquired through trade then forged into tools.
>
> The painting on the pole also follows classic formline – used only to highlight certain features. Black paint enhances primary design elements such as the raven's beak and the eyebrows, eyelids and eyes on most of the figures. Red is used for secondary elements such as lips and nostrils, and the blue-green highlights tertiary design elements such as eye sockets.

Figure 3: Haida formline on the Star House pole. (Courtesy Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford, PRM0000018248)

Cara Krmpotich:

> Once felled, the cedar trunk is first stripped of its bark. The log is not dried, but worked whenever it is convenient. If there is a major knot or flaw that can't be removed, the design might be devised to incorporate and hide it. One third of the trunk is removed along the length and the heartwood is hollowed out to leave a half-tube shape. This makes the pole lighter and enables it to be stood flat against a house-front. It also ensures the whole structure lasts longer since the softer heartwood is more liable to rot.
>
> A centre line is then drawn down the front in charcoal and the design is sketched down one half. When the artist is happy, he mirrors the design on the other half of the pole to give a symmetrical effect. The master often carves one side, leaving the other side for the apprentice to copy. Most carving is done with an adze and the finer details, such as the eyes and teeth, are done with chisels and knives. Protruding parts like the large raven's beak are carved separately and then added to the pole using pegs or joints. You can see a join line in the raven's beak. This was original; it was taken apart again when the pole was shipped to England to make it fit the crate better.

Who carved the pole?

AS Haida artist Christian White has noted, the artist who created the pole had a deep understanding of Haida art. Robin Wright, an art historian who has studied nineteenth-century Haida art, found an archival reference stating that 'Edenshaw' carved the lower portion of this house frontal pole. This is an important clue, and makes sense given the high level of expertise shown in this pole. The Edenshaws were from Massett, and several men in the family – Albert Edward Edenshaw (c.1810–1894) and his nephew Charles Edenshaw (1839–1920) – were master carvers (Wright 1988, Gough 1990).[1] Wright feels that the style of the pole fits with others by Albert Edward Edenshaw. Whichever of these men acted as the senior carver, it is likely that he would have had one or more apprentices assisting him and training on the project.

Christian White, who is a descendant of Albert Edward Edenshaw, told Museum staff during his visit in 2009: 'It has been theorized that this pole may have been made by Albert Edward Edenshaw because of the style of the carving and the date it was carved. This would be shortly after he moved to Massett and Anetlas was one of his clansmen. The pole carvers, for a house pole, usually they were carved by the chief's own clan. If it was a memorial or a mortuary pole, it would be carved by the opposite clan.'

The figures on the pole

THIS pole is carved with bears, bear cubs, a raven with a large beak, and other figures. Today, Haida people understand the pole to tell a story about the Bear Mother, a Haida girl who became the wife of a bear and had twins with him, and who eventually returned to her people having taught her sons to be great hunters. Additional crests and family rights of Anetlas and his wife are also represented in some of the figures.

The Star House pole's figures are identified as follows from bottom to top, as, contrary to popular belief, the bottom figure on a Haida pole is often most important.

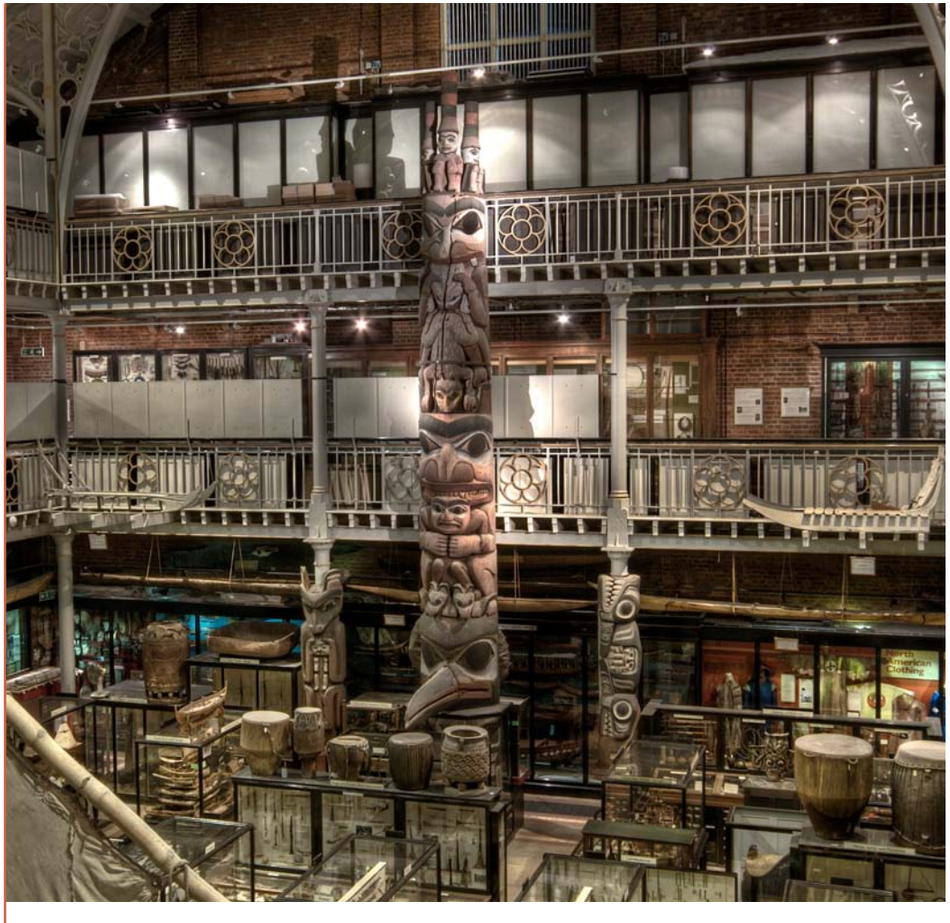


Figure 4: Star House pole at the Pitt Rivers Museum.

Raven with a human holding an animal between its wings

The massive raven at the bottom of this pole most likely represents a crest owned by Anetlas, as his clan had the rights to the raven as one of their crests. The absence of a lower lip labret in the human figure between the raven's wings indicates a male, who is holding what contemporary Haida believe to be a type of marine animal. An 1883 drawing of Star House with the pole in front of it by James Swan includes the caption 'Hooyeh the Raven at the bottom. The Raven as a man is holding the magic salmon Taia, which bites out the ravens [*sic*] heart and he remains a Raven ever afterward.' In his diary, Swan wrote: 'finished sketch of carved column and house of Annethlas which has at the base the raven – and the man with a salmon eating his heart'.[2] While the base of this pole now sits on a platform, the pole extended at least eight feet into the ground when standing in its original location.

Grizzly Bear holding a human and two cubs at its feet

The grizzly bear, or *X̲uuds* in Haida, bares sharp teeth while holding a human captive. The absence of a labret in the lower lip indicates the figure to be a man. There are two cubs peeking out from between the bear's feet, and the grizzly bear's toes are depicted in the ear of the raven below it. While Swan stated in 1883 that this section of the pole showed 'the (Hoorts) [Haida: *X̲uuds*] Bear with the Hunter (Towats) [Haida word unknown] in his mouth, and his claws tearing open the hunters [*sic*] breast', Haida people now believe the pole tells a version of the Bear Mother story, where a young girl is kidnapped by bears and brought back to their village. She marries and gives birth to children that are half-bear, half-human. In one version of the story her father sets out to save her and is captured by the bears, who ask him to stop killing grizzlies as his grandchildren are now part bear. In another version, her brothers set out to save her.

Bear with a frog in its mouth and bear cub between his legs

This bear has a frog extending from its mouth, and a bear cub stretched out below. It may or may not be part of the Grizzly Bear story.

Three Watchmen

Watchmen are found most often at the tops of poles, looking out over the ocean and ready to alert its homeowners of incoming visitors. The Watchmen hats boast *skil,* or potlatch rings, which record the number of potlatches held by the pole's owner.

How did the Star House pole get to Oxford?

Laura Peers

> "The full history of the Star House pole has been lost to the nineteenth-century upheaval of our society – a time when coastal First Nations were experiencing some of the most damaging times in their histories, including mass epidemics and colonial regimes designed to eradicate these rich cultures." (Jisgang, Nika Collison)

Star House was built between 1878 and 1881, and the great frontal pole carved for it was erected in 1879. Two years later, General Pitt-Rivers donated his collection of ethnographic objects to the University of Oxford to found the Pitt Rivers Museum (PRM). Edward Tylor was hired in 1884 as the first Reader (professor) of anthropology. His work on what was then thought of as 'primitive culture', and in particular on what was then called animism and totemism in religion, led to his

Figure 5: Photograph of Star House by Richard Maynard, 1884. Jisgang, Nika Collison notes of this image: 'While the house, built of red cedar, retains the structure and function of a traditional Haida longhouse, including massive interior posts and a smoke hole, this photo captures a time of transition. Note the narrow, horizontal, milled siding on the house rather than traditionally wide vertical slats, two windows, a modern door, and the roofline trimmed with scalloped edging.' (Courtesy Royal British Columbia Museum, PN9074)

interest in Haida art. From 1884 to 1898, Tylor also served as chair of the British Association for the Advancement of Science's 'Committee on the Northwestern Tribes of Canada'. The committee was 'appointed for the purpose of investigating and publicly reporting on the physical characters, languages, and industrial and social condition of the North-western Tribes of the Dominion of Canada' (BAAS 1887: 173). In 1899 he published a paper on another pole from Massett, which had been erected on the Fox Warren estate in Surrey, England (Tylor 1899). Tylor's article expressed his professional interest in the pole: 'No other example of the wooden sculpture of the North-West Americans of dimensions comparable to this is to be seen in England, so that it is desirable to place a figure of it on record for the use of anthropologists, with such account as is available of the meaning of its designs' (1899a: 133). Thinking about the pole at Fox Warren led Tylor to desire a totem pole for Oxford.

As with so much of museum collecting in the late nineteenth century, the interests of scholars and museums to acquire 'specimens' came at a time when Aboriginal people were subject to colonial policies intended to force them to assimilate. In Canada, revisions to the Indian Act in 1884 – the year the Pitt Rivers Museum opened – had made the potlatch and related cultural activities illegal. People were subject to fines or jail terms for practising traditional activities such as the potlatch, and regalia associated with these activities could be confiscated. Missionaries on Haida Gwaii were placing pressure on Haida people to stop erecting totem poles and to take them down, as well as to stop making and using masks and regalia. Many cultural practices went underground or became dormant.

This context of collecting is clear in correspondence in 1899 between E. B. Tylor and the Reverend Charles Harrison about the possibility of getting a totem pole for the PRM. Harrison, a missionary with the Church Missionary Society, arrived on Haida Gwaii in 1882, and collected 142 objects for the Pitt Rivers Museum. In a letter to Tylor in 1899, Harrison wrote:

> Mr. Murray [probably Alexander Campbell Murray, a Hudson's Bay Company employee] showed me your letter in which you wished him to purchase for you another Totem. I am doing my best to get him one and also for the past year have been trying to get you one about 50 feet long. Ten or twelve have promised to sell me Totems but when the moment of purchase came they were afraid of their friends and withheld them. I think that I can secure two about next February when the people are generally without money & food. My estimate according to what they have formally asked will be about $75.00 for a 70 ft. one and $50 for a 30 ft. one. (PRM Tylor Papers, Box 17, Item 1a: letter from C. Harrison to E. B. Tylor, 24 May 1899.)

Tylor himself recognized the colonial contexts of collecting regarding the Star House pole in his article written about the Fox Warren one:

> No more posts are likely to be set up at Masset. Missionary influence has impressed upon the native mind a sense of such art being a waste of labour. The Haidas will, perhaps, remember their old ideas for a generation, and it is to be hoped that more will be collected. (Tylor 1899: 2)

Reverend Charles Harrison said almost exactly the same thing when he urged Tylor to acquire a pole:

> Totems are getting very scarce as the people are not now in the habit of erecting them, and in the near future will all be gone, so now the time is ripe for National & Private Museums to obtain them. Twenty years ago there must have been 300 in Massett alone and now there are about eighteen. (PRM Tylor Papers, Box 17, Item 1d: letter from C. Harrison to E. B. Tylor, 10 May 1900.)

Museum professionals felt it was important to 'save' these 'relics' of what were then understood to be vanishing cultures. Tylor's eagerness to acquire a pole for the museum with which he was affiliated also reflected competitiveness amongst museums, which at the time sometimes sent agents into Indigenous communities and competed with each other to obtain the 'best specimens' (Cole 1995).

Although Professor Tylor and Reverend Harrison had known each other for some time, Harrison was in the end not the person through whom the Star House pole came to Oxford. Through networks developed around the Fox Warren pole, Tylor corresponded with Robert Hanley Hall of the Hudson's Bay Company from 1899, and actually sent Hall a photograph of totem poles in Massett, taken by Bertram Buxton in 1882, to show Hall what he wanted. Buxton had taken the photograph to show the pole that went to Fox Warren, and must have given a copy to Tylor. Such photographs circulated amongst scholars and were used for developing anthropological theory, along with the objects they depicted, before the age of anthropological fieldwork in the twentieth century. Tylor emphasised to Hall that he wanted a pole that was just as large and well carved as the one collected by Buxton and taken to Fox Warren:

> Enclosed I send a photograph of Massett totem-poles where the 3rd from the right hand is that which was sent to England by Mr. Buxton some years ago. I hope the one it is proposed to buy will be as good or better than this as to art, and that it will be like this one carved all the way up. The next one with the great raven at the foot, must be a very fine pole. (PRM Tylor Papers, Box 17, Item 1b: draft of a letter from E. B. Tylor to R. H. Hall, 11 June 1899.)

In fact, the 'fine pole' with the 'great raven at the foot' – the Star House pole – turned out to be the one that was sent to Oxford. From his base in Victoria, Hall organised the removal and shipping of the post by local Hudson's Bay Company agents in the autumn of 1900.[3] He wrote to Tylor on 15 November 1900 that 'I have at last shipped your Totem Pole' and listing various payments for its removal and transport:

> Victoria B.C. 9th Nov. 1900
>
> Mr. E. B. Tylor
>
> Bought of The Hudson's Bay Comp[an]y
>
> Terms, Cash. *Interest will be charged on all overdue Accounts*

To Paid	– Indian for Totem Pole	36 00
"	– Taking down	15 00
"	– Carrying to sea Beach	9 50
"	– Indians freighting to Pt. Simpson	37 50
"	– Wharfage & handling at Pt. Simpson	7 00
"	– Repairing[,] cutting & cleaning	14 00
"	– Freight Pt. Simpson to Victoria	27 00
"	– Wharfage at Victoria	4 00
"	– Drayage at Victoria	4 00
		$ 154 00

(PRM Tylor Papers, Box 12, Item 22 (H4): letter from R. H. Hall to E. B. Tylor, 15 November 1900, enclosing an invoice from the Hudson's Bay Company to E. B. Tylor, 9 November 1900.)

The bill testifies to the fact that Haida people were paid to cut the pole down, carry it to the ocean, and freight it to Port Simpson. Looking at the Star House pole in the Pitt Rivers Museum in 2009, Elder GwaaGanad (Diane Brown) stated that 'according to our Elders, missionaries and Indian Agents just went along mowing totem poles down and heaped them up. . . and set fire to them. But also some of our poles made it down south, too: white people picked the select few that they thought were the best ones and took them to here, there, and everywhere. But it was a really horrible time in our history' (quoted in Krmpotich and Peers 2013, 11). Jisgang, Nika Collison adds that Haida people 'maintain that anything which served a societal function that was sold during the Potlatch Ban period is argued to have been sold under duress.'

The pole's journey – and 'touching up'?

FROM Massett, the pole was taken by steamer to Port Simpson on the mainland, and then to Victoria, where it was crated, loaded onto a Canadian Pacific Railway freight car and transported across Canada to either Montreal or Halifax. From there it was transferred again to a trans-Atlantic steamer. From London, the pole was probably transported by canal barge to Oxford and then by wagon to the Pitt Rivers Museum.

When the pole left Massett, it was cut into two and the beak (originally designed as a separate component) was removed to make transporting it easier. The item 'Repairing[,] cutting & cleaning' on the bill of sale seems to refer to this, but may also explain some of the questions about the paint on the pole.

Black and white photographs taken of the pole when it was standing in front of Star House make it appear that the pole was largely unpainted during its time in Massett. This may be because the reds and blues usual for Haida poles would have shown as mid-greys in historic black and white photographs, and do not appear as painted areas in prints of the time. However, Robert Reford's clear photograph of autumn 1890 shows the beak as quite dark, and this area at least does seem to have been painted. While the paint is in typical Haida colours of red, black, and blue with some white, several experienced Haida artists have commented that it looks a bit unusual. Might the paint have been added, or touched up, by Haida people after it was cut down and while it was being made ready for shipping?

Christian White suggests that the pole was 'painted by Haida people. The colours are in the right spots. It might not have been painted until after the pole was lowered back down again. After it was standing in the village, the one that was sold was lowered back down, and then the Haidas had the commercial paint available. Because whoever painted the pole had an understanding of the design.' At the time the pole arrived in Oxford, other observers noted that it seemed to be 'carved and painted anew'. This may be related to the note on the bill of sale for the pole from the Hudson's Bay Company that says for 'Repairing[,] cutting & cleaning, $14'.[4]

One other important change has happened to the pole. Originally, the central Watchman, documented as representing Anetlas, had nine rings. Today, only four rings remain. It is possible that the other rings were removed to fit the pole into a travel container during its journey to the Pitt Rivers Museum. Another explanation that has circulated as a story told in Oxford is that the Haida removed rings when they removed the pole from Star House, because they felt that the original number would

be excessive for the status of its new location at Oxford University. A Haida story told about the rings is quite different. When Guujaaw, artist and former president of the Haida Nation, visited the pole about twenty years ago, he was told by Museum staff that a young English boy, who could not apparently have known about the pole's history, had asked them why the pole was missing several rings. Jisgang, Nika Collison, one of the Museum's Haida advisors, notes that for Haida people, who believe in reincarnation, this story suggests a spiritual connection between the boy and the people of Star House.

Figure 6 (left): Star House pole in Massett, 1882, showing five rings on right Watchman and nine rings on central Watchman. Detail from photograph by Bertram Buxton. Massett, Haida Gwaii, Canada. 1882. (Courtesy Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford, 1998.473.1)

Figure 7 (right): Star House pole installed in the Pitt Rivers Museum, 1901. The image shows the left and right Watchmen with four rings each, and the central Watchman with five rings. (Courtesy Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford, 1999.19.2)

What has happened to the pole since it arrived in Oxford?

SINCE its arrival in Oxford, the pole has become much loved, by local Oxford visitors and by people from around the world; it is an icon of the Museum. The Museum recognizes that the pole is also part of Haida cultural heritage, and is working with Haida people to make Haida collections accessible to them.

Reconnections with Haida people

> "On Haida Gwaii, there are still many K'ouwas Eagle clan members alive today, and *GyaGang.aay*, or poles, are still being carved and raised by various clans."
>
> Jisgang, Nika Collison

IN 1998, a group of Haida people came to the Pitt Rivers Museum to request that a Haida ancestral remain in the Museum's collection be returned to them for burial in the community cemetery. The group was leading efforts to bring home ancestral remains from all over North America. The visit was the start of a series of important conversations between Museum staff and Haida people. Since then, Haida curators, scholars and artists have lectured to staff and students at the Museum, worked with Museum staff to confirm the identification of Haida objects, and helped to develop educational programs. Laura Peers, PRM Curator for the Americas, travelled to Haida Gwaii in 2006 to bring the conversation into Haida communities and learned much from Haida people about the kinds of access that they need to heritage items in museum collections. PRM staff and Haida people have been visiting each other ever since.

In 2009, with funding from the Leverhulme Trust and matching funding raised by Haida people, twenty-one Haida delegates spent several weeks at the Museum working with all 301 Haida objects. They learned from ancestors' knowledge and skills embodied in the historic items, and reconnected with them. The project was intended to create permanent, supportive relationships between the Pitt Rivers Museum and Haida people around the collections. It was very successful: Haida people had an important opportunity to see their treasures and to learn from them, and very generously gave Museum staff much additional information about the objects. A video about this project, entitled *Everything was Carved*, is available at **https://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/haida**

That project led on to others. At the end of the 2009 visit Haida delegates submitted a formal request to the University to repatriate their ancestral remain. The request was approved and in 2010 Museum staff accompanied the ancestor

home and participated in burial ceremonies. Repatriation is not about losing items from museum collections: it is about strengthening relationships. Since the repatriation, the relationship between the Museum and the Haida Nation has continued and has benefitted both. For example, the Museum's educational programs have benefitted tremendously from Haida input. And in 2015, carvers Gwaai and Jaalen Edenshaw came to the Museum and replicated a magnificent Haida box, down to the direction and angle of the original carving strokes. The original box, which is displayed behind the totem pole in the Museum, proved to be a masterclass in Haida box design. The replica box is now back on Haida Gwaii, where it has been used to teach classic Haida art to high school students and to inspire artists and other community members.

Figure 8: Gwaai and Jaalen Edenshaw with the new 'Great Box' they carved at the Pitt Rivers Museum, September 2014. (Photograph: Michael Peckett)

Inspiration and possibility: the Star House pole today

"This totem pole is from the Haida community of Massett. I like it because it is so big and really stands out in the gallery. I imagine what it must have looked like when it was used for their tribal village events. The top of it is carved from figures that remind people of how their ancestors gave things to their families. Carving the wood so carefully must have been quite hard work. Sometimes I help my father to work in wood so I know what it might feel like to work on such a large sculpture for a long time. Words to describe this item are tall, wonderful and powerful." (Rory Nicholson, aged 9, Oxford, 2014)

THE Star House pole continues to inspire visitors to the Museum. It is also still remembered and missed by descendants of those who raised it. It remains part of a thriving tradition of Haida art. Professor Tylor and Reverend Harrison were correct in predicting that there would be a time when monumental poles were no longer carved. That period lasted until 1969, when Robert Davidson carved and erected a pole in Old Massett. Today, there are many new poles on Haida Gwaii, and their creation is part of a renewal of Haida culture. The Star House pole in the Pitt Rivers Museum reminds us of the difficult histories that Haida people, colonisers, and museums have come through. It stands as witness to the work we must do together to support Haida culture today and to ensure that museums involve Haida people in caring for and interpreting Haida material heritage. And it stands as a great work of art by Haida ancestors. Its Watchmen have seen many things in their time. I wonder what they will see in the future?

Figure 9: New totem poles, Haida Gwaii Heritage Centre, 2015. (Photograph: Murray Foubister)

Haida Bear Mother Story

This version of the story is found at 'Haida Legends, Myths and Folk tales', **http://haidalegends.blogspot.co.uk** [accessed 28 September 2017]

Giihlgiigaa Tsiij git'anee (Todd DeVries). Very similar versions of this story were told by Haida visitors to the education staff at the Pitt Rivers Museum in 2009.

Long ago, a group of girls were out gathering huckleberries. One among them was a bit of a chatterbox, who should have been singing to tell the bears of her presence instead of laughing and talking. The bears, who could hear her even though some distance away, wondered if she was mocking them in her babbling. By the time the berry-pickers started home, the bears were watching.

As she followed at the end of the group, the girl's foot slipped in some bear dung and her forehead strap, which held the pack filled with berries to her back, broke. She let out an angry laugh. The others went on. Again she should have sung, but she only complained. The bears noted this and said, "Does she speak of us?" It was growing dark. Near her appeared two young men who looked like brothers. One said, "Come with us and we will help you with your berries". As the aristocratic young lady followed them, she saw that they wore bear robes.

It was dark when they arrived at a large house near a rock slide high on the mountain slope. All the people inside, sitting around a small fire, were wearing bearskins also. Grandmother Mouse ran up to the girl and squeaked to her that she had been taken into the bear den and was to become one of them. The hair on her robe was already longer and more like a bear's. She was frightened. One of the young bears, the son of a chief, came up to her and said, "You will live if you become my wife. Otherwise you will die."

She lived on as the wife of the bear, tending the fire in the dark house. She noticed that whenever the Bear People went outside they put on their bear coats and became like the animal. In the winter she was pregnant, and her husband took her to a cliff cave near the old home, where she gave birth to twins, which were half human and half bear.

One day her brothers came searching for her, and the Bear Wife knew she must reveal her presence. She rolled a snowball down the mountainside to draw their attention, and they climbed up the rock slide. The Bear Husband knew that he must die, but before he was killed by the woman's brothers, he taught her and the Bear Sons the songs that the hunters must use over his dead body to ensure their good luck. He willed his skin to her father, who was a chief. The young men then killed the bear, smoking him out of the cave and spearing him. They spared the two children, taking them with the Bear Wife back to her People.

The Bear Sons removed their bear coats and became great hunters. They guided their kinsmen to bear dens in the mountains and showed them how to set snares, and they instructed the people in singing the ritual songs. Many years later, when their mother died, they put on their coats again and went back to live with the Bear People, but the tribe continued to have good fortune with their hunting.

Figure 10: Horn cup with twin bear cub decorations, Haida. Collected before 1874. (Courtesy Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford, 1884.68.61)

References

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Jisgang, Nika Collison's quote is from 'Star House Pole,' in S. Farthing, ed., *Art: From Cave Painting to Street Art* (New York: Universe Publishing, 2010).

Further reading

The Pitt Rivers Museum's website on Haida material culture, art, educational resources, and videos about the Museum's work with Haida people can be found at **https://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/haida**

The Haida Gwaii Museum's website is at **http://haidagwaiimuseum.ca**

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Endnotes

[1] The reference is from Charles Newcombe's field notes at the British Columbia Archives. As Wright states, because these notes date to 1901, after Albert Edward had died and Charles had taken the name Edenshaw, it is possible that Newcombe was referring to Charles Edenshaw rather than Albert Edward Edenshaw.

[2] James Swan's drawing, made on 19 July 1883, is at Yale University, Franz R. and Kathryn M. Stenzel Collection of Western American Art, WA MSS S-2368; found online at **http://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/vufind/Record/3432777** [accessed 26 May 2016]. See also Swan's diary about the story associated with this sketch: Swan, 19 July 1883, bottom of page: 'The Legend of Towats'; accessible at **http://cdm16786.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/ref/collection/pioneerlife/id/23116**

[3] Hall himself was based in Victoria; we do not have the name of the local agent in Massett who was involved in removing the pole. Other interpretations have suggested that C. F. Newcombe and Reverend J. H. Keen were involved in removing and sending the pole. However, Keen, a missionary, left Massett in 1898 and went to Metlakatla on the mainland, before Tylor actively began seeking a pole. Newcombe purchased a Haida pole for Kew Gardens in 1897 and was working for anthropologist Franz Boas on Haida Gwaii in 1900, so it is possible that he was involved, but his name is not mentioned in any of the detailed correspondence between Tylor and Hall.

[4] Dr C. F. Newcombe to Dr Forbes, British Columbia Archives, Royal British Columbia Museum, MS-1077 (Newcombe Family Papers), Volume 42, File 2, 'Collections – Collections sent to Liverpool Free Museum in 1900 by C. F. N.' (Copy in Related Documents File for PRM 1901.39.1; PRM Tylor Papers, Box 12, Item H4a: invoice from the Hudsons Bay Company to E. B. Tylor, 9 November 1900.)

[5] I am grateful to Guujaaw (personal communication) and to Jisgang, Nika Collison's 2010 article on the Star House pole for this story.

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