The Emblematic Totems (or *Tupati*) of the Indigenous Peoples of the Northwest Coast of Canada, and Their Incorporation into Heraldic Emblems[1]

ADAM A. JANIKOWSKI
L.R.H.S.C.

1. Introduction

1.1. Heralds and Heraldry in Europe and Canada

Like its principal mother country the United Kingdom, Canada has inherited from the traditions of Western Europe[2] a system of personal, familial, and institutional **emblems** (signs of *particular identity*) and **insignia** (signs of *general nature* and *status*) that has evolved gradually since about 1135 CE. The principal species of emblem are the ***arms***, or ***coat of arms*** — a two-dimensional design with fixed figures or patterns in fixed arrangements and colours set primarily on a *shield*, or an *image* of a shield; the ***crest*** — a three-dimensional object with similar characteristics set at the apex of a *helmet*; and the ***achievement***, in which arms, crest, helmet, and other species of *emblem* (like **supporters** and **badges**) and *insignia* (like coronets and the collars and crosses of knightly orders) are combined in a fixed arrangement. The forms and uses of these signs — restricted to persons and institutions of relatively high standing or

[1] This article is a revised version of a thesis submitted to the Committee on Education of the Royal Heraldry Society of Canada, for the Licentiate of the Society, and was examined by its chairman, Prof. D'A. J. D. Boulton, the Editor of this journal.

[2] It is important to recognize that the heraldic emblematic system emerged in and was long confined to the kingdoms of Western Europe dominated by Catholic Christianity, in which Latin remained the language of learning and worship. On its early history, see (inter al.) the first article of this issue.

honour, and therefore constituting a form of honour themselves — have long been governed by a set of rules embedded in a traditional '**Law of Arms**', which differs in details from one national system to another, but adheres to a set of basic principles common to all western European nations and their colonies in other parts of the world.

Because that system of signs came in each of the three British kingdoms to be regulated by traditional specialists called 'heralds', whose profession and associated expertise have since 1562 been called '**heraldry**', the system as a whole is commonly described as '**heraldic**', to distinguish it from all other systems of signs (including modern logos and similar commercial and governmental emblems), which despite common usage, are technically *non*-heraldic. The common use of the term 'heraldry' to designate any emblematic system *as such* — including that administered by the heralds — is incorrect, and is not permitted in this journal.[3]

Down to 1988, the conferral and use of truly *heraldic* emblems in Canada was regulated by the two national heraldic authorities of the United Kingdom — the English and Irish College of Arms, based in London and headed by Garter Principal King of Arms, and the Scottish Lyon Office, based in Edinburgh, and headed by the Lord Lyon King of Arms, sole king of arms in Scotland. Until recently, both of these authorities asserted a sort of 'Imperial' jurisdiction in such matters, and agreed when petitioned to do so to grant arms and other heraldic emblems to Canadian individuals and corporate bodies, public and private, whom or which they deemed worthy of such emblems, which had long been regarded as marks of *honour* as well as simple *identity*. Rather confusingly, both authorities maintained in their Canadian grants the very distinctive conventions of their respective national systems.

In 1988, however, the rights of both bodies were transferred to a new office attached to the household of the Governor General of Canada, called the '**Canadian Heraldic Authority**', made up of a

[3] On the history of the words 'heraldry' and 'heraldic' and their various misuses, see D'A. J. D. Boulton, 'Advanced Heraldic Studies: An Introduction. Part I. A New Conception of an Interdisciplinary Field of Scholarship', *Alta Studia Heraldica* 1-2 (2008-2009), pp. 1-54, esp. pp. 30-45.

number of '**heralds in ordinary**' under an officer called the '**Chief Herald of Canada**' (in effect a king of arms). Since that time the CHA (as it is informally called) has not only conferred hundreds of new heraldic emblems on Canadian individuals and corporations, public and private, but established a number of new conventions appropriate to the state of Canadian culture in recent decades.

One of the mandates of the new Authority was to integrate into the traditional English system of heraldic emblems it adopted — centred on the *simple* emblem called the '**arms**' or '**coat of arms**', and on the *compound* emblem of which it has long been a part, properly called the '**armorial achievement**'— not only the homologous and generally similar heraldic emblems of other European traditions, but to the extent possible, the very different kinds of emblems traditionally employed by certain indigenous peoples of Canada.[4]

It must be emphasized at this point that systems of emblems in any way comparable to the Western European heraldic system have been extremely rare in other regions and periods. In the Old World they included only two: (1) the system of emblems called ***mon*** adopted by the *daimyo* and *samurai* of Japan in the last decades of the twelfth century[5] — by chance precisely the period when the heraldic system began to take form in western Europe; and (2) the only slightly later system of emblems called ***rank*** adopted — in this case almost certainly under the influence of their enemies the Christian crusaders — by the Mamluk rulers of Egypt and Syria.[6]

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[4] The situation in Canada was closely analogous to that in Australia, where in roughly the same period settlers from the British Isles and other parts of Europe colonized the lands of the indigenous peoples, and in the more heavily settled areas effectively destroyed most of the traditions of the latter. For the effects of this on the indigenous emblematic tradition in Australia, see the article by Richard D'APICE, 'Australian Heraldic Law and Authority: A Quest for a Champion', in *Alta Studia Heraldica* 1-2, (2008-2009), pp. 119-148.

[5] On the Japanese system of *mon* (also called *monsho*, *mondokoro*, and *kamon*) see esp. *Kamon & Japanese heraldry knowledge base* (online, in English).

[6] On the Mamluk system of *rank*, see esp. L. A. MAYER, *Saracenic Heraldry: A Survey* (Oxford, 1933). *Rank* (whose design was similar in conception to that of heraldic arms, differed in use both in being restricted to men who held the high office of *amir*, or commander, and in not being hereditary.

It is not at all surprising, therefore, that a system of emblems in any way comparable to that of the western European heraldic system was created by only *one* of the many indigenous cultures of North America: what may be called in general terms the '**totemic**' system of the cultural region of the **North-West Coast of Canada** and adjacent areas of the United States. It may be called more specifically the '**tupatic**' system, from the word ***tupati*** given to its figures (and other forms of *totem*) in one of the many indigenous languages of the region, and that is the term that will be used here.

Given the current interest in Canada in the indigenous peoples now officially called 'First Nations',[7] and their changing place within Canadian society and its constitutional order, the nature of the tupatic system and the ways in which its elements both *have been* and *might be* incorporated into the Euro-Canadian heraldic system are of comparable interest. This article will therefore begin with an examination of the traditional character of the emblematic *tupati* of the region just identified, and of their development, characteristics, transmission, and display. It will then turn to the challenges of incorporating these totems into a conventional *heraldic* system of emblems of a European type, and particularly the primarily English type that has been established in Canada since 1988. Among these challenges are creating terms to designate types of figure wholly alien to the European tradition.

1.2. A Review of the Sources

It must be noted that *both* the government of the individual British provinces of North America before 1867, and the government of the new federal Dominion of Canada created by the British North

[7] 'First Nations' is the official term for the political units of any of three distinct cultural groups recognized as 'Aboriginal' in Canada's Constitution Act of 1982, especially those of the tribal cultures of the regions south of the tree-line. The other two distinct groups characterized as 'Aboriginal' are the **Métis**, a distinct ethnicity created by the fusion of *truly indigenous* and *French colonial* cultures on the prairies, and the **Inuit**, a late-arriving indigenous culture generally living North of the Arctic Circle, and closely related to cultures both in eastern Asia and Greenland.

America Acts of that and following years, actively attempted to destroy indigenous nations as distinct groups, and to eliminate their cultures, in an attempt to assimilate them into the broader framework of Euro-Canadian culture and government. Sir John A. MacDonald, Canada's first Prime Minister, stated in 1887 that 'The great aim of our legislation [in that area] has been to do away with the tribal system and assimilate the Indian people in all respects with the other inhabitants of the Dominion as speedily as they are fit to change.'

This policy of assimilation — especially the implementation of the residential school system intended to suppress the use of traditional languages and cultural practices that prevailed in indigenous regions even in the second third of the twentieth century — achieved part of its aim, causing a significant decline in traditional knowledge amongst the various indigenous peoples to whom it was applied.

Because of this, much of the knowledge of the traditional totemic system of the Pacific Coast now available to scholars is embodied in the field research of anthropologists working in the first half of the 20th century, when the system was already in steep decline. These anthropologists inevitably relied on imperfect transmissions of traditional ideas, and also faced indigenous suspicion of sharing what knowledge they *did* retain with anthropologists — commonly (if erroneously) seen as the agents of the dominant culture which in general was hostile to their interests.

These anthropologists also relied for their information about totemic practices on the journals of Euro-Canadian traders and explorers, and of the records of the trading companies for which they worked (especially the Hudson's Bay Company) — whose particular biases also influence the record.

My own research has had to rely to a significant extent on the work of Marius Barbeau, CC, FRSC, (1883-1969), a Canadian ethnographer and folklorist well known for his cataloguing of the social organizations and traditions of Northwest-Coast peoples. Even *his* works inevitably reflected the inherent cultural biases of his time, so it was always necessary to take these into account.

In addition, I often encountered conflicting accounts of the practices with which I was concerned. In such cases, I had to look for a *third* source to determine the accuracy of the first, but even the

understanding retained or regained by the living members of the indigenous peoples in question sometimes differs, both with regard to the *identity* of traditional signs, and to their *significance*.[8]

Unfortunately, *historical* first-person accounts of such matters written by members of the First Nations in question are few and far between. As Carol Otness admitted in her graduate thesis on the subject of **button blankets** (one of the *non*-tupatic elements of the system of signs): *'A person with an interest in these blankets can find no single reference containing information on their historic development, significance, and use'*.

In keeping with the principle that no study of any aspect of First Nations' history or culture would be complete without some exploration of the oral history relevant to the aspect in question, the author contacted a number of potential sources. These included both members of relevant First Nations, and the research staff at *Canada's History Magazine* (formerly known as *The Beaver*).[9] Unfortunately — for the reasons just summarized — none of those consulted was as well-informed about the emblematic system in question as the author had hoped, and it must appear that much if not *most* of the traditional knowledge of its forms and uses has been lost, both to the members of the peoples who used them, and to Euro-Canadian scholars like myself.

Clearly much more work needs to be done to rediscover and catalogue the practices of the Canadian indigenous peoples, and although it is outside the scope of this paper, it is the author's hope that in some small way this paper can contribute to that effort.

2. The Northwest Coastal Peoples of Canada

2.1. A General Introduction

The indigenous peoples of Canada belong to more than fifty distinct nations and language groups.[10] This paper will primarily focus on the

[8] S. L. OTNESS, *The Tlingit Button Blanket, A Masters Thesis.* Oregon State University (1979), p. 9.

[9] Ibid., p. 5

[10] AFN. (2018). *Description of the AFN.* Retrieved from URL. Retrieved December 27, 2018

First Nations along the Pacific Coast who were living in British Colombia and southern Alaska before those territories acquired their current statuses as a province of Canada and a state of the United States of America, respectively.

It is often hypothesized that a natural abundance of foodstuffs enabled the Indigenous peoples living along the coast to develop a unique and complex culture that emphasized art and ceremonials more than other Indigenous groups, because the Northwest Coast peoples were able to devote less of their time to sustaining themselves through hunting and gathering, and more of their time to developing a complex and nuanced artistic, ceremonial, and mythological tradition. It is believed that it was primarily for this reason that the Totemic System that evolved along the North West Pacific Coast was and remains more advanced than that found in all other regions of North America.

This paper will primarily focus on the peoples who call themselves **Haida**, **Salish**, **Tsimshian**, **Kwakiutl**, **Nuu-chah-nulth**, **Nisga'a**, and **Gitxsan**, which unless context requires specificity, will be referred to collectively as the **Northwest Coast** (or **NWC**) **Indigenous Peoples**. It is nevertheless important to remember that these groups all constituted distinct *nations* with unique histories, and that over the centuries each *nation* developed its own artistic style and ceremonial practices. A significant study could therefore be done on each group's unique totems and practices. This general study, however, will focus on the characteristics of their practices that they had in common, mentioning distinctions only when they were significant.

2.2. Levels of Social Organization within the Different Nations

2.2.1. The Higher Levels: Phratries and Sub-phratries

In order to understand the nature and function of the totemic emblems of the peoples in question, it is important to understand the distinctive units of their societies and their relationships to one another. This section will provide a brief but sufficient overview of those matters.

The largest and most important social unit of the nations of the North-West Coast, and their primary division, has different names in the various languages of the region, but is generally designated by anthropologists by the (Greek) term **phratry** (literally a

'brotherhood'). Each phratry includes at least two or more distinct groupings called **clans**, and in some cases is divided into two or more **sub-phratries** made up of at least two **clans**. Phratries are generally identified with a particular **totemic animal** or **being**, drawn from the set represented by totemic figures.

The number of distinct phratries recognized differs from one nation to another, but is generally quite small. [11] For example, the **Tlingit** nation is divided into two main phratries, the **Raven** and the **Wolf**, each of which is divided into various sub-phratries, while the **Tsimshian** nation is divided only into four phratries: those of the Raven, Wolf, Eagle, and Killer Whale.

A phratry can consist of a population spread over a wide area. Its members are bound together by a tie of kinship, and by certain mutual obligations that can be both numerous and complex. These obligations can include military support, economic and trade relationships, and social assistance of various kinds. Belonging to a phratry also allows an individual the use of the distinctive emblematic *tupati* of that phratry, which announce his or her membership.

However a general cultural tradition of the region dictates that members of a phratry may never marry inside their own phratry — meaning that a Raven may never marry another Raven — so the transmission of the various titles and emblematic *tupati* a member of the society may acquire is *matrilineal*. This is of course in marked contrast to the European tradition of the transmission of *heraldic* emblems, which has always been primarily *patrilineal*, but may pass in the female line in the absence of a male heir. Exceptions to this practice, however, existed among the Haida, and in certain cases in Gitxsan tribes, where 'often the father's title and position passed on to his sons instead of his nephews in the maternal line, depending on the preference of the individual'.[12]

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[11] C. BARBEAU, 'The Bearing of the Heraldry [sic] of the Indians of the North West Coast of America Upon Their Social Organisation', *Journal of* the *Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 84 (1912)

[12] M. BARBEAU, (1954). "'Totemic Atmosphere' on the North Pacific Coast", in *The Journal of American Folklore,* Vol. 67, No. 264, p. 109.

2.2.2. The Lower Levels of Kinship Group: Clans and Families

The **clan** is the next most important kin-group after the phratry and sub-phratry, when one of the latter existed. The individual members of a *clan* consider themselves to be more closely associated with each other than they are with the other members of their phratry. This association might be based on ties of blood, of origin, or on a common name or another shared attribute. Clans *as such* had neither a common chief nor a common territory, but shared several common emblematic *tupati.* As clans are all divisions of a phratry, members of a clan share the phratric totems common to all of the clans of the phratry, but they can also claim the extensive use of totems peculiar to their clan, normally related to their imagined origin. These emblems were also transmitted matrilineally.

Clans are themselves subdivided into what are called by anthropologists (somewhat misleadingly) '**families**', or '**house groups**', whose members shared a single long-house or set of adjacent houses. Each of these groups normally claimed a *particular* emblem (often misnamed a '**crest**' in the literature) for their own exclusive use.[13] Family- or house-group property, which included ceremonial objects and emblematic tupati, were also passed from maternal uncle to nephew and did not leave the unit — though of course by European standards they passed from one *patrilineage* to another. Maintenance of individual rank within the house-group was insured by a proper marriage.[14]

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[13] C. BARBEAU, 'The Bearing of the Heraldry of the Indians of the North West Coast of America Upon Their Social Organisation', *Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, (1912) p. 86. The traditional use of the term 'crest' for these emblems is inappropriate and unacceptable in an heraldic journal, in which it can only be used in the technical sense of '*an emblem primarily displayed at the summit of some form of helmet*'. While it is true that tupatic emblems were occasionally displayed in that manner, it was neither the *primary* nor even a *common* manner of display, and did not define their character.

[14] OTNESS, *The Tlingit Button Blanket*, p. 20.

Fig. 1. The Longhouse owned and built by the T'Kope Kwiskwis Lodge of the Order of the Arrow Lodge of the Chief Seattle Council[15]

2.3. Totems and Totemic Systems

In the most general terms, a **totem** is best defined as a '*type or class of object symbolizing the owner's belief that his lineage was descended in blood line from a land, air, or sea creature of supernatural origin*'.[16] '**Totemism'** is a name given to the practice of displaying such totems in a systematic way.

Totems have existed in a variety of forms in a number of different cultures, each of which employs different sets of forms in different — if often similar — ways. Here we shall be concerned exclusively with the totems and totemic system of the peoples of the North-West Coast of North America, which in one of their numerous languages are designated by the name ***tupati***. In a paper discussing their characteristics delivered to the Royal Heraldry Society of Canada, Professor D'Arcy Boulton assigned that name to all of the totems of that culture, and created the adjective **tupatic** to describe them and their characteristic features.[17] Not all totems, or even all tupatic totems, serve as *emblems* in the technical sense used in this

[15] *Wikimedia Commons, 2013.*

[16] J. H.. WHERRY, *The Totem Pole Indians* (New York, 1964), p. 4

journal — **signs of particular identity** — but it is with those that *do* function in that way that we shall be exclusively concerned in this article. These totems may be referred to either as **emblematic tupati** or **tupatic emblems**, according to context.

Clearly, totemism in general is one of the most distinctive and familiar aspects of the culture of the indigenous peoples of the North-West Coast. Indeed, when one thinks of Canadian indigenous peoples, one of the first images that comes to mind is one of beautiful polychromatic totem-poles like those in Fig. 1 above. Besides being visually striking, these totem poles help represent some of the oral history and traditions of the phratry, clan, or family. According to Barbeau, 'The origin of all of the crests [*sic*] and Totems representing animals or objects is explained nearly in the same way along the coast. It generally consists in relating that the ancestor met a mythical being, or monster, by whom he was given magical secrets, powers, and sacred objects, which thereafter remained in his own or in his successor's possession.'[18] Nothing even remotely comparable was believed of the heraldic emblems of Western Europe.

Totems could be displayed in various manners, but like the emblems of European heraldry, only the owner of a tupatic totem was allowed to display it. "Ownership of a particular crest [*i.e., tupatic totem*] gave one the right to symbolize it in a variety of ways."[19] These representations could be either *two*- or *three*-dimensional, and be set on objects ranging in materials and scale from a **cedar hat** to a **house-screen**, a **feast-dish**, a **blanket**, or a **tree-sized pole** or **house-post**. Often, such physical realizations of a totem were associated both with traditional and specially-composed songs, which were sung whenever they were formally displayed in a ceremonial way.[20] Thse songs were also the property of the 'owner' of the tupatic

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[17] D'A. J. D. BOULTON, 'Traditional Non-heraldic Systems of Emblems III: The Totemic Tupati of the Northwest Coast of North America', paper given at the VI. Annual Colloquium on Heraldry of the R.H.S.C., during the A.G.M. of the Society in Montreal, Quebec, 31 May 2013. A longer version of this paper was given at the A.G.M. of the Society held in Vancouver, B.C..

[18] BARBEAU, 'The Bearing of the Heraldry', p. 89.

[19] Ibid., p. 85.

[20] OTNESS, *The Tlingit Button Blanket,* p. 23.

totem, and were passed down matrilineally with the totem they accompanied.

Traditionally, among the peoples in question here, to been regarded as *legitimate*, a tupatic totem must be *validated* through regular display at a *potlatch* or comparable sacred and ritualized feast; without such a validation, it would be treated as culturally worthless. As a potlatch involved a series of events including feasting, dancing, and the giving of gifts, it was a highly social function, through which status within the phratry and clan could also be established. The more often a tupatic totem was validated through exhibition, and all other accompanying public displays — including singing the accompanying song — the more valuable it would become.[21] In some of these ways, tupatic emblems bore a resemblance to heraldic emblems, whose formal display traditionally indicated a public claim to the genealogical and societal status they represented, so that the right to display them could be disputed in courts of law or even the field of battle. Nevertheless, such public displays were never considered essential to the validity of the emblems themselves.

As was noted above, certain tupatic totems belonged to a *phratry*, some to a *clan*, and others to a *house-group*. Each clan would own a **major totem** as well as one or more emblems of lesser value. Nevertheless, their transmission followed a variety of patterns in addition to that of simple matrilineal inheritance. Tupatic totems could also be transmitted by **marriage**, **conquest**, **enslavement**, **trade**, **formal cession**, or in certain circumstances **unilateral assumption**.[22] Again, there were parallels to such irregular forms of transmission in the heraldic system of emblematics, including formal cession and acquisition by right of conquest, but these followed very different conventions, and were all quite rare.

After any of these irregular forms of transfer, ownership of tupatic totems of all types required **public validation** through the

[21] Ibid., p. 130.
[22] BOULTON, 'Totemic Tupati,

forms of display indicated above. Without this validation a totem would have no social recognition and would be an object of ridicule.[23]

3. Emblematic Tupati

3.1. The Emblematic Characters of Tupatic Totems and their Differences from those of the European Heraldic System of Emblem

Clearly both the form and use of tupatic totems bear some resemblance to those of the heraldic emblems of the European and Euro-Canadian tradition — especially to those of the *three-dimensional* **crests** and **beast-badges** (increasingly used as **supporters**) that from about 1320 began to supplement the originally two-dimensional arms painted on the flat surfaces of shields, horse-trappers, martial coats, the rectangular banners of great lords and commanders, and the triangular pennons of ordinary knights bachelor.

Like crests and badges, tupatic totems are (1) clearly *emblems* — signs of particular identity — are (2) conceived of as a form of hereditary property, and (3) are normally indicative of *ancestry* — though not of membership in or descent from a patrilineal kin-group, or any other such group identified with a *surname* or comparable *lineal* marker. They also differ from heraldic emblems (1) in being much more limited in the *variety of their forms*, (2) in having a *very distinctive style of representation* that varies only from tribal culture to tribal culture, (3) in having a *totemic* character wholly alien to most heraldic emblems, (4) in lacking a *descriptive language* comparable to blazon, in which they could be embodied, and finally (5) in lacking a *corps of professional overseers* comparable to heralds, whose role was to grant, record, and regulate them.

Thus, in their normal cultural situation, tupatic emblems are clearly very different from heraldic emblems, and should not be associated with them except when a particular tupatic emblem has been incorporated — ideally with the permission of its rightful owner

[23] M. BARBEAU, ' "Totemic Atmosphere" on the North Pacific Coast', *The Journal of American Folklore,* Vol. 67, No. 264 (1954), p. 112

— into an otherwise *heraldic* design. This sort of inclusion, as I shall show, has only recently been officially carried out on any sort of scale by the heralds of the Canadian Heraldic Authority.

Even then a tupatic emblem forms only one element of a larger heraldic emblem, whose use and significance, as such, is governed by the *heraldic* rather than the *tupatic* code. Furthermore, as I shall explain below, tupatic signs lose their *spiritual character* — essential to their character as *totems* — when they are incorporated into a heraldic design.

The process of incorporation also raises serious questions for the heraldic tradition of composition and description. This is true in part because the heraldic tradition has always permitted a wide variety of graphic interpretations of the design embodied in a blazon, allowing every artist to represent its elements in keeping with his or her own notions of style — or at least conforming consistently to the style employed by a particular authority or in a particular series of representations.

It is also true because the heraldic tradition has always demanded a *consistency* in the style of representing the elements of any particular achievement, prohibiting the inclusion of elements represented in two or more highly divergent styles. I shall deal with the particular problems of these types involved in actual examples of incorporation.

3.2. The Origins of Tupatic Totems

As was mentioned above, it is believed that the rich totemic culture of the North-West Coast First Nations — unique not only in detail but in its very existence in North America — arose because of the temperate climate of their region and the abundance of foodstuffs it provided. This relatively easy access to food allowed North West Coast First Nations to devote less time to sustaining themselves through hunting and gathering, and more time to developing a complex and nuanced artistic and cultural tradition. From this general cultural tradition, the totemic system emerged to express an increasingly complex system of beliefs, including the spiritual and

ceremonial understandings of the origins and relationships between phratries, clans, and families.

Fig. 2. Flag of the Russian-American Company 1835, (Wikimedia.org, 2018)

Fig. 3. Totem pole in Stanley Park, (Creative Commons, 2018)

An interesting theory about the evolution of emblematic tupati was put forward by Marius Barbeau. Barbeau wrote that the complexity of the NWC Indigenous Peoples' totemic system became much more pronounced after contact with Russian Fur Traders in or slightly before 1740. The basis for his claim is the apparent influence of the Russian imperial eagle, which was embossed on trade buttons — items highly sought after, and widely traded among the Peoples of the region. Barbeau posits that the totemic eagles with one or two heads are replicas of the eagle in the Russian Imperial Achievement, prominently displayed on the flag of the Russian American Company represented in Fig. 2.[24] While difficult to prove, this theory is nevertheless plausible, and if true, could provide a tenuous link between the current totemic system and European heraldic emblematics.

3.3 Basic Tupatic Motifs and Designs

The distinctive character of the design and representation of tupatic emblems has already been mentioned, but requires more specification. That is the subject of the present subsection.

It must first be explained that almost all NWC Indigenous Peoples' totemic figures are represented, in both two-dimensional and three-dimensional renderings, using one or more of a small set

[24] BARBEAU, 'Totemic Atmosphere', pp. 103-122

of characteristic motifs, arranged in a conventional manner. These motifs — either linear or solid in character — can be considered the building blocks of the *form* of emblematic tupati.

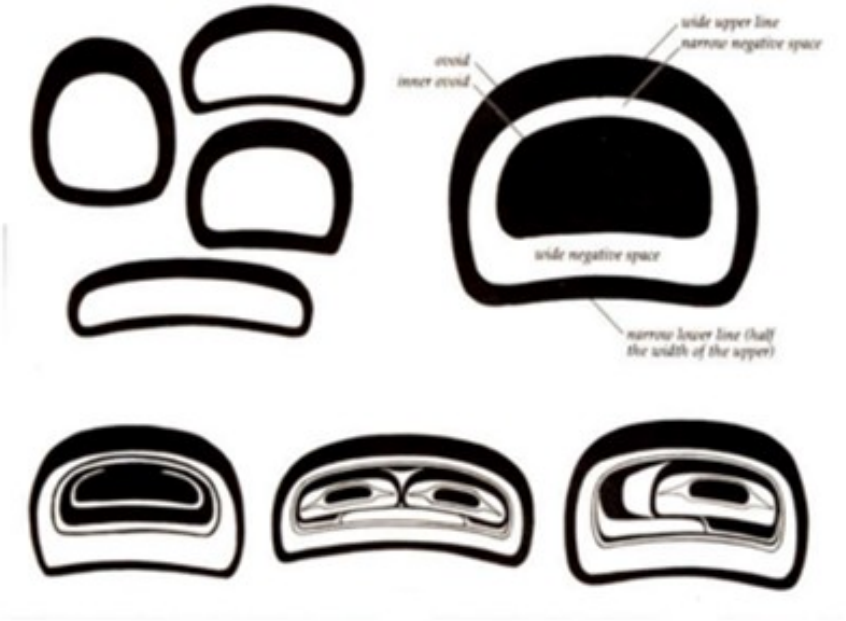

Fig. 4. Examples of Ovoids, Open and Solid
(From Stewart, *Looking at Indian Art of the Northwest Coast*, 1979).

The single most characteristic motif is the **Ovoid**: a type of stylized, rounded rectangle, which has both linear and solid variants with similar general outlines. A well-made Ovoid seems to be held in tension with the top edge appearing to be sprung upward as though from inner pressure and the lower edge with a slight bulge that seems to be caused by the pull of the inward corners.[25] The Ovoid most often takes an open linear shape, with the upper edge thicker than the lower edge. Such ovoids can be used in any proportions, from elongate and slender to globose or round. Solid Ovoids, less common than the open linear type, are generally found within an open Ovoid to provide depth and contrast, and are often found with a fine black line around them.

Ovoids are generally used to represent elements of an animal or human form, such as a head, wing, or eye socket. Interestingly,

[25] H. STEWART *Looking at Indian Art of the North West Coast.* Seattle (1979), p. 19.

the Haida word for Ovoid is the same as their word for the large dark spot on either side of a young *skate* — a type of *ray* found in the Pacific Ocean.[26]

Fig. 5. Placed inside a U Form, the tail feather of a red-shafted flicker forms a perfect Split U Form

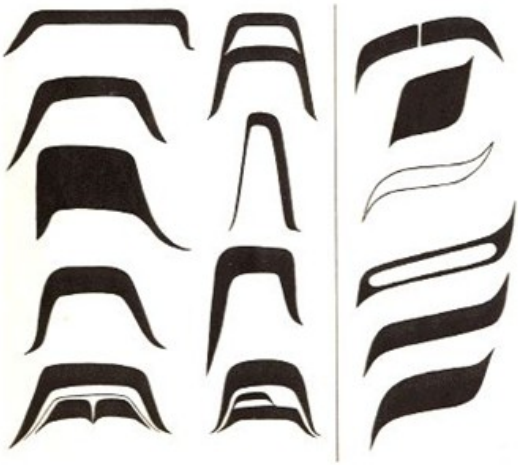

Fig. 6. Left - Examples of U Forms; Right - Examples of S Forms (ibid.)

Another component motif of tupatic design is one that may be termed the **U-Form**. U-forms can vary tremendously in proportion and are used to contour the body of a Totem. They can also be used to fill in open spaces — an example being feathers on the body of a bird.

A derivative of the U-Form is the **Split U-Form** which is often used in conjunction with the U-Form to fill space. The Haida word for the Split U Form translates as "flicker feather" due to its similarity to the tail feathers of the red-shafted flicker, which were often set vertically around the edge of a chief's headdress.

[26] Ibid, p. 20.

The **S-Form** is another motif commonly found in totems which is derived from two halves of a U-Form joined in the opposite direction. S- Forms have many uses in a design, quite often as a connecting element or to create an outline. Totemic *tupati* are almost all represented by combinations of the variants of these four motifs.

3.4. Characteristics Shared by Tupatic and Heraldic Emblems

There are some interesting similarities between tupatic and heraldic emblems that are worth exploring, given the recent practice of incorporating tupatic and related forms of emblem into heraldic badges, arms, and achievements.

Fig. 7. The Badge of the 19 Air Maintenance Squadron Featuring a Tlingit- Style Eagle (*an eagle displayed in the West Coast style, head to the sinister Sable Argent and Gules*) (Canada Gazette, 2006)

3.4.1. The Colours Common to Tupatic and Heraldic Emblems

As I have established that tupatic emblems are not heraldic, I shall refrain from using the tincture terms of blazonic terminology to describe them, but it is worth noting that all four of the **standard tupatic colours** correspond to '***colours***' (as distinct from ***metals*** and ***furs***) of heraldic design. The basic colours of NWC Indigenous

Peoples' totems are **black** and **red**. ***Black***, the dominant colour, is used to define the general structure of the image and to clarify its various anatomical structures where necessary. ***Red***, the secondary colour, is reserved for fill, shading, and elements of lesser importance. Occasionally an artist may reverse this order with the red line forming the image, but it is difficult to place this reversal in a historical context, and it is primarily used for artistic purposes. A *third* colour — and even more rarely, a *fourth* colour— may be added to increase the brilliance of the design: most often either **green** or **blue** (or both). Finally, a *fifth* colour — either **white** or the natural **pale yellow** inherent in carved wood— normally serves as a background colour within the design, as can be seen in the examples given in Figs. 7-12.

If required, each of these colours save the last can be blazoned easily in the heraldic system, apart from the tupatic emblem of a button blanket. The button blanket displays a unique "tincture" which may require a good deal of thought to properly address and blazon.

3.4.2. The Phenomena Represented in Both Emblematic Tupati and Heraldic Emblems of Various Species

Traditionally, the phenomena most commonly used as emblematic tupati have been the **raven**, the **eagle**, the **thunderbird**, the **beaver**, the **frog**, the **killer-whale**, the **bear**, the **owl**, the **halibut**, and the **starfish**. To these were added less commonly representations of other fauna, flora, and natural phenomena familiar to the Peoples of the region, including the **rainbow**, the **stars**, the **earthquake**, and the **glacier**.[27]

As this very partial inventory suggests, many of the natural phenomena that are common in emblematic *tupati* can also be found in European heraldic emblems. Examples include **eagles**, **hawks**, **ravens**, **bears**, **wolves**, and formalized representations of **stars** and other celestial phenomena. All of the more common phenomena in both systems have also been given more or less *formalized* standard representations with *exaggerated* characteristics, to make them more easily identifiable. This, however, is much less common in the

[27] M. BARBEAU, 'Totem Poles: Recent Native Art of the Northwest Coast of America', *Geographical Review, 20* (2) (1930), pp. 259-260

heraldic system, in which certain creatures — lions and eagles in particular — have long been given highly stylized forms, while most of the less common creatures (including bears, deer, and horses) are represented in something closer to their natural form.

It is important to note that in both the heraldic and the tupatic system there are a number of formal rules or guidelines which artists follow when representing charges or emblematic *tupati*. However, a fundamental difference between the two systems is that heraldic artists are ***not*** **constrained by *stylistic* rules** in realizing blazons, but ***are*** **constrained by the terms of the verbal description in which every motif charge is embodied**. Tupatic artists, by contrast, must follow the ***traditional stylistic conventions*** of tupatic representation.

Like the charges in the heraldic zoo that have acquired more-or-less standardized characteristic features (especially the lion and the eagle), tupatic creatures have come to be represented with certain characteristic features. For example, a **whale leaping** is always represented with five or six such features, which unequivocally indicate to anyone familiar with the tupatic system that the emblem is a *whale*. Conventions have been built up through generations of artistic continuity.[28] The distinctions can be seen quite clearly in the examples from each system in Figs. 8-13 below.

[28] Stewart, H. (1979). *Looking at Indian Art of the NorthWest Coast.* Seattle: University of Washington Press, 3.

Example 1: The Raven

Fig. 8. A Heraldic Raven
(Fox-Davies, 1909)

Figure 9. A Tupatic Raven,
(Wikimedia images, 2002)

Example 2: The Wolf

Figure 10. A Heraldic Wolf Rampant, (Fox-Davies, 1909)

Figure 11. A Tupatic Wolf,
(*Richmond Public Library)*

Example 3: The Bear

Fig. 12. A Heraldic Bear Rampant
(Switzerland, 1470/80)

Fig. 13. A Tupatic Bear
(Carrier Sekani Family Services)

3.4.3. Symbolism in the Tupatic and Heraldic Systems

The people of the Northwest Coast First Nations have been primarily animist in their beliefs, and have traditionally considered not only every *living thing*, but also every *element of the natural world* to possess both a **soul** or animating spirit, and a **will** or **purpose** of its own. In consequence all such creatures are believed to be deserving of respect from human beings. The images of their totems are intended in part as an acknowledgement of the power of the natural world.[29]

A *symbolic* character is therefore essential to tupatic emblems in general, and is intimately associated with the spiritual belief-system connecting particular kin-groups to particular animal spirits — normally embodied in a particular way in a single primordial creature, called **Raven**, **Bear**, **Whale**, or the like. Many of the animals and other beings of the natural world — real and imaginary — were also incorporated into the legends and stories of a phratry, clan, or family. These narratives would typically relate the adventures of an ancestor, and describe how the rights to a totem were obtained.

[29] G. Wyatt (1994). *Spirit Faces, Contemporary Masks of the Northwest Coast.* Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre., 5

Such myths would subsequently be adopted as emblematic tupati for phratries, clans, and families, and were accepted as part of the belief of each lineage.

Little comparable spiritualism exists within the traditional heraldic set of charges, most of which lack any symbolism beyond the rather banal sort in which *fierce* animals like lions or *fierce* birds like eagles represent *strength* and *ferocity*. Occasionally within the heraldic system a family legend or allusive charge may became integral to the achievement of arms, but the allegory loses its symbolic importance within a few generations.

For example, the Arms of the Douglas family are *Argent a heart Gules imperially crowned Or, and on a chief Azure three mullets of the first.* The charge of a *heart Gules* refers to the popular legend in which Robert the Bruce on his deathbed entrusted his heart to Sir James Douglas, to be taken to the holy land and presented at the church of the Holy Sepulchre. Several iterations of this common theme (deathbed instructions and bequeathings) resemble certain creation myths of the phratries of the NWC Indigenous Peoples. However, unlike the adherents of these creation myths, no member of the Douglas family is likely to view a heart as an integral part of the formation of their family traditions and values.

The *symbolism* of an image is thus essential to the nature and function of tupatic emblems, and is intimately connected with the general belief system of the NWC Indigenous Peoples. The type of symbolism in question is unknown in the heraldic system of emblems, and in fact once an image has been incorporated into a heraldic design, it becomes merely allusive to some element of the armiger's identity. Once a tupatic image is incorporated into the heraldic system, therefore, it ceases to have a recognizable symbolic significance in traditional Indigenous terms.

3.4.4. The Ownership and Transmission of Tupatic Emblems

The primary expression of status of the NWC Indigenous Peoples was the display of hereditary privileges. The head of the family controlled the use and distribution of these privileges among its members. These privileges arose from the ownership of family history and included rights in nearly all aspects social behaviour: the display of crest [*sic*] images, use of songs and performance of dances, use of

names, property, and so on.[30] As discussed previously, these privileges were inherited matrilineally; though some might be acquired as a gift, through marriage, or as spoils of war.

There is some similarity between tupatic and heraldic emblematics based on the shared characteristic of *hereditary ownership*, but this is merely superficial. When compared to that of European heraldry, the NWC Indigenous Peoples' transmission system of Totems could be compared most closely to that of the Polish commonwealth. Polish armigers, owing to the loss of the formal institution of heralds in the 15th century (and to the collective rather than individual rights to particular arms peculiar to that country), enjoy very limited controls over their transmission, and their designs are influenced by a tribal system in which the nobility, consisting of more than forty thousand families, uses about seven thousand distinct coats of arms and their variations.[31]

Although NWC Indigenous Peoples' Totems could only legally be displayed by their owners, their ownership is and was validated socially through a system of potlatches, and the principles governing their transmission are far more fluid than the strict rules laid out by the heraldic authorities of England, Scotland, and Canada, and by traditional conventions in most European countries.

3.5. Common Totemic Objects

Although there is a base-level familiarity with tupatic objects in the general Canadian population, it is important to highlight some of the common objects unique to the culture of the peoples in question. Like the arms of the heraldic systems — originally displayed on shields, but increasingly set on such additional items of martial equipment as horse trappers, banners, and martial coats (ultimately in the form of *tabards*, long worn only by heralds), and increasingly represented on objects of purely civil use including seals and dresses

[30] Neil, J. S. (1986). Masks and Headgear of Native American Ritual. *Theatre Journal, 38*(4), pp. 454.

[31] SULIGOWSKI, L. J. (1995). Polish Genealogical Society of America. Retrieved December 28, 2018, from https://pgsa.org/polish-history/polish-heraldry-nobility/a-crash-course-in-polish-heraldry/

— emblematic *tupati* were displayed in a variety of physical contexts, most of them conventional. These included **totem poles**, **house-fronts**, **household furnishings**, **chiefly mantels**, **button blankets**, and sheets of **beaten copper** used as marks of status.

In this section of my survey, I shall first identify and illustrate some of the more common objects used for the display of tupatic emblems, and then present a brief discussion of their recent inclusion in Canadian heraldic emblems. Each of these types of object represents a very important element of the regional culture, and requires a significant amount of additional study before its history and functions can be adequately understood.

3.5.1. Coppers

I shall begin with the objects that in English are called 'coppers'. These take the form of a plate of copper, hammered into the shape of an indigenous shield. They were an important symbol of wealth among the peoples of the North West Coast, particularly in the years before European contact. Coppers — like the analogous shields of the heraldic system —were often decorated with emblematic tupati and related designs. Each copper was given a distinctive name, and its potlatch history determined its value.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Hudson's Bay Company **trade blankets** were used to purchase coppers, and some of them were worth thousands of these blankets. Coppers were sometimes broken and thrown either into the *sea* or a *fire* as signs of the owner's wealth and status — an example of *conspicuous destruction* — but more frequently they were transferred between families at the time of marriage.[32]

[32] Gadacz, R. R. (2016). Coppers. *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. Retrieved January 02, 2019, from https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/coppers.

Fig. 14. A large copper decorated with a double-headed Eagle. The double-headed Eagle is not a traditional Haida emblem, but was adopted from the Imperial Russian form of this bird introduced by Russian fur traders in Alaska.

(Collected from Skedans before 1900 by Charles F. Newcombe.,

Fig. 15.
The Achievement of Judy Gingell, featuring as an additional supporter a Tlingit copper proper decorated to include designs representing salmon, crochet hooks, and a fishing hook Sable,

(Public Register of Arms, Flags and Badges of Canada, 1998)

One of the early grants of an armorial achievement represented in a largely Indigenous style was that to Judy Gingell, a distinguished political leader. The arms proper are of a conventional heraldic form, set on a standard form of shield, but the other elements, including the copper behind the shield, are Indigenous. Fig. 16 includes a badge in a wholly Indigenous style set on a copper of traditional shape.

Fig. 16: The Badge of the Nisga'a Nation, the *Hayatskw* emblem: *A Nisga'a copper Argent charged in chief with a beaver [affronty] embellished Sable and Gules, voided of the field.*

3.5.2. Totem Poles

The totem poles of the Northwest Coast of North America have long achieved global recognition, in a large part due to their stunning artistry. Marius Barbeau describes the figures on totem poles as symbols comparable to those of heraldry, which usually illustrate myths or tribal traditions. He points out that they are not objects of worship, but rather monuments erected by the various families in the tribe to commemorate their dead.

The goal of the carver of each pole is to demonstrate the right of the dedicatee to certain totems. Common Totems depicted included the eagle, the raven, the frog, the finback whale, the bear, the wolf and the thunderbird. The totems displayed varied on the basis of their claim to ownership of the totems, which were exclusive family property, and jealously guarded.[33]

Figure 17: "Ka'kan" Coast Salish house post and "Gyaana" Haida totem pole, Totem Plaza at Lions Lookout Park, White Rock, British Columbia, Canada. Carved from Western Red Cedar. The design for the house post is by Coast Salish (Musqueam) artist Susan A. Point and for the

[33] BARBEAU, *Totem Poles,* p. 259.

There have been many articles and books written on the culture, creation, and history of totem poles. This previously published research will not be reproduced here as it is readily available publicly, and of limited relevance to the Totemic system and its associated role in conventional heraldry. Due to their widespread recognition and artistic appeal, totem poles have come to be represented in various contexts in Canadian heraldry, particularly in grants of arms to organizations associated with the Northwest Coast, like those shown below in Figs. 18 and 19

Fig. 18. The Badge of RCSCC Masset-Haida, featuring as a charge a Haida Indian house post bearing the eagle and cormorant Totems of the Eagle Clan, proper.

(Royal Heraldry Society of Canada)

Fig. 19. The **Badge of the Military Police Security Service the figure of a Haida watchman *Or embellished Sable and Gules***

(Public Register of Arms, Flags and Badges of Canada, 2011

3.5.3. Cedar Bark Hats

A cedar bark hat is an important part of the formal dress of the peoples of the region in question here. These hats — taking the form of a truncated cone with deeply concave sides — date back to pre-Contact times, as we know from references to them in the records of the expeditions of Captain Cook to the region between 1776 and

1780.[34] They are created by twined weaving, and are made principally of cedar bark and grass spires. As Fig. 20 suggests, these hats were typically painted with emblematic tupati, wrapped around their concave outer surfaces.

Fig. 19: Haida painted woven hat, made of cedar bark
(Collected at Masset in 1911 by C. C. Perry, Canadian Museum of History)

These hats have yet to be incorporated into emblems granted by the Canadian Heraldic Authority, but they could usefully be incorporated as a form of chiefly insignia, or as simple charges in arms granted to their owners. For this reason, their existence, significance, and methods of incorporating tupatic emblems should also be understood by Canadian heralds and heraldists.

3.5.4. Masks

Masks of various forms, carved from wood, and painted in the same manner as totem poles, have long formed an important context for the display of tupatic emblems, especially in ceremonial dances. Each normally represents the head of one of the tupatic creatures to which their owner has a claim, and often has one or more moving parts — especially the lower jaw — operated by the wearer in a fashion not unlike that of a European puppet. As this suggests,

[34] C. C. WILLOUGHBY, 'Hats from the Nootka Sound Region', *The American Naturalist, 37* (433), (1903), p. 66.

masks allowed their owners to take on the persona of the totemic creature by disguising themselves as the creatures, in the context of a dance that itself represented the origin of the relationship between the creature and the ancestor of the person wearing the mask (and usually a related costume of some sort).

On the basis both of their three-dimensional form and the manner of their wear (on the head), masks most closely resemble the *crests* of the European heraldic tradition, though the latter differ from them both in being attached to the *apexes* of helmets, and in lacking a totemic character. Masks always represent a totemic being, and the rights of their owner to own and dance with a mask are acquired in the same fashion as the totems they embody.[35]

Both masks and the dances in which they are principally displayed can take many forms, all of which have their own unique symbolism. Masks were also part of the 'property' of the phratry, clan, or family who claimed them, and were only danced by those who had the right to them.

[35] G. WYATT, *Spirit Faces, Contemporary Masks of the Northwest Coast* (Vancouver, 1994), p. 5

Fig. 20: Eagle mask with movable wings; Nootka
(North America department, Ethnological Museum, Berlin, Germany; Jacobsen collection, 1881), *Wikimedia Commons*, 2009

So far, tupatic masks as such have not been incorporated into heraldic emblems in Canada, but the possibility of employing them either as charges in arms or as crests remains open.

Fig. 21. Button Blanket procession at R. Davidson and T-L Williams's wedding (Virtual Museum of Canada, Photo by Sandra Price, 1998)

3.5.5. Button Blankets

Tupatic emblems have also been employed by their indigenous owners as elements of the design of ceremonial garments called 'button blankets'. The latter are generally made of a trade blanket in dark-coloured wool, whose edges are trimmed across the top and down the two sides with bright red woollen cloth. Pearl buttons decorate the background in rows next to the border, and are arranged in the centre in the form of a tupatic emblem. A traditional button blanket is the sister of the totem pole, and like the pole, proclaims hereditary rights, obligations, and powers.

Interestingly, several sources state that historically only the wealthy and well-born wore button blankets. Those who were not chiefs, heads of house, or immediate members of their families, wore instead cloaks in the form of plain blanket.[36]

Ceremonial 'crested' robes — as those decorated with emblematic buttons are commonly miscalled — and other types of insignia associated with them have been among the most spectacular creations of the indigenous peoples of the region. These robes are powerful statements of identity and, in donning them,

[36] OTNESS, *Button Blanket, p.* 104.

people become in a real sense what they wear.[37] A button robe is a coded document that is decipherable by those who understand the traditions of the people in question, and helps to impart the power of the totems it bears to the wearer.

Button blankets emerged as a direct result of the availability of trade goods such as blankets and trade buttons. Prior to contact, a button blanket would have been too time-consuming to create from abalone shells. However, Indigenous people were wearing button blankets all along the west coast by the early 1800s, as trading caused a cultural shift in North West Coast First Nations culture.[38]

Historically button blankets were used primarily in formal ceremonial events such as a potlatch. If an owner's totem and blanket was "validated, the blanket would be worn while dancing, singing, telling stories, and making speeches. They were also draped over the deceased during funerals."[39] Today button blankets maintain a similar and adaptive role in important ceremonies including weddings.

There is currently no representation of a button blanket in Canadian heraldic emblems, although the emblematic tupati displayed on button blankets are regularly granted in achievements of arms as crests, charges, and supporters. Given the importance of button blankets to the NWC Indigenous Peoples, there is potential to incorporate button blankets into the Canadian heraldic system. One suggestion is to create a category, unique within the Canadian Heraldic Athourity, in which a button blanket could be recognized as a form of emblematic display comparable to a heraldic banner, standard, or guidon, should the owner desire such a recognition, and apply for it. This grant could be considered an additional form of validation, similar to the validation gained at a potlatch, and would also strengthen the ownership of the design in a modern, more inclusive, and more generally accessible context.

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[37] D. JENSEN, *Robes of Power: Totem Poles on Cloth.* (Vancouver, (1986). p. v.

[38] OTNESS, *Button Blanket*, p. 63.

[39] Ibid., 105

If this approach were adopted, some consideration would have to be given to the blazoning of a button blanket. Although mother of pearl could be blazoned as Argent, given the iridescence of the material and the uniqueness of the imagery as it relates to NWC Indigenous Peoples' Totems, an argument could be made that the term *proper* is not suitable, and that the mother of pearl buttons should be blazoned distinctly. Fox-Davies suggests that '*when a natural animal is found existing in various colours it is usual to so describe it, for the term "proper" alone would leave uncertainty*'.[40] Unfortunately, no such colour-name exists for mother of pearl, and Argent would be unsuitable. One suggestion is to blazon the tincture representing buttons on button blankets as 'bulla'— the Latin word for button.

3.6. The Use and Display of Tupatic Emblems

Like the achievements recorded on European lintels, manor gates, and knightly stall-plates, NWC Indigenous people left a history of their family and clan at their ancestral homes in the form of totem poles. These First Nations 'achievements' were also displayed on traditional elements of dress such as button blankets and cedar hats, not dissimilar to tabards, surcoats, and helmet crests. In fact, according to Barbeau, the noblest and wealthiest families in a phratry or clan make a frequent use of representations of their tupatic emblem on their masks, and in the form of sculptures, high and low relief carvings, tattooing, and decorative painting. In some cases, a chief would wear on his head or over his face, the mask representing his phratric, clan, or family 'crest'.[41] Comparable examples of the use of armorial emblems can be found throughout European heraldic history.

[40] A. C. FOX-DAVIES, *A Complete Guide to Heraldry.* (London, 1909), p. 75.
[41] BARBEAU, 'The Bearing of the Heraldry', p. 87.

BUILDINGS: LINTELS AND HOUSE POSTS

Fig. *22*.
A lintel in Ippoton St., Rhodes
(Wikimedia commons, used

Fig. 24.
A lintel and house-post

CLOTHING:
TABARD AND BUTTON BLANKET

Fig. 23. The velvet tabard of Sir William Dugdale, Garter King of Arms from 26th April 1677 to 10th February 1686,
(FOX-DAVIES, 1909)

Fig. 24. A dark blue trade wool blanket with the design of a double-headed Eagle,
(Canadian Museum of History)

HEADGEAR 1:
CRESTED HELMET & CEDAR HAT

Fig. 25. Crest of William de Montagu, Earl of Salisbury (d. 1344). (From his seal)
(Fox-Davies, 1909)

Fig. 26. A Painted woven hat, circa 1885,
(Wikimedia)

(Wikimedia Commons used with permission by Joe Mabel, 2010*)*

HEADGEAR 2: MASKS

Fig. 27. Sallet in the Shape of a Lion's Head
(The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000-2018)

Fig. *28*. A Haida Wolf mask, circa 1880 (*Wikimedia commons*, used with permission by Ethnologisches Museum, Berlin-Dahlem)

4. Combining the Heraldic and Tupatic Emblematic Systems

As we have seen, there are several important differences between the heraldic and the tupatic systems of signs that make the full incorporation of the latter into armorial emblems nearly impossible.

The armorial system of emblems emerged as a means of identification for nobles and knights in battle and martial games, and evolved into a more general system for marking the identity and nobility of thousands of named patrilineages and their branches and sub-branches, and also to the west of the Rhine (through differencing and marshalling), the place of any particular member of a patrilineage within its structure, and matrilineal descent from heiresses of other noble patrilineages. They generally lack mythic or spiritual associations, are often purely geometrical in character, and their meanings are not expressed through any form of ritual display. Finally, the conventions that govern their design, though distinctly constraining, permit a virtually unlimited number of distinct emblems, differentiated by combinations of figures of every imaginable type, represented in at least nine distinct colours and a comparable number of patterns, set at four distinct angles and four

distinct orientations, in numbers ranging from one to sixteen, and in almost any imaginable combination.

The *tupatic* system of emblems, by contrast, emerged as the expression in a *totemic* manner of an entire system of beliefs about the mythic origins of kindreds (defined and organized in quite different ways), and about the relationships of those groups with animal and other natural spirits, mythically associated with their origins. Tupatic emblems are accordingly endowed with a strong *spiritual* character, which is claimed not only through their *static* display on houses and totem poles, but more importantly through active *ceremonies.* In these, the visual emblems are associated with songs and dances that are no less emblematic of their owners, representing them as members of their *phratry*, *clan*, and *family*, in the context both of their particular *nation* and their regional *culture*. Because of this, their incorporation into *any* element of an armorial achievement — whose representational range is entirely different — effectively removes such visual emblems from them their cultural context, and deprives them of most of their significance in the eyes of their society.

Finally, in their normal graphic and sculptural forms, tupatic figures are *independent* of any particular *field* comparable to that *inherent* in heraldic arms, and their identity as emblems is not normally associated with any particular *attitude*, *orientation*, *number*, or *set of colours* — all inherent in armal charges, crests, and badges. Instead, they are represented, both in two- and three-dimensional realizations, in any combination of a very limited set of colours — typically, as we have seen, black and red on a white ground — and in a highly stylized manner. This manner of representation, while differing in details from one *rendering* to another, and even more from one *national tradition* to another, serves both to indicate that the figures belong to the emblematic system of that culture and nation, and to differentiate them markedly from heraldic analogues.

Given the flexibility of stylistic representation permitted in the heraldic tradition, it is possible to represent the elements of a heraldic achievement entirely in a *tupatic style* — though that can only be optional, at the discretion of the artist. By contrast, the incorporation into an achievement in any style of a single element in

a style completely different from that of the rest of the composition is in fact strongly contrary to the heraldic stylistic tradition, and can only be visually jarring.

For these reasons, even where it might otherwise seem appropriate to do so, incorporating emblematic *tupati* into heraldic designs presents a number of serious difficulties. These include in addition to those just adduced a problem of establishing a **blazon**. The blazonic descriptions in which arms and other heraldic emblems are legally embodied must specify the *nature*, *number*, *orientation*, *tinctures* and other characteristics of its design. No suitable method of doing this for tupatic emblems currently exists, and Canadian heralds are reduced to designating them as charges in a particular cultural tradition — a tradition alien to heraldry, and unlikely to be familiar even to an expert heraldist.

Despite the difficulties in reconciling the conventions of tupatic and heraldic emblems, the heralds of the Canadian Heraldic Authority have already incorporated a number of tupatic emblems in grants of badges, crests, and arms to Indigenous groups and individuals, and given the political climate in Canada, it is likely that they will continue to do so. As the following examples indicate, the armorial emblems in question have drawn from different national styles, and have been granted to petitioners of a wide variety of types, from universities and military units to restaurants.

Fig. 31. The Achievement of Capilano University, featuring a salmon hauriant contourné Azure embellished Argent in the Coast Salish Style

(Public Register of Arms,

Fig. 32. The Achievement of Paul's Restaurant Ltd., with a pair of *delgryphi* Or embellished Gules, and a copper crest, in the Kwakwaka'wakw style

(Public Register of Arms,

5. Conclusion

Although the display of tupatic emblems was originally confined to the contexts permitted by the tupatic totemic systems of the various indigenous nations of the North-West Coast of Canada, elements of the tupatic system — including coppers, individual tupatic animals, and totem poles — are increasingly being granted as badges, crests, and armal charges in Canada.

Unfortunately, the resemblances between the tupatic system of emblems and the heraldic emblematic system are entirely superficial. There are profound differences, with perhaps the most important being the impossibility of accurately blazoning a tupatic element in the heraldic system. Until a formalized description of the component tupatic motifs and designs is developed, it will be difficult to formally and accurately describe the nature, orientation, tinctures and other characteristics of tupatic emblems when they are granted elements of armories. At present, therefore, incorporating emblematic *tupati* creates significant problems for blazoning. However, the heraldic emblematic system is a living code that must reflect the values and customs of the people who use it. As there is an increased focus in Canada on Indigenous people, and because of the striking beauty of tupatic emblems, they and the culture they represent are increasingly popular. As heraldic practices in Canada evolve, tupatic imagery should and will be increasingly included in heraldic emblems, and Canadian heralds will be required to develop a system of blazoning them.

Fig. 33: The Badge of the 478 (Nanaimo) Communications Squadron with a raven in a tupatic style affronty
(Public Register of Arms, Flags and Badges of Canada, 2010)

Fig. 34: The Achievement of The City of Abbotsford, with a crest including a tupatic Thunderbird
(Public Register of Arms, Flags and Badges of Canada, 1995)

Sommaire en français

Cet article examine systématiquement la nature du système emblématique 'tupatique' des peuples indigènes du côte ouest du Canada, sa connection profonde avec leurs cultures et croyances animistiques, les formes et les origines de ses éléments visuels, leur expression en costumes, masques, objets sculptés comme les mâts totémiques, la décoration des façades de leur maisons, et rituels de plusieurs types — dont tous servent à proclamer le droit de possession de l'emblématigère. Il examine aussi la pratique croissante d'incorporer des élements visuels du système tupatique dans les emblèmes héraldiques créés par l'Autorité Héraldique du Canada, pour une variété d'entités, ou indigènes ou possédantes quelque association avec un peuple indigène, et les problèmes créés par les différences profondes entre les principes et les forms des deux systèmes emblématiques.