

## Totem Poles According to Location

### TSIMSYAN-NISKÆS

#### GITIKS AND ANGYADÆ VILLAGES (*down Nass River*)

**The Pole of Negwa'on of Angyadæ**, on an island above Angyadæ, Nass River, according to Chief Weehawn (Moody); William Beynon, interpreter, 1927.

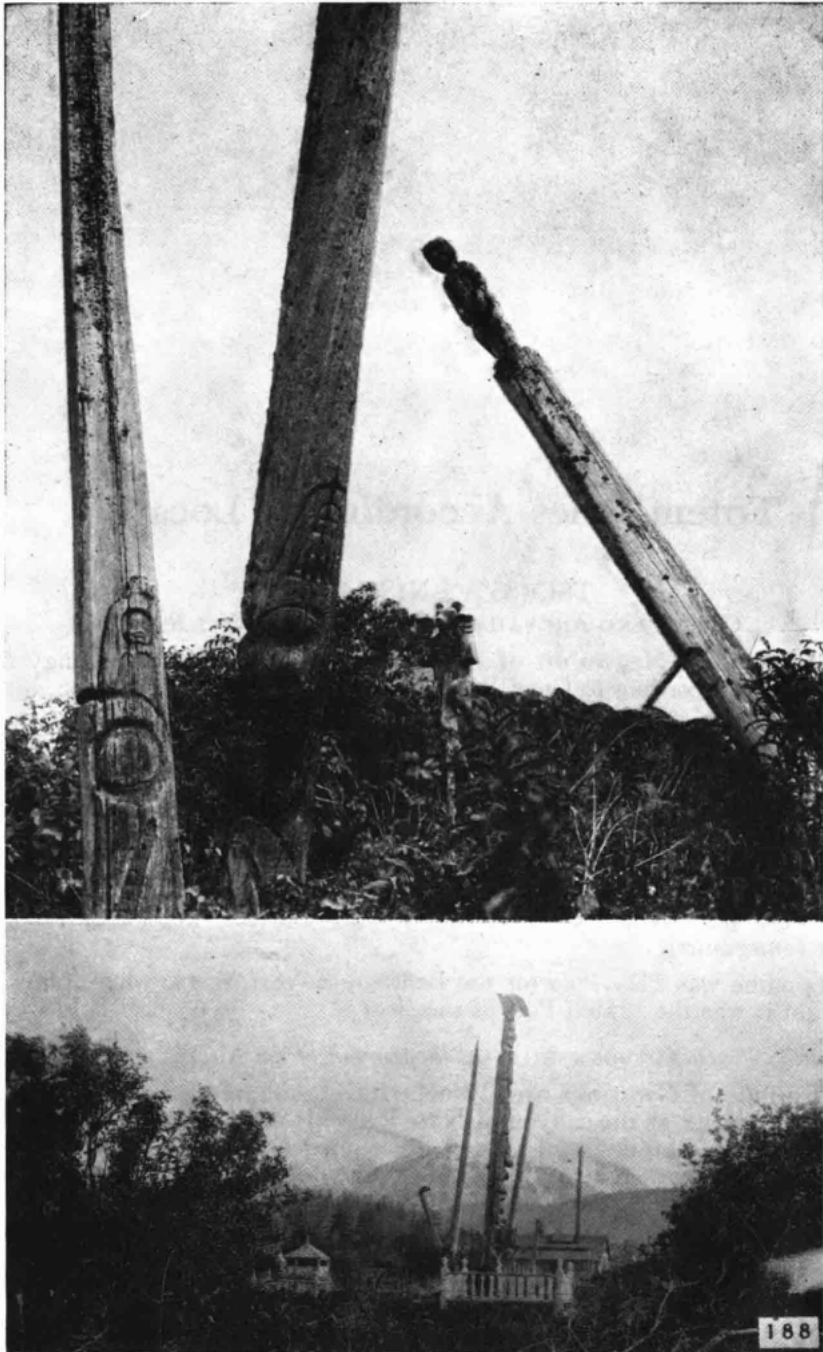
This "very old" pole was named after its owner, Negwa'on (Long-Arms). His was a *narhnorh* or spirit name. Negwa'on belonged to the same Wolf clan as Sqateen of Gitlarhdamks up river. At the feast when this name was assumed, the new bearer dramatized it by wearing appended very long arms with sharp ends. The lowest figure on the totem pole at one time also had long arms, but these disappeared long ago. The island where it stood amid tall cotton trees (which made photographing difficult) was called Happy-Place (*antegwalæ*).

Its name was Play-Pole (of the Bear) — *an'maisemerh*: where plays — or again it was the Watch-Pole of the Bear.

#### GITWINKSIHLK (*at the canyon of the Nass*)

**The Pole of Gwaneks and 'Weelarhæ** of the Fireweed (*Gisrast*) group of Gitwinksihlku at the canyon of Nass River. It stood on the south side of the canyon on the deserted village site named Gwunahaw. Purchased in 1929 by the author for the Museum of the American Indian, New York City, it now stands in the court of the Annex of this museum in the Bronx.

*Description.* This pole, 40 or 50 feet tall, was known under the name of Niqanskyi (lies over the top), from the figure at the top. The bow represents the Rainbow (*marhe*), a crest in this clan. The next emblem (2) is the Blackfish or Killer-Whale (*'narhl*); (3) One-legged being (*negut-ligirhna'ts*), spoken of in a myth; (4) Sun (*hlawqs*); (5) unidentified by the informants; (6) Grizzly-Bear-of-the-Sea (*mediegem-dzawey'aks*).



(Upper group) Old totems at the abandoned village of Angyadæ on Nass River  
(Lower group) Totems and graves at the same village



Graveyard figure at Gitiks  
on Nass River



The pole of Negwa'on of Angyadæ



Pole of Gwaneks and 'Weelarhæ at the canyon of Nass River. To the left, as it stood in the bush

*Carver, age.* It was one of the first poles erected at Gwunahaw, about 1890. Bryan Peel (Ligwen, in Wideldal's house, Fireweed formerly of the Gitsemkælem tribe on the mid-Skeena) carved it. His father, of Gwunahaw, was Gwandeman. Peel began carving poles by assisting Qaguhlæn. Then he helped Neeskinwætċ in the work on Toq's pole at Gitlarhdamks. This pole now stands on the top of the hill in the park of the Canadian National Railways at Prince Rupert. (Peel, about 1920, carved the figure with a war club at the top.) His next job was carving the pole of Gwanemks in Gwunahaw village.

(Informant, Peter Neesyawq, Wolf chief of Gitlarhdamks, 1929; William Beynon, interpreter.)

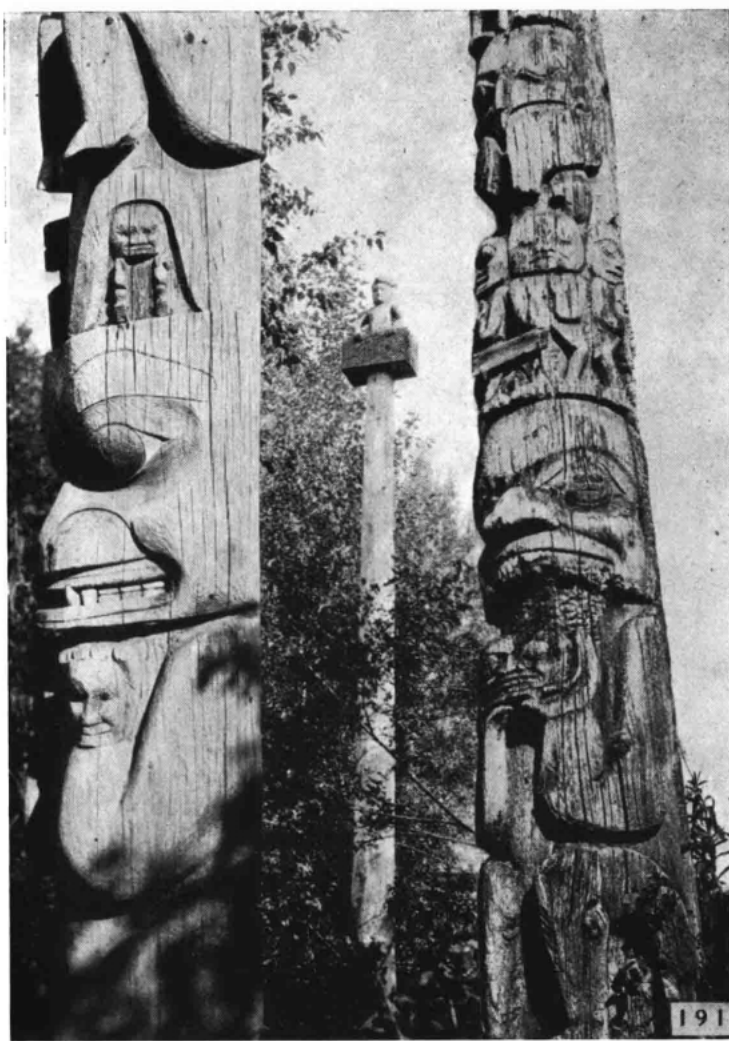
*Function, carver, age.* It was known as "Henry Adzeks' father's pole" and has been raised in commemoration of a former Gwaneks. Erected about 1911, according to one informant (about 1892, according to another), it had been carved by Qaderh (of the house of Kyærhk, Wolf, of the village of Gitlarhdamks on the river above). Other informants (William Moore and Mrs. Adzeks) claimed that it had been carved by Bryan Peel (Nigwen) of Gitlarhdamks. But, at best, Peel could only have assisted, being too young then for the full job. (He was still living in 1929.) Another pole, exactly the same in appearance, is said to have stood on the other side of the canyon where the present village stands; it was burned about 1892 in the fire that destroyed the settlement and most of the poles.

Old Neesyawq of Gitlarhdamks stated that the new pole was already standing at Gwunahaw two years before the fire.

*Informants.* Peter Neesyawq, the old Wolf chief of Gitlarhdamks, and Henry Adzeks, Agwilarhæ, an Eagle, of Gitwinksihlk, 1929; William Beynon, interpreter.)

**The Half-Protruding pole** (*ksede-philku*) of Arhtimenawdzek, Wolf chief, at Gwunahaw, the deserted village on the south side of the canyon of Nass River, opposite the village of Gitwinksihlk. It was the second pole of this family.

*Description.* This pole is a plain, round shaft, quite tall — 40 or 50 feet — with a single human figure with a box at the top. The figure and the box gave its name to this monument.



(Left) Bear-Mother pole at Gwunahaw, canyon of the Nass  
 (Centre) The Half-protruding pole of Arhtimenawdzek at Gwunahaw  
 (Right) A pole, half burned, at the canyon of the Nass

GITLARHDAMKS (*up river*)

WOLF PHRATRY

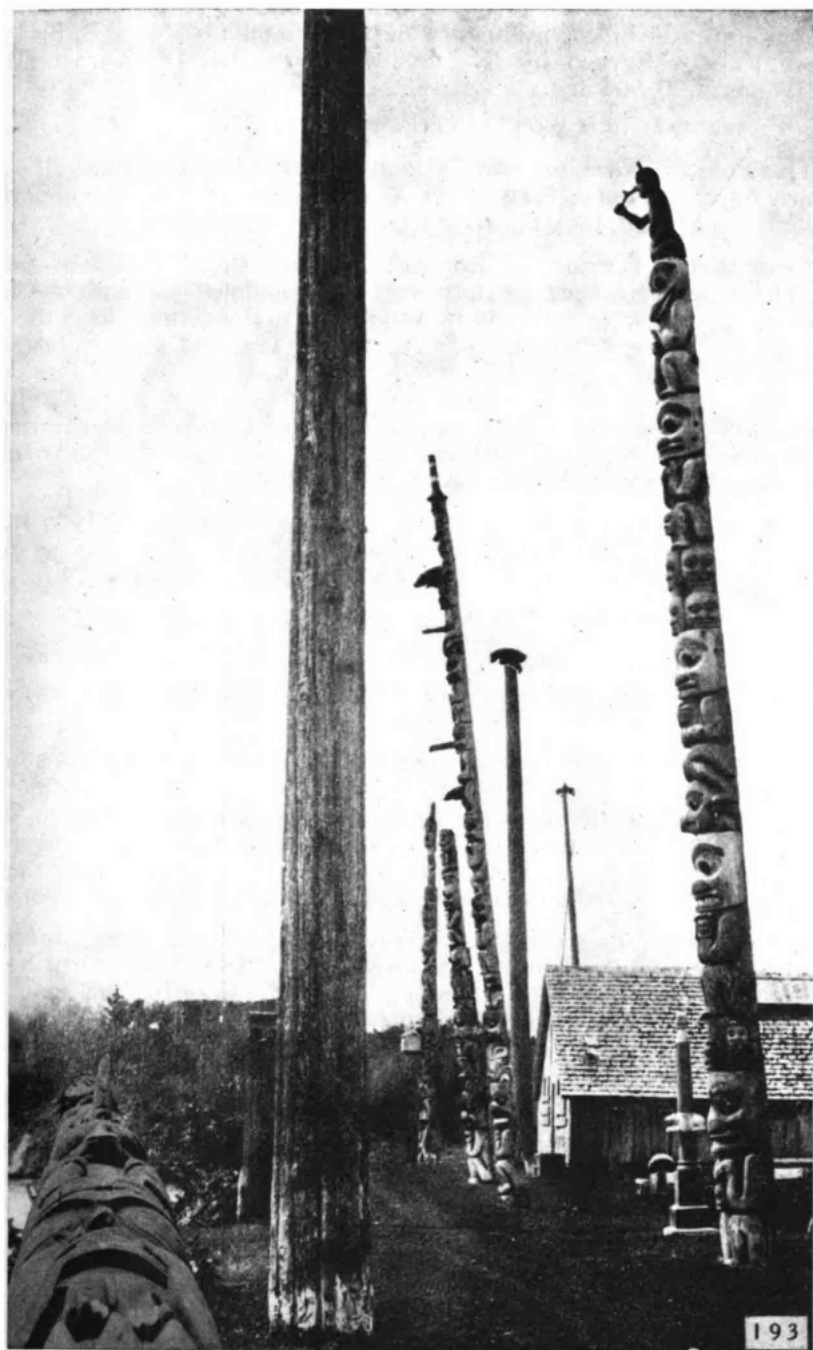
**The Pole of Towq**, head of a Wolf clan of Gitlarhdamks on upper Nass River. It was the ninth in the row from the uppermost pole along the Nass river front.

*Description.* It stood in front of Towq's house, called Ladder-of-Slabs (*kanærhsem-daeħ*). Its figures, from the top, are: (1) Kamlugyides—Person wearing Woods (*kaidem-wudenyæ*), a hat of ermine (*kaidem'meksihl*), and



The pole of Towq at Gitlarhdams on upper Nass River. Now at Prince Rupert

holding a war club (*haralar*) — illustrating a myth belonging to the clan; (2) Bear (*smaih*) whose full name is Bear-broken-free or Sitting-Bear holding cubs on each hand (*smaiyen-kalp-kan*) — also referring to a myth; (3) Person-looking-out-from (*kwilgyan-ksi-gyet*) — spoken of in a myth; (4) Human-steps or People-of-the-ladder (*kanærhsem-dæik*), a special crest carved for the runways of a canoe or for launching their canoes — also explained in a myth; (5) a Person (?); (6) Thunderbird (*Skyemsem*); Towq used only the carved bill of this mythical bird; (7) Double-headed Person (*kaodirh-gyet*).



Totem poles at Gitlarhd amks, upper Nass River.  
The pole to the right is that of Towq, now in Prince Rupert

*Function, carver, age.* Erected in commemoration of a former Towq. It now stands on the hilltop in the park of the Canadian National Railways, at Prince Rupert. Carved by 'Neeskyinwætk, assisted by Kyærh (Bryan Peel), about 50 years ago.

(Informant, Dennis Wood of Gitlarhdamks.)

**The Pole of 'Neesyoq and 'Neeskyinwæt**, members of a Wolf clan at Gitlarhdamks, on upper Nass River. It stood seventh from the uppermost in the row of poles along the river front.

*Description.* It stood in front of a house called House-of-the-Sky (*wilplarhæ*) and belonged to the *ptsæn* type (hollow-back and carved all over). Its figures, from top to bottom, are: (1) mythical man with the deep sea cockle adhering to a rock (*kal'own*) holding his hand fast — illustrating a myth; (2) the head of the Sperm Whale (*hlpoon*), the jaw hanging down; (3) Person (*gyet*) wearing a garment with many faces on it, probably the Garment-of-Marten (*gwisha'dao'tk*); (4) the bird Gyaibelk, at the bottom of the pole. This mythical bird was also used as a head-dress (*amhallait*) and as a spirit (*narhnorh* or *narhnok*).

*Function, carver, age.* Erected in memory of a former 'Neesyoq by the present (in 1927) chief of the same name, an old man. It no longer exists. Carved by Paræt'Nærhl, assisted by his son, about eighty years ago.

(Informant, Dennis Wood of Gitlarhdamks.)

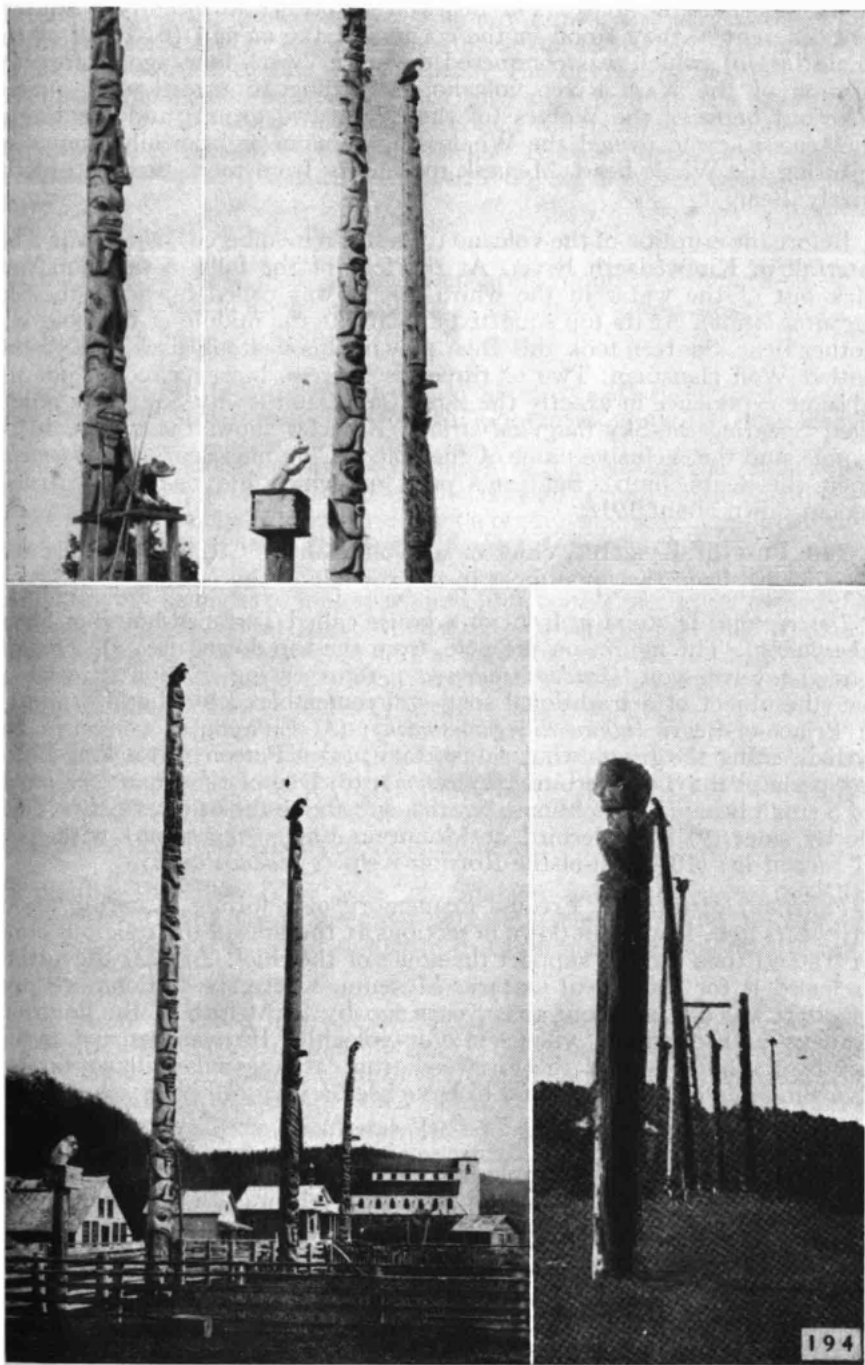
**Totem Poles of 'Neesyoq**, head of a Wolf clan at Gitlarhdamks.

Of the two totem poles belonging to 'Neesyoq, the older rotted away and fell. It was the monument of Kwistarhkaiks.

The second pole was erected near the spot now occupied by the house of Sqateen when the present 'Neesyoq (in 1927) was still young; he had just been married and raised to the rank of chief. When it was cut down with most of the others in 1918, it was already getting weak. A young man climbed the pole — it was 10 fathoms high — and tied a rope near the top. After he had come down, the pole was pulled down; it broke into pieces.

The crests on the second pole were: (1) Deep-Sea-Cockle (*takahla'on*), which had caught the hand of an ancestor and held it fast until he was drowned by the rising tide, according to the tradition of this clan. The carving representing the cockle was saved, as it was still intact after the pole was destroyed. But a "silly boy spoilt it, when his elders were away hunting." (2) Gyebelurh, a large mythical bird in the water. (3) Red Sun at sunset on the sea (*hlawqsem-larh-saildem*). According to the tradition, some members of this household and their Wolf friends of Gitlarhdamks once went in their canoes to trade with the Gitrahla tribe of Tsimsyans, on Porcher Island out to sea. On their way they beheld with surprise the red sun before it set into the sea and considered it a supernatural experience. They took it as their own exclusive crest. Their surprise was due to their being an up-river people, used to walking the trails rather than travelling in canoes. (4) Garment of Marten (*gwis-hadarwtk*), spoken of in the clan tradition. On the totem pole, this crest had the natural appearance of a marten (perhaps more than one), head and all. (5) Graded house of Beechwood (*da'gam-kalp*), which was two steps deep. Four Bears were carved on





Totem poles at Gitlarhdamks

the main posts of the house. (The Bears on the posts of the family of Sqateen were different — they stood in the corners of the *da'aq*.) (6) Head of the Whale (*hl'pin*), which was conquered during a "war" long ago, before the eruption of the Nass River volcano. According to tradition, a quarrel broke out between the Wolves (of the 'Neesyawq group) and the Eagles (of Menæsk), who owned the Whale. In the same fight, while they were capturing the Whale head, Menæsk took away from them the head of the Grizzly Bear.

Before the eruption of the volcano (it is still remembered), there was a big waterfall in Kimwedzerh River. At the foot of the falls, a tall slim pole stuck out of the water in the whirlpool. It was called Spearing-the-Sky (*hagyahl-larhæ*). At its top squatted a bear. At the middle of the pole was another Bear. Sqateen took this Bear pole for his crest, as also did Kyærhk, another Wolf clansman. Two or three discoverers, however, could not use the same experience in exactly the same way. That is why Sqateen's pole is called Spearing-the-Sky (*hagyæhl-larhæ*). Kyærhk shows the two bears on his pole, and the exclusive name of the pole is Climbing-Bears (*anmisesmrhs*: Where-the-Bears-climb). Sqateen's pole, on which his Bear was carved, was cut down about 1918.

**The Pole of Kyærhk**, chief of a Wolf clan at Gitlarhdamks. It was the eleventh from the uppermost in the row along the Nass river front.

*Description.* It stood in front of a house called Terraced-house-of-Stone (*takanlaw'p*). The figures on the pole, from the top down, are: (1) Hat-of-Coming-towards-you (*kaidem'wudenyæ*), representing a hunter with a bow (the object of a traditional song still remembered by the informant); (2) Prince-of-Bears (*hkuwælksegem-smaih*); (3) Lu'ayoq, a person in the myth directing the guests what side to take; (4) a Person; (5) a long-billed bird, perhaps the Thunderbird (*skyemsem*); (6) Den-of-the-Bear (*spesmaih*) and a small bear; (7) two human figures, one above the other; (8) two birds side by side; (9) Thunderbird or Mountain Eagle (*skyemsem*) with long bill turned in; (10) Man-of-the-Rotting-Kelp (*gyædem-s'aurh*).

*Function, carver, age.* Erected in memory of a former Kyærhk, about sixty years ago. It was cut down in sections at the time of the religious craze of 1918 and then used to support the house of the chief. In 1927 the author purchased it for the Royal Ontario Museum, where six sections are preserved. It was carved about sixty years ago by 'Arhtsiprh of the house of Gwaneks at the canyon village of Gitwinksihlk. He was assisted in his work by Paul Hlæderh of the Fireweed group at Angyædæ village, farther down the same river. It was said to have been a very tall pole.

(Informant, Dennis Woods of Gitlarhdamks.)

**Roasted-Person.** The pole of Kstiyaorh called Roasted-Person (*anyawskyet*), in a Wolf clan of Gitlarhdamks. It was the thirteenth pole from the uppermost in the row along the Nass river front.

*Description.* It stood in front of the house of Kstiyaorh, a house with steps downwards inside (*da'aq*) called "da'aq into which a man was taken" (*dagomlutrahgyet*); after the guests passed the entrance, it was blocked and nobody was allowed to leave. This was in commemoration of a former Kstiyaorh who had killed Temnonerh of Gitlarhdamks, above the canyon

of Skeena River, after having imprisoned him in his house and roasted him in retaliation for a raid of the Gitsalas tribe of the same river. The name of the pole also alluded to this ancient deed. The figures on the pole were: (1) Temnonerh, who stood at the top with a stick through the head, this being called roasting stick (*anyaw*) (Although the name of this figure was never announced because of the then friendly relations between the tribes, everybody knew what it meant.); (2) Tsihyaqyaq, a person upside down, perhaps a similar allusion; (3) Wolf erect (*kyibu*); (4) Double-headed Person (*kaodirhgyet*), at the bottom.

*Carver, age.* A short pole, about seven arms (double) in length; it was carved by Paræt'nærhl about eighty years ago. It no longer exists.

(Informant, Dennis Woods of Gitlarhdams.)

**The Pole of Sqateen**, member of a Wolf clan of Gitlarhdams. Its name is now forgotten. It was the sixth from the uppermost along the river front.

*Description.* It stood in front of the house of Sqateen, of the *ptsæn* type (hollow-back and carved), and was of the terraced (*da'aq*) type. This house bore the name mentioned in the nursery song of the owners: Where-outwards-swims-with (*wiluks-tiyoret*). Its carved figures, from the top down, were: (1) Garment-with-human faces (*kwis-kalyæn* or *qaqakalyæn*), representing a man going out at night to molest women (illustrative of a myth owned by this family), used as a crest, also as a *narhnok* (spirit); (2) Weeping-Woman, a carved figure with a short nose and a large labret in the lower lip (mentioned in the same myth); (3) Wolf (*kyibu*); (4) Mountain-Goat (*matih*) standing; (5) Bear (*smaih*) of the type called Gilarhkan.

*Function, carver, age.* Erected in memory presumably of Gyælre and Rhain; former members of Sqateen's household. It no longer exists. It was carved by Paræt'Nærhl, of Gitlarhdams, about seventy years ago.

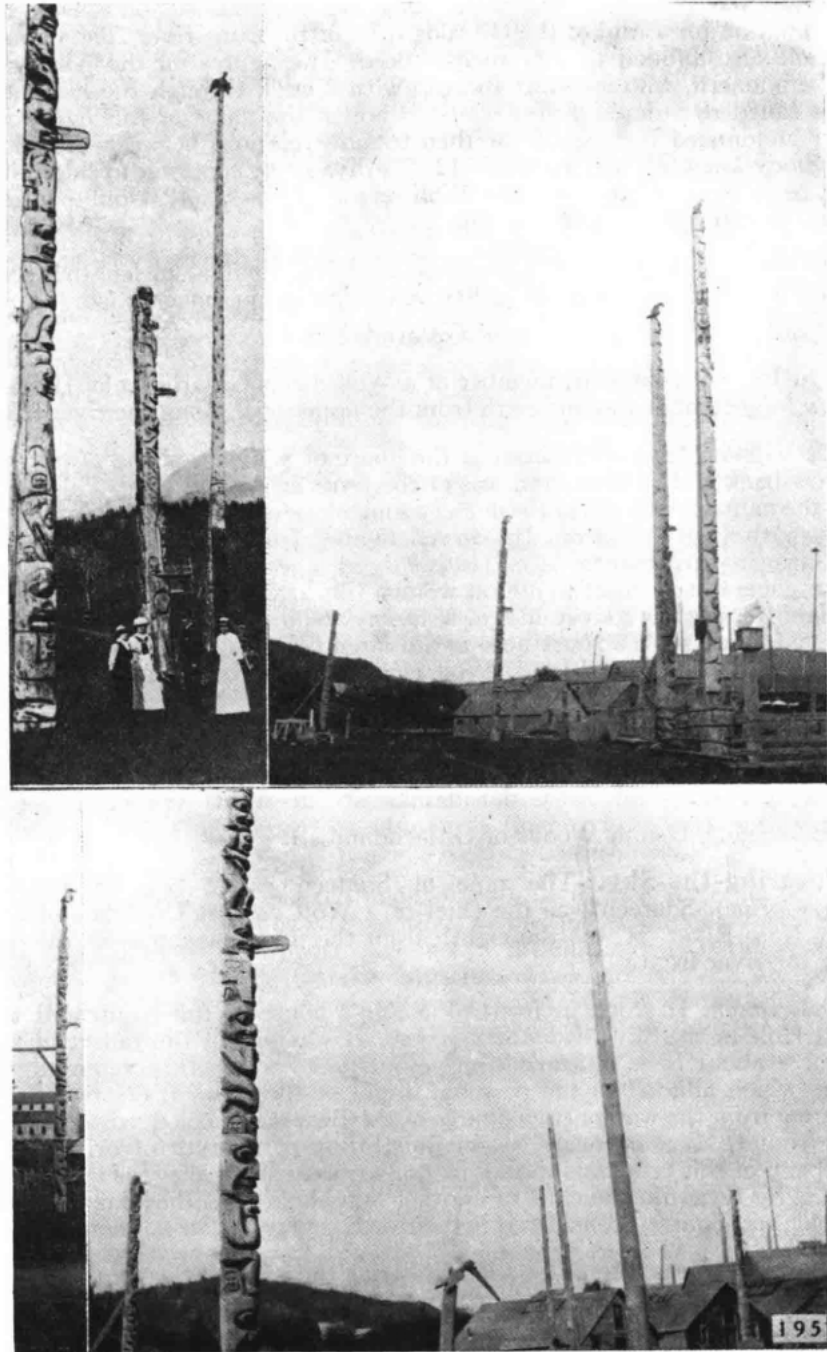
(Informant, Dennis Woods of Gitlarhdams.)

**Spearing-the-Sky.** The pole of Sqateen called .Spearing-the-Sky (*Agyæt-larhæ*). Sqateen was the chief of a Wolf clan at Gitlarhdams on upper Nass River. It was the eighth from the uppermost pole in the row along the river front.

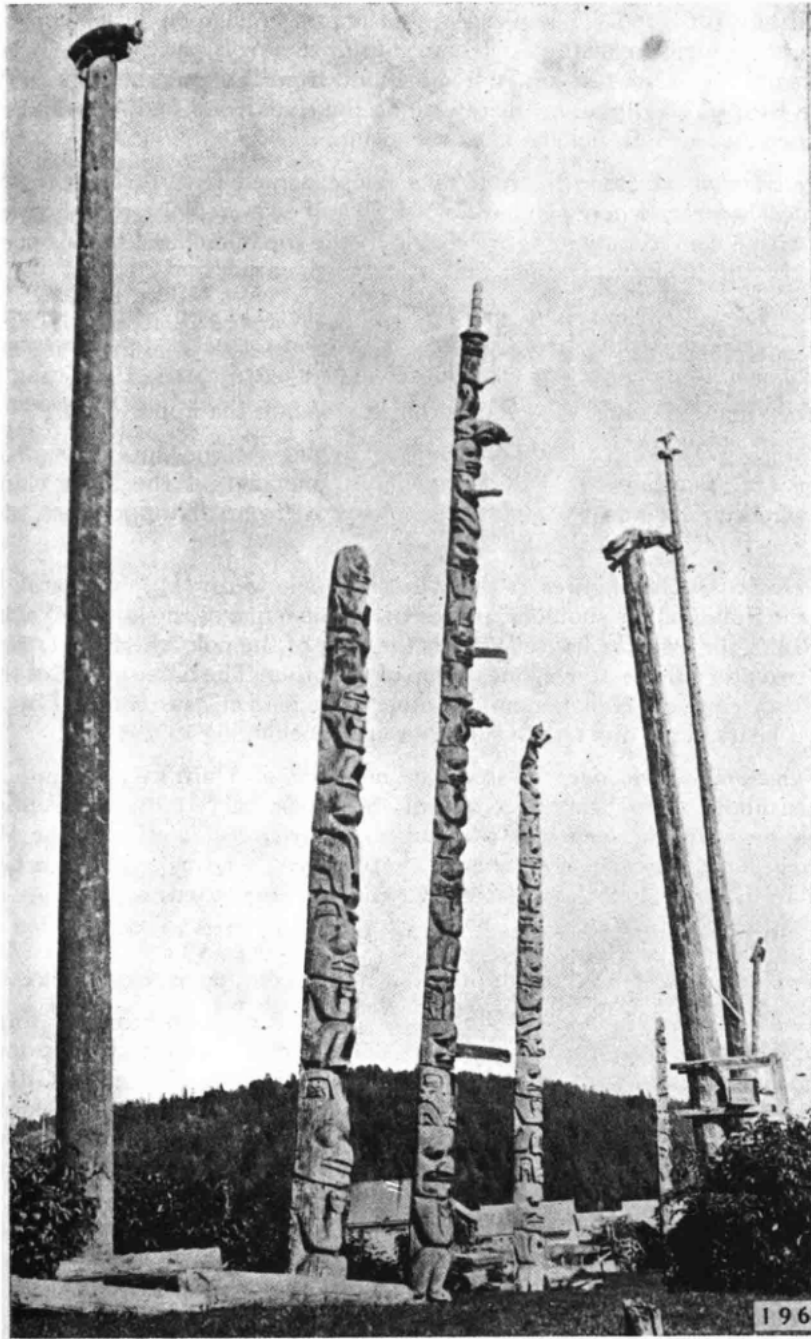
*Description.* It stood in front of Na'uq's house of the group and was called Hole-in-the-Sky (*wulnakarh-larhæ*). It was one of the tallest in this village — about 12 or 14 arm's lengths (outspread arms). It represented: (1) Eagle, which alluded to the personal origin of the owners; (2) two Bears emerging from the waters (two figures of the Bear); and belonged to the *kan* type (round). It was meant as an illustration of a myth of origin. The ownership of this crest was the subject of a great controversy, as it was also claimed by Kyærhk, the chief of another household at Gitlarhdams. Both Kyærhk and Sqateen considered it their own, as far as can be remembered.

*Function.* It was erected by a chief bearing the name of Sqateen, who was very old when last seen — the fourth Sqateen from the present, in 1927. The name of the carver is no longer known.

(Informant, Dennis Woods of Gitlarhdams.)



Totem poles of Gitlarhdams before 1903



Totem poles of Gitlarhdamks

**Village-on-Tree.** The Tsapem-larhkan (Village-on-Tree) pole of Kyailran, a member of the Sqateen group in the Wolf phratry, at Gitlarhdamks on upper Nass River. It stood second from the uppermost pole, that of the Bear of Tserhqan, in the row along the river front. "Village-on-Tree" is a theme in a myth belonging to the group.

*Description.* It stood in front of a house named Hole-through-the-Sky (*wilnagarhl-larks*: where-against-hole-sky) and was a plain round pole (a *kan*) with a carved human figure sitting at the top. One hand of this person was raised to his head, and he was sitting on the other.

*Function, carver, age.* In memory of whom? It no longer exists. Carved by Paræt'Nærhl of Gitlarhdamks, it may have been the earliest pole erected in this village, about ninety or one hundred years ago.

(Informant, Dennis Woods of Gitlarhdamks on the upper Nass.)

**Packing-Robins.** The pole called Packing-Robins-Out-Through-The House (*kalksakakawldzerh*) of Larh'wilgyit, member of the Wolf clan of Gyilwilnakya. It was the twentieth pole down from the uppermost, along the river front at Gitlarhdamks.

*Description.* The figures at the top of the pole were: (1) Person standing with the Robin on his shoulder, representing the name of the house "Packing the Robin through the house"; (2) at the base of the pole, the Bear (*smaih*), with two other Bears above, one on top of the other. The name of one of them was Rrhelemgyet (Half-Person, meaning Bear person), surmounted by two carved bears. This was an allusion to a myth belonging to the clan.

*Function, carver, age.* It stood in memory of Darh'wilgyet and was erected about sixty years ago, one of the latest carved by Sqateen and Sabam'næq. As Sqateen was a member of Gyisransnat clan of the Wolf phratry, he could carve a totem for another Wolf who belonged to a Gyisransnat, as both clans did not consider themselves related.

(Informant, Dennis Woods of Gitlarhdamks.)

**Two totems of Kstiyaorh** of Gitlarhdamks on upper Nass River.

*Function, carver, age.* Of the two poles commemorating a former Kstiyaorh, one was quite old, and its base had rotted when it was cut down. It had been carved by Paræt-Næqht, member of an Eagle clan of Gitlarhdamks. The other was erected about sixty years ago, in memory of Ksedo'l of the same household. The informant helped in putting it up. Its carvers were Sqateen (chief of a Wolf clan at Gitlarhdamks) and Naqum-wilgyawks of the same household. Both these poles were destroyed. According to the informant, the present (1927) Kstiyaowrh: "The people at one time had a fit [at the time of a revival, about 1918,] and chopped down the totem poles. They did not want anybody to keep them up. They cut down ours too. They later burnt them up."

**Totem Pole of Kungyaw**, member of a Wolf clan at Gitlarhdamks on Nass River.

According to Menæsk, the old chief of this group of Eagles at Gitlarhdamks (William Beynon acting as interpreter, in 1929), the crests of Kungyaw used on totem poles were: (1) Bear (*smaih*) on the pole then (in 1929) standing at the rear of Menæsk's house; the same Bear had been used on an older pole; (2) Two-headed-Person (*gaodek-gyet*); this crest, also used by Hrstiyaorh, in the same village, was carved at the base of a pole now fallen; (3) Between-Thighs (*wuden-bebæ*) this was a ceremonial entrance—the guests entered between the thighs of a large carved figure forming the doorway; (4) the bird called Yimrhqhl, a crest resembling the Gyaibelk, also a crest of the same clan; it was represented on the pole.

Another informant, Michel Inspringbright, a native of Gitwinhklul, living in Gitlarhdamks, stated that the Bear on this pole was called Prince-of-Bears (*h l k u w æ h l k s e h l k e m - s m a i h*). It had been acquired from the house of Kyærhk, of the same village.

**Commemoration<sup>7</sup> of Temnunrh.** The Totem Pole commemorating the killing of Temnunrh, the Gispewudwade chief at Gitlawp Lake, by Kstiyaorh, chief of the Wolves at Gitlarhdamks.

*Tradition.* The Fireweed clan from Temlarham, in the course of its migrations down Skeena River, was looking for new hunting and fishing grounds. When they arrived at Qlu'iyu (In-Hiding) below the canyon (at



At Gitlarhdamks



the place where Usk now is), they found there two groups of earlier occupants: Kstiyaorh, head of the Wolves, and Hrhpiarhæ of the Kanhade at Kitsemkælem. Very soon a clash broke out among the earlier occupants and the newcomers. This goes back to the time when the mythical Beavers dammed up the Skeena and made a great lake here.

Neshaiwærhs' nephews for this reason decided to move again down the river and look for other hunting territories where they would find mountain goat (*matih*). Upon reaching Kle'andzeh, they ascended it to its headwaters. There, on the Ktsemhodzarh, they found a place where game was plentiful and also streams where salmon abounded. They returned to their camp at Qlu'iyu and told their chief Neshaiwærhs about their discovery.



Carved figures cut off a totem pole at Gitlarhdamks

As these hunting grounds belonged to Kstiyaorh, the chief of the Wolves, a feud developed between the owners and the interlopers. The Wolf occupants gave warning: "You people had better leave this country, for we will always be at strife." Neshaiwærhs agreed to this but did not take his leave early enough. The Wolves attacked the Fireweed clan and killed Temnunrh, one of its chiefs. They took his corpse and roasted it on an open fire, then exposed it in the open.

At a later period, the Wolf branch of the clan at Gitlarhdamks, on upper Nass River, was about to erect a totem pole in memory of this event. They planned to show the killing of Temnunrh in the form of a man at the end of a pole thrust through his body. But they were stopped in this venture by the Gitsalas people of Fireweed extraction who threatened to attack the Wolves. Because of this threat, the pole was never erected. This happened at the time when the first guns brought in by the white people appeared in the country.

(Informant, Walter Geo. Wright, Gispewudwade chief of Gitsalas; William Beynon recorded this narrative in 1927.)



## EAGLE PHRATRY

**Whereon-sits-the-Woodpecker.** The Pole of Gyilarhnameren called Whereon-sits-the-woodpecker (*wilnidahl-gyihl'wins*); the owner was a member of the Menæsk Eagle clan of Gitlarhdams. It stood on the river front, the nineteenth from the uppermost pole.

*Description.* It was a round pole (*kan*), four arms (double) in length, supporting a bird figure, that of the Woodpecker.

*Carver, age.* It was carved by Sqateen of a Wolf clan in Gitlarhdams, about seventy years ago.

(Informant, Dennis Woods of Gitlarhdams.)



Sections of an Eagle totem at Gitlarhdams

## FIREWEED PHRATRY

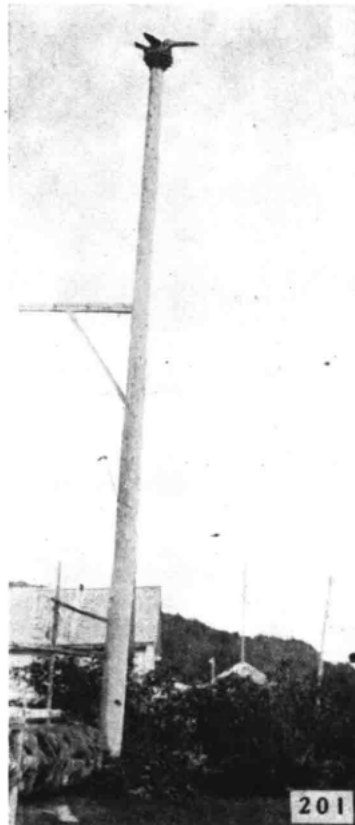
**One-Fireweed.** Totem Pole of Gamrhnarh, head of the local Fireweed household of the Girsansnæt group at Gitlarhdams.

Among the nine crests of this clan, as listed by John Davis, an old member of this family (Charles Barton, interpreter), a few that actually appeared on their totem poles at Gitlarhdams were:

- (1) Goose (*haaq*); (2) Grouse (*pstæ'i*);
- (3) One-Fireweed (*kyelaast*); (4) Blackfish (*næqhl*), the fin-back whale.

According to tradition, this group once belonged to the Gitsegyukla tribe on upper Skeena River and took to flight. When they were travelling in the wilds, they saw a [spirit-like] goose and killed it. Thereafter they used it as a crest (*ayuks*) and composed a song to commemorate the event. The Grouse was acquired in the same way; at first it was a *narhnok* (a spirit). Eventually they built a house, called it One-Fireweed (*kyelaast*), and erected a totem pole at Gitlarhdams, at the top of which was perched the Goose (*haaq*).

*Function, carver, age.* The only pole they ever had was the *kyelaast*, which was cut down about forty years ago. It had been erected in memory of Pi'l and



The Woodpecker on its nest at Gitlarhdams



Fragment of an Eagle totem pole  
at Gitlarhdamks

Hæwaw', about sixty years ago. Their house was graded (a *da'q*). It was carved by 'Weenawq, member of an Eagle clan at Gitwinksihlk, at the canyon of the Nass.

**Whereon-sits-the-Goose** (*wilidælhark*) pole of Pi'l, member of a Fireweed clan. It stood third from the topmost pole in the row along the river front at Gitlarhdamks on upper Nass River.

*Description.* It stood in front of a house called *Tarem-hæst* (Fireweed terraced or with *da'arh* grades). It was a plain pole (*kan*), about four arms in length. On its top sat one carving, that of a goose with wings folded.

*Function, age, carver.* It was erected about seventy years ago and no longer exists. In memory of whom? Carver?

(Informant, Dennis Woods of Gitlarhdamks, upper Nass.)