

The hunting grounds were the exclusive property of Alimlarhæ. He opposed the ceremony on the grounds that totem poles are a relic of their past that they should forget, but was overruled by the other lineage members and his tribesmen.

The brothers prepared the pole themselves, and collected the food and gifts required for their potlatch, with the aid of lineage relatives and their tribesmen. Their father assisted them with a money contribution. When they were ready, the entire village was invited to lift the pole into place. A spokesman for Alimlarhæ told the guests of the crests and privileges of his lineage and announced that the pole was to be named the 'Pole of the Sand Place,' commemorating one of the exclusive crests of the chief's lineage which had appeared on totem poles belonging to his ancestors.

TOTEM CARVERS, TECHNIQUE



A Tlingit totem pole carver

Types of carvers among the Kitka'ata Tsimshyans of the sea-coast south of Skeena River, according to H. L. Clifton, chief at Kitka'ata; interpreter, William Beynon, in 1939.

There were two divisions of carvers, first the Gitsontk (People-secluded), who carved nothing but *narhnorhs*, spirits, and worked in utter secrecy; second, the ordinary carvers, who carved crests.

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

Occasionally the Gitsontk were engaged by a foreign tribe. For instance, a reputed secret carver of Alaska might be hired by the Bella-Bellas to

the south of the Tsimshyan country, or by any other tribe, and for his services he would receive a heavy compensation. At one time a famous *narhnorh* invented by a Wudstæ (a tribe at the frontier between the Tsimshyans and the northern Kwakiutls) was a huge wooden whale that was made to swim, dive, and spout. This unwieldy contrivance, used at night, in the flickering light of fires on the shore, or by moonlight, successfully moved at first, but finally the fastenings operating it fell undone and almost killed the people inside it. The Wudstæ Gitsontk operating the whale immediately committed suicide by jumping into the sea. They could not survive after what had happened.

The powers, skill, and training of the Gitsontk were inherited or reserved within certain families. Their privileges were controlled by various secret societies with which they associated, and whose diffusion centre lay on the sea coast south of the Tsimshyan country. Khluwalæ and Rlkyadet, two outstanding early Gitsontks, came from the south. Yællem was another famous craftsman of their class.

As a group, the Gitsontk gave secret advice to the chiefs who belonged to the inner councils. A few of them usually were selected from each household to train under the supervision of two or three experienced carvers. For instance, among the Tsimshyans (according to William Beynon), one of the best Gitsontk was Neesloot (a Gispewudwade of the Ginaihdoiks tribe); another was Neeslaranows, Wolf chief of the Gitlæn tribe. They were employed by most of the chiefs to construct and superintend the *narhnorh* or spirit displays. The Gitsontk carved the masks, which on the whole fell into their reserved lot.

II. The totem pole carvers, called *ukgyihlæ*, were not considered as important as the first class; their calling was to produce crests and totems. As there was no secrecy to their work, they could not carve *narhnorhs*.

Practically all of both classes of carvers have disappeared many years ago among the Kitka'ata, and the informant found it difficult to recall the names of any of them. Finally he brought out the name of Neesnamo, a Kanhade, as a maker of totem poles, whom he had not known, but whose carvings he had seen.

At Kitka'ata there are no totem poles left; they have fallen from old age and decay, the last one about 1933. They were tall but not elaborately carved. One of them was the Fireweed pole, another the Whale; a third, the Asewælgyet (Thunderbird); a fourth, the Raven; a fifth, the Eagle. Each of them, away from the house front, was 30 or 40 feet tall; the Fireweed was close to 50 feet. In the Eagle house, house posts supporting the roof beams inside were carved in the form of human figures and bore the name of Packing-on-shoulder (*kalkawldzerh*).

Salmon Brown, a Wolf of the Gitrhahla tribe not far off, was the only good carver of totem poles whom Clifton could name. He was the maker of the Bullhead pole of Gitrhahla, about 1915 or 1920, a pole still in good condition. Brown died about 1934.

The informant does not clearly remember any house-front painting in his neighbourhood, although he saw, when young, a wall decoration of his uncle's with two Blackfish — just a vague recollection. When he was born, the people had already done away with ancient customs.

How a Haida pole was made, according to James Deans, in "Tales of the Hidery" (36: 19, 20).

The most important part of a house was the gayring or carved column, totem post as it is generally named. In order to have one, the first act was for a party to go into the woods and select a tree of a given size, as near as possible to the sea. When a suitable one was found, it was cut down and hewn to certain dimensions; then it was slid into the water, where a party was in waiting in a canoe, who hauled it to the village and put it on shore. On shore, it went into the hands of the carvers, who hewed it into shape, then marked one side of it into sections. The average height of these columns was 30 feet, divided into five sections of 6 feet each. For carving each of these sections, ten blankets were paid, or, in all, fifty blankets. These blankets were bought by the bale for not less than five dollars a blanket, which would make two hundred and fifty dollars for each post. Generally the party who carved one section, say the lower, was not allowed to carve the next, unless his social standing allowed him to do so. In like manner, through all the five sections different carvers were employed. When finished, all the villagers helped to raise it. If they were unable to do so, help was secured from another village. If a man happened to die while his house was in course of erection, nothing more was done to it. At Skidegate I saw a column lying rotting, which had been ready for the carver when the owner died.

The old house with totem at Kayan (near Massett), described by J. R. Swanton (97: 134, 135, Plate XI, Figure 1).

Plate XI. Figure 1, gives an idea of the framework of an old house. It stood at the town of Qayan, just above Massett. In 1901 the frame was gone, but the pole, although much decayed, was still standing.

Selection and carving of a pole among the Haidas. The carving of a hollow-back portal or totem pole, according to Edward Russ of Massett, Queen Charlotte Islands, in 1947; interpreter, William Russ.

(Taken from a long narrative bearing on the origin of a northern group of Haidas, now of Massett, from Hippah Island on the northwestern side of the Queen Charlotte Islands.)

Ot'iwans came from Neesto on the west coast, first to Kiusta, then to Yan (opposite Ad'iwas, now called Massett). . . He took an axe, came over to Aden River, and looked for a cedar from which to make a canoe. The first day, he did not find any suitable, although he covered much ground going through these woods for the first time. The second day, in the morning, his wife gave him advice. She told him that her uncles used to point out how to look for cedars, that is, to walk along the edge of a river when engaged in this search.

That day, following her advice, he walked along Aden River and found two cedars which he thought were good ones. One was about 5 fathoms long, the other 4 fathoms. He marked the trees (to make them his own) and did not otherwise touch them. But, after he had returned home, his wife told him a story that she had learned from her uncles. Before starting to chop down a tree, one must find out whether it is sound. This is done by cutting into the heart of the tree. Before this, you must find a yew wood *hlait* tree, cut a bit out of its heart, and place this piece in your mouth on the right side, and keep it there while searching out the heart of the cedar tree.

Ot'iwans did not succeed in finding a young yew wood tree the first day. He used a young hemlock (*gang*) instead, and took a piece out of its heart. Having gone back to the cedar trees he had marked, he began to chop one down, but found that in the trunk there was a hole (perhaps a large knot hole). So he gave it up. Besides, the tree was hollow inside. In the old days, to be a good canoe carpenter, one had to use medicine (the interpreter called it "dope") for the hands and fingers. Ot'iwans at first had forgotten



Carving totem poles under the C.C.C. Project, Alaska

this precaution. Looking at the tree he had wasted his efforts on, he thought that he could still make a totem pole out of it. His uncles were good totem pole carvers. Although he had not yet tried his hand at a totem pole, he knew that a cedar tree unfit for making a dug-out canoe might serve another purpose.

He then began to work on the other tree, planning a four-fathom dugout. While thus busy, he kept thinking of the first cedar tree. It would be good for a totem. When he came back home to his wife, he told her that he would consult his Neesto uncles the next day about the larger tree. His wife asked to go with him in order to learn how to build a canoe and carve a

totem pole. She suspected that, alone, her husband might overlook some important detail, for he still had much to learn before completing a good first canoe. His uncles asked him what he intended to do with the canoe: "What model of a canoe do you have in mind? . . ." (then a long explanation followed as to the types of dug-out, their names, and other particulars). It required a whole night for his uncles to show him the way to make a canoe and how to doctor his hands with Indian medicine in preparation for the work. There was no time then to learn in detail about the carving of totem poles. But the idea of carving a pole had suddenly occurred to him. From the time he built his first canoe he intended to find out from his uncles all they knew about carving totem poles, for it was customary for uncles to train their nephews in woodcraft.

After his canoe was made, he moved with his wife to Yan. It was then the season during which he sold his garden produce (potatoes). Meanwhile he could not forget the large cedar tree with a hollow heart he had cut down on Aden River.

Later on, he hired another clan to work on his totem, to carve it for him and to make the foundation, rafters, and other parts of the house. This part of the work had to be done by the "opposites" (that is the clan of the father). When they were dragging the hollow totem cedar, he had the bark peeled off, to be used for the roof of the house; two hundred pieces of cedar bark (*laqwawklahl*). Another clan was engaged to dig the grades (*tarai*) or underground steps for the structure. Altogether, three clans were employed for the undertaking. Others, meanwhile, toiled at gathering the foods required for the feast to follow. . . . When everything was ready, all were assembled at Yan village for the erection of the building, which was about 100 feet long, and the pole. A big celebration followed. Once the work was finished, Ot'iwans paid off his workmen and carpenters. For this, a whole day was required. His uncles suggested a name for the new structure — Negwudenqins, and this name is still remembered. From that time on, Ot'iwans ranked among the chiefs of Yan. It was from him or the members of his clan that Skilæ (Isaac Chapman), adopted by the family because of the lack of nephews, learned how to carve totem poles. But Chapman, who was a cripple, never carved anything but argillite totems. The era of the tall totems had by that time passed away. His uncle Ot'iwans had been among the last to erect great totems.

Method of selecting and carving a pole, according to Edward L. Keithahn (62: 110).

When the occasion arose among the Haidas for the carving of one of these huge monuments, a search was made for a suitable tree as near to the beach as possible. When selected and approved by the chief for whom it was to be carved, it was felled, cut to the proper length, trimmed, and peeled. Then the side containing the most knots was hollowed out as in preparing to make a canoe. This hollowing had a dual purpose. First, it reduced the weight, making it easier to skid down to the beach, and lighter when the finished pole was to be erected. But most important, the removal of the heart wood made the pole more resistant to checking, that is, cracking disastrously. The pole, ready for carving, was a half-round shell about ten inches thick.

In this condition the log would be towed to the village and dragged ashore at the place for carving. It now went into the hands of a professional carver and his helpers (or slaves), who adzed it into shape.

The carver as an "artist" had little if any personal liberty in his work. He was told exactly what was to be carved on the monument, and traditional "Haida style," evolved from the earlier argillite carvings, dictated how the highly conventionalized figures had to



Carving a totem pole, Alaska

be carved. Moreover, a committee of inspectors representing the chief for whom the work was being done had to approve each suggested pattern before it was roughed in. Often in the course of carving an important pole, distinguished friends of the chief would be invited to take the adze and make a few token strokes. This was considered a great honour, comparable to laying a cornerstone of a fine public building or driving the last spike of an important railroad.

The principal tools used by the totem carver were an assortment of steel hand adzes patterned after the earlier tool with nephrite bit, and several carvers' knives with curved blades resembling farriers' knives, but more likely a bloodbrother of the Eskimo's "mitlik." Then there was an assortment of accessory tools and materials, such as chisels, mallets, patterns of hide and birchbark, sharkskin for sanding.

The technique of carving totem poles. The introduction of the Hawaiian "toe" or adze revolutionized craftsmanship on the north Pacific Coast, according to Edward L. Keithahn (62: 25, 26).

A most significant fact is that in trading for sea-otter pelts, the item most in demand by the natives was the "toe" or "towe." This word, which is Hawaiian in origin, means "adze" in Hawaii, and is used entirely for "adze" by Dixon and other traders on the northwest coast. In trading with the Haidas, "toes" were desired to the exclusion of all other trade goods in some instances; they were even given to children as presents.

Since the adze is the principal tool used in carving totem poles, as well as in making house planks and canoes, considerable impetus must have been given to woodworking of all kinds at this time, for now almost anyone could have tools that once were possessed only by the wealthiest chiefs. In the Queen Charlotte Islands the stone age had ended over-night.

Tools for carving among the Tlingits, as mentioned by Edward L. Keithahn.

The mallets used by the Tlingits in carving were made of crabapple wood, boiled first for hardening. [M.B. The specimen shown is of exactly the same form as the traditional French-Canadian mallet used by wood carvers.]

Mr. Keithahn has noticed that the Coast Indians, in using the crooked knife [M.B. Used everywhere in the northern parts of the continent and made by French-Canadian craftsmen at or near Montreal for the fur-trading companies, and later imitated by the natives], draw it towards them when working, which gives better control. The white people move it in the opposite direction. This observation had already been made elsewhere along the coast by the painter Langdon Kihn and the author. This, it seems, is an Asiatic trait, just like the way of holding the bow and arrow. The northwest Coast Indians hold the bow in hand horizontally, whereas, east of the Rockies, the bow points up and down.

Carvers at Wrangell in the WPA shops, in 1939:

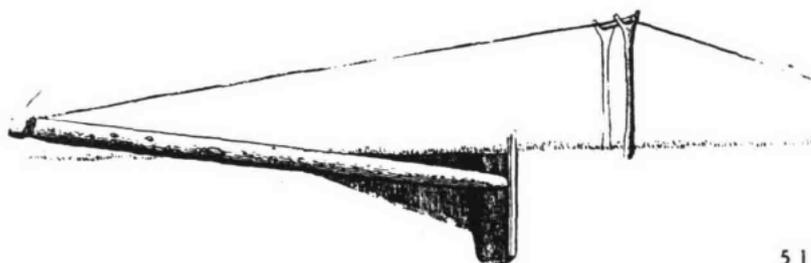
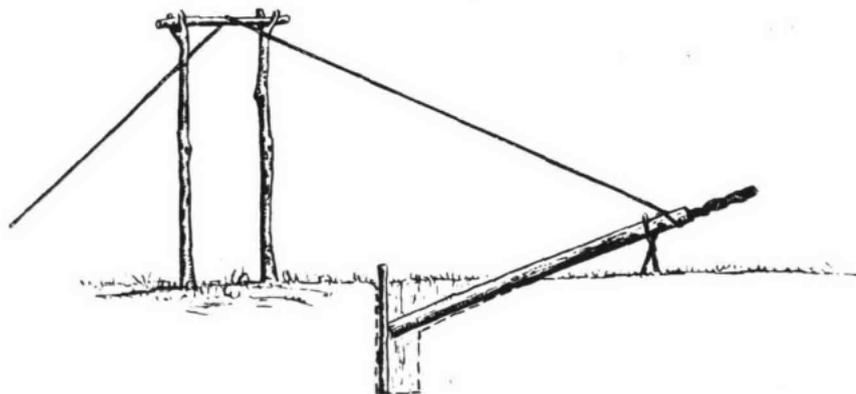
Jos. Thomas of Wrangell, the leader; Charley Tagkook, born near old Klukwan (Alaska); Thomy Ukas of Wrangell; Philip Kelley, also of Wrangell.

How a totem pole was erected, according to Edward L. Keithahn (62: 116, 117).

Barbeau calls attention . . . to the fact that the "trench" method of raising a tall totem pole is identical with that of South Sea islanders.

The trench method consists of digging a trench some twenty feet in length, starting shallow and gradually sloping to the other end, which will be of the desired depth for setting the pole. The pole is rolled into the trench with the butt in the deep end where it lies at an angle of about 30 degrees. A short log roller is placed under the upper end and moved forward as a pole is raised by straight lifting, "scissors," and pikes. A plank standing upright in the hole prevents gouging and aids in getting the pole erect. The whole band — men, women,

and children — complete the job with lines, while a foreman on a nearby stump or housetop shouts the native equivalent of "Yo heave!" Once erect, the pole is twisted about, until it faces the proper direction, that is, the waterfront; then the trench and hole are filled in.



519

Erection of a carved post among the Maoris of New Zealand

How Haida poles were made, according to James Deans (33, 34: 343).

In their preparation a large cedar tree was selected, one easily split, and with few knots being preferred, because knots interfere with the carving. After felling, it was cut into the desired length, and then split in two. The section chosen for the column was hollowed out to about 5 inches in thickness, according to the wish of the owner. After the bark and rough places were removed, it was floated to the village; and the carver set to work. When finished, it was raised by the united strength of the tribe, and by numbers invited from adjoining ones.

Technique of the Gitksans (Barbeau 5: 27).

The Gitksan poles were made from the trunks of red cedars, and their length varied from 15 to 60 feet. A suitable tree was first selected and felled, then hauled to its intended destination, sometimes many miles away. The "fathers" — or paternal relatives of the opposite phratry — rendered cere-



Carving a totem pole at Wrangell

monial services and benefited by liberal compensation. They took charge of the work, were fed and entertained during the progress of the work, and were paid at the conclusion. The total expense of the first operations exhausted the resources which a family or a clan could muster at one time. So the log was left lying uncarved in the village for a year or more.

A carver was then hired, the best available from among the "fathers." When he lacked the required ability, he appointed a substitute, whose work it was to carve the pole while he "stood over him." The carving was done under shelter, as secretly as possible; and the figures were selected by the owners from among their several crests. The greater their wealth and the higher their rank, the taller the pole and the more elaborately decorated. The carver was usually paid in guns, blankets, or skins, and the price for his services seldom exceeded in all the equivalent of \$600.

Far more costly was the erection of the carved pole, which as a rule was postponed another year. When sufficient wealth and food were accumulated, invitations for a festival were dispatched far and wide. Several tribes gathered for the event, and the totem pole was raised in the midst of celebrations that were one of the outstanding features of Indian life.

Raising a large pole by means of primitive devices required great ingenuity and the co-operation of several tribes. A hole was first dug in the

ground, at least 6 feet deep. The butt was sunk in a trench leading to the hole, and the smaller end was raised gradually on wooden props. Stout ropes of twisted cedar bark attached to the top of the shaft and thrown over a high supporting frame were hauled by numerous hands, until finally the pole was hoisted into place.

The technique of raising a pole from the ground is illustrated in Plate XXXI, figure 2, which was drawn from information obtained from Hlengwah (or Jim Larahnitz) and Arhkawt (Alfred Sinclair) at Kitwanga in 1923. Its resemblance to the Polynesian process of the South Seas may be appreciated upon its comparison with that illustrated in Plate XXXI, figure 1, from a picture in the *Pa Maori* . . ., by Elsdon Best, 1927.

A typical instance of the exact proceedings in the erection of a totem pole is given on pages 53 and 54.

Gitksan carvers of totem poles and poles carved by them, among the Gitksan tribes of the Tsimsyans.

See the list of their names and particulars, and of the poles ascribed to them in the author's earlier museum monograph *Totem Poles of the Gitksan*, p. 178-187.

Upper Skeena River carvers (178-184).

Nass River carvers (180-181).

Tsimsyan carvers (of the lower Skeena) (184).

Carrier carvers of Bulkley River (185).

Summary (186, 187).

Kwakiutl totem-pole carvers of Alert Bay and neighbourhood, according to Daniel Cranmer in 1947.

Charlie James, /Yaakutlas, from Fort Rupert was a Kwinksutenog, married a Kwakiutl woman of Fort Rupert, and stayed there part of his life. He resided at Alert Bay and died a few years ago. He was the best-known carver there. Several of his large totem poles still stand, and he carved a great number of models. (The author has gathered material on him for a short biography.)

Arthur Shaughnessy, Hai'maseluk, a Tsaatenurh of the Kingcome tribe, who died a few years ago at the age of sixty. He carved totem poles, cedar chests, and boxes; he was also a silversmith, making brooches, ear-rings, and bracelets of silver and gold. His son Alfred Shaughnessy, who was drowned last winter, carved model poles for tourists.

Yurhwayu of the Mamtagyaila tribe was an older carver than the two first-mentioned carvers. He was the carver of the tallest Alert Bay pole, the Thunderbird, now standing in Stanley Park, Vancouver, and described elsewhere.

Willie Seaweed, Haihlamas, of Blunden Harbour, still living, carved totem poles and still carves masks. One of his poles stands in the Alert Bay graveyard: the Thunderbird pole (way back, on the right side); some of his work can be found in his village.



Carving a "curio" totem pole at Victoria

Mungo Martin of Fort Rupert, son of Kwuksutinuk, over sixty years old, is a carver of poles and masks, whose training was received from Charlie James, whom he used to assist.

Tom Patch, Hlalipalas, of the Tsawadenorh tribe, about fifty years old, is a carver of totem poles. The newest one in the graveyard of Alert Bay is his work.

Albert Johnson, Kyayustisalas, of the Harhwanis tribe of Kingcome Inlet, about the same age as Tom Patch, is said to be a good carver of masks.

Nelson, Tsaqaalahl, about fifty years old, carved a totem pole standing in the Alert Bay graveyard (the one at the right end, in front). He belongs to the Kwatsino tribe.

Awaloskyinis, a carver of the Mamalikula tribe who, about twenty years ago, carved the Bullhead-like totem pole standing near the gate in the Alert Bay graveyard.

Herbert Johnson, a 60-year-old Kwakiutl carver of Kingcome Inlet, who, according to Daniel Cranmer of Alert Bay, carved many totem poles — a good carver.

Northern frontier of red cedar out of which totem poles were carved, according to Edward L. Keithahn (62: 109, 110).

Red cedar does not grow north of latitude 57 degrees N., running out in the vicinity of Wrangell and Sitka. Yellow cedar is found as far north as Prince William Sound, but even at Katalla the totems were made of imported red cedar. At Klukwan, on Chilkat River, canoes are made of cottonwood in lieu of cedar, and houses of spruce; but all of their house posts are of imported red cedar.

Northern frontier of totem poles, according to Edward L. Keithahn (6:43).

No totem pole is recorded from any point north of Katalla, highwater mark of Tlingit northern expansion. Two rather new Katalla house pillars, fully painted, about 8 feet high, and representing presumably the Thunderbird, are shown on page 42.

Evolution of design among the Tlingits, according to J. R. Swanton (30th Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, Part 2, p. 795).

According to native Haida accounts, carved designs were originally made directly on the front slabs of the house, afterward on a broad, thick plank, and finally on poles. This comparatively modern evolution is corroborated by the Tlingits, who have only the grave-post upon which they carve representations of stories as well as crests.

Abalone shells on totem poles. Mr. Edward L. Keithahn drew the author's attention to his observation that the abalone shell pieces inset on totem poles for their decoration are often drilled through. The hole thus drilled served in sewing these pieces onto ceremonial garments. This feature is significant in that, before the time of the totem poles, abalone was used on garments. The shells, obtained from the natives at Monterey, California, were traded off to the northern natives by the white seafolk engaged in the fur trade of the Pacific after 1785.