

## Early Gwenhoot from Alaska

(Informant, Arthur Wellington <sup>clak,</sup> of Port Simpson,  
1915. Interpreter, William DeGuen.)

### The Rkpeeek group

Rkpeeek was a Gwenhoot [from Alaska], whose [phratic] crest was the Eagle [or Thunderbird], darkskink. He became head-chief of the Gisparklawts tribe [of the Tsimisyan River, on the Skeena River], in replacement of chief Warhaait, whose wealth was not enough to maintain him at the first rank.

This Gwenhoot new-comer arrived here long before Neeswa'mak, also a Gwenhoot, but with a somewhat different ~~ad~~ [tradition of origin]. He had not been, like Neeswa'mak, engaged in warfare with the Darkkibu ~~o~~ [Wolves]. Therefore he was ~~a~~ not a real Gwenhoot.

The Rkpeeek group [of Eagles] had fought among themselves because of a woman <sup>who had married</sup> an Eagle clansman and who had a lover, also belonging to the Eagle [phratry]. After the fight was over, some of the Eagle clansmen ~~had~~ fled southwards, until they reached Na'a [also in Alaska]. Originally all these folk were from Temlak'am [the Good Land of Yore]. After the Flood, they had drifted in their canoes to the northern parts of Alaska.

The ~~R~~ Rkpeeek villagers lived for some time at Na'a, where the fishing was good. Na'a is now called Kassan, on the map, on the other side of Port Chester. At Kassan or Na'a

They fought with another tribe over fishing weirs. The fight once over, they parted again. Some of them (their tribe was mixed, included others of a different cast) went up the Nass River, others went back to Alaska, and others settled on the Skeena River. Some went up Portland Canal, some up Observatory Inlet. They spread all over. Their vanguard reached as far south as Git'amat.

Rhpelck <sup>who</sup> had been in the fighting, was recognized as the <sup>the</sup> head-chief. He went up the Skeena, and eventually settled at Neelakutla [with the Tsimshyan people]. It is at that time that he became chief of the Gispanklawts, after having taken the lead over Warhaait, who was poor. The ~~house~~

and sank to the rank of-lekakigyet, not even the highest among them.

Rpaelck group was subdivided into three or four households: 1. Tkwilazhae, 2. Wut'ahraup, 3. Neesnaish... Neesnaish and Warhaait became extinct over fifty years ago [~~the~~ dating back from 1915].

The Neeswa'mak group

Neeswa'mak was also an Eagle (darksked) from Na'ia. He arrived here at the same time as Rhpelck. They were both ~~Swen~~ Swenhoob, who had been mixed up in fighting. Rhpelck was the chief, not Neeswa'mak, who rose in rank only later, when at Neelakutla he was ~~appointed~~ raised to replace Rhpelck. The name of Neeswa'mak itself did not exist in Alaska. It is only when, at Neelakutla, the nephew of Rhpelck was

chosen to replace his uncle as chief that the name of Neeswa'mak was adopted to be that of the new chief. After he was created head-chief [of the Gisparklawts], Neeswa'mak had a house of his own. And he was the wealthiest of them all. The other subdivisions of Rhpelck's group still remained, with the rank of royalty, ~~After~~ ~~the death~~ and once more Rhpelck became the head-chief, the house of Neeswa'mak being a subdivision of his family.

The house of Lopyaerh

Lopyaerh was chosen by the Gisparklawts tribe to be the head-chief, after the death of Neeswa'mak. Before this happened, Lopyaerh was already of royal blood, an Eagle [or Thunderbird], but he had come from Wudstae [Bella-Bella, to the south]. As for Neespelæs, he headed an independent <sup>royal</sup> house of the Eagles (Larksteek), in the same tribe. He was a Swentoot [from Alaska]. But he ~~was~~ was under Rhpelck and Neeswa'mak, at one time, he had been the head-chief of the tribe, before Neeswa'mak but after ~~Warkait~~ Warkait. He was only a wullaerish to Neeswa'mak, no closer. His lineage retained royal rank to the end, although he has now [in 1915] only one survivor ~~alive~~, Harry Swanson, who called Neespelæs.

While Lopyaerh was head-chief, the rank of the Eagle royal chief was: 1. Lopyaerh, 2. Neeswa'mak, 3. Rhpelck, 4. Karnak (in Neeswa'mak's house), 5. Qastu) ~~the~~ <sup>Leeni</sup> (who of Neeswa'mak's house). Neespelæs at that time had amalgamated with Lopyaerh, and

as the ~~the~~ personal name of his household had been adopted into Legyach's house.

In former times, the Gispashlawts had travelled away from here, and ~~the~~ Legyach's mother had gone over the headwaters of the Skeena to Git'amat [that is, the pass leading from the present Terrace to Git'amat, on the mid-Skeena]. There she had married a Wudstae, a Bella-Bella, and Legyach was born of this marriage. After Legyach had grown up, they had some trouble with the other folk there. An elderly woman had told Legyach that he had no business there, that this was not his homeland, why wouldn't he just go back to the home of his grandfathers [grand uncles]. ~~At~~ Legyach had repeated this to his mother. She had then told him where that land [to the north] was. Then he set sail for Metlakatla, along with many Wudstae friends with him. We don't know whether or not he had any brothers with him. ~~At~~ Upon arriving at Metlakatla he ~~landed~~ from his canoe and was met by a crowd of Tsimshian. The Gispashlawts <sup>at once</sup> recognized whom he was ~~and~~, of royal blood. Neeswamak then was the head-chief. But, after Neeswamak's death, Legyach was chosen to succeed him as the leader. Or perhaps, we are not sure, he may have been ~~take~~ adopted into Neeswamak's home. After his election as head-chief, Legyach became powerful.

### Skagwait's house

In former ~~times~~ <sup>days</sup>, there were three tribes of which Legyach was head-chief: the Git'andaw, the Git'wiksebae, and the Gispashlawts. Skagwait ~~belonged to~~ <sup>was from</sup> the home of Legyach. This was only a name, that of the chief of the Git'andaw, at the time when the Tsimshian moved permanently to

Port Simpson [in 1833]. He was born of the marriage of  
 a Gispahlawts woman, a member of the household of Lopyaerh,  
 and a Gitsees man. Before he was appointed chief,  
 he was not of royal ~~lineage~~ lineage. Gyaikluk, who  
 was then the Gitrandaw chief, a Killa-whale [Gispowud-  
 wade] was a Lekahkipyet. The Gitrandaw ~~were~~ formerly  
 were a branch of the Gispahlawts tribe, on the Skeena  
 River. There is how they split up in twain. One day,  
 Lopyaerh's sister pulled out her canoe to go down the  
 river to sell products she had. She was refused assistance  
 by the others, <sup>except for a few.</sup> on her way down, her canoe upset and most  
 of her escorts were drowned. Lopyaerh was very much  
 incensed over this, and he chase quite a few of  
~~the~~ folk from his village, because they had refused to help  
 his sister. These people had ~~not~~ founded another village  
 farther down the river. As they had no tools and  
 utensils to cut and build houses with, they took salmon  
 weirs of the Githsaw [farther up the river], and with  
 these weirs, known as tau, they erected ~~houses~~ huts. It  
 is because of this that they became known as Gitrandaw,  
 People-of-weirs. Then they appointed two of their  
 men to be chiefs: Gyaikluk and ~~Nees~~ Nees-  
 raynaet. ~~Atto~~ they then their tribe consisted of  
 altogether four households, ~~and~~ situated one mile  
 farther down the river than the Gispahlawts. Thus  
 they multiplied into a large tribe. Later they  
 selected as their royal chief, Swelthaesh, a royal  
 Eagle of the Greenhoot lineage. After the passing  
 of Swelthaesh, his <sup>royal</sup> successor was Tzahktsiyush.  
 After him, ~~it was~~ the next chief were Neesweebast  
 and Tzahkharhaeky, one after the other, all of the

relative, not a brother,  
husse of Gwelhaerh, who was a wackych of Lopyaerh.  
He was a Swenhoot. After this husse <sup>of the Gitrandaw</sup> became  
extinct, he took as then chief Skagwait, from Lopyaerh's  
husse. Until then this name had been that of a boy  
in Lopyaerh's family. So this name had been raised to  
the rank of royalty.

[ ~~How~~ The personal names in the household of Akpreelek  
were recorded, translated and explained. They are not reproduced  
here ]

Among these names, several are ~~thought to~~ Gida-  
ranits [ Thinkit ] terms, impossible now to translate.  
Ak Qastaseeni is <sup>one of them; it means</sup> ~~a Thinkit word interpreted as meaning~~  
"The Eagle eats in the water".

~~Akpreelek Akpreelek and Lopyaerh owned large~~

~~gangs~~

In Neeswa'mak's husse, a ~~name~~ personal name  
refers to the "Copper" used as an anchor in the clan  
tradition (adaank): Kadeelkem-hayaetsk, "Anchor-  
of-Copper".

Neeswa'mak means "Uncle-of-Wa'mak". Wa'mak  
was the name of a slave who could not catch anything  
when fishing; wa'mak, "Not catching".

Neespelaes means "Uncle of-Pelaes", ~~that is~~ Pelaes  
~~was~~ is a species of unedible codfish. It was applied  
to a slave who used to catch this kind of cod.

Sunerhaet ~~is~~ is another name in ~~the group which~~  
<sup>going</sup> ~~back~~ back to the Gwenthoot ~~from~~ from Alaska.

Tom Deerhsyaeksleht-gaerh

Tsaramsae'gisk, "Towards-shore-pulling", is a  
man's name, in the husse of Lopyaerh, which refers  
to the family myth (adaank) of Neesun'aks [ to  
the south ].

Other names  
are in foreign  
languages, now  
unintelligible.

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Several names  
refer to various  
"Coppers".