

# Trade and warfare TSIMSHIAN NARRATIVES 2

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Cover Photo: Warriors at 'Ksan Village

Canadian Museum of Civilization  
Mercury Series  
Directorate  
Paper No. 3

DEDICATION

*To Marius Barbeau and William Beynon whose contributions to  
Tsimshian ethnology are only touched upon here.*



*Marius Barbeau 1953*



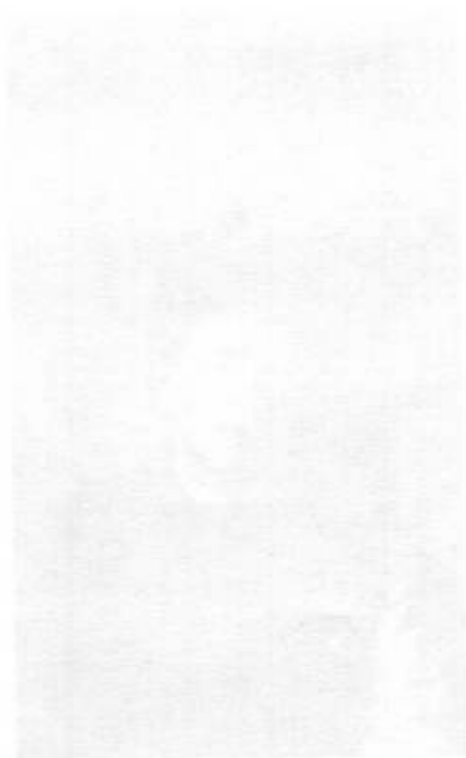
*William Beynon 1915*

### Abstract

The Tsimshian Narratives are a collection of vivid oral histories depicting the rich culture of the west-coast Indians. Much of what is contained in the narratives reflects the relationship these people had with their environment: from their understanding of the spiritual universe to their interpretation of the physical world, the stories help chronicle and trace the unique spirit of these people.

### Résumé

Ce livre présente une collection de récits d'histoire orale par les Indiens Tsimshian de la Côte Nord-Ouest du Pacifique. Les textes reflètent les multiples relations de l'homme avec l'environnement depuis leur compréhension du monde physique. La lecture de ces récits permet de pénétrer et apprécier la culture de ce peuple.



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## PREFACE

Anthropologists have long recognized that oral traditions play an important part in the lives of pre-literate peoples. With the advent of more sophisticated methods of analysis, such traditions can relate a great deal more to us about those peoples, their cultures and even about the nature of human thought. The resultant increased interest in myths, legends, and folk-tales has, however, not been restricted to academics. Public recognition of ethnic and cultural diversity has done much to promote the acceptance of those narrative forms as literatures that can be appreciated in their own terms.

The narratives presented here, and in the first volume of this series, come from the Tsimshian, Gitksan, and Nishga of Canada's Pacific coast (see Table 1). Those three societies are collectively referred to as Tsimshian by anthropologists because of their cultural similarities. Although some of their oral traditions have already been published (Boas 1902, 1912, 1916; Barbeau 1928, 1961; Harris 1974; Kitanmaax 1977), the bulk of those recorded by anthropologists have not. This series is intended to present more of them for both academic and non-academic audiences.

For the Canadian Museum of Civilization, publication of these two volumes on Tsimshian narratives has a special significance. Those texts represent not only a part of Canada's cultural heritage, but are a memorial to Marius Barbeau and William Beynon. They collected these narratives as part of their research on the Tsimshian, which spanned forty-two years (1915-1957). The results are a body of information on the Tsimshian which has few, if any, parallels in the history of anthropology.

To add to the significance for the Museum, Marius Barbeau was employed by it, then called the National Museum of Man, for thirty-seven years. In addition to his Tsimshian research, he was known for his work on Huron-Wyandot and Quebec cultures. Barbeau was also active in the arts. He produced recordings of native music, wrote a novel based on his Tsimshian investigations (Barbeau 1928) which became a play, and influenced painters such as Langdon Kihn and Emily Carr.

Less well known is William Beynon. He was the son of a Nishga woman and White trader whom Barbeau hired as a translator for his first Tsimshian field season in 1915-1916. That relationship quickly changed, and Beynon was paid a per page rate for his field notes over subsequent years, with Barbeau returning for periodic visits. Beynon's skills as a researcher were recognized by other anthropologists as well. When not working for Barbeau, he was hired by notables such as Boas, Garfield, and Drucker. As Halpin (1978) states, Beynon was an anthropologist in his own right.

The net result of the Barbeau and Beynon collaboration is the so-called "Tsimshian Files" (Duff 1964) held by the Canadian Museum of Civilization. It contains what might best be defined as a cultural census of the twenty-six Tsimshian villages (see Figure 1). It describes their social organization, territories, material culture, and oral traditions. While exploring those Files, one of the editors

of this two volume series discovered a virtually forgotten Barbeau manuscript on Tsimshian narratives. It was obvious to us that it should be published, and the initial intent was to do so to commemorate the centennial of Barbeau's birth.

For reasons that will become clear, reaching that target date was not possible. What at first appeared to be a relatively easy editorial task became increasingly complex. The first problem was the sheer size of the manuscript, which is over two thousand typed pages. Since it consists of both narratives and analysis, we felt that the first priority was publication of the narratives themselves. Although this decision reduced the size of the manuscript by half, the texts presented another dilemma. It was clear that Barbeau had in mind an audience of specialists. A large number of the narratives are either fragments or summaries, and there are others which are nothing more than variations on the telling of the same narratives.

Since a specialist audience has ready access to the Tsimshian Files, now that the bulk of them are available on microfilm, we decided to eliminate those texts which were summaries or fragments. The issue of variant narratives was more difficult. Here we made a compromise. Those texts which are, in our opinion, too similar were reduced in number. At the same time, we thought that certain Tsimshian narrative conventions should be expressed. Native narrators sometimes "hang up" episodes, meaning that they will be continued, and combine them in different ways to ultimately produce stories which are distinct.

After making these editorial decisions, we discovered that Barbeau's intent for the manuscript could no longer be accurately reflected. His concern was with the origins of the four Tsimshian clans and their subsequent histories. The eliminations we had made did not permit the kind of reconstruction which Barbeau envisioned. Given that realization, we made a radical choice. The Tsimshian Files contained other narratives which did not fit Barbeau's objective, yet gave a more complete representation. In doing so, a re-organization of the original manuscript was demanded. We chose a topical approach. Volume I dealt with the questions of origins, particularly human acquisitions of supernatural powers. This volume focuses on trade and warfare.

During the course of deciding which narratives would be excluded and included, we confronted an external set of issues. Certain texts, namely oral histories, have special significances to the Tsimshian. The first is that they are regarded as property (see the Introduction to volume I). The second is their relevancy to ongoing land claims activities by the Gitksan, Nishga, and Tsimshian proper. We discussed these issues with one native organization, but could not reach a satisfactory conclusion. Our decision to incorporate representative as examples of oral histories within these two volumes was based largely on the fact that they are already in the public domain, were given to the general public who might wish to know something about those Native societies which are making claims.

The final set of editorial considerations was the use of illustrations in the original Barbeau manuscript. He had commissioned a friend and artist, Art Price, to illustrate narrative themes. We



felt that more could be done in this regard for a variety of reasons. The first is that Tsimshian narratives are not isolated from the rest of the culture. Many of the ritually important items produced by the Tsimshian are linked to narratives, such as totem poles and chiefly regalia (see the Introduction to volume I). The second is that Barbeau collected many Tsimshian items now found in museum displays around the world and used photography as a means of recording the Tsimshian. The third is that Tsimshian narratives are part of a living culture, upon which modern artists draw. We have therefore attempted to provide a range of plates which show these connections to the narratives.

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## INTRODUCTION

The coastline of British Columbia is one of the most complicated of any area of the world. It is a region of mountains and fjords with many microenvironments, each with distinctive products desired by neighbouring groups who had other products to exchange. For example, the offshore islands had optimal access to sea mammals but were deficient in land animals, such as mountain goats and sheep. The great rivers of the coast provided access to the interior, with its abundance of fur bearing animals that became especially important in the early trade, but which lacked shellfish and other seafood savoured by the upriver people.

Trade began on the coast more than 10,000 years ago according to the very precise fingerprints of spectrographic profiles of obsidian found in dated archaeological sites in southern British Columbia. (Fladmark 1986:37) Once such centre was Mt. Edziza north of the Stikine River. Pieces of the glass like obsidian from Mt. Edziza have been found in the Alaska panhandle and throughout northern British Columbia, at a time when the glaciers were still retreating in the northern river valleys.

By 5000 years ago, a good deal more trade was evident on the north coast in the archaeological sites of the Prince Rupert Harbour and on sites on the first canyon of the Skeena River. These include exotic forms of stone used for chipped and ground stone tools, and include obsidian from other sources further south in the Bella Coola area. As archaeology proceeds in the area, evidence is building up of a network of trails five millenia ago not much different from those of historical times. To this day the roads of northern British Columbia follow, for the most part, these ancient trails.

There is little doubt that the trade along the major trails continued to expand at a slow but steady pace for the next several thousand years, until a new plateau was reached at the beginning of the first millenium before Christ. By that time, graves by the Prince Rupert Harbour demonstrate that trade with the interior included materials of wealth such as amber, jet beads and exotic shells from further down the coast.

In the same graves, an abundance of stone and bone weapons, and pieces of armour indicate that the onset of large-scale trade brought with it an obvious militaristic element aimed at gaining and holding control of major routes. Several particular features associated with growing militarism in this area, such as a significant occurrence of trophy heads which accompany the graves and the type of rod armour indicated, (MacDonald and Inglis 1976:77) suggest strong links with somewhat earlier militaristic features associated with the Old Bearing Sea cultures on both the Siberian and the American sides of the Bearing Straits, dating to about 1,000 B.C. In turn the armour of the Old Bearing Sea culture is closely related to that of the Shang period of China at about 1600 B.C., a militaristic trading culture also known for the abundance of trophy heads in its graves.

The village sites of the Prince Rupert Harbour area yield further evidence throughout the first millenium before Christ, of the growth of both the size of house plank dwellings, as well as the size of the communities. New types of woodworking tools demand exotic varieties of stone and shell, for their cutting edges that must be imported from distant sources.

The developing system of rank, also reflected in variations in house style and elaboration in the first millenium B.C., results in a growing list of imports to mark status differentiation. Several hundred skeletons from the cemeteries of the harbour show an extremely high incidence of males with head and forearm fractures associated with hand to hand combat with clubs. (MacDonald and Inglis 1976:35) It is quite possible that at this time, the Tlingit people of Southeast Alaska, who were first in line for military strategies borrowed from Asia, were raiding frequently the Prince Rupert Harbour area, the heartland of the Tsimshian, for booty and slaves.

The Tsimshian in turn appear to learn these new lessons quickly and pass them on to their advantage to their neighbours inland, out to sea on the Queen Charlotte Islands and south to the Bella Coola and beyond.

These events on the coast are clearly reflected in the archaeological sites of the Kitselas and Hagwilget canyons of the Skeena River, and probably on the Nass River, although little archaeological work has been done there, with the exception of Cybulskis work on the Lakaltsap (Cybulski 1982, 1983 ms.).

By the time of Christ, the power structure of the coast of British Columbia seems to have stabilized. Economic territories seem to have come under the control of particular lineages, who had their own fishing and collecting sites during the summer along the Skeena River and its tributaries below the Kitselas Canyon, and during the winter had their own village sites on the islands and bays of the prince Rupert Harbour. In the spring they headed north to the lower Nass River to fish for eulachon, and to trade with the Haida and Tlingit, who also congregated on the lower Nass for eulachon and trade.

By the time of Christ, a relative stability appears to have prevailed among the north coast tribes, which lasted the better part of two thousand years. Art styles continued to celebrate, with increased drama, the power of lineages over particular resources. Archaeological deposits in villages built up like layer cakes in a rhythmic and orderly fashion. Trade expanded up and down the coast, as well as up the Nass and Skeena Rivers and over to the Queen Charlotte Islands. Slowly, the entire culture of the north coast, from tool types to forms of social organization are integrated into what has been identified as a co-tradition shared by the Haida and Tsimshian, and probably Tlingit, although the archaeological evidence for the last is not available.

The patterns of relative stability on the north coast is abruptly disturbed about 1750 A.D., when the penetration of the Russians reaches the northern portion of British Columbia. The first records in the Barbeau - Beynon files of intruders to the coast, are the Russians rather than the English, or Spanish as was the case at the mouth of the Columbia and Frazer Rivers. At first the Russians are few in number, accompanying bands of Aluet hunters seeking sea otter furs for the China trade. Nevertheless, they bring new weapons and military strategies along with new trade demands that destabilize the people of the north coast. They begin to jockey for favourable positions to intercept the trade ships before their neighbours, and to wrest control of the trade routes into the interior which yield their own wealth of furs, so eagerly sought by the newcomers.

In the interregnum of the eighteenth century, even petty chiefs could by dint of force become like feudal barons — the local power in control of key points such as the trade routes between coast and interior, and between river systems. In the Tsimshian area, the trails pre-existed the shock of contact with European culture in the 1700's by at least several thousand years. The following resumé of trails and trade demonstrates the extent and systematic nature of trading relationships in the region.



Heavy leather armour was folded and fastened with toggles up one side. Crest figures often embellished the front and back. Smithsonian Institute photo.

## TRAILS AND TRADE:

### The Kitwankul Trail

The trails that linked together the productive fish streams and rivers of the North Coast were known collectively as grease trails. Of the dozens of trails that connected the native villages together in Northern British Columbia the most famous was the Kitwankul Trail between the Skeena and Nass Rivers. It was often just called "The Grease Trail" was about sixty kilometers long and one of the widest trails in the region. It was reported to be as much as one meter deep where it cut over hills and ridges. The trail was used by many explorers of the late nineteenth century including George Mercer Dawson and Charles Horetsky who have left detailed descriptions of the trail and traffic they encountered on it.

The Kitwankul trail ran mainly across country from Aiyansh on the Nass River to Kitwankul Lake. From there it followed the edge of the lake and the Kitwanga River all the way to its confluence with the Skeena River. There were some minor deviations from the Kitwanga River to cut overland as it did a few kilometers before it reaches the Skeena. This eliminated a large meander of the river and also reached the Skeena farther upstream from the village of Kitwanga. Trails rarely have their junctions with other trails or rivers right at village sites. (Donahue 1974) At the Skeena River, the Kitwankul trail joined with the Skeena River trail, a major segment of which ran from Usk to Hazelton via Kitwanga. It was the later trail that was used by the authorities to suppress the Skeena River Rebellion and hunt down Kitwankul Jim in the 1880's. (Barbeau 1928)

Commodities carried over the grease trail spanned a wide variety of both native and European trade goods. Eulachon grease from which the trail took its name, was undoubtedly the single most important commodity since this trail was the main line from the Nass fisheries into the interior. According to Horetsky, men on the trail carried an average of three hundred pounds of goods in tied wooden boxes, with a trump line to their forehead. Women carried half that amount, but even children and dogs were pressed into service to carry as much as possible.

The Kitwankul trail was begun in prehistoric times but it is impossible to say when. As a hunting trail it is undoubtedly many thousands of years old, but as a major trade route, it probably came into importance between two and three thousand years ago. The technology of fishing eulachon and of preserving the oil by fermentation and separation may not be older than that. There is clear evidence of prehistoric trade in the finds of fourteen pieces of obsidian at the Kitwanga Fort site (MacDonald 1979) which came from

Mt. Edziza on the Stikine River. The Nass to Skeena grease trail and the Nass to Stikine trail form a direct route from Kitwanga to the Edziza Source.

Although there were forts situated at key control points on every major trail, there was no attempt to block anyone from using the trails to go to the Nass fisheries nor to charge them a users fee. It would appear that this situation is parallel to ones described for Alaska, where the local groups controlled resources which were so rich they could not hope to deplete them. They would exploit the resources further by inviting the neighbours in to fish, thereby putting the visitors in their debt. This applied to the provision of camp sites and fishing stations to visitors by the Nishka, and the trails were simply another necessity to which the sharing was extended. It was unlikely a fort was required on the grease trail as long as the main use was connection with the Nass fishery. When European trade had commenced in the region, the situation probably changed rapidly.

During the eighteenth century, European trade items were an extremely desirable and very rare resource. Metal weapons including war daggers and metal arrow points, gave a military advantage as well as an economic one. In return for European trade objects the Indians were required to barter skins, which were also in limited supply. It is clear in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that chiefs vied with each other to control trade routes. This has been documented on the coast for Maquina among the Nootka, Cunneha among the Haida and Legaic among the Coast Tsimshian. (Robinson, M; 1978) Legaic formed solid alliances with the Hudson's Bay Company when they established Fort Simpson in 1834 by providing the land on which to build the post and by marrying his daughter to the chief factor. Within a short period his new wealth and weaponry gave him undisputed authority over all trade on both the Nass and Skeena Rivers, and presumably the grease trail which linked the two rivers.

The Kitwankul Trail is part of a network of trails that distributed goods between the coast and interior. Of all of the northern coast rivers from Telegraph Creek in the north to Kemano in the south, only a handful, such as the Nass and the Skeena are navigable for even part of their length, because of the steep gradient of their channels. The Skeena and the Nass have problems of spring flooding, other seasonal flash flooding and winter freeze up that put limits on their usefulness as well as for canoe travel. Overland trails and trails along the riverbanks, provided a much more reliable system for the transport of trade items.

A brief discussion of the trails that connected the Kitwankul Trail to the major villages throughout the North Coast and adjacent interior is provided here. The numbers correspond to those on the trail map in Fig.1. The Kitwankul trail is unnumbered on the map.



Mt. Edziza on the Stikine River. The Nass to Skeena grease trail and the Nass to Stikine trail form a direct route from Kitwanga to the Edziza Source.

Although there were forts situated at key control points on every major trail, there was no attempt to block anyone from using the trails to go to the Nass fisheries nor to charge them a users fee. It would appear that this situation is parallel to ones described for Alaska, where the local groups controlled resources which were so rich they could not hope to deplete them. They would exploit the resources further by inviting the neighbours in to fish, thereby putting the visitors in their debt. This applied to the provision of camp sites and fishing stations to visitors by the Nishka, and the trails were simply another necessity to which the sharing was extended. It was unlikely a fort was required on the grease trail as long as the main use was connection with the Nass fishery. When European trade had commenced in the region, the situation probably changed rapidly.

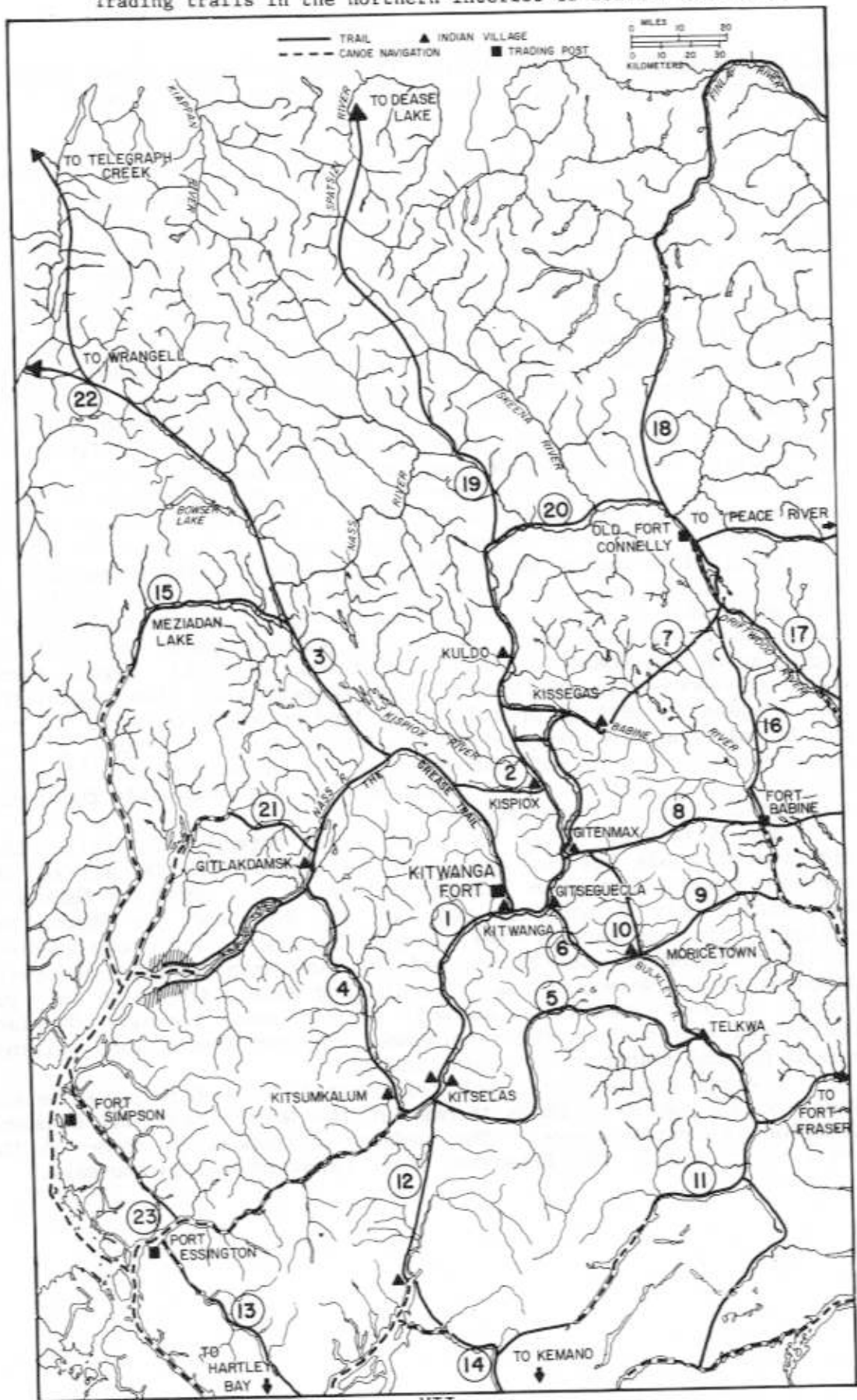
During the eighteenth century, European trade items were an extremely desirable and very rare resource. Metal weapons including war daggers and metal arrow points, gave a military advantage as well as an economic one. In return for European trade objects the Indians were required to barter skins, which were also in limited supply. It is clear in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that chiefs vied with each other to control trade routes. This has been documented on the coast for Maquina among the Nootka, Cunneha among the Haida and Legaic among the Coast Tsimshian. (Robinson, M; 1978) Legaic formed solid alliances with the Hudson's Bay Company when they established Fort Simpson in 1834 by providing the land on which to build the post and by marrying his daughter to the chief factor. Within a short period his new wealth and weaponry gave him undisputed authority over all trade on both the Nass and Skeena Rivers, and presumably the grease trail which linked the two rivers.

The Kitwankul Trail is part of a network of trails that distributed goods between the coast and interior. Of all of the northern coast rivers from Telegraph Creek in the north to Kemano in the south, only a handful, such as the Nass and the Skeena are navigable for even part of their length, because of the steep gradient of their channels. The Skeena and the Nass have problems of spring flooding, other seasonal flash flooding and winter freeze up that put limits on their usefulness as well as for canoe travel. Overland trails and trails along the riverbanks, provided a much more reliable system for the transport of trade items.

A brief discussion of the trails that connected the Kitwankul Trail to the major villages throughout the North Coast and adjacent interior is provided here. The numbers correspond to those on the trail map in Fig.1. The Kitwankul trail is unnumbered on the map.



Trading trails in the northern interior of British Columbia.









KITKATNA

T S I M S H I A N

GITKALATH

GINADOKS

GITSSEES

GINAKSTOK

GITNIDO

KITSUMKALIM

GITGIGENIK

GITKATEEN

GITLANDAMAK

KITWANCOPL

GITANMAAX

GISPAPKLOATS

GITLAN

KITSELAS

KITWANGAK

KITSEGAKLA

GILITSADU

Keurnelium

Usk

Chimodemash

Gitsax

Glaus

Tsunyo

Chikadzaw

Lakvise

Kisem

Kasles

Kiyaks

Kivoda

Spuscut

Quinwang

Forquith

Lakhalzo

Lakhalzo

Citax

Chikaderuks

Lakwinoqwam

Cikwanishikw

Saks

Lakwilikap

Kiwungak

Tawdzap

Kiamaka

Kiepor

Skeena

Kitsegukla

Hogwaget

Pir  
Wa  
Isia

Queen  
Charlotte  
Island



- 1) The Skeena Trail runs along the north bank of the river from possibly as far downstream as the Khyex River to the Kitsumkalum River near Terrace, where it linked with a trail past Lake Kitsumkalum to the Nass River. From Kitsumkalum the Skeena Trail continued through the Kitselas Canyon, past Usk to Kitwanga where it met the Kitwankul Trail. From Kitwanga the Skeena Trail went to Gitenmax (Hazelton) where it joined with five other trails. (Donahue 1973: 4) One branch continued up the Skeena River cutting across the big bend of the river above Kispiox to rejoin at the now abandoned village of Kuldo. From there it continued to Dease Lake and links with other trails. It appears that this one trail alone, which was made up of a number of segments, followed the Skeena River for about one thousand kilometers.
- 2) The Cranberry Trail begins at Kispiox village on the Upper Skeena River and follows the course of the Kispiox River to a point near its source where it jumps over to the headwaters of the Cranberry River, a tributary of the Nass River. At Cranberry Junction the Kispiox, Kitwankul and Stikine Trails meet together and then descend the Nass River to Gitlaxdamsk. There it passes the Kitsumkalum Trail and links up with the eulachon fishery grounds at Mill Bay, Red Bank and Nass Harbour.
- 3) The Stikine Trail begins at Cranberry Junction where it meets the Kispiox Trail from the Upper Skeena and runs north to Telegraph Creek on the Stikine River at which point a number of trails intersect. Obsidian from the Stikine source found along the Skeena River indicates that this trail has been in use for several thousand years. Although more research is required, it appears that this was a major trail bringing Russian trade goods into the Upper Skeena and Nass River areas.
- 4) The Kitsumkalum Trail is a close parallel to the Kitwankul Trail. It begins on the Skeena River at Kitsumkalum, below Terrace, and passes the old village site of Kitsumkalum, now deserted, and follows the eastern shore of Kitsumkalum Lake to emerge on the Nass River a short distance from the village of Gitlaxdamsk. The recently constructed highway from Terrace to Ayansh follows this trail.
- 5) The Copper River Trail leaves the south bank of the Skeena River at the bottom of the Kitselas Canyon and follows the course of the Copper River, which is unnavigable, to the Bulkley River near Teye Lake, above Moricetown. It is clearly indicated on Father Morice's map of 1907. It was followed by J. Fountain and H.C. Hawkins in 1904. (Morice 1971) About midway on this trail a branch north led through a pass to join the Gitseguecla-Moricetown Trail.
- 6) The Gitseguecla-Moricetown Trail follows a mountain pass between the Skeena and Bulkley River valleys. It leaves the Skeena at a point near where the Kitwankul Trail reaches the Skeena from the north just above Kitwanga, and just below Gitseguecla on the opposite side. It was in a real sense a southern continuation of the Kitwankul Trail past the Skeena River.



Transport on the old grease trail consisted of carrying heavy loads on the backs of men, women, children and dogs.



Transport on the rivers relied on small dug out canoes made from the local cottonwood trees or larger red cedar canoes traded from coastal Indians, as in the illustration. (NMC 47035)

- 7) The Kisgigas Trail began at Gitenmax (Hazelton) and followed the east bank of the Skeena River north to the now abandoned Kisgegas village. Today it had been turned into an emergency road for Fisheries Services of British Columbia. From Kisgegas village on the Babine River, the trail heads northeast to Bear Lake, where Old Fort Connelly once stood and from there east to Fort Graham on the Finlay River. The use of this trail to bring iron goods to the Finlay River Indians was commented upon by Simon Fraser. (Morice 1971)
- 8) The Babine Lake Trails began at Gitenmax (Hazelton) and followed the Bulkley trail to just past Hagwilget where it headed east following the Bear River valley to pass south of Mount French down to Fort Babine. The fort was on the site of an ancient village of Babine Indians as a narrows in the lake; archaeological work there in 1966 shows evidence for a long occupation of this site. (Turnbull 1966 ms) Across the narrows the trail continued as far as the Peace river.
- 9) The Moricetown-Babine Lake Trail paralleled the Hazelton-Fort Babine Trail but ran from further south on the Bulkley to a more southerly point on Babine Lake.
- 10) The Bulkley River Trail started at Gitenmax (Hazelton) and followed the course of the Bulkley River past Morricetown, and past the Morrice River near where Houston stands today, to trails which connect it with Oosta Lake and others in the Tweedsmuir Parks region.
- 11) The Kemano-Telkwa Trail began on the Gardner Inlet and ran up the Kemano River then took a southern branch through a high pass to Emerald Lake, and a chain of neighbouring lakes to Lamprey Creek a tributary of the Upper Bulkley River. From there to Telkwa the trail was along the banks of the Bulkley River. This was not a major trail and was undoubtedly closed during the mid winter.
- 12) The Kitimat Trail was one of major importance that linked the Skeena River with the head of Douglas Channel. The trail left the Skeena just below the Kitselas Canyon cutting overland to the eastern slope of Lakelse Lake. From there the trail ran parallel to the Kitimat River, though some miles to the east of it, until it reached salt water where present day Kitimat stands.  
 This trail is important in the traditions surrounding the Kitwanga Fort as it was the trail taken by Nekt during his raid on the Kitimat where he aquired the rights to secret ceremonies. It was also the trail that brought the Kitimat warriors to Kitwanga in another episode.
- 13) The Port Essington - The Hartley Bay Trail left the Skeena at what is now Port Essington and followed the Ecstall River to a low divide back of Hartley Bay. The Hudson's Bay Company established a post at Port Essington only a few years after Port Simpson was established. The people from Kitimat, Kemano and Hartley Bay found this a convenient route to trade for European goods throughout most of the nineteenth century.

- 14) The Kitimat-Kemano trail linked two communities through the interior although good water links also existed between them.
- 15) The trail to Work Channel linked the Lower Skeena from the mouth of the Khyex River to a small Indian village at the head of the Work Channel. It provided a well protected route from the Skeena to Portland Inlet and the mouth of the Nass River.
- 16) The Stikine trail ran up the Stikine River from its mouth to Telegraph Creek where it met the trail south to the Nass River (trail no.3). It continued up Telegraph Creek to Dease Lake and eventually to Lower Post on the Yukon border. The importance of this trail lies in the fact that this route linked with the Russian Fort Dionysius. Before 1825 this was a major avenue for Russian trade materials but after this date the area was leased to the Hudson's Bay Company.
- 17) The trail from Babine Lake to Bear lake is an aboriginal one, but became very significant in the early nineteenth century as a link between two fur trading posts -- Fort Babine at the north end of Babine Lake and Old Fort Connelly at the north end of Bear Lake. From the latter post a series of trails lead eastwards to the Peace River.
- 18) This is another trail which links the Bear Lake to Takla Lake at Fort St. James in the Upper Fraser River drainage.
- 19) Leading north from Old Fort Connely is an important trail to the Finlay River with connections to the Peace River and the high plains.
- 20) At the big end of the Skeena River north of Kuldo the trail branches with the northern trail heading between the headwaters of the Nass and Skeena Rivers to link with the Spatsizi River to Dease Lake near the headwaters of the Stikine River.
- 21) At the same branch where trail no.19 heads north, the second branch follows the Skeena River to a tributary that leads to Bear Lake and Old Fort Connelly where several other trails in Carrier territory converge.
- 22) From Gitlakdamks on the Nass River a short but important trail leads across to the head of Observatory Inlet where the town of Alice Arms stands today.
- 23) A branch of the trail from the Nass River to Telegraph Creek heads due west around the north shore of Bowser Lake to the Lower Iskut River which it follows to the mouth of the Stikine River near where Fort Dionysius (later Wrangell) was situated. This was indeed the shortest route from the Skeena River to a Russian fur trading post, and most important as trade for European goods opened up in the eighteenth century.

The twenty-three trails discussed above are all major ones that were in use in prehistoric times. There were scores of secondary trails that linked every village and major economic or resource area together. For most trails there were alternate routes that were used in summer and winter. In winter many of the higher passes were blocked with snow in which case longer alternate trails along the river bank had to be used. In spring however, these routes often disappeared

under flood waters. Once the river froze over they became natural highways. There were considerable periods each year on the Skeena when ice was unstable or the river was in flood that trails along the bank were required. By late spring these usually became congested with prolific new growth which diverted traffic elsewhere.

The Tsimshian speaking peoples of the Skeena and Nass Rivers were unique on the west coast of Canada for using snow shoes extensively in their trading ventures. They employ their own style with pointed, lashed toe struts that suggest a long period of development and use.

Within historic times dog teams have been widely used on the Skeena River in winter. The sleighs are of local manufacture but were not aboriginally known in this area. Nevertheless, dogs were used to pack supplies in prehistoric times. Dog sleds probably came into use in the early 1800's after trading posts at Bear Lake, Fort St. James and Fort Babine introduced the concept.

Charles Horetsky was the first person to leave an eye witness account of the Kitwankul grease trail from Kitwanga to the Nass when he was surveying the route for the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1872. Horetsky's description of the trail and the traffic that passed along it is particularly useful. (1874: 117)

Since we left we met many of the Kitsgiguehlé (Kitseguecla) Indians returning from the great feast at Kitwancole; more than one hundred have passed us, and they were without a single exception, not only men, but also women and children, laden with large cedar boxes, of the size and shape of tea-chests, which were filled with the rendered grease of the candle fish caught in the Naas waters.

On arriving at Kitwankul mid-day on the trail, he observes: (ibid: 120)  
For the last ten days this village has been the place of barter between the Naas Indians and those of the interior. The former had carried up grease to the extent of many hundreds of boxes, which they exchanged with the Skeena Indians for blankets and other articles".

Approaching the Nass River he observes: (ibid: 123)

We pushed on, however, the trail becoming very much worse...after making poor progress we camped near a large assemblage of Naas Indians, who were returning homewards. Here the trail, or what was left of it, disappeared entirely, and we had now to beat the road through three feet of snow, very soft and extremely difficult to plow through.

Following a trail that sometimes rose to three hundred and fifty feet above the river and at others took them along the narrow ledges of river ice, they arrived at Gitlaxdams at five thirty on the 14th. It thus took them eight and a half days to cover the Kitwankul Trail from Kitwanga to Gitlaxdams under the winter conditions.

George Mercer Dawson who conducted a geological survey of the Skeena valley in 1879 for the federal government, states that it could be covered much faster in the summer months: "A trail leads from this place (Kitwanga) across to the Nass River, the journey occupying, according to the natives, three long days." (Dawson 1881: 15B)



## The Historical Period:

### Early Historical Contacts

The dates of the first occurrences of trade objects of European manufacture among the native people of Northwest British Columbia is an open question.

Maritime exploration begins with the Spanish under Juan Perez who probably reached the Queen Charlotte Islands in 1775. Cook made landfalls on the outer coast in 1778 followed by Captain Dixon in 1787, La Perouse, and by the 1790's Vancouver and a host of other explorers and traders. Invariably the early maritime explorers expressed considerable surprise in finding quantities of trade goods, particularly iron axes and knives, in the hands of the native people they contacted.

Dixon remarks "...a fondness for carving and sculpture was found among the people by Captain Cook; iron implements were in common use," and he adds: "it must doubtless be a considerable time ago that iron was introduced from that coast". (1968: 243-44)

At roughly the same time, in the late eighteenth century, explorers and traders came to Northern British Columbia over the Rockies, beginning with Alexander MacKenzie in 1792. Father Morice describes what he believes to be the first iron axe owned by the Déné as coming from a village called "Tsechack", near the Hazelton on the Skeena River, about 1730. Morice further notes that Simon Fraser found iron wares near the 49th parallel, "...some of them which seemed of Russian manufactures". (1971: 9) Morice justifies this by pointing out, "When in 1741, Behring first reached the mainland of America, he found among the inhabitants of the Fox or Eastern Aleutian islands 'long iron knives, apparently their own manufacture.'" (quoted in Morice 1971: 346)

Such items were undoubtedly traded across Bering Strait from the Gulf of Anadyr opposite the mouth of the Yukon River. Behring notes (9-10) that as early as 1648 trading expeditions had brought quantities of trade objects to this area some of which would have been traded into the New World. Stellar comments of the Siberian Eskimos: (Jochelson 1933: 22)

"The Chuckchee carry on trade with America through the medium of the islanders (Diomedes), they sell to the Americans iron knives, lances, and iron points, in exchange for sea-otters, martens and foxes. The Chuckchees obtain iron wares at Anadyr at excessive prices from the Russians and sometimes sell to the Americans for furs."

Gregor Shelikov established the first permanent trading settlement at Three Saints on Kodiak Island in 1784. (Clark nd) In the 1790's as the Russians depleted the sea-otter populations, first on the Alutians and later around the Kodiak island, they began to extend down the coast of Southeast Alaska. In 1799 Baranov founded Redoubt St. Gabriel at Sitka in Southeast Alaska only to be driven out by the Tlingit in 1802. In reference to the founding of Sitka by Baranov, Bennett and

Schermacher state (1967: 3), "A settlement here, he saw, would bring the Northwest Coast under Russian rule and thus make it more difficult for other nations to continue their trade rivalry." After driving the Tlingit rebels from their fort at Sitka in 1804, the Russians expanded their settlements and activities and rapidly down the coast until they were held by a southern boundary at 54°40' by a treaty with the United States in 1824.

When Zagoskin visited the Russian posts at Fort St. Michael on Norton Sound and Fort Alexander on Bristol Bay on the Bering Sea coast of Alaska in the 1840's:

"both carried a stock of native goods: In addition to 'Yakut' knives, 'Kolosh' capes and 'Yenesei' axes, these forts were stocking walrus and whale fat, deer hides, decorated Chuckchee parkas..." (Stodard 1972: 55)

The Yenesei and Chuckchee items were direct imports from Siberian tribes. A suit of Tlingit armour in a small museum in Finland has a broad border of Chuckchee fur mosaic attached to the hem that bears witness to the trade in native goods between the Siberia and Northwest coast.

Archaeology, trade goods have been found in the central interior of British Columbia which corroborates these dates. Borden (1952:31) found a chinese coin at the Carrier village of Chilac which Morice claims was destroyed during the Chilcotin raid of 1745. Excavating in the Chilcotin area south of the Carrier territory Wilmeth (1979: 150), has trade copper objects appearing at A.D. 1705  $\pm$  75. It is now apparent that trade objects of European origin began to appear in the Skeena River district in the early decades of the eighteenth century although the first Europeans did not travel this river before another century had passed.

## WARFARE

Among the Tsimshian speaking people of British Columbia, warfare is recorded in epic oral histories that even by conservative estimates, span three or four centuries prior to European contact. The wars of the coast Tsimshian were on a much larger scale than those of their relatives on the Upper Skeena River. The coast Tsimshian conducted raids hundreds of miles north and south of their home territory, using large sea going canoes that could carry fifty men. In a recent study of northwest coast warfare, Ferguson (1979: 4) states:

"The river mouths were centers of trade both before and after contact. Furs and other items from the interior were traded down the valleys and western buyers clustered around the estuaries. Control of this trade was a continual source of conflict."

In particular reference to the Skeena estuary, he states (Ferguson 1979B: 6):

"Boas' (1970: 335-378) informants recalled a long series of exterminative raids fought between the Tlingit and Tsimshian over control of the Nass and Skeena estuaries. These occupied most of the eighteenth century, with the Tlingit finally being defeated and pushed north".

At the same time, the Haida were pushing out from their Queen Charlotte Island home in several directions. To the north they displaced Tlingit people from much of the Prince of Whales Archipelago, and made frequent attacks on the Coast Tsimshian villages. According to legend, they were leading war parties up the Skeena River even before the maritime fur trade had been established.

Archaeology in the Prince Rupert Harbour area near the Skeena estuary (MacDonald 1969) demonstrates clearly that warfare has been an organized and relatively extensive activity since approximately 1000 B.C. Finds of massive monolithic clubs as well as stone club heads, slate dagger blades and whalebone clubs verify this conclusion.

Repercussions of such widespread hostilities near the Skeena estuary undoubtedly were felt at least as far the Kitselas Canyon (Allaire: 1978). Even from this early period the coincidence can be seen in the increased evidence of interregional trade, and in the intergroup conflict. Warfare and trade go hand in hand over the past three thousand years in the Skeena estuary and adjacent coast.

The pattern of warfare was consistent along the entire Northwest coast as far as the Bearing Sea (Burch: 1974). Night or dawn attacks were favoured, and the aim was generally to trap as many people in the house as possible, and to take the women and children alive to be slaves. Most such activities might best be characterized as raids rather than wars. Motivation for war was revenge or to take slaves, food stores or crest priveledges. Territorial expansion was rarely the motive or result of such hostilities.

Large specially built war canoes gave amazingly effective strike and retreat capability. Campaign supplies could be stored easily in the big watercraft, so that the warrior crew was not slowed down by the necessity of foraging for food. Several accounts describe the Tsimshian war canoes armed with large rocks that were used at close range to sink enemy craft. Small cannons were mounted on war canoes early in the maritime fur trade period. The mobility provided to the coast Indians by the war canoe can be favorably compared to that of the horse nomads of Eurasia. Traditional narratives talk of Haida war parties on the Skeena River, with as many as 600 men in 12 canoes.

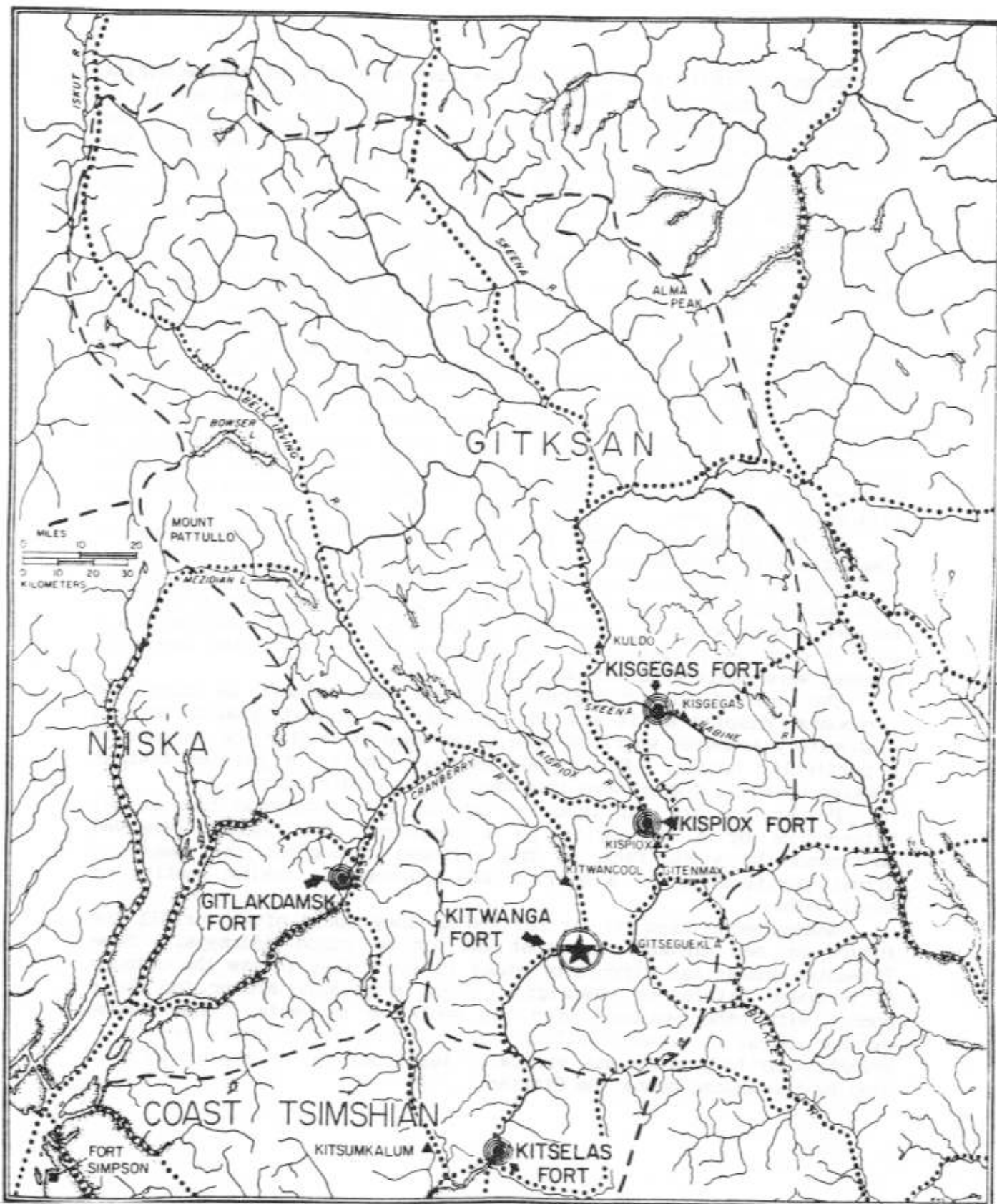
The only organization of war parties was by lineage or household groups, each of which recognized the authority of their own chief. A chief wishing to lead a war party was required to solicit the assistance of other house chiefs within his village. War parties drawn from a number of villages were rare. The close relationships between a household group and a canoe party is noteworthy. A house chief became a canoe chief, and every member of the party had an assigned seat in the canoe that corresponded to his seating rank within the house. Canoes, like houses, were named beings thought to have an existence and history of their own.

It has often been noted for the Northwest coast that warfare is conducted like a ceremony, and ceremonies, particularly the potlatch, is conducted like warfare. There is good evidence to support the view that potlatching and warfare were part of a continuum, whereby disputes between groups who were physically or culturally close, would be dealt with through the potlatch; whereas disputes between those who were more distant were dealt with through warfare.

The use of armour appears to have been almost as much for ceremonial display as it was for protection. Ritual combats between elaborately armoured warriors were often used to decide the outcome of a particular battle. Elaborately carved helmets, or painted leather jerkins over the armour were important forms of display.

Preparation for war involved fasting and abstinence from sexual intercourse by a man prior to a campaign, and rigidly observed abstinence by wives back in the villages throughout the campaign. Ritual purification of a warrior was achieved by taking emetics or sweat baths.

Shaman were taken on war parties as they could often foretell the future or see through the mist or fog on canoe journeys. Some Tsimshian shaman had mirrors of stone in which they foresaw the outcome of proposed battles or campaigns. They often wore armour for their combat with other shamans over the souls of patients. The famous warrior, Naekt of Kitwanga village on the Skeena River, had armour of a grizzly bear hide which was virtually identical to the bear skin cape used by the Shaman among the Gitksan.



Fort locations on the Nass and Skeena Rivers.

Several types of armour were used by the Tsimshian speaking tribes. The most elaborate were wooden slats or rods woven into an articulated cuirass. Decorative panels on front and back often bore painted clan crest designs. The breast plate was in four parts, two cover the thorax, front and back, and the other two, which are smaller, covered the front and back of the lower neck. Assistance was needed to get into this type of armour. It was often worn over a leather shirt, possibly to keep the wood from chaffing the skin, but sometimes wooden armour was concealed under a leather shirt or jerkin. Wooden armour was particularly common among the Sitka Tlingit, but early accounts speak of wooden armour among the Niska and Coast Tsimshian.

The second type of armour was made from heavy leather. This was often the skin of a large animal such as a sea lion, elk or moose, which was folded double then wrapped around the body and fastened at the left side by toggles and thongs. This kind of armour could be reinforced in several ways; wooden or metal slats could be sewn inside, and gravel or other small stones could be glued on the outside with strong fish glue. This treatment was often applied three or four times until the leather coat was like cement. The weight of this armour must have been considerable.



A Gitksan chief wearing a clan helmet carved and decorated with a raven design. Ermine tails attached to the helmet symbolized rank. Such helmets were often worn as part of the armour of a warrior in prehistoric times.

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## THE ORIGIN OF THE GITXAWN GROUP AT KITSEMKALEM

1

Informant: John Morvin  
Recorded by: William Beynon, 1953

Diks, a niece of the Eagle clan chief at Gitlaxdamks, was a beautiful woman and was very much in demand by many chiefs. Finally, she married a Kitsemkalem chief, who took her to his village on the Skeena. When she was at this village, these people, recognizing her high standing, held her in great respect. She had many slaves and attendants and seldom went anywhere without being properly attended by her servants. It was the time when the people went picking berries, and there were separate berry grounds belonging to each chief. There the berry pickers would dry their berries by sun drying or smoking them in big cakes for winter food. It was here that Diks and her husband's people moved to. The men went hunting while the women stayed behind to pick berries. The berry ground was near Klaxgals Lake adjoining the territory of the Gilodza tribe, and through this territory ran the trail the people used to travel to the Kitimat country on the seacoast to the south. The Kitimat used it in their raiding upon the Skeena Tsimshian villages.

While Diks and her women companions were busy picking berries, a raiding party from the Kitimat came upon them and captured them. After taking the young women, they let the old women go, and they returned to Kitimat. The Eagle chief Senaxat at once recognized that Diks was of high standing, and as such he adopted her as his niece, and he redeemed her soon after. They went away to their seal hunting grounds near the Haida islands. When they were at their seal hunting village of Laxtxal, now Banks Island, an attack was made upon them by the Haida, who took many captives; among them was Diks. When the Haida chief, who was a Raven clan man, saw her and knew who she was, he married her.

The Kitsemkalem people did not know what had become of Diks. They went to Kitimat to redeem her, as they knew that she had been captured by them. But when they were told that she had been taken by the Haida along with many of their Kitimat people, they gave the matter up and considered her as dead or lost. A long while after this the Kitsemkalem were at their village at the mouth of the Kitsemkalem river, which flows into the Skeena River. Here all the folk were busy catching and drying salmon. Every day, the children would go some distance away from the village to play on the large level sandbar which was dry and above the water. There were several large shallow ponds, and here the children played, swam, and waded in. The older boys made a raft out of some drift logs, a large raft which held many children. They built a shelter on it, a small house, and pretended to have secret society dances. When they grew tired, they would lie down on the raft and sleep. Some of them would bring provisions and stay all day and play their games. Others even took robes with them and travelling from

one end of the pond to the other, they pretended to be going to other countries. This they did every day. Some of the older children began to sleep on the raft at nights, feeling very secure in the shelter of their little house on the raft. There were objections at first from their parents, but after a while, seeing that they always came home safely, the people were so busy with their salmon, that they gave very little attention to their children, and these would spend more time on their play raft.

One morning, the children arrived at the raft with provisions and robes. After playing strenuously all day, they were all tired. Some went back to their homes while most of the older ones stayed on the raft and slept there. During the night, the river began to rise and soon the pond became a part of the main river, and the raft drifted away. Next morning, the children awoke and found themselves adrift. Where they were they did not know, and the waters became very swift. They were a long distance from shore, which, they could see, was fading away in the distance. They had only a small quantity of food and only a little water. So they began to share the food in small quantities, and when it rained they managed to get some rain water. The Kitsemkalem people, when their children did not return to their homes, went to look for them. Behold! The raft was gone and the sand bar was awash. They searched for them, but could find no trace of them or the raft. They were given up as lost.

For days the children drifted about in the open sea. They no longer saw land and were now getting weak from hunger and exposure. Two boys were older than the others and acted as leaders. One night, they felt that the raft was no longer moving. Early the next morning, they arose and saw that they were aground. In the far distance there appeared to be a village, and they could see smoke coming out of the houses. Where they were or what they should do, they did not know, as they were afraid to go to this strange village, and they dreaded drifting away again. The two leaders had not awakened the younger children. While they were considering what to do, the Haida chief, who had seen the raft, at once sent his men down to investigate this strange thing. When the Haida saw the children, they took them to the chief. They were brought in to Diks, who was now the wife of the Haida chief. She recognized the two older boys and called them, "Niskal and Yagrawox, what are you here for? Where have you come from?" She was astounded at seeing here two of her own relatives, even though they still were children. She then told the chief, her husband, "These are my nephews, and they must have come to visit me." The Haida, learning who they were, now took them in and placed them with his own family. Diks was very happy to have some of her own relatives with her, even though they were children. She felt strengthened with them, and the children soon became very clever in all things. They were liked by the Haida.

The two elder boys Niskal and Yagrawox became very skillful in their training with the chief. They were experts in using the bow and arrow, in the use of the sling, and also skillful sea hunters. They

always went with the chief when he hunted seals and sea lions. Soon they grew into skillful canoemen in rough weather. They were also foremost in the games that the young Haida indulged in, such as wrestling, putting of heavy stones, and jumping. They easily overcame their Haida friends. This caused a great deal of jealousy among the Haida boys. One day, in competition with weight throwing, the Haida rivals threw their heavy stones farther, and one of the Haida, the son of the chief who was the husband of Diks, becoming very bitter, said so that the two Tsimshian boys could hear, "Why is it that those of unknown origin are so clever among us? One would think they were our equals. They are so clever." The young Tsimshian heard this, and were aware that it was meant as a slur upon them. They had been here for some years, and many did not know how they had happened to come to the islands or that they were different from the Haida. Only the two elder boys knew. So they went to Diks and told her, "The Haida crowd is making fun of us, because we are better than they at their games. They grow angry and call us people of unknown origin. What do they mean by that? Everybody laughs at us, and we feel quite humiliated." Diks did not speak for a long while. Finally she said, "They do not know you, that is why they speak as they do. Your uncle's territory is much greater than this, and his is much wealthier. Here you will be subjected to more humiliation. It is better that we should try and go back to our own country."

Next day, the woman spoke to her husband, the Haida chief, "What your people are doing to us is very humiliating, and we can no longer stay among them, now that we have been called people with unknown origin. It means we no longer enjoy social standing among your people, and your own children are included. In our country, no insults will reach our ears. From now on nothing but bitterness will be felt towards us, among your people. They have already begun to humiliate us. Permit us to return to our own country." "I will consider it first," the chief replied.

Many days passed and the feelings between the young people were more strained than ever. Again the boys went to Diks, saying, "The Haida are humiliating us at every chance they get. We must leave here as soon as we can." Diks again went to her husband, the chief and said, "Before my people really die of shame at being constantly humiliated, it is better that we should leave now." So the Haida chief answered, "I will have my large canoe made ready, and your people shall gather much food, as you are going very far, and it will take you many days." So the boys, who were now young men, and Diks, began to prepare provisions. They had all manner of foods: dried halibut, herring, spawn, seal meat, and many robes in the canoe, as the Haida chief wanted Diks to have a big supply of valuable sea otter robes, to distribute to her uncles when she arrived at her own village. He did not want her people to think him as a poor man.

When all was complete, the Haida chief took his sons, and to the eldest he said, "I will give you my name Githawn, which you will use as your highest name. Tell your uncles and grandfathers that I did not

want you to go, but it is your right to return to your own people." To the eldest of the young men of his wife's family, who was Niskal, he said, "You will be the leader, and I will give you directions to follow. Go from here in the direction of the rising sun. You will see no land for a long while. The first thing you will sight will be a high mountain peak. Head for that peak. It is Kna-medik (Place of Grizzly), now known as McNeil Mountain. You will see two large islands, one is Kwaxl (Beaver Tail). In the direction of the rising sun you will find the Nass River. In the direction of rain winds, to the south, is the Skeena River. You may choose either one, as you have relatives in both places. Do not land at Kwaxl (Dundas Island), as here is the country of the Tlingit. They would enslave you. It is much safer for you to travel at night and possibly to the Nass River, where you will be protected by your relatives."

So then Diks and her family set to go to the mainland. As the Haida chief had told them, they saw the peak and headed their canoe towards it, and before the night, they headed towards the Nass, and travelled all night. At daybreak, they made a camp and hid all day. They were searching for the mouth of the Nass River, where they knew they would be safe. When night came, they set out again, and this time Diks now recognized some of the mountains. She said, "We are not far from the Nass River and we will soon be all safe with our own people." At daybreak, she discovered where she was. Feeling safe, she told her canoe companions, "We will soon arrive at a village which belongs to one of my uncles. Here we will stay until we can safely travel to the Skeena, where we will meet your people."

The children who had drifted on the raft had been away for a long time. They were now full grown, and Diks had children of her own who also were grown up. Soon they came to Gitiks, the Eagle village of the chief Txalaxatk. When they arrived here, they began to sing the paddle song of the Eagle. Txalaxatk heard it and recognized the song. He brought in these people who had arrived in a huge canoe. "I am Diks, and I originally came from Laxangyeda, a long time ago, and went to Kitsemkalem. My uncle there is Lai. My son has been given his father's name of Githawn, and these children are Niskal, and Yagrawox. I was made a captive a long while ago, first by the Kitimat warriors, and then, when they moved to their seal hunting camp, I was taken by Haida raiders. Recognizing me, they treated us well, and I became the wife of the Haida chief, who gave us this canoe and provisioned us with all kinds of food. He also gave me robes to present to my uncles." Then Diks gave a sea otter robe to Txalaxatk. She was then taken to her uncle Lai, at Laxangyeda.

The people of the Skeena River came overland for their eulachon grease, which they cached on the Nass until such a time as the snow on the trails would allow them to use sleighs which they would pull over the trail. Thus Diks returned to her home village from which she had been captured, and it was thus that the children that had drifted away from Kitsemkalem went back home, and also how the new group became known as the Githawn family.

## NARRATIVE OF THE CANNIBAL SOCIETY

Informant: Nathan Shaw

Recorded by: William Beynon

The Cannibal society are the most feared group and also the most exclusive. For an ordinary person, who is not a member of the group, to have contact with this type of shaman while in the course of his activities, means death to the uninitiated. This happened to Uksloegwelk, a Wolf of Gitgaata. This man and his brother were great hunters and they were in the woods taking their purification baths previous to their hunting trip. While they were doing this, a call of "Hap! Hap! Hap!" came out from the nearby hills. The brothers went in the direction of the call, not knowing at the time that this was the call of the cannibal society. When the brothers came close to where the calls were, they saw the remnants of a human leg but saw no body. They separated and one followed one trail and the other brother went up the other trail. They met each other at nightfall, but neither one had seen anything. There was a house in the distance, so they went to this small house and found there a strange man who was bathing. He was also singing in a tongue they recognized as from Kitimat, so they went back to their village and told the people what they had seen.

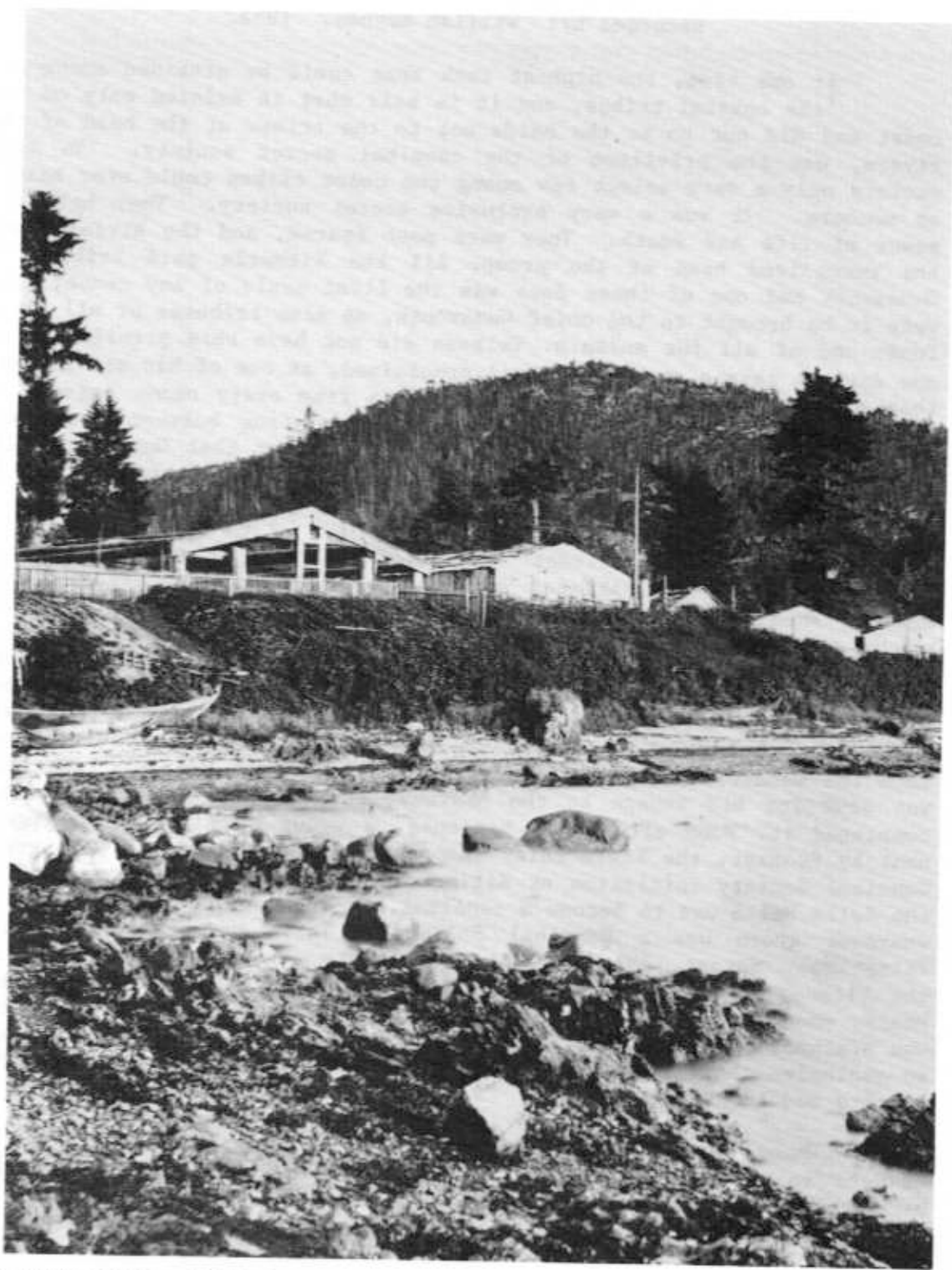
They heard the calling again of "Hap! Hap! Hap!" This was repeated many times during the night. The two hunters went again to the house where they had seen the strange man bathing, and now saw him dancing. He spoke to them, "I want you to take me to Kitimat where I shall meet my brother." The two hunters were not aware that it was taboo to have contact with a person while he was yet under the influence of supernatural powers. "Yes, we will take you to where you want to go." The man came down to where the hunter's canoe was and as soon as he boarded it, a great storm came up, so they went to a sheltered place for some time. All the time these men were in close contact with the man. Soon there were able to travel on to Kitimat. Before they arrived, the man in the canoe sounded the supernatural calls of "Hap! Hap! Hap!" When Xwengas, the Kitimat master heard this he at once knew that a fellow cannibal was coming, but would not land at once. The two hunters saw that the man was hiding something and when he sounded his call of "Hap! Hap! Hap!", he took the bundle and went up into the woods on the outskirts of the village.

They heard the calls "Hap! Hap! Hap!", and then answering calls came from one of the Kitimat houses. As the man seemed to have gone, the two hunters went on to the village. They were unaware that they were in any danger and were only curious as to what was happening. They landed and while all the people were fleeing the sounds of the whistles, the two hunters were very unconcerned and went to the house from which the spirit whistling was coming. Finally the Kitimat man went to the woods to bring down the visiting cannibal who was sounding the spirit call "Hap!" He led the visiting shaman down to the cannibal society

house where they danced. In that house were the two hunters who had brought the man. They were in great danger, but they did not know it. It was only after the ceremonies were over that the Kitimat man noticed them and inquired, "Why have these men been allowed to watch our performances? The penalty for this is death."

The two hunters heard this, and without being observed, they escaped from the shaman house; they got to their canoe and at once set out for their village. When they arrived, they related to the others what had happened to them, and what the great Kitimat cannibal had said about them. One of the hunters then dropped into a trance and was soon dead. The people bathed the other man with roots which were brewed. The brew, which is a strong poison, was poured over the man's body to try and wash off the influence of the cannibal, but he died as well.

The Wolves wanted to retaliate upon the Kitimat for having caused the death of the two men and were about to invade when peace messengers came from Xwengas the Eagle chief, who was also the head of the cannibal society. They entered the houses of the dead victims and scattered the eagle down about as a symbol of peace. Then they began to sing a song imploring peace before presenting compensation. Gifts were brought in and presented to the Wolf chiefs and people. The raid was stopped when all the compensations had been made.



1. Tsimshian village of Kitkatla on Dolphin Island at the mouth of the Skeena River; photo by E. Dossetter 1881. American Museum of Natural History photo.

## RIVALRY BETWEEN TSIBASA AND GUNAXNUTK

Informant: Nathan Shaw, Naxl, Kitkatla  
 Recorded by: William Beynon, 1952.

At one time, the highest rank that could be attained among all the coastal tribes, and it is said that it existed only on the coast and did not go to the Haida nor to the tribes at the head of the rivers, was the privilege of the cannibal secret society. To this society only a very select few among the coast tribes could ever belong as members. It was a very exclusive secret society. They held the power of life and death. They were most feared, and the Kitimat were the recognized head of the group. All the Kitkatla paid tribute to Gunaxnutk and one of these dues was the first seals of any canoe; they were to be brought to the chief Gunaxnutk, as also tributes of all other foods and of all fur animals. Tsibasa did not have this privilege. So one day, he gave a great feast and proclaimed, as one of his privileges, that a sea otter pelt had to be given him from every canoe engaged in this hunt. There was a great resentment existing between these two chiefs. Tsibasa resented above many things a power that Gunaxnutk had, which was to open the winter season of ceremonial, and until he did it there were no initiations or dramas given.

At that time Tsibasa had announced that a nephew of his, Nisxtsis, was to be initiated and he was to be his successor at his death. When he would succeed him, privilege was to be given him. He was to receive the first sea otter killed by any of the Kitkatla hunting canoes. This was more valuable even than the privilege of Gunaxnutk whose tribute was the first seal killed by any Kitkatla hunting canoe. So the feeling between the two chiefs ran very high. Then Gunaxnutk opened the winter ceremonial season. Among the first to be initiated into the Dancer society was Nisxtsis, the nephew of Tsibasa. He then was sent for his voyage to the heavens, to appear again after he had completed it. Soon after this happened, a group of Kitimat messengers sent by Senaxat, the Eagle chief announced that there was to be a great Cannibal Society initiation at Kitimat, at which time the new chief of the Bella Bella was to become a cannibal. Messengers were being sent to wherever there was a Cannibal Society. There were two among the Tsimshian: Saxaxt, chief of the Gitwilgoats, and Skagwaits, chief of the Gitando. Among the Kitselas, there was one, Wudeldal, a Killer Whale; among the Bella Bella, Hemdzit, a Raven; and among the Gidzestsu was Nislaws, a Killer Whale. No others could join this society. It was so exclusive that it was termed Great Dancer. The lesser ones were the Dancers and the Dog-Eaters.

These last two were open for all people, both royal and of headman rank. But it was only by hereditary rights that one could become a Great Dancer. The messengers, who were not actual members of the Great Dancer society, were the attendants. They were privileged to



attend the great halaits and be at their feasts and come in contact with them. Their position was hereditary, and when their lineage became extinct, they were chosen by the man-eater halait whom they served. There was great authority resting on these members who were the attendants. They were as much feared almost as the great halaits whom they served. But at any initiation of this group, no matter where held, it must be attended by all of the man-eater halaits and their followers. So now this initiation was to take place at Kitimat for a very select group. There was much excitement when the messengers came blowing their spirit (naxnox) whistles, which sounded "awp, awp, awp, awp... awp!" When the people heard these whistles, they disappeared into their houses, as this was the most feared and dreaded voice by any of the ordinary people, the uninitiated. They sought refuge at home and kept there until all ceremonies were over. Any contact of an ordinary person with any halait of the two groups Nuhlim and Mithla, by anyone, meant that he would have to be an initiated into the one he came into contact with, a very costly event. Any contact of an ordinary person or any person with the man-eater halaits, unless he was an attendant, meant death. So there was great excitement and when Gunaxnutk had finished entertaining, the messengers went away.

Now Tsibasa was very envious and he planned that in order to get more, if not only equal prestige, he must arrange a very spectacular return of his nephew Nisxtsis. He began planning, then he thought, "If I could have Nisxtsis return from the heavens and just briefly appear at the man-eater halait ceremonies at Kitimat and disappear, then make his final appearance here at Laxklan, he would then have become more famous than any initiate. He would command more prestige than any other person." But how to do this? His nephew was yet away on his initiation trip to the heavens. Actually he was in hiding at the nearby mountain refuge at the rear of the Kitkatla village of Laxklan on a small mountain-like island, and there was a big cavern there. This refuge was used by all the halaits as a hiding place for their initiates and as a place in which they were trained into what they were to do. The name of this place was Watigiyamxshl (Never-to-Go-Near-to), and was a forbidden hiding place for all. None could go near there, except initiates and halait attendants.

Tsibasa knew that Gunaxnutk would go away the next day to Kitimat. So he called in one of his foremost canoe men also a foremost hunter, whose name was Gulahahubel (Always Night) and said to him, "I want you to take Nisxtsis to Kitimat in your fast canoe, where he will make an appearance as a halait initiate." Gulahahubel was not yet an initiate, and should not have anything to do with a halait initiate. After considering it for a long while, he finally said, "I will do as you say." Tsibasa then called in his headmen Lutkudzemti and Kmins. He told them. "I want my nephews return from the heavens to be more spectacular than anything ever done. I want him to appear and then vanish again in the man-eater halait ceremonies. This will earn him equal privileges as belong to Gunaxnutk. I have arranged with

Gulahahubel to use his fast hunting canoe and I want you to take the initiate Nisxtsis with you. He will make a quick appearance in the halait house and then disappear again. But he will make his final appearance here after Gunaxnutk returns from his halait visits. The other people must never learn of this. It must remain a secret. You will leave tomorrow morning, pretending to go on a seal hunt, together with Gulahahubel, who is a great seal hunter. I have already sent a messenger for Nisxtsis to be ready to board the canoe as soon as it is dark. Then you will start right away. I have already spoken to two men who are with Gunaxnutk and you will contact them and they will arrange for the appearance and quick disappearance of Nisxtsis. Everything is arranged. This will give to my nephew the equal privilege of receiving the tribute equal that of Gunaxnutk."

Next day very early, the seal hunter Gulahahubel and the other men together with the nephews of Gulahahubel who were to paddle the fast canoe, set out to hunt seals. They had let it be known that they would be gone some days, so that no one would suspect anything else. They paddled away in the opposite direction of the secret hiding place of the halait. When it came nightfall, the canoe that pretended to go seal hunting, went directly to where the initiate Nisxtsis was waiting for them. When the canoe touched the island, they put him on board and he was wrapped in a heavy bearskin and hidden from all in the canoe. They immediately set out for Kitimat, a distance of about eighty miles. These men were the best paddlers and in the fastest canoe that was available among the Kitkatla people. They paddled all night. When daylight came, they pulled the canoe up into the woods and hid all day, and the initiate was kept in hiding from the others of the party. When night came, they set out, as they were nearing Kitimat, and could land only when all were asleep. Then they would have to act very quickly. When all noise had stopped and there appeared to be no more life, they landed near the village. Kmns went to contact the other men that were in Gunaxnutk's group. But he was not able to find which house they were in.

Gulahahubel, who was not an initiate in any halait, went round and without knowing it, went into the house in which the man-eater halait ceremonies were being carried out. He began to go to the sleeping quarters, trying to identify the Kitkatla. He awakened a Kitimat man, and pretended that he was looking for his mates and had mistaken the house. The Kitimat man became suspicious and told him where to go. But he noticed the Kitimat man wore no halait collar around his neck, which if he were an attendant he must, to show he was privileged to come into the house. The people began to stir. Then Kmns had found where the other Kitkatla men were, who he was to contact. They had been afraid to do their part, and now Kmns had brought the initiate Nisxtsis from the canoe which had gone away a short distance from the village ready to return to take on board the initiate. In the meantime, Gulahahubel was trying to escape, and he realized the danger he was in if caught. He would be put to death.

Kmins found that all the plans had not miscarried and his only way was to escape to the canoe. He did so, but both he and the initiate had been seen, as was Gulahahubel who had come into the sacred halait house where he had no right to go. They all managed to escape.

The next day there were mutterings, and the Kitimat who had seen the Kitkatla knew him as did another who had seen Nisxtsis. Some overheard Kmins reprimanding the other from Kitkatla for not being ready. These things got around finally to Gunaxnutk, who became angry, and he soon learned of the plans of Tsibasa endeavouring to overcome him. He grew very angry. He said, "Does Tsibasa think that he can overcome us? My halait powers I will show him, when I return. I will first talk with my fellow halaits, who will decide what shall be done. Tsibasa has now broken the most sacred thing in the halait. He has allowed his nephew to come in contact with an uninitiated person, while being under the influence of the halait. He had not yet returned from the heavens. His punishment will be severe."

The Kitkatla managed to return to their village unharmed, and they hid Nisxtsis in the halait refuge. They went to Tsibasa, and Kmins said, "We arrived in to where we were going to, but everything was upset. The ones we were to contact failed to meet us and, whether they knew we were there, I am not sure. When the plans missed, we ran away at once, realizing that the situation was too dangerous." "So," said Tsibasa, "if you were not seen and recognized, everything will be alright. But should it even be known who you were, then we are all in danger."

Back in the halait house at Kitimat, it soon became known what Tsibasa had planned doing, and the fact that the initiate had been brought in a canoe manned by men that were ordinary people, made the taboo violation worse. Nisxtsis completed his initiation before the return of the man-eater halait, who had gone to Kitimat. Nothing more was said about the incident, and it was as if nothing had happened.

It was now time for Nisxtsis to take his last initiation, and this was to be a great event. Chief Tsibasa had invited all of the Tsimshian chiefs and their spokesmen, also the Kitselas, the Gitaata, and the Bella Bella. When the guests all arrived, then would be the time for Tsibasa to make known his proclamation that one of the privileges would be assumed by Nisxtsis, upon his assuming the position of chief, after Tsibasa's death. Every Kitkatla hunter would have to pay a tribute of the first sea otter, in addition to fur seal. This would be much better than the privilege of Gunaxnutk, whose tribute consisted of the first hair seal which the hunters got. It was valuable in as much as hair seals were caught throughout the year and their furs were used for cloaks and moccasins and waterproof boots. Also they were used for armoured shirts, which were cured in a way to make them almost arrow proof. The guests now all arrived, and the festivities were held in the large house of Kaimtkwa.

Now the Wutahalaït, when they found out that Tsibasa and Nisxtsis had disregarded the taboo of the halait by allowing an uninitiated person to contact someone under halait influence, inflicted punishments to the culprits. They said, "When the time comes for Nisxtsis to dance before his guests, he will not make one complete circuit before he drops dead, and at the same time his uncle Tsibasa will drop dead too. This is in punishment for breaking taboos and for being guilty of the sacrilege towards the Wutahalaït house at Kitimat." One of Tsibasa's men had gone into the house to search for the other Kitkatla who was to help the others carry out the plan of Tsibasa of having his nephew appear at Kitimat and then to disappear again. Now that Nisxtsis was to continue the halait ceremonies, and all the guests were here, Tsibasa and Nisxtsis had been told of what the Wutahalaït group had decreed would happen. But Tsibasa had disregarded and defied them. This defiance was known practically by all the Kitkatla. While it was never actually divulged in a public way, yet the decision of the Wutahalaït was generally known to all. There was great excitement when the preparations for the halait of Nisxtsis were begun. It had also been openly stated that some of the Tsibasa family had said, "Should anything happen to Nisxtsis or Tsibasa, we would retaliate." Also when the guests for Nisxtsis' halait arrived, these also came to Kitkatla some of the man-eater halait from Wutsta and Kitimat. These went to Gunaxnutk's house and gathered together.

Nisxtsis was now ready and all his guests were in his house. The halait members of the Nuhlim had sounded their spirit whistles and the halait singing had begun. Then Nisxtsis entered, dancing. After he was halfway around the house in front of all his guests, the people heard the sounding of the man-eater halait whistles of "awp awp awp" from the nearby house of Gunaxnutk. Nisxtsis heard it and kept on dancing. When he had gone nearly around the house, he dropped to the floor and was dead. There was intense agitation and Tsibasa ran out to where his nephew lay. He no sooner got there than he was stricken dead too. All the guests retired and there was great excitement. Many were for retaliating at once, but the older man said, "Wait! You may bring disaster upon us, if the man-eater halait have caused these deaths. You should first cut open the bodies of Nisxtsis and Tsibasa and examine the heart. If you find earth on each, then you will know that it was they who caused their deaths. There can be no retaliation as both Tsibasa and Nisxtsis have broken a sacred taboo of the halait and have been punished. Should we retaliate it would bring down the anger of the powerful man-eater halait on us. We would suffer as Tsibasa and Nisxtsis have, and the whole village would suffer too."

While feelings were high, yet the older men were able to subdue the younger ones who wanted vengeance, yet feared the wrath of the Wutahalaït. Thus the plan for proclaiming the privilege of the first sea otter tributes and fur seal tributes was lost. The bodies of Tsibasa and Nisxtsis were cut open and on each of their hearts, the people found earth in large lumps embedded there. They now knew for certainty that the Wutahalaït had inflicted their punishments on these men, who had defiantly broken the taboos of the halait and of all secret societies. The man-eaters were the most feared.

## MELULEQ'S TAUNTING SONG

Informant: John Brown (Kwiyaihl), Kispiox  
 Recorded by: Marius Barbeau, 1920

At one time, the people of Kisgegas used to live at a place named Laxtsap below Kisgegas. Meluleq was their head chief. A big party came from the Nass to raid Laxtsap under the leadership of Luralhult (Too-Much-Snow) of Gitlaxdamks. The villagers receiving advance warning, were very much alarmed. They held a great ceremony, the chief of which was Yoomax (Behold-Lighting). In a performance, he conjured bad weather, lots of snow and strong gales, and this came to be. All the belongings of the raiders got wet and damaged. Their chief sent word that he was not to attack anyone, but that he intended to go back peacefully. He went into the house of Meluleq. Then Lawromrashl, a nephew of Meluleq, composed a song with which they were to accompany the performance. In readiness for the feast, the villagers gathered into Meluleq's house, to help him in the song. Then he began a chant belittling the valour of the Nishga raiders, and taunting them.

After this affair, the Nass strangers were distributed among various houses. Luralhult, the Nishga chief, was offended by the taunts of Meluleq's song, but he did not know how to retaliate. He planned returning the performance and to invite all the Kisgegas to his feast. He sent messengers with invitations. His intention was simply to decorate his face with red paint and to sing his own song. The guests came into this house, which was not Meluleq's. As Meluleq knew that whenever Luralhult painted his face red with the tracks of the Wolf, it meant disaster for his enemies, he entered with his followers. Luralhult was sitting brooding with his bag of red paint, opening it in front of him. He took it in his hand, held it up for about an hour, and looked into it for about half an hour. It took him a long time, and it was near the morning before he had finished. Then he placed the bag against his forehead and held it there a long while without moving. Lawromrashl, a follower of Meluleq, came behind him, planning to club him, should he move the paint bag to another part of his face. For a long while, Luralhult sat without moving the bag from his forehead. It was nearly daylight. Then he made a complete circle around his face, which was a symbol that he meant peace, as it represented Maxmaxai (The Rainbow).

After this, food was distributed among the guests, and the people went out, everything having been settled peacefully. But still, Luralhult retained bad feelings about the taunting song of Meluleq. Time now came for the strangers to leave the village, and the Kisgegas were alarmed at the prospect that they might go away peacefully. While they were getting ready to leave, Lurumgyiyawxl of the Nishga party, took two elk skins wanting to sell them. His intention was merely to

trade when he entered Meluleq's house with them. Meluleq took the skins, showing how haughty he was. He wanted to provoke the owner of the skins to anger, thus offering grounds to kill him. Having taken hold of the skins, he did not pay for them. Lurumgyiyawxl said, "Keep them!" Then he left the house, and his band went away without attacking.



2. Port Simpson in the 1850's reconstructed by Tsimshian artist Freddie Alexcee in the 1920's, showing the steamship Beaver opposite the Hudson Bay Company Fort. National Museums of Canada photo 86130

## TSETSOUT ATTACKS UPON KISGEGAS

Informant: John Brown (Kwiyahil), Kisgegas  
 Recorded by: Marius Barbeau, 1920

There used to be many raiding parties coming over the mountain of Qaneksenawhlawp (Through-Hole-In-Rock); actually there is a pass there, but no hole. The raiders were Tsetsaut and their target was Kisgegas. They slaughtered many of them. Meluleq the Wolf head chief of Kisgegas planned to retaliate, now that his nephews had grown up into being warriors. These were: Kamangyahle (Only-About-Spearing-Large-Grizzly), Lugunituweeligyins (The-Large-Grizzly-Stands-Up-In-Its-Den); and two cousins named Kuwisathlawiludhlganao (In-Smell-Of-Slime-Where-Sits-Frog), Lugugyisa-antkutemras-kupistai (The-Head-Of-The-Small-Grouse-Cooks-First).

They went to the mountain of Qaneksenawhlawp. When they arrived at the canyon above Kisgegas, they travelled until they reached a lake called Kshenlarem-shintk (Water-Of-Rising-Summer), so-called because the people went there only during the summer, and they were known as Summer-people or Summer-lake people. Farther away they got to another lake called Weetax or Weedisemtax (Large-Lake). They stayed there for a short while, fishing trout. Here they found wild celery (hamawq). They were monster plants about the thickness of stove pipes, and ten feet high, with huge leaves. Lugunitu gathered some to take back home and show the people. He used one stem as a staff (qaat). Later they came to a place where the Tsetsaut used to attack them, when travelling over Qaneksenawhlawp. Here they beheld a huge man, a giant called Yawxawndi, of the Tsetsaut, who had his wife with him, both of them about ten feet tall. The Kisgegas attacked this giant, shooting him with bows and arrows, the arrows being a place in Tildzile (Chipmunk) about three miles from the scene of their battle. He overtook her there, but did not kill her. After he had come back, they asked him whether he had destroyed her, he answered, "I did not kill her, because if I had, no one could convey the news to her people that you have killed Yawxawndi." Kamangyahle and his band returned to Kisgegas, and this tribe made ready to meet the Tsetsaut raiders, when they came.

Three years after they had given up the plan of retaliation against the Tsetsaut, the people had a huge feast; they were all assembled in the feast house. This happened in the fall. It was not the custom for the women to attend the feasts. A woman meanwhile was getting maple bark to make baskets with. As she was up there, she heard the noise of someone approaching on the trail, as if dragging spear poles on the ground. She went back at once and got word into the feast house where all the folk were assembled. She said, "While I was getting maple bark, I heard people on the trail dragging spear poles." Meluleq, who sat in the middle of the group at the rear of the house, asked, "Who gave the news?" She was a former wife of his. He remarked, "She is always fooling, getting child like," and he took no further notice.

After all the people had left his house, Meluleq went to feed his pet eagle, which he kept in his summer house, close to the river. Along that very trail, the Tsetsaut raiders were sitting on both sides, close to Meluleq's summer house. They intended to retaliate because a nephew of Meluleq had killed Yawxawndi, the giant.

Yakuhleptahlsmaax (Flat-Ribs-Of-Bear), was at his fish trap in the canyon, with his daughter. The spot where the Tsetsaut sat was Anrxtawis (Grinding-Stone), to sharpen stone adzes. Yaku saw that the Tsetsaut were squatting on both sides of the trail, and he said to his daughter, "Let us not return through there! If we do, they will kill us." He had on his back, as a robe, the stiff skin of a mountain-goat, called Gilralwilwalraumatih, (The-Mountain-Goat-Sheds-Its-Fur). He carried with him his bow and many arrows. He placed an arrow on his bow and held it in readiness, while he said to his daughter, "You walk in the centre of the trail. Avoid either side," and he made semi-circles around her, like a grizzly. The raiders also had their bows ready to shoot him down. He had four arrows in his mouth. The length of this part of the trail was about 150 feet. He kept on advancing in semi-circles until he got through that distance without being shot at. Then he came on top of the village, and cried to his people, "Get ready, the raiders are right here. They are about to invade the village."

That is what happened. They began to fight in the middle of the day and fought all through the day. The Tsetsaut were losing many of their numbers, because the Kisgegas had taken precautions for fear of this raid. A brave Wolf warrior Wilusuhl-ganao (The-Frog-Is-Chased-Away) advanced among the raiders and taunted them. Another brave Wolf warrior of Kisgegas, Naskyanhlwelegyisu (Against-Pitch or Gum-Large-Grizzly) did the same thing, taunting the enemy. The Tsetsaut then took to flight, frightened as they were of Naskyan and Wilusuhl. Besides, they were hesitant in their attack and were feeding themselves on roseberries. It was then that the saying originated that: "The-Outside-Circles-Of-The-Warriors-Were-Carelessly-Eating-Roseberries."



**A RAID BY THE PEOPLE OF THE NASS**

Informant: Jimmy Williams, Kisplox

Recorded by: Marius Barbeau, 1920

A member of the House of Laan in Kisplox, named Tsixtsap (People-of-the-Fish-Traps) went to the Nass River, to the village called Gitxhadin, in order to trade among the Nishga. While he was there, he was killed, probably because it was habitual among them that if they invited you and you did not come it was considered quite an insult to them, and they killed you the offender.

A brother of this man was living at Anlaxagemdax. He was a brave warrior, whose name was Kalan. Two other braves in the same village were Hisnoots and Hislacentu. During the summer they went to Gitxadin to avenge the death of Tsixtsap. When they got to the Nass River, they made a raft by which to get on to the opposite side of the river above the village of Gitlaxdamks and they came upon the fishing camp of Sqatin at a place called Gitkssetsuts. They planned to take some of the fish out of this house at night. When they attempted to, their whereabouts became known to the people there. Aware that they had been discovered there, they voluntarily came out and showed themselves, assuring the people that they would do them no harm. There was another fishing camp opposite this one on the same side of the river, as the trail that comes from the Skeena ends there. The man on that side was catching a fish. One of the Gitksan raiders was standing on the opposite side, watching him. The fisherman was going to club the fish when the warrior called to cut its head off, that is the way of all warriors. During the night, all the family of Sqatin was killed by these warriors. After they had killed the Nishga, the raiders returned to Anlaxagemdax.

Sqatin's relatives invited all the people of the village of Gitwinksilk and Gitxadin. These tribes prepared themselves to go and raid the Gitksan in revenge. They came over from the Nass to a place called Wilnaadeks, at the end of the trail on the Skeena side near Kisgegas. The Nishga were able to get across to Anlaxagemdax and Kisgegas. It was snowing then. There was much gambling going on in one house where all the people of the village had gathered. The Nishga raiders surrounded the house. At one place where the doorway was hidden from view, there were two of the Nishga coming up towards the village from below on the river. It gave the local people the impression that these were from Kisgegas.

The three warriors, Kalan and his companions however, expected a return of their raid on the Nass and had prepared themselves in case of these being Nishga. The Nishga were afraid to make a raid just then, on account of these warriors. The people of Anlaxagemdax took to flight as soon as they found out that these were Nishga raiders, leaving only the

brave warriors behind. The Nass people were afraid to attack, as they knew that the warriors were stationed in their houses. One of the warriors, called Hislasentu, rushed out among the Nishga. Although he was shot at, none of the arrows took effect. The other two braves remained in the houses. Then Hisnoots did the same thing. He ran among them, but was not wounded. He also made good his escape. There was only one warrior left. The Nass people were still afraid of Kalan. He finally ran out and pretended to attack the invaders. They drew back, to get out of his range, and he made good his flight, jeering. The Nass, finding out that he was running away from them, shot him through the arm. Kalan, wounded in the arm, hid between the boulders in the river above the village. From this spot, he would take the arrows and put the string in his mouth to shoot arrows over to the Nishga. They kept out of range of the arrows. After a long time, they attacked him and captured him alive. They asked their captive, "Was it you who killed Sqatin?" "Yes, it is I. I killed him." He acknowledged it, saying that he had done it in a crazy spirit. He had done it for fun. Then the Nishga said to him, "If you are a brave man, you will laugh, for we are going to cut your head off." He did it. He was laughing while they were cutting his head off. The Nass people deemed him to be the bravest of all men, saying that even though the Haida were very brave, when their heads were cut, they always howled. Kalan was laughing at them.

Because of all this, the Nishga, who attacked a whole village, did not get a single man besides him. They only got the very old people who had been left behind. They cut off their heads and scalped them. They were able to pursue many of the people of Anlaxagemdax into the hills, where they attacked and killed many women and older people. Then they went on to the house of Meluleq, the chief of the Kisgegas, situated at Laxwilpcin. The house of Meluleq was disguised in the winter. They would pour water all over the top of it, and then let it freeze, continually doing so, disguising it with leaves and branches so that it could not be recognized as a house. The doorway was built differently from ordinary doors. It was very cold during the winter, and they wanted to come into this house, guaranteeing him that they would do him no harm. There were in this house four brothers who were of Tsetsaut origin, their father being a Tsetsaut, and they were great warriors. They were Wimenawzek and Axtoq plus two others. These four brothers got together and attacked the Nass raiders. Then the Nishga made peace with them, promising not to capture this House. They went back home, taking with them a number of captives of Anlaxagemdax children and women. Wimenawzek wanted to go after these Nass raiders to try and get back the captives that had been taken by them. They were able to overtake them as they were on their way home at a place called Maxhlaratset (Across-the-Labret). When they came to the camp of the Nishga they saw that the raiders had roasted the babies of Anlaxagemdax. Then they returned to their own village, Kisgegas.

**TRADING FEUD OF HLITUX ON THE SKEENA RIVER (1857)**

Informant: Robert Stewart, Kincolith

Recorded by: William Beynon, 1948-49.

In olden times, only those who had trading privileges could go to the various tribes to trade. The Nishga had no one to trade with, excepting themselves and the Haida, when these came to the Nass. But they could not go to the other foreign tribes. Sometimes the Gitksan came overland from the Skeena and got their supply of eulachons, eulachon grease and other seacoast foods, and these they carried over what was known as the Kitwancool trail, which came from a point above Gilaxdamks and ended at Kitwancool.

Knowing that this trail existed, and being married to a Gitksan woman, a Wolf named Hlitux together with other Wolf chiefs and young men, planned to trade by going over this trail. They gathered all their trading goods of seacoast foods, such as dried cockles, clams, grease, dried eulachons, seaweed, dried herring eggs, and all other coast foods which were in great demand by the upper Skeena people. It was a large party. Their guides were several young Gitksan who had wintered with the Nishga. There were many things they had to fear, and these were some of the most important. They had to stay clear of the Tsimshian and the Kitselas, as these two groups enjoyed the trading privileges of the upper Skeena. Knowing this, Hlitux and his group set out and after landing with their canoes at the Nass end of the trail, they set off with many sleds all loaded with trade goods. After many days travelling, they finally arrived at Kitwancool, where they traded many of their things. The most outstanding of all was a huge copper shield that Hlitux possessed, and he wanted to sell it to the highest bidder. So they kept on travelling until they came to Gitanmaax and Kispiox.

After trading, the Nishga made preparations to return down the Skeena River. They purchased some large canoes. These were filled with their trading returns, and it was a very valuable cargo, as Hlitux had secured what he wanted for the copper shield. They travelled on down the Skeena, being guided by their Gitksan friends. When they got to Kitselas Canyon, Gulhrax and his followers stopped Hlitux, took away all their trading goods and destroyed their canoes because they had usurped the privilege of Gulhrax. Among these Kitselas were several Gitlan men, whom Hlitux recognized. There were two Kitselas villages, one on each side of the canyon. Githawn lived on the lower village, and these had many relatives on the Nass. They at once came over and took the Nass people in for shelter, and Githawn gave a reception for them.

When Githawn had finished dancing and spreading eagle down upon Hlitux and the other Wolf guests, he called out to his tribesmen, "What are you going to do for my brother-in-law, who now is my guest and his followers?" Then the tribesmen brought in several canoes, and these were filled with food and provisions. Githawn then went on saying, "You

will use this, chief Hlitux and your followers, to travel to your home. My brother who lives on the other side of the canyon is a very thoughtless person and has no regard for anyone. He and his people do not even recognize or respect their own relatives." These gifts and the reception given to him somewhat pacified the feelings of Hlitux, and he spoke, "You have done much, Chief Githawn, and it is in keeping with your fame as a very hospitable host to all. Your name is spoken of all along the coast and even in our humble village, your name is greatly respected. Now that you have done this for me and my brothers, we will never forget it, and this I must say to you: It will be well for you not to come to the Nass next eulachon season. But should you come, you and your own group must stay in a separate village, not together with Guhlrax." So when they had recovered from the effects of the attack upon them, Hlitux and his fellow Nishga left Kitselas guided by their Gitksan friends.

It was now the eulachon season, and right below the Nishga village was the Gitlan fortress village. Below this were the Kitselas at what was known as Place-of-Red-Stones. That year the eulachons were very plentiful, and everyone was engaged first in catching them and then storing them in the large bins. They made preparations for cooking and rendering the grease. The Nishga had invented an improved method of cooking the eulachon by using a huge tank and only they had the boards which were used to cook them, and these were very much in demand by the other tribes. When the time came to prepare for cooking the grease, a person of the Gitlan tribe said, "We have no cooking box, and we will go to the Nishga at Laxangyeda and purchase one."

So next day the man who had said this took his canoe, and many of the Gitlan women went along also to trade their coast foods for Nishga foods. When they arrived at Laxangyeda, the Gitlan man began to bargain for a cooking box, and the women traded with the Nishga women. While they were busy, Hlitux, who was sitting outside of his house sunning himself, recognized the Gitlan man as being one that was with the Kitselas when Guhlrax had attacked him on the Skeena. Once certain that he was the man, he seized him, but he liberated the women and they returned. There was considerable excitement among the Gitlan at what happened, but Nislaganos, who was a very good friend of Hlitux and the other Wolf chiefs, said, "This man was in the wrong, but we must redeem him by some compensation to Hlitux." Then the Gitlan chose a lesser chief to go along with the elders to redeem the man whom Hlitux had taken captive.

The chief who accompanied these was Wals, and he had an impediment of speech in that he seemed to speak out of the corner of his mouth. His speech sounded very funny, and anyone not knowing this would think he was trying to make funny sounds. The Gitlan with their chief Wals came to Hlitux and placing their gifts in front of him said, "Chief, chief Hlitux, we realize that what we place before you is but a small portion of your loss, which this thoughtless man had a part in, but your brother Nislaganos is very sorry, and the friendship which is

between you and him will lessen your feelings towards this man, and you will have pity and liberate him." Wals, the lesser Gitlan chief, spoke in his peculiar voice, and when all had finished, Hlitux spoke, "It is well that you take your tribesman. Were it not for my brother Nislaganos, I would not be lenient. We were in a foreign land and among foreign people and had it not been for the generosity of Githawn, we would either have been enslaved or killed. To see one of my brothers' tribesmen among those that caused this to happen to us made me very angry. Now you can tell my brother I have no feeling against him. I am satisfied. Take your tribesman."

All was settled peacefully. The Gitlan began to leave Hlitux's house. When they were outside, they came upon a group of children playing. They were imitating the voice of the Gitlan chief Wals and also his facial distortion. All this Wals heard. As he entered his canoe, he said, "I will kill the first Nishga who comes down past my village." He landed at his village and in anger and embarrassment he went directly to his sleeping place and laid down. All the people were now busily engaged in eulachon cooking, extracting grease. The last ones to begin were the Nishga. One day a canoe came down the river with a Nishga man to gather cooking stones just below the Gitlan village, this being the only place where these stones were available. There was a Gitlan woman, the wife of Niskanas, who was busy extracting eulachon oil. She saw this canoe coming down the river and knew where it was going. Having heard the angered threat of Wals, that he would kill the first Nishga who passed his village, the woman called out, "Where is that man who is going to kill the Nishga?" This was spoken in a jocular taunt, as she thought his anger was spent. Wals was very quick-tempered, and now he was taunted by his own tribeswoman. He came rushing out from his house, just as the canoe with the Nishga man was passing in front of the village, in it was the body of the dead man. Many Gitlan still felt they should have retaliated when Hlitux had taken the Gitlan captive. So now there was bad feeling between the two groups.

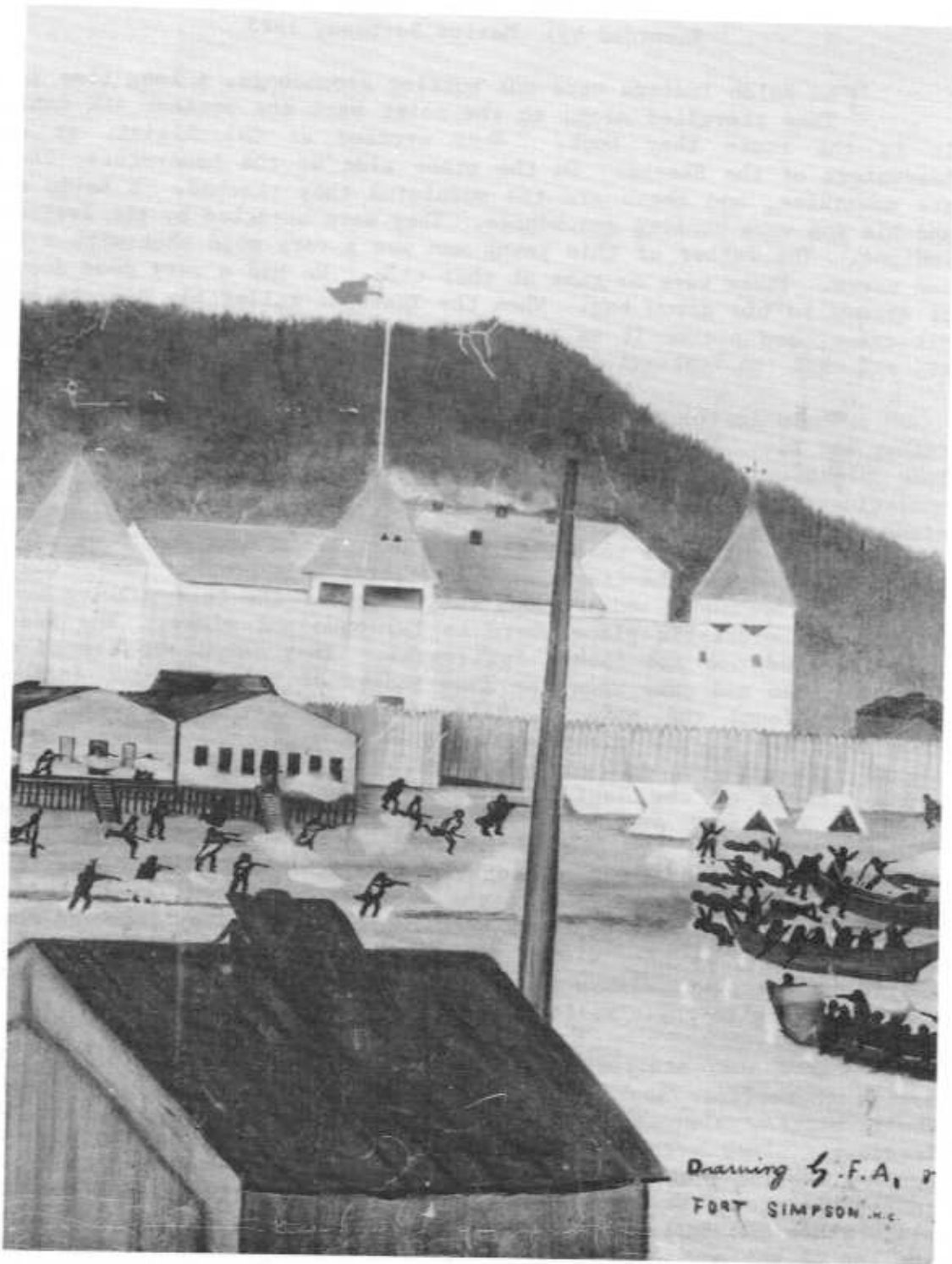
Wudimas, the brother of Niyuks, together with a number of his younger nephews went into the woods to gather wood and here they were waylaid by the Nishga, and Wudimas was wounded and he eventually died. The rest of the party escaped, bringing the dying man with them. The Gitlan were angered and called together all their warriors, and led by Niyuks, they set out to raid the Nass village. When they were close by it, at a place which is called Waliyaxiyaxl-dao (Where-the-Ice-Hangs), they divided their warriors, planning to attack the village of Gwenwex. All had gone into different directions to attack and one man was left to look after the canoes while they were gone. The Nishga knew that the Gitlan would retaliate. They had gone further up the river, hiding and at the same time keeping an alert on the river. One of the Nishga princes, Tsuwit, of the House of Tratkuraxs, came upon Niyuks. Tsuwit, finding the Gitlan by surprise, took from him his weapons and his robes and left him. Tratkuraxs, having heard from Tsuwit what the Gitlan were doing, sent out a war invitation to all the Nishga warriors. When

the warriors came to this feast house, the festive spoon was presented to them. Whoever drank grease from it had to join in attacking the Gitlan, and preparations were made to attack; all their plans were complete. A young man of Tsimshian extraction went on down and contacted the Gitlan chief Nislaganos, saying, "The Nass people are now going to destroy you all. They are having a feast, and Tratkuraxs is calling his warriors to avenge the actions of Wals in killing one of the Nishga." Nislaganos began to prepare to battle, and the eulachon cooking was neglected. Other Tsimshian people came and finished this work for the Gitlan, who were making full preparations to give battle with the Nishga.

While the Gitlan were preparing, a lone canoe came down opposite the Gitlan village, and those in the canoe shouted out, "Come you, Niyuks, come get your wearing apparel and your weapons!" This angered the Gitlan, who were being openly challenged. Wals in anger ran out and shot at the taunting Nishga. Then a Nishga man called out to Niyuks, "A great storm is coming over you. There is a black cloud hanging over you, and before night the storm may break." In this Gitlan group were some Kitselas, and they were there to help the Gitlan. They wanted to attack the Nishga, but the Gitlan were not prepared. So several Gitlan and these Kitselas went up the bank of the river and they captured a Nishga man and killed him. They cut off his head and put it on a stump, and the body they put on a pole and drove it into the shallow water. This the other Nishga saw and they returned to their village at Gwenwex to tell of what had happened.

The Gitlan were now afraid of a big invasion, and they immediately moved to where the Tsimshian were all living together. The Nishga were awaiting an opportunity to attack the Gitlan. Now that the grease-making was finished, many of the other Tsimshian tribes set out to gather other sea foods. Soon only the Gitlan were left behind. Many of the wives of the Gitlan were from other tribes and mostly from the Gitando and Gispaxloats tribes. Some of the women went into the woods to get cedar bark, to weave mats and baskets with; others to get wild celery for food. Among them were Gitando women who had married into the Gitlan, and a surprise party of the Nishga came upon a group of them and captured them. These were taken as prisoners to the Nishga village of Laxangyeda. When this happened, the Gitlan, knowing that many of the Gitando were yet at Knemas, sent a canoe to tell them what had happened.

When the Gitando heard this, they were very indignant. They at once returned to the Nass, and Gistaku was deeply angered as he knew his sister had been captured, and he said, "I will go alone, I am not a thief that I must be afraid of anyone." So saying he led a group of Gitando and Gitlan warriors and headed to Laxangyeda. As they came in, Sispegoot, a member of Axlkuraxs' House went up in the smoke hole to escape. Again the Gitando said, "I am not a thief or a coward. I have come to take my own property." So saying, he went to where the Nass women were and led them out. The quick action of the Gitando prevented any further raiding, and since Sispegoot had placed himself in an embarrassing situation by trying to escape through the smoke hole, the Nishga were in ridicule and there were no further hostilities.



3. Haida War party attacking Tsimshian Indians at Port Simpson about 1850, from a drawing by Frederic Alexcee. National Museums of Canada photo 77046

## KALDO RAIDS AGAINST THE TSETSAUT

Informant: Simon Gamanoot

Recorded by: Marius Barbeau, 1923

The Kaldo Indians were out hunting groundhogs, a long time ago. They travelled along to the point past the present 4th Cabin. It is the route they took. They crossed at Galanhlgist, at the headwaters of the Skeena. On the other side of the headwaters, there are mountains, and these are the mountains they reached. A Kaldo man and his son were hunting groundhogs. They were attacked by the Tsetsaut Indians. The father of this young man was a very good shot with a bow and arrow. There were no guns at that time. He had a very good supply of arrows in his arrow bag. When the Tsetsaut killed his son, he took his canoe, and placed it as a kind of screen and stood at the back of it, and shot the Tsetsaut from behind.

Those in the camp were anxiously waiting for the return of the father and son. They had set a date for their return, and that date had long passed. His house-brother was beginning to be very anxious, wondering what had happened to his brother and nephew. He could not stand the anxiety any longer; so he went out with some other young men. They started out as a search party. This man's name was Suwiraushlganao (Away-Jumps-The-Frog). His brother's name was Qayais (Walking-Beforehand), which means the action of the bear walking round seeking a comfortable place where to lay down and sleep. The search party started out and looked for tracks. They found the tracks and followed them and came upon the dead bodies of some Tsetsaut Indians. Then they found the body of their dead brother. The uncle was so grief-stricken at the sight of the dead body of his nephew that he picked it up and held it in his arms. There was a great number of arrows, those of the Tsetsaut, near the bodies of the brother and nephew. They went over to see on the other side, and found as many Tsetsaut dead, and an equally large number of arrows from the dead brother. They also found some of the dead Tsetsaut in the lake; their own companions had taken them to the water. The brother took his dead brother's body, and his nephew's back to the camp. They cremated them, burnt them all, as they always did in the olden times. That was the custom in the past, always to cremate the dead. After this was done, they went back to their village.

Then they started in to eat the bark of the devil's club, and washed themselves, seeking better success. They were doing this in their hearts, that they may be able to conquer and defeat more Tsetsaut. They were a whole year preparing themselves for the war against the Tsetsaut. When they were ready, a large number of relatives in the village of Kaldo started out. They travelled on, and found the place where the battle had taken place. They travelled up and reached the top of the mountain. There they looked down into the valley below them. Looking down into the valley, they saw smoke. By the smoke they



knew that there was a large gathering of people down there because so many fires were burning. They looked down and they could not make up their minds as to who must go down into there. As they were still looking down, they saw a great number of people coming to this camp where they saw the smoke.

In the old times, when the Indians went to war, they made themselves armour of the heaviest moose hide they could get. They put on these skins, and placed themselves among the mountain side, so that at a distance, they may look like rocks. The Tsetsaut thought they had seen people, but when they looked up again, "No, that is only rocks that we have seen." When they got near the mountain they looked around and said: "It is only pieces of rocks, otherwise they would move." Another said: "No, those are men that we have seen." They were moving." They began pushing themselves back and forth. Some of them were cross and the others laughing. Those who pretended to be rocks had to keep perfectly still until dark. They could not move, and they remained there until just before the break of dawn. Then they went down and surrounded the camp below and attacked it. Suwiraus, who then had prepared himself for this war for a year by eating bark, was so sure of success that, without fear, he entered the camp and began to slaughter the Tsetsaut. They attacked six houses before the rest were aroused. Those who tried to escape out of the camp were killed in their attempt to escape by those who surrounded them. Everybody in the camp was killed. There was not a soul left, except the children. These they used as guides to show them where the other villages were, that is, where they were from. It was a big piece of country. There were no houses there, the people lived underground. The smoke came from out of the ground. They could not get at them.

Suwiraus said, "Who will go out and kill some grizzly bears first?" They killed grizzly bears and skinned them, then gathered a lot of pitch. After this, they covered the grizzly bear skins with it. They got sand, and rubbed sand in it. They took a grizzly bear skin and put a man inside of it, and sewed it all up. As he was walking about the Tsetsaut would shoot at it, but the arrows had no effect. They could not penetrate the skin, the gum and gravel. The arrows could not have any affect on the grizzly bear skins. The attackers placed themselves all round the underground camp and sent the grizzly bear walking round in a circle. When the people in the holes saw the grizzly bear, they immediately came out of their holes to attack it. Everytime they would shoot at this grizzly bear, the arrows would break. Then they called out to the rest in the hole, to all come out. They were determined to kill this grizzly bear. As they had sharp spears, they began to chase the grizzly with them. The grizzly bear enticed them on, and they kept following him, right near where the Kaldo kept in hiding. They could not make out what was wrong with the grizzly bear as the spearing and the arrows had no affect on it. As they got near where the people were in hiding, these raiders sprang at them, and killed them as they were unaware of an attack. There was no means for them to escape. They were surrounded and killed.

After the Kaldo had killed all the men, they went down into the holes where the people had come out of, and found the children down in the huts. The young women they took as prisoners, and made the stronger children pack the small ones. The Kaldo Indians were quite surprised and interested to find out what kind of dwelling the Tsetsaut had lived in. It looked like the burrows of dead rats. They lived like ground squirrels. They went back to their own village, the Kaldo. The Tsetsaut children could not eat the dry fish. It sickened them. Those that were able got out and killed rabbits which they could eat. The rabbit meat was the right food for them. As they grew up and became stronger, they ran away from the Kaldo and went back to their own country of the Tsetsaut, towards the Stikine country. After these children had run back to their own country, the Kaldo village was attacked by the Stikine. They almost cleaned the Kaldo out. They left just a few. Then they figured that they would have peace, as they had both had destructive raids on each others' villages.

## TSETSAUT RAIDS ON THE KITWANCOOL

Informant: Charles Mark, Gitsegyukla

Recorded by: Marius Barbeau, 1923

A man in Guxgan's House was named Ksoo (Grizzly-Goes-out-in-the-Springtime). He was a brave and had a war club with which to hit the enemy on the head. It was made out of bone. He also had a warrior's bow and arrows. A warrior's bow is different from that of a hunter. A hunter cannot use a warrior's bow. One needs a very powerful arm to bend the warrior's bow. Warrior's bows are made by putting pitch at the back of the bow for sticking sinews to it for reinforcements. His arrow's tips are made of the shank of the bear, which is very hard. With his bow and arrow, the warrior can kill a grizzly with one shot; it can break its skull.

Ksoo had a sister whose name was Sudemksaux, (The-Bear-Slides-Out-Of-His-Cache-In-The-Spring). This sister married a chief of Kitwancool named Luxawn (The-Bear-Often-Eats-Salmon). This chief had two wives. His second wife was from his own tribe, and her name was Lootxaldaoganao (The-Frozen-Frog).

He took both his wives with him when he went to hunt, following the outlet of Kitwancool Lake down the river, until he reached his own hunting ground, called Ksgyigyan (Upper-Camp-On-Water). They were camped there. The chief said to his wives that he would like to eat the root of a plant which grows at the foot of the mountain. It is a fern root. So one of his wives went to gather fern roots and the other wife stayed with him. It was the Kitwancool woman that went for the fern root. The other wife and Luxawn were in the camp when two men arrived there. They entered Luxawn's house. He asked them to sit down. To show that he had no ill will against them, he danced for them. When he was over with his dancing, he opened his bag and took a large moose hide, cut it in half and presented each visitor with a half. And he said to them, "I regret not to have any eulachon grease, as I have not gone to the Nass yet." After he had eaten, they left the camp and went away. They went back to the place where a third man in hiding held the dogs, which the chief Luxawn did not know anything about. When they reached the third man, they showed him the gift they had received, and he left, very angry. There was none for him. He said, "Of what use will this be to you? Why did you take it? Why did you not kill him? That is what you went there for."

Wherewith the three of them went to Luxawn's house, killed him and Ksoo's sister with their lances. There were two children in the camp, who they captured, a little boy and a girl. The boy was the eldest and the girl a small little thing. They started off, left the two bodies lying on the ground. The second wife that had gone for the fern root arrived back at the camp and she found her husband lying outside the house, dead, and the woman in the house, also dead. The

children were nowhere to be found. One was hers, and the other the other wife's child. She followed the tracks and found where the raiders had sat in the snow, and she knew that they were Tsetsaut.

She left the camp as fast as she could and went to the next hunting camp and told the people what had happened. Word was sent at once to Ksoo, the brother of the dead woman. As many braves were gathered together as could be. Ksoo was ready. He took his warrior's bow and his spear, a long pole. At the end of the pole was a goat horn which they sharpened by warming and working it with their fingers, and kept it well oiled with fat. These he carried. They all got together at the camp of the dead man, a great many of them. And they began to follow those that had murdered the man and the woman. They travelled along on the crust of the snow.

While they were going along, they picked up the trail of a groundhog. The little boy that had been captured was named Naxwalix (They-Came-And-Ate-The-Back-Of-Fish on a Portage). The little girl's name was Lutxaldao. The little boy was made to keep his sister. She was packed in a robe and the robe was made of groundhog skins. Every skin had its tail on. The little boy knew that there would be someone to follow them. So once in a while he broke off a tail of a groundhog and dropped it in the snow. That was a sign for those coming, between them. It was in the spring of the year and the snow left no tracks, that was why he left the tails. When he had taken all the tails off the robe, there were no more. Then he would break pine boughs and drop them every once in a while. Those that were pursuing them kept finding those boughs on the trail and they were able to follow them by these marks. When those that were pursuing would camp, Ksoo would put on his marten robe and he would tie the end of the robe over his head. He made it look like the nose of a wolf and he made himself a tail. He did it by putting on his arrow bag, tying it inside in the blanket. Then he would go on all fours along the lake. At the same time he kept good watch for the smoke of the enemy's camp. When it was daylight, he started off again with the others.

They had been travelling many days. They came to a very large lake and they camped quite near the lake, not on the edge of it. The name of the lake is Meziaden. Ksoo got on his robe again, and fixed himself like a wolf once more and went on like this, to keep watch. All at once he saw something coming at the farthest end of the lake. He went back quickly to his camp and took off his robe, tied his forehead, and covered his head with brush, and he started off on a very quiet walk to reach the camp of the enemy. He came back to his own camp and the people said, "Ksoo is coming." He said when he got in sight of them, "Oh, I found three large grizzly bears." Then Ksoo's father said, "My son has seen the camp of the enemy." His father's name was Kwenoo (Begging-for-Food). They waited until midnight and started off. Ksoo was in the lead to the enemy's camp. The Tsetsaut were quite unprepared. They thought that there would be no revenge, as they were so far away and had gotten out of reach. In the Tsetsaut camp there was

an elderly man, a great shaman. As he went to sleep, he said, "Before the sun rises in full, every Tsetsaut in this camp will be killed." But his own people laughed at him.

Every time the Tsetsaut camped, they made themselves a large brush house and they all slept there together, after they had made a fire in the middle. This is the way the Tsetsaut warm themselves, and keep themselves in form for travel. They put a pole horizontally about two or three feet high. And they rest their legs on that, to keep their sinews warm. They also put a cord right around their camp and on this cord they hang bundles of dried caribou hooves. Anybody who touches them makes a great noise. It gives those inside a warning. The Tsetsaut were all fast asleep in their camp when Ksoo came over cautiously. They knew that the Tsetsaut had a fence of caribou hooves around their house, and they were very careful not to touch it. They figured, Ksoo and his band, that just at the break of day, when the night and the day were together, there would be a mist. They appointed a man to call the name of the boy that was captive, "Naxwalix if you are still living, don't get up. Lie flat and hold Lutxaldao in your arms. Lie very low." And then with a shout they made an attack on the camp. They had surrounded the brush house. Every time a Tsetsaut appeared out of the brush hut, he was hit on the head. They killed everyone and the big shaman was the last to die. They cut him across the side, and all he could do was to put his hand on the ribs by this shaman. He was unable to do anything.

When the others saw that he had been stabbed, they all fell on the body of this great shaman, and cut him to pieces. Then he died. The Tsetsaut women, after all the men were killed, were found in the brush house. They were with the children. Every warrior of Ksoo's band took a strong woman and a strong child, and the weaker women and children were killed. Ksoo did not die of his wound, as it was only slight. A strong captive woman packed Ksoo on her back. Her name was Seenan. Then they raised the scalps of all those whom they had killed, and took their scalps home. A song was sung to their victory, which Ksoo sang. He sang it while he was being packed on Seenan's back. They were travelling on the ice on Meziaden Lake. Every spear had a scalp on it. They held them high on their spears. The song was: "What do you hold in your hands which resembles the wild rice root that comes from the sky. A whole village is now lost."

They continued their voyage, the woman still packed Ksoo. Then they arrived at their own village, and Ksoo quite recovered of his wound. Whenever he travelled after that, he took his slave woman with him. She always stayed with him. Ksoo took the hunting ground that belonged to the Tsetsaut and the whole of Kitwancool and the Gitsegyukla tribes hunt there right up to this day. It is on account of Luxawn, the chief of Kitwancool, having been murdered. Ksoo got the right to hunt there because of his sister having been murdered there too. It is a very good hunting ground where they killed beaver and grizzly bear. They had no reason to fear the Tsetsaut as they had won it by conquering

them. Whenever Ksoo went, he had Seenan with him. She was his slave. Ksoo made Seenan sing the victory song of the Tsetsaut, and he learned it and took it for himself and his House, and Guksan of Gitsegyukla still have this song.

Ksoo went to his hunting ground taking his slave with him. On one of his trips in the woods, he found a bear in a great cottonwood tree, in a hollow. The bear was sitting in there. Ksoo, when he saw the bear in the hole in the tree, climbed up to kill the bear while his Tsetsaut slave Seenan was at the foot of the tree. When the Indians kill a bear they always sing before and after they kill it. He had killed the bear and was singing the death song.

There were three Tsetsaut way off scouting about, always on the lookout for Ksoo. The name of Ksoo, as a child, had been learned by the Tsetsaut, it was Kseraus, and it was a name that brought terror to them. The brave Tsetsaut had a sharp spear, and when they thought of Kseraus (Ksoo), they would pile up dirt and spear it, and say, "Oh, if this was only Kseraus we were spearing." They heard his voice singing the bear song. They came and hurried down where they heard the voice. When Ksoo learned that there were people approaching in the woods, he came down the tree as quickly as he could. These Tsetsaut scouts thought that it was some of their own people who had killed the bear as the song was in Tsetsaut. So they called out in their own language saying, "Who are you that are chanting the song?" The slave Seenan of course understood her own language. So she spoke and said, "This is Kseraus." That was what they wanted to know. Hearing the name of Kseraus, they came right down to where he was. Ksoo put his snowshoes on and ran for his life. The Tsetsaut chased him. He turned around and in his excitement to get his bow fixed, he pushed the cord too high and it came off the bow. He did not know what to do. The Tsetsaut killed him and they took the woman back to their own country. The hunting ground remains to the Gitksan tribes there. The Kitwancool people went there and burnt the body of Ksoo. To this day, the spot where it happened remains clean. Nothing grows there. Only jack pines grow right around, but nothing on the spot. The name of this hunting ground is Aksnagyalre (Water-Of-Nagyalre).

**WHY THE EAGLES AND THE WOLVES FOUGHT AT LAXSAIL, ALASKA**

Informant: Sam Lewis, (Laoi) Kitkatla

Recorded by: Marius Barbeau, 1916

The Eagles and the Wolves all lived together at the mouth of the river near Laxsail (Alaska), close to what is now Ketchikan. The river was the property of the Wolves, who used to catch their fish there, while the Eagles had to catch their fish on the saltwater by means of weirs or traps.

The Eagles had a beautiful princess, and every day a young Wolf, also of royal rank, would meet her. They wanted to marry, but the Eagle and the Wolf chiefs would not permit it, because one was jealous of the other. There was always trouble between the two crests over this river. To prevent the Wolf from marrying the princess, the Eagle chief married her to a Raven chief, who had a village not far away. The Raven chief came and lived with his wife at the Eagle village. When he went hunting, the Wolf prince would go over at night and sleep with her, and before it was daylight he would go back to his own village. Nobody knew of it, although it had continued for a long time. The princess' husband felt that his wife was unfaithful because he could not get any game, and he had to come back without anything. Yet he could never catch his wife being unfaithful. So he planned to find a way to surprise the culprits.

During the day he cut a hole through the side of the house and left only the bark standing up so that no one could see the opening. It was cut beside where his wife slept. After he had done this, he said, "I am going to see how my traps are, and I expect to catch a wolf," and he went away. The woman knew that he had suspected her, but she could not send word to her lover to warn him. The Wolf prince had seen the hunter go away in his canoe, taking many things with him, as if he were going away for a long time. When night came, he went over to the house of the Eagle princess and slept with her. The princess said to him, "You must not come here any more. My husband knows that you are here, because he said he was going to catch a Wolf in his traps." In this country, wolves were very scarce, and a hunter would have to go up into the hills to get them. That is why the woman understood that her husband meant her lover, and she did not want him to be killed.

The husband had not gone very far. He returned by way of the hills to the back of the two villages, and came to the side of the house where he had cut a hole in the wall. The princess had just finished telling her lover about the warning her husband had given her, when she got up from alongside the wall. Her lover went away to his own house. The husband told his wife's brother that he intended to take revenge upon the Wolf prince. The princess' brother went in and killed his sister. Then he took her body and threw it over to the Wolf side of the

river. The Wolf people were now ashamed and did not know what to do. They were aware that they would have to pay dearly for this offence.

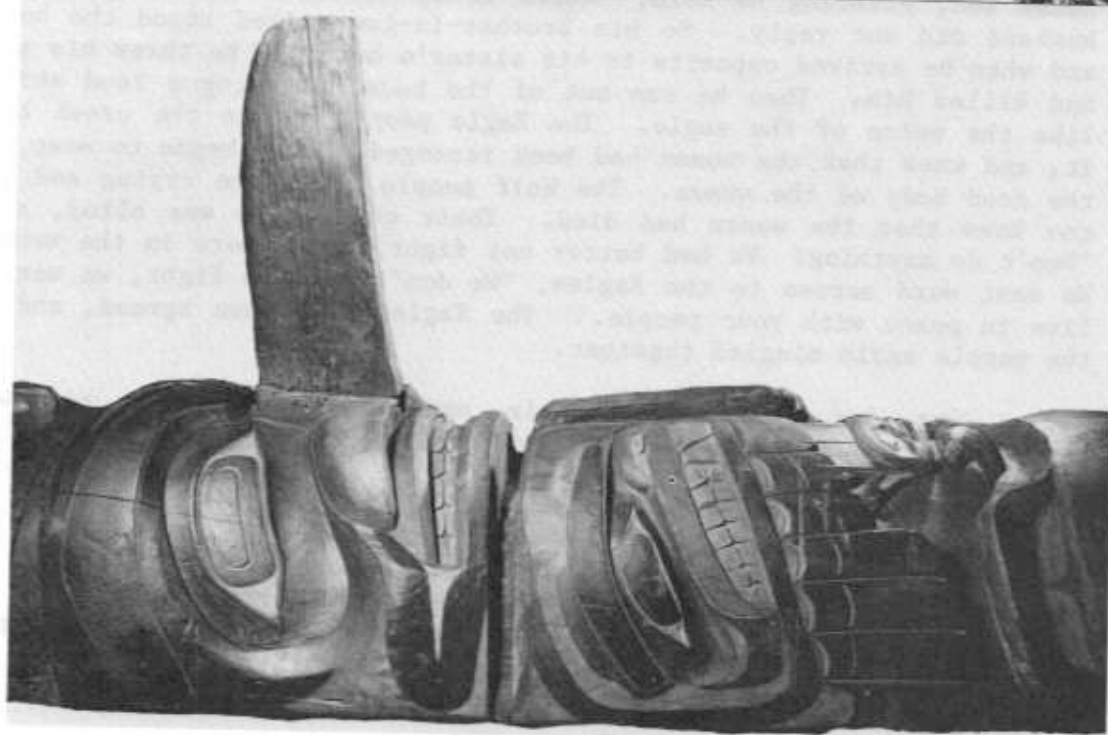
The Wolf chief called in all his headmen and they sent over word to the Eagles that they could now erect their salmon traps on the river. Yet they must not place them so as to block the Wolf's traps. The Eagles were satisfied, as they had wanted this for a long time. So they built their traps just below the Wolf traps, but found out that they could not get salmon as plentifully as the Wolf fishermen could. So they moved up their traps without the Wolf people being informed of it. They were angry, and they wanted the Eagles to remove their traps. But they would not do so, and the Eagle chief refused to yield, saying, "I am not yet satisfied for the loss of my niece." The Wolf offenders knew they were wrong. Yet they secretly destroyed the Eagle traps. In the morning the Eagle men were infuriated, but they were not many, and the Wolves were numerous and powerful.

The brothers of the Eagle princess now wanted revenge for the loss of their sister, but the clan was afraid, because the Wolves would drive them away. So one night, the brothers went secretly into the Wolf house and cut off the head of their sister's lover, and brought it out. As soon as they discovered this, the Wolves got ready to fight. The Eagles, when they found out what these young men had done, were frightened. They got their canoes ready, they started on their way north to the Raven village. The Wolves did not want them to do so, for they would get help there. They headed them off and killed a good many of them, chasing them south.

When the Eagles saw that they would have to change their plan, they took with them a copper, a stone eagle and a wooden eagle. The stone eagle belonged to the royal chiefs and the wooden eagle to one House. When they had gone a long way and were opposite Hahlstaxl, near Cape Fox, Alaska, they used their large copper to anchor their canoes. However the rope made of cedar bark broke and the canoes started to drift away. Then they took the stone eagle, anchored their canoes, and went to sleep in them. They were tired from paddling and fishing. They all slept, and they did not hear the Wolves who were chasing them. The Wolves discovered them anchored, and they planned to destroy them all. One of the Eagles woke up and saw them. He called upon his relatives to wake up. They started to pull up the stone eagle, but did not have enough time. They cut the rope and lost the eagle. They now had only the wooden eagle. They fled and went on southwards.

They built a fortress village at what is now known as Water Island. Here they were near the Tlingit village of Tongas. Some of them went there to stay. Others proceeded to the Nass River, ascended it, and joined in with the Nishga people. Some went on to the Haida, that is, to the group of Githawn. Niswamak joined the Tsimshian. Txalaxath stayed with the Nishga. Gilasramran and Lutkudzemti opted for the Kitkatla on Porcher Island. Here they lived and were of very high rank, because they were many and had great wealth.





4. Tsimshian Chiefs house in Port Simpson about 1880. Judge James Swan collected the carved pole for the Smithsonian Institute (see detail) National Museums of Canada photo 72-9029

5. Detail of carved pole collected by Judge James G. Swan at Port Simpson about 1880. Smithsonian Institute photo 2340

THE CONFLICT OF LAXSAIL, ALASKA  
Informant: Herbert Wallace, Gitsis  
Recorded by: Marius Barbeau, 1915

The Thunderbird or Eagle households of Sqagwaits, Legaix, Nishlkudzaik and Niswamak, all lived close together at the centre of the village, but separately, at Laxsail near what is now Cape Fox, Alaska. A creek ran through the village. The Eagles were on one side, and on the other, the Wolves.

There was always trouble between the two clans as to who had more rights over this creek. They came to words about it one day. A Wolf man who had married an Eagle woman entered his house and ordered his wife to prepare food for him. She was slow in doing it, and the husband grew angry. He clubbed her. She was able to get out of the house and to cross over to her own people, but she died from the effects of the clubbing. Before she died, she had time to tell her uncle Niswamak what her husband had done to her. A prince of this household said, "Do not weep nor make any noise!" Then he sent men across, after having told them, "Go and inform the woman's husband that she is alright." This he did in order to have time to prepare for a battle.

A brother of the deceased princess went across to her husband's house and, entering he said, "Where is my sister's box?" The guilty husband did not reply. So his brother-in-law walked round the house, and when he arrived opposite to his sister's husband, he threw his spear and killed him. Then he ran out of the house uttering a loud shriek, like the voice of the eagle. The Eagle people across the creek heard it, and knew that the woman had been revenged. They began to weep over the dead body of the woman. The Wolf people heard the crying and they too knew that the woman had died. Their chief, who was blind, said, "Don't do anything! We had better not fight, as we were in the wrong." He sent word across to the Eagles, "We don't want to fight, we want to live in peace with your people." The Eagles' clansmen agreed, and all the people again mingled together.

One day, the young Eagle man who had killed his Wolf brother-in-law heard the old Wolf folk wailing that the best man in the village had been killed. This angered him. He rushed into the house and cut off the head of the Wolf man who was wailing and ran back to the Eagle side of the river. War was then declared by the Wolf people, and they called other clansmen and allies elsewhere for help. When the Eagles saw that they were being defeated, their chief said, "We had better run away and not let the Wolves capture us." They made their canoes ready, took their coppers, a large stone eagle, and also the scalp and headdress of the Wolf whose death had caused the war.

They paddled away in their canoes and were chased by the Wolf warriors, and they could not land anywhere. When it was night, they anchored out and used the large stone eagle for an anchor. Unknown to them, the Wolf canoe men camped on the shore nearby. In the morning, the fugitives pulled up the eagle anchor, but before they got it up, the rope broke and they lost it. Then they paddled south, until they came to the Nass River. Some of them wanted to go up the river and see what place this was. Others wanted to proceed further south. So they divided.

Niswamak and Nishlkudzailk travelled on until they reached the Skeena River, where the Tsimshian people are living. Nishlkudzailk landed at the Gitsis village, and Niswamak went up the river to the Gispaxloats village. Both were taken into these tribes as Eagle members of these tribes. Niswamak was of royal blood, and Nishlkudzailk belonged to the councillor class. They owned crests, which they had taken with them from Laxsail. These were: the Qahlawn, which was assumed in the House of Gwehlah and the Grizzly-Bear headdress. This was the headdress worn by the murdered Wolf prince. As a member of the house of Niswamak had slain him, the house of Niswamak had a right to this as a crest. It is a headdress made of wood to represent the head of the Grizzly, and is used in the ceremony of assuming a name. It is the exclusive property of Niswamak, an Eagle of the Gispaxloats tribe, and is also used by the Wolf chief of Laxsail among the Tlingit. The third crest was the Supernatural Halibut. It is used by all the descendants of those fugitive families. This is how and why these families are all related to one other and tell the same myth.



6. Hudson's Bay Company fort and Tsimshian houses at Fort Simpson in 1872.  
Charles Horetzky photo, National Museums of Canada photo 73-318

**THE TLINGIT ATTACK THE KITKATLA**

Informant: Nathan Shaw, Kitkatla  
Recorded by: William Beynon, 1952

The influence of the Tlingit at one time extended to what is now Hartley Bay, and even as far as what is now Gill Island, where the Kikiata first made their village. It was here that the Tlingit attacked the Kitkatla. Kamayam, a Killer Whale of Kitkatla, swam out and upset the warrior leader's canoe of the Tlingit. Kaga, the Tlingit leader, barely escaped capture.

The Tlingit attempt on the Kikiata having failed, they withdrew farther north, where the Kitkatla had established a village at Laxklan. This was more of a winter village, where the Kitkatla gathered together for their feasts and winter ceremonials, and they had these together with the Kitisu and the Kikiata. These events were held among the three villages and even to as far south as the Bella Bella and the interior group of Kitlawh and Kitimat. These tribes lived each within their own territory, each group having their own fishing and hunting village, where stood more or less its permanent village. The main gathering point for winter dramas and festivities was Laxklan. Near Laxklan was an island not large but bare of trees, and its sides were straight up and down. There was only one way to approach it, and that was through a very perilous pass. The Kitkatla saw that it was an ideal fort, and here they found that the top of the island was hollowed and this they covered over to make a refuge and storage. The only difficulty was that of fresh water. This they got from a nearby creek on another island and they stored what they could, and there was food on the island. It was called Frog Fort. This served the Kitkatla people many times.

One day, Nisawis, a Kitkatla Killer Whale, was coming from his village at Ktai and with him were some of his nephews. He saw, hidden away in the distance against the shore lines, a number of canoes. He pretended not to have seen them, and went about what he was doing. As soon as he was out of sight, he returned to his village by another way and warned his people and sent several canoes to warn all the Kitkatla that there were Tlingit invaders about. It so happened that Tsibasa was going to give a great feast at Laxklan and was there with many of his tribesmen to make preparations for this. When they learned about the Tlingit raiders, they all went to their fort for safety. They were able to get all the people to it together with much food and water. Then one of the Tlingit canoes was searching for the location of the village, as Kitkatla has hundreds of small islands. The searchers saw another canoe which had set out to get more water. It was seen by the raiders, who endeavoured to chase it, but it got to the island fort, and the people pulled it up in safety. The Tlingit now knew where their refuge was, and they at once went for the rest of the invaders.

Soon many Tlingit canoes surrounded the island fortress and they shot their arrows up to where the people were, but these were in shelter, so no harm came to them. On the island, the Kitkatla had gathered together a huge quantity of stones and boulders, which they could hurl down upon the invading foe. Now that they were surrounded by the Tlingit, when any canoe came close to the island fort, they would hurl a heavy boulder and, breaking the canoe, they hurled stones on the inmates. The Tlingit kept away and planned on starving the Kitkatla out or making it impossible for them to get water and food supplies. For many days the Kitkatla water supply was getting low and they could not go over at night and get a fresh supply of water, as the invaders were living at the creek where they got their supply. So Tsibasa, the chief, suddenly said, "We will fool them. We will pretend that we have all the water we need, and some even to throw away. Save all your urine and when the invaders are near us, we will take this and throw it down the sides of the rocks and they will think we have all that we need." When the Tlingit saw the Kitkatla throwing the water away with apparent waste, they said, "These people have a large supply of water. They do not save it but throw much of it away."

It was a Tsimshian, a Gitsis man who had been captured by the Tlingit to guide the warriors to the Kitkatla villages, who spoke, saying, "You will never stop their water supply. They have a spring on the island and they have stored food to last them a long while." When the Tlingit heard this, they counselled among themselves, saying, "We cannot starve them out, and also they have all the water they want. So we may as well give up and go back, as our own food is getting low. We find only deserted villages, and the people have either escaped or are at this fort." They started to return. In the meantime, the Gitsis, knowing that on their return the Tlingit would have to pass through certain waters, lay in wait for them.

When the Tlingit returned, their Gitsis guide led them through a very narrow channel where the Tsimshian intended to attack them. He knew they would be in hiding along one of the narrow passages. So he led these Tlingit through. It was just about the end of the day, and the Tlingit were planning to rest a while. Then, during the night, they would pass on towards their own country at Tongas. They wanted to pass the Tsimshian villages at night and thus escape them. So they came to this narrow pass and the Tsimshian, who were in ambush on both sides, attacked the Tlingit, and so unexpected was the attack that many Tlingit canoes were destroyed and many raiders were captured. Only a few canoes escaped, and these went to Dundas Island and out to sea, to escape the Tsimshian. This was the last effort of the Gidaganits to re-establish themselves in their old grounds. Kaga, the leader, escaped but was chased by several canoes of Gitwilgoats and finally was able to go to an island. He was not captured. He perished after being seen sitting on the extreme point of the small island. He must have died on the breakers which broke over where he sat. The island is now a Gitwilgoats possession.

## THE PURCHASE OF THE NAHUK

Informant: Jas. Lewis, Kitkatla

Recorded by: William Beynon

Many myths have always stated that copper shields came from among the Chilkat of Haines, Alaska, and that these people traded in coppers and in the chiefs' dancing aprons or Chilkat blankets. The people who were privileged to trade with the far northern tribes were the Ginaxangik of the Tsimshian. This privilege the Ginaxangik claimed by virtue of having proclaimed it as their right and by distributing gifts to all the guests. This right was continued by all the other tribes. The Gilodza were privileged to trade with the Haida of what is now Prince of Wales Island. The Gitlan traded with the Nass tribes; the Gitwilgoats, with the Haida of what is now the Queen Charlotte Islands; the Gidzaxlahl and Gitsis with the Tlingit, with whom their royal Houses were related; the Gixpaxloats, with the Upper Skeena; the Gitando with the Kitselas; and the Kitkatla with the Kitimat and the Bella Bella. Thus all had exclusive trading areas.

Wisaiks of the Ginaxangik traded with the Stikine Tlingit. Here it was that he learned of a famous copper shield which had originated among the Chilkat and had passed through many war raids between the Chilkat and the Kake tribe of the Tlingit, and even the tribes of the Upper Stikine. It now was in the possession of the Stikine chief of Saiks. The fame of this shield was known to distant lands and was considered the most valuable of all copper shields. It was appreciated by Wisaiks of the Ginaxangik who, at various times, had seen it. Thus he became desirous of owning it. So he held a chiefs' feast in his own tribe and when his people had come in and were fed and gifts were distributed by Wisaiks, he spoke and said, "There is one thing I want to tell you about, that is, what I want not only for myself, but also to put the Ginaxangik tribe above all the other tribes. We have for generations gone to the Stikine to trade, and there is only one valuable thing they possess which we do not, and it is their copper shield Nahuhuk, of which I speak. It is the one copper shield that is the most valuable possession of all in the world. The tradition and fame of this shield has reached all the other places, and yet it is beyond the reach of all tribes. So I am asking that we try and get it. This means that it will take all our wealth. But in so doing, we will become the foremost of all people. This is why I have gathered you together, so that we may discuss this plan. I now put this question in your hands, you headmen, you who control the Ginaxangik tribe. By your counsels I will abide. Should you so desire, nothing will prevent you getting this, the most valuable position among all tribes. Consider this and tell me your thoughts, you, Mediks, Gamayam, Gyamk, Garaolida, Halaidemran, Gisyoksemwalp, Nistelax, Awi, and all the other headmen. That is all I have to say."

Each one of the headmen spoke and thanked the chief. The last speaker to answer was Mediks, who at that time was the foremost and whose word was almost equal to that of the chief Wisaiks. "Yes, my master, who I serve. I have heard your voice and your desires, and so have the other wisemen of your tribe. It is indeed a great wish and one which, as you say, will place you and us above all other tribes. We must consider this very carefully and we must counsel among ourselves, as to whether we can do it. Anything that is worthwhile doing must first be carefully planned, and in so doing, nothing is overlooked that may defeat our plans. But there is one thing I must ask all, that is, we must keep this a secret among us. When we have arrived at a decision, we will let you know, my master Wisaiks. Do not become discouraged. We have not said that we shall do what you desire. But we must proceed with the utmost care, so that the other tribes will not ridicule us or shame us for having such high ambitions. To you, my fellow headmen, give what Wisaiks has said careful thought, and we will discuss it."

After a long while Mediks invited only the headmen to a secret meeting. At this time he spoke, "It is now well that we should take up the question which our chief has asked us to consider. Even though we have not discussed it outside of ourselves, it has already been spoken of by other tribes, and we must try and see what we can do. The Ginaxangik tribe is now placed in a very uncomfortable position. We must do something. So that is why I am bringing this to you now. After we have made our plans, we will call Wisaiks and inform him of what they are to be. This is what I suggest; that we forego all festivities this coming season, and that we gather all our wealth together. When we have accumulated enough goods and slaves and canoes, then we shall go direct to the Stikine and ask Saiks of that tribe to do his brother a favour and give him the copper shield Nahuhulk, for which we will give compensation. Now you, headmen, it is for you all to discuss this very important question. It is not a small matter that Wisaiks, our master, has asked us to consider and we must find a solution. If you think that this is going to be too big an enterprise for us, then we shall drop it, and in so doing, we must be ready to hear the insults and taunts of the other tribes. So now let us all speak on this. It matters not if we must stay in here for a long while."

As soon as Mediks had finished speaking, Gyamk and Nistelax followed. Gyamk was a veteran trader, and as his former uncles had done, he traded with the Chilkat; and much of his products consisted of moose hides and caribou hides. These he got from the Gispaxloats, who in turn accepted them from the Hagwilget tribe of the upper Skeena River. Gyamks was considered at this time as being very wealthy. So he spoke up, "Are we children that we should be scared so easily? This great mighty Ginaxangik tribe stands in fear over the purchase of a copper shield. I thought you were brave and wise men. But you seem to be afraid. Why? Even one man could get that if he were determined to do so. So why should this mighty tribe have doubts as to its own

strength? Come, my fellow tribesmen, let us show to all the strength of this mighty people! Come, my nephew, Nistelax, come, I want you also to voice your feelings and show that you are not a nawts (hermaphrodite) and that we are mighty men. I will be able to contribute much wealth, and I know that you will all do likewise. But if you decide that we should not do this, then we are now humiliated, and we have no place here to hide our shame. This you must consider."

So saying he called upon his nephew Nistelax, who responded, "You have heard the voices of two of our leading men of the Ginaxangik. Who are we that we should dispute what you have set out to do? There is no way out of this but to go ahead and get this thing that our master wants. If we all go and work together, we can do this. This is all I have to say. I am but a young man among you, but I will do anything that you want of me. So now we should hear from our wisemen, men who have had much experience. Whatever they say we will do." The final speaker was Niskwelax, a Raven, who was a great leader among the Ginaxangik. "Yes, my fellow headmen, what you say is true. As soon as my master voiced his feelings and told us his desires, I for a time hesitated, as this is a big thing. Should we fail, we shall face taunts from the other tribes. It is also going to take all our strength and resources. That is why I doubted at first, but now that the other tribes know that we are after this, we cannot turn back. So it is well that we call Wisaiks. And you, Gyamk, and you, Awi, shall make known to him what we have decided, that we shall assist him in getting this copper shield from the Stikine. We must know what he himself plans in doing. Then we will be guided by whatever he does. It is he that we are going to elevate, and he must be prepared or he would not have called us to make known his wishes to us. It is well that someone goes for him now and summons him here, so that we may know what to do."

A messenger was dispatched, and he soon came back accompanied by Wisaiks. It was agreed that Gyamk and Awi should speak to the chief. As soon as Wisaiks entered, he was greeted and accorded the place of honor at the rear of the house. Then Gyamk spoke, "Chief, chief, my master, I am not of your size or rank. I am like a slave, but I know that you will listen to me. After you made known your desires and wishes to your tribesmen, they considered them very seriously. This has caused a great deal of worry and anxiety. Now we are all as one in accord, that we shall muster the wealth and strength of the Ginaxangik, in order to try and bring your wishes to fruition. We know that already other people are talking of us, ready to taunt us should we fail, and they are ready to ridicule us, if we do not try to fulfill your desires. So now, my master Wisaiks, as I have said, your tribe stands as I do and it will be well if we impoverish ourselves, but we shall try. All our children shall do their bit and you yourself, chief, will be a very wealthy man. You have slaves from Kwakiutl, Ligyimen, Owikeeno, Bella Bella, Kitimat, Kitlope, Gihrayu, Queen Charlotte Haida, and Gitrao, Prince of Wales Island Haida. You even have some



from Nootka from the West Coast of Vancouver Island, as well as Tsetsaut interior tribes of the hills, as slaves. No other chief has such a great collection of them. We will add our humble wealth to yours, when you are ready to go to visit your brother at Stikine. Now I want Awi to add his wisdom to my words, and that is then the wishes of the Ginaxangik tribe, which we now lay before you."

Awi, who was head of the Raven households, then spoke, "You have heard Gyamk. What he has said is true. It is the voice of the Ginaxangik. It is true we were afraid of this at first, as it seemed too big an undertaking. But your desires and wishes, we have felt, must be met. We have always been able to get whatever we have wanted, and this will be so again, if we go at it all together. Well, chief Wisaiks, you can rest better now that you know that we have decided to get this for you, and much will depend on yourself. There is this to bear in mind, that all of the other tribes are watching us, and if we fail, we shall be ridiculed and taunted for our failure. But if we succeed, we shall become the wealthiest among all tribes, for is not this Nahuhulk the most valued of all copper shields? So until next fall when it will be the season of the naxnox, we will go to the Stikine and make overtures to your brother there. So in the meantime from now on until we get ready to go, we shall devote all our efforts to accumulate wealth for the purchase of this copper shield. This we now tell you, chief Wisaiks."

He then replied, "So counsellors, wisemen that control this great tribe, I have heard your answer to my poor plea, and now I am happy. I will sleep, as I know that whatever you set out to do, you can accomplish. When the time comes, I will gather you altogether and then we shall see what wealth we can accumulate. I have full belief that my brother Saiks at Stikine will heed our plea, and that we will be able to dispose of enough wealth to satisfy him and his people. I have no doubts. We will shame all of those that would ridicule us, and we will achieve fame. I had faith in your wisdom and knew that if you felt that this was impossible, that you would not undertake it. So now I am pacified and shall devote my time to meet the wants of my Stikine brother."

When the fall came and the people had finished gathering all of their various foods and before the month of taboos when nobody would travel, the Ginaxangik gathered together at their village of Ginaxpaos, now Sand Point, at Metlakatla. Then Wisaiks assembled his people together and then announced to them, "I have been preparing to go to the Stikine as we planned. So I have gotten two large Haida canoes, each to be manned by ten slaves from all surrounding countries. Together with these I have prepared many moose hides, also I have much other wealth in two other canoes. Altogether I have four canoes and now, my tribesmen, my wise headmen, men that are able to accomplish anything they set out to do, to this you will add your help in order that we may go to the Stikine before the months of the taboo set in." All his nephews and

nieces and his own immediate household came forward with their various gifts. These were placed in the middle of the house. Then each headman stepped forward together with his household and their gifts. These all came forward as they were called. Then when all of these had finished their contributions to Wisaiks, those that had married into the Ginaxangik tribe came forward with their gifts. Then the wife of Wisaiks and her maternal uncles and household came forward too with what was termed sawasesk (to make covered with blankets). When all had been completed, these gifts were gathered up and placed in the rear of the house to be put in the canoes. In all these were four canoes from Wisaiks. Two of these were manned by slaves, twenty slaves in all. From among all the tribes, six more canoes were given. Into these ten canoes were placed all of the gifts with which to purchase the great copper shield. Preparations were now made, and Gyamk and Awi were to be the leaders, as these men had much experience in travelling to that distant country.

They now set off. Only men, and these the headmen and strong young men, went with the large party. Wisaiks' canoe was in the middle of the group. After many days of travelling, they came to the mouth of the Stikine River and to the village of Saiks, which is now known as Wrangell. They did not land at once, but waited until they had been seen. They set up a camp opposite and made preparations to meet Saiks of Stikine. When they were in readiness, they heard the drums announcing their arrival. So they knew that they would be welcomed, as they heard the songs that proclaimed that a supernatural power would be thrown to them. When those on shore had finished singing of their supernatural powers, they threw in the direction of the Ginaxangik canoes, an invisible being. Then Wisaiks of the Ginaxangik stood up in his canoe and after wrestling with this invisible power, finally overcame it, and then the Ginaxangik people began to sing of their ability to overcome it. Then Wisaiks stood up in his canoe and said, "Now is the time," and he threw towards the Stikine group on the shore his invisible power, and Saiks wrestled on the beach with this invisible power and finally overcame it. The Stikine people then began to sing. This went on for some time, until Saiks ran up into his house with the invisible force that had been thrown by Wisaiks of the Ginaxangik, and then he sent down his messengers to call in his brother and the Ginaxangik tribe.

When they arrived they were taken into Saiks' house, who called out, "Sit my brother and his spokesmen at the rear of the house, and spread a mat for them." After this all the Ginaxangik were seated at the side of the house, and then the Stikine Saiks went to the secret chamber of the house, and after a long while he emerged wearing his dancing hat and his dancing garment, and the headdress was filled with eagle down which he scattered, while dancing, upon all of the guests as a symbol of peace. When he had danced in front of the guests and finished scattering the eagle down, he sat alongside of the Ginaxangik Wisaiks. Then he called out, "Bring us food, for my brother is hungry."

Food was brought to them only a long while after they had arrived. This was a sure sign of no treachery. Had the Stikine planned on treachery, they would have fed their guests at once and then killed them. But the longer they kept their guests waiting, the greater the respect they were paying to them. Many times when tribes were visiting one another, they would eat just before landing, knowing that it would be much latter that they would be fed. The host Saiks of Stikine spoke, "It is well, brother, that you visit me. I feel greatly honored to know that my relatives always have me in mind. You have visited me many times and I have not done the same to you, but the fame of your village and your people has reached me. Many of your headmen have married Stikine women and many of these I know must have children, and among your people my tribe has grown. We also have some from among your tribe who have married into mine, and you will see that you have people among my tribe and village here. You will not feel as a stranger, and my House shall be your House, and we want you to stay as long as possible. We will have much to talk about, and my people will entertain you each in their turn." The host was followed by his tribesmen, who each spoke welcoming Wisaiks of the Ginaxangik to the house of his brother.

Then Gyamk, who had been designated as the spokesman together with Awi, spoke in reply, "Yes, brother, your brother has been lonesome for you and has spoken of you constantly, so that his tribesman, having pity on him, then suggested that the chief visit you. Now we have heard and seen your welcome to us, and I know that my master's feelings are now at rest since he has come into your House. Ages and ages ago it is said that we were as one family and that we became separated through warfare, misadventure and through thoughtless illicit love affairs, which caused us to leave and separate in shame, and many times in disgrace. But we have not forgotten our connections and relationships. That is why the chief, your brother, got very lonesome for you. And he brings you some gifts from his own territories on the Skeena. Come, Nistelax. Brings the gifts which our master has brought for his brother." Nistelax and his fellow tribesmen then came forward and placed the gifts of moose skins before Saiks of the Stikine. When this was done, Awi of the Ginaxangik addressed the Stikine chief, "Chief Saiks, your brother has heard your voice and has received your welcome, and as you have heard Gyamk say, he has been longing to see you. We will do as you say, and stay as our master wishes. What Gyamks says is true. Among our forefathers, whenever the Ginaxangik House of Wisaiks was about to become extinct, women were taken from Saiks of Stikine's House, and these because mothers perpetuated Wisaiks House of the Ginaxangik. Saiks of the Stikine did the same thing. Thus the two Houses grew closer to each other. All this my master knew. That is why he was so lonesome to visit you. Now you have welcomed him, and we will do as you bid us do. Before we return, we shall ask of you one great favor, and of this we will talk later. It is a great favor, one that will not only bring fame to you for having given it, but will also add prestige to your great brother among his fellow Tsimshian chiefs. We ask that you will not refuse this poor plea for this great favor,

because on your granting it lies the future of your brother. This we will make known to you at a future time. Now we have gathered together to be happy and to become better known to one another. This is all that I say, great chief, Saiks, although I am not of high rank to address you, but as the spokesman of my master I address you on his behalf and of his tribe."

Now it was known that, besides a friendly visit, there was another reason for the Ginaxangik coming here, and this reason was kept secret. As much as the Stikine people wanted to know, they would not ask. Chief Wisaiks of the Ginaxangik now was as a member of the Stikine chief's House. This Stikine chief had many wives from as many places, among whom was a very beautiful and fair young woman of the Raven clan. She was always at the rear of the house, weaving mats. Wisaiks saw her and immediately became enamoured of her and wanted her for himself. He became very much infatuated and wanted to sleep with her. He called one of his tribesmen and told him of his desires to have intercourse with his brother Saik's wife. "Stop it! This is not what we have come for. If you ruin of what we have come for, we will return empty-handed. We are here on a very serious trip. We must use every possible means to bring about the good feelings of your brother and his Stikine people. We must not do anything to bring shame upon us or anger from the Stikine people. We should now feel out what your brother and his Stikine tribe will think of trading the great copper shield for which we have come. We should make overtures to the Stikine chief, and then we will know how to approach him. But, my master, again I ask you not to indulge in these desires of yours. We are on a trip which is equal to a war expedition, and as you know, it is strictly taboo to have any sexual relationship with any woman, as this would weaken the purpose of our visit. So again I ask of you not to indulge in your desires."

But this resistance seemed only to increase the infatuation of Wisaiks for the wife of his Stikine brother. The woman kept to herself and was always busy weaving. Seemingly she paid no attention to any of the visitors. Again and again the Wisaiks pleaded with his tribesmen, that he would make known his desires to the woman who now had completely infatuated him. But always these men pleaded with him to not heed his desires, which would upset their plans. He then pretended to his now alarmed tribesmen that he would forget this woman.

Some time after, he called to his side a Ginaxangik woman who had married into the Stikine tribe and spoke very secretly to her, saying, "I am much infatuated with my brother's wife, and I wish to have intercourse with her. I want you to speak to her and tell her of my desires, and I shall present her with many slaves. Tell her it is my wish and desire." Next day, the Ginaxangik woman went to where the Stikine chief's wife sat, and after speaking of many things, she said, "My chief woman, there is one thing I have come to you for. My master your husband's brother Wisaiks wants you and wishes to have intercourse

with you and will present you with many slaves for this favour. What shall I tell him?" The Stikine woman made no reply, seemed not to have heard what the woman had said. So the Ginaxangik messenger repeated her request. But again the Stikine woman kept on with her weaving silently. So the Ginaxangik woman returned to Wisaiks and said to him, "The woman who you want will not even speak to me. I told her your message and your desires, but she never even replied to me. It was better that you leave her alone. It was not right that a foreign woman should humiliate you. She is not the only woman. There are many others."

Wisaiks did not reply, but went out and sat outside for a long while. His pride was hurt. But now he was determined to get this woman at all costs, rather than his pride be hurt and his overtures spurned, he, a chief who was always used to being obeyed. When in the past he made requests of this nature, although the women to whom he made them did not want him, they had respect for his high rank and gave in to his wishes. Here he met with a woman who not only disregarded his high rank, but even would not deign to reply and speak to his messenger. This made him very angry, but he would not show his anger. He made up his mind that he would conquer her, even if it took all the wealth he had.

Next day, he called the Ginaxangik woman and said to her, "You go and see my brother's wife. Tell her that I must have her and I will give her more slaves and wealth, if she will let me have intercourse with her. Tell her I shall give her one canoe loaded with slaves, besides much wealth." The Stikine chief's wife, sitting in her position of the house, was busy weaving when the messenger came beside her whispering to her, "My master Wisaiks, your husband's brother, has sent me again. His desires for you are very great, and if you will let him stay with you, he will give you one canoe loaded with slaves, also much wealth." The Stikine woman went on with her weaving and seemingly paid no heed to the messenger's request. After a long while this woman again spoke to the Stikine woman, "It is well that you should tell me what to say to my master. He is not a child." But still the Stikine woman paid no attention. After a long while, the messenger laid some presents down beside where the Stikine woman sat and then went out to where the chief was, and she said to him, "No, master, the woman does not reply. I waited for her to reply, but she seemed as if not even to hear what I had said. You should not go on with this, my master, there are many women who are better than she. Give her up before she openly hurts your feelings. Who is she, that she should ignore your requests? She seems to think you are a child. So, master, show your disregard for her as well."

Wisaiks was now indeed hurt. He again went out of the house and for a long while he sat at the water's edge, considering what to do. He was now more determined than ever to get the woman and he would

sacrifice all the wealth he had brought to purchase the copper shield, in order to conquer her. She now seemed to disregard his overtures. He was so angered that now even some of his counsellors began to suspect that something was wrong with their chief. So they were constantly watching him, but only the Ginaxangik woman who was acting as messenger knew of his secret, and she told nobody.

Next day, the Ginaxangik chief went to where his messenger was and said to her, "I want you to go to the Stikine chief woman, and tell her I must have her, and I am going to increase my presents to her by offering two canoes loaded with slaves together with much other wealth. Ask her to send her answer by you." So the woman again went to where the Stikine wife was weaving her mats, and she sat close beside her and said to her, "My master's desires for you are strong, and he must have you above anything else. He has told me that his presents to you are now two canoes, each loaded with ten slaves, besides much other wealth. Also he must hear from you now." After a long while, the Stikine woman answered, "I have heard your master's wishes, and I must first decide upon his request. It is not that I have ignored his voice. But I have to consider it very carefully. I will let you know what my decision is as soon as I have settled what to do." When the chief's messenger returned to Wisaiks, she said to him, "The woman has replied to your requests, my master, and she will think your offer over. Then she will let me know. As soon as she does this, I will tell you." Wisaiks was pleased now that he knew that he would get this Stikine woman, and he said to his tribeswoman, "All is well. As soon as she lets you know what she has decided, you will come to me secretly. Do not tell anybody what you have done or said. We will await her reply."

In the meantime, the Stikine woman, who was but one of the many wives of Saiks, went to her husband and said, "Your Tsimshian brother has sent a messenger many times, asking that I sleep with him. His desires must be very strong for me, as he has in his last offer to me promised two canoes loaded with twenty slaves, besides much other wealth. What shall I tell him, as he sends his messenger to me every day and he seems very earnest and insistent? I did not tell his messenger that I would see you, but I told her I would think the matter over. This is the first time I have replied to his demands. It now is to you to decide." When she had finished, she waited a long while. Then her husband, who sat very quietly and was in deep thought, finally said, "It is well that you should yield to the wishes of my Tsimshian brother. He wants you, and you should take him to your uncle's house, and there stay with him as long as he wishes."

This was but in accord with the ways of the olden people. It was a source of revenue for a chief; and if his wives brought him wealth in this manner they were considered lucky women. Often hunters previous to their taboo feasts in preparation for the hunting trips would seek

out women who were considered lucky women, that is, women who brought good luck to a chief. These women commanded very high presence when overtures were made to them, and when they consented to the plea, they got large presents from the hunters. These presents were given to the women, who in turn brought them to her spouse. The wife of the man very often took the gifts to the wife of the chief, with whom her husband had been associating, especially if she were of lower social standing, recognizing also the lucky qualities of the woman in question. A woman who had no lucky quantities was never in demand, regardless of the fact that she may be even more beautiful. So it was in this instance. This particular woman was considered not only the most beautiful, but also the most lucky and industrious of the Stikine chief's House, and she was in popular favor. She also was of the highest rank, being from the Eagle House of Kasaiks who afterwards moved further south at Laxspeaus (On-place-of-Sand) now known as Cape Fox near Mary Island.

After the woman had heard what her husband had advised her, she went to her uncle's house and said to him, "I am bringing in the Ginaxangik chief Wisaiks, who is going to stay with me. He has promised me much wealth and you must entertain him, while he stays here with me." The woman's uncle was at first alarmed. But when he learned that his niece's husband approved, he could do nothing but accede to the wishes of his niece. He set apart a portion of his house for the use of the Tsimshian chief and his niece. After all was made ready, the wife of the Stikine chief sent for the woman messenger of Wisaiks. When she came to where the woman sat, in the house of her uncle, she said to her, "Go and tell your master that I have carefully thought over his desires to stay with me, as well as his offer of presents. So I will bow to his wishes and I will grant them to him. Let him be ready to come when my uncle sends for him. But he must come alone. He will stay with me here."

The messenger went at once to her master and said, "Well, chief, be of real courage! You will now get your desires. The woman for whom you most earnestly want has accepted your offer, and when her uncle sends for you, you must go to his house alone, and there you shall stay. Should your tribesmen become alarmed or worried over your absence, I shall say that you are having an adventure with your brother's wife. But when you have finished your visit with her, you must then give your presents, in order that no shame or taunt will fall upon you." The Tsimshian Wisaiks now made preparations and it was at this time that he confided in his chief spokesman and advisor Gyamk. "I have been trying to meet with my brother Saik's wife for a long while, and now I am arranging to stay with her, while she is visiting her uncle. Do not be alarmed at my absence, and should anything happen, the Ginaxangik woman who is one of the wives of Gusran will keep you informed. But do not tell my tribesmen. Advise them that I am acquiring a new supernatural power and I have gone into seclusion."

Gyamk was very much alarmed and afraid that this would now spoil any chances of their being able to purchase the valuable copper shield

they had come for. So he answered, "You should not do this, my master, chief Wisaiks, it may spoil any chance that we have to purchase the great copper shield. It is better that you wait until this is finished and then fulfill your own desires. This is a very foolish thing to do and may not only ruin the thing we have come here for, but also bring disaster upon us. I urge you to stop and consider not only yourself, but your tribe." Wisaiks became very angry and replied to his headmen, "Am I a child that you should talk to me like this? You do not seem to know me. When I want anything, I will get it. I have told you what I am going to do, and this I will do. I do not want you to inform any of the other tribesmen, excepting what I have told you to tell them." The tribesman was also very angry and he retorted, "Do as you please! It will not be I that will be laughed at and ridiculed, should we fail in the purpose of coming here. It was a known fact, when you left the Tsimshian, that you were coming for the great copper of Saiks of the Stikine." With that the headman left and the Ginaxangik was more anxious than ever to get the Stikine woman.

So after a few days had gone by, the woman's uncle sent one of his tribesmen to summon Wisaiks to his house. When he came in he placed him at the rear of the house, a part of which had been prepared for him to stay with the Stikine woman. It was then that Wisaiks sent for his nephews and had them bring in the slaves and gifts that he had promised to present to the woman. After these were brought in, he gave them to her. Well, he stayed with her many days, and when he was finished with her, he made preparations for his return to his Tsimshian village at Metlakatla. He had paid all of the wealth he and his tribe had brought to satisfy his own desires, and they were now returning without even trying to bargain for the great copper shield. The entire Ginaxangik tribe was ashamed of their chief. But none spoke nor rebuked him. Just before Wisaiks was ready to return, Gusran, the uncle of the woman, filled the canoes of the Ginaxangik with food and gifts in recognition of the honor their chief had bestowed upon him by staying with his niece in his house.

The Ginaxangik returned to their village and they told nobody what had happened, but rather they gave the impression that they had only given preliminary payment and they were to go again before they could possess the valuable copper shield. Then for two years the Ginaxangik gathered and stored wealth again to make an effort to purchase the copper. They accumulated a huge amount of wealth, some of which was of a personable kind, such as valuable supernatural power which were the exclusive property of Wisaiks. It was with these that Wisaiks hoped to satisfy his Stikine brother. The counsellors who accompanied him were now in control of all the things. Gyamk said, "It is better we should bargain at once, and we will await the reply of the Stikine, as this will take some time to decide. They will not part with such a valuable thing as this copper shield without a struggle. We felt, when we were there last, before our thoughtless chief gave all the



wealth we had to that woman, that we could get this copper. So we must bargain soon after we arrive, before we again run into another mishap." To this all of the other headmen agreed. Wisaiks had little to say, as everything was now in the control of his tribesmen, who were not going to allow anything to ruin their plans.

When they arrived at the Stikine village they were received in the same manner as in their former arrival. After the many days they spent in feasting and entertaining, first by the Stikine Saiks and then the Wolf, Raven and Eagle chiefs, the Ginaxangik headmen went in to where the Stikine Saiks was sitting and they placed there many valuable gifts. Their gifts were known as haliskehl (the gift for the privilege of speaking). Gyamk spoke, "Chief Saiks, chief Saiks, chief Saiks, it is with great humility that we come before you. Were you not the brother of our poor master, we would have great fear in approaching you. We have come, great chief and all your wise tribesmen, we have come to ask of you something which has become a great desire of your brother. To get it will not only make him the greatest among the Tsimshian, but will also make him the wealthiest. The fame of the Nahuhulk copper is known to our people, and it seems to be a myth rather than a reality that you own it. It is spoken of in great respect by our people. This is the desire of my master to ask that you present him this copper shield. You shall give it to him, as we know we have not enough wealth with which to purchase it. Even so, your brother will do his humble best to return your favor. This is a request not of a stranger, but of your own brother, who now humbly pleads to you. Now to the wisemen of your tribe I will speak. Wisemen, wisemen, men who govern and advise and give strength to your chief! You are the strength and wisdom of the Stikine tribe, and at this time you have heard the humble plea of your master's brother, our chief. I know that it is asking a great deal, but not only will it add to the prestige of our chief, but all of the other people will know whence it came. Thus this will also add to the already great fame of your master. You will hear also the voice of Awi, as we both express not only the humble plea of our master, but also the wishes of all his tribesmen. We hope you will pity us and grant us this favour which my master asks of you, his brother."

After Gyamk had spoken, Awi addressed the Stikine chief and his tribesmen, "Great chief Saiks, great chief Saiks, everything that Gyamk has said is true and we are but little children compared with you. But it is only because our master is your brother that we do not fear to speak to you, to ask of you such a great favour. We feel that you will accede to your brother's desires, and that you will grant him his wishes. We tried many times to dissuade him and to point out to him that what he wants is too much, but he is certain that you would heed his poor plea. Your two Houses, yours and your brother's, have been at all times -- far back -- closely connected. When one was about to become extinct, it was kept alive by the other; so that there was always a close link. That is why we do not hesitate to ask of you this that

you value so highly. We ask your consideration, and we know you will grant this wish, and you will endeavor as well to satisfy your own feelings in this. We do not expect a reply at once, but we will await it. Now to your great tribesmen, who are brave and wise! I am but adding my own voice to that of Gyamk. I am nobody, but we are only expressing the wishes of your master's brother who controls us. We know that you will give this humble request your wise consideration, and we hope that as soon as you have decided we will then endeavor to satisfy the feelings of your chief, for we realize the value of this which our master asks. Even though you have heard the voice of only two of us, it is for our chief and the entire Ginaxangik tribe that we speak."

For a long while none of the Stikine spoke, then the spokesman for the Stikine Saiks said, "Yes, great chief, and your tribesmen, your brother has heard your voice and he recognizes your plea, and we will carefully consider everything you have said. Your brother recognizes your voice, so why will he not give it careful thought? And we will do likewise. It has always been the way between brothers. When one has something really valuable and the other wants it, they have come in the same manner as you. So be patient, great chief, be patient! We have heard your voice, Gyamk, we have heard your voice Awi, and we recognize them. What you say is true. Be patient, great Ginaxangik tribe, be patient! Our master has never let any of his brothers go empty-handed. So again I say to you all, be patient! You will be with us a long while, and we will carefully consider all that you have said, and we will let you know my master's wishes."

After this the offerings of the Ginaxangik, which had been put in front of the Stikine Saiks, were taken, and this in itself was encouraging to the Ginaxangik. Many days after this, after many secret meetings of the Stikine chief and his tribesmen, messengers were sent to invite the Ginaxangik chief Wisaiks and his tribesmen to the house of his brother Saiks. When they came in, they were all seated in the place of honor and food was served. After this there was a dance and the spreading of eagle down. When they had finished dancing, one of the nephews of the Stikine chief brought out the great copper shield. It was wrapped up in cedar bark and was placed in front of the Stikine chief, who now arose and danced with it. He placed it in front of Wisaiks of the Ginaxangik, afterwards spreading more eagle down upon him, and then he danced back to his own place. When all the dancing was done, Saiks spoke only a few words saying, "Yes, my brother, I have heard your voice, and why should I let you return empty-handed, after hearing your plea? You will now take the copper shield that I value very highly. Now I give it to your care and that of your tribe." This was all that he said.

Then his spokesman arose and spoke, "Great chief Wisaiks, chief Alimlaxa, all of the headmen of the Ginaxangik, and all the Ginaxangik tribe, you have heard the voice of my master Saiks. He declares that he

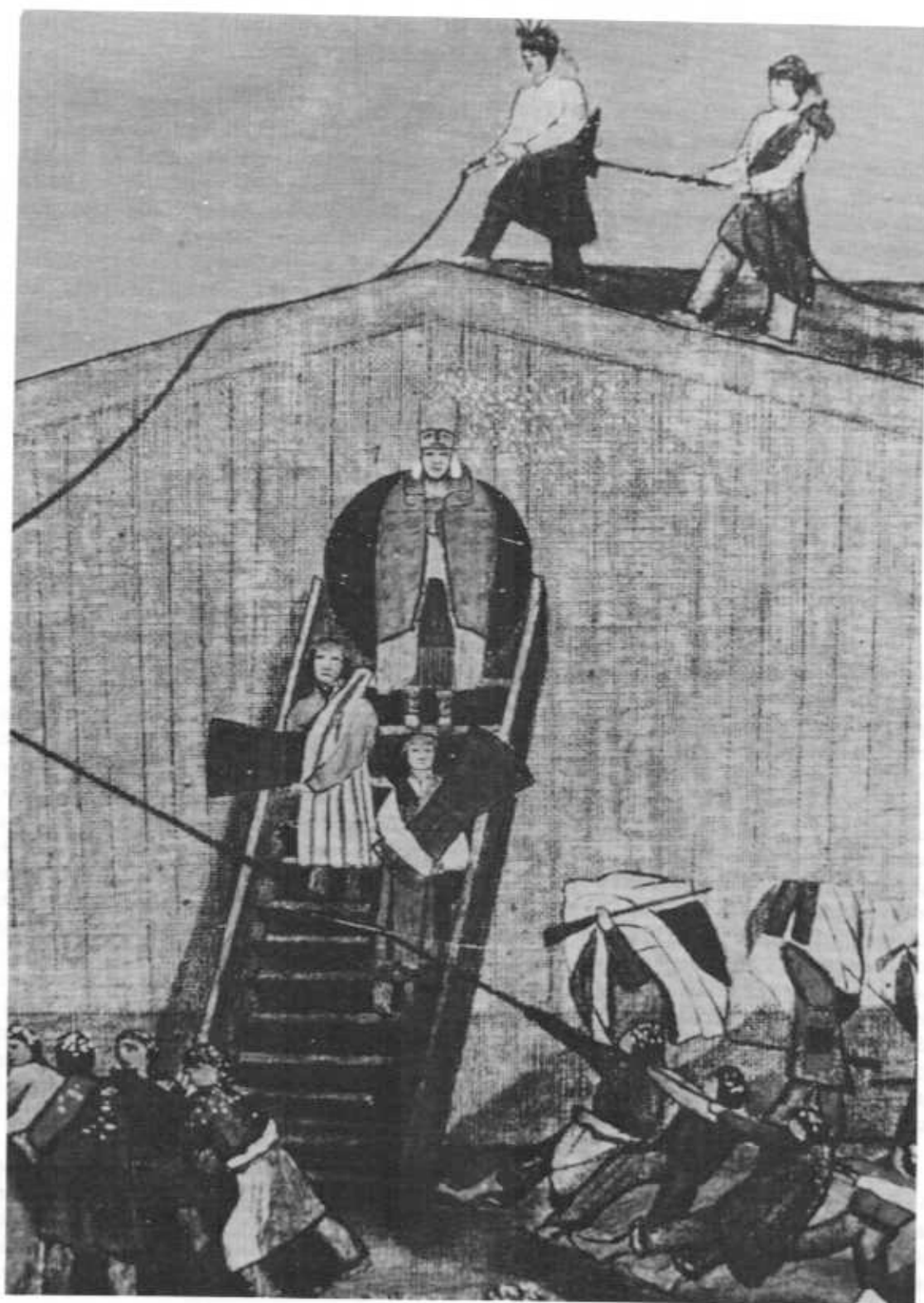
has heard the voice of his brother and his plea and he recognized it. Now you have seen what he has done. My master valued this copper highly above all his other wealth. It was obtained only after many trips to the Chilkat people who were loath to part with it. Because of these many efforts my master and his people were able to acquire this copper shield. He is sure that you will take good care of it and will appreciate its value. Many tribes have wanted to purchase it, but at no time have the Stikine and Saiks wanted to part with it. We have always had very good connections with the Ginaxangik. When we have wanted to reestablish a weakened chief's House in our village, we have always taken a member of your chief's House. So have we maintained the best of relationship, and it is because of this that my master and his people have heeded the wishes of your chief. We are not selling this copper shield, because it is priceless. But it is like placing it in the care of another part of the House, as the copper is still in the keeping of the group of Saiks and Wisaiks."

When this man had finished other Stikine leaders spoke, all in the same manner as the first. When it was over, Wisaiks, chief of the Ginaxangik said, "Yes, brother, I have now seen what you have done. You have stripped yourself naked, in order to please my poor wishes. And before I shall take this priceless gift, I will satisfy my feeling also by adding to my brother's already great wealth. I am not purchasing this, as what you say is true, that there is not enough wealth among all the tribes to purchase so great a copper as this. I will now call on my tribesmen. Come Gyamk, come Awi, come Nisaxnats, come Nistelax, come Halaidemran, come Mediks, come Wasibaxs, come Naxi, come Saraolita, accompany my nephew Alimlaxa and Nisratis. Bring in my box, open it, and place it in front of my brother! I have been made happy today, and I want, in a small poor way, to make my brother's heart and feelings good, as well as of his tribesmen." When he had said this, his leading headmen, who he had called upon immediately, arose and left the house. Then after a while, they returned with many slaves and many canoes, also with all other wealth, such as mink garments, groundhog blankets, moose skins and hides. The moose hide was considered one of the most valuable articles, as from it were made all wearing garments. These were all piled up in front of the Stikine Saiks.

Then Gyamk, who was the Ginaxangik chief spokesman, said, "Saiks, Saiks, Saiks, there now comes into my master's tribe great happiness, which has originated from your kind words and those of your tribe. I shall continue to tell of your wonderful act, even when I am only a ghost, and when I meet with our ancestors, in ghostland. These few paltry things that my master now places before you are to show you in some way the happiness that he and his people feel. It is not to be regarded as payment for your wonderful gift. But he has a personal gift for you, which belongs to him and he now places this to be your exclusive property. It is a naxnox, and he himself shall dance it, and you will hear him sing the songs belonging to it. You shall use them

whenever your fellow chiefs meet together in festivities. The name of the naxnox is Hukaloup (continually throwing stones). You will see yourself how my master acts it and shows you its privilege. This is one of the most valued privileges my master possesses, and this he passes to you for your exclusive privilege. Now to your tribesmen I will address some words. Wisemen, wisemen, who guide the destiny of the chief and the great Stikine tribe! You people have done a great thing, this day, which my master and his tribe shall never forget. It will show to all of the other Tsimshian tribes that the clan of Wisaiks is not beggarly, but is a mighty people. My master will show this great gift, which his brother has bestowed upon him, not only to his own tribe, but to all of the other tribes of the Tsimshian, of which there are many. Now my master Wisaiks, show to your brother Saiks your own exclusive gift to him, a power which you now bestow upon him, to use when he meets with his equals. Come, bring it forward, my master!" Wisaiks of the Ginaxangik then arose and began to sing the song of Hukaloup. He was accompanied by his tribesmen. When he came to the part of the song which related to his exclusive privilege of throwing stones among the guests, he bent down and gathering handfuls of pebbles he scattered these all round the house, and none that were hit could protest. But if any were injured, he was immediately compensated by a tribesman of the chief. He wore a mask that represented a bird, and his garment was the grizzly bear representing the Prince-of-Grizzlies. When he came to where sat the Stikine chief, he placed all of these in front of him and then returned to his place.

Then the Ginaxangik chief called on each of his tribesmen, "Well, Gyamk, are you not going to show your appreciation to my brother for what he has done for us?" With that, Gyamk, who had brought in much of his wealth, stood up, "Here I am, master! I cannot hide myself from this great event. Even though my gifts are small and of no value, yet they are a symbol of how I feel for your brother and appreciate what he has done." He then placed his gifts in front of chief Saiks. Each one of the Ginaxangik headmen were called in turn and they responded in the same manner as Gyamk. When all this was finished, the Ginaxangik made ready to return to Metlakatla. Although this copper was considered a gift, it was a form of sale, the gift making it more valuable; also it placed the Ginaxangik somewhat in a position as being still under obligations to the Stikine people. So while it was a gift to the chief Wisaiks, it also was the property of the Ginaxangik, who had contributed to the purchase -- gifts to the Stikine chief and his people. While this copper shield remained in the care of the chief, it was actually controlled by the tribe. It was known from time to time to all of the Tsimshian in feasts.



7. Chief Legaic of Port Simpson on his trick stairway during a feast and pole raising ceremony, by Fredée Alexcee. National Museums of Canada photo.

## THE LAXLSEWANEM FORTRESS OF THE GITWILGOATS

Informant: Hebert Wallace (Niyaranat)

Recorded by: Marius Barbeau, 1927

The Tlingit were called Gidaranits by the Tsimshian, who were constantly attacked by them. The Gidaranits had attacked the Gidzaxhlahl village of Tralmesaw. The Gidzaxhlahl chief said to Weedis, another chief, "Take my daughter and see if you can save her. We are all about to be destroyed by the Gidaranits." This chief took the young princess and went away to the headwaters of the Kstawl River. This young woman was a Gitwilgoats of the House of Ligiutkwatk. They went to the headwaters of Niskiaws, later known as Tseyak. They arrived at a large cavern, in which they made their refuge. While there, they gathered much food - bear, goat, and groundhog meat. Weedis took this young girl as his wife.

They had two sons whom they called Kamayam and Kaya. Later they had a third son whose name was Paxkwan; then a fourth son whom they called Kyamak. He taught his sons how to grow strong, how to become warriors and how to hunt. The father took them and had them take their baths in the cold water and then whipped them in order to make them able to stand punishment and make them strong. He brought them up with one ambition, that is, to retaliate on the Gidaranits.

After they were grown up, he was prepared to move back to the Skeena. When they came among the surviving Gitwilgoats people, the woman introduced her children by their names. They outfitted these young people with a canoe and food, and sent them on. They knew that the Gitwilgoats had a village on the Ksyau, just below Kawdzeks. The father of these children was Aksk. On this location was the fortress of the Gitwilgoats, a huge mountain-like island. It was difficult to approach. This band had grown in numbers, as the young people had married and increased. They built a house on this fortress. All the young people had to learn the art of warfare and prepare their weapons and handle them. They always kept bundles of paddles near them. The length of these paddles was two arms (six feet). The house was built at the edge of the rocky island and the canoes were tied to the doorway, and the paddles were always at the doorway. All the young people were constantly practising canoeing in these treacherous waters. Day after day they also kept on practising with their spears. They had already built caches along the Kawdzeks River and the house was full of spears and war implements. They had gathered into this house many stones which to throw upon anyone attacking the fort.

One day, many canoes approached which they recognized as Gidaranits canoes. The Gidaranits attacked the island fort. They were many in numbers. The young people in the fort kept throwing stones and spears at these besiegers. But the Gidaranits, in spite of this, were able to approach the island. One of the besiegers cried out, "Father,

are we in battle yet?" The father answered, "No, not yet! We have not fought in earnest yet." Aksk, finding out that they were unable to overcome the foe, closed his trap door and went to the other entrance, where the canoes were tied up. They all escaped into the canoes and in their haste they forgot the bundle of paddles near the doorway. After they were adrift, they realised that they had no paddles, only spears. Then the father said, "We are about to fight in earnest," meaning, "We are up against it now." The saying has remained among the Tsimshian, "We are about to fight in earnest." They were able to escape from the Gidarants, but the raiders burned their village. The fugitives went up the river to where the Gitsis people had their village.

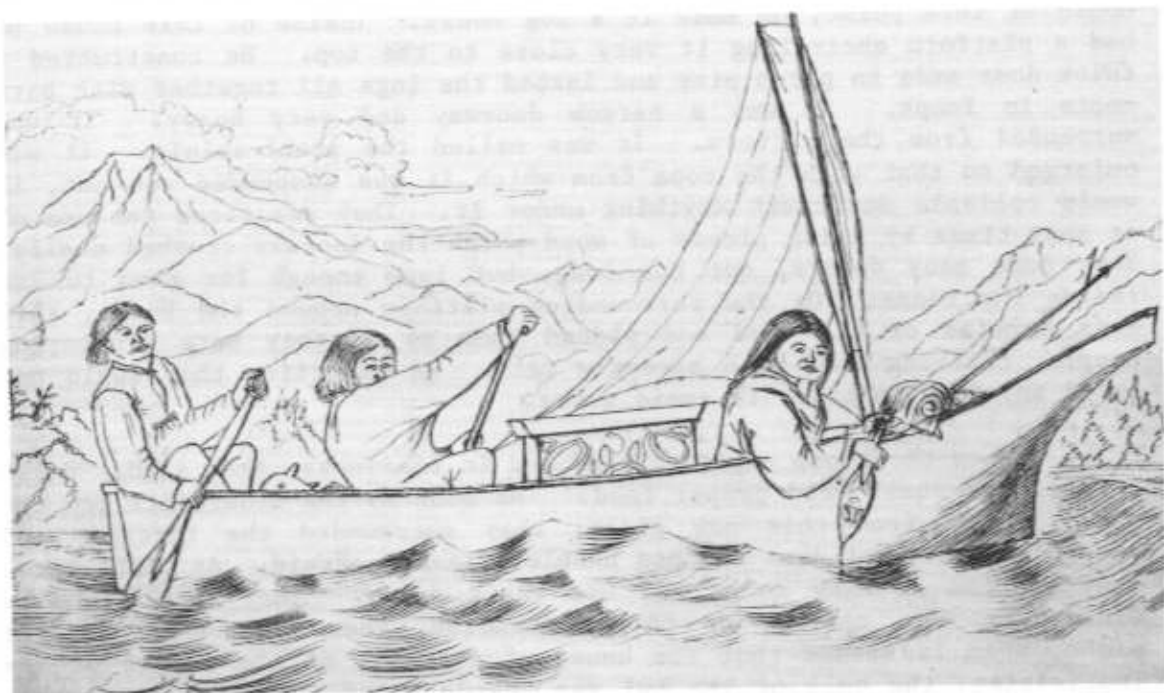
The following year, Aksk said, "We shall move now, down to the saltwater, to the coast." The family of Aksk had now grown to be brave warriors and able to overcome the grizzly. They took two canoes and lashed them together, making a raft on which they piled timber for the building of a house. They then came to a place on Kaen Island (Prince Rupert) and were going to build a village there (where the white beacon stands, and where the cemetery of Prince Rupert is). When he built his house at this point, he made it a log house. Inside of this house he had a platform encircling it very close to the top. He constructed a thick door made in pitch pine and lashed the logs all together with bark roots in loops. It was a narrow doorway and very heavy. It was suspended from the rafters. It was called the ptahl-skinis. It was enlarged so that when the rope from which it was suspended was cut, it would collapse and crush anything under it. They practiced the use of it many times by using pieces of wood which the doorway crushed easily. They made many spears, not too long, but long enough for them to use inside the house. On the surrounding platform around the house, they made dummies of old wood and placed them as if they were slumbering people, covering them with sleeping mats. At nighttime they would not build any fire in order to avoid smoke.

When the house was completed and in readiness, Aksk said, "Build a fire. We shall need proper food." As soon as the Gidarants saw the smoke coming from this new place, they surrounded the fortress and approached it. But Aksk and his people were not afraid. As night came, they started to sing songs and use their drums. They knew that the Gidarants were coming, or only pretending, they did not know. At night, when it seemed that the house of Aksk was at the height of its festivities, the call of the owl was heard at one corner of the house, "Hu hu, hu hu!" When the womenfolk were sent for water to the water hole, they took their torches of pitch, and when they got to the hole, they saw the reflection of the Gidarants who were hiding in the bushes. But they pretended not to see anything, and were shouting and laughing as if unconcerned.

When it was late at night, the people made pretense of going to rest, but they crawled from the sleeping platform up to the platform around the rafters. Then they imitated the noise of snoring, "Hox, hox, hox ..." The Gidarants then had crept up close to the house, and they

began to come into the house, one at a time. The Gidaránits were ready for an attack on what they thought was the sleeping people. Then the signal was given to release the trap door. It crushed many of the Gidaránits. Aksk then lit the torch which he had in readiness, and from their platform the besieged speared the Gidaránits, while the Gidaránits speared the dummies. The raiders tried to lift up the trap doorway, but were unable to escape. Aksk and his people killed many of the Tlingit. Those saved took flight and returned to their village. It is from that time that the Gidaránits have abandoned this territory and gone farther north. Aksk raised his trapdoor into position and removed the remains of the dead warriors and placed them outside to cremate. This incident is explained in the dirge song: "When the doorway of pitch pine was brought down by the chief, it put to flight the Gidaránits."

This dirge song of the Gitwilgoats is also used by Kamkagyigyani of the Gidzaxhiah!; they are related, having the same common origin as Aksk.



8. Drawing by Judge G. Swan about 1880 of Tsimshian traders in a sailing canoe. Smithsonian Institute photo 45,604-D



**THE CONTROVERSY BETWEEN THE NISHIKUMIK AND RAPLIGIDAHL**

Informant: Sam Bennett, (Nispins) Giludzo

Recorded by: William Beynon, 1952

At one time in the Giludzo tribe there were no men to take the position of chief, and a woman was the only lineal one in line for it. She was a woman of very strong character and to her death she was very firm. She never married. She also was held in high regard by the other tribes and she was wealthy. Her Tsimshian name as chief was Nishlkumik and her English name was Victoria Young. Her father was Rapligidahl, chief of the Gitando. Sometimes the head chief would be named Skagwait, at other times Rapligidahl.

Rapligidahl was going to give a feast and he had called upon his tribe for their contribution, and he also had invited his brother Legaix to assist him as he had done when Legaix had given his own feast. The chief Nishlkumik also had gone to the assistance of her father in recognition of her paternal origin. She was not duty-bound to do so, but she gained more prestige and increased the potlatch debt of her father's tribe, as that was returnable at some future time.

The Gitando now made preparations, and the chiefs were all invited and everything was already. The guests were all assembling for the feast. Then it was that the Giludzo came in with the wealth that was to be distributed. It was all piled up in the middle of the house. The names of all as they contributed was proclaimed, and by this the other tribes also learned the names of the headmen. When all was counted and properly apportioned for distribution to the guests, the first called was Wisaiks, chief of the Ginaxangik. Then came the Raven chief, Nishot and his Gidzaxlahl tribesmen; next, Nisyaranat and Kalksek, chiefs of the Gitsis, and their tribesmen Niswaxs and his Ginadoiks tribesmen; next Nishlaganos, chief of the Gitlan and Saxsaxt and Ligiyutgwatk, chiefs of the Gitwilgoats, and all their tribes.

The last to be called as guests were the Giludzo tribal chief and his own daughter, chief Nishlkumik. When they called Nishlkumik, they placed in front of her only small gifts. This angered the chief and her headmen, and she arose from where she sat, "Am I still child that I should be treated as a child?" So saying, she went out of the feast with her followers. This brought great embarrassment to him who had sought to take advantage, that the chief Nishlkumik was his own daughter and should have special consideration for him. But she stood on her own rights as a chief of a big tribe and wanted that consideration to be shown to her. She said, as she left the feast house, "All the Tsimshian tribes are in debt to the Giludzo, and they should recognize it, instead of treating the Giludzo as children."

Immediately after she had gone out there was great confusion. The feast could not go on, unless she returned. So the headmen of the Gitando were sent over to beg her to reconsider. Their spokesman,

Kamayam, said, "Chief Nishlkumik, your father the great chief of the Gitando is now in great sorrow and is humiliated. He recognizes his mistake and now wants to correct it. He lays this before you, so that you may listen to his humble plea." With that they put gifts in front of Nishlkumik. After a long while Nispins, spokesman for Nishlkumik, answered, "We will consider it, wise man, and then let you know our decision." For a long while nothing was said or done. Then another Gitando spokesman came over and said to her, "Chief, your father now waits for you, and all his guests await your return to his feast. He will not go on with it unless you return to the feast. He begs you to come back." Again the Giludzo headman spoke in reply, "We will consider everything you have said, wise man, and we will let you know." Four times the Gitando sent over their headmen to beg Nishlkumik to come back to the feast. It was then finally that Tsihl, the Wolf headman of the Giludzo who was actually the chief spokesman for chief Nishlkumik, a very arrogant speaker, turned to chief Nishlkumik, "Why do you act as a child? You have heard the voices of some very important men, yet you do not heed them. Who do you expect will have respect for you, when you show no respect for the wishes of others who are your equals? Get ready and we will go with you to your father's feast. Do not act as a baby. Tomorrow we will give a feast to wipe this away, so that not even a child would dare mention it." At that Nishlkumik arose and put on her ceremonial cloaks and went to her father's feast accompanied by her tribesmen.

No one referred to the incident, and everything went on as if nothing had happened. At the conclusion of the feast, the same Wolf Giludzo headman spoke, announcing, "Tomorrow my master Nishlkumik will try to entertain you." The people knew that this meant that she was giving a cleansing feast. That same night, chief Nishlkumik called together all her people and gave to each of her tribal people a gift, and to each of her headmen she gave a portion of the gifts which she had received from the Gitando. This was called tsap (to share with tribe). Then she said to her tribe, "Tribesmen, headmen, wisemen, chief ladies, I have called you together to let you know my feelings. You remember that yesterday I felt slighted and hurt. Perhaps I acted too hastily. I may have made myself ridiculous and seemingly like a child, instead of a responsible person. I now ask you what will be best for me to do, in order that I may again stand up before my equals. We are a proud people. But now I come to you for advice and guidance."

"Chief Nishlkumik, as long as you have guided the canoe of the Giludzo, we have all been proud of you, of your cleverness, your courage to meet any emergency. You have always put your own personal feelings to one side for our benefit. Now that was what happened yesterday, at your father's Xmas feast. You thought of us. You heard what the wise man said, last night, that you were going to entertain the headmen and chiefs of the Tsimshian nation. Now this we have committed ourselves to. We will cleanse off any taint that may be on you, and you will again stand among your equals without shame or fear of any ridicule." So said Nispins. "I know that whatever you want done, your people stand behind you."

There was further discussion and then the headman Tsihl spoke, "Well, we are all agreed that the chief will call together all the Tsimshian chiefs and their headmen, and we will entertain them and show to them our disregard for wealth. We will show them that we are not a poor people in our lavishness. Your people now are ready to assist you, so that you will be able to hold your head among your fellow chiefs. It is the privilege of the headmen to advise a chief and to caution their chief in doing what is right, just as it is your duty to caution us when we do wrong, to lead us with honour among the tribes. So this will you do."

Next day, canoes were sent to sing and invite the various chiefs, and their headmen. As the canoe came below the different chiefs' houses, the Giludzo sang their paddle song. Then the steersman called out the name of the invited chief, also the names of his headmen who would accompany him. Each canoe was to go on to certain chiefs. The guest of honour was the Gitando chief Rapligidahl. He came accompanied with his headmen, and then the other chiefs came in order of their being invited. When all had come in, Nishlkumik danced in front of all the guests, at the same time showering eagle down upon all of the guests. Then she danced about three times. When she had completed this, one of the headmen of the Giludzo called out, "Sit very patiently, chiefs! My master Nishlkumik has taken this time to try and make you all happy, as happiness has descended upon the Giludzo tribe, and my master wishes to share it with you all." Then another headman called out to the Giludzo chief, "What are you going to do for your guests, Nishlkumik? They have been waiting patiently for a long while." "I am here, chiefs, I am here!" replied Nishlkumik, bringing in some wealth while her nephews and nieces and slave women brought in much more. After them, all her tribesmen came together with members of their household, each one of them announcing who they were and each of the contributors. When this was finished then those who married Killer Whale men or women acknowledged their spouse's origin. And last, those that were of Killer Whale paternal origin. There was now an immense pile of wealth which in those times consisted mostly of blankets. For the guest of honour there was a huge copper shield, which had been brought from the Nass and given in compensation for the killing of Temnunx, a Giludzo prince. All of the chiefs received large gifts, and then the Giludzo began their taunting song, which is permissible on occasions of this kind.

"The Big Grizzly is barely able to crawl with its back pack, in front of the big Eagle, in front of the Wolf, in front of the big Bear, to where the big Bullhead is swimming about."

This was taken as a taunt. It was sung while each chief was called out, according to his clan.

There were good feelings restored between the Giludzo and the Gitando. Some say that the affair was prearranged, so that the Giludzo could show off their wealth and that actually there never had been any hard feelings between the two tribes.

**THE ORIGIN OF NISWAXS AMONG THE GINADOIKS**

Informant: James Lewis (Gaitkwa) Kitkatla

Recorded by: William Beynon, 1947-1948

There was considerable jealousy among the Kitkatla chiefs as to their rights and privileges in their tribes. Tsibasa, the head chief, expected every one of his tribesmen to give him one seal as a tribute, while Hale had as his tribute one sea otter from each group of sea otter hunters. Should any of the hunters fail to give Tsibasa his tribute, he would enslave them in his House and they would have to be redeemed by their relatives. Before being liberated, they were subjected to many indignities. Especially the elder Tsibasa was a terrible tyrant, and for the most trivial reasons he would enslave sometimes a leading chief. The people began to fear him greatly, and soon there were plots among them. They wanted to do away with him. He did not hesitate to kill anyone who stood in his way.

One day, an old headman named Ahaw was sitting and sunning himself at the top of the pathway which skirted the bank and was very steep. He was almost asleep. Tsibasa, coming along, found his pathway obstructed. So he took hold of the old man and threw him down the embankment, saying, "Who are you that you block my trail?" This further increased the anger of the Kitkatla, and the family of Tsibasa was greatly embarrassed. After every similar occurrence, the family would pay compensation in a public feast to which all of the chief's own immediate relatives would contribute, to compensate the aggrieved ones. Presents were also made to all the other guests, so that everything might be forgotten. When the slighted ones only suffered indignities, the feast was called iyawkse. But if a life was lost, this brought about a more serious situation. The payment of compensation from the aggressor to the victim was termed ksis. These events were becoming too frequent for Tsibasa's House, and the Kitkatla had more than once insinuated that they were going to do away with this tyrant chief whose infamy had become too well known to the other villages, to the embarrassment of the Kitkatla. So Tsibasa's family gathered together, and Niswaxs, a younger nephew, spoke, "It is well that we should remove our uncle. Not only is he impoverishing us, but he is getting us into a state where we will soon have to go away and leave him to his fate. He is making us ashamed. Soon someone outside may murder him, which is bound to cause fighting among ourselves in the tribe and possibly a flight on our part. The people hate him. If we ourselves do away with him, it will save us much compensation to pay, and we would reestablish ourselves among our people. I will volunteer to dispose of the tyrant myself." So it was secretly agreed that Tsibasa was to be done away with, and his own nephew Niswaxs, was to do the work. Only a few of the immediate nephews knew of these plots and one or two of the main chiefs, and these kept the secret to themselves.

One day, Tsibasa, while in anger for being slighted as he claimed, attacked a small grandson; this gave Niswaxs, his nephew, the opportunity he had been waiting for. He took his spear and killed Tsibasa. The Kitkatla people were dumb with surprise, and only because it was his own nephew who had murdered him prevented them from taking any action at once. Some of the Killer Whale headmen of the same clan, as well as chiefs, were angered. They were those who had not been in the plot to do away with their chief. When they were told, many became even more bitterly angered. For his own safety, Niswaxs, with some of his immediate family, went away to his various camps nearby. But even here he always was afraid of a surprise revenge and was in constant fear, and kept moving from one hunting ground to another. Finally his Tsimshian wife, who was a Wolf woman of the House of Nistelax, chief of the Ginadoiks, became very tired of this constant fear of being attacked. She said to her husband, "It will be well that we go to my uncle's people. There we will be safe from any attack. Besides it will be safe for your children among their own people."

For a long while Niswaxs waited, and one day a canoe came to the camp where he was. In it were two of his nephews who had stayed behind, and they came to him, "Your people are further angered, and many are urging a revenge, and now plots are being made to surprise you in retaliation. So be prepared! The whole village is troubled and excited. So we have come to warn you." They went away and again Niswaxs went to another hiding place. Finally he said to his family, "It is well that we leave here and go to your mother's people. There we will have the protection of her people." So preparations were made for the flight to the Tsimshian country, which was then at Metlakatla. After several days of paddling, they landed at the Ginadoiks village, below the House of chief Nistelax, who at once brought up his niece and her husband to his household. "Come, my son-in-law, stay with me, I have heard how your people have treated you. You have your own people here, Nislout of the Killer Whale, so you will not feel as a stranger among us." Thus Niswaxs came to the Ginadoiks, which up to that time only consisted of the Raven and Wolf people. Only these had established hunting territories. Nislout, who had migrated into the Ginadoiks was also of Kitkatla origin and had married into the Raven House of Kalksedepsxat of Ginadoiks and was given the privilege of going to the hunting and fishing grounds of his brother-in-law. He was an accepted Ginadoiks headman.

Now that Niswaxs was among the Ginadoiks and was known as an exceptionally strong leader, he was made a chief of the Ginadoiks. He was given the privilege of using any of the hunting grounds of this tribe, on the Ginadoiks River and on the Skeena River. In turn, many of the nieces and nephews moved to live with him, thus established more firmly his House among the Ginadoiks tribe.

**THE BELLA BELLA ORIGIN OF LEGAIX**

Informant: John Tate (Salaben) Gispaxloats

Recorded by: William Beynon, 1952

During the seasons of the year, it was the way of the Tsimshian tribes to go to their various villages to gather the seasonal foods. The first was the eulachon, during our months of March, April, and May. Not everybody would go. Some of each tribe remained to gather herring spawn, and they traded it with those who were engaged in eulachon fishing. The salmon was the next seasonal food to be gathered, and berries at the same time. For this the people had their salmon villages and berry-picking grounds on the Skeena River. From the Canyon to the mouth of this river were the villages of the Tsimshian tribes.

It was while the Gispaxloats were at their salmon village that a surprise attack was made on them, at a time when all the men and warriors were on a raid on the upper Skeena. There was no stopping the attacking Kitimat. Among those taken was the Gispaxloats chief's sister, a very beautiful woman. As soon as the raiding Kitimat chief saw her, he took her for his own wife. After the woman had arrived at Kitimat, a surprise attack was made on this village by the Bella Bella tribes. Again this beautiful Gispaxloats woman was taken captive. This time it was Hantsit, the Raven chief, who had led the Bella Bella warriors who saw and captured her. She became the wife of this chief and soon a son was born to them. The Bella Bella chief was very proud of his son, who was to grow into a very clever boy.

His father taught him all the knowledge of hunting and warfare and the use of weapons. As soon as he grew up he was the foremost in all games and always the winner of all competitions. The chief, his father, had named him Legaix, and his successes made him the enemy of the other boys of Bella Bella. Finally one day, while the young Bella Bella were playing a stone throwing game, the young Legaix easily overcame the competitors. This so angered them that one of them said, "How is it, that this youth of unknown origin is so clever?" Legaix heard this and went to his mother, and said, "Why do the other boys refer to me as of unknown origin?" For a long while, the woman did not reply. Then she said, "They are right, we are aliens here. We do not belong to these people. Your uncles have a great country up north, and are great leaders. We must return to our own people. We are aliens here."

When she met her husband, she said, "It is now time that my son and myself should return to our own people, as your son is the object of taunts that are embarrassing him. No good can come of it." The husband did not reply for a long while. Finally he said, "What you say is true. But let me first finish the training of my son. Then I shall take back both of you to your own country. I will teach him of the

secret societies and powers, so that he may be more clever than any of his fellow chiefs, and I will give him many weapons that he will use in warfare. He shall be the leader of his uncle's people." He began to make preparations to return his son and wife to their own people. He had a large canoe especially made and he chose as a guide several Tsimshian, one a slave, another was married to a Bella Bella woman.

He sent these men back to their own country, to accompany his son and his son's mother, just before the season of the eulachon when the people at Metlakatla would be making preparations to go to the Nass. The Gispaxloats people saw approaching their village at Metlakatla, several canoes which they recognized as being Bella Bella. They went down to greet them. While these two canoes were approaching, they heard the singing in Tsimshian. It was one of the paddle songs of the Gispaxloats chief. Immediately the Gispaxloats chief hastened down to the beach and behold! His sister was in the canoe, one who they had mourned as being dead. There was great happiness in the village when they saw the woman and her son, and the other Tsimshian people who had accompanied them. A great feast was given by the chief Niswamak, who, in this feast, exhibited the different new crests that his nephew had brought him. He also announced the nephew's name as Legaix, who would be his successor. Then a great quantity of wealth was distributed to the guests, who were the chiefs of their households and spokesmen from all the other Tsimshian tribes.

The young Legaix soon became a leader and was very clever. After his uncle Niswamak died, he was his successor as chief of the Gispaxloats. He assumed the name of his uncle and said, "I will wear my own garments together with those of my uncle." He soon became known by his own name and was the outstanding leader, not only of the Gispaxloats, but during any war raids in which the warriors from all the different tribes took place, he was always the leader. He became very powerful and created many enemies among his own Tsimshian people. Soon a plot was being made against his life, by his own tribe. "Legaix is not only becoming too powerful, but he also has no regard for anybody. He is too arrogant among his fellow chiefs and has embarrassed the tribe many times."

While this was being planned, a niece of Legaix was married to one of the plotters, who had planned to do away with Legaix as he would be en route to the Nass River for eulachon fishing. They would wreck his canoe and drown him, making it appear as an accident. Preparations were made. The niece of Legaix, knowing all the plans, got some food ready and then said to her husband, "I am taking this, my uncle's favourite food, to him. I am the only one who knows how to prepare it." Thus she averted suspicion from the conspirators. When the woman came to her uncle's house she said to him, "I have brought you some of your favorite food which I have made ready myself." She took it to where he sat, at the rear of his house, while the others were busily engaged. She sat close by and began in a loud voice, "I have come to

warn you. They are plotting to do away with you while en route to the Nass River. So be very careful. It is your own people that are doing this."

When Legaix heard it, he began planning how to overcome these conspirators. Suddenly, a thought occurred to him, and he called out his chief spokesman, "Kawela, come here! I want to discuss with you something which I think very important. In order to show to all my people and all the other Tsimshian that I control not only the Skeena River, but also the Nass, I am going to paint my picture on the sides of the cliff at Ktsiyamxl, now known as Ten Mile Point. This will show that I control this river, as well as knowing that I control the Nass." So he got one of his own craftsmen and had him prepare a way by which he could be lowered down, so as to paint a design to represent him and twelve of his most important copper shields. These each had a name, having been acquired from the Stikine, the Haida, the Tlingit of Kake village, the Chilkats, and from many other sources. He had also many other of these copper shields of lesser value and importance. So he went away with only his very select and trustworthy men. Only he and they knew what he planned, and it was done with the greatest of secrecy. Legaix confided only with his trusted head men Xloop and Kawela, both of whom were clansmen of the Eagle. They took an artist, who was Nishalupes, also Laskik. With only a very few they set out for the Nass, where Legaix had let it be known that he was going after some mountain goat.

When they got to the place where he had chosen to be the place to paint his picture, he and his men climbed to the top of the cliff, and getting a very strong wicker-like basket, they lowered the man down in the basket. When he was at the right spot, he began his painting of a face which was to symbolize Legaix and the twelve copper shields, each of which had a name and were very valuable. There were many countries where these came from, and Legaix had traded many slaves and many moose hides for these shields.

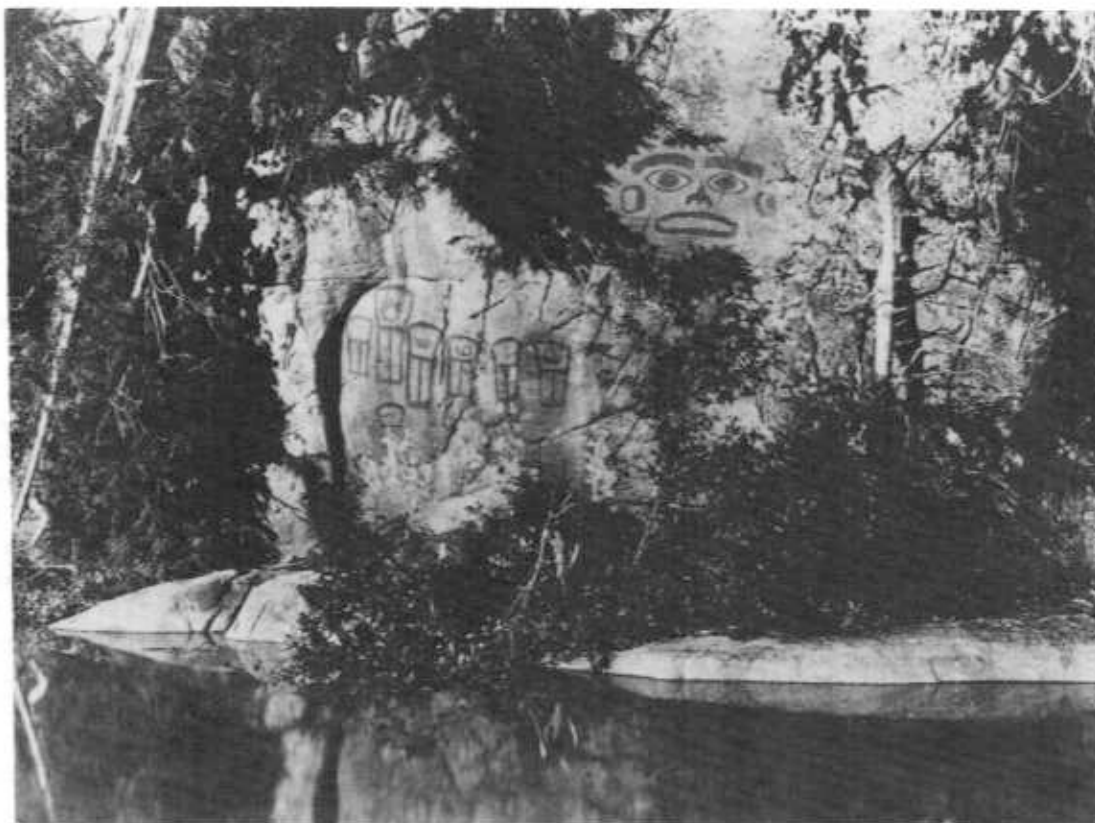
When the painting was completed and in order that none would become suspicious, Legaix sent several hunters to hunt mountain goat, and when these came back, he at once returned to his village at Metlakatla. It was now approaching the time when the Tsimshian would leave for the eulachon fishing on the Nass, then Legaix called his tribe together. "I will give a feast to all the Tsimshian and Kitkatla people en route to the Nass. You all gather at Miyahlaw, as I want you to be ready to entertain them." There was no word as yet given to anyone regarding the painting, and only a very select few knew of it.

The secret was well kept. The Gispaxloats went on ahead, after having sent out inviting messengers to all the tribes. Many of these already knew of the conspiracy to do away with Legaix, and although he was aware of it, and who they were, he pretended not to know anything. The conspirators did not have a chance to get near him while en route to



the Nass camp. The Gispaxloats landed at Miyanhlaw, which was about a half mile from the high cliff on which the painting had been made. Soon the Gispaxloats began to prepare for their guests who would be following. They were all ready when the Tsimshian tribes arrived together, as did the Kitkatla and Kikiata people. After they had gathered together, Legaix spoke, as food had been distributed. Gifts were given, many of which were supplied by Legaix himself.

Then he spoke. "Chiefs, chiefs, and princes and chief women, and all the great spokesmen for the chiefs, and tribesmen of the chiefs! I have acquired greater power, now that my face is painted on the walls of the cliff which you will see as you go past (and he pointed to the cliff). This is to signify that I control these waters. Even though there are those among my own tribe who are trying to overcome me and belittle me, I can still overcome them. This place will be known from now as 'The picture place of Legaix.' It also shows my wealth. Who among these, who are trying to destroy me, can claim an equal amount of wealth? Come, let him or they come forward and show it at this time." All the guest chiefs responded, and acknowledged the power of Legaix and his right to name this place as Wel-gilktrah-tamkl (Place-of-painting-of Legaix). It is the name of this place to this day. Thus it was that Legaix overcame his enemies and put them to great shame.



9. Rock painting at the mouth of the Skeena River which commemorates Chief Legaix's trade monopoly in the area. National Museums of Canada photo 64381

## REVENGE OF LEGAIX UPON THE HAIDA

Informants: Jos. Morrison & Mrs. McKay, Nishga  
Recorded by: William Beynon, 1927

Legaix had just been raised to his position as high chief, and he was only a young man. This was long before the white man came, and they were living in their village on the Skeena. One day, they ran short of seaweed and grease. They needed the grease for preserving the wild crab apples. So Legaix with a few of his companions went down the river to Metlakatla, to their cache and to get a supply and bring it up the river. When they arrived at Txamax, now Horsay Island, they saw in the distance a large fleet of canoes coming up through the slough of the river. They knew that these were raiders who would attack them. So they hid at the mouth of a small creek. Legaix said to his companions, "You go and save yourselves, I will stay here." He was too proud to run away from the raiders. It would have been a disgrace. So he sat in the canoe, and the Haida raiders, coming up to him, recognized him, took him on board as a captive, and went back home. The Gispaxloats fugitives followed the river course upwards, until they reached the Gitwilgoats village at Kiyaks. Here they borrowed a canoe and went on up the river until they arrived at their own village. They told their tribesmen that Legaix was gone and had been captured by the Haida.

The Gispaxloats, now without Legaix, turned to Niswamak, the sub-headchief, and he in turn called all the councillors together. They planned to get ready to go and attack. Word was sent to Kitselas and to the chiefs of each clan, and to all the other Tsimshian. The Gispaxloats engaged a canoe maker to build a huge canoe. It took one year in which to finish the canoe at Kmillen. When it was complete, a message was sent to the chiefs that had promised to assist the Gispaxloats, and these all gathered at the Gispaxloats village. Then word was dispatched to the Ginaxangik chief for one of their men to act as a guide. For this service he was to receive in payment ten moose skins.

When the Ginaxangik heard this the messenger said, "No, we cannot help you as we are related to the Haida." Then the messenger went back and said to Niswamak, "They will not help us." He was angered and said, "Alright, I shall not forget this." Messengers were then sent to the Gitwilgoats, to ask for the same service as guides across to the island. But the answer was the same. The Gispaxloats men were angry, and they said, "We shall go over without them, and we shall show them that not only they, but ourselves too, know the Haida." The Gitwilgoats and the Ginaxangik lived on the coast and traded a great deal with the Haida. They were better acquainted with the Haida country. That was why the Gispaxloats wanted them as guides.

The Gispaxloats travelled down the river, and when they came opposite the village of the Gitwilgoats, these villagers called out to them, "You poor people, remember us, and bring us over Suxaons, the noted Haida warrior." This was a taunt. The Gispaxloats were just about to put over in the direction of the Haida when, in the distance among some islands, they saw a canoe with three men in it. They surrounded the canoe and recognized a Gitwilgoats man. The Gispaxloats took him into their large canoe. Niswamak said to him, "We will take you and you will show us the way to the Haida village, and we will pay you ten moose skins."

The man, seeing no way out of it, consented. So they sent the man's two companions back to the Gitwilgoats village. The Gitwilgoats man knew all about the winds. He led the party to an island, and here they lay for four days, waiting for a chance to get across. On the fourth day the Gitwilgoats guide saw by the clouds that the next day would be a fine day. So he said, "Tomorrow, we will go across." When they got the canoes together, they tied them one after the other with cedar bark ropes. The canoemen were all blindfolded, as it was the rule that all those passing over strange open waters for the first time must blindfold themselves for the weather to remain calm. So they set out, and when they came in sight of land, the Gitwilgoats guide said, "Oh my, dirt has got into my eye." This meant that he could see land. The paddlers worked harder than before and when they were very close to where they were going, the pilot turned the canoe towards the open sea and said, "Take off the covers from your eyes. We are now close to shore."

The men took off the covers, and when they looked ahead, they could see nothing. Thinking that the Gitwilgoats guide was making sport of them, they were going to scold him, when he said, "Look behind you!" They saw that they were at the shore. The pilot pointed out the place where they would land and stay. Then he pointed in another direction saying, "There is the camp of the men who have taken Legaix." When the Gispaxloats knew where they were, they landed and made houses out of their mats.

After they had made camp, they sent two men who were to go near the Haida camp to entice the Haida and draw their attention, and, if possible, to have them chase them. When they were close to the Haida camp, the Haida noticed that it was a strange canoe, possibly of sea otter hunters who had lost their way. They set out after them and shot arrows after them. Many canoes chased them. They came past where the Gispaxloats and other warriors were, and these went out to meet the Haida. All the warriors were dressed to represent whichever clan they belonged to. A Wolf would have on a costume representing a wolf, and likewise with others. They were all dancing on the beach. This attracted the attention of the Haida, who stood off shore in their canoes watching this performance. They did not see the other party of

Gispaxloats who had gone up into the hills and to the back of the village, to set fire to the houses and kill many and take the women captives. The others attacked the Haida in the canoes and wounded Suxaons, the noted Haida warrior, and took him as a captive. They found Legaix and liberated him.

The Gispaxloats returned with their captives to the Skeena. When they came to the Gitwilgoats village, remembering the taunt they received here, Gitxawn stood up in his canoe and broke a copper shield in defiance to the Gitwilgoats. They proceeded up the river to their own village.

When the following spring the Gispaxloats people went to the Nass for eulachon fishing, they attended a feast given by the Nishga. There a huge amount of dried crab apples was given the Haida captive Suxaons. Eating too much of this, he died, and was buried as a chief, not as a captive.



10. Tsimshian trading canoe on the Skeena River. W. Wrathall photo, Public Archives of Canada.

**WHEN LEGAIX'S MOTHER WAS MADE A CAPTIVE**

Informant: Heber Clifton, Hartley Bay

Recorded by: William Beynon, 1952

Legaix was a most ferocious warrior and he had no respect or feeling for anybody, just like his Eagle warriors, mostly all Gispaxloats. He was dreaded by all. Women from other tribes used his name in their nursery songs to instill fear into their children. The Legaix warriors were a vicious group.

In one raid on the Bella Bella they exterminated a small village at Klemtu. On their way to the main village of the Bella Bella at a creek divided into many branches at the mouth, the people were just about ready to go to their various fishing stations. Klemtu was one belonging to Nislaws, a Tsimshian from Gidestsu, and a Raven chief named Wakas from Bella Bella. At Klemtu, was the young nephew of Wakas and his wife. The Gispaxloats warriors led by Legaix came upon the Bella Bella village and razed it completely, and took many captives mostly women and children. The salmon fishing had just started, and many of the Bella Bella men were away, so that Legaix and his Gispaxloats warriors had a very easy victory, and they escaped before word could be sent to the nearby Bella Bella tribes.

When they were returning, the Gispaxloats went by another route that led them right by the Klemtu camp, and here they came upon the young Bella Bella prince and his wife. They took the prince captive and they led the young woman down to the canoes. She was near dead. The warriors, fearing she would die, stopped off at one islet. There they put her and her husband off to care for her. Among the Gispaxloats was a Wolf man who recognized the woman as a clanswoman of his. He took a robe and some food and then left the two on this pinnacle with hardly any shelter. These two stayed there for many days, the woman gradually regaining a little strength.

It so happened there were several Bella Bella canoes passing by with people who had been visiting relatives at Kitimat. They came upon the prince and his wife, and they told these people what had happened there. But for what the Wolf man had done, they would have perished. When they all landed at the razed village of the Bella Bella, there was a great deal of grief there, as the people thought the prince and his wife were lost. When they saw them, their uncle Wakas and his brother Humdzit were in great temper. Humdzit in his anger bit his arm, saying, "I will retaliate, and Legaix will be made to feel as I do now." That fall when all the work was done, Humdzit sent out a call to all his fellow Kwakuhl chiefs, to rally at Wagalise and to make plans of retaliation upon Legaix and his Gispaxloats warriors. His messengers went to the Bella Coola and even to Rivers Inlet. When these messengers arrived at Wagalise, Wakas spoke, "Chiefs, brothers, warriors, I will

tell you what has happened to us, and we are now in great sorrow, as many of our people have been enslaved by the tyrant Legaix and his Tsimshian warriors. They humiliated our prince and his wife, and I am asking your help, so that we may overcome this terror and retaliate. Now I am calling, who is the man to be the leader, who will come forward and drink this, and who will take my niece as his wife?"

The first one tried to empty the immense ceremonial spoon full of eulachon grease, but he was unable to do it. He gave it up, and one after another did likewise. Finally one man, a great Ligimiu warrior came forward, "Give me the measure. I will finish it." The chief gave him the huge ceremonial spoon, and he drank the whole contents down. Wakas said, "You will be the leader, and you will marry my niece. She has been in demand by many foreign chiefs who have desired to marry her, but I have refused them all."

With the leadership of the retaliation invasion of the Tsimshian chosen, it was planned to go next spring. As soon as the first spring salmon arrived, they would set out. There was among them a Tsimshian who had married a Bella Bella woman, and he would act as their guide up the Skeena River. He would take them to Legaix's village on the Skeena River, where he would be at that time. The Bella Bella warriors were 'making their days' by bathing in devil's club juice. When all was ready they set off, their long hair tied in knots on the top of their heads, which was a sign of war. Wakas said, "Remember the man who helped the prince, and do not harm either him or his family." He had not forgotten the Wolf man, and he did not want any harm to come to him.

When the Bella Bella arrived at the Skeena, they waited until nighttime and then went slowly up the river, passing first the Gitsis village, then the Gitwilgoats village, then the Ginadoiks. Then daylight began to appear, so the war raiders hid their canoes and took to the woods. When it became night, they again set off, passing the Ginaxangik, Gilodza, Gitlan, and Gitando villages. Day was just breaking when they came to the Gispaxloats village. It so happened that most of the Gispaxloats were away up to Kitselas at a big feast given by Nistaxok. A few had remained behind, and among those was the mother of Legaix and her daughter, who was a very young woman.

The Bella Bella attacked, taking the village by complete surprise. They burnt the village and took many captives; and as they were leaving they caught Legaix's mother, stripped her garments off her, ravished her, and then bound her to a small tree. This was to retaliate for the treatment that the young Bella Bella woman had received from the Gispaxloats. Wakas asked, "Are there any relatives of Nisments, the Wolf here?" Some of the captives identified themselves as being relatives. The Bella Bella chief turned them loose, and left immediately. They went down the river, their important prisoner being the sister of Legaix. There were also many other important ones among the captives, and the Bella Bella were well satisfied with the raid. They inflicted grave indignities against the person of Legaix's mother.

They managed to get past all of the other Tsimshian villages without being seen, and they headed at once for the mouth of the Skeena, then to their own village. While en route, a large war party of Haida came upon them very unexpectedly, and the Bella Bella took to flight, being outnumbered. They tried to escape. Their canoes were much lighter than the large Haida ones and many got away; but some Bella Bella canoes were taken. Among these were the one of chief Wakas and also Legaix's sister who was Diks, also some other Gispaxloats captives. The Bella Bella were very distressed, although they had overcome the Gispaxloats and retaliated for the indignities that Legaix's warriors had inflicted on them, they were overcome by these Haida raiders. They fully expected that Legaix would know it was Wakas and his people who had raided his village and would attack them in their weakened condition; or they might even come to redeem the Tsimshian captives. Some of them were gone, and their own chief was a captive of the Haida. So were many of the Gispaxloats captives. Soon they arrived at their village, and when the rest of the Bella Bella people heard what had happened, they were very sad, and there was deep mourning.

There was also much grief and anguish at the Gispaxloats village; Legaix and his tribesmen returned and were at a loss seeing the way their village had been destroyed, and discovering Legaix's mother and sister had been ravished. The young warriors were for immediate reprisal, to catch them before they had time to settle down at their village. But the older men were in control and one aged councillor said, "Chief, my master, and all the Gispaxloats tribe, before you do it, carefully consider everything that has already been done. You attacked the Bella Bella, and did it so many times. They have retaliated. You have been paid back and it is equalized. This leaves the road clear just to redeem those that have been captured, and to have a feast at the Bella Bella village. Then there will be no further bloodshed. Consider these things carefully before you do anything rash."

The chief and people did not say anything for a long while. Finally Legaix spoke, "What the wiseman has said is right. We might retaliate, and it would only bring another war upon us. I agree with the words of our wiseman Welkawset. We will prepare to do as he has suggested and redeem those that have been taken captive." Legaix and his tribe began to gather together their wealth. Then, having repaired the damage that had been done, they made preparations to go and redeem their people from captivity.

They set off to go to the Bella Bella village with their canoes loaded with wealth, with which to redeem their people. As they approached the village singing their peace songs, they heard the singing of dirges from the Bella Bella village, and they were met as in great grief and were led up to the chief Humdzit, who spoke, "Chief Legaix, we are in mourning, as a great disaster has fallen on us. Our party was attacked by the Haida and many of our people including Wakas, our chief,

and many of your people were also taken, including your sister. There is great mourning, and now that you have come singing your peace songs, we do not have the princess, your sister and the others that came with her." Then there was great grief, and Legaix said, "I will invade the Haida country and take what belongs to me. I will be revenged."

Legaix returned to his own country, and there he called in help from all the Tsimshian warriors. He told them, "We are going to show the Haida that we will not be ridiculed and that we are a proud people. We will not be slaves to any of those people with obscure origin, who dare to insult us, to try and belittle us. We will show them our strength." So all of the Tsimshian warriors began to come forward, to join with Legaix's invasion of the Gihlgayu Haida at Skidegate. There was among the Gitwilgoats a Haida who had married a woman of that tribe, and this man was to guide the party.

When all were ready, they set off for the Haida country. Also to guide them there was a Kitkatla man, who had lived a long while at Skidegate and was familiar with all the Haida country. Among the weapons that Legaix was using was a new kind of an arrow which he had obtained from the Hagwilget people from the Upper Skeena River. This was made from the saskatoon berry tree. It was a very hard wood arrow shaft and could be sharpened to a fine penetrating point. It was the first time that this type of arrow had ever been used on the sea coast. The Gispaxloats raiders came upon a small party of Haida, a long ways from Skidegate. The Tsimshian were in hiding, and they shot at these Haida. A number were killed, but some escaped and they took some of these arrows along with them, in order to discover who were the people who had attacked them. When they got to their village, they showed these arrows, but nobody could identify them.

Legaix's sister saw them and knew at once these were the arrows used by her brother. He must be nearby. She looked at the arrows and told the Haida, "These belong to a very ferocious interior people. When my tribe see these, they flee for safety. These up-river people make themselves invisible at times and strike when least expected. Not only are they cruel, but they are also cannibals." She thus caused the Haida a great deal of anxiety and worry. The Skidegate did not know what to do.

That night the Tsimshian scouts went on ahead and studied the country for an attack. They stayed behind the houses and found how to approach. Next they went to the water hole, and here they awaited the arrival of the Tsimshian women, whom they knew were here and would soon come to get water for their Haida masters. They came just when it was getting to be dusk, and now the scout said to them, "Tomorrow night when you hear the owls hooting at each end of the village, you must run out of the houses and go down to the beach and board the canoes." The captive women also gave more information to the Gispaxloats scouts. The Haida had posted some of their warriors to watch and to give warnings of



any sudden approach. These women knew where these sentinels were posted and told the scout so that, next day, the scouts came upon where these were posted and killed them. That night, they led the Gispaxloats to their position. At the time when all were ready, the owl hooted from each end of the village. The Gispaxloats attacked. All the Tsimshian captives had been warned, and they had gone down the beach to the waiting canoes. The Tsimshian took many captives, as well as those of the Bella Bella. These they did not treat as captives, as they were at peace with the Bella Bella, and it was through them that they knew what had happened to Legaix's sister.

The Gispaxloats returned to the Skeena River, and the next fall, they set out for the Bella Bella village, as Legaix wanted the friendship of Wakas, whom he had rescued from the Haida. He also knew that he would receive an immense amount of wealth, both for himself and his tribe. So they set out. While still a short way off the village, they began to sing their paddle song. The Bella Bella came down the shore, and they saw among the Gispaxloats their chief Wakas and many of their tribesmen. These were dressed in ceremonial garb and were not captives, but were treated with respect. They led Legaix and the Tsimshian and all of them to the house of Humdzit, the brother of Wakas.

Humdzit gave a reception dance and scattered eagle down on the heads of Legaix and his party. When all was finished, the spokesman for Legaix addressed Humdzit and his tribesmen. The spokesman for Legaix was originally from Gidestsu and could use both Tsimshian and Bella Bella tongues. He spoke for Legaix, "Chief Humdzit and all the people of Bella Bella, my master has been happy today to see the dark cloud lifted from above your village. You can sleep in peace, now that your brother has returned from among the Haida, and there has been no harm to any of your people. The chief Legaix has been worried and could not rest until he had brought your brother to you together with those that went with him to the Haida. Now that he has come safely to you, we will all feel happy again. Legaix had just completed his journey, having gone to the Haida to recover his sister and to punish the Haida for their rash and thoughtless acts. He feels that he has been avenged and he has been able to recover all his people, as well as the chief Wakas and his companions. We have not always been as we are now. There were times when we thought that the only thing that could bring to either you or us complete happiness, was to destroy each other. But now we can sit down together and share each other's sorrow and happiness. Legaix, my master, knows that had you gone to the Haida first, you would have done the same to him as he has to you. This day, that is why we are all happy, there will be joy in many Houses, as there was in Legaix's House when he returned from the Haida country. This is as much as my master can say at this time."

Before the chief Humdzit could reply, the Bella Bella began singing their lament song, expressing their feelings that they could not have gone with Legaix when he went to the Haida. Then Humdzit said,

"Chief Legaix, my son, we know you and you know us, and this is the way it should be at all times. We should know each other better and have closer relationships with each other. Today, you and your people have lifted a great darkness from us and we are now able to look about us comforted, in the knowledge that no one has been injured, and also you have been able to avenge your feelings by punishing the Haida and have recovered all your own people. Now acts like this cannot be forgotten. My people are also a proud people. They will recognize this great thing you have done for them. So I ask you to be patient, my son Legaix! Be patient, my people will endeavour to compensate you for the great kindness you have done them in not forgetting the land of your father. So be patient, my son Legaix!"

Then Humdzit spoke to his own people, "What are you going to do to compensate my son for what he has done for me and for you? Kindness is never forgotten." When he said this, his people began to leave the festival house. Then one of them returned with his family all laden with various wealth items such as fur robes, furs, power objects, and masks and every form of wealth. He called out, "This is I, my master! This is my humble effort to satisfy the feelings of your son, the great Legaix." One after another came, each laden with wealth, as well as their relatives. Then came chief Humdzit and his brother Wakas, dressed in their dancing garments. They brought in valuable powers, dancing masks, dancing robes, and dancing hats. As they stepped in, the Bella Bella again began singing a song, in which they praised the war virtues of their chiefs and the wars that they had won. There was an immense pile of wealth, and robes, powers, and everything that was of value. The Bella Bella began to distribute this to Legaix and to each of the Tsimshian who were with him. Along with the gifts were canoes and many painted boxes which were filled with food. When all festivities were over, Legaix and all his people returned to the Skeena village. There Legaix called together all the warriors who had accompanied him to the Haida country and distributed to them a portion of the wealth he had received from the Bella Bella. Then everything was settled.

Came the eulachon season, and all of the Tsimshian then moved to the Nass River, and everyone was busily engaged in catching and processing eulachon. One day, approaching where the Gispaxloats village was on the Nass, could be seen many large Haida canoes. As they drew close to the Gispaxloats village, the people could hear them singing, and they knew this to be Kawagani songs. They arrived below the Gispaxloats village, and there they stayed. Soon Legaix's headmen came down attired in their dancing robes and met the Haida, and the drum began beating in Legaix's house. This was where the Haida were led. They began to make proposals to redeem the captives that Legaix had taken in his Haida raid. There was again a great exchange of wealth and canoes to redeem the captives taken by Legaix. In this way another invasion was stopped. The Haida realized they had to come every year to the Nass, to get eulachon and grease, by trading, so that a war with the Tsimshian was not advantageous.



11. The treacherous whirlpools of the Kitselas Canyon on the Skeena River by which all trading canoes had to pass. Each whirlpool contained a supernatural water spirit that could eat canoes. National Museums of Canada photo 70373.

## GISPAXLOATS INVASIONS OF THE BELLA BELLA

Informant: John Tate, (Salaben), Gispaxloats

Recorded by: William Beynon, 1950

The Gispaxloats tribe lived on the Skeena River, at their village of the Ksemrot River known as the Zimacord River, a few miles below the present Terrace. While the river itself belonged to the Gitlan, the Gispaxloats village was at the mouth of a stream, situated more on the Skeena than on the Ksemrot. Across from this village were berry grounds where many of the people went to pick blueberries and cranberries. It was at this place that the trail going over to the Kitimat went through. One time, a party of young Kitimat hunters fell upon a group of Gispaxloats women, who were picking berries, attacked them, ravished them and carried off some of them as prisoners. The leader was a young man from the Bella Bella tribe to the south. Now when Legaix heard of this, he was angered, as there was a considerable hatred between the Gispaxloats and the Bella Bella over the treatment that had been inflicted by the Bella Bella upon the mother of a former Legaix, a woman who had been taken from the Gispaxloats royal Eagle House of Niswamak. This woman had escaped from the Bella Bella and had been subjected to much ridicule while in a Bella Bella House. This insult had not as yet been retaliated.

The attack by the Kitimat under a Bella Bella leader brought this to the mind of Legaix, who at once called in all his warriors. "We will go and attack the Bella Bella during the secret society season, when they will all be engaged in their dances and will not be prepared for war." He called in all the warriors from other tribes to assist him. Before going, they fasted and made preparations. When they were ready they set off, having as their guide a Bella Bella man who had married into a Gispaxloats House. When it came day, they would seek shelter by hiding in the forests en route, hauling their canoes out of sight and at night they would travel. Soon they came to the vicinity of the Bella Bella country, and they travelled very cautiously, so as not to be seen. The Bella Bella village was at that time on the shores of what is now Millbank Sound, known as Laxseldem-Wutsta. When they came to this village, they found that the village was deserted and all of the house boards had been taken down. In the olden days, the people, when going away, would take down their house boards and rooftops and cache these in secret places. This was to prevent them being burned by raiding parties.

When the Gispaxloats raiders came and found the place empty, they had their plans defeated and could go no further. They set back and now travelled openly, not attempting to hide themselves. They came suddenly upon a man and his wife, who were hunting in the area where Klemtu is today. Their daughter had recently become an adolescent; and

she had been taken into a hut at the rear of the house, hidden from view. Here she was kept to herself, so as not to come in contact with any of the hunting paraphernalia, until she had completed her menstruations. Meanwhile the hunter and his wife were awaiting. For this reason they did not accompany the other Bella Bella people who had gone to Wigyinu (Rivers Inlet), to have a feast. This man was a prince of the House of Hamtsit, the Raven chief of the Bella Bella and his wife was of high Wolf rank. The attacking Gispaxloats killed the two after torturing them. They had stretched the man by hanging his hands to a tree branch, his feet being pulled to the ground. The woman was ravished and her head was cut off and put on a stake and driven to the ground. The adolescent girl was never found, but she saw everything that happened, as she kept in hiding after the house was burned by the Gispaxloats warriors, who returned to their village on the Skeena River.

When the Bella Bella people returned from Wigyinu, they wondered where the prince and his wife and daughter were. These were not to be found, so they set out to look for them, and they came upon their bodies at the hunting village of Klemtu. The only survivor was the young girl, who told them who it was that had attacked and slaughtered her father and mother. By some of the arrows that were found, the Bella Bella warriors recognized these as belonging to Legaix. Also they had been expecting a war party from the Gispaxloats. From the girl's description they recognized the warriors as Gispaxloats and Legaix as their leader.

The Bella Bella chief Hamtsit became very angry, and biting his arms, he declared that he would avenge his nephew and his wife. On the Skeena River, the Tsimshian tribal villages began at tide water, the first being the Gitsis River and territory of Kiyak. The next were the Kisumdzaxs and Mentaate, which belonged to the Gitwilgoats. Xhaidzeks belonged to the Ginaxangik. Ginadoiks belonged to the Ginadoiks people. Kitemrot belonging to the Gitlan. Ksems belonged jointly to the Gispaxloats and Gitando. The Gispaxloats also had proclaimed that they had the use of the entire Skeena and that they had the right for exclusive trading privileges on the Upper Skeena River.

One day a man, whose name was Buk, was fishing at tide water below where Haysport stands today and while fishing, he saw many canoes approaching in the distance, heading upstream on the Skeena River. He knew at once that it was a raiding party. So he paddled his little canoe up the river and when he came near the Gitsis village of Kiyaks, he called out, "Raiders are coming; they look like Bella Bella canoes. Flee and escape them!" Now this Buk was a notorious liar, and nobody believed him. When the people saw it was Buk who was giving the warning, no one heeded him. He kept on going upstream, and in the meantime the canoes which Buk had seen came upon the first Tsimshian village and invaded it before the people had a chance to defend themselves. Many were killed or taken captive, others escaped by fleeing to the headwaters of the Kiyaks River. After the invaders had raded this village they kept on travelling.

## GITHAWN'S TRADING PRIVILEGES ON THE UPPER SKEENA

Informant: Harriet Hudson

Recorded by: William Beynon, 1948-1949

Ages ago the Kitselas tribe was the uppermost of the Tsimshian proper on the Skeena River. Its home village was situated at the canyon. These people did not know of any other people above them on the river, and although their hunters went to a considerable distance upstream, they never found any other folk living there. There were a great many Kitselas, who made two villages, one on each side of the Canyon. One of these was under Githawn. His village was on the high part of the canyon and was known as Gilaxsiks. The lower village on the opposite side was known as Gilaxtsawks. There were two groups of Eagles: Githawn and Guhlrax; on the other shore was the house of a Killer Whale chief, Nistexawk, and a Raven chief, Guam.

One day, a group of young Eagle women went out to pick berries. Among these was a niece of the Chief Githawn. She had gone somewhat farther than the rest and strayed away from them. When it was about dusk, she met some young men who took her and lead her to their camp, which they reached by night. Next morning, very early, they set off travelling very swiftly, the young woman could hardly understand them, but soon they came to where their canoes were hidden. Then they travelled up the river. For many days they went on, and finally came to a very large village of many people. The young men took the young woman to the house of their chief Hlengwa, a Frog, who at once took her for his wife, as she was very fair.

Now when the Kitselas searched for her, they could find no trace of her and thought that some supernatural being had captured her. After searching many days, they gave up their efforts. The woman had been gone many years and she had children by the chief Hlengwa, who had taken her to wife. But soon she began to long to return to her own home. As she knew that it was down the river, she planned to escape as soon as she could get a canoe. The canoes were too large for her to manage alone and they were too heavy. It was always customary for the people to hide their canoes in secret places some distance away from the village and the shore.

Her husband Hlengwa went to his fishing and hunting place down the river, and every day he went up into the hills to set his snares together with several young nephews, who followed him. He proceeded further and was gone several days. It was then that she set about searching for a canoe and found a large one, much too large for what she wanted. Taking one of her husband's stone axes, she began to cut the canoe in half. This took her a number of days. Then she brought out provisions and put them into the canoe. Her children, who were now quite large, she planned on taking with her. She waited for the time

when her husband would be going to the more distant part of his hunting territory. When he did, she launched the half canoe and putting her children in it, she sat in the stern and raised the bow of the canoe out of the water, and paddled away.

She had been going down stream a few days, and each night she had made her camp in the woods with her children. She began to recognize the tops of some of the mountains which she knew. She was not far away from her Kitselas, and kept on paddling. She finally came to her uncle's village. When she did, many of the people ran away from her, thinking she was a ghost woman, especially more frightening with her weird half canoe. Many people gathered at the shore and finally, she said, "It is I, the niece of Githawn. Is my uncle alive?" The people who had long given her up for dead, wept with joy when they saw her, and she went up to her uncle's house. "My uncle, I have come away to show you to my children. My husband is a kind man and is the chief of his village, which is known as Kitwangak (People-of-the-Rabbit). It is a land of plenty and there are a great many people there. It is now very far from here. A canoe with many people could go there in a few days." When Githawn heard what his niece said, he thought for a long while and finally said, "I must return you to your husband and we will go there. You were right in making your children known to me. When you have overcome your lonesomeness then we will set off for your husband's country."

Githawn called together all the Kitselas, and presented his nephews and his niece to his people saying, "These were the ones whom we thought were dead, but are alive. Now I am about to return my niece together with her children to her husband, who is a great chief, and I want you to come with me." Githawn then gathered all the coast foods he had, such as dried herring eggs, seaweed, dried halibut and clams, and all kinds of seafoods. With his folk he set out. When they arrived at Kitwanak, they were greeted by these people and a great feast was at once given by Hlengwa in honour of Githawn. After these exchanges, Githawn spoke, "My niece has told me how well you have looked after her. She wanted to return after having shown her children to her own people. So, although you have much food, she has brought seacoast treats, and this she now places before you. When we return she will remain behind with you." Hlengwa, the Kitwangak chief, replied, "So, what you say is right. I am very happy you are here with us. And I want to proclaim this; that only you shall have the privilege of trade with us, in this way. You may come often to see her. And this will give you also the right to trade with all the other villages above, and there are many others."

Githawn had come upon a very valuable trading village. It was well protected, as his own village was situated on the canyon through which any canoe going up would have to pass. To protect it further, he made a rope of cedar bark which canoes passing would contact and this would shake an alarm made of puffin beaks and deer hoofs. So that anyone trying to go through the canyon at night would shake the cedar

rope, thus giving the alarm. Then those in the Githawn village would be able to capture the canoe. It was almost impossible to pass through without the knowledge of the Kitselas people.

Legaix, the Eagle chief of the Gispaxloats, was very envious of Githawn, who was growing very wealthy by having control of the trading privilege with the upper Skeena tribes of the Gitksan. Guhrax, who was of the Legaix group, wanted to assist his uncle Legaix to overcome Githawn, who was becoming too powerful. During this period, Legaix had become the most powerful chief among the Tsimshian. He began to try to take away from Githawn much of his strength. He made several attacks on Githawn's canyon fortress. Soon Legaix made progress. One day, there were a number of the Githawn tribe below the canyon village, busily engaged in salmon fishing, when a war raid party led by Legaix came upon them and made them captives. Then Legaix, in a surprise landing, overcame Githawn. Legaix and his party then went up to the upper Skeena and began trading with the Gitksan tribes. On the return of Legaix to his own village, he was waylaid by Githawn and much of his trade goods were lost. Legaix prepared to attack the Kitselas at the canyon village.

There were some Kitselas men at Kitwangak when Legaix returned. These Kitselas men had already left to inform Githawn of Legaix's coming, so that they were planning to destroy him. The present Githawn was a weak young man, so a Kitselas man named Nishaax took the leadership. The Kitselas had already cut many hemlock logs, and these were taken to the top of the canyon, where their village was. When Legaix and his men landed on the shore and started to climb up the steep walls of the canyon, the Kitselas cut loose the hemlock logs and these went rolling down, and killed many of the Gispaxloats. Among these was the chief Legaix. As most of the dead bodies fell into the canyon, the body of Legaix hung to the shore and was rescued by a fellow Eagle of the Kitselas, and it was taken to Guhrax's house. Guhrax interred it in a secret place. The surviving Gispaxloats escaped to their village away below the canyon and for a long while, did not retaliate, but they planned for it.

Many years later, a new Legaix was chief of the Gispaxloats and he wanted to overcome the Kitselas, and again to have the privilege of trading with the upper Skeena and Hagwilget tribes. It was from these people that the most important skins or hides of moose and caribou were obtained. These were valuable gifts for distribution among the chiefs during the feast, and were very much in demand among the coast tribes. So Legaix planned a surprise attack. Coming on to the Kitselas village early one morning, he attacked it and destroyed most of it by fire. Many Kitselas escaped and went up the Skeena River, to meet with the large body of the Kitselas who were already trading. Only a few old people and women had remained behind and it was these who Legaix had captured by surprise. Those that escaped got to Kitwangak and here they met with Githawn and his Kitselas group. Githawn said, "You will see,



Legaix will come on up the Skeena. That is his purpose in attacking our village. He had wanted to get this privilege. But we will waylay him when he comes up."

In the meantime, the Kitselas went on up the upper Skeena to pursue their trading. Legaix, now that he had been successful in his raid upon the Kitselas, went on to trade with the Gitksan. This was still the exclusive privilege of the Kitselas under Githawn. Legaix had as yet not been able to get it. When Legaix and his band came upon the Kitselas, who were on their return journey, it so happened that they met at Kitwangak. Among the Kitwangak was a very beautiful slave woman whom Hlengwa had taken from a Tsetsaut tribe of the interior. It was for this woman that Legaix was bargaining when Githawn of the Kitselas came in, and in a very taunting manner, said, "We do not bargain when we want anything. That is why poor people should not try to butt in to trade with these people here. The only ones that are wealthy should come." Legaix felt very humiliated and returning to his Gispaxloats, said, "I have been humiliated by Githawn. He pretends that he and his people are much stronger than my people. We shall attack them here before they have a chance to return to their village of Kitselas."

Without any warning they attacked the Kitselas, who were then staying in Hlengwa's house. Legaix was staying with his clan brother, Semoigidem-higex, later known as Qoq. Then there was great excitement, and Qoq, who was also the clan relative of Githawn, who was an Eagle like him, at once came between the two warring factions. He came in dressed in his Eagle robe and his headdress, which also showed the Eagle crest, and he scattered eagle down upon all the warring groups, calling, "Brothers! Cease your strife! It is not well or proper that brothers should kill one another, especially when they both come to visit me, their younger brother. The example that you both show is not proper or good. Other people will ridicule you both and say to you, "There are brothers who are always fighting one another. So cease your struggles; you will come to my house where I will entertain you."

Then the halait drum began beating in Qoq's house, which was the Eagle house among the Kitwangak. He was one of the foremost chiefs among the Gitksan. He was going to try and bring peace between his warring brothers Githawn and Legaix. When both the Gispaxloats and the Kitselas stepped into his house, Qoq invited all of the Kitwangak head chiefs, and he came in with his dancing garments, scattering eagle down upon all that were in his house. Hlengwa came forward as the head chief of the Kitwangak and he also danced and scattered eagle down upon the two Eagle chiefs, Legaix and Githawn, and their tribesmen. After he had finished dancing, the Wolf chiefs Axti Hix and Wixa of Kitwangak, danced and they also scattered eagle down upon these Eagle chiefs and their tribesmen.

After they had all finished, Hlengwa a chief of Kitwangak said, "Chiefs, chiefs, great tribesmen the Gispaxloats and the Kitselas, you all have one dish from which you eat, as you own the same crests, the

same nursery songs, the same paddle songs, the same dirges, the same myths, the same names. So why should you fight one another? It might be right, if you were of different clans, but here you are brothers. So before you have gone too far, let everything be forgotten. Qoq's country, Wixa's country and Axti Hix's country and my own, are large ones, as is the same with our brothers farther up the river. It is plentiful and large enough for the both of you brothers to come and trade with us. This we will make known to all of this river; Hlengwa, Qoq, Axti Hix, Wixa and Githawn had now given power to both chiefs and their tribes to come and trade on this great river. This we will know and respect." Each of the other chiefs then spoke, addressing both Legaix and Githawn and their tribesmen, affirming what Hlengwa had proclaimed and adding that they supported everything that he had said.

For a long while, neither Legaix nor Githawn spoke, until finally Legaxnitsk, spokesman for Legaix said, "Yes, great chiefs, yes, all that you have said is true. All what you have said is correct. It has been a mistake that is often made, and now my master chief Legaix sees the light of day, when you have opened his eyes. There will be happiness in my master's House now. You alone, you great chiefs of this great river, have made it possible. It has been your wisdom that has brought this about, and what you have suggested we will do. I know that all my fellow tribesmen will rejoice and will agree with me when we now heed and accept your wise advice. I know that all of those of Legaix's people who have been left behind at their own village will be glad that this unhappy strife is over. Legaix will now sleep and be contented, now that he is at peace with his brother. It has also pained him that there was always strife between them, and now, through your wisdom, Hlengwa, and your brother chiefs Qoq and Axti Hix and Wixa, this has been made possible. Now we have heard your voices and Legaix and his tribe shall abide by it."

When this spokesman had finished, Nishaax, spokesman for Githawn, spoke, "Chief Hlengwa, chief Qoq, chief Axti Hix, chief Wixa and your tribesmen. Yes! Hlengwa your father-in-law recognizes your voice and that of your brother chiefs, and he respects your wishes. There is nothing else he can do, but conform to your wishes. And my master Githawn will abide by your wishes, and there will be no more hostilities from him or his people. This has been only possible through the wisdom of you and your chiefs. For many years there had been peace between Githawn and his brother Legaix, but for no reason strife broke out between them. Now you have restored to them that former brotherly feeling that always existed between them. In olden times, when one of them met with difficulties, the other brother always assisted him. This you have again made possible. He, Githawn, has heard your wishes that in the future both the Gispaxloats and Legaix, and Githawn and his people, may come together since they can each enjoy the privilege of trading with you all. This we will respect and hold together. In this way we may meet more often with one another in our regular trading without fear of one another, as we have in the past. Now Githawn and his people are happy and whatever may have happened in the past, he has

now forgotten it. Now he will dance in his brother's House, which is the same as if in his own House." When he had finished, Githawn danced and scattered eagle down upon all the people, especially upon the Gispaxloats. Then the Kitselas people distributed gifts to all of the Skeena chiefs and their tribes. When he had done so, Legaix and his Gispaxloats did the same.

Thus it was that Legaix was able to begin his trading, and later he even ousted the Kitselas from any great business, these seldom going farther up than Kitwangak and Kitwancool. In each of these villages some of the Kitselas had become established, so that they did not interfere with Legaix, who established himself up to the Hagwilget tribe. There was no further trouble between the Kitselas and the Gispaxloats.



12. Kitwankul village on the Grease Trail between the Nass and Skeena Rivers about 1915. National Museums of Canada photo 71-5544.

**LEGAIX CONFLICT WITH THE KITSELAS TRIBE**

Informant: Charles Abbott, Port Simpson,

Recorded by: William Beynon, 1927

On his return from the Gitksan village of Kispiox, Legaix planned to raid other Gitksan villages, but as he had already danced the peace dance with them, he could not break this pledge. So he changed his mind and came on down the river. There had been bad feelings between the Gispaxloats and the Kitselas tribes, because Legaix had trespassed on one of the hunting territories of the Kitselas.

Guhlrax, who was a prince of the House of Legaix, had not gone with Legaix on his trip up to the Gitksan country, but he stayed at the Gispaxloats village below the canyon. When the season came to gather berries, he went up with other members of his House to a territory which belonged to the Kitselas. Upon returning, Guhrlax was in a canoe by himself. The others, ahead of him, were going to a place just above the canyon to camp there. As they were nearing this point, they came upon a party of Kitselas men who were hunting and also on their way to the same berry ground. Seeing the Gispaxloats men and women coming back from there with their canoes loaded with fruit, they were angered and exchanged words with them. As the Gispaxloats were outnumbered, they kept on going down the river without a stop, trying to make it to their village. The last canoe was the one in which Guhrlax sat.

When he came past the Kitselas men, they shot him with an arrow, killing him, and broke up his canoe. It was about the time when Legaix was returning down the river. As he came on down, he found the body of his brother with an arrow in it, which he recognized as a Kitselas arrow. Very much infuriated, he called upon his men to help attack the Kitselas. The Kitselas people knew that he was up the river and that he would soon be at the place where they had killed his brother Guhrlax. They were waiting for him. Legaix tried to surprise them in a sudden attack, but these Kitselas had many huge logs which they piled up on the fortress of Gitladzawk at Kitselas canyon. They rolled down the logs as soon as anyone came up. In this way they were able to keep the sides of their fortress clear.

Legaix, seeing that there was no use trying to scale this steep rock by day, waited and planned to do it by night. He and his party went through the canyon in their canoes and prepared to make war upon the Kitselas, in revenge for the murder of Guhrlax. After many days of preparation, he was assisted by many warriors of the other tribal chiefs, among whom were the Gitando. These were closely allied to the Gispaxloats by both having the same royal House. Again they approached the Kitselas fortress; but every time they tried to rush the fortress, the Kitselas would cut the lashings of the logs that were tied at the top of the rock, and these would roll over the raiders, who had to recoil.

During the siege, the Gispaxloats could prevent the besieged from getting water, as it was drawn from the canyon right below the steep rock. After many attempts to capture the fortress, the Gispaxloats had been forced to turn back and wait. Legaix noticed that the logs on the cliff were getting fewer. So he shammed many attacks, and each time the logs would roll down, until all the logs were gone. Then Legaix felt safe, as his warriors outnumbered the Kitselas. He attacked them. When the Kitselas realized that they were to be defeated, they called out, "Legaix, stop it! I will compensate you and give you an amhalait (headdress) called 'Beautiful-Hips-of-a-Woman'." This was a special halait of Nisdoxoig, and it was new. Upon hearing this, Legaix immediately stopped fighting, and then the Kitselas brought out the new halait. They began a dance of peace and compensation, which both sides shared. Legaix compensated the Kitselas, as several of the royal House of Qawm had been killed. After this, the Kitselas paid Legaix for the murder of Guhrax. This was the last time that the Gispaxloats and the Kitselas met in warfare.

## THE WAR CLUB REPRESENTING A WOMAN

Informant: A. Argyle, Kitkatla  
Recorded by: William Beynon, 1916

The club is a crest of the House of Kayemtkwe, a Killer Whale of the Kitkatla tribe. Its name is Hagwilget Woman. Here is how it originated.

Legaix, chief of the Gispaxloats Tsimshian, was very jealous of his rank and was regarded among the Tsimshian as the head chief of them all. He would not let any people but his own go up the Upper Skeena River without his permission. He considered the Gitksan country a trade preserve of his tribe. But one day the Kitkatla people of Porcher Island went away up the Skeena above the Kitselas village at the first canyon. When he heard of this he was angry, and he sent Gulxax to overtake them. Gulxax went up, found them at a point above the rapids, attacked them, and was driven back. They were too many for him and his little band of Gispaxloats. They returned to their village of Laxspeaos. There Legaix prepared to encounter the Kitkatla trespassers on their return. He waited some time. Meanwhile the Kitkatla prepared to meet the Gispaxloats and gathered close together above the rapids. Here they prepared to fight the Gispaxloats.

Legaix assembled his men and sent word to the Kitkatla chief Nisnawhl, "Before two days are over, we shall kill all the Kitkatla band." Nisnawhl answered, "We are only few, but we will give you battle, knowing how powerful you are." After this the Gispaxloats villagers attacked the Kitkatla. The Kitkatla had fixed a log trap, and when the Gispaxloats climbed the side of the steep hill where the Kitkatla stood, they, the Kitkatla, let loose the large logs and these logs rolled down on top of the Gispaxloats climbers, killing a good many of them. The Gispaxloats attackers went back home. They had lost a lot of their warriors. Yet they planned to still attack the Kitkatla. When they started in again, Legaix told them, "The Kitkatla are trying to dominate the Tsimshian nation. We must not let them succeed." When the Gispaxloats attacked again, they had war headdresses and armor which covered their entire body, and the arrows of the Kitkatla could not pierce these. So the Kitkatla were driven back this time, and many of them were killed or hurt. They did not know what to do, as the war armor of the Gispaxloats was too thick for their arrows. They planned their best how to beat their enemies, as they knew that otherwise they would all be destroyed and their women would be made slaves of the Gispaxloats.

Then Gulanaxnox, a councillor of the House of Gayemtkwe, said, "I will make a war club, Hagwilget Woman, and with this club we shall win our battle." So Gulanaxnox made a club which emitted a sound like the cry of a woman. It was to be held up in front of the Gispaxloats.

When, the following day, the Gispaxloats attacked the Kitkatla, they were met by them, but they did not seem frightened. Legaix called out to them, "Before the sun sets I will capture you all." The Kitkatla did not reply. But as soon as the Gispaxloats had approached near enough, Gulanaxnox took his war club, Hagwilget Woman, and he began to wave it in the air. It emitted strange cries. The Gispaxloats, beholding this, stopped fighting, and took off their headdresses to watch the performance of this club. While they were uncovered, the Kitkatla fighters took their bows and arrows and fired upon the attackers. The Gispaxloats, who were now helpless, fled as fast as they could. Legaix, their chief, wanted to buy this war club from Gulanaxnox, but Gulanaxnox refused.

The Kitkatla had driven the Gispaxloats up the Skeena, and they went to their canoes and travelled down the river. They went back to their island homes. They had gone up the Skeena with the purpose of making some of the Hagwilget or Gitksan people slaves, in revenge for a previous attack on their own people on the Nass River. The Hagwilget had made slaves some Kitkatla women and children from the house of Hale. Upon arriving at their island village at Kitkatla, the House of Gayemtkwe made ready and gave a great feast. Hereafter the House of Gayemtkwe used this club as a crest, and they sang dirge songs. A great amount of goods was distributed to the guests.

**CONTROVERSY OVER THE SHARK-FIN AND GNAWING-BEAVER CRESTS**

Informant: Sam Bennett (Nispins) Gilodza

Recorded by: William Beynon, 1948-49

There had been a hot controversy between the Gispaxloats and the Gitando tribes of the Tsimshian over the privilege of using the Shark-Fin crest. They were still quarrelling over this when Legaix, chief of the Gispaxloats, erected a pole with the crest indicating it to be his own exclusive property. Whilst he was erecting this, a Nishga brother of Legaix came along and at the base of the pole he threw a copper shield, to show that his brother had every right to the crest.

Another crest also was in controversy between Skagwait and Legaix, that is the Gnawing-Beaver. Skagwait, chief of the Gitando, called upon the Gitlan chief Nislaganos to erect a totem pole of the Gnawing-Beaver. While it was in the course of being prepared, many threats were made by Legaix to the Gitando, but they were disregarded, in the same way that Legaix had disregarded the Gitando threats. This all happened at Port Simpson, after the Hudson's Bay Company had established a trading post there, and firearms were in use by the Tsimshian. These two tribes were nearly on the verge of fighting each other.

When it was all ready, the carved pole of the Gnawing-Beaver was brought to the front of the house of Skagwait, and the Gitando sent out messengers to all of the tribes to come and assist them in erecting their chief's pole. Soon the Tsimshian chiefs and tribesmen began to go to Skagwait's house and all helped to erect the pole. Then they went into the house where each invited chief and tribesman had their own allotted place to sit. The chief in this form of feast would seat himself in front, and directly behind him would be his lineage successor. On each side were his main spokesmen and immediately behind were the tribesmen who came with the chief. When all were seated in the house, Skagwait called upon his tribesmen saying, "Now that all the chiefs are here whom we have invited, what do you intend to do to please them? Give me Guhlrax, who will be my successor, give me Diks, give Niswipak! Where are all my tribesmen?" When he had finished calling each of his headmen, they all came forward saying, "I am here, master, I am here, chief!" With that he came forward with his contribution, and when all the tribesmen had finished, those who were married to the Eagles of Gitando would also contribute, led by the members of the family of the wife of Skagwait. Here it was a woman of the Gilodza royal Killer Whale House of Nishlkumik. The Gitando Skagwait was the father of the then Nishlkumik. When all the contributions were in, the Gitando headmen gathered together to apportion how much each chief and guest shall receive. During this time, one of the headmen arose and narrated to all the guests the history of Skagwait, also describing his many crests and privileges. Then he announced, "You have today assisted in erecting one of the main crests belonging to Guhlrax and Skagwait."



This is the Gnawing-Beaver which he has brought from his grandfather's country away into the direction of the North Wind. Today, you have solidified it by erecting this pole for him in front of the people of the world. Now all the Tsimshian people know of it, and it has become the absolute property of Skagwait, who will always have it in front of his house, the Nest-of-Eagle.

The Gitando distributed their wealth to all the guests, each chief being called in order of rank. When it came to the turn of the Gilodza chief Nishlkumik to receive the Gitando gifts they hoped that she would overlook the fact that her gift was small in comparison to her rank because she was the daughter of Skagwait. Nishlkumik, realizing this, did not consider that Skagwait was her father and felt insulted. She arose and left the feast house, saying "Even though you people know that you are poor, you try to give a feast and have nothing to give your guests." She was followed out by her own tribesmen.

The Gitando were embarrassed, and Skagwait halted the feast. They could not go on. Skagwait called several of his headmen to go to the Gilodza and ask Nishlkumik to come back. Gistaku, one of Skagwait's headmen, came as spokesman, "Chief Nishlkumik, your father and his tribesmen made a mistake, and we are all sorry that you feel embarrassed. Now we ask you to return to your father's house. We intend to appease your feelings and those of your tribesmen." No one spoke and Gistaku went out, returning to Skagwait. "No, chief, your daughter will not even reply to us." No one spoke. "Her feelings have been hurt. Whoever apportioned their gifts made a very sad mistake, as this is something that will always be spoken. We shall always be referred to as the Poor Gitando by those who wish to ridicule us. It will be well to send other headmen. Gaihluk is of her clan. Perhaps he can speak to Nishlkumik and use his influence towards getting her to return to the feast."

They sent Gaihluk to the Gilodza, and he went to Nishlkumik at once, saying, "You know that you will feel very sorry when you hear the people making fun of your father, my chief. You will regret that it was your action that made the people ridicule him. Chief Nishlkumik, you know me. I am your relative and have the same traditions as you and the same origin. I hope you will listen to what I say. I have come here of my own accord, although I know your father's people have made a grievous mistake. He is your own father, and you should consider it. If someone else ridiculed him as you have, you would feel very sad about it. So I am speaking that you return to your father's feast. He will then do everything to please you and your tribe. I had no fear in coming to you to plead for your father, as I know that you recognize in me your relative and one who will at all times support you."

It was then that Lais, the Wolf spokesman and headman of the Gilodza spoke, "You have done what is right, Gaihluk, in coming to speak as you have to your niece. You have the right to advise her, to support her in anything that will be for her own good and also to reprimand her,

should you see she is making a mistake. This you have done. Certainly, my brother, my chief has heard your voice and there is nothing else she may do but to return to her father's feast and take her place in his festivities. It sometimes happens that some are hasty, but soon all is forgotten. This your niece has already done. Return to your great master Skagwait, tell him his daughter's people will heed his voice."

Then Nispins, a Killer Whale, spoke, "Yes, wiseman Gaihluk, my master has heard your voice, the voice of an uncle, and she heeds it. Nishlkumik will go to the feast of your master. Whatever Lais has said expresses the thoughts of the Gilodza, and what he has said will be done. Even though we have caused embarrassment to the great chief Skagwait, we pray that this be forgotten. You know yourself that your niece regrets what she has done and will find a way to appease the feelings of her father and his people. Well, now that all is settled, return to your master, we will go at once to his festivities."

So now Gaihluk returned to his Gitando chief and people and told Skagwait, "Chief, chief, Nishlkumik is coming back. Her feelings have been appeased. She will come to your feast. Tell your guests to have patience. They will see for themselves that everything will be well." Then Gistaku of the Gitando went around the feast house and said, "Be patient, chiefs, be patient! Skagwait has taken this time to entertain you, and even if it should take many more days to entertain you, happiness comes on the village of my master. Then Nishlkumik returned, and Skagwait went on distributing the rest of the gifts to the chiefs, then began the supernatural power dances. The Gispaxloat's claim to the crest that had just been assumed by Skagwait was no longer voiced, since they attended the feast as guests and accepted the gifts of Skagwait. They at this time had acknowledged his right to this crest.



13. The village of Fishery Bay at the head of the Grease Trail on the Nass River. Haldane photo 1903. BCPM photo PN 4279.

## THE XMAS FEAST OF LEGAIX

Informant: John Tate (Salaben) Gispaxloats

Recorded by: William Beynon, 1947

It was now a year since the new Legaix had assumed the position of the late chief of the same name. He was still in mourning and would soon give his Xmas feast. There he would again decorate his face with red paint and would wear different clothes to denote that his period of mourning was over. He would take his position among his fellow chiefs, in their councils. To this end the Gispaxloats were making preparations for the feast; this was to be held at Laxklualams, now Port Simpson. Before sending messengers, Legaix called in all his tribesmen to what was known as 'meeting-one's-own-tribe' in which every Gispaxloats was summoned. The food was provided by Legaix, as well as gifts to his tribe's people. It was then that he made known his plans. Having got their approval and support, preparations were made. There had to be power songs to be used by the messengers, and also arrangements for the display of his ceremonial entrance. All these were now completed. The messengers were sent out to each tribe, and this took considerable time as these messengers had to be entertained. When there were several chiefs, each of these chiefs had to be invited separately, and each entertained the messengers. After the messengers had returned, the guests from afar began to arrive. They made their camps in the near vicinity, to await the call of the messengers who would come for them when the feast was ready.

When these messengers were sent out to the tribes, each of the tribes and their chiefs arrived at different times. As they came in their canoes below the village of Legaix, they were met by Legaix's headmen and himself, who greeted them with his reception dance and threw a spirit power out to the canoe in which the guest chief was. This would be caught by someone in this canoe, and after wrestling with it for a while, they would intone their own song. After this they threw back the supernatural being, and those on shore wrestled with it. This they did a few times, and then the guest chief and his tribesmen would be invited to land. They were then led into the feast house of Legaix. The chief and his headmen -- who were the guests -- had to pass through a round ceremonial entrance some distance above the ground, and an ordinary person would have to squeeze himself to get in. Anyone that met with mishap in getting in would be the subject of taunts during the festivities.

As the guests came in, they were greeted with songs. The chief Legaix was dressed in his dancing headdress and his dancing apron. He stood at the rear, and after all the guests had entered he came forward, dancing; and with his nodding head he scattered eagle down upon his guests. When all his guests had been danced for, his headman Xoop called upon chief Legaix, "Well, my master, all your guests are here,

and the chiefs have been awaiting you a long while. What are you going to do for them? Why have you invited them? Do not treat them as children." Then Legaix and his nephews and nieces came in with their wealth, which was laid in the centre of the huge house. This consisted of copper shields, moose hides, mink robes, rabbit robes, marten robes. All of this was laid in one pile. After Legaix, each of his nephews appeared in order of age and rank, also his nieces. It was then that, as each donor appeared, his name was announced. When all these had finished appearing, then came the tribesmen, each group being led by the individual head of the councillor Houses. Each donor of wealth was called by name, and it was at this time that names were bestowed upon tribesmen in acknowledgement for their contributions. This took up all of the first day of the ceremonies. The contributions of the Gispaxloats on this occasion reached to the roof of the house of Legaix, and never before had the people seen such a display of wealth.

Legaix now chose some of his headmen to apportion the gifts to the guests. As this took a long while, food was given the guests, and they were cared for until the next day, when the actual distribution of gifts would take place. This first was known as Tselemwal (contribution of a tribesman to the House of his chief). The next would be the apportioning, or counting, with sticks. The procedure was to apportion each of the tribesmen of the chief Legaix with the care of so many guests, and for everyone that was entitled to receive gifts, a stick was given. Thus the stick served as a check, and the name that was held by a person thus checked was always known as name-stick. When it was all finished, each guest was apportioned a certain amount of the wealth as theirs.

The next day the festivities continued, and Xoop, who was the leading headman of Legaix, acted as his spokesman. He called out in order of rank all the chiefs to receive gifts: 1) Tsibasa; 2) Wisaiks; 3) Wisaak - these three were from Kitkatla; 4) Wisaiks of Ginaxangik; 5) Saxsaxt of Gitwilgoats; 6) Niswaxs of Ginadoiks; 7) Nishlaranus of Gitlan; 8) Nishot of Gitzaxlahl; 9) Nisyaranat of Gitsis; 10) Nishkumik of Gilodza; 11) Entewiwalp of Gitgaata; 12) Nistarhoik of Kitselas; 13) Skagwait of Gitando; 14) Nisgitelawp of Kitselas; 15) Guhlrax of Kitsemkalem.

Then followed the headmen of these tribes in the same order, each headman being called out in order of rank. The distribution of gifts took the whole day and night before it was completed. After all the gifts were distributed, Xoop called out to his chief, "Come, chief my master, Legaix! Stand before your equals and look into their faces. You have now put aside your black mourning." With that, Legaix stepped forward, wearing his dancing robes and again danced before the guests, and his tribesmen sang the dancing songs. When this was completed, he sat at the rear of the house where his uncle formerly sat. Xoop and the other Gispaxloats headmen who were the spokesmen, then addressed the guests, reciting the history of this House. There were many speakers.

commodity. It was used in face decoration. Xoop's wife had a beautiful box containing red ochre. This precious article tempted the wife of the owner of the copper shield. She wanted to have this box, which was in the hands of Xoop's wife. The Haida chief insisted that if the red ochre be added to that which Xoop had already offered, then he would immediately deliver the copper shield. This he was willing to do, as he remembered the insult to his charge, Legaix, by the Kitkatla.

After the Haida had gone, Nisawalp, the associate of Xoop, who also was responsible for the well being of Legaix came in and saw what Xoop had done. He declared, "Why have you done this alone? Why have you not called me? We both would have shared this." But Xoop said, "I wanted to test my own strength and show the Kitkatla what one man's strength could accomplish among the Gispaxloats."

Another day, when all the tribes were gathered for the feasts at Metlakatla, messengers were sent out to invite all the tribes and especially to the Kitkatla, and the Killer Whale chief of that tribe. The Kitkatla were to be the main guests. They already had heard of what Xoop had done and how he had purchased the copper shield. Everybody recognized its great value. So when all came to the feast of Legaix, the spokesman Xoop had the presents brought out. These were placed in front of the chiefs. The largest share was put in front of Tsibasa. As this was done his name was called out. The amount placed in front of Tsibasa exceeded the amount that had previously been given to Legaix.

They gave a name to the copper shield which they had carried here: 'Cormorant Copper', as the Cormorant was a crest of Legaix. After having announced the name of the copper shield, Xoop said, "My master Legaix will assume a new name, 'Reaching Up,' which meant not reaching up to his level. This was an allusion to the fact that Legaix had been hidden from view behind the gifts when he was a child. Those that had thrown parts of a copper shield had done it only to the value of threescore moose skins. They remembered this well. This had been purchased by the entire tribe. The one that had been purchased by one man, Xoop, had the value of fourscore moose skins. This copper was then broken up and the pieces distributed. In this way the position of Legaix was maintained and has remained unchallenged.

**CONTROVERSY BETWEEN LEGAIX AND WISAIXS**

Informant: Mrs. Elizabeth White, Port Simpson

Interpreter: William Beynon, 1939

It had become known that Legaix would give a laax feast, that is, a feast that precedes the final one of a chief when he assumes his social position. He would give this when the people had finished cooking the eulachon to get grease, on the Nass. He got ready. As he was composing his songs, some were to taunt chief Wisaiks of the Ginaxangik.

Txaqaxs, of the House of Wisaiks, had become angered and had moved away from his tribe. He had just been presented by his Nishga son with much spring salmon. In his happiness at having received this gift, he invited guests to partake of this fresh food. It so happened that the people were very busy at the time and had not as yet drained the grease from their cooking boxes, and Txaqaxs was ready with his salmon cooked. But nobody came to his feast, as all of them wanted to finish what they were doing and come only later to spend much time with him. Txaqaxs in his anger had been slighted by their absence. He immediately took the fish which he had cooked and threw it all into the river.

The guests, when they were ready, went to the house of Txaqaxs and found nothing prepared. Their would-be host had retired to his sleeping quarters, so they went right out again. They were offended at the action of their chief, and they made up their mind not to tolerate Txaqaxs, as he was considered a tyrant for this action. The people planned to treat him roughly, even to kill him. He heard of this and he got up and moved away from here with all his slaves, nephews, and nieces.

All of this Legaix knew. He intended to use this affair in his taunting song. This was the taunt: "The-Grizzly-of-the-Sea made an empty house at the foot of the big mountain." The reason of this taunt is that when Txaqaxs had built his house, he had not given a big feast. He was not mentioned by name in the song, yet it was well known that he was aimed at. Legaix wanted to shame the Ginaxangik and Txaqaxs in particular.

Now, before the end of the time when eulachon are rendered into oil, one of the Ginaxangik councillors became short of wood. Together with his group they crossed the river to fell some trees for firewood. There were many canoes in the party. They went up to gather the wood while the father was caring for the canoes. In another canoe moored nearby there was a young boy. The boy was sitting in the bow, and each time he sang a little louder. The old man sitting in the canoe heard the song and grew interested. So he pulled up his canoe alongside that of the boy, and he said to him, "My dear boy, I like the way you are

singing. That is why I have come to you. Is this a real song and whose song is it?" The boy replied, "This is the Gispaxloats song which they will use when Legaix gives his laax feast." The man said, "Sing it again. It is a fine song."

In this way he learned the song, and then he left the boy and returned to the place where his sons were getting wood. He hurried them by saying, "Hasten! I am not feeling well." As the tide was still heaving, they went down with the tide to the village. They sailed close to the house of Txaqaxs. The people thought it strange that he would return so soon, and with so little wood. The man who was in the canoe said to his sons, "You will make a fire and I shall invite all the Ginaxangik. Then he sent one of his sons to get all the Ginaxangik. When these all came in, he said to them after he had given them food, "I will tell you something very important. Will you eat? Legaix is planning to taunt Txaqaxs. I will sing the song which he has composed."

The feeling became very great among the Ginaxangik, as they had been put to shame. They made plans to stop the taunt from being given. After much discussion, one of the headmen said, "It would be good to act before Legaix does; we will complete all of Txaqaxs' feast right here on the Nass. We will scatter eagle down. We will hold the laax feast, and then we will give the Xmas feast (partaking of red) in which he adorns his face with red paint." To this all the tribe agreed.

A messenger was sent to Txaqaxs that night. When he arrived Txaqaxs called out, "Who is coming?" The messenger answered, "It is I, chief. Open the door!" He walked in and the chief said to his household, "Make a fire!" "Well, chief, our tribe has understood that you will complete the series of three feasts. Legaix has composed a taunting song in which he despises your name and the name of this House."

They went up the next day, impersonating trading Haida, singing and talking in the manner of the Haida. They went to each tribe scattering eagle down as a symbol of peace. The people knew from this that there would be no treachery at any of the feasts. Immediately preceding the laax feast, all the Ginaxangik women lined up on the beach in front of the village and they sang, "Get ahead of him, my dear man, get ahead of him!", meaning that they should go before Legaix had a chance to do anything. In this way they had completed the laax feast. It consisted of piling all of the gifts. Only the councillors took part and no formal announcement of the gifts was made. All would rush in the pile of gifts and help themselves in a sort of scramble. These would not be lifted singly and given out, but all would get what they could. After they had done this, the next feast was the Xmas. They sang a song, in which they taunted Legaix, that the Eagle was not able to catch the Grizzly-of-the-Sea. In this manner Legaix knew that he had been overcome.



## THE LAST FEAST OF LEGAIX

Informant: L. Grace, Port Simpson, 1946

Recorded by: William Beynon

It was at the particular time when Legaix was going to give his feast series which would require, in all, a period of four years or a series of four feasts. To this feast all of the Gispaxloats would contribute. The first feast in connection with it was known as galamsk (to make clear), in the sense of making clear the ground for building. Legaix would then call upon all his paternal uncles and cousins to assist him in the building of his house and decorating it with his crests. This feast was given by Legaix to the tribe of Gispaxloats. He announced his intention of giving a feast for the Gispaxloats tribe alone and his paternal relatives, who would be called upon to work on his house. At the time, his house was already built, but the ceremony was to be as if it was actually just going to be built, with the plan of decorating it with his crests. Since they could not do it themselves, they would have to appoint somebody to do this work for them, and they would compensate them and receive credit as if they had done it themselves.

After the feast, the paternal uncles began to decorate the house. When it was finished, Legaix called in all his people, announcing that the decoration of his festal house was complete. The paternal relatives were then compensated, and if they had engaged others to work for them, they in their turn were compensated. The house being ready, Legaix gave his own personal feast known as Xtsap, meaning 'partaking with his tribe.' On this occasion he let it be known that he intended to give, on the next year, a last feast at which all of the tribes were to be invited. At this Xtsap feast given to his own tribe, the Gispaxloats, he gave to all of the other tribes small gifts. The Gispaxloats then went away to prepare for the feast, as much of the responsibility fell upon them. They prepared much food for the preliminary feast. In itself it meant hilarity or much fun. At this feast all manner of supernatural powers were introduced and shown by the Gispaxloats. The Gitsontk fraternity of the chief, experts in secret arts, were now busy composing new songs and inventing new naxnoxs.

When the season for the feast came, the Gispaxloats sent messengers to all the tribes, right to Kitkatla. They had in the meantime gathered their belongings into the house of their chief, Legaix. The Kitkatla were always the guests of honour at all Gispaxloats feasts, just as the Gispaxloats were also always the guests of honour to the Kitkatla. On the arrival of the Kitkatla, these visitors did not land at the village, but camped over at Finlayson Island in full sight of the Gispaxloats, who now prepared a reception dance for them. When everything was ready a messenger was dispatched,

to bring them over to the feast. As the Kitkatla came close to the shore, the Gispaxloats were on the beach singing their feast songs, and Legaix walked down, dressed in headdress, spreading eagle down. He also wore a dancing blanket. When they had finished singing, Legaix began to wrestle with what was supposed to be a supernatural power. After having overcome this spirit, he made motions of throwing it out towards the Kitkatla canoes. Then the chief of the Kitkatla stood and caught what had been thrown out to them. After seeming to struggle in the canoe, the chief finally overcame the spirit. Then the Kitkatla sang the songs of the power. When they had finished singing they threw it back to the Gispaxloats. At the same time they blew eagle down towards the shore. When they landed the Gispaxloats took their canoes, pulled them up the beach and they led the chiefs to the house of Legaix. The councillors of Kitkatla were taken to the councillor houses of Gispaxloats and looked after. The chiefs of the Kitkatla and the other Tsimshian chiefs gathered in the house of Legaix. There he gave a reception, in which he went round spreading eagle down on the guests, after the food had been prepared and given to the guests.

Next day, the councillors of the Gispaxloats took all the counsellors of the other tribes to the beach in front of the Gispaxloats houses. Here they took the presents which they were to distribute. They were all put into one heap. Then the guests were all invited to take part in the proceeding. The gifts, instead of being distributed to them, were scattered. A general scramble took place, all the guests trying to get as much as they could, and very often two would struggle over something both had grasped. This was what was termed 'spirit of laughter'. The chiefs took no part in these. They were entertained in Legaix's house, and gifts were properly apportioned to them all. That night the people gathered into the house of Legaix and powers were exhibited and dramatized to the accompaniment of new songs. This series of entertainments took about four days. Everybody knew that at the same time next year Legaix would give his feast. This was to be the fourth feast Legaix was to give, a feat unequalled by any other chief anywhere.

The Gispaxloats now gathered much food and all forms of wealth, which would be distributed to the guests. It had already become the talk of all the tribes. When the feast time arrived the Gispaxloats sent messengers to the Kitkatla, inviting them to the feast of Legaix. The messengers were councillors of the Gispaxloats and a lesser chief named Nispelas.

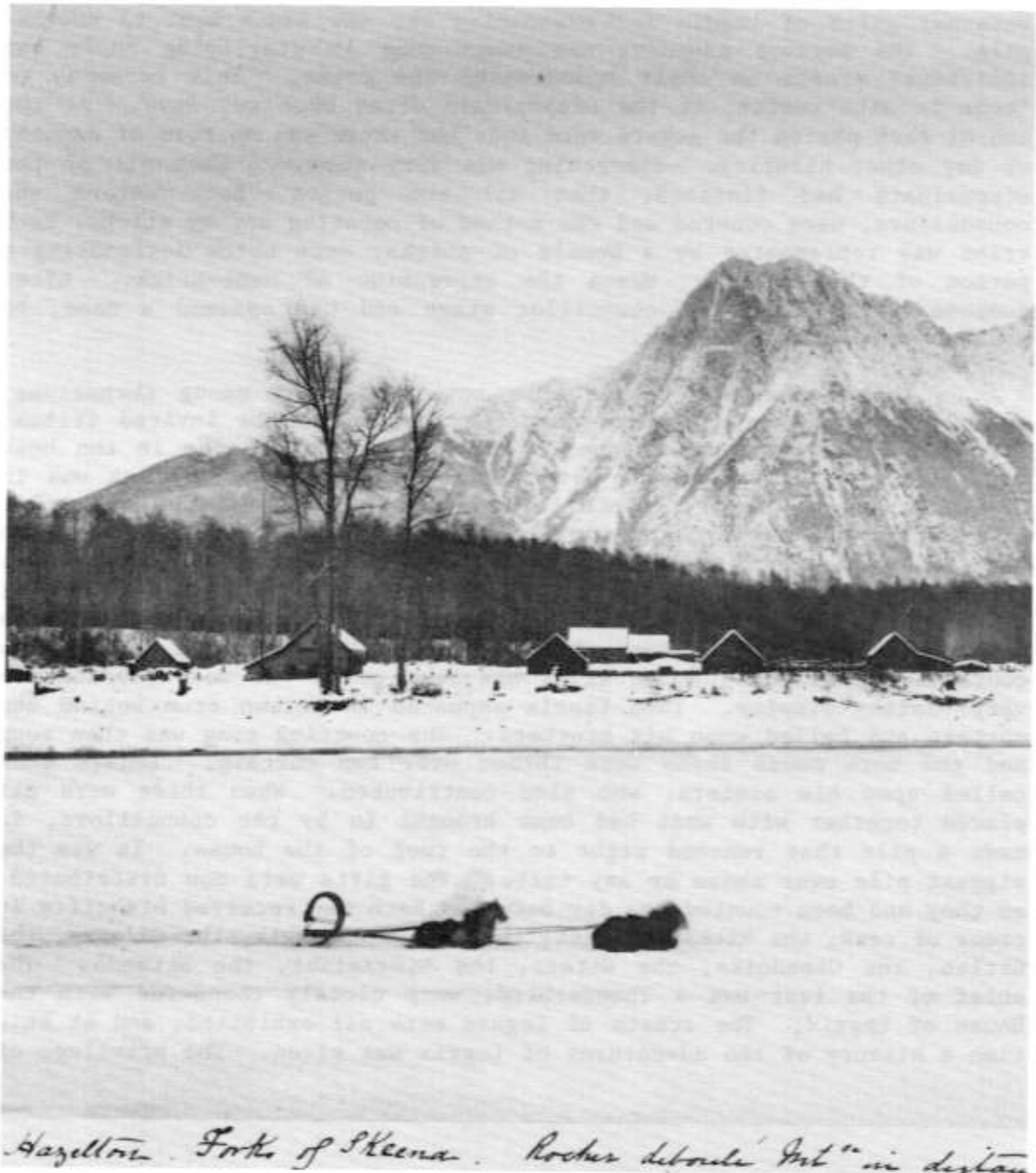
Legaix, while awaiting the arrival of his guests, prepared all his crests to be exhibited at this feast. There was to be no dancing, only the solemn series of naming the crests and reciting the history and achievements of the House of Legaix. At this feast the chiefs of each tribe, together with their main councillors, would attend. When all the guests arrived into the house of Legaix he immediately called on his main councillors saying, "Bring in so and so! I want to know what he is

going to do to please my guests." Then this councillor came in saying, "Here I am, chief! I have brought in my nephews and nieces." So saying, he started to call off the names of his nephews and nieces. Up to this time these had no names. So now that they had brought in gifts to their chief to be used as help in his feast, they were privileged to assume new names, and these were recognized, as these names were announced before the gathering of all the other tribes, so that recognition was given this form of names. All the Gispaxloats councillors were called in order of their standing, and each went through the same procedure. In this way names were given to all of the Gispaxloats. This was termed 'come in with wealth'. As each name was called out, the person came forward and placed gifts on one pile. The personal gifts of Legaix for announcing the new names went to another pile. The persons assuming new names came in displaying their own individual crests on their headdresses and robes. This ceremony of 'come in with wealth' of the Gispaxloats often took two days. At the end of each period the guests were fed, but there was no form of dancing or any other hilarity. Everything was very solemn. When all of the Gispaxloats had finished, then all the guests, both chiefs and counsellors, were counted and the method of counting was by sticks. Each tribe was represented by a bundle of sticks, each stick designating a person of that tribe. Hence the expression of name-stick. After someone had reached the councillor stage and had assumed a name, he would be counted by a stick.

The Gispaxloats people were now in session among themselves, each one having one stick representing someone in the invited tribes. Then the gifts were apportioned. Each guest had someone in the host tribe to remember the proper portion for him. When everything was in readiness for the feast, then all the guests were sent for. Up to this time Legaix had not brought out his gifts. The singers then sang the counting song behind a curtain. As each stanza stated a gift, it was thrown over the curtain, for example a moose skin. They went on until ten had been thrown over. Then they began over and over again, and more moose skins were thrown over, until ten had fallen upon the heap. This continued until fifty moose skins had come over. It was considered a very wealthy display. Then Legaix appeared in person from behind the curtain and called upon his brothers. The counting song was then sung and ten more moose skins were thrown over the curtain. Legaix then called upon his sisters, who also contributed. When these were all placed together with what had been brought in by the councillors, it made a pile that reached right to the roof of the house. It was the biggest pile ever shown by any tribe. The gifts were now distributed, as they had been counted the day before. Each man received his gifts in order of rank, the Kitkatla first, then the Ginaxangik, the Gilodza, the Gitlan, the Ginadoiks, the Gitsis, the Gidzaxlahl, the Gitando. The chief of the last was a Thunderbird, very closely connected with the House of Legaix. The crests of Legaix were all exhibited, and at this time a history of the adventures of Legaix was given. The privilege of

this recital always belonged to the House of Tamks, who, at their own Kitesu village held royal rank. For reciting the history of the crests and prowess of the House of Legaix, Tamks received a gift from Legaix.

In the counting songs, when Legaix was throwing over his gifts, taunts were made to the other tribes and to the other clans, deriding them for the powers of the Thunderbird on the one hand, and the weakness of the Blackfish and the Wolf.



15. The village of Hazelton from the Skeena River with Skikiyaden Mountain in the background, December 29, 1872; photo by Charles Horetzky. Public Archives of Canada PA22575.

## LEGAIX TRIES TO CONQUER THE NISHGA

Informant: Walter Haldane (Rlkwaiyamk), Kincolith

Recorded by: William Beynon, 1929

Many attempts had been made to take away from the Nishga the control of their river, Lisems (the Nass). Many invasions by the Haida and the Tlingit had been met and defeated. Then Legaix, who was the head chief of all the Tsimshian, made plans to capture the Lisems and to give control of this river to the Eagle clan. At that time the Wolf clan was the most powerful on the Nass River and had control over the other clans, although they were the minority. Kindzadux was the most powerful and wealthiest of the Wolves. It was at the time that the mission at Kincolith was established.

The Eagles under Legaix planned to overcome them by the power of their wealth. He came up to the front of the village of Kincolith. With him were many canoes which were loaded with food and goods of many kinds. When he arrived in front of the village, the Tsimshian began to sing their song of conquest, and they paddled round. Then Legaix stood up and called out, "Give me the great chief Kindzadux! I wish to combat him with copper shields." Saying this, he took a copper shield and threw it into the water. Then he called out, "Give me Kindzadux! I want to meet him in combat of wealth." The Nishga people knew that this was a combat which would test their wealth. Who would be the real power of the Lisems? When Legaix had finished throwing his copper shield into the sea, his followers immediately began to sing, belittling the wealth of the Nishga Wolves. After the Eagles had finished singing, the Nishga began to sing a song in answer to the Tsimshian. Once they had finished, Kindzadux came down to the water's edge, and he also threw a copper shield into the water. As his wealth was being challenged, he was only called upon to meet whatever Legaix had done, until such a time as he would see that the other man's wealth was exhausted. Then he would, in order to show his greater wealth over his challenger, make a greater display.

Legaix still was in his canoes together with his followers. After the Nishga chief had thrown his copper shield into the water, his followers sang of the ability of the Wolves to overcome all, as his wealth was so great. He was the wealthiest man in the world, so they sang, daring Legaix to produce more.

Then Legaix began to call, "Bring me Kindzadux! I want to test his wealth against mine. If I overcome him, then Lisems shall be mine." After he had spoken, the Tsimshian sang, and then Legaix brought up another copper shield, and this he threw into the waters. Then he kept on singing of the amount of wealth belonging to him, and of his storehouse of copper shields. Kindzadux again met this challenge and brought out another copper shield and threw it into the sea, and his

people sang in reply songs of Legaix. Another and another copper shield was thrown into the waters, and then Legaix took many trade blankets and threw them on the beach. The amount was again met, and there was further singing on the part of the Wolves, whose wealth was being challenged. At this time Kindzadux called upon all the Nishga of all the clans to assist him, as it was clear that if he was defeated, then the Nishga would lose control of the Lisems. He had already exhausted his stock of copper shields and had nearly drained his and the Wolf people's wealth in this combat. All the Nishga contributed, and they brought out their valuables to the Wolf chief in this great combat. They knew that Legaix had been assisted by all the Eagles of the Tsimshian nation, so that they would contribute the whole of their wealth.

A Haida chief had married a niece of Kindzadux, and he was reputed to be extremely wealthy. This was known to Legaix. A sister of Legaix called out now, "Give me the Haida woman! I want to meet her, as her wealth has been known to all." With this the Tsimshian began to sing of the great Nishga woman, and the great Haida, and of their fame as being extremely wealthy. Who would dare to challenge the sister of Legaix? When Kindzadux heard this, he called upon his niece and asked her if she were ready to counter the challenge of the Legaix woman. The Haida chief, whose name was Sqakani, also an Eagle, immediately placed all his wealth at the disposal of his wife. The Legaix woman had placed on the beach many different spoons only, and when the Nishga woman saw this, she began to sing, belittling the amount that the Legaix woman had put out, saying that among them it was only a trivial thing that was kept by slaves. She marched down the beach together with her women followers and placed in a pile a great number of trade blankets, and they sang, mocking and belittling the spoons that had been placed in a pile by the Legaix woman. When Legaix heard this, he became very angry and called out again, "Give me Kindzadux! I want to combat once more with him in copper shields." The Tsimshian again began to sing, and, as each shield was thrown over, they sang different songs, calling the various copper shields by name in the songs, so that the Nishga knew the names of each, as they were thrown overboard.

Kindzadux was now down to his last copper. When throwing into the sea the coppers that had been contributed by his nation, he also had sung their names, as each were thrown into the water. Legaix was still in his canoe and he again prepared to throw another copper shield over, when, a young woman, a Nishga who had married into the Tsimshian and had early in the fray come to the shore among her own people, told the Nishga, "Legaix is fooling you, people. He is using the same copper shield over again." So the people watched Legaix very closely, and they saw that there was a line attached to the copper shield he threw into the water, and when he had cast it over, it was hauled up into the canoe. The Nishga people were preparing to retaliate, when Kindzadux discovered this trickery. They all broke out into singing songs belittling this deceit and said, "You are meeting the wealth of

Kindzadux only with songs and shadow copper shields," meaning that he had no wealth, and his treasure was only a fiction. With this defeat of Legaix, he now gave up the fight and this was the last time any attempt was made to capture the Lisems.

Because the Wolves had been called upon to bear the largest portion of the combat, it was then recognized that they should be the people that had the greatest authority on the Lisems.



16. Gitksan chief holding the white owl copper; G. MacDoneld photo, 1972; National Museums of Canada L.O.54847.

**THE SUPREMACY OF LEGAIX**

Informants: Henry Pearce (Xoop) & James Percy, (Kawala) Port Simpson  
Recorded by: William Beynon, 1947

Some years ago the last lineal Legaix passed away, and a great controversy as to his successor sprang up. Some of the Gitanda, whose royal House of Skagwait originated from the original Gunhoot Eagles with Niswamak as their head chief, wanted the position of Legaix to be their own. Some of the Gispaxloats wanted it otherwise. Finally they all agreed to accept the present incumbent, a Killer Whale, whose father was a brother of the last Legaix. He is at least of the same paternal origin or connection as the Legaix House. This question brought about considerable feeling. Some claimed that the Gispaxloats were in considerable potlatch debts to the Kitkatla and the Gitando. But the Gispaxloats denied this claim.

There was a time when all the Tsimshian were very jealous of Legaix and his Gispaxloats people and of the Eagle Gunhoot which had come from the north, then under the chieftainship of Niswamak. These at the time could outdo all the other tribes in wealth and leadership. To make his position ever more secure, Legaix had married many of his nieces into other tribes, thus controlling these through marriage, and in every way Legaix soon became very powerful among all the nation. Many times other tribes conspired to bring his power down, but always they were outdone. Once, a conspiracy to kill him was planned to take place during the secret society season. Legaix heard of it through one of his nieces who had married the chief who was plotting. She chose a trusted slave woman and, preparing some special food, sent her to her uncle and, when the slave came to Legaix she said, "Your niece has sent you food which she has prepared for you." Placing this food in front of the chief, she spoke in a low voice, "Tsimshian are now planning to kill you and to humiliate the Gispaxloats. This is a warning your niece is sending you." With this warning the woman went out, and Legaix called his most trusted men together, Xoop and Nisawalp, both Gunhoot Eagle, and his chief headmen. These headmen said, "We have to combat these plotters, and we will combat them with wealth, so that they shall always be in our debt."

One of the reasons why Legaix was so hated among the Tsimshian was that he had had a song composed as a paddling song, which he used when he went to feasts of other chiefs. Legaix, by this song, was openly flaunting his superiority over all chiefs and tribes, and this angered the Tsimshian.

He dispatched his messengers inviting all the Tsimshian chiefs and tribes to his feast. As they came in, he kept singing his paddling song, which had angered them. It was then that he challenged these tribes to combat him with wealth. None accepted his challenge, so again



he sang his paddling song, and he distributed to each chief one copper shield, and to the headman, moose skins. In this way he overcame and put to shame those that were going to humiliate him, and endeavour to do away with him. All were afraid to challenge him in a combat of wealth. None knew how many copper shields he really possessed or just how wealthy he was. Immediately after this feast, Legaix called together his headmen and spoke to them, "I am now planning to have a picture of myself painted in some prominent place, together with all my copper shields. This must be a spot where all canoes pass and see." Many of his headmen suggested that the Skeena River would be the best place. But he rejected that because not all the tribes went to the Skeena River. Some suggested Qwawk (Wark Mountain), but again it was rejected, because not all the canoes went by there. Then a headman said, "Kutsiyanxl (Ten-Mile-Point), on the Nass River. It was a point where every canoe must pass to go for eulachons. That should be the right place for the picture." So plans were at once made, and a painter was chosen from among his own people to paint Legaix's face and his copper shields on the bluff side. Chosen for this painting was a man named Dawxensk. Many cedar bark ropes were made, and a huge basket was lowered from the top of the bluff down the bare side. This picture represented Legaix surrounded by seventy-four replicas of copper shields, this represented the number of copper shields owned by Legaix.

After the picture was completed, Legaix again sent out his messengers, inviting all the Tsimshian chiefs and their headmen. It was at the time when the people were going to the Nass for eulachons. At this feast he assumed authority over all this territory and this became known as Welgilks-Tshaltamtk (Place-of-Picture). This is how it is known today. To all the chiefs who were his guests he gave a copper shield and a bundle of moose skins; to each of the chiefs' headmen one half bundle of moose skin. To Tsibasa, chief of the Kitkatla, who was his greatest rival, he gave, besides the copper shields and moose hides, a canoe with many slaves. So in this way Legaix overcame the Tsimshian.

## LEGAIX TAUNTS THE GITLAN

Informant: Jos. Bradley, (Niyuks) Port Simpson

Recorded by: William Beynon, 1947

The Raven chief of the Gitlan, Niswaksenahlk, had a very beautiful sister, of whom the chief thought a great deal. She was an only sister. Many chiefs wanted to marry her. While she was very young, she took sick and died. The grief of the chief was great indeed, so great was it that he went away and visited with his Raven friend who was the chief at Bella Bella, whose village was known as Wakalislá.

When he arrived at the house of his Raven brother, he saw there a very beautiful young woman, a niece of the Bella Bella chief, and this young woman was the exact double of his dead sister. Niswaksenahlk was so impressed by this young woman that he said to his tribesman who had accompanied him, "This surely is my sister, who has come back from the dead. I am going to ask the chief, my brother, to give her to me to replace my dead sister, in order that my House shall not become extinct." The Gitlan chief was in great sorrow and grief, and thus he spoke to the chief of the Bella Bella, "My brother, I have seen my sister. She lives again and she is in your House, your niece. I ask you to pity me and give her to me, that she may become a member of my House. Her son shall be my successor and he shall inherit all of my wealth. He shall be a very high chief among the Tsimshian."

This woman had a young son, whose name was Haimas, and he had just finished his secret society elevations and was of very high rank among his own people. The Bella Bella chief considered for a long while and when he heard what his brother Raven had promised about his niece's son being his successor, he consented and said, "I hear you, brother, and I know you will take good care of my niece. All I want to do now, I will tell my people. I will hold a feast and at this feast I will give my grandson many powers, which have not as yet been seen outside of my House, and my own dancing paraphernalia."

The Gitlan chief was now very happy and he immediately planned to return to his village at Metlakatla, to show to the people the return of his sister and her child. On his arrival at Metlakatla, he first called together his Gitlan people, announcing to them, "My sister and her son Haimas have come back to me. I will call together all of the chiefs and I will again raise my head from my grief, and I will announce that Haimas will be my successor, and will be your chief on my death." To this the Gitlan agreed and all of the Tsimshian chiefs and their headmen were invited.

Niswaksenahlk took the dancing paraphernalia that had been given to Haimas and he wore them when the guests came in, each being announced

and received in their turn. Haimas danced in front of the chiefs and scattered eagle down upon each of them. When he finished food was served to the guests. Then Niswaksenahlk announced, "All the great chiefs, headmen, speakers for the great chiefs, I want to show you my sister who was dead and now returns with her son, Haimas, who now entertains you. The young man, my nephew, will be my successor and will be of help to you in your councils. He is of a great group of people, who are famous both in war and hunting. All the new crests that you see have been given by the chief Hamtsit to Haimas." After this, many gifts were presented to the guests.

The young chief Haimas was always away hunting and fishing, and particularly he fished for crabs which were very plentiful in the neighbourhood of the Metlakatla village. He would go fishing, this with his young companions, whenever he could get a chance. There suddenly came to the Gitlan village messengers from the Ginaxangik inviting all the Gitlan chiefs to a feast to be given by the chief Wisaiks. It so happened that Haimas was away fishing crabs, and a Gitlan canoe went to look for him. In the meantime the other chiefs had gone on to the feast. Now each chief had special festive privileges which had been acquired by proclaiming them in a feast. Legaix had, as his special and exclusive privilege, to come into any of the festivities last. Wisaiks of the Ginaxangik was to sit on two ceremonial boxes. Nishot had the privilege of always sitting at the doorway. Saksaxt of the Gitwilgoats had the privilege of coming in first. Nobody would go to a feast until Saksaxt had gone. Another chief, Nislaganos would not come to a feast until he had been called three times, that is, the messengers on the day of the feast would come three times for him.

At this Ginaxangik feast, all of the chiefs had come together with their tribesmen, even Legaix whose privilege was to enter last. He came in, but Haimas had as yet not entered the feast and was delaying it by not appearing. Messengers had been sent to call him, but as yet he had not come. It made the other chiefs very angry that this young chief should be breaking the privileges of the other chiefs, who were very vexed. Haimas had not done this on purpose, but was away spearing crabs. Finally he was found by his tribesmen, who had searched for him. They came to the feast which was being held up. They could not begin with the feast until every chief and his tribesmen were there. When Haimas walked in he was seated next to Legaix, who was angry, because he had assumed his special privilege of entering a feast last.

After the feast was in progress, Legaix turned to the youthful Haimas and asked, "Why were you so late in coming to this feast?" Haimas replied, "I was spearing crabs and did not know of this feast." This angered Legaix, who knew that all the other chiefs were secretly laughing at him for having had his privilege disregarded. He therefore taunted the young Haimas, "Say, you, why don't you give a crab feast sometime? You are such a good crab spearer." Several of the Gitlan headmen saw Legaix speaking to Haimas and they knew that Haimas had, unknowingly, disregarded the privilege of Legaix.

As soon as the feast was over, these men went to Haimas and asked, "What did Legaix say to you, during the feast?" "He asked me why I held up the feast. When I told him I was out spearing crabs, he told me I should give a crab feast." Immediately all of the Gitlan headmen met together, and Niyuks said, "We will do as he says. We will go to Knemas and there we shall build a large house. We will send out our hunters, who will get many mountain goats, and we will save as much as we can the kidney fat, which we shall use as crab meat. This is a taunt. We will show Legaix, who will be the head guest, what Haimas can do." So all agreed to what Niyuks had said, and the time set was to be in the early spring, when the people set out for the Nass to fish for eulachon.

The Gitlan were making all these preparations in great secrecy. The hunters had gone out and they had much mountain goat flesh and kidney fat. Great stores of berries were cached at Knemas, also salmon. The feast was to be given at a time when all of this kind of food was scarce among the Tsimshian, as during the cold season and taboo months when no food was gathered; thus by the spring nearly all of the stored food was gone and the people were very often on the verge of famine. The Gitlan made every preparation and were doing it to belittle Legaix and extinguish the taunt he had addressed to Haimas.

The Gitlan had completed their house at Knemas. It was a large house, and the floor was of a reddish earth. When the fire was lighted, it reflected a reddish glow. So they called it Tsemknemakem-wilp (The Red House). When everything was ready and the people were moving to the Nass to fish eulachon, the Gitlan sent messengers to all the Tsimshian tribes inviting them to the Red House.

After Haimas had danced his reception dance and had spread eagle down upon all the guests, Niyuks called out, "Come, bring out the crab spears! The chiefs have now been awaiting a long while. We shall give them the crabs my master has gotten." So then each one of the guests were given miniature crab spears. Then Niyuks called out, "Come, bring out the crab meat! The chiefs have fasted long enough." Then the white kidney fat of the mountain goat was placed in front of the guests, and then the guests roasted this and ate of it. As they ate, Tiben, one of the Gitlan headmen, went about admonishing, "Do not hurry, chief, take your time! You are eating the crab flesh which my master Haimas has caught, and having caught plenty, he wishes now to have you all taste it."

Right from the start, Legaix understood that this feast was directed at him, and he was embarrassed, as he felt that all the other chiefs knew of his taunts to Haimas. They also knew that when this feast was being designated as a crab feast, it was directed against him. Then the other food was brought out and the people were astonished at the huge quantity of it, since it was at the time of the year when it was scarce. It was at this feast that Haimas exhibited more of the

powers that he had brought from Bella Bella. Haimas brought shame to Legaix, and the only way Legaix could equalize the fact that the Gitlan had accepted the taunt he had made in anger, was to give an even greater feast. Haimas was thus well established among the Tsimshian, and he received the recognition of a head chief. The Gitlan people had overcome Legaix.



17. Smoke houses at Kisegegas village on the Upper Skeena River, photo by C.M. Barbeau 1920. National Museums of Canada photo 49496.

## A CHALLENGE FEAST OF TSIBASA

Informant: Henry Watt, (Nisnawhl), Kitkatla.

Recorded by: William Beynon, 1948-49

A great rivalry always prevailed between the high chiefs of the Kitkatla and the Gispaxloats tribes of the Tsimshian Proper. Legaix had proclaimed himself the foremost chief of all the Tsimshian and had established the privilege of being the last of any guests to come to any feast. No feast could begin until he had arrived. But his authority was always being challenged by Tsibasa, head chief of the Kitkatla. Also in the winter ceremonials, each would always try to outdo the other in having the best powers and the most modern theatrical devices.

So this time, there was a great athlete among the Kitkatla, and another among the Gispaxloats. Each of these men were wrestlers and had never been defeated. Each had killed many of his competitors. They would wrestle until one competitor had his back broken and had died. Neither of these two had ever met and there was much talking among all the tribes as to the outcome of a match between them, should they meet. It was a foregone idea that they would be forced to meet, through some prearranged situation whereby one would be so provoked that combat would be unavoidable. With this in view Tsibasa said to his headmen, "I am going to invite Legaix, and perhaps we may provoke the Gispaxloats in some way. There will be nothing else he can do but to have his strong man to challenge ours." The strong man of the Kitkatla tribe was Ayairansk, a Raven; and the strong man of the Gispaxloats was Buk, a Killer Whale. Messengers were sent to the Tsimshian that there would be a great feast. As the messengers went to every one of the Tsimshian chiefs, they said, "My master invites you. There will be great happiness in my master's House, and he wants to share it with all his fellow chiefs." It was not thus made known just what the purpose of Tsibasa's feast was for. When the messengers had finished their errand they returned, and a few days after would be the time when all the invited chiefs would set for Laxlan, the village of Tsibasa. The guests would not all land together; nor would they come directly to the village itself, but would land some distance from the Kitkatla village, in full view of the people. When all had landed at the camping place, they would make ready to come in their ceremonial dress.

All of the Tsimshian had gathered at the temporary camping place. This place was in constant contact with Tsibasa, who knew when each chief arrived. When the invited guests had arrived, he sent over his greeters with invitations to the chiefs saying, "Chiefs, you and all your people will come to the house of Tsibasa at once." When they had invited the guests, the greeters returned, and on their return the great drum began to sound in the chief's house. This drum was a huge box about six feet in length; in height, five feet, and in thickness, about

two feet. It was suspended from the rafters of the house, usually alongside of the singing platforms, and when this started to beat, it was either an alarm to arouse the people or an announcement that the chief was now ready to receive his guests at a feast.

As soon as it was heard, the invited guests made preparations to go to the feast, and the order in which they were invited was that of their entry. The first tribe would go and so on, and the last of the Tsimshian were Gispaxloats and their chief Legaix. Legaix, whose special privilege it was to be the last to enter, was acknowledged. He had been the last to arrive at the camping grounds. Now when the Kitkatla greeters came to the Gispaxloats camp, one of the greeters took offence at what one of the young Gispaxloats had said. This greeter was Nixtsis, he was the head man of Kitkatla, a very influential person. As he had a deformed face, this gave him a bird-like appearance. So the young Gispaxloats had exclaimed, "Look at the blue jay without its wings." This was repeated many times and was heard by Nixtsis, who was very angry. To further hurt the Kitkatla's feelings, the young Gispaxloats added, "That is how all their wisemen appear. They are like blue jays without wings." "The Gispaxloats are making fun of us. Some of their young people have just called me a blue jay without wings, and some others have said, 'All our wise men have the same comic appearance.'"

When Tsibasa heard this, he was very angry too as his big drum was now beating to invite the guests. He was so angry that he said, "Stop beating the drum, and send my greeters to tell the invited guests that the feast has been postponed. The greeters will be sent to invite them when everything is ready. Tsibasa has changed his plans. He does not want you to be disappointed." These greeters went over at once, and when they returned from the Tsimshian camp, Tsibasa said, "I will now use and install one of my most difficult and secret powers: my Revolving Steps. Over these all the guests must arrive, and only a few will be able to enter over them without humiliation. As this is a special privilege to use in my own feast, no one must take offence. But I will humiliate them, and they shall be sorry for having offended you. I want especially to humiliate Legaix and to show his tribe that we are as big as they are, and as clever."

The messengers went over at once and to each of the invited chiefs they went, spreading eagle down, saying as they did, "Chief, chief, Tsibasa has changed his plans of entertaining you, and he wishes to make you all happy. That is why he has changed his plans. He was afraid that the present plans he has intended using would not have been amusing enough. So he has at the last moment, while he still had the chance, changed his strategy. So be patient, chiefs, and wisemen who are the councillors of the chiefs." This was repeated to every one of the chiefs, who now retired to their camping place to await the next call of the Kitkatla chief.

Tsibasa then called together his helpers, and they at once began to build the Revolving Steps leading up into the small aperture in front of the feast house, through which all of the guests would have to enter. All that fell off or were unable to use these steps were humbled and considered as inferior people, until they would redeem themselves by feats of dancing. Many of the Kitkatla were against using this, as they feared its surprise use would lead to war and feuds between the Kitkatla and those humiliated. They were afraid of the consequences. But Tsibasa was very much angered and humiliated by the ridicule of the young Gispaxloats men who had said, "Look at the blue jay without wings!"

They decided that only when Legaix and his men used these revolving steps would they manipulate them so as to humiliate. With the other guests they would not do so. The entrance was at a rising angle, and in going through it was then that the steps would revolve, and anyone caught unawares would be thrown off. Everyone had to go in through this. No one could refuse, and meanwhile they would be taunted in song by the Kitkatla and be referred to as hermaphrodites. This was a very low insult. So now, when everything was all ready, and the singers had intoned the songs of the power, Revolving Steps, Tsibasa sent out his messengers again to invite in the Tsimshian chiefs, and in the same way each chief and his tribe. In the same order the chiefs and their people came and were met at the shore by Tsibasa's greeters, who met them with welcome performances.

This took the form of a contest between those on the shore and the guests in the canoes, who threw to each other an invisible supernatural power. The first would be thrown by the greeters on the shore, who then sang of the virtues of his power. Then one in the canoe would stand up and reach into the air, and then grab something and struggle and wrestle with it, finally overcoming it. Then those in the canoe began singing that this power was easily overcome, and the people on the shore were beaten, and then those in the canoe began to sing again. This time they sang of the virtues of their own power and they threw this invisible power to those standing on the shore. One of the greeters jumped into the air and grasped something and then began to wrestle and tumble about with this invisible power, and after a long struggle overcame it. Those on shore began taunting and singing of the weakness of the power, and then threw out their power. The same procedure was repeated as at first. This they did several times and then the master of ceremonies would call out, "Come, chief, come! The fire now burns in my master's house. He has been awaiting your arrival for a long while."

The guests landed and were led up to the house. The singers of Tsibasa began to sing of the virtues of the Revolving Steps, declaring that only brave people were allowed to use them, as was being done now. Then the guests were led to the steps, and if it is the will of the person operating these steps, he can pull a cord and the steps begin



collapsing, but otherwise the guests walked up and there was nothing happening. This whole procedure was repeated with each one of the guest chiefs and their people. It came to Legaix and the Gispaxloats, whose special privilege it was to be the last guest in, and he also was the principal guest. Legaix and his tribesmen reached the Revolving Steps, and as Legaix walked up, the steps collapsed, throwing him off. He was followed by the strong man of the tribe, and this man also was thrown a long distance, and he was much humiliated. Legaix went out of the feast very indignant and returned to his camp together with his people. The Kitkatla sent messengers to beg him to come to the feast, and many times the messengers went out, but Legaix and his people paid no attention.

Then one of the Kitkatla chiefs came, and Legaix replied, "Because you have come, is why I will go to the feast." Legaix came in and this time he did use the Revolving Steps without being made to fall, and they were then seated in the feast house, when a Kitkatla man began to sing about their strong man, who had never been defeated and would never be defeated. So much was said about this man, and taunts were being directed at the huge Gispaxloats strong man. It was an open challenge. The Gispaxloats went to where the Kitkatla man sat and without warning grasped him and threw him down in the middle of the house. The Gispaxloats was sitting at the top of the five terraces or steps of the house, and when he threw the Kitkatla man down their terrace steps, he broke the man's back. There was considerable excitement, and again the Gispaxloats people went out, and this time the Kitkatla people were humiliated, as their strong man, who they were sure would be able to overcome his rival, had been killed and without any struggle. They had expected to be easily victorious. Legaix took refuge in the House of Lutkutsemti, an Eagle House of the same origin as Legaix. Depxa, who was a relative of the Kitkatla strong man, came in to the place where Legaix was and for a time, threatened him. Soon after Lutkutsemti and Tsibasa sent in their headmen to scatter eagle down upon Legaix and his headmen, and again invited them to the feast. Now at this time, had the Gispaxloats failed to respond, a Gilodza man was ready to challenge the Kitkatla. But the Kitkatla had been overcome.



18. Smoke house with dried salmon, an important element in trade, Upper Skeena River. British Columbia Provincial Museum. PN 6626.

## LEGAIX CREMATES HIMSELF

Informant: Matthew Johnson (Laraxnits) Gispaxloats

Recorded by: William Beynon, 1926

There was a keen competition between the Kitkatla and the Gispaxloats tribes in the pursuit of making the most beautiful representation of power in the secret society activities, or the most striking magic, especially on the return of initiates from the heavens. Legaix had always been considered the most spectacular in bringing back his initiates. But at a performance in Kitselas, at which the Gispaxloats had been invited, they had seen something that was more fantastic than ever before. In front of the village, in the water at Kitselas, there emerged a huge log standing upright. This was called the Snag-of-Sandbar. It drifted right in front of the village and opened as if split in two. The people saw standing inside a young daughter of Tsibasa, the Killer Whale chief of Kitselas, who was an initiate and returning from her initiation in the heavens. The people beheld this. The log closed up again and sank into the water<sup>1</sup>. Then the people heard the call of the naxnox [spirit] whistle behind them in the village. They beheld the same girl they had seen on the log standing in front of the house. This had been the most spectacular event connected with the return of an initiate from the sky. Because of this the supremacy of Legaix had been surpassed, and in veiled ways it was conveyed to Legaix.

Legaix's pride being hurt by his defeat by the Kitkatla, he went back to his Gispaxloats village with one thought. This was to outdo them. He took some of his leading men into his confidence and sent them away to the north in order to find a man somewhere who was exactly his double. They discovered a Chilkat, purchased him, and brought him back in secrecy to the house of Legaix. Legaix himself immediately went into hiding. Not all of his family was aware of what actually was happening. His place in public was taken and assumed by the slave bought from Chilkat, even to the extent of associating with Legaix's wives. To all intents and purposes he was Legaix himself.

That spring, while the people had gone to the Nass for eulachon fishing, the Gispaxloats circulated the rumor that Legaix was planning a most wonderful feat which would surpass all other feats of its kind. Before summertime the news went out that Legaix proposed to cremate himself. The rumor was further enlarged: It would be the greatest secret society display accomplished anywhere. This news aroused much attention at large.

When the secret society season opened, the messengers of the Gispaxloats tribe especially invited Tsibasa and his Kitkatla people. After they all had gathered into Legaix's house the dance took place with the slave, presumed to be Legaix, and attired with his regalia.

Everyone except a few believed that this was actually Legaix himself. When the dance finished one of the Gitsawnk, experts in the secret arts, spoke and said, "My master is about to show you that his power over life and death are greater than those possessed by anyone else. They are so great that he will cremate himself. Then his attendants will sing over him, until he shall be restored to life."

The Chilkat slave impersonating Legaix was then taken and actually cremated in front of the guests. After his body was reduced to ashes, the ashes were taken and placed in a large box, in full view of the people. The box was closed up. The attendants of Legaix, those of the Gitsawnk group, started to sing the supernatural song of Legaix. After a long while, the people heard faint sounds coming from inside the box. This kept on until the sound increased in volume. A long time later, the voice inside got louder and louder. Then the box opened, and Legaix, alive once more, stood up; the actual Legaix who had been in hiding. Tsibasa, chief of the Kitkatla, whose name as a child had been Nootk, saw with his own eyes Legaix rise out of the box while emitting a sound as if utterly exhausted. Legaix called out, "Come on, Nawts<sup>2</sup>! Can you do better than cremate yourself and come back to life?"

This is how Legaix regained his prestige.

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<sup>1</sup> This snag was operated like this. It was a hollowed out log box attended to by a canoe afloat. The log was sunk and towed in such a way that it was waterproof. The end was hidden by the sides of the canoe. The girl inside was not really the initiate, but a double, while the real initiate was hidden in the house. All this initiation was done by doubles. In other words, the people would see a presumed initiate in the water and usually landing in front of the village, while the double would be hidden behind, watching the performance.

<sup>2</sup> Hermaphodite

## THE LEGAIX GROUP ACCUSED OF PRACTICING WITCHCRAFT

Informant: Mark Luther, Port Simpson, 1926

Recorded by: William Beynon

Tgaxataw, chief of the Ginaxangik tribe was very ill, having an abscess on his left side near his heart. He was slowly sinking and getting weaker. All the chiefs came to visit him and sympathized with him. One day Niswamaq, who was then the Gispaxloats chief, came to him and asked him in a quiet friendly way, saying, "Now chief, I should send your elders up the Skeena before it is too late, for I know what is causing your illness. The belt you wore is in the insides of the dead Legaix, who is buried on the Skeena. When Legaix died, he was disembowelled before burial. Your strap and the belongings of many other chiefs were placed into his insides." This Niswamaq whispered to Tgaxataw so that nobody else could hear. He himself had been associated with Legaix when this happened.

Tgaxataw then sent out all his tribesmen from his house and called only his trusted councillors. He told them what Niswamaq had said, and it was decided that they would immediately make plans to go to the Skeena secretly, unknown to the other tribes. So they declared to all casually that they were going on a raid against the Kitselas tribe at the Canyon, to avenge a wrong suffered from them. This was to hide their real purpose. Everyone knew where the body of Legaix was buried, and that a heavy structure of hemlock logs had been placed on the body to prevent animals from exhuming it. Tgaxataw's sister had married Niswamaq and had two sons, who were the nephews of Tgaxataw. They were kept in ignorance of what the Ginaxangik tribe were going to do. But as soon as these nephews heard of the raiding plans about Kitselas, they immediately wanted to go along, and could not be refused. An extra canoe was added to the party, which was under the leadership of four of the elders who were taken into the confidence of the Ginaxangik chief and were in charge.

The other Tsimshian folk were now going to the Nass for eulachon fishing, and the Gispaxloats too had gone there. No one suspected the real purpose of the Ginaxangik and surmised that they were going on a raiding expedition.

After a few days journey, these Ginaxangik came to the point where Legaix's body had been buried, and the elder of the party said, "Two canoes must go on first to scout around and see how everything is, as the Kitselas may be on their way to their coastal village. And the rest of us will wait here." The canoes with the two sons of Niswamaq and two others were sent further up the Skeena River. When they were out of sight, the Ginaxangik started to take down the hemlock obstruction in great haste, as the other canoes on scout duty were expected to return the next day. They exhumed the body of Legaix,

opening it up. As Niswamaq had said, they found the strap in the cavity where the heart had been. It was now nearly almost rotted. They also found many other things that belonged to other people. These the Ginaxangik also took, and returned the body to the grave. They replaced the cover, and they made a big fire. They destroyed all the things they had found except the belt of their chief.

As soon as the Ginaxangik returned to the river, the other members of their tribe who had been left aside came back, and they all set out for the Nass, taking along with them the sick chief Tgaxataw. The troubles of Tgaxataw were relieved as soon as the belt was taken away from the body of Legaix. He immediately felt better. When they took the belt to the river to cleanse it in the cold water, he began to shiver and went on shivering until they put the belt on the fire, burning it. The canoe that had been up the river to inspect with the two sons of Niswamaq came down and travelled much faster than the other one which lagged behind to kill time. The fact they they had stopped right at the point where Legaix was buried immediately had aroused suspicion in the minds of the young men, that the Ginaxangik were going to do something to the body of their paternal relative. This caused one of them to say, "There is something wrong here. These men are going to do something where our father lies." None of the other men in the canoe spoke. The young men insisted that the canoe turn about and return to the point where the other Ginaxangik were. The elders had just finished burying Legaix and burning all the things they had found, when the other canoes returned. The two young men were surprised that everything was as it should be. They gave up the idea of a raid, as it had been called. They had now violated the custom of war by having broken some taboos. They went back to their village.

When they arrived at the Nass, they saw that Tgaxataw had improved, and he was well again.

The rumour spread to the Gispaxloats that the Ginaxangik had taken the body of Legaix and had thrown it into the Skeena. This started a quarrel between the two. But eventually the real purpose of the expedition became known, that is, what had been done to the body of Legaix. Because Niswamaq had married a sister of Tgaxataw, he felt compassion for him. That is why he volunteered the information.

## LEGAIX'S TRIUMPH

Informant: Matthew Johnson, (Laknits), Gispaxloats  
Recorded by: William Beynon, 1926

In the fall of one year, the Tsimshian all gathered together on the Skeena, to fish salmon and gather fruits. At this particular time, the Tsimshian chiefs of all their tribes excepting the Gispaxloats held a secret conference planning that, when the people should gather at Metlakatla, they would kill off the Gispaxloats and Legaix, because he was such a tyrant.

When the people moved back to Metlakatla, a woman of the Gispaxloats who had married into one of the other tribes, came to her relatives and said, "I have come to warn you, the other tribes are now to kill off the Gispaxloats and Legaix." With this information the woman went in to see Legaix himself and said, "Chief Legaix, the other Tsimshian are going to attack us and kill you, as they are jealous of you and of our tribe." Legaix answered, "Good! We shall prepare for them. We shall invite them to a feast where we will combat them with copper shields. Should they outdo us in copper shields, we shall use slaves in combat. Should they again outdo us, we shall combat them in their wealth. If we are overcome, then we shall fight them." Legaix made all preparations for the feast. He was assisted by all of his tribe who had brought in their contribution of copper shields, with which they were to awe all the other tribes. They did this very secretly so that the other tribes did not know of these plans. One night, the same Gispaxloats woman came in again and said, "At midnight last night, a secret meeting was held by those people who are going to attack you, and they have decided that tomorrow will be the time for the attack. So it is well that you should escape." Legaix said, "Good! Tomorrow, we shall give our feast and attack. So it is well that you should escape." Legaix said, "Good! Tomorrow, we shall give our feast and tonight, I shall send messengers to all the chiefs inviting them." Those who had planned to attack Legaix put off their plans and did not attack. No one knew the nature of Legaix's feast and what it was intended for. They all arrived the next day, and Legaix stood up and began to sing his reception song, which from the start showed that it was a taunting song. In the song of each calling, he belittled them all.

After the Gispaxloats had sung this song, Legaix stood up and called his councillors, singing, "What is the matter? Do you not see that my guests, the chiefs, are tired? They have been here a long time." Then Nisawalp, a councillor, called out, "Yes, chief, yes, my master! These chiefs have heard that you have no copper shields." To this Legaix replied, "Why do you not show them my coppers? Am I a slave that I should keep my copper shields hidden? Bring them out! Put one before each one of these chiefs, my guests." Then the Gispaxloats

brought the copper shields out and placed one before each chief, and before each chief's spokesman. As this was done, Legaix had given away eighteen copper shields. He then stopped and said, addressing the chiefs, "Who among you will try to do as I have done? Whoever thinks he can do as much must accomplish it now, and stand before us. It will not be well enough simply to think that they could do it, but they must stand up now. I have still plenty left that I can do."

Then the Tsimshian tribes were shamed, because they had been overcome. They could only come back at him with common wealth, as he had challenged them to show their strength and wealth. He had begun by showing his own wealth. Now it was for them to do likewise. They could not do so, and were humiliated when confronted with the great wealth of Legaix. So that, in this way, they were defeated. The tribes, now humiliated, dropped their plot to do away with Legaix and the Gispaxloats. Legaix, to humiliate them more completely, and to show his mastery over the Nass River tribe also, called his people and said, "I am going to show my power to all the tribes that surround me, and I am going to show my picture painted on the cliffs at the entrance of the Nass, so that all the world which comes to gather food there shall see by the picture that I am the complete master of the river."

One of the councillors said, "It is well that we do so." The chief then said to his tribe, "It will soon be time for the people to go to the Nass to gather food. We shall tell them to meet on the Nass, when I have had my picture painted there." Next day it was arranged to send messengers to invite all the Tsimshian to Legaix's house. As each of these chiefs arrived, they were met by the Gispaxloats and set in their proper place in order of rank and importance. After all had arrived, Legaix gave them another dance. When he had finished dancing for them, he called out, "Come, bring my brother chiefs food. They have been waiting a long while." The food was brought out, the first being salmon that had been obtained from the Gitksan, then seaweed gotten from the Bella Bella, then fish eggs, herring eggs from the Skidegate, then chokecherries, which had been obtained from the Nass, and all of the countries from which these foods are usually gathered. These were described while being eaten, in order to show how far the power of Legaix extended in his trading privileges, and to what extent he travelled.

When all had partaken of these foods, Legaix spoke and said to the chiefs and all the Tsimshian nations, "I have assembled you together in order to show all the surrounding people our power. I am going to draw my picture on the cliffs of Ktsiyanexl (Flat-Bold-Cliff). As soon as I have completed this picture, I shall summon all the people on their way to the Nass." As the chiefs heard this, they agreed, the councillors speaking for their own individual chiefs.

Legaix gathered his tribe together and, taking his wisemen in council, he decided that a basket would have to be used to lower the

artist from the top of the cliff. He said, "What shall we use, as our cedar bark ropes are not strong enough? They would break and bring ridicule upon us from the other tribes." One of the headmen remembered that there were some Haida visiting Saksax, chief of the Gitwilgoats. So Legaix sent his headman to see the Haida, and inquire whether they had root ropes made from the saplings of spruce roots. The chief answered, "Yes! we have such ropes at our village." Legaix said, "Go and bring some to me. We shall purchase them from you." So the Haida from Skidegate set out and were away only five days. They came directly to Legaix's house and he purchased the rope, for which he paid five slaves and two copper shields, because it was from a Haida chief that he had purchased it, and he wanted to pay a high price, making the transaction an important one. It was to gain fame among his people in having his picture painted at the mouth of the Nass, which would give him power over the territory. When everything was completed a man named Nisaot was chosen from among the Gispaxloats to paint this picture.

They went to the mouth of the Nass, and it was decided to go up into the hill and lower Nisaot down from the top of the cliff. The chief had his tribeswomen make a large basket woven from strong roots and large enough to hold a man and all his articles of painting. As soon as they were ready to paint this picture, Legaix sent his messengers to all the tribes, calling them to gather to this place called Kstiyanax. The tribes were: the Gitando, the Gitsis, the Gitwilgoats, the Kitkatla, the Kitesu, the Gitlan, the Gilodza, the Kitimat, the Kitselas, the Gitzaklahl, the Ginadoiks, the Ginaxangik. These all assembled here, on their way to fish eulachon, and Legaix called out to all the gathering, "I am now to have my picture painted on this cliff, which will be for our future children to behold. They shall know the power that is our own."

He led out the artist and put upon him his own dancing garments and headdress, as a payment for his services. He then led him off to the top of the cliff, and lowered him in the basket to complete his work. When the work was finished, the people saw that there was a picture of a man surrounded by copper shields. This became known as the picture of Legaix. When it was completed, Legaix turned to his guests and said, "To those who wanted to overthrow me and my tribe I wish to reveal to them my great wealth and power. They have always stood me in times of difficulty. No one can surpass them. That is why I have painted my picture here. My power shall travel both on the Skeena and the Nass rivers. Over both waters I am the master." So that those who had planned to defeat the Legaix and his Gispaxloats tribe were completely humiliated. They went on their way to fish eulachons, and there were no further plots to destroy Legaix and his tribe.



## THE GISPAXLOATS RAID ON THE KISPLOX

Recorded by: Jimmy Williams, of Kisplox.

Interpreter: William Beynon, 1920 Hazelton, B.C.

The Gispaxloats had always come up from their village on the lower Skeena and kept in touch very often with the people of Kisplox. They came here all the time to trade for berries. At one time, their whole tribe arrived ready for battle. There were no women in their party. They walked up along the river below the village, and came on to Kisplox. The Kisplox were suspicious, owing to their large number. Some of the Kisplox took flight, and there were not very many left in the village, when one of the Gispaxloats opened an umbrella. The people of Kisplox were stunned at the sight of this umbrella, a novelty. They called back all those that had taken flight, who returned to their village. The Gispaxloats were right below the village, on the point. Only one of the Kisplox, a chief named Alux, had a slave. He put on his slave his dancing raiments. The slave's name meant Grouse-with-Red-Round-Eyes. Chief Alux sat his slave down at the rear of the house. He was a brave man and a great warrior, and he was preparing himself for this raid, for he knew that the Tsimshian were there for some purpose. He was getting ready for them.

The Gispaxloats then attacked the village, and the first house they broke into was the house in which the Kisplox had prepared for festivities. The Tsimshian attacked, thinking that this slave all dressed up was the chief himself. Meanwhile Alux was hidden inside of a house post which he had hollowed out. He killed a prince or chief of the Gispaxloats, Akustin. Many of the Kisplox had taken flight, with only the very brave warriors remaining behind to give battle to the Gispaxloats. Among them was Tsikesgo, of the House of Kwiyambe. He rushed to the top of the wall, in the upper part of the village, and hid himself in one of the cache pits, having his bow and arrows with him. The arrows were made differently then. They had a stone point which detached itself from the shaft when it got into a body. The Tsimshian overtook a good many of the fugitives, among whom were women and children.

On their return, after putting the Kisplox folk to flight, the warriors were fired upon by the Kisplox who had stayed behind in the cache pits. Many of them were struck by these arrows. After they had killed a number of Tsimshian, the Kisplox warriors were themselves put to flight. The Gispaxloats then went to the village and burned it. The Kisplox kept on running until they came to a place that belonged to Alux, called Beaver-dam, on the Kisplox River. Here they stayed for a while. They settled there for some time, fearing another invasion by the Tsimshian. After living there for a period, they moved back to their old village.

They were afflicted again, this time by a great epidemic of sickness which was termed 'excrement of blood', cholera. They cremated all their dead. Often they burned as many as three people at the same time. There was only one thing they used which could save the victims of this epidemic. That was the excrement of the dog which they mixed with elderberry roots.

The people moved another time, now to Wilnadeks (Where-it-Comes-Close-in). The river ran close to the camp, about where the second cabin now stands. They lived here for a period, possibly three years. Then they moved on further down the river to Nasgandamit (Where-the-Kenikenick-Grows), about fourteen miles above Kispiox. They moved down again towards Kispiox, to the place where they had their fishing stations all along that area. They lived here for a long time. Finally, they returned to Kispiox and built their own village there.

It was at the time that the Tsimshian took Luxkyist as prisoner. The reason why Legaix had raided the village of Kispiox was that Luxkyist was moving to Metlakatla. Legaix intended to force these people to build him graded house. The Tsimshian recognized some of their relatives among the prisoners. They had their crests, so they redeemed them. For instance, Hale redeeming Luxkyist, of the household of Qayl and Alux.

The Kispiox people still had it within themselves to be avenged. For many years all intercourse between them and the Tsimshian was broken off, until one time the Tsimshian came up, but only as far as the canyon up here, below Glen Vowell, which is named Axtselasus (Mouth-Up-Canyon). There were only three canoes. Gitamas, of the House of Kwiyambe, heard them. He was able to put all of these Tsimshians to death and bring their canoes up, saving only one woman, who was beautiful. The news soon travelled down the river to the Gitanmaax tribe and their warriors. Galexstaganhltiyatu and Waats, a Laxsel of the House of Hatidzex, went up the river and found out that the news was true, that Gitamas had put all the Tsimshian to death. They went on further up the river to try and take back from him the Tsimshian woman he had captured. When Gitamas was about to be overpowered he took his spear and killed the woman so that they could not get her. This happened many years ago.

**LEGAIX'S ATTACK ON THE KISPIOX TRIBE**

Informant: Chief Semidik, Kitwangak

Recorded by: William Beynon, 1924

Legaix and his band passed by Kitwangak in dugout canoes, and proceeded up the river for a raid on the Kispiox tribe. He was at the time planning to give a big feast at Metlakatla, on the coast at the mouth of the Skeena River. He arrived at the village of Kispiox just below the rapids and stopped there. While he was waiting here, he sent a canoe on to take a preview of the village. When this canoe landed there, the canoe-load of warriors were presented with berries which they were to take to their chief Legaix. Some of the scouts secretly advised those that had given the berries to flee into the woods, as Legaix was planning to attack them. The scouts then returned to Legaix with their gifts of berries and said to him, "We have brought you berries that have been given to us by the people of Kispiox." But Legaix would not eat any of the dried fruit.

When the Tsimshian canoemen saw that Legaix would not be pacified and eat the berries presented as gifts, one of his warriors called upon the rest of the party to prepare themselves at once for an attack upon the Kispiox tribe. The raiders paddled up the river until they had reached beside the village. When the first canoe landed with Legaix, he stood in the middle of the canoe, took an umbrella which he had with him, opened it, and twirled it around very fast. The Kispiox people, on seeing this, stopped in their flight and returned to their houses to behold this new wonder. They had never seen an umbrella. They invited in Legaix and all his warriors, and prepared to entertain them. During this preparation, Legaix and his warriors massacred them. They took many captives, capturing only those that were young, killing the old and the infants.

When he got back to his village of Metlakatla he made his captives build him a huge house, a graded house which was the exclusive privilege of a few high class. It had six platforms or steps. Many of those captives attempted to escape. Only two were able to reach Kitsemkalem. One of them, a woman, came across a place where groundhogs were plentiful, and through the killing of groundhogs they managed to get enough food to reach the Kitsemkalem tribe. From there they eventually arrived at their own village, Kispiox.

When Legaix gave his feast among the Tsimshian, he distributed his slaves among all the invited guests. Tsibasa, chief of the Kitkatla tribe, received two women slaves. They were of his own crest, Killer Whale, of the House of Xantku, Kispiox. They became lonesome in Tsibasa's house. While one of them was crying, she began to sing her dirge song, the dirge song of Tsibasa. He listened to this dirge song, which was his. The women were bemoaning their misfortune of being

enslaved. Tsibasa was very sorry for them. It was during the night. He got up and told his other slaves to light the fire and called in the whole village of Kitkatla.

When the people had entered his house, he called upon them, singing, "Councillors, what shall I do with my sisters?" He had called these slave women his sisters. Tsibasa asked the people's advice. One man got up and said, "Chief, you must send your sisters back to their own home, and for this supply them with a canoe and food." Tsibasa had in mind then to retaliate by capturing Gispaxloats people, of whom Legaix was the chief.

Had it not been for the interference of the councillors there would have been war between the two. The women captives told Tsibasa, "We have an uncle among the Kitselas people, at the canyon of the Skeena, who originated at Temlaxham and is a branch of our House. His name is Nistaxoq. It is to his village that you should take us." This was done by Tsibasa, for Nistaxoq was of the same clan as himself, of the same group as Xantku. From the House of Nistaxoq the liberated captives eventually reached Kispiox.

Another captive member of the Kispiox tribe, a woman with children of Xlimlaxa, in the Frog House of Haray, ran away from the Tsimshian to some people among the Stikine nation. The village she had come to among the Stikine were a ferocious warlike people. While she was asleep, they came in and cut her toe to see if she was fleshy. They cut also the toes of her children. But nothing but blood came out. They killed the children and kept her alive. The Stikine people then gathered rocks and heated them in the fireplace to roast the children they had just killed. The woman then took flight from that tribe and travelled on through the hills by herself, until she came upon the Nass River. The people of Gitlaxdamks took charge of her and brought her from there to Kitwanga. Her name was Ksenwehl-laxa, of the House of Genulaxa. She was redeemed from the Nishga people by the Frog House of Lalt. For her redemption all the Frogs subscribed. After she was redeemed, messengers were sent to Kitselas, Kitwancool, and Gitseguekla, inviting these tribes to a feast. It was to wipe out the stain of slavery from her. Gifts were distributed in the feast house. She was restored to her former rank after this feast, and she became the wife of Tewalas, at Kitwangak. Tewalas was a brother of Qoq, an Eagle.

**AYAIRANSK, THE GREAT RAVEN WARRIOR**

Informant: James Lewis (Laoi) Kitkatla

Recorded by: William Beynon

Ayairansk was a great warrior and also a great athlete, whose strength was often challenged and put to test. He always came off best. He was known also as a very treacherous man and would put to death and scalp any stranger who came near 'm. He was greatly feared, even in his own Kitkatla tribe. His rank was almost equal to that of Hale. His village stood on an island opposite the main village of Kitkatla. On the island he had a house which had two ceremonial entrances, one at each end. From this the house derived its name Laraxlemdzax (To-Each-End-Enter). The island was right in the way of anyone approaching the village of Kitkatla. Any wrong person who stopped on the island before coming on to the village, was attacked and killed by Ayairansk, who was making for himself a garment of scalps, with the scalps of his victims. He would first invite the visitor in and pretend to entertain him. After giving his guest entertainment and food, if he were not on the watch, Ayairansk would knock him on the head, killing him and taking his scalp.

As many people perished in this manner, his name was dreaded among all, so much so that two young men from the House of Legaix got up and climbed into the hills in the Skeena mountains and went into a fast, in which they prepared themselves to meet the terrible chief, Ayairansk. Many times when strangers came to Ayairansk's island, they were received by the nephews of the chief, who would not let the people escape. They would pick up the canoe and break it up into pieces. This the young men of Legaix's House knew. Ayairansk also had heard of these two men, and he was in readiness for them and he wanted to add their scalps to his garment.

When the young men arrived at the island, they were met by the chief's nephews. They ran out of the canoe, and when the nephews and others tried to grapple with them, they slipped through and were able to get away, as their bodies were greased. They entered the house of the Raven chief, and without waiting to be invited, they sat down on the platform on which Ayairansk always placed his guests. There they sat waiting for the chief. The chief's nephews had taken the canoe and brought it into the house to break it up. The young men paid no attention to this, and they also saw that their food and food boxes were being taken away and distributed among the household. Then Ayairansk spoke to his guests, pretending not to recognize them. Yet all the time he knew they were the two young men who had said that they were going to match themselves against him. "Why have you come here and who are you?" They replied, "We have been sent by our uncle to bring you food gifts. Your fame as a hospitable man has reached our village and we have come to see you. You are so popular that women sing of you in their nursery

songs." Then Ayairansk came over to where the young men were seated and said, "You are very strong looking men. You have large bones." To this one of the young men replied, "Our bones should make strong fire sticks." Ayairansk was doing this to frighten them, or catch them off guard, so that he could club them. Once more he came to where they were seated and asked them, "Do you know this platform on which you are seated?" The young man replied, "Yes, it is often mentioned by our travellers as the platform of hospitality." It really was the platform upon which victims were clubbed and put to death.

Ayairansk felt that he was defeated in his purpose, as he saw that these callers were going to outwit him. He came to where they were sitting. Approaching them, he addressed them very sternly, saying, "You do not seem afraid of me." To this the young men replied, "Why should we be afraid of such a hospitable man, whose fame has reached the village of our uncle?" It was now impossible for Ayairansk to kill these men. He called upon his slaves, saying, "Bring out the moose skins and clothe my nephews." The slaves brought out the skins, and these were given to the visitors. Then the chief called his slaves and said, "Bring food for my nephews who have come a long way, and are hungry." He sat with them to eat; he was beaten. He prepared a canoe and put many food boxes upon it and set the young men off to return to their village.



19. Indian suspension bridge used on the Upper Skeena River at Ragwilget village. National Museums of Canada photo 60313.

## A STIKINE RAID UPON KITISU

Informant: John Robertson, Port Simpson

Recorded by: William Beynon, 1927

A young woman belonging to the household of Legaix had been left behind at Bella Bella. Her name was Hlaowt. There she became the wife of the chief Gitxawaiks, at Kitisu. While she was living there a raiding party descended upon them from the Stikine. All the hunters were out, and the only ones left in the village were the women, the children, and the very old men. They were taken captives by the Stikine. Among them was Hlaowt. Back at the Stikine, she became the wife of Shaiks, the head chief of the Stikine tribe of the Tlingit.

While at the village of her husband at Stikine, she gave birth to two sons. They grew up. When they were young men, they became very clever in war raids and as hunters. In every way they outdid the Stikine young men. Down to this moment they did not know that they were the offspring of a captive woman from among the Kitisu far to the south, a tribe which the Stikine hated deeply.

When they mingled among the young Tlingit men, they noticed that others kept aloof from them and shunned them even within their own household. These were jealous of the two brothers and of their prowess. The young brothers grew very angry. The Tlingit did not want the young southerners to outdo their young men in hunting, fishing, and in everything.

In a competition in the village one day, the elder brother outshot with his bow and arrow all the other young men. The father of one of the princes that had been defeated then made the remark, "Where have these young fellows without grandfathers or grandmothers come from, that they should dare to mix with us?" The young brothers, incensed, went to their mother Hlaowt and asked her what the chief meant by saying they had no grandfathers or grandmothers.

The mother wept and sang a dirge song. Then she said to her sons, "Yes, what he said was right. Here we are slaves. I was taken captive from the south by your father, and there in the south is where your uncles and relations are." The young men then said, "Let us go back to them! Tell us the direction that we must take or you come with us."

The father of the young brothers was vexed with his people for taunting his sons as they had done, and when they came to him and said, "We are going away to our uncles and our own homes," the father answered, "Go, my sons, and be informed that your uncles are great chiefs."

The two brothers in company with their mother travelled south. They stayed for a while at Laxsail. Here again they received the same taunts that had driven them away from the Stikine. So they moved on farther down, until they came to the mouth of the Nass River, thinking it to be the Skeena River. They went up and eventually met the Tsimshian and were taken to Legaix of the Gispaxloats tribe. They stayed there for a long time with this royal House and were acknowledged as nephews. But they grew restless and wanted to get to the land of their uncles at Kitisu. So they journeyed on south and came to the Kikiata, a southern tribe of the Tsimshian. The younger brother stayed there with one of his maternal uncles. Gait, the elder brother, kept on going farther south, until he came to his uncles at the Kitisu village, where he was taken in by his mother's brothers and elevated. For his name as a chief, he assumed that of Gait, a Tlingit name from Stikine.



20. Gitksan Indian using pack strap to carry burden;  
Public Archives of Canada, PA11716.



**WAR BETWEEN THE GISPAXLOATS AND THE GITSIS**

Informants: Sam Bennett, Gilodzar and John Tate, Salaben, Gispaxloats  
Recorded by: William Beynon, 1954.

Nispelas was the chief of the Gispaxloats, and Kalksek was that of the Gitsis tribe. Tsibasa, the Killer Whale chief of the Kitkatla, had many wives, as it was the custom for a high-ranking chief to have many wives. Usually a chief chose wives from all of the other tribes, in order to have strong tribal connections. Tsibasa had as his leading wife Diks, a sister of Nispelas and his next ranking wife was Winax, a sister of Kalksek, chief of the Gitsis. From each of these two wives he had many children. The oldest son of each marriage would be the successor of his chief. There was great rivalry among the children of Tsibasa as to who would be the favored son. The chief always favored his oldest son from his first wife. His name was Hadzeksna, and he was a great sea otter hunter, as well as a warrior.

He was a full grown man when his great uncle Nispelas died, and he was to be the successor in the Gispaxloats tribe. As he was being brought up by Tsibasa, he had given many ceremonies in honour of Hadzeksna, so that, when he succeeded his great uncle Nispelas he would be fully elevated to take his position among his fellow chiefs. When Nispelas did die, he was called by the tribe of his great uncle to assume the name of Nispelas, and he also inherited his great wealth - many slaves, wives of foreign tribes, dancing robes, and canoes.

The son of Tsibasa's second wife, who was Txadzike, was not as well endowed as his half brother. But when Kalksek died, he succeeded to the chieftanship, and he was very jealous of the prestige of his half brother Nispelas, who was looked upon by all the tribal chiefs as the foremost chief. Many times he declared that someday he would kill Nispelas and show the people who was the greatest. His councillors said to him, "Be careful of what you say. The Gispaxloats will hear of it; they will make war upon us, and they will have the support of all the other tribes and we will be shamed." Kalksek then called his Gitsis tribe together and said to them, in a tribal feast, "I want to give a feast to all the Tsimshian to announce that I want the honor of being the first to be called out in all the Tsimshian feasts. In this way I will overcome Nispelas." His wisemen said, "No, we must fear a battle against all of the Tsimshian tribes, because they will give their support to Nispelas. We will be humbled in the eyes of all your fellow chiefs. No, we must not do this."

Now Tsibasa, who was a great power among all the tribes, called a great feast to which he invited the Kitimats, the Gitaata, the Bella Bella, the Kitselas, and all the Tsimshian tribes. When these had gathered at the great feast, he announced that he was showing his eldest

son. "He will be the first one to be called upon at all feasts. He will be your leader in all wars. He will be the recognized head chief of all the Tsimshian." Then Tsibasa gave away much wealth to all the guests, who accepted what Tsibasa had proclaimed. Only Kalksek, his son by his second wife, walked out, muttering, "We shall see!" As he went out, he was followed by his warriors and tribesmen, and then he announced the plan, "Let us hide in a bay, and when Nispelas and his tribesmen come, they will be caught by surprise. We will kill him and make the others slaves, besides taking his wealth from him." As soon as Nispelas saw his half brother Kalksek leave the feast, he knew that he must expect treachery, and was all prepared for anything. He feared an attack, for Kalksek had many fearless warriors and companions. Also he remembered the threats Kalksek had made, that he would kill him, because his father Tsibasa favored him above anyone else; although Tsibasa had many sons, he did not show the same feeling towards them as he did to Nispelas.

The Gispaxloats made ready to return to Metlakatla when the festivities were over, and all the tribes left in groups. The last to leave was Nispelas, and his Gispaxloats. They were some distance away from Kitkatla when suddenly a number of canoes appeared ahead of them, coming towards them. Nispelas already held up his bow and arrow, as his warriors did. He recognized his half brother Kalksek, to whom he called, "What do you want, why are you here?" "I have come here to kill you," Kalksek replied. Without further warning, Nispelas shot his arrow, piercing Kalksek's arm and injuring some of the Gitsis. Seeing that they were going to be defeated, the Kalksek party turned about their canoes and took flight. Thus the feeling between the Gispaxloats grew very bitter and almost on the verge of a war.

Many times afterwards they met and, while no actual warfare broke out, there was a great deal of feeling between the two tribes. The Gitsis chief wanted to get greater prestige, so he planned on giving a great feast, to which he invited all the chiefs except Nispelas and the Gispaxloats people. His plan was to turn the other chiefs against Nispelas. The other tribes knew that the Gispaxloats chief and his people had not been invited, and as it was a privilege that they must be the first invited to any feasts, the other Tsimshian abstained. This only made the Gitsis angrier. Now Kalksek said to his people, "I myself will kill Tsibasa." But the wisemen of the Gitsis would not agree. "Stop! You would bring great disaster on us all, and we would always regret it." But Kalksek wanted to go ahead. So he planned on inviting Nispelas and his Gispaxloats to his village, and there, massacre them. A messenger was sent to Nispelas and he said, "My master, your brother invites you to a feast. He wants to make his feelings known to you and your tribe." "That is well. Tell my brother if he is now changing his feelings towards me, he must also bring in all the other chiefs and their people. He must scatter upon all the symbol of peace, which is eagle down. This will show that his intentions are peaceful."

The Gitsis messengers returned and told their chief what the Gispaxloats chief had said. When Kalksek heard this, he became very angry and he declared, "I am going to kill Nispelas, who has become too powerful." Upon this he and his own companions went into the bushes near the house of Nispelas, after they had landed near the Gispaxloats village in the Metlakatla Passage. They waited until someone would come from the Nispelas house and ambush them. Finally, an aged man walked out to relieve himself, and as he was making his way down the beach the Gitsis attacked the helpless man, who shouted. When help came, he had been killed and his head cut off. Nispelas immediately sent out his warriors, after telling them to paddle direct to the Gitsis village, and there to await the return of those who had ambushed the aged Gispaxloats. Nispelas at once had suspected his half brother. The Gispaxloats lay in wait below the Gitsis village and, after a long while, they saw a canoe with five men in it, travelling very cautiously along the edge of the shore under the shadow of the tree-lined shore. The Gispaxloats waited until they were opposite them, then they attacked them, killing all of them and taking their heads in the same way they had taken the aged Gispaxloats man's head. They returned, leaving behind the bodies, as well as the head of the Gispaxloats victim, so that the other Gitsis would see what had happened.

When the Gitsis discovered the remains of their chief and his companions, they knew he had carried out his threat and had been defeated. The Gitsis attempted to raid the Gispaxloats village at Laxmasawle, in the Metlakatla Passage, but they were ready for them, and in the raid the Gitsis suffered a heavy loss in the killing of two other brothers of Kalksek. The youngest brother of the dead Gitsis chief now became Kalksek, and when he assumed the position, a great feast was given to all the Tsimshian. There was a scattering of eagle down upon all the guests including Nispelas, and peace seemed restored among the feuding brothers and tribes.

Soon after, the new Kalksek made many attempts to waylay the Gispaxloats chief, and there was still a deep hatred among the two tribes. Nispelas, who was now somewhat aging, suddenly fell ill, and after a very brief illness, died. His death was announced in the usual way after a high-ranking chief's death, by a summon to all the Tsimshian chiefs and their tribes. Gispaxloats messengers were sent out to each tribal chief, and a present of groundhog skins was given with the announcement that the chief had died. All the tribes went into mourning except Kalksek and his Gitsis, who had ceremonies every night in the house of the Gitsis chief. All the nearby villages heard the sound of happy dancing and singing. When it came to assuming the position of Nispelas by his oldest nephew Xpilk, all the Tsimshian tribes with their chiefs were invited, as also were Kalksek and the Gitsis tribe. Then some of the nearest tribes of the Gitsis village told the Gispaxloats of the merry-making of Kalksek and the Gitsis, while the other tribes were in mourning for Nispelas. This further deepened the ill-feeling between the two people, and taunts were exchanged between them. The feeling again was tense.

Many of the Tsimshian chiefs attempted to act as peacemakers between these two tribes. Skagwait, chief of the Gitando, invited the two feuding chiefs and their tribes to a peacemaking feast. In this feast the Gitsis chief openly embarrassed the Gispaxloats chief. A canoe load of Gitsis warriors tried to attack the Gispaxloats village, and in the fighting the Gitsis were defeated and their chief killed. The Gispaxloats, to humiliate the Gitsis, cut off the Gitsis chief's head and put it through the smoke hole on the end of a stick. The feud then quieted down considerably, but the feeling was still there between them, as the head of the Gitsis was kept by the Gispaxloats. When the new Gitsis chief was to assume his position, he would not change his name, but used the name of Haimas, as it was considered that the name of Kalksek was still in bondage to the Gispaxloats; it had not been redeemed.



21. Gitskan Indian pack dog used to transport trade goods.  
G.T. Emons photo about 1910. National Museums of Canada photo 71-5552.