Tsimshian Peoples: Southern Tsimshian, Coast Tsimshian, Nishga, and Gitksan

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The Tsimshian (ˈtsĭmshē,ăn, locally also ˈsĭmshēən, ˈchĭmpshēən) are a group of linguistically and culturally related peoples whose languages constitute the Tsimshian family, which is not closely related to any other.* The Tsimshian live in northwestern British Columbia along the Nass and Skeena rivers and on the inlets and islands between their estuaries, extending south to Milbanke Sound. They comprise four major divisions: the Nishga (ˈnĭshgə), on the Nass River; the Gitksan (gĭtkˈsăn), on the Upper Skeena above the canyon at Kitselas; the Coast Tsimshian, on the lower reaches of the Skeena and the adjacent coast; and the Southern Tsimshian, on the coast and islands to the south (fig. 1).

Languages

Linguistically, the major division is between the Coast and Southern Tsimshian on the one hand and the Nishga and Gitksan on the other. These are clearly two separate languages, though many Nishga and Gitksan people once spoke Coast Tsimshian, which was more prestigious, especially for ceremonial purposes. Southern Tsimshian, nearly extinct by the 1970s, is close to Coast Tsimshian but the two may not have been mutually intelligible. Nishga and Gitksan are mutually intelligible.

*The phonemes of Coast Tsimshian, as here transcribed, are: (plain stops and affricate) *p, t, c, k, k*ʷ, *q, ʔ*; (glottalized stops and affricate) *ṗ, ṭ, ċ, k̇, k̇*ʷ, *q̇*; (continuants) *s, ł, x̱, h*; (plain sonorants) *m̱, n, l, w, y, ÿ*, (an unrounded velar glide); (glottalized sonorants) *ṁ, ṅ, l̇, ẇ, ẏ, ÿ*; (short vowels) *i, e, a, o, u*; (long vowels) *i·, e·* ([ɛ·]), *a·, o·, u·, i·*; (stress) *v́*. The plain nonglottal stops and affricates are contextually voiced to [b], [d], [ʒ], [g], [gʷ], [ġ], the velars are palatalized to [kʸ, gʸ] and [k̇ʸ] before *o(·)* or *u(·)* and optionally before other vowels. It may be possible to analyze the vowel system as having only three phonemic short vowels, with what are here written as *i* and *e* as allophones of *i*, and *u* and *o* as allophones of *u*.

Nishga-Gitksan may be transcribed with the same inventory of phonemic symbols plus *x̌, x, x*ʷ; there is no *ÿ, ẏ*, or j·.

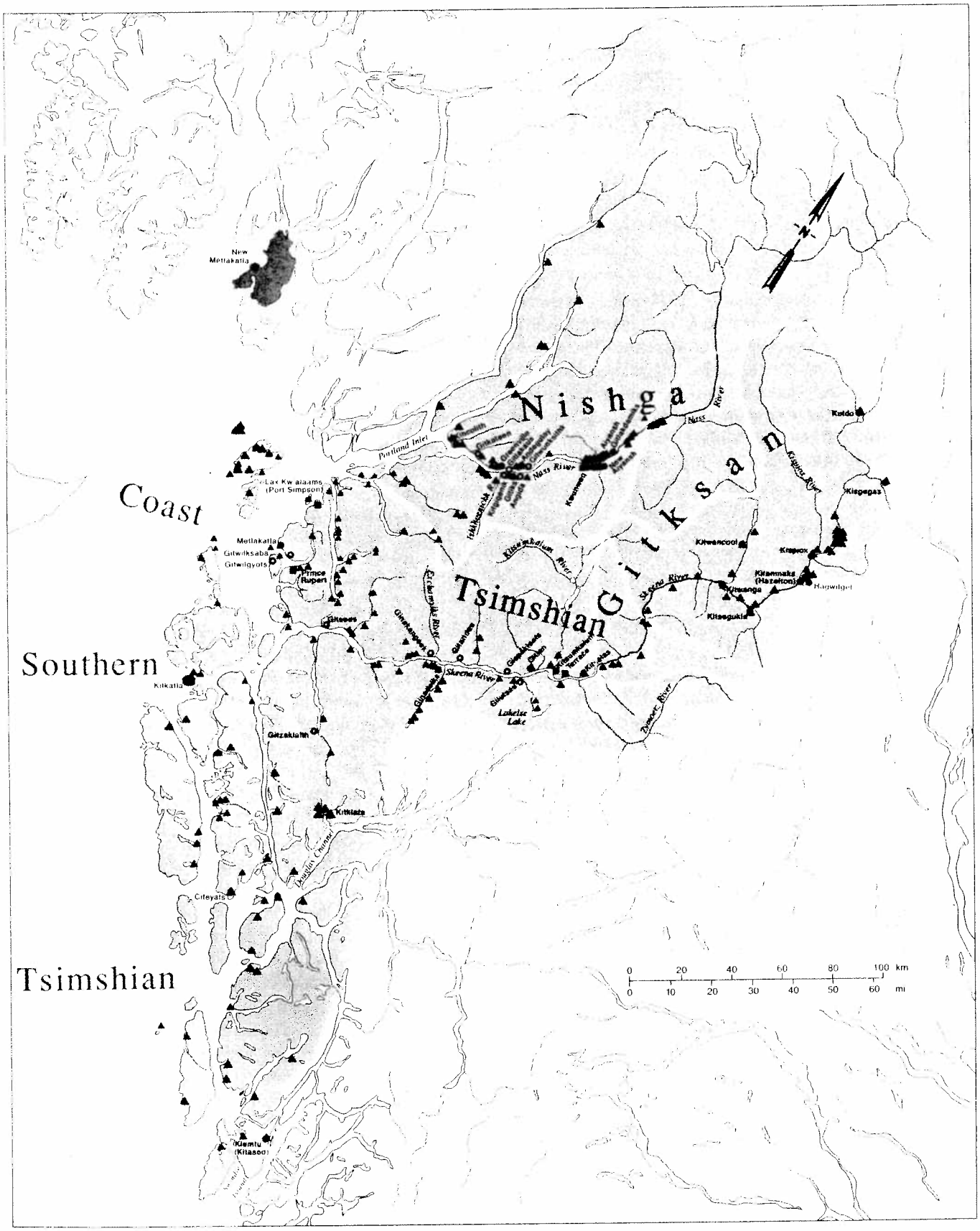
Considerable dialectal variation in the shape of Coast Tsimshian words is documented by J.A. Dunn (1978); the transcriptions used here follow John A. Dunn (communications to editors 1974, 1985, 1986). Information on Tsimshian phonology was also obtained from Bruce Rigsby (communications to editors 1973, 1986); Hindle and Rigsby (1973), and J.A. Dunn (1978, 1979). The editors are responsible for the particular selection from and interpretation of these materials used in the *Handbook*.

Territory

In traditional Tsimshian thought, each village "was held to be a world apart, distinct in history, custom and law; to enter the territory of another village (or even of another lineage segment) was to enter a foreign land, whether a nearby one which shared the same language or a more distant Haida or Tlingit one" (Seguin 1985:1). Each local group customarily occupied a single winter village, moving in the spring to fishing villages on the lower Nass and in the summers to fishing camps on other rivers. The 26 groups known for the nineteenth century (Duff 1964: 18–20) are shown on figure 1.

The historic Southern Tsimshian villages are: Kitasoo, Kitkiata, and Kitkatla. The Kitasoo live in the 1980s in Klemtu with the Haihais. The original village of the Kitkiata was abandoned between the 1860s and 1880s when the people joined the mission village of Metlakatla established by William Duncan (W. Duncan 1853–1916; Wellcome 1887). The present village was founded at a new site in 1887 by 27 people who returned to their own territories rather than follow Duncan to New Metlakatla, Alaska (for a history of the Kitkiata, see Campbell 1984). The Kitkatla have been regarded by Indians and anthropologists as being the most conservative of the Tsimshian villages.

Ten groups of Coast Tsimshian had winter villages on the lower Skeena River below its canyon: Gitwilgyots, Gitzaklalth, Gitsees, Ginakangeek, Ginadoiks, Gitandau, Gispakloats, Gilutsau, Gitlan, and Gitwilkseba (Duff 1964:18). In late prehistoric times, they extended their territories coastward and built new villages on the islands of Venn (Metlakatla) Pass, where the weather was milder. There is evidence of some 5,000 years of occupation in the Prince Rupert Harbour area ("Prehistory of the Northern Coast of British Columbia," this vol.). They continued to return to their territories on the Skeena in the summers for salmon fishing. After the Hudson's Bay Company moved Fort (later Port) Simpson to its present location in 1834, nine groups moved to the area surrounding the fort (the Gitwilkseba were extinct by this time). William Duncan reported that there were some 2,300 Indians living in 140



268 Fig. 1. Territories and settlements of the Gitksan, Nishga, Coast Tsimshian, and Southern Tsimshian in the mid-19th century.

houses around Fort Simpson in 1857.

In the 1980s these people comprised the Port Simpson and Metlakatla bands in British Columbia, and there is a population of the descendants of Duncan's followers at New Metlakatla on Annette Island in Alaska ("Tsimshian of Metlakatla, Alaska," this vol.). The bulk of the published literature on the Tsimshian refers to the Port Simpson people (Boas 1896, 1916; Barbeau 1917; Garfield 1939, 1966; Barnett 1941, 1942; Beynon 1941).

Also classified as Coast Tsimshian are the Kitselas, who lived in two winter villages on either side of Kitselas Canyon on the Skeena River, and the Kitsumkalum, who lived below them near the mouth of the Kitsumkalem River.

The Nishga of the lower Nass were divided into two groups: the Gitkateen and the Gitgigenik, a small group that moved a short distance upriver to the village of Andegulay. The four villages shown on figure 1 for the Gitkateen (16a–16d) were nineteenth-century ('totem pole') villages.

The Nishga of the upper Nass were the *kitanwili´·ks* ('people staying temporarily', referring to their movement downriver at eulachon fishing time). They were divided into the Gitwunksithk, who lived at the canyon, and the dominant Gitlakdamiks, who lived a few miles above them.

The Nishga were relatively inaccessible and little studied until well into the twentieth century. The documentation of their land claims has added much to the literature.

The seven Gitksan groups each occupied a single winter village, six of them on or near the Skeena and one, Kitwancool, to the north on a "grease trail" (eulachon oil trade route) to the Nass. About 1880 another small group, the Anlagasamdak, joined the Kisgegas. The traditional villages in their order upriver are: Kitwanga, Kitwancool, Kitsegukla, Kitanmaks (Hazelton), Kispiox, Kisgegas, and Kuldo.

Environment

The villages and hunting territories of the Coast Tsimshian and Nishga were within the Coast Forest biotic area, a heavily forested region of high precipitation. The winters are relatively mild and summers cool. Along the coastal fiords the land rises precipitously from the shore except for a few favored locations (frequently near small streams) that have a more gentle slope. The winter villages were generally the choicest of these locations, that is, those with available fresh water, a variety of plant and animal food resources nearby, shelter from strong winter winds, and preferably some defense against attack. Transportation between sites for most activities was by canoe, and only in a few areas were there networks of trails. Elsewhere it was, and is, time-consuming and difficult to walk more than a short distance into the bush due to the heavy cover of undergrowth lying over layers of deadfall.

The climax forest along the coast is dominated by western hemlock, red cedar, Sitka spruce, mountain hemlock, yellow cedar, and grand fir. Preclimax areas are dominated by red alder and broadleaf maple.

The Gitksan winter villages were also in the Coast Forest biotic area, but some of them (notably the Kitwancool, Kispiox, Kuldo, and Kisgegas) had hunting territories in the Upper Nass and Skeena drainages, which were in the Subalpine Forest biotic zone. This is a higher and dryer region, containing a larger proportion of valley land than along the coast, which was penetrated by a number of well-used trails.

Culture

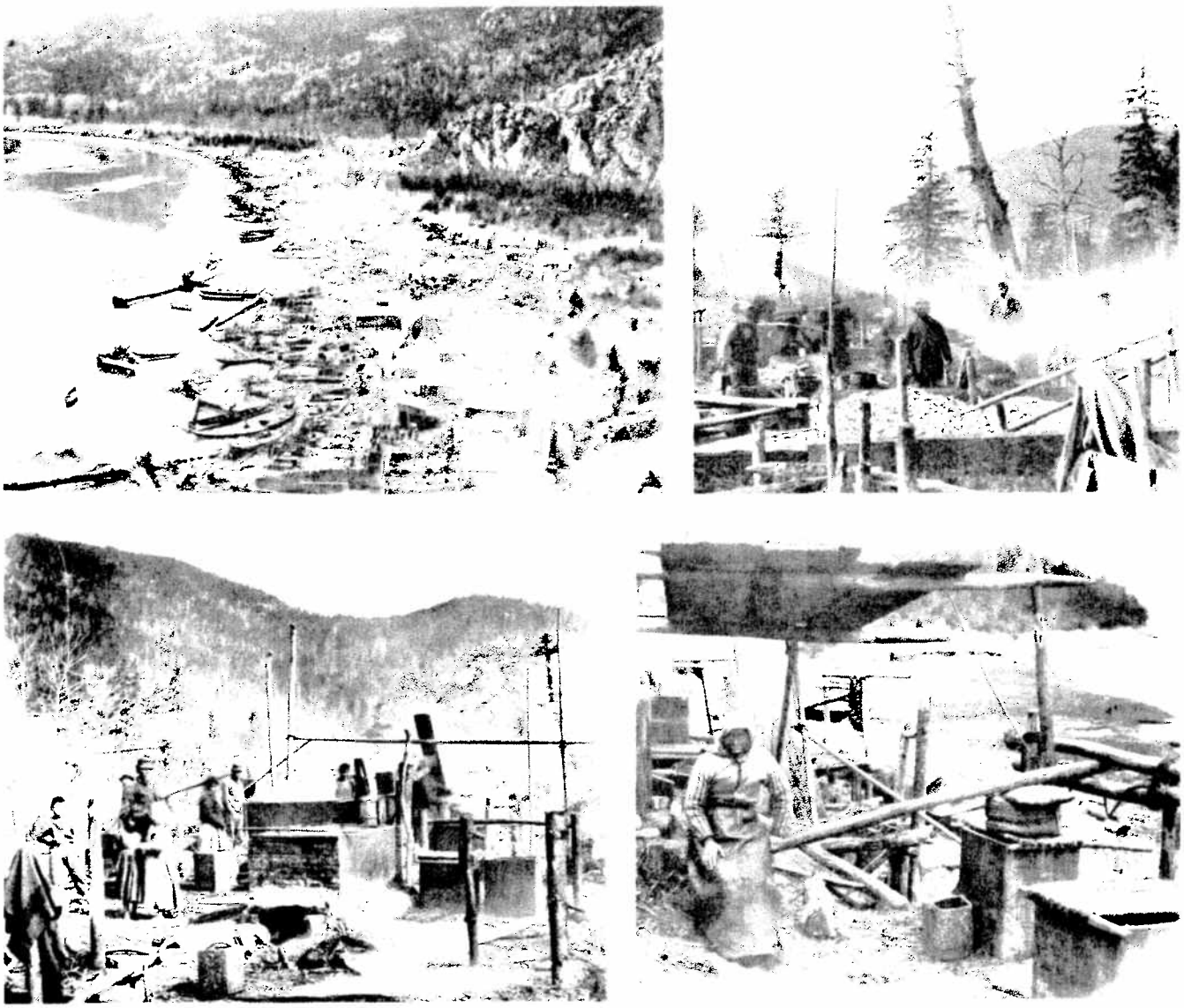
Annual Round

Boas (1916:399) discusses Coast Tsimshian seasonal activities, from which J.A. McDonald (1985:98) has extracted a reconstruction of the aboriginal cycle. His account of that cycle is supplemented here with information on the Southern Tsimshian area (Mitchell 1981; Seguin 1984a).

At the end of winter before the river ice breaks up (roughly February to April), the main activity was eulachon fishing on the Nass. The man who caught the first eulachon gave it to the oldest child of his eldest brother, who gave gifts in return. The fish were either dried or processed into a nutritious (iodine-rich) oil or "grease" that was highly prized (fig. 2). The Tsimshian monopoly on the grease trade brought them wealth. Although some people remained at the winter village site (Mitchell 1981:84), a very large proportion made the journey to the Nass, after which they returned to their winter villages and stored the grease and eulachon in their permanent houses.

May was the time for the Coast and Southern Tsimshian to gather and dry seaweed from rocks along the coast, generally residing for a month or more at special seaweed camps. While there men fished for halibut, which women sliced into thin filets for drying on racks in the sun. Large quantities of herring spawn were also gathered at this time, either from thick deposits on grass and kelp or on branches suspended in the water for the purpose. Supplies of the inner bark of the red cedar were collected for winter weaving, and the cambium of several species of trees (hemlock, spruce, and lodgepole pine) was collected for eating.

The eggs of sea gulls and oyster catchers were gathered in early June, and abalone was taken at the lowest tides during the summer months. The first salmon of the year began to enter the tidal waters during the seaweed season, at which time they were caught by trolling. In myths,



Royal B.C. Mus., Victoria: top left, PN 4279; top right, PN 9360; bottom left, PN 1447; bottom right, PN 1448.

Fig. 2. Eulachon preparation, Nass River, B.C. People from all divisions of the Tsimshian and even Tlingit and Haida came here. For the Gitksan who came overland the trip to eulachon sites in late winter was physically rigorous but was enjoyed for the social opportunities as well as the economic rewards (People of 'Ksan 1980:89). top left, Fishing camp with dozens of racks of drying eulachon. Photograph by Benjamin A. Haldane, 1903 or before. top right, Loads of the fish left to ripen (decompose) in large pits for from 10 days to 3 weeks depending on the weather. bottom left, Boiling the decomposed fish in large wooden boxes with fire-heated rocks. After boiling several hours the mixture was allowed to stand and cool, so that the oil could be skimmed off the top. bottom right, Extracting more oil from the fish residue, placed in a stiff, open-meshed container made of heavy cedar splints (Laforet 1984:236). The basket was placed over a grid on a box and squeezed with a lever on a flat stone. top right, bottom left, and bottom right, Photographs by Richard Maynard, 1884.

shamans are described as performing a ceremony over the first salmon of the year (Boas 1916:449–450).

As the salmon began to enter the rivers in early summer, people moved to traditional fishing sites where seasonal camps were maintained. The sites for fishing were under the control of the "houses" (corporate matrilineages) managed by the chiefs. Also during the summer, women were active in harvesting berries from house territories, beginning with the early-ripening salmonberries and continuing through the summer until the wild crabapples and high bush cranberries could be gathered and stored in the autumn. The woman who picked the first salmonberry of the year gave it to her husband's or father's sister, who would return gifts of high value. Some berries were dried while others were preserved in grease. Various roots and shoots were collected for fresh consumption, particularly early in the season.

Early autumn (September and October) was a period of intense activity, including the preservation of the major supplies of salmon. The chum salmon that had begun moving up the rivers were ideal for preservation, because the fat content was lower and the product was less likely to

go rancid; they were smoke-dried in great quantities. The failure of a salmon run could presage a winter of privation, and many myths refer to actual starvation (Cove 1978). However, since each house controlled several different fishing stations, access to all five salmon species provided some insurance against famine. The habits of each species were extremely well known, and weather specialists monitored and predicted the annual runs.

After the supply of preserved salmon had been safely stored, the territories for hunting game were used. Hunting was undertaken by groups smaller than those for the spring and summer activities; permission to use hunting territories was granted by the house chief. Men purified themselves before hunting or fishing. They fasted, bathed, drank the juice of the root of the devil's club, and practiced sexual continence. Animals were said to be offended by unclean persons and to refuse to allow themselves to be caught by them. In myths, gamblers were said to purify themselves for luck. Other sources of luck were to cohabit with a "lucky woman," who was paid for her services, or to meet the Crying Woman in the woods (see Halpin 1981). There was also a bird similar to a robin (called *hačanás* 'good luck') that conferred luck to those who saw it. Bear taboos and killing ceremonies are described in myths (Boas 1916:449).

J.A. McDonald (1985:105) lists the following game regularly hunted by the Kitsumkalum: deer, elk, seal, sea lions, sea otter, mountain goat, mountain sheep, bear, porcupine, raccoons, eagles, marmots ("groundhogs"), caribou, moose, mountain lion, hares, lynx, swans, geese, ducks and other waterfowl.

Sporadic hunting was an option through the winter, but most people spent the season in the permanent villages. Shellfish abounded in the coastal waters, and huge shell middens attest to their importance as food; among the shellfish used were cockles, several varieties of clam, and mussels. All except abalone were gathered primarily during the winter months on nearby beaches exposed by very low tides. Many individuals were occupied with weaving (women) and carving (men) during the winter months, and the midwinter was the period when most ritual and ceremonial events were held, with the exception, of course, of those dictated by life cycle events. Potlatches and secret society dances were held only during the winter. The long period of relative inactivity was also a favored time for gambling and storytelling.

The annual round of activities for Gitksan and upper Nass River Nishga groups was similar to that of Coast and Southern Tsimshian villages, with accommodations to their riverine environment (fig. 3). Shellfish and seaweed, which were not available, were obtained by trade with coastal groups. Certain plant foods, including soapberries, were available in greater abundance and were harvested and processed for trade as well as use. There was a greater emphasis on land hunting (figs. 4–5), and a somewhat greater variety of game available: beaver, marmot, and moose were more abundant, and the hunting of bear and mountain goats was a significant activity.

Chiefs managed the diverse resources available from house territories to provide food throughout the year, surplus for trade, and the liberal quantities of special delicacies served at feasts. The foods that were most valued were those that were scarce, available only seasonally, required intensive labor (and entailed organization by a person of rank), "imported items" (including European foods as they became available), grease, and anything preserved in grease. In general, prestige foods were foods that required some evidence of supernatural efficacy, such as luck in hunting or propitious weather, to obtain.

Structures

Tsimshian winter houses were constructed of massive timbers hewn from red cedar. In 1792 the chief's house at Ksidiy'ats was about 50–55 feet long and 30–35 feet wide "and at some time must have been much larger, as around and above it stood heavy forked posts with cross timbers" (Caamaño 1938:293). The largest house at Fort Simpson was about 60 by 40 feet (Church Missionary Society 1869: 26); the average house was 50 by 55 feet (Drucker 1965: 119). According to Boas (1916:46–48), the walls were independent of the post, beam, and roof structure. Thick upright base planks at the front, rear, and sides were set just outside the corner posts and grooved to receive thinner horizontal planks. Vertical wall planks are also reported (Drucker 1950:178–179). Garfield (1939) reports that some people carried their house planks to their spring and summer camps.

An excavated pit, five feet deep and 30 feet square, usually lined with cedar plank retaining walls, formed the main living space and contained the central fireplace, which was lined with sand and the beach cobbles that were used for stone-boiling. Cedar-bark mats were used as insulation in the winter. Some houses had narrow platforms around the main pit; narratives tell of famous chiefs' houses with multiple platforms. The ground level platform served as a storage area. The door (apparently either rectangular or oval) was at the gable end facing the beach. Some houses had entrance doors cut through totem poles placed at the front of the house. House names were inherited as crests.

The only published plans of Tsimshian houses are in Boas (1896:580–583). Tsimshian houses with vertical wall planks are shown in Boas (1916:pl. II).

The chief and his immediate family occupied one or more cubicles at the rear of the house; people of lesser rank had family quarters along the side walls. Sacred red cedar bark was used to transform chiefs' dwellings into dance

houses during the winter ceremonial season.

Housefronts were painted with crest designs (fig. 6) (see MacDonald 1984). One of Barbeau's (1929:15) informants said that "the housefront paintings . . . were the most important; they were the real crest boards. The poles . . . were merely commemorative." Housefront paintings sometimes had projecting beaks (fig. 7). Painted "false fronts" were added to the houses at ceremonial times. Wooden screens painted with sacred designs were erected at the inside rear of the house.

Other structures included menstrual huts (MacDonald 1984a:71), summer houses, sweat lodges, and underground caches (Drucker 1950:252–253, 180–181).

Tsimshian totem poles are well known through several surveys (Barbeau 1929, 1950; Duff 1952). Although some scholars (for example, Barbeau 1950) have suggested that

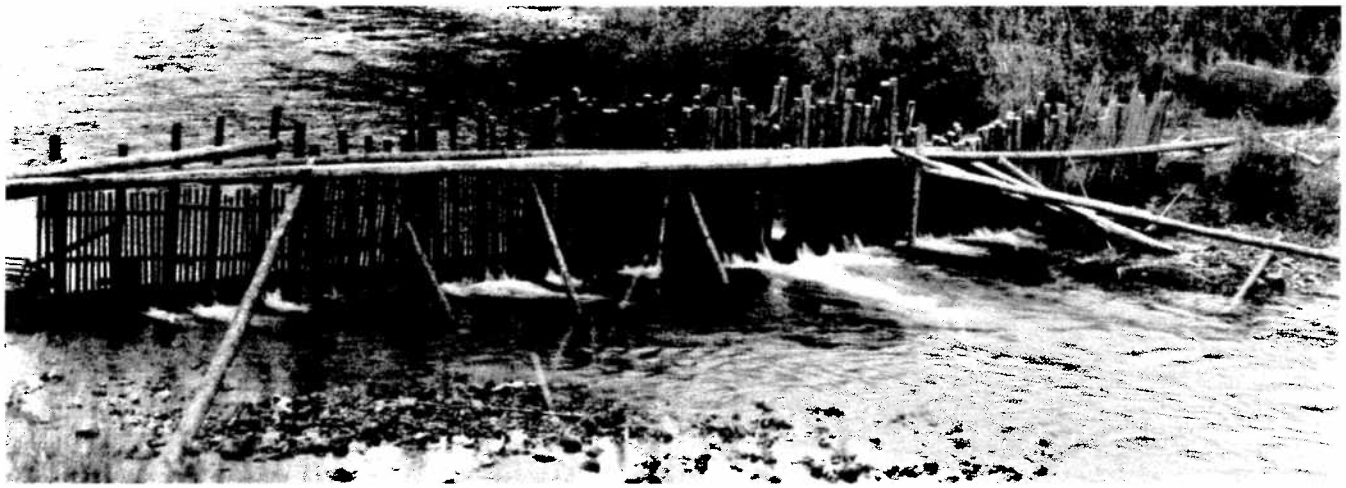


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Fig. 3. Fishing. The basic item of subsistence was fish, which was served at every meal (People of 'Ksan 1980:30). top, Weir (a wooden lattice fence that guided migratory salmon into traps) across a shallow river. A salmon trap is on the shore at right. bottom left, Gitksan youth with salmon trap made by lashing sticks together. The fish would swim through a small opening made with split sticks and could not get out (H. Stewart 1977: 112–113). top and bottom left, Photographs by Louis Shotridge, Kitwancool, B.C., 1918. bottom right, Fishing platform and salmon trap being set by a Gitksan on the west side of Hagwelget canyon, Bulkley River, B.C. (Barbeau 1930:144). The trap consists of a vertical barrier set between posts, a long chute, and fish basket. Photographed about 1920.

Natl. Mus. of Canada, Ottawa: 59501.
Fig. 4. Daniel Wiqaix or Wigaix, a Kisgegas chief with furs, including bear, fox, wolverine, beaver, ermine, fisher, mink, otter, and marten. Some land game was used for food, but animals such as marten, fox, otter, and mink were taken only for their furs, which were then traded (People of 'Ksan 1980:45) for Euro-Canadian goods. The appliqued, fringed skin shirt and snowshoes show Subarctic influence. Photograph by C. Marius Barbeau, Hazelton, B.C., 1923.

Royal B.C. Mus., Victoria: PN 3935.
Fig. 5. Arthur Derrick and family ready to go hunting. An infirm individual, probably an old woman, is wrapped in blanket and tied onto the sled. Such winter transportation is evidence of Subarctic influence. The wooden cradle has a rod with beads on it in front of the baby's face. Photographed probably at Kitwanga, B.C., about 1920s.

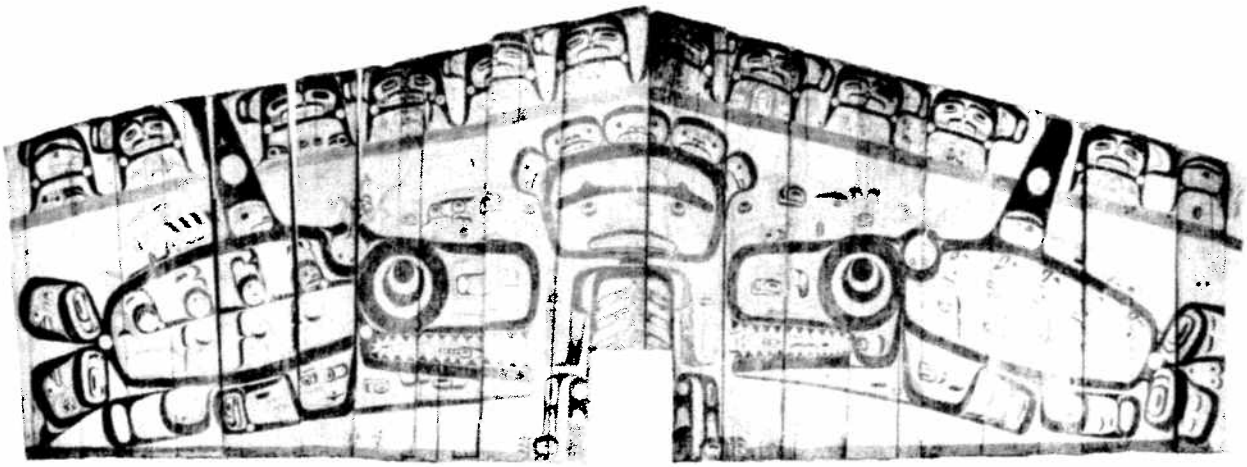
they were a postcontact phenomenon on the Northwest Coast, Duff (1964a) clearly demonstrated that they existed before contact in some areas. Whether or not this was true for the Tsimshian remains to be established.

Totem poles were carved from large red cedar logs by people standing in the relationship of "fathers" to the pole's owners, that is, affinal relatives of the house commissioning and erecting the pole. If no good carver stood in the proper relationship, one was appointed by a "father" who "stood over him" (Barbeau 1929:7; see also Shane 1984). The most elaborate totem poles were erected in honor of deceased chiefs by their successors. Poles featured the crests of the house erecting them, although a crest of the carver's house was sometimes included as a "signature."

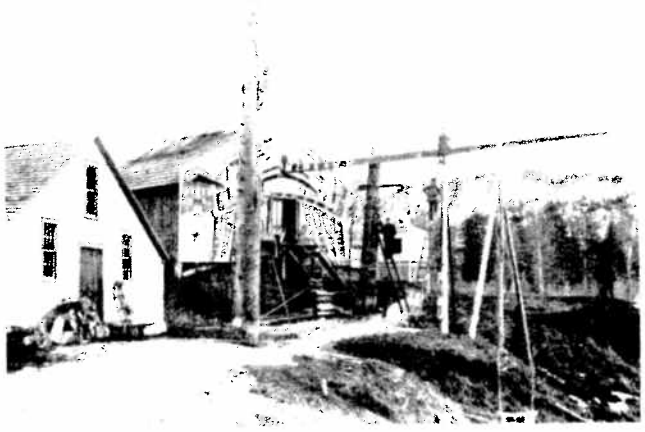
Technology

Basketry was made by women. Coast women mainly used the bark of the western red cedar for mats and containers, while upriver women also used maple and birch bark and spruce roots for containers. Throughout the region, the techniques of greatest importance were plaiting (checker weaving) and twining, with a greater emphasis on plaiting on the coast (see Laforet 1984 for an illustrated survey of Tsimshian basketry). Functional classes of Tsimshian basketry include plaited bark containers used for berries and the transport of goods, plaited mats, eulachon baskets, and twined-root cooking baskets. There are stylistic differences between the coast and upriver peoples, with the Nishga sharing in both traditions.

Utilitarian wooden objects made by men, of the same types as those of the Haida and Tlingit, included a wide



Smithsonian, Dept. of Anthr.: 410732.
Fig. 6. Painted Tsimshian housefront, presumably the only complete example in a museum collection. It was acquired by J.G. Swan at Fort Simpson, B.C., probably in 1875, for exhibition at the 1876 Centennial in Philadelphia. It measures 11.6 m in length and 3.6 m in height.



Royal B.C. Mus., Victoria: PN 4110.
Fig. 7. Minesqu House, Gitlakdamiks, B.C. The elaborately painted housefront has a projecting beak. Commemorative poles are in the front. Photograph, cropped, taken in 1903.

variety of storage boxes (fig. 10) and chests, the northern type of canoe, woodworking tools, and fishing and hunting gear. Many are described in Drucker (1950) and illustrated in Boas (1916).

Social Organization

● DESCENT GROUPS The customary anthropological picture of Tsimshian society has been that it had a four-fold structure, being divided into four exogamous matrilineal clans (Garfield 1939:173), also called "exogamic groups" (Boas 1916:488), "phratries" (Barbeau 1917), and "crests" (Adams 1973:23) by anthropologists and "tribes" or *pte·x* by the Tsimshian themselves. The four clans are listed in table 1.

Field Mus., Chicago: 13747.
Fig. 8. Carved wooden bark shredder of the type commonly used to shred the inner bark of the cedar. However, this specimen was used to shred young alder bark, which was put into a bath with shredded cedar bark to dye the cedar a reddish brown—the color required for shamans' headdresses. Collected at Angida, B.C., by G.T. Emmons, before 1921. Length 45.5 m.

This four-clan structure appears to have been the case only in the postcontact villages of Port Simpson and Metlakatla, where most of the early fieldwork was done. Fieldwork done since the 1960s (Adams 1973; Dunn and Dunn 1972; J.A. Dunn 1984, 1984a; Kasakoff 1984) suggests that, *at the village level*, Tsimshian society traditionally had a dual or moiety structure.

The basic social unit in Tsimshian society was a corporate matrilineage called a "house" (*wa·lp*), the members of which, together with affines, children belonging to other lineages, and slaves, occupied one or more dwellings. Barnett (1938:349–350) identified the *wa·lp* as the functioning unit in the potlatch, in which case the term refers only to members of the same kinship group (see also Garfield 1939:174). Houses fluctuated widely in size, and hence in productivity, at times resorting to adoption to prevent extinction, at other times growing so large that they fissioned into two or more separate houses. Garfield (1939: 278–282) analyzes the membership of the house of Grizzly Bear at Port Simpson, and Adams (1973) has published a study of house composition and dynamics for the Gitksan.

Each house owned fishing, hunting, and gathering territories and localities, which it exploited under the direction of the house chief (the man, and in exceptional circumstances, the woman, who bore its highest-ranking name). The house owned crests, songs, names, and other privileges, also under control or stewardship of the chief. The transfer of the right to use natural resources to another house by gift or through seizure in payment of a debt was fairly common. Matters of mutual interest, such as defense, were discussed with the chiefs of other houses in the village. Each interacting group of chiefs had an established rank order, which determined their rights to precedence in both political and ceremonial events.

● KINSHIP The kinship system was of the Iroquois type, with separate terms for affines. Gitksan and Kitkatla kin terms are listed in Kasakoff (1984); Nishga terms in Sapir (1920); Coast Tsimshian in Boas (1916:489–495) and Durlach (1928). Dunn and Dunn (1972) list Kitlatka terms, J.A. Dunn (1984) compares Coast and Southern

Royal B.C. Mus., Victoria: PN 4601-B.
Fig. 9. Poling a spoon canoe on the Skeena River, B.C. Photographed about 1910–1920.

Royal B.C. Mus., Victoria: PN 4330.

Fig. 10. Nishga chiefs of Gitlakdamiks, B.C., with ceremonial equipment. left to right: 3 children; Andrew Nass, wearing shirt with coppers and ermine-decorated headdress; John Nass in light-colored skin robe, holding a rattle, his dance headdress showing a carved frontlet; James Skean wearing Chilkat blanket and decorated leggings and dance apron; Philip Nass, wearing Chilkat blanket, neck ring, 3-ringed headdress, and dance apron decorated with puffin beaks; 2 children; Charlie Brown, in shirt with inverted face holding a painted drum; Eliza Brown, in button blanket with neck ring; Matilda Peal in button blanket; child. Both women have down in their hair. Displayed are masks, frontlets, dance headdresses, and carved wooden boxes. Photograph possibly by C.H. Orme, about 1903.

Tsimshian and Nishga kinship terms, and J.A. Dunn (1984a) compares them to Haida and Tlingit lists. While most analysts have worked on the referential meaning of the kin terms, Kasakoff (1984) considers the nonliteral or extended use of kinship terms where these intersect with and accommodate the demands of the potlatch system.

The relationship with father's side was extremely important throughout an individual's life. Pole-carving and canoe-carving were also purchased from the father's side.

Affinal relationships between clans were expressed in a relational naming system unique to the Tsimshian on the Northwest Coast. Children's names, which were owned by the matrilineage, referred to physical and behavioral characteristics of the two major crest animals of the father's clan (Sapir 1915a). Some examples of such cross-clan names are "mocking raven," "the eagle never flies crooked," and "the eagle has nothing to eat" (Duff 1964). Several authors (C. Ackerman 1975; Cove 1976; Rosman and Rubel 1971) have developed analyses that assume that names reflect perpetual affinal relationships between clans. This assumption has been disputed by Kasakoff (1984:83).

• CLASS The Tsimshian recognize four named social distinctions, often called classes (Seguin 1984:110–136; Garfield 1939:178ff.). Women were of the same levels as men, although their names and status did not ordinarily entail the same sort of political power. All marriages were supposed to be between social equals; the children of parents of unequal rank inherited rank no higher than that of the lower-ranked parent. The social distinction between the *smkikét* 'real people' (singular *sm?ó·ket* 'chief'), that

Table 1. Tsimshian Clans with Haida and Tlingit "Friends"

Coast Tsimshian	Killer Whale (*kispuwutwáta*)	Wolf (*laxkipú·*)	Eagle (*laxskí·k*)	Raven (*qanháta*)
Southern Tsimshian	Killer Whale	Wolf	Eagle	Raven
Gitksan	Fireweed (*kisq̓aha·st*)	Wolf (*lax kipu·*)	Eagle (*lax xski·k*)	Frog/Raven (*lax se·l̓/ qanata*)
Nishga	Killer Whale	Wolf	Eagle	Raven
Haida	Raven	Raven	Eagle	Eagle
Tlingit	Wolf	Wolf	Raven	Raven

is, the chiefly families, and the *liq̓akikét* 'other people', that is, those who had names of lesser rank, was maintained through intermarriage with other chiefly families, including those from Tsimshian-speaking as well as other language groups (Tlingit, Haida, Haisla, and Heiltsuk). Free people who had not taken ancestral names in the potlatch system were termed *wahʔáʔayin* 'unhealed people' (explained as "without origin" or "having no relatives"). Slaves (*x̣a·* or *łú·nkit* were captives taken in war or purchased from slavers, especially from the south, and their children; their status was hereditary, and it was unthinkable for free persons to marry them (Garfield 1939:177–178, 1966:28–31; Seguin 1985).

● CRESTS Crests are images and privileges (acquired by one's ancestors during encounters with supernatural beings) that are owned as property by a house and ceremonially displayed by its members. When listing crests and their owners (Duff 1964a; Halpin 1978, 1984), Tsimshian informants often mentioned the kinds of artifacts on which the crests could, and more rarely could not, be represented. Categories of artifacts most often specified for crest representations were: architectural features—totem poles, including house entrance poles, house posts, housefront paintings, beams, rafters, and ceremonial entrances; costume features—robes and headdresses (fig. 11); and feast dishes and ladles. In other words, crest images were worn in the potlatch, used in the feast, and represented on the houses where potlatching occurred. Sapir (1915a:6) notes that "one cannot even pay a neighbour a visit and wear a garment decorated with a minor crest without justifying the use of such regalia by the expenditure of property at the house visited."

Natl. Mus. of Canada, Ottawa: VII-C-1764 (TS-57).
Fig. 11. Wooden ceremonial crest hat displaying a bear's head surrounded by 5 human hands (one not visible) and bearing 3 basketry potlatch rings. The hat proper is painted green, the bear's head painted red and black with abalone inlays for eyes. The hands are painted red with eye designs in green on the back of each one. Collected at Port Simpson, B.C., about 1900. Height 28 cm.

Each Tsimshian clan was associated with and identified by two primary crest animals: for the Blackfish or Fireweed clan, the grizzly and killer whale (in local English, "blackfish"); for the Wolf clan, wolf and bear; for the Eagle clan, eagle and beaver; for the Raven clan, raven and frog. These animals were the building blocks of the crest system and, with rare exceptions, could be displayed by all members of the clan. Halpin (1984) identifies secondary animals for each clan, some of which served to identify subclans (groups of related houses).

Additionally, there were other animals, mythological beings, celestial phenomena, some items of costume (armor, ladles, feast dishes), plants, water phenomena (whirlpools, riptides), and varieties of fires that were claimed as crests. One factor that accounts for the abundant use of human faces in Tsimshian art is that many of the crests identified as celestial phenomena and mythological creatures were represented by stylized human faces (Halpin 1984; see also MacDonald 1984). Special crests that could be made of real animal heads and skins, and included ermine and abalone decoration, were restricted to the chief (Halpin 1984). This introduction of the dimension of rank into the crest system sets the Tsimshian apart from the Haida and Tlingit.

Political Organization

Since descent among the Tsimshian was reckoned matrilineally, succession to a man's names and position went in theory to a younger brother or sister's son (see Garfield 1939:179 for a ranked succession order). Actual succession, which involved a number of situational factors, was often a source of controversy.

The role of village chief was present only among the Coast and Southern Tsimshian (Mitchell 1981; Boas 1916: 429–434; Garfield 1939:182–191, 1966:32–37). The village chief was the chief of the highest-ranking house in the village, and the other houses, in all clans, were ranked under him in descending order. Gitksan chiefs, on the other hand, were not organized above the clan level, and the chief of the highest-ranking house in a clan did not have authority over the other clans. Nishga chiefs seemed to be vying for hegemonies of the Coast Tsimshian type.

Garfield (1939:182) reports that a chief had other (nonritual) economic support from and obligations to his group: "While a chief can expect constant and liberal economic support from his tribesmen, he does not contribute to potlatches given by them. He is responsible for their economic welfare, must feed them when necessary and has to lay aside supplies for this purpose."

Traditional narratives report that the Southern Tsimshian chiefs received tribute in the form of the first sea otter and seal caught by each canoe of sea hunters and other fur animals captured by land hunters. It is also reported that chiefs hunted sea lions and mountain goats, activities that

required courage and endurance, but that they seldom participated in other hunting, except to perform a supervisory role (Garfield 1966:17). As chiefs, they could expect slaves and other hunters to provide for them (Boas 1916:429). In Kitsumkalum the people were said to give a chief everything he needed so that he did not have to produce for himself at all (Boas 1916:278; J.A. McDonald 1985:97). Duff (1964), Mitchell (1981), MacDonald (1984a), and M.P. Robinson (1978) suggest that some chiefs, including Legaik of the Gispakloats, at Port Simpton, Sebassa of Kitkatla, Neqt of the Gitksan, and Chief Mountain of the Nishga, achieved unusual influence through fortunate placement in the fur trade. Mitchell (1981:85) traced the recorded mentions of Sebassa in the journals of fur traders for the year 1835, finding that the "glimpses we have of his year find him playing host to a visiting chief, in turn visiting and trading with the Bella Bella, trading with Europeans and seeking revenge for wrong done him or his group by a trader."

Life Cycle

Important events in an individual's life activated a series of duties and wealth exchanges between the houses of the father and mother (Garfield 1939:329ff.; Seguin 1984: 123).

The birth of a child was attended by its father's sister and other women of his lineage, who brought gifts for the infant. If the family were of high rank, the chief announced the birth, for which he was compensated; otherwise, it was announced by the father's relatives. The birth announcement was accompanied by the distribution of marmot skins provided by the mother's house. A first naming ceremony was held at which the chief or the father's relatives announced the name, for which they were again compensated. Such a ceremony was often included as a minor element in a potlatch.

When children of both sexes were about seven, they were given their first initiation ritual, in which a chief "threw" power into them. A father's sister or other female relative pierced her ear as a sign of rank; high-ranking girls also had their lips pierced for labrets (fig. 12).

Both boys and girls were given their first names at puberty ceremonies, at which time their lineage relatives made gift distributions. Girls were secluded in menstrual huts at their first menstruation.

Marriages were arranged. The boy's mother and her brother made the initial call upon the girl's relatives, bringing gifts. Several further gift exchanges between the relatives of the bride and groom were made, including at a potlatch when the marriage was announced to others. The Tsimshian are said to have a rule of preference for marriage with a man's mother's brother's daughter (Boas 1916; Garfield 1939:321, 1966:23), although late twentieth-century research has been unable to verify it. It seems likely that the Tsimshian favored marriage with either cross-cousin (Cove 1976). What is clear is that the primary goal of marriages was the consolidation of wealth and position. The ideal postmarital pattern, at least for the high-ranking men who inherited noble names, was one of avunculocal residence. In fact, a boy went to live with his mother's brother as a child, later succeeding to his name and position. Polygyny was permitted for chiefs, although it was apparently rare, and a widow was expected to marry her husband's successor or brother. Divorce was probably frequent (Garfield 1939:235).

Mus. of the Amer. Ind., Heye Foundation, N.Y.: 9/8044.
Fig. 12. Mask representing an old woman, with long stringy strands of hair, and a labret inlaid with abalone. The size and treatment of the labret indicates an old woman of high status. Collected from the Nishga, B.C., probably 1825–1850. Height 24 cm.

Death was announced by the distribution of marmot skins by the deceased's own lineage, which contributed to a funeral fund. Other clan relatives were also expected to contribute. The preparation of the body and the coffin and related tasks were the responsibility of the deceased father's lineage, for which it was compensated from the

funeral fund. Traditionally cremation was practiced. Secret society regalia were burned with the body. The bodies of shamans were placed in caves or special grave houses.

Ceremonialism

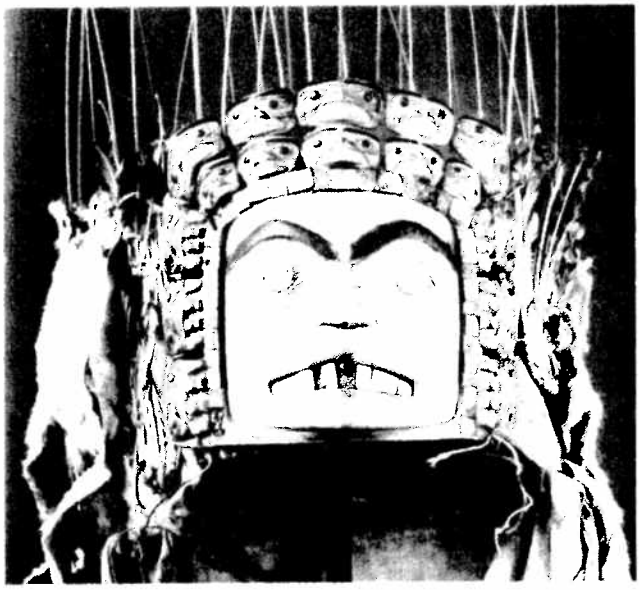
● FEASTS AND POTLATCHES Though the secret society dances were the most flamboyant expression of Tsimshian ceremonialism, the feast complex was apparently the core around which the social system revolved. Through various types of feasts the social order was maintained and expressed, inheritance and succession were validated, and conflict was expressed and managed. Since sacred and secular were not distinct domains for the Tsimshian, the feasts were organized by premises that can properly be seen as religious. Seguin (1985) has suggested that the feast complex was a discourse with supernatural powers who were represented at the event by the chiefs from other houses invited as guests. This allowed a house to purify itself by distributing property, in an act reminiscent of the ritual fasting and cleansing required by a man who wished to attract fish or game. The ability to manage the territories of the house and gather the support of contributors made it self-evident that the house was ritually clean and the event proper.

The most obvious constant features of a *ya·k*^{w} 'potlatch' were the division of the people into two groups—hosts and guests—and the public distribution of wealth by the hosts to the guests. The specific action of the feast varied according to the purpose of the event the guests were called to witness; there were house-building, marriage, naming, funeral, and cleansing feasts. This last event "washed off" a mistake or indignity from an individual or group and "shut the mouths" of the guests.

Tsimshian potlatches were ritual statements of the social relationships of the participants. Members of the host clan sat together near the entrance while members of the several guest clans were seated together in prescribed ranked arrangements around the house (see Adams 1973: 54). A chief's successor sat in front of him, the next in line behind him. Contributions to the potlatch fund were made publicly by those affirming solidarity with the potlatch giver and his local lineage segment. In a Coast Tsimshian chief's potlatch to chiefs from other villages these were all the houses in the village. In other potlatches donors were lineage, clan, and affinal relatives. The amount of the contribution was a signifier of the relationship and of past obligations owed to the potlatch giver or his deceased predecessor. Disbursements or gifts to the guests were made in accordance with their rank, those of highest rank receiving the largest gifts. Food was served at all potlatches, sufficient in quantity for chiefly guests to redistribute on their return to their own houses.

According to information Beynon (1916) received at Kitkatla, the most important potlatch was the last of three mourning potlatches at which a successor assumed his deceased predecessor's name and position. It was known as *wilxmás*, the "feast of red," referring to the fact that, at this feast, the black facial markings that had been worn by the successor since the "feast of black" (*wilxtú?uck*) were replaced with red stripes on each cheek. Second in rank was an *?oix* potlatch (*?oix* 'to proclaim or make known'). These were the feasts of assuming a name, validating a crest, or erecting a totem pole. Rivalries and challenges were also typically expressed through crest displays within the *?oix* potlatch framework. Other kinds of potlatches were said to rank behind these two. The prestige accorded the potlatch-giver, of course, depended upon the amount of wealth he displayed and gave away (fig. 13). Boas

St. Louis Art Mus., Mo.: 268:1982.
Fig. 13. Copper, "the ultimate symbol of wealth" (MacDonald 1984: 133). It was beaten out of a sheet of metal into this standard form, the central T-shaped ridge separating the flared upper panel and the two rectangular lower panels. The engraved designs varied, but in any case were not crests; coppers changed ownership and so could not symbolize kin groups. They were displayed at namings and were essential to potlatches honoring the dead. The followers of a Tsimshian chief bought a copper for him, preferably a very valuable one and broke it up after his death, identifying the pieces as his "bones" and distributing them to other chiefs (Garfield 1939:264). The design on the upper panel of this copper may be a hawk. Collected about 1800; height 110.7 cm.



Royal Ont. Mus., Toronto. HN 825.
Fig. 14. Chief's dance headdress worn in his role of *smhaláit* or 'real dancer'. The carved frontlet represents a crest. The double rows of small faces around the periphery are distinctively Tsimshian, and common on the flattened globular rattles. Abalone sections are inlaid around the face and used for eyes and teeth. Sea lion whiskers form the standing crown atop assorted feathers over a canvas headdress and printed cloth trailer, which are both lined with strips of ermine. Collected by C.M. Barbeau on the Nass River, B.C., in 1927 or before. Height 48 cm with whiskers.

(1916:538–541) and Garfield (1939:192–219) are second-hand descriptions of Tsimshian potlatches. In eyewitness accounts of a 1965 Gitksan potlatch (Adams 1973:51–78) and a 1980 feast (Seguin 1985:76–87) many traditional forms and idioms were no longer present, but the events were recognizably continuous with a 1792 account (Caamaño 1938; Gunther 1972; Seguin 1985).

● RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION Establishing and maintaining supernatural power and well-being was not relegated to religious specialists but was the responsibility of the political leaders, *smkikét* p.18 (Halpin 1973; Guédon 1984a). Their religious responsibilities included demonstrating respect for animals and spirits in all activities (such as hunting, fishing, and the consumption of animal foods), and also during the particularly volatile periods around rituals, birth, and death.

The spiritual leadership of the *smkikét* can be separated into four types of activity. In their role as house chiefs they were active in ritual occasions such as the feasts and naming ceremonies; at these occasions they wore their crests and ceremonial robes and headdresses (fig. 10). In their role as *naxnóx* 'power' dancers they dramatized and validated the powers of their ancestors and their house by masked dances and dramas. As *smhaláit* 'real dancers', garbed in their *kʷushaláit* (Chilkat dance robes) and *ʔamhaláit* (frontlet headdresses not covering the face), with the raven rattle as a symbol of power, they initiated young people into ritual roles. The final formal named role for a leader was the *wihaláit* or 'great dancer', the leader of the four secret societies, into which many of the people were initiated (fig. 14). For this role the *wihaláit* wore red cedar-bark neck rings and danced to the music of whistles and drums. The secret society dances were apparently borrowed from the Haisla and Heiltsuk-speaking people just before contact with Europeans; they were most fully expressed among the Southern Tsimshian, who obtained them directly from the Heiltsuk speakers, and had only partially been received by the other divisions. Most of the names for the dancers are Northern Wakashan in origin. (Accounts of the dance societies appear in Garfield 1939; Boas 1916; Drucker 1940.)

The chiefs' roles in ordering sacred relations were complemented by the activities of specialists called *swánsk haláit* 'blowing shamans', who were particularly active during serious illness or times of "bad luck" such as failure in a salmon run (Barbeau 1958; Guédon 1984). Such events were understood to be due to events in the domain of power. Illness, for example, was believed to be at least partly due to spiritual weakness or impurity, and the practices of the shaman marshaled the spiritual resources of the community to strengthen and purify the spirits of the patients, who were symbolically cleansed by the shaman sucking "dirty" objects from them and rubbing them with clean substances. The *swánsk haláit* were not a separate social stratum like the *smkikét* and in fact some *smkikét* were shamans as well.

● WITCHCRAFT Not classified as sacred were the *haltá·ukit* or witches, men or women who worked in secret to harm others. They did not have spirit-helpers but employed physical objects such as dolls or nail parings to create a state of "dirtiness" that was the opposite of the purity required for a supernatural encounter. Witches were depicted in a "horrid manner" (Guédon 1984a:148). Their favorite ingredients were bits of corpse; Boas (1916: 564) gives a detailed example of the witch's "recipes."

Beliefs

Tsimshian beliefs in reincarnation were not well reported by early ethnographers, although they were still widespread in late twentieth-century villages (Seguin 1984; Halpin 1984a; Adams 1973; B. Campbell 1975). The traditional belief seems to be that people were reincarnated in their lineage grandchildren, although other connections are also reported. Seguin (1984:123) goes so far as to suggest that the potlatch was structured so as to "*make it possible for lineage members to be reincarnated properly.*" That the same terms are used to refer both to a cradle and a gravebox (*ẇo*) and that a person's baby song and mourning dirge (*li·mk'ói*) are the same song is evidence in point.

Natl. Mus. of Canada, Ottawa: VII-C-215 (67).
Fig. 15. Wooden shaman's rattle. This characteristic flattened, globular rattle is made in halves, joined with lashes, and pegged at the handle. Both front and back shown. It is carved in bas relief and left unpainted. Arrangement of design elements is typically Tsimshian, although other northern groups also had these rattles ("Haida: Traditional Culture," fig. 12, this vol.). Collected at Gitlakdamiks, B.C., 1905; height 30 cm.

Nat. Mus. of Canada, Ottawa: 69616.
Fig. 16. Frank Bolton, a lower Nass River chief of a leading Eagle clan, portraying a medicine man helping the "patient" Robert Pearl of Gitlakdamiks. The singers are, left to right: Albert Allen, of Kincolith; Henry Smart, chief of a Wolf clan on upper Nass River, with a skin drum; and William Foster, chief of an Eagle clan at Gitwunksithk (Barbeau 1951:105–106). In shamanistic performances techniques used by the healer to get himself and patient ready for treatment are drumming, tapping rhythm sticks, singing specific songs, and manipulation of objects given to the shaman by supernatural helpers. The noise and physical activity help pull the concentration of the shaman and patient together (Guédon 1984:187–188). A shaman's rattle, an essential part of the equipment, is lying on the "patient." Photograph by C. Marius Barbeau, near Hazelton, B.C., 1927.

Mythology

There are two types of Tsimshian myths: those that were known generally and could be told by anyone, such as the Raven cycle (Boas 1916), and those, called *ʔatáuẓ* that were owned by a particular house and could be told only by a trained and authorized house member.

The Raven cycle tells of the exploits of *tẓá·msm*, who was known to the Nishga and Gitksan as *wi·két* ('great person' or 'giant'), a trickster and shape-changer. One of his accomplishments was the liberation of light from a box in the Sky Chief's house. He also brought fire to humans and taught them the use of the eulachon rake. While *tẓá·msm* cannot be called a creator, since the elements and creatures with which he worked were already in existence, he put the world in its present order.

The *ʔatáuẓ* are historical in character. Many tell of the original home of the lineage ancestors, their migration to and possession of their present territories, and their acquisition of power and crests from supernatural ancestors. The most famous of the Tsimshian homelands was Temlaham (Barbeau 1928; Boas 1902:221–225), said to have been a large town stretched along the west bank of the Skeena just below present Hazelton. Episodes in *ʔatáuẓ* were widely known, such as the story of a girl who married a bear, and were interpreted by each house to its own ends. Portions of a great many Tsimshian *ʔatáuẓ* have been published (Barbeau 1929, 1953, 1961; Boas 1902, 1916; see also Harris 1974). Lévi-Strauss (1967) and his commentators have analyzed the myth of Asdiwal.

External Relations

Garfield (1939:230ff.), Boas (1916:519–523), and Swanton (1905:66) reported that the four Tsimshian clans parallelled the moieties of their Haida and Tlingit neighbors. Marriages were forbidden with foreign "friends," that is, clans sharing the same crests (table 1). J.A. Dunn's (1984a) comparison of Haida, Tlingit, and Tsimshian kinship terms reveals a number of borrowings that bring all three societies into symbolic relations with one another. He argues that from the Tsimshian point of view, the Haidas were seen as supernatural animal "fathers" and the Tlingit as "little sisters."

Toward the interior the Tsimshian had as neighbors the Tsetsaut, whose last members affiliated with the Nishga, and the Carrier, matrilineal Athapaskan-speaking peoples. Some items of the Subarctic groups' material culture, such as snowshoes and work with porcupine quills, were borrowed by the Nishga and Gitksan, but most cultural borrowings flowed in the other direction. The Carrier, for example, took over the coastal complex of the potlatch and crests from the Gitksan. This "Gitksanization" of the Carrier (Jenness 1943) continued in the late twentieth century, and in fact some of the Carriers politically affiliated with the Gitksan villages in the Gitksan-Wet'suwet'en Tribal Council.

According to Tsimshian oral histories, dancing societ-

ies were received from the Haisla and Heiltsuk; Swanton (1905:156–160) reports that the Haida, in turn, received them from the Tsimshian of Kitkatla.

The greatest aboriginal trading center on the northern Northwest Coast was at the mouth of the Nass River during the eulachon fishing season in the early spring. Tlingit, Haida, Gitksan, and Nishga from the upper Nass converged each February on the lower Nass River from Red Bluff to Fishery Bay to fish and trade with the coastal Nishga and Coast and Southern Tsimshian who owned fishing stations there.

Formal trade relationships have been reported for a number of groups, both within and between the Tsimshian-speaking divisions and with Haida and Tlingit groups (MacDonald 1984a). Trade goods included foods (eulachon and grease, halibut, seaweed, soapberries), carved horn spoons, and slaves. Boas (1916:398) inferred village specialization in commodity and craft production, but Allaire (1984) analyzed the myth upon which that conclusion was based and suggests that the text was a "mental map" or code of Coast and Southern Tsimshian groups based upon a metaphorical relationship between containers (coastal), food (interior), and ceremonial paraphernalia (southern).

About 1750–1835 forts were built at Kispiox, Kisgegas, Gitlakdamiks, Kitwanga, and Kitselas, probably in response to trading networks that brought European goods into the area in advance of settlement. They were connected by "grease trails," 22 of which have been plotted for the Skeena-Nass-Stikine river systems (MacDonald 1984a).

History

The Southern Tsimshian were the earliest contacted by Europeans. The joint fur trading expedition of Capt. Charles Duncan in the vessel *Princess Royal* and James Colnett in the *Prince of Wales* visited what was probably the village of Kitkatla in 1787 (Moeller 1966). Colnett believed that he and his men were the first Europeans seen by the villagers, although they already had trade goods and were eager for more. In 1792 the Spanish explorer and captain of the *Aranzazu*, Jacinto Caamaño, visited a village on Pitt Island. This village has been identified as Ksidiya'ats, known as an archeological site (Seguin 1985: 28); Caamaño (1938:287) called it Citeyats.

The Gitksan were in contact with Europeans at Fort McLeod and Fort Saint James during the first decade of the nineteenth century, although they were not intruded upon by White settlement until the late 1860s, when Kitanmaks became the site of the Skeena River trading town of Skeena Forks or Hazelton.

Capt. George Vancouver explored Coast Tsimshian waters and sailed up Portland Canal into Nishga territory in 1793, but he left only scanty information about the few Indians he saw. The documentary history of these two groups begins with the establishment of the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Simpson on the Nass River in 1831.

Fisher (1977) has claimed that the native cultures were little disrupted by the traders, although Grumet (1975) analyzed changes in the potlatching patterns of the Coast Tsimshian who relocated around Fort Simpson.

It was the coming of the missionaries that inaugurated a much greater change in the cultures of the Tsimshian. The story of William Duncan and the establishment of the Christian village of Metlakatla has been told several times (Wellcome 1887; Arctander 1909; Usher 1969; Duff 1964: 93–94). An Anglican lay preacher, Duncan arrived at Fort Simpson in 1857 and learned enough of the language to preach his first sermon in Tsimshian in June 1858. In May 1862, he led a group of about 50 converts to found a village at the site of the old winter villages on Venn Passage. Soon after they departed, smallpox struck Fort Simpson, and others followed them. Barnett (1941, 1942) records instances in which people moved to Metlakatla because of political difficulties at Fort Simpson and concludes that Duncan offered an alternative life to people who had little chance of advancement in traditional Tsimshian society or who were otherwise in difficult or shameful positions.

The community prospered. By 1879 the population of the village was about 1,100 (Duff 1964:93). In 1887, after several years of conflict with officials of the Anglican Church, Duncan and his followers left British Columbia and founded New Metlakatla on Annette Island in Alaska (Usher 1974; Beynon 1941; Murray 1985).

The people remaining at Fort Simpson after the founding of Metlakatla, British Columbia, continued to follow traditional practices, but only for a few years more. In 1874 Rev. Thomas Crosby, a Methodist, went to Port Simpson at the invitation of Alfred and Kate Dudoward, high-ranking people who had been converted the previous year in Victoria. When Crosby arrived, there was only "one shingled 'European' " house outside the fort, but within a few years, Port Simpson resembled Metlakatla as a model Christian community. By 1878 "most of the original carved posts" at Port Simpson had been "cut down as missionary influence spread among the people" (Dawson 1880a:115B). An 1873 visitor to Metlakatla exclaimed: "I say these men are not Indians, they are White men" (Fisher 1977:134). However, the succeeding century has shown that the cultures of the Tsimshian were more resilent than that evaluation implies. Several authors have argued that the Tsimshian were active participants in their own missionization and that they developed a uniquely Tsimshian Christianity, suited to their new context dealing with a colonial society (Patterson 1982; Seguin 1985).

Missions in the Nishga and Gitksan areas quickly followed on the success at Metlakatla. In 1864 Rev. Robert Doolan founded a mission village at Kincolith; in

1880 Rev. William H. Collison, who had assisted Duncan at Metlakatla since 1873, was sent to Hazelton; another mission in the Gitksan area was founded north of Kispiox in 1879 by Robert Tomlinson, who had moved a mission founded at Greenville to Aiyansh in 1878. Patterson (1982) discusses Nass River missions.

The years during which the missions were growing were active in other ways as well. Trapping for trade led to shifts in annual cycles among most groups, though the traders' journals imply that most Indians continued subsistence production. After a minor gold rush along the Skeena in the early 1870s, there were prospectors in the area for many years. Most significant, the first salmon cannery was established on the Skeena in 1876, to be followed by a number of others. The labor of the local Indians was sought by the new industry, and a pattern of summers spent residing in company houses at the salmon canneries was quickly established. J.A. McDonald (1985) traces the development of the modern economy of the north coast area, pointing out that many Tsimshian people developed businesses and worked for wages during the nineteenth century.

Population

Duff (1964:39) estimated the 1835 total population of Tsimshian-speaking peoples at 8,500, of which 1,200 were Southern Tsimshian, 3,000 were Coast Tsimshian, 1,700 were Nishga, and 2,600 were Gitksan. In 1885 the total Tsimshian population in British Columbia had been reduced to 4,500; in 1887, 817 Tsimshians moved to Alaska. By 1895, the lowest year on record, the British Columbia population had shrunk to 3,550; there were 465 Tsimshians at New Metlakatla, Alaska, in 1900. The population began to grow in the twentieth century, and by 1963 there were 6,475 Tsimshian people in British Columbia. In 1980 there were 9,494 of which 3,149 were Gitksan, 2,893 were Nishga, and 3,452 Coast and Southern Tsimshian (Canada. Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Indian and Inuit Affairs Program 1980:50).

Synonymy

The name Tsimshian is derived from *ċmsyan*, literally 'inside the Skeena River', the designation the Coast Tsimshian and Southern Tsimshian use for themselves. It appears in English as early as 1836, when Duncan Finlayson referred to "The Pearl Harbour, and Skeenah Indians called the Chimmesyan tribe" (E.E. Rich 1941: 323). Boas (1890:804) and Hodge (1907–1910, 2:827) used the spelling Tsimshian, though Hodge (1907–1910, 1: 270–271) continued to use the same name in the older spelling Chimmesyan for the linguistic family as a whole, following Powell (1891:63–65). Other spelling variants given by Hodge (1907–1910, 2:827) include: Chimseyans, Chymshean, Chimpsain, Shimshyans, Simseans, Simpsian, Tsimsean, Tsimseyans, Tsimsheeans, Tsimpsean, T'simpshean, and (German) Zimshīan.

Gitksan is from the Gitksan people's name for themselves in their own language, *kitxsan*, literally 'people of the Skeena River' (Hindle and Rigsby 1973:2). In Coast Tsimshian they are referred to as *kitksyán*. Spelling variants given by Hodge (1907–1910, 1:707) include Kitksan, used as the heading of the entry, and Gyitksa´n, Gyitkshan, Kiksàn, Kit-ih-shian, and Kit-ksun. Locally the spelling 'Ksan has some currency.

Nishga is also a self-designation, *nisqáʔa*; the etymology of this word is uncertain. Spelling variants given by Hodge (1907–1910, 2:75–76) in the entry Niska include: Náss, Naas River Indians, Nascah, Nascar, Nishgar, Nishka, and Nis-kah. The spelling Nisgha is used by the Nisgha Tribal Council.

The Tsimshian-speaking peoples do not have a common name for themselves. The coastal people refer to the upriver people as *ċmsyán kilháuli* 'upriver Tsimshian'; the interior people call the coastal people *alukikét* 'standing-out people'. The Coast Tsimshian speakers differentiate their own language, which they call *smʔálkax̣* 'the real language', from Southern Tsimshian (*ski·x̣s*) and Nishga-Gitksan (*qe·lmx̣*) (John A. Dunn, communication to editors 1974).

Names for the Tsimshian in other Indian languages include: Tlingit *ċu·cxán* (Davis 1976:86), Tongass dialect *ċù·cxan* (Williams and Williams 1978:32–33); Haida *kílda·*, *kílada·* (Lawrence and Leer 1977:250); Squamish *ċamšián* (Kuipers 1969:39); Heiltsuk kwē´təla and Bella Coola elx̣ī´mix (Boas 1890:805, normalized).

Variant forms of the names of the principal Tsimshian-speaking villages are given with the sources abbreviated as follows: B (Boas 1916:482–485, 959–966), H (Hodge 1907–1910), MB (Barbeau 1950).

Nishga

Gitiks (*kitʔáiks* 'people of *ʔáiks!*'), G·it-aiks (B), Gitiks (MB), Kitaix (H).

Kwunwoq (*kʷinwoʔa* 'where people sleep over'), Gwunahaw (MB), Gwinwork (H).

Angida (*nkitỷáh* 'where they rake eulachon'), Angyadæ (MB), Ankeegar (H).

Gitlakaus (*kitlax̣ʔáus* 'people on the sand bar'), G·it-lax-a´us (B).

Andegulay (*ʔantekʷile·*), Andegualē´ (B).

Gitwunksithk (Canyon City) (*kitwinksí·łk* 'people of the place of lizards'), G·it-wunksē´łk (B), Gitwinksihlk (MB), Kitwinshilk (H).

Gitlakdamiks (*kitlaxtá·miks* 'people on the place of springs'), G·it-lax-dā´mîks (B), Gitlarhdamiks (MB), Kitlakdamix (H).

Gitksan

Kitwanga (*kitwiṅgáx̣* 'people of the place of rabbits'), Kitwanga (MB), Kitwingach (H).

Kitwancool (*kitwanłkú?ul* 'people of the little place *or* narrow valley'), G·it-wunlkō´ł (B), Gitwinlkul (MB), Kitwinskole (H).

Kitsegukla (*kicikúkʷła* 'people of Sagukhla Mountain'), G·idzig·u´kła (B), Gitsegyukla (MB), Kitzegukla (H).

Kitanmaks (Hazelton) (*kit?anmá·xs* 'people where they fish by torchlight'), G·it-an-mā´k·s (B), Kitanmaiksh (H).

Kispiox (*kispayákʷs* 'people of the hiding place'), G·ispa-yô´ks (B), Kispayaks (MB), Kishpiyeoux (H).

Kisgegas (*kisqaqá?as* 'people of the seagulls [?]') G·isgagas (B), Kiskagas (MB), Kishgagass (H).

Kuldo (*qaltó?o)*, Qaldo (B), Kauldaw (H).

Coast Tsimshian

Gitwilgyots (*kitwilkó·c* 'people of the kelp'), G·id-wul-g·â´dz (B), Gitwilgyawts (MB), Kitwilgyoks (H).

Gitzaklalth (*kitsax̣łá·ł* [c?] 'people of [?] berries'), Kitsalthlal (H).

Gitsees (*kitcí·s* 'people of the salmon trap'), G·it-dzī´ºs (B), Kitzeesh (H).

Ginakangeek (*kinax̣?ankí·k* 'people of the mosquitoes'), G·inax'ang·ī´ºk (B), Ginarhangyeek (MB), Kinagingeek (H).

Ginadoiks (*kinató·iks* 'people of the swift water'), G·inadâ´ºxs (B), Ginaihdoiks (MB), Kinuhtoiah (H).

Gitandau (*kit?antó·* [?] 'people of the weirs'), G·itlandâ´ (B), Gitandaw (MB), Kitunto (H).

Gispakloats (*kispax̣lu?uc* 'people of the elderberries'), G·i-spa-x-lâ´ºts (B), Gisparhlawts (MB), Kishpachlaots (H).

Gitwilkseba (*kitwilksipá·*), G·id-wul-ksE-bā´º (B), Kitwilksheba (H).

Gilutsau (*kilucá·ÿ* 'people of the way inside'), G·i-lu-dzā´r (B), Gillodzar (MB), Kilutsai (H).

Gitlan (*kitlí·n* 'people of two passing canoes'), G·it-lā´n (B), Gitlæn (MB), Kitlani (H).

Kitsumkalum (*kitsmqé·lm* 'people of the plateau'), G·itsłEmg̣ā´lôn (B), Kitsumkælem (MB), Kitzimgaylum (H).

Kitselas (*kitsalá·sÿ* 'people of the canyon'), G·itsłalā´sEr (B), Gitsalas (MB), Kitzilas (H).

Southern Tsimshian

Kitkatla (*kitq̣xá·ła* 'people of the channel'), G·it-qxā´ła (B), Gitrhahla (MB), Kitkatla (H).

Kitkiata (*kitqa?áta* 'people of the ceremonial cane'), G·it-qłā´ºda (B), Kitkahta (H).

Kitasoo (*kitiscú·*), G·idEsdzū´ (B), Kittizoo (H).

Sources

The first written record of Tsimshian people is in the 1787 journal of Colnett (1798; Howay 1940; Moeller 1966). The most complete explorer's account is the journal based on Jacinto Caamaño's extended sojourn among Southern Tsimshians in 1792 (Caamaño 1938). There are a few other reports of Coast and Southern Tsimshian people during the next three decades. The establishment of Fort Simpson by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1834 began a period of more regular records (Hudson's Bay Company 1834–1838). Mitchell (1981, 1983a) used records from the fort and trading vessels from 1835 as the basis for a discussion of the annual round of a Kitkatla chief in 1835. Patterson (1982) summarizes most of the early accounts of the Nishga. Large's (1957) history of the Skeena River includes information on the Coast Tsimshian and Gitksan peoples. William Duncan's papers (1853–1916) are preserved in Metlakatla, Alaska, and his reports to the Church Missionary Society are preserved in the Society's archives in London (both sets of papers are available on microfilm from the University of British Columbia Library, Special Collections Division, Vancouver).

There are no ethnographies of the Tsimshian in the sense that a traditional ethnography is an attempt to describe a whole culture on the basis of information gathered from informants and from the observation of behavior. Boas worked with Tsimshian people in Victoria in 1886 and on the Nass in 1894, and between 1903 and 1914 he corresponded with Henry Tate, a Port Simpson Tsimshian, who sent him a large body of texts. Boas's primary interest was in mythology, and the result was two volumes (Boas 1902, 1912) of texts with translations and one collection (Boas 1916:58–392) in English only. His ethnographic publications consist of a piece on the Nishga (Boas 1895:569–583) and a general description of the Tsimshian peoples incorporated into his work on their mythology (Boas 1916). This consists of a short account of material culture (1916:43–57), a description of Tsimshian culture as reflected in their myths (1916:398–477), and an analysis of social organization using other sources and comparative data (1916:478–564). While much of this work is convincing in the light of later work, insofar as it depends on myths it must be used with caution. Myths are not a reliable source on actual behavior.

During the 1930s Boas received extensive collections of notes from William Beynon, of Port Simpson, but never published from these materials, some of which are in the Columbia University Library, New York, and are available on microfilm, and some of which are in the Library of the American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia. Beynon also sent material to Philip Drucker in the 1950s,

which is preserved in the National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington.

Sapir (1915a, 1920) published information on Nishga social organization gathered from chiefs who visited the National Museum of Man in Ottawa. Berger (1981) summarizes the important Nishga land claim case.

Viola Garfield, a student of Boas, did fieldwork among the Coast Tsimshian at Port Simpson during the 1930s; she also worked extensively with William Beynon. Her monograph (1939) is a detailed investigation of their social organization, with considerable information on potlatches and *haláit*. She also wrote a useful popular summary (1966), which is the best general introduction to Tsimshian culture available. Garfield's field notes and papers are preserved in the University of Washington, Seattle.

Marius Barbeau was an active Tsimshian scholar for a number of years from his first fieldwork during 1915. William Beynon worked with him throughout the period, and the collection of unpublished Tsimshian notes and texts in the Barbeau room at the Centre for Folk Culture Studies at the National Museum of Man, Ottawa, is the most significant resource for Tsimshian scholars (Duff 1964a; Halpin 1978). It is available on microfilm. Beynon collected an enormous volume of material from the Coast and Southern Tsimshian and the Gitksan, most of it myths and narratives, between 1915 and 1957. Much of it remains unpublished, and what was published by Barbeau (notably 1929, 1950, 1953, and 1958) was poorly edited and organized in support of outdated theoretical assumptions (see Duff 1964a).

Grumet (1979) published a thorough bibliographic essay on the Tsimshian. Significant contributions include Seguin (1985) on feasts, Patterson (1982) on Nishga missionization, McNeary (1976) on Nishga social and economic life, J.A. McDonald (1985) on the Kitsumkalum economy, and two edited collections. Seguin (1984b) includes chapters on feasts, archeology, basketry, cosmology, secret society carvers, and shamanism. Miller and Eastman (1984) include discussions of mythology, totemism, inheritance, potlatch, kinship, house fronts, and religion.

Important museum collections from the Tsimshian groups are in the Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria; the National Museum of Man, Ottawa; the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto; and the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, New York. These repositories include both artifacts and photographs.