

Geographical and Political Subdivisions

(Table 1, Maps .)

Geographical Subdivisions.

For the century between 1770 and 1870, before the calamitous decline in their population, the Haida can usefully be described in terms of regional sub-ecological scene for the culture groups. Geographical factors set the scene in each area, and individual lineages, with their distinctive cultures, seldom extended beyond them. It must however be stressed that cultural similarities far outweigh the regional differences; and that despite endemic internal warfare, communication was maintained within the entire Haida area through chiefly intermarriage, trade, and potlatching. Given the superior mobility of their superior watercraft the horizons of individual Haida extended throughout Haida territory and beyond.

1. Kunghit-People. The people of the southern half of Moresby Island were acknowledged the distinction of being called collectively the "Kunghit-Haida" (ga'nxet xa'-idaga-i). The name "Kunghit" seems to connote "southward". While within historic times these people shared a single winter village, Ninstints, they seem earlier to have been more populous. Skincuttle Inlet and Juan Perez Sound, on the eastern side, contained a large number of traditional villages and two of the mythical origin places of the Haida Ravens: Xagi and Atana. The dialect of the area was noticeably different. Swanton credits them with

"...considerable racial individuality. They were great fighters, and sent expeditions in all directions. Their greatest enemies were the people of Kloo; but they warred with those of Kaisun and Te'a'aʔ on the west coast, with the people of Skidegate and Masset, with the Tlingit, Tsimshian, Bella Bella, and Kwakiutl tribes, as far at least as Alert Bay." (1905a:105)

SUBDIVISIONS

The Haida were bound together as a single people by their common language, island habitat, and the awareness of sharing a common culture; however there were no bonds of a political nature that made them a nation. In Haida thought social bonds were more important than political ones, ^{and} Primary allegiance was given to kinfolk rather than neighbours. The social universe consisted of two exogamous, matrilineal moieties (clans, "sides"), the "Ravens" and the "Eagles". Each of these consisted of a large, ever-changing number of localized subdivisions of varying size, the lineages (Swanton's "families"). These were the fundamental corporate units of Haida society, each owning its resource areas, dwellings and monuments, historical narratives, names, crests, and other social prerogatives. The traditional narratives strained to confirm the relatedness of the lineages of each of the sides, either by asserting the facts of a remembered common origin or by postulating the former existence of 'story towns' where the ancestors of all of them had once lived together, or of ~~descent from~~ common mythical 'grandmothers' with multiple breasts who rose out of the waters of the primal flood. Fictive kinship ties were extended even further, to the clans of the Tlingit and Tsimshian, based either on remembered relationships or on perceived similarities in crests and myths. Not only were all relevant human beings divided into Ravens and Eagles, but ^{also} ~~so~~ were the supernatural beings ~~of the universe~~ (although those of mythic times were mostly of the Raven side). The Haida therefore extended the concept of kinship to divide their universe into two all-inclusive families.

Nevertheless, ties of a political nature, based upon the face to face ^{habitation} sharing of common winter villages, were also important; and bonds based upon ^{of a} the sharing of common geographical sub-areas were/significant beyond that of mere just descriptive reference, and have increasingly come to have political implications for the Haida. The winter villages, in which the lineages constructed

their headquarters buildings and erected their monuments, were often 'towns' of substantial size. While traditionally it is usually said that each lineage once occupied its own village, and each village was usually founded by a single lineage which remained its owner, most of the towns at any given time consisted of houses of two or more lineages and often both moieties. The largest towns were complex, brittle, and impermanent aggregations of lineages and households which for most purposes retained their essential autonomy. However, the ranking chief of the owning lineage was recognized as 'town chief' ('town mother' at Skidegate) with social precedence, and performed ritual duties for the entire population which have not, perhaps, been enough understood, and were perhaps increasing. Town chiefs often wielded power far beyond the normal charter of the social system. It was from such chiefs that the first European visitors gave the villages their names. It is the ruins of the historic 'totem pole villages' that are the most memorable monuments of Haida life. Modern Haida communities are of course constructed more on political than social principles. For these reasons, the present article lays stress on the villages as units, listing somewhat arbitrarily the 27 which were most prominent during the past two centuries.

There is also validity in describing the Haida in terms of a small number of geographical subdivisions, each of which had a certain individuality based upon intimate social and historical ties. This article retains, in a somewhat modified form, Swantons' division into six such subdivisions (Swanton, 1905a, p. 105). Finally, it has been not without significance that Haida territories straddle what has become an international boundary. The Queen Charlotte Haida have been under British and then Canadian dominion since early in the 19th Century, while those in Alaska have been 'Russian Indians', and since 1867 citizens of the United States. These relationships are set out in Table 1.

Social Subdivisions

Moieties.

It was a fundamental premise of Haida social structure (and probably of Haida metaphysical thought) that the universe was divided into two halves which were opposite and equal. The primary social purpose of this division was to control marriage: Ravens were prohibited from marrying Ravens, and vice versa. Descent was matrilineal. A Haida therefore belonged to the same 'side' as his mother and her siblings, his own siblings, and the children of his sisters. He was 'opposite' to his own father and his siblings, his own wife and her siblings, and his own children. The moiety division therefore divided the people with whom he was most intimately related into two halves. Haida social life was an orchestration of the reciprocal relationships between the opposites.

A Haida was however born into a specific lineage, within which he (she) found his social place, and had especially-close relationships with the lineage of his father, that of his wife (ideally, the two were the same), and that of his uncle's wife (in the case of a male who succeeded to his uncle's position and had to potlatch to his predecessors wives people). That is to say, he had close relationships with (at least) two opposite lineages, as well as his own. All the rest of the Haida lineages, near and far, were ranged on his side or the opposite side, Ravens or Eagles, we and they, 'brothers' and 'brothers-in-law' and 'sisters' and 'sisters-in-law' of varying degrees of remoteness. For purposes of marriage, trade, and protection, Haida Ravens extended such fictive kinship ties to Tlingit Wolf moiety (Eagle) and Tsimshian Wolf (laxkibu) and Bear (gispuwadwade) clans; Haida Eagles similarly considered as kin the Tlingit Ravens, and the Tsimshian Ravens (ganhada) and Eagles (laxski k). These ties were based primarily on similarities in the major crests owned by the clans.

There was no Haida term embracing all the Ravens (they were not called xoya "raven"; Boas recorded Koalā from CE). Nor was there a single common term for the Eagles (they were not called got "eagle") although the term Gitins (Masset Gitans, Boas git'ina' 1916:480) was used by many of the lineages. It seems to mean "treasured children" (of the Ravens). There was a feeling/that among some the common 'grandfather' of all the Ravens was Raven the culture hero of myth, and their common 'grandmother' was Foam Woman, who rose out of the primal flood near the south end of the islands. Some The Eagles, in parallel and probably derivative fashion, postulate a common 'grandmother' in Djilaqons, who was brought by Raven from the mainland to the head of Cumshewa Inlet; that is, a sort of wife of Raven. The myths are not, however, consistently systematized.

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Lineages.

the corporate

The most important units were the lineages, local subdivisions of the moieties. Swanton's superb listing of these includes 22 major Raven lineages and 23 Eagle, many with sub-lineages, and is repeated below, with his system of designation, R1-R22 and E1-E23, from south to north (Swanton, 1905a, pp. 268-76). So important are these units that recent informants have called them "tribes", and writers have had difficulty in maintaining the distinction between the lineages and their villages (eg, Harrison, 1895, pp.). Indeed, each was associated primarily with a particular place where it originated, usually by fission from a parent lineage, and settled in a new village. Their names are most frequently based on place names ("those born at ----", "town people of ----", "people of ---", and "gitins of ----" -but note, not "ravens of ----"). In size, these units show several ranges of segmentation, from single households to lineages with houses in several winter villages. Each household had its own chief, as did each lineage (the ranking house chief of the lineage), and each town (the ranking lineage chief of the town). As summarized by Rosman and Rubal, the lineage:

...has rights to territories for hunting and fishing, cemetery areas, house sites, and trade routes, as well as the use of crests, personal names, house names, and secret society rites. This is the unit with corporate and legal functions which conducts warfare and participates in feuds, and makes alliances through marriage (p. 35).

The number of such lineages was constantly changing, through the processes of fission and sometimes fusion; within a lineage sub-groups would tend to develop and disputes might cause them to split off.

Lineages were not serially ranked, as was the case with parallel kin group among the Tsimshian and Kwakiutl. Some were acknowledged to be of the highest status, others to be little better than servants. Of more importance were pairings of lineages of equivalent status in regularized marriages; the one becoming the 'father's' of the other.