. . . .   H A I D A

Feople speaking the Haida (HIGH-da) language occupied the

Queen Charlotte Islands and the southern half of Frince of

Wales Island ~~immediately~~ to the north in Alaska. The name

means, in their language, "people". In addition to applying

it to themselves, they often used the word in their names for

other people; for example, KilYat-Haida "Mainland People",

and Yets-HaidaYai "Iron People" (their name for white men).

Until the 1750's or so, all of the Haida lived on the Queen

Charlottes; about that time, some of them moved from the north-

western corner to Dall and Prince of Wales Island, where they

established several villages. These Alaskan Haidas are

generally called Kaigani, after one of their village sites.

Haida Subdivisions

The Haida seem not to have been divided into local
"tribes" in the same sense as the Tsimshian, the Tlingit,
The abor centr not clees because decline of popn + movement to Alaska.
or the Kwakiutl. They did not have the same sort of named,
territoreal
localized groupings of lineages which had some degree of
structure and some sort of unity through time. To them, the
to which they owed their loyalty and identification
most important units were the matrilineal lineages ("families"
'lineage' Swand
matri-sib or avuncu-
(kin)   clan (ses)
Murdock.
of Swanton), which had their own histories and possessed their
seasonal
own summer and winter habitation sites and resource areas.
These groups might migrate from one village to another, split
up, form coalitions, gradually build branches in other villages.
Their traditional histories are tangled skeins of such move-
remembered
ments, some real, some inferred, some mythical.

The winter villages, where the massive and substantial
houses were built and the totem poles erected, were usually
(sometimes the diff sections
of the vill had sep names
uneasy and shifting coalitions of ~~a number of~~ households of
belonging to
several lineages, both Raven and Eagle.phratries. The site
itself was owned by just one of the lineages. Within the village
usually
the family chiefs admitted to some sort of order of rank, with
a "town chief" having social precedence if not everyday auth-
ority over all. Winter villagescommunities,therefore, were
somewhat like local tribes of the Tsimshian, except that the
by having a name for the group or a sense of identity with it
Haida did not recognize them as such, and they had little
permanence.¹

1. There has been a tendency as popn fell to consolidate lineages in fewer villages
and more often in earlier times they may have had winter villages of their
own, but

In tracing the history of the Haida, therefore, we
cannot use the concept of Tribe as we have with the Tsimshian
and Kwakiutl. We could, instead, focus upon the individual
lineages, as Swanton has done, and try to follow their ramif-
ications from place to place since mythical times. Or alter-
nately, we could take as our unit the winter villages, and trace
their histories as well as we can, even through *if temporary* shifting popul-
ations and changes of ownership. The latter is what we propose
to do, and in the account which follows, the numbered units
are **villages**. Each village which seems to have been of some
importance, by reason of historical accounts or photographed
ruins and totem poles, is described separately. *Swantons lists give compes*
in most cases

Great trades names

Despite not having "tribes" in the usual sense, the Haida
and people describing them were vaguely aware of groupings
larger than the winter village communities. For example, all
the people of the southern part of Moresby Island, who in
recent times have shared a common winter village on Anthony
Island, were known collectively as "Kunghit-Haida" or Kunghit
People. And all the people of the three villages of Cumshewa,
Skedans and Tanoo recognized a closer kinship among themselves
than with the other Haida. It was the same with the groups
around Skidegate Inlet. The name for Masset Inlet was Gao
("Inlet"), and the people who lived at its mouth (and by extension
all the people of northern Graham Island) came to be called
"Inlet-People". The Skidegate people, for example, called them

Gao-haidagai, and the Tsimshian called them Gitgao. Swanton
divided the Haida into six of these "geographical and histor-
ical groups" :

     1. The southern or Ninstints people

     2. The people of Skedans, Tanoo and Cumshewa

     3. Skidegate Inlet

     4. West Coast people

     5. Rose Spit

     6. North (Langara) Island people, or as they later

        became, the Kaigani.

In Swanton's scheme, the North Island people moved to Alaska
and became the Kaigani Haida, and the Rose Spit people spread
        entire
to occupy the northern coast. That in a simplified sense, is
what does seem to have happened. In the account which follows
we shall divide the villages into somewhat the same regional
groupings.

    The earliest traders, faced with the lack of named
                        and villages
tribes, usually solved it by naming the groups after the
principal chiefs of the area. Thus originated "Skidegates'
Village", Cumshewa's Village", "Kloo's Village", which have
survived as the place names Skidegate, Cumshewa, Kloo (Tanoo).
                  and Skedans are other villages
Ninstints (formerly Koyah's) is another village named from its
chief rather than its placename.

move forward

These regional groupings were apparently set apart by
minor dialect differences, although as they have moved together,
only two dialects remian, the Skidegate dialect and the Masset
dialect, spoken also in Alaska.