

A Study of Matrilineal Descent from the Perspective of the Tlingit NexA'di Eagles

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(Received 11 March 1988; accepted in revised form 21 February 1989)

ABSTRACT. The Athapaskans of the boreal forest of northwestern Canada and Alaska and the Indians of the northern Northwest Coast shared a similar social organization. It was based on the division of a group into moieties and/or phratries, tracing matrilineal descent, practicing exogamy, matrilocality, and sharing resources with other affiliate groups.

The Sanyaqoan NexA'di Eagle clan was singular among the Tlingit in the early 20th century because they had a third exogamous group, as opposed to the rest of the Tlingit, who had two: the Raven and the Wolf/Eagle. Therefore, they were often scorned socially by their northern cousins. The NexA'di have also been an enigma to anthropologists. Whereas most researchers have identified the NexA'di as being outside the two major divisions, Olson (1967) suggested they represent "Tlingitized" Tsimshian Eagles. Recent research suggests that, instead, it was the Tlingit Eagles who, through division and migration, introduced the Eagle phratry among the Nisga'a. At an earlier time, the NexA'di or a related Eagle group was present among Tlingit "tribes" as far north as Frederick Sound. The Tlingit, specifically the Chilkat, Kake, Stikine, Tongass, and, of course, the Sanya recognize the NexA'di as being an ancient Tlingit clan that originated in southeast Alaska.

Key words: matrilineal descent, matriorganization, Athapaskans, Tlingit, NexA'di, Eagle, phratry/moiety, origins

RÉSUMÉ. Les Athapaskans de la forêt boréale du nord-ouest du Canada et de l'Alaska et les Indiens de la partie nord de la côte nord-ouest, avaient la même forme d'organisation sociale. Celle-ci s'appuyait sur la division d'un groupe en moitiés et/ou phratries, dont la généalogie était établie par filiation maternelle, qui pratiquaient l'exogamie et la matrilocalité et qui partageaient les ressources avec d'autres groupes affiliés.

Le clan de l'Aigle Sanyaqoan NexA'di se distinguait parmi les Tlingit au début du XX^e siècle, car ils avaient un troisième groupe exogame, alors que le reste des Tlingit en avait deux: le Corbeau et le Loup/Aigle. C'est la raison pour laquelle les membres de ce clan étaient souvent méprisés sur le plan social par leurs cousins du Nord. Les NexA'di ont aussi représenté une énigme pour les anthropologues. Alors que la plupart des chercheurs ont identifié les NexA'di comme étant à l'extérieur des deux plus grands groupes, Olson (1967) a suggéré qu'ils étaient en fait des Aigles Tsimshian qui avaient été «tingitisés». De récentes recherches laissent supposer que ce furent plutôt les Aigles Tlingit qui, en se divisant et en émigrant, introduisirent la phratry de l'Aigle parmi les Nisga'a. À une époque précédente, les NexA'di ou un groupe d'Aigles qui leur était relié étaient présents parmi les «tribus» Tlingit à une latitude aussi septentrionale que Frederick Sound. Les Tlingit, plus précisément les Chilkat, les Kake, les Stikine, les Tongass et, bien sûr, les Sanya reconnaissent les NexA'di comme étant un ancien clan Tlingit originaire du sud-est de l'Alaska.

Mots clés: filiation maternelle, matriorganisation, Athapaskans, Tlingit, NexA'di, Aigle, phratry/moieté, origines

Traduit pour le journal par Nésida Loyer.

INTRODUCTION

Understanding the historic relationships between the Northwest Coast people of southeastern Alaska and their interior Athapaskan neighbors is an important topic in northern scholarship. The long-standing contact between these groups has resulted in a complex web of economic and social ties. Anthropologists have begun to unravel part of this web. Nevertheless, many aspects of these relationships are still poorly understood. Such ties can offer solutions to unanswered questions about the origin and history of Native people in southeastern Alaska and adjacent areas.

The Athapaskans of the boreal forest of northwestern Canada and Alaska and the Indians of the northern Northwest Coast shared a similar social organization. It was based on the division of a group into two subgroups (moieties) or more than two groups (phratries), tracing matrilineal descent and practicing exogamy (marrying into the opposite moiety or phratry) and matrilocality (Bishop and Krech, 1980:40; de Laguna, 1975:20). In addition, the sharing of resources was obligatory among them (Bishop and Krech, 1980:39; Olson, 1967:12). Although there were differences, the similarities are conspicuous enough for anthropologists to examine affinities. An overriding concern is the origin of this social system, recently called "matriorganization" (Krech, 1980:3). Bishop and Krech (1980:40-41) have suggested that the social organization evolved from unilineal clans to matriorganization, until such time that dissension broke out

in the group. It might then have changed to a tracing patrilineal descent. Key to their hypothesis is that the Athapaskans preferred peace above all else and would avoid conflict by sharing resources. It was only after the onset of Euro-American traders that the social system was replaced by the bilateral and bilocal focus. This was due to a number of factors, including a shift from big game hunting to the trapping of fur bearers and harvesting anadromous fish, changing territory to be closer to forts or fur-bearer habitat, and epidemics (Bishop and Krech, 1980:36-37).

A further stated concern is to gain understanding of the function of the social organization through analysis of dynamic factors (Garfield, 1939:61; de Laguna, 1975:26). Herein, the following analysis of an Eagle group found among the Sanyaqoan Tlingit considers the dynamic factors that contributed to the growth — and the decline — of a group tracing matrilineal descent.

An understanding of Tlingit social organization is relevant to this discussion. Anthropologists have recognized the Tlingit as being divided into three exogamic matrilineal phratries (Ober, 1973; Swanton, 1980) or two exogamic, matrilineal moieties (de Laguna, 1972, 1975; Olson, 1967). Proponents of moiety theory noted that there was one exception, the NexA'di clan of the Sanyaqoan, which intermarried into both groups.

The principal functions of the phratries or moieties were the same: to regulate marriage (exogamy) and determine certain kinship usages (Olson, 1967:24; de Laguna, 1972:225).

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The entity was viewed as being reciprocal, although not a social group. One function was to divide individuals into "opposites" who intermarry, help each other at life crises, particularly death, and entertain one another with potlatches (de Laguna, 1975:89; Olson, 1967:1). It provided a psychic unity since all members of a phratry claim blood relationship (Oberg, 1973:48). Each phratry was composed of a number of clans (Olson, 1967:23), and each had one crest, which was the common property of all the membership clans (Oberg, 1973:43). A village would contain at least two of the three phratries. Boas (1916:487) theorized that the older form of the social organization among the northern Northwest Coast cultures was a threefold phratral division. Alternatively, de Laguna (1975:138) stated her belief that the dual moiety system found among the Tlingit (if one discounts the Sanyaqoan) and Haida was older.

The two Tlingit phratries that are always recognized by anthropologists are Raven (yel) and Wolf (gutc). The third phratry was the Sanyaqoan Eagles (t'cak'). In northern southeast Alaska, the term "wolf" is rarely used in English, with "eagle" (t'cak') being substituted, but in Tlingit the term "wolf" is the poetic metaphor that was applied (de Laguna, 1972:453). Oberg (1973:44) noted that there seemed to be an essential difference between the Raven and the Wolf phratries because the clans belonging to the Raven phratry used Raven as their main crest. They associated this with the mythical Raven and claimed that they came from the south and that they were the first people to have settled in south-eastern Alaska.

In the Wolf phratry, there was no mythical unity. The Wolf did not form the chief crest. In the south it did, but in the north it was the Eagle. Of note is that the Wolf was not connected with a single mythical being comparable to the Raven. Oral traditions demonstrate that the Wolf clan obtained their main crests through the individual experiences of clan members. The Raven clans accepted their main crest by explaining it through a single origin (Oberg, 1973:44). Interior Athapaskans who moved into Tlingit territory were incorporated into the Wolf phratry (de Laguna, 1975:87; Oberg, 1973:44).

The northern Tlingit Wolves only recently acquired the Eagle crest. According to one version, in the early to mid-19th century, the Chilkatqoan Kagwantan purchased the rights to the Eagle crest from the Tsimshian Eagle phratry at Port Simpson (Shotridge, 1928:354-361). Another version states that they obtained it when a boy was killed by an Eagle and his father consequently took it as a crest (Olson, 1967:42). Swanton (1908:415) suggested that they acquired the Eagle crest through a dispute with the Sanyaqoan NexA'di. By the mid-19th century, the northern Wolf-Eagle Kagwantan clan had grown to such an extent that north of Frederick Sound all persons of the Wolf-Eagle phratry, regardless of clan, began to refer to themselves as Kagwantan. It became an inclusive term that in the north was frequently used as well by persons of the Raven side when speaking of the Wolf side (Olson, 1967:13).

The most important feature of Tlingit society was the maternal clans or sibs. The clan, through its head man, managed property such as houses, fish and game resources, oral traditions, and crests. Within each geographic unit, clans were grouped into two divisions that were rigidly exogamous, with the exception of the Sanyaqoan, who had three divisions

(Olson, 1967:1). The clans in many respects were the most important social group. The phratries were too large to function as units (Olson, 1967:24). The clan was a group of individuals living in a number of villages who identified themselves by using a common name and a number of crests and who believed in a common local origin. As subgroups of the phratry, they considered themselves to be related through females and were an exogamic group. The clan acted as a whole only on rare occasions, such as when a feud of great proportion occurred (Oberg, 1973:40). When clans grew in number and class division became more accentuated, there was a tendency for them to divide, one branch relocating and establishing itself by taking on a new name and crests (Oberg, 1973:23). The crests were connected with the clan. Every clan had a number of subsidiary crests that belonged expressly to that clan. There appears to have been much duplication, but it was only apparent. Two clans may have had the same animal as a crest. However, the unique posture or shape of the animal differentiated them. Specific names also distinguished the crests (Oberg, 1973:43). Most of the clan and household crests are believed to be ancient and their origins are usually explained in myths. A clan adopted the right to a crest through a significant encounter with that creature (de Laguna, 1972:453).

Clans were generally named for localities claimed as their place of origin or associated with the migrations of their ancestors. They owned crests and other intangible property, such as personal names, songs, and origin traditions (de Laguna, 1972:454). The appropriation of a crest belonging to another clan was an insult. Such an action was done deliberately to shame a rival or force payment of a debt. Attempts to claim a crest belonging to another provoked enmity and outright warfare. Crests had to be redeemed (de Laguna, 1972:454,459, 1975:34). Even so, crests and other clan property were alienable and could be sold, provided as indemnity to settle disputes, obtained through war, used as payment for a debt, given to a high-born son-in-law, or be a bride price (de Laguna, 1975:34).

Clans were further subdivided into households, also called lineages or housegroups, of which the maternal nephews were the heirs. It was here that the maternal nephews were educated, conducted important economic activities, and met the important crises of life (Oberg, 1973:23). The household was the most important unit of economic and political strength and, as such, participated in the larger ceremonial activities of the community (Oberg, 1973:29). It was composed of a number of ascending generations of males related through their mother's side, including uncles and nephews who moved in between the ages of six to eight years. As matrilocality was practiced when feasible, temporary household members were often newlywed sons-in-law who might, with their wives, stay for a year (Olson, 1967:20). All males, with the exception of the "opposite," e.g., sons-in-law or sons under the age of six who had not yet moved into their mother's brother's home, stood to inherit the highest position, that of the head of the household. The men in the household were unified economically, politically, and militarily. Because of the avunculate, there was little a young man could do without his uncle's consent (Olson, 1967:31).

Finally, the Tlingit were grouped into at least 14 geographical divisions, called qoans in their own language. Each had at least one winter village and a section of coast

on which they camped every summer and hunted in the winter (Swanton, 1908:397). Every qoan contained at least two phratries and several clans of each phratry. The clan was often distributed between two or more qoans (Swanton, 1908:398). In the absence of a more appropriate term, anthropologists have referred to qoans as "tribes." However, Olson (1967:1) noted that they lacked tribal solidarity and were merely geographical groups. A Tlingit would think of himself as a member of a clan, not of a tribe, and neither the town nor the qoan had any formal organization. Ownership of the land was by clan and household rather than by qoan. De Laguna (1972:212) concurred:

To call these groups "tribes" and the areas they utilized as "tribal territories" would not reflect either the actual situation or native thought. Thus, while the "inhabitants" [qoan] of each geographical district were to some extent united by feelings of local pride, local sociability, and ties of affinity, they still did not constitute a tribe in the sense of a politically active and autonomous group.

However, even de Laguna (1975:31) recognized that it was the local branch of the clan, as members of the community or qoan, rather than the clan at large, that owned hunting, fishing, and berrying places and was identified with particular localities, either those it now used or places from whence came its ancestors. It seemed clear to Olson (1967:55) that the Tlingit did not think of "tribal" territory as a geographic unit. Instead, they considered the clans within each qoan to own localities for food gathering. There was no concept of "tribal" ownership *per se*.

Oberg (1973:40) addressed qoans indirectly through observation and noted that the local clan division owned hunting and fishing rights to certain carefully defined areas. Every clan owned a number of salmon streams for its own use. In addition, they owned sealing islands, mountain sides for mountain goats, berry patches, patches of other herbs, stands of trees, and regions where certain edible roots were plentiful. They also owned a portion of land within the village upon which their house was built. In fact, although the local division of the clan has been recognized as being the owner of these resources, Olson (1967:11) and Oberg (1973:55) have noted that in reality they were managed by the household.

Another aspect of Tlingit culture relevant to this discussion is how resources were shared with others and under what circumstances warfare was acceptable. In former times, no one, not even an outsider, would be refused food and shelter. All members of the same phratry were "brothers" who could not be refused. All others were "brothers-in-law" and similarly could not be refused. Ownership of summer places was often based on the tradition that a clan ancestor had "discovered" it. Their claim would be based on a story that explained the name of the place. Outsiders, not knowing these details, could not uphold any claims they might make. Subsistence areas were managed by the head of the household. The manager could not refuse clan-mates access to the place or his house because he was only a trustee. If an outsider came to a subsistence area when the group was there harvesting resources, the stranger would be feasted and given a gift to convey the fact that the area was claimed. If he came when the owners were absent, he might poach for a few days, but if the owner came, he would again be feasted and given a gift. A member of an opposite phratry need only to ask

permission to obtain resources and he could not be refused. To do so would insult the opposite clan and the man's wife. Yet the brother-in-law was expected to ask permission, and his rights depended on consent. Only a nonentity would violate traditional rights (Olson, 1967:11-12).

The acquisition of new fishing streams and hunting grounds was in response to population pressure and the carrying capacity of the land. The Tlingit speak of a steady movement northward from the mouths of the Nass and Stikine rivers. A number of clans would remain near a certain river for a long time. Then quarrels over women and wealth would divide the village, and one branch would leave for new territories. Disputes over wealth originated in connection with bride gifts and potlatches. But as wealth came originally through fishing, hunting, and trading, those in possession of the poorer resources had to seek new regions for exploitation. It is conceivable that disputes over property could be settled by making the necessary legal adjustments. But when new resources were within easy reach, it was probably simpler to move to a new region while still retaining the old social relationships and rank (Oberg, 1973:55).

Territorial expansion by any group could occur in one of three ways: settling in virgin territory, sharing with the pre-existing group, or through conquest (Oberg, 1973:56). In their northward push, the Tlingit met groups of Athapaskans whom they either drove away or absorbed. When a suitable spot was found, the pioneers would name it and settle there. A single clan found it difficult to function if it lived far from the clans of the opposite sides. It was customary for a clan, upon establishing a new village, to invite members of an opposite clan to come and live with them, generally the fathers and the brothers-in-law (Oberg, 1973).

In allocation of territory, the agreements concerning the boundaries and their permanent acceptance were constantly influenced by the domination of the stronger clans and the element of kinship. The strongest clans had the most convenient and productive sources of supply. They would, however, steadily encroach upon the rights of weaker clans if this were to their advantage. It happened that if one clan wanted to have the property belonging to another, they might claim their crests or something other than territory in land and resources (Oberg, 1973:59).

In fact, culturally acceptable catalysts for warfare and feuds included: the desire for property, be it slaves, captives to hold ransom, plundered property, clan crests; jealousy over women; or revenge for past grievances (de Laguna, 1972:581). However, it seems that technically groups could not fight over subsistence resources or territory. Certainly, in the oral traditions describing clan histories and involving disputes, direct fights over subsistence resources and territory in land are not mentioned.

THE SANYAQOAN

The Sanyaqoan are distinguished from the other Tlingit by the fact that they had three phratries, which intermarried with one another. The three phratries were Raven, represented by the Kiksadi clan, Wolf, represented by the Teqoedih clan, and Eagle, represented by the NexA'di clan. Their territory was located at the southern extremity of the Alaskan panhandle along the shores of east Behm Canal, in what is now Misty Fjords National Monument (Fig. 1). The Sanya have

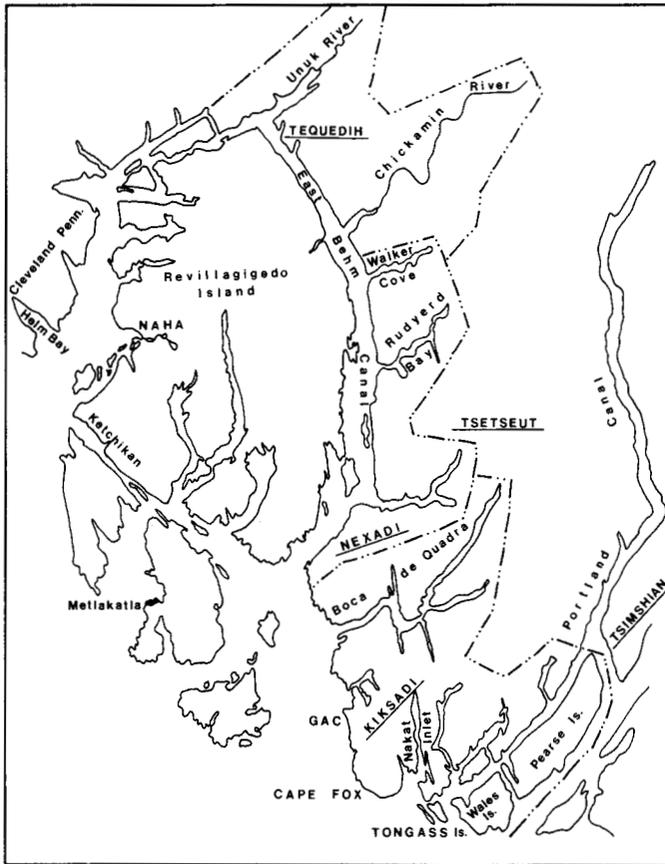


FIG. 1. Sanyaqoan territory along East Behm Canal, southern southeast Alaska.

been described as one of the weakest of all the Tlingit groups, subjected to pressures from the Tsimshian, Haida, and Tlingit Tantaqoan. Certainly, Tongass, Annette, and Duke islands had been Sanyaqoan territory until the Tantaqoan took them (Olson, 1967:3). Specifically, the Kiksadi owned the area around Port Tongass, including Boca de Quadra and its arms, Cape Fox, Portland Canal, including Nakat, Willard and Fillmore inlets, and Wales and Pearse islands. Helm Bay, situated on west Behm Canal indenting the coastline of Cleveland Peninsula, was called Kiks in Tlingit and was recognized as being the traditional home of all the Kiksadi clans. It was here that they achieved their identity as a distinct subgroup and from here that they obtained their name, meaning "the men of Kiks" (Olson, 1967:24). According to Emmons (n.d.:2) they constituted one of the oldest and most important of the Raven clans among the Tlingit and they claimed to have originally lived along the Tsimshian coast. They are also believed to have been among the oldest inhabitants on Prince of Wales and Dall islands. It was only after they obtained their name from Helm Bay that they moved onward to the Stikine and Sitka.

The Tequedih owned the Unuk River and all its watershed, and they claimed the Chickamin River, called Xetl in Tlingit, meaning "Foam." Actually this last was also claimed by some of the Wrangell people, called the Xetltequedih. The Tequedih also owned Walker Cove, called Ken'xkt.

The NexA'di owned Rudyerd Bay (xena') and Smeaton Bay (xan) (Olson, 1967:4; Goldschmidt and Haas, 1946:137). They also owned Kah Shakes cove (Goldschmidt and Haas,

1946:135). Prior to the advent of the Tantaqoan, they owned Revillagigedo Island, facing Tongass Narrows, where the community of Ketchikan is presently located (Emmons, n.d.:2). After a NexA'di noble married a Tantaqoan Ganaxadi woman, who died, he gave Ketchikan Creek to her brothers (Olson, 1967:56). They claimed Naha, in the vicinity of Loring along west Behm Canal (Olson, 1967:4), as did the Stikinqoan Xetlqoan (Emmons, n.d.:2).

One aspect of the Eagle phratry that has been detrimental to their being viewed as a third phratry among the Tlingit is the fact that at the turn of the century they were represented only among a single clan in a single qoan. Consequently, their presence has been the source of confusion and a number of anthropological theories. Wrote de Laguna (1975:64, 87),

One clan, the NexA'di of Sanya, stands apart from both moieties, in that its members can intermarry with both, although they claim the Eagle crests like those of the Wolf sibs. . . . As for the peculiar NexA'di Eagles, of the Sanya, who marry with both moieties, Olson accepts them as "almost certainly Tsimshian in origin" and Swanton suggests they are of Tsetsaut descent.

Elsewhere de Laguna (1972:451) described them as being "uncertain" about their affiliation and suggested that this was because they were foreigners who were in the process of being assimilated by the Tlingit. In fact, the Tlingit held the Tsimshian in such high regard that some Tlingit clans are suspected of claiming invalid Tsimshian affiliations (Swanton, 1908:414; de Laguna, 1975:69).

Olson (1967:3) recorded the fact that the Sanya were ridiculed because NexA'di were considered to be members of the Eagle-Wolf moiety by other Tlingit, but within their qoan the Raven, Eagle, and Wolf phratries were exogamous and clan members of each intermarried. He (Olson, 1967:33-34) maintained that they were almost certainly of Tsimshian derivation.

Swanton (1908:409) stated that the NexA'di were peculiar in that they were not included in the two great phratries and were characterized principally by the possession of the Eagle crest and Eagle personal names. He suggested that the northern Tlingit may have obtained the Eagle crest from the NexA'di. Their name means simply "people of Nex," a creek in their country. It is possible that their origin was connected with the Tsetsaut, who formerly occupied the shores of Behm Canal and intermarried with the Tlingit to a considerable extent in ancient times. However, the NexA'di state their claim to the Eagle is based on the belief that one of their people was formerly assisted by an eagle and was eventually transformed into one (Swanton, 1908:415; 1909:229).

Close analysis of recorded oral traditions, however, discloses that at an earlier time the Eagle phratry was found in more than one Tlingit qoan. Specifically, as will be described in greater detail in the following section, they were found among at least five qoans, all of which were situated south of Frederick Sound (Fig. 2).

THE XETLQOAN

One qoan among whom Eagle phratry representatives were found was the Xetlqoan. Prior to the mid-19th century, the Xetlqoan owned considerable territory in southern southeast Alaska (Boas, 1895:558; Swanton, 1908:396). According to Boas (1895:558), they owned all of Revillagigedo Island, called

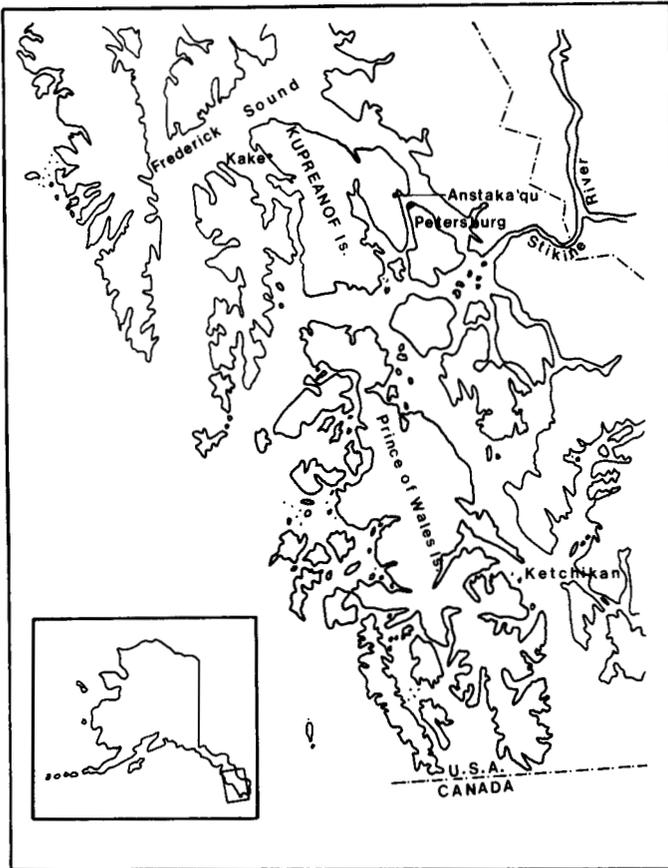


FIG. 2. Southern southeast Alaska and location of Anstaka'qu on Kupreanof Island.

in Tlingit K'a'tik. Eventually they were expelled by the Tantaqoan. One clan, the Xetlteqoedih, had lands along west Behm Canal, including Traitor's Cove, Bell Arm, and Behm Narrows, and shared a claim of the Chickamin River with the Sanyaqoan Teqoedih that was called Xetl, meaning "Foam" in Tlingit and which was the source of the name of the Xetlqoan. They are regarded as being related to the Sanyaqoan Teqoedih (Emmons, n.d.:3; Olson, 1967:57). The Xetlqoan also owned Naha, at Loring, and shared a claim of the Unuk River with the Sanyaqoan (Emmons, n.d.; Olson, 1967). They had a village at Naha.

Some had intermarried with the Tantaqoan Ganaxadi and they often visited them at Port Chester prior to a dispute that broke out in the mid-19th century (Emmons, n.d.:3; Olson, 1967:93). In fact, it was after their dispute that they moved *en masse* among the Stikinqoan, and it was as a result of this that the Stikinqoan claimed the coast as far southward as Loring (Swanton, 1908:411).

It was through their intermarriage with the Tantaqoan Ganaxadi that a dispute broke out. Apparently, the hostility arose originally between the Xetlqoan Teqoedih and the Tantaqoan Ganaxadi over women. It escalated to embrace all clans in both qoans after the Xetlqoan raided the Tantaqoan winter village, Taquani, at Port Chester and destroyed the village by setting fire to the houses. The result was the Xetlqoan joining the Stikinqoan and abandoning their southern holdings (Emmons, n.d.:3; Olson, 1967:93-96).

The Xetlqoan were recognized as having owned lands along west Behm Canal, including Naha Bay and Loring. The

people of Naha Bay were called the Na· a'dih (Olson, 1967:33; Goldschmidt and Haas, 1946:15, 140; Emmons, n.d.:2), meaning "Men of the Distant Lakes" (Emmons, n.d.:2). Like the NexA'di, the Na· a'dih belonged to the Eagle phratry, claimed the beaver as a crest, and in fact, were acknowledged as being closely related to the NexA'di (Goldschmidt and Haas, 1946:15; Olson, 1967:33). They were extinct as a group by the mid-20th century (Goldschmidt and Haas, 1946:37). The area they abandoned at Loring and Naha was claimed by the Stikinqoan, no doubt because the Xetlqoan had consolidated with them, and by the Sanyaqoan NexA'di, probably because they reckoned kinship ties with the Na· a'dih, as did all clans belonging to the same phratry. Although the Xetlqoan were recognized as having once been an independent group upon Revillagigedo Island, by the turn of the century, as a result of their having consolidated with the Stikinqoan, they were beginning to be referred to as a distinct Stikinqoan clan (Swanton, 1908:396, 399).

In sum, it seems indisputable that the Xetlqoan did exist as a separate qoan, or tribe, owning property in southern southeastern Alaska. They owned sections of Revillagigedo Island, the mainland facing west Behm Canal, and claimed the Chickamin River too. Up to this point, only one clan has overtly been associated with the Xetlqoan, that being the Xetlteqoedih. However, close analysis of territorial ownership on a clan-by-clan basis empirically establishes the Na· a'dih, a clan now extinct but once belonging to the Eagle phratry, as having also been members of the Xetlqoan.

EAGLE PHRATRY HISTORY

In the ethnographic past, no situation was as static as we may be led to believe by ethnographers performing salvage cultural histories. To understand the history of the NexA'di and their affiliates, it is essential to turn to the oral traditions of the people themselves, particularly those recorded in previous generations. Acculturation has been rapid, and many historical nuances have been lost. The Tlingit had elaborate oral histories describing what are believed to be true events. Among the Tlingit, oral traditions can be classified as either myths, delineating the shadowy past, or history, describing what actually happened. Historical accounts include descriptions of significant events, such as group migrations, wars, and the coming of the whites (de Laguna, 1972:210-211). The veracity of Tlingit oral traditions has often been remarked upon, and they are considered reliable (Goldschmidt and Haas, 1946:2). The following history of the Tlingit NexA'di Eagles and related subgroups is theirs as described to a number of different anthropologists. This is the first attempt made to perform a comparative analysis focusing exclusively on them, and the similarities among the accounts is remarkable.

Mythological Time

The Tlingit, including the Chilkatqoan, the Stikinqoan, the Kakeqoan, the Tantaqoan, and the Sanyaqoan, do not view the NexA'di as being foreigners who were 'Tlingitized.' The NexA'di claim to have acquired the Eagle as their crest in the mythical past when an eagle assisted their starving people prior to the flood (Swanton, 1909:230; Olson, 1967:3,34). Tlingit oral history considers the NexA'di to be

an ancient Tlingit group that had arrived on the coast before the flood (Olson, 1967:36). The NexA'di say that the legendary Kats, whose adventures resulted in the formulation of the Teqoedih clan and adoption of the brown bear as a crest, was originally of the Eagle phratry (Olson, 1967:38). The Chilkatqoan of northern southeast Alaska acknowledged the NexA'di as being one of the five original Tlingit clans (Shotridge, 1928:362). The Chilkat Daqlawedi state that the NexA'di Eagles accompanied them down the Stikine River when they first traveled to the coast from the interior. The Kakeqoan say that at an earlier time, the NexA'di or a related group having the Eagle as their phratral crest lived with them on Kupreanof Island. The Stikinqoan recall the NexA'di, or a related clan of the Eagle phratry, living with them on the site of Petersburg before the Kaigani Haida invasion (Olson, 1967:31,58).

The Tlingit agree that the NexA'di obtained their identity and their name while living at a stream called Nex in southeast Alaska, although they differ as to its specific locale. Nex has been variously identified as the Naha River on Revillagigedo Island, a stream in Borroughs Bay, a creek near Kake on Kupreanof Island, and Nakat Inlet (Emmons, n.d.:3; Olson, 1967:36; Garfield and Forrest, 1948:44). The Chilkatqoan described the NexA'di migration down the Stikine River with the Daqlawedi clan (Olson, 1967:32). Although the exact location of Nex may never be known, it is significant that according to the Tlingit themselves it was well within Tlingit territory.

Early Undated History

Emmons (n.d.:3) obtained an account from the Sanyaqoan at the end of the 19th century that described the NexA'di descent of the Unuk River from the interior to Behm Canal and eventual settlement at Naha. He recorded that Naha, meaning "land of the distant lakes," gave the NexA'di both their identity and their name.

The northern Chilkatqoan Daqlawedih clan, of the Wolf-Eagle phratry, provides a different version of the NexA'di arrival to southeast Alaska. According to them, the NexA'di accompanied the Daqlawedih and the Nesadi, also of the Wolf-Eagle phratry, down the Stikine River to eventually settle a village called Tutxank on Lake Bay, Prince of Wales Island. Here the Daqlawedih and the NexA'di intermarried. Eventually they became engaged in a feud that resulted in the qoan disbanding. The Daqlawedih traveled north, the Nesadi west, and the NexA'di south (Olson, 1967:32-33).

The NexA'di version of this account is virtually the same. However, it does not specify the river down which they traveled with the Daqlawedih, and it states that when the qoan disbanded, some NexA'di traveled north to the Wrangell area, some went south to settle among the Sanyaqoan, and some traveled to the Nass River (Olson, 1967:33-34).

Pre-1750

NexA'di presence, or that of a related clan, in the vicinity of Wrangell is undeniable. They are said to have moved there after their dispute with the Daqlawedih on Prince of Wales Island (Olson, 1967:36). At this point in their history, they were not members of the Sanya, but of another qoan, the name of which has been lost. They founded a village called Anstaka'qu on Kupreanof Island, which they subsequently

abandoned for unknown reasons when they moved south. Anstaka'qu, located near where Petersburg stands now, was expropriated by the Kasqaguedi clan, who are of Haida origin. The Kasqaguedi migrated north with other Kaigani Haida to settle at Kasaan, near Karta Bay on Prince of Wales Island. Kasaan means "Pretty Village" in Tlingit and is believed to have originally been a Tlingit village (Swanton, 1908:408). After dissension broke out among the Kaigani, one branch traveled north. On Cleveland Peninsula they were attacked by the Sanya. Eventually they reached the Stikinqoan. They lived in several places before inhabiting Anstaka'qu, which had only recently been abandoned by the Eagles (Emmons n.d.:23; Olson, 1967:31, 58; Swanton, 1908:411).

There is also strong evidence for NexA'di presence, or that of a related group, among the Kake on west Kupreanof Island. In fact, Garfield and Forrest (1948:44) recorded the fact that at one time the NexA'di were part of the people living in the vicinity of Kupreanof. Not only is there a creek called Nex near Kake, but Kaxateh (Kadake) Bay, as described below, is a place-name associated with the NexA'di (Olson, 1967:34).

A group related to the NexA'di, also holding the Eagle as their phratral crest, occupied Karta Bay, which indents the east coast of Prince of Wales Island near Kasaan (Fig. 3). They constructed eight large stone fish weirs at the mouth of the creek. Every spring, eight slaves were sent to repair them and afterwards were freed. Most of the slaves came from the Stikine River area prior to the ascendancy of the first Chief Ceks (Olson, 1967:34). The Stikinqoan recall that in the past they had occupied numerous small villages within their territorial boundaries. The first Ceks is credited with

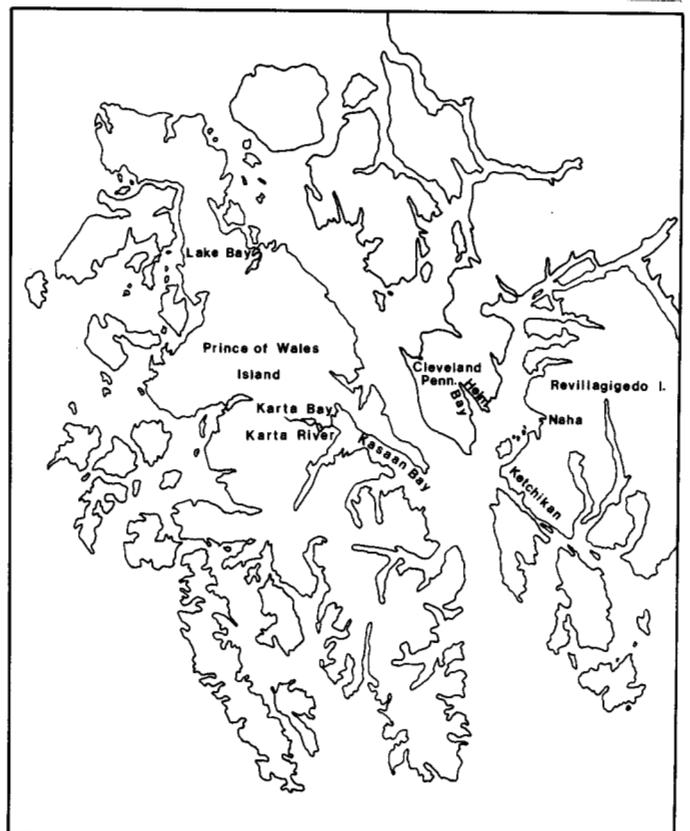


FIG. 3. Identified places held by Eagles on east Prince of Wales Island.

uniting the people to protect them from aggression by neighboring groups (Goldschmidt and Hass, 1946:123). According to W.G. Morris, an employee of the Treasury Department stationed at Wrangell in the late 1800s, a subsequent Ceks said this occurred ca. 1679 (Morris, 1879:76).

The Tlingit group living at Karta Bay called themselves the Kadakeqoan after their village and the adjacent creek (Olson, 1967:34). However, as defined by Swanton, a qoan was an aggregate of clans belonging to different phratries that shared territory and kinship ties. Consequently, we can deduce that the Tlingit clans living at Karta Bay were called the Kadakeqoan. The composition of the remainder of this group is unknown. It was while at Karta Bay that the NexA'di acquired the giant clam as a crest (Barbeau, 1950:24; Garfield and Forrest, 1948:41). For unknown reasons, probably related to the Kaigani Haida invasion, the Kadakeqoan disbanded, and one group of the NexA'di continued south.

According to a Nisga'a chief of the Eagle clan, it was during this southern migration, in the vicinity of Tongass Narrows, that the NexA'di acquired the halibut as a crest (Barbeau, 1950:25).

The group eventually joined the Sanyaqoan at Cape Fox (Barbeau, 1950:26; Garfield and Forrest, 1948:44). As described earlier, this area belonged to the Sanyaqoan Kiksadi. Recorded Barbeau (1950:25), "Together with these earlier people, and as their opposites, they formed the village of Cape Fox . . . Kah Shaiks [a prominent NexA'di] is their head chief and our close relative." The Sanyaqoan, as noted earlier, were composed of the Kiksadi, the Teqoedih, and the NexA'di. Garfield and Forrest (1948:44) corroborate this statement:

Some of them [NexA'di] moved south . . . stopping at a bay called Nakat. They took a new name from the bay and came to be known as the NexA'di or Nakat Bay People, though they continued to claim the eagle of their ancestors as their crest. After many years they settled at Cape Fox Village. . . . All of the people who lived there of whom the NexA'di were only one group came to be known as the Cape Fox tribe [another term for the Sanyaqoan].

It was while with the Sanyaqoan that the NexA'di obtained the bullhead and the eagle-halibut as crests (Barbeau, 1950:26).

A tragedy resulted in the NexA'di once again dividing. Some stayed with the Sanyaqoan, while others moved to Tongass Island. Eventually they moved southward, to ultimately settle on the Nass River. In ca. 1740, they joined the Nisga'a, became "Tsimshianized," and formed the prominent Gun-hu'ot clan (Barbeau, 1950:27; Boas, 1916:486; de Laguna, 1975:42,43).

19TH-CENTURY POPULATION MOVEMENTS

Knowledge of more recent history can further enhance our understanding of the underlying issues in this discussion. In the latter part of the 18th century, the Haida invaded south Prince of Wales Island, displacing the Tlingit, specifically the Tantaqoan or Tongass Indians (Krause, 1956:206; Niblack, 1890:385; Olson, 1967:3). The Tantaqoan, in turn, emigrated northward and eastward, directly impacting the Sanyaqoan (Olson, 1967:85; Rabich, 1980:11) and displacing the Xetlqoan.

A third group, the Tsetsaut Athapaskans, who shared east Behm Canal with the Sanyaqoan, were also affected. Although the Tlingit call Rudyerd Bay xena', its meaning is not known among them (Waterman, 1922). According to an elder of Tsetsaut descent, it means "on the other side" in Tsetsaut and was frequented by the Tsetsaut who hiked overland from Portland Canal (R. Dangeli, pers. comm. 1985).

The Tsetsaut had an interior-oriented economy rather than a maritime economy. They trapped and hunted land mammals and harvested salmon. Their social organization comprised two moieties, the Wolf and the Eagle (R. Dangeli, pers. comm. 1985). Prior to 1830 their relationship with the neighboring Sanyaqoan Tlingit was amicable — they traded with one another, feasted one another at potlatches, and intermarried (Boas, 1895:556; Olson, 1967:33; Swanton, 1908:409). In that year the Sanyaqoan provoked feuds that resulted in the Tsetsaut moving to Portland Canal and in their ultimate fusion with the Nisga'a 50 years later (Boas, 1895:556; Swanton, 1908:409). This did not occur without deadly effects on the Sanyaqoan; the Tsetsaut were worthy opponents who retaliated with success (Collison, 1915:309).

The Sanyaqoan's relationship with the Tantaqoan varied from a fragile peace to outright warfare. In one instance, in the early 1800s, a Tantaqoan Xashittan woman was killed in a dispute by a NexA'di. In a peace settlement, the Tantaqoan Xashittan were given an Eagle crest hat as payment. The Xashittan did not have the right to Eagle house names or personal names, and the Sitka Xashittan did not have the right to use the Eagle at all (Olson, 1967:40).

In another case said to involve women, all clans were involved on both sides in a dispute between the Sanyaqoan and the Tantaqoan, although originally it was just between the NexA'di and the Tantaqoan Ganaxadi. When peace was finally obtained, the Ganaxadi gave their Raven digging stick to the NexA'di to pay for lives lost (Olson, 1967:84-87).

This was an uneasy peace, since the NexA'di had several times created ill feeling through making deprecating remarks in speeches (Olson, 1967:102). At the turn of the century, bloodshed nearly occurred again when a Tantaqoan Teoqoedi woman was killed by her NexA'di husband. The NexA'di paid back the Raven digging stick to secure peace (Olson, 1967:102).

It is interesting that in all the aforementioned cases, the reasons given for the disputes involved trouble over women. Yet, the end result was the Tantaqoan acquiring Sanyaqoan and Xetlqoan territory. As described earlier, Tlingit law required sharing resources with clansmen and members of the opposite phratry. Seemingly, discussion involving expropriation of territory was avoided to the point where it has been said that the Tlingit must not have fought with the Kaigani over territory lost on Prince of Wales Island (Olson, 1967:70). Yet, this is more a reflection of the anathema the Tlingit and Haida share about discussing disputes that involved conquest (E. Shea, pers. comm. 1984; E. Hamilton, pers. comm. 1985). People avoided this topic because, even generations or centuries later, they fear that discussion will reopen old wounds and lead to ill feeling. In fact, it may enable us to better understand the nature of disputes if we take into account the fact that even though technically disputes over resources could not occur, and the subject of conquest was avoided, it was culturally acceptable to feud

over crests. When crests are perceived as symbolizing real property, the reasons for having feuds over them are clarified.

The Kaigani Haida invasion seems to have greatly impacted the populations in southern southeastern Alaska. Kasaan has long been recognized as having been occupied by the Tlingit before it became a major Kaigani population center. The fact that Eagle phratry history has the Kadakeqoan occupying nearby Karta Bay prior to the Kaigani invasion and abandoning their territory afterwards suggests that territorial losses may have been the motivation for their relocation. It is also suspicious that the Eagle phratry clans abandoned their holdings among the Kake and Stikine Tlingit in the same period. One wonders if pressures brought to bear by the Kaigani subgroup that eventually became the Kasqaguedi clan and took over Anstaka'qu did not have anything to do with the situation.

Certainly, the Kaigani invasion had an indirect impact on the Sanyaqoan in that the Tantaqoan encroached on their territory around Cape Fox, Duke Island, and elsewhere. The numerous disputes, said to involve women, in fact resulted in the Tantaqoan obtaining considerable resources and territory. The Tantaqoan further expelled the Xetlqoan, again over disputes about women, gaining their territory on south Revillagigedo Island (Goldschmidt and Haas, 1946:134; Olson, 1967:57). The recent nature of this development is evidenced by the fact that no qoan had yet physically taken over the western shore of Revillagigedo Island, particularly territory that had belonged to the Na'a'adi (Goldschmidt and Haas, 1946:140).

CONCLUSIONS

The fact that the Sanyaqoan had a threefold phratral social organization, compared to the dual moiety system to which the rest of the Tlingit belonged, has made the question of Sanyaqoan, and especially NexA'di, origins of considerable interest to anthropologists. In the early 20th century, Swanton suggested NexA'di origins were connected with Athapaskans since identified as the Tsetsaut. Indeed, along with the Tsimshian, the Tsetsaut, who occupied the unnamed peninsula lying between east Behm Canal and Portland Canal, were among the Sanyaqoan's closest neighbors until the early 1800s. The Tsetsaut and Sanyaqoan even shared territory along the mainland. The relationship between the Sanyaqoan and their neighbors seems to have been friendly until the early 1800s, when the Sanya forced their removal to Portland Canal.

Nevertheless, to describe the Sanyaqoan NexA'di as being of foreign derivation ignores evidence, some of it considerable, supporting other alternatives. Olson maintained that the NexA'di were almost certainly of Tsimshian origin, since the Tsimshian also had a threefold division, and since the NexA'di crests are identical with those of the Nisga'a Eagle clan. Although Olson's claims are plausible, he had it turned around. The Eagle phratry among the Nisga'a were originally Tlingit, rather than the reverse being true. Further, a Tsimshian origin would have carried with it no stigma for the NexA'di.

Throughout, the threefold division among the Sanya was also retained. Clearly, they believed they had a legitimate right to their social system, which seems so peculiar to 20th-century anthropologists. In light of the history previously described,

their confidence probably can be attributed to the fact that until recent years, Eagle phratry clans were found in more than one qoan in southern southeast Alaska, specifically the Stikinqoan, the Kakeqoan, the Xetlqoan, and the Kadakeqoan. Despite criticism from other Tlingit, they not only continued their existing system but, interestingly enough, intermarried with high-born Tantaqoan Teqoedih. Where this would have led had the Tlingit been undisturbed by settlement on the part of the United States is certainly open to speculation. It does seem possible, however, that the Tantaqoan, who were among the Sanyaqoan's most vocal critics, may well have adapted to the threefold phratral system.

Yet, despite the conflict over territory, the southern Tlingit groups retained their concept of matrilineal descent. They did not change their pattern of residency. They continued to label the causes of conflicts as being reasons other than territorial disputes. The strength of their matriorganization superceded loss of life and debilitating feuds. Their social organization survived intact despite population movements, loss of territory, and loss of status.

The threefold versus the dual system is also beclouded by the fact that it was only in the 19th century that the northern Wolves acquired the Eagle as their crest. Only afterwards could they claim that the NexA'di were incestuous because they intermarried with the Teqoedih. Up to that point, it was not possible to draw this distinction, because as far as is known, the southern Eagles were the only group to own that bird as their crest among the Tlingit.

Among the Sanyaqoan, the Teqoedih are said to be an offshoot of the Eagles. If this is the case, it means that the Eagles superceded this clan. It is not known, however, if before the creation of the Teqoedih the people followed a moiety or phratry style system. The implication in their recorded oral history is that moieties/phratries were exogamous through time. However, there is no evidence at present to suggest that one form is more ancient or "true" to the Tlingit than the other.

In closing, NexA'di traditions of having evolved in place among the Tlingit seem to be as credible as that of any other clan or phratry. They do not appear to have any tradition of having been Tlingitized, and no other Tlingit group has ever suggested that either. They do not conform to the picture the Tlingit presented to anthropologists in the early decades of this century. However, if one could be transported back in time by 150 to 200 years, the Eagle phratry would have been accepted as a characteristic of the southern Tlingit, rather than as an aberration among a single qoan.

With respect to the suggestion made by Bishop and Krech that conflict resulted in Athapaskans tracing bilateral as opposed to matrilineal descent, it may be instructive to examine why it did not apply to the Tlingit, since in so many ways their social organization was similar. Perhaps on the coast, where resources were more abundant and the threat of starvation was diminished, matriorganization could survive in spite of conflict. Along these lines, perhaps in the interior, where harsher conditions prevailed, any modification of the fragile social and ecological equilibrium held by the Athapaskans would result in an immediate change in tracing descent and residency. Possibly they could not afford the excesses of their coastal neighbors despite the similarities in their social organization. Alternatively, it is possible that the Athapaskans, like the coastal Tlingit, abhorred describing

warfare over territory and conquest of their neighbors, in fear that verbalization could lead to causing ill feelings to surface centuries or generations later. If this is the case, conflicts that may actually have occurred have either not been disclosed or have been minimized and are not a part of the historical record.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It would not have been possible to produce this paper without Wendy Arundale's unflagging support and assistance and Gordon Hodgson's patience. A special thank you to the two anonymous reviewers whose insightful comments substantially changed the tone of the paper. I am indebted to our sons, Douglas, age 3, and Seth, age 1, for allowing me to work uninterrupted for 15-minute segments. Finally, my husband, Doug, deserves my undying gratitude for taking on all the unpleasant household tasks, from washing clothes to buying Happy Meals, while I puttered away at the computer. He also listened to my endless thoughts on the subject and helped eliminate a lot of the dead wood in drafts. This paper is dedicated to the loving memory of my dear friend Joe Denny, Sr., NexA'di clan leader.

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