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THE STORY OF A TLINGIT COMMUNITY:
A PROBLEM IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
ARCHEOLOGICAL, ETHNOLOGICAL, AND
HISTORICAL METHODS

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Stream," at the head of Whitewater Bay, was the exclusive property of the 'An'akhitan. This statement suggests that other sibs enjoyed rights in the area.

The former village is still marked by a few dilapidated houses, overgrown garden patches, and cache pits, and by what appear to be the pits of older houses (fig. 4). The site is on a narrow flat, less than 500 yards long, with a steep hillside behind, which would have forced a concentration of occupation within a relatively small area. There is an excellent stream of water near the northwest end of the cove. On the rocky point beyond the stream are painted a red circle (or semicircle) with a dot in the center, and a red comma-shaped figure (fish?) (see fig. 7, c).

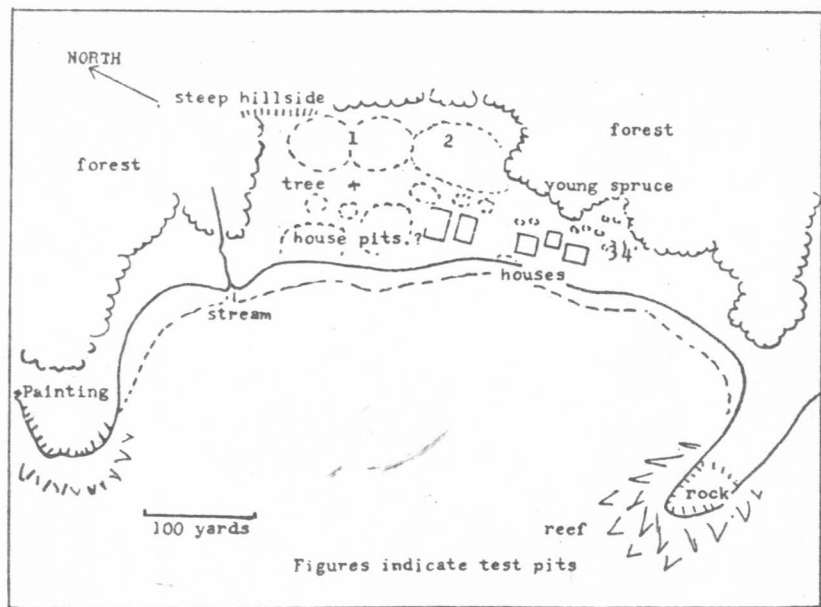


FIGURE 4.—Site of Neltushkin, Whitewater Bay.

We dug two test pits in the old garden plots near the western end of the site. In the first, the top 18 to 20 inches consisted of humus, gravel, fire-cracked rocks, etc. Below this was a layer of crushed shells, 6 to 10 inches thick, which rested on a hearthy deposit, the total depth of the midden being 34 inches. The second hole revealed 75 inches of alternating layers of shelly midden and thin lenses of beach sand. The upper 30 inches here seemed to correspond to the top 10 inches in the first pit. Interruptions of the strata indicated that a hole had once been dug from the 26- to the 48-inch level, and

had subsequently been filled with more midden debris. The total depth of the deposit here suggests that it had accumulated in the pit of an old house; perhaps several other house pits were later dug at the same spot.

We also sank holes in the bottoms of two modern cache pits near the eastern end of the site. The original bottoms of these caches were 64 to 68 inches below the present surface of the ground, and the cache pits had been dug through middens that extended to depths of 40 to 72 inches. These older deposits consisted of thin layers of shell, separated by thicker layers of sand. The cache pits themselves contained boulders, rotted wood, tin cans, fragments of iron, a faceted blue glass bead, and a broken cannonball.

One has the impression that occupation of the site had been intermittent, allowing for the accumulation of the sterile sand layers over the successive strata of refuse. The sand may have been washed down from the hillside, washed up by the sea, or possibly, in some cases, have been brought by the people as clean coverings for the floors of their houses. Only extensive trenching across the entire flat could determine the origin of the sand layers and the relationships between the various strata of the deposits. It is to be regretted that we found no objects of native manufacture here, for the site appears to be the oldest in the area, and is one that should be excavated.

There are said to be smokehouses at or near the head of the bay, but we did not try to explore this area. A Decitan man told us of salmon-impaling stakes (probably across the mouth of the stream at the head of the bay), which are supposed to be quite old. He said that as a boy he pulled one up out of curiosity, but was warned by his elders not to "fool around with them," because it would bring bad luck. He also said that Table Mountain, a 2,400-foot peak south of the bay, was another refuge place during the Flood. There are ropes of ashes on top, which he has touched, and piles of stone, which are the remains of walls to keep out the bears that attacked those who took refuge on the summit. On both occasions when he had "fooled around" on top of the mountain, it rained, and the old people knew that he had been naughty.

"Head Island," q'acayī ḡāk' (this form of the name suggests a little point behind the island), is apparently the North Island of the charts. It has or had "faces on all the rocks." The mother of an 'Anḡakhītan woman of Angoon used to live there and told her daughter about the pictures, but the latter was unable to find them. They were probably petroglyphs, for another informant mentioned some in Whitewater Bay. Again, we were unable to ascertain the exact location and did not see any.

RUBBING STONE

A roughly egg-shaped pebble with a natural groove around it, somewhat enlarged by pecking, was found in the Daxatkanada midden. It shows polish from use or handling. One of the older women suggested that it may have been a rubbing stone used by an adolescent girl or widow.

DRINKING TUBE (?)

A broken bird-bone tube (pl. 9, *y*) originally over 9.5 cm., may have been a drinking tube. Our informants denied that adolescent girls had to drink through a tube, but their reluctance to talk about such matters leaves the question rather open.

OBJECTS OF FOREIGN PROVENIENCE

COPPER

Two objects of copper were found at archeological sites in the Angoon area. While native copper, obtained primarily from the Copper River region through trade with the Yakutat and Eyak, was available to the Tlingit in prehistoric times, it would be impossible to determine the source of these two small pieces without subjecting them to chemical analysis.

The first is a conical tinkler (pl. 10, *l*), 1.2 cm. long, made by winding a scrap of copper around a thong. It comes from the Daxatkanada midden.

A fragment of a wooden object, 2.3 cm. wide, flat on one side and faceted on the other, has been wound about by a strip of copper. This bears the faint impression of a stamped design suggestive of a bird's head and eye. It was found 24 inches below the surface of the midden which spills down the north side of the Ganax Women's Fort at Angoon.

IRON

We have already noted some objects which appear to have been shaped or cut with iron or steel tools. The total list is a half of a toggle harpoon head (pl. 8, *b*), two barbed heads with tang (pl. 8, *d*, *l*), a jet bead (pl. 10, *u*), an ivory pendant (pl. 10, *f*) four cut bones, and a wooden post (pl. 4, *c*). These came from all levels of the Daxatkanada midden. In addition, there is a barbed arrowhead from the upper part of the midden at Pillsbury Point (pl. 8, *a*).

From Daxatkanada midden there is a small chisel-like piece of wrought iron (pl. 10, *gg*), which might have been shaped by hammering flat a large spike. It is 6.5 cm. long and 2.3 cm. wide.

Before the Tlingit were in contact with white traders, perhaps

before Bering's discovery of Alaska, the natives apparently obtained iron from driftwood, and worked it, according to tradition, like native copper by heating and pounding. Such drift iron was called *gayés*, and the presence of some iron, or of sharp knife cuts on archaeological objects, does not constitute proof of trade relationships with the whites.

TRADE GOODS

Two other objects from Daxatkanada midden indicate, however, trade contacts. One of these is a piece of a green glass bottle, and the other is a brass thimble (pl. 10, *ff*). The latter has a tiny hole at the end, evidently made from the inside (by a nail?). The interior is filled with carbonized incrustation (glue or pitch), and the thimble was probably used as an ornamental ferule, perhaps on the end of a cane, rather than as an aid in sewing. It was found well down in the midden deposit and serves, therefore, to date the site as early historic.

In one of the recent cache pits behind the abandoned houses at Whitewater Bay were found a fragment of a hollow iron cannonball, probably like those used to shell Angoon in 1882, and a faceted blue glass bead of the type sold by the Hudson's Bay Company during the last century.

CONCLUSIONS

Among the most interesting discoveries to be noted is the evidence that the Tlingit baked clay or claystone for paint and that the children modeled clay into toy dishes. They seem occasionally to have achieved a baked-clay object by accident, although we should hesitate to call this pottery making, even though Jones, as quoted above, credited the Tlingit of former times with this art. To what extent they may have used clay is a problem for further research.

It is also interesting that our informants were unable to identify or even sometimes to recognize as artificially shaped the objects which we have called "rubbing tools," even though these were the most common type of artifact at Daxatkanada. I do not know of any similar objects in museum collections, but this may be because their crudeness has failed to attract the notice of collectors. They resemble small chisel-like or adz-like tools from Yakutat and Prince William Sound in shape (de Laguna, 1956, pp. 121-124) but are unlike these in that they were evidently used to abrade, whereas the Yakutat and Chugach slate tools were used to cut and gouge.

Of greater interest are the incised stone plaques. While some small slate objects, with suspension holes and designs incised in more traditional Northwest Coast style, may be found in museums, we have never seen any other Tlingit specimens quite like these simple rough tablets with their fine peculiar ornamentation, except for one

PILLSBURY POINT

Layer A: Surface-6 inches:

- Hammerstone [P-24]
- Barb of harpoon head [P-17]
- Bone pin fragment [P-4]
- Bone awl [P-28]

Layer B: 6 inches:

- Toggle harpoon head [P-12]
- Green slate whetstone [P-9]
- Hard rock whetstone [P-10]

10 inches:

- Metal-cut barbed arrowhead [P-13, pl. 8, a]

Layer C: 6-12 inches:

- Greenstone rubbing tool [P-8, pl. 7, n]

12 inches:

- Barbed head fragment [P-14]
- Bird-bone point [P-15, pl. 9, j]

26 inches:

- Rubbing tool [P-6]

Layer D: 12-18 inches:

- 2 worked bones [P-29, P-30]
- Sandstone saw [P-2]
- Sawed shale [P-3]

Layer E: (depth ?):

- Unfinished adz or scraper [P-31]

Layer F: (depth ?):

- Bone pin fragment [P-7]

47 inches:

- Bird-bone bead [P-24, pl. 10 t]

Layer G: (depth ?):

- Worked whale bone [uncat.]

29-30 inches

- Whetstone with red paint [P-1, pl. 6, b]

51 inches:

- Whetstone [P-32]

Layers A-E: (depth ?):

- 2 worked bones [P-19, P-20]
- Worked bird bone [P-18]

Layer unknown: 6-12 inches:

- Powdered red hematite [uncat.]
- Mussel shell knife fragment [P-5, pl. 9, n]

18 inches:

- Beaver tooth tool [P-25, pl. 9, g]
- Sea otter tooth pendant [P-11, pl. 10, a]

Depth unknown:

- Shale whetstone [P-27]
- Cut bird bone [P-21]

Beach:

- Unfinished splitting adz [P-23]

OTHER SITES

Angoon; west beach:

Splitting adz [X-8]

Ganax Woman's Fort:

Maul head [49-25-14, pl. 4, b]

Wooden object with copper band [X-11]

*Vicinity of, purchased:*3 pestles or hand hammers [X-6, pl. 5, e; X-7,
pl. 5, d; X-10]*Sullivan Point:*

Sandstone saw [X-3, pl. 7, q]

Slate knife fragment [X-1]

Cut bone [X-2]

Killisnoo Harbor Village:

Notched slate tablet [X-5]

Hood Bay Fort; midden below:

Barbed harpoon head [49-25-10]

Tang of arrowhead? [49-25-9]

Midden on top:

Barbed harpoon head [49-25-11, pl. 8, k]

Stone labret [49-25-12, pl. 10, aa]

Chaik Bay, beach below fort:

Barbed harpoon head fragment [49-25-15]

Whitewater Bay, cache pit:

Iron cannon ball fragment [49-25-23]

Hudson's Bay Company blue glass bead [49-25-22]

EXPLANATION OF PLATES

PLATE 1

The West Beach of Angoon, 1950. (Frontispiece.)

PLATE 2

Angoon Houses, 1950 and 1890.

a, Lineage houses, Angoon. *Left to right:* Packed Solid House (No. 9); Steel House (No. 8); Clear Spring House (No. 7); Middle of the Village House (No. 6); Bear House (No. 5); Killer Whale House (No. 4). (Photographed in 1950. See figure 17 for location of houses.)

b, Killer Whale House (No. 4) as it was in 1890.

PLATE 3

Daxatkanada Island and causeway.

a, Looking north from Channel Point Island, showing the causeway.

b, Looking west, the causeway.

PLATE 4

Artifacts and posthole.

a, Stone vessel, shelf at Daxatkanada Island, C2E 6-12 inches (No. 302). (Scale in centimeters.)

b, Maul head, Ganax Women's Fort, Angoon (45-25-14). (Scale in centimeters.)

c, Wooden post from bottom of shelf at Daxatkanada Island, G2E. (Scale in inches.)

d, Posthole (left) and roothole (right), subsoil on shelf at Daxatkanada Island.

(The white arrow above the posthole is 12 inches long.)