

# KNOW YOUR PLACE: THE ORGANIZATION OF TLINGIT GEOGRAPHIC KNOWLEDGE<sup>1</sup>



Thomas F. Thornton  
University of Alaska Southeast

**Tlingit geographic knowledge is organized along two principal axes: social structure and subsistence production. Using the place-name inventory of an 83-year-old Tlingit elder, this essay analyzes how geographic names form an essential part of Tlingit social being and integrate physical and sociological landscapes in practical ways. As potent, mnemonic symbols, Tlingit toponyms reference important social and environmental knowledge and, when strategically deployed in rituals and other communicative acts, function to distinguish and unite social groups in myriad ways. (Tlingit, place names, space, cognition, social identity, ecology)**

For the individual in Tlingit society, geographic knowledge is organized along two fundamental axes: social structure and subsistence production. The key role of social structure in the formation of Tlingit geographic knowledge was first alluded to by de Laguna (1960:17-18), who speculated upon the strong force that the matrilineal sib (or clan) exerts over a Tlingit individual's "sense of history and geography." De Laguna also recognized that Tlingit territory at the most fundamental level was conceptualized not in terms of large swaths of land, but rather as constellations of points or locales, typically the sites of productive activities such as fishing and gathering, or historical and navigational landmarks (cf. Malinowski 1922). This article describes the construction of Tlingit geographic knowledge by considering the place-name inventory of a particular Tlingit man, 83-year-old Herman Kitka, Sr. (a lifelong resident of Sitka, Alaska), with whom I have been studying Tlingit geography for the past three years.

Working together we have documented more than 200 Tlingit place names known by Mr. Kitka. The geographic range of named sites extends from Grenville Inlet (*Xoots Geeyi*)<sup>2</sup> in Northern British Columbia to Prince William Sound (*Chágugeeyí*, Greatest Bay) in the land of the Pacific Eskimo some 1,000 miles north as Raven flies. The distribution of these place names is neither uniform nor random. On the contrary, as for most Tlingits, the patterns of names on the land in Mr. Kitka's toponymic repertoire are predictably co-ordinated along social structural lines and subsistence pathways. These axes constrain not only what Tlingit place names an individual knows but serve as twin foundations for interpreting places.<sup>3</sup>

## SOCIOGEOGRAPHIC TIES TO PLACE

To be born Tlingit means to be placed in a particular sociogeographic web of relations indexed by geographic names. Tlingit social organization has six major levels which can be nested from broadest to narrowest as follows: 1) nation,

Table 1: Tlingit Social Organization, with a Profile of Mr. Kitka

| Level | Social Unit  | Herman Kitka, Sr.              |
|-------|--------------|--------------------------------|
| 1     | Nation       | Tlingit                        |
| 2     | Moiety       | Eagle/Wolf                     |
| 3     | <u>Kwáan</u> | Sheetk'á <u>Kwáan</u>          |
| 4     | Clan         | Kaagwaantaan (L'uknaxádi Yádi) |
| 5     | House        | <u>Kook Hít</u>                |
| 6     | Name(s)      | S'áaxw Shan (Naawu Laadaa)     |

2) moiety, 3) *kwáan* (a Tlingit term from the verb “to dwell”), 4) clan, 5) house group, 6) personal name/title (see Table 1). At each of these levels linkages between the sociological and physical landscapes are expressed through place names. Although not a nation in the political sense of having a single leader or government, Tlingits recognize their distinct language, culture, and geography. Tlingits as a group occupied a circumscribed space which at one time extended from Cape Fox, on Alaska's southern border with British Columbia, to Katalla in the Gulf of Alaska. They conceived of their collective territory as a place and referred to it as *Lingit Aaní* (Tlingit Country) (de Laguna 1972:58 ff.).

The exogamous, matrilineal clan is the most basic unit of Tlingit social structure and the foundation of both individual and group identity. In Tlingit you are your mother's clan, a child of your father's clan, and a grandchild of several other clans. The 60-70 Tlingit clans are organized under two reciprocating moieties (Raven and Wolf/Eagle) with one anomalous exception (Swanton 1908). Traditionally, clan identity formed the basis for nearly all social action. Clans or their localized segments, known as house groups, owned and maintained use rights to physical property (including salmon streams, halibut banks, hunting grounds, sealing rocks, berrying grounds, shellfish beds, canoe-landing beaches, and other landmarks) as well as symbolic property (such as names, stories, songs, regalia, crests, and other cultural icons, including clan ancestors and representations of geographic features). These possessions (*at.óow*) were integral components of Tlingit identity, and each clan was conceived of as having not only its exclusive property, but also its own unique “personality” and ways of being (de Laguna 1972:451). Virtually all legal and political authority was vested in the clan, which made war and peace, conducted rituals, and organized material production. The centrality of the clan is further reflected in the fact that foreign groups, like the Haida (Deikinaa, “Way Outside Clan”) and Athapaskans (Gunanaa, “Different Clan”) were conceived of as clans. In

Table 2: Class Proximal to Mr. Kitka and Their Geographic Origins and Distribution

| Clan                   | Translation                  | Place Affiliation (Origin)          | Translation            | <u>Kwáan</u> Distribution              |
|------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|--|
| Kaagwaantaan           | Burned House People          | Kaḡ'noowú                           | Female Grouse Fort     | Huna, Chilkat, Sitka, Yakutat, Dry Bay |
| L'uknaḡ.ádi*           | People of L'ukanáḡ           | L'ukanáḡ (Deep Bay)                 | Coho Community         | Huna, Sitka, Yakutat, Dry Bay          |
| X'at'ka.aayí*          | Those on the Island          | X'at'ká (Island in Dry Bay)         | Island On              | Huna, Dry Bay                          |
| Kus'keidí* (Xaasitaan) | People of Kus'eix (Gus'eix?) | Kus'eix (Village at Dry Bay)        | ? (Cow House)          | Huna, Yakutat, Dry Bay, Sitka          |
| T'aḡdeintaan*          | Residents of T'aḡdeinx'áat   | Taḡdeinx'áat (Island in Lituya Bay) | Toward the Side Island | Huna                                   |
| Kiks.ádi               | People of Kiks               | Kiks (Helm Bay)                     | ?                      | Sanya, Sitka, Stikine                  |

\* All considered to be "Coho Tribe" clans.

larger communities, these clans were divided into sublineages or house groups that traditionally resided within a single clan house.

Herman Kitka is Kaagwaantaan of the Box House (see Table 1), a child of the L'uknaḡ.ádi, and a grandchild of the Kiks.ádi (the premier Raven group in Sitka) and other Raven clans. He therefore has geographic knowledge of the origins, migrations, and key historical events concerning these clans, though his degree of knowledge is highest and intellectual property rights strongest with respect to his own matrilineal clan.

An important but often overlooked aspect of Tlingit clans is their geographical basis. Two aspects of clan geography are particularly significant: origin and distribution. Origin refers to the location where the clan was founded as a distinct social group and is typically from where it derives its name. The majority of Tlingit clans adopted their names from the specific places where they were formed. What is more, the linguistic construction of such clan names evokes a sense of belonging or being possessed by the named place. For example, *Gaanáḡ* (Sheltered Place), the Tlingit name for Port Stewart in Behm Canal, was settled by a Tlingit group who then became the *Gaanáḡ.ádi* (the beings of—or possessed by—Port Stewart). (Clans most proximal in social space to Mr. Kitka are listed in Table 2 along with their geographic origin and distribution.)

In addition to clan names that are taken directly from natural geographic features are those taken from man-made features or combinations of both. Mr. Kitka's clan, the Kaagwaantaan (Burned House People), is an example of the former; they take

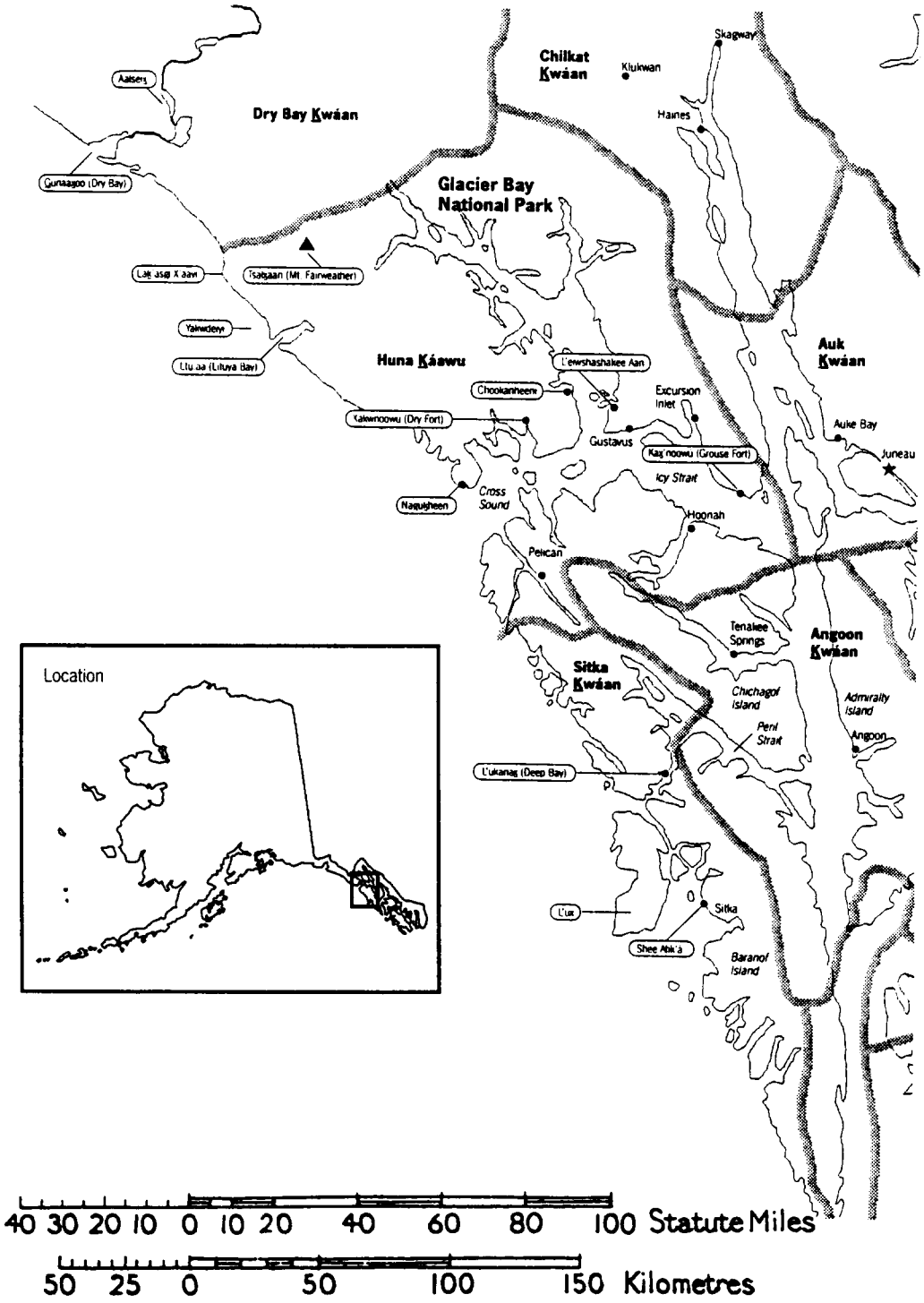
their name from an event, the burning of a clan house. Interestingly, although no explicit semantic reference to geographic locale is contained in the name Kaagwaantaan, because the clan name alludes to an event with a specific setting—Grouse Fort (*Kax'noowú*), on the northeast shore of Icy Strait (see Figure 1)—people naturally link the clan to this place. An example of the latter is the Deisheetaan (a contraction of *Deishu Hit Taan*), whose name relates to the fact that they built a house (*hít*) at the end of a natural feature, a beaver trail (*deishú*, “end of the trail”). With a few exceptions, all of the Tlingit clan names follow these three naming patterns, with naming for natural geographic features being predominant.

The geographic distributions of clans are noteworthy because of their discontinuity in space. Segments of a single clan are typically dispersed in several, often nonadjacent, communities or *kwáans*. For example, the Teikweidí (People of Teik) are found in the northern *kwáan* of Yakutat and the southernmost *kwáans*, Sanya and Tongass, but nowhere in between, except Angoon. This dispersed network of multilocal clans, which evolved through the twin processes of fission and migration, contributes to a social geography with its own spatial logic and unity. Thus, through his clan's oral traditions, a Yakutat Teikweidí of the Bear House has some sense of the historical geography of Ketchikan and perhaps Sitka (where the group migrated after a conflict), despite the fact that they lie hundreds of miles to the south and he personally may never have traveled to these places (de Laguna 1972:225-26). Because the social body of the clan has ties to these places, so do its individual members, despite their relocation, segmentation, or distance in space. These multiple ties to place are embodied in the clan's material and symbolic property. Tlingit history and geography, then, must be read through the clans.

The symbolic effects of this linguistic grafting of social bodies onto physical places have a profound influence on the identity of each. In Peirce's (1960-1966) semiotic terms, each becomes an indexical icon of the other. Every time the clan name is spoken, the geographic associations are invoked in a way that merges the social group with the place. Thus, we cannot speak of the Kiks.ádi without implicitly invoking their ties to Helm Bay (*Kiks*), the distant place for which they are named. The converse is also true: when the place name is mentioned, the people and their history are naturally alluded to. These associations remain poignant even after the clan's place of origin has been abandoned, provided that the clan itself remains a vital social group and continues to maintain its heritage (*shagóon*). As birth (or rebirth) places of the clans, these geographic sites are particularly sacrosanct and may serve as crests (*at.óow*), vital sources of symbolic capital.

Such is the case with the Kaagwaantaan. The story of the Kaagwaantaan begins near *Xakwnoowú* (Dry Fort) in Dundas Bay (see Figure 1). From here *Kaakeix'wtí* (a.k.a. the man who killed his sleep), a *Xakwnukweidí* (a person of the people from Dry Fort), struck out on an epic quest to the interior via Glacier Bay after killing his sleep, which appeared to him in the form of a bird (Swanton 1909:326-46). Looking for seals, he canoed into Cross Sound, moving west toward a place called *Nagukheen* (Rolling Creek, a small cove at Cape Spencer), after which he rounded Cape Spencer

Figure 1: Map Showing Selected Sites in Herman Kitka's Place-Name Inventory



(*Nagukyada*) and headed inland on foot to Mount Fairweather (*Tsalxaan*, Land of the Ground Squirrels), and then back to the coast, emerging near Lituya Bay at a place called *Yakwdeiyí* (Canoe Road) near *Lak'asgi X'aayí* (Seaweed Point). He continued his journey north to Dry Bay (*Gunaaxoo*, Among the Athapaskans) and then navigated up the Alsek (*Aalseix'*, Resting Place?) to the interior, where he lived among the Athapaskans for two years, teaching them how to trap and prepare certain fish and animals more efficiently. After two years, *Kaakeix'wtí* packed up his belongings and returned with the Athapaskans to Glacier Bay. Re-entering Tlingit land, they reached the coast at *Chookanhéeni* (Beach Grass Creek), home of the Chookaneidí (People of Chookanhéeni) clan; but the Chookaneidí shunned the visitors, telling them instead to head across the bay to *L'eiwshashakee Aan* (Glacial Sand Hill Town, at Bartlett Cove). Here they encountered the proto-Kaagwaantaan. Later, after the advance of the glaciers in Glacier Bay (another story; see Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1987:245-92), *Kaakeix'wtí* and his group moved with the Kaagwaantaan to *Lulxágu* (Fireweed Pebble Beach), where they built several large houses and a fort (*Kax'noowú*, Grouse Fort) and sponsored lavish potlatches with their newfound wealth from the interior trade. One of these houses was damaged by fire and, consequently, earned the name *Kaawagaani Hít* (Burned House). It is for this house that the Kaagwaantaan are named. Afterward some of the Kaagwaantaan (Burned House People) moved to Sitka. As Swanton's (1909:346) Sitka informant put it, emphasizing ancestral ties to the landscape: "Because we are their descendants we [the Sitka Kaagwaantaan] are here also. They continue to be here because we occupy their places." As Herman Kitka puts it, working backwards, "Some of us came to Sitka, but we all stem from Glacier Bay."

The journey of *Kaakeix'wtí* is Kaagwaantaan history. Because Herman Kitka draws his identity from these events, he knows this geography, even though he has not set foot in much of the territory. He even knows where *Kaakeix'wtí* liked to hunt his seals, at a place called *Tsaa Tákdí X'aak* (Harpoon Seals Carry On) in the Inian Islands which is especially well suited to harpooning, a hunting method well described in longer versions of the story.

*Kaakeix'wtí* is also claimed as a hero by the *L'uknax.ádi*, Herman Kitka's father's people.<sup>4</sup> The Kaagwaantaan, it is said, were the wives of the *L'uknax.ádi* (Swanton 1909:161). They lived together at Glacier Bay and later at Sitka. The *L'uknax.ádi* too gained wealth through favorable trade with the Athapaskans, including native copper through the Copper River trade corridor. According to oral tradition (Swanton 1909:160), in the spring after they hosted the Athapaskans, the *L'uknax.ádi* traveled to the mouth of Copper River (*Eikhéeni*), where they established a village, *Kus'eixka*. Swanton's (1909:160) informant notes, "All along where they went they gave names. A certain creek was called [*Nagukhéen* (Rolling Water, at Cape Spencer)], and they came to a lake which they named [*Ltu.áa* (Inside the Point Lake, Lituya Bay)]." Also named were the two tallest mountains in northern Southeast Alaska: Mount Fairweather (*Tsalxaan*, Land of the Ground Squirrels), and Mount St. Elias (*Was'eita Sha*, Mountain Inside *Was'eita* [known as Icy Bay in

English]). Because Herman Kitka's father was *L'uknaḡ.ádi*, he also knows these places from their side.

Although Kaawagaani *Hít* and *Kax'noowú* have long been abandoned, as sacred places they are remembered, honored, and frequently utilized as potent symbols to achieve important social objectives. For example, in potlatches and other ceremonies in northern Tlingit land, Kaagwaantaan orators often use the phrase, *Ch'a Tleix' Kax'nuwkweidí* (We who are still one People of the Grouse Fort) to achieve at least three ends: 1) to promote solidarity and *communitas* among the now-dispersed *Kax'noowú* clans; 2) to reiterate their inextricable ties to this historic, collective dwelling place;<sup>5</sup> and 3) to metaphorically transport the listeners to this sacred landscape so that they may be reunited with their ancestors who likewise may be summoned by name.<sup>6</sup> Place names like *Kax'noowú*, then, may serve as "mnemonic pegs" (Basso 1984:43), or what Bakhtin (1981:44-45) calls "chronotopes,"

points in the geography of a community where time and space intersect and fuse. Time takes on flesh and becomes visible for human contemplation; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time and history and the enduring character of a people. . . . Chronotopes thus stand as monuments to the community itself, as symbols of it, as forces operating to shape its members' images of themselves.

For the collective memory of the social group, chronotopes represent the merging of temporal and spatial sequences, where neither space nor time can be understood without reference to the other. As poignant means of "presencing" space in time and "gathering" (cf. Heidegger 1962, 1971) time in space, place names often serve as potent and authoritative symbolic tools in oratory, narrative, song, and other modes of discourse. Among the Tlingit, as among the Western Apache about whom Basso (1988:177) writes, "insofar as places and placenames provide . . . people with symbolic reference points for the moral imagination and its practical bearing on the actualities of their lives—the landscape in which people dwell can be said to dwell in them."

The Coho clans possess their own phrase of sociogeographic solidarity: *Ch'a Tleix' L'uknaḡ.ádi* (We who are still one People of *L'ukanax*). The original *L'ukanax* (lit., Coho Community) was probably Deep Bay in Peril Strait north of Sitka, where Herman Kitka maintains his father's subsistence camp to this day (cf. de Laguna 1972:226). Mr. Kitka can trace his family's presence there back at least eight generations. In oratory, the phrase *Tleix' L'uknaḡ.ádi* is also used to refer to Dundas Bay, Lituya Bay, and Dry Bay on the west coast of Glacier Bay National Park. Dry Bay and Lituya Bay are famous as birth places of new Coho clans. As one *L'uknaḡ.ádi*, the late Paul Henry, remarked: "From Lituya Bay we migrated away from each other," adding jokingly, "Maybe we kicked each other out of there" (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1981:52a), an acknowledgment of the main motivation for clan fission among the Tlingit: conflict. Lituya Bay is especially rich with place names and cultural associations. It is here, at a place called *Gathéeni* (Sockeye Creek), famous for its red salmon and late run of coho salmon, that the young

L'ukna $\bar{x}$ .ádi girl, Kaaksateen, insulted the coho by playing with their heads and, as a consequence, disappeared among them. It is said that this event is what prompted the L'ukna $\bar{x}$ .ádi to adopt the coho as crest or at.óow. Similarly, Herman Kitka noted in our interviews that "Dundas Bay has a lot of history" (Thornton 1995:292). Among other things, it is celebrated as the site of the original two-story clan house (Eagles' Nest House), what he jokingly terms "the first Tlingit condominium." Occasionally, the phrase *Ch'a Tleix' Xakwnukeidí* (We who are still one People of Xakwnoowú) is also used in oratory to the same effect as the Kaagwaantaan phrase. Like Kax'noowú, Xakwnoowú is a very old site; material recently excavated at the fort site suggests occupation dating as far back as 6,500 years b.p. (Wayne Howell, pers. comm.).

### SUBSISTENCE PATHWAYS AND GEOGRAPHIC KNOWLEDGE

At this point, we have entered Sitka Kwáan only to trace the origin of the L'ukna $\bar{x}$ .ádi and the dispersions of the Kaagwaantaan. Otherwise, we have been traveling in Huna territory (Huna Káawu), with excursions north into Dry Bay Kwáan and the interior. Outside of Sitka Kwáan, place names in Huna Káawu comprise by far the largest portion of Mr. Kitka's toponymic inventory.

Kwáan is a Tlingit sociogeographical term meaning "inhabitants of," literally a contraction of the Tlingit verb "to dwell" (Emmons 1991:21-22). It is most commonly used to refer to a geographic region consisting of those areas controlled by clans or house groups residing in a single winter village or several closely situated winter villages (cf. Olson 1967:55). Island Tlingits especially tended to organize their seasonal activities around two foci: the winter village and the summer salmon fishing camp. Herman Kitka's upbringing exemplifies this pattern, with the two co-ordinates being Sitka and Deep Bay. Approximately 60 per cent of his indigenous toponym inventory comes from Sitka Kwáan. But again we find a distinct northern bias with almost 90 per cent of the named sites occurring north of Sitka Sound, the social and geographical center of Sitka Kwáan. This is because the majority of Kaagwaantaan and L'ukna $\bar{x}$ .ádi territory lies north of Sitka Sound. Deep Bay, site of his family's subsistence camp, is located about 45 miles north of Sitka in Peril Strait. The few named sites that Mr. Kitka knows in the southern part of Sitka territory are either major landmarks or places he learned about through affinal relations, specifically his wife's father's family (Kiks.ádi).

Given its economic importance, it is thus no accident that Mr. Kitka began our geographic inventory with a trip to Deep Bay and an exposition of the subsistence activities that took place there. The seasonal round outlined below is that followed by Mr. Kitka during the training he received from his maternal uncles (the geography teachers for Tlingit men) beginning at age ten and which he still follows to some degree today. The composite sketch was recorded during a series of interviews and presentations, portions of which were documented in my dissertation (Thornton 1995:183-85; 237 ff.). As de Laguna (1972) suggests, it consists of a series of



points, but these points are connected by pathways of travel and experience not unlike those of *Kaakeix'wtí*. These locales (Giddens 1985) and the paths and projects (Pred 1986) that connect them are organized and remembered according to the phenomenology of production.

1) The annual cycle of production began in spring with the herring roe harvest in Sitka Sound in late March or early April, after which Herman's family moved to Deep Bay. The herring roe harvest was a major regional activity which attracted groups from all over Southeast to Sitka Sound. The geographical and moral center of the harvest was marked by Herring Rock (*Yaaw Teiyí*), a Kiks.ádi at.óow and landmark which symbolizes the importance of this harvest and evokes a story cautioning against over-harvesting, a lesson Herman Kitka thinks is being ignored today by the commercial fishers who recently have been exploiting herring for their sac roe (the harvest of which, unlike the spawn harvest, kills the fish), a product favored by Japanese. Moving toward Deep Bay, a series of navigational landmarks are acknowledged, including *Haandé Aa Séet* (Hither Strait, Olga Strait), *Tliyadé Aa Séet* (Thither Strait, Neva Strait), and *Hatx.ishkaak* (Lands in the Whirlpools), where dangerous riptides occur.

2) Safely ensconced in Deep Bay, the production cycle commenced anew with the gathering of black seaweed, gumboots (chitons), and cockles from certain named reefs and gray sandy beaches in Salisbury Sound, south of Deep Bay. After being transported back to Deep Bay, these foods were dried or preserved; the cockles in particular were cooked and smoked and then stored in containers with seal oil, forming a highly esteemed food.

3) After these gathering activities, "the next project was going after halibut and bunch alder." Mr. Kitka notes that his uncle would select one group "to go after bait [octopus] for the [halibut] hooks," which they "learned how to get from around the islands in the narrows."

The hooks all baited, we were shown the halibut fishing holes called *eet* [bottomfish hole] in Tlingit. The fishing hole had two landmarks for line-up in the narrows outside of Deep Bay. Today, I still use this halibut eet line-up to catch my subsistence halibut for drying at Deep Bay. . . . The hooks were lowered to the bottom and the buoys were watched, and as soon as one moved it was hauled up. The hooks catch only medium-size halibut, which is the choice fish for drying.

4) After putting up halibut for drying, the next subsistence project was seal hunting. Hunting seals required not only expert marksmanship but also a detailed knowledge of seal behavior (haulouts, breeding grounds, feeding patterns, etc.) and local geography, including natural blinds, currents, and wind patterns.

We went to the narrow passes between the islands at the entrance of Deep Bay. We were told to stay behind boulders, [to] watch and not move around. Uncle done the shooting when the seals start coming through. We did not use any guns on the first seal hunt, till later after we were older and taught how to use a rifle.

Seal meat was eaten freshly cooked or dried, and seal oil, a pervasive condiment and preservative, was rendered by cooking the fat.

5) In some years, seal hunting might be combined with a trip to Point Carolus (*Yaay Shaak'u* or Little Whale's Head, a metaphoric reference to the shape of the mountain above the point) near the Kaagwaantaans' ancestral home in Glacier Bay, *Sít' Eeti Geeyí* (Bay Taking the Place of the Glacier). Here the family would cut bark from hemlock trees (*yán*) in long slabs to make trays for drying berries later in the summer and harvest the inner cambium of the hemlock (called *sáx'*), which was considered a delicacy. Glacier Bay was also a place where mountain goats (*jánwu*) were hunted and where goat wool was gathered for weaving Chilkat-style robes.

6) From June though September, the height of the salmon runs, Tlingit groups traditionally stayed at their fishing camps for the purpose of putting up salmon. But Mr. Kitka notes that a "change of living" has taken place in his lifetime. Instead of remaining at fish camps, "families moved back to Sitka to get ready to go to canneries for the summer." They might return to their camp after the commercial fishing season if sufficient salmon were still available. In Mr. Kitka's case the family ensured this by engaging in a bit of indigenous aquaculture: transplanting a run of fall dog salmon to Deep Bay so that there would be fish available for harvest after the commercial fishing season. This transplant succeeded beyond expectations and to this day provides a steady supply of fall salmon which return to spawn right by Mr. Kitka's smokehouse on the creek at Deep Bay.

7) With "smokehouses full," the next project for Herman Kitka's family "was picking berries for winter use." This usually began in mid- to late summer. Like salmon streams, choice berry patches were named, owned, and celebrated. From elders' instructions, "We learned where to go for different berries—blueberries, highbush cranberries, crabapples, and lowbush cranberries. All have different places where to get them. Some of the berries were cooked and put in containers with seal oil, others put in canning jars." In some years, the family returned to *Yaay Sháak'u* at Glacier Bay to pick strawberries and dry them on the trays made earlier in the spring from the hemlock bark. "We filled [those trays] up with strawberries, real long; then they put them on racks over a smudge fire to keep the flies away. . . . And the sun melts it right down and all the water . . . evaporates and it gels down to about [a half-inch] thick. You take one slice and it fills you right up. . . . That's what we used to do at *Yaay Sháak'u*." Soapberries (*xákwí'ee*), nagoon berries (*neigoon*), and bearberries (*tinx'*), all unavailable on the islands, were also gathered at Glacier Bay in quantity.

8) Autumn meant a return to Deep Bay for fall salmon fishing and deer hunting. Geographically, deer hunting was centered in the two major valleys feeding Deep Bay.

Uncles showed us how to make deer calls out of alder. We went into two valleys from the smokehouse in Deep Bay. [There were] two parties, one for each valley. Once in the valley when we came to a meadow, uncle said to stand next to a tree and not move around while he called with the deer call. Two deer came to the call and both were shot by uncle, we were not allowed to use a rifle yet.

We were shown how to clean the inside out of the deer, how to prepare one for packing it whole. One was cut in half to pack in our pack sacks back to camp. Back at camp, the elders skinned the deer and cut it to about one inch thick in strips for smoking in the smokehouses. After three days of smoking, the deer meat was cooked and put in containers of seal oil for winter use.

By mid-October it was time to return to Sitka for winter activities.

9) Winter (December-February) was traditionally a time for limited, local subsistence activities. But in Herman Kitka's lifetime commercial trapping was also a major winter enterprise, taking participants far afield in pursuit of furbearers. Yet, despite covering a wide territory in his trapping pursuits, this enterprise, like commercial fishing, added few place names to his inventory as compared to the subsistence activities which were more closely linked to his family's traditional lands and conducted in a sociological context (under uncles' tutelage) well suited for transmitting traditional toponymic knowledge.

### CONCLUSION

There are two important geographies in Tlingit: the physical and the social. The basis of claims to ownership and use of territory and resources was founded in a knowledge of both geographies. Tlingit place names were an important symbolic link between the two landscapes and thus formed an important basis for social identity and the maintenance and transcendence of sociogeographic boundaries. Strategically deployed in rituals and other communicative interactions, place names function not only to distinguish groups, but also to unite them. Toponyms embody both subsistence and sociological knowledge, and Tlingits learn to think with the landscape to achieve a variety of material and social goals.<sup>7</sup>

This is why on a recent berry-picking trip to Glacier Bay, Herman Kitka began thinking about place names and about his relatives, maternal and paternal, who lived and subsisted in Glacier Bay. At a memorial plaque in Dundas Bay honoring his dad's nephew, he and members of the Chookaneidí and T'akdeintaan (a Coho clan, once a house group of the L'uknaḡ.ádi) clans stopped to pay their respects and to recall their many relatives and ancestors who had dwelled in this sacred place. Turning to the younger leader of the T'akdeintaan, the recognized owners of Dundas Bay, Herman Kitka recalled one of the man's maternal uncles who had said to him, upon meeting the Kitkas' boat anchored at Dundas Bay more than a half century ago, "You belong here 100 per cent." "He knew I had Coho on both my father's and my mother's [mother's father's] side of the family," Herman remarked with a smile, remembering the warm feeling of being "placed" and embraced by the web of Tlingit social relations. "That's right," his T'akdeintaan host replied, renewing the embrace with a link of his own, "You're my dad's people" (i.e., Kaagwaantaan). And with that all scattered to pick nagoon berries, united again in the shadow of Xakwnoowú.

## NOTES

1. This essay was first presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Society in San Francisco, CA, in November 1996. The original research was supported by small grants from the Jacobs Fund for anthropological research and the Phillips Fund of the American Philosophical Society; the trip to Glacier Bay National Park was sponsored by a grant from the National Park Service and the University of Alaska Southeast. I am grateful to John Marks for insightful comments on the thesis, to Richard and Nora Marks Dauenhauer and Patricia Thornton for reviewing the manuscript, and to Amy Carroll, Mike Ciri, Jason Nelson, and Melissa Nell for their assistance with the map. I am especially indebted to my adopted brother, Herman Kitka, for sharing with me a portion of his formidable geographic and cultural knowledge.

2. The spelling of Tlingit words follows the popular orthography developed by Naish and Story and later refined (see Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1987:38-47). Tlingit possesses both velar and uvular consonants. Velar consonants are represented in English by the letters g, k, and x, though the latter is pronounced more like the German "ch." The uvular consonants are represented by g, k, and x. Tlingit also features a set of glottalized consonants which are "pinched" between the vocal cords and the mouth. The pinch is symbolized by an apostrophe (e.g., t'a, king salmon), whereas a complete glottal stop is represented within a word by a period (e.g., Ta.aan, Sleep Town, a place name).

Coastal Tlingit has four long vowels and four short vowels, represented and pronounced as follows:

| <u>Tlingit Vowel</u> | <u>As in the English</u>    |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| a                    | was                         |
| aa                   | Saab (a Swedish automobile) |
| e                    | ten                         |
| ei                   | vein                        |
| i                    | hit                         |
| ee                   | seek                        |
| u                    | push                        |
| oo                   | moon                        |

Vowels may be pronounced with either a high (á) or low (à) tone. In northern Tlingit the low tone is unmarked.

3. For a review of anthropological studies of Native American place naming, see Thornton (In press). Hunn (1994) has demonstrated a strong correlation between population and place-name densities in a range of societies (see also Thornton 1995:171-74 for an extension of this idea to Tlingit). On a cognitive and emotional level, Basso (1984, 1988, 1996) and others (cf. Feld and Basso 1996) have shown the potent symbolic value place names have as containers of wisdom and in shaping human perceptions of the landscape.

4. In addition there is a Chookaneidí version of the story. See Willie Marks's story in Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer (1987:152-65). Interestingly, his story begins at Gathéeni (Sockeye Creek), a stream at Cape Spencer, rather than Dundas Bay.

5. Archeological investigations have shown Ground Hog Bay, the location of the Grouse Fort remains, to be one the earliest native settlements in Southeast Alaska, dating to 9,000-10,000 b.p. (Ackerman 1968; Ackerman et al. 1979).

6. Such metaphors are skillfully blended in the context of formal oratory (cf. Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1987, 1990).

7. Unfortunately, those who do not speak Tlingit, nearly all those under age 60, have a much more difficult time achieving these goals because the implicit connections between personhood and geography are absent in English.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ackerman, R. 1968. *The Archeology of the Glacier Bay Region, Southeastern Alaska*. Washington State University Laboratory of Anthropology Report of Investigations No. 44. Pullman.
- Ackerman, R. E., T. D. Hamilton, and R. Stuckenrath. 1979. Early Cultural Complexes of the Northern Northwest Coast. *Canadian Journal of Archaeology* 3:195-209.
- Bakhtin, M. 1981. *The Dialogic Imagination*. Austin.
- Basso, K. 1984. Stalking with Stories: Names, Places, and Moral Narratives among the Western Apache. *Text, Play, and Story: The Construction and Reconstruction of Self and Society*, ed. S. Plattner, pp. 19-53. Washington DC.
- . 1988. Speaking with Names: Language and Landscape among the Western Apache. *Cultural Anthropology* 3(2):99-130.
- . 1996. *Wisdom Sits in Places*. Albuquerque.
- de Laguna, F. 1960. *The Story of a Tlingit Community*. Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 172. Washington DC.
- . 1972. *Under Mount St. Elias: The History and Culture of the Yakutat Tlingit*. Smithsonian Contributions to Anthropology, Vol. 7. Washington DC.
- Dauenhauer, N., and R. Dauenhauer (eds.). 1981. *Because We Cherish You . . . Sealaska Elders Speak to the Future*. Juneau.
- (eds.) 1987. *Haa Shuká, Our Ancestors: Tlingit Oral Narratives*. Juneau.
- (eds.) 1990. *Haa Tuwunáagu Yis, for Healing Our Spirit: Tlingit Oratory*. Juneau.
- Emmons, G. T. 1991. *The Tlingit Indians*. Seattle.
- Feld, S., and K. Basso (eds.). 1996. *Senses of Place*. Santa Fe.
- Giddens, A. 1985. Time, Space, and Regionalization. *Social Relations and Spatial Structures*, eds. G. Urry, D. Urry, and J. Urry, pp. 265-95. London.
- Heidegger, M. 1962. *Being and Time*. New York.
- . 1971. Building Dwelling Thinking. *Martin Heidegger, Basic Writings*, pp. 343-65. London.
- Hunn, E. S. 1994. Place Names, Population Density, and the Magic Number 500. *Current Anthropology* 35(1):81-85.
- Malinowski, B. 1922. *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. New York.
- Olson, R. L. 1967. *Social Structure and Social Life of the Tlingit in Alaska*. University of California Anthropological Records, Vol. 26. Berkeley.
- Peirce, C. S. 1960-1966. *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce, Vols. 1-6*, ed. C. Hartshorne and P. Weiss. Cambridge.
- Pred, A. 1986. *Place, Practice and Structure—Social and Spatial Transformation in Southern Sweden: 1750-1850*. Cambridge.
- Swanton, J. R. 1908. *Social Conditions, Beliefs, and Linguistic Relationship of the Tlingit Indians*. Bureau of American Ethnology 26th Annual Report. Washington DC.
- . 1909. *Tlingit Myths and Texts*. Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 39. Washington DC.
- Thornton, T. F. 1995. *Place and Being among the Tlingit*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Washington. Seattle.
- . In Press. *Anthropological Studies of Native American Place Naming*. *American Indian Quarterly*.