

A Comparison of Studies on the Social Organization of the Carriers

The social organization of the Carrier Indians has never been thoroughly examined. A brief comparison of the studies which have been made may help future students in this area.

Father Morice, a Catholic missionary in New Caledonia during the last quarter of the 19th century, wrote extensively on the Carriers but discussed the social organization only briefly. Diamond Jenness studied the Carrier Indians of the Bulkéley River in the winter of 1924-25, and had obtained information on the Carriers from the Sekani Indians at McLeod Lake. In 1951 Wilson Duff made a survey of the Carriers around Fraser Lake and as far east as Prince George. I visited the Babines in 1956, and Daniel Grossman is currently completing a study after a field trip in 1958.

In discussing the social organization of these tribes, writers commonly use the term phratry. This term was used earlier on the coast to describe social units which appeared to be larger or differed somewhat from clans. In some cases these phratries were a moiety and included a number of distinct clans. Among the Carrier tribes, however, these phratries appear to function as clans. Grossman describes the phratries in Jenness's work as clans and the clans as lineages.

It has generally been accepted that the phratric structure of the Carriers was borrowed from the coast; however, could the Carriers have merely made minor adjustments in a clan system which made the structure workable when a Carrier tribe joined with the Tsimshian for a social function? Students of the coastal

tribes may also consider the possibility of clan structures which have been slightly modified to fit into a more dominant and vigorous social system which spread over the entire coast.

The following table gives the phratries in some of the Carrier tribes as they move toward the east. Although this information has been gathered over a period of seventy-five years, the similarities indicate that the interchange of ideas took place to a large degree. Whether or not these similarities are superficial or not is another question. The Gitksan and Bulkley River are from Jenness, Stuart Lake is from Morice, and Fraser Lake is from Duff:

<u>Gitksan</u>	<u>Bulkley River Carrier</u>	<u>Babine Lake Carrier</u>	<u>Stuart Lake Carrier</u>	<u>Fraser Lake Carrier</u>
Gisra'ast	Laksamshu	Laksamasyu	Lt'semec-yu	Lsamasyu
Laxsamillix	Tsayu	Tsayu	Tsa-yu	Tsayu
	Laksilyu	Granton or Cumbewotin	Laksilyu	Laksilyu and Tsuyaztotin
Lakse'l	Gilserhu	Jilserhu	Yesilyu	Jilserhu
Laxgibu	Gitamtanyu	Laxgibu or Jitumten	Tem'ten-yu	Tamtanyu

Jenness also made a study of the Sekani Indians shortly before he visited the Bulkley River Carrier in 1924. They listed five phratries at Stuart Lake: tsayu, ~~l~~tsamashu, yisilyu, kwanpahotenne, and eske. He also gives this list in a footnote on the same page:

Hwittsowittene group (around Bulkley River): tsayu, lachsamshu, lakselyu, gitamtanyu, and gilserhyu.
 Uanwittenne group (Babine lake): tsayu, lachsamshu, kwanpe'hwotenne, gitamtanyu, and gilserhyu.

Nattlewittenne group (at the east end of Fraser lake):
 Xtsamashu, laksilyu, tamtanyu, and gilserhyu.
 Nu'tsenni group (main part of Fraser lake): tsayu,
 Xtsamashu, yiselyu, tamtanyu, and tsuyezhottenne.
 Tattcatottenne group (around Cheslatta lake): tsayu,
 Xtsamashu, yisilyu, tamtanyu, tsuyezhottenne.
 Yuta'hwotenne group (Stony Creek Indians, just south
 of Vanderhoof): yisilyu and gilserhyu only. (Jenness 1934:47)

When the Babine Carriers came into contact with the Sekani and had potlatches with them, the phratries had to be combined for seating purposes since the Sekanis have only three: laksel, lachsibu, and lachs^{gish}amshu. Gilserhu and kwanpahotenne combine, and lachsamshu and tsayu combine so that the Babines have three groups.

The Laksamasyu and Tsayu phratries were also separate at one time among the western Carriers, but an amalgamation took place among the Carriers on the Bulkley River about 1865. (Jenness 1943:482). This amalgamation evidently spread to the eastern tribes as well. Although Morice listed the two as separate, probably in the 1880's, in 1956 the two were combined at Stuart Lake.

Granton is found only at Babine, but the other name for this phratry or clan, Cumbewotin, corresponds to Kwanpe'hwotenne, "People of the Fireside," which Jenness claims is the same as Laksilyu (Jenness 1943: 482). Indians at Burns Lake, Stella, and Fort Fraser recognized these names and agreed that they were the same as Laksilyu. Morice does not show a corresponding clan for Cumbewotin in his list, but he says that "Tem'tenyu, in Babine is changed to Kwen-pa-hwo'tenne" (1904:204). In 1956 one informant said that Granton did exist at Stuart Lake but that Laxgibu did not.

It is interesting to note that while Gitamtany^a replaces Laxgibu among the Bulkley River Carrier, it is used as an alternate at Babine. It also appears on the eastern boundaries of Carrier territory among the Sekani along with Lakse'l. Since the Sekani inhabit the area around Bear Lake, they may have come in contact with the Gitksan as well as with the Carriers.

The available data does not permit definite conclusions on the nature of the acculturation process; perhaps further research before these cultures completely disappear will permit adequate theories on the subject.

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