

Long Abstract

## The Gao'a Myth of Hale's House

Joshua Tsebasae to Beynon, Kitkatta, 1916.

Informant  
inconsistent. Later,  
gitxendekt as the  
opposite village

A long time ago before there were any *gispwudwa'do* people, there were two villages opposite each other on the Nass River. One was *gitxendekt*. A chief of this village went hunting, and while he was away his wife was carrying on an illicit love affair with a young man from the opposite village. The chief had bad luck in his hunting, and so he knew his wife was unfaithful. Coming home unexpectedly, he caught the lovers together, and cut off the man's head.

The people of the opposite village tried to find out what had happened to the young man. They sent a slave woman, on the pretext of getting fire, into each of the houses in turn. In the last house, as the slave was leaving, a drop of blood fell on her foot. Outside, she stumbled purposely, putting out her fire so that she could go back in, and above the door she saw the headless body of the man. She returned with the news to the village, where the men made ready, and attacked *gitxendekt*, burning the village and killing the people.

The only survivors were a woman named *gao'a* and her daughter, who had hidden themselves in a pit. After some time they emerged and escaped into the forest. She cried "I am saved" several times, but no one else had survived to come to her. She determined to marry her daughter to someone who would take revenge, and began to cry <sup>repeatedly</sup> "Who will marry the daughter of *gao'a*?" A hummingbird appeared and offered to marry her. "What can you

do, son-in-law?" she asked. "I can pick out the eyes of my enemies," it replied. "Go away, son-in-law, you are not strong enough," she told him, and continued her cry. One by one the animals came in the same way, told about their powers, and were rejected. First, the sparrow, then, woodpecker, grouse, eagle and other birds, and squirrel, musk, porcupine, wolf and grizzly bear. She considered none of them capable of the revenge she sought, and continued her cry. Finally, the semogidam laxa (Chief of the Heavens) sent down his son to answer her cry. "What can you do, my son-in-law?" she asked. "I can turn the earth over and bury my enemies," he replied, and demonstrated his power. She consented to let him marry her daughter.

The young man prepared to take them to the skies. He took them under his robe, cautioned them not to look out, and rose in the air. gao<sup>2</sup>a disobeyed him, looked out, and they fell to the ground. This happened three times. Angered, the young man pulled a limb from a spruce tree, put his mother-in-law in the hole, and replaced the limb. (Whenever the wind blows, you may still hear her whining). Then he took his bride to the sky, to a large village.

First he entered his father's house alone, then brought his bride in, and she was given food. Then she was given new fur clothing and a new mat to sit on (this was a form of wedding ceremony), and they were married. In a miraculously short time, they had four sons and two daughters. Their grandfather made them grow quickly by stretching them, and gave them special training and special powers, preparing them to return and take revenge on their enemies.

The oldest boy, whom he named da.g.əm wil.g.ət, received his <sup>the</sup> father's power to turn the ground over and <sup>to</sup> kill at command. The second, 'am di.əm ("to punch"), had the power to kill with a blow of his hand; the third, l.ət.əm.g.əi ("ding expert") had lethal powers with a sling; and the youngest, li.gi.'yu.'n ("left-handed person") was given a stone club which would kill with a touch, and power to use either hand. The daughters, k.s.əm.gi.lax.wil.g.ən and k.s.əm.ham.həm, were given the power to heal wounds by sucking. When he returned his grandchildren to earth, he gave each of the boys a house.

(They had, in order, ~~these~~ the following crests painted on the front: sun (g.əm.k), stars (bi.y.əl.s), rainbow (ma.xai), and sky (la.x.'əm).)

In the village of g.i.t.x.ənd.ək.t.ək on the Nass [inconsistency is that of informant], the young men regularly threw taunts across at the destroyed village: "The <sup>no</sup> noise comes from the village of the brave men." Their elders were more cautious about offending the ghosts. One morning, while a thick fog lay on the river, they heard noises. The young men scoffed "The village of the brave men is sounding again." When the fog cleared they were amazed to see four new houses with shining paintings on the front. They wondered who these newcomers could be.

Some of the ~~the~~ young men ventured across, on the excuse of wanting to gamble, and went onto li.gi.'yu.'n's house. Their host won all their wealth in the game, but treated them hospitably and invited them back. Day after day they returned, and they always lost. Emboldened by the small number of the

newcomers, and their wealth, they decided to provoke a fight. During the next game, one made fun of Igi'yu'n's stone club, and a fight started in which all of the gamblers from across the river were easily killed.

All of the enemy now attacked the four brothers, and it required all the supernatural powers they had to win the battle. At the end, the oldest brother commanded the ground to turn over, and all of their <sup>plunging</sup> enemies were killed.

The four brothers and two sisters then went over to the Skena river and founded a village at tɔm lax'am. They increased, and their nephews and grandsons went to other villages and tribes.

Those who use the gao'a myth are tsiy bese (qitxat'a), alimlexe (qinaxangik), ni'shades [ni'swe'xs] (qina'dɔ'iks), sax sa'axt (qitwilqɔts), and ni'stkumi.k and tɔmno'nx (qiludzaɔ). Nobody but the royal Temlahem qispəwudwa'də may use it.

Abstract of Gao'a, the mythic ancestress  
Mrs. Alfred Sudoward, 1915 to Barbeau.

There were two tribes living opposite each other on the Nass River. In winter, when the ice was on the river, they invited one another across to gamble (xca'n). One day the losing side started a fight and destroyed the <sup>other</sup> village. The chief secluded his wife gao'a and young daughter in a cellar in his house, and covered them over, and they were the only survivors of the fire.

They escaped into the hills, and sat down and cried. "Who will marry my daughter?" the woman wailed. At last a little wren came forth: "I will marry the daughter of gao'a." She asked him to show his power, which he did, and she refused him. Next came a squirrel, then other animals, and finally the grizzly bear. Each showed her what it could do, but was refused. She continued to cry. Suddenly a shining supernatural man appeared in a flash of lightning, and offered to marry her daughter. "What is your power?", she asked. "I can bring down fire from the heavens", he replied. Satisfied that such a power could avenge her husband's tribe, she consented to the marriage.

The man took the woman and her daughter, one under each arm, and covered them with his robe. He cautioned them not to look out as they rose through the sky. But twice, gao'a looked out, and they returned to the ground. The man pulled a branch out of a tree, thrust the woman in, and returned the branch. And so even today you may hear her voice in the creaking of trees in the woods. He then took his bride and

rose to his home. He took her into the large house of his father, who was the god who was the sun (q,εmgəmdzi'ust - sun light?). In time they had six sons and two daughters. (later informant says ten boys and two girls). Their grandfather bathed the children each day, stretched them to make them grow, and drilled them in fighting. Whenever a boy was hit by an arrow in their sham battles, his sister would remove it and cure the wound by sucking. The youngest son, ligi's'wan "lefthanded" had a ~~fo~~ left hand of iron, which he used as his only weapon.

The sun god gave each boy a house with its crests. He taught them the story of their village, then returned them to its site. He gave them also a box called t'sε'io.

One night the people of the village across the river heard a crashing noise on the site of the burnt out village. They laughed mockingly, "It is the ghosts over on the other side".

But in the morning they saw something across the river, and as the light grew brighter they made out wonderful houses, close together, painted with crests of the sun, moon, stars, rainbow, clouds, and all things of the sky.

Many people seemed to be moving about in the houses. The chief sent a slave over to investigate, on the pretext of getting fire. The slave was welcomed into one house (in which they had all gathered) and <sup>was much</sup> impressed.

The bravest of the men invited the new sky men <sup>across the ice</sup> to gamble. The sky men won, and finally provoked another fight. With their sisters' magical control over their enemies'

arrows, and with the iron fist of the youngest brother, the sky men ~~lotted~~ were winning. But more and more people joined their enemies, until, almost exhausted, the brothers finally had to use the magic box. They turned the box over, which caused the enemy village to overturn, and finally the war ended.

Informants don't connect this story in any logical way with Zamlaham, which is the place their mind jumps next.

gitxata origins.

gispawudwa'da I, II, VI, X, XIV, XV, XVI, XIX

ROYAL	I	tsibasa etc	Temlaham
	II	wise'ks etc	Temlaham
	VI	g.aiyem't'kwe	Temlaham via gitga'ato
	X	'niɔs'ɔ'is	gid'estsu - gitnugun'aks
	XIV	'wa'ɔmxk	original
	XV	gushaw'e'l	watsta (gitnugunaks?)
	XVI	'wətali	Temlaham

ganha'da III, IV, V, VIII, IX, XI, XIII, XVIII

III	'extewé'ls	gidaxanits via gitxax'te't
IV	wə'ka's	1. original laxken → watsta → gitxata → <sup>ladaxta gitwilyots</sup> watsta 2. watsta → gitxata → <sup>gitwilyots</sup> watsta
V	'ayai'gansk	(gidaxanits → gitga'ato) → <sup>orig</sup> gitxata
VIII	la'ɔ'i	has (gas'ɔ') → Dundas → gitxata FLOOD - → gitxata.
IX	'ayaimax	local, with ayai'ganok.
XI	dzayang, isheitks	git'and'ɔ'
XIII	hegwilɔgam laxe	watsta
XVIII	'nagapt	local

laxski'ɔk VII, XVII

VII	lutkudzemti	gwunhut laxse'ɔɔ
XVII	niɔshalopes	handa - kitɔp - gitnugunaks → gitxata.

laxkibu XII

XII	kebəksk	1. Slikine fignitwis → laxse'l → gitsi'ɔs → gitxata 2. matlakatla with 'asagalysen → gitxata.
-----	---------	--

# Summary of gitxa'ta origins

## I he'l (gispawudwa'dz)

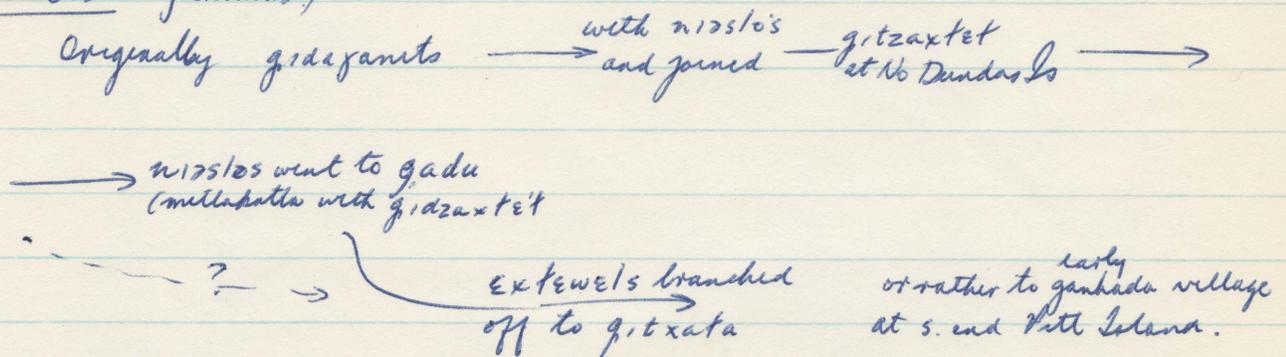
Temlaham royal gispawudwa'dz. See long narratives of his travels to coast. Went to Ktsam'n'egan, later estab. laxklea

wisa'ay (gisp) preceded him, an earlier temlaham migration or coast origin at least he already had coastal crests when tsibasa arrived.

ganaxa'u'tk: conflicting statements. Coast origin or preceded tsibasa from temlaham, or later than tsibasa.

## II se'ks (gisp). also temlaham, later migration than tsibasa. (When he arrived laxkibu held km'dz, laxklea not established yet)

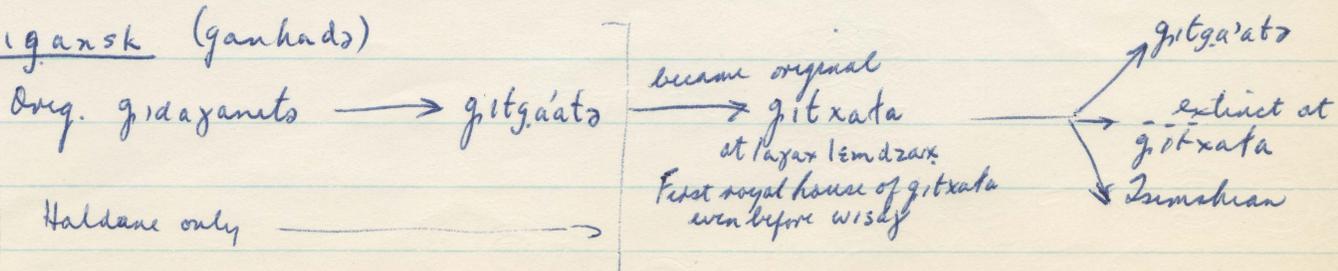
## III 'extewel's (ganhadz)



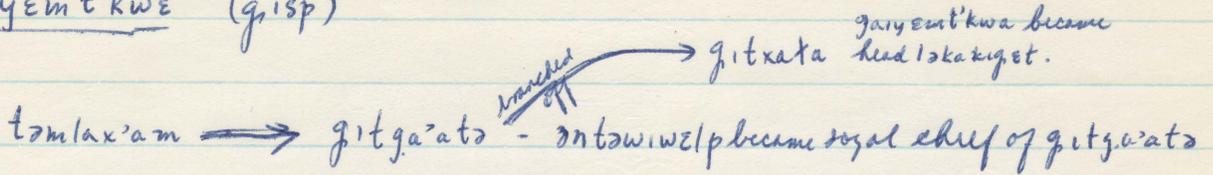
## IV wə'ka's (ganhadz)

One informant says wə'ka's and hamdzit wotsta, <sup>and some tsimsyan</sup> lived at laxklea before tsibasa came; and became part of gitxa'ta. Married nissnot of tsibasa's house so became royal. Moved back to wotsta. Then joined by la'dox from Haida. When he'd married a woman of the house they returned to gitxata for a while, then wə'ka's returned to wotsta (now chiefs hamdzit) and la'dox moved to gitwolqts.

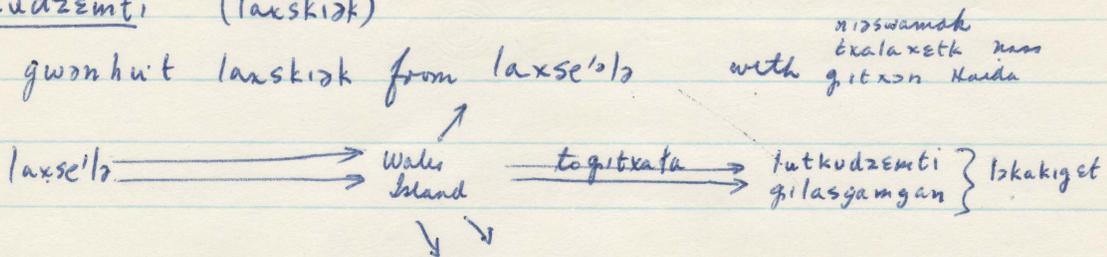
## V 'ayaigansk (ganhadz)



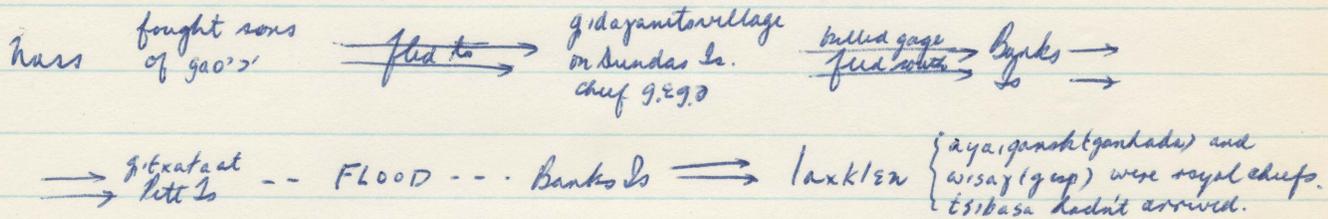
VI gariyemtkwe (gisp)



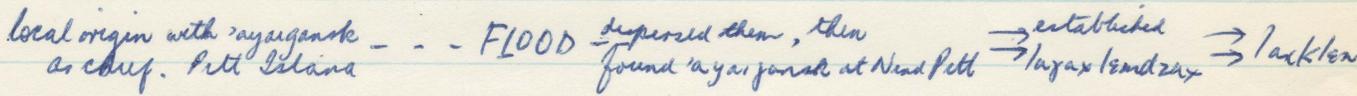
VII Iutkudzemti (laxskik)



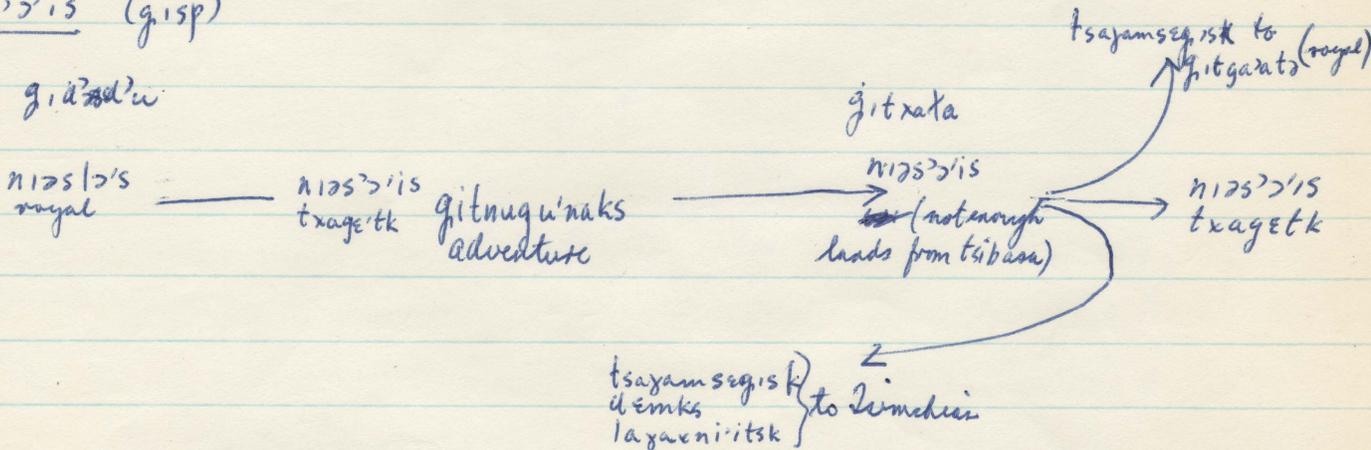
VIII Ia'>'i (ganhada) and widinaxs



IX yayamax (ganhada) [original ganhadas]



X niss'>'is (gisp)

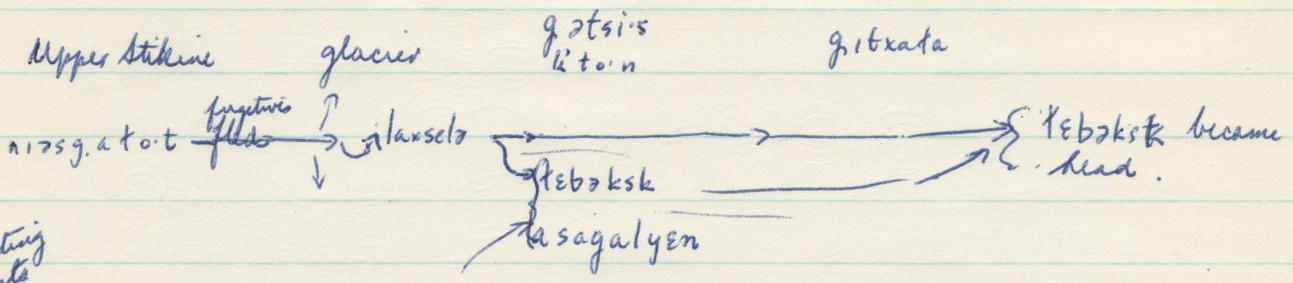


XI dzayam gish'e'itks (ganhada)

from gitz'ands when itsplit off from gispax'ots.



XII tebaksk (laxkibu)



Conflicting accounts

1. Asagalyen had lived at metlakatla (when only laxkibu lived there). q'edayants made war and he went to k'ton (tebaksk a bro went south to gitxata?).
2. n125g.ato:t fled from Upper Stikine, under glacier, to C. Fox, and to k'ton then joined gitxata, while tebaksk stayed with gitsi's at k'ton and amalg. with asagalyen. Then tebaksk left and came to gitxata.

XIII hagwilqam laxε (qanhada)

watsta' origin

XIV 'wa'omxk (q'ispawudwa'da)

original gitxata

XV gushawe'l (q'ispawudwa'da)

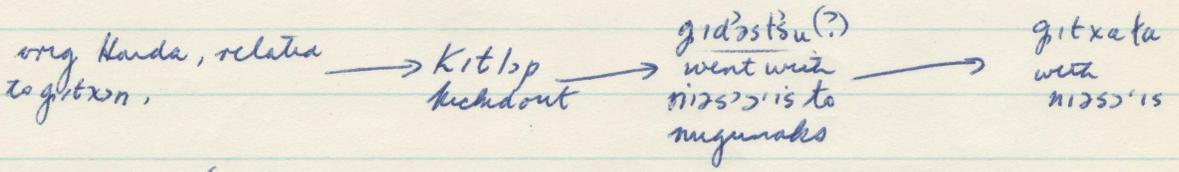
claim q'itnuqnako myth, but prob. watsta origin

XVI 'watali (q'ispawudwa'da)

originally tomlax'am, related to getak (q'itand)

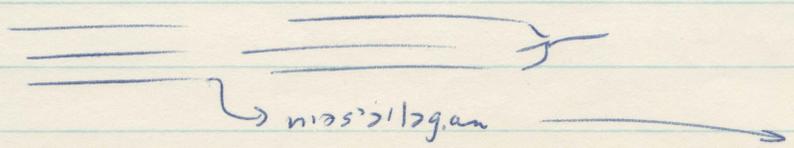
- once was royal chief for a while -

XVII n12shalop'εs (laxskixk)



XVIII 'nagap't (qanhada)

local origin (gave rise to n125'is'igan qinadixks)



XIX laxaxlihaitk (q'isp)

local origin

- Earliest:
- 1 Statement that gashada lived here first.
  - 2 2 gashada houses IX, XVIII, claim local origin (so do two gispawudwad, XIV, XIX, but no laxkibu or laxskiak).
  - 3 Statement that ayarganek was first royal chief, before wisaray (although ayarganek also came from north)
  - 4 Statement that woka's (gashada) was at lakken when tsibasa came
  - 5 wisaray was royal gisp chief when tsibasa came.

- Early:
- 1 When la's'i VIII came, ayarganek and wisaray were royal and (pre tsibasa) "temlahoms hadn't arrived" (although wisaray said to be earlier temlahoy)
  - 2 did e'xtewels precede tsibasa?
  - 3 "gunaxantk" " ?

Middle: arrival of tsibasa I

- Post tsibasa
- 1 wiceks arrives II
  - 2 nias's'is X and niashalopas XVIII arrive

VII lutkudzemti gwundut eagle

↑  
dzayam gishetks XI from gib'ands.

## General Notes on gitxata origins

Lewis, at end of his la'si 'Nasa gao's' myth:

(At the time la'si [VIII] came to laxk'len) "The royal chiefs were 'ayai'yansk, garhada, and wis'e'eg, gisp. This was before the people came from tom lax'am. The garhada were the original gitxata and always lived here before the other people."

Henry Brown, narrative (1952 Bryson) on troubles with Skidegate:

This was the tsibess who was later killed by Niswexs who then went to g'inedziks. He had a couple of nephews of Skidegate as slaves.

"While the main village of the gitxata was at laxk'len (the present site) each of the other groups had their independent villages and only came to laxk'len for the halauts and yauks. At laxk'bu, (Wolf Point) was the village of 'axta'wells, a garhada chief." (He lived <sup>here</sup> with a few of his relatives almost all year round).

Chronology

laxskik

q. is p'wudwa'ds

ganhada

laxkibu

xviii nizshalops —  
from muznaks

x nias'ois from qunaks  
i se'ks etc arrive.

xii tebaks etc

vii lutkudzenti from  
laxse'ls

i tsibasa arrives

xi dzayangisheitks from  
gitands

iii ekewe'ls ?

gunaxzwtk (?) (?)

xiii haqwibgumlane from  
wetata

wisa'ay royal  
wisa'ay arrives

viii la's'i arrives from lass  
'ayai yansk royal

v 'ayai yansk arrives  
w'ka's at laxklen

xiv 'wa's'mxk original

ix 'ayamax local

xix laxaxlike'itk local

xviii 'naxap't local

ganhada originals



VIII la'oi origin myth - a gao'oi myth

Abstract of narrative "The La'oi version of Temlaham"

Beynon, 1916 from Sam Lewis, la'oi garhada.

On the Pass were two villages opposite each other, one garhada. Garhada chief had lover across river, adulterous affair. Husband caught him, cut off head. Garhadas sent over slave to spy, finally she goes in night house, drop of blood on her foot. Garhadas kill off everyone except gao'oi and daughter in hole. Dan. marries chief of skies (son) 5 sons 1 dau. Fog. New village appears 5 houses (5 sons had powers: turn earth over: (2) shoot sling (3) spear (4) fists (5) <sup>stone</sup> club. dau: cured by sucking. Each house had crest (1) zembk (2) <sup>stars</sup> biyels (3) <sup>rainbow</sup> maxai (4) lax'oi m (5) tek'un (mirage) housefront painting alive) Garhadas go over to gamble. Lose. Get mad. Pick a fight. Get beat. Run away down river. Came to gidaxanits village on laxkwaxt (Bundas Island), chief g'eg'u garhada. One day they fought and killed some gidaxanits from another village, and g'eg'u, angry, persuaded wudinaxs to give his sister to the chief in compensation. They killed her and wudinaxs was mad at g'eg'u, killed him and his people and went south to Banks Island. Here lived as one house. Later went inland until they came to gitxata village at end of Pitt Island wilhat ga'm'ilge medok "where the groyggy play along the shore" and lived here. Flood came, anchored to a rock. Water receded. Banks Island. lived there for a while then found some other people (who?) at laxk'len, and stayed

at that time royal chiefs were 'ayaigansk <sup>(goads)</sup> and wise'eg (gap) This was before the people came from temlaham. The garhada were the original gitxata and lived here before the other people.