Lingít ka Waashdan Kwáan

The Tlingit and the Americans:
Interactions and Transformations, 1856–1896

Tlél daakw lingit’aaní tukwáani sá
Haa yáx gugatée, ka hás

No other people in the world
Will be like us, and them

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Acknowledgements

The epigraph on the title page comes from an unidentified speaker at Sitka in 1899.1 I grant permission for Georgetown University to publish this thesis in its institutional repository.

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1 Nora Dauenhauer and Richard Dauenhauer, eds., Haa Tuwunàagu Yis, for Healing our Spirit: Tlingit Oratory (Seattle; Juneau: University of Washington Press; Sealaska Heritage Foundation, 1990), p. 158.
Language Notes

This thesis uses a limited number of Tlingit words, all of them listed in the glossaries, in order to both accurately label certain essential concepts and to convey a measure of Tlingit perspective. For example, the meaning of ḵwáan remains difficult to encapsulate, and the English word “tribe”—with all of its connotations—is an entirely inappropriate translation of the word. Describing seal tail flipper as a geení, by contrast, is not required for accuracy, but it does lend subtle flavor to a story (more subtle, one would think, than the taste of a geení itself). The modern American orthography of Tlingit (the modified Naish–Story system) has been used wherever possible, although many names of Tlingit individuals are written here as they are in the nineteenth century source material, such as Sah–quah, Can–ah–couqua, and so on.

The favoring of some Tlingit place names over the common names in English, such as the major Alexander Archipelago islands of Taan (Prince of Wales) and Shee (Baranof) reflects a small effort on the author’s part to revive these names and place them in more frequent usage. As Étienne Marchand stated over two hundred years ago,

> If we were willing to act in this manner in regard to all the places whose proper names are known, we should preserve the nomenclature of geography, from those variations, annual as it were, which have no other object than to gratify the caprice or the vanity of a navigator.

Marchand also learned the words Lingít Aaní, transcribing them as Tchinkítâné, and demonstrated that Tlingit already used this phrase to describe “Tlingit Country,” or

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3 Those wishing to learn the Tlingit alphabet and the pronunciation of each letter should visit the Sealaska Heritage Institute’s interactive webpage found here: http://www.sealaskaheritage.org/programs/Language%20Resources/alphabet_interactive/tlingit_alphabet.swf

“the land of the Tlingit.”

Thus the term Lingít Aaní appears here frequently, rather than the anachronistic “Southeast Alaska,” which—as this thesis demonstrates—did not become a reality until the end of the nineteenth century.

Autonyms (self-appellations) are applied to indigenous peoples and groups wherever possible, such as Sugpiaq in place of Alutiiq, Dene in place of Athabaskan, Nuxalk in place of Bella Coola, and so on. Indigenous groups are not labeled according to the names Tlingit gave them, (Haida, not Deikeenaa), but Russians and Americans are interchangeably referred to by their Tlingit names, Anóoshi and Waashdan Kwáan.

Also note that the thesis does not use the Anglicization “Tlingits,” but rather leaves the word “Tlingit” to serve as both singular and plural, as Lingít would in the Tlingit language. Certain important locations retain their Russian language names, such as Pavlovskaya Gavan (Paul’s Harbor, now Kodiak), and Novoarkhangelsk (New Archangel, now Sitka).

Again, this small loyalty to the language used by those who lived the history of such places should enhance the reader’s appreciation of their realities.

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6 Keri Edwards, Dictionary of Tlingit (Juneau: Sealaska Heritage Institute, 2009).

Other indigenous groups are mentioned infrequently enough in the thesis that usage of both their own names and Tlingit names for them would likely create confusion. Note that the word “Haida” is an Anglicization of Xaadas, just as “Tlingit” is an Anglicization of Lingít.

7 Apostrophes used in more precise but less aesthetically pleasing orthography are not retained (Novoarkhangelsk, not Novoarkhangel’sk).
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Map Notes

The colors in the maps created by the author have some justification behind them: The reddish color representing the Tlingit imitates the red used as the traditional secondary color (after black) in Tlingit art. The color representing the Haida imitates the blue-green used as a traditional tertiary color (after black and red) in Haida art. The greens representing the Nisga’a, Tsimshian, and Gitxsan reflect the interrelation of these peoples and their languages, as do the colors denoting groups further south. The yellow used for Russian forts and settlements is the same yellow in the “coat of arms flag” used under Romanov rule. Similarly, the red representing British
and Canadian presences mirrors the red in the Union Jack and Maple Leaf flag. The blue representing the United States comes from the American flag.

All of the Ḵwáan names used in the thesis follow the spellings shown in Map 2, except for the Sheet'ká Ḵwáan, labeled Sheey At'iká Ḵwáan on the map, and the Yaakwdáat Ḵwáan, labeled Laaxaayík Ḵwáan on the map. Please note that the maps that show indigenous settlements do not offer a complete picture of all the communities that existed in and around Lingít Aaní at any one time. Creating such a comprehensive map lies well beyond the scope of this project.

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8 Sheet'ká Ḵwáan is a common contraction of the name, similar in form to other Ḵwáan names on the map. The name Yaakwdáat Ḵwáan is more commonly used than the name Laaxaayík Ḵwáan, and it relates to the present-day place name Yakutat. James A. Crippen, “Tlingit Ḵwáan, Clan, and House List,” (last updated Dec. 2012), http://www.drangle.com/~james/tlingit/clan-list.html.

9 All of the maps created by the author use outlines taken from Alaska in Maps software. Distance on the maps is marked in kilometers. For reference, 300 kilometers equals about 186 miles, and 600 kilometers equals about 373 miles.
This map indicates some of the most prominent features of the Northwest Coast of North America and North Pacific Rim. The line from each river name points to the mouth of the river.\(^\text{10}\)

\(^{10}\) Created by the author. Tlingit names used come from Thomas F. Thornton, ed., *Haa Léelkw Háə Aani Saax’ú: Our Grandparents’ Names on the Land* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012). The Tlingit names shown are Laaxaayik (Yakutat Bay), Sit’ Eeti Çeeyí (Glacier Bay), T’aakú (Taku River), Shee (Baranof Island), Shtax’héen (Stikine River), and Taan (Prince of Wales Island).
A recarving of the “Proud Raven” kootéeyaa (totem pole) that stands in Saxman, Alaska epitomizes the ability of Tlingit to record history in art. The kootéeyaa bears a likeness of Abraham Lincoln at the top, representing the first white man encountered by the Taant’a Kwáan.¹¹

¹¹ Photograph taken by the author, July 2012. The “first white man” encounter for this group of Tlingit must have occurred with a merchant ship at some point during the late 1700s. The carver of the original monument, working in the 1870s or 1880s, used a photograph of Abraham Lincoln as a model for his art.
**Introductions**

In the year 1856, large groups of men, accompanied by some of their wives and children, walked down to the beaches of their communities in Lingít Aaní, the land of the Tlingit. The Tlingit boarded their canoes, skillfully carved out of enormous red cedar trees over the course of previous winters. The deep and powerful vessels carried dozens of paddlers at once, and the travelers had loaded them with all the necessary supplies for a long and dangerous journey—strong cedar paddles, cedar bark ropes, rations of smoked salmon, rifles, and other weapons. These people—warriors, wives, and children—then began a daring expedition southward, leaving the waters of their homeland and following a lengthy coast inhabited by many foreign peoples. The Tlingit paddled for weeks, travelling over six hundred miles along the Inside Passage of North America’s northwest coast, situated between emerald coastal islands and the fjorded mainland. They carefully bypassed the homelands of numerous other indigenous peoples, including the Haida, some of whom journeyed south as well.\(^\text{12}\) The canoes and their occupants ultimately arrived in the Salish Sea, the grand southern terminus of the Passage, and the Tlingit spent weeks exploring its waters. In their movements, they entered Puget Sound, an inlet that had only recently seen the settlement of a new group of foreigners who now called the land “Washington Territory.” The Tlingit had known these people from past interactions in their own waters, and had named them the *Waashdan Kwáan*—the Americans.\(^\text{13}\)

In October, some of the Tlingit or Haida visiting the Sound attacked a small schooner, raided vacant American houses, and fought with the Squalli–Absh (Nisqually) on their lands, where the Waashdan Kwáan had recently assigned that people a


\(^{13}\) Sergei Kan, *Memory Eternal: Tlingit Culture and Russian Orthodox Christianity through Two Centuries* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), p. 57, 557.
reservation.\textsuperscript{14} In November, the American settlers sent for one of their ships, the U.S.S. Massachusetts, and the steamer met the Tlingit near the northern end of the Sound, near Port Gamble, where the travelers had brought in their canoes to a defensible encampment at the base of a tall hill, surrounded by thick forest.\textsuperscript{15} The Tlingit saw the Massachusetts anchor, and soon met two boats carrying eighteen armed men, including an interpreter, who delivered a message from the commander that he would “forgive them for all the depredations they had committed, providing they would comply with [his] demands, and not return to the Sound any more.” The Tlingit leaders rejected the demands and their warriors jeered at the foreign soldiers, who returned to their ship. A second expedition came soon after, made up of forty-five Waashdan Ḵwáan in the ship’s launch and two cutters, but the Tlingit again declined to leave according to the Americans’ terms.\textsuperscript{16}

The Tlingit stayed wary through the night: Their sentries watched the Massachusetts resituate itself further away from the Tlingit encampment while the launch and the newly arrived steamer Traveller moved closer, each with artillery on board. In the morning, one of the cutters made landing at the encampment, and the American officers reiterated their demands, telling the Tlingit it was folly to resist further. The Tlingit objected to their threats and defied the Americans once again, taking their arms and moving to positions deeper into the forest. Suddenly, the Traveller fired its field piece and the Tlingit fired their rifles simultaneously. Firing continued, and the defenders saw the Massachusetts open with its battery, round shot and grapeshot ripping through the trees, killing some of the Tlingit while the sounds

\textsuperscript{16} Holbrook and Nikol, p. 16.
of booming artillery and exploding wood ricocheted off the water. A troop of twenty-nine soldiers charged into the camp and set it ablaze, driving the Tlingit further into the forest. The Americans also took axes from the camp and destroyed all but one of the canoes, the last one too well protected by Tlingit rifles. One American died, shot through the head, and others were injured by glancing shots before they retreated to the ships. In the afternoon, thirty-seven of the Waashdan Kwáan soldiers returned to shore and disabled the final canoe while under fire from the Tlingit. A Tlingit woman who had been captured by the Americans was sent to the defenders to ask for their surrender, but they refused. The American bombardment continued from the surrounding ships when any Tlingit was seen.17

The next morning, two of the elder Tlingit leaders asked for peace in return for means to go home, given the destruction of their vessels. The Tlingit had gone without food for two days, and twenty-seven of their number had died while twenty-one suffered wounds. The Massachusetts brought the survivors on board and the Americans gave them provisions before taking them north to British Columbia.18 On ship, the captives must have mourned their dead and seethed with anger at their killers. At the same time, the soldiers must have marveled at the daring of these warriors with rifles who had stayed so defiant in the face of their artillery. When the defeated travelers debarked in British Columbia, they acquired new canoes to paddle the hundreds of miles north to home, back to Lingít Aaní. Decades before, the Tlingit and the Americans had maintained relatively peaceful relations based on mutually profitable commerce. A new relationship had begun, however—one filled with conflicts, misunderstandings, imbalances in power, and interactions that would change the course of Tlingit history forever.

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17 Holbrook and Nikol, p. 17–18.
18 Holbrook and Nikol, p. 18.
After 1856, the volume of Tlingit–American interactions increased, involving acts of resistance, accommodation, and ultimately, colonization. From the 1780s through the 1830s, Tlingit and Americans had interacted as trading partners, with New England merchant ships visiting Lingít Aaní for commerce. In 1839 a hiatus in contact began when Americans stopped bringing vessels to Tlingit waters.\footnote{American merchant ships stopped visiting Lingít Aaní when the Russian–American Company based in Novoarkhangel’sk agreed to purchase supplies from the Hudson’s Bay Company, rather than the Americans. James R. Gibson, *Otter Skins, Boston Ships, and China Goods: The Maritime Fur Trade of the Northwest Coast, 1785–1841* (McGill–Queen’s University Press, 1991), p. 264.} After over a decade of separation, Tlingit and Americans reengaged with one another in U.S. territory, culminating in the 1856 Battle of Port Gamble.\footnote{Lutz, “Inventing an Indian War,” p. 7–8.} For the next forty years, Tlingit–American interactions would include violent threats and attacks, competition over resources and trade, and Tlingit and American appropriation of each other’s wealth, knowledge, and practices. Through the late 1860s, Tlingit remained strongly independent from agents of Russian Empire who engaged in their last futile efforts to colonize the Tlingit people. However, deadly diseases and the growing presences of Euroamericans around Lingít Aaní began to encircle Tlingit communities both figuratively and literally. The American purchase of Alaska in 1867 ignored the Tlingit, but it did not extinguish their independence. Initial American occupation of Lingít Aaní did seriously threaten some Tlingit clans’ security: The U.S. Army brought their firepower to bear in disputes caused by misunderstandings, as well as in attacks meant to subdue Tlingit communities. Nevertheless, the Army’s presence had a geographically restricted impact, and Tlingit people continued to follow their own laws and long–held practices.

In the late 1870s, Tlingit convinced newly arriving American industrial enterprises and fishermen to honor Tlingit conceptions of property, and pay for land...
and water rights accordingly. Tlingit also continued to benefit from competitive trading with Euroamericans, as they had for the previous hundred years. During the 1880s, however, a number of circumstances arrived that would end Tlingit sovereignty and impose an American colonial regime: U.S. military forces re-occupied Lingít Aaní and engaged in further “gunboat diplomacy” that brought the American authorities closer to their desired monopoly on the legitimate use of violence;\(^{21}\) American entrepreneurs and fishermen used that supremacy to gain control of Tlingit fisheries; the Organic Act of 1884 established an American civil government for Alaska that imposed American laws; and Christian missions built an assimilationist education system in collusion with the U.S. government. Finally, American settlers caused many disruptions in Tlingit economic and cultural life, even before the Tlingit–Tagish Klondike gold discovery in 1896 augured the arrival of even more of the newcomers. These dynamics contributed to striking transformations in communities of Lingít Aaní and changed the futures of new generations.

Through the course of these four decades, the actions of Tlingit groups and individuals contributed greatly to the changes that took place in their homeland. Tlingit traders continually adapted to the patterns of commerce connecting them to each other, to other indigenous peoples, and to Euroamericans, driving hard bargains and acquiring useful new goods and technologies. Tlingit also coped with the devastating impact of diseases, adopted refugees and economic migrants from other communities, and formed vibrant and diverse agglomerations at new nodes of trade and interaction.\(^{22}\) Tlingit warriors selectively challenged Euroamerican presences as well, showing their strength in the destruction of forts, the seizure of ships, and even

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in the killing of foreigners who violated Tlingit law or property. Tlingit men and women also acted as peacemakers, calming tensions or avoiding greater destruction in conflicts that occurred with Russians, British, and Americans. Some Tlingit readily adapted to new dynamics that took hold after the late 1870s: They worked in the American canneries or supplied fish to them using new techniques; they taught in schools and infused some of their own culture into the ideas brought by missionaries; they built new communities with new institutions, and fought within those institutions to build better futures for their children.\(^2\) In sum, finding a holistic vision of the history of Lingít Aaní from 1856 to 1896 comes not through examining the plans and actions of a single group of people. Rather, it comes from examining the interactions between peoples, above all the Tlingit and the Americans.

Investigating Tlingit interactions with Americans during the course of the late 1800s brings to the fore many questions related to historical methodology, Alaska historiography, and U.S.–indigenous history as a whole. First, nineteenth-century Tlingit history—like other histories of people who lacked recourse to a formal writing system—should lead scholars to rethink and reshape their methods of research, interpretation, and storytelling. Second, Tlingit actions during this time period directly refute some of the myths or lingering misunderstandings present in the historiography of Alaska, challenging historians and the public alike to revise misleading chronologies and narratives. Finally, the Tlingit experience highlights the oft-neglected significance of indigenous peoples’ actions to the course of American expansion, illuminating the multi-directionality of U.S. colonialism and the interactions that made it possible.

In recent years, scholars such as Daniel Richter, Juliana Barr, and Pekka Hämäläinen have reconstructed encounters between Europeans and indigenous peoples using indigenous perspectives.\textsuperscript{24} The account that began this thesis attempts to emulate that type of methodology, seeking to provide a Tlingit view on the Battle of Port Gamble using historical source material—the reports of American officers—that seems to represent anything but. The thesis as a whole offers a mixture of Tlingit and Euroamerican perspectives, addressing in particular certain moments where biases of Euroamerican narratives cloud the understanding of indigenous thoughts and agency as well as realities of autonomy and power. Fundamentally, this work aims to reshape perceptions of the voice that Euroamerican historians ought to take in their studies of the nineteenth–century Northwest Coast.

There are, however, potential pitfalls to revising histories told by one–sided sources, even when using them to present multiple perspectives. During the 1970s, Ranajit Guha led the creation of the Subaltern Studies movement in South Asia, a historiographical school that aimed to rectify elitist biases by focusing on the history of the subaltern—those subordinated or marginalized by relationships of dominance.\textsuperscript{25} Guha wrote that there exists a “counter–insurgent code,” supported by texts that disregard the agency of subaltern insurgents and fall into categories of primary, secondary, and tertiary discourses. Officials produce the immediate, primary accounts of insurgency, followed by the secondary official reports and memoirs. Historians then produce tertiary accounts using these sources that may analyze or critique the original viewpoint, but nevertheless perpetuate the “counter–insurgent code” or “code of


pacification” as long as they do not extricate themselves from it by locating the subaltern as subject, possessing their own agency.  

The Tlingit do not readily fall into categories as either insurgents or as a subaltern group before the 1880s, as they primarily did not live under foreign-imposed political or economic structures. Nevertheless, many of their late nineteenth–century interactions with Americans—and earlier interactions with Russians—were subjected to a similar code of pacification. Euroamerican officials attributed conflicts with the Tlingit to their “savage” nature, to alcohol use, or to culturally insensitive provocation by unwise EuroAmericans. The Tlingit lacked any voice in accounts of events like the destruction ofḴéex Kwáan villages and the bombardment of Aangóon (Angoon), and their own agency and decision-making were ignored in the secondary and tertiary discourses that followed. In the late 1880s and 1890s, some Tlingit began recording their own perspectives or having those views recorded for them, but during this period Tlingit communities also became increasingly subaltern, subordinated to American governmental, economic, and social structures as Lingít Aaní was colonized. With these limitations in mind, historians must take particular care to notice how they might participate in perpetuating a code of pacification.

This thesis seeks to reinterpret and re–periodize Tlingit history through the use of a large number of monographs and articles produced in the last few decades. These include some recordings of Tlingit oral history, as well as scholarly analyses. Select primary sources and secondary works of the 19th century augment this

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26 Prakash, p. 1479.
27 One should nevertheless acknowledge the presence of many subalterns within Tlingit society before the 1880s, namely slaves.
reinterpretation, but because of limits to time and resources, the author did not fully utilize many of the primary sources that scholars today might access.\textsuperscript{30} This project strongly demonstrates that it will take years of research and scholarship to give this subject—the reinterpretation of the Tlingit nineteenth century and Tlingit–American interactions—the full treatment it deserves. Zachary Jones, Nancy Furlow, and other scholars have produced critical work in the last few years to further this objective. Hopefully, Tlingit historians will soon begin to synthesize large amounts of oral history with the written record, producing broad and powerful accounts of the late nineteenth century in Lingít Aaní that fully represent indigenous perspectives and become well-known narratives among Alaskans.

Another essential aspect of tempering historians’ perspectives comes in the avoidance of “upstreaming,” a concept explored and explained by James Axtell:

\begin{quote}
While hindsight is indispensable to the historian, it can also truncate the lived past by oversimplifying. Historians look backward, up the stream of time, but history’s actors, in their own time, looked forward into the ill-charted flow of the future. If we are to capture their sense of life as it was being lived, of history being made, we must imaginatively ignore our knowledge of the denouement and seek to recapture the challenges they faced, the options they enjoyed, the choices they made, and the short-range as well as long-range consequences of their actions.\textsuperscript{31}
\end{quote}

Scholars should indeed heed this advice conscientiously and continuously, forswearing historical narratives that imply a predetermined end. However, the idea that people today know the “denouement” of certain histories rings false, as humans live out an ever-continuing history that has no foreseeable end in the near future. Tlingit history certainly does not have a denouement: In Tlingit, the word \textit{shuká} loosely means “ancestors,” or even “history,” but the words carry the connotation that the ancestors

\textsuperscript{30} For example, full U.S. military records from the 1860s and 1870s garrisons in Lingít Aaní remain available at the National Archives and Records Administration, but the author declined to research these sources thoroughly, opting instead to pursue more Tlingit perspectives through secondary works.

have moved forward, going on ahead of the rest of us. Thus, shuká can also mean “future,” emphasizing the continuity of Tlingit history.\textsuperscript{32} Today, Tlingit elders continue moving forward, becoming shuká, and their descendants will preserve their memory for generations to come.

Tlingit of the nineteenth century conceptualized or discussed the past in three essential categories: The most distant period was \textit{tlawk}, or “mythic” history, wherein extraordinary events occurred, such as the Great Flood or the bringing of light to the world by Raven, the Trickster. Then came “legendary” history or clan history, which memorialized the origins and movements of the clans and the relations between them. Finally there was “recent” history, traced through the course of a community’s last few generations and their remembrances of events, places, and daily life. Interestingly, Thomas Thornton has drawn a parallel between these conceptions of time and those employed by the \textit{Annales} school of history.\textsuperscript{33} Tlingit likely had a better understanding of \textit{l’histoire de longue durée} (long term history) than many present–day historians, whom Fernand Braudel accused of having an instinct to turn to the short term—consisting of events and named individuals—to the neglect of larger patterns.\textsuperscript{34} While this thesis does not engage heavily with \textit{tlawk} or deep clan histories, it does attempt to explore histories of varying temporal scopes—moments, decades, centuries—and it also strives to utilize oral history sustained by recent generations of Tlingit.

Oral history serves as one of the primary ways through which Tlingit preserve and connect with their past. Anthropologist Daniel Monteith characterizes this past as


“deep history,” and believes strongly in Tlingit cultural memories plausibly stretching back hundreds and even thousands of years, memorializing, for example, the movement of glaciers within Sít Eetí Geeyí (Glacier Bay). Monteith points to entrenched concepts like at.óow (“owned things”) and practices such as the kú.éex’ (potlatch) as the means to make this longevity possible: As new generations had heritage and property passed down to them ceremoniously and continually, and as they participated in elaborate celebrations that honored their heritage in detail, the heavy meaning and identity embedded in these traditions would give them the strength to remember and continue in much the same way. Clearly, Tlingit had developed discourses of history long before Europeans came to make Lingít Aaní a part of their history.

In addition to the importance of oral traditions, the complexity and meaning rooted in Tlingit monuments and artifacts challenges common conceptions of what exactly constitutes written history. As artist Shelly Laws states, the Tlingit figuratively “wrote on everything,” and “the written language is on the spoons; it’s on the clothes.” Each woven blanket and basket or carved screen and monument “had some piece of information on it.” The high level of information–filled artistry produced by the Tlingit has helped preserve and perpetuate oral histories, and it has the ability to supply a Tlingit perspective on nineteenth–century interactions with Euroamericans, as exhibited by monuments like the “Proud Raven” kootéeyaa, commemorating the event when Gänax.adi men of the Taant’a Kwáan saw white men for the first time. Kootéeyaa, known in English as totem poles, served as carved memorials to Tlingit

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36 Daniel B. Monteith, "Tongass, the Prolific Name, the Forgotten Tribe: An Ethnohistory of the Taantakwaan Tongass People" (Ph.D., Michigan State University, 1998), p. 64.
38 See Image 1. Monteith, "Tongass, the Prolific Name, the Forgotten Tribe," p. 73.
memory, history, or ownership in the nineteenth century, and kootéeyaa still stand today fulfilling many of the same purposes, affirming the Tlingit past and present.

Such reclamation of the Tlingit past has a powerful role to play in many spheres, including the historiography of Alaska, the political entity in which most Tlingit live today. Most Alaskans and Americans would state that Alaska became part of the United States in October 1867, when American, Russian, Creole, and Tlingit onlookers saw the Russian flag fall and the American flag rise over the fort at Novoarkhangelsk (Sitka). This thesis should disabuse readers of false notions such as this: In 1867, the United States had merely purchased a claim; it did not purchase a reality. Lingít Aaní experienced the earliest and most intense American occupation and settlement, and the land of the Tlingit arguably became the first part of “Alaska” controlled and ruled by Americans. However, this establishment of political dominance did not truly occur until the 1880s, and more remote parts of the Alaskan subcontinent did not come under American control until decades afterward. Put simply, Alaska did not become a U.S. colony as soon as 7.2 million dollars had passed from a congress to an emperor; it became a colony after Americans engaged in multiple struggles for sovereignty with indigenous peoples and forcibly imposed processes of colonization.

Problematically, some current historians of Alaska present one-dimensional analyses of the colonialism that profoundly shaped the subcontinent’s last three centuries. In his recent work Alaska: An American Colony, Stephen Haycox primarily defines Alaska as a colony because Russians and Americans viewed the land and its waters as “a resource for exploitation,” and because the Russian and American presences required constant outside support while remaining subject to decisions made elsewhere. He writes that colonial enterprises must be sustained from without, creating dependencies that inevitably diminish the capability of the Native people to maintain their aboriginal culture
and self-determination and that render the non-Native (and later the acculturated Native) colonial population subject to the economic and political judgments made by the absentee investors in pursuit of their own objectives.\(^\text{39}\)

This interpretation of “colonialism as dependence” wholly neglects to explain the intentional colonization of people—indigenous peoples—including their resources, communities, ways of thinking, ways of governing, and ways of living. Indeed, one reviewer writes that he was “impressed” both by the book’s “exhaustive scope, yet also by how little space natives receive.”\(^\text{40}\) Haycox conceptually distances the themes of indigenous–Euroamerican interaction and indigenous resistance and accommodation from the nature of “Alaska’s colonial history,” but in doing so grossly underestimates the fundamental roles indigenous groups played in colonization, both as targets and as participants.

Another issue appears in the organization of Haycox’s work between two halves, Russian and American, justified by his statement that “In a real sense Alaska has two post-contact histories: one of Russian America, the other of American Alaska.”\(^\text{41}\) If one defines “a real sense” as considerations of realpolitik or as individuals’ lived realities, the Alaskan subcontinent post–1741 clearly has many more than two histories: It has a Russian history; an Unangan history; Sugpiaq, Yup’ik, and Inupiat histories; Dene histories and Tlingit history; American history, and others. Portrayal of “Alaska history” itself as having existed throughout the nineteenth century constitutes a quintessential case of upstreaming: The claimed totality of “Russian America” or “Alaska” had little relevance at the time to anyone other than politicians and bureaucrats in St. Petersburg and Washington, D.C. Only from the 1880s through the first half of the twentieth century did processes of “Alaskanization” unite in “a real sense” the diverse and


\(^{41}\) Haycox, p. xiv.
disparate peoples and lands that became a part of the arbitrarily defined place called Alaska.

Unfortunately, the structure of Haycox’s work does not represent an exception in Alaska historiography, but rather a consistent rule. Works on the history of the Great Land almost universally emphasize 1867—the year of the Alaska Purchase—either as an endpoint, if the work treats of Russian America, as a starting point if it addresses Alaska under U.S. rule, or as a moment of great significance if the work’s scope spans that date. This entirely ignores the reality “on the ground,” so to speak, for the vast majority of the land’s population, for whom the year 1867 would have seemed undistinguished in the chronology of their lives and communities. Ted C. Hinckley’s book *The Americanization of Alaska, 1867–1897* naturally follows this same rule, but furthermore, it periodizes the late nineteenth century according to the vicissitudes of the small settler population’s politics, such as the 1873 dissolution of the Sitka town council, an event which had virtually no relevance whatsoever for anyone living within the claimed borders of the Department of Alaska, except for the few Americans in Sitka.42 Despite its title, the work seems not to directly address the Americanization of Alaska’s indigenous inhabitants, but merely the amorphous political Americanization of the entity according to settlers’ activities.

Over two decades later, in 1996, Hinckley produced a book that deals directly with Tlingit history over the whole of the nineteenth century—*The Canoe Rocks: Alaska’s Tlingit and the Euramerican Frontier, 1800–1912*.43 This was perhaps “the first professional ethnohistory” published on any indigenous people of Alaska, and remains

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the only general history of the Tlingit written to date. Despite its ambition and generally successful execution, Hinckley’s work suffers from a few weaknesses, particularly a lack of details on specific cultural changes, vague periodization, and a penchant for fixating on individual Americans to the neglect of Tlingit voices. Perhaps even more seriously, The Canoe Rocks appears to present an image of progressive, uninterrupted Tlingit acculturation and assimilation over the late nineteenth century, as if it were a natural and predetermined result. While this thesis addresses the same subject matter as Hinckley and similarly abstains from focusing on changes in specific cultural characteristics, it aims to rectify some of the general weaknesses in Alaska historiography: It examines indigenous perspectives and sources, presents a clear periodization of the late nineteenth century based on concrete Tlingit experiences, and argues that Tlingit adapted or refused to adapt to colonization in highly varied ways.

Because this work addresses Tlingit–American interactions, it should rightly analyze a few of the themes within wider U.S.–indigenous and North American indigenous historiography with which it intersects. Today, upstreaming almost perpetually obscures the importance of indigenous peoples to the history of the United States and Canada: The marginality of many Native peoples in the present hides their power and sometime supremacy in the past. Pekka Hämäläinen’s recent work The Comanche Empire depicts such power in a highly compelling manner, demonstrating that the Comanche controlled, exploited, and coexisted with their Native and Euroamerican neighbors, developing a type of imperialism all their own. By these

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46 Hämäläinen, p. 3–4.
metrics, the Tlingit did not form an empire in the nineteenth century, existing instead as a nation of autonomous clans that did not readily control or exploit neighboring peoples. This nation of clans did, however, retain its political independence, holding comparative advantages over all newcomers in its sphere of influence from 1741 until the 1880s. The defense and maintenance of Tlingit sovereignty—including the defeat of Euroamerican colonial endeavors—further demonstrates the centrality of indigenous peoples to North American history.

In the 1984 article “The Indians’ New World,” James Merrell wrote, “after 1492 native Americans lived in a world every bit as new as that confronting transplanted Africans or Europeans.” The Tlingit experience contributes ample evidence to refute this claim: The Tlingit—and most indigenous peoples of North America—did not see their homes suddenly transformed into “new worlds” with the arrival of Euroamericans. Indeed, on coming to the Americas, Europeans encountered many enduring societies and civilizations that possessed political, economic, and religious systems with much longer histories than their own. The strong continuities in Tlingit life prevailing from the eighteenth through the nineteenth centuries—and even to the present day—definitively show that Euroamericans did not create a “new world” in Lingít Aaní.

In some cases, however, certain influences did seem to throw entire worlds into disarray, particularly in instances of rapid environmental change. Stephen Hackel describes processes among peoples of the California coast initiated by Spanish missionaries as “dual revolutions” of ecological transformation and demographic disaster. The explosion of plants and animals brought by the Spanish onto the California landscape created a subsistence crisis for the people there, just as deadly

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diseases weakened or destroyed their communities.\textsuperscript{48} While Tlingit suffered deadly diseases as well, Lingít Aaní did not undergo the sort of drastic ecological changes witnessed in other parts of North America, and Tlingit communities continued their subsistence ways of life for most of the nineteenth century. Tlingit history distinguishes itself from other indigenous histories in good part because of the uniqueness of Lingít Aaní—its geographic isolation, the relative futility of European-style cultivation in its climate and soil, and its insular and montane denials to the types of overland settlement that spelled such disaster for so many peoples elsewhere on the continent.

These exceptional environmental factors partially account for some of the major contrasts in political history between the Tlingit and groups originating in what would become the contiguous United States: The Tlingit—as well as most indigenous groups in Alaska—never signed treaties with the United States, never relocated to reservations, and never experienced large-scale massacres, although killings and destruction at the hands of Americans certainly occurred.\textsuperscript{49} Temporal contingency also played a large role, however, as the initial establishment of the Americans’ claim to Lingít Aaní came directly after the Waashdan Ḵwáan had ended their “great civil war,” and the government of that nation focused on many other concerns besides the occupation and colonization of new lands, while potential settlers saw little incentive to move north until gold strikes occurred in the 1880s, and again after 1896, in the latter case coinciding with an American economic recession.\textsuperscript{50}

Unique aspects of Tlingit society itself also contributed to the perseverance of Tlingit communities in facing American colonization: Tlingit clans gained and long

\textsuperscript{49} James–Stern, p. 240.
maintained capacities for military success against Euroamericans, but seemed to largely abandon the potential application of such strategies once the U.S. military showed its strength in several locations. Tlingit had also found utility in Euroamerican technologies, knowledge, and trade since the eighteenth century, and participated in industrial processes at fish canneries and in sophisticated fishing vessels, as well as in commercial pursuits such as in tourism. Some Tlingit readily sought to understand the language and beliefs of Americans in their lands, adopting the newcomers’ words and using that discourse to advance the interests of their children. In short, Tlingit pursued diverse pathways to preserve their communities and benefit as much as they could from circumstances difficult to surmount. These paths did lead to Americanization and Alaskanization of Tlingit society, but such choices nevertheless prepared Tlingit to become leaders in new institutions and systems during the twentieth century.

Tlingit history intersects with global history in unique and intriguing ways: The transoceanic dynamics of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth–century fur trade connected Chinese consumers to Euroamerican merchants and to indigenous producers on the Northwest Coast, including the Tlingit. These exchanges brought already–dynamic indigenous commercialism into contact with developing capitalism that spanned the Atlantic and Pacific, influencing Euroamerican and Northwest Coast economies as well as geopolitics.\(^{51}\) Transoceanic capitalism again entered Lingít Aaní in the 1870s as industrial fishing and fish–canning processes arrived, feeding a global export economy through Tlingit resources, knowledge, and labor.\(^{52}\)

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Tlingit history also intersects with the first—and perhaps only—significant attempt by the Russian Empire to acquire and maintain an overseas colony, and Tlingit resistance to Russian colonization provides an example of how entrenched defense of indigenous norms could defeat an invading power. Lingít Aaní thus serves as a singular setting in which to compare the colonial policies of Russia and the United States, two major powers of recent history who shared colonial forays in only a few locations. Alaska constitutes the only example with depth to its colonial parallels: Both Russia and the United States sought to control it from afar when the nations had to that point fixated on overland expansion. Both empires also encountered a Tlingit nation unwilling to cede its independence—a nation that only succumbed to colonization when myriad factors conspired against it, encircling its people, appropriating its resources, contradicting its laws, and providing conciliatory structures that allowed Tlingit to pursue their interests by new means.

The initial chapter of this thesis frames the work by presenting central characteristics of Tlingit society and their geographic context. It then explores the types of interactions that occurred between Tlingit, other indigenous groups, and Euroamericans before 1856, arguing that these events and trends remain fundamental to understanding the following forty years. The second chapter continues where this introduction began, with the killing of twenty-seven Tlingit by U.S. naval forces near Port Gamble—an event that critically represents the reestablishment of Tlingit–American relations. The chapter then asserts that diseases, the Hudson’s Bay Company, and the last colonial activities of the Russian–American Company weakened and pressured Tlingit communities over the subsequent decade. The third chapter

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addresses the first ten years in which the Waashdan Ḷḵwáan laid claim to Lingít Aaní, arguing that Americans and Tlingit gained knowledge of each other while following independent strategies and norms of interaction, several times resulting in violence.

The final two chapters thematically analyze a critical period beginning in 1877, when the U.S. Army withdrew entirely from Lingít Aaní, and ending in 1896, when the Tlingit–Tagish discovery of gold in the Klondike preluded the arrival of unprecedented numbers of American settlers. During this span of twenty years, the United States acquired a monopoly on legitimate violence in Lingít Aaní and solidified the preeminence of American law and government. Americans also acquired control of Tlingit fisheries, industrializing the catching and processing of salmon and other resources, commodifying Tlingit labor as well as the people's fundamental traditional food source. Simultaneously, American missionaries, teachers, and tourists also entered Lingít Aaní, bringing influences that would shape new generations of Tlingit and change the very structure of their communities. All this occurred before the Klondike Gold Rush shook the demography of the far northwest of North America, and before the Tlingit entered the twentieth century.

Tlingit history from 1856–1896 offers a compelling narrative of indigenous independence defended and denied. As Tlingit challenged the Waashdan Ḷḵwáan, their stories challenge all people to readdress the actions of indigenous nations that have impacted geopolitics, global commerce, and the course of colonialism. In order to find the roots of such histories, this project begins by reaching for the roots of a people and their worldviews in a distantly remembered past.
Originally titled “Traditional Tlingit Country, Circa Late Nineteenth Century,” this map shows the boundaries of Tlingit Ḵwáan (geographic divisions) as well as contemporaneous settlements and neighboring indigenous groups.54

54 Modified by the author from the original, provided by the Alaska Native Knowledge Network.
These are the approximate indigenous territories of the Northwest Coast, North Pacific Rim, and northwest interior of North America, with early European forts and settlements, c. 1800.55

55 Created by the author with reference to maps and information from the Alaska Native Language Center, Intercontinental Cry, and the Government of British Columbia.
Chapter 1: Lingít Aaní to 1856

And so the tide began to rise, each day coming a little higher but failing to go back down to its original low tide mark. Seeing this the people realized there was a flood. Soon their houses were flooded and they were forced to get into their canoes. They fashioned a strong rope of cedar bark and taking this with them headed for the highest mountains on the mainland. ... Still the tide continued rising but not all of the mountains were covered. ...

Aside from the misery of the rain and storm the wild animals caused considerable trouble. Most dangerous however, were the trees which popped to the surface, coming up by the thousands from the area below which once had been beautiful forests. ... Finally it stopped raining. A streak of sunshine broke through the clouds and was quiet. They were saved! ... Those that were saved thanked their spirit for being alive and a song was composed of the sun tide.

If I could but see (make ready now)
If I could but see (make ready now)
This man’s world (make fast now the lines)\textsuperscript{56}

The Tlingit people tell of a great flood that covered their homeland in an age long past. While the account above comes from the twentieth century, it evokes the spirit of a story told by countless generations.\textsuperscript{57} In addition, although this version originates in the south of Lingít Aaní, other groups of Tlingit similarly referenced the flood. In the words of an ixt’ (shaman) of the Daḵl’aweidi, a clan of the Xutsnoowú Ḵwáan, “After the Flood, people came down the Nass River from the interior. Then when the Flood went down, they spread all over.”\textsuperscript{58} The passage of the flood marked the genesis of many of the Tlingit clans, but centuries later these clans saw a more insidious type of crisis growing, “each day coming a little higher but failing to go back down.” The events of 1856 served to some extent as the prelude to this crisis—the gradual colonization of Lingít Aaní by the Waashdan Ḵwáan, the Americans.

Understanding the events of 1856 and the decades of change that followed requires a thorough amount of contextualization. Therefore, this chapter examines

\textsuperscript{56} Monteith, "Tongass, the Prolific Name, the Forgotten Tribe," p. 57–58.
\textsuperscript{57} Monteith, “Tongass, the Prolific Name, the Forgotten Tribe,” p. 58.
\textsuperscript{58} Frederica de Laguna, \textit{The Story of a Tlingit Community}, p. 139.
Tlingit history and society during the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth century, addressing important aspects of the Tlingit world and analyzing how Tlingit groups encountered and engaged foreigners during this time. This information forms an essential baseline for evaluating how Tlingit society and Tlingit–American interaction changed after 1856. Tlingit clans dealt with Spanish and French explorers, traded with the British Hudson’s Bay Company and American merchant ships, and perhaps most importantly, responded in varied ways to the colonial projects of the Russian Empire and its Russian–American Company. The terms of engagement in these situations, as well as their results, very much informed the actions of later generations.

Discussions of the Tlingit—and indigenous peoples in general—often stress that their culture has existed since “time immemorial.” While this idea has some truth to it, more or less, it has the unfortunate side effect of engendering the presumption that Tlingit culture is timeless—that it has existed since time immemorial in a static, unchanging state. To historians and other scholars, this notion is unacceptable: Clearly, Tlingit and other Native peoples’ practices and traditions have varied significantly over time, including millennia of change and development that took place before they encountered people from other continents within the last few centuries. For that reason, the overview of Tlingit life and culture that follows strives to note the dates of observed practices and clarify the implications of modern research within specific frames of geographic and temporal reference. These efforts should help clarify the differences and the commonalities that existed across Lingít Aaní, as well as the changes and continuities evident over time in the most important elements of Tlingit life.
**Lingít, People of the Tides**

The word *Lingít* literally means “human being,” but it may have originated in two phenomena fundamental to Tlingit life: According to elder and historian Mark Jacobs, Jr., the word *tlane* means “low tide,” while *git* means “human activity,” so the Tlingit are in essence “low tide activity people.”\(^{59}\) Such an explanation calls to mind the relatively well-known and commonly cited Tlingit saying: “When the tide goes out, the table is set.”\(^{60}\) This proverb summons images of the beaches of Lingít Aaní, covered in gravel and rock, pitted with ample tide pools and replete with unique foods. To better understand such dynamic images and insights, one must first examine the striking physical geography and plentiful ecology of the Northwest Coast of North America, and in particular the Alexander Archipelago—the Tlingit heartland.

West of the Rocky Mountains lie a long string of impressive peaks that look out over the Pacific Ocean known as the Coast Mountains.\(^{61}\) As this mountain range stretches northward from Washington State, tracing the edge of the North American continent, it manifests itself in increasingly dramatic fjords and rocky islands. The largest among these islands is Vancouver Island, while the most isolated are Haida Gwaii, (formerly called the Queen Charlotte Islands), which lie nearly forty miles from the nearest land and fifty miles from the mainland.\(^{62}\) The largest and grandest island group, however, is the Alexander Archipelago, formed of more than one thousand islands, among them many of the largest in the United States. Packed together tightly and engraved with countless inlets, these islands provide ample shelter from ocean

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waves for abundant marine animals as well as wide-ranging human travelers. Lingít Aaní encompasses these islands and the mainland adjacent, as well as some lands beyond it. In cases where themes of Tlingit–American interaction call for greater geographic focus, this thesis concentrates on the history of the Archipelago, with an emphasis on its southern half.

While Tlingit groups occupied several different types of climate zones and ecosystems, foremost among them reigned the temperate rainforest. The rainforest of Lingít Aaní represents the northernmost tract of the Pacific coastal forest that stretches southward all the way to the Salish Sea and beyond. This environment retains consistently cool and mild temperatures, and depending on the location, the skies can pour forth in excess of two hundred inches of precipitation each year. These conditions support the greatest amounts of biomass—organic weight—of any place on earth.  

Massive trees such as spruce, hemlock, and red and yellow cedar provided much of that weight, and these trees served the Tlingit well as giant canoes carved from single logs, as planks and posts to build impressive houses, and as a host of other tools and items of material existence. The forest and the alpine areas above the tree line served as habitats for animals like deer, black and brown bears, mountain goats, wolves, and smaller mammals that were hunted, trapped, and utilized by the humans who shared their world. Different communities along the Northwest Coast maintained large domesticated dog populations, and useful plants and roots abounded as well: Early European explorers even witnessed Tlingit practicing a small amount of agriculture, cultivating tobacco for chewing.  

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63 Vaillant, p. 9.  
64 Gibson, Otter Skins, Boston Ships, and China Goods, p. 4–5. It is said the dog breed of the Northwest Coast may have been somewhat similar in appearance and demeanor to a modern-day Basenji.
The bountiful marine life of the Alexander Archipelago includes mammals like whales, orcas, sea lions, seals, and otters. Sea lions and seals were often hunted in the outer islands, and featured in legends and place names such as that of the largest island in the archipelago—Taan (Prince of Wales Island), meaning sea lion. Land otters played into legends as well, as the dangerous and mysterious kóoshdaakáa (land otter men), and sea otters’ superlative pelts drove ships around the world during decades of fur trading between indigenous, Euroamerican, and Chinese. These mammals fed off some of the same types of seafood harvested by Tlingit twice a day with the changing of the tide—shellfish, kelp, sea urchins, sea cucumbers and crabs, as well other foodstuffs. Archaeologists working in Lingít Aaní have discovered deep middens filled with discarded shells that date to nearly five thousand years ago: The development of inter-tidal resource harvesting in the lifestyles of the people there may well have been part of a transition into the Northwest Coast cultural tradition.

Most importantly, however, the Northwest Coast provided ideal habitats for a huge variety of fish—eulachon, herring, halibut, and above all else, five species of salmon. Salmon survived for millions of years in highly volatile environments of the coastal waters, adapting to the changing geography of the region by developing an anadromous life cycle—living most of their lives in the ocean, then returning to freshwater to spawn. The number of salmon returning to the rivers and streams of Lingít Aaní in any given year, however, could be extremely variable: David Arnold estimates that when humans first arrived to the region, the salmon runs might have

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65 Some sources state that Taan referred only to the southern part of the island—which the Taant’a Ḵwáan had occupied—but for clarity this thesis will use the name to reference the entire island. Crippen, “Tlingit Ḵwáan, Clan, and House List,” (last updated Dec. 2012), http://www.drangle.com/~james/tlingit/clan-list.html.
provided as many as one hundred million fish in the best of years, and perhaps as few as five million in the worst. The civilizations constructed along the Northwest Coast depended on these salmon; harvesting them by the thousands from streams during the summer, communities could smoke and dry the fish and guarantee a well-supplied winter. Indigenous groups also developed practices and attitudes related to distinctions among the different salmon species, each with its own spawning patterns, nutritional values, and other characteristics of use. Understood in the most basic way, this abundance of salmon served as the fundamental ingredient in the development of Northwest Coast civilizations, a chain of peoples stretching from the Tlingit in the north to the speakers of Coast Salish languages in the south, interconnected culturally as well as environmentally. Archaeological evidence from Xutsnoowú Ḵwáan territory supports the idea that the Tlingit may have employed mass salmon-harvesting techniques in the Alexander Archipelago as early as three thousand years ago.

Turning to the human geography of Lingít Aaní, the challenging and often controversial question of demography rears its head: How many Tlingit were there in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries? Scholarly argument over the population of North America’s indigenous societies has a long history of contentiousness, and the widely varying figures offered have become fodder for propaganda used in both prejudicial and revisionist narratives. Nevertheless, the Northwest Coast clearly supported much larger populations than most of the rest of the continent, north of Mesoamerica, and one of the densest populations of non-agricultural people known in

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68 Arnold, p. 18–20.
human history.\textsuperscript{71} Even with figures judged “as conservative as precontact population estimates come,” anthropologist and demographer Robert Boyd concluded that the entire Northwest Coast had a population over 180,000, and that approximately 12,000 people lived in the lands later defined as Southeast Alaska.\textsuperscript{72} Looking at Lingít Aaní as a whole, it seems reasonable to estimate that around 15,000 people lived there during the mid-eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{73}

At the time interactions began with Europeans, Tlingit navigated six levels of socio-political organization: class, house, clan, kwáan, moiety, and nation.\textsuperscript{74} Tlingit persons held rank within society—sometimes characterized simply as noble or commoner, but also categorized by some scholars as three classes: high class (nobles), commoners, and low class. Slaves, who were taken as war captives or purchased in trade, lay outside of this hierarchy.\textsuperscript{75} Individuals often carried hereditary names or titles as well that helped form a political or public persona very much a part of their identity. Linked to this identity was the integral concept of at.óow, meaning “owned things,” which consisted of both communal and personal property that could be physical as well as conceptual—land, fishing grounds and objects, as well as stories and songs. Much of a person’s at.óow was shared with others of their house or clan, but no two people would possess exactly the same at.óow, and so it made up a fundamental pillar of their individual as well as collective identity.\textsuperscript{76} A person’s house (hit in Tlingit) constituted the most intimate level of collective organization. Houses

\textsuperscript{72} Arnold, p. 24.
\textsuperscript{73} In 1803, Urey Lisiansky estimated that the Tlingit numbered 10,000, and this was nearly three decades after Europeans had likely brought diseases to their communities. Gibson, \textit{Otter Skins, Boston Ships, and China Goods}, p. 17. Stephen Haycox inexplicably offers that the Tlingit numbered 50,000 “at the time of contact,” but this lacks any citation. Haycox, p. 30.
\textsuperscript{74} Thomas F. Thornton, \textit{Being and Place Among the Tlingit} (Seattle; Juneau, Alaska: University of Washington Press, in association with Sealaska Heritage Institute, 2008), p. 42.
\textsuperscript{76} Thornton, \textit{Being and Place Among the Tlingit}, p. 38, 42.
existed as subdivisions of a particular matrilineal clan, with men of that clan and their families living together under the same roof. As George Emmons stated, however, a name once given to a clan house will “survive the mere structure.”

No matter what happened to a particular building, a person’s house identity and traditions would persevere.

The clan provided the strongest, most basic unit of Tlingit social structure. At one time the Tlingit nation may have consisted of over one hundred different clans, interrelated but distinct. Several clans would occupy a single village, and children belonged to their mother’s clan, participating in nearly all activities according to that group identity. The clan held among its goals the securing of resources for survival, the accumulation of material wealth, the increase of status in relation to other clans, the establishment of alliances with others, and the expansion of its resource base and prestige. Thornton writes, “virtually all legal and political authority was vested in the clan,” and so it carried out and organized war, peace, rituals, and material production. The clan also controlled much at.óow, in the form of land, objects, stories, dances, and songs. Tlingit feelings of political loyalty and pride—“patriotism,” as such—lay with the clan.

Moieties, meanwhile, represented a division of all Tlingit people between two matrilineages—on one side Wolf, and on the other Raven, in the interior known as Crow. Moieties functioned most critically as a regulation of marriage practice: Tlingit

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78 Thornton, Being and Place Among the Tlingit, p. 46. Crippen, “Tlingit Kwáan, Clan, and House List,” (last updated Dec. 2012), http://www.drangle.com/~james/tlingit/clan-list.html. The Tlingit word for clan, naa, is the same as the generic word for moiety, and would add unnecessary confusion.
79 Tollefson, “Potlatching and Political Organization among the Northwest Coast Indians,” p. 54.
80 Thornton, Being and Place Among the Tlingit, p. 47.
81 The Sanyaa Kwáan also had a third group, Eagle, the members of which could marry either Wolves or Ravens. In northern Lingít Aani, the terms Eagle and Wolf could be interchangeable. Crippen, “Tlingit Kwáan, Clan, and House List,” (last updated Dec. 2012), http://www.drangle.com/~james/tlingit/clan-list.html.
individuals could only wed someone of the opposite moiety; marriage or intercourse within the moiety represented the equivalent of incest. As alluded to previously, Tlingit identity and social status followed the mother’s descent, and marrying someone of the opposite moiety necessarily meant marrying someone of another clan. Thus, children often received their most important mentorship from their mother’s brothers, rather than their father, because they belonged to the same clan and moiety as those uncles. The two moieties served as “bisecting kinship units” that preserved balance in each community and throughout all of Lingít Aaní. Many ceremonies, for example, required constant signs of respect to pass between one clan and a clan of the opposite moiety. Such responsibilities tied to one’s identity perpetuated strong values of reciprocity.

The kwáan grew in significance during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries because of the American perception of it as equivalent of “tribe,” a term with great prominence in legal discourse and the popular imagination in the rest of the United States. In fact, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the kwáan functioned as little more than a unit of social geography, possessing no political power. The kwáan represented a geographic identity or homeland for Tlingit just as the clan represented a kin identity, and while a particular clan might have members in many different parts of Lingít Aaní, an individual referenced their kwáan to indicate where they were from. This thesis frequently mentions kwáan as a way to localize where events occurred and where different Tlingit came from, but this is in part a

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85 Soboleff, p. 1–3.
reflection of the limited knowledge and bias of Euroamerican observers: As one official lamented in the late 1810s, Russians could not adequately take revenge on Tlingit attackers, “for one cannot determine to which clan the culprits belong.” While Tlingit themselves fully comprehended clan dynamics among their communities, the confusion among Euroamericans has left lacunas in the historical record.

Lastly, the concept of a Tlingit “nation” represents a people who retained a highly distinguishable level of cultural and linguistic cohesiveness over a contiguous stretch of territory, in spite of having no overarching political authority. One might liken the relative tangibility of the Tlingit nation to the Italian or German nations romanticized during the same time period. It is likely, however, that Tlingit social groups were moving farther apart during the eighteenth century, particularly as expansion continued in the north. In the Alexander Archipelago—the islands of the Tlingit nation—eight kwáan predominated through the nineteenth century: Sheet’ká Ḵ̱wáan, Xutsnoowú Ḵ̱wáan, Ḵ̱éex’ Ḵ̱wáan, Kooyu Ḵ̱wáan, Shtax’héen Ḵ̱wáan, Hinya Ḵ̱wáan, Sanyaa Ḵ̱wáan, and Taant’a Ḵ̱wáan. To give an example of the social structures outlined above, the following table lists the clans that existed in two of the archipelago kwáan and the houses that belonged to the first of the clans in each list:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ḵ̱éex’ Ḵ̱wáan</th>
<th>Wolf moiety</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ḵ̱aach.ádi</td>
<td>Tsaagweidí</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ḵ̱’áakw Hít (Freshwater Marked Sockeye House)</td>
<td>Aan Yakawlitseixi Hít (House that Anchored the Village)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ḵ̱utis’ Hít (Looking Out to Sea House)</td>
<td>Tóos’ Hít (Shark House)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suḵteeneidí</td>
<td>Ḵ̱aay Hít (Yellow Cedar House)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

86 Hinckley, _The Canoe Rocks_, p. 32.
87 Thornton, _Being and Place Among the Tlingit_, p. 42.
As shown above, one clan—the Ḳaach.ádi—existed in both kwáan, and the number of clans in a kwáan as well as the number of houses in a clan could be highly variable. There were also clans related to one another: The Teeyineidí, Kiks.ádi, and Teeyhittaan belonged to one such group of related clans, and Teeyineidí and Teeyhittaan may have originally been variations of the same name. These types of intersections within the clan system, and between it and other social differences such as wealth and class, clearly constituted what social scientists term “cross-cutting cleavages.” In every Tlingit community, and throughout the Tlingit nation as a whole,

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individuals married, lived together, worked together, and carried out ceremonies together across these lines of identity, creating a uniquely institutionalized cohesiveness common to the entire culture.

Life within and around Tlingit settlements consisted of highly coordinated activities including resource collection, artisanship, and ceremony. During the spring and summer, the smaller house groups visited sites that provided essential food and materials such as sea lion rookeries, salmon streams, eulachon runs, or groves of high-quality and high-utility trees. In the fall when the heaviest rainstorms arrived, often bringing hurricane-force winds, house groups returned to large winter villages where people engaged in crafts and artistry, building immense clan houses, weaving intricate baskets and clothing out of bark, or carving canoes and monumental kootéeyaa.

Ceremonies or celebrations known as *ku.éex’* (potlatches) would often be hosted in winter as well. The *ku.éex’* constituted a key social, economic, and cultural practice in Tlingit life that remains critical to understanding the worldview and social structures of the Native peoples of the region. *Ku.éex’* could be held for any number of reasons, such as a celebration or as a memorial, and consisted of days of feasting, dancing, storytelling, and singing, typically in the context of one clan inviting another as guests. According to Kenneth Tollefson, *ku.éex’* occurred most often in the context of a clan leader’s death, facilitating the transfer of authority and also permitting the strengthening of alliances or the resolution of conflicts with other clans.91 The most profound aspects of the *ku.éex’* took place when gifts were given: Often the hosts were extremely lavish in their gifts, giving everyone present ample amounts of goods like food, furs, or even coppers—flattened copper plates or shields that symbolized great

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91 Tollefson, “Potlatching and Political Organization among the Northwest Coast Indians,” p. 71.
wealth. The following oratory, recorded at Sitka by the Harriman Expedition in 1899, illustrates some of the meaning of the ku.éex’ as a source of pride and prestige for the hosts, the Kaagwaantaan clan of the Sheet’ká Ḵwáan, who invited people of the T’aaku Ḵwáan:

You who are standing there, my relatives,
I will speak to you.
Well, this last winter
how proud we were.
I will speak to you about it.
How very proud we were.
We were happy in many ways
when the Taku aristocrats were invited here.
How much strength of mind
we gained
because of it,
and because we are Kaagwaantaan.
We took all
the things of our grandfathers out
for these Taku aristocrats
to see.
How very much we showed them
how proud we are.
When they were invited here from Taku,
everything went smoothly.
We gained strength of mind.
In all kinds of ways
we showed where we are noble
and how they are noble too.
No other people in the world
will be like us, and them
the way we had strength of mind,
how much money was brought out,
how much there was;
how much was brought out
in Sitka
for the frog
when people were invited to the Frog House.92

Some Tlingit oral traditions, including some from northern clans, point to the Nass River and Taant’a Ḵwáan territory as the origin of their people.93 The Nass origin

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theory supports the idea that the Tlingit migrated into the Alexander Archipelago from the south and east, gradually expanding northward and eventually taking over lands beyond the archipelago in the northern interior and on the coast of the Gulf of Alaska. Linguistic evidence also supports a south-to-north trajectory, as the dialect of the Taant’á Ḵwáan in the south appears to have retained more conservative linguistic elements than dialects in the north. Although the Tlingit spoke a single tongue—Lingít, the same word as their autonym—their language had several dialects: Northern dialects included gulf coast, inland, central, and transitional Tlingit, while three distinct southern dialects belonged to the Hinya Ḵwáan, Sanyaa Ḵwáan, and Taant’á Ḵwáan.94 Many Tlingit—and nobles in particular—were multilingual, speaking the languages of the people they interacted with and among whom trading, slaving, warring, and intermarriage occurred.95

These neighbors of the Tlingit included the Eyak and the Sugpiaq to the northwest along the coast of the Gulf of Alaska, against whom the Tlingit waged wars of expansion; various Dene (Athabaskan) peoples to the north and east in the interior, including the Tagish, Tutchone, and Tahltan; the Haida to the south, some of whom migrated into Lingít Aaní from their homeland of Haida Gwaii; and to the southeast the related Nisga’a, Tsimshian, and Gitxsan peoples. Beyond these groups lay other Northwest Coast civilizations such as the Haisla, Heiltsuk, Nuxalk, Kwakwaka’wakw, Nuu-chah-nulth, and a variety of peoples speaking Coast Salish languages. It is difficult to know which of the nations or groupings of the Northwest Coast might have

93 Thornton, Haa Léel’kw Háas Aaní Saax’ú, p. 171.
had the largest population in the eighteenth century or the most widespread presence in the coastal trade networks. However, Lingít Aaní constituted the largest swath of territory on the coast where the inhabitants all spoke a single language.96

In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Tlingit people participated in vast networks of exchange on the Northwest Coast—violent as well as commercial, informed by demand for resources as well as notions of tradition and prestige. Myriad goods moved on trade routes all along the coast and between the coast and the interior, along rivers and mountain passes: They included items such as robes, blankets, skins, baskets, spoons, rattles, headdresses, copper, shark teeth, shells, abalone, eulachon grease, and indeed slaves as well.97 For untold centuries and perhaps millennia, these networks connected the Tlingit to other indigenous peoples, both close by and thousands of miles away. Only in the late 1700s did Europeans and Americans join these intricate relations and transactions.

**Dleit Kaa, the White Men**

Almost by chance—though more by result of the Pacific’s prevailing winds and currents—the Tlingit were the first people of the Northwest Coast to encounter Europeans: In June of 1741, the ship *Sv. Pavel* (St. Paul), commanded by Lieutenant Alexei Chirikov, was separated from its sister ship captained by Vitus Bering during the second voyage sent by Russia to discover a way east to the Americas. While Bering’s ship eventually landed near the Gulf coast territory of the Eyak, the *Sv. Pavel* crossed the entire Gulf of Alaska and sighted land at 55° 20’ north latitude—the Alexander Archipelago, and more particularly Tlingit territory, near the border between the Hinya

96 See Map 3 – The Northwest Coast, c. 1800. The coast and interior Salish peoples spoke many different languages, and the other peoples shown on the map inhabited smaller territories than the Tlingit.

Ḵwáan and the Kaigani Haida. Chirikov and his men then sailed north along the outside of the islands, apparently without encountering anyone, and in mid-July at 58°N—perhaps at Yakobi Island, in the territory of the Xunaa Ḵwáan—the sailors decided to land and replenish their water supplies.¹⁹ Eight heavily armed men went ashore in a whaleboat, but nothing was seen or heard of them for five days, until smoke was spotted and interpreted as a signal for help. A second boat was sent out with four men in it, but this too disappeared. Two days later the Russians saw two canoes approach: The Tlingit paddlers shouted to the ship and then moved away along the water. Eventually Chirikov made the decision to turn back to Kamchatka, and after losing several men to scurvy along the way, the ship finally reached Russian lands in October.⁹⁹

Many scholars over the past century have speculated on the fate of Chirikov’s missing men, some concluding that the boats must have capsized, others—including Chirikov himself—believing that the men must have been killed or taken captive. Historian Andrei Grinev, however, makes a thorough and convincing argument in support of another possibility, one provided in oral history brought to light by Mark Jacobs, Jr. in 1990: Eight Russian men, resenting the severe discipline and conditions on ship and perhaps uncertain of their prospects for returning home alive, decided to join the Tlingit and become adopted into their community. Fearing what might happen if Russians returned to the same location, they moved south to live among the people of the Hinya Ḵwáan, where their descendants became the heads of several notable families.¹⁰⁰ Grinev casts a great deal of doubt on the other possibilities and concludes that though the fifteen Russians sent ashore may have fought among themselves—

⁹⁹ Grinev, “Reflections on the Fate of Alexei Chirikov’s Missing Men,” p. 3.
resulting in the account that only eight joined the Tlingit—the men had compelling motives for abandoning their countrymen and starting new lives among the Natives.\textsuperscript{101}

More than just an interesting story or an obligatory account of “first contact,” the likely fate of the Russians from Chirikov’s ship represents an important insight into Tlingit attitudes toward strangers, and their strategies for interacting with them.\textsuperscript{102} The first shore party brought with them a substantial amount of trade goods, so in offering to join the Tlingit, the community would have appreciated the apparent wealth of the dleit káa (white men), as well as the novel utility of objects like iron bayonets and broadswords.\textsuperscript{103} As occurred elsewhere in North America, the Tlingit were accustomed to taking strangers into their communities, ranging in nature from marriages with nobles of another nation to acts of hostage taking and slaving. On first encountering any new group of people, however, Tlingit appear to have most often exhibited curiosity and an eagerness to trade: This was at least the case in the majority of accounts from Euroamericans who came to the region during the era of the fur trade. However the Russian deserters may have communicated their initial intentions, it seems most likely that those who were willing successfully integrated into Tlingit society, beginning an era of interaction that would in a few more decades began to grow more complex.

After 1741, the Euroamerican historical record does not tell of the Tlingit again until 1775. During this time, knowledge likely spread among the Tlingit and their neighbors of the alien vessel that had visited their waters and the men who had arrived

\textsuperscript{101} Grinev, “Reflections on the Fate of Alexei Chirikov’s Missing Men,” p. 5.
\textsuperscript{102} The author agrees with the sentiment that “the earliest contacts between Natives and Euroamericans have been overdrawn as epochal events.” Jonathan R. Dean, "Rich Men, Big Powers, and Wastelands: The Tlingit-Tsimshian Border of the Northern Pacific Littoral, 1799 to 1867," Ph.D. in History, The University of Chicago, 1993, p. 14. Nevertheless, revising the longstanding interpretation of the fate of Chirikov’s men represents an important example of how oral history and changed perspectives’ yield decisive historical insights.
\textsuperscript{103} Grinev, “Reflections on the Fate of Alexei Chirikov’s Missing Men,” p. 4.
bearing strange weapons and other objects. If members of the Russian shore party had indeed deserted to live among the Tlingit, they may have communicated some of their nation’s ambitions and capabilities, warning of future voyages to come. For most inhabitants of the Northwest Coast at this time, however, these people from another continent must have existed only as rumors and unverifiable stories—thoughts that scholars can only guess at today.104

The next date in the record of contact between Europeans and Tlingit, 1775, comes not from Russian sailors, but from the Spanish: A ship commanded by Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra landed on Shee (Baranof Island) and likely brought smallpox with it.105 This event would have been among the first of many epidemic disasters to strike the Northwest Coast civilizations, each with brutal ramifications for the communities afflicted. The disease also would have struck the Sheet’ká Ḵwáan a mere twenty-four years before Russian ships arrived to establish a fortress in their territory.106 Before addressing those events, however, Tlingit dealings with the Spanish and other EuroAmericans merit serious attention: These episodes illustrate Tlingit customs, capabilities, and modes of interaction with strangers, highlighting patterns that continued into the late nineteenth century.

From their position on the western coasts of the Americas, the Spanish government became alarmed to hear of Russian activities in the North Pacific. Ships soon travelled north from San Blas, New Spain, with the intent to elongate and substantiate Spanish imperial claims.107 For the purposes of Tlingit history, encounters

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104 This analysis follows the conceptual framework laid out in Richter, Facing East from Indian Country, p. 11–40.
105 Gmelch, p. 12. This conclusion comes from an observation in 1789 that there were many people with pockmarked faces among the Sheet’ká Ḵwáan. Steve Langdon, “Comparative Tlingit and Haida Adaptation to the West Coast of the Prince of Wales Archipelago,” in Ethnology, vol 18, no. 2 (Apr., 1979), p. 113.
106 Dauenhauer, Dauenhauer, and Black, Anóoshi Lingít Aaní Ká, p. xxviii–xxix.
107 Gibson, Otter Skins, Boston Ships, and China Goods, p. 18. San Blas is today located in the state of Nayarit, Mexico, north of Puerto Vallarta.
with these Euroamerican mariners took place over a brief period of time, but brought significant and devastating effects to some of the people they encountered. Wallace M. Olson writes of Spanish–Tlingit relations as having transpired “without the tragedy that usually followed such meetings,” referring to other confrontations between Spanish and indigenous peoples that resulted in violence and destruction.\textsuperscript{108} While the apparent absence of fighting between Tlingit and Spanish is noteworthy, this statement ignores the traumatic effects of disease that these voyages carried with them. In addition to bringing smallpox to the Sheet'ká Ḵwaan in 1775, Spanish mariners likely spread it among the people of the Hinya Ḵwaan as well, in 1779, when the expedition led by Ignacio Arteaga interacted extensively with Tlingit at Bucareli Bay. The subsequent population loss likely allowed the Kaigani Haida to expand northward, gaining territory on Taan and the smaller islands off its west coast; indeed, this explains how Spanish returning to the same place in 1792 encountered Haida there, not Tlingit.\textsuperscript{109}

The 1779 Arteaga expedition seems quite illustrative of how Tlingit and Spanish managed encounters and negotiations. In May, the Spanish raised a cross and said mass in order to solemnly “take possession” of the territory, located near the frontier between the Hinya Ḵwaan and the Kaigani Haida. One month later, however, the Tlingit who had gathered around the Spanish encampment took the cross down for the iron nails it contained.\textsuperscript{110} Having previously had access only to copper, Tlingit immediately saw iron as a highly attractive and useful new material. A day later, two sailors deserted with the intent to stay with the Tlingit, but their officers believed them taken captive and seized a hostage in order to secure their return. When Tlingit did not trade


\textsuperscript{109} Langdon, p. 113.

for this hostage, the Spanish tried to take more captives, firing on some of the Tlingit as they climbed up one of their ships, believing that they were attacking. One or two men were killed, but the rest were taken on board, given gifts and treated well.\(^\text{111}\)

The Spanish had purchased five children during their visit, and Francisco Antonio Mourelle, the pilot, related that during the incident one of the children took soldiers by the hand, led them to the muskets and weapons on board, and made signs that they should fire on some of the canoes. While this story has no confirmation from the other sources on the voyage, it seems intriguing to consider that this child may have been a Haida slave who, once aboard a foreign vessel with new owners, was eager to have them attack his previous masters.\(^\text{112}\) Eventually the hostage crisis ended with the exchange of the Spanish deserters and Tlingit captives, and the sailors were tied to a gun and given twenty lashes.\(^\text{113}\) Unlike Chirikov, whose sailors likely succeeded in deserting, the Spanish and later Euroamerican forces would not allow their subordinates to so easily abandon their duties to find a new life among the Tlingit.

Olson ascribes the relative lack of violence between Spanish and Tlingit to the actions of “‘honorable’ men and women on both sides” and supports this by citing Spanish orders to act favorably toward the Natives, to ignore Tlingit commission of what they considered petty thefts, and to treat hostages and others as best as possible, giving food and gifts, beds in the officers’ quarters, and even musical entertainment. Indeed, had these \textit{dleit káa} come to Lingít Aaní with more belligerent, self-assured intentions, and had not Tlingit nobles and others conducted themselves with such patience in tense situations, acting according their own dictates of honor,

\(^{111}\) Olson, p. 71–72.
\(^{112}\) Gormly, p. 164. These five purchased children were brought to New Spain but do not appear in any records afterward.
\(^{113}\) Gormly, p. 159.
bloody clashes probably would have occurred. As British and Russian examples discussed later demonstrate, violence became much more likely when Euroamericans built fortifications in Tlingit territory, allied with Tlingit enemies, or interfered with Tlingit political and commercial affairs. Ultimately, one must most ascribe the benign nature of the Tlingit experience with the Spanish (aside from the dreadful effects of smallpox) to New Spain’s lack of capacity to conduct a veritable colonial project. A voyage in 1792 was the last to reach the vicinity of Lingít Aaní: Shut out by Russian and British claims and American commercial prowess, the Spanish abandoned their settlement on Vancouver Island in 1795, thereafter occupying themselves with endeavors further south.

The Kingdom of France became interested in exploration of the North Pacific after receiving accounts from the voyages of the Spanish as well as the British navigator James Cook. After the conclusion of the American Revolutionary War, the French navy had the means to engage in global maritime exploration, and so in August of 1785, two ships set forth from Brest under the command of Jean François de Galaup, Comte de Lapérouse, bearing with them a scientific mission as well as hidden political objectives of spying and making a claim for France. Anchored for weeks in Lituya Bay on the Gulf coast, Lapérouse grew frustrated—as had the Spanish—with what he perceived as ongoing theft of expedition items by the Tlingit. Having a quite different conception of property, and seeing the French benefit from their own property, their own at.óow, in terms of the water, wood, and other resources taken from their lands, the Tlingit present likely did not see their actions as theft at all.

114 Olson, p. 67–72.
117 Inglis, p. 60.
Tlingit also offered to sell Lapérouse a small island in the bay, which he accepted even as he doubted the sale’s legitimacy, writing, “It is more than doubtful that the chief was the owner of any land at all; the government of these people is so democratic that the country must belong to the whole society.”\textsuperscript{118} Clearly, the foreigners did not grasp the workings of the Tlingit political system and their strongly held notions of property, but Tlingit managed to profit from the encounter nonetheless.

A second French voyage arrived in Lingít Aaní in 1791, commanded by Etienne Marchand and conducted with a commercial objective—profiting from the fur trade. Marchand’s vessel entered Sitka Sound (on the west coast of Shee) in August, and a few Tlingit in canoes found the ship within several days.\textsuperscript{119} Marchand also became the first recorder of the words “Lingít Aaní,” believing they referred to Sitka Sound, rather than to a much larger concept.\textsuperscript{120} In the account of his travels published in 1789, British trader Nathaniel Portlock wrote that the Tlingit were “very easily irritated, and would very little scruple to kill you when they think themselves injured.”\textsuperscript{121} The Spanish and French experiences, however, effectively demonstrate that curiosity and the allure of mutual benefit most often prevailed in encounters between Tlingit and strangers: The Tlingit adhered to their own system of justice—not to irrational and aggressive savagery, as Euroamericans claimed—and they consistently sought to acquire new goods through trade. The threat of violence in response to injury occurred only when proper compensation was not provided through peaceful negotiations. Such was Tlingit jurisprudence.\textsuperscript{122}

\textsuperscript{118} Inglis, p. 55.
\textsuperscript{119} C. P. Claret Fleurieu. \textit{A Voyage Round the World, 1790–1792, Performed by Etienne Marchand}. Amsterdam; New York: N. Israel; Da Capo Press, 1969 p. 190.
\textsuperscript{120} Dauenhauer, Dauenhauer, and Black, \textit{Anóoshi Lingít Aaní Ká}, p. xxvii.
\textsuperscript{121} Olson, p. 67.
\textsuperscript{122} Harring, p. 220–221.
British activities on the west coast of North America in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries took several forms and proceeded from multiple directions. As with the Spanish and French, the British conducted long-distance voyages of exploration that wound their way along or through the islands of Lingít Aaní. British merchantmen also participated heavily in the fur trade, and the North West Company and Hudson’s Bay Company competed as a powerful corporate entities arriving overland. While primarily occupied with regions to the south and east making up the territory of New Caledonia, (later British Columbia), British activities had important consequences for the Tlingit history of the Alexander Archipelago well into the late nineteenth century.

The first series of consequences came from the final voyage of James Cook, which ignited the Northwest Coast fur trade: Buying sea otter skins among the Nuu-chah-nulth in 1778 in exchange for iron and glass beads, Cook’s crewmen then sold the pelts in Guangzhou (Canton), China, profiting enormously.\(^1\) Chinese authorities at the time allowed trade with European foreigners to take place, but only at Guangzhou and Macau in the south, and at Kyakhta (in Russia) in the north. Especially with this restricted line of supply, one can imagine why Chinese consumers—primarily wealthy officials, merchants, and landed gentry—valued the furs so highly: The sea otter has the densest pelt of any animal on earth—60,000 hairs per square inch.\(^2\) These consumers played a critical role in the story of the Pacific fur trade, and by extension, Chinese desire for luxurious furs fueled interactions between Euroamericans and indigenous people, including the Tlingit, linking Tlingit history to global history.

A spate of British and American ships came to the Northwest Coast for furs in the 1780s. By the 1790s, the traders from the newly independent United States had

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\(^1\) Gibson, *Otter Skins, Boston Ships, and China Goods*, p. 22.

\(^2\) Gibson, *Otter Skins, Boston Ships, and China Goods*, p. 6, 86.
come to dominate the market, in part because British traders faced competitive obstacles in the form of their government’s South Sea Company, granted the monopoly on British trade in the Pacific, and the East Indian Company, granted the monopoly on trade in China.\textsuperscript{125} Thus, Americans first encountered the Tlingit not as explorers or would-be claimants to any land, but rather as traders and sailors intent on making profits from their voyages. Because most of the American ships sailed from Boston or other New England ports, the Tlingit rendering of “Boston,” \textit{Waashdan}, became the appellation of the entire nation: \textit{Waashdan Ḵwáan}, the Americans. By the last few years of the eighteenth century, these seafaring representatives of the \textit{Waashdan Ḵwáan} had become the main trading partners of the Tlingit.\textsuperscript{126}

As they demonstrated elsewhere in North America, American traders had no scruples about selling weapons to indigenous people in areas where the United States staked no territorial claim.\textsuperscript{127} They apparently sold firearms to Tlingit even under the gaze of the Russian fort at Novoarkhangelsk, and sold cannon as well: Aleksandr Baranov saw four falconets among the Sheet’ká Ḵwáan in 1799. One Russian official wrote,

\begin{quote}
These savages are so cunning and careful that they tell the Americans they will agree to carry out trade in sea otters only if their ships bring a known quantity of arms and the equipment associated with them, and if not, they will not trade them even one otter.\textsuperscript{128}
\end{quote}

Thus, Tlingit throughout the Alexander Archipelago quickly gained access to important new tools for warfare and hunting by means of harvesting sea otters, and to a lesser extent other fur-bearing mammals.

\textsuperscript{125} Gibson, \textit{Otter Skins, Boston Ships, and China Goods}, p. 25, 35.
\textsuperscript{126} Kan, \textit{Memory Eternal}, p. 57, 557.
\textsuperscript{127} Indigenous peoples in the part of New Spain that later became Texas received arms from Americans by the late eighteenth century. Barr, p. 222.
The Americans also brought many other goods, such as cloth, clothing, sugar, axes, knives, and other metal items, selling them at cheaper prices and in much higher quantities than other Euroamericans had. Alcohol, which played a variable role in Tlingit communities throughout the nineteenth century, appears to have first come from the British and Americans as well. According to one oral history, an American captain hosted a Tlingit leader named Nekut on his ship, having him drink rum and sending him on his way with another bottle. Nekut fell asleep drunk on shore, seriously alarming his family members, and when he awoke the next morning he decided to discard the rest of the American goods they had acquired, seeing them as dangerous to his people’s health.

In each of these Tlingit encounters with various foreign nations, scholars tend to concentrate on how much Euroamericans learned or did not learn about the Tlingit. Indeed, this perspective results because investigating newfound natives was often a primary focus of Euroamerican observers. A more conscientious thinker considers the ways in which Euroamericans misunderstood the Tlingit, but this too is one-sided and insufficient. Those who look back on these histories of interaction must additionally understand that just as explorers sought to learn more about indigenous peoples, indigenous peoples sought to learn just as much about the new arrivals—the ships and sailors in their waters with novel goods and novel practices.

Taking this into consideration, the Tlingit seemed particularly adept in learning how to interact with and even take advantage of Euroamericans. Merchants almost

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129 Kan, Memory Eternal, p. 57.
130 Andrei V. Grinev, “The Distribution of Alcohol among the Natives of Russian America,” in Arctic Anthropology (47, no. 2, Sept., 2010), p. 71.
constantly lamented the indigenous acumen present on the Northwest Coast, such as in this cautionary advice from 1787:

...It appears that the natives are such intelligent traders, that, should you be in the least degree lavish, or inattentive in forming bargains, they will so enhance the value of their furs, as not only to exhaust your present stock, but also to injure, if not ruin, any future adventure.\(^\text{132}\)

Euroamerican traders particularly loathed to negotiate with Tlingit women, not only because it violated their own expectations of gender roles, but also because women were even more shrewd and skillful in their bargaining. Tlingit commonly accepted that women should lead in handling wealth and conducting trade for family units, and apparently thought that men had wasteful tendencies that women needed to keep in check. Thus, a woman would often accompany men on trading voyages, setting prices and ensuring good returns.\(^\text{133}\)

The traders and sailors of the Waashdan Kwáan seemed less willing generally than other foreigners—in particular the Russians—to learn about Tlingit ways or engage in ceremonies with their communities.\(^\text{134}\) Nevertheless, Americans and Tlingit engaged in ample peaceful transactions that served both parties. Through the 1820s and 1830s, American ships frequented the settlement of Novoarkhangelsk in Lingít Aaní, bearing essential supplies and luxury items for the employees of the Russian–American Company located there. After selling all the goods they could to the Russians, the Waashdan Kwáan merchants would then engage in covert dumping, cheaply exchanging all of their remaining products—including ammunition and alcohol—to Tlingit in return for more furs. These exchanges likely represented the last contacts many Tlingit clans had with Americans before the 1860s and 1870s, since

\(^{134}\) Kan, *Memory Eternal*, p. 57.
after 1839 the Russians agreed to buy their supplies from the British, shutting the Americans out of Lingít Aaní.\textsuperscript{135} In spite of the importance British and American merchants held in Tlingit trade and the acquisition of new goods, the Tlingit had the greatest amount of interaction over the early and mid-nineteenth century with another group of foreigners—the \textit{Anóoshi}, or the Russians.

Russians reached the Pacific Ocean in the seventeenth century, and Russia’s imperial influence soon stretched to the very easternmost edges of Asia. One hundred years after this first Russian sighting of the Pacific, eastward expansion proceeded through oceanic exploration: The first Kamchatka expedition determined the nature of the Bering Strait, and during the second, Bering and Chirikov “discovered” different parts of the land that would be called Alaska. Through the remainder of the eighteenth century, Russian activities along the North Pacific Rim concentrated on the Aleutian Islands, the coasts of the Alaska Peninsula, and the islands near it.\textsuperscript{136} Kodiak, the largest of these islands, took on the first major Russian outpost in North America, Trekhsviatitelskaya Gavan (Three Saints Harbor), which in 1791 moved to Pavlovskaya Gavan, (Paul’s Harbor), later called Kodiak.\textsuperscript{137} The gathering of valuable furs had driven much of Russian expansion across Siberia, and this became the preeminent motivation for activities in the Pacific as well. \textit{Promyshlenniki} formed the vanguard of this operation, men referred to by James Gibson as “freelance entrepreneurs in general and fur traders in particular.”\textsuperscript{138} Siberians, Cossacks, Pomory, and others—“Siberianized Russians” more neatly—came to this new land called “Russian America” as

\textsuperscript{136} Grinev, \textit{The Tlingit Indians in Russian America}, p. 94.
\textsuperscript{137} The name Trekhsviatitelskaya comes from Dauenhauer, Dauenhauer, and Black, \textit{Anóoshi Lingít Aaní Ká}, p. 92. (The author located no other sources that provide a Russian version of the name Three Saints Harbor.)
promyshlenniki, a word that literally means “industrialists.” Not all of the men displayed their industry in work as fur traders, either, many serving as skilled and unskilled laborers to support the Russian fur trading companies’ activities.

In order to harvest sea otters in the Pacific—a novel task for men accustomed to hunting and trapping on land—the promyshlenniki depended on the abilities of the Unangan and the Sugpiaq, Native peoples living on the islands and coasts of the North Pacific Rim that the Russians referred to as Aleuts. In time, unions between the Russians and these people—and later some Tlingit—resulted in children known as Creoles who lived between their parents’ worlds, often working for Russian enterprises or the Orthodox Church. For the Unangan in particular, however, contact with the promyshlenniki proved devastating to their communities: Deadly diseases, massacres, conquest, and virtual enslavement for the purposes of sea otter hunting followed at the hands of the Russians, such that in 1863, P. N. Golovin wrote, “Now the Aleuts are the meekest people, and it can be said, crushed in spirit.” The Tlingit did not experience the same cruel course of colonization.

The highest quality sea otter pelts originated around the Kamchatka Peninsula and in the Kuril and Aleutian islands; only when these supplies became exhausted during the later decades of the eighteenth century did Russians move east toward Lingít Aaní seeking other populations of sea otters. Promyshlenniki and distant Russian investors formed highly competitive companies during this period, and in response, the Emperor’s government chartered the Russian–American Company (RAC) in 1799 to exclusively manage the fur trade and the affairs of “Russian America.”

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139 Kan, Memory Eternal, p. 34–35. Michael Rouland, personal communication, 1 April 2013.
140 Vinkovetsky, p. 31.
141 Gibson, Otter Skins, Boston Ships, and China Goods, p. 15. The Sugpiaq are also known as Alutiiq, according to their own rendering of the word Aleut.
142 Grinev, The Tlingit Indians in Russian America, p. 94.
In the years leading up to the establishment of the RAC, Tlingit and Russians began to gain more knowledge of each other. The Tlingit learned of Russian activities in Sugpiaq territory and gave these foreigners the name Anóoshi, while the Russians learned of the Tlingit through the Sugpiaq and called them the Koloshi.144 The Russians and Tlingit had their first verifiably violent encounter in Prince William Sound, west of the Tlingit Gulf coast. Aleksandr Baranov had recently become chief manager of the Shelikhov–Golikov Company, in June of 1792 he set off with a party of Russians and Kodiak Sugpiaq to “pacify” the Chugach Sugpiaq communities around the Sound. One night, Baranov’s encampment fell under attack, surrounded by men who began cutting down the Sugpiaq. Baranov later wrote that the attackers “came up so stealthily in the darkness that we saw them only when they began to stab at our tents.”145 Eventually the use of the Russians’ cannon caused their assailants to retreat: They had killed two Russians and ten Kodiak auxiliaries, while losing twelve of their own. A wounded attacker, captured by the Russians, confessed they were Tlingit of the Yaakwdáat Kwáan who had come to avenge—or rather, seek to balance—a Chugach raid on their home the previous year.146

Four years after the battle in Prince William Sound, in the summer of 1796, Baranov and the Shelikhov–Golikov Company established the first Russian outpost in Lingít Aani. They called it Slavorossiya (the Glory of Russia), located at the heart of Yaakwdáat Kwáan territory on Laaxaayík (Yakutat Bay). Slavorossiya initially had eighty inhabitants—fur hunters and settlers, including women and children—and members of the Yaakwdáat Kwáan reportedly visited the site that same summer, dancing, singing,

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144 Kan, Memory Eternal, p. 45–46.
and demonstrating intentions to have friendly relations with the Anóoshi.\textsuperscript{147} Although fur hunting expeditions did use the post, Frederica de Laguna writes it was “quite evident” Baranov took less interest in Slavorossiya than he did in establishing a post further south, in the Alexander Archipelago, where his company could gain closer access to a more plentiful otter population.\textsuperscript{148} Baranov accomplished this in July of 1799, when he negotiated with three leaders of the Kiks.ádi clan of the Sheet'ká Ḵwáan in order to build a settlement in their territory on Sitka Sound. He stayed the winter at the site with thirty Russians and over one hundred Unangan and Sugpiaq hunters, engaging in a policy of careful appeasement, giving ample gifts to the Kiks.ádi and their leaders. The Tlingit, however, grew uneasy with the extent and seeming permanence of Russian activities. The Unangan and Sugpiaq hunters’ poaching of sea otters within Tlingit waters also stirred outrage, as these goods were highly desired at the time for trade with the British and Americans. Open hostilities lay just beneath the surface.\textsuperscript{149}

Now Chief Manager of the newly created Russian–American Company, Baranov left the site in 1800, and relations deteriorated between the settlers and the Tlingit: In addition to the poaching of sea otters, oral histories of the Sheet'ká Ḵwáan also relate that Unangan and Sugpiaq robbed valuables from Tlingit cemeteries, while some Russians took Tlingit women by force. Finally, in 1802, Tlingit of several different clans attacked the Russians in their barracks while half their settlement’s inhabitants were away, killing all of the men and burning down every structure. A few days later, a ruthless English merchant seized Shḵ'awulyéil and Ḵ'alyáan—two Kiks.ádi noblemen who had led the attack—when they came onboard his ship for trade. He forced the


\textsuperscript{149} Kan, \textit{Memory Eternal}, p. 55–56.
Tlingit to hand over their trove of sea otter pelts taken from the fort, as well as most of the prisoners, who were returned to Pavlovskaya Gavan for a large reward.  

Also occupied with preserving the Russian presence at Slavorossiya, Baranov took until 1804 to ready an expedition that would defeat his Company’s Tlingit enemies and restore its operations on Shee. With several ships, 120 Russians, and perhaps 900 Unangan and Sugpiaq auxiliaries, the party first moved to intimidate groups from other Ḵwáan who had participated in the 1802 Tlingit victory. The Ḵunaaxoo Ṭwáan and Xutsnoowú Ṭwáan purportedly sent conciliatory emissaries to the Russians, while others abandoned their villages and hid while the Russian armada passed their homes. Baranov’s party only attacked empty communities of the Ḵeeḵ’ Ṭwáan and Kooyu Ṭwáan before turning back to Shee, where the Kiks.ádi and their allies had relocated to an impressive stronghold named Shiksi Noow (Sapling Fort) in preparation for an attack.

In September, Baranov landed at an abandoned Sheet’ḵá Ṭwáan village and decided to reestablish the RAC’s new fort and settlement there, named Novoarkhangelsk in honor of Baranov’s home. His force then turned to Shiksi Noow: The Tlingit refused to surrender the fort and Russian bombardment began from their ships while the defenders responded with their own rifles and cannons—some taken from the Russians, some likely purchased from Americans. Ḵ’alyáan led a courageous repulsion of a Russian assault on the fort, and the battle continued for seven days while ongoing peace negotiations broke down. Eventually the Tlingit abandoned Shiksi

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Noow—which the Anóoshi then burned—and escaped to a new home on the eastern shore of Chichagof Island in an arduous trek known as the Kiks.ádi Survival March.\textsuperscript{152}

After the years of turmoil surrounding the battles with the Sheet’ká Kwáan, today called the Battles of Sitka, the Russians faced yet another setback to their colonial plans when the Yaakwdáat Kwáan destroyed Slavorossiya in 1805. Long remembered through oral history, the Yaakwdáat Kwáan had accumulated several grievances with the Russians over their presence at Laaxaayík: Harry Bremner recounted that the Anóoshi had promised to pay the Tlingit for the land they took to build their post, but never did so. They also took Tlingit women to the settlement, and sent Tlingit children away to the west. The Russians also threatened a Tlingit man who took nails from a broken-up skiff, and—perhaps most importantly—they placed a gate across a vital stream, preventing salmon from swimming past.\textsuperscript{153}

A small group of Tlingit developed a plan to drive out the Russians: One day while most were gone on a fishing expedition, Tlingit men came to the fort and killed the few Russians who had stayed. Then, as the fishing boats returned one by one, the group of Tlingit came down to the shore, as they might have regularly, to help the Russians unload their goods. Instead, the attackers jumped in each boat and killed the occupants with their knives. One man escaped, waved down the last Russian ship, and they left immediately for Kodiak. The Tlingit then burned down the Russian fort, and may have relocated for a time to a fortified encampment, anticipating that the Anóoshi would return for retribution.\textsuperscript{154} Such a counter-attack never came, and the Russians never again settled on the Tlingit Gulf coast.

\textsuperscript{152} Kan, \textit{Memory Eternal}, p. 63–65. Dauenhauer, Dauenhauer, and Black, \textit{Anóoshi Lingít Aaní Ká}, p. 273. Dauenhauer, Dauenhauer, and Black without a doubt provide the most comprehensive treatment of the Battles of Sitka, but the level of detail they compile lies beyond the reach of this work.


\textsuperscript{154} De Laguna, \textit{Under Mount Saint Elias}, p. 234, 236.
In spite of the multiple violent blows struck against their posts by the Tlingit, the Anóoshi continued with their strategic pivot by designating Novoarkhangelsk as the capital of Russian America in 1808. This move supported Russia’s claims to the northern Northwest Coast and followed the most plentiful supplies of furs, as otter populations were increasingly depleted around Pavlovskaya Gavan, the former capital.\(^{155}\) During their first few decades in Lingít Aaní, the Russians did not conduct a great deal of trade with the Tlingit, this void filled instead by British and American merchant ships. Instead, the Anóoshi sent out huge parties of ships and kayaks with Unangan and Sugpiaq hunters, essentially poaching sea otters from Tlingit waters. As a result of these trespasses and thefts of potential trade goods, Tlingit occasionally attacked unwary hunting parties. In 1818, for example, Hinya Ḵwáan men killed twenty-three Unangan and wounded twelve others with volleys of gunfire from shore.\(^{156}\) By the 1820s, the RAC essentially ceased its hunting activities in Tlingit territory, and the Company’s leaders even discussed withdrawal from the region because of its costliness, advocating for retrenchment in southwestern Russian America, on the other side of the gulf.\(^{157}\)

The RAC ultimately did not liquidate Novoarkhangelsk, staying in Lingít Aaní in order to retain its claims to that land and counter British incursion. A Russo–Tlingit rapprochement even seemed to occur in the 1820s, as the Sheet’ká Ḵwáan resettled next to Novoarkhangelsk and trade rapidly increased between the groups on an annual basis, with Tlingit becoming the primary suppliers of all the Russian settlement’s needs, including provisions and furs.\(^{158}\) The Anóoshi established a special “Kolosh

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market” as well, and the nearby Sheet’ká Ḷwáan settlement grew, attracting other Tlingit with its commerce.¹⁵⁹

In spite of its significance to Sheet’ká Ḷwáan economic life, the Russian presence at Novoarkhangelsk remained peripheral to relations between Tlingit clans through the early nineteenth century. One powerful demonstration of this fact comes in the war of 1828–1830 between the Kaagwaantaan of the Sheet’ká Ḷwáan and the Naanyaa.aayí of the Shtax’héen Ḷwáan. In the fall of 1828, a Naanyaa.aayí man abducted the wife of a Kaagwaantaan noble, and later he killed the nobleman. The Naanyaa.aayí refused to parley with the Kaagwaantaan, prompting them to send assassins who killed the abductor and his brother. Retaliatory attacks followed between the two clans, until the Sheet’ká Ḷwáan Kaagwaantaan enlisted the aid of the Kaagwaantaan of the Jiḵaat Ḷwáan and Xutsnoowú Ḷwáan, dispatching an army of 150 men to the village of the Shtax’héen Ḷwáan in April of 1830. One month later, news arrived in Novoarkhangelsk that the Kaagwaantaan had been defeated, suffering 120 casualties in an ambush the night before their planned assault. Apparently out of respect for two Sheet’ká Ḷwáan leaders, the Shtax’héen Ḷwáan did not enslave the Kaagwaantaan survivors, but released them with the remains of the dead.¹⁶⁰

This simplified and distant account of the war derives from the RAC Chief Manager Petr Chistiakov, who claimed to have attempted to resolve the matter at its outset, offering compensation to the Kaagwaantaan noble after his wife had been abducted. After the conflict concluded in disaster for the Kaagwaantaan, however, Chistiakov wrote that he wished the war had occurred years before, since the slaughter

¹⁵⁹ Kan, Memory Eternal, p. 74.
had rendered the Sheet’ká Ḵwáan more peaceful.\textsuperscript{161} Though it certainly had adverse effects on the parties involved and hampered trade across the region, the war clearly demonstrated that the Russians had no power to interfere with clans embroiled in conflict. When rumors later arose that Kaagwaantaan would counterattack against the Shtax’héen Ḵwáan, RAC Chief Manager Ivan Kupreyanov told his officers, “Aside from your mediation for peace, I order you to ensure that no Russians participate in any way in Kolosh affairs.”\textsuperscript{162}

In 1832, because of the war’s strongly deleterious effect on commerce, Tlingit from the Ḵéex’ Ḵwáan and Xutsnoowú Ḵwáan requested that the Russians dispatch a steamer to their villages for trading, demonstrating the continuing importance of commerce to Tlingit society. Partially in response to the conflict, the RAC moved to establish a post among the Shtax’héen Ḵwáan in order to maintain access to the significant fur trade coming down the Shtax’héen (Stikine River), a major trade route and the longest river in Lingít Aaní. The Russians constructed Dionisievskii Redoubt in 1833 at a site known to the Tlingit as Ḵaachxan.áak’w, later the town of Wrangell. RAC Deputy Manager Etolin made entreaties to all of the Shtax’héen Ḵwáan leaders in the area in order to gain acceptance for the establishment, and over the following few years the two parties came to an understanding based on mutual interest in excluding the Hudson’s Bay Company from their trading sphere. In 1839, however, the Russians agreed to lease the Tlingit mainland to the HBC, handing over the fort and complicating relations on the Shtax’héen.\textsuperscript{163}

Grave Russo–Tlingit conflicts reappeared in 1852 and 1855, partially as a result of reignited Kaagwaantaan–Naanyaa.aayí hostilities. After an accumulation of small

\textsuperscript{161} Dean, “Their Nature and Qualities Remain Unchanged,” p. 5.
\textsuperscript{162} Dean, “Their Nature and Qualities Remain Unchanged,” p. 6.
conflicts, a Tlingit man wounded a sailor in 1855 and RAC Chief Manader Voevodskii demanded his banishment. Tlingit began to agitate and the Russians withdrew into their fort. Soon after, one marksman shot a Russian on the battery, causing the Anóoshi to release two warning salvos. In response, the Tlingit sacked the church outside the palisade and took up firing positions within it. The Russians then opened fire with rifles and cannon, beginning a two-hour battle that resulted in fifty Tlingit casualties in addition to two dead and eighteen wounded Russians.¹⁶⁴

In the eighteenth century, the Tlingit nation consisted of a large number of interconnected but autonomous clans, characterized by vigorous networks of ceremony and trade coupled with “cross-cutting cleavages” of class and matrilineage. In 1856 this description remained true, even as—from the late 1700s onward—Tlingit encountered peoples from entirely different worlds: Europe, the United States, British North America, and Russian Eurasia. Already well adapted to commerce with other indigenous peoples, the Tlingit readily participated in the creation of a global fur trade, and carried on their first interactions with the Waashdan Ḳwáan, whose New England merchant ships provided some of the most valuable new goods to the Tlingit, including firearms and ammunition. At the same time, Tlingit reacted forcefully to violations of their laws and at.óow, as proven by the destruction of Russian forts, attacks on hunting parties, and other battles as well. Though the Tlingit certainly did not defeat or drive out the Anóoshi in the 1855 fighting at Novoarkhangelsk, their offensive provided a forceful demonstration of the Russians’ failure to absorb the Tlingit into their empire.¹⁶⁵ Tlingit society had certainly changed after a near century of interactions with Euroamericans, but it remained fundamentally Tlingit, and fundamentally independent.

¹⁶⁴ Dean, “Their Nature and Qualities Remain Unchanged,” p. 8–12.
These are communities of Tlingit and other indigenous peoples in and near Lingít Aaní, c. 1856, as well as sites of Russian and British forts and settlements, 1830s–1850s.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ Created by the author with reference to Thornton, *Haa Léel’w Háa Aaní Saax’ú*. None of the author’s research yielded any dates for the construction or abandonment of the Ozersk Redoubt, although it seems reasonable to guess that it was built in the 1810s and was occupied until the 1860s.
Chapter 2: Rifles Held High, 1856–1867

At the Battle of Port Gamble in November 1856, Tlingit suffered a humiliating and grievous defeat. In addition to the twenty-seven men killed in the fighting, a wounded clan leader died en route as they travelled north on the American steamer. Oral history from the Ḵéex’ Ḵwáan tells that the leader came from the Tsaagweidí, and that a woman of that clan led an expedition to restore balance by killing an American of equal status. In August of 1857, the expedition came to Whidbey Island and chose Colonel Isaac Ebey as an appropriate target—a lawyer, customs official, and former territorial legislator. The woman and her companions reportedly approached Ebey’s house, fired a rifle into the air, and then shot Ebey when he came outside his front door. The party then beheaded the man and left to return north. Through 1858, other attacks occurred around the region perpetrated by “Northern Indians.” In the words of nineteenth-century historian Hubert Howe Bancroft, “Numerous depredations were committed by them, which nothing could prevent except armed steamers to cruise in the Fuca strait and sea.” However, information remains vague as to which northern indigenous groups made most of these forays into American waters: Most may have been Haida; some may have been Tsimshian. Indeed, the Tlingit group attacked at Port Gamble in 1856 may not have even been responsible for the acts leading up to the battle that the Americans attributed to them.

Nevertheless, the interactions between Tlingit and Americans in the Salish Sea and Puget Sound from 1856–1858 shocked the residents of Washington Territory, and they enraged the Tlingit who lost loved ones and clan members in the fighting. The

167 Holbrook and Nikol, p. 19.
169 Bancroft, 137–138.
beheading on Whidbey Island may have satisfied Tsaagweidí desire for reciprocity to some extent, but on the whole, the balance sheet of the Tlingit relationship with the Waashdan Kwáan cannot have felt complete. The year 1856 critically marks a new phase in Tlingit–American relations, one far different than the overwhelmingly peaceful and mutually advantageous trading that had obtained decades before. From the Tlingit perspective, the Waashdan Kwáan ceased to consist of veritable “Boston Men”—sailors and traders from East Coast ports—and now became a kwáan of soldiers, officials, and settlers, ready to confront the Tlingit in battle and ultimately colonize their land.

For the next decade, the government and armed forces of these foreigners stayed distant from Lingít Aaní as the Anooshí continued to defend their claims. There were, however, Americans who encountered Tlingit society during the Stikine Gold Rush of 1861, and certain processes accelerated from 1856–1867 that rendered Tlingit society more vulnerable and more open to outside influences, paving the way—in part—for the arrival of Americans with claims of sovereignty. These processes included further incorporation of Tlingit into Euroamerican labor roles, a demographic weakening of Tlingit society through disease, and the consolidation of Tlingit political and social units into new forms of communal organization. Nevertheless, Tlingit held their rifles high during this time in a largely successful defense of their own conceptions of life, liberty, and property.

Facilitating the arrival of Americans in the Stikine Gold Rush, British presences formed a perimeter around Lingít Aaní during this time period: Although the Hudson’s Bay Company abandoned Fort Stikine, it bolstered the important post of Fort Simpson just beyond the southern edge of Lingít Aaní, and it continued operating in and vying for the markets of the interior so highly valued by the Tlingit. The most critical foreign presence in Lingít Aaní, however, continued to be the Russian–American Company. The
RAC still claimed nominal sovereignty over the Alexander Archipelago and its adjacent mainland, in spite of the clear control Tlingit exerted everywhere but Novoarkhangelsk. Nevertheless, from 1856–1867 Russian administrators, colonists, and indigenous collaborators developed and implemented new strategies for interacting with Tlingit clans and brought more Tlingit into working relationships with Russian enterprises and institutions.

The analysis presented here should not create the impression that the Russians could never have successfully colonized or subjugated the Tlingit, nor that there was any measure of inevitability in the Russian sale of what came to be called “Alaska.” One may consider counterfactually that the Anóoshi could have maintained their claim to sovereignty over the Tlingit indefinitely, and they could have strengthened that claim over the long-term.\textsuperscript{171} However, the considerations of the Russian Empire, coupled with the actions of the British, Americans, and others, created the conditions for the sale and purchase in the prevailing political context.\textsuperscript{172} Additionally, the powerful resistance of the Tlingit to Russian rule constituted a crucial factor in the imperial government’s decision to sell Russian America to the United States, an act that bore serious implications for the future of Lingít Aaní.

**Expeditions and Encirclements**

Even as the Russians entrenched themselves in Lingít Aaní, Tlingit continued to venture beyond their lands and interact with other groups. The journeys to the Salish Sea and Puget Sound appear remarkable because they survive in the American historical record and shocked many of the Americans involved. More frequent

\textsuperscript{171} Dean, “Rich Men, Big Powers, and Wastelands,” p. 472.
interactions occurred with the British, who still had a “lease” on the Tlingit mainland that brought small numbers of Euroamericans into Lingít Aaní during the 1850s and 1860s. Countless other exchanges must have occurred during the same time period between Tlingit clans and between the Tlingit and other indigenous peoples, whether related to warfare, trade, or the giving of *ku.éex’*. Unfortunately, accounts of such interactions are limited, but some that do survive provide some interesting details.

Metaphorically, some of the greatest “encirclements” of Tlingit society operated through the devastating effects of disease, which not only brought tragedy to indigenous communities but also threatened their self-sufficiency and capacity to respond to new pressures. Epidemics spread throughout the Northwest Coast from the late eighteenth century onward, with particularly deadly outbreaks coming in the 1830s and 1860s. Smallpox arrived in Novoarkhangelsk in November 1836, and raged throughout the Russian colonies for nearly three years. In his work on the history of the RAC published from 1861–1863, Petr Tikhmenev wrote, “The Kolosh, who had stubbornly resisted vaccination, died in whole families at the first appearance of the epidemic, and after three months, four hundred or about half of the entire village near [Novoarkhangelsk] had perished.”\(^{173}\) Tikhmenev noted that in the area of the Shtax’héen Ḵwáan and at Dionisievskii Redoubt, the epidemic had been “quite harmless,” but among other groups such as the Xutsnoowú Ḵwáan, some dwellings were devastated “to the last man.”\(^{174}\) According to the Russian and British census information compiled and analyzed by Boyd, the Tlingit population of the Alexander Archipelago appears to have suffered the least among northern Northwest Coast groups—including the Haida, Tsimshian, Haisla, Heiltsuk, and Nuxalk—from the three

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\(^{174}\) Tikhmenev, p. 198.
major epidemics of the 1770s, 1836, and 1862. Nevertheless, the Tlingit nation as a whole declined by about one third in the 1830s, a horrific toll that likely resulted in village abandonments and other turmoil.\footnote{Robert Boyd, *The Coming of the Spirit of Pestilence: Introduced Infectious Diseases and Population Decline Among Northwest Coast Indians, 1774–1874* (Vancouver; Seattle: UBC Press; University of Washington Press, 1999), p. 204, 213.}

In 1857, a Russian ship brought typhoid fever to Novoarkhangelsk, which then spread to Tlingit with deadly effect.\footnote{Grinev, *The Tlingit Indians in Russian America*, p. 191.} Then in 1862, smallpox struck again, this time spreading by means of an infected person who travelled from San Francisco to Victoria, British Columbia, landing there in March. Large numbers of indigenous from along the Coast had a permanent encampment for trade just outside of Victoria, and Tlingit—mostly of the Shtax’hëen Ḵ̓wáan—constituted about fifteen percent of this urban gathering. Smallpox arrived in the encampment by mid–April, and by mid–May the Victoria police had worked to evict many of the survivors, sending them north back to their homes.\footnote{Boyd, p. 173–181.} The disease that the homecoming migrants brought with them had appalling results across the Northwest Coast, including Lingít Aaní. Most of the Tlingit in Novoarkhangelsk had accepted smallpox vaccinations from the Anóoshi in response to the outbreak of the 1830s, so the 1862 virus did not have a severe impact there, but it did spread from south to north across the Alexander Archipelago and onto the mainland.\footnote{Tikhmenev, p. 371.} Records appear ambiguous as to the overall effect of the epidemic, but eyewitness reports state that few people remained in Ḵaachxān.áak’w as smallpox raged among the Shtax’hëen Ḵ̓wáan, and at least one village of the Hinya Ḵ̓wáan became, in the words of George Emmons, “a veritable city of the dead.”\footnote{Boyd, p. 200–201.}

Tlingit communities also became more encircled by the activities of the British on lands claimed and leased by them. Acting in contrast to romanticized notions of
expansion by sea, the agents of the North West Company had moved steadily westward across the mainland of North America, from the heartland of Upper Canada across the prairies to the Pacific. The company established various trading posts, encouraging the collection of beaver furs from the indigenous groups of the interior, and for nearly every year from 1792–1823, the North West Company sent tens of thousands of such pelts to China through American middlemen.\textsuperscript{180} After the North West Company merged with the Hudson’s Bay Company in 1821, forming a monolithic trade power, the HBC became increasingly involved with the networks of trade most utilized and valued by the Tlingit.\textsuperscript{181} The founding of Fort Simpson in 1831 as the center of the HBC’s northern coastal operations proved particularly important: Though located near the Nass River in Tsimshian territory—part of what became British Columbia—the Sanyaa Ḵwáan and Taant’a Ḵwáan lay just to the north and those Tlingit had long benefitted from goods supplied from the Nass.

Rapprochements between the Russians and British in North America led the RAC to lease its mainland claims adjacent to the Alexander Archipelago to the HBC in 1839, in return for an annual payment of two thousand pelts.\textsuperscript{182} The HBC then converted Dionisievskii Redoubt into Fort Stikine (also called Fort Highfield), but the Shtax’héen Ḵwáan insisted with some hostility on their arrival that the British would follow Tlingit terms. The Naanyaax.aayí leader Sheiyksh purportedly told the British that they would follow Tlingit conditions in their trading or not one of them would live. The Russians interceded multiple times over the next decade to mediate British–Shtax’héen Ḵwáan conflict, including in 1848 and 1849 when the British decided to close the fort in spite of Tlingit protests that almost became violent. Regardless of previous conflicts, the

\textsuperscript{181} Klein, “Demystifying the Opposition,” p. 102.
\textsuperscript{182} Klein, “Demystifying the Opposition,” p. 102.
Shtax’héen Ḵwáan still placed a high value on easy access to Euroamerican goods and did not like seeing that access lost.\(^{183}\)

Interesting dynamics developed because of vicissitudes in HBC policy as well as Tlingit attitudes toward trade, which included both attachment to Euroamerican goods and hostility to interference with pre-existing commerce. The British built Fort Durham (also called Fort Taku) farther north in the territory of the T’aakú Ḵwáan in 1840, but Company policies soon shifted and it was abandoned in 1843.\(^{184}\) Where British encirclement of previously Tlingit-controlled trade routes seemed particularly pernicious, Tlingit clans acted several times to stop foreign encroachment with force. In 1839, Tlingit sacked the then-empty HBC fort at Dease Lake, located inland from the Shtax’héen Ḵwáan in Tahl tan territory.\(^{185}\) In 1852, Ḡaanax̱.adí warriors of the Jilḵaat Ḵwáan travelled three hundred miles north over land to sack Fort Selkirk, looting and destroying the Hudson’s Bay Company post, which they saw as a threat to their trade with the Tutcheone and other Dene groups.\(^{186}\) According to George Emmons, writing in 1916, the Tlingit warned the British after burning the fort against ever encroaching on their trade zone again, and the Jilḵaat Ḵwáan then retained those trading rights with the interior until the Klondike Gold Rush.\(^{187}\)

In spite of these setbacks, the HBC continued to send trade ships among the Tlingit of the littoral, particularly the Beaver and the Labouchere. In August of 1862, the Labouchere sat off the main village of the Xunaa Ḵwáan near Icy Strait. Tlingit had come on deck for trading, but a squabble broke out over the price of an otter pelt, and before the ship’s men could react, their Tlingit customers pulled out concealed knives

\(^{183}\) Dean, “Their Nature and Qualities Remain Unchanged,” p. 7–8. Sheiyksh is often anglicized as Shakes.

\(^{184}\) Klein, “Demystifying the Opposition,” p. 104.

\(^{185}\) Dean, “Their Nature and Qualities Remain Unchanged,” p. 6.


and seized the British officers. By this time, many more Tlingit had climbed aboard, perhaps one hundred in all. The ship’s captain and trader-interpreter were taken ashore to speak with Xunaa Ḵ̱wáan elders, and afterward they were canoed around the steamship for hours as the paddlers sang, thereafter returned to the ship, and the *Labouchere* was allowed to depart. In total, the HBC ship had been seized by the Tlingit for six hours, but the incident ended without bloodshed.188 This type of encounter again exhibits the ferocity and courage with which Tlingit would defend their own terms and demands, but it also shows that leaders would parley for peace in order to preserve relations with useful partners.

However, British contacts with Lingít Aaní did not merely give the Tlingit a new line of supply for goods. They also brought Anglo-American gold-seekers to Tlingit lands in the Stikine Gold Rush of 1861, creating a brief but significant flurry of Euroamerican activity in Shtax’heid Ḵ̱wáan territory. Trade with the HBC also led the Tlingit to begin frequenting Victoria for trade, which then led to the devastating spread of the 1862 smallpox epidemic. British encirclements led the Tlingit to face challenges they never had before, particularly disruptions to their long maintained trade routes on the mainland. The HBC also brought unprecedented supplies of alcohol to some groups of Tlingit, which led to its own serious problems.189 Nevertheless, the British certainly did not colonize any Tlingit communities, even as they claimed to have leased a large portion of their lands.

In addition to confronting and engaging with the British, Tlingit during the mid-nineteenth century also continued interacting with other indigenous groups. Expeditions dispatched for the purpose of gathering slaves continued, although during

189 Klein, “Demystifying the Opposition,” p. 107, 112.
this time they likely became less frequent, covering greater distances than in the past and requiring more careful planning.¹⁹⁰ Military expeditions continued as well, as did trading expeditions, although Tlingit now frequented new sites such as Victoria. In instances when Tlingit expeditions did not come into contact with Euroamericans, however, few stories endure that detail such interactions.

One surviving story comes from a Haida man who took the name Richard: He was a warrior of the Middle Gitî’ns people of the western coast of Haida Gwaii, and John Swanton recorded his story during the winter of 1900–1901. Although contemporary scholars cannot determine the exact date that the story took place, it seems likely that the events Richard described occurred in the 1860s, perhaps as late as the early 1870s.¹⁹¹ In the beginning, the account tells of a past crime that fuelled the desire for retribution among Richard’s people:

> Qandawas was going to make a potlatch in Masset. She owned ten slaves, and she had eight storehouses in the Kaigani country, and she owned a copper worth ten young slaves. She intended to sell it for that price in the Tsimshian country. They offered her nine slaves and an eight–fathom canoe. She said she would not part with her copper because there were not ten slaves. So Qandawas returned to Raven Creek. Later, as she was sailing north to House Point with a south wind, a squall drove the canoe into the Kaigani country. There some Tlingit, who were gathering seaweed, invited Qandawas and her crew ashore. After these Tlingit had fed everyone, they killed them all. Thinking of this while we were growing up, we grew up only to war with the Tlingit.¹⁹²

Historian Charles Lillard’s analysis points to the southeast coast of Taan as the likely location of this killing: Haida often steered for Cape Chacon, the southernmost point of Taan, as they navigated Dixon Entrance, and the westerly squall that Qandawas and her

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¹⁹⁰ Donald, p. 249–250.
¹⁹² Lillard, p. 83. This is Lillard’s reconstruction of Swanton’s original text, which is mostly the same save for clarifications that make reading easier.
party encountered may have driven them too far to the north, into the territory of the Taant’a Kwáan.\footnote{Lillard, p. 96–97. This image of a wealthy Haida woman leading a trading party and driving a hard bargain reinforces the idea that many noblewomen on the Northwest Coast controlled their financial affairs and directed commercial transactions.}

In any case, regardless of the truth about Qandawas and her companions’ death, some years later young Richard and many of his clan members set forth across Dixon Entrance to kill Tlingit as retribution. Arriving in Tlingit territory, they found a small camp with women and children inside the dwelling. Seeking out the men, they paddled out into the water again, and then...

...there they were around the point—Tlingit in a big canoe, men standing in lines down the middle, holding their rifles high. There were a great number of guns in that canoe. “Huk. Huk,” I called out to my men. “Let’s kill people.”

Seeing they were outnumbered, the Tlingit began fleeing, still they shot at us twice. Then something struck me on the head, and I fell. When I came to myself, I was in the bilge, and I stayed there in the bloody water until I grew stronger.

The Haida soon overtook the Tlingit canoe, killing most of the men and taking the rest back as slaves to their village in Haida Gwaii.\footnote{Lillard, p. 86. Again, the quoted text is Lillard’s reconstruction of Swanton’s original version.} Richard’s story further substantiates the fact that indigenous Northwest Coast peoples still waged war on one another long after encountering and establishing regular interaction with the Euro-Americans who claimed to control their lands. Nevertheless, Richard may have been one of the last living warriors of his people, because of the enormous impact the smallpox epidemic of 1862–1863 had on Haida Gwaii.\footnote{Lillard, p. 96.}

For the Tlingit, the means and norms of warfare had changed significantly over the first half of the nineteenth century, exemplified by the Tlingit men in this story having ready access to rifles, even while living at a small summer camp, unsuspecting of a Haida threat. So too changed the capacity of Tlingit clans to successfully wage war,
as disease sapped the human strength of their communities. These changes in the independent strength of Tlingit clans also revealed themselves in Russian–Tlingit relations that went on until 1867.

**Russian America’s Last Stand**

Following the fighting at Novoarkhangelsk in 1855—a seeming moment of defeat for Russian colonization efforts—some Russian administrators began developing new strategies for interacting with the Tlingit. From the perspective of the Anóoshi, these strategies yielded some positive results, bringing about a Tlingit–Russian rapprochement and also setting precedents in terms of Tlingit contributions to RAC activities. Nevertheless, observers sent by the Emperor still found fundamental weaknesses in the Russian–American Company’s colonial endeavor, and this contributed to the decision—also influenced by geopolitical factors—to detach Russian America from the Russian Empire. From 1856–1867, the Tlingit engaged the RAC in new political and economic relationships that included benefits for Tlingit individuals as well as symbolic victories for Tlingit culture itself. However, this decade ultimately constituted the Russian–American Company’s last stand in Lingít Aaní, and while Tlingit–RAC interactions had important results for both parties, those interactions would come to a permanent end.

Though they continued to profess ethnocentric superiority every step of the way, the Russians developed policies in Lingít Aaní after 1856 that appear particularly conciliatory: In 1859, for example, Chief Manager Voevedskii presented a Sheet’ká Ḵwáan leader with a copper (a valuable sign of wealth among the Tlingit) and in 1860 gave one to Mikhail Kukhan, whom the Russians considered the “main Sitka Tlingit chief.” In 1861 a Kaagwaantaan leader was granted an annual salary, and seven
members of the clan given certificates for service to the RAC. In the 1850s, in fact, the Anóoshi began to abandon their use of “Euroamerican hegemonic symbols,” according to Dean, and strived instead to organize an “indigenous political economy” based on Tlingit practices. These policy changes demonstrate the high capacity of the Tlingit nation to insist upon interaction by means of their own customs and laws, even while accommodating foreign presences.

Meanwhile, the Anóoshi began to develop certain enterprises in Lingít Aaní that attracted Tlingit to wages and a wage economy: The RAC surveyed coal deposits in the Alexander Archipelago, and began supplying its own needs from those resources. A dynamic market also arose in California after 1849, leading the Russians to develop exports like ice, towing blocks of glacier south. They even experimented in whaling, and the two ships of the Russian–Finnish Whaling Company found success in the Pacific through the 1850s. In all of these enterprises, the Russians recruited Creoles and Tlingit as laborers as they never had before; Tlingit found immediate benefits in the wages they received, augmenting the prosperity of their communities still sustained by their own modes of resource harvesting and production. In the mid-1860s, Dean writes that the RAC “was on the verge of developing a laboring class out of the local creole and Tlingit population.” To be sure, most Tlingit Ḵwáan had no part in these dynamics; the new relationships remained almost entirely restricted to the Tlingit of the Sheet’ká Ḵwáan, who had lived so near the Russian invaders for over half a century. Nevertheless, the changes signaled transformations in both Tlingit and Russian colonial society.

By 1867, the Russian Orthodox Church claimed over 400 Tlingit members—about half of the Tlingit population of Novoarkhangelsk. Beyond the RAC capital, however, the Church had no influence or membership among the Tlingit. In addition, most observers agreed that the apparent neophytes in Novoarkhangelsk exhibited little understanding of Orthodoxy or commitment to Christianity. Fundamentally, the continued political independence of the Tlingit allowed them to remain culturally independent as well, resisting Russian attempts to interfere with their cultural–spiritual practices such as the giving of the ku.éex’, the belief in the power of ixt’ (shamans), and even the sacrificing of slaves. While many Tlingit had readily taken advantage of economic opportunities proffered by EuroAmericans since the late 1700s—first in oceanic commerce, then in Russian enterprises—they turned those profits and newly acquired technologies to support their own social structures and practices, such as the strength of their matrilineal houses and clans. That strength endured even as, thousands of miles away, Europeans and Americans made decisions that foreshadowed new assaults on Tlingit society.

Because the decision to sell the Russian Empire’s American possessions ultimately came from the Emperor in St. Petersburg, it seems easy to assume that the Russian parting with its colonial project originated in financial and geopolitical considerations unrelated to indigenous people. However, the impressions of Russian America formed in government over the preceding decades came largely from observers such as Pavel N. Golovin, a navy officer who expressed profound frustration or astonishment in the face of the Tlingit’s belligerent independence. Golovin wrote in 1860 that the Tlingit “have a deep aversion to civilization of any kind.” He discussed their constant bearing of weapons, and most shockingly, wrote that Novoarkhangelsk

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“is constantly in a state of siege.” Golovin merely saw with new eyes the sort of strong military precautions the RAC had taken to defend its settlement since the Second Battle of Sitka in 1804. Other difficulties had certainly plagued RAC officials from 1799 to the 1860s—problems of supply, limited sources of revenue, and so on—but the Tlingit resistance to colonization and betrayal of Russian vulnerabilities had a powerfully draining effect on the confidence of would-be colonizers.

The pivotal order that would end Russian America came during a meeting in December 1866 at the office of foreign minister Aleksandr Gorchakov, attended by Emperor Alexander II, his brother, and top officials from the navy, foreign affairs, and finance ministries. None spoke against the idea of selling the colonies, and the unanimous decision came quickly, with the Emperor instructing that secret negotiations with the U.S. should commence. Americans both on the West Coast and in Washington, D.C.—particularly Secretary of State William Seward—had become extremely interested in Russian America over the past several years, before and during the U.S. Civil War, and the Russians increasingly believed that the Americans would come into conflict with their presence in North America. Americans had, after all, flooded into British territory during the Fraser Canyon Gold Rush, sparking the authorities there to create the province of British Columbia. Mass migration into Russian America seemed highly likely—even inevitable—especially as the Russians became aware of gold deposits in their territory. The Anóoshi faced a pivotal moment in their international affairs, after their loss in the Crimean War, and the sale of Russian

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202 Vinkovetsky, p. 3.

America served a double purpose of strengthening Russo–American friendship while allowing the Russian Empire to refocus its efforts in Asia.\(^{204}\)

Thus, in March of 1867, the United States purchased Russia’s claims to North America for 7.2 million dollars, an act that would change Tlingit history—but not on its own, and not right away. From 1856–1867, the Tlingit continued to hold their rifles high, even as diseases and the Hudson’s Bay Company encircled Lingít Aaní and the Russian–American Company adopted new strategies of colonization. Most Tlingit firmly preserved their sovereignty and retained their indigenous practices, conditions that ultimately contributed, ironically, to an act that ignored their sovereignty entirely—the sale of Russian America to the United States. Though their society had changed in many ways since the arrival of Euroamericans to their lands, Tlingit clans and warriors had guarded well their resources, their customs, and their weapons. Those weapons would reappear as the foreboding ships of the Waashdan Kwáan arrived in Tlingit waters.

This painting by Emanuel Leutze shows, from left to right, chief clerk Robert Chew, Secretary of State William Seward, translator William Hunter, secretary Ulademak Bodisco, Minister Plenipotentiary Baron Eduard de Stoekl, Senator Charles Sumner, and Frederick Seward, the Secretary’s son. The signing of the treaty ceding Russian America to the United States took place at four o’clock in the morning on March 30 at the U.S. State Department in Washington, D.C.  

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Chapter 3: Ambiguities and Army Attacks, 1867–1877

While the Tlingit–American relationship had changed in 1856, that relationship grew much more significant after 1867, as the United States now assumed Russia’s territorial claim to the majority of Lingít Aaní. The Sheet’ká Ḵwáan continued to experience a more intimate and urban connection with foreigners than did other groups of Tlingit, as it had during the existence of Russian America, but many of the settlement’s institutions and patterns of daily life changed markedly, even with a small number of American civilians present. The Shtax’héen Ḵwáan saw the reestablishment of a military post at their main settlement of Ḵaachxán.áak’w, and with it changed the dynamics of work, law, and politics in their home at the mouth of the Shtax’héen. Elsewhere, new American presences brought permanent influences to areas where Tlingit communities had not experienced such intrusion before, while other kwáan continued to remain relatively distant from direct contact with the newly assertive Waashdan Ḵwáan.

A number of ambiguities appear to characterize this decade known as the “Army Phase,” after the branch of the U.S. military given jurisdiction over the geographic entity newly named “Alaska.” More technically, the Americans labeled this land the Department of Alaska, although many erroneously referred to it as a territory. The most obvious among these ambiguities had their source in U.S. congressional and military policy: Bobby Lain characterizes this early Alaska as “an insular colony, acquired before the United States was ready for overseas colonies.” The Tlingit, however, were not a colonized people, and ambiguities affected their life and politics as well. For the Tlingit, numerous questions surrounded the exit of most Russians from

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206 Remsberg.
the region, the unprecedented arrival of a group of soldiers and settlers from the south, and the new claims of land ownership and resource use these people began to exert. Also, importantly, there remained significant questions surrounding the sorts of changes in cultural activity advocated for or enforced by new foreign institutions such as the U.S. military posts or settler civil government.

Despite its sometime appearance of confusion and uncertainty, however, overall U.S. policy in Lingít Aaní to 1877 did contain certain clear objectives that were pursued by a relatively independent military command: These included the securing of U.S. claims to the land, the accommodation of incoming Americans and their interests, and the suppression of perceived restlessness among the Alaska Department’s “uncivilized tribes,” or in particular, the indigenous groups living in proximity to Americans, and most of all the Tlingit. Addressing such “restlessness” primarily entailed the regulation of alcohol importation and production, an “impossible mission” for the American authorities to pursue.\(^{208}\) Other serious conflicts arose, however, because Americans and Tlingit disregarded and violated each other’s conceptions of law or property, leading to highly imbalanced clashes resulting in death and destruction.

Tlingit speculated heavily on the arrival of American troops and migrants in their lands, though many of their thoughts have been lost to the historical record. Tlingit clans and individuals also employed sophisticated strategies in dealing with Americans, although these varied significantly from situation to situation. Throughout 1869, violent confrontations, attacks, and executions took place at Sitka, in Ḵ̱eeḵ’ Ḵwaan territory, and at Ḵaachx̱an.áak’w, revealing the deadly seriousness of U.S. commanders’ intentions and the fundamental divergences that existed between them and Tlingit clans. During the 1870s, however, as a result of scandals inside the Department and

pressures outside of it, the long arm of the U.S. federal government withdrew the Army garrisons from Alaska. By 1877, the last garrison had closed, signaling the end of yet another chapter of Tlingit–American relations.\(^{209}\) Though they had borne the brunt of the impact from the first American arrivals in these northernmost lands claimed by the United States, the Tlingit clearly remained independent as the foreign soldiers departed.

**Speculation and Strategy**

Both Tlingit and Americans placed a great deal of value on careful gathering of information and determined execution of strategy. An inestimable amount of reconnaissance and planning had presaged the impressive Tlingit military successes against the first fort at Novoarkhangelsk, Slavorossiya, and the British Fort Selkirk. Although these victories seem widely spaced, occurring in 1802, 1805, and 1852, Tlingit clans engaged in nearly continuous assessments of the foreign presences around them. Indeed, the clans surveilled each other as well, as evidenced in wars between them that included stealthy assaults and the use of deceit. Similarly, the United States had agents who continually gathered intelligence as their government and associated bodies made policy decisions. Just as previous contacts with fur traders, the RAC, the HBC, and others had shaped Tlingit strategies and attitudes toward interaction, however, American soldiers did not move north into Lingít Aaní without their own tactics and preconceived ideas shaped by experiences with others.

Analysis of U.S. entry into Lingít Aaní requires a brief—and unavoidably simplistic—examination of U.S. actions toward the indigenous peoples of North America over the previous decades. American expansion into the territories and lives

\(^{209}\) Remsberg, p. 419.
of Natives during the nineteenth century was multi-faceted and multi-directional, proceeding from diverse actors who sought trade, resources, places to settle, or who served as representatives of government institutions. The activities of Native individuals and the trajectories of their societies were even more varied during the course of the century, including expansions and retractions, wars and negotiated peaces, and times of prosperity as well as unimaginable suffering. Nevertheless, one cannot ignore the general reality of American expansion and conquest: While in 1800 indigenous peoples almost indisputably controlled and held sovereignty over most of the North American landmass, by 1867 the United States had subdued or subsumed many of these groups, due in large part to its demographic and military advantages. The complex course of these events set the stage for the entry of the U.S. government into Lingít Aani in 1867, and it immeasurably shaped the actions of the Americans who were its agents.

Following its independence from Britain and its consolidation under the Constitution of 1787, the United States federal government employed many of the same approaches toward indigenous groups that had prevailed during the British colonial period: For example, it established trading posts in a wide arc from Florida to the Great Lakes, retaining Natives as friendly allies to counteract potential claims and interferences from the British or Spanish. The federal government also sought to regulate interactions with Natives and reaffirm that authority over conduct with these peoples lay with it, and not the American states. Over the first few decades of the nineteenth century, however, migratory and sometimes bellicose American citizens began to undermine the government’s “Indian policy” and drive it in new directions.

Conflicts between these migrants and Natives, especially over land, sparked U.S. efforts to remove indigenous nations to undesirable areas, such as the “Great American Desert”—the High Plains—which politicians at the time considered a place Euroamericans would never wish to settle.212

In time, however, Americans moved into the plains and across the continent to the Pacific coast, exacerbating ongoing conflicts with many indigenous groups, and creating new ones. Battles over land, resources, and laws played out in countless local disputes and in the “Indian Wars,” which took place before, during, and for decades after the American Civil War.213 In many cases, shocks to Native societies came swiftly in the form of ravaging diseases, ethnic cleansing, and the imposition of new social, political, and economic systems dictated by foreign invaders. Writing about the Great Basin, Ned Blackhawk states, “In the span of one generation ... immigrants became settlers, settlements became towns, and Indians became outsiders.”214 While to some extent these shifts are a matter of perspective, the same phenomena occurred in similar ways throughout nearly all of the lands that became part of the United States.

When Tlingit came to Washington Territory in the 1850s, they unknowingly became involved in American–indigenous conflict that spanned the region at the time. Over the course of just fourteen months during 1855 and 1856—just before the Battle of Port Gamble—Washington Governor Isaac Stevens had negotiated ten different treaties that ceded some seventy million acres of Native lands to the United States.215 Settler movement in the wake of these treaties very quickly sparked violent altercations, precipitating the Puget Sound War. Washington now had American–

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212 Fritz, p. 16–17.
213 Calloway, p. 296, 301–303.
215 Calloway, p. 301.
indigenous wars occurring simultaneously on both sides of the Cascades, but the war in Puget Sound came to an end in 1857 with the help of the U.S. naval presence originally established to protect against hostilities from groups such as the Tlingit and Haida.216

The Waashdan Kwáan thus had a long history of interacting with indigenous peoples—interactions that included trade and cooperation, but also invasion, violence, and subjugation. Importantly, the patterns that characterized American actions in these encounters flowed not only from government policies, but also the decisions made by private citizens—migrants, or “settlers”—who could often call on the aid of government forces after conflicts had arisen. When U.S. politicians purchased Russian America in 1867, however, no Americans resided there. From the start, Seward and other officials intended that the newly purchased lands would fall under U.S. military occupation. The United States had imposed such temporary military rule before, particularly in lands where American soldiers preceded American settlers, and some fears of indigenous violence—shaped by ongoing conflicts in the U.S.—seemed to solidify the decision to deploy military force.217

The United States’ newly purchased Department of Alaska had an area nearly one-third the size of the thirty-seven states forming the Union in late 1867.218 Given the subcontinent’s immense size and relative lack of penetration by the Russians, U.S. forces did not remotely attempt to establish presences throughout the entirety of their claimed territory, but rather focused on occupying the RAC capital, soon called Sitka, and its region—Lingít Aaní, now seen as Southeast Alaska in the Americans’ eyes. The region was the closest part of the Department to contiguous U.S. territory, and the

216 Holbrook and Nikol, p. 10.
218 Alaska has a total area of 663,300 square miles, while the 37 states of the Union in 1867, plus the District of Columbia, have a total area of about 2,078,000 square miles.
closest to the Colony of British Columbia, which Russian advisors, Seward, and many in the American public had come to view as a potential target for future U.S. expansion.\textsuperscript{219}

The U.S. military occupation of “Alaska” thus fixated on Lingít Aaní, undergirded by attitudes formed from American interactions with other indigenous peoples. However, written orders for Major General Jefferson C. Davis—the commander sent to lead the occupation, no relation to the erstwhile Confederate President—indicate that some in the U.S. War Department had a more discerning view of previous Tlingit–Euroamerican interactions:

> Past history has shown that most of the difficulties which have occurred in this territory between the natives and foreign settlers, have arisen from a violation of tribal laws, or rules in regards to the rights and duties of their females.\textsuperscript{220}

In spite of this advice, American commanders in Lingít Aaní would disregard courses of action cognizant of Tlingit laws, resulting in disastrous conflicts.

Major General Henry W. Halleck, Commander of the Military Division of the Pacific, remarked in May of 1867 that the United States would be wise not to bring “our Indian system” to Russian America:

> This country and the adjacent British territory contain a very large Indian population, some of whose tribes are warlike, and of a character far superior to those of Oregon, California, Nevada, and adjacent countries. Heretofore the excellent policy of the Russian government and fur companies, and of the Hudson Bay Company has kept these Indians at peace with and friendly to the whites. But should our Indian system, with its treaties, annuities, agents, frauds, and peculations, be introduced there, Indian wars must inevitably follow, and instead of a few companies for its military occupation, as many regiments will be called for, with the resulting expenditure of many millions of dollars every year.\textsuperscript{221}


\textsuperscript{220} Hinckley, \textit{The Canoe Rocks}, p. 69.

\textsuperscript{221} Price, p. 24.
Halleck perhaps spoke prophetically, as the Department of Alaska and the governmental incarnations that followed it never did see the implantation of the same “Indian system” as that of the contiguous United States.

Halleck presumed, as did the other officials involved in the occupation of Alaska, that the transfer of the territory would “soon be followed by an organized territorial civil government, with the extension over it of the general laws of the United States.” Instead, such a civil government did not come into being until 1884, and the presence of a few Army companies in Lingít Aaní did not and could not create a comprehensive American administration to supersede and dominate the Tlingit, not to mention the other indigenous peoples whose lands the U.S. now claimed. Until that date, U.S. government bodies did not provide a clear legal framework for action in Alaska. Throughout the period, the Federal District Judge in Oregon to whom the occupation authorities sent their court cases ruled repeatedly against federal jurisdiction and the applicability of U.S. laws in the Department.

The text of the 1867 Treaty of Cession itself merits note because it framed the development of American laws in Lingít Aaní. Among other stipulations, the treaty reaffirmed the boundary between British and Russian (now American) claims, stating that the whole of Taan (Prince of Wales Island) belonged to the U.S., and that the border on the mainland would extend along the mountain summits no more than ten marine leagues inland. Significantly, this split maritime Lingít Aaní from its inland regions, a division that became more significant in subsequent decades. Most importantly, Article III of the treaty stated the following, cited in full:

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222 Remsberg, p. 49.
The inhabitants of the ceded territory, according to their choice, reserving their natural allegiance, may return to Russia within three years; but if they should prefer to remain in the ceded territory, they, with the exception of uncivilized native tribes, shall be admitted to the enjoyment of all the rights, advantages, and immunities of citizens of the United States, and shall be maintained and protected in the free enjoyment of their liberty, property, and religion. The uncivilized tribes will be subject to such laws and regulations as the United States may, from time to time, adopt in regard to aboriginal tribes of that country.225

It quickly became clear that for the Americans, the Tlingit constituted an “uncivilized tribe” and would not enjoy rights as U.S. citizens. As for the laws and regulations the Waashdan Kwáan would adopt, those remained largely ambiguous while the Army remained in Lingít Aaní.

Ample records greatly facilitate study of American speculation and strategy, including its intricacies and oversights. Additionally, American popular opinions of the newly purchased land in the north receive a great deal of attention, even if recent histories correct the impression that most of those opinions were negative.226 However, the imbalance in available source material should not prevent scholars from seeking to discover how the Tlingit speculated and strategized as well: Tlingit likely spent even more time conferring and thinking on these issues than did congressmen or Army officers, given that the Americans had entered their own homeland. The discussions of clan leaders and other Tlingit, despite going unrecorded, should not go unacknowledged, and in some cases historians may even make inferences and imagine the details of such instances of speculation and strategizing.

The Tlingit—not to mention the other peoples of “Alaska”—initially possessed limited knowledge of the 1867 sale and its ramifications. Some information on Waashdan Kwáan policy toward other indigenous groups had likely reached Tlingit ears by the 1860s, and some Tlingit had already visited American settlements, even a few

225 Lautaret, p. 3.
years before the violent events of 1856–1858 in Puget Sound.\textsuperscript{227} Most information, however, must have come from settlers and soldiers after their arrival. Interestingly, some Tlingit attitudes toward interaction with the Waashdan Ḵwáan in 1860s likely formed in relation to information gathered on indigenous experiences in British Columbia.\textsuperscript{228} “Gunboat diplomacy” had already seen deployment there, as the British had shelled indigenous villages beginning in the 1850s and began to impose treaties as part of a reserve system.\textsuperscript{229}

Throughout their seventy-year stay in the Alexander Archipelago, the Anóoshi had never actively sought to convince the Tlingit that the Russian Empire possessed or held sovereignty over their lands. Indeed, the effort would have been virtually pointless; the Russians only made this claim in their relations with other Euroamerican governments. The objective of imposing foreign laws in Lingít Aaní, abrogating Tlingit sovereignty, and convincing the Tlingit they had already taken the rights to their homeland—in effect, the mission of colonization—now lay with the Americans.\textsuperscript{230} During 1867, American military commanders prepared their plans for pursuing this task, and over the next few years they would possess a high level of autonomy. Tlingit could also strategize, however, and they intended to retain their independence.

**Independent Commanders, Independent Clans**

When the formal transfer ceremony between Russia and the United States took place in Novoarkhangelsk on October 18, 1867, several Tlingit watched from canoes in the harbor, and a few nobles stood in the crowd. For these people of the Sheet'ká

\textsuperscript{228} Monteith, “Tongass, the Prolific Name, the Forgotten Tribe,” p. 148.
\textsuperscript{229} Moss, “Northwest Coast: Archaeology as Deep History,” p. 21.
\textsuperscript{230} Harring, p. 208, 212.
Ḵwáan, the abrupt replacement of a long-present group of foreigners with another came as a shock; Tlingit received no formal notification of the negotiations or their conclusion—let alone inclusion in them.\(^{231}\) Tlingit in Novoarkhangelsk likely learned of the ceremony from Russians or Creoles, perhaps not even until after the Americans arrived there. Clearly, this slight signified that the Waashdan Ḵwáan would not consider the Tlingit equal partners in their activities in the region, and appeared to spark distrust or resentment among the Sheet’ká Ḵwáan. In a letter from November—one month after the handover—General Davis wrote that the Tlingit at Sitka were at peace, but “notwithstanding they evidently fear us, they frequently boast they can and will whip us one day.”\(^{232}\) Thus began a relationship wherein independent Tlingit clans and independent American commanders faced each other uneasily, with open conflict a possible result.

The Americans arrived in Lingít Aaní with very different means than the Russians had possessed, most notably greater military capabilities and a stronger line of supply.\(^{233}\) U.S. military commanders thus inclined toward strategies of conquest and domination that the Russians had never been able to achieve, given their limited and overextended resources. In the short term, however, the relative advantages of the Americans did little to abrogate the independence of Tlingit clans. Tlingit leaders and clans did at times adjust their practices in response to American actions during this time period, but for the most part the Tlingit continued to adhere to their own standards of conduct that they had modified gradually through contacts with the Russians. Most Tlingit in 1877 had preserved their most fundamental ways of life after a decade of American intrusion, retaining their autonomy and control of their

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\(^{231}\) Hirschmann, p. 448.

\(^{232}\) Lain.

\(^{233}\) Dean, “Their Nature and Qualities Remain Unchanged,” p. 13.
resources. Nevertheless, the actions of commanders and clans had produced some shocking and violent clashes, and planted the seeds of ongoing conflict.

At the time of the formal transfer of claims between Russia and the United States in October of 1867, the Tlingit population likely stood anywhere between 5,000 and 8,000 people in the archipelago and on the littoral, unevenly distributed among the *kwáan*.234 The Sheet’ká Ḵwáan, Shtax’héen Ḵwáan, T’aaku Ḵwáan, and the Jilkoot and Jilkaat Ḵwáan together likely had the largest populations, thus favoring the north—which had been more isolated from diseases—and the two *kwáan* areas wherein the most established trade with EuroAmericans had occurred.235 Tlingit still maintained large numbers of firearms, and they continued to travel by means of their large and sturdy cedar canoes. Thus, while armed well enough to defend themselves in any small–scale confrontation, the Tlingit would have difficulty adjusting their strategies to the steam power and heavy artillery possessed by the Waashdan Ḵwáan.

The military post at Sitka was the first established in October 1867, at the time of the Russian handover, followed by Fort Tongass in April of 1868 and then Fort Wrangel in May.236 Fort Tongass, named for a derivation of the name Taant’a Ḵwáan, was built at Kądúḵxuka, a village on a small island at the edge of Dixon Entrance and the end of Portland Canal—the southern frontier between U.S. claims and British Columbia—where some of the Taant’a Ḵwáan had lived since the 1830s.237 It was also located near to the village of Gàash, primary home of the Sanyaa Ḵwáan. Fort Wrangel, named for the former RAC Chief Manager Ferdinand von Wrangel and later amended to

235 Emmons and De Laguna, p. 433.
236 National Archives and Records Administration, U.S. Army Continental Commands, 1821–1920, Military Installations. The exact dates of the Army garrisons’ presences are as follows: The post at Sitka, October 1867–June 1877; Fort Tongass, April 1868–October 1870; Fort Wrangel, May 1868–September 1870 and September 1874–June 1877.
237 Monteith, “Tongass, the Prolific Name, the Forgotten Tribe,” p. 140–141.
a spelling with two L’s, was built at Ḵaachxan.ák’w, the Shtax’héen Ḵwáan site that had also hosted the Russian Dionisievskii Redoubt and the British Fort Stikine.

Only a few hundred soldiers would occupy these posts, and in doing so they entered an alien and often alienating world. The military records detail suicides, desertions, and court-martials, no doubt induced by the new environment as well as conditions of isolation and alcohol consumption. Stanley Remsberg writes that U.S. Army officers regarded their designated task of governing the Department of Alaska as “an onerous, thankless duty they gladly would have relinquished,” positing that the men, inculcated in the American tradition of military subordination to civilian government, felt inherently uneasy about controlling political affairs. Thus, soldiers and officers alike occupied what they considered unenviable positions, far from the conditions they knew and the duties that most expected.

Few American civilians would join these soldiers, at first. In fact, it is difficult to underestimate how many came north in the immediate wake of the Purchase: Only a few settlers arrived in Novoarkhangelsk (renamed Sitka) around the time of the official handover, and there were perhaps one hundred a month later in mid-November. Sitka had by far the greatest concentration of Americans, and the only other locations that attracted settlers were Ḵaachxan.ák’w (Fort Wrangel) and Pavlovskaya Gavan (renamed Kodiak). Enforcing what Lain calls “an arbitrary order” among the settlers and Tlingit at Sitka, the U.S. Army there employed extra-legal means, assigning an astonishing 200 Tlingit and 147 Americans and Creoles to “confinement” from 1872–1875.

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Such forceful impositions became a part of daily life in the settlement, both shaping and revealing the nature of the community.

As they had with the Anóoshi, however, the Tlingit quite willingly traded with the Waashdan Kwáan arrivals and offered their labor and respect as well. Tlingit constantly sold fish and game to the Americans, and officers employed Tlingit in supplying lumber for the construction of their outposts, and firewood for fuel thereafter. As they engaged the Waashdan Kwáan economically, the Tlingit did not shy from political interactions either: In the summer of 1869, the Taant’a Kwáan of Kadúḵxuka led by Ebbits—a Tlingit leader who had taken a Euroamerican name—hosted William Seward himself, holding a ku.éex’ in his honor. When Ebbits received Seward and lavished him with furs and numerous gifts, he sought to engage this great personage of the Waashdan Kwáan in the type of respectful, prestige-reinforcing interactions of reciprocity that the Tlingit had carried out with each other and with others for centuries. Seward and his companions, however, did not reciprocate, neither by giving gifts of their own nor by any other means; instead, they tried to impress upon the Tlingit how the United States had purchased their lands. The Tlingit, meanwhile, replied that they hoped for peaceable relations, and resented the disrespect they had received at the ku.éex’, later commemorating the event in a kootéeyaa meant to shame Seward for his insult. Clearly, neither the Tlingit nor the Americans understood or accepted the other party’s desired meanings for their interaction. These ambiguities of understanding and acceptance would continue, and elsewhere they resulted in more serious—and fatal—conflicts.

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241 Lain, i. Harring, p. 216.  
242 Monteith, “Tongass, the Prolific Name, the Forgotten Tribe,” p. 141–142.  
243 See Image 3 for a glimpse of Kadúḵxuka in 1868, near the time of the Seward ku.éex’.  
244 Monteith, “Tongass, the Prolific Name, the Forgotten Tribe,” p. 143–147.
From January to December of 1869, the American occupying forces carried out a spate of violent attacks on Tlingit communities. Zachary Jones has skillfully revealed the “code of pacification” and self-justifying narratives present in most of the works that discuss these attacks: According to the accounts produced by Americans—and then perpetuated by historians—conflict broke out because of intoxicated Tlingit, but the Army eventually ended the hostilities through just application of force, punishing the perpetrators. Oral histories and other evidence cast considerable doubt on the reality of this portrayal, created by the Americans involved in response to criticism from the U.S. press and Congress. The stories of 1869 reaffirm in a highly compelling fashion the necessity of Tlingit history’s reevaluation through Tlingit sources.245

The first conflict of 1869 began on its first day—on New Year’s Day in Sitka, as three Tlingit leaders of different kwáan left the American stockade after a meeting with Major General Davis. As the leaders exited, an American sentry apparently kicked Shkeedlikáa, a leader of the Jilkáat Kwáan, and then attacked him with the butt of his rifle. In the scuffle, Shkeedlikáa wrested the firearm away from the soldier, and then left the scene with it. On hearing what happened, Davis sent a detachment of soldiers into the Tlingit settlement, and when an armed standoff occurred an American fired, setting off volleys that left five Tlingit wounded, one dead, and one American wounded. Davis placed the community on lockdown, threatening to destroy it entirely with artillery if Shkeedlikáa was not surrendered. In the interim, several more Tlingit died, shot as they attempted to escape Sitka by canoe. Eventually Shkeedlikáa submitted, sparing the village from what would have been an unquestionably horrific bombardment.246

246 Jones, p. 8–9. The name Shkeedlikáa was often written as Colchika.
After all this, two more deaths made the difference in beginning a wider conflict: On the morning after Shkeedlí̓káa gave himself up, two unarmed Tlingit were shot by an American sentinel as they left the town by canoe. Past historians concluded that these men had merely disregarded the American commands in place, but new accounts corroborated by a soldier’s diary show the Tlingit had received permission to leave and the soldier on duty committed a grievous error. The men killed belonged to the Kéex’ Kwáan, the same kwáan attacked by Baranov’s armada before it turned to Shee, and the same kwáan that lost twenty-seven people in the Battle of Port Gamble, the bloodiest battle of the 1850s conflicts in Puget Sound. Now violence had come to the Kéex’ Kwáan again, this time in a series of events known as the Kake War. In reality, the “Kake War” did not constitute a true war, as Tlingit did not engage militarily with the United States for the entirety of the conflict, even as the U.S. Army attacked them. Instead, the occupying forces used an act aligned with Tlingit law as a pretext to inflict heavy damage and set an example of American power.

Coodick, a clan leader who had sat in the same canoe with the two men who were shot, went immediately to Davis, requesting trade blankets and goods as compensation for the deaths, as Tlingit law required. Davis refused, so Coodick and his party left Sitka with the knowledge that the Waashdan Kwáan owed them a debt, one that now demanded force to exact. On the way home to Kéex’ Kwáan territory, the party came upon four trappers; they killed the two Americans among them, leaving the two Creoles alive. Two American deaths had answered for two Tlingit, and from Coodick and his clan’s perspective, they had now fulfilled their laws.

247 Jones, p. 11.
249 Jones, p. 2.
250 Jones, p. 11–12. Coodick was also known as “Chief Tom.”
For Davis and the American forces, however, the conflict with the Ḵéex’ Ḵwáan had only just begun. Hearing of the killing from the Creoles, Davis dispatched Commander Meade with the USS Saginaw with direct orders to seize hostages until the perpetrators were surrendered, and—without qualification—to burn their villages as well. Oral history reports that the Tlingit learned of the Americans’ approach from the sentries they had positioned, and proceeded to discuss whether they would challenge the oncoming soldiers. They decided to retreat and hide, in order to protect their families.251 Thus, when the Saginaw arrived at its first Ḵéex’ Ḵwáan village on 14 February, the soldiers found it deserted. The following morning, armed with turpentine oil, the Americans set the village ablaze, likely killing an elderly Tlingit woman who had stayed in bed because of her health and assumed any attackers would spare her. By noon the ship arrived at Lxex’wxu.aan, principal village of the Ḵwáan, and Meade here decided to bombard the village from a distance first, for safety. Afterward, the shore party again found the Tlingit houses deserted, and again put them to flame. The Saginaw then visited a third and final village, only somewhat smaller than Lxex’wxu.aan, and located two empty Tlingit forts nearby. The same process of destruction obtained in each place.252

In total, the Waashdan Ḵwáan destroyed approximately twenty-seven large plank houses, as well as the two forts, all structures painstakingly built from impressive cedar planks and logs. Perhaps even more importantly, the attackers incinerated the Ḵéex’ Ḵwáan’s winter food supplies by the ton, as well as valuable canoes, precious at.óow, and even Tlingit burial posts. Afterward, the people of the Ḵéex’ Ḵwáan scattered to their smaller subsistence camps, overlooked by the

251 Jones, p. 12–13, 15.
Americans, desperately seeking to provide for their survival in the middle of winter. Many died as a result of exposure and starvation, particularly women and children.\

Several months later, in December, a violent incident in Ḵaachxan.áak'w and Fort Wrangel resulted in multiple Tlingit deaths as well. While accounts differ on the details of what occurred, the essential facts seem to be that a Tlingit man bit off the finger of an American officer’s wife at a Christmas Eve party held inside the fort, and the man and his brother were killed.\(^{254}\) When their father Scutdoo learned the news, he killed an American trader, Leon Smith, to fulfill the Waashdan Ḵwáan’s debt.\(^{255}\) The soldiers demanded Scutdoo’s surrender, and when he did not appear they began bombarding Ḵaachxan.áak’w with two cannon, drawing Tlingit gunfire in response but killing an unknown number of people in the village.\(^{256}\) The next day, Scutdoo gave himself up, and in three days time the Americans hanged him at the fort.\(^ {257}\)

In total, the violence of 1869 at Sitka, among the Ḷéex’ Ḵwáan villages, and at Ḵaachxan.áak’w represented a deep, fundamental conflict between Tlingit and Waashdan Ḵwáan manifested in their refusal to recognize each other’s laws: Neither party strove to understand or respect the legal conceptions of the other, including ideas of reciprocity, compensation, and clan responsibility among the Tlingit, and the notion of individual culpability held by the Americans.\(^{258}\) Beyond these refusals, however, the Army attacks also laid bare major inequalities in power. Through their overwhelmingly superior firepower, the Americans forced Tlingit communities to bend to their legal demands, even as the U.S. commanders used the crimes they perceived as a pretext to shock and awe Tlingit into submission. Nevertheless, some Tlingit

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\(^{253}\) Jones, p. 13–16.  
\(^{255}\) Tamaree, p. 1, 4.  
\(^{256}\) Jones, p. 17.  
\(^{257}\) Harring, p. 222.  
\(^{258}\) Jones, p. 8.
would later extract acknowledgements of their jurisprudence from the Americans, employing their own pressures and advantages.

The 1869 attacks became national news across the United States, and to some extent contributed to the closure of two of the Army posts in Lingít Aaní. The Kake War became known to the American officials in the States by the summer of 1869, and officials dispatched Vincent Colyer, Secretary of the Board of Indian Commissioners, to investigate—such that he was present in Lingít Aaní when violence broke out again in Kaachxan.áak’w and thereafter produced a highly critical report for Congress.²⁵⁹ Colyer described the Kaachxan.áak’w violence as a “massacre,” and quoted the missionary William Duncan, residing among the Tsimshian in British Columbia, who stated that “the blood of poor [Leon] Smith, lately shot at Fort Wrangel, lies, I am sorry to say, at the door of military authority there.”²⁶⁰ Some national media, however, described the events in less accusatory tones, such as the Baltimore Sun, which referred to the bombardment as “excellent practice” for the American garrison.²⁶¹ Nevertheless, the U.S. government closed both Fort Tongass and Fort Wrangel in the fall of 1870, leaving Sitka as the only military post. It did so partially in response to the Army’s attacks, but also because of general military reorganization at a national level as well as charges of mismanagement, corruption, and laziness leveled at the Alaska garrisons. Customarily, enlisted men would perform many of the daily tasks required at such Army posts, but it appears—at Fort Tongass at least—that the soldiers constantly bought their supplies from the Tlingit of Kadúḵxuka instead.²⁶² Their presence seriously downsized, the

²⁵⁹ Jones, p. 17.
²⁶¹ “The Indian Hostilities in Alaska—Bombardment of an Indian Village—How Affairs are Managed in ‘Our New Possessions’—A Dose of Solid Shot—Excellent Practice, &c,” in The Baltimore Sun, (March 22, 1870).
²⁶² Monteith, “Tongass, the Prolific Name, the Forgotten Tribe,” p. 150.
Waashdan Ḳwáan commanders now faced new conditions for the remainder of the “Army Phase” in Tlingit history.

As a new decade began only three years after the presumptuous “Alaska Purchase,” American officers began to consider it expedient or necessary in some cases to follow Tlingit laws and placate Tlingit when Americans broke them. In 1870, General Davis paid compensation for the death of a Tlingit man murdered by a white constable in Sitka. Later, in 1875, the Americans compensated a Shtax’heen Ḳwáan clan for the death of one of their leaders, after he committed suicide while in U.S. custody. Apparently the U.S. Army had sent the man south in order to testify in a case against some American prisoners, but he killed himself during the voyage, perhaps because of threats he received on board. After hearing the news in Ḳaachxan.áak’w, the man’s clan demanded justice from the officers at Fort Wrangel, holding them responsible, and received one hundred blankets as payment as well as the body of the deceased. Aside from these concessions, the would-be American administrators had an unbroken de facto policy of recognizing Tlingit law in disputes among the Tlingit. The continuing strength of the Tlingit clans, compared to the extremely limited American presence, all but dictated that these types of policies would remain in place—as they had in Russian America—until conditions changed.

In June of 1877 conditions did change, but not in a manner that signaled American ascendance: The United States now withdrew all of its soldiers from Lingít Aaní, opting to achieve efficiencies by leaving only a revenue cutter in Alaska, subject to the Department of the Treasury. The difficulties of what Bobby Lain calls the

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263 Worl, “Tlingit Law, American Justice and the Destruction of Tlingit Villages.”
264 Worl, “Tlingit Law, American Justice and the Destruction of Tlingit Villages.”
267 Monteith, “Tongass, the Prolific Name, the Forgotten Tribe,” p. 150–151.
“extra-legal, expedient administration of Alaska,” caused in part by “Congressional apathy,” resulted more or less from the same fundamental issues that had ultimately led Russia to sell their claim:268 The overland empires of Russia and the United States, otherwise propelled largely by migrants, had serious difficulties adapting to the task of managing a state-controlled overseas colonial claim. Russian and American alike had also confronted the Tlingit, a people who readily adapted to profit from foreigners—first in trade and then in wage labor—but who nevertheless retained their independence and devotion to their own laws with a ferocity that defied and defeated Euroamericans.

Nevertheless, the Army attacks of this period revealed that some Tlingit would concede to Waashdan Kwáan authority, if only under threat of extreme and disproportionate violence. Such was the case with Shkeedliḵáa in Sitka and Scutdoo in Kaachxan.âak’w, men who likely saved dozens of Tlingit lives—if not more—through their surrender.269 When Alaska Territorial Governor and later Senator Ernest Gruening referred to Alaska’s history from 1867–1884 as the “era of total neglect,” he referred largely to the neglect of the U.S. Congress to create a civil government for the Department.270 Viewed from a Tlingit perspective, however, the Waashdan Kwáan had not neglected Lingít Aaní at all: They had sent powerful ships, along with hundreds of soldiers and settlers, and imposed terror on Tlingit communities, killing men who defended Tlingit jurisprudence and destroying the homes and property of an entire kwáan, leaving them to starve. In spite of this terror, most Tlingit communities remained isolated from Americans from 1867–1877, and most Tlingit continued to live, work, and act within their own well-established political, social, and economic

268 Lain, p. iii.
269 Jones, p. 9.
systems. After a decade of claiming Lingít Aaní, the United States retreated, leaving Tlingit scarred by traumatic attacks but suddenly more liberated from foreign imposition.
Famed English photographer Eadward Muybridge took this photograph at Kadúḵxuka on Tongass Island in 1868. Note the rifles and the two kootéeyaa alongside houses built with American siding. The Tlingit wear both Euroamerican and Tlingit clothing, including naaxein (Chilkat robes).²⁷¹

²⁷¹ Ketchikan Museums, Tongass Historical Society 70.7.10.1.
This map notes select communities of Tlingit and other indigenous peoples in and around Lingít Aaní, as well as sites of American and British forts and settlements in 1869 and the approximate border between American and British claims.272

272 Created by the author with reference to Thornton, Haa Léelk’w Hás Aaní Saax’ú.
Chapter 4: Struggles for Sovereignty, 1877–1896

By 1877, Euroamericans had leveled threats to Tlingit sovereignty for a full one hundred years, dating from the placement of a Spanish cross at Bucareli Bay. For the most part, however, even after grievous attacks on some of their communities, Tlingit clans retained their independence from any foreign control of their affairs. This state of autonomy began to change during the 1880s and 1890s in ways that must have deeply troubled Tlingit elders and clan leaders. Perhaps two themes above all others undergirded these trajectories: The first trend was Tlingit clans’ loss of the ability to apply their own laws, through force if need be, both among foreigners and among themselves. This capacity to enforce one’s own laws and customs constitutes an essential element of the concept of sovereignty from any perspective, European and non-European alike. The second phenomenon consisted of Tlingit losing their long-maintained access to the rich, abundant fisheries in the waters surrounding their homeland. The wealth of the streams and ocean of Lingít Aaní had supported Tlingit civilization for untold centuries, if not millennia, and the day-to-day vitality of Tlingit communities inherently depended on those resources.

In general, these two fundamental patterns worked in tandem: First, the establishment of American military dominance and law allowed American entrepreneurs and fishermen to exploit Tlingit resources more and more perniciously. Second, the incorporation of Tlingit men and women into an American–run industry, including both fishing and fish processing, rendered Tlingit communities increasingly dependent on the American presence, amplifying the predominance of U.S. law and

273 In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, some scholars of indigenous North America, such as Vine Deloria, Jr. and Gerald Alfred, have redefined indigenous sovereignty in terms of “cultural integrity” and “distinctiveness” among communities. Rosita Worl, “Reconstructing Sovereignty in Alaska,” in Cultural Survival Quarterly (Oct. 2001). In a nineteenth-century context, however, it seems uncontroversial to posit that political and legal independence constituted an important aspect of indigenous sovereignty.
settler ways. One can hardly overemphasize the centrality of these currents to Tlingit–American relations from the 1870s onward: If Tlingit had retained firm control of their own laws and fisheries—as they had to that time—the later history of Lingít Aaní would have unfolded extremely differently.

A Monopoly on Violence

The U.S. Army had carried out devastating attacks on Tlingit communities in 1869, enforced limited aspects of U.S. law, and carried out extra–legal punishments in Sitka and the surrounding area. Nevertheless, the Army’s withdrawal left no doubt that the United States had failed to acquire a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence in Lingít Aaní. In 1877, the U.S. federal government instructed its Treasury Department to control all the affairs of the Department of Alaska, without a single soldier remaining. This removal of effective American power left Tlingit freely able to exercise their ways and enforce their customs not only among themselves, but also around and among the sparse American settlers. In response, the United States soon reinstated a military presence among the Tlingit, pursuing supremacy in force and law through a process that would unfold and more or less conclude in a matter of several years.

The notion of a state possessing a monopoly on the legitimate use of force or violence was articulated most famously in the writings of the oft–cited theorist Max Weber. Weber wrote in 1919 that “a state is a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory,” and “the right to use physical force is ascribed to other institutions or to individuals

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274 Harring, 216.
only to the extent to which the state permits it.”275 Upon arrival in their claimed province of Alaska, the agents of the American state engaged themselves in a self-justifying mission of incorporating the Tlingit and other indigenous peoples into their own “human community,” aiming to deny them any claim to legitimacy in the use of force outside of systems and legal conceptions established by the United States.

After the U.S. Army removed its last personnel in 1877, however, the administration in the Alaska Department on American terms rested solely with the U.S. Treasury Department. The Waashdan Kwáan’s military disengagement from Lingít Aaní presented Tlingit clans with a period of respite; acting without threat of any response, Tlingit tore down the stockades at Sitka and Fort Wrangel, burning them for firewood.276 In Sitka—now the only location with significant American settlement—eight hundred Tlingit residents overwhelmingly outnumbered eighty Americans and two hundred Creoles. From 1877–1879, the American inhabitants in Sitka became increasingly disturbed by the Tlingit activities in their midst and the prevailing power of Tlingit law: When a Tlingit died from drinking too heavily with an American companion, the clan members of the deceased successfully extracted compensation of 250 dollars plus liquor from the companion and the merchant who had sold them their alcohol; when a killing occurred between Tlingit, men searched through various American houses for the perpetrator without pause; Tlingit also executed a purported witch in plain view of the settlers.277 With these and other activities, the Sheet’ká Kwáan had not exactly “colonized” the American settlers of Sitka. They had, however, “Tlingitized” the lives of those settlers, at least partially, enveloping them in cultural norms that defied their own American attitudes.

276 Harring, p. 223.
These interactions came to a head after an American was killed in November of 1878 by Kot–ko–wot, a member of the Kiks.ádi. By February, Kaagwaantaan men led by Anaxóots had arrested Kot–ko–wot and his alleged accomplice Okh–kho–not, handing them over to the Sitka settlers. At the same time, San Francisco ship owners as well as local authorities had refused to compensate the Kiks.ádi or render the back wages for five of their clan members who had drowned while working as crewmembers on a trading vessel. Perceiving injustice and imbalance in the ongoing events, the Kiks.ádi agitated in Sitka, while Ḵ’alyáan threatened to kill five shopkeepers. Continuing altercations sparked fear among the settlers, who sent Kot–ko–wot and Okh–kho–not south on a mail steamer with Kaagwaantaan witnesses to Federal District Court in Oregon. The steamer also brought a panicked message from the Sitka settlers to Esquimault, British Columbia, asking for aid. The Osprey, a British man–of–war bearing six heavy guns and well over one hundred men came immediately, relieving the American settlers on arrival. However, the “Osprey Affair” brought embarrassment to the United States—the country appearing unable to defend its own citizens. The U.S. Navy arrived several weeks later, destined to stay in Alaska and reengage in establishing American security and American laws.

The Navy would perpetrate the last major attack in Tlingit history—the bombardment of Aangón in October of 1882. Significant not only as yet another violent event, the destruction of Aangón—the primary settlement of the Xutsnoowú Ḵwáan—sent shockwaves across Lingít Aaní and left long–lasting scars on Tlingit–American relations. Nonetheless, the 1882 attack remains a relatively little–documented and little–researched event, and, like the Ḵéex’ Ḵwáan attacks,

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279 Names often pass from generation to generation among the Tlingit. This Ḵ’alyáan must have been a clan descendant of the hero in the Battles of Sitka.
280 Harring, p. 224. Lautaret, p. 31–32.
understandings of the events have also suffered from skewed narratives. In October of 1882, a whaling ship belonging to the Northwest Trading Company lay in the inlet outside of Aangóon. A harpoon exploded accidentally, and pieces struck Teel’ Tlein, a highly respected ix’t’ in the community working on the ship at the time. Teel’ Tlein was taken to shore but soon died, leading his clan members to request a compensation payment of two hundred blankets from the company. In the meantime, the Xutsnoowú Kwáan ceased their work for the Americans, made funeral preparations, and began following a number of strict protocols that result from the death of an ix’t’ while also continuing to put up food in the village for the fast-approaching winter.

According to the accounts from U.S. officials, the Xutsnoowú Kwáan had captured the Northwest Trading Company’s ships and two of the American whalers after the accident, holding them as hostages as they demanded two hundred blankets. A company superintendent fled to Sitka to call in military aid, charging that the Tlingit threatened to destroy the company’s property and kill the prisoners. Within the next few days, two Navy ships arrived in the inlet, and Commander E. C. Merriman demanded four hundred blankets from the Tlingit, “as a guarantee for good behavior.” After a refusal, the Navy destroyed the Tlingit canoes and encampment at the place they had stopped. The next day, Merriman ordered the shelling of Aangóon and sent a landing party afterward to pillage and burn everything else. This total destruction of a community, its vessels, and its supplies left the Xutsnoowú Kwáan without food or shelter for the winter, and after the bombardment they struggled to recover in order to survive. An unknown number of people died that winter.

281 Furlow, p. 21.  
282 Furlow, p. 83–85.  
283 Furlow, p. 91–93  
284 Furlow, p. 85, 90–91, 96–100.
Comprehensively evaluating the American accounts of the event, anthropologist Philip Drucker judged that they “are so contradictory that they must be evaluated as unreliable,” and stated, “It seems probable that this unreliability was clearly [and] deliberately written into the reports.” However, a recently discovered letter written by an American sailor offers a strong critique of his superiors’ actions and a refutation of some of their claims. The letter, written by Frank Clark, states the Tlingit had already restored the North West Company’s property and released the men by the time Merriman arrived. Clark wrote,

Most of the officers including myself consider it a brutal and cowardly thing and entirely uncalled for. ... We are all anxious to see the account the papers will give of it and the report the Capt. will give of it. In other words how big a lie he will tell in order to justify himself.

Again, as with the attacks on the Ḵéex’ Ḵwáan and at Ḵaachxan.áak’w, independent American commanders misunderstood or willfully ignored consistent Tlingit practices, using them to justify extreme military actions.

In this case, however, U.S. forces would not withdraw. In fact, the Aangóon bombardment prompted reactions from American officials and legislators, leading to the creation of the first American civil government in Alaska with the Organic Act of 1884. Creating a district court, a post of governor, and provisions for comprehensive civil law as well as education, the Organic Act responded to the perceived “state of lawlessness and violence” present in Alaska, failing to recognize that the ongoing violence consisted of blatant assaults on already-existing legal systems. In 1783, the United States saw its independence recognized with the signing of the Treaty of Paris.

285 Furlow, p. 21.
287 Furlow, p. 102–104.
Ninety-nine years later, the Tlingit of Aangóon saw their independence denied, their customs ignored and their community destroyed, subdued by a foreign military.

In addition to destroying Tlingit communities and property with bombs, the United States also confiscated and abolished another type of property—slaves. Tlingit kept slaves for an untold number of centuries, taken as captives in war or purchased in the dynamic indigenous trade networks of the Northwest Coast. Slaves did contribute to production and subsistence activities within Northwest Coast societies, laboring for the benefit of their wealthy master's house and clan. The Tlingit economy, however, did not rest on a foundation of slave labor—certainly not when compared to the plantation societies that had boomed for centuries on the other side of the continent.288 Even by the mid–1800s, the prevalence of slaveholding among the Tlingit had declined markedly: Epidemics and changes in economic life considered, this seems unsurprising.289 Nevertheless, slaves did seek escape as opportunities arose in the mid– to late nineteenth century. The mission community of Metlakatla, British Columbia apparently became known as a refuge, and a significant number of slaves from nearby Tlingit and Haida territory for sanctuary there, while the Tsimshian residents and their Anglican missionary leader William Duncan established a five thousand dollar fund to compensate owners for their lost property.290

In this context of already–declining slavery, the newly created U.S. District Court in Sitka found it expedient to make a legal example using a slave named Sah-quah who escaped from his owners and asked for protection from the Sitka settlers.291 In an 1886 case referred to as In re Sah Quah or Sah-quah v. Nah-ki-klan, Judge Lafayette

288 Arnold, p. 31–32.
289 Donald, p. 249–250.
290 Murray, p. 133.
Dawson ruled that the U.S. Constitution’s Thirteenth Amendment set Sah-quah and all other slaves in Alaska free. Dawson confirmed that the Tlingit constituted an “uncivilized tribe” under the 1867 Treaty of Cession. “No treaty having ever been made with the Alaska Indians or tribal independence recognized,” he additionally ruled that Tlingit would not be treated as “free and independent within their respective territories, governed by their tribal laws and customs in all matters pertaining to their internal affairs,” as treaty–signing indigenous peoples in other parts of the United States were ostensibly recognized. Now, after the United States felt militarily assured and had established itself on a more firm governmental footing, its authorities confidently denied Tlingit sovereignty entirely.

American authorities again abrogated Tlingit sovereignty and property when they made large grants of Tlingit land. In 1887, William Duncan travelled to Washington, D.C. to explore the possibility of securing land in Alaska for his mission community of Metlakatla. For several years Duncan had conflicted with the Church Missionary Society of England and disagreed with the reservation land plan the Canadian government had created for the Tsimshian people. When queried, the administration of U.S. President Grover Cleveland informed Duncan that he and his followers could claim “squatters’ rights” on unoccupied land in Alaska, and by August of 1887 Duncan and eight hundred Tsimshian had decamped on Annette Island, located some seventy miles northwest of their former home. Although the group named the settlement New Metlakatla, they had built on a site belonging to the Taant’a Kwáan known as Tàakw.àani or “Winter Village.” Tàakw.àani had no inhabitants at the

time, but a lone Tlingit *kootéeyaa* still stood near the shore. Coincidentally, less than a year earlier three men had inspected the same place as a potential site for the relocation of the Taant’a Kwáan and Sanyaa Kwáan. Tlingit men Louis Paul and Wah Koo Se, and American missionary Samuel Saxman died in the expedition when their canoe overturned in bad weather. As tragedy set back the missionary–led Tlingit relocation effort, the Tsimishian led by Duncan came to take the space. Some Tlingit may have even told the Tsimishian advance party of Tàakw.àani’s abundant salmon runs, and according to one account, Louis Paul’s wife Tillie suggested that the Metlakatlans relocate there when Duncan visited her after her husband’s death.

Sources do not seem to indicate that any immediate material protest from the Tlingit clans appeared over this occupation of their land. At this time, they may not have thought they had any chance of legal recourse within the American courts, or they may not have considered that course of action at all. A Euroamerican trader living in Wrangell, W. H. Woodcock, wrote about the theft of Tlingit land to build New Metlakatla in a letter to the Portland *Oregonian* sent in early 1888. Woodcock expressed that it had been wrong to turn Annette Island over to Duncan and the Metlakatlans for nothing, and claimed Annette Island had a value of one hundred thousand dollars. Woodcock emphasized that the island had always belonged to the Taant’a Kwáan and Sanyaa Kwáan, and wrote, “For a tribe of foreign Indians to come in and want a reservation is, to say the least, impudent in the extreme.” Little seems to have come from this letter, however, as Congress confirmed the Metlakatlans’ “squatters’ rights”

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298 Murray, p. 217.
in 1891, granting them the Annette Islands Reserve. If a former Skeena River trader came to such a conclusion on the injustice of the settlement and land grant, however, the members of the Taant’a Ḵwáan who had known the site, fished it, and owned it for generations must have felt that injustice inestimably more strongly.

This large and sudden settlement of a Tlingit island by foreigners had other ramifications: Tsimshian began to fish Tlingit waters around the island, on the southwestern side of Taan, near Sanyaa Ḵwáan territory on the mainland, and also the waters at the mouths of the Nass and Skeena rivers. In essence, the New Metlakatlans lay claim to fishing rights not only in a wide range around their new settlement, but also at places nearer to their former home in British Columbia. In the past, Tlingit likely would have responded to such an invasion with immediate demands for compensation, under threat of violence. Their inability to follow such a course of action at New Metlakatla—or, perhaps, their decision not to—reflected yet another instance where the American presence had undermined Tlingit sovereignty and independence. The decisions of foreign missionaries and a far-off government superseded any claims to long-established laws and rights.

American pursuit of hegemony for their own legal system had profound implications for Tlingit social structures and religious values. Nancy Furlow notes that the Tlingit worldview rested fundamentally on values of balance and balancing, as demonstrated by reciprocal giving as well as compensatory payments and killings. For clans, families, and individuals of the Sheet’ká Ḵwáan, Ḵéex’ Ḵwáan, Shtax’héen Ḵwáan, Xutsnoowú Ḵwáan, Taant’a Ḵwáan, and other Ḵwáan besides, the Americans violated these balancing values repeatedly. The Waashdan Ḵwáan used its superior

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300 Hosmer, p. 205.
301 Furlow, p. 137–139.
military force to batter Tlingit communities into submission, not only in the major
bombardments of 1869 and 1882, but also in countless other acts that denied Tlingit
the opportunity to fulfill their laws and preserve harmony within their worldview.
Sidney Harring argues that Tlingit preserved their own laws into the 1890s, citing
examples from the Jilkoot and Jilkaat Kwáan.\textsuperscript{302} In the Alexander Archipelago, however,
Tlingit clans had already resigned from recourse to violence by the 1880s, militarily
outgunned and shocked with destruction. The brutal American quest to achieve a
monopoly on violence and impose American laws ultimately led to the loss of Tlingit
political and legal independence. That quest also unfolded through the takeover and
exploitation of vital Tlingit resources, most of all their fisheries.

\textbf{Fighting for the Fisheries}

Throughout the nineteenth century—and for millennia before that—the Tlingit
relied critically on aquatic resources for their communities' survival and for their
accumulation of wealth. In the 1880s, however, as American forces began to reengage
in the objective of acquiring a monopoly on violence, the fishing grounds of the Tlingit
came under increasing threat of appropriation by American entrepreneurs and settlers.
The first American salmon canneries in Lingít Aaní were built in 1878, commencing a
process of industrial commodification that transformed not only Tlingit salmon runs,
but also Tlingit labor.\textsuperscript{303} Nevertheless, the twenty years from 1877 through 1896 did
not see the disappearance of Tlingit–managed fisheries, nor even the complete
transformation of fisheries managed with Tlingit technology and knowledge into ones
entirely managed by means of American origin.

\textsuperscript{302} Harring, p. 220–230.
\textsuperscript{303} Arnold, p. 40–41.
Tlingit had used markets and tools provided by Euroamericans for one hundred years before the first American cannery in order to augment the profitability and productivity of their aquatic resources. In this regard, Tlingit interactions with American companies from 1878 onward had precedents, especially as Tlingit fishermen adopted new technologies and Tlingit men and women labored in new processes that utilized the same fish their ancestors valued. With the arrival of large numbers of American fishermen, however, and the connection of Lingít Aaní to a more global market for its fish, Tlingit began to lose more and more control over the critical decisions determining the usage of their resources. Tlingit salmon harvesting had not stopped on the eve of the Klondike Gold Rush in 1896; on the contrary, it had grown to influence the diets of people well beyond the realm of the Northwest Coast. Nevertheless, the relationship between Tlingit individuals and their fisheries had transformed significantly, and that transformed relationship would continue to develop into the twentieth century.

During the era of the fur trade, Tlingit patterns of maritime resource harvesting changed significantly, accommodating the collection of immense numbers of pelts from otters, beavers, bears and other mammals. Tlingit control of the totality of their fisheries and other resources, however, remained relatively steadfast, as exhibited by Euroamericans’ reliance on Tlingit suppliers: Americans and British did not attempt to gather furs on their own in Lingít Aaní, and although the sailors occasionally fished for salmon, they found it far more efficient to trade for the food from Natives. English Captain George Dixon wrote in 1797 that a fishing party of seven “was greatly inferior to that of two Indians,” and with “the natives constantly bringing us plenty of fish, our boat was never sent on this business afterwards.”

Arnold, p. 44. Italics are Dixon’s.
out by the RAC for otters risked violent ends from Tlingit gunfire, and although the RAC did succeed in trapping and processing fish at Novoarkhangelsk and nearby Ozersk Redoubt, the inhabitants of the Russian American capital inescapably relied on Tlingit supplies for nourishment.³⁰⁵

The first Americans to live indefinitely in Lingít Aaní did not intrude on such resources even to the extent the Russians had, depending instead on goods shipped from their country to the south, augmented by provisions purchased from the Tlingit.³⁰⁶ Thus, although they willingly traded fish and other resources with Euroamericans to their benefit, the Tlingit retained tight control of their self-sufficient salmon-dominated food systems—especially outside of Sheet’ká Ḵwaan territory—well into the late 1800s. Indeed, although sea otters and some other types of fur-bearing mammals experienced precipitous population declines due to relentless commercial hunting, other fish and game may have faced no such pressures through the mid-nineteenth century, in particular because of the many deaths among the Tlingit caused by disease.³⁰⁷ Unprecedented pressures on Tlingit salmon only truly began to appear once American enterprises arrived, fuelled by laissez-faire capitalism and supported by technologies like canning.

The process of canning, invented in France in the 1790s, consists most basically of sealing food in a container and then applying heat. Companies began canning fish in Scotland during the 1830s, and by the 1840s the Atlantic fisheries of the United States and Canada had adopted the practice as well, in order to move some of their seafood to market. Canning arrived on the Pacific coast of North America during the 1860s, on the Sacramento River in California, and thereafter seems to have spread

³⁰⁵ Arnold, p. 47, 51.
³⁰⁶ Monteith, “Tongass, the Prolific Name, the Forgotten Tribe,” p. 141.
³⁰⁷ Monteith, “Tongass, the Prolific Name, the Forgotten Tribe,” p. 134.
north, to the Columbia River, to Puget Sound, to the Fraser River and then to the Alexander Archipelago.\textsuperscript{308} Canning operations opened North America’s fisheries to truly global markets: By the end of nineteenth century, the Northwest Coast salmon industry—its growth propelled significantly by the resources of Lingít Aaní—exported seven million pounds of fish per year to Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America.\textsuperscript{309}

Contributing to the rapid expansion of this industry, the first Alaska salmon canneries were built in the spring of 1878 at Lawáak (Klawock), on the west coast of Taan, and at Sitka, both owned and managed by Americans and operated by Tlingit labor.\textsuperscript{310} By the summer of the very same year, Tlingit demonstrated a fierce attachment to their positions in this new enterprise: There was a protest at the Sitka dock where many Tlingit, the leader Anaxóots at the fore, blocked the arrival of eighteen Chinese employees. After much consternation on the part of the American businessmen, however, the confrontation resolved peacefully with promises that the Chinese would only work at skills Tlingit had not been taught, and if Tlingit learned those skills they would replace the Chinese.\textsuperscript{311} As they had shown in previous wage employment stretching back to the 1850s and even before, Tlingit valued opportunities to augment their wealth through work for Euroamericans, and the canneries proved no different—at least not at first.

In spite of the competition for employment there, the Sitka cannery closed in 1879.\textsuperscript{312} From 1880–1882, the Lawáak enterprise was thus the only functioning cannery in Southeast Alaska, but in 1883 Cape Fox Packing Company was established in Sanyaa Ḵwáan territory. Two canneries appeared on Chilkat Inlet that same year—

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{308} Newell, \textit{The Development of the Pacific Salmon–Canning Industry}, p. 4.
\item \textsuperscript{309} Arnold, p. 57.
\item \textsuperscript{310} Robert E. Price, \textit{The Great Father in Alaska: The Case of the Tlingit and Haida Salmon Fishery} (Douglas, Alaska: First Street Press, 1990), p. 49.
\item \textsuperscript{311} Price, p. 49–51.
\item \textsuperscript{312} Kan, \textit{Memory Eternal}, p. 193.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Pyramid Harbor Packing Company and Chilkat Packing Company, the first permanent Euroamerican establishments the Jilḵaat Ḵwáan had hosted in their territory. The Aberdeen Packing Company was set up on the Shtax’héen in 1887, and in 1888 and 1889 eight more canneries appeared, totaling twelve in Lingít Aaní.\(^{313}\) In 1890, a U.S. Census agent reported that the Lawáak cannery had a dozen Euroamerican employees, but Native men, women, and children performed all of the other labor. Given the virtual absence of any other available workforce, the early canneries relied heavily on Tlingit in order to function and turn profits.\(^{314}\)

Tlingit not only worked inside of these canneries processing salmon and other seafood, but they also carried out much of the necessary fishing. In the 1880s, Tlingit often fished for the canneries using their own technologies—canoes, wooden hooks, weirs, and other tools—and would paddle for long distances in order to sell their catch. When they could, however, Tlingit fishermen adapted to new technologies such as gillnets and purse seines, which they often rented or leased from the canneries.\(^{315}\) Not coincidentally, patterns of Tlingit engagement with American industry mirrored certain preexisting norms in Tlingit life: Seasonal movement to pursue cannery work mimicked regular movements to summer fish camps, and men most often fished while women and children processed the catch—roles analogous to those taken outside the canneries. Some changes certainly occurred, however, insofar as American employers treated women’s labor as much less valuable than men’s, jeopardizing Tlingit norms that placed financial resources with the women in a household.\(^{316}\)

\(^{313}\) Price, p. 52.
\(^{314}\) Arnold, p. 69–70.
\(^{315}\) Arnold, p. 61, 70, 136.
Conflicts arose when Euroamerican fishermen began to ply the waters of Lingít Aaní, challenging Tlingit dominance in the canneries’ supply chain as well as Tlingit conceptions of property. Because fishing sites represented such fundamental *at.óow*—the sacrosanct property of clans or other social units—the least Tlingit could do as Americans utilized their sites was to request some form of compensation. Many American fishermen and canneries complied with these requests early in the industry’s development, in order to avoid conflict. In fact, Rick Kurtz writes that the early industry was a “boon” for the Xunaa Kwáan based on these royalties, as well as the wages Tlingit men and women could earn supplying and processing fish.\(^{317}\) Even in the 1890s, the cannery superintendent at Lawáak paid a local leader so that his fishermen could access a nearby stream. As the years went on, however, and especially after the creation of a civil government for Alaska in 1884, Americans used the threat of legal force—that is, their force—to deny Tlingit the property ownership established under Tlingit law.\(^{318}\) American belief in a self-evident fishing “commons” undergirded this movement, fuelled by the growing profits of an unregulated capitalist industry that took in new migrants as supporters.

In the Anglo–American legal tradition, fisheries belonged to the commons, each person possessing an equal right to exploit them.\(^{319}\) This ideology fundamentally contradicted the Tlingit understanding of their fisheries, in which a person or clan counted streams and other fishing sites among their *at.óow*, passed to descendants or to others as inviolable pieces of property. Tlingit demarcated firm boundaries between their rights to resources in the water, and had long defended their property rights to particular waters and the resources within them against any daring thief. The


\(^{318}\) Arnold, p. 67–68.

\(^{319}\) Arnold, p. 54–55.
Americans, however, brought with them an open-access ideology, which they imposed on Tlingit communities with assurances that Tlingit “could fish under the law wherever the white men fished.” In the words of David Arnold,

The principal of “equal rights” to the salmon fishery was little consolation to a people whose previous system of regulating fisheries was based on the delineation of strict property rights to fishing sites. It was as if hunter-gatherers colonized Kansas and determined that the landscape of privately owned farms would become an open-access hunting grounds in which the farmers could compete equally with their invaders for game.320

The stereotypes of indigenous and European conceptions of property seem reversed, as American officials and businessmen tore down a private property framework to make way for communal resource access. However, the American system never offered truly equal or common access to fisheries, dividing them instead according to differences in capital and economic and social power, as well as divisions of gender, race, and class.321 Tlingit would not sacrifice their long-defended resource ownership to this system without a challenge.

Tlingit leveled their challenges through everyday acts of resistance, including threats and sabotage. Tlingit fishermen drove off cannery seiners at Lawáak in 1881 when they came too close to their settlement. In 1882, a Navy officer reported that Tlingit threatened to cut the seines if Americans performed the fishing that they wished to conduct. In 1890, Jilḵaatẖ Kaan Tlingit objected to the placement of an industrial fish trap, and when the company responsible refused to remove the contraption, armed Tlingit men destroyed it.322 Despite these insurgents’ courage, their resistance had varying rates of short-term success, while in the long term the systematic use of force supporting American interests grew increasingly difficult to defy.

320 Arnold, p. 66.
321 Arnold, p. 142.
One example of U.S. military and legal power assuring the dominance of American fishermen comes from 1890: Responding to calls for assistance, the Navy dispatched Ensign Coontz and six marines to Sit’ḵú (Sitkoh Bay) on Chichagof Island. Coontz recalled what the American boats entering the fishing grounds faced:

A band of one hundred and twenty-five Indians [were] on a point of land where a little stream enters the bay. The tug took us close in to the shore, and we lowered a boat. I endeavored to get one or two Indians to come out and talk with us, but failed. We saw that they were all armed with shotguns, rifles and other implements of war.  

Coontz apparently approached the leader of the group, demanding their surrender.

He demurred, but I told him that even if he did kill us, the federal government would sooner or later have its innings with them, and that if the Indians had real grievances, they could be adjusted by the governor. … As soon as the Indians surrendered I ordered the white men to start fishing, and I remember that on the first haul of the seine they took in more than a thousand salmon.

The marines had effectively leveraged the threat of the United States’ massive capacity for force to open the way for Americans to reap the benefits from incredibly rich fishing grounds. Realizing that they would indeed have faced a deadly reckoning had they utilized violence, the Tlingit stepped down, but at the same time submitted to the painful abrogation of their law and property.

While the confrontation at Sit’ḵú stands out as one of the largest between Tlingit and Americans over fishing rights, small-scale altercations still occurred in the early twentieth century, such as threats to cut American nets. As one official commented in the late 1890s, however, there were no longer any “legal rights or title to any fishing-grounds in Alaska except what force or strategy furnish.”

Tlingit waters also grew more crowded: American fishermen were increasingly drawn to Lingít Aaní, and the canneries also brought in more Asian and Euroamerican laborers from points south.

323 Price, p. 55.
324 Price, p. 55–56.
325 Arnold, p. 67–68.
such as Seattle and San Francisco. With regulation scant into the twentieth century, the American industrial fishery in Lingít Aaní had few limitations to its growth as long as far-off capital and unimpeded overfishing propelled it.\footnote{Arnold, p. 53, 57, 60, 130–131.}

Tlingit men and women did remain prominent in fishing and canning well into the twentieth century, and their unique knowledge of their resources proved essential to their success. Few Tlingit refused to participate in the establishment of the American industrial fishery, either by supplying it, working for it, or allowing their streams to be used by it for a price. In fact, these Tlingit readily constructed a hybrid economy combining their subsistence activities with involvement in wage labor and a cash economy. Nevertheless, this economic adaptation had a price, as employment and payment proved erratic and placed great strain on communities’ ability to acquire all of the supplies they required each winter.\footnote{Arnold, p. 70, 73, 132.}

The imposition of a “commons” paradigm in fishing rights by Euroamericans on the Northwest Coast also allowed some Tlingit fishermen to exploit resources where they never had before, including waters previously controlled by other indigenous peoples. Alfred Aucland, a Tsimshian who stayed in Old Metlakatla after Duncan and his followers left, stated\footnote{Hosmer, p. 204.}

> In the old time no one but the owner had the right to go to these places, [but] white people have been telling us that anyone can go to them, and so Indians from Tongas [the Taant’ a Kwáan] and all around have been going to these streams, where they were not allowed before.

William Duncan had spoken out against the trespassing of canneries on indigenous fishing rights in British Columbia—perhaps making him the first Euroamerican to do so. In the mid–1870s, Duncan wrote that it was a pity Natives should see the wealth of their fishery taken away by outside speculators, “and not be able to reach out and get
at least a share of the bounty.”Ironically, a decade later the members of his community at New Metlakatla began taking the bounty from Tlingit fisheries.

Duncan and the Tsimshian reported that their community’s fishing in Tlingit waters—and indeed their settlement on Tlingit land—had led to tense relations between the groups, including the perceived threat that Tlingit might try to reoccupy Annette Island, which had been designated as a reservation for the Tsimshian. There were, however, some Tlingit who accepted Duncan’s invitation to join the community at New Metlakatla, and by 1895 Tlingit constituted 95 of the 823 inhabitants. Duncan believed more would have come, had they not feared to lose their claims to other places. This rationale present among some would-be migrants emphasizes the importance that maintained claims would have for the Tlingit in the twentieth century: Even as they lost their autonomy and property, many Tlingit held out hope that they could reclaim certain rights in time.

American pursuit of a monopoly on violence and development of an industrial fishery in Lingít Aaní proceeded from the 1870s to the 1890s as two major facets of a single overarching phenomenon: The Waashdan Ḵwáan utilized force, ethnocentrism, capital, novel technologies, and the power of global markets to deny Tlingit sovereignty and subject Lingít Aaní to American laws and economic interests. Tlingit made a number of active decisions when faced with American impositions: The clans chose not to engage in desperate and futile acts of violence, even when the Waashdan Ḵwáan devastated their communities without provocation and grievously upset the balance between the two peoples, as in the bombardment of Aangóon. Tlingit also stroved to benefit economically from American canneries and new fishing opportunities, even as they saw their own treatment of streams and fishing areas as

329 Murray, p. 133.
330 Hosmer, p. 205.
at.óow ignored, unless they took risky and decisive action. The rise of American laws and the rise of American–controlled fisheries reinforced one another, as Tlingit could no longer depend on their own laws to protect their resources, and they could no longer rely on their previous economic autonomy to support their independence. Now unable to make effective legal demands of foreigners, and incapable of maintaining exclusive access to their most precious source of economic vitality, the Tlingit had—after more than a century of attempted colonization—finally lost their sovereignty.
This photograph shows four Tlingit policemen in Sitka in 1881. The U.S. Navy’s creation of an indigenous police force proved a successful early attempt to incorporate Tlingit into American legal norms. Kaagwaantaan leader Anaxóots sits in the foreground wearing a Navy uniform, next to Mary Klan Tech, the daughter of another important Kaagwaantaan man. The other three men are unidentified. 331

One of the first two industrial canneries built by Americans in Lingít Aaní was built in 1878 at Lawáak, (anglicized as Klawak and then Klawock), located on the outside coast of Taan. In its early years of operation, Tlingit supplied the vast majority of the cannery’s fishing and processing needs.\textsuperscript{332}

\textsuperscript{332} Photograph courtesy of Ketchikan Museums and the Tongass Historical Society. Arnold, p. 69.
These Tlingit men stand for a photograph in a skiff used for seining. Tlingit generally had less advanced fishing equipment than their Euroamerican counterparts, due to their communities’ general deficiency of American capital.333

Chapter 5: New Generations and New Communities, 1877–1896

Concurrent to their defense of political sovereignty and struggle to control their fisheries, Tlingit also faced unprecedented foreign influences arriving in their communities. In the past, some Tlingit individuals had participated in Euroamerican economic systems in peripheral or piecemeal ways, as workers in RAC businesses, for example. The influx of American settlers, entrepreneurs, and even tourists during the last decades of the nineteenth century, however, brought Tlingit into a degree of economic reliance on EuroAmericans that never existed before. Similarly, during most of the nineteenth century Euroamerican religious institutions had relatively little range or authority among the Tlingit, but in the 1870s American and Tsimshian missionaries began arriving in Lingít Aaní to establish schools. In some cases their activities even led to the founding of entirely new communities, as at Saxman, which became a new home for the Taant’a ḳwáan and Sanyaa ḳwáan. Missionary activities and schools in particular had a profound influence on new generations of Tlingit, and many children during this time period were brought to school or kept there by coercive means, as evidenced by the 1887 court case In re Can-ah-couqua. Each of these processes—secular and religious, economic and social—contributed to the gradual Americanization and Alaskanization of the Tlingit. Put simply, Tlingit became more incorporated into American ways, and the territorial idea of Alaska became more of a geographic and political reality, superseding Lingít Aaní.

The second part of this chapter broadly evaluates the significance of the twenty years between 1877 and 1896 to the history of the Tlingit people. Tying together the major themes of violence, law, resource control, economic activity, community institutions and generational change, it questions the extent to which these decades

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witnessed a true “transformation” in Tlingit ways of life. To some extent, major trajectories of change had existed among the Tlingit in the decades leading up to these dates, such as the presence of foreign powers—first the RAC, then the U.S. Army—who affected Tlingit sovereignty and the preeminence of Tlingit customs in ways both large and small. In addition, Tlingit had long shown a strong willingness and capacity to adapt new modes of trade and other activities to their benefit. Changes continued long after 1890s, of course, with some trends accelerating and many American institutions solidifying. Nevertheless, by the time of the Klondike gold discovery in 1896, Tlingit–American interactions had constructed many of the patterns that would frame later transformations.

**Americanization and Alaskanization**

The processes of Americanization and Alaskanization among the Tlingit proceeded on several fronts. The first of these terms denotes significant economic, legal, and cultural shifts that increasingly incorporated Tlingit into the overarching patterns of industry, government, and daily life propagated by the United States and its citizens. The major American actors in this process included entrepreneurs, missionaries, teachers, and tourists, who in their own ways created new points of interaction with Tlingit individuals and communities. The Tlingit actors included men and women seeking profit through trade and industry, children who attended new schools and developed in a mixture of cultural influences, and families who chose to align with or avoid certain American institutions and practices as they best fit their perceived interests. To some extent, these men and women “Tlingitized” the enterprises and organizations brought by the Americans, and multifaceted dynamics led Tlingit and Americans alike to adopt new lifestyles. Nevertheless, Tlingit
communities experienced heavy pressures to Americanize, including instances of outright coercion that had major effects on new generations.

The second of the terms discussed here—Alaskanization—represents above all else a reification of geographic boundaries and the gradual association of the peoples and processes therein. These Alaskanizing borders, established by Russia and Britain and later finalized between the United States, Canada and Britain in 1903, stretched across Dixon Entrance, up the Portland Canal, and along the peaks of the coastal mountain range, splitting maritime Tlingit from inland Tlingit and Kaigani Haida from Haida Gwaii. For the Tlingit, Haida, and other indigenous peoples, these borders between Euroamerican claims were largely ignorable into the late nineteenth century. By the 1870s and 1880s, however, the border began to have important ramifications for the Tlingit nation it divided, and the diverse indigenous groups caught within the new, artificial region of Southeast Alaska began to recognize shared struggles and even adopt shared identities.

In addition to dividing Lingít Aaní itself, the Alaska–B.C. border also helped to break the centuries–old trade routes that Tlingit had sustained for so long with Dene groups like the Tutchone, Tagish, and Tahltan. More crucial to this decline in trade, however, was the Americanization of the Tlingit economy and the general patterns of community life in the Alexander Archipelago. This serves as just one example of how Americanization and Alaskanization worked in tandem, and although these processes continued well beyond the Klondike Gold Rush, begun in 1896, the twenty years preceding the Rush represent a clear period of implantation and germination of American institutions and influences. Again, these trends functioned not just as external impositions, but operated fundamentally through Tlingit men and women.

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seeking economic benefit, Tlingit children exposed to new pressures, and Tlingit groups allying with foreign institutions.

Aside from their participation in cannery work and the growing industrial fishery, Tlingit also sought to profit from other businesses that arrived in Lingít Aaní during the late nineteenth century, mining and tourism foremost among them. Euroamerican mining and prospecting had first infiltrated Lingít Aaní in the 1860s, during the ephemeral Stikine Gold Rush. Mineral exploration and exploitation came to stay after 1880, when a Tlingit leader named Kowee led prospectors Richard Harris and Joe Juneau to gold in Áak’w Ḵwáan territory, giving rise to a settlement first called Harrisburg and later named Juneau.336 Áak’w Ḵwáan Tlingit became the mines’ most reliable workers, participating in each step of processing the ores. Tlingit received markedly lower wages than Euroamericans, uniformly receiving two dollars per day while common American laborers received three and those with specialized skills earned more. Nevertheless, Tlingit reportedly organized strikes to seek redress for their grievances, and by the 1890s they appear to gained higher wages.337 While such actions appear consistent with other stands Tlingit took for their rights, notably in fishing and cannery work, mining operations undoubtedly served as Americanizing influences, introducing novel activities to Tlingit life.

Tourism in the Alexander Archipelago has a history almost as old as the concept of “Southeast Alaska.” In addition to his consideration as the architect of the U.S. purchase of Russian America, William Seward also receives credit as Alaska’s first tourist: Seward retired from government in March of 1869, and in spite of being nearly 70 years old, he determined straight away to go see the land he had purchased for his

country, beginning his experiences in Lingít Aaní with the unreciprocated *ku.éex’* addressed previously.\(^{338}\) By the 1880s, more and more Americans became acquainted with the idea of travelling to Alaska, and widespread travel literature not only praised the beauty and value of the sights, but also the virtue of visiting “our own sublime regions in America before going to Europe,” as William Tecumseh Sherman wrote at the time.\(^{339}\) Alaska tourism then focused on Lingít Aaní—as it does to this day—given the region’s proximity to the American states and its plentitude of sights and curios.

Tlingit produced and marketed the bulk of such curios at stops such as Ḵaachxan.áak’w, Juneau, Sît Eetí Čeeýí (Glacier Bay), and Sitka. They produced baskets, carvings, and other wares of fine quality, some so impressive that the Tlingit merchants reportedly covered them and requested a fee in order for customers to examine them.\(^{340}\) American travel literature extolled touristic interaction with the Tlingit, and emphasized the importance of experiential purchases. As one booklet put it, one could never replicate “the value of those [items] bought from the old Indian woman, in the far-off wilds of Alaska.”\(^{341}\) The *Idaho*, one of the earliest cruise ships to visit Alaska, arrived in Sít Eetí Čeeýí in July of 1883 with the travel writer Eliza Scidmore. Taking to heart the ethic of interacting with Natives, Scidmore explored the Xunaa Kwáán seasonal camp where the ship had stopped, and reported that at one point she saw an old man cooking a *geeni* (seal flipper) in a kettle, who told her, “Seal! Seal all the same as hog,” trying to relate to the American woman’s tastes in meat. Nearby, another Tlingit man worked at smithing half-dollars into silver bracelets that

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\(^{339}\) Campbell, p. 88.

\(^{340}\) Gmelch, p. 154.

were popular items for the tourists.\textsuperscript{342} Even at this early date in the tourist industry, Tlingit utilized surprising proficiency in Americans’ language and culture, as well as exceptional skill, in order to profit from new opportunities.

While the guidebooks most often promoted American–owned businesses selling Tlingit wares, Tlingit also sold their articles independently, and in some cases amassed fortunes doing so. Qadjint, known to Americans as Princess Tom, captivated tourists and readers with her commercial success, which she achieved in the 1880s and 1890s largely by taking goods produced in her home among the Yaakwdáat Ḵwáan and selling them to tourists in Sitka. One newspaper reported in 1896 that she had acquired a schooner and two sloops in order to transport even more goods. Estimates of Qadjint’s wealth varied wildly, but in 1891 she gave a massive \textit{ku.éex’}, distributing gifts to guests from nine o’clock in the morning to ten o’clock at night.\textsuperscript{343} On her way home from the Klondike gold fields in 1898, Mary Hitchcock witnessed the type of commercial vigor that funded Qadjint’s prestigious success: Hitchcock wrote that as her steamer came into the harbor at Sitka, “Indian women hurried down to the wharves and seated themselves along the road, spreading out their wares on the ground before them—curios of all sorts and descriptions.” One Tlingit artisan successfully traded some of his wares for medicine from Hitchcock’s cabin in order to lessen his wife’s pain.\textsuperscript{344} Even without amassing fortunes, Tlingit could clearly carry out complex transactions with Americans and work them to their advantage.

While Tlingit men and women profited as best they could from the arrival of new American industries, other arrivals placed unprecedented pressures on Tlingit children. Missionaries, and the auxiliaries they brought with them, did a great deal to introduce

\textsuperscript{343} Koros, p. 27–29.
\textsuperscript{344} Mary E. Hitchcock, \textit{Two Women in the Klondike} (University of Alaska Press, 2005), p. 185–187.
and advocate for major changes in Tlingit spiritual life, modes of thought, and the structure of Tlingit communities. Teachers and schools—supported either by the Russian Orthodox Church or by the Presbyterian Church in collusion with the U.S. government—created deep, long-term patterns of change in Lingít Aaní as they recruited Tlingit children, sometimes coercively, and engendered generational divides in views on culture and the utility and superiority of American ways.

The largest figure in the construction of a new religious–educational complex during the late nineteenth century in Southeast Alaska was unquestionably Sheldon Jackson. A Presbyterian missionary who began his ambitious career in the Rocky Mountain West, Jackson grew compelled to spread his religion beyond the Rockies, and in 1877 he visited Wrangell to establish a home mission station there—the first strong Protestant presence in Lingít Aaní.345 In February of 1882, a request from Sheldon Jackson reached the House of Representatives for the granting of a building in Sitka to the Presbyterian Board of Home Missions for use as a school “for the training and civilization of Indian children.” Jackson wrote that “the building will never be needed for government purposes,” and “as the government is fostering Indians schools, and we are prepared to repair said building and carry on said school in the same, we respectfully ask you to ask authority from Congress to turn over said property,” to the “trustees in trust of Sitka Indian Industrial School, Alaska.”346 Jackson completed the school, and advocated forcefully for civil government in Alaska, achieved in 1884, resulting in his designation as Alaska’s general agent of education by 1885.347

347 Bender, p. 187–189.
At the same time, Jackson initiated the Comity Plan, a meeting he held with Methodist, Baptist, and Episcopalian representatives to divide Alaska geographically between their denominations—and a few others—in order to effectively missionize it. The establishment of American missions among indigenous groups in Alaska also received public funding, both from the federal and territorial governments.\(^\text{348}\)

Leveraging his position in government to serve his religious mission, Jackson utilized the provision of the Alaska Organic Act stating, “the Secretary of the Interior shall make needful and proper provision for the education of the children of school age in the Territory of Alaska, without reference to race.” Without any significant population of American children in Lingít Aaní, funds funneled through Jackson went directly toward the objective of converting and Americanizing Tlingit children.\(^\text{349}\)

The critical assistance for Jackson’s project came from indigenous men and women who saw value in American education: A Tsimshian man named Clah began religious instruction in Ḵaachx̱an.áak’w in 1876, and when he preached in Sm’algyax, Tlingit teacher Sarah Dickinson translated. People like Dickson, her son Billy, Frances Willard, and Louis and Tillie Paul served as essential cultural brokers between American missionaries and the wider Tlingit population, translating words as well as ideas in order to promote training in English and Christianity, which they saw as essential to the survival of their people and culture in the midst of American impositions.\(^\text{350}\)

Frances Willard numbered among the Tlingit children who attended schools in the American states, such as her young ladies’ seminary in New Jersey and the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania. Through devotion to American education,


Willard’s one-time fiancé Edward Marsden became the first indigenous resident of Alaska granted American citizenship. A Tsimshian born in British Columbia who moved to New Metlakatla when he was eighteen, Marsden went on to become the first indigenous Alaskan to graduate from a four-year college, and the first to complete a program in theology, gaining a license to preach in 1897. Marsden then worked as a missionary among the Tlingit and Haida, carrying on a tradition of several Tsimshian who had pursued that vocation in past and serving as an example to many Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian under the influence of Euroamerican missionaries and teachers.

While few Tlingit pursued American education as far as Willard or Marsden before the twentieth century, many children spent time in Presbyterian or Orthodox schools during the 1880s and 1890s, receiving introductions to Christianity, the English language, and Euroamerican modes of thought. Tlingit parents most often brought their children to the schools of their own volition, seeing potential opportunities, but coercive forces appeared as students were compelled to speak English and even forced to stay at the schools. In the 1887 case In Re Petition of Can-ah-couqua for Habeus Corpus, Judge Dawson ruled that the Presbyterian mission school in Sitka could retain custody of the child Can-ca-dach in spite of his mother Can-ah-couqua’s wishes to remove him. Dawson wrote,

... it is quite evident that the policy of the government is to aid these mission schools in the great Christian enterprise of rescuing from lives of barbarism and savagery these Indian children, and conferring upon them the benefits of an educated civilization.

And, although he questioned the ability of the government to compel children to attend the schools, the judge added,

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352 Beattie, p. 11–12, 80.
It is the experience of those who have been engaged in these Indian schools that, to make them effectual as disseminators of civilization, Indian children should, at a tender and impressionable age, be entirely withdrawn from the camp, and placed under the control of the schools. It is quite obvious that to permit the parents of these children to place them in school under an agreement that they shall remain there for a determinate period, and then withdraw them at their own pleasure, would render all efforts of both the government and missions to civilize them abortive.\textsuperscript{353}

The Waashdan Ḵwáan clearly used both persuasion and coercion to influence Tlingit children, resulting in massive impacts on Tlingit society over the course of subsequent generations.

In order to address the changes surrounding them, Tlingit families and whole communities evaluated their allegiances and the institutions in which they participated. From the mid-1880s to the mid-1890s, Tlingit of the Sheet’ká Ḵwáan, Áak’w Ḵwáan, and Xutsnoowú Ḵwáan converted in large numbers to Orthodox Christianity. Amazingly, the Orthodox Church in Sitka increased its membership from only 117 Tlingit in 1882 to nearly the entire Tlingit population of the settlement (perhaps over 900 people) by the early 1900s. Sergei Kan believes that the vigorous campaign of Presbyterian and U.S. authorities against “old customs” helped drive Tlingit to Orthodoxy. The Orthodox Church was disassociated from the U.S. government—unlike the Presbyterians—and some of its members had served as intermediaries between Tlingit and American settlers. Perhaps most importantly, the Orthodox Church remained more tolerant of indigenous customs, and increased Tlingit membership not only demonstrated that they would align with institutions that served their interests, but it also led to some Tlingitization of the Church.\textsuperscript{354}

In other areas of Lingít Aaní, however, the Orthodox Church had no presence, and in other situations Tlingit dealt with other institutions. Some families


\textsuperscript{354} Kan, “Russian Orthodox Brotherhoods Among the Tlingit,” p. 200–201.
enthusiastically joined the Presbyterian Church or later other religious organizations such as the Salvation Army, in the effort to gain educational and material benefits. Native fishermen began to form cooperative unions, and political organizations appeared later, such as the Alaska Native Brotherhood, begun in Sitka in 1912. In spite of their differing origins, languages, and their often confrontational past relationships, Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian increasingly cooperated with one another and interacted on common terms, a result of Americanization—lending them a common language—and a result of Alaskanization, tying their lands and interests together.

The processes of Americanization and Alaskanization accelerated dramatically among the Tlingit from the establishment of the first Presbyterian mission in Alaska during the late 1870s to the eve of the Klondike Gold Rush in 1896. They proceeded through numerous avenues and in extremely variable circumstances, well beyond the capacity of this project to fully encapsulate. Nevertheless, Americanization and Alaskanization proceeded among the Tlingit for several fundamental reasons, foremost among them the steady loss of Tlingit independence and sovereignty to the colonizing forces of the Waashdan Ḵwáan. As their laws, community autonomy, and resource rights lost ground, Tlingit men and women turned to new economic opportunities and negotiated between institutions that they could both influence and create. They also sought to insure the futures of their children under rapidly changing conditions, guiding them to learn—and become profoundly influenced—in unprecedented settings. From the 1880s onward, these choices led to the adoption of more American ways among the Tlingit, and to acceptance of Alaska and the United States as the political and cultural bodies to which most Tlingit belonged.

Continuing Transformations

In August of 1896, a man named Keish, his sister Shaaw Tláa, and their nephew Kháa Goox—in English known as Skookum Jim Mason, Kate Carmack, and Dawson Charlie—accidentally discovered rich placer gold deposits in Bonanza Creek along the Klondike River. The two siblings had a Tlingit father and a Tagish mother, and so upon finding the gold they staked their claim in the name of Shaaw Tláa’s American husband, George Carmack. 356 This Tlingit–Tagish gold discovery in the Klondike region sparked the northward movement of massive numbers of Americans who had two pathways available to them: The longer—if simpler—route entailed voyaging up the Yukon River by steamship when it was navigable, but the shorter and far more popular route took the new arrivals straight through Lingít Aaní, travelling by ship from Seattle through the Alexander Archipelago to landing points at Skagway and Dyea. From there, would-be prospectors took the mountain passes into the Klondike long used for trade by the Jílḵoot and Jílḵaat Kháan. 357 From 1877 to 1896, the Tlingit experienced an unprecedented barrage of assaults on the autonomy and integrity of their laws, economies, and communities. Analyzing the extent to which these indigenous systems changed or transformed during this time period, however, requires a balanced approach fully cognizant of changes that occurred among the Tlingit both before and after the late nineteenth century.

Some of the most dramatic transformations undergone by Tlingit communities in the final decades of the nineteenth century were the physical relocation and consolidation of former villages. However, one should note that village abandonment and relocation occurred among the Tlingit long before even the eighteenth century, as

a result of wars and conflicts as well as changes in resource utilization or other factors. Before the intensification of Tlingit–American interactions after 1856, diseases had immense impacts on Tlingit communities, leading to the consolidation and reorientation of many groups. Because of the trading sites established by the Russians in their territory, the Sheet’ká Ḵwáan and Shtax’heen Ḵwáan did not relocate, except perhaps to gradually stop frequenting alternate sites away from the main towns. For other Tlingit, however, the 1880s and 1890s saw the abandonment of former homes and the creation of new communities built with American institutions in mind. Canneries like that at Lawáak brought Tlingit to live there permanently, and although in northern areas canneries were built near pre-existing villages at first, by the late 1880s the enterprises selected sites at choice streams, encouraging Tlingit to relocate. Relocation and reorganization continued well after 1896, in places like Haines and Hydaburg that came about as a result of missionary efforts that used the establishment of schools as well as steamer service as incentives.358 Saxman, perhaps the earliest example of a settlement following this type, was founded in 1894.

One of the most striking and important features of Tlingit–American interactions to 1896 remains the small number of people involved: The 1890 U.S. Census records 8,038 people living in Southeast Alaska, fewer than 2,000 classified as “white.” Of these, a majority lived just in Juneau and Douglas—the mining boomtowns. The third largest population of EuroAmericans remained in Sitka, at 280 people, drastically outnumbered by nearly 900 classified as “Indian” or “Mongolian.” Across Lingít Aaní, most communities had less than twenty “white” residents, or in some cases

none at all.\textsuperscript{359} The small number of American settlers residing in Alaska before the Klondike Gold Rush calls into question the extent to which indigenous peoples had truly seen transformations in their lives by 1896. Indeed, Alaska historiography often presents the Klondike Gold Rush as the watershed event in the transformation of the Great Land, after which relations between Natives and Americans changed as never before.\textsuperscript{360} Nevertheless, it only required a few hundred Americans to set in motion many of the patterns of transformation in Tlingit society discussed in this thesis: A few hundred men in the Navy imposed U.S. laws with violent American technologies; only a handful of American entrepreneurs and fishermen established the first industrial canneries and began the rapid-growth processes of commodifying Tlingit fisheries; limited streams of American tourists and miners changed the way Tlingit did business; and finally, just a few Euroamerican men and women began the missions and schools that recruited Tsimshian and then Tlingit and Haida to their cause of Americanization.

Lingít Aaní had by no means become entirely missionized by the 1890s; when the Presbyterian Board of Home Missions commissioned Edward Marsden to work as a missionary at Saxman in 1898, there was no other missionary south of Wrangell in Southeast Alaska, except William Duncan in Metlakatla.\textsuperscript{361} In February of 1899, Marsden purchased 36-foot steamer that became the first mission boat in Southeast Alaska, used especially to access the Haida communities on southern Taan and its islands immediately to the southwest. While these Haida had heavily adapted to the widespread area canneries, they had not experienced any regular preaching of

\textsuperscript{360} Haycox, p. 208.
\textsuperscript{361} Beattie, p. 98. Samuel Saxman had briefly worked at Loring before his death in the canoe accident with Louis Paul and Wah Koo Se in 1886. Kiffer, “Canoe Accident Led To The Founding of Saxman.”
Christianity.\textsuperscript{362} Even in places with long-time missions, Tlingit ways and symbols still had powerful significance: One example arose in 1898 when conflict grew in Sitka between the L’uknax.ádi and the Kiks.ádi over the usage of the frog as a clan crest. As told by the Orthodox Archimandrite Anatolii Kamenskii, an American official had most of the Tlingit involved sign an agreement in 1900 stating that, “since they were now Christians and were ruled by civilized people, they wished from now on to do away with all their tribal and religious emblems.” Nevertheless, just a few days later, members of the Kiks.ádi chopped the L’uknax.ádi display of the frog crest to pieces.\textsuperscript{363} Quite apparently, the Tlingit in Sitka still considered clan crests invaluable, inviolable at.óow whose appropriation was unacceptable.

A small number of Euroamericans in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had proved capable of creating the conditions in which Tlingit made a significant number of adaptations and changes in their lives: Tlingit benefitted from harvesting furs for global trade, and readily adopted new items and technologies such as firearms that changed modes of interaction in Lingít Aaní forever. However, despite the changes they introduced, Euroamerican merchants and Russian settlers did not fundamentally alter the Tlingit worldview or Tlingit independence. From the 1880s onward, Americans imposed on Tlingit society to the extent that a new generation began to lose its understanding of their people’s previous cultural and intellectual autonomy. When this occurred, the Tlingit began to lose some of their worldview, adopting major aspects of American thought and not just material elements or economic roles. Nevertheless, most Tlingit made small decisions to integrate further

\textsuperscript{362} Beattie, p. 104, 109–110.
with American ways based on Tlingit logic—that is, Tlingit ways of thinking about life and its possibilities. At the same time, Tlingit had experienced a great deal of trauma in the outright denial and violation of their culture, their laws, their spiritual values, and the material underpinnings of their communities. These issues remained present in Tlingit life at the end of the nineteenth century as they do to this day.

When investigating the 1890s, many more oral histories become available, particularly from individuals who were children at the time or from people who could speak of their parents’ experiences during the era. These stories do a great deal to highlight ongoing patterns and shed light on the transformations taking place in the lives of a new generation. In her autobiography, Carol Feller Brady related that her parents attended the Sheldon Jackson School in the 1890s, married in 1902, and as school alumni received land to build a home through the Presbyterian Board of National Missions. These facts concisely illuminate the power that the Presbyterian Church cultivated among the Tlingit, using schools and material assets to develop lifelong membership and new ways of life. Many other oral histories highlight the thoughts of Tlingit at this time—an invaluable source of insight.

Gunáak’w, also called Chester Worthington, was an eager student in Kaachxan.áak’w during the 1880s who then studied with Sheldon Jackson in Sitka. In 1923, he escorted an American woman back to the ship carrying President Warren G. Harding and his entourage when it left her behind on the dock. After returning the woman in his boat, Gunáak’w made a declaration to the passengers—the President included:

We Tlingits of Wrangell captured this fine young lady, but we are not like the white people who came to our country and claimed it by purchase. This was our land and our country, we were not at war with our white brother. We captured

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this lady only that we might return her to you so that your country would realize that we have always been friends of the United States. We are glad to return her to the Great White Father and trust that we might always deserve well of you.\textsuperscript{365}

G̱unáak’w’s speech contains a number of highly interesting elements, and how he crafted his words for American ears merits careful consideration. Nevertheless, education in American schools during the late 1800s clearly had a powerful impact on a new generation of Tlingit, allowing them to adapt to participating in American discourse in ways that their parents and grandparents never could.

Myriad questions and other historical elements remain under-studied or unaddressed in the late nineteenth century history of the Tlingit people. One important aspect of the Tlingit experience that merits further exploration is its geographic and seasonal dynamism, including the development of urban centers and changes in patterns of seasonal movement. One may question in much greater detail how well Euroamericans grew to understand Tlingit culture by 1896, including nineteenth century anthropologists and scholars as well as those such as Sheldon Jackson who engineered significant changes in Tlingit society. One might also ask whether the Tlingit or Americans bear the greatest responsibility for the transformations that took place in Lingít Aaní during the late nineteenth century, or whether historians have the capacity to answer such a question at all. These ideas—and many others—deserve much more attention and research. Exploring the extent of changes in Tlingit life over the course of two decades more than a century ago illuminates not only the past, but also the continuing transformations present in Lingít Aaní to this day.

This map shows the communities of Lingít Aaní with over 100 residents, (total population listed), according to the 1890 U.S. Census. Communities are colored according to the group that constituted the majority of the population.\textsuperscript{366}

\textsuperscript{366} Created by the author with reference to U.S. Department of the Interior, Census Office, \textit{Report on Population and Resources of Alaska at the Eleventh Census, 1890} (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office), accessed with the ProQuest Congressional Database. Tlingit and Haida names come from Thornton, \textit{Haa Lëel’k’w Hás Aaní Saax’ù}. The names given by the Census for the places here marked with Tlingit and Haida names are as follows: Klakwan (Tlákw.aan), Chilkoot Mission (Lḵoot), Hindostukee (Yandesit’aḵyé), Huna (Xunaa), Hoochinoo (Aangóon), Sitka (Sheet’ká), Wrangell (Ḵaachxan.áakw), Loring (Kax.āan), Bourroughs Bay (Joonák), Klawak (Lawáak), and Howkan (Gáwk’yaaan).
Originally entitled “Totem Poles at Fort Wrangle” [*sic*], this photograph from 1891 features the house of Kadashan built in luxurious American style, with two large kootéeyaa in front.\(^{367}\)

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\(^{367}\) Alaska's Digital Archives, from the collection Mr. and Mrs. William P. Smith. Photograph Album, 1891, UAA–HMC–0518.
Image 8 - Saxman, c. 1900

The town of Saxman on Revillagigedo Island was established in 1894 as the location for the resettlement of the Taant’a Kwáan and Sanyaa Kwáan. The white building at the center of the photograph has a sign saying “Saxman Merchandise,” and the house at right, while constructed with American methods, bears a halibut crest façade painted in Tlingit style.368

368 Ketchikan Museums, Tongass Historical Society 67.10.5.67.
Conclusions

The concept of a “long nineteenth century” often appears in works of European history, or in global histories like C. A. Bayly’s *The Birth of the Modern World*, which defines the period as beginning in 1780 with the “revolutionary age” and ending in 1914 with the world war that “ripped apart the contemporary system of states and empires.” The Tlingit too experienced a “long nineteenth century,” beginning in 1775 when the expedition of Bodega y Quadra landed at Shee, and ending, perhaps, in 1897 when the first Americans seeking Klondike gold poured into Lingít Aaní following the discovery of Keish and Shaaw Tláa. Alternately, the long Tlingit nineteenth century may stretch all the way to 1912, when the Alaska Native Brotherhood began its powerful growth, serving as the political voice of Tlingit, Haida, and ultimately other indigenous people who lived all across a vast and diverse collection of homelands.

Regardless of the bookends favored, periodization is a theoretical and partially artificial endeavor for historians, and one that typically receives much less assessment than it merits. The act of “fencing the historical landscape,” so to speak, is a critical task, shaping the conceptions of future historians as well as the general public.

To be sure, periodization has a “rigidifying power,” one that has the potential to obscure continuities, reify certain ideas, and even create “intellectual straightjackets” for thinkers. Historians should thus treat that power with care and caution, but in the case of Tlingit history, periodization has not received the attention that it deserves. This thesis has attempted to de–fence and re–fence the landscape of nineteenth–century Tlingit history, viewing its latter half as a time of Tlingit–American interactions.

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372 Green, p. 13.
stretching from 1856–1896. Within those forty years, three clear periods appear, each of them bounded by events that certain Tlingit would have viewed as momentous and that many throughout Lingít Aaní would have understood as highly significant.

In 1856, a large group of Tlingit experienced the traumatic Battle of Port Gamble far from home in Puget Sound, which led to retributive raids soon after. From that time until 1867, the Tlingit had episodic interactions with Americans that differed greatly in nature from the transactions completed when the Waashdan Ḵwáan had plied their waters from the 1790s through the 1830s, during the era of the fur trade. These mid-century, pre-Purchase interactions took place both far away from Lingít Aaní, and also within it, when Americans came to the Shtax’heen by way of British Columbia. In late 1867, the Sheet’ká Ḵwáan noted that a new group of foreigners—the Waashdan Ḵwáan—had come to replace the Russians in their midst. At Kadúḵx̱u a Ḵwáan experienced the novelty of situating themselves near a permanent Euroamerican presence, while at Ḵaachx̱an.áak’w and Sitka Tlingit readjusted to the new presences and the Americans’ actions, including major violence exerted against the Tlingit in three locations in 1869. Limited interactions became the norm thereafter for most clans, until the U.S. Army withdrew completely from Lingít Aaní in 1877, leaving the Tlingit once again with uncontestable sway over their own lands and waters, save for a few plots in the small town of Sitka.

In 1878, American machinery and financial ambitions arrived, seeking salmon to ship southward for global customers. Tlingit successfully had Americans pay for the use of fishing grounds and land, at.óow of the clans and houses, and simultaneously sought payment from the foreign entrepreneurs by taking up labor on the water and in the canneries. Soon, however, the Americans reengaged militarily with Lingít Aaní, using force to protect the brazen pursuit of profit in defiance of Tlingit property laws.
The brutal bombardment of Aangóon in 1882 stood as the last major violent encounter between the groups, and the Organic Act of 1884 then saw that American laws and American settlers would direct the policies and activities of the land. American schools and churches had arrived and grew in number, accompanied by American teachers and missionaries, and staffed in part by Tsimshian immigrants, then by Tlingit adapting to new institutions. Tourism allowed Tlingit to profit from new types of trade, and other industries such as mining provided other ways to commodify Tlingit labor, pulling it away from the subsistence patterns of previous centuries.

In 1896, when Keish and Shaaw Tláa discovered gold in the northern reaches of Lingít Aaní, the long Tlingit nineteenth century closed with a breathless moment on the eve of tens of thousands of newcomers streaming north through the Archipelago. Several generations of Tlingit had experienced substantial changes and pressures since the late 1700s: In response they learned, reacted, adapted, and in sum had kept their culture and their presence in Lingít Aaní alive. They now wore different clothes, built their houses with new materials, and changed where and how they spent their time each day, and throughout the year. However, even when faced with an unprecedented barrage of diverse changes and influences in the final decades of the century, the Tlingit inculcated a strength of mind among their children necessary to fight for their interests, their families, their values and their futures, into the twentieth century and beyond.

Because the thesis investigates a relatively large span of time, it certainly does not capture the full spectrum of diverse Tlingit experiences, particularly on a geographic level. Other topics from this history worth investigating in much deeper detail include the experiences of Tlingit on the Gulf Coast, the Juneau Gold Rush of 1880, and the colonization of inland Tlingit groups whose homes became a part of
British Columbia and Yukon. Nevertheless, the central narrative of this work aims to illuminate the chronology of major themes in Tlingit–American interaction, tracing how they resulted in a loss of Tlingit independence as well as the successful adaptation of many Tlingit to new ways of thinking, working, and living. Hopefully this work will contribute to reinvigorated examination of the Tlingit nineteenth century by challenging accepted timelines, casting doubt on common assumptions, and offering new perspectives to those who would seek them out.

At a ku.éex’ in 1899, an unidentified speaker of the Kaagwaantaan spoke, “No other people in the world/Will be like us, and them/The way we had strength of mind...” The Tlingit nineteenth century clearly lay the groundwork for Alaska’s twentieth century, a century in which many Tlingit retained a strength of mind that helped them lead the way in changing the status of all indigenous peoples in the United States’ northernmost land. Tlingit founded the Alaska Native Brotherhood in 1912 and the Alaska Native Sisterhood soon after, organizations that advocated for Protestant Christianity and the use of English, but also successfully fought to gain rights for indigenous people within American government and society. In 1945, Elizabeth Peratrovich, the Tlingit president of the Alaska Native Sisterhood, gave the powerful testimony in the Alaska Territorial Legislature that sealed the passage of an anti-discrimination act turning back Jim Crow–style racism that had appeared throughout the state, especially in Lingít Aaní. The act, passed through the strength and determination of Peratrovich and her Native brothers and sisters, constituted the first of its kind in the United States, predating the Civil Rights Act by two decades.

373 Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer, eds., Haa Tuwunáagu Yís, for Healing Our Spirit, p. 158.
The Tlingit experiences of the twentieth century as Alaskans and as Americans clearly do not consist only of successes and progress. The colonizing frameworks and processes conceived in the late nineteenth century continued their work for decades, endangering and marginalizing the Tlingit language as well as Tlingit religious practices and worldviews. Ḵ̱éex’ again played a disquieting role in Tlingit history in the 1920s, when Christian converts who had gained control of the village’s leadership convinced the community to tear down and burn all of their kootéeyaa.376 Over time, significant amounts of knowledge were lost as the long–maintained threads of intergenerational cultural transmission became frayed. Today, however, many Tlingit participate in struggles to preserve rights to their resources, reinvigorate the use of indigenous languages, and develop the arts and skills practiced by their ancestors.

Because the United States had never recognized indigenous ownership of Alaska’s lands, Tlingit and other Alaska Natives fought for decades in order to achieve compensation and land recognition. Then, in 1971, the U.S. Congress passed the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), in large part due to a convergence of interests between Natives, government entities involved, and eager oil developers.377 Since its passage, ANCSA has powerfully influenced the political, economic, and social life of Alaska’s indigenous communities. Most critically, ANCSA claimed to legally extinguish all indigenous title to Alaska land, and in return it created various Native corporations at village and regional levels that received a total of 45 million acres of land and over 960 million dollars.378 The system has its strengths and weaknesses, and Tlingit continue to fight for some of the lands due from the settlement while also

questioning whether corporate entities should own their land, rather than some form of Native government. Nevertheless, the position of indigenous Alaskans today reemphasizes the importance of the Tlingit–American interactions during the nineteenth century that created a unique type of society—one built by the labor, knowledge, and adaptations of both Tlingit and Americans. That type of society continues to evolve today in Southeast Alaska, and throughout the Great Land.

Tlingit history has relevance not only to Tlingit, Alaskans, and Canadians, but also to a wider audience seeking insights into indigenous and colonial history as a whole. From the Battle of Port Gamble to the discovery of gold in the Klondike, Tlingit provide unique perspectives on a past filled with mutually beneficial trade, repelled attempts at colonization, conflict over property rights, violence precipitated by cultural difference, and families who made the best of forced assimilation, preserving their culture nonetheless. Those interested in revising Alaska history, surveying global patterns of colonization, examining indigenous understandings of the past, or visiting an extraordinary front in the history of American expansion should turn to the Tlingit experience for valuable revelations. During their own “long nineteenth century,” Tlingit raised new generations to fight for their shuká—their ancestors, their histories, and their futures. For a striking forty years of that century, Tlingit challenged, resisted, accommodated, and benefitted from the presence of the Waashdan Kwáan in their lives and their lands. Doing so, they lived with pride and acted with courage. No other people in the world will be like them.

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379 Worl, “Reconstructing Sovereignty in Alaska.”
Glossary of Tlingit Place Names

**Aangóon** – “Isthmus Town,” anglicized Angoon, located on the west side of Admiralty Island in Xutsnoowú Ḵwáan territory that the U.S. Navy bombarded in 1882

**Lingít Aaní** – meaning “land of the Tlingit,” this historically includes all of present-day Southeast Alaska as well as parts of Southcentral Alaska, British Columbia, and Yukon (Note that it can also mean “world,” as Lingít means “human being.”)

**Ḵaachxan.áak’w** – name for the site of the Russian Dionisievskii Redoubt, later the British Fort Stikine, where a Tlingit settlement grew that later hosted the American Fort Wrangel and eventually became the town of Wrangell

**Ḵadúḵxuka** – a village on a small island at the very southeast edge of Lingít Aaní that served as one of the primary homes of the Taant’a Ḵwáan and as the site of the U.S. Fort Tongass, built there in 1868

**Laaxaayík** – name for Yakutat Bay, one of the largest bays in Lingít Aaní, which opens onto the Gulf of Alaska and lies at the heart of Yaakwdáat Ḵwáan territory

**Lxex’wxu.aan** – literally “Town Where No One Sleeps,” Lxex’wxu.aan was the principal village of the Ḵéex’ Ḵwáan until its destruction in 1869. The present–day town of Kake stands in the same location.

**Shee** – one of the names for Baranof Island, the fourth largest island in the Alexander Archipelago, home primarily to the Sheet’ká Ḵwáan and the island in Lingít Aaní longest occupied by Euroamericans

**Sheet’ká** – name for the settlement established by the Sheet’ká Ḵwáan alongside Novoarkhangelsk in the 1820s, which later became the city of Sitka

**Shtax’héen** – the Stikine River, the longest river that flows through Lingít Aaní and the namesake of the Shtax’héen Ḵwáan

**Sít Eeti Ėegyí** – most recent Tlingit name for Glacier Bay, part of Xunaa Ḵwáan territory

**Sit’ḵú** – with a name that means “Glacier Area,” Sitkoh Bay is located on Chichagof Island in Xutsnoowú Ḵwáan territory

**Tàakw.àani** – Taant’a Ḵwáan site on Annette Island that became New Metlakatla for Tsimshian arriving from British Columbia

**Taaan (Tàan)** – literally meaning “sea lion,” this is a name for Prince of Wales Island, the largest island in the Alexander Archipelago, shared primarily by the Hinya Ḵwáan and the Kaigani Haida, who immigrated to the island from Haida Gwaii

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380 Thornton, *Haa Léelk’w Hás Aaní Saax’ú*.
381 Jones, p. 13.
382 The Shtax’héen is slightly shorter than the Skeena River, which flows through Gitxsan and Tsimshian territory.
Glossary of Tlingit Terms

A geení – seal or sea lion tail flippers

Anóoshi – Tlingit word for Russians

At.óow – social concept meaning “owned things” that could be individual or collective property of either a material or intangible nature—places, monuments, stories, and names, for example

Dleit káa – white men (Dleit also means “snow.”)

Hit – house, in both a physical and social sense, i.e. a kin group inhabiting a large shared structure

Ixt’ – a Tlingit shaman, healer, or medicine man

Kóoshdaakáa – land otter men, legendary creatures typically viewed as shape shifters capable of luring people to their deaths

Kootéeyaa – totem poles, monuments carved of red cedar that could commemorate individuals, events, or stories

Ku.éex’ (koo.éex’) – Literally meaning “to invite,” a ku.éex’ is a potlatch, the most important type of event among Northwest Coast civilizations. (The word potlatch derives from words in Nuu-chah-nulth and Chinuk wawa meaning “to give.”)

Kwáan – a homeland, a unit of social geography used by Tlingit to identify their origins (also used to describe some groups of non-Tlingit people, such as the Waashdan Kwáan)

Naaxein – Chilkat robes, (sometimes called blankets), intricately woven with goat hair and cedar bark. The technique originated among the Tsimshian, but became named for the Jilkaat Kwáan, the last people to practice it.

Shuká – a word meaning “ancestors,” “history,” or “future,” based on the Tlingit conception that the deceased move forward and experience the world ahead, in contrast to the European view of the dead lying behind, in the past

Tlawk – a period conceptualized by the Tlingit as a time in the past when extraordinary events occurred, including the formation of the natural world as they knew it

Waashdan Kwáan – Tlingit name for people from the United States, derived from interpreting the word Boston, the port many Americans sailed from

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383 Edwards.
Glossary of Other Terms and Abbreviations

**American** – used in this thesis only to refer to citizens of the United States, not the indigenous peoples of North America (Although many Europeans referred to the indigenous of the Americas as “Americans,” the Euroamericans of the U.S. appropriated the term.)

**Euroamerican** – used in this thesis as a very broad term encompassing all non-indigenous people associated with or originating from Europe, European colonies in the Americas, or the United States of America

**Creole** – used in Russian America and Alaska refer to persons born of or descended from unions of Russian and indigenous parents

**HBC** – the Hudson’s Bay Company, a corporate agent of British colonial interests in North America that had substantial interactions with the Tlingit

**Kolosh** – Russian appellation for the Tlingit, derived from the Sugpiaq word for labret

**Promyshlenniki** – literally meaning “industrialists,” promyshlenniki were entrepreneurs and fur traders of varied ethnic origins who drove Russian imperial influence eastward across Siberia and into the North Pacific

**RAC** – the Russian–American Company, a corporate entity created in 1799 that held the sole authority of the Russian Empire in North America
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