

Tsemsyaenhl-get:
Sixteen Battles in the Military History of the Nine Allied Tsimshian Tribes

by

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BA, University of Victoria, 2011

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

There is a deeply held bias in Northwest Coast scholarly literature that suggests pre-contact Indigenous warfare was primarily made up of simplistic nighttime sneak attacks to raid for slaves or treasure. This thesis examines sixteen battles in the pre-contact history of the Nine Allied Tsimshian Tribes to show that there were sieges, battlefield maneuvers were complex and coordinated with multiple forces, combat was well organised, had strong leadership, and the Nine Tribes utilised these sophisticated strategies and tactics in warfare to achieve broader geopolitical goals.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my Grandmother, Sheila Southworth (AKA Bam), because no matter how difficult things got she never let me give up.

Introduction

This thesis is about the military strategies and tactics of the Coast Tsimshian Nine Allied Tribes. At the time of contact the Nine Tribes were one of the most powerful polities on the northern coast of what is now British Columbia. The purpose of this study is simple: correct the idea that Indigenous people on the coast only carried out simplistic night time sneak attacks on their enemies to raid for booty and slaves.

This is not to suggest that raids or ambushes are not legitimate forms of sophisticated warfare, there are numerous examples of their effectiveness even into the modern era.¹ However, the way raids have been characterised in the literature on the Northwest coast suggests authors saw it more as “primitive” warfare than tactically sophisticated.

For example, a raid, or depredation, is not intended to capture terrain. The attacking force always retreats to a previously defended position before the enemy can counter-attack. It is also typically a tactic of irregular warfare and guerrillas. The primary objectives are to demoralise the enemy, plunder, destroy specific targets, capture specific enemy combatants or to gather intelligence. In other words, raids may support broader strategic aims of a fighting force, but they do not constitute the decisive blow necessary for victory.

This interpretation closely aligns with one of the Northwest coast’s iconic ethnographies, Thomas McIlwraith’s observation on the Bella Coola. In it he wrote:

In the old days wars between the coastal tribes were common, but though slaves were taken freely, land was never seized; such is unthinkable to the Bella Coola.²

¹ George Washington’s attacks on the British being a prime example used by military historians to show the effectiveness of such tactics. See Michael Harris, *Brandywine: A Military History of the Battle that lost Philadelphia but Saved America, September 11, 1777* (El Dorado: Savas Beattie, 2014).

² Thomas McIlwraith, *The Bella Coola Indians (reissued from 1948)*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press: 1992), pg. 133.

We will see that this characterisation cannot be applied to the Nine Tribes and some authors have taken McIlwraith's observation to apply to the whole coast. This thesis uses the Nine Tribes as a case study to suggest that these conceptions of pre-contact warfare are not universal on the Northwest Coast.

Warfare has been well documented within the archaeological, anthropological, ethnographic, oral traditions and historical writing on the Pacific Northwest Coast.³

³ Kenneth Ames and Herbert Maschner, *Peoples of the Northwest Coast: Their Archaeology and Prehistory* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999); William Angelbeck, "Conceptions of Coast Salish Warfare," In *Be of Good Mind: Essays on the Coast Salish*, by Bruce Miller (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007); William Angelbeck, "They Recognize no Superior Chief: Power, Practice, Anarchism and Warfare in the Coast Salish Past" (UBC unpublished PhD thesis, Vancouver, 2009); William Angelbeck and Ian Cameron, "The Faustian Bargain of Technological Change: Evaluating the socioeconomic effects of the bow and arrow transition in the Coast Salish past," *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 36 (2014); William Angelbeck and Eric McLay, "The Battle at Maple Bay: The Dynamics of Coast Salish Political Organisation through Oral Histories," *Ethnohistories* 58, no. 3 (2011). Kyle Bocinsky, "Extrinsic Site Defensibility and Landscape Based Archaeological Inference: An Example from the Northwest Coast," *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 35 (2014); Donald Callaway, "Raiding and Feuding Among Western North American Indians" (PhD Thesis, University of Michigan, 1978); Helen Codere, *Fighting With Property: A Study of Kwakwaka'wakw Potlatching and Warfare 1792-1930* (New York: JJ Augustin Publisher, 1950); Gary Coupland, "Warfare and Social Complexity on the Northwest Coast," In *Cultures in Conflict Current Archaeological Perspectives*, ed. Claire Tkaczuk and Brian Vivian (Calgary: The University of Calgary Archaeological Association, 1989); Jerome Cybulski, "Human Biology," In *Handbook of North American Indians, Volume 7, Northwest Coast*, by Wayne Suttles (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990); Jerome Cybulski, "The Greenville Burial Ground," *Archaeological Survey of Canada*, No. 146 (National Museums of Canada, 1992); Jerome Cybulski, "Culture Change, Demographic History, and Health and Disease on the Northwest Coast," In *In the Wake of Contact: Biological Responses to Conquest*, ed. Clark Larsen, & Clark Milner (New York: Wiley-Ness, 1994); Jerome Cybulski, "Trauma and Warfare At Prince Rupert Harbour," *The Midden* 31 (1999); Jerome Cybulski, "Conflict on the northern Northwest Coast: 2,000 years plus of bioarchaeological evidence," In *The Routledge Handbook of the Bioarchaeology of Human Conflict*, ed. Christopher Knusel and Martin Smith (London: Routledge, 2014); Jerome Cybulski, "Updating the Warrior Cache: Timing the Evidence for Warfare at Prince Rupert Harbour," In *Violence and Warfare Among Hunter-Gatherers*, by Mark Allen and Terry Jones (Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2014); Elsie Francis Dennis, "Indian Slavery in the Pacific Northwest," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 31 (1931); Leland Donald, "Was the Nuu-Cah-nulth-aht (Nootka) Society based on Slave Labour?" In *Development of Political Organization in Native America*, ed. Elizabeth Tooke (Washington DC: Proceedings of the American Ethnological Society, 1979); Leland Donald, "Slave Raiding on the Pacific Coast," In *Native People, Native Lands*, ed. Bruce Cox (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1987); Leland Donald, "The Slave Trade on the Northwest Coast of North America," *Research in Economic Anthropology* 6 (1984); Robin Fischer, "Arms and Men on the Northwest Coast, 1774-1825," *BC Studies* 29, Spring (1976); Robin Fischer, "Indian Warfare and Two Frontiers: A Comparison of British Columbia and Washington Territory during Early Years of Settlement," *Pacific Historical Review* 50 (1981); David Jones, *Native North American Armor, Shields, and Fortifications* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004); Grant Keddie, "Fortified Defensive Sites and Burial Cairns of the Songhees Indians," *The Midden* (1984); Grant Keddie, "Fortified Defensive Sites and Burial Cairns of the Songhees Indians," *Discovery* (Friends of the British Columbia Provincial Museum and Quarterly Review) 13, no. 2 (April 1985); Grant Keddie, *Archaeological Site Inspection at the Finlayson Point Site (DeRu 23), Beacon Hill Park, Victoria, B.C.* (Victoria, B.C.: Archaeology Branch, Ministry of Small Business, Tourism and Culture, 1995); Grant Keddie, "Aboriginal Defensive Sites: Four Parts," *Discovery* (1996); Patricia Lambert, "The Archaeology of War: A North American Perspective," *Journal of Archaeological Research* 10 (2002); Charles Lillard, "Revenge of the Pebble Town People: A Raid on the Tlingit As Told ed. Richard of the Middle-gitins to John Swanton," *BC Studies* 115/116, no. Autumn/Winter (1997/98); Joan Lovisek, "Aboriginal Warfare on the Northwest Coast: Did the Potlatch Replace Warfare?" In *North American Indigenous Warfare and Ritual Violence*, ed. Richard Chacon

In addition, the a large projectile point embedded in the pelvis of the 8900 year old remains of the Kennewick man suggest it was also a very old phenomena.⁴ However, there is a persistent analysis within the literature that portrays warfare as politically insignificant, holding little strategic value, and tactically irrelevant beyond small scale surprise and ambush tactics-in Helen Codere's words, it was "not much more than a game."⁵

This analysis is surprising when we consider that scholars like Brian Ferguson argued that Pacific Northwest Coast warfare was connected to the development and maintenance of the potlatch system, Herbert Maschner and Katherine Reedy-Maschner, Madonna Moss and Jon Erlandson all felt warfare had a significant influence on village design and location, David Schaepe saw military defensive

and Ruben Mendoza (2007); Joan Lovisek, *The Lax Kw'alaams Indian Band and Others v. The Attorney General of Canada and Her Majesty the Queen in Right of the Province of British Columbia* (Surrey BC: Prepared for Department of Justice BC Regional Office Vancouver BC, 2007); Nathan Lowrey, "An ethnoarchaeological inquiry into the functional relationship between projectile point and armor technologies of the Northwest Coast," *North American Archaeologist* 20 (1999); George Macdonald and Richard Inglis, "An Overview of the North Coast History Project, 1966-1980," *BC Studies* Winter 48 (1980-81); Susan Marsden, "Defending the Mouth of the Skeena: Perspectives on Tsimshian Tlingit Relations," In *Perspectives on Northwest Coast Prehistory, Mercury Series Paper 160*, ed. Jerome Cybulski (Hull: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2001); Susan Marsden, *Defending the Mouth of the Skeena: Perspectives on Tsimshian Tlingit Relations*. (Prince Rupert: Tin Ear Press, 2000); Andrew Martindale and Kisha Supernant, "Quantifying the defensiveness of defended sites on the Northwest Coast of North America," *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 28 (2009); Herbert Maschner, "The Evolution of Northwest Coast Warfare," In *Troubled Times: Violence and Warfare in the Past*, ed. David Frayer and Debra Martin (Toronto: Gordon and Breach Publishers, 1997); Herbert Maschner and Katherine Reedy-Maschner, "Raid, Retreat, Defend, Raid, Retreat, Defend: The Archaeological and Ethnohistory of Warfare on the Pacific Rim," *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 17 (1998); Katherine Reedy-Maschner and Herbert Maschner, "Marauding Middlemen: Western Expansion and Violent Conflict in the Subarctic," *Ethnohistory* 46, no. 4 (1999); Donald Mitchell, "Excavations At Two Trench Embankments in the Gulf of Georgia Region," *Syesis* 1 (1968); Donald Mitchell, "Predatory Warfare, Social Status, and the North Pacific Slave Trade," *Ethnology* 23 (1984); Donald Mitchell, "Changing Fortunes: Kwakiutl-Salish Frontiers of the Central Northwest Coast," In *Proceedings of the Circum-Pacific Prehistory Conference*, ed. Dale Cross (Seattle: Circum-Pacific Prehistory Conference, 1989); Madonna Moss and Jon Erlandson, "Forts, Refuge Rocks, and Defensive Sites: The Antiquity of Warfare along the North Pacific Coast of North America," *Arctic Anthropology* 29, no. 2 (1992); Paul Prince, "Artefact Distribution at the Kitwanga Hill Fort: Protohistoric Competition and Trade on the Upper Skeena," In *Perspectives on Northwest Coast Prehistory. Mercury Series Paper 160*, ed. Jerome Cybulski (Hull: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2001); David Schaepe, "Rock Fortifications: Archaeological Insights into Precontact Warfare and Sociopolitical Organisation among the Sto:Lo of the Lower Fraser River Canyon, BC," *American Antiquity* 71, no. 4 (2006); Kisha Supernant, *Inscribing Identities on the Landscape: A Spatial Exploration of Archaeological Rock Features in the Lower Fraser Canyon* (UBC unpublished PhD Thesis, Vancouver, 2002); Morris Swadesh, "Motivations in Nootka Warfare," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 4, no. 1 (1948); Joan Townsend, Firearms Against Native Arms: A Study in Comparative Efficiencies with an Alaskan Example," *Arctic Anthropology* 20, no. 2 (1983).

⁴ R. E. Taylor, Donna L. Kirner, John R. Southon, and James C. Chatters, "Radiocarbon Dates of Kennewick Man," *Science* vol. 280, is. 5367 (22 May 1998): 1171.

⁵ Codere, *Fighting With Property*.

features as an important lens from which to evaluate governmental organisation among the Sto:Lo, and William Angelbeck and Eric McLay in their “The Battle of Maple Bay” revealed significant geopolitical developments in the history of Coast Salish and Kwakwaka’wakw people in their battle history.⁶

European military historians have long accepted the power and importance of war in shaping and changing society. The Homeric epics, Peloponnesian Wars, Alexander the Great, Rome, Napoleon, Prussia, Bismarck, the Nazis, the Cold War—these and many others have all figured prominently in European history and European identity. It is strange that with the focus of “agency” in many Pacific Northwest Coast studies that scholars have not used warfare to explore Indigenous “agency” more thoroughly. As Bill Angelbeck commented, “I cannot think of anything more agential than the defense of one’s community.”⁷

This study will show there is an implicit bias to characterising Indigenous warfare as ‘petty’, ‘primitive’ or lacking sophistication. The origin of the bias can be found not in the evidence, but in Western philosophical thought on war. An overriding concern with debates about human beings and whether we are naturally warlike or peaceful, the origins of war, or if pre-contact societies practiced “True War” have prevented a proper accounting of Indigenous military history.

The evidence suggests that pre-contact warfare was sophisticated, strategically orientated and involved large formalised battles as well as smaller lower intensity conflicts. Wars were fought over important resources, control of strategic trade routes, dominance over prime subsistence areas or access to luxury resources, as well as for revenge or to loot the enemy.

Land, sea and riverine based territories were often solidified after battle or lay at the core of conflicts over ownership and trespass. At the same time, emotional motivations, like revenge for the murder or molestation of a relative were also primary

⁶ Brian Ferguson, “Warfare and Redistributive Exchange on the Northwest Coast,” In *The Development of Political Organization in Native North America*, ed. Elisabeth Tooke (Washington DC: American Ethnological Society, 1983); Schaepe, “Rock Fortifications”; Maschner, “The Evolution of Northwest,” Moss and Erlandson, “Forts, Refuge Rocks”; Angelbeck and McLay, “The Battle at Maple Bay.”

⁷ Angelbeck, “They Recognize no Superior Chief,” 4.

causes to violent conflict and these events could also be fabricated to justify attacking neighbours as part of larger strategies. Like all societies, Indigenous warfare was a mixture of the rational and irrational and fought for many different reasons.

This study is inspired by Barry Gough's comment that "all too often Northwest Coast Natives have been robbed of the fullness and totality of their past capabilities by the prevalent refusal to see them as warrior(s)."⁸ The people who lived/live here were part of powerful expansive polities; warfare was not just a method to loot for treasure or raid for slaves. It was a way to project power, remove corrupt rulers, and perhaps most of all, to defend vital territories, resources, and family members.

This thesis is also motivated by comments made by Donald Mitchell in his paper on *Sebassa's Men*, where he points out that all too often ethnographies provide clear explanations of cultural traits yet when we examine the primary sources little or no details exist to support these ethnographic explanations.⁹

We will see through the examination of sixteen battle narratives that the primary source material, in the form of *Adanx* ('true tellings' in Smalgyax), do not support the suggestion that pre-contact warfare was made up of night time sneak attacks designed to raid for booty and slaves.

There are three sections to these arguments:

Section one deals with the anthropology of warfare and explores how certain idealised and essentialised views of Indigenous people have created an implicit assumption that people without a formal state, modern weaponry or agriculture do not practice "True War," and cannot have sophisticated martial institutions. These views are compared to the literature focused on warfare for the Northwest Coast. We will see that there is a pervasive bias towards interpreting coastal warfare as nothing more than constant "petty raiding," but by the end of the twentieth century there was a growing recognition amongst archaeologists of the importance of warfare in understanding Indigenous history.

⁸ Barry Gough, "Reviews: Indian Slavery in the Pacific Northwest by Robert Ruby and John Brown," *The Canadian Historical Review* vol. 76, no. 22 (June 1995), 284.

⁹ Donald Mitchell, "Sebassa's Men," In *The World Sharp as a Knife: An Anthology in Honour of Wilson Duff*, ed. Donald Abott (Victoria: British Columbia Museum, 1981), 79.

Section two looks at the sources and methods employed in this thesis. This section also discusses the *Adamx* (Tsimshian oral records) and how they are used here. There is also an “ethnographic briefing” that introduces readers to the ‘need-to-know’ traditional ethnographic traits of the Nine Tribes that are necessary to understand some aspects of chapter three.

Section three is an historical narrative that begins roughly 3500 BP and explores sixteen battles from five wars. The narratives are reconstructed from numerous *Adamx* and followed by an analysis of the military tactics and strategies used in each battle.

Chapter 1 - The Anthropology of Warfare

The study of warfare among pre-contact societies has been a highly controversial topic in many areas of the world. For example, in the American Southwest it was generally agreed that there was no violent conflict until 1996 when Lawrence Keeley published a scathing critique of anthropology's "pacification" of Indigenous history.¹⁰ Richard Chacon and Ruben Mendoza have also explored how scholars overlooked evidence of violent conflict among a number of peoples stretching from Mexico to South America.¹¹

Despite these controversies, the existence of warfare on the Northwest Coast has never been controversial among ethnographers and anthropologists. By the 1990s Northwest Coast warfare was increasingly seen as causally affecting broader patterns of settlement, subsistence procurement and even social stratification. Despite this recognition many still considered it to be primarily made up of primitive raiding and feuding.

This chapter explores trends in Western thought, from basic philosophical debates on the innate nature of human violence, the anthropology of warfare in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the bias of military historians to state level conflicts, and their influence on Northwest Coast literature regarding warfare.

A Bias

Persistent idealised or essentialised characterisations of Indigenous people within Western thought is an ongoing issue within scholarship and society at large. Writings focused on Indigenous warfare have been no exception to these trends.¹²

¹⁰ Lawrence Keeley, *War Before Civilization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). Also see Christy Turner and Jacqueline Turner, *Man Corn: Cannibalism and Violence in the Prehistoric Southwest*, (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1999).

¹¹ Richard Chacon and Ruben Mendoza, *The Ethics of Anthropology and Amerindian Research: Reporting on Environmental Degradation and Warfare* (New York: Springer, 2012).

¹² David Dye and M. Franklin Keel. "The Portrayal of Native American Violence and Warfare: Who Speaks for the Past?" In *The Ethics of Anthropology and Amerindian Research: Reporting on Environmental Degradation and Warfare*, ed. Richard Chacon and Ruben Mendoza (New York: Springer, 2012), 4.

Evidence of Indigenous armed conflict has been minimized, even denied,¹³ but more often idealised. For example, Russel Means and Marvin Wolf wrote that “before the whites came, our conflicts were brief and almost bloodless, resembling far more a professional football game than the lethal annihilations of European Conquest.”¹⁴

Richard Chacon and Ruben Mendoza concurred with Means and Wolf that the imagery of “Indian savageness” was propagated to justify the expansion of Western power into their territories, but they also cautioned not to stretch the revisionist approach too far.¹⁵ Downplaying Indigenous warfare obscures a vivid history of life and death, geopolitical drama, territorial conquest and resistance to colonial conquest.

The idea that war was nothing more than a sport does a significant injustice to those people who gave their lives fighting for their communities. The trivialisation of Indigenous warfare is not just a matter of semantics and academic debate; it is harmful. If Indigenous warfare is couched in language like “primitive,” “petty” or “unimportant” then it can be dismissed. If Indigenous warfare is not serious then the losses or gains from combat are marginalised and if Indigenous people cannot wage “True War” their loss of life is dehumanised and unimportant.

Within the socio-political context of land claims and self-determination the importance of clearly understanding Indigenous warfare as more than petty feuds or simplistic raids becomes even more critical. As David Schaepe has written, the:

emphasis on the passivity of Aboriginal peoples and the diminution of “warfare” to the non-political level of “raiding” tends to predominate within the context of Native land claims and self-governance issues. Notably, one criterion in the colonial definition of “legitimate” land acquisition is via defeat in warfare, per the 1763 Royal Proclamation of King George. This colonial perspective was recently embedded in the Supreme Court of Canada’s *Delgamuukw* Decision of 1997 identifying the defense of an Aboriginal territory as a defining

¹³ For denial see Ann Fienup-Riordan, *Eskimo Essays: Yup'ik Lives and How We See Them* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990) reporting on Yup'ik leaders claim that killings never occurred until after contact.

¹⁴ Russel Means and Marvin Wolf, *Where White Men Fear to Tread: The Autobiography of Russel Means* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 16.

¹⁵ Chacon and Mendoza, “Ethical Considerations.”

element in the legal test of Aboriginal title. A dominant colonial perspective suggesting the passivity of Northwest Coast [...] peoples and alluding to a failure to protect lands in combat erodes the concept of Aboriginal land title and promotes the Aboriginal concession of land to colonial occupancy.¹⁶

There is a profound gap in our understanding of Indigenous people's military history. The portrayal of Indigenous people as "fighting with food," while probably appropriate after the 1860s, is not convincing when we examine the pre-contact records of Indigenous people.¹⁷

Defining war is a challenging task and the lack of a definition has been a critical issue even in recent memory. For example, the United Nations Security Council failed to act when 'ethnic cleansing' was evident in the former Yugoslavia because they could not agree on what constituted "True War." Similar inaction came about during the Hutu mass killing of Tutsis in Rwanda just four years later and again in Darfur in 2003. The UN recognized genocide as a punishable offence under international law, but found itself unable to act due to an inability to define "war."

Why has "war" been so difficult to define? In part, it is because the debate over the antiquity of warfare and human violence is both longstanding and highly controversial; strong emotions are wrapped up in the scholarship.¹⁸ But, there is also a bias that is deeply rooted in Western thought. It is "perfectly"¹⁹ summarised by the competing ideological views of philosophers Thomas Hobbes and Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

¹⁶ Schaepe, "Rock Fortifications," 673.

¹⁷ "Fighting with Food" is a play on Helen Codere's "Fighting with Property" (Codere, *Fighting With Property*).

¹⁸ For example, at the 1997 Ford Foundation Fellows Conference Ruben Mendoza was physically assaulted by a conference Fellow in response to his presentation on Mesoamerican warfare. See (Chacon and Mendoza, "Ethical Considerations," 10) Also see their chapters titled "Attempts to Suppress Data on Indigenous Warfare and Violence" and "Culture of Accusation."

¹⁹ Neil Whitehead, "A History of Research on Warfare in Anthropology-Reply to Keith Otterbein," *American Anthropologist* 102, no. 4 (2000), 835. Keeley also identified the Enlightenment origins of the debate, but also suggested it was even older than the 18th Century.

Like many prejudices it is deeply contradictory; on the one hand, there is the “peaceful savage” and on the other, the violent, fierce and warlike savage. Both perspectives however, see “True” war as fundamentally connected to the level of “civilisation.” “War,” for Western thought, was intrinsically tied to statehood.

Interpretations by Western scholars of how non-Europeans have waged war reveals more about Western perceptions of other cultures than about the cultures themselves. Judgements about how others employed violence “have underpinned nation-building projects, systems rooted in a sense of racial or ethnic superiority, and imperial ideologies.”²⁰

Writing about ‘savage’ or ‘primitive’ warfare reflects the changing ideas of Western thought on Indigenous people. War, can be used to explore how Western thought has defined itself in relation to the “savage” ‘other’ especially during the period of Imperial expansion. Warfare, or violence, is used to distinguish between the ‘civilised’ and the ‘primitive,’ these are not; however, absolute ontological categories.

History of thought on Warfare

Scholarly knowledge of prehistoric and pre-state warfare has steadily grown over the last 60 years, but in the mid-late 1990s the topic had a major resurgence. To a large degree the 1990s resurgence was spurred by Lawrence Keeley’s book *War Before Civilisation* where he tackled post Second World War anthropology and archaeology for artificially ‘pacifying’ the past. We can also speculate that the conflict in the former Yugoslavia had a strong influence on this theorising.

Keeley claimed that anti-war biases among scholars had led to the denial of Indigenous violence especially in the ancient past.²¹ While there had been a growing recognition of warfare in the academic literature he went further and argued that scholars had dramatically underestimated the frequency and devastating consequences of violence in “primitive” or “noncivilized” peoples. He argued that academics were

²⁰ Richard Reid, “Revisiting Primitive War: Perception of Violence and Race in History,” *War and Society* 26, no. 2 (2007), 24.

²¹ Keeley, *War Before Civilization*.

desperately seeking idyllic peaceful people to counter a Western world rife with violence and war.

Helle Vandkilde acknowledged similar problems in European archaeology and demonstrated that ‘warriors’ and warfare, even if they were acknowledged, are rarely given agency in change over time.²² There is little question that much of the writing that downplayed Indigenous warfare was a “foil” for criticisms of Western political and cultural institutions.²³ In the most Eurocentric way these writings had less to do with Indigenous people and their warfare than ideological debates within Western thought.

Keeley identified the 1960s as the origin of what is known as the “peaceful savage myth.” Keeley attempted to connect the anti-war movements of the 1960s with an anti-war bias in scholarship. Keith Otterbein heavily critiqued Keeley’s ‘history of anthropological thought on warfare’. He did not disagree that there had been a pacification of pre-historical societies, but Otterbein argued the origins of the myth could be traced to his “Foundation Period (c. 1850-1920)” and took hold during the 1930s when anthropologists romanticised “their people.”²⁴ Neil Whitehead went further and said that while Otterbein’s attempt to historicise anthropological research was “quite appropriate,” he “fail[ed] to recognize the deep historical origins and ideological trappings of this debate.”²⁵

Pinpointing the exact moment when Western thought conceived of the “peaceful savage” and the “warlike savage” is probably not realistic; however, by the sixteenth century we can see that the study and interpretation of warfare in Europe was becoming intrinsically bound up in perceptions of the world outside of Europe.

Michel de Montaigne’s *On Cannibals* written in the 1570s conceived of Brazilian Indigenous warfare as simple and pure, even “beautiful.”²⁶ He felt there was no

²² Helle Vandkilde, “Archaeology and War: Presentations of Warriors and Peasants in Archaeological Interpretations,” In *Warfare and Society*, ed. Ton Otto, Henrik Tharnae and Helle Vandkilde (Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 2006).

²³ Chacon and Mendoza, “Ethical Considerations,” 4.

²⁴ Keith Otterbein, “A History of Research on Warfare in Anthropology,” *American Anthropologist* 101, no. 4 (2000), 795.

²⁵ Whitehead, “A History of Research,” 835.

²⁶ Michel Montaigne, “On Cannibals,” In *Essays*, ed. JM Cohen (London: Penguin, 1993), 114-115; Ronald Wright, *Stolen Continents: the Indian story* (London: Pimlico, 1993); Thomas More, *Utopia*, ed. R. Robinson (Ware: Wordsworth, 1997).

economic or material gain, their warfare was based on valour and courage alone. He strongly juxtaposed this form of warfare to that of Europe, one based only on the physical and access to the most destructive weaponry. Montaigne used Brazilian Indigenous warfare as a tool to critique war in Europe. His goal was not to faithfully explore the form and meaning of Brazilian warfare, but show his readers, European readers, the folly of European warfare.

Thomas More's *Utopia* captured these romanticised ideas of warfare and many of his themes have been repeated in the centuries that followed. More's Utopians detested war, but they had a form of righteous war, war to liberate or right wrongs.²⁷ Utopian war, therefore, was not based on physical prowess (or devastating weaponry) it was war of intelligence and wit; war by strategy. Utopian war was best when "they vanquish and oppress their enemies by craft and deceit... for with bodily strength (say they) bears, lions, boars, wolves, dogs, and other wild beasts do fight."²⁸

More's set up of the "violent savage" is most apparent in his juxtaposition of the Utopians to their neighbours the Zapoletes who embodied the idea of a 'wild people' lurking in the shadows at the periphery of civilisation.²⁹ The Zapoletes were tolerated as a necessity for fighting Utopian wars, but given the chance the Utopians

²⁷ More, *Utopia*, 106-108.

²⁸ More, *Utopia*, 106-107.

²⁹ One passage relates strongly to writing on Northwest Coast warfare. More wrote that the Zapoletes were "hideous, savage, and fierce, dwelling in wild woods... They be of hard nature, able to abide and sustain heat, cold, and labour, abhorring all delicate dainties, occupying no husbandry nor tillage of the ground." Within Northwest Coast ethnographies 'warriors' are often at the periphery of settlements, they endure the elements with as little protection as possible, they routinely dunk themselves in frigid waters or flay themselves with hemlock branches. They are surly and impolite. See for example, (Franz Boas, *Kwakwilt Ethnography*, ed. Helen Codere (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 2-4), Boas wrote: "They were taught to be cruel and treacherous and to disregard all the rules of decent social behaviour. A boy who was being trained to become a warrior was treated roughly by his father who instructed him to insult and maltreat boys and to seduce girls. He was carefully trained in running, swimming, diving, and in the use of weapons of war. They strengthened themselves by bathing in very cold weather." And (Franz Boas, *The Religion of the Kwakwilt Indians* (New York: AMS Press, 1969), 194-195) or (Codere, *Fighting With Property*, 99 and 106). Also see (Angelbeck, "They Recognize no Superior Chief," 110, 117, 120) and (Jay Miller, "First Nations Forts, Refuges, and War Lord Champions Around the Slaish Sea," *Journal of Northwest Anthropology* 45, no. 1 (2011), 74) for the segregation of Coast Salish warriors. See (Tylor Richards, *Under the Cedar Mat: Uncovering Warriors in Traditional and Contemporary Sto:lo Society* (Victoria: University of Victoria Sto:lo Field School, 2011) for the segregation of Sto:Lo warriors from mainstream society. Nevertheless, see (Schaepe, "Rock Fortifications," 679) for a more complicated view of the "necessary evil of warriors." Also see John Swanton, "The Haida of Queen Charlotte Islands: Reprint from Vol. 5 Part 1 of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition," in *Memoirs: American Museum of Natural History Volume VIII*, (New York: GE Stechert & Co., 1905), pg. 90 "Pitch Town People" for a similar characterisation.

would have “rid out of the world all the foul stinking den of the most wicked and cursed people.”³⁰

We can see More defining Europe in opposition to the ‘other.’ The other fought like animals, was “foul” and deserved to die fighting the Utopian ‘righteous’ wars. While a work of fiction there can be little denial of what More was about. We can see the early justifications for the brutal treatment Indigenous people would receive at the hands of expanding European empires in their quest to wage ‘just’ wars in the name of the civilisation.

The same time as More was fantasizing about Utopians and Zapoletes Machiavelli wrote his famous treatise, *The Art of War*.³¹ In it he characterised stateless societies as incapable of producing great warriors.³² In *The Prince* Machiavelli explicitly connected the state, civilisation and war; “The main foundation of every state... are good laws and good arms... you cannot have good laws without good arms, and where there are good arms, goods laws inevitably follow.”³³

Thomas Hobbes would have agreed with Machiavelli. In *Leviathan* Hobbes made his famous proclamation that life without the state was “nasty, brutish and short.” He maintained there could be no trade, commerce, security, art, or society, just a constant fear of a violent death without the state for protection. Humanity’s natural state of existence was violent and brutal.

Contrasting Hobbes’ gloomy outlook on humanity’s base character was the Earl of Shaftesbury who in his *Inquiry Concerning Virtue* argued that morality was innate and natural. Jean-Jacques Rousseau went further and maintained that the natural state of humanity was compassion, cooperation and peace. While Rousseau is often credited with the expression, “the noble savage” it was coined by John Dryden; nevertheless, the ideas are now closely associated.

³⁰ More, *Utopia*, 109.

³¹ Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Art of War*, ed. P Bondanella and M Musa (London: Penguin, 1995).

³² Machiavelli, *The Art of War*, 37.

³³ Machiavelli, *The Art of War*, 39.

In the late eighteenth century these ideas, the noble savage and the primitive savage, were “a philosophical dichotomy” that was “being articulated throughout Europe concerning the “innate” nature of indigenous people.”³⁴ Nowhere were the polemics of inherent “violence” in human nature more apparent than discussions of the African slave trade.

The anti-slave trade movement argued, like Rousseau, that African people were by nature peaceful and that it was the slave trade that had violently disrupted this pre-modern ‘utopia.’³⁵ Those who stood to benefit from slavery pointed out that warfare had existed long before the Atlantic slave trade and African people had engaged in slavery even before European influence.³⁶

By the Nineteenth century the Victorians “became fascinated, indeed titillated, by ancient, bloody, savage power.”³⁷ As exploration continued in Africa and around the world Europeans searched for evidence of the early state and often created mixed metaphors of African peoples as “Vandals,” “Goths” or “Israelites.” Richard Reid argued this was an outgrowth of a European search for “order out of chaos and darkness.”³⁸

On the North American continent one of the best examples of the contradictory dichotomy of peaceful and violent savage was represented by Fenimore Cooper’s ‘good’ and ‘bad’ “Indians” in his *Last of the Mohicans*. However, an earlier book by Cooper, *Leatherstocking Tales, The Pioneers* and its depiction of “wild and savage” ‘Indians attacking “civilized and peaceful” settlers trying to make a life on the American frontier was more representative of where Western depictions of Indigenous North Americans was headed.

³⁴ Chacon and Mendoza, *The Ethics of Anthropology*.

³⁵ “Utopia” my wording, Thomas P. Buxton, *The African Slave Trade and its Remedy* (London: John Murray, 1840).

³⁶ For example, W Snelgrave, *A New Account of Some Parts of Guinea* (London: Frank Cass, 1971).

³⁷ Richard Reid, “Revisiting Primitive War: Perception of Violence and Race in History,” *War and Society* 26, no. 2 (2007), 8.

³⁸ Reid, “Revisiting Primitive War,” 8.

While ‘frontier’ life was probably a “safer place than American society today,”³⁹ the marketing of “wild” ‘Indians’ as the villains of peaceful colonial settlements was a huge commercial success.⁴⁰ Even in the late nineteenth-century, after settlement had taken hold and most Indigenous people had been confined to reservations, exaggerated displays of “Indian Wildness” and “savagery” in Wild West shows were put on display to fulfill “the contemporary requirement that native people should be depicted as villains.”⁴¹

Many of these negative stereotypes can be traced to the “US government’s policies towards Plains Indians.”⁴² General William T Sherman’s orders to wage a 25-year war of extermination was justified on the grounds that Indigenous people were ‘less-than-human’, a ‘savage race’ standing in the way of American destiny manifesting itself in transcontinental railways. This attitude is probably most sharply expressed through the phrase “the only good Indian is a dead Indian.”⁴³

As if this wasn’t enough, Indigenous martial prowess was often devalued even in the face of overwhelming victory. For example, the defeat of General Custer is rarely credited to superior Indigenous military maneuvering or tactics, but to Custer’s ignorance and ineptness as a military commander. These themes, Indigenous savagery, but a lack of martial sophistication, continued into early twentieth-century especially in films where Indigenous people functioned as a “particularly dangerous form of wildlife.”⁴⁴

John Price’s evaluation of twentieth-century films noted that even though some sympathy towards Indigenous people can be seen in later films, especially into the

³⁹ W. Eugene Hollan, *Frontier Violence: Another Look* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974).

⁴⁰ Thomas Kent, *Interpretation and Genre: The role of Generic Perception in the Study of Narrative Texts* (Cranberry NJ: Associated University Presses, 1986).

⁴¹ Dye & Keel, “The Portrayal of Native,” 57.

⁴² Thomas J. DiLorenzo, “The Culture of Violence in the American West,” *The Independent Review* 15 (2010), 229.

⁴³ Also see justifications of this kind in Joseph Chamberlain, “The True Conception of Empire (1897),” In *Empire Writing: An Anthology of Colonial Literature 1870-1910*, ed. E Boehmer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Rudyard Kipling, “White Man’s Burden,” In *Empire Writing: An Anthology of Colonial Literature 1870-1918*, ed. E Boehmer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); CE Callwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practices* (London: HMSO, 1896).

⁴⁴ Jane Tomikins, *West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerns* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 8.

1970s, “Indians were still seen as violent by nature... A white villain was an individual with characteristic traits, ideas, and emotions, but an Indian could be a villain just by being an Indian.”⁴⁵

Ronald Wright noted that the “entire vocabulary is tainted with prejudice and condescension...” “...whites are soldiers, Indians are warriors... whites have generals, Indians have chiefs.”⁴⁶ When the Grand Fire Council of American Indians met with the mayor of Chicago in 1927 they commented that school histories “call all white victories, battles, and all Indian victories, massacres... White men who rise to protect their property are called patriots—Indians who do the same are called murderers.”⁴⁷

By the 1920s the impact of the First World War can be seen in the anthropological writings on war. There was strong desire, especially among Marxists, to find the economic motives for warfare. For example, Max Schmidt concluded that while on the surface ‘primitive war’ did not seem to have any economic motivations, the loss of bodies for labour could be considered an “economic act.”⁴⁸ However, Schmidt questioned if any of this violence could even be considered war:

According to the usual view of international law, war is the self-defence by arms of state for the vindication of rights which cannot be defended by peaceful means. According to this definition, the name war can only be given to contests which are carried on by a state as such, and which... are directed against a state as such. The frequent vendettas or feuds between family groups among native races cannot therefore be called war.⁴⁹

Robert Lowie characterised American Indian wars as “games” where the object was “to gain coveted glory” by stealing horses, taking the enemy’s weapon, or

⁴⁵ Price, John, “The Stereotyping of North American Indians in Motion Pictures,” *Ethnohistory* 20, no. 2 (1973), 163.

⁴⁶ Ronald Wright, *Stolen Continents*, 188.

⁴⁷ Ronald Wright, *Stolen Continents*, x.

⁴⁸ Max Schmidt, *The Primitive Races of Mankind: A Study of Ethnology* (London: Harrap & Co., 1926).

⁴⁹ Schmidt, *The Primitive Races*, 171.

touching the enemy with your bare hand.⁵⁰ In the 1940s these ideas, and their respective stereotypes, found their way into the contemporary scholarly literature on Indigenous warfare. Harry Turney-High's 1949 *Primitive War* and Quincy Wright's 1942 *A Study of War* identified the distinction between "modern" warfare, political in nature, and "primitive" war, lacking organisation, rationality and generally disorganised.⁵¹

Turney-High wrote:

Nonliterate man's motivation for war contrasts markedly with that of civilized man. One generalization seems valid regardless of the identity or efficiency of the culture under consideration: Civilization wages war for more coldly calculated motives than does non-literate society. Civilized war need not be primarily derived from hate. Merely want is required ... In essence, the paramount motive in civilized war is overtly economic or covertly economic through politics. The economic motive was rarely strong in pre-metallurgical war, and was sometimes entirely absent.⁵²

Turney-High felt there were many other reasons that made primitive war primitive, but one worth pointing out, and one we will review later, was his conception that non-state societies did not press the advantage and wage "total war" or wars of total destruction. Again, the theme of 'war-as-a-game' comes to light, he said

the great majority of American tribes behaved towards their enemies like modern game laws regard deer: If you kill them all now, what fun will there be in the future? They consistently failed to pursue and exploit a victory, removing forever an hereditary enemy.⁵³

⁵⁰ Robert Harry Lowie, *Primitive Society* (London: Routledge, 1929), 276-277.

⁵¹ Harry Turney-High, *Primitive War: Its Practice and Concepts* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1949) and Quincy Wright, *A Study of War* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1942).

⁵² Turney-High, *Primitive War*, 169.

⁵³ Turney-High, *Primitive War*, 103-104.

...

primitive war, in spite of the dancing about, honors counting, scalping, and head-hunting, was remarkably tame. Perhaps this is because it so rarely was thoroughly economic.⁵⁴

...

In the end, this means nothing more or less than saying that the non-civilized fighter is no soldier, his warfare is not war, and his butchering is futile and primitive because his operations lack organization and because he has developed the functions of leadership and command so poorly.⁵⁵

Turney-High was cited by Keeley as one of the foundations of the Peaceful Savage myth, but Otterbein rightly pointed out that Turney-High had not suggested just because war was 'primitive' did not mean it did not involve bloodshed. What he did say was that 'primitive war' was mostly pointless.

One of the most explicit mid-century characterisations of Indigenous warfare was John Mahon's comment that Indigenous people were "virtually without discipline in their fighting methods"⁵⁶ and ambush was the only tactic they could successfully employ as they did not possess the "social organisation needed to plan and execute operations of a more complicated nature, such as group maneuvers or frontal assault."⁵⁷ Another example was Jon White's comment that "the Indian had no feeling for grand strategy, was a sketchy tactician, and was nothing more than a primitive warrior."⁵⁸

It is important to point out that there were a number of writers in the modern era that approached Indigenous warfare from a very different point of view. For example, George Snyderman's *Behind the Tree of Peace* covered a wide range of

⁵⁴ Turney-High, *Primitive War*, 186.

⁵⁵ Turney-High, *Primitive War*, 227.

⁵⁶ John Mahon, "Anglo-American Methods of Indian Warfare, 1676-179," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 45 (1958), 257.

⁵⁷ Mahon, "Anglo-American Methods," 259.

⁵⁸ Jon White, *Everyday Life of the North American Indian* (New York: Dorset Press, 1979), 115.

important aspects of military history not included in battlefield tactics, but he did include 11 points under “patterns of fighting.”⁵⁹ Patrick Malone’s *Indian and English Military Systems in New England in the Seventeenth Century* insisted that Indigenous fighting forces could and did carry out complex tactical operations in the forest.⁶⁰ Francis Jennings’s *The Invasion of America* persuasively challenged the idea of the “Skulking Indian.”⁶¹ Thomas Connelly revealed numerous examples of Tennessee Indigenous people fighting settlers in formations.⁶² Perhaps the most authoritative defense of Indigenous battlefield sophistication came from J.F.C. Fuller’s *British Light Infantry in the Eighteenth Century*.⁶³

Historically there were also a number of writers who saw sophistication in Indigenous fighting tactics. James Smith’s 1799 book *Scoouwa: James Smith’s Indian Captivity Narrative*, James Smith’s *A Treatise on the Mode and Manner of Indian War*, Robert Roger’s *Journals* list his 28 rules of woodland war, William Smith’s *An Historical Account of the Expedition Against the Ohio Indians in the Year 1764*, James Adair’s *The History of the American Indian*, Major John Norton’s *Journal*, Joseph Lafitau’s chapter “warfare” in his *Customs of American Indians* and Johnathan Carver’s *Travels Through the Interior parts of North America*.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ George Snyderman, *Behind the Tree of Peace: A Sociological Analysis of Iroquois Warfare* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania PhD, 1948).

⁶⁰ Patrick Malone, *Indian and English Military Systems in New England in the Seventeenth Century* (Providence: Brown University PhD, 1971), Also see Patrick Malone *The Skulking Way of War: Technology and Tactics Among the New England Indians* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000).

⁶¹ Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (Williamsburg: Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, 2010).

⁶² Thomas Connelly, “Indian Warfare on the Tennessee Frontier, 1776-1794: Strategy and Tactics,” *The East Tennessee Historical Society’s Publications* 36 (1954), 3-22.

⁶³ JFC Fuller, *British Light Infantry in the Eighteenth Century: An Introduction to “Sir John Moore’s System of Training* (Doncaster: Terence Wise, 1991).

⁶⁴ James Smith, *Scoouwa: James Smith’s Indian Captivity Narrative* ed. John Barsotti and William Darlington illustrations, (Columbus: Ohio Historical Society, 1978); Col. James Smith, *A Treatise on the Mode and Manner of Indian War* (Paris Kentucky: Joel R. Lyle, 1812); William Clements, *Journal of Major Robert Rogers* (Worcester Mass: American Antiquarian Society, 1918); William Smith, *An Historical Account of the Expedition Against the Ohio Indians in the Year 1764*, (Philadelphia: T. Jefferies, 1766); James Adair, *The History of the American Indian* (London: Edward and Charles Dilly, 1775); John Norton, “The Journal of Major John Norton, 1816,” ed. Carl Klinck, James Talman and Roger Hall, *The Publications of the Champlain Society*, vol. 72 (2013); Joseph Lafitau, “Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of

Nevertheless, these were not the views shared by the majority of either the colonial observers or their scholarly settler descendants. Lafitau's observations, for example, rested on a fundamentally different perspective than the European political, administrative and military norms of the times.

In section three we will explore several counter-examples to the illustrations of 'primitive' Indigenous warfare. These examples will decisively undermine any suggestion that Indigenous people lacked strategic orientation or tactical sophistication. This is not to suggest that surprise or ambush are not sophisticated forms of warfare, but the examples are designed to provide evidence based counter narratives to characterisations we have just seen in this section.

Turning to the Northwest Coast

The earliest full-length study of warfare on the Pacific Northwest Coast echoed the characterisation that Indigenous warfare was "primitive." Helen Codere's "Fighting with Property"⁶⁵ argued that Kwakwaka'wakw warfare was highly ceremonial and insignificant, she denied any material basis for war instead argued the only reason for combat was to recover lost prestige. She suggested when combat did take place it was characterised by head hunting, surprise or sneak attacks, and dramatic dancing. She argued that this 'primitive' warfare was so ceremonial that it was easily replaced by competitive potlatching in 1849 as a result of colonial contact.

To say that Helen Codere's theory was influential would be an understatement. Her argument has gone on to be applied as general theory to the entire Northwest Coast.⁶⁶ Her comments on warfare have been used by some to suggest that war was

Primitive Times, " *The Publications of the Champlain Society* vol. 48 (2013); Jonathan Carver, *Travels Through the Interior parts of North America* (London: C. Dilly; H. Payne; J. Phillips, 1781).

⁶⁵ Codere, *Fighting With Property*.

⁶⁶ Marriane Bolscher, *The Potlatch in Anthropological Theory: A Re-evaluation of Certain Ethnographic Data and Theoretical Approaches* (Nortorf Germany: Volkerkundliche Arbeitsgemeinschaft, 1982); Christophe Bracken, *The Potlatch Papers: A Colonial Case History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Douglas Cole and Ira Chaikin, *An Iron Hand upon the People: The Law Against the Potlatch on the Northwest Coast* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1990); Leland Donald and Donald Mitchell, "Some Correlates of Local Group Rank among the Southern Kwakwaka'wakw," *Ethnology* 14 (1975); Carol Jopling, *The Coppers of the Northwest Coast Indians: Their Origin, Development and Possible Antecedents* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1989); Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*. (London: Routledge, 1990); Gail Ringel, "The Kwakwaka'wakw Potlatch: History, Economics and Symbols," *Ethnohistory* 26 (1979);

insignificant and nothing more than a terrifying idea.⁶⁷ Others have used her thesis to argue that the Kwakwaka'wakw are an example of a nonviolent culture.⁶⁸ Her thesis even appeared in a 1996 *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* claiming that it was self-evident Indigenous people on the coast were pacifists. Joan Lovisek has argued that this was a “new advocacy perspective” where a “revisionism in which the positive attributes of Aboriginal culture, such as peace, have supplanted the negative, such as warfare, slavery, and human trophy taking.”⁶⁹

Keith Otterbein explained in detail how this “revisionism” came about. He argued that within anthropology from 1850 to 1920 the dominant theoretical framework for understanding ethnographic data was an “evolutionary” approach.⁷⁰ By his second phase of anthropological thought, 1920-1960, the evolutionary approach was cemented within anthropological scholarship and “the myth of the peaceful savage [was] embedded in the development typology. By definition an evolutionary sequence must show change.”⁷¹

Major anthropological writers who focused on warfare subscribed to the evolutionary approach. For example, in 1939 Ruth Benedict described “primitive” warfare as a “nonlethal form of warfare” whereas modern war was the “lethal variety.”⁷² Bronislaw Malinowski argued for a developmental sequence where the first three stages were not serious forms of warfare. Malinowski argued that over time war

Abraham Rosman and Paul Rubel, *Feasting with Mine Enemy: Rank and Exchange Among Northwest Coast Societies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971); Wayne Suttles, “Post-Contact Culture Change among the Lummi Indians,” *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* 18 (1954); Wilson Duff, *The Indian History of British Columbia: The Impact of the White Man* (Victoria: Royal British Columbia Museum, 1997).

⁶⁷ George Woodcock, *Peoples of the Coast: The Indians of the Pacific Northwest* (Bloomington Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1977), 183-184.

⁶⁸ Ashley Montagu, *The Nature of Human Agression* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976) and Irenaus Eibel-Eibesfeldt, *The Biology of Peace and War: Men Animals, and Aggression* (New York: Viking, 1979).

⁶⁹ Lovisek, “Aboriginal Warfare,” 59. For broader understanding of this topic see Chacon and Mendoza, “Ethical Considerations” and Richard Chacon and David Dye, *The Taking and Displaying of Human Body Parts as Trophies ed. Amerindians* (New York: Springer, 2007).

⁷⁰ Otterbein, “A History of Research,” 795.

⁷¹ Otterbein, “A History of Research,” 796.

⁷² Ruth Benedict, “The Natural History of War,” In *An Anthropologist at Work*, ed. Margret Mead (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1959).

slowly evolved to support nationalist policies.⁷³ A 1942 textbook characterised ‘primitive’ warfare as a game rather than the more serious conflict of modern nations.⁷⁴ In 1960 William Newcomb revealed his version of the evolutionary model with four principle stages. Stage three was “True War” and stage four the world wars, but non-state warfare was crude and disorganised.⁷⁵

Otterbein comments “the myth is a direct outgrowth of evolutionary thought that became firmly rooted in the Foundation Period [1850-1920]. Once the myth sprouted... it was nurtured by cultural relativism.”⁷⁶ Otterbein felt that in order for cultural relativism to succeed in its humanising point of view it had to portray pre-state people as “gentle and benign, not savage and brutal.”⁷⁷

Otterbein cited Codere’s thesis as an example of an “ethnographic classic” that was written during the period when a “database” of ethnographies was being produced that would form the raw material for later anthropologists who entrenched the “peaceful savage myth.”⁷⁸

Despite these somewhat progressive comments in 2004, Otterbein, while acknowledging the pre-state origins of war, argued that warfare was only possible once a society had achieved agriculture and the necessary organisational structure that came with agricultural societies.⁷⁹ Erik Brandt further refined Keeley and Otterbein’s arguments, but showed that Malinowski had already provided a distinction between ‘modern’ war and ‘savage’ war.⁸⁰ According to this view modern war was total,

⁷³ Bronislaw Malinowski, “An Anthropological Analysis of War,” *American Journal of Sociology* 46 (1941).

Bronislaw Malinowski, “War--Past, Present and Future,” In *War as a Social Institution: The Historian's Perspective*, ed. J Clarkson and T Cochran (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941).

⁷⁴ Eliot Chapple and Carleton Coon, *Principles of Anthropology* (New York: Henry Holt, 1942).

⁷⁵ William Newcomb, “Toward an Understanding of War,” In *Essays in the Science of Culture*, ed. G Dole and R Carneiro (New York: Crowell, 1960).

⁷⁶ Otterbein, “A History of Research,” 798.

⁷⁷ Otterbein, “A History of Research,” 798.

⁷⁸ Otterbein, “A History of Research,” 797.

⁷⁹ Otterbein, “A History of Research.”

⁸⁰ Erik Brandt, “Total War and the Ethnography of New Guinea,” In *Warfare and Society: Archaeological and Social Anthropological Perspectives*, ed. Ton Otto, Henrik Thrane and Helle Vandkilde (Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 2006).

affecting all social and cultural activity whereas ‘savage’ war was seen “as a form of physical exercise devoid of political relevancy.”⁸¹ All these ‘refinements’ to the definition of warfare still closely resembled Harry Turney-High’s 1949 argument that there was a “military horizon” where “primitive war” was separated from “true war.”⁸²

Today the consensus is that war has never been rare, but neither has it been a constant human condition. A growing body of archaeological data supports the presence of war across the entire globe and conclusively dispels the myth of peaceful pre-modern society.⁸³ However, even as the scholarly tone shifted to acknowledging that warfare was present across the globe, debates continue about whether this was “True” war.

Military history has long held a bias to “state-level warfare and the written records kept by or for state bureaucracies.”⁸⁴ Many military historians see warfare as a “bloody progression of weapons development, state building, [and] the rise of “civilized” nations with geopolitical aspirations.”⁸⁵ This attitude is exemplified by the Greek historian Thucydides and the Prussian general Carl von Clausewitz’ idea that

⁸¹ Ton Otto, “Conceptions of Warfare in Western Thought and Research: An Introduction,” In *Warfare and Society: Archaeological and Social Anthropological Perspectives*, ed. Ton Otto, Henrik Tharne and Helle Vandkilde (Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 2006).

⁸² Turney-High, *Primitive War*.

⁸³ D. Bamforth, “Indigenous People, Indigenous Violence: Precontact Warfare on the North American Great Plains,” *Man* 29 (1994); Jacobi Bridges and M Powell, “Warfare Related Trauma in the late prehistory of Alabama,” In *Bioarchaeology Studies of Life in the Age of Agriculture: A View from the Southeast*, ed. Patricia Lambert (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2000); Jonathan Haas, “The origins of war and ethnic violence,” In *Ancient Warfare: Archaeological Perspectives*, ed. J Carman and A Harding (Stroud UK: Sutton Publishing, 1999). Jonathan Haas and W Creamer, *Stress and Warfare Among Kayenta Anasazi of the 13th Century AD*. Fieldiana, Anthropology, New Series (Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History, 1993); Keeley, *War Before Civilization*. Patricia Lambert, *War and Peace on the Western Front: A Study of Violent Conflict and Its Correlates in Prehistory Hunter-Gatherer Societies of Coastal Southern California* (Unpublished PhD, Santa Barbara, University of California, 1994); Lambert, “The Archaeology of War,” Steven Leblanc, *Prehistoric Warfare in the Americas Southwest* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1999); Maschner and Reedy-Maschner, *Raid, Retreat, Defend*.

⁸⁴ Lambert, “The Archaeology of War,” 208.

⁸⁵ Tom Holm, “American Indian Warfare: The Cycles of Conflict and Militarization of Native North America,” In *A Companion to American Indian History*, ed. Philip Deloria and Neal Salisbury (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 154.

war is “policy by other means.”⁸⁶ To this end, scholars have seen war as a political act where decisive victory over the enemy was the ultimate goal. Tom Holm suggested this has led to the feeling that “only hierarchical, centrally controlled states can conduct “true” or “decisive” war.”⁸⁷

According to this perspective “tribes” or “proto-states” lacked the necessary political or organisational structures to coerce citizens to whatever action was required by leaders on the battlefield. Thus, as Holm puts it “‘pre-states’ -by definition- fought ‘primitive’ warfare, which was neither made for geopolitical concerns nor fought to destroy decisively an opponent’s will to fight.”⁸⁸ Holm goes on to note that the labels of “primitive” and “tribal” warfare were placed on Indigenous peoples as they were not proper states at the time of contact and as a result they were locked in “long term duels that had no geopolitical purpose.”⁸⁹

While Keeley’s *War Before Civilization* ended the debate on whether pre-state societies practiced warfare, it replaced it with other debates, primarily concerned with the ‘origins’ of warfare. Often the expressed purpose of many scholars writing on pre-state conflict is to trace the origins or ‘evolution’ of warfare. Their expressed goal is to uncover war’s beginnings to understand how we might prevent current or future conflicts. To this end, the scholars who write about pre-state conflict are invested in keeping pre-state war ‘primitive’ to support their arguments; in other words, if a pre-state society’s warfare is just as complex as modern war we are left with very little analytical material from which to unpack the origins of modern war.

A consequence has been that the trope of the “noble savage” has persisted, though somewhat amended; rather than being pacifist, they were simply “primitive.”

⁸⁶ David Warburton, “Aspects of War and Warfare in Western Philosophy and History,” In *Warfare and Society: Archaeological and Social Anthropological Perspectives*, ed. Ton Otto, Henrik Thrane and Helle Vankilde (Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 2006).

⁸⁷ Holm, “American Indian Warfare,” 154. It is interesting to point out that there is another line of reasoning on war championed by thinkers like Thomas Aquinas, Rousseau, Hegel and the Hebrew Bible that argue for the ‘just war’. See (Warburton, “Aspects of War”). Warburton’s analysis goes on to point out that 20th Century Europe became dominated by the ‘just war’ idea and increasingly saw war as untenable especially during the Cold War era while the United States has continued with the more cynical interpretation.

⁸⁸ Holm, “American Indian Warfare,” 154.

⁸⁹ Holm, “American Indian Warfare,” 155.

These are the same tropes which justified the ‘civilising’ effort of colonialism, but it remains an implicit assumption in the scholarly literature on pre-state warfare. It is

an ideological view. By insisting on Indian savagery, such interpretations painted European military conquest as a civilizing action. Yet all too often, non-indigenous scholars have passively accepted this view of Native American Warfare, depicting it as functional only in terms of revenge, gaining access to new hunting grounds, obtaining booty and women, or providing warriors with the opportunity to display their individual prowess and courage in combat.”⁹⁰Sometimes explicitly, but more often implicitly, many of these stereotyped impressions of Indigenous warfare made their way into the scholarly literature on Northwest coast Indigenous warfare. Northwest Coast Literature

Helen Codere’s 1950 thesis on Kwakwaka’wakw warfare is the typical entry point for most investigations on Northwest Coast Warfare. This is a little odd when we consider Morris Swadesh wrote a paper on Nuuchah Nulth warfare two years earlier, but as we have seen Codere’s thesis has been much more influential than Swadesh’s.

Codere’s argument for small scale, strategically limited and tactically insignificant warfare has been uncritically reproduced by many major Northwest Coast scholars who have written about warfare. Nevertheless, we will see that by the 1990s people’s minds were shifting to using warfare as a lens from which to evaluate broader historical changes in Indigenous cultures on the coast.

There is no suggestion in Codere’s thesis that she meant to directly challenge the stereotypes of Indigenous warfare, and in some cases she perpetuated those stereotypes, but it does seem she was trying to explore some level of sophistication among the Kwakwaka’wakw in their response to colonial pressures on their system of warfare. She deserves credit for trying to overwrite the portrayal of Indigenous people as simply “dangerous wildlife,” unfortunately extending this credit has had negative consequences for the scholarship of the Northwest Coast.

⁹⁰ Holm, “American Indian Warfare,” 155.

Parts of Codere's arguments have been subjected to critique,⁹¹ but it wasn't until 2007 that Joan Lovisek undertook a "systemic assessment of the validity of her thesis."⁹² While Lovisek's critique did provide some new insights into the role of potlatching and warfare she did not challenge the assumption that Kwakwaka'wakw warfare was "seasonal and limited to such tactics as surprise and ambush... took the form of raids, human trophy-taking, ambushes and surprise encounters."⁹³ There are a number of things wrong with Lovisek's arguments, not to mention incorrectly dating important archaeological sites,⁹⁴ but what is important here is that 57 years after Codere's thesis the reigning interpretation of Northwest Coast warfare was still to small-scale ambushes and raiding.

The uncritical acceptance of Codere's thesis is even more surprising when we consider that two years earlier Morris Swadesh had published a short article largely made up of translations of Nuuchahnulth "war narratives."⁹⁵ He found that wars were fought almost exclusively for material gain in the form of slaves, territory and resources. While Swadesh's interpretation of one of the published stories, a coup narrative, was criticised for not being a "war narrative," but a "moral" story about proper chiefly behaviour,⁹⁶ the critique was not destructive to Swadesh's interpretations.

⁹¹ Philip Dricker and Robert Heizer, *To Make My Name Good: A Reexamination of the Southern Kwakwaka'wakw Potlatch* (Berkeley, 1967); Brian Ferguson, "A Reexamination of the Causes of Northwest Coast Warfare," In *Warfare, Culture, and Environment*, ed. Brian Ferguson (Orlando: Academic Press, 1984); Wayne Suttles, "The Ethnographic Significance of the Fort Langley Journals," In *The Fort Langley Journals 1827-1830*, ed. Morag Maclachlan (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000).

⁹² Lovisek, "Aboriginal Warfare."

⁹³ Lovisek, "Aboriginal Warfare," 72.

⁹⁴ For example, she suggests the oldest archaeological evidence for warfare on the PNWC was in the Prince Rupert Harbour at 3000BC, presumably the Warrior's cache at the Boardwalk site though she is not specific, but the oldest evidence for warfare is at the Namu site and is dated to 4000BC. Erome Cybulski wrote: "The Prince Rupert Harbour series does not the oldest skeletal evidence for warfare on the Northwest Coast. That distinction is held by the site Namu... Most of the human remains at the Namu date between cal 2000Bc and 4000 BC." See (Jerome Cybulski, "Updating the Warrior Cache: Timing the Evidence for Warfare at Prince Rupert Harbour," In *Violence and Warfare Among Hunter-Gatherers*, ed. Mark Allen and Terry Jones (Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2014), pg. 415) for a more authoritative chronology.

⁹⁵ Swadesh, "Motivations in Nootka Warfare," 76.

⁹⁶ Susan Golla, "A Tale of Two Chiefs" Nootkan Narrative and the Ideology of Chiefship," *Journal de la Société des Américanistes* 74 (1988).

Golla's critique of Swadesh did point out that some nuance and sophistication was required in interpreting ethnographic literature, but even if, as Golla argues, the story was only meant as a comment on proper chiefly behaviour and was not an actual historical event, the setting and context, a coup and counter coup, is still important to informing our understanding of how deeply embedded Indigenous politics was in war. Surprisingly Swadesh's point that wars were fought for material gain does not seem to have taken a strong hold in later literature though there are other authors who argue for more materialistic motivations.⁹⁷

Between 1950 and 1968 some works dealt with warfare incidentally, but none with warfare as an expressed purpose.⁹⁸ In 1968 Donald Mitchell wrote a short article in *Syesis* where he outlined archaeological results from two remarkable Coast Salish military defensive sites.

Mitchell reported on preliminary excavations at Rebecca Spit Quadra Island and on Towner Point (private residence on Saanich Peninsula). The most notable observation was a unique form of Coast Salish defensive site called a "Trench Embankment."

Trench embankments are a common form of military fortifications on the Pacific Northwest Coast. They are located on geographical features such as a point or rocky headland that increased a site's defensibility, but they have the added feature of a trench, usually semi circular, on the inland side of these geographic features. Mitchell suggested these trenches may have had pointed stakes embedded in the trenches. Most of the article is straightforward archaeological artifact and site descriptions, but Mitchell did provide some speculation and commented that "the Aboriginal fighting pattern rarely involved siege, being, instead, dependent almost entirely on surprise as a tactic."⁹⁹

Herein lies the central paradox of scholarship on Indigenous military fortifications on the coast. Mitchell comments that these fortifications were "refuges,

⁹⁷ For example, Ferguson, "A Reexamination of the Causes."

⁹⁸ For example, Wilson Duff, *The Indian History*," original publication 1964.

⁹⁹ Donald Mitchell, "Excavations At Two Trench Embankments."

to be occupied only when danger from attack was an immediate threat,”¹⁰⁰ but how can a fortification simultaneously serve as a temporary refuge only when forewarning of attack is known while the dominant form of warfare was surprise attack?

Mitchell does not point us at ethnographic literature, oral histories or any other evidence to support his speculation, yet his observation continues to inform important scholarly writing on Coast Salish warfare.¹⁰¹

Through the 1970s preeminent BC historian Robin Fisher also perpetuated this paradox. Fisher wrote two articles in the 1970s on Indigenous warfare. The first article dealt with the introduction of firearms to Pacific Northwest Coast societies. Fisher asked us to reconsider the argument that firearms had a dramatic “fatal impact” on Indigenous societies. The article is largely outside of the scope of the present study as it deals with effects after contact, but Fisher did bring to light a number of important details especially around weapons like the sling, the lance and heavy armour, the former two suggestive of siege warfare.¹⁰² Despite this welcome new information, he perpetuated the idea that warfare was small scale and tactically based on surprise.

Fisher cited Codere arguing that “Kwakiutl warfare...” was “waged on the outnumbered and unsuspecting, on victims rather than enemies.”¹⁰³ Fisher argued that “direct frontal attacks on fortified villages with strong wooden houses had only a limited chance of success and were likely to involve considerable loss of life, so the Indians relied on stealth and surprise.” He went on to note that attackers typically snuck into long houses and despatched the inhabitants using the chaos of a mid-night sneak attack to prevent any counter attack. After the inhabitants are killed the long house is set on fire.

Why, if attackers were risk averse, did they not just set the long house on fire? Long houses typically had a main entrance and sometimes a secret or rear entrance, both could have been easily guarded for escapees and they could be despatched as

¹⁰⁰ Mitchell, “Excavations At Two Trench,” 45.

¹⁰¹ See for example, (Angelbeck, “They Recognize no Superior Chief,” 190-195, 271-272)

¹⁰² Robin Fischer, “Arms and Men on the Northwest Coast, 1774-1825,” *BC Studies* 29, Spring (1976). See George Macdonald, *Kitwanga Fort Report* (Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1989), pg. 13-15 for use of eighteen foot ‘lances’ on pallisaded walls for defense from seige attacks.

¹⁰³ Fischer, “Arms and Men,” 5, originally in Codere, *Fighting With Property*, 98.

they ran out of the burning houses all with considerably less risk to loss of life or injury to the attackers.

The answer is complex and depends on which cultural group is under examination. For example, Kwakwaka'wakw elite warriors would behead their elite ranked opponents as this was the only way to acquire their supernatural and corporeal property, but also to prevent the enemy warrior from haunting them after the battle.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, burning houses to the ground with occupants still inside did occur in Kwakwaka'wakw territories.¹⁰⁵ In another case a house was burned to the ground as an offensive maneuver to decisively eject the Tlingit from the Prince Rupert Harbour by the famous Nine Tribes warrior Aksk, an example we will see in more detail in section three.¹⁰⁶

The point here is to draw our attention to two things. First, the referencing of Codere as the basis that *all* warfare was based on sneak attacks in the middle of the night. Second, is Fisher's characterisation of Indigenous fighters as not capable of crafting siege strategies or so risk averse as to avoid siege altogether. Perhaps worse was the idea that the enemy was a "victim" not a combatant. We will see in the chapter three that there is ample evidence of siege attacks, formalised battle, daytime combat, strict codes to war and other evidence which does not support the concept of raiding sneak attacks waged on victims rather than combatants.

Fisher's second article was a comparison of violence between the colonial states in the Northwestern United States and British Columbia. He asked why the two trajectories of colonialist violence were so different yet had the same "depressingly similar" outcome for Indigenous people.¹⁰⁷ Again, this paper is beyond the scope of

¹⁰⁴ Lovisek, "Aboriginal Warfare."

¹⁰⁵ See for example Edward Curtis, *The North American Indian Vol. 10* (Norwood Mass: The Plimpton Press, 1915), 104.

¹⁰⁶ In another a Tlingit village is lit on fire to force the occupants out to be clubbed over the head as they exited the burning long house, see Beynon, *The Raven Clan Outlaws on the North Pacific Coast*, pp. Chas Abott, recorded by William Beynon 1927, "Gidarants and Tsimsyan Raids."

¹⁰⁷ Robin Fischer, "Indian Warfare and Two Frontiers: A Comparison of British Columbia and Washington Territory during Early Years of Settlement," *Pacific Historical Review* 50 (1981), 32.

this study, but Fisher does make more casual assumptions regarding the nature of pre-contact Indigenous warfare on the coast.

Fisher asked why the American territories suffered from violence such as the 1847 Cayuse attack on the Whitman mission, the outbreaks of violence through the late 1850s and the fighting retreat of the Nez Percé while in British Columbia the Tsilhqot'in Uprising was the closest thing to a full-blown colonial war.¹⁰⁸

Fisher explored the possibility that Washington and Oregon State Indigenous people followed different socio-culture patterns of warfare as a possible explanation for the difference in the level of violence. He concluded that there were/are more similarities across the border than between groups on either side of it; for example, the Coast Salish stretch across the 49th parallel and have similar socio-cultural customs whereas the difference between the Coast Salish and the Haida Nation cannot be over emphasized.

Fisher argued that the difference in cultural groups could not explain the disparate levels of violence in Canada or the US. Anyone familiar with Indigenous cultures on the coast would not disagree with this or Fisher's broader cultural observations and he perpetuated Codere's view of Indigenous warfare on the coast.

For example, he noted that "intergroup raids and feuds were features of these Indian cultures," war "...was normally small scale..." "...some individuals would attract unenviable reputations as ferocious fighters, but there was no separate military organisation," and "campaigns were nearly always motivated by the need to revenge insults, to retaliate... [or to] plunder."¹⁰⁹ Fisher noted the only significant cultural difference between Canada and the US was the importance the potlatch took on during the fur trade, especially among the northern groups. He cited Codere's thesis that warfare was suppressed in 1860 by the subsequent rise of the competitive potlatch.

Again, we see "raids" motivated by "plunder" or "revenge," not strategy or geopolitics, being central to pre-contact warfare. We also see Codere's thesis applied

¹⁰⁸ Fisher does note other incidents such as the 1877 Okanagan Shuswap Confederacy, but said these did not amount to anything close to the bloodshed in the US.

¹⁰⁹ Robin Fischer, "Indian Warfare," 34.

to all Indigenous groups on the coast, in this case Fisher singled out the importance of the potlatch to northern groups, but applied Codere to the southern cultural area. To his credit he did point out that parts of Codere's thesis were under critical evaluation, but he seemed content to leave his general comments on warfare stand.¹¹⁰

Fisher's casual references to Indigenous warfare and combat are not especially scandalous. They do not interfere with his arguments or conclusions in either article, but they do point to tendency even among some of British Columbia's best historians to repeat the assumption that warfare was based on small scale, petty and disorganised raids for plunder.

Warfare scholarship on the coast tended to lag behind the most recent theoretical and methodological changes. For example, Fisher's characterisation of warfare by quoting Codere is unusual when we consider that in the broader historiography (and popular culture) Codere's description of a complete cultural loss was being categorically challenged by a resurgence of potlatching and other traditional ceremonies.¹¹¹

The 1980s was at once a major boon for warfare scholarship, but also cemented the raiding thesis as one of the dominant analytical lenses. Three major Northwest Coast scholars wrote on warfare and were joined by one non-Northwest Coast specialist, but one of Anthropology's most influential writers on warfare. Rather than treat each piece in its official chronological spot I will deal with each thematically; Leland Donald and Donald Mitchell's writings on slavery followed by outsider Brian Ferguson and his materialist description of warfare, and lastly Gary Coupland who connected warfare and social stratification on the coast.

Slavery on the coast had been well documented in general survey ethnographies and by a few other writers,¹¹² but Donald and Mitchell overturned the idea that slaves

¹¹⁰ Robin Fischer, "Indian Warfare," 38-40.

¹¹¹ Michael Harkin, "Past Presence: Conceptions of History in Northwest Coast Studies," *Arctic Anthropology* 33, no. 2 (1996), 7.

¹¹² See Elsie Francis Dennis, "Indian Slavery in the Pacific Northwest," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 31 (1931) for the first treatment, but also according to Harkin, "Past Presence, 8. Soviet scholar Julia Averkieva's work on the Tlingit and her "emphasis, and exaggeration of, slavery" also spurred Donald and Mitchell's writing. Also see, Philip Drucker, *Cultures of the North Pacific Coast* (San Francisco: Chandler, 1965), 52.

were not economically important.¹¹³ The two authors had slightly different approaches to the importance of slaves. Mitchell conceived of slaves as important within the potlatch exchange complex and as a ticket to greater prestige, whereas Donald saw them as critically important to labour and menial tasks, especially food preservation. Nevertheless, both believed slaves were primarily the “spoils of war.”¹¹⁴

Leland Donald’s first paper drew attention to issues in Nuuchah-nulth ‘modes of production.’ Donald pointed out that much of the resources harvested within Nuuchah-nulth territory were not a matter of production, but a matter of preservation. For example, salmon caught in weirs did not represent an issue with harvesting, weirs were efficient and produced massive amounts of meat in a relatively short space of time due to annual spawning in narrow rivers and streams. However, the tons of raw fish had to be processed as the spawning runs only happened once a year. Donald noted the importance of slaves to this form of labour. He also pointed out that slaves were gender neutral and could perform men’s or women’s work in a society where there appeared to be strong gendered divisions in labour.¹¹⁵

A remarkable feature of Donald’s first paper was his recognition of “federations.”¹¹⁶ According to Donald “federations were primarily ceremonial and war units.”¹¹⁷ He suggested that unlike the confederations of the Iroquois there was no obvious intra-federation fighting. It wasn’t clear why some groups federated and others did not within the broader Nuuchah-nulth territories, but those that did federate appeared to lack productive salmon streams and may have done so to protect themselves from stronger, more resource rich polities.¹¹⁸

¹¹³Donald, “Was the Nuuchah-nulth-aht?”; Donald, “The Slave Trade”; Leland Donald, ““Captive or Slave?” A Comparison of Northeastern and Northwestern North America by Means of Captivity Narratives,” *Culture* 5 (1985); Leland Donald, “Slave Raiding”; Leland Donald, “Paths out of Slavery on the Aboriginal North Pacific Coast of North America,” *Slavery and Abolition* 10 (1989); Donald Mitchell, “Predatory Warfare, Social Status, and the North Pacific Slave Trade,” *Ethnology* 23 (1984).

¹¹⁴ Donald Mitchell and Leland Donald, *Some Economic Aspects of Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian Slavery*. Vol. 7, in *Research in Economic Anthropology*, ed. Barry Isaa (Greenwich: JAI Press Inc, 1985), 23.

¹¹⁵ Donald, “Was the Nuuchah-nulth-aht,” 111.

¹¹⁶ To be clear, “confederation” was Drucker’s idea.

¹¹⁷ Donald, “Was the Nuuchah-nulth-aht,” 109.

¹¹⁸ Christopher Morgan, “The Economic Basis of Nootka Politics,” *Canberra Anthropology* 4 (1981).

Donald challenged the concept that warfare on the coast was “non-economic.”¹¹⁹ He devoted very little space in his short article to the actual production of slaves, which he believed was primarily through warfare, but he did note that slaves were important enough to the preservation of food products that they must have had some economic worth. He also noted that it was well established that there was a “lively intergroup slave trade” suggesting other economic values for slaves.¹²⁰

He concluded his paper with “war was common and everyone was continually exposed to the consequences of failure in war: death or slavery.” Donald also noted that even if you were repatriated the stigma of your slave name could persist after emancipation.¹²¹

Donald’s paper, while slim on warfare related analysis, did progress the field of warfare studies. He moved the conversation along to include strong economic causes to warfare and brought Swadesh’s thesis back to the forefront of the discussion. His acknowledgement of ‘federations’ pointed to unique political institutions for the purpose of warfare. However, despite these early gains the concept of “raiding” for slaves would soon overshadow these minor positive achievements.

In 1984 Donald Mitchell published his paper on the connection between “predatory warfare,” warring for the acquisition of slaves, and the maintenance of “high social status” on the coast.¹²² His motivation was to demonstrate the value of “slaves-as-wealth rather than slaves-as-labour.”¹²³

While Mitchell noted that warfare could be fought for a variety of reasons, “revenge, territorial expansion, plunder, and the securing of slaves,” he maintained

¹¹⁹ Donald, “Was the Nuu-Cah-nulth-aht,” 112.

¹²⁰ Donald, “Was the Nuu-Cah-nulth-aht,” 112-113.

¹²¹ For an example of a Tsimshian woman who turned her slave name into a chiefly name see Beynon, Beynon Manuscript, 1939 pp. L Gray, “Bella Bella War Raids on the Tsimshian.” In this narrative, a chief’s (Legex) mother was taken as a slave in combat. She is beaten, raped and generally very ill treated by her captors mostly because of her association with her son. Her release is eventually negotiated and returned home, but her slave name travels with her. Through a variety of events she is able to turn her slave name into a chiefly name that then serves to mock her former Bella Bella captors.

¹²² Mitchell, “Predatory Warfare,” 39.

¹²³ Mitchell, “Predatory Warfare,” 39.

that after reading “725... ethnographic sources...” that “...source after source...” noted the “prime motive for raiding was to gain captives for enslavement.”¹²⁴ Mitchell goes on to quote a British Naval officer resident of British Columbia in the 1860s, Richard Mayne who characterised Northwest Coast Indigenous warfare as a “cruel system of predatory warfare.”¹²⁵

Mitchell’s paper is brief, but thorough. He developed a relative evaluation of a slave’s exchange value, he analysed each of the major cultural linguistic divisions and offered specific information on slaves as part of the competitive potlatching system. Mitchell concluded with quotes from a variety of important colonial figures and their appreciation for the importance of slave raiding to Indigenous people and their economy. Mitchell comments “slaving was indeed a business, and predatory warfare a business venture. Much Northwest Coast fighting must be seen in this cold economic context.”¹²⁶ Mitchell felt this was not the same as raiding for goods. For example, stealing someone else’s goods was a redistribution of wealth, but enslaving free people was creating wealth.¹²⁷ People, according to Mitchell, became a resource the same as salmon, berries or whales, and were used to create or enhance status.

There is nothing wrong with Mitchell’s larger analysis, rather it is his characterisation of war, battle and soldiers as “predatory” and a “business venture” that highlights a bias to plunder and slaving at the expense of the broader geopolitical or strategic dimension.

Mitchell, I believe, rightly connected the importance of warfare to status and power, but wrongly assumes that small scale slave raids represent the sum total or focus of Northwest Coast warfare. His review of ethnographic sources is at odds with the scholars who have argued warfare was more about revenge. Moreover, in the thousands of pages of William Beynon’s recording of the Tsimshian *Adawx* I have yet to come across one warfare narrative where slaving was the explicitly stated purpose for an attack. There can be little doubt that raiding was a function of inter and intra

¹²⁴ Mitchell, “Predatory Warfare,” 39.

¹²⁵ Mitchell, “Predatory Warfare,” 39.

¹²⁶ Mitchell, “Predatory Warfare,” 45.

¹²⁷ Mitchell, “Predatory Warfare,” 46.

group conflict and slaves were taken in war, but slave raiding to create wealth was not the same as war.

Leroy Eid argued that in eastern North America two distinct modes of warfare were apparent; “national wars” and smaller private actions.¹²⁸ National wars were fought by large-scale public armies while the smaller private actions were more reflective of the “raids” so ubiquitous in the Northwest Coast literature. Smaller private actions were not sanctioned by a polities’ formal political structure, but they were also not decisive or devastating. They were, as Mitchell characterised, a method of attaining wealth. Large national forces on the other hand were decisive, did not rely on stealth, followed formal codes of warfare and delivered devastating blows with overwhelming force.¹²⁹

Eid’s argument is well supported by Nuuchah Nulth history. For example, there have been a number of ‘wars of extermination’ by various Nuuchah Nulth polities. These examples should have complicated Mitchell’s argument as it seems illogical to destroy your source of wealth. This is not to say Mitchell’s analysis is wrong, but heightening “plunder, and the securing of slaves” as “so important” to the system of warfare on the coast is an exaggerated analysis.

Mitchell also did not evaluate the role of ‘revenge’ in larger geopolitical maneuverings. For example, ‘revenge’ can often be used as *casus belli* following an orchestrated event. The enemy can be provoked into trespass or breaking some form of protocol to acquire legitimate grounds for invasion or attack.¹³⁰ This is not to say raiding is not a form of warfare, but the characterisation of “slave raiding” as all important or dominant by Mitchell is not supported by the evidence from the Nine Tribes.

¹²⁸ Eid, , “Revisitng Primitive War.”

¹²⁹ See for example G. Bailey, *The Osage and the Invisible World: From the Works of Francis La Flesche* (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 69, 100.

¹³⁰ In Chapter three of this thesis in the section “War for the Canyon” I explore one such example of orchestrating *casus belli*.

By 1985 Mitchell and Donald were collaborating on their slavery work.¹³¹ This paper was largely a reproduction of earlier work by both authors, though now centred on an analysis of the Northern part of the Pacific coast and the evidence was trending to more quantitative data. They also put forth several tables related to the specific tasks assigned to slaves to paint a picture of what slavery might have looked like.

The bothersome part comes in their connection of slaves being taken in “raids” as the “spoils of war.”¹³² Their concern is not so much with warfare, but how slaves were created in the first place; however, by connecting Indigenous warfare to ‘slave raiding’ and nothing else, readers are left with the impression that Indigenous warfare was not very serious, perhaps not even much more than crime.

By 1988 this idea, that warfare was raiding, was cemented in Donald’s paper “Slave Raiding on the Pacific Coast” in *Native People, Native Lands*.¹³³ In this paper Donald dealt directly with warfare and the expressed purpose of the paper was not only to “describe and discuss” warfare but to evaluate its connection with slavery.

Donald defined ‘war’ along the same lines as Helen Codere did in her edited version of Franz Boas’ *Kwakiutl Ethnography*.¹³⁴ ‘War’ was defined as “fighting” between “Tribes” or “clans” but also between “individuals.”¹³⁵ He used McIlwraith’s ethnographic descriptions of the ‘Bella Coola Warfare’ as his model in describing warfare across the coast. McIlwraith wrote:

In the old days wars between the coastal tribes were common, but though slaves were taken freely, land was never seized; such is unthinkable to the Bella Coola.¹³⁶

¹³¹ Mitchell and Leland Donald, *Some Economic Aspects*.

¹³² Mitchell and Leland Donald, *Some Economic Aspects*, 23.

¹³³ Donald, “The Slave Trade.”

¹³⁴ Franz Boas, *Kwakiutl Ethnography*.

¹³⁵ Franz Boas, *Kwakiutl Ethnography*, 108, cited in Donald, “The Slave Trade,” 164.

¹³⁶ Thomas McIlwraith, *The Bella Coola Indians (reissued from 1948)*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press: 1992), pg. 133.

Donald noted that “basic to their warfare was the raid.”¹³⁷

According to Donald, war was organised by “warriors,” but “such a leader did not have strong control over his followers.”¹³⁸ Raids were typically motivated by a desire to retaliate for raids conducted by the target. Donald felt raids were carried out in the late spring and early summer, but typically planned over the winter.

Raiders are said to travel in secrecy as they approached their targets, only travelling at night, hiding by day and not lighting camp fires. Donald describes a variety of rituals that were supposed to be observed, for example elaborate eating procedures, specific seating plans in canoes and wives back at home were supposed to observe certain types of behaviour.

As the raiders approached their targets they would scout the area for the best plan of attack, if the element of surprise was lost they would abandon the entire plan. If secrecy was maintained, they would attack at dawn in a rush and attempt to kill all the male inhabitants and capture the women and children as slaves. They would set fire to the village and make a hasty retreat to avoid any counter-attacks from reinforcements.

Donald noted this pattern is repeated in numerous texts on coastal warfare; however, following this classic interpretation to Indigenous coastal warfare, Donald acknowledged the strong discrepancy between Swadesh and Codere’s descriptions of warfare. He noted that Swadesh saw territorial and economic acquisitions as strong motivators for the Nuuchah Nulth, while Codere’s descriptions of Kwakwaka’wakw warfare could not be entirely accurate especially in light of Lekwiltok (tribe of Kwakwaka’wakw) territorial expansion into Salish territories or Kaigani Haida acquisitions of Tlingit territories.¹³⁹

Donald did not resolve this apparent difference of opinion, he was content to comment that “little systematic work on Northwest Coast Warfare has been done.”¹⁴⁰ It may not have been entirely necessary for Donald to explore why Swadesh and

¹³⁷ Leland Donald, “Slave Raiding,” 165.

¹³⁸ Leland Donald, “Slave Raiding,” 165.

¹³⁹ Donald’s descriptions from (Leland Donald, “Slave Raiding,” 164-167).

¹⁴⁰ Leland Donald, “Slave Raiding,” 166.

Codere arrived at such opposing points of view, but by not exploring the ideas in more detail we are left with only his conception of ‘slave raids’ tactically based on sneak attacks as the dominant interpretation to warfare.

It is not entirely surprising Donald left the question unresolved, after all it didn’t suit his thesis to explore it in greater detail and sneak attacks for slaves fit his interpretation. For example, while he noted that there were numerous competing interpretations to warfare, slaving was a ubiquitous outcome “whether or not one of the initial motives of an expedition was the acquisition of slaves.”¹⁴¹

Before leaving the topic of slavery and for the sake of thematic clarity I will introduce one work outside the 1980s. Leland Donald published a book length study on slavery in 1997 that can roughly be seen as the totality of this research. It was an important publication in the broader Anthropological literature on slavery and was a strong argument against the revisionist “peaceful savage” approach to Indigenous Anthropology.

The book offered no new information on warfare and repeats most of what was said in his and Mitchell’s earlier papers. However, Donald is slightly more cautious in his approach, he noted “*some* attacks on other groups ha[d] as their primary motive the capture of slaves.”¹⁴² He also noted that while a discussion of warfare was important, it “would lead too far from the topic of slavery.”¹⁴³

As we will see in section three of this thesis Donald’s characterisation of nighttime sneak attacks with weak leadership was not representative of the complex tactical maneuvers carried out by the Nine Tribes. While stealth was an available tactic, Donald’s portrayal cannot be considered accurate for the Nine Tribes.

Brian Ferguson published two papers on Northwest Coast warfare in the 1980s. Both papers offer the first serious connections of warfare to Northwest coast

¹⁴¹ Leland Donald, “Slave Raiding,” 167

¹⁴² Leland Donald, *Aboriginal Slavery on the Northwest Coast of North America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 113, my emphasis.

¹⁴³ Donald, *Aboriginal Slavery*, 104.

politics and, following Swadesh, a reconnection of warfare to materialist motivations other than slavery.

Ferguson's first paper, a 1979 conference presentation, argued war was a "contest over control of valuable resources." It was fought "to conquer rich estuarine territories" and for "control of trade."¹⁴⁴ He argued that warfare made the redistributive exchange of the potlatch necessary. It was a key component to peace negotiations, alliance building and preventing violence.

Ferguson felt that food production on the coast was unpredictable from year to year based on salmon spawning variabilities and this variation made the food stores of neighbours highly desirable as a target of raiding. From this position Ferguson posited that Feasting was a defensive measure. Feasting a belligerent or starving neighbour would not only alleviate the possibility of being attacked, but it would place their neighbour in their debt. A complex web of reciprocal debts and expectations linked various groups to each other and diminished the possibility of violent conflict.¹⁴⁵

Ferguson never directly cited a set of narratives, archaeological studies or community interviews that would cleanly support his arguments. Instead he relied on George MacDonald's conference presentation on the "The Epic of Nekt"¹⁴⁶ and other unpublished work by MacDonald. Nevertheless, within the large corpus of narratives on Naeqt in the Beynon or Barbeau files¹⁴⁷ and in MacDonald and Cove's edited version of some of these narratives¹⁴⁸ there is no explicit reference to raiding for food. Furthermore, osteological analyses by Jerome Cybulski do not support any periods of starvation or food shortage on the Coast.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁴ Ferguson, "Warfare and Redistributive Exchange," 133.

¹⁴⁵ Ferguson, "Warfare and Redistributive Exchange," 135-136.

¹⁴⁶ This was published in George Macdonald, "The Epic of Nekt," In *The Tsimshian: Images of the Past; Views for the Present*, ed. Margret Seguin (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1984).

¹⁴⁷ Original narratives in **Invalid source specified..**

¹⁴⁸ Beynon & Barbeau, *Tsimshian Narratives 2: Trade and Warfare*, 1987.

¹⁴⁹ Originally cited in George Macdonald, *Coast Tsimshian pre-contact Economics and Trade: An Archaeological and Ethno-historic reconstruction* (Metlakatla/Lax Kw'alaams Land Claim File, Submission to Ratcliff & Co, 2006), 12 and 24.

George MacDonald's "The Epic of Nekt," is also not an exploration of fighting for food. In it he traced the historical progression of warfare in the broader Tsimshian area from early attacks against the Tsimshian, to their control of the important "Grease Trails" trade routes and controlling important trade resources in the proto-contact period (such as metal), and finally control of trade routes and resources that evolved out of the Fur Trade and HBC posts. He noted that early on the people of Kitwanga were the defenders, but in the later episodes they were the aggressors, using the Fort as base from which to expand their power.¹⁵⁰

Much of that work found its way into his *Kitwanga Fort Historic Site* and the 1989 *Kitwanga Fort Report*.¹⁵¹ MacDonald noted that there is an unusually rich body of material to analyse regarding Fort Kitwanga. There are a series of 14 tapes that recorded Jack Morgan's recounting of the wars of the Kitwanga people, a series of interviews by Rosalind Whalley to record the oral traditions of the area and provide context to the structures and artifacts recovered during archaeological excavation of the Fort. Lastly, there is the rich ethnohistory recorded by William Beynon, Marius Barbeau, Franz Boas and George Emmons.¹⁵²

MacDonald noted that "the wars of the Coast Tsimshian were on a much larger scale"¹⁵³ and that both the Coast Tsimshian and Haida fought wars of territorial conquest against the Tlingit. He went on to note that archaeological evidence in the Prince Rupert Harbour showed "that warfare has been an organized and relatively extensive activity since 1000 BC."¹⁵⁴ He connected interregional trade with warfare, but then made the somewhat incompatible statement that

Most such activities could best be characterized as raids rather than wars. Motivation for war was for revenge or to take slaves, food stores or crest

¹⁵⁰ MacDonald, "The Epic of Nekt," 73.

¹⁵¹ George Macdonald, *Kitwanga Fort National Historic Site, Skeena River, British Columbia" Historic Research and Analysis of Structural Remains* (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1979); George Macdonald, *Kitwanga Fort Report* (Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1989).

¹⁵² See Macdonald, *Kitwanga Fort Report*, 1-2.

¹⁵³ Macdonald, *Kitwanga Fort Report*, 4.

¹⁵⁴ Macdonald, *Kitwanga Fort Report*, 4.

privileges. Territorial expansion was rarely the motivation or result of such activity.¹⁵⁵

Following this statement MacDonald goes on to examine specially built “War Canoes” and armor used in war. MacDonald felt armor was more ceremonial than functional. He also felt disputes could be solved by individual combat between high ranking members of each force.

This interpretation is probably due in part to the only reference in Beynon/Barbeau files of individual combat resolving a ‘war’ which comes from the Naeqt narratives, but there appear to be logical contradictions in these musings and most are conjecture rather a proper examination.

For example, armor is often highly ceremonial, even modern military uniforms are embedded with numerous cultural and ceremonial meanings. This does not mean they do not function to protect the soldier and it is not evidence that armor wasn’t an important function of siege warfare or individual combat. In section three of this thesis we will see some examples of armor that, while ceremonial, also acted as an important and effective tool of war.

MacDonald’s own analysis of weapons pointed to the importance of siege in warfare, for example he briefly mentions eighteen-foot spears that were used from atop palisades to attack besieging enemies and explores the use and construction of military fortified sites.¹⁵⁶

The more perplexing analysis is MacDonald’s reliance on the “The Epic of Naeqt” as the backbone of the ethnohistoric evidence.¹⁵⁷ Despite MacDonald’s comments that warfare was best characterised as “raiding,” the Epic of Naeqt provides a different view. The narrative is clearly a large-scale battle where the Kitimat

¹⁵⁵ Macdonald, *Kitwanga Fort Report*, 4.

¹⁵⁶ *Kitwanga Fort Report*, 13-15.

¹⁵⁷ Beynon, *The Raven Clan Outlaws on the North Pacific Coast*, n.d., pp. Luke Fowler (Lugwentu of House Haku, Kitwanga) recorded by Constance Cox 1920, “The Epic of Naeqt.”

pay two other coastal tribes to augment their forces and the Kitwanga send messengers to the Nisga'a asking to form an alliance.

Both sides spend considerable time in preparations by forming (or attempting to form) alliances.¹⁵⁸ Activities at the Fort included felling trees to place atop the palisades, sharpening the branches into spears and placing the logs atop the palisades so they could be rolled down on the enemy if they attacked the palisades.

Sentries “watched at their posts, day and night.”¹⁵⁹ Once the Kitimat alliance reached the Fort there is a dialogue between the forces and Naeqt taunts the Kitimat alliance into a frontal assault on the fort. In the ensuing battle, the Kitimat charge the Fort, they do not plan a sneak attack at night or engage in any other ‘stealthy’ behaviour. The logs are released on the charging Kitimat and they are decisively defeated.

Following the battle Naeqt orders the Fort’s inhabitants to burn the dead and ceremonies are held to distribute or adopt crests from the battle. This narrative clearly demonstrates a Kitimat siege at Kitwanga. The use of superior battlefield tactics and cunning by Naeqt to force a decisive defeat of the enemy. There is no indication of raiding for food.

MacDonald seemed to see warfare as more than simply raiding despite some of his comments to the contrary. His study of Kitwanga is the most comprehensive look at the battlefield. It incorporated oral history, archaeology, and community engagement. Perhaps the complexity of all these forms of evidence, their relative paucity combined with the numerous contradictions prevented him from making more decisive conclusions, but it is difficult to reconcile the statements that warfare was primarily raiding when the most comprehensive study completed does not support that position.

In 1989 Gary Coupland wrote a short chapter where he tried to connect social stratification on the coast with warfare and offer some context to Ferguson’s

¹⁵⁸ There are temporal markers in the form of noting the passing of the seasons during these preparations. It appears as if at least a half a year passed before the assault.

¹⁵⁹ Beynon, *The Raven Clan Outlaws on the North Pacific Coast*, n.d., pp. Luke Fowler (Lugwentu of House Haku, Kitwanga) recorded by Constance Cox 1920, “The Epic of Naeqt.”

arguments. Coupland felt that motivations for warfare varied based on the cultural area under investigation. He wrote:

The role of warfare in social complexity has, until recently, been given little attention. Yet, coastal oral histories are replete with incidents of war... largescale earthwork fortifications exist, reflecting a considerable labour investment, and an overriding concern with defense.

Referring to Codere, Coupland writes:

Suggestions that Northwest Coast war was just so much bluster have been amply refuted by Ferguson who provides examples of “pitched battles, prolonged attritional campaigns, and treacherous massacres. Codere to the contrary, Northwest Coast Warfare “was no game.”¹⁶⁰

We see the now common theme of citing other authors who have not completed any primary research themselves (Ferguson relying on MacDonald). Coupland’s analysis rests almost exclusively on raids for food, according to him more evident in the North, and raids for slaves, more evident in the South. We see the ‘predatory raiding’ thesis was amended, but continued to be propagated.

Coupland never directly investigates Indigenous sources such as oral histories, but reproduces much of the work analysed above. One curious inclusion in his bibliography is the *Tsimshian Narratives 2: Trade and Warfare*.¹⁶¹ This is a collection of Tsimshian *Adawx*, though edited by Marius Barbeau and edited again by John Cove and George MacDonald.

A serious review of this source should have complicated Coupland’s view that “Northwest Coast raiding was primarily economically motivated; the goals being to secure booty, food and slaves.” While warfare could be economically motivated, I cannot locate a single narrative in the collection where the purpose of the conflict was to raid for “booty, food and slaves.”

¹⁶⁰ Coupland, “Warfare and Social Complexity,” 205.

¹⁶¹ Beynon & Barbeau, *Tsimshian Narratives 2: Trade and Warfare*, 1987.

In section three of the thesis I look more closely at the narratives included in the *Tsimshian Narratives 2: Trade and Warfare*, though where possible I have consulted William Beynon's original field notes or Marius Barbeau's transcriptions of Beynon's notes. Section three will conclusively show that "booty, food and slaves" were not strong motivators for war.¹⁶²

In the 1990s warfare on the coast was increasingly becoming a mainstream lens for analysis of Indigenous cultures. The quality of research dramatically increased and new debates from the broader field of the 'anthropology of war' were being tested against the evidence on the Pacific Northwest Coast.

Madonna Moss and Jon Erlandson's paper "Refuge Rocks, and Defensive Sites"¹⁶³ made a case for exploring the history of warfare through an analysis of fortification sites. They established a typology for fortification types, how they could be identified archaeologically and relationships of where they were distributed. Their paper focused almost entirely on Tlingit Forts, but did bring in some context from the broader Pacific Coast.¹⁶⁴

Their analysis was focused primarily on establishing a broad chronology of fortification building and how these construction projects might coincide with other archaeologically known events. While they did repeat the assumption that warfare was made up of slaving and raiding, they also noted that territory was often absorbed (or lost) in warfare. They also speculated on the 'domino' effect of territorial acquisition/loss and the pressures on other territorial boundaries these changes might have had throughout the region.

The paper is often cited in warfare studies. It established a baseline from which to measure sites that are defensible and to what extent they may be military defensive

¹⁶² It is important to note that when narrators are characterizing the enemy. Often the enemy is characterized attacking villages empty of fighting men and 'raiding' for food booty and slaves. However, when warfare is organised and carried out by people of the same cultural ancestry these themes are absent from the narratives.

¹⁶³ Moss and Erlandson, "Forts, Refuge Rocks."

¹⁶⁴ See for example Moss and Erlandson, "Forts, Refuge Rocks," 84.

sites or simply defensible sites where other activities were carried out. The paper used archaeological, ethnographic and oral sources.

They point out the ubiquity of these sites through the entire Northwest Coast and their analysis of fortification sites and broader Tlingit history serves as an excellent example of what we can learn from studying the military history of Indigenous people.

In 1997 Herbert Maschner put to rest the idea that food scarcity led to warfare. In his “Evolution of Northwest Coast Warfare”¹⁶⁵ Maschner argued wars were fought for many reasons, often overlapping and wars lasted for decades. Using evidence from Jerome Cybulski’s analysis of human skeletons it was not possible to argue for starvation as a causal factor in warfare because there was no evidence of starvation in the archaeological record.

Maschner took a more historically sensitive approach to warfare pointing out that warfare “was probably much more common prehistorically than historically.”¹⁶⁶ He believed the ethnographically recorded patterns of warfare were remnants of an older system.

Maschner set out an archaeological chronology where the 1500BC marker of the “Middle Period” served as the most important. This was the time when large villages formed, it was also when evidence for region-wide violent conflict appears, especially cranial and forearm parry fractures from trauma disproportionately higher in male skeletons. It was also when weapons appear in the archaeological record. By the “Late Period 200 AD-500 AD” fortified defensive sites appeared up and down the coast in increasing numbers.

Maschner provided an example of what can be learned by exploring his archaeological work at Kuiu Island and the area. He argued that in general, defensive sites can be temporary refuges, the site of resource storage, resource processing areas and entire villages. In the Kuiu area he found no resource stress that would lead to the conflict described by Ferguson, but he did find population increases.

¹⁶⁵ Maschner, “The Evolution of Northwest Coast Warfare.”

¹⁶⁶ Maschner, “The Evolution of Northwest Coast Warfare,” 298.

In the Late Period villages at Kuiu had moved from convoluted and productive shorelines to sites with greater viewsheds (long straight beaches). Villages appear next to productive salmon streams and they grew in size to accommodate more than one lineage. Subsistence shifted from small group marine mammal hunting and deep-sea fishing to more collective salmon weir harvesting and terrestrial animal hunting. Maschner concluded that all these developments were primarily for increased defensibility and in response to the introduction of the bow and arrow.

Maschner agreed with previous scholarship that wars were fought for revenge, for slaves, over women, access to trade and resources, but also noted territorial change and wars of extermination. He commented “simply trying to explain warfare as a response to competition over scarce foodstuffs, we ignore the great range of variability in how historically known people behave.”¹⁶⁷ Wars were also often fought for a combination of these reasons and it was almost always the strongest polities, not those with the most need, that initiated violent conflict.

Maschner along with Katherine Reedy-Maschner continued this line of research in 1998 with a look at Aluet and Koniag history (Also known as Unangan and Alutiiq – Gulf of Alaska, Kodiak archipelago, and Aleutian Islands).¹⁶⁸ The paper is largely organised around a critique of Ferguson’s earlier arguments around raiding for food and the “Tribal Zone” thesis.

The Tribal Zone thesis emerged in the 1990s and argued Indigenous warfare was directly related to a particular group’s relationship *vis-à-vis* expanding Euro-Imperial powers.¹⁶⁹ According to its proponents, ethnographically observed warfare patterns were not “pristine manifestations of indigenous culture.”¹⁷⁰ Tribal Zone architects felt we could not trust the ethnographically recorded history of warfare because oral accounts and ethnographic accounts of cultures had been tainted by the contact process. However, Tribal Zone proponents were optimistic about using

¹⁶⁷ Maschner, “The Evolution of Northwest Coast Warfare,” 293.

¹⁶⁸ Maschner and Reedy-Maschner, *Raid, Retreat, Defend*.

¹⁶⁹ Brian Ferguson and Brian Whitehead, *War in the Tribal Zone: Expanding States and Indigenous Warfare* (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1992).

¹⁷⁰ Ferguson and Whitehead, *War in the Tribal Zone*, p. xii.

warfare as a lens from which to view the anthropological and archaeological past. For example, in an edited collection of papers on the Tribal Zone thesis the editors wrote:

By bringing together the historical and the military, this volume also connects with theoretical developments in historical sociology and political science, in which a growing body of literature seeks to incorporate collective violence as a topic within the mainstream of social research.¹⁷¹

Maschner and Reedy-Maschner pointed out that archaeologically we can discern a tremendous amount of ‘pre-contact’ information and that warfare on the North Pacific Coast was not scaled up during the contact process, in fact it was probably scaled down complicating the Tribal Zone arguments.

The Maschner/Reedy Maschner paper explored a number of different lines of archaeological evidence, probably most interesting was the shift around 1000 AD to villages that had neither productive shorelines nor were protected from the elements. These new sites were however highly defensible, often using rocky points as “bastions”¹⁷² and they appeared clustered at borderlands.

The authors argued that the introduction of slat armor, the recurve bow, and other materials of war combined with fortified villages and other fortification sites reflected a macro-regional pattern of increased warfare and pressure on borders.

They argued for a broader region-wide analysis to understand the pressures on borders.¹⁷³ They suggested that localised examples of resource stress or political instability might explain localised motivations to warfare, but they do not adequately address the general shift in the archaeological record on the entire Northwest Coast to increased warfare. Instead they argued the technologies of warfare combined with increasing social stratification better explain the broader trend. They contended that

¹⁷¹ Ferguson and Whitehead, *War in the Tribal Zone*, p. 3.

¹⁷² Maschner and Reedy-Maschner, *Raid, Retreat, Defend*, 33-34.

¹⁷³ See also Alan McMillan, “Reviewing the Wakashan Migration Hypothesis,” in *Emerging from the Mist: Studies in Northwest Coast Culture History* ed. RG Matson, Gary Coupland and Quentin Mackie, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003), pg. 256-257. In this article McMillan makes a similar call to examine broader region wide patterns, such as warfare, that influence pressures on borders and territorial changes.

population increases, migrations and increasing competition by young males for status more than likely resulted in increased violence and warfare as people sought better status opportunities amongst greater competition. The paper is strangely titled for such an analysis, but in general, the history of the Nine Tribes seems to echo most of their larger points.

The 1990s also saw the introduction of Jerome Cybulski's more robust engagements with the human remains in the Prince Rupert Harbour and their connection to warfare. While Cybulski analysed the remains in 1978,¹⁷⁴ and it was apparent early on that these remains could be associated with warfare,¹⁷⁵ it wasn't until the 1990s that he began a systematic analysis and dating of these remains.

Cybulski originally dated the oldest skeletal evidence for warfare at in the Prince Rupert Harbour around 3100 BP. He has since revised this date to 1290-830 BP as he gained access to more sophisticated methods and equipment.¹⁷⁶ Cybulski's evidence and dates along with his work at Greenville Harbour have formed one of the core streams of evidence for warfare on the coast.¹⁷⁷

Cybulski found that more men than women exhibited depressed cranial vaults which are associated with an object hitting the head rather than the head hitting an object, where women did exhibit depressed cranial vaults they were to the side and back of the skull rather than to the front as they were with the men. This suggested to Cybulski that women's fractures were received while fleeing and men's while fighting. In addition, there are a number of forearm parry fractures that are often closely associated with combat as well as missing teeth. Five headless skeletons were also discovered. Three of those five were intact enough to reveal cut marks on vertebrae suggesting decapitation. These skeletons were found at the Lachane site, which is

¹⁷⁴ Jerome Cybulski, "Modified Human Bones and Skulls from Prince Rupert Harbour, British Columbia," *Canadian Journal of Archaeology* 2 (1978).

¹⁷⁵ See Jerome Cybulski, The Prince Rupert Harbour Project, In *Perspectives in Northwest Coast Prehistory* (Vol. Archaeological Survey of Canada Mercury Series Paper 160), ed. G. MacDonald and J. Cybulski (Gatineau: Canadian Museum of History, 2001).

¹⁷⁶ Cybulski, "Updating the Warrior Cache."

¹⁷⁷ For Greenville see Jerome Cybulski, "The Greenville Burial Ground."

associated with a famous Nine Tribes warrior Aksk and described in more detail in section three.

Grant Keddie had a short publication in 1996. The main thrust of the article was to show that defensive sites, 19 in all, in the Victoria BC area were Indigenous in creation. There had been some thought that they might have been Spanish forts. Keddie's radiocarbon dates from the Lime Bay, Finlayson Point and Macaulay Point sites pointed to 460 BP to 1160 BP.¹⁷⁸ This dating put the features at an older date than Mitchell had originally speculated.¹⁷⁹

In 2000 Maschner and Kenneth Ames put together a survey on the *Peoples of the Northwest Coast: Their Archaeology and Prehistory*.¹⁸⁰ Chapter eight was dedicated to warfare. The chapter focused on the work of George MacDonald's Fort Kitwanga investigations and Maschner's work on the Kuiu Island Project, but incorporated all the major contributions to the field.

As with most surveys it does not make any controversial arguments and tried to incorporate the general state of knowledge. The result is mixed, there is a tension in the chapter as it tries to harmonise Maschner's accounts of warfare being causal to significant cultural change in the region while maintaining more conservative interpretations.

Ferguson's Potlatch thesis is dismissed as unlikely and the authors offer their view that wars were fought for numerous reasons and often these reasons were overlapping. "People will fight over anything they consider important to their social or economic survival."¹⁸¹

Nevertheless, the chapter's focus is on long-range raiding, revenge, slaving, or the maintenance of status. The authors make the conflicting assertions that "there is

¹⁷⁸ Keddie, "Aboriginal Defensive Sites" also see Keddie, *Archaeological Site Inspection*.

¹⁷⁹ Donald Mitchell, "Excavations At Two Trench Embankments."

¹⁸⁰ Ames and Maschner, *Peoples of the Northwest Coast*.

¹⁸¹ Ames and Maschner, *Peoples of the Northwest Coast*, 196.

little evidence that these wars often resulted in a shift in territory”¹⁸² while at the same time recognizing the Tlingit invasion and occupation of Tsimshian territory, the eventual Tsimshian reoccupation of these lands, the Kaigani Haida invasion and occupation of Tlingit lands, the Tlingit occupation of Eyak lands, the Lekwiltok invasion of Salish lands and Nuuchah Nulth intra-regional wars of annihilation to occupy rival lands.

A number of important papers were published in the 2000s. In this decade the incorporation of archaeological, ethnographic and oral sources became increasingly important. The 1997 Delgamuukw decision no doubt gave scholars increased confidence in using oral sources, but oral records have always been an important part of Northwest Coast scholarship. Within the ethnographic context oral traditions have also been important,¹⁸³ but by the 1970s oral history had become increasingly popular especially by British Labour historians and ‘history from below’.¹⁸⁴ The result was that by the 2000s oral history and its power to reveal ‘hidden history’,¹⁸⁵ the agency of the less powerful, and the histories of ethnic minorities had become more mainstream.

While the next 17 years of warfare scholarship generally took an increased recognition of sophistication, the twenty first century writing got off to a shaky start with a chapter by Leland Donald in *Hunters & Gatherers in the Modern World*.¹⁸⁶

Donald set out to compare Northwest Coast peoples to other early horticultural societies in an effort to show the similarities in their modes of war. In his section on “Strategy and Tactics” Donald repeated the assertion that nighttime sneak attacks, where the primary purpose was to kill as many able-bodied males while they

¹⁸² Ames and Maschner, *Peoples of the Northwest Coast*, 209.

¹⁸³ For example see, Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

¹⁸⁴ Harold Perkin, “Social History in Britain,” *Journal of Social History* 10, no. 2 (1976), 132.

¹⁸⁵ Term coined by Sheila Rowbotham (*Hidden from History: 300 years of Women's Oppression and the Fight against it* (London: Pluto Press, 1973)), while she didn’t use oral history others like Jill Liddington, “Rediscovering Suffrage History,” *History Workshop Journal* 4 (1977) took up the challenge.

¹⁸⁶ Leland Donald, “Patterns of War and Peace Among Complex Hunter-Gatherers: The Case of the Northwest Coast of North America,” In *Hunters & Gatherers in the Modern World: Conflict, Resistance, and Self-Determination*, ed. Peter Schweiter, Megan Biesele and Robert Hitchcock (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000).

slept as possible, was the “principle strategy” of Northwest Coast warfare.¹⁸⁷ Donald goes on to note “command structure was underdeveloped and weak” and “elaborate tactics, especially if they involved the coordination of several groups from different communities, often failed.”¹⁸⁸

Donald includes no citations in his “Strategy and Tactics” section. This is a bit alarming when we consider that just three years earlier he had completed a book length study where warfare was a key feature to his analysis of slavery. In the introduction to his paper Donald cited some relevant recent research into warfare noted above, yet cannot marshal a single source to support his view of nighttime sneak attacks.

Directly following the section on “strategy and tactics” Donald commented on the weapons and armor deployed by Indigenous soldiers. The question is, why would stealthy night time raiders need armour? Armour is heavy and cumbersome, especially the Tlingit armour Donald describes. Armour is used for frontal assaults and fixing forces, not for lightning sneak attacks. Armour is worn when you expect the enemy to know you are present and you need protection from their heightened situational awareness. Armour is not stealth.

Donald concluded that “Northwest Coast warfare falls well within the range of fighting practices of “tribally” organized people.”¹⁸⁹ The conclusion is at odds with Ferguson’s 1988 observation that there is no “Rubicon dividing the tactics of states from those of non-states; instead, one finds an evolutionary continuum.”¹⁹⁰ This point, that the military science of infantry fighting tactics has changed very little over the course of history, is usually missed by most anthropologists or archaeologists.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ Donald, “Patterns of War,” 166.

¹⁸⁸ Donald, “Patterns of War,” 166.

¹⁸⁹ Donald, “Patterns of War,” 176.

¹⁹⁰ Brian Ferguson, *The Anthropology of War: A Bibliography* (New York: Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation, 1988) in Keeley, *War Before Civilization*, 42.

¹⁹¹ For example, The Duke of Marlborough favoured penetration, as did Gen. Montgomery at El Alamein. Alexander the Great, Robert E. Lee, Erwin Rommel, Hannibal, the destruction of the German 7th Army at the Falaise Gap are all classic examples of envelopment. Crecy (1346) and Agincourt (1415), Hastings (1066) or Napoleon’s Battle of Austerlitz

In 2006 David Schaepe wrote about Sto:lo defensive rock features on the Lower Fraser River. He used the features to explain an elaborate system of inter village political cooperation when it came to matters of mutual defense. The arguments were highly significant in themselves, but Schaepe also highlighted that the “persistence of the Rousseau-Hobbes dichotomy and debate” was a “distasteful aftereffect of British Colonial presence.”¹⁹² Schaepe called out the prejudicial bias in characterising the Northwest Coast peoples’ warfare as “raids” as a deliberate strategy whereby the “emphasis on the passivity of Aboriginal peoples and the diminution of “warfare” to the non-political level of “raiding” tends to predominate within the context of Native land claims and self-governance issues.”¹⁹³

Not only did Schaepe show that there was an inherent bias, but he soundly critiqued and provided convincing evidence from archaeological, historical and oral sources that the Coast Salish Sto:lo were not a pacifist people.

The basis of Schaepe’s archaeological analysis rested on a series of rock walls and platforms with an intervillage viewshed in addition to a communication network based on line of sight and trails. Using these archaeological data; rock features, communications, projectile points and sling stones, Schaepe then connected the “threat of attack from downriver [as a] central motif” in Sto:lo oral recordings of warfare”¹⁹⁴ to show that while it is commonly believed that Coast Salish political organisation did not go beyond the corporate family group, on the Fraser River there did appear to be a much broader inter village political organisation on matters of defense.

This paper represents a turning point in the scholarship of Northwest Coast warfare. While the “raiding thesis” appeared in a few works right up into the 2010s, much of the work after Schaepe is focused on the specifics of warfare rather than justifying it as a legitimate lens of analysis.

are all examples of defensive-offensive maneuvers, either tire the enemy out in a protracted siege from a strong defensive position or feigned withdrawal to draw the enemy out and onto more favourable ground.

¹⁹² Schaepe, “Rock Fortifications,” 673.

¹⁹³ Schaepe, “Rock Fortifications,” 673.

¹⁹⁴ Schaepe, “Rock Fortifications,” 698.

In 2007 Bill Angelbeck convincingly argued against the theme of Coast Salish pacifism or the “portrayal not as warriors but, rather, as victims.”¹⁹⁵ He asserted that archaeological evidence of defensive sites, the ubiquity of trench embankments in Coast Salish territory and the Fraser River rock features showed that Coast Salish people did not disperse when attacked, but instead dug in, built fortifications and fought back.¹⁹⁶

He went further by explaining that the constant Salishan fear of attack expressed in the *Fort Langley Journals* was not a fear of raids for ‘booty and slaves,’ it was a fear of extermination. After all the Lekwiltok had conquered large portions of Salish territory representing an existential threat.¹⁹⁷

Angelbeck makes much of the introduction of firearms into the area as a ‘war winning weapon’. Here Angelbeck and I have contrasting points of view. The theme of firearms technologies upsetting Indigenous practices is generally overstated in my opinion. For example, HBC trade guns were not particularly good weapons. They suffered from inaccuracy and slow reload times. There is no doubt they were adopted wholesale by Indigenous people, but not necessarily because they were better weapons.¹⁹⁸

Angelbeck provided a better analysis of how the Lekwiltok came to dominate the Salish in his 2009 PhD:

¹⁹⁵ Angelbeck, “Conceptions of Coast Salish Warfare.”

¹⁹⁶ Angelbeck, “Conceptions of Coast Salish Warfare,” 266.

¹⁹⁷ Angelbeck, “Conceptions of Coast Salish Warfare,” 268

¹⁹⁸ For discussions of firearms being exaggerated as war winning weapons see, George Raudzens, “War-Winning Weapons: The Measurement of Technological Determinism in Military History,” *The Journal of Military History* 54, no. 4 (October 1990). See Patrick Malone, *Indian and English Military Systems in New England in the Seventeenth Century* (PhD Thesis, Providence: Brown University, 1971) for a better analysis of Eastern Woodlands warfare and musketry. Also see James Smith, “The Western Woods Cree: Anthropological Myth and Historical Reality,” *American Ethnologist* 14, no. 3 (1987) for the “standardized ethnological myth [that] holds that the Western Woods Cree” beginning around 1670 obtained firearms and in less than a century conquered the vast western boreal forest. Also see James Wright, “Prehistory of the Canadian Shield.” In *Subarctic: Handbook of North American Indians, vol. 6*, ed. June Helm (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1981) for a similar discussion. See Joan Townsend, “Firearms Against Native Arms: A Study in Comparative Efficiencies with an Alaskan Example,” *Arctic Anthropology* 20, no. 2 (1983) for a critique of firearms as war winners in Alaska. Also see B. Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's "Heroic Age" Reconsidered* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985) for the exaggeration of Champlain’s ‘mighty shot’.

In the Lekwiltok case, the warriors form part of a ranked institution that extended beyond and existed separate from the organization of households. Consider the difference in effectiveness with organizational power: one can put one's energy into canvassing individuals to your cause in warfare, appealing to their self-interests or convincing them of its justification—in such cases, the power to join is heavily in the control of the free individual. Or, the secret society of warriors pursuing this attack can demand that its members participate in the attack, or be barred from membership in that institution—the weight is on side of the institution, or the secret society. For the Lekwiltok, their warrior societies were already an institution—already organized and at the ready—whereas Coast Salish war parties were formed after efforts of organizing for each occasion.¹⁹⁹

Interestingly, Angelbeck and McLay's recounting of the Battle of Maple Bay which decisively ended Lekwiltok attacks on Coast Salish villages in a mid nineteenth-century maritime battle made very little mention of firearms, the battle won by superior tactics and numerical superiority rather than technology.²⁰⁰

Nevertheless, Angelbeck's central assertion that the Coast Salish were not pacifists was well supported by the evidence he supplied and continues the conversation that there were prevalent biases in the literature towards "ideological" conceptions of Indigenous people.²⁰¹

Joan Lovesik's 2007 article on Kwakwaka'wakw headhunting serves as an excellent example of how essentialized ideas of Indigenous violence could be. She noted that "no... controversy occurs over the existence of human trophy taking."²⁰² Even so, scholarship surrounding Kwakwaka'wakw 'headhunting' has placed a variety of unconvincing meanings onto the practice. For example, John Keast Lord argued that the purpose of 'head hunting' was to "win the most terrible name for blood

¹⁹⁹ Angelbeck, "They Recognize no Superior Chief," 91.

²⁰⁰ Angelbeck and McLay, "The Battle at Maple Bay."

²⁰¹ Angelbeck did not engage directly with the Rousseau/Hobbes dichotomy but idealized concepts of the Coast Salish. See Angelbeck, "Conceptions of Coast Salish Warfare," 179.

²⁰² Joan A. Lovisek, "Human Trophy Taking on the Northwest Coast," in Richard J. Chacon and David H. Dye, *The Taking and Displaying of Human Body Parts as Trophies by Amerindians* (Memphis: Springer, 2007), 47.

thirstiness.”²⁰³ Franz Boas’ analysis complements Lord’s, but added that the desire to be “atrocious” was linked to prestige.²⁰⁴ Curtis believed heads were the primary objective of warfare, in essence, “winning of gory trophies.”²⁰⁵ Helen Codere echoed these beliefs in her study of Kwakwaka’wakw warfare but placed more emphasis on the *Hamatsa* or cannibal winter ceremony.²⁰⁶ Within the more recent postmodernist genre the subject of human trophy taking is cited as evidence for the negative cultural characteristics applied to Indigenous peoples by colonial “civilised” society.²⁰⁷ Further, Drucker and Heizer cautioned scholars not to take the “picturesque references” to head-taking too literally.²⁰⁸

Kwakwaka’wakw beliefs place the soul at the crown of the head. The soul travels through the esophagus and into the stomach during reincarnation. The tongue also has special significance as communicator with supernatural powers through singing and whistling, and the tongue protrudes at death.²⁰⁹ The notion that death occurred when the body had been dismembered is found throughout Kwakwaka’wakw beliefs. For example, when women killed salmon they cut off their heads so that the soul was released and it could be “reborn or reincarnated in the classic sense of transformation.”²¹⁰ Metaphorically the separation of the head from the esophagus is significant because Kwakwaka’wakw symbolism has abundant references to “swallowing property,” or “swallowing up” other tribes and resurrection

²⁰³ John Keast Lord, *The Naturalist in Vancouver Island and British Columbia*, Vol. 1, (London: R. Bentley, 1866), 171, UVic Special Collections, Microfiche, CIHM no. 38401.

²⁰⁴ Franz Boas, *The Organization and Secret Societies of the Kwakiutl Indians*, Early Canadian Online, accessed October 7, 2009, University of Victoria, <http://canadiana.org/record/14300>, <http://www.canadiana.org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/pimg/14300.pdf?id=9e64a7b8b9aaefb0>.

²⁰⁵ E.S. Curtis, “The Kwakiutl,” vol. X in *The North American Indian 98*, online, <http://curtis.library.northwestern.edu/>.

²⁰⁶ Codere, *Fighting With Property*, 97, 98, 101, 107, 108.

²⁰⁷ Bracken, *The Potlatch Papers*, 87-91.

²⁰⁸ Philip Drucker and Robert Heizer, *To Make My Name Good: A Reexamination of the Southern Kwakiutl Potlatch* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 127.

²⁰⁹ Jopling, *The Coppers of the Northwest*, 120-121.

²¹⁰ Lovisek, “Human Trophy Taking.”

through vomiting.²¹¹ The Kwakwaka'wakw practiced decapitation to release the soul from the body, souls that were not released could do damage.

The Kwakwaka'wakw believed that when an enemy was beheaded the warrior acquired their supernatural powers.²¹² Under these circumstances head hunting acted as a tool of war. The taking of an enemy's head not only protected the warrior from the dead soldier's soul returning to his body to take revenge, but it also ensured the decapitator would acquire the dead man's supernatural wealth. During the 1850's headhunting was reported in the historical record particularly in the central and northern parts of the coast where warfare was prevalent.²¹³ For example, on October 6, 1849 a Kwakwaka'wakw war party returned to Beaver Harbour with "14 skulls and about 30 prisoners."²¹⁴ J.S. Helmcken reported in 1850 that Kwakwaka'wakw warfare was engaged for the "purpose of taking heads and captives of enemies."²¹⁵ During battles it appears as if only persons of status were targeted for decapitation. For example, only Chiefs' heads (15) were taken in a war between the Owikeno and the Bella Bella.²¹⁶

Lovisek noted that by the 1860's head hunting was in serious decline. Lovisek attributes this decline to two reasons, European colonists would not tolerate such activities because they did not appreciate its cultural meaning and European material goods replaced heads simultaneously as the secular potlatch replaced spiritual winter

²¹¹ Boas, *The Organization and Secret*, 559.

²¹² Jopling, *The Coppers of the Northwest*, 84, 148.

²¹³ Ames and Maschner, *Peoples of the Northwest Coast*; Lovisek, "Human Trophy Taking"; Maschner, "The Evolution of Northwest Coast Warfare," 267-302; Coupland, "Warfare and Social Complexity," 205-214.

²¹⁴ Robert Galois, *Kwakwaka'wakw Settlements 1775-1920: A Geographical Analysis and Gazetteer*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1994), 45.

²¹⁵ Fort Rupert Letterbook, MS A/B/20/R2A, Fort Rupert Fonds, 1857, 67, Provincial Archives of BC.

²¹⁶ Newcombe Family Misc. MS 1077, Newcombe Family Fonds, v 44, folio, 14, August 14, 1908, Ethnological, "Descriptions of "Slaughter Illahee" between Bella Indians and Owikeno Indians as told by Ned Wesley," 1908, Provincial Archives of British Columbia.

ceremonies.²¹⁷ These conclusions follow her comments in her other 2007 paper focused on a critique of Helen Codere's *Fighting with Property* thesis.²¹⁸

In 2009 Bill Angelbeck wrote a PhD on Coast Salish warfare. He set out to evaluate what warfare could tell us about Coast Salish sociopolitical organization. He found that Coast Salish societies seemed to resemble anarchic institutions that could coalesce into defensive alliances when the threat of a common enemy was evident.

While Angelbeck consulted oral, ethnographic, historical and ethnohistorical sources these were largely to provide "background information."²¹⁹ His primary information came from an analysis of his four categories of defensive features: "Lookouts, Refuges, Fortifications and Stockades."²²⁰ From these distinct forms of fortifications he suggested a model of scalar political organization reflecting the element of threat.

Angelbeck's thesis makes the most explicit case for connecting warfare with "structural change through time, highlighting shifts in the parameters of a group's social and political structure,"²²¹ but whether he accomplished a broader "meaning and rationale in warfare"²²² is debatable.

Angelbeck still saw warfare as primarily made up of "surprise raids that could be directed at any village."²²³ He noted that communication networks would typically relay the information about raiders and these warnings spread quickly. He saw trench embankments as temporary strongholds that were occupied during these times of heightened alarm. He commented, "As refuges [were] occupied for short durations, these sites indicate that a group resorted to them because a threat was known

²¹⁷ Lovisek, "Human Trophy Taking," 58-59.

²¹⁸ Lovisek, "Aboriginal Warfare."

²¹⁹ Angelbeck, "They Recognize no Superior Chief," 304.

²²⁰ Angelbeck, "They Recognize no Superior Chief," Chapter 7.

²²¹ Angelbeck, "They Recognize no Superior Chief," 5.

²²² Angelbeck, "They Recognize no Superior Chief," 6.

²²³ Angelbeck, "They Recognize no Superior Chief," 226.

beforehand.”²²⁴ It is difficult to reconcile this theory with his invocation of Mitchell’s statement that: “... [T]he aboriginal fighting pattern rarely involved siege, being instead, dependent almost entirely upon surprise as a tactic.”²²⁵ Angelbeck commented that Mitchell “provided an insight to the trench-embankment strategy, commenting that such a defensive structure would have served well given the nature of warfare practices in the region.”²²⁶

How can a trench embankment serve as a refuge only when forewarning of an attack is given, yet at the same time the dominant war strategy is surprise attack? Moreover, if villagers have forewarning of an imminent attack, why not flee into the woods?²²⁷ Why go to all the trouble of building these elaborate fortresses?

I have provided some answers to these questions elsewhere,²²⁸ but I believe there are a few examples that illustrate how Angelbeck arrived at his conclusions.

First, this evidence is disproportionately ethnographic and historical. In other words, it is highly slanted to the contact process. While some evidence may represent pre-contact practices, these practices were likely highly influenced by smallpox epidemics and the resultant decline in population. Angelbeck himself noted the skewed perceptions of Coast Salish warfare as passive or defensive was probably a result of the contact process.²²⁹ As we saw earlier, it is very probable the demographic decline from pre-smallpox decreased the pace and scale of warfare all along the coast.²³⁰

²²⁴ Angelbeck, “They Recognize no Superior Chief,” 272.

²²⁵ Donald Mitchell, “Excavations At Two Trench Embankments,” 45.

²²⁶ Angelbeck, “They Recognize no Superior Chief,” 271.

²²⁷ Angelbeck identifies a variety of defensive sites designed with this specific tactic in mind, see Angelbeck, “They Recognize no Superior Chief,” 180-189.

²²⁸ Jeremy Buddenhagen, “Pre-contact Indigenous Military Fortifications: Siege Warfare and Implications for Land Ownership,” *BC Studies 2015: From Exclusion to Inclusion: Forging a Multicultural Identity in British Columbia* (Richmond BC: BC Studies, 2015).

²²⁹ Angelbeck, “Conceptions of Coast Salish Warfare,” 261.

²³⁰ Ames and Maschner, *Peoples of the Northwest Coast*, 218.

Second, Angelbeck felt that trench embankments could have served as temporary refuges during periods of intra-Salish conflict and this was key component to his interpretation of scalar political organisation. He felt high ranking competing Coast Salish families often feuded with each other and trench embankment sites would have been good temporary refuges during these short-term disputes.

Keith Carlson found that in the Fort Langley Journals half of the recorded disputes were between Coast Salish groups.²³¹ This line of reasoning also fit well with the archaeological record, that embankments were situated away from villages, the area within an embankment site was not large enough for a whole village and middens tended to be shallow compared to villages. While there is no explicit analysis of these conflicts the assumption appears to be that small-scale raids were designed to destabilise a family's political support base.²³²

There is little analysis of inter-regional conflict. The distribution of defensive sites is more suggestive that Coast Salish defensiveness was focused on the borderlands. For example, Angelbeck notes three core areas of defensive practices and these core areas are located on the northern, southern and eastern frontiers of Coast Salish territory.²³³ Similarly, even though Angelbeck's definition of defensive sites was fairly generous, it included "lookouts" and "refuges," the sites are more highly distributed at the frontiers of Coast Salish territories.²³⁴

Angelbeck did look at a major battle between a Coast Salish alliance and the Lekwiltok at Maple Bay that concluded with a decisive defeat of the Lekwiltok and the end to years of predatory raiding against the Salish. Nevertheless, there was little analysis as to why the Salish would have constructed trench embankments over non-trenched defensive sites.

If offensive forces were there only to raid the nearby village then what was the purpose of digging labour intensive trenches? Could palisades not serve just as

²³¹ Keith Carlson, "Intercommunity Conflicts," In *A Sto:Lo Coast Salish Historical Atlas*, ed. Albert McHalsie, David Shaepe, Keith Carlson (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2001).

²³² Angelbeck, "They Recognize no Superior Chief," 227-229.

²³³ Angelbeck, "They Recognize no Superior Chief," 220 (fig. 34).

²³⁴ Angelbeck, "They Recognize no Superior Chief," 223 (fig. 35).

effectively? Similarly, as stated before, why not simply evacuate the whole village to a well camouflaged refuge in the woods and wait out the attack also storing goods away from the main village? Why place trench embankment fortifications in prominent positions with high visibility for both the attacker and defender?

The full answer to these questions is beyond the current study, but siege warfare was a component of warfare in the north and we can speculate in the south as well. Women and children did retreat to the woods²³⁵ and trench embankments served as a defensive position to prevent decisive defeats such as the Lekwiltok one. I have suggested trenches and their location imply a different style of combat. Specifically, they were designed to reduce the kinetic energy from a charge, they suggest a more formal code of war.

For example, in a siege battle for Hekums²³⁶ between the besieged Guauaenok and the Kueha, the Kueha were called out to “not fight with slings, but man to man with spears.”²³⁷ The ensuing battle that followed was characterised by formal battle tactics. First a rush of spears, followed by war clubs to dispatch the wounded, and archers were deployed on the flanks for covering fire. The narrative concludes by stating “since that time the Guauaenok have been last among the tribes, whereas they formerly were first.”²³⁸ This narrative suggests two things: first, war followed set patterns or codes, and certain types of war were ‘unmanly.’ Second, the objective of war was decisive victory, evidenced by the Guauaenok lowly position after the battle.

Trench embankments, with the additional labour required to build them, were more likely a means to defend against decisive defeat and as Keddie pointed out a symbolic expression of territorial ownership.²³⁹ For example, Angelbeck, as noted above, saw the Lekwiltok raids as more than a threat to steal booty and women,²⁴⁰ it was an existential threat to the Coast Salish and their territories. Angelbeck also noted

²³⁵ Angelbeck, “They Recognize no Superior Chief,” 181-182.

²³⁶ Kwakwaka’wakw territory, known today as Hopetown.

²³⁷ Curtis, *The North American Indian*, 115.

²³⁸ Curtis, *The North American Indian*, 115.

²³⁹ Keddie, “Aboriginal Defensive Sites.”

²⁴⁰ Angelbeck, “Conceptions of Coast Salish Warfare,” 268.

Klallum acquisition of Sooke territory through warfare, that the Lummi acquired mainland territories from war,²⁴¹ the Makah expansion into Chimakuan territories,²⁴² and the Lekwiltok acquisition of Comox territories. This is not an exhaustive list, but it should give us pause when considering the raiding thesis.²⁴³

In 2009 Andrew Martindale and Kisha Supernant took warfare studies in a new direction by attempting to quantify the defensiveness of defensive sites.²⁴⁴ They felt that there was a need to provide a measurable and repeatable way to express defensiveness if we were to continue speculating that an increase in fortification construction, especially away from productive shorelines, was caused by an increase in warfare.

This line of inquiry followed an attempt in 2007 to define the “universal features of fortifications” for prehistoric archaeologists.²⁴⁵ Both papers relied on ‘biomechanics’ or the “control of the movement of people in space is the essence of defensiveness.”²⁴⁶ Martindale and Supernant commented:

By “biomechanical” we refer to the universal parameters and central tendencies of humans in their physical capacity to inflict injury upon one another. Such capacities are limited by the physical constraints of the human body, although they can be augmented with technology. Thus, we argue that the capacity for interpersonal violence in any landscape can be quantified through general analogy.²⁴⁷

They felt that analogy, often inferred by archaeologists, could be more transparent about its assumptions. For example, Matthew Johnson published a study of Medieval castles in 2002 that showed what often looked fortified (or defensive) was in fact

²⁴¹ Angelbeck, “They Recognize no Superior Chief,” 128.

²⁴² Angelbeck, “They Recognize no Superior Chief,” 163.

²⁴³ See also Alan McMillan, “Reviewing the Wakashan Migration Hypothesis.”

²⁴⁴ Martindale and Supernant, “Quantifying the defensiveness.”

²⁴⁵ Lawrence Keeley et al., “Baffles and Bastions: The Universal Features of Fortifications,” *Journal of Archaeological Research* 15 (2007).

²⁴⁶ Keeley et al., “Baffles and Bastions,” 56, cited in Martindale and Supernant, “Quantifying the defensiveness,” 192.

²⁴⁷ Martindale and Supernant, “Quantifying the defensiveness,” 192.

purely symbolic.²⁴⁸ Martindale and Supernant used this example to illustrate that even if these castles don't have "real" defensiveness, the symbolism might act as defensive; therefore, by focusing on the biomechanical limitations of bodies in space, and since we all have basically the same kind of body, "there are general principles that we conform to when we wish to protect ours or injure some else's."²⁴⁹

They used four criteria; visibility, elevation, accessibility and area, to calculate a "Defensibility Index" (DI).²⁵⁰ These calculations were then applied to 26 known defensive sites. Interestingly one of the Fraser River rock features, the Xelhalh redoubt, had the highest DI of the 26 sites and Fort Kitwanga a close second, though the authors noted the importance of applying the ethnographic information to arrive at Kitwanga's DI.²⁵¹ The authors cautioned against relying too heavily on the values, expressed between 0-4, because while 3-4 values were possible they were typically only found in idealised models. The authors preferred to express defensibility in "low, medium and high."²⁵²

In 2014 Kyle Bocinsky built on this model and created a methodological approach that compared all geographic locations (30m resolution) against known sites.²⁵³ His concern was that just because a village was constructed in a defensible spot did not mean the intention of the builders was defense. It may have been a convenient location for other reasons and much of the Northwest Coast's coastline is by its nature highly defensible.

Bocinsky used his method to locate those sites that were "95%" more defensible than the surrounding landscape.²⁵⁴ He noted that the Finlayson Point and Towner Bay Trench Embankments were in significantly more defensible locations than the surrounding landscape suggesting the builders chose the sites especially for

²⁴⁸ Matthew Johnson, *Behind the Castle Gate: From the Middle Ages to the Renaissance* (London: Routledge, 2002).

²⁴⁹ Martindale and Supernant, "Quantifying the defensiveness," 193.

²⁵⁰ Martindale and Supernant, "Quantifying the defensiveness," 196.

²⁵¹ Martindale and Supernant, "Quantifying the defensiveness," 200.

²⁵² Martindale and Supernant, "Quantifying the defensiveness," 202.

²⁵³ Bocinsky, "Extrinsic Site Defensibility."

²⁵⁴ Bocinsky, "Extrinsic Site Defensibility," 172.

their defensibility. 39% of Trench Embankments were in highly defensible locations, and only four out of the 23 were not more defensible than the mean landscape defensibility. He did note that in the American Southwest the size of a settlement can also act in its defensibility and this had not been considered in his calculations.

In 2011 the theme of Coast Salish militarism was again evaluated, this time by Jay Miller.²⁵⁵ Miller felt fortifications were in part a result of the introduction of the bow and arrow, but also a product of Coast Salish military culture. He saw Coast Salish warfare organised around war champions or “War Lords.” These men resided in the ubiquitous defensive sites scattered throughout the Salish Sea.

According to Miller these fortifications were built by War Lords who mobilised the labour of nearby communities to protect them. The forts acted not just as a physical protection from enemies, but also to contain the dangerous powers of the war champions.²⁵⁶

Miller’s paper is unique in that he connects specific forts with the names of important war champions, names he argued are still handed down today. He felt that Coast Salish forts were “like Camelot and Arthur, Salish forts were associated with named warriors.”²⁵⁷ Miller saw these War Lords as a way to facilitate trade and diplomacy, rather than as a tool of political expansion.

It is an interesting assertion, but not well supported by the article. Miller compiled a list of 41 defensive sites, but can only connect 24 names. I would suggest that 41 defensive sites for the “Salish Sea;” this includes the Canadian and American sides of the Sea as well as the islands throughout, is a gross underestimation. Miller does acknowledge that it is an “incomplete listing,” but does not offer why he did not complete the inventory. In some cases he does not faithfully represent the sources cited. For example, he cites Grant Keddie’s paper on the 19 defensive sites in and around Victoria, but only records four sites.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁵ Miller, “First Nations Forts.”

²⁵⁶ Miller, “First Nations Forts,” 83, note 1.

²⁵⁷ Miller, “First Nations Forts,” 72.

²⁵⁸ Miller, “First Nations Forts,” 77. See Keddie, “Fortified Defensive Sites,” for the expanded listings.

Miller also did not evaluate sites with more than one fortification present. For example, at Witty's Lagoon there are two fortification sites on each side of the main village's flanks.²⁵⁹ Similarly, Clover Point, Finlayson Point and Holland Point defensive features are in close proximity to each other. Would Miller's contention be that these three sites were occupied by three separate War Lords, a veritable pre-contact strip mall of mercenaries? It would seem more likely these forts served as a "gateway" to the Empress Stream which was routinely used as the main access to the inner harbour when approaching from the east.²⁶⁰ I would also suggest that the defensive sites at Witty's Lagoon functioned as bastions rather than the private abodes of war lords.²⁶¹

Whatever the function of these sites might have been, Miller's catalogue seems biased to sites he could identify with specific warriors rather than robust accounting of the known archaeology even within the literature he has cited not to mention the ever increasing library of Impact Assessments held by the Province of British Columbia in the Archaeology Library.

Nevertheless, Miller's analysis was a good reminder to not ignore the more symbolic representations fortifications had, especially as markers of territoriality; however, his analysis did not evaluate the more practical, or biomechanical, aspects to defense. If he could have depicted battles that convincingly showed warfare was primarily organised and fought by these war lords perhaps his arguments could have been more persuasive.

Jerome Cybulski wrote two papers in 2014. One was a survey of 2000 years of "bioarchaeological evidence" on the Coast and the other an important dating update to the "Warrior's Cache" found in the Prince Rupert Harbour.²⁶²

The Warrior's cache was a clustered deposit of weapons at the Boardwalk site in the Prince Rupert Harbour. It was originally uncovered in 1968 and has served as

²⁵⁹ Keddie, "Fortified Defensive Sites."

²⁶⁰ Jennifer Sutherst, *Lost Streams of Victoria* (Victoria: South Islands Aquatic Stewardship Society, 2003).

²⁶¹ See Maschner and Reedy-Maschner, *Raid, Retreat, Defend*, 32-35 for other examples of 'bastions'.

²⁶² Cybulski, "Conflict on the northern" and Cybulski, "Updating the Warrior Cache."

one of the central pieces of evidence in the debate over the antiquity and pervasiveness of Northwest Coast warfare.

Until this update there was “an emerging consensus that between 2000 and 1500 BP there was a remarkable escalation in warfare along the Northwest Coast.”²⁶³ This hypothesis was largely based on Cybulski’s earlier osteological analysis of trauma to human skeletal remains excavated by George MacDonald in the 1960s and 1970s from the Prince Rupert Harbour²⁶⁴ and the Moss and Erlandson paper on Tlingit fortifications in Southern Alaska.²⁶⁵

Cybulski altered his initial findings after obtaining AMS (accelerator mass spectrometry) radio carbon dates for the “warrior’s cache” and decapitation events at the Lachane site in the Prince Rupert Harbour as well as an analysis of previously unreported stratigraphic evidence.²⁶⁶ He concluded that this evidence supported warfare being prevalent from 1000 BC to 1000 AD.

Cybulski’s other paper provided more of a survey of the human remains and the various injuries they received. Cybulski repeated some assumptions made by previous scholars and the nature of the battlefield, but his own evidence does not seem to support his “ethnohistoric background.”²⁶⁷

Cybulski cites Viola Garfield’s massive study of the Tsimshian and suggested that there was no separate militaristic arm of Tsimshian culture. Cybulski characterised Tsimshian warfare as “small-scale conflict or feuds,” but he did note that “more organised forays or “wars” were undertaken to obtain booty, land or food,

²⁶³ Marsden, *Defending the Mouth of the Skeena*, 98-103, also see Ames and Maschner, *Peoples of the Northwest Coast*, and Knut Fladmark et al., “Prehistory of the North Coast of British Columbia,” In *Handbook of the North American Indians, Volume 7, Northwest Coast*, ed. Wayne Suttles (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1990).

²⁶⁴ Cybulski, “Human Biology.”; Jerome Cybulski, “The Greenville Burial Ground.”; Cybulski, “Trauma and Warfare.”; Fladmark et al., “Prehistory of the North.”; George Macdonald and Jerome Cybulski. “The Prince Rupert Harbour Project,” In *Perspectives on North Northwest Coast Prehistory*, ed. Jerome Cybulski (Hull: Canadian Museum of Civilisation, Mercury Series Archaeology Survey of Canada, Paper 160, 2001); Macdonald and Inglis, “An Overview of the North.”

²⁶⁵ Moss and Erlandson, “Forts, Refuge Rocks.”

²⁶⁶ Cybulski, “Updating the Warrior Cache.”

²⁶⁷ Cybulski, “Conflict on the northern,” 416.

and, perhaps more importantly, to capture slaves.”²⁶⁸ He further commented “the tactic usually accomplished most successfully at night when the enemy was asleep and least likely to react with consequence for the invaders.”

Cybulski only identified two of 30 individuals with perimortem head injuries.²⁶⁹ An amazing feature of his study is this number of people who seem to have survived violent blows to the head. Interestingly Cybulski hypothesized that these individuals who exhibited evidence of trauma to the head, but survived, were likely wearing at least some form of basic armour.²⁷⁰

The problem is, how can the pervading tactic be night time sneak attacks while people slept yet they seem to be wearing armour? This hypothesis gets even weaker when we compare where the injuries are located on each victim’s head.

Cybulski noted that on the south coast “the ratio of anterior to posterior” lesions from trauma were 35:25, whereas they were 43:11 in the Prince Rupert Harbour. This suggests that in the south more people died from either fleeing a fight or from being killed in their sleep whereas at the Prince Rupert Harbour the nature of the blows indicate they were received while in hand to hand combat. Furthermore, when we include evidence of cranial trauma from the Namu site, 2000-4000 BC, the majority of cranial trauma evidence came from blows to the back of the head.

The evidence from Namu may represent a “True Raid” whereas the Prince Rupert Harbour evidence shows a different kind of tactical battlefield. I do not subscribe to Cybulski’s interpretation of the Tsimshian battlefield being made up of night time sneak attacks. The evidence does not support this interpretation.

Despite my disagreement, Cybulski did add welcome nuance to the overall picture of warfare. He looked closely at the differences between the South and North coasts and attempted to understand the specific nature of the injuries and what this could tell us about the battlefield.

²⁶⁸ Cybulski, “Conflict on the northern,” 416.

²⁶⁹ Cybulski, “Conflict on the northern,” 434.

²⁷⁰ Cybulski, “Conflict on the northern,” 435.

The last source in this literature review is Bill Angelbeck and Eric McLay's "The Battle at Maple Bay."²⁷¹ Their account of climatic battle between a Coast Salish alliance and the Lekwiltok at Maple Bay and the decisive defeat of the Lekwiltok is argued to be a turning point whereby the Lekwiltok halted their 'predatory raids' on the Coast Salish. Angelbeck and McLay used the battle to analyze Coast Salish political institutions and argued for broader political organisation than has been typically recognized.

This paper is one of the primary inspirations for this thesis. It provides a classic 'battle history' in a traditional western military history sense, but it also highlights the use of oral and ethnographic sources to reconstruct the battle. The authors note the discrepancies in retellings and attribute these to different interpretations of what the battle meant to each member of the alliance. While this is likely the case, it is also worth pointing out that John Keegan wrote an entire book dedicated to the theme that while the battle histories written by Europeans often seem neat and tidy, the reality is that battle is never neat and tidy.²⁷²

Nevertheless, while battle itself may be chaotic, while commenting on the Coast Salish strategy Angelbeck and McLay wrote:

The Battle at Maple Bay provides an example of Coast Salish warfare in the postcontact era beyond merely opportunistic raiding. Most accounts of the battle describe a well-organized and calculated surprise attack against the Lekwiltok that utilised scouts, signaling, strategic deception and tactical positioning, multiple lines of offense, and a variety of battle maneuvers and tactics that took full advantage of the marine landscape.²⁷³

Here we find the first strongly worded articulation that Coastal Indigenous people had sophisticated tactics and strategies in war. The words are supported by evidence from 21 different primary accounts of the battle. The battle's outcomes and significance are analysed to highlight a tension in Coast Salish sociopolitical

²⁷¹ Angelbeck and McLay, "The Battle at Maple Bay."

²⁷² John Keegan, *The Face of Battle* (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), 62-63.

²⁷³ Angelbeck and McLay, "The Battle at Maple Bay," 373.

organisation between autonomy and alliance. It is an excellent example of what can be learned from exploring a detailed military history of Indigenous people.

Chapter three of this thesis articulates similar themes as they relate to the Nine Allied Tribes of the Coast Tsimshian.

Chapter 2 - A Note on Sources and Method

The primary evidence used in this thesis relies heavily on the “true tellings” or *Adawx* of the Coast Tsimshian. The majority of the *Adawx* used here were told to William Beynon, a Nisga’a hereditary chief, originally recorded in Smalgyax, translated to English by Beynon, and in some cases transcribed by Marius Barbeau of the Canadian National Museum (now Canadian Museum of History CMH).²⁷⁴

While several archaeologists have used the *Adawx* to help contextualise their research²⁷⁵ it is rare for researchers to use them exclusively in scholarly work.²⁷⁶ I have relied on the *Adawx* almost entirely, some archaeological context is offered, but archaeology did not provide the necessary context for the battlefield. For example, Gauvreau and McLaren pointed out that:

oral narratives often relate large-scale events that occurred in the past, whereas archaeology is often more concerned with everyday life... For example, aspects of archaeology, such as lithic debitage analysis, may not figure prominently in oral narratives. Likewise, a story relating the accomplishments of a hero-animal figure may not have archaeological residues.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁴ Beynon also worked for Franz Boas, Amelia Susman, Viola Garfield, Homer Barnett and Philip Drucker. Later ethnographers such as Margaret Anderson, John Cove, Marjorie Halpin, Susan Marsden, Jay Miller, James McDonald, and Christopher Roth have all drawn heavily on Beynon’s collection of *Adawx* and Archaeologists like Kenneth Ames, Gary Coupland, Richard Inglis, Andrew Martindale, George MacDonald, Duncan McLaren and Paul Prince have all engaged with this documentary collection of oral records.

²⁷⁵ For Tsimshian see Macdonald, *Kitwanga Fort National*; MacDonald, *Kitwanga Fort Report*; Marsden, “Defending the Mouth of the Skeena”; Andrew Martindale and Susan Marsden, “Defining the Middle Period (3500BP to 1500BP) in Tsimshian History through a Comparison of Archaeological and Oral Records,” *BC Studies* 138 (2003); Andrew Martindale, “Methodological Issues in the Use of Tsimshian Oral Traditions (*Adawx*) in Archaeology,” *Canadian Journal of Archaeology* 30 (2006).

²⁷⁶ Marsden, “Defending the Mouth of the Skeena” and Marsden, *Defending the Mouth of the Skeena* is an example though she still uses a fair amount of archaeological evidence. Also see Michael Robinson, *Sea Otter Chiefs* (Calgary: Bayeux Arts, 1996).

²⁷⁷ Alisha Gauvreau and Duncan McLaren, “Stratigraphy and storytelling: Imbricating Indigenous oral narratives and archaeology on the Northwest Coast of North America,” *Hunter Gatherer Research* 2, no. 3 (2016), 308.

They also commented that oral records were stronger for describing “intergroup conflict and political alliances.”²⁷⁸ While commenting about the *Adawx* and a lack of archaeological evidence near Hazelton Amanda Marshall wrote:

these traditions are detailed, dramatic and much better documented than the archaeology of the region, with the result that, as records of the past, the oral narratives speak much louder and have guided and informed archaeological investigations and synthesis of regional prehistory.²⁷⁹

Beynon recorded House histories which often included “descriptions of wars, raids, disputes [and] historic events.”²⁸⁰ Marius Barbeau also commented on the “almost endless [...] stories that one can collect on the wars, adventures and troubles that still constitute the complex background of the Tsimshian.”²⁸¹ Archaeology is a great tool for understanding gradual shifts through time, but the *Adawx* are better suited to exploring the strategies and tactics used in war.

The Adawx

The *Adawx* are sometimes referred to as “oral history,”²⁸² but the meaning of “oral history” has “been diluted so that any interview conducted with an individual may be labelled ‘oral history’.”²⁸³ The Tsimshian have stories that could be characterized as “oral history,” but the *Adawx* are a specialized set of texts within the larger Tsimshian oral record.²⁸⁴

²⁷⁸ Gauvreau and McLaren, “Stratigraphy and storytelling,” 308.

²⁷⁹ Amanda Marshall, *Archaeological Impact Assessment of Proposed Hazelton Landfill Site for the Regional District of Kitimat-Stikine Heritage Inspection Permit 2004-436* (Victoria: Provincial Archaeology Library, 2004). Also see

²⁸⁰ Barbara Winter, “William Beynon and the Anthropologists,” *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 2 (1984), 288.

²⁸¹ Marius Barbeau, “Review of Franz Boas ‘Tsimshian Mythology,’” *American Anthropologist* no. 19 (1917), pp. 552-553.

²⁸² For example, Martindale and Marsden, “Defining the Middle”; Marsden, *Defending the Mouth of the Skeena*; Neil J. Sterritt et al., *Tribal Boundaries in the Nass Watershed*. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998) or *Delgamuukw v British Columbia*, 3 SCR 1010, 23799 (SCC, 11 December 1997). Also see Gauvreau and McLaren, “Stratigraphy and storytelling,” 304-305 and their distinctions between “oral history,” “oral traditions,” and “oral narratives.”

²⁸³ Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 2.

²⁸⁴ Martindale, “Methodological Issues,” 159.

While the *Adawx* are oral, they are not “oral histories.” Oral histories are complex subjective remembrances of the past specifically focused on one person or community interpreted through the interviewer.²⁸⁵ The *Adawx* on the other hand, are more analogous to Common Law.²⁸⁶

Adawx are oral records of political, social and economically significant events that often mark specific ownership of titles, rights and territory.²⁸⁷ Like Case Law in Western legal traditions they establish precedents for rights, titles and territories. These records are specific to certain lineages, but also “acknowledged by the society as a whole.”²⁸⁸ They represent a formal code of legal ownership over supernatural and physical property.²⁸⁹ The *Adawx* can be expressed through crests, poles and ceremonial regalia, all of which act as mnemonic devices. *Adawx* are expressed publicly at feasts to ensure their accuracy and legitimization through the broader community.

While oral histories are profoundly personal ways to explore the past, they are not the same as oral methods for formally codifying laws, territories and rights.²⁹⁰

The Texts

The Barbeau Fonds at the CMH houses most of the *Adawx* collected by Beynon, his notes and memos from his research, and Barbeau’s own field notes from

²⁸⁵ Abrams, *Oral History*.

²⁸⁶ For another characterization of the *Adawx* as Common Law see (Monet & Wilson (Skanu'u), 1992, p. Stanley Williams (Gwis Gyen) plaintiff pg. 101).

²⁸⁷ Susan Marsden, “Adawx, Spanaxnox, and the Geopolitics of the Tsimshian,” *BC Studies* 135 (Autumn 2002): 102.

²⁸⁸ Marsden, “Adawx, Spanaxnox,” 103.

²⁸⁹ They can record wars, migrations, famine, natural disasters, shifts in political and economic power, extinctions, Limx’ooy (ancient songs of loss), and they give rise to crests, poles and ceremonial regalia. However, it is important not to conflate Tsimshian and Western epistemology. Where Western thought would see property as something that exists outside of us (i.e. that it can be taken away) Tsimshian thought would see it more as “I am this” rather than “I own this.” See Susan Marsden, “Northwest Coast Adawx Study,” In *First Nations Cultural Heritage and Law: Case Studies, Voices and Perspectives*, ed. Catherine Bell and Val Napoleon (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), 114.

²⁹⁰ For another discussion that separates ‘oral history’ from owned ‘oral narratives’ and the social processes of ‘oral traditions’ see Gauvreau and MacLaren, “Stratigraphy and storytelling.”

several visits to the area (1914-15, 1920-21, 1924, 1926, 1927, 1929, 1939 and 1947).²⁹¹ Some have suggested this is the largest ethnographic corpora on the Northwest Coast, even greater than the Boas Kwakwaka'wakw collection.²⁹²

Below I list the main 'texts' used here. A large part of Marius Barbeau's files were not generally available until the 1990s and parts of Beynon's work existed in other collections, the Franz Boas Papers at the University of Columbia for example or Wilson Duff's files at the UBC Museum of Anthropology. Because of the scattered nature of the collection there are no standardised set of citations and this can be confusing when consulting other work. In addition, more recently many scholars have dropped Barbeau from the citation as we have come to realise the ethnographic work was largely Beynon's and while Barbeau tended to disseminate, he did not analyze.²⁹³

This is not an exhaustive list of the primary material related to the Nine Tribes or in this thesis. It is meant to clarify just some of the Beynon files, where I retrieved my copies and where they exist under other names.

- 1) Barbeau, M., & Beynon, W. (1910-1969). "Marius Barbeau's Northwest Coast Files MS-2101." BC Archives.

The originals are held at the Canadian Museum of History. The first copy of these files I consulted was loaned to me by the Metlakatla First Nation while working on Traditional Land Use and Occupancy Studies for the Nation. While they were not immediately concerned with issues of warfare I made notes when I came across these references and subsequently consulted the microfilm copy held at the BC Archives. The collection is homogenous across these two accessions. The collection is organised around the microfilm reels and a guide to the reels and their contents was created by John Cove in 1985.²⁹⁴

²⁹¹ Derek Smith, "The Barbeau Archives at the Canadian Museum of Civilization: Some Current Research Problems," *Anthropologica* 43, no. 2 (2001), 192 and Andrew Nurse, "Marius Barbeau and the Methodology of Salvage Ethnography in Canada, 1911-1951," In *Historicising Canadian Anthropology*, ed. Julia Harrison and Regna Darnell (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014).

²⁹² Wilson Duff, "Problems in the Interpretation of Marius Barbeau's Tsimshian Material," (*Fourteenth Annual Northwest Anthropological Conference*, Vancouver, 1961) cited in Smith, "The Barbeau Archives," 193.

²⁹³ See Smith, "The Barbeau Archives."

²⁹⁴ John Cove, *A Detailed Inventory of the Barbeau Northwest Coast Files* (Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies/National Museum of Man Mercury Series Paper no. 54, 1985).

The files consist of the field notes of Marius Barbeau and William Beynon from 1915 to 1956. There are thousands of pages of hand written notes that detail all aspects of Tsimshian culture, politics, society, geography, economy, spiritual practices and so on. Informants are identified by their English and Smalgyax names, as well as their House, Clan, and Tribe. This method of identifying the House, Clan or Tribe is the Tsimshian way of validating the information being presented and shows the authority of the individual to speak to the topic at hand.

I have attributed authorship to both William Beynon and Marius Barbeau despite archival accessions typically attributing authorship solely to Barbeau.

- 2) Beynon, W. (1980). "The Beynon Manuscript." In F. Boas, *Accession #1167; University of Victoria Microfilms Centre*. New York: Columbia University.

and

- 3) Beynon, W. (1875-1954). "Ethnographic and Folkloristic Texts of the Tsimshian 1939." In F. Boas, & F. B. Papers (Ed.), *Franz Boas Papers Relating to Indian Linguistics MS 1425* (pp. Freeman #3771, File #35 Reel A00238). Victoria BC: BC Archives.

This manuscript is sometimes referred to as the "William Beynon Manuscripts from the Columbia University Library." These are the field notes of William Beynon while he worked for Franz Boas. The UVic copy is the original handwritten notes with interlinear translations and the BC Archives copy is a transcribed, typed and edited version of these stories.

The files consist of *Adamx* that are primarily related to the Nine Tribes and trace the history of the founding Tribes. As with the Northwest Coast Files the informant's name, English and Smalgyax, their House, Clan, and Tribe are listed to provide the necessary authority in Tsimshian culture to speak to the topic at hand.

I have credited Beynon with the authorship of these files as I consulted the original handwritten notes, but the transcriptions are very faithful to the original.

- 4) Beynon, W. (1875-1954). "Ethnical and Geographical Study of Tsimshian Nation." MS 0870 Box 6 File 10/part49. Victoria BC: BC Archives.

This is the weakest of all the Beynon materials. Philip Drucker commissioned Beynon to write an overview of all the *Adanx* and the histories he had collected that could easily be digested by western audiences.²⁹⁵ Beynon did not succeed in this endeavor. Partly because he was not well and died before finishing, but also because such a simplistic approach to the material is not possible. Boas made a similar mistake when writing his *Tsimshian Mythology*.²⁹⁶ This collection is housed in the Franz Boas papers at the BC Archives, but Boas was not involved in its production.

I have credited Beynon with the authorship even though he was highly directed by Drucker in his reporting.

- 5) Beynon, W. (1875-1954). "The Gwenhoot of Alaska" (1959). In M. Barbeau, *Franz Boas Papers Relating to American Indian Linguistics MS-1425.325* (pp. Freeman #3767, File #Am4 No.2, Reel A00267). Victoria BC: BC Archives.
- 6) Barbeau, M., & Beynon, W. (n.d.). *Temlarham: The Land of Plenty on the North Pacific Coast*. In M. Barbeau, *Franz Boas Papers Relating to American Indian Linguistics MS-1425.326* (pp. Freeman #3769, File #Am4 No.3, Reel A00267). Victoria BC: BC Archives.
- 7) Beynon, W. (n.d.). "Larhkibu: Wolf-Clan Invaders from the Northern Plateaus among the Tsimshian." In M. Barbeau, *Marius Barbeau VII-C-67M* (pp. Box 231-232, File 6-9). Ottawa: Canadian Museum of History Archives Ethnology Documents.
- 8) Beynon, W. (n.d.). "The Raven Clan Outlaws on the North Pacific Coast." In M. Barbeau, *Marius Barbeau VII-C-67M* (pp. Box 6, f.2). Ottawa: Canadian Museum of History Archives Ethnology Documents.

These four collections are made up of Beynon and Barbeau's field notes. They consist of the origin stories and histories of each of the Clans listed in the titles. Barbeau had these notes typed up in the 1980s with an eye to publication. They are

²⁹⁵ Philip Drucker, "Drucker to Beynon; Beynon to Drucker" MS 0870 *Philip Drucker Notes re BC and Alaska Indians* (BC Archives, 1954), Box 6, File 11/part50.

²⁹⁶ See Barbeau, "Review" for a strong critique. Also see Martindale, "Methodological Issues" and Morley Eldridge and Andrew Martindale. *Ancient Names Resurface for Archaeological Sites in Prince Rupert*, accessed 21 November, 2014, <http://millennia-research.com/ancient-names-resurface-for-archaeological-sites-in-prince-rupert/>.

very well organized and catalogued. As with the Northwest Coast Files, the House, Clan and Tribe of the informants are listed.

My citations of these sources list the source, “Raven Clan Outlaws” for example, followed by the informant’s details, their name, Clan and House affiliation as well as their Smalgyax name if given in the original. I note who recorded the narrative, usually Beynon, when they recorded it, and these details are followed by the title of the *Adamx* narrative. Individual page numbers are not provided as they were not consistent across the copies I had and would have only led to more confusion.

These collections form the bulk of my evidence. I was originally turned on to these sources by Susan Marsden’s *Defending the Mouth of the Skeena* where she relied heavily on these four collections to reconstruct a chronologically ordered history of the Nine Tribes.²⁹⁷ Unlike some of the other field notes or file collections these four sources are highly historical in their focus.

I have credited both Beynon and Barbeau with the authorship of these files because the final typed versions have been clearly edited for clarity and publication.²⁹⁸ I still list Beynon as the first author as I believe his work stands above Barbeau’s.

There is a suggestion that the original field notes are “extant,” but presumably lost. In my communications with Benoit Theriault at the Museum of History it is clear that at least the Wolf Clan files have hand written notes in their folder.²⁹⁹

William Beynon as Ethnographer

William Beynon was the son of Welsh father and royal Nisga’a mother. He was raised in Victoria, but his mother refused to speak English and taught him his traditional responsibilities. Even though he had been taught about the rights, rituals and obligations of being a chief, when he had to perform the rites associated with the death of his Uncle (Gusgain) he felt unsure in his knowledge to carry out the proper

²⁹⁷ Marsden, *Defending the Mouth of the Skeena* and Marsden, “Defending the Mouth of the Skeena.”

²⁹⁸ Despite Barbeau’s hope to publish they never were.

²⁹⁹ "Oral History," Tin Ear Press, n.d., tinearpress.wordpress.com/oral-history-sources.

rituals.³⁰⁰ He even refused the position of chief at first as he was enfranchised and worried this would erode his legitimacy, but in the end he was persuaded to accept the position.³⁰¹ As a chief Beynon became a very active and prominent member of the Tsimshian community. He married the niece of Ts'ibassa further cementing his royal lineage and increased his role as a steward of traditional Tsimshian practices.

Barbara Winter commented that “the use of Beynon’s notes by others may present a number of problems.” Beynon collected his notes under strict instructions from Barbeau. He was limited to certain subjects, content and format.³⁰² Nevertheless, unlike other Indigenous ethnographers, Henry Tate for example, Beynon recorded the narratives with the full knowledge of his informants.

Beynon’s original notes are made of three lines of interlinear translations. Beynon would first record the story in Smalgyax then later in private perform a literal translation. After the literal translation, he would do a free translation that flowed better than the literal. The result is a collection of very reliable recordings of the *Adawx* with the ability to go back and interrogate the original translation for clarity if needed.

These interlinear translations are considered the most authoritative texts for consultation by most scholars working with the *Adawx*. However, Barbeau routinely removed pages from Beynon’s notebooks, cut them into smaller sections and then filed them by subject. The result is that we cannot contextualise Beynon’s notes with some of his other observations such as Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations which could have provided insights into Beynon’s methodology. Barbeau also sometimes transcribed the handwritten notes into typed copies.

Beynon chose people who were connected to the events he recorded or those who belonged to the House owning the *Adawx* and had the right to repeat it. Beynon also consulted people who could shed light on a topic from different points of view. For example, Nisga’a were chosen to relate information on the “Snow Feast,” a

³⁰⁰ William Beynon, *William Beynon Papers* -(Mss. B.B467, *American Philosophical Society*, n.d).

³⁰¹ Winter, “William Beynon and the Anthropologists,” 282.

³⁰² Winter, “William Beynon and the Anthropologists,” 280.

uniquely Nisga'a Feast; Gitksan informants to provide context to Legex's wars and trade monopoly in their territories, or Tlingit and Haida informants to contextualise customs and myths that involved those people.³⁰³

Beynon's inquisitiveness was also sometimes manipulated by those recalling events. For example, Joshua Tsibase (Dzihase) recalled a tale of his rival who was humiliated; in another case, the informant's House was successful and rose in prestige.³⁰⁴ In a society so focused on rank and status these stories served the informant and the context was probably skewed in their favour.

Beynon was not ignorant to this manipulation however. He provided background information on informants especially if he felt they were biased. He almost always used more than one informant to record an event and he would often ask for clarification if there were irregularities or discrepancies in accounts. He provided this context in marginal or footnotes. In one case, he even saved what he considered to be the "best" informant for the last interview for "corroborating work."³⁰⁵

Beynon always had someone 'check' his translations and provided his commentary on Tsimshian cultural practices that may not be well understood by people outside of Tsimshian society. Barbara Winter concluded that Beynon's comments on inter-racial relations might be somewhat suspect due to his intermediary position; however, "the data collected by Beynon has been demonstrated to be, on the whole, fairly representative and trustworthy."³⁰⁶ Beynon has belatedly been recognized as a skillful and accomplished ethnographer.

My Method

My approach is historical insofar as Andrew Martindale has explained that all people share a common way of chronologically ordering their life and community's

³⁰³ Winter, "William Beynon and the Anthropologists," 285.

³⁰⁴ Winter, "William Beynon and the Anthropologists," 285.

³⁰⁵ Cited in Winter, "William Beynon and the Anthropologists," 285.

³⁰⁶ Winter, "William Beynon and the Anthropologists," 289.

history through important, sometimes tragic, events.³⁰⁷ I also follow Susan Marsden and try not to “filter the oral record through this [anthropological and archaeological] academic lens.”³⁰⁸

Marsden wanted to acknowledge the “full significance and intellectual content of the *Adamx*.” She felt her paper provided an academic form “in which the original aboriginal voice is not subsumed by that of the non-aboriginal scholar.”³⁰⁹ I am more cautious about optimistic statements surrounding voice, but believe this paper is an appropriate way to explain part of Nine Tribes history.

In this thesis, I have tried to let the *Adamx* speak for themselves. As Marsden noted the *Adamx* are an intellectual product in and of themselves. The public nature of *Adamx* transmissions always struck me as very similar to the academic peer review process, both ways of validating what is being presented as true. However, this is not the same as saying the information is not subjective.

My analysis starts from the *Adamx* and adds context from other areas if needed for clarity. I have not engaged in a lengthy discussion on oral records and their strengths and weaknesses because I take it for granted that the *Adamx* do not need justification as a source.

Nevertheless, while Beynon went to considerable lengths to record accurate versions of the *Adamx* we should consider that even if his recordings are highly reliable that the perspective of the informants is still that of the Nine Tribes, the individual informant or the House. In other words, the battles recounted here are the stories of the victors in war and the details may have been altered to either aggrandize the victors or dehumanize the enemy. For example, you will not encounter stories of the Nine Tribes attacking villages that are absent of fighting people; however, you will find reference to the enemy attacking helpless Nine tribes’ villages.

I acknowledge that the reconstruction of pre-contact events can be a difficult task and colonialism will always leave a residue on any source considered ‘pristine’, I do not find anything particularly complicated about the suite of narratives I have

³⁰⁷ Martindale, “Methodological Issues,” 166.

³⁰⁸ Marsden, *Defending the Mouth of the Skeena*, 11.

³⁰⁹ Marsden, *Defending the Mouth of the Skeena*, 12.

consulted. In the preceding description of the sources I have highlighted areas that need understanding, how the records were collected, collated and how they have been stored. I let readers form their own opinions on what this might mean for the collection, but after having read almost all of Beynon's field notes and nearly all the recorded *Adamx* in the above sources, I have concluded that the *Adamx* show far too much corroboration across their breadth (collected over a fifty year time span and thousands of miles of geography) to not be admired for their consistency.

For the most part, the *Adamx* used in this thesis are not unusually complicated. Some *Adamx* can be very challenging and it takes time to understand the metaphoric language of the Tsimshian. For example, tension within Tsimshian tales is an important literary device. The tension is illustrative of the 'moral of the story.' For example, in *The Origin of Txamsem* the Chief of Heaven sends Txamsem to Kanagatsiyot to replace an important chief's dead child. In the story Txamsem at first refuses to eat, then becomes a glutton and is forced away from his home so as not to destroy the village.³¹⁰ These tensions illustrate the dangers of "over-patriliation," a concern that re-emerges in other Tsimshian stories.³¹¹ John Cove's investigation into Tsimshian narratives explores how these tensions are an important means for understanding human actuality and potential.³¹²

Warfare narratives are not expressed within these complex metaphors. They are generally more straightforward and almost hyper-focused on geographies. The geographical focus makes sense as many of the warfare narratives discuss changes in territorial ownership or reinforce existing ownership through successful defense from invasion.

The chronological ordering of some events in the *Adamx* has been explored by Andrew Martindale and Susan Marsden.³¹³ They constructed a chronology of events listed in the archaeological record and the *Adamx*. I use this chronology as a guiding

³¹⁰ Franz Boas, *Tsimshian Mythology* (Washington: 3rd Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology for the Years 1909-1910, 1916), 58-60.

³¹¹ See John Cove, *Shattered Images: Dialogues and Meditations on Tsimshian Narratives* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1987); *Tsimshian Narratives: Tricksters, Shamans and Heroes, Vol. 1.*, ed. John Cove and John MacDonald (Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Civilisation, 1987), 83.

³¹² Cove, *Shattered Images; Tsimshian Narratives*, 52.

³¹³ Martindale, "Methodological Issues"; Martindale and Marsden, "Defining the Middle"; Marsden, *Defending the Mouth of the Skeena* and Marsden; "Defending the Mouth of the Skeena."

template and look for markers in the *Adamx* that can be compared against their model to locate the wars and battles described below.

The battle narratives presented here combine the details from multiple *Adamx*. This is usually because details offered in one version are not offered in another. These are often not disagreements just different versions. Sometimes this is a product of the narrative style of individual informants, but it also reflects the different priorities of different owners of those *Adamx*.

In cases where there was a disagreement about facts I have looked for other markers. For example, in a series of narratives related to Legex attacking the Haida some of the stories followed the same battle pattern, but disagree on whether the battle was at Masset or Skidegate. I argue that while Skidegate was named in one version, the battle took place at Masset because in the preamble to the battle there are strong references to rounding Rose Spit from the east to the west.³¹⁴

In one case, I have provided both versions of the events as there were no markers to help clarify the events and the two versions were so different that there is no common ground. In this case, it is not the battlefield that is in question, but what happened to the infamous warrior Haimas after his career was over.

I have excluded all stories or versions of stories that involve firearms. While it may be true that stories with firearms in them are of pre-contact origin, the majority of the stories with firearms make explicit reference to the importance of the weapon in changing warfare. This resulted in dropping a large corpus of narratives surrounding Legex and his “Trade Wars” up the Skeena River that strongly support my central arguments.

I have also excluded any stories that reference white men, the HBC or other contact markers.³¹⁵ Again it is possible these are pre-contact in origin, but I have opted for the least controversial examples.

Lastly, I find it difficult to accept that the narratives of battles were highly influenced by contact and colonisation. The descriptions of infantry tactics are not couched in any jargon. That is, military science terminology is not used, I also find it

³¹⁴ A blinding sandstorm and naming Rose Spit.

³¹⁵ For example, Hel (Hale) in Gitxaala territory is argued by Beynon to be a power derived from the contact process.

highly unlikely that the informants Beynon interviewed were well read on military history or infantry tactics. Even if one or two had, the appearance of similar tactics across multiple texts and informants further erodes the idea that these retellings of battlefield maneuvers were editorialised.

Other Thoughts

Before moving on a cautionary note is required. While Beynon was, as Winter put it, “trustworthy;” the *Adamx* in the above texts have largely been removed from their traditional setting. *Adamx* by their nature need to be told publicly and witnessed by those who have an investment in their accurate retellings.

Charles Menzies noted of some interviews Beynon recorded in Gitxaala territories the whole project had to come to a halt more than once so that approval could be sought from the appropriate people. Menzies commented:

the process of ensuring approval, proceeding, stopping, and reaffirming approval is a longstanding practice among the Gitxaala people. It is part of the internal mechanisms and protocols that ensure the maintenance and continuity of an oral history over time.³¹⁶

Menzies also pointed out that the reliance on Beynon’s written records means we cannot hear the silences. Silences are important aspects of *Adamx*. Unlike Western learning where dissent is vocalised and speakers are challenged, Tsimshian disagreement is expressed with silence.³¹⁷

Menzies provided a good summary of three times he was present to learn *Adamx* histories.³¹⁸ He noted that while one took place in a classroom two took place *on the land*. That is, the *Adamx* were told and recorded while visiting the specific places mentioned. For Menzies, it is clear this provided a different level of understanding than simply learning in a classroom.

³¹⁶ Charles Menzies, *People of the Salt Water: An Ethnography of Git lax m'oon* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016), 71.

³¹⁷ Menzies, *People of the Salt Water*, 772-736.

³¹⁸ Menzies, *People of the Salt Water*, 74-85.

On the other hand, Beynon did turn the *Adawx* into written records and was aware of what he was doing.³¹⁹ As Andrew Martindale pointed out, the Beynon/Barbeau files are the most common way for outsiders to access the *Adawx*.³²⁰ There can be little doubt Beynon was influenced by Barbeau's implicit and explicit 'salvage' approach to anthropology;³²¹ however, it is equally important we allow Beynon the agency to tell his people's history and allow the Tsimshian people the agency to change or add to their methods of recording history.

Menzies' concern with observing *Adawx* protocols is important, but following Carolyn Hamilton I do not see Beynon's adaptation of the *Adawx* to written sources and then their storage in a Euro-Canadian archive as a failure of the source, rather I see it as a profound example of survival.³²² There was, and still is, a call by Indigenous people for their oral records to be "taken seriously as legitimate perspectives on history."³²³

Ethnographic Brief

The Nine Tribes are a kin based society. The Nine Tribes are:

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1) Gitwilgyoots | 6) Gitando |
| 2) Gitzaxlaal | 7) Gispaxlo'ots |
| 3) Gitsiis | 8) Giluts'aaw |
| 4) Ginaxangiik | 9) Gitlaan |
| 5) Gitnadoiks | |

Important socio-political relations are defined by who is related to whom and how. Family group membership is defined matrilineally, you belong to the House or *wa'lp* of your mother. While a father's family is important at certain stages of maturity, it is the connection to your uncle or aunt on your mother's side (i.e., mother's brother

³¹⁹ Martindale, "Methodological Issues." Also see Menzies, *People of the Salt Water*, 70 on Beynon's marginal and footnotes to the correct ways to Tsimshian oral records should be related.

³²⁰ Martindale, "Methodological Issues," 160.

³²¹ Nurse, "Marius Barbeau."

³²² C. Hamilton, "Living by Fluidity': Oral Histories, Material Custodies and the Politics of Archiving," In *Refiguring the Archive*, ed. C. Hamilton et al. (Dordrecht: Springer Science and Business Media, 2002).

³²³ Julie Cruishank, "Oral Tradition and Oral History: Reviewing Some Issues," *Canadian Historical Review* 75, no. 4 (1994), 403 also see Wendy Wickwire, "Stories from the Margins: Toward a More Inclusive British Columbia Historiography," *Journal of American Folklore* 118, no. 470 (2005), 455.

and sister) that matter most. For example, nephews inherit the estates of their uncles, not of their fathers. Every individual, except slaves, belong to one of four Clans (also referred to as Crests):

1. Laxsgiik – Eagle
2. Ganhanda – Raven
3. Laxgibu – Wolf
4. Gispwudwada – Killerwhale

Clans do not exercise political power, but they are important for tracing an individual's origin stories and they control whom you can marry; you cannot marry within your Clan. In other words, they are exogamous. Clans crosscut the Tribes, Houses and villages. Political authority rests with the *Wa'lp* (House).

While each village or tribe was an independent territorial, economic, and political body, Coast Tsimshian society is best understood historically through this “House.”³²⁴ Within Archaeology and Anthropology it has become more common to refer to Coastal Indigenous people in British Columbia not as ‘complex hunter-gatherers,’ but as “House Societies.”

The society is organised around the physical structure of a house or dwelling, but it also represents the seat of wealth, title and properties. Material and non-material goods were handed down from one generation to the next through bloodlines or fictive kin arrangements and adoption. Strict rules of kinship were less important than the perpetuation of the House's estate. Social elites were most concerned with perpetuating the estate, but low-class members of House were also interested in perpetuating the estate as they received food and protection in exchange for their labour.³²⁵ In this way the physical house is seen as the container for its members, its

³²⁴ Katherine Patton, *Reconstructing Houses: Early Village Society Organization in Prince Rupert Harbour, British Columbia* (PhD Thesis, Toronto, University of Toronto, 2011), 97.

³²⁵ Jay Miller, *Tsimshian Culture: A Light Through the Ages* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 51. Viola Garfield, *The Tsimshian Indians and Their Arts* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1966), 29.

goods, its titles and wealth. This ties groups to domestic dwellings and, more importantly, to specific locations on the landscape.³²⁶

Wa'lp in *Smalgyax* refers to both the physical house and its comprising household.³²⁷ It is the “fundamental political and land owning unit in Tsimshian society.”³²⁸ It is a complex idea that incorporates both corporeal and cosmological things and relations.³²⁹ It is a matrilineal kin group that can be made up of a singular physical structure, or several structures that are considered to have ancient origins.³³⁰ By the contact period Coast Tsimshian Houses typically had permanently occupied physical ‘winter’ houses in the Prince Rupert Harbour that were thousands of years old,³³¹ and temporarily occupied houses along the banks of the Skeena during the summer at the mouths of the various tributaries which generally constituted distinct owned territories.³³² Both physical sets of houses were owned by a single socio-political “House” or *Wa'lp*. Plank houses had profound consequences for the social and economic organisation of households on the Pacific Northwest Coast because their construction reflects long term, multi-generational investments in particular landscapes evident in places like the Boardwalk site on Digby Island where shell middens are more than 5000 years old.

³²⁶ Janet Carsten and Stephen Hugh-Jones, “Introduction,” In *About the House: Levi-Strauss and Beyond*, ed. Janet Carsten and Stephen Hugh-Jones (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 45-46; Alan Sandstrom, “Toponymic Groups and House Organisation: The Nahuas of Northern Veracruz, Mexico,” In *Beyond Kinship: Social and Metrial Reproduction in House Societies* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 56.

³²⁷ Marjorie Halpin and Margaret Seguin, “Tsimshian Peoples: Southern Tsimshian, Coast Tsimshian, Nisga, and Gitksan,” In *Handbook of North American Indians Volume 7, Northwest Coast*, ed. William Sturtevant (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1990).

³²⁸ Martindale and Marsden, “Analysis of Territorial Claims,” 71.

³²⁹ Patton, *Reconstructing Houses*, Chapter 1.

³³⁰ Kenneth Ames, “Thinking About Household Archaeology on the Northwest Coast.” In *Household Archaeology on the Northwest Coast*, ed. Elizabeth Sobel, DAT Gahr and Kenneth Ames (Ann Arbor: International Monographs in Prehistory, 2006) and Yvonne Marshal, “Houses and Domestication on the Northwest Coast” In *Household Archaeology on the Northwest Coast*, ed. Elizabeth Sobel, DAT Gahr and Kenneth Ames (Ann Arbor: International Monographs in Prehistory, 2006).

³³¹ Andrew Martindale, *The River of Mist: Cultural Change in the Tsimshian Past* (Toronto: University of Toronto PhD Thesis, 1999), 197-198.

³³² Martindale, *The River of Mist*, 197-198.

Houses are thought of as containers that hold names and properties, crests, songs, dances as well as its members and their wealth.³³³ Margaret Seguin wrote: “the image of the matrilineage is that of a house, which is a container motif, like the box which contains preserved food, wealth, or both.”³³⁴ Resource territories were included in this box metaphor; not only were they contained in the box, but like a box they only need be opened to support the members of a household and provide wealth.³³⁵

The core of the *Wa'lp* is the name-holder (usually male) and his wife, children, widowed or divorced sisters, unmarried brothers and nephews.³³⁶ Large Houses could be split into new Houses and smaller Houses could adopt new members. Each person was born a member of their mother's House, but opportunities exists for people to move between Houses or to benefit from the wealth and estates of more than one House.³³⁷ Boys and girls could reside in one House, but ask for permission to access the wealth or resources of Houses connected to them by their parents.³³⁸ This allowed for either to maintain some level of economic independence.³³⁹ The property of a house was inalienable. It could not be transferred through marriage or adoption, but

³³³ Viola Garfield, “The Tsimshian and Their Neighbours,” In *The Tsimshian and Their Arts*, ed. Viola Garfield and Paul Wingert (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), 22-23; Miller, *Tsimshian Culture*, 45-55; Susan Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing: Nineteenth-Century Protestant Missions and Tsimshian Christianity* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003) and Margaret Seguin, “Introduction,” In *The Tsimshian: Images of the Past; Views for the Present*, ed. Margaret Seguin, ix (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1993).

³³⁴ Seguin, “Introduction,” 12.

³³⁵ Loius Allaire, “A Native Mental Map of Coast Tsimshian Villages,” in *The Tsimshian: Images of the Past; Views for the Present*, ed. Margaret Seguin (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1993); Gary Coupland et al., “Does Resource Abundance Explain Local Group Rank among Coast Tsimshian?” In *Perspectives in Northern Northwest Coast Prehistory*, ed. Jerome Cybulski (Ottawa: National Museum of Canada; Mercury Series Archaeological Survey of Canada Paper 160, 2001); James McDonald, “Cultivating in the Northwest: Early Accounts of Tsimshian Horticulture,” In *Keeping it Living: Traditions of Plant Use and Cultivation on the Northwest Coast of North America*, ed. Douglas Duer and Nancy Turner (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005), 242-243; Miller, *Tsimshian Culture*, 45-55, 52; Seguin, “Introduction.”

³³⁶ Miller, *Tsimshian Culture*, 50-55.

³³⁷ Garfield, *The Tsimshian Indians*, 23 and Patton, *Reconstructing Houses*, 105.

³³⁸ For a full discussion see Patton, *Reconstructing Houses*, 105.

³³⁹ Joanne Fiske, “Colonization and the Decline of Women's Status: The Tsimshian Case,” *Feminist Studies* 17, no. 3 (1991).

access could be granted to relatives. Theoretically the only way a House could lose property was through military conquest or extinction.³⁴⁰

All three classes of Tsimshian society lived inside each house. The interior of the house was divided along class lines with the lowest ranked families towards the front door and the highest-ranking families towards the rear of the building.³⁴¹ Commoners typically inhabited benches along the walls and royal or important families along the back wall. This gave the elites access to a special room at the back of the house where the *wa'lp* heirlooms, regalia and art were kept.³⁴²

While the *Sm'oigyey* (Real People) or elites of a House owned the wealth and property, both commoners and slaves were key components to producing wealth and harvesting resources. Elites were supposed to gain favour with supernatural beings to ensure bountiful harvests while the commoners and slaves extracted or harvested these resources. Elites manipulated the wealth of a House to enhance its reputation as well as directing food production and other work. The head of the highest-ranking House in a village acted as a 'village chief' and sought the advice of other heads of Houses within the village and in return received tribute from the other Houses in the village.³⁴³

Villages were made up of these independent *Wa'lp*, but identified with a tribe. Tribes often had more than one village at Metlakatla, the Prince Rupert Harbour, at the mouth of the Nass and tributary watersheds of the Lower Skeena River. Villages and tribes could act as coherent political and economic units and owned territory in common. At the same time the clan system and its obligations meant that many villages and tribes had affinal ties to other clan members in other tribes and villages. This formed the basis of longstanding trade and warfare alliances between lineages

³⁴⁰ Houses that became too weak were often amalgamated into other Houses. A Feast would be held to codify the handing over of property.

³⁴¹ Boas, *Tsimshian Mythology*, 395.

³⁴² Garfield, *The Tsimshian Indians*, 11; Halpin and Seguin, "Tsimshian Peoples"; Miller, *Tsimshian Culture*, 45-55.

³⁴³ Garfield, *The Tsimshian Indians*, 26-28; Martindale, *The River of Mist*, 197-198.

from different tribes and villages. Within the broader tribal territories each Wa'lp owned exclusive territories.³⁴⁴

In *Smalgyax* commoners and low-class people are “those without origin.”³⁴⁵ This means they lack the proper origin stories that connect certain people to owned territories where resources could be harvested. These origin stories were typically codified in the *Adanx*, not to be confused with oral histories or myths.³⁴⁶

It was necessary for those in control of certain *Adanx* to legitimize their ownership of these stories or to pass their rights on to other elites through winter feasting and ceremonies. Property was given away at feasts as payment for those in attendance to ‘witness’ or legitimize the feast’s particular goals; for example, feasts were held to express territorial boundaries, marriages, temporary access to territories or resources, trade agreements, passing of names or rank, and so on. One way, albeit a limited way, of seeing the *Adanx* is as a public display of property law. These feasts and ceremonies almost all took place in the winter villages in the Prince Rupert Harbour, but could also be held at the mouth of the Nass River.³⁴⁷

As the majority of resource and food procurement was decentralized and spread over large privately-owned territories it would not have been practical for Feasts to be held during the summer season. In addition to these practical reasons the Nine Tribes congregated at the Prince Rupert Harbour to hold feasts, but also so that each village and all the Houses were in close proximity to one another. The close proximity ensured that not only were there numerous “witnesses,” but that the right witnesses were on hand.

To summarise, Tsimshian society was organised into a well-defined sociopolitical system in which territories and trading privileges were owned and controlled by autonomous, but interconnected Houses and Tribes. The foundation of the Tsimshian geopolitical system lies in the inalienable and exclusive title of each House to its territories, the resources in those territories, and trading prerogatives

³⁴⁴ Susan Marsden and Robert Galois, “The Tsimshian, the Hudson's Bay Company, and the Geopolitics of the Northwest Coast Fur Trade, 1787-1840,” *Canadian Geographer* 39, no. 2 (1995) and Martindale, *The River of Mist*.

³⁴⁵ Garfield, *The Tsimshian Indians*, 29.

³⁴⁶ Martindale and Marsden, “Analysis of Territorial Claims.”

³⁴⁷ For validation of ownership and prestige through feasting see Cove, *Shattered Images* and Christopher Roth, *Becoming Tsimshian: The Social Life of Names* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008).

outside Coast Tsimshian territory. Title is entrenched in a complex legal system which regulates access to territory and resources through common matrilineal ancestors. The chief of the leading House and the headmen of the other Houses manage the overall economy of the tribe/village and its associated geopolitical relations with other tribes.

Depending on the needs and priorities the chief and the headmen, rights may be granted to other Houses. For example, marriage alliances were a common form of arranging rights of access and other economic prerogatives. Sometimes these alliances lasted many generations and created an intricate web of relationships linking the economies of Houses, tribes and even regions and nations. Entry into territory and access to trade partners other than one's own are acknowledged by obligatory gifts to the owners following a strict protocol based on the nature of the exchange. This system of trade was an integral component to a common geopolitical and economic institution.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁸ Marsden and Galois, "The Tsimshian," 170.

Chapter 3 - The Battles

Introduction

The most powerful dynastic Nine Tribes House from 1780 to 1825 was led by Legex. Legex established the most expansive regional power the north coast had seen.³⁴⁹ Michael Robinson has argued Legex established a “proto-statedom,”³⁵⁰ though Andrew Martindale’s characterization of a “paramount chiefdom”³⁵¹ is more common.

In 2003 Martindale argued it was Legex’s ability to manipulate the power dynamics of the fur trade within Indigenous coastal society that allowed him to propel his people to quasi-statehood, a form of the “Superchief thesis;”³⁵² however, he has recently changed his position.³⁵³

Martindale now believes the process of increased political centralization was established long before the fur trade.³⁵⁴ In this section I agree with Martindale’s updated position and support it with a military battle history of the Nine Tribes to trace their rise to power through the strategic use, deployment, and projection of their military power.

The chronological order of events offered here follows Susan Marsden’s *Defending the Mouth of the Skeena* and her work with Andrew Martindale that focused

³⁴⁹ Marsden and Galois, “The Tsimshian.”

³⁵⁰ Robinson, *Sea Otter Chiefs*.

³⁵¹ Andrew Martindale, “Hunter-Gatherer Paramount Chiefdom: Tsimshian Developments through the Contact Period,” in R. Matson, G. Coupland, and Q. Mackie, *Emerging from the Mist*, 12-50, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003).

³⁵² I believe Robinson is the original ‘superchief’ proponent see Robinson, *Sea Otter Chiefs*, but this line of thinking generally follows what is known in the broader anthropological literature as the “Tribal Zone” thesis. See Ferguson and Whitehead, *War in the Tribal Zone*.

³⁵³ Andrew Martindale, “Entanglement and Tinkering: Structural History in the Archaeology of the Northern Tsimshian,” *Journal of Social Archaeology* 9, no. 1 (2009).

³⁵⁴ For Martindale’s change of position see Martindale, “Entanglement and Tinkering.” For Joan Lovesik’s influence on this change of position see Menzies, *People of the Salt Water*. Also see Lovesik, *The Lax Kw’alaams*.

more narrowly on what they call the “Middle Period” 3500BP to 1500BP.³⁵⁵ It follows their argument that ten of the Coast Tsimshian tribes formed a regional and defensive alliance about 1500 years ago in response to a military invasion by the Tlingit.³⁵⁶ Marsden wrote her book to “correct” a view held by some anthropologists that the Tlingit controlled the mouth of the Skeena River until the proto-contact period.³⁵⁷

This thesis digs even deeper by following the specific battle narratives that clearly demonstrate the violent eviction of the Tlingit from not just the Harbour, but the broader area. It also shows the Nine Tribes did not stop at ejecting the Tlingit. After defeating the occupation and consolidating their political organisation, they used their newly fortified position in the Prince Rupert Harbour to project their social, economic and military power outwards. At its height, Nine Tribes military power could be felt deep into the interior along the Skeena River, as far south as Kwakwaka’wakw territories, north to Wrangell Alaska, and even at Skidegate and Masset on Haida Gwaii.

The most powerful Nine Tribes Houses were born out of this War with the Tlingit and earlier violent historical migrations into their coastal territories. It should be noted that this power was not the result of resource abundance.³⁵⁸ It was through cunning, alliance building, strategic marriage and military power.

³⁵⁵ Marsden, *Defending the Mouth of the Skeena*; Marsden, “Defending the Mouth of the Skeena; Martindale and Marsden, “Defining the Middle.” I also draw on Marsden and Galois, “The Tsimshian.”

³⁵⁶ It is possible the Tlingit had not yet formed as a recognizable political organisation at the time of the original encroachment into Nine Tribes territory. It is also possible that their encroachment into Nine Tribes territory helped consolidate the Tlingit into a political unit. For the sake of simplicity and following the lead of other scholars I will use “Tlingit” to refer to these invaders.

³⁵⁷ Marsden, *Defending the Mouth of the Skeena*, 9.

³⁵⁸ One of the most powerful and famous Houses in Nine Tribes history was that of Legex of the Gispaxlo’ots. But, his House did not own productive salmon streams and their territories were not otherwise overly productive. Martindale, “Entanglement and Tinkering” and Martindale, “Hunter-Gatherer Paramount.”

Preface to War

Oldest Inhabitants

The oldest ancestors of the Nine Tribes are hard to trace. We know early on there were three distinct cultural groups that eventually coalesced into the Nine Tribes; the original coastal inhabitants (Laxmoon – people of the salt water), a series of coastal migrations (the second wave of migrants are usually called the Gwenhoot – fugitives), and a series of migrations from the interior (Temlarham – Land of Plenty).³⁵⁹

Interior Peoples

Archaeological evidence for an original Skeena component is inconclusive,³⁶⁰ however, there were ancient settlements, 5000 BP, at Kitselas³⁶¹ and the *Adawx* speak of ancient villages clustered around Lakelse Lake and the Shames River.³⁶² The *Adawx* also list the Upper Skeena as an origin point for several successive migrations into the Nass River, Skeena River, Kitimat (and further south), the archipelago between the mouth of the Skeena and Douglas channel, and even Haida Gwaii.³⁶³ Archaeological excavations along the lower Skeena have been scarce and the evidence at this point cannot confirm or deny an early Lower Skeena River component.³⁶⁴ The migrations

³⁵⁹ Historically there were actually Ten Tribes but the tenth, the Gitwilksabe, went extinct and were absorbed by other Tribes, primarily the Gispaxlo'ots, Gitlaan and Giluts'aaw. The Gispaxlo'ots and the Giluts'aaw also absorbed the Gitwilksabe territories around Lakelse Lake and the Lakelse River watershed. The Gits'ilaasu absorbed Gitwilksabe territories on the Zymoetz River and its watershed. See (Beynon, *The Raven Clan Outlaws on the North Pacific Coast*, n.d., pp. Robert Stewart, Larhskeek of the Nass River, Recorded by William Beynon 1948-49, "The Gitwilksabe Tribe of the Tsimshyan." For the possibility that Legex absorbed the Gitwilksabe as part of his rise to power see Beynon, *The Gwenhoot of Alaska* (1959), 1875-1954, pp. Matthew Sheppard, A Thunderbird of the Gispahlawts, Port Simpson, Recorded by William Beynon 1915, *The Fight at Na'a* (Alaska)

³⁶⁰ Martindale, *The River of Mist*, 197-198, 91.

³⁶¹ Inglis and MacDonald, "An Overview of the North."

³⁶² Martindale and Marsden, "Defining the Middle Period."

³⁶³ There are too many Adawx based on these migrations to list here, but the most important narratives can be found in **Invalid source specified.**

³⁶⁴ For an overview see Martindale, *The River of Mist*.

from the interior were largely the result of natural disasters such as a landslide at Gidamaks (Hazelton) or unseasonably cold weather.³⁶⁵

Coastal Peoples

According to the *Adawx* the earliest coastal groups maintained territories in the Prince Rupert Harbour, the Nass River, at the mouth of the Skeena and on the archipelago. The Killer Whale Clan (Gispwudwada) led by Yahan, Ligiutkwaatk and Saxasa'axt of the Gitwilgyoots controlled substantial territories at the mouth of the Skeena, the Prince Rupert Harbour and eulachon grounds on the Nass.³⁶⁶ The Gispaxlo'ots, Ginaxangiik and Gitzaxlaal also likely held territory in the Harbour.³⁶⁷ The Gitsiis held territories at the mouth of the Skeena and formed a border with the Gitxaala.³⁶⁸

³⁶⁵ See for example, **Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.**

³⁶⁶ Marsden, "Defending the Mouth of the Skeena," 22

³⁶⁷ The Gitxaala have an origin story where the famous warrior Ayagansk drove Wolf Clan members from Metlakatla "out to sea." His descendants formed the Gitwilgyoots, Ginaxangiik and Gitzaxlaal Tribes of the Nine Tribes as well as the Gitxaala and Gitk'a'ata. See Susan Marsden, *The Gitk'axala, Their History, And Their Territories* (Report Submitted to Janes Freedman Kyle Law Corporation, 2011) and Margaret Anderson, "The Allied Tribes Tsimshian of the North Coast British Columbia: Social Organisation, Economy and Trade," Expert Witness Report submitted for Lax Kw'alaams Indian Band V Canada (AG) (2008 BCSC 447 [2008], 2006).

³⁶⁸ Wilson Duff and William Beynon, "Ganhada" (Duff Files. Metlakatla First Nation Resource Library, n.d.). There are several episodes within Gitxaala history that refer to shifts in the balance of power beginning at Temlaxam until they reach the coast looking for "exclusive territory of their own." See **Invalid source specified.**

Archaeological evidence for the ancient occupation of the Prince Rupert Harbour is overwhelming.³⁶⁹ Recent studies have found sites older than 10,000 BP on the outer islands of the Harbour and on Dundas Island.³⁷⁰

Archaeologically there is evidence for small communities distributed throughout the coastal areas after 5000 BP.³⁷¹ It should be noted that deposits run deeper than the 5000 BP stratigraphy, but these deposits are underwater and at the time of excavation archaeologists were not equipped to carry out underwater excavations.³⁷² These ‘ancient’ settlement sites would have been occupied for extended periods of time. Early settlement sites were typically chosen for their proximity to intertidal food sources, especially clams, mussels, snails and barnacles. Excavated village sites in the Harbour are dominated by shellfish and fish remains. Salmon is by far the most common fish with herring being a distant second.

Salmon bones are not well preserved in deeper middens due to chemical factors, but stone and bone artifacts indicate fish were an important component to diet.³⁷³ The basic pattern of subsistence seems to be more sedentary in nature than is recorded in the ethnographic record. A lack of salmon vertebrae until after 3500 BP suggests there was no significant influx of Skeena river salmon, but this may be due to screening techniques that biased larger faunal remains.³⁷⁴

³⁶⁹ Ames and Maschner, *Peoples of the Northwest Coast*; Kenneth Ames, *The North Coast Prehistory Project Excavations in Prince Rupert Harbour, British Columbia* (Oxford: John and Erica Hedges Ltd. British Archaeological Reports, 2005); David Archer, “An Archaeological Survey of the Prince Rupert-Terrace Area,” *The Midden* 17, no. 2 (April 1985); George Macdonald, “Archaeological Sequences from the Coast Tsimshian area British Columbia” (*Paper Presented to the American Anthropological Association*, New Orleans, 1969); Inglis and MacDonald, “An Overview of the North.”; MacDonald and Cybulski, “The Prince Rupert.”; George Macdonald, *The Nine Tribes of the Coast Tsimshian and the Prince Rupert Harbour* (report prepared for the Port of Prince Rupert Mediation, 2009), Macdonald, *Coast Tsimshian pre-contact*.

³⁷⁰ Andrew Martindale et al., “Mapping of Subsurface Shell Midden Components Through Percussion Coring: Examples from Dundas Island,” *Journal of Archaeological Science* 36, no. 7 (2009); McLaren, Martindale, Fedje, & Mackie, “Relic Shorelines” and McLaren, *Sea Level Change*.

³⁷¹ Martindale and Marsden, “Defining the Middle Period,” 20.

³⁷² Ames, *The North Coast*.

³⁷³ Macdonald, *Coast Tsimshian*, 3 and Ames, *The North Coast*.

³⁷⁴ Kathlyn Stewart et al., “Effects of Screen Size on Fish Element Recovery in Northern Northwest Coast Middens,” In *Transitions in Zooarchaeology*, ed. Kathlyn Stewart and Frances Stewart (Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Nature, 2003) and Kathlyn Stewart et al., “Boardwalk, Northern Northwest Coast, Canada: A New Face to an Old Site,” *Canadian Journal of Archaeology* 33, no. 2 (2009).

Early on the coastal peoples expanded their territories through strategic marriages and negotiations with supernatural beings to the mouth of the Skeena River.³⁷⁵ Expanding their territory to the Skeena allowed for travel and trade up to the Skeena estuary (tidal limit).³⁷⁶ The divide between the coastal and interior peoples was at the Exchamsiks River watershed.³⁷⁷

Around 3500 BP Nine Tribes territories underwent tremendous change. Both population growth and an influx of migrants from the interior had a substantial impact on the area and its people.

Migrations

The *Adawx* record a series of migrations from the interior. These migrations consistently begin at the head of the Stikine River at village named “Lax’wiyip.”³⁷⁸ The Raven, Eagle and Wolf clans³⁷⁹ all had villages in this area.³⁸⁰ Conflict over hunting and fishing resources led to a Raven/Eagle Clan alliance to wage war on the more powerful Wolf clan.³⁸¹ The Wolf Clan was overpowered by the alliance and fled, but they brought their spouses and other family members from the Raven and Eagle clans with them. Some travelled overland to the headwaters of the Nass and Skeena

³⁷⁵ Marsden, “Adawx, Spanaxnox.”

³⁷⁶ Patton, *Reconstructing Houses*, 138.

³⁷⁷ Martindale and Marsden, “Defining the Middle Period,” 22.

³⁷⁸ For example, see (Beynon, Wolf Clan Invaders from the Northern Plateaus Among the Tsimshian, n.d., pp. George McCauley and Mary 'Aharhsraerh, Gitrhahla, recorded by William Beynon 1916, "The Flight from Alaska of Neeskahlot").

³⁷⁹ I use the English words for narrative simplicity, but will use the Smalgyax in direct quotes.

Laxsgiik – Eagle

Ganhanda – Raven

Laxgibu – Wolf

Gispuwudwada – Killerwhale

³⁸⁰ Two villages feature in the *Adawx* “Daxk’leo” and “Takun” for a map of all the located villages see Marsden, “Defending the Mouth of the Skeena,” 13.

³⁸¹ **Invalid source specified.**

Rivers to Temlarham.³⁸² Eventually these people made their way down the Skeena to the coast.³⁸³ Others travelled down the Stikine River but found the way blocked by a glacier. Here they split, some went overland to the north while others passed through a narrow passage in the glacier.³⁸⁴

The Tlingit *At.oom* record a similar story regarding the origin of the Wolf clan among the Tlingit.³⁸⁵ The newcomers to Tlingit territory continued to feud with each other.³⁸⁶ The Eagle clan lost these conflicts and fled south, these people “became one of the clans of the Tsimshian.”³⁸⁷

These migrations mark the beginning of the “Middle Period” ca. 3500 BP - 1500 BP.³⁸⁸ Andrew Martindale and Susan Marsden characterize the period as defined

not by the emergence of cultural traits characteristic of the later ethnographic cultures, such as delayed storage economy, but as a complex series of historic events related to westward and southward migrations by interior and coastal peoples. This movement of peoples, for which there is evidence in both the archaeological and oral history records, amplified local population growth and resulted in sociopolitical changes that culminated in a period of warfare between Tsimshian and invaders from the north and east. The formation of alliances between various Tsimshian tribes as a result of this invasion created much of what is recognizable as ethno-historic Tsimshian culture.³⁸⁹

³⁸² Temlaxam is said to stretch from Kitwancool to Hazelton, but is largely understood as a large ancient and long-term settlement at the convergence of the Skeena and Bulkey Rivers, where present day Hazelton now stands.

³⁸³ **Invalid source specified.**

³⁸⁴ **Invalid source specified.**

³⁸⁵ Nora Marks Dauenhauer and Richard Dauenhauer, *Haa Suka, Our Ancestors: Tlingit Oral Narratives Vol. 1 Classics of Oral Tlingit Literature* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1987, 63-70 also see Olsen, Social Structure, 28-29) both quoted in Marsden, “Defending the Mouth of the Skeena.”

³⁸⁶ Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer, *Haa Suka*, and Ronald Olsen, *Social Structure and Social Life of the Tlingit in Alaska* (Berkeley: University of California Anthropologica Records Vol. 26, 1967), 32-33.

³⁸⁷ Beynon, The Gwenhoot of Alaska and Olsen, *Social Structure*, 36)

³⁸⁸ Periodization from Inglis and MacDonald, “An Overview of the North.”

³⁸⁹ Martindale and Marsden, “Defining the Middle Period,” 18.

The influx of newcomers to Tlingit territory put pressure on resources and territorial boundaries came under dispute, the Tlingit were drawn into the conflicts.

War with the Tlingit

Invasion

There were two major incursions of migrants from the north into the Prince Rupert Harbour and around the mouth of the Skeena. The first were the Eagle Clan members mentioned above who became integrated into Nine Tribes society. They became known as the Gwenhoot (Fugitive) Eagles. They shared origin stories with the Gits'ilaasu and Gispaxlo'ots, but were not a Royal Family.³⁹⁰

The second incursion, this time by the Gwenhoot Wolves, led to open warfare. These Wolf Clan members established themselves, slowly at first, throughout Nine Tribes territories. They chose protected and out of sight inlets and bays such as, Work Channel, Kitsumateen and along the Nass. They preyed upon small work parties or groups of people vulnerable to attack in Observatory Inlet and the Prince Rupert Harbour. The predatory raids made travel increasing difficult. Eventually the intensity of the attacks picked up in pace and severity.

The Tlingit pushed as far south as Greenville Channel and Estevan Island Group.³⁹¹ The *Adamx* record a Tlingit chief named Kagaa who was forced out of his territory during the course of an inter-clan civil war.³⁹² He is recorded to have moved to Dundas Island and used the Prince Rupert Harbour, among other localities, as a fishing station.³⁹³ Kagaa built a fortification at Dundas Island called Da'axs Kagaa. From the safety of his fortification Kagaa is said to have carried out increasingly intense predatory raids on the Prince Rupert Harbour inhabitants.

³⁹⁰ Wilson Duff and William Beynon, "Gitxaata Origins" (*Duff Files*, no. File 13-81 Box 41-79. UBC Museum of Anthropology, n.d.).

³⁹¹ See **Invalid source specified.** and **Invalid source specified.**, **Invalid source specified.** and **Invalid source specified.**

³⁹² **Invalid source specified.**, **Invalid source specified.** and Marsden, *Defending the Mouth of the Skeena*, 20.

³⁹³ **Invalid source specified.**, **Invalid source specified.** and **Invalid source specified.**

The raids do not appear to have been conducted on villages, but on work parties traveling to specific resource extraction sites. In particular it appears as if work parties to the upper Harbour were especially vulnerable; the further a work site was from a substantial village the more vulnerable they were to attack.

According to Andrew Martindale the Nine Tribes remember this period as either “When the Tlingit Lived on Dundas Island” or “War with the Tlingit.”³⁹⁴ I suggest there is a finer delineation to be made. As we will see below the “War with the Tlingit” is probably a broader time period than “When the Tlingit lived on Dundas Island.” As above, the Tlingit had pushed much further south than Dundas Island. However, a grand Alliance of local people defeated the Tlingit in the south and eventually pushed them back to Dundas Island. This marker, ‘living on Dundas Island’ is present in these narratives as a point of victory, but is not present in other battle narratives. “When the Tlingit lived on Dundas Island” is one part of the larger “War with the Tlingit.”

Shortly after Kagaa had established his fort at Dundas more Tlingit Eagle and Wolf clan members also began raiding into the Prince Rupert Harbour.³⁹⁵

It is important to note that the raids do not appear, from either the Adawx or At.oow, to be well organised. This was not the “Tlingit polity” waging a war of conquest as is evident in later narratives. Nevertheless, Tlingit chiefs like Kagaa made it possible for other Tlingit groups to range more freely through the area as they shared kin and clan alliances with the invaders. It is clear that the Tlingit managed to weaken the local inhabitants enough that they became increasingly confined to their villages and, as the record of Kagaa shows, he was able to begin harvesting resources in the area which suggests increasing territorial control.

Tlingit raids were not decisive defeats of the Nine Tribes villages, but the denial of access to resources weakened the Nine Tribes and most retreated to more fortified positions on the Skeena River. Emboldened by their success in the north, the Tlingit

³⁹⁴ Martindale, “Methodological Issues,” 172.

³⁹⁵ **Invalid source specified..**

made incursions further south into Gitxaala territories as far as Estevan Island Group and Lowe Inlet.³⁹⁶

This is how Susan Marsden has characterized the second migration:

While the Gispwudwada from Temlaxam were aggressive in their integration into new villages, they built their network over time, and the dispersal into Tsimshian territory could not be characterized as an invasion. This cannot be said of the events that took place many centuries later when foreign peoples from the north pushed into Tsimshian territory. The invaders originated among the Tlingit but also among the Tahltan and their Athapaskan neighbours up the Stikine River who migrated through Tlingit territory. The first to penetrate Tsimshian territory were lineages of the Tlingit Raven clan, followed by the Eagle clan and finally inland and coastal lineages of the Wolf clan. The impact of the Raven clan invasion was mostly felt among the northern Tsimshian but the Eagle clan lineages spread throughout the region, and the Wolf clan invasion provoked warfare. Extensive archaeological research over the last decade has consistently pointed to a date of approximately 1500 BP for these events.³⁹⁷

The War for the Archipelago

At some point Tlingit control of the area became concrete. The Nine Tribes had retreated up the Skeena to fortified settlements and the original Gitxaala Houses were pushed south.³⁹⁸ In order to “show their authority over these waters and country”³⁹⁹ the Tlingit established early warning systems to alert them of anyone travelling in their newly controlled territories.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁶ **Invalid source specified.** and **Invalid source specified.**

³⁹⁷ Marsden, *The Gitksaala*, 22.

³⁹⁸ The narratives aren't clear if the Wolf Clan members of these Houses integrated with the Tlingit or if they were driven south as well (Marsden, *The Gitksaala*, 23), see **Invalid source specified.** for push south.

³⁹⁹ **Invalid source specified.**

⁴⁰⁰ **Invalid source specified.**

The Tlingit continued their pattern of raiding on unprotected work groups or families travelling to resource extraction areas. However, the more southern incursions meant their victims now included a wide range of peoples including the Gitra'ata/Gitga'at (Hartley Bay), Gidestu (Kitasoo/Xaixais Alliance, Klemtu), Gitrhahla (Gitxaala), Gidamat (Kitimaat - Haisla), Kitlawp (Kitlope – Henaksaila), Nine Tribes (Gitwilgyoots and Gitsiis) and Wutsdaa/Wutstae (Bella Bella - Heiltsuk).⁴⁰¹ These people banded together to create a formal alliance designed to push the Tlingit Wolf Clan invaders out of the archipelago. The alliance adopted an innovative strategy for engaging the Tlingit.

The Battle of Kaagas

The Gitxaala Alliance enticed the Tlingit to attack them at their fort named Kaagas on Campania Island. The fort was easily defended and the siege took its toll on the Tlingit.

Opposite the fort was the village Knabaa on Estevan Island, but the Tlingit did not know its exact location. When the Tlingit had been worn down by the defenders at Fort Kaaga, Alliance forces made their presence known at Knabaa, but rather than come out in force to attack the Tlingit they made it look like they were “excited and they ran about and seemed to want to escape.”⁴⁰² The Tlingit abandoned the siege of Kaagas and “paddled strenuously” to Knabaa to attack the more vulnerable fleeing villagers.

In their haste, and expecting the villagers would not be prepared, the Tlingit attack on the village was disorganized and arrived haphazardly. The Alliance had feigned disorganization to draw the Tlingit into the village. As the Tlingit attempted to land their canoes they realised their mistake as Alliance forces charged into the shallow water and broke the Tlingit canoes. The Tlingit faced a well organised counter attack. First, the Tlingit canoes were destroyed and captives taken, then the Tlingit were taken by the alliance in an encircling maneuver. The Alliance killed many of

⁴⁰¹ **Invalid source specified.**

⁴⁰² (Beynon, *Ethnographic and Folkloristic Texts of the Tsimshian 1939, 1875-1954*, p. #226)

Tlingit, some escaped, but most were captured. After this battle the Tlingit were forced to retreat to four villages in Lowe Inlet and further north.⁴⁰³

Analysis

Our first conflict offers several repeating themes in *Adamx* Battle narratives.

The first is the role of decisive victory. Demoralized by their defeat the Tlingit retreat to a more northerly position. The victory wasn't just a physical one, it was psychological. It is worth noting that the *Adamx* record important and unusual events. It is likely that there were many battles never recorded, but this particular one was. It signals the first stage of the Tlingit retreat northwards. A key point for our purposes was that the Alliance did not set out to raid for Tlingit slaves or wage a petty tit-for-tat revenge war, they set out to defeat the enemy and take back control of the southern archipelago.

Second, we can see the acquisition of territory or territorial change was a key component to warfare. The Tlingit had established themselves in the archipelago through violence. While they continued the pattern of "predatory raiding," the Alliance adapted their military strategy to defeat the Tlingit by building a more organised and effective fighting force. As a side note it is interesting that the theme of "predatory raiding" comes through often in the narratives, but only when describing the enemy.

Next, the Alliance devised a strategy that required cooperation and leadership. From an operational standpoint, the battlefield is fairly large for an ancient engagement. As the bird flies it is about eight kilometers from Estevan to Campania Islands. While the narrative is not explicit we can assume the Tlingit did not directly see the Knabaa in their village, but more likely smoke. The use of smoke and fires to draw the enemy into battle, or tactical deception in other cases, was an established technique and is mentioned in other battles against the Tlingit.⁴⁰⁴ Assuming the human eye can see about 4-5 km at sea⁴⁰⁵ the Alliance forces would have had to have

⁴⁰³ Invalid source specified.

⁴⁰⁴ See for example, Invalid source specified., Invalid source specified.

⁴⁰⁵ If you are six feet tall at sea level the horizon is about 5km away. $s^2 = (r + h)^2 - r^2$ where s is how far you can see and r is the radius of the earth and h is how high your eyes are.

had a prearranged plan and scouts to relay the progression of the first battle at Kaagas.

Lastly, the tactics of the battle at Knabaa show a good understanding of encirclement on both flanks. Being surrounded has a dramatic effect on enemy morale. An encircled force must either cut its way out, surrender or fight to the death. Fixing the enemy at the centre (breaking the canoes) then enveloping them is a classic military maneuver, but its weakness is a breakthrough by the enemy along the strung-out lines seeking to encircle the enemy. The Alliance countered this weakness two-fold; first, by wearing the Tlingit down at Kaagas, but more importantly, by enticing the Tlingit to a hasty attack by feigning weakness and thereby denying the Tlingit the ability to concentrate their forces.

The entire battle shows a sophisticated approach to warfare. Strategically, even being able to form a cohesive alliance deserves mention, but then to coordinate two separate fighting forces over distance and execute the encircling maneuver shows an excellent understanding of both tactics and battlefield operations as well as a firm grasp on command and control.

Battle for Kitkatla

After the victory at the Estevan Island Group the Gitxaala House of Ts'ibassa slowly pushed their influence and territories onto K'ts'm'nlaagan (Pitt Island-Lowe Inlet) and conquered many of the Tlingit Wolf Clan invaders.⁴⁰⁶ In the process of pushing the Tlingit out and increasing their regional military power, House Ts'ibassa further developed their military alliance with the Heiltsuk and forged strong Hailat (Secret Society) bonds with the Kitimat to strengthen their position.⁴⁰⁷ After taking control of K'ts'm'nlaagan the Gitxaala expanded further onto Laxklaan (Porcher Island), the current home of the Gitxaala First Nation at Kitkatla, and from there dominated the Gitxaala archipelago.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁶ **Invalid source specified.** and **Invalid source specified.**

⁴⁰⁷ **Invalid source specified.** and **Invalid source specified.**

⁴⁰⁸ **Invalid source specified.** It should be noted that while the Gitxaala held the majority of Porcher Island the Gitwilgyoots controlled a large portion of the northern Island. While there is no explicit narrative that this was a result of their alliance to defeat the Tlingit, it does seem a reasonable speculation. See **Invalid source specified.**

The Battle for Kitkatla is an unusual battle narrative. It is not represented as a coordinated attack, but the final push to evict the Tlingit from the archipelago starts with a Tlingit attack on a Gitxaala fortification at Kitkatla followed by a devastating ambush by the Gitsiis of the Nine Tribes.

Even though the Gitxaala and their allies were able to push back on the Tlingit incursions, predatory raids by the Tlingit continued. The raiding parties; however, were increasingly larger as more Tlingit warriors were required to achieve victory over the Alliance forces.

House Ts'ibassa along with their Kitasoo and Bella Bella allies were planning a large winter celebration at Kitkatla when one of these larger Tlingit raids was underway. Nisawis, a Killerwhale Clan member from Kitkatla, saw the Tlingit raiders on his way to Kitkatla from his village at Ktai. With forewarning of the attack Ts'ibassa moved his people and allies to their fortification near Kitkatla and were well stocked with "much food and water."⁴⁰⁹ This was one of the most well protected fortifications, but it lacked a supply of fresh water. It is described as:

Because raiders were always coming upon them the Kikatlans had made a fort on top of a small island out from (opposite) Lax-k'l '.n and this was a very strong fort because there was a large crevice on top of the rock which went in a long ways. And here was where they would hide the women and children. And this fort was very difficult to climb for anyone and there was only one place where it was good for the people to go up and it was a very hard trail and when the people got to the top of the island fort and they could guard all around the fort from where they sat in the inside and this was the place of refuge for all.

The Tlingit surrounded the fort and began to rain arrows down on the Gitxaala. The fort offered significant protection from the arrow volleys and the Gitxaala counter attack was described as:

On the island, the Kitkatla had gathered together a huge quantity of stones and boulders, which they could hurl down upon the invading foe. Now that they were surrounded by the Tlingit, when any canoe came

⁴⁰⁹ Invalid source specified. and Invalid source specified.

close to the island fort, they would hurl a heavy boulder and, breaking the canoe, they hurled stones on the inmates.⁴¹⁰

The Tlingit pulled back out of range of the Gitxaala boulders and decided they would starve the Gitxaala out rather than directly attack the fort.

The Gitxaala tricked the Tlingit into thinking they had an ample supply of water in their fortification. A Gitsiis man who the Tlingit had abducted earlier in their campaign told the Tlingit that "You will never stop their water supply. They have a spring on the island and they have stored food to last them a long while."⁴¹¹ The Tlingit counselled amongst themselves and decided to abandon their siege as their own food supply was low and they could not achieve victory.

The Gitsiis guide "led them through a very narrow channel where the Tsimshian intended to attack them. He knew they would be in hiding along one of the narrow passages." According to the narrative the Tsimshian were fellow Gitsiis come to retrieve their tribesman. The Gitsiis lay in wait on either side of the narrow pass and ambushed the Tlingit.

So they came to this narrow pass and the Tsimshian, who were in ambush on both sides, attacked the Tlingit, and so unexpected was the attack that many Tlingit canoes were destroyed and many raiders were captured. Only a few canoes escaped, and these went to Dundas Island and out to sea.⁴¹²

Analysis

Tactically the Battle for Kitkatla itself is not tremendously remarkable. While it does show a successful defense through some cunning, it does not exemplify many of the more sophisticated themes present in other narratives; nevertheless, the battle overall is important.

The Gitsiis ambush demanded patience and careful siting, it also required precise control of the strike. The Gitsiis showed great self-discipline in waiting for the

⁴¹⁰ Invalid source specified. and Invalid source specified.

⁴¹¹ Invalid source specified. and Invalid source specified.

⁴¹² Invalid source specified.

right moment to attack, it also suggests the leadership was competent in maintaining control of their fighting forces. Perhaps most importantly, it shows they were able to channel their aggression into an effective strategy.

The role of decisive victory is central to this narrative. The Tlingit are denied a victory at Kitkatla which serves to reinforce Gitxaala control of the area. The defeat of the Tlingit by the Gitsiis also signals a major turning point in the larger war against the Tlingit—a retreat to Dundas Island.

For the Gitxaala it signaled the decisive ejection of the Tlingit from their territories on the archipelago. For the Nine Tribes it signaled a shift in the power dynamics of the region. The weakening of Tlingit power on the archipelago was the beginning Nine Tribes political consolidation into a military and political alliance that would come to dominate the region.

Battle for the Prince Rupert Harbour

As the Gitxaala increasingly exerted more influence and control over the archipelago they were drawn into a series of new conflicts among their neighbours to the south and east of the archipelago.⁴¹³ While the narratives never explicitly state this is what held the Alliance back from continuing their push north we can speculate it had at least some influence on the Gitxaala contentedness to remain on the archipelago.

When the inhabitants of the Prince Rupert Harbour fled to the Skeena River after the initial Tlingit invasion they found their ancient ancestors who had gradually moved down the Skeena from Temlarham. Here ancient clan bonds were rekindled as they rejoined their distant relatives. It is generally believed that the Nine Tribes' control and consolidation of their tributary watershed territories on the Lower Skeena were cemented during this period. Each Tribe remained localized within their watershed territory, but likely traded short distances up and down the Skeena.⁴¹⁴

⁴¹³ Duff and Beynon, "Gitxaata Origins."

⁴¹⁴ Wilson Duff, *Tsimshian File, Unpublished Manuscript* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology, n.d.).

Aksk's Story

Aksk was the leader of a large and powerful House that traced its origins to the Royal Houses of Saxasa'axt of the Gitwilgyoots, at the mouth of the Skeena, and Gigiyawhaem of the Gitxaala.⁴¹⁵ He regularly moved his House back forth between the territories. Aksk also traced his origins to the original Laxmoon people, but was also a member of the Killerwhale Clan.⁴¹⁶

At the mouth of the Skeena Saxasa'axt had built a fortification which was intended to prevent any further Tlingit incursions up the Skeena River.⁴¹⁷ Part of Aksk's power came from his abilities as one of Saxasa'axt's leaders in war and defending this fort from Tlingit attacks.⁴¹⁸ He became well-known as an important and powerful war leader and likely carried out offensive campaigns against the Tlingit even after the Gitxaala Alliance began to fade away.⁴¹⁹

At some point Aksk was captured by the Tlingit, his ransom was paid by Weehawn (a Killerwhale from the Gitxaala), Spinren and Gilarh'aks. After the ransom was paid Weehawn adopted Aksk into his House and made him his brother.⁴²⁰

Aksk fell in love with Weehawn's sister Gandorh. Unfortunately, it was not appropriate to have a relationship with someone from your own clan. It was considered a "Kaets" or incestuous relationship; having a relationship with your clan sister.⁴²¹ While the two managed to keep the relationship a secret for a long time, eventually they were found out. The two lovers decided to deliberately get themselves captured during an attack so they could be together.⁴²²

and Martindale and Marsden, "Defining the Middle Period," 24, also see Boas, *Tsimshian Mythology*, 370.

⁴¹⁵ **Invalid source specified.** and **Invalid source specified.**

⁴¹⁶ **Invalid source specified.** Also see his name described by Beynon as Gilax'aks (gi – among, lax – on, aks – water, meaning he who stays in and out of the water), **Invalid source specified.**

⁴¹⁷ Boas, *Tsimshian Mythology*, 370.

⁴¹⁸ **Invalid source specified.**

⁴¹⁹ **Invalid source specified.**, **Invalid source specified.** and **Invalid source specified.**

⁴²⁰ **Invalid source specified.**

⁴²¹ The term Kaets was an insult or "slur," **Invalid source specified.** and **Invalid source specified.**

⁴²² **Invalid source specified.**

Aksk and Gandorh were captured by the Wutstae during a conflict with the Gitxaala. As captives they were able to marry without any taboo because the incestuous relationship rules were different in Heiltsuk territories.⁴²³ Eventually the two escaped their captivity. It is not clear why they chose to return to their people, but it is possible as captives they were made slaves and when they started having children they did not want them to grow up as slaves.⁴²⁴

After their return to the Gitwilgyoots, Aksk suffered significant social stigma because of this relationship. At an important feast held by Saxasa'axt, Aksk was openly ridiculed by an important guest.⁴²⁵ He lost prestige and social standing but refused to leave his wife. Eventually he was stripped of his rank and title, and no longer invited to feasts or to warfare related activities.⁴²⁶ To avoid the constant ridicule he moved his House to the Khtada River.

Tlingit Attacks on the Skeena

Saxasa'axt's fortification at the mouth of the Skeena which had stood for several years fell to Tlingit attacks after the departure of Aksk. It appears that after years of continuous assaults and without Aksk's leadership the fort gave way. Defeat at the mouth of the Skeena further eroded the Nine Tribes position regionally.⁴²⁷

The Tlingit do not appear to have occupied former Nine Tribes village sites, but they maintained a watchful vigil over the area. The Nine Tribes position was weakened by this surveillance as they could not safely travel by canoe to the Nass River to fish for eulachon.⁴²⁸

⁴²³ This was due to a combination of reasons, first, as slaves it is highly unlikely anyone would have paid attention to their union, but second, the Heiltsuk had different rules surrounding taboos and marriage between clans. See for example, **Invalid source specified.**

⁴²⁴ For references to their many children see Boas, *Tsimshian Mythology*.

⁴²⁵ **Invalid source specified.**

⁴²⁶ **Invalid source specified.** and **Invalid source specified.**

⁴²⁷ Boas, *Tsimshian Mythology* version of events suggested that Saxasa'axt did not shun the two and may have even encouraged them to leave in order to be safe.

⁴²⁸ The Tlingit watched the mainland from their fortifications on Dundas Island for any signs of the Nine Tribes re-occupying the harbour. **Invalid source specified.**

It is important to note that those Tribes on the upper reaches of the Lower Skeena, the Gispaxlo'ots, Giluts'aaw, Gitlaan and Gitwilksabe (near present day Terrace) did maintain access to the Nass Fisheries overland by "The Skeena" and the "Kitsumkalum" Grease Trails.⁴²⁹ The ability of these groups to maintain access through the Grease Trails was critical to their success, especially of the Gispaxlo'ots, in later years. Nevertheless, their access was far from unfettered as they were compelled to cache their grease until there was sufficient snowfall to permit transporting it on sleighs as the rivers were not suitable for freight transport and they had to negotiate access through territories that had been hostile to several of their ancestors in the migrations from Temlarham.⁴³⁰

Aksk Conquers the Prince Rupert Harbour

With the fall of Saxasa'axt's fort the Skeena was open to attacks by the Tlingit. The Tlingit made their way to where Aksk had his village on the Khtada River. They were attacked many times at their improvised fortification on the Khtada River, but eventually had to retreat in the face of overwhelming Tlingit numbers.⁴³¹ While they had put up a strong fight in the last battle, Gandorh (Aksk's wife) was killed, as were many others from the House including Aksk's immediate family. The survivors were forced to retreat further up the Khtada River.

As time passed and the Tlingit were pushed further north by the Alliance and at the Battle of Kitkatla. Aksk was able to move his House back down the Khtada River near the confluence with the Skeena. During this time the house had grown in size and while they had been away from the Skeena Aksk had been training his group in warfare and they had accumulated a considerable store of weapons.⁴³² He established a second fortification at the confluence of the Skeena and Khtada Rivers. When they were not attacked by the Tlingit in this location House Aksk was emboldened and moved further north into the Prince Rupert Harbour.

⁴²⁹ For maintaining access see **Invalid source specified.** For a list of the Trails themselves see (Macdonald, *Kitwanga Fort National*, 18-23) and **Invalid source specified.**

⁴³⁰ Beynon & Barbeau, *Tsimshian Narratives*, p. 4.

⁴³¹ **Invalid source specified.** and **Invalid source specified.**

⁴³² **Invalid source specified.**

On Kaien Island Aksk and his group built a square long house and fortified it with a double walled palisade of fir logs. They made a trapdoor in the doorway, not like a magician's trapdoor, but a heavy door that could be dropped on intruders. The trapdoor was recorded to have been made up of several layers of squared logs and rocks laminated together with pitch. Inside the house they placed half rotted wooden logs and covered them with cedar mats so they looked like sleeping bodies.⁴³³

They built a platform in the rafters of the long house where Aksk and his group could hide. They made spears that were just long enough to use from the rafters, slightly shorter than a standard spear.⁴³⁴ They took certain precautions such as stringing caribou hooves and puffin bills around their camp so that anyone trying to sneak up on them would rattle the hooves/bills. They also spread shells around the fort which would make a loud crunching noise making it almost impossible to sneak up on the fort without being heard.⁴³⁵ Once the fort was completed they stocked it with weapons.

Aksk's motivations for building the fort are clearly revealed in the narratives. He wanted revenge for the death of his wife at the mouth of the Skeena, he wanted Tlingit captives so he could exchange them for his own people that had been taken,⁴³⁶ but Aksk also built the fort "to drive back the Tlingit."⁴³⁷

In order to entice the Tlingit to attack them they lit a large fire in the hearth and burned green branches to create a great "smoke smudge" and let the Tlingit know the Nine Tribes had returned to the Harbour.⁴³⁸ Aksk had several men set up in high trees to act as watchmen.⁴³⁹

⁴³³ Invalid source specified., Invalid source specified., Invalid source specified., Invalid source specified., Invalid source specified. and Invalid source specified.

⁴³⁴ Invalid source specified.

⁴³⁵ Invalid source specified. and Invalid source specified..

⁴³⁶ Invalid source specified.

⁴³⁷ Invalid source specified.

⁴³⁸ Invalid source specified., Invalid source specified., Invalid source specified., Invalid source specified. and Invalid source specified.

⁴³⁹ Invalid source specified., Invalid source specified. and Invalid source specified.

The Tlingit sent scouts to assess the strength of the Aksk's forces. The people in the fort sang very loudly and late into the night to create the appearance of a large number of people in the fort. Aksk also had several of the women needlessly return multiple times to the stream next to the fortification to collect water to add to the appearance of a larger number of people inside the fort. Aksk wanted the Tlingit scouts to report a large force to entice as many Tlingit in the area into battle as possible.⁴⁴⁰

When the watchmen reported the advance of the main Tlingit forces into the Harbour Aksk sent out his own scouts to ascertain the Tlingit numbers.⁴⁴¹ The scouts reported that there were so many Tlingit that they "drank the creek dry" where they were camped.⁴⁴²

The Tlingit waited until nightfall before they launched their main attack. Aksk suspected the Tlingit would conduct a night attack and used kelp hung from their secret platform to imitate the sound of many people snoring. As the Tlingit assembled their forces from the area to attack their spies reported the loud snoring and they anticipated a large number of people to be sleeping in the fort.

Aksk committed the majority of his forces to the platform in rafters. He placed his nephews next to the trap door lashings and they were instructed to cut the lashings when he gave the signal. Several fighters were hidden some distance from the fort in canoes ready to give chase to any Tlingit that would attempt retreat. He also maintained his watchmen in the trees. Their job was to break as many of the Tlingit canoes as possible once the battle had started to prevent a Tlingit retreat.⁴⁴³

Once the Tlingit had assembled they crept silently towards the fort. They accidentally rattled the hooves and puffin bills as well as crushing the shells that had been set up as an early warning system. This alerted Aksk's forces that the battle was imminent. The Tlingit stopped and listened fearing they had lost the element of

⁴⁴⁰ Invalid source specified.

⁴⁴¹ Invalid source specified.

⁴⁴² Invalid source specified.

⁴⁴³ Invalid source specified., Invalid source specified., Invalid source specified. and Invalid source specified.

surprise, but the snoring continued. This emboldened the Tlingit as they assumed the people inside must be exhausted from their late night of dancing and singing.⁴⁴⁴

The Tlingit stealthily crept into the long house and began spearing what they thought were the sleeping bodies. Their spears and knives got stuck in the half-rotted wood and soon a knot of Tlingit fighters jammed into the doorway as those who weren't able to withdraw their weapons prevented the others from pushing deeper into the house. Seeing the congestion at the doorway Aksk called for the trapdoor to be released. It crushed several Tlingit and caused instant panic among their ranks.⁴⁴⁵

The Tlingit began to wildly attack anybody they could sink a spear or knife into. Their assault quickly devolved into chaos, even stabbing some of their own warriors in the dark and confusion. As the Tlingit tried to stab the sleeping bodies their knives and spears became stuck in the wood. Those Tlingit with knives became hopelessly trapped as it was common to lash a war knife to the warrior's wrist in battle. With the Tlingit in chaos and many having lost their weapons to the half rotten wood Aksk and his followers launched their main assault.

Those in the rafters first unleashed a rain of arrows down on the Tlingit and attacked with their short spears. Following the volleys of arrows, they jumped down from the rafters and speared the remaining Tlingit. Some Tlingit managed to escape only to be pursued by the waiting canoe forces who chased them down as the Tlingit frantically tried to retreat to Dundas Island. Several of the fleeing Tlingit were killed or captured in the chase, but some managed to reach their fort at Dundas Island. Many of those that escaped to Dundas collected their relatives and fled to the mainland, especially to the Kitsumateen area.⁴⁴⁶

Several Tlingit that were captured or killed had their heads cut off and impaled on sticks in front of the fort as a definitive signal that the area was now under Aksk's control. According to one narrative Aksk "was now victorious he took the territory of

⁴⁴⁴ Invalid source specified. and Invalid source specified.

⁴⁴⁵ Invalid source specified.

⁴⁴⁶ Invalid source specified.

the Tlinkits.”⁴⁴⁷ Aksk also released two of the Tlingit captives to relay a message, he demanded compensation for the death of his wife and his people on the Skeena River. If the Tlingit did not comply Aksk would kill Nae’naedzrs, nephew of Tlingit chief Mae’naetsu.⁴⁴⁸

Aksk became wealthy from all the “canoes, crest helmets, decorated daggers, decorated armor, coppers and elk skins of their enemies.”⁴⁴⁹ A large village emerged where Aksk had built his fort as the other Nine Tribes either heard of the victory or were sent for by Aksk.⁴⁵⁰ Once the other Tribes’ chiefs were present Aksk’s eldest son held a feast and gave away the war treasures they had acquired to all the Nine Tribes chiefs. In this feast he took the name Wi-hoxm.

Wi-hoxm then organised all the Tribes into an alliance against the remaining Tlingit in the area. The ten chiefs agreed to lay siege to Kagaa’s fort on Dundas Island. They quickly defeated the Tlingit as there were very few of their fighting forces left. The Tribes searched all the known Tlingit hiding places on the island, but found very few men, the women and children found were taken captive. After these victories the remaining Tribes on the Skeena took up residence in the Harbour, though they settled in the area of Metlakatla Passage rather than at Aksk’s former fortification.⁴⁵¹

Sometime later the Tlingit returned to the harbour, but this time they came for peace. After a series of elaborate ceremonies, the Tlingit chief Mae’naetsu gave considerable wealth to the House Aksk and his people were returned to him. The narrative states that this marked the defeat of the Tlingit, but not the end of the war;

While there were other battles between the Tsimshyan and the Gidaranits, from this time they were defeated by ‘Aksk, the Tlingit withdrew further north. Where formerly they had their villages at Ksrairhl (Stevens Island) and Kwaerhl (Dundas Island) they now deserted these settlements. The

⁴⁴⁷ Invalid source specified.

⁴⁴⁸ Invalid source specified.

⁴⁴⁹ Boas, *Tsimshian Mythology*, 373.

⁴⁵⁰ Invalid source specified.

⁴⁵¹ Invalid source specified.

Tsimshyan established their main group of tribal villages at Metlakatla Passage and what is now known as Tuck's Inlet.⁴⁵²

The Nine Tribes were now finally able to move freely between their hunting, fishing and berry territories on the Skeena River to the Nass River eulachon fisheries and Metlakatla in the Harbour, the new geopolitical core of Nine Tribes permanent settlements.

The House Aksk split after their defeat of the Tlingit. One group stayed at the original fortification site while the other moved into Metlakatla Passage.⁴⁵³ The name Aksk, while a historically powerful one, was not adopted again. This may be due to the stigma surrounding the name from his incestuous marriage to his clan sister. While the stigma seems to have been removed after her death, perhaps it was not enough to completely clear the name.

Aksk also did not associate with House Saxasa'axt (Killerwhale Clan) after his victory, but House Neeslaws (Eagle Clan), who was among the first to move back to the Harbour.⁴⁵⁴ Nevertheless, House Saxasa'axt lived in both villages. In one narrative Aksk moved to live with the Gitxaala without his family,⁴⁵⁵ but the Adawx are strangely silent on what happened to House Aksk after the retaking of the Harbour.⁴⁵⁶

Analysis

Strategically we see Aksk develop a way to entice the Tlingit into a decisive battle. The outcome of the battle is probably the most important shift in territorial control and ownership in the history of the Nine Tribes. While one of Aksk's goals was to take Tlingit captives, this was not slaving to "create wealth" or for labour as Donald and Mitchell would have it, but as a means to repatriate his own people. The

⁴⁵² Invalid source specified.

⁴⁵³ Invalid source specified.

⁴⁵⁴ Invalid source specified.

⁴⁵⁵ Invalid source specified.

⁴⁵⁶ In Invalid source specified. Beynon wrote that Aksk House was named W lgamgansk s gilax'aks (Where Gilax'aks barricaded) and Aksk adopted P't m ski'ni.st (door or barricade of Jack Pine) as a crest and no one else was allowed to adopt a similar structure, but this source is considered one of the weakest and these details do not appear in the other narratives.

retreat of the Tlingit to Dundas Island and even further inland was a clear indicator Aksk had retaken the Harbour and the Tlingit were no longer an existential threat.

Tactically this battle shows an excellent example of ‘force multiplication.’ Force multiplication is typically defined as an attribute or combination of attributes that dramatically increases the effectiveness of a fighting force; for example, a special weapon, technological superiority, numerical superiority, mobility, training, intelligence, even a fearsome reputation.

Aksk designed his tactical strategy to maximize his inferior forces in the face of greater Tlingit numbers. Like the Gitsiis ambush victory after the Battle for Kitkatla, the ability to channel aggression into an effective strategy is a significant indicator of sophistication in warfare.

While a large part of Aksk’s tactics relied on stealth, building the special fort without being detected, this was to ensure the battle was fought on his terms and at a time of his choosing. Choosing the time and place of battle is key concept in most major works on strategy. For example, Sun Tzu wrote “whoever occupies the battleground first and awaits the enemy will be at ease... one who excels at warfare compels men and is not compelled by other men.” Manipulating the enemy is a core principle of Sun Tzu’s tactical measures.⁴⁵⁷

Aksk convinced the Tlingit there was a large number of people in the house not only to provoke a decisive battle, but as a psychological deception. The Tlingit fighters’ eagerness to engage Aksk, but also their choice of stealth as a tactic, was what led to their defeat. Had they openly assaulted the fort it is hard to know if the trap door and sudden rain of arrows from the rafters would have been as successful; in fact, unlike the Battles at Kitkatla or Kaaga there is no indication Aksk’s forces could have defended against a more traditional siege (lack of rocks and boulders, no high ground or supplies).

A siege would have allowed the Tlingit to concentrate their forces where needed and on their terms, but by getting jammed up in the doorway inside a confined space the advantage of their superior numbers was significantly reduced and

⁴⁵⁷ See Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, ed. Ralph Sawyer (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1994).p. 191 and note 85.

the ability of Aksk's forces to terrorize the Tlingit caused their ranks to break and ultimately be defeated.

The use of military deception shows a good understanding of the battlefield and how to achieve victory even in unfavourable conditions or drawing the enemy into a situation that is more favourable to your fighting forces.

The End of the Tlingit War: Rise of the Wudzen'aleq and Haimas

In the final stages of the war the Gitsiis expanded their control of the Khyex Creek watershed and used the upper reaches of the Khyex to launch a series of attacks on the remaining Tlingit hiding at Work Channel, Quottoon Inlet and Kitsumateen. Out of these attacks came the ascendancy of one of the Nine Tribes' most famous, or infamous, 'chiefs;' Haimas.

Origins of the Name Haimas

Haimas was the nephew of Neesyaranaet a Raven Clan chief of the Gitsiis. He was the son of Weesaiks, a Ginaxangiik chief, who had married Neesyaranaet's niece.⁴⁵⁸ He was a "high prince" of the Gitsiis Tribe from a particularly powerful paternal line of chiefs and slated to become its successor.⁴⁵⁹ Haimas spent his youth with his Ginaxangiik father on the Skeena. His father decided to commemorate the birth of his princely son with a unique name.⁴⁶⁰ Haimas meant/means: Haitkyem'as (Stands on Bark) naw'awde (case-of-the) hayatsk (copper): Bark-case-of-a-copper.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵⁸ **Invalid source specified.**

⁴⁵⁹ **Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified. and Invalid source specified.**

⁴⁶⁰ It may also have been that Haimas was the successor for Txa-dzi'kik a line of famous Gitsiis chiefs engaged in a generations long bloody dispute with the Gispaxlo'ots. The last Txa-dzi'kik was beheaded by Gispaxlo'ots warriors and his head placed in the Gispaxlo'ots House. The name could not be perpetuated without redeeming it first. See **Invalid source specified.**

⁴⁶¹ This is in reference to the bark cases that were made for Coppers when they were transported. See **Invalid source specified.** Haimas had a brother who was named Weedawde (soaking) ne'awde (the case) hayaetsk (copper shield).

Young Haimas

Haimas as a boy loved to play war. From an early age he showed a capacity for organising other boys in make-believe attacks.⁴⁶² As a young teenager he and a group of boys started to raid the caches of other Tribes on the Skeena River. As the group of boys got older they formed a “gang” and graduated from stealing caches to outright attacking people to steal their goods.⁴⁶³ This “gang” of boys formed a fraternity called the Wudzen’aleq as they grew into young adults.⁴⁶⁴ Haimas moved to join the Gitsiis after becoming a young man and continued to attack fellow Tsimshian.⁴⁶⁵

The Wudzen’aleq eventually grew into a distinct and feared group of fighting men. They had a fearsome reputation up and down the coast. They had strict rules for membership. It was first and foremost a society of fighting men. According to some accounts only the sons of leading families were allowed to join. Most accounts maintained that members had to belong to the Raven Clan, but they could be from any Tribe or even “foreign lands.” Members could never show agony, grief or pain. They had to obey Haimas or other leaders no matter what was asked of them. Over time and with many victories against the enemies of the Nine Tribes it became a great honour to be a member of the Wudzen’aleq.

Gitsiis Territorial Expansion

After the retreat of the Tlingit from the Harbour a series of battles took place between the Gitsiis and the Tlingit refugees. The Tlingit retreated to a variety of sites throughout Work Channel, Quottoon Inlet, Kitsumateen (Khutzeymateen) Inlet and Union Inlet. At the head of Work Channel is Lachmach River which eventually meets the Antigonish Creek in an uncharacteristically low valley for the area. The low valley

⁴⁶² Invalid source specified. and Invalid source specified.

⁴⁶³ Invalid source specified. and Invalid source specified.

⁴⁶⁴ Inside Braves or Secret Braves according to some sources, Terrible or Ferocious according to others. An interesting side note is the “-aleq” may refer to the warriors that followed Haimas as a class barely above a slave. See **Invalid source specified.** and **Invalid source specified.** Other translations suggest it simply means those under a chief.

⁴⁶⁵ Attacks were carried out on Nisga’a and perhaps Gitksan. It is not clear if they attacked fellow Nine Tribes as they grew out of their teenage years. See **Invalid source specified.**

made for easy travel between the Skeena River, where the Antigonish drains, and Work Channel.

As described above, during the Tlingit occupation of the Archipelago and the Harbour the Gitsiis had consolidated their hold on the Khyex and Kwinista River watersheds. The mouth of Antigonish Creek lies only three kilometers from the mouth of the Khyex and the watershed of the Creek was well within Gitsiis territories.

Tlingit and Gitsiis Connections

In a 1989 Archaeological Report Morley Eldridge, Randy Bouchard and Dorothy Kennedy suggested the Tlingit and Gitsiis had significant connections.⁴⁶⁶ Some *At.oom*, Tlingit Oral Traditions, trace Tlingit origins to the area. Emmons noted that a clan of the Sanyakwan (Cape Fox) Tlingit are/were known as the “Kit cheese” and later changed their name to the Kiksadi.⁴⁶⁷ Olson had a different interpretation suggesting it was the Tihittan Clan that traced their origins to the area.⁴⁶⁸ Swanton argued the Tihittan and Kiksadi were once one clan that split.⁴⁶⁹

Whatever the case might be, the picture is clear that in the years of the Tlingit retreat there seems to have been significant interaction between the Tlingit refugees and the Gitsiis. What the Millennia Research report did not capture in their description of Gitsiis/Tlingit connections was the degree to which this relationship was guided by violence.

The Final Battles

The Gitsiis began attacking the Tlingit at their village Larhmarhl at the head of Work Channel to get access to their copper tools.⁴⁷⁰ The Tlingit retaliated by attacking

⁴⁶⁶ Millennia Research, *Khutzeymateen Ethnography and Archaeology: Permit 1989-70* (Victoria: Provincial Archaeology Library Report, 1989), 11.

⁴⁶⁷ George Emmons, *Tlingit Ethnography*, ed. Frederica De Laguna (New York: American Museum of Natural History, 1991).

⁴⁶⁸ Ronald Olsen, *Tlingit Field Notes* (Berkeley: University of California Press, Bancroft Library, 1996 (1933-34)).

⁴⁶⁹ John Swanton, “Social Condition, Beliefs and Linguistic Relationship of the Tlingit Indians” (In *26th Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology for the Years 1904-1905*, 391-485, Washington DC, 1908).

⁴⁷⁰ **Invalid source specified.**

Gitsiis villages on the Skeena, but the narrative states this was while the men were away “up river.”⁴⁷¹ Haimas then called for a Kalkaeihlems Feast⁴⁷² and invited fighting men from all the tribes to join under his leadership. Bolstered by the temporary alliance and his Wudzen’aleq fighters Haimas easily razed Larhmarhl. Details of the battle are not provided in the narratives, but it seems safe to suggest they simply used superior numbers to crush the already weakened Tlingit. An interesting note was that they portaged their canoes through the Lachmach/Angonish valley rather than paddle around and attack from the water as was more typical.

Following the sacking of Larhmarhl, Haimas canoed to Ktoon (Quottoon Inlet) and attacked the Tlingit settled there. Several of the Tlingit fled overland to the Kitsumateen Inlet. Haimas then launched his last series of attacks and took possession of both Work Channel and Kitsumateen Inlet for the Gitsiis Tribe though it is noted in the narrative that the other tribes who had contributed warriors had some rights to fish and hunt in the area.⁴⁷³

Over the course of this campaign a large number of Tlingit were taken captive. Typically, the families or Houses of important people taken in war could be reclaimed through an exchange. Captives could be freed after a ransom was paid. However, in this case the Tlingit had been weakened to the point where they were not able, perhaps unwilling, to pay to free their captive relatives.⁴⁷⁴ These Tlingit then became part of the Nine Tribes. Often highborn captives were not enslaved, but married to prominent families/Houses and continued to live as elites.

Analysis

There are not enough details in narratives to perform a full tactical analysis. The use of portaging to attack from the rear was probably not particularly significant as the Tlingit themselves had used this route to attack the Gitsiis, but Haimas’ ability to raise a large armed force, provision it and have it carry heavy war canoes on a ten-

⁴⁷¹ It is worth noting that the enemy attacking “while the men were away” is so common within the narratives it should be considered a trope.

⁴⁷² In this case a declaration of war: Kal – continually; kaeihlems – shouting for aid; not restricted to matters of war, but any large-scale project where labour was given and then compensated for upon completion of the project.

⁴⁷³ **Invalid source specified.**

⁴⁷⁴ Most likely the Tlingit in the area had become a separate “Tribe” and after their defeat had no Houses or relatives left to claim them.

kilometer portage does suggest a certain level of political sophistication for someone who had developed a reputation as a thug.

The portage of the canoes indicates Haimas planned to attack more than just Larhmarhl, his goal was a complete rout of the Tlingit from the area. The narrative also states that Haimas prepared for at least one season, perhaps longer, suggesting the importance of logistics to a campaign. However, two themes stand out as the most salient, decisive victory and territorial conquest.

The role of decisive victory is uncomplicated in this case. This is the last of the battles in the area where the Tlingit possess settlements. This marks the end of the War with the Tlingit. There are more battles with the Tlingit, but these fall more under the category of defensive maneuvers to prevent predatory raiding by the Tlingit.

Territorial conquest comes across as little less dramatic than it really was in the narrative. While it was true that the Tlingit were in the process of a gradual retreat and too weak to resist the rising tide of the Nine Tribes, it is significant that the narratives point to these battles as definitive for establishing Gitsiis ownership of these territories.⁴⁷⁵ The Gitsiis more than doubled their exclusive territorial holdings.

Tlingit Retaliation

After being driven from Kitsumateen and Work Channel a Tlingit alliance was formed to invade the Gitxaala and Gitsiis.⁴⁷⁶ The Tlingit were reported to have had more than 800 warriors in their fighting force. They set out to attack one of Ts'ibassa's fortresses at Curtis Inlet.

The Tlingit besieged the fort, but initially did not attempt to storm the walls. They believed the fort lacked a fresh water supply and they could wait until the Gitxaala needed to resupply then launch their attack. Unfortunately for the Tlingit strategy the fort did have a supply of fresh water. When the Tlingit leader tried to assault the fort with 30 of his canoes he was repelled by a "shower of stones and

⁴⁷⁵ Also see **Invalid source specified.**

⁴⁷⁶ **Invalid source specified.**

rolling logs.”⁴⁷⁷ The Tlingit took heavy casualties from this attempted assault and retreated.

Wounded, but not dissuaded, they attacked another nearby fishing station fort belonging to Neesnawl. Neesnawl’s fort was more of a temporary refuge than a fortress. The Tlingit were able to take them by surprise and captured many of Neesnawl’s people including his sister.

The Tlingit abandoned the idea of attacking the Gitsiis as they had taken too many casualties from their attacks on the Gitxaala, nevertheless, on their way north they managed to find small groups of Gitsiis fishing and killed the men while capturing the women.

One of these women belonged to Haimas’ House. He along with the Gitxaala were angered and they called a Kalgailensk Feast (Declaration of War). The Gitxaala/Gitsiis alliance decided to attack in the depth of winter as the Tlingit would not suspect an attack during the coldest months.

Details are not provided for the attack on the Tlingit village other than spies were sent ahead to warn the Gitxaala and Gitsiis captives to be prepared for an attack. The village was set on fire and the Tlingit men were killed as they fled their burning homes. Many Tlingit women were reported to have been taken captive.⁴⁷⁸

The ‘Saltwater’ Times

After the war Haimas and his band of Wudzen’aleq lived by themselves almost as a separate Tribe. Haimas and the Wudzen’aleq had a number of important settlement sites in the Kitsumateen and Quottoon Inlets, on Deer Point, at Metlakatla in the Harbour, and at the Nass River. They did not have any sites on the Skeena River. Their most important settlements were two fortification sites, one in the

⁴⁷⁷ Invalid source specified.

⁴⁷⁸ Invalid source specified.

Kitsumateen Inlet and another secret fort in Hidden Inlet.⁴⁷⁹ The Wudzen'aleq spent a great deal of their time travelling into Tlingit territory.

As the chief of the Ginaxangiik, Haimas' father had significant economic ties to the Tlingit. Each of the Nine Tribes had exclusive trading prerogatives with their neighbours.⁴⁸⁰

Gitwilgyoots	Haida (Masset)
Gitzaxlaal	Tlingit
Gitsiis	Tlingit, Nisga'a
Ginaxangiik	Tlingit (Chilkat, Stikine)
Gitnadoiks	Gitxaala, "Kwakiutl" ⁴⁸¹
Gitando	Gits'ilaasu (Kitselas), Haida (Skidegate)
Gispaxlo'ots	Gitxsan, Upper Skeena and Hagwilget Carrier
Giluts'aaw	Kassan Kaigani Haida
Gitlaan	Nisga'a and Nass Tribes, Tlingit (Cape Fox and Ketchikan)

Haimas appears to have made trading trips into Tlingit territories, but not all his sojourns into Tlingit territory were for trade.⁴⁸² Following the Gitxaala/Gitsiis war with the Tlingit Haimas led a variety of incursions further north, but his territorial acquisition was halted at Hidden Inlet.

⁴⁷⁹ Haimas villages are listed as Hltsem'adeen, Ksarauraa, Rpharkhyals. A map of Haimas village sites can be found in **Invalid source specified.**

⁴⁸⁰ **Invalid source specified.** and **Invalid source specified.** For close ties between Tlingit and Gitsiis see **Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.** and **Invalid source specified.** These should be considered a 'traditional' list "In recent times the tribes disregarded these trade arrangements."

⁴⁸¹ This could mean Heiltsuk, Haisla or Kwakwaka'wakw as it was common to refer to the Heiltsuk and Haisla as Kwakiutl. See **Invalid source specified.** for Gitnadoiks trading partners.

⁴⁸² For other examples not cited here see **Invalid source specified.**

According to John Tate:

After a time, the Tsimsyan began to get more powerful and finally drove the Tlingit farther north, until they made their most southerly village at what is now known as Dundas Islands. Here were many Tlingit villages. As this island was right on the fur-seal grounds, the Tsimsyan and Gitrhahla finally drove them away. There was also great sea otter grounds near the present Port Simpson. Now it was known as Larhgud'aerh. From here the Tlingit moved farther north. It was then that the Tsimsyan raiders began to invade their country, and their invasions extended as far as the Staegyin (Stikine).⁴⁸³

Haimas had built his settlement at Kitsumateen specifically as a launching point for an invasion of the Tlingit.⁴⁸⁴ During the preparations for this invasion one of Haimas' war leaders, Nisawrom'naerhl, broke his ankle. This left Haimas, Weerhae, Kasrh and Wigunaets as the remaining war leaders of the Wudzen'aleq. The loss of Nisawrom'naerhl meant that not only would he be absent, but the men and women he commanded would also not attend the invasion without their leader.

Haimas set out with the other three leaders to attack the Stikine Tlingit. They never made it to their intended target, instead they were attacked by the Tlingit near Kstiyarom-lekstae (Haughty Island). Haimas was outnumbered by the Tlingit and quickly surrounded. With no hope of cutting their way through the superior Tlingit numbers Haimas called for a retreat and his forces beached their canoes on the island.

The Tlingit leader did not pursue Haimas into the forest knowing his rout could have been easily reversed in the thick brush. Instead the Tlingit destroyed the Wudzen'aleq canoes stranding Haimas and his forces. The Tlingit leader turned his attention to the village at Kitsumateen which he knew would now be defenseless without the bulk of Haimas' forces there to protect it.

The Tlingit easily stormed the fort and captured all in the occupants including Haimas' wife. The injured warrior Nisawrom'naerhl had managed to escape to the

⁴⁸³ Invalid source specified.

⁴⁸⁴ Invalid source specified.

forks of the Aluksemeteen and Larhwilgyaeks rivers. From here he made his last stand.

The Tlingit were eager to capture Nisawrom'naerhl as he had previously tortured several Tlingit by cutting their ears and noses off before killing them. The narrative is sketchy on the details of this last stand, but from the Nine Tribes perspective Nisawrom'naerhl put up an epic last defense and died while trying to kill as many Tlingit as possible.

Haimas eventually escaped from Haughty Island by building makeshift rafts. He secured the protection and aid of Kawaehl, a Tlingit chief of Githaihl Village and of "Larhsail people called Anarhtade." Later on, in recognition of their help, Haimas granted both the right to hunt and fish in the Kitsumateen area.⁴⁸⁵

Battle of Wrangell⁴⁸⁶

The Gitsiis were angered by the Tlingit razing of Haimas' Kitsumateen fort. Haimas rallied the entire Gitsiis Tribe and some of the other Nine Tribes. This larger force was led by himself, Mawskembaen and Tsiroh of the Gitsiis, Lutsihl of the Gitnadoiks, and Lurhpaele of the Ginaxangiik. Their goal was to destroy the Stikine Tlingit village near modern day Wrangell Alaska in retaliation for the razing of the Kitsumateen fort.⁴⁸⁷

They set out with 40 canoes, roughly 600 fighting men. They made no pretense to stealth and adopted a philosophy of "Hayem, Sweep!", meaning they were going to wipe out anything that got in their way.⁴⁸⁸ When they got near the Tlingit village Mawksembaen's men were sent forward to scout the village.

⁴⁸⁵ These comments help to contextualize the remarks made by the 1989 Archaeological Report by Morley Eldridge, Randy Bouchard and Dorothy Kennedy regarding Gitsiis and Tlingit connections to the Kitsumateen area. See **Invalid source specified..** And see Research, *Khutzeymateen* for the 1989 comments.

⁴⁸⁶ The actual Tlingit village was about 25 miles from modern day Wrangell, but is not named in the narratives.

⁴⁸⁷ **Invalid source specified.**

⁴⁸⁸ **Invalid source specified.**

They found that the village sat on either side of a small stream and Haimas' forces were greatly outnumbered.⁴⁸⁹ The stream provided some difficulties for the plan of attack, but the superior Tlingit numbers was a greater challenge. Haimas and his commanders decided not to pursue a frontal assault.

Mawskembaen was able to place some of his men in the village as spies. Because of the long history of Gitsiis and Tlingit interactions many Gitsiis were able to speak Tlingit and knew how to blend into the village.⁴⁹⁰ The spies learned that the captives from Kitsumateen were held by House Gusraen (Wolf Clan).⁴⁹¹

Mawskembaen was able to hatch a plot with his niece who was being held captive in the Tlingit village. The plot was for the women who had been captured at Kitsumateen to put on a dance for their Tlingit captors. The dance required the use of the Tlingit spears, but to assure the Tlingit of no wrong doing the Tlingit were told to remove the points of the spears and keep them.⁴⁹²

As the festivities went on Haimas and his men began to mingle into the village and took up strategic points in the back corners of the houses and on either side of the stream. Those in the back corner of the houses had boxes with pulverized pitch wood mixed with eulachon grease to use as an incendiary accelerant. Once the dancing ended and they knew their people were safely out of the houses they set fire to the houses.⁴⁹³

The fires forced any occupants to flee the houses and Haimas' warriors were waiting outside to attack. The weaponless Tlingit were easily defeated by the Gitsiis warriors. Haimas was able to kill the Tlingit chief and the entire village was burned to the ground. Having captured more captives than they could transport the rest were killed.

⁴⁸⁹ Invalid source specified.

⁴⁹⁰ Invalid source specified.

⁴⁹¹ Invalid source specified.

⁴⁹² Invalid source specified.

⁴⁹³ Invalid source specified.

“Fighting Like Tsimshian:” The Battle of Finlayson Island

The Stikine Tlingit organised a largescale counter-attack after the destruction of their village near Wrangell.

They realized that

Hai'mas had attacked. 'Neeshawlt at once went to the other nearby Tlingit villages and it was then planned that they would call in the aide of all of the Tlingit and organize a large attack on all the Tsimsyan. 'Neeshaw't's secret messengers to the more distant villages of the Tlingit at Larhsai'l (Cape Fox village), Tae gwaen (Metlakatla Alaska, Annette Island), Gitraen (Ketchikan), Na'a (Loring), Stae gyin (Wrangell), Rhai'q (Cake), Sitaeka), and Tae ku (Taku). To those places came warriors [...] led by their princes, who invited these villagers to send their warriors to make a great attack upon the Tsimsyan and on Hai'mas.⁴⁹⁴

The Tlingit chose two war leaders, Kaekae and Kaedu'ni'uk. Both men were well acquainted with Tsimshian territory and had fought many battles. The Tlingit strategy was to establish a series of ambush camps along the route to the Nass fisheries. The two Tlingit war leaders

planned this invasion so as to arrive at the strategic points before the Tsimsyan set out. They went ahead and made secret camps at Knem'as and all along what is now Steamboat Passage. From there they would go to other places and ambush their enemies as they came up this passage.⁴⁹⁵

The Tlingit chose the early spring for their attack because

the people did not [travel] in big parties, but only in little groups when they went to the Nass. The raiders made an encampment at Kemenhans, High-Bluff. This was at the south end of Somerville Island. They made another encampment at Kwawk (name of a mountain, derived from Wawprh, Forehead, a large cliff). They established another camp at

⁴⁹⁴ Invalid source specified.

⁴⁹⁵ Invalid source specified.

'Miyraenhl'aw, At-the-foot-of-a-slide; also another at Ktsem'iyawp, In-the-Ground. Both of these last adjoined each other. They made another camp at Sparhkyael, Where-Tamted (sic – tainted) (mussels), or the Place-of-Poison-Mussels. The other three encampments are in Steamboat Pass, Somerville Island. This happened when a great many Stikine warriors came to attack the Tsimshyan while on their way to the Nass.⁴⁹⁶

The Nine Tribes did not sail directly to the Nass River in the early spring. They stopped at a variety of camps along the way to collect materials necessary for Eulachon fishing.⁴⁹⁷ When these small unprotected work parties were out of sight of the main encampments the Tlingit would attack them and take captives.

Haimas and his Ginaxangiik family were camped at Larhkayawn (Port Simpson). They had sent out seal hunters to various reefs and islets in the area. The seal hunters often travelled alone. At first a few canoes did not return, then more failed to return. Haimas began to suspect something was wrong.⁴⁹⁸

As the Tsimshyan arrived at Ka'yawn on Burney Island and also at Sparh'wan, Amongst-Islands (at Finlayson Island) and at Larhkwawralamp, Place-of-Wild-Roses (now Port Simpson). They made camps all along on Larhkoo, On-Sandbars, at Burnt Cliff Island at what is now Port Simpson. They did not go straight to the Nass, but some went to hunt seals on the way, going individually. As these went along they never returned. Then the people began to suspect that something or somebody were attacking them. So Dzarh'wihl, a Larkibu of the Ginarhangik warriors went out to investigate.⁴⁹⁹

Dzarh'wihl discovered the Tlingit and hastily made for the main encampment to warn the others. Haimas set out to investigate for himself. Small scale raids were

⁴⁹⁶ **Invalid source specified.**

⁴⁹⁷ These included, but were not limited to, food supplies, clams and cockles, deer and seal meat, and hemlock bark which was used to create fiber strings that the eulachon hung from while drying in the sun, small cedar poles for the eulachon rakes, cedar bark for baskets, mats and sails. See **Invalid source specified.** and **Invalid source specified.**

⁴⁹⁸ **Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.**

⁴⁹⁹ **Invalid source specified.**

often a fact of life on the route to the Nass fisheries. The Tongas Tlingit often made small incursions, but never in force as they feared a Nine Tribes reprisal that might wipe them out.⁵⁰⁰

Haimas patrolled the inside waters between the camp and the Nass River in a small canoe with a few men as he assumed this was one of these small Tongas raiding parties. Haimas' was alerted to the presence of Tlingit "Gitwaeltk" (Warriors) by another Tsimshian man who had almost been captured himself.⁵⁰¹ Rather than flee as his informant urged him, Haimas went to confront the Tlingit.

Haimas was grossly outnumbered and nearly encircled by the Tlingit. He managed to escape by paddling out to the open passage. He enticed the Tlingit to pursue him. Haimas and his men were able to kill several of the Tlingit with their bows before arriving at his family's camp. Once they arrived at the camp they sounded the alarm. The camp did not have any houses or fortifications so the non-fighting people fled to the woods. No details are provided on the actual battle once the Tlingit landed, but it was noted that "the Tsimshian killed the best warrior of the Stikine... as soon as this happened, the Stikine stopped fighting and went away."⁵⁰²

While they had won the battle several of the women and children had been taken captive including Haimas' aunt, her loss caused great shame to his father prompting Haimas to say, "You are a foolish warrior."⁵⁰³

That night Haimas and the other leading men developed a strategy to fight the Tlingit. They would go out again and entice the Tlingit to attack their smaller, but fast canoes. They would draw the Tlingit near Bernice Island. In the hills of the island they would hide archers, as the Tlingit passed Bernice Island the archers would unleash flanking fire and the retreating canoes would turn and attack the Tlingit.⁵⁰⁴

⁵⁰⁰ **Invalid source specified.**

⁵⁰¹ Spelled "Gitwaeltk" by the Sm'algyak Living Legacy Dictionary.

⁵⁰² **Invalid source specified.** and **Invalid source specified.**

⁵⁰³ The shame stems from having a family member as a slave. Typically, family members could be redeemed through a gift of wealth to the abductors, if a family did not have enough wealth to redeem captives it could cause the entire House to lose prestige. The narrative is no explicit, but Haimas' comment implies his father might not have possessed enough wealth to reclaim his sister and Haimas chastised his prowess as a warrior for letting her be captured with no way to reclaim her. See **Invalid source specified.** for quote.

⁵⁰⁴ **Invalid source specified.** and **Invalid source specified.**

While Haimas and the Ginaxangiik strategized the Tlingit had consolidated their ambush camps into one larger force. While Haimas' strategy to entice the Tlingit into the archers flanking fire worked, they were vastly outnumbered by the Tlingit reinforcements. They managed to deliver a significant blow to the Tlingit but the Nine Tribes forces were ultimately compelled to retreat further. While the Tlingit possessed superior numbers the morale of their forces had been badly damaged by the flanking fire at Bernice Island. Both the Tlingit and Nine Tribes leaders agreed to withdraw for the night and regroup.

The next morning Haimas tried to outflank the Tlingit again. This time Haimas' and his men wore their grizzly bear war armor. Grizzly bear armor was made up of a grizzly bear hide that had hardened sap embedded with sand and pebbles in the fur.⁵⁰⁵ The armor was very effective at defending against arrows at range. In addition, Haimas used a noxnox owned by his father.⁵⁰⁶

A noxnox is a spiritual power or talisman that is usually associated with Secret Society ceremonies. This noxnox, called Ligyhidihl, was a carved wooden human figure, roughly life sized, that sat in the bow of a canoe and drew the incoming fire of enemy archers due to its realistic depiction of a human being. The armored men stood up to the superior Tlingit numbers, but neither side could force a decisive conclusion to the battle. Both parties again withdrew at the end of the day.

That night Haimas devised another strategy. They would split their forces into three. One party would feign retreat and draw the Tlingit in, this time near Finlayson Island. The second group would wait in the woods on Finlayson Island and the third group would hide in their canoes at the northern tip of the island. Once the Tlingit entered the passage between Finlayson Island and the mainland the first group would turn and fight the Tlingit while the group on the island would fire volleys of arrows and the third group, the hidden canoes, would attack the Tlingit from the rear and cut off their retreat.

Haimas again led the initial charge into the Tlingit canoes, he slowly retreated to the channel between Finlayson Island and the mainland giving the impression they were retreating to Metlakatla for reinforcements. Once the Tlingit were completely

⁵⁰⁵ **Invalid source specified.** For another account of this type of armour see **Invalid source specified.**

⁵⁰⁶ It is important to note that Ts'ibassa of the Gitxaala also claimed ownership of this noxnox as a crest.

within the channel the second and third groups attacked. There was no escape, the Tlingit could not fight their way out of the encirclement. The complete envelopment badly crippled the Tlingit morale. Seeing their defeat some managed to beach their canoes on the island and flee into the woods only to be met by a hidden wall of spearmen.⁵⁰⁷

Both Kaekae and Kaedu'ni'uk were singled out and cornered by Haimas' forces, Kaekae escaped capture, but Kaedu'ni'uk was killed trying to climb a cliff. "The Stikine ever since have spoken of this battle as having been the biggest between them and the Tsimshyan."⁵⁰⁸ Haimas had now more than qualified himself as a war leader, but he did not stop there.

Haimas pursued the Tlingit that had captured his aunt. He managed to recapture her as well as other captives in small skirmish. Haimas demanded his father pay for her return with the Ligyhidihl noxnox. Haimas' father refused and an argument ensued. At some point one of Haimas' men got out of the canoe walked up to the noxnox, cut its head off and gave it to Haimas. Haimas returned his aunt and left his Ginaxangiik family.⁵⁰⁹

It was then that was inaugurated this strategy of leading the raiders into a narrow channel and ambushing them and completely closing in from all sides; the name for it being: "Tsemsyaenhl-get: Tsimshyan-way of warfare."⁵¹⁰

Analysis

The "Tsimshyan-way of warfare," is a theme repeated in a number of narratives following this battle. In one example the Ginaxangiik are even asked by the Stikine Tlingit to teach them these tactics to help them defeat the Sitka Tlingit. This battle takes place exclusively on land, but the principles are the same; the Stikine draw the

⁵⁰⁷ **Invalid source specified.**

⁵⁰⁸ (Beynon, *The Raven Clan Outlaws on the North Pacific Coast*, n.d., pp. Mark Luther (Medeeks of Ginarhangik), recorded by William Beynon 1926, "Hai'mas at War with the Stikine.")

⁵⁰⁹ (Beynon, *The Raven Clan Outlaws on the North Pacific Coast*, n.d., pp. John Tate, Port Simpson, recorded by William Beynon 1954, "Tlingit and Tsimshyan Warfare.")

⁵¹⁰ **Invalid source specified.**

Sitka down a path in a feigned retreat to where their Ginaxangiik allies lay in wait to ambush them from both flanks and the rear.⁵¹¹

Tactically this is a classic encirclement or envelopment maneuver, but it is a rather complex example. Feigning retreat is one of the most difficult maneuvers to perform.⁵¹² The lighter faster canoes enabled Haimas to keep his men just out of reach, but the morale and resolve of his men had to be iron willed or the feigned rout could have easily turned into a real rout.

Once this retreating force turned to fight they became the fixing force holding the Tlingit in place while the enveloping force moved into position. They would have had to have been made up of the most disciplined men to take the constant casualties on the retreat and then remain calm and steadfast as they turned to face the numerically superior Tlingit force. As they let the Tlingit close ranks they also would have had to have been very trusting of their commanders while they waited for the enveloping force to relieve the pressure of the Tlingit assault. This is not a maneuver for weak leadership.

Organisation, coordination and command deserve special mention. In order to coordinate the three forces into a 'hammer and anvil' maneuver the men had to obey orders and be united by the command. Ancient battles in other places in the world used foot soldiers, spearmen or heavy infantry, to fix the enemy army in place, the anvil, then usually cavalry or faster skirmishers swung to one flank and crushed the enemy from the side or behind as the 'hammer'.⁵¹³

The 'hammer and anvil' tactic in other places was used in response to shield wall tactics that reduced many infantry battles to shoving matches. While some infantry forces could fight from multiple angles at once, more often their spear points were focused forward and the crushing blow from charging cavalry caused the

⁵¹¹ **Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.;**

⁵¹² One of the most famous examples was by the Spartans in the Battle for Thermopylae against the Immortals, (Herodotus, *The Histories*, ed. AD Godley (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1920), VIII, 24) also see Keegan, *A history of Warfare* for difficulty in its execution.

⁵¹³ Classic examples include many of Alexander the Great's victories and the Second Punic War battles of Cannae and Zama. See Azar Gat, *War in Human Civilization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 340.

formations to collapse. Cavalry are often considered a much more powerful psychological weapon, the tactic of ‘shock’, than infantry on the battlefield.⁵¹⁴

Haimas understood well how to terrorize his enemy and rout them from the battlefield. While he did not possess cavalry or shield walls, the rain of arrows from the flank while fixed in place by Haimas’ armoured warriors then the attack from the rear likely had an equal amount of ‘shock’ value for the Tlingit.

The use of the archers in the woods is an interesting example of ‘combined arms.’ Combined arms “hits the enemy with two or more arms simultaneously in such a manner that the actions he must take to defend himself from one make him more vulnerable to another.”⁵¹⁵ In this case if the Tlingit chose to face and fight Haimas’ fixing force their broadsides were exposed to the archers’ volleys. If instead they chose to minimize their exposure to the archers and turn to face them they would leave their broadside flanks exposed to Haimas’ force. It should be noted that even the famous Spartan phalanx was never fully able to realise the potential of combined arms and instead was overly focused on the use of heavy infantry.⁵¹⁶

The death of two of the Tlingit’s “best warrior[s]” at the end of the battle also reinforces the importance of leadership in battle. The Nine Tribes were aware that one road to decisive victory was to kill the enemy’s leader. In general, ancient battles around the world were often fought with one of two objectives, inflict a devastating blow to the enemy army to force it to flee the battlefield, usually in a flanking maneuver or rout the enemy’s commander and watch the leaderless enemy forces disintegrate.

We also see some interesting innovation in this battle. The use of the noxnox is very interesting if unorthodox. Eventually that noxnox became a crest coveted by other Nine Tribes as a symbol of power.⁵¹⁷ This battle is the first mention of the use of armor and must have helped maintain the morale of Haimas’ fixing force.

⁵¹⁴ Philip Sidnell, *Warhorse: Cavalry in Ancient Warfare* (London: Hambledon-Continuum, 2006).

⁵¹⁵ William Lind, *Maneuver Warfare Handbook* (Boulder: Westview Special Studies in Military Affairs, 1985), 12.

⁵¹⁶ Robert Penderson, *A Study of Combined Arms Warfare ed. Alexander the Great* (MA thesis, Fort Leavenworth: US Army Command and General Staff College, Military Art and Science, 1998).

⁵¹⁷ **Invalid source specified.**

Lastly, Haimas did not stop at defeating the Tlingit. In the wake of his victory he pressed his advantage and chased down those who held his aunt captive. He was able to leverage the recapture of his father's sister into political power through the acquisition of the Ligyhidihl while simultaneously diminishing his father's political power. The battle cemented his position as a war leader, but his ability to press the advantage also resulted in an increase in his political power. This is evidence of a greater strategy that went beyond military matters, but as the *Adawx* do not explicitly state this was Haimas' plan we are left to speculate.

Chronologically this story is important for Haimas. It signals the beginning of what would become a pattern of greater isolation from the main body of the Nine Tribes, but it also cemented his position as a war leader and a preeminent force within the Nine Tribes.

The Slaughter/Barricade Feast

Sometime following his rise to ascendancy in martial matters Haimas initiated a chain of events that led to his and the Wudzen'aleq being characterized by the other Nine Tribes as 'outlaws.'

After the Battle of Wrangell, Gusraen, a Wolf Clan chief of the Stikine Tlingit, was married to Haimas' sister, Tsaromtrhanae'rh. None of the narratives are specific as to why after so many years of fighting a Stikine Tlingit married Haimas' sister, but it may have been part of a negotiated peace.⁵¹⁸

Tsaromtrhanae'rh was very popular among the Tlingit. She was beautiful, young and brought tremendous prestige to their tribe. Gusraen elevated her to "head wife," but this was not well received by Gusraen's existing wives. One of Gusraen's wives was so jealous she belittled Tsaromtrhanae'rh and conspired with some of the other wives to deepen her humiliation. Eventually Tsaromtrhanae'rh had to secretly

⁵¹⁸ It seems somewhat improbable as Haimas' nephew or niece born to the Tlingit chief would have been his heir, and a high prince/princess of the Gitsiis. Nevertheless, this marriage is confirmed in many *Adawx*. **Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.** and it may also have been the plan that a male heir would return to the Gitsiis as Haimas had done when he left his paternal Ginaxangiik parents for the Gitsiis. For a description of peace ceremonies between the Tlingit and Gispaxlo'ots see Boas, *Tsimshian Myhtology*, 377-379.

return to Haimas' house after being further shamed by the Tlingit wives.⁵¹⁹ While Haimas tried to hide his sister when she returned to Metlakatla her shame eventually became known.⁵²⁰

For a time, no one mentioned Tsaromtrhane'rh out of respect for Haimas, but late one night when the tide was particularly far out Haimas overheard a group of people harvesting mussels mocking his sister and opening ridiculing Haimas. Haimas knew he had to act.⁵²¹

Haimas could not stand to be openly mocked by common people, he was a famous warrior, a leader of men, but he was also fiercely proud and hot headed.

On the morrow he called his Wudzen'arh group together and said, "To-day, I am going to show the poor Tsimsyan how I suffer. You will build a great mound pile in front of my house. When you have finished you will call all the Tsimsyan chiefs and their tribes. Tell them that I intend to show them a wonderful thing. Tsaromtrhane'rh's name shall no longer reecho through Metlakatla Pass. I will show them what a great princess she is. Go now and call all of these chiefs and their tribesmen." He did not inform his own people what were his plans.⁵²²

Tsaromtrhane'rh was dressed in her "gwushalaeit and 'amhalaeit" as "only a Wudzen'ank" could be. A large pile of wood had been stacked in front of Haimas' House and all the chiefs of the Nine Tribes were gathered in front. Haimas called to his sister:

"Come, Tsaromtrhanre'rh, come! Show these people that you are a Princess, and that to die is nothing. No one can ridicule you." She then came out wearing her valuable gushaliaeit and headdress, and she sat on the pile of wood in front of her brother's house. As she did this the

⁵¹⁹ Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.

⁵²⁰ Invalid source specified.

⁵²¹ Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.

⁵²² Invalid source specified.

women of the Hai'mas' household began to sing the dirge of the Raven. The tribesmen of Hai'mas then put the pile of wood to fire, before all of the assembled chiefs and their tribesmen. No grief was expressed. Tsaromtrhan'rh did not show any feelings, but sat in the brasier until nothing remained of her. Such were the members of the Wudzen'ank society! The Tsimsyan chiefs and their tribesmen went back home knowing that they had been shamed, and they also knew why it had been done. Not one of them spoke or did anything. Now Hai'mas had put them all to shame.⁵²³

This was just the beginning of Haimas' plans.

Haimas moved to the Nass River ahead of the rest of the Nine Tribes with his closest and most trusted Wudzen'aleq and their families.⁵²⁴ He built a "huge new house." After it was completed he invited all the headmen from all the Tribes to come for massive feast at the new house.⁵²⁵

The house had been designed with a low double doorway so that people entering the house had to bend down through a doorway covered with a grizzly bear hide into a narrow entrance that would only allow one person in at a time,⁵²⁶ then through a second low doorway also covered with a bear hide. The design meant that once someone had gone through the first doorway they were no longer visible from the outside of the house.⁵²⁷

When the various chiefs and headmen arrived greeters called out "So-and-so has arrived" and those inside the house kept up a constant drumming and singing in

⁵²³ **Invalid source specified.** For another almost identical account see (Beynon, *The Raven Clan Outlaws on the North Pacific Coast*, n.d., pp. Mr. and Mrs. Peter Ryan and Alfred Auklan, recorded by William Beynon 1952, "Haimas and His Kanhada Warriors.") and **Invalid source specified.**

⁵²⁴ (Beynon, *The Raven Clan Outlaws on the North Pacific Coast*, n.d., pp. Mr. and Mrs. Peter Ryan and Alfred Auklan, recorded by William Beynon 1952, "Haimas and His Kanhada Warriors.")

⁵²⁵ **Invalid source specified.**; (Beynon, *The Raven Clan Outlaws on the North Pacific Coast*, n.d., pp. Mr. and Mrs. Peter Ryan and Alfred Auklan, recorded by William Beynon 1952, "Haimas and His Kanhada Warriors."); **Invalid source specified.**

⁵²⁶ (Beynon, *The Raven Clan Outlaws on the North Pacific Coast*, n.d., pp. Mr. and Mrs. Peter Ryan and Alfred Auklan, recorded by William Beynon 1952, "Haimas and His Kanhada Warriors."); **Invalid source specified.**

⁵²⁷ **Invalid source specified.**

welcome of each guest. What the guests did not know was that Haimas had dug a deep trench inside the second doorway and as his guests bent down to come through the second doorway they were clubbed over the head by Wudzen'aleq warriors waiting on the other side. The drumming and singing meant no one outside the house could hear the cries of those being killed.⁵²⁸

Those of Hai'mas' greeters were there to meet them. The one nearest the arriving chief guest announced the guests' name, and this was carried on into the house where then began very loud singing and beating of the large hallaeit drum. All of this made a great deal of noise. The guest chief being led to the narrow passage went in first, got inside a curtain and stooped over to get in. As he stooped a man who was standing inside, struck him on the head, killing him. One by one his followers came in, and they were killed in the same manner. Hai'mas, dressed in his warrior garments was there to see that they were killed and none of the guests escaped.⁵²⁹

Afterwards Haimas scalped his victims and placed their scalps on poles outside the house. The place became known as Knerawli, Place-of-Scalps or Kincolith.⁵³⁰

Battle of Kawnde (Hidden Inlet)

After the Slaughter Feast the Wudzen'aleq fled to their secret fortified position at Hidden Inlet fearing a joint reprisal from the Nine Tribes.⁵³¹ The Wudzen'aleq were now also made up of the wives and children of its fighting men. Wudzen'aleq women often made weapons and medicines, they acted as spies,⁵³² and “even the women of

⁵²⁸ **Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.**

⁵²⁹ **Invalid source specified.**

⁵³⁰ **Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.;** spelled “Knerawle” in (Beynon, *The Raven Clan Outlaws on the North Pacific Coast*, n.d., pp. Mr. and Mrs. Peter Ryan and Alfred Auklan, recorded by William Beynon 1952, "Haimas and His Kanhada Warriors."). Also see **Invalid source specified.** for the same general account of events.

⁵³¹ (Beynon, *The Raven Clan Outlaws on the North Pacific Coast*, n.d., pp. Mr. and Mrs. Peter Ryan and Alfred Auklan, recorded by William Beynon 1952, "Haimas and His Kanhada Warriors.")

⁵³² **Invalid source specified.**

this band were skilled in warfare, and many even did duty like their husbands.”⁵³³ The fortress at Hidden Inlet was called “Tawdzepem-kanao,” The Frog Fort, but it is listed in the narratives as Kawnde.⁵³⁴

The Wudzen’aleq do not appear to have engaged in subsistence activity. Their provisions instead being the results of successful raids on Tlingit, Haida (Kaigani), Nisga’a and Nine Tribes.⁵³⁵ Sometimes they would simply steal provisions hidden in caches.⁵³⁶

Haimas’ uncle, Neesyaranaet grew worried about Haimas’ actions. Haimas could not take his position as head chief of the Gitsiis now that he had murdered the other chiefs of the Nine Tribes, but Neesyaranaet was getting old and in need of an heir. Neesyaranaet took it upon himself to visit Haimas to see what could be done, but Neesyaranaet angered Haimas during his visit and Haimas had him killed.⁵³⁷

Shortly after killing his uncle Haimas set out to attack the nearby Kaigani Haida for both women slaves and seal skins, something the Kaigani were famous for.⁵³⁸ While the bulk of the Wudzen’aleq were away the Tlingit attacked Kawnde in retaliation for their attack on their village Kasaerhs (20 miles from Cape Fox).⁵³⁹

The Tlingit sent scouts to ascertain the best way to attack the fortress as they did not know Haimas and the bulk of the Wudzen’aleq were away. As the Tlingit scouts tried to determine how many fighters were at the fortress some of the women who had gone out to collect bark spotted the Tlingit scouts. The women then

⁵³³ (Beynon, The Raven Clan Outlaws on the North Pacific Coast, n.d., pp. Mr. and Mrs. Peter Ryan and Alfred Auklan, recorded by William Beynon 1952, "Haimas and His Kanhada Warriors.")

⁵³⁴ For the name see **Invalid source specified.** For the use of Kawnde see Ryan source and **Invalid source specified.**

⁵³⁵ **Invalid source specified.** See **Invalid source specified.** for a list of Haimas’ farthest attacks.

⁵³⁶ **Invalid source specified.**

⁵³⁷ **Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.**

⁵³⁸ **Invalid source specified.**

⁵³⁹ **Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.** The Ryan source lists Hhlekwana and Haokaen as the target. **Invalid source specified.** For a different version of the motivations to attack see **Invalid source specified.**

put up their hair in the manner of men's, and they had dressed themselves like men. So they were mistaken by the Hlawoq as warriors.

...

The women then went to the camp where the Hlawoq were stationed, their canoes being somewhat away from the camp. The women attacked them and put them to flight.⁵⁴⁰

It didn't take long for the Tlingit to figure out what they had done and once they realised the only reason the women were pretending to be men was to give the impression the fortress was fully staffed they attacked in force. Kawnde easily fell to the Tlingit even though the "women and children of Hai'mas' village who had been trained as fighters as well as the men."⁵⁴¹ They were taken captive while the older people were killed. The fortress was burned to the ground by the Tlingit.

When Haimas returned from his attacks on the Kaigani he found his Kawnde fort burned to the ground. An old man who had escaped the melee informed Haimas of the battle and who had carried out the attack. Haimas caught up to the Tlingit before they had made defensive preparations. Haimas' attack followed a now familiar pattern when outnumbered.

Spies were sent to warn the captives of the impending attack. The spies made note of what houses the fighting men came from and the markings on the front of the houses. They would then contact any captives, particularly around the local water source. From the captives they would develop a plan and gain more intelligence on which houses belonged to the chief and to the fighting men.⁵⁴²

The plan was for all the Wudzen'aleq captives to run to the canoes on the beach when a signal was given.⁵⁴³ At night while the Tlingit slept a call was made to

⁵⁴⁰ **Invalid source specified.**

⁵⁴¹ (Beynon, *The Raven Clan Outlaws on the North Pacific Coast*, n.d., pp. Mark Luther (Medeeks) and Sunaet Collison, Kanhada of Gitrhahla, recorded by William Beynon, "Haimas after his Slaughter Feast.")

⁵⁴² **Invalid source specified.**

⁵⁴³ **Invalid source specified.**

alert the captives the assault was to begin. The Wudzen'aleq then clubbed as many Tlingit as they could and made off with as many of their people as possible. The Wudzen'aleq stole the Tlingit canoes to transport their people and ensure the Tlingit could not pursue them.⁵⁴⁴ They were able to liberate many of their people, but they could not return to the Kawnde fortress. Haimas "knew that the Tlingit would organize for a massed attack."⁵⁴⁵

The Wudzen'aleq made their new home at another secret village, Ksemktihl, on Kamelia Inlet in Greenville Channel south of the mouth of the Skeena River.⁵⁴⁶ The inlet was long and narrow and could only be navigated at certain tides.⁵⁴⁷

By this time

All the Tsimshyan banded themselves together to try and overcome Hai'mas. For a time he had almost disappeared, and they could not discover where he had hidden or where his new hiding place was. He went with his band and attacked a Gitrhahla village and plundered it. Then he escaped to where no one was able to discover. Hai'mas had made his place of refuge at Baker's Inlet, in the vicinity of Greenville Channel, was very secure there, as only a few people approached and as it was dangerous at the narrow entrance owing to swift water. It was reputed to be the abode of a monster and for this reason, it was avoided entirely by the others. Hai'mas, knowing this, made his village at this point. This place abounded in foods with a plentiful supply of deer, berries, shellfish, and seals. But there was no salmon excepting at a salmon stream across the channel on Pitt Island, which was called Salmon River.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁴ **Invalid source specified.**

⁵⁴⁵ **Invalid source specified.**

⁵⁴⁶ **Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.**

⁵⁴⁷ (Beynon, *The Raven Clan Outlaws on the North Pacific Coast*, n.d., pp. Mr. and Mrs. Peter Ryan and Alfred Auklan, recorded by William Beynon 1952, "Haimas and His Kanhada Warriors.")

⁵⁴⁸ (Beynon, *The Raven Clan Outlaws on the North Pacific Coast*, n.d., pp. Mark Luther (Medeeks) and Sunaet Collison, Kanhada of Gitrhahla, recorded by William Beynon, "Haimas after his Slaughter Feast.")

Haimas continued his attacks on other people, especially the Kaigani Haida. The Kaigani eventually had had enough of the constant attacks and formed a coalition to execute Haimas and his Wudzen'aleq.⁵⁴⁹

To counter the Haida attack Haimas led the Kaigani to the mouth of the "Salmon River" pretending to be a small fishing party. Waiting in the woods were the Wudzen'aleq warriors who, once the Haida beached their canoes, engulfed them from three sides on the banks of the stream. The Wudzen'aleq slaughtered all the Haida and took no captives.⁵⁵⁰

The list of Wudzen'aleq enemies was growing and the chance they would escape death at the hands of one of their many enemies was shrinking. There are two versions of what happened next.

Tlingit version

The Tlingit organised a large group of fighting men to attack Haimas, but unable to locate his new hidden village they satisfied their thirst for revenge on the other Nine Tribes. Because Haimas had killed the majority of the Nine Tribes leadership in his slaughter feast and more recently his uncle, the Nine Tribes had difficulty in organising for war and began to scatter. Those that remained appealed to Haimas to lead their fighting forces against the Tlingit. Haimas saw the opportunity to redeem himself and obliged. Haimas executed his now famous maneuver of feigning retreat to envelop the enemy.

In this way they overcame the great Tlingit Horde, who when they saw they were being attacked, now from both sides, became disorganized. While some of the raiders escaped, many were killed and some were taken as slaves. Hai'mas was now again accepted as the Tsimsyan leader, although constantly alert for any treacherous attack. He again assumed his position as a chief of the Gitsees, and many of his warriors remained

⁵⁴⁹ **Invalid source specified.** The Ryan source says the Haida were attacking the Wutstae and happened upon Haimas and a small group fishing, **Invalid source specified.**

⁵⁵⁰ **Invalid source specified.** and (Beynon, The Raven Clan Outlaws on the North Pacific Coast, n.d., pp. Mark Luther (Medeeks) and Sunaet Collison, Kanhada of Gitrhahla, recorded by William Beynon, "Haimas after his Slaughter Feast.")

with him. But many of them returned to their own villages rejoining their own people.⁵⁵¹

The Tlingit version is not specific about where this last battle took place, but a noticeable difference to the earlier victory was the lack of archers in the woods. There are some striking similarities to the Battle of Finlayson Island, but there are enough differences, the disbanding of Wudzen'aleq for example, to suggest they are two different battles even if the narrator may have borrowed details from the other story for narrative interest.⁵⁵²

“Wetstae” version

After the Wudzen'aleq repelled the Kaigani Haida invasion they were asked by Sarhsarht, chief of the Gitwilgyoots to lead a Nine Tribes fighting forces in a war against the “Wetstae.” The success of this war allowed Haimas to reinstate himself with the Nine Tribes, but the Wudzen'aleq disbanded and returned to their Tribes of origin leaving Haimas without a standing pool of fighting men to rely on.⁵⁵³

The Battle of Kincolith: Haimas' last stand

Haimas returned to live with his Ginaxangiik father as he was afraid to live among the Gitsiis after killing his uncle.⁵⁵⁴ Without his Wudzen'aleq Haimas was at a significant disadvantage. While his victory allowed him to return to the Nine Tribes, the years in hiding had made it difficult for him to amass wealth and/or prestige. Haimas was also now getting old and needed to secure his legacy. Ts'ibassa of the Gitxaala knew this and seized the opportunity to settle a long-held dispute between the two.⁵⁵⁵

Ts'ibassa had a right to attack Haimas after Haimas plundered a Gitxaala village in the waning days of the Wudzen'aleq as outlaws, but instead of igniting a full-scale

⁵⁵¹ **Invalid source specified.** Beynon confirms this account here **Invalid source specified.** Also see **Invalid source specified.** for similar version.

⁵⁵² For a more detailed examination of narrative in history and consistency see 106-129), but also see Martindale, “Methodological Issues” for more specific analysis of Adawx and oral narratives.

⁵⁵³ **Invalid source specified.**

⁵⁵⁴ **Invalid source specified.**

⁵⁵⁵ The rivalry between Ts'ibassa and the Ginaxangiik goes very far back, for example see **Invalid source specified.**

war that would probably have seen the Nine Tribes rally under Haimas' banner, Ts'ibassa chose to attack Haimas in a battle of property.

Ts'ibassa claimed the Ligyhidihl as his crest. Ts'ibassa planned and announced a great feast. He deliberately featured the Ligyhidihl knowing Haimas' privilege to use it derived from his leadership in the Battle of Finlayson Island.

He was now causing a controversy that would call up a combat of wealth, in order to overcome and maintain its ownership. Tseebesae would dispute the right of Hai'mas to use it. In so doing he would destroy an immense amount of wealth and Hai'mas, in order to maintain his claim to its use, would have to destroy more than Tseebesae in equal wealth, that is, if the combat was in copper shields, both sides would use copper shields. Here Tseebesae would challenge with copper shields.⁵⁵⁶

In the battle of wealth that followed Haimas ran out of coppers to destroy before Ts'ibassa. "So Hai'mas now found himself in an embarrassing position, unless he could muster up a copper shield of an immense value, one that Tseebesae could not equalize."⁵⁵⁷

Haimas went to his father for help. His father possessed the most valuable shield in all the Nine Tribes. It had been purchased with the assistance of the entire Ginaxangiik Tribe, its name was Huhoolk.⁵⁵⁸ Haimas' father denied his request saying:

"I cannot give you Hukoolk, as that belongs to the whole Ginarhangik tribe. It is not my own. Only the tribe has the right to give it away. You can have as many of my own copper shields and use these in combat, but to the one you ask for I cannot give." Hai'mas was now in great anger and said, "will you be happy when you hear your brother has overcome your son? Will you be happy when you hear the people ridicule me, your son. I must have the Hukoolk and thus vanquish Tseebesre." "No, I cannot give it to you. It does not belong to me. Take

⁵⁵⁶ **Invalid source specified.**

⁵⁵⁷ (Beynon, *The Raven Clan Outlaws on the North Pacific Coast*, n.d., pp. Robert Ridley, Gispahlaw'ts, House Nees'awaelp of the Eagle Clan and Arthur 'Neeshaw't Raven Clan chief of Gitzarhlaeth, recorded by William Beynon, "Haimas, the Kanhada Warrior and Outlaw.")

⁵⁵⁸ There a number of Adawx associated with the Huhoolk, see **Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.**

any of my other possession, but not that, for Tseebesae knows the copper shield and it will only further cause you embarrassment when he taunts you about using the property of another tribe to overcome him. No, do not touch it,” Weesaiks pleaded. But Hai’mas was beyond himself. As his father was blind, he went to where this valuable copper shield was kept and took it to his house. Then he went down to the water's edge, carrying down the great valuable copper shield and, as soon as the Gitrhahla chief saw the shield, he recognized it as the property of Weesaiks and the Ginarhangik tribe. So he called, “Have you no pride, are you that poor that you needs (sic) must use the property of your father and his tribe to try and overcome me? Use your own wealth as I have done. Your uncles must be very poor that they cannot help you.” And even when Hai’mas had thrown this shield into the water, Tseebesae turned his canoe about and with his Gitrhahla a(sic) tribe returned to his village. Hai'mas had been unable to overcome him with his own wealth and had used that of another chief and tribe to which he had no right to. He was overcome and he was embarrassed. Now he began to lose his standing.⁵⁵⁹

Haimas never took his place at the head of the Gitsiis, between the Slaughter Feast and the murder of his uncle the Gitsiis felt his brother was a better choice. His loss to Ts’ibassa in their battle of wealth further eroded his power. In a desperation Haimas plotted to murder his brother and seize the Gitsiis leadership.⁵⁶⁰ In an uncharacteristically crude move Haimas bludgeoned his brother to death with a stone hammer after having invited him to his house at Kincolith. He tried to blame a slave for the death, but when a successor was chosen it was not Haimas.⁵⁶¹

Haimas had placed the body of his brother on a copper shield as compensation, but when his brother’s people removed the body they did not take the copper signifying they did not accept Haimas’ compensation. The Gitsiis sent messengers out to inform the rest of the Nine tribes what had happened. One of these messengers had gone to Neeslaranows camp; Neeslaranows was married to the

⁵⁵⁹ (Beynon, *The Raven Clan Outlaws on the North Pacific Coast*, n.d., pp. Robert Ridley, Gispahlaw'ts, House Nees'awaelp of the Eagle Clan and Arthur 'Neeshaw't Raven Clan chief of Gitzarhlaelth, recorded by William Beynon, "Haimas, the Kanhada Warrior and Outlaw.")

⁵⁶⁰ **Invalid source specified.**

⁵⁶¹ **Invalid source specified.**

dead man's sister and happened to be hosting Ts'ibassa for a feast. Ts'ibassa seeing his opportunity to finish Haimas off for good insisted he be allowed to attack Haimas first. Neeslaranows agreed and promised to bring the rest of the Nine Tribes to his aid if he could not destroy Haimas.

Haimas was aware his life was in jeopardy and retreated to his palisaded house on the Nass. When the Gitxaala attacked they were not able to force a decisive victory. The Gispaxlo'ots came to their aid, but even with their combined forces Haimas repelled the attack. The Gispaxlo'ots and Gitxaala temporarily halted their attack as nighttime approached. At the same time many of Haimas' people could see their House crumbling around them and fled when the hostilities ceased for the night. Among those people who left was one of Haimas' wives, Liky. Liky was the sister of one of the men competing to take control of the Gitsiis, Weelarhae.

Haimas felt especially betrayed by Liky's departure. "Hai'mas had two wives of whom he thought much of. One was Liky of the house of Weelarhae, and Kundahlrairh, a Larhkibu of the house of Gusraen."⁵⁶² Haimas went after Liky at her brother's house. When Haimas arrived at the house everyone had left except one woman making cedar mats, Haimas asked where his wife was;

He called to her, saying, "where is Liky?" (Bis). She replied, "I don't know where she is." He was standing in the doorway, and he heard a voice above. Looking up, he recognized one of his tribesman in the doorway. This man above speared him in the forehead. Hai'mas fell back.⁵⁶³

This was the end of Haimas. Former members of the Wudzen'aleq maintained a certain level of prestige, but they no longer formed their own Tribe and when Haimas died his House did not live on.

Legex

Legex was one of, if not, the most famous dynasty in the history of the Nine Tribes. Part of the fame stems from the fact the name Legex perpetuated into the contact period and at least two, perhaps three, generations of the name had significant

⁵⁶² Invalid source specified.

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contact with the HBC and early settlers. This contact has left many historical sources to work with and has been explored by a few scholars.

Susan Marsden and Robert Galois in their article “The Tsimshian, The Hudson’s Bay Company, and the Geopolitics of the Northwest Coast Fur Trade, 1787-1840” explored how Legex, largely through non-violent political maneuvers and strategic marriages, manipulated the politics of the fur trade to become one of the Nine Tribes’ most powerful chiefs.⁵⁶⁴

Their research on Legex was quoted extensively by Cole Harris in his “Social Power and Cultural Change in Pre-Colonial British Columbia,” where he investigated the state of “understandings of the major vectors of power” during the early contact period. Harris was interested in the validity of the “cultural enrichment” thesis largely accredited to Robin Fisher’s “Contact and Conflict”⁵⁶⁵ and while he urged caution for scholars interested in the theory he did not argue with the proposition that Legex was one of the most powerful chiefs in Nine Tribes history, perhaps in the entirety of the Northwest Coast.⁵⁶⁶

Michael Robinson considered Legex a prime example of a “superchief.” For Robinson a “superchief” was an Indigenous person who did not “acculturate.” They manipulated the processes of early colonisation to their advantage and used this advantage to perpetuate their traditional cultures.⁵⁶⁷

Andrew Martindale used Legex as evidence for a “Paramount Chiefdom” within the Nine Tribes.⁵⁶⁸ In 2003 Martindale argued that it was the contact process which initiated the consolidation of political power, but later he changed his position

⁵⁶⁴ Marsden and Galois, “The Tsimshian,” also see James Dean, “These Rascally Spackaloids” The Rise of Gispaxlots Hegemony at Fort Simpson, 1832-40,” *BC Studies* (Spring 1994), and Robinson, *Sea Otter Chiefs*.

⁵⁶⁵ Robin Fischer, *Contact and Conflict* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992).

⁵⁶⁶ Cole Harris, “Social Power and Cultural Change in Pre-Colonial British Columbia,” *BC Studies* 115/116 (Autumn 1997/98).

⁵⁶⁷ Robinson, *Sea Otter Chiefs*, 8-9 and 65-91.

⁵⁶⁸ Martindale, “Hunter-Gatherer Paramount.”

arguing the consolidation of political power had been a long process predating the influence of newcomers to Nine Tribes territories.⁵⁶⁹

I will not cover the later Legex in much depth as the above works more than illustrate his political maneuvering and jockeying for position. However, there has always been a point surrounding Legex that that hasn't been answered.

Marsden and Galois wrote "in 1787, the Gispaxlo'ots were the leading tribe among the northern Tsimshian. Their leading chief was Ligeex."⁵⁷⁰ They go on to note Legex had an exclusive trade prerogative on the Upper Skeena and this was the primary source of his power, but they never explain how Legex acquired this power. They do quote extensively from some Adawx, but those Adawx only state "Legex had supremacy on the Skeena River."⁵⁷¹

The Adawx also often state that Legex rose to power as he was an exceptional leader in war, but in the majority of the stories quoted by Marsden and Galois Legex actually loses those battles. In part, this is explained because the thrust of their article is less about martial prowess and more about non-violent jockeying for power through marriage and alliance building, but it also because the suite of stories they quote are Gitxsan Adawx.

One of the reasons we do not have a robust set of Adawx surrounding the Gispaxlo'ots (or Legex's) rise to power on the Upper Skeena was because Beynon did not record them. From 1937 to 1959 of the ten non-Nine Tribes informants Beynon recorded, five were Gitxsan, three Haida, one Tlingit and one Nisga'a.⁵⁷² Beynon also worked for a time freighting supplies up and down the Upper Skeena and many of the people he came in contact with during this time were Gitxsan.

Almost all the narratives centred on the Upper Skeena that involved the Gispaxlo'ots were military defeats for Legex. While one battle with the Kispiox is an exception, it paints the Gispaxlo'ots as evil marauders while the spartan Kispiox fight

⁵⁶⁹ Martindale, "Entanglement and Tinkering."

⁵⁷⁰ Marsden and Galois, "The Tsimshian," 170.

⁵⁷¹ Marsden and Galois, "The Tsimshian," 170-171.

⁵⁷² Winter, "William Beynon and the Anthropologists," 284.

a valiant defensive battle for their home, this is of course because the narrative is told from a Kispiox perspective.⁵⁷³

The question remains how did the Legex dynasty rise to power? This is a critical question as the House lacked productive salmon streams, hunting territories or significant berry grounds to simply amass wealth.⁵⁷⁴ The following explores a possible explanation of how the early Legex dynasties gained ascendancy through military conquest. It looks at a series of battles that most likely cemented the Legex dynasty as a war leader. This final battle narrative section is the prequel to the Marsden and Galois paper.

Legex's Origins

The House of Neeswa'mak, Eagle Clan, from the Wedstae (Bella Bella) village of Gitaoyae was challenged in a feast, they lost. The House was forced to flee in shame. One part of the fleeing House found refuge among the Gispaxlo'ots, these people became known as the "Shame-People." Despite the name they were accepted as a royal family, but it is important to note that early on they did not possess nor were entitled to territory. The House rose in importance largely due to "their ability at leading war parties."⁵⁷⁵

The sister of Neeswa'mak was abducted during a war between the Gispaxlo'ots and the Kitimat. She was married to a Kitimat chief and her royal ancestry was recognized by the Kitimat.⁵⁷⁶ This same woman was captured again during a war between the Kitimat and Bella Bella. She became the wife of Hamts'eet, the Bella Bella Raven chief who had led the war against the Kitimat.⁵⁷⁷

These two had children together. Their eldest son was very successful in competitions he undertook and eventually became a target of the native Bella Bella

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⁵⁷⁵ Invalid source specified. and Invalid source specified. "At the beginning, the Gispaxlo'ots had no hunting territories nor fishing stations whatsoever on the Skeena River."

⁵⁷⁶ Invalid source specified. See his footnote on erasing shame by adopting the ridicule name.

⁵⁷⁷ Invalid source specified. Also see Invalid source specified. and Invalid source specified.

boys who grew jealous of his success. They taunted him saying “how is it, that this youth of unknown origin is so clever?”⁵⁷⁸

The young man asked his mother why the Bella Bella taunted him for having no origin and she explained how he was originally from the Gispaxlo’ots. The mother thought it would be best if her son returned to the Gispaxlo’ots to avoid further shame. The father did not want to let him go, but reluctantly agreed on the condition he be allowed to train his son in warfare and Hallaeits before he left.⁵⁷⁹ Once his training was complete the boy and his parents traveled to the Gispaxlo’ots main village.

Their return home prompted Neeswa’mak to hold a feast and the new crests the boy carried with him from his Bella Bella father were displayed to the Gispaxlo’ots.⁵⁸⁰ This feast indicated publicly that the boy was unquestionably accepted as a member of Neeswa’mak’s Royal Family.⁵⁸¹

The young Legyaerh soon became a great leader and was very clever. After his uncle Neeswa’mak died, he was his successor as chief of the Gisparhlaw’ts. He assumed the name of his uncle and said, “I will wear my own garments together with those of my uncle’s.” He soon became known by his own name and was an outstanding leader, not only of the Gisparhlaw’ts, but during any war raids in which the warriors from all the different tribes took place, he was always their leader.⁵⁸²

Michael Robinson pointed out that Legex brought with him tremendous wealth from his Bella Bella father and when it was combined with that of his uncle’s he was

⁵⁷⁸ **Invalid source specified.**

⁵⁷⁹ Hallaeits are the Secret Society ceremonies, practitioners or holders of those powers. Sometimes called “Shamans/Shamanism” or “Medicine Men” etc. See **Invalid source specified.**

⁵⁸⁰ **Invalid source specified.**

⁵⁸¹ According to the John Tate narrative this was when Legex was given his name **Invalid source specified.** For an alternate naming story whereby Legex turned a shamed name into a powerful one see **Invalid source specified.** See his footnote on erasing shame by adopting the ridicule name.

⁵⁸² **Invalid source specified.**

sure to have a prominent position.⁵⁸³ Additionally, Legex inherited the rights to the Nuhlim Secret Society, a society that charged a fee for membership. According to Robinson “for all these reasons Legaik 1 had the power base necessary to become a great Tsimshian chief.”⁵⁸⁴

When Legex arrived at the Gispaxlo’ots there were three head chiefs, Neeswa’mak, Neespelaes and Warhai (Wi’allae).⁵⁸⁵ The first Legex was no doubt a shrewd political tactician and worked quickly to secure his position once he arrived in Metlakatla. While his wealth was certainly an asset, it was his ability to capitalise on the momentum of his uncle to consolidate power within the Gispaxlo’ots Tribe that enabled Legex to take control of the Tribe.⁵⁸⁶

Both Neeswa’mak and Legex brought wealth into the tribe, but they also brought new connections with other Eagle Clan members (the Gwenhoot or Fugitive Eagles). Legex also gained a number of brothers and sisters after being adopted into the Gispaxlo’ots which allowed him to strategically marry his nieces and nephews to other important Nine Tribes families.⁵⁸⁷ It should be noted when Legex arrived in Metlakatla he could not even speak the language. Legex must have also been highly charismatic as he attracted numerous members of the Eagle Clan into the Gispaxlo’ots thereby increasing his support base.⁵⁸⁸ He also worked to increase his connections in the area, notably acquiring new crests from the upper Skeena.⁵⁸⁹

⁵⁸³ In Tsimshian culture the uncle passes his wealth to the nephew. In Heiltsuk culture the father passes his wealth to his son. For a list of the Crests Legex brought with him see **Invalid source specified..** For a list of Neeswa’mak’s Crests see **Invalid source specified..**

⁵⁸⁴ Robinson, *Sea Otter Chiefs*, 69. Robinson believes there were four generations of Legex, but the narratives indicate they were more. For example, see **Invalid source specified..** Barbeau notes “This last Legyaerh was not the one who had razed the village of Kispayaks – presumably he was about the tenth Legyaerh (in succession) back.” This quote is also noteworthy as Barbeau believed the migration of Indigenous People to North America originated in Serbia and was very recent, about 500 years ago.

⁵⁸⁵ **Invalid source specified.**

⁵⁸⁶ **Invalid source specified.** and **Invalid source specified.**

⁵⁸⁷ **Invalid source specified.** also see **Invalid source specified.** for list of who was married where and what names, crests and prerogatives Legex was entitled to as a result and where he had alliances.

⁵⁸⁸ **Invalid source specified.**

⁵⁸⁹ **Invalid source specified.**

When Neeswa'mak died Legex did not hesitate, he quickly distributed coppers, furs and other gifts to all the Clans and Tribes cementing his position as the heir of Neeswa'mak.⁵⁹⁰ The narratives never explicitly state how, but Neeswa'mak was able to secure his position over Neespelaes before he died.⁵⁹¹ The exact mechanisms, other than outlined above, of how Legex gained ascendancy over Warhai are not revealed, but shortly after the death of Neeswa'mak Legex had risen to the head chief of the Gispaxlo'ots.

There are two non-combat related episodes in the history of the Legex dynasty that are worth mentioning as we consider the dynasty's rise to power. The first was a clever, if not slightly gruesome, Secret Society ceremony Legex invented. In this ceremony Legex had replaced himself with a look-a-like slave. After convincing most people the slave was actually Legex, he had the slave burned alive. Secretly Legex had hidden himself nearby and after everyone had thought Legex was dead, he "reincarnated" himself.⁵⁹²

The second incident most likely happened sometime after the dynasty had already achieved a certain level of power and influence. Legex became aware of a plot by the other Tribes to overthrow him and have him assassinated. In response he had a giant picture of himself and twelve coppers painted on the cliffs at Ten Mile Point so that every year when the Nine Tribes, Haida, Tlingit, Gitxaala and other traders passed by the Point on their way to the Nass fisheries they would be reminded of who held supreme power.⁵⁹³ Legex held a feast with the Nine Tribes after the painting was complete and shamed all the Tribes during the unveiling of his painting.⁵⁹⁴

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⁵⁹³ Unofficially it is believed the paintings were erased by the Nisga'a when the last Legex converted to Christianity in the late 19th Century and issues of land/reserve allotment were before the colonial government.

⁵⁹⁴ **Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified. and Invalid source specified..** Legex also has a rock painting on the Skeena see **Invalid source specified.**, it was meant to depict his supremacy on the Skeena River. Also see **Invalid source specified.** for Gispaxlo'ots declaration they owned the Lower Skeena.

Adawx not related to Legex give some insights into the advantages of his strategic marriages. In an Adawx related to the Gitando Royal Families Legex assumed temporary leadership over the Gitando Tribe while a successor came of age. The successor was a relative of Legex from the Gitsiis Tribe, her name was Sem'oidem-hana'rh, "Chief-woman." As a young chief she caused a major faux-pas at a feast and gave the fabled Stone Eagle crest to Legex for safe keeping as she feared an invasion. The invasion never materialized, but a consequence of giving the Stone Eagle to Legex for safe keeping meant he was entitled to use this Crest in the future.⁵⁹⁵

The War for the Canyon

There are fewer chronological markers in the suite of Legex narratives than would be ideal, but there are several *Adawx* that relate to battles Legex fought to gain control of the Kitselas Canyon which provided access to the Upper Skeena for Legex and the Gispaxlo'ots.

The Legex dynasty was establishing its trade empire on the Upper Skeena at the same time as a powerful Gitxsan dynasty was fading into history. The "Warrior Nekt" was famous for establishing the Kitwanga Fort and fighting several wars to secure and protect the area for his people. At the height of his power he was leading attacks on the Nisga'a and at the mouth of the Nass River.⁵⁹⁶ The Kitwanga Fort has been studied in some detail by George MacDonald and even has a model based on the oral histories and archaeological investigations.⁵⁹⁷

Legex never had to lay siege to the Kitwanga Fort as it had been abandoned after the Wars of Nekt, but attacks by Legex on the villages in the Kitselas canyon prompted the establishment of a new fortress to rival the Kitwanga Fort.

⁵⁹⁵ The Stone Eagle Crest is famous in the stories of the Gwenhoot Eagles fleeing Alaska. A Larger version was used as an anchor but lost, the smaller version was what survived. For the Gitando story see **Invalid source specified**. Also see **Invalid source specified**. for a debate between Gitando and Gispaxlo'ots as to which tribe was entitled to promote the next Legex long after the last one had died, the last Legex had also converted to Christianity after he loss substantial prestige when he failed to kill William Duncan. See **Invalid source specified**. and **Invalid source specified**.

⁵⁹⁶ **Invalid source specified.**; **Invalid source specified.**; **Invalid source specified.** and **Invalid source specified**.

⁵⁹⁷ **Invalid source specified**. and (MacDonald, *Kitwanga Fort Report*).

Kangyet (Timbers for killing people)

During a major battle with the Kitimat at Kitwanga, Nekt provoked the Kitimat into frontal assaults on the fort. When the Kitimat fighters attacked he ordered the release of the logs that were tied to the palisades of the fort. These logs crushed the waves of attackers seeking to attack the walls. After the battle House Hlaingwerh adopted the “Man-crushing-Log” as a crest.⁵⁹⁸ The crest was memorialized on the “Man-crushing-Log Pole” raised by Chief Hlengwah (Jim Laganitz) of the Raven-Frog Clan in honour of Xstangemgipik.⁵⁹⁹

The Man-crushing-log was adopted by the Gits’ilaasu at the Kitselas canyon as “Kangyet” (Timbers for killing people).⁶⁰⁰

Gits’ilaasu War

Battle of Gitlaxdzawk

Tensions between the Gispaxlo’ots and the Gits’ilaasu were heightened because “Legyaerh had trespassed on one of the hunting territories of the Gitaslasu.”⁶⁰¹ Guhraerh, a prince in House Legex, added insult to injury by trespassing again Gits’ilaasu berry grounds and harvested several canoe loads of berries without permission. Some Gits’ilaasu hunters discovered Guhraerh and exchanged harsh words with the berry picking party. The Gispaxlo’ots were outnumbered and tried to continue sailing down river back to their village when the Gits’ilaasu hunters shot Guhraerh with an arrow and killed him.⁶⁰²

It is possible that the Gispaxlo’ots were deliberately trying to provoke a confrontation with the Gits’ilaasu to raid their salmon stores and control the

⁵⁹⁸ **Invalid source specified.**

⁵⁹⁹ The pole was carved by Yaxyaq of Raven-Frog Clan of Kitwancool. It was cut down in 1890 to save it from being undercut by the river. The Pole underwent conservation, but never re-raised and eventually cut into several pieces. See (Simon Fraser University, Monumental Art.).

⁶⁰⁰ **Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.**

⁶⁰¹ **Invalid source specified.**

⁶⁰² **Invalid source specified.**

Gitlaxdzawk fortress as a geopolitical choke point into the interior, but the narratives are not explicit enough to draw firm conclusions.⁶⁰³

Legex was infuriated when he discovered what had happened and immediately set out to attack the Gits'ilaasu. The Gits'ilaasu fortress in the Kitselas canyon was well protected and when Legex began to scale the cliffs of the fortress the Gits'ilaasu rained boulders and rocks down on the attacking Gispaxlo'ots.⁶⁰⁴

Legex realised the futility of continued attacks and regrouped. He called on his Gitando allies for help. When they returned with their Gitando allies the Gispaxlo'ots also brought several women from their village with empty baskets as a taunt to the Gits'ilaasu to show that they were so confident in their victory they had brought their women to pack out the spoils of the Gits'ilaasu fortress.

However, even with the combined forces of the Gispaxlo'ots and the Gitando Legex was not able to breach the walls of the Gitlaxdzawk. The Gits'ilaasu baited the larger force onto the cliffs and when the cliffs were covered with Gispaxlo'ots and Gitando they released their "Kangyet" logs causing massive casualties.⁶⁰⁵

Legex knew they could not starve the Gits'ilaasu out of their fortress, but he noticed their supply of logs was getting smaller and smaller. Legex organised a series of feint attacks against the cliffs to provoke the Gits'ilaasu into prematurely releasing logs with minimal loss of Gispaxlo'ots fighters. Eventually the supply of logs dwindled and the Gits'ilaasu called for peace before they were slaughtered by the superior forces of the Gispaxlo'ots and Gitando.

The Gits'ilaasu were allowed to maintain control of their territories by compensating Legex for the death of Guhraerh and paying reparations to the Gispaxlo'ots. The Gispaxlo'ots acquired several powerful and coveted regalia and crests as part of the reparation payments.⁶⁰⁶

⁶⁰³ Invalid source specified.

⁶⁰⁴ Invalid source specified.

⁶⁰⁵ Invalid source specified.

⁶⁰⁶ Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified. and Invalid source specified..

Analysis

While the narratives give the impression the attack on Gitlaxdzawk was an emotionally charged affair, a closer reading shows the whole event might have been far more calculated than it appeared. Strategically Legex coveted access to the interior and openly encouraged disrespect of the Gits'ilaasu borders. He also knew he possessed numerical superiority, but could not afford a conflict with a broader Gitxsan alliance. The killing of his brother provided the *casus belli* he needed.

The battle itself shows remarkable adaptation to changing circumstances, but unsung in the narrative is the command Legex must have had over his forces to continue sending waves of assaults against raining boulders and rocks and then the Kangyet. Troop discipline would have had to have been high for Legex to effectively drain the supply of Kangyet logs in the feint attacks.

Lastly, contrary to the “predatory raid” thesis the battle is formalized, took place during the day and even during the second assault was preceded by taunts from the Gispaxlo'ots. The battle was a siege, not a sneak attack.

The Bella Bella War

A war with the Bella Bella stretched over one or two generations of the Legex line. The hostilities may stretch back even further as the narratives typically start with one side or the other retaliating for some indignity they received from the other, but it is not possible to say with certainty when the battles began. We do know from the Legex origin stories that attacking work groups was common for the Kitimat and may have been equally common for the Bella Bella and Gispaxlo'ots.

Battle of the Wudstae Fortress

Hostilities between the Gispaxlo'ots and Bella Bella came to a boiling point shortly after the Bella Bella burned three Gispaxlo'ots villages on Dundas Island.⁶⁰⁷ On their return south they attacked several Gispaxlo'ots travelling down the Skeena River and took Legex's sister captive.⁶⁰⁸

⁶⁰⁷ Invalid source specified.

⁶⁰⁸ Invalid source specified.

To redeem his sister Legex organised an alliance made up of members of all the Nine Tribes. The alliance prepared through the winter for their attack, making canoes and gathering enough food for the campaign.

They set out to attack in the early spring. When they arrived near the villages of the Gidestsu (Kitasoo) “Legyaerh stopped there for a rest, and he informed the Gitestsu, “We are going to attack Waekyas. You had better tell him.””⁶⁰⁹ Legex’s forces numbered between 1500 and 3000 men.⁶¹⁰ Waekyas immediately moved his people to the “tawdsep (fort)” where the “Bella Bella had build (sic) houses and a stone wall around [on a tawdsep – a rock island fortress].”⁶¹¹

Legex had the fortress scouted before planning his attack. The scouts reported that the fort was well protected and the Bella Bella had stockpiled considerable food and water. In addition, they had gathered boulders and made piles of rolling logs around the fort.⁶¹²

Legex hid half his forces and took the other half to the fort. Once at the fort Legex tried to negotiate the return of his sister by offering furs, coppers and other goods. Waekyas took the goods, but failed to deliver Legex’s sister. Waekyas kept asking for more ransom until finally he told Legex that “I will not return your sister, now that I have all of your wealth.”⁶¹³

Legex knew he could not siege the fort directly as the rolling logs would destroy his forces. So,

he and his men picked out twenty large logs and hollowed out one side somewhat like a canoe just large enough for a man to crawl up in. Then they prepared fire torches by pulverizing very finely dry spruce. Getting live coals and putting them in the centre, they wrapped these with a fiber

⁶⁰⁹ Invalid source specified.

⁶¹⁰ The Clah narrative states there were 200 canoes and the Abbott narrative 80 with 15 men each. Based on other narratives the Clah estimation seems exaggerated.

⁶¹¹ Invalid source specified. and Invalid source specified.

⁶¹² Invalid source specified.

⁶¹³ Invalid source specified.

of ground wood which was like wool, making a ball with the coal in the centre.⁶¹⁴

Legex had several of his warriors approach the fort under the logs, they placed the logs against the cliffs so that when the Bella Bella released their rolling log defence the attackers were protected. Once the logs had been released Legex then sent a wave of men wearing hardened mountain goat armor against the Bella Bella using the hollowed logs as a ramp. They managed to rescue Legex's sister during their attack then fled the fortress.

As soon as Legex knew his sister was safe he ordered the men under the hollowed logs to move one end of the logs as close to the Bella Bella houses as they could. Once in place they used the "fire torches" they had prepared and set fire to the logs which spread quickly to the Bella Bella houses.

With the return of his sister and the Bella Bella fortress burning Legex had won the battle. Once the alliance had returned to Metlakatla Legex had a number of the Bella Bella captives executed in a feast to show his sister was no longer a captive.⁶¹⁵ She assumed a new name at this feast "Ramdamarhl (Only-we-Carry).⁶¹⁶

Analysis

This is a remarkable example of a siege. There are some details missing from the narrative that we are left to assume, for example, it seems reasonable that during the siege the Bella Bella defenders were firing a constant rain of arrows and rocks down on the Gispaxlo'ots as we saw in the earlier battles between the Gitxaala and Tlingit at Gitxaala fortifications and there was probably more hand to hand fighting than is revealed in the narrative, though it is interesting to note that the breakthrough comes from the armored men.

Legex's decision to hide half his forces while negotiating was an interesting tactic. It is not clear if this was because the hidden forces were already constructing

⁶¹⁴ Invalid source specified.

⁶¹⁵ Invalid source specified.

⁶¹⁶ Invalid source specified.

the 'hollowed-log' siege engines, or if he simply wanted to keep his true strength hidden as he anticipated treachery on the part of Waekyas.

The use of armored fighting men to attack the fortress could be a broader signal to shifting patterns of increased fortification building often alluded to in the secondary and archaeological literature.⁶¹⁷ However, there are no clear temporal markers in this story for us to place it within a broader chronology. I suspect it is early in the Legex dynasty, if not the first Legex, as he does not press his advantage, he simply freed his sister and left. As we will see in other narratives, Legex becomes bolder and more punitive towards his enemies.

Perhaps most interesting was this lack of pressing the advantage. Legex clearly set out to free his sister and nothing more. He even tried to bargain for her, which was certainly the custom at the time, and only resorts to violence when he is swindled. He does not stay to loot the fortress or take slaves.

Lastly, this story is virtually the anti-thesis of the 'predatory raiding' theory. They attack during the day, it is a frontal assault, it is preceded by formalities (the negotiations), it is a siege-not a sneak attack. The fighting men have distinct roles and are organised, they prepare well in advance for the battle and the objectives have almost nothing to do with raiding for booty or slaves.

The Battle of Klemtu

While it is not explicit, the Bella Bella appear to have led a retaliatory attack on the Gispaxlo'ots following the razing of their fortress. This may have been years after the initial attack, but it was certainly a provoked attack.

The Bella Bella attacked the Gispaxlo'ots village on the Skeena overland from Kitimat. On their way to the Gispaxlo'ots village they came across a work party of women picking berries, they raped and took the women captive.⁶¹⁸ As is common in many narratives, Legex and most of the men were away during the attack and the

⁶¹⁷ Moss and Erlandson, "Forts, Refuge Rocks."; Maschner, "The Evolution of Northwest Coast Warfare."; Maschner and Reedy-Maschner, *Raid, Retreat, Defend*.

⁶¹⁸ Beynon, *The Gwenhoot of Alaska* (1959), 1875-1954, pp. John Tate (Saelaeben) Eagle Clan Gispaxlaw'ts, recorded by William Beynon 1950, "Gispaxlaw'ts Invasions of the Wutstae."

Bella Bella made short work of the women, children and old people left in the village.⁶¹⁹

When Legex and the rest of the Tribe returned to the village they immediately called for preparations for an attack. At this time the village of Klemtu was under at least partial control of the Bella Bella chief named "Wakaes."⁶²⁰ They followed the now familiar pattern of sending spies ahead to contact the Gispaxlo'ots captives and warn them of the impending attack and to be ready to flee. The scouts learned the location of each of the Bella Bella/Klemtu houses and where the enemy fighting men were sleeping. They attacked and burned Klemtu to the ground freeing most of the Gispaxlo'ots captives.

On their return trip to the Skeena village the war party came across a Bella Bella fishing station. A Bella Bella Prince and his wife remained at the fishing station while they waited for their daughter to finish her menstruation.⁶²¹ The daughter was hidden away at the back of the house.

The Gispaxlo'ots took the Prince and his wife captive. A dispute over who owned the Prince ensued and two Gispaxlo'ots warriors "began pulling until they pulled so hard that they dislocated the arms of the Wudstae man, who was a prince."⁶²² The Gispaxlo'ots then "stretched the man by hanging his hands to a tree branch, his feet being pulled to the ground."⁶²³ The "young woman was raped by them, and the young man was tortured and then killed, as was the young woman too."⁶²⁴ The woman's head was placed on a stake driven into the ground.⁶²⁵ Their bodies were left on the beach, but the daughter was never found.

⁶¹⁹ Beynon, *The Gwenhoot of Alaska* (1959), 1875-1954, pp. Sam Bennett (Neespints) Killerwhale Clan Gilledsau, recorded by William Beynon, "The Last Invasion of the Wutstae Upon the Tsimsyan."

⁶²⁰ **Invalid source specified.**

⁶²¹ It was taboo for women during their menstruation to come in contact with hunting equipment.

⁶²² **Invalid source specified.** and **Invalid source specified.**

⁶²³ **Invalid source specified.**

⁶²⁴ **Invalid source specified.**

⁶²⁵ **Invalid source specified.**

When the Bella Bella found the bodies and the chief learned of what had transpired he formed an alliance of Bella Bella, Bella Coola, Kitimat, Kitlope, Klemtu, Nimkish, “Wikyeno” (River’s Inlet), and Nawitsee.⁶²⁶ The alliance made preparations for war.

It took over a year to gather the necessary food, weapons and canoes for the alliance. The Bella Bella alliance travelled up the Skeena past all the Nine Tribes village’s, “it was just breaking day when they came to the Gispahlaw’s village.”⁶²⁷

Again, Legex and most of the men were away, this time at Kitselas, when the Bella Bella arrived. Legex’s mother and his niece were among those that remained in the village. The Bella Bella instantly recognized Legex’s mother. She was stripped, tied to a pole and repeatedly raped “then they pulled out the arms from her body and her legs. Even after she was dead, they still mutilated her body and put the remains on a stake and left after burning the houses.”⁶²⁸ Legex’s niece was taken as a captive by the Bella Bella.⁶²⁹ On their way back to Bella Bella the alliance was attacked by the Haida and Legex’s niece, among other Gispaxlo’ots and Bella Bella, were taken by the Haida.

When Legex returned to the Gispaxlo’ots village he was enraged at what had taken place, but he was in no position to launch a retaliatory attack against such a large alliance. He would need time to prepare and gather a coalition. In the meantime, Ts’ibassa of the Gitxaala, reported to be the paternal father of this Legex, was working in the background to see if he could bring an end to the bitter hostilities between the Gispaxlo’ots and the Bella Bella. Ts’ibassa’s position on the archipelago meant he had vested trade interests with the Bella Bella, but also needed the approval of the Gispaxlo’ots to trade on the Upper Skeena.⁶³⁰

One of Ts’ibassa’s most powerful headmen was secretly sent to the Bella Bella. He told the Bella Bella that Legex would form an alliance made up of the Nine Tribes,

⁶²⁶ Invalid source specified., Invalid source specified. and Invalid source specified. and Invalid source specified..

⁶²⁷ Invalid source specified..

⁶²⁸ Invalid source specified.. Also see Invalid source specified..

⁶²⁹ Invalid source specified., Invalid source specified. and Invalid source specified..

⁶³⁰ Invalid source specified.

Gitksan and even Tlingit that would crush the Bella Bella and they needed to sue for peace if they hoped to survive.

At the same time Ts'ibassa visited Legex and urged him to end the hostilities. Gispaxlo'ots elders also urged Legex to make peace. It may have also helped that Legex's mother was despised by most of her Tribe, she was seen as a tyrant and a bully and many felt she had got what she deserved.⁶³¹ Legex eventually agreed with Ts'ibassa and his elderly advisors to make peace with the Bella Bella.

When Legex arrived at Bella Bella he found the village in mourning. They told Legex of the Haida attack and that not only was Legex's niece taken, but the Bella Bella chief had been made a captive as well. Legex made a tentative peace with the Bella Bella and vowed to attack the Haida.⁶³²

The Haida Wars

The first war with the Haida was between the Gispaxlo'ots and the "Gihlga'e'yu" (Skidegate). Few details are revealed in the narratives. In some versions Legex sets out to rescue just his niece in others his nephew and sister are captured by the Haida.⁶³³

With the aid of a Gitxaala guide the Gispaxlo'ots navigate to Skidegate and scout the village before they attack. They collect intelligence on where the captives are being held and where the Haida warriors sleep by contacting their people at the watering hole. The Gispaxlo'ots make a plan with their captive people to attack during the night and when the signal is given the captives were to make a run for the Gispaxlo'ots canoes.

The Gispaxlo'ots kill several guards to maintain the element of surprise and were able to rescue many of the captives, including several of the Bella Bella people.

⁶³¹ Invalid source specified.

⁶³² Invalid source specified..

⁶³³ Just sister see Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified. and Invalid source specified.; sister and nephew see Invalid source specified.

On their return to the mainland the Gispaxlo'ots return the Bella Bella captives to their home and negotiate a lasting peace with the Bella Bella.

Legex's spokesman commented "There were times when we thought that the only thing that could bring to either you or us complete happiness, was to destroy each other," but "my master has been happy today to see a dark cloud lifted from above your village."⁶³⁴

Analysis

There is little tactical military analysis to be made here that has not already been done earlier; use of intelligence led coordinated surprise attack and goals limited to emancipation, not raiding for slaves. But, the peace process is noteworthy.

In general, the peace process has been ignored in this thesis. This was due to economy of space and it is not the primary avenue of investigation in this study, but this particular case warrants mention. The words of Legex's spokesman are some of the more powerful expressions of deploring the violence of war. It may have been because The Bella Bella War was particularly nasty, it may be because the narrative was recorded only a few years after the conclusion of the Second World War, but it was also likely a deliberate design of the story.

Oral history and even the Adawx are not unproblematic recollections of the past. As I have discussed earlier the Adawx are something apart from oral history, nevertheless, sometimes the processes are similar.

Daniel Schacter argued that memory is how we "convert the fragmentary remains of experience into autobiographical narratives that endure over time and constitute the stories of our lives."⁶³⁵ In this case the Adawx act more as the collective memory of the Nine Tribes as they are publicly produced and affirmed rather than one person's story. This story, nevertheless, indicates the Nine Tribes were very familiar with the human costs of war.

⁶³⁴ Invalid source specified.

⁶³⁵ Originally quoted in Abrams, *Oral History*, 79.

While not direct evidence against the ‘predatory warfare’ thesis, people engaged in the “production of wealth” through slaving are not likely to have an emotional crisis over the destruction of their enemy.

Battle of Maxlo Layamp'te'lt (Passage of Rotted Rib Bones)

A Haida attempt at a surprise attack on the Gispaxlo'ots while on their way from the Nass fisheries one year went terribly wrong for the Haida. Their initial night attack was a success, but among those who escaped the first melee was Legex.⁶³⁶

Legex escaped back to the Nass River and quickly formed a group of Nine Tribes and Nisga'a fighting men to attack the marauding Haida. The counter attack resulted in a complete rout of the Haida.

Several of the Haida escaped back to their island and with their captives. Legex pursued the Haida, discovered their village and attacked. He was able to free most of the captives. On the return trip to Metlakatla Legex stopped in Gitxaala territories and emancipated some Gitxaala who had been prisoners of the Haida. Some years later the Haida planned a retaliation to overcome the shame of defeat from the previous battle.⁶³⁷

The Haida were keen to capture or kill Legex and planned to ambush him again on his way to the eulachon grounds. The Haida camped near Maskelyne Island in secret, careful to pull their canoes from the water and hide them in the brush. Their strategy was to keep an eye out for Legex as he passed on his way to the eulachon grounds and ambush him.

While two of the Haida canoes were out scouting some Giluts'aaw halibut fishermen from Bernie Island noticed the Haida. The Giluts'aaw chief decided they would gather some more information on how many Haida there were and where they were camped.

So a scouting party left the camping group at Bernie Island and went by Salt Lake, and then portaged a canoe over a short trail and then down Wark's Canal. When they came to Canoe Pass, they went into the

⁶³⁶ Invalid source specified.

⁶³⁷ Invalid source specified.

woods. Going through carefully, they saw where the Haida were encamped and stayed there and counted the canoes. Then they were able to contact one Tsimsyan who was a former captive and had married into the Haida band. He had acted as guide for the Haida raiders. Then he told the Tsimsyan scouts, “The Haida are after Legyaerh and the Gisparhlaw’ts in retaliation for the attack they made on the Haida.””⁶³⁸

The Giluts’aaw chief dispatched a messenger to Metlakatla to warn Legex of the ambush.

Legex gathered a fighting force and camped at Bernie Island. He sent a large portion of his forces over the Salt Lake trail to establish an ambush on either side of the narrow Canoe Pass. The plan was for this force to lay in wait while the remaining Gispaxlo’ots fighters split into two forces. The first force would draw the hidden Haida from Nlawhl-Haida into the pass. As the Haida were drawn out and into the Pass the second held back force would follow the Haida. Once the Haida were trapped inside Canoe Pass the canoes feigning retreat would turn and fight while those hidden on shore would fire volleys of arrows and the final force would cut off the Haida rear.

There were so many killed that, when the carcasses of the dead were thrown into the narrow passage, these rotted, and only the white rib bones of the victims could be seen. So now they called this passage of water Marhle-loremtael, Passage-of-rotted-rib-bones.⁶³⁹

The Haida were decisively defeated, but the Haida war leader, Goedu’ni’k escaped the slaughter. Eventually he was tracked down near one of Haimas’ former fortifications and killed. Since then the place was renamed “Wel-lu-dulrhges-Goedu’ni’k” (Where-Goedu’ni’k-was-trapped) to commemorate his honourable death as a soldier.⁶⁴⁰ Another Haida warrior escaped, Weesaerh’uns, and found his way back to Masset.

⁶³⁸ Invalid source specified.

⁶³⁹ Invalid source specified.

⁶⁴⁰ Invalid source specified.

The Battle of Masset

The Legex that had won the victory at Maxlo Layamp'te'lt died sometime after the battle. A new, young Legex, took control of the Gispaxlo'ots a few years later. While away hunting mountain goats with only a handful of other Gispaxlo'ots he was attacked by a group of Haida led by Weesaerh'uns. The young Legex refused to flee in the face of the Haida fighters and was captured. The Gispaxlo'ots who escaped quickly made their way to Metlakatla to inform the others of what had happened.⁶⁴¹

Kao'wleae, Legex's regent, immediately called for preparations to free Legex. He sent canoe makers to Knemas "where huge cedars are abundant," he sent traders up the Skeena to get "Hagwilget arrows of Saskatoon-berry trees," weapons were made, food was stored and the whole Tribe prepared for an invasion of Masset.⁶⁴²

It took a year for the preparations to be completed. Once the Gispaxlo'ots had sufficient supplies Kao'wleae called a Kalkaeihlems Feast (declaration of war). At the feast many fighting men from other Tribes volunteered to join the attack.⁶⁴³

The Gispaxlo'ots tried to engage the services of both the Gitwilgyoots or Ginaxangiik to act as guides. Both Tribes had significant ties through marriage and trade to the Masset Haida. Both Tribes declined, the Gitwilgyoots even went so far as to hurl a taunt at the fighting force "Just bring me the head of Weesaerh'uns and I will be happy."⁶⁴⁴ The fighting force was able to secure a guide from the Gitwilgyoots, though they had to coerce him while at sea.⁶⁴⁵ Once the fighters had rounded Wehu or Miyaenhoo (big sandbar or Rose Spit) they made camp and planned their attack.

Scouts were sent ahead for reconnaissance. The scouting party stumbled upon a Haida hunting party and a skirmish ensued. The Gispaxlo'ots were able to kill all the Haida before they could escape, but there were too many bodies to hide quickly and

⁶⁴¹ **Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified. and Invalid source specified..** Also see **Invalid source specified. and Invalid source specified.**

⁶⁴² **Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.** in another version Rhoop is named as the war leader, but the details for preparations are basically the same. See **Invalid source specified..** In another version Niswamak is named as the leader, see **Invalid source specified.**

⁶⁴³ **Invalid source specified.**

⁶⁴⁴ **Invalid source specified..** Also see **Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified. and Invalid source specified.** for similar taunts.

⁶⁴⁵ **Invalid source specified. and Invalid source specified..**

quietly. The hunting party also consisted of several Gispaxlo'ots captives who had been brought to pack supplies. The scouting party made the decision to send the captives back and tell the Haida there was a large party of foreign fighters on their way to Masset and the hunting party had fallen to their spies.

The captives who relayed the message played up the ferocity of the fictitious enemy. The Haida demanded to see the bodies. When they examined the bodies they could not identify the Hagwilget saskatoon berry arrows. When they asked Legex about the arrows he told them they belonged to a fierce warlike tribe from the interior that “are a very dangerous people and have no mercy on whom they attack.”⁶⁴⁶ The Haida were in a state of alarm and prepared for an attack.

Having lost the element of surprise, but also the ability to contact their own people at the watering hole Kao'wleae decided they “will use the Tsimshyan way of attack.”⁶⁴⁷ They would split their forces, a large force would approach the Haida from the water in a frontal assault. This force had to be large enough to convince the Haida that not only was this the force that killed their hunters, but also to persuade as many of the Haida fighting men to attack as possible. Another small group would approach the village from the rear to set fire to the buildings and rescue their captives while a third force of canoes would lay hidden until the Haida came out and engaged the main canoe force. This third force was to cut the main body of Haida fighters off from the village giving the small force in the woods enough time to locate Legex and free as many Gispaxlo'ots captives as possible.⁶⁴⁸

The main force of canoes approached the Haida village and began singing war songs to attract their attention. They stayed far enough off shore so that the other two forces could get into position. The Haida took the bait and attacked the primary canoe group with full force. Those waiting in woods began looking for their people and setting fire to the buildings once the Haida had engaged the main canoe force. At the same time the hidden canoe force attacked the Haida rear. The Haida realised their mistake and tried to break back through encirclement and save their village. The

⁶⁴⁶ **Invalid source specified..** Also see **Invalid source specified..**

⁶⁴⁷ **Invalid source specified.**

⁶⁴⁸ **Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified. and Invalid source specified..** Also see **Invalid source specified. and Invalid source specified..**

few canoes that did break through were met on shore by the small force now augmented by the Gispaxlo'ots captives. The Haida were completely routed.

The Gispaxlo'ots took many captives including Weesaerh'uns. They loaded their canoes and took several of the Haida canoes to transport their captives and any loot they had acquired back to the mainland. Weesaerh'uns sat with Legex at the bow of one of the canoes, Weesaerh'uns was not treated as a slave, but an honoured guest even though he was technically a prisoner of war.

On their way back to Metlakatla the Gispaxlo'ots made sure to stop at the Gitwilgyoots village and return the taunt by showing Weesaerh'uns was their captive. The Gitwilgyoots shamed by this display paid in wealth to the Gispaxlo'ots to remove the shame of their taunt.

About a year later the Haida returned to the Nass River to redeem Weesaerh'uns and make peace with the Gispaxlo'ots. While the narratives conclude the peace was successful, even establishing a trade custom whereby the Haida were obligated to come to trade at the Nass Fisheries each year to maintain the peace, this peace only lasted until the establishment of Fort Simpson and hostilities between the Haida and Gispaxlo'ots boiled over again.⁶⁴⁹

The Last Wars of Legex

Legex carried out a series of wars in the proto and post contact era that I will not cover here. The wars were against the Kaigani Haida and on the Upper Skeena in retaliation for violation of his trade prerogatives.⁶⁵⁰ The later trade wars have been covered by Marsden and Galois as well as Harris and while neither had military tactics as a specific focus, the larger geopolitical realm was well covered.⁶⁵¹

⁶⁴⁹ See Dean, "These Rascally Spackaloids," and Marsden and Galois, "The Tsimshian." Also **Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.** and **Invalid source specified.** Also see **Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.** and **Invalid source specified.**

⁶⁵⁰ For Kaigani Wars see **Invalid source specified.** For the later trade wars see **Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.; Invalid source specified.**

⁶⁵¹ Harris, "Social Power, and Marsden and Galois, "The Tsimshian."

Both the later trade wars and the war with the Kaigani Haida involved the use of firearms and could provide a fruitful exploration of the effects of firearms on the Nine Tribes military culture, strategy and tactics. However, the corresponding decline in population first due to climate change and followed by foreign diseases probably had a more significant impact.

Conclusion to the Battle Narratives

About 1500 years ago the Nine Tribes began a process of consolidating their political and military power to violently eject a Tlingit invasion into their territories. The result of this consolidation was not just the eviction of the Tlingit from their territories, but an expansion of their political and economic power through military conquest.

The motivations to combat in Nine Tribes history was as varied as the clashes of modern states. Sometimes geopolitical motivations such as Aksk taking back the Prince Rupert Harbour, Haimas' expansion of Gitsiis territories or Legex's control of the Upper Skeena trade routes were important. At the same time, the death or molestation of a relative, Legex's mother for example, could be a more emotional motivator. However, as we saw with Legex's war with the Gitsilassu sometimes these 'emotional events' were cleverly crafted political events.

Whatever the cause, once the Tribes went to war they did so with strong leadership, they used strategy and complex group maneuvers to sway the battle in their favour. While ambush and stealth were components of some battles, frontal assaults and siege were also parts of others. They were not long-term duels with no purpose, these were calculated matches to the death that sought a decisive result. The Nine Tribes were not 'sketchy tacticians' with no sense for 'grand strategy'. These were refined warriors with a strong sense of discipline and duty.

Chapter 4 - Conclusion

This thesis set out to provide examples of Nine Tribes warfare that challenged the idea that pre-contact Indigenous warfare on the Pacific Northwest Coast of North America was primarily made up of night time sneak attacks to raid for booty or slaves. It also set out to challenge the characterization that these ambushes and raids were devoid of sophisticated tactics and strategy.

Tied to these goals was a suggestion that if the examples from the history of the Nine Tribes provided strong evidence against the dominant theory of unserious raiding then, combined with a growing body of evidence like the Battle at Maple Bay or the Fraser River rock fortifications for example,⁶⁵² a deeper investigation is warranted not just for the Nine Tribes, but all along the coast.

In the sixteen battles examined in this thesis neither treasure nor slaves ever informed the decisions of the Nine Tribes to go to war with their enemies. This point is even more salient when we consider that the battles examined here signify some the most decisive events in Nine Tribes history.

Furthermore, when the Nine Tribes did go to war their battlefield tactics only rarely reflected small scale night-time sneak. While stealth was an available tactic, when they were outnumbered for example, siege and day time assaults on fortified positions were also evident. Complex maneuvers featured multiple forces and mixed arms worked in cooperation with strong leadership in both stealthy attacks and siege battles. These battles and wars reflect an expression of geopolitical goals not burglary and kidnapping.

These conclusions are all the more important when understood in the climate of modern day land claims litigation because “the defense of an Aboriginal territory [i]s a defining element in the legal test of Aboriginal title” as found by the Supreme Court in the *Delgamuukw* Case.⁶⁵³ Colonial interests are bound up in an interpretation that Indigenous people carried out small scale attacks of little strategic

⁶⁵² Angelbeck, “They Recognize no Superior Chief,” Schaepe, “Rock Fortifications.”

⁶⁵³ Schaepe, “Rock Fortifications,” 673 for quote and *Delgamuukw v British Columbia*.

or tactical importance in order to justify the “concession of land to colonial” occupation.⁶⁵⁴

Northwest Coast scholars have always accepted that warfare was a part of pre-contact life. However, the majority of the work was not from an in-depth consultation of Indigenous sources. Outside of the Northwest Coast larger debates about the origins or definition of ‘True War’ within a narrow conception of conflict tied to statehood have dominated the discourse of Indigenous combat. At the same time stereotyped images of Indigenous people as noble or warlike “savages” has prevented a proper accounting of Indigenous martial prowess and geopolitics.

Nine Tribes warfare was not a long-term duel with no purpose, these were calculated matches that sought decisive results. The Nine Tribes were not ‘sketchy tacticians’ with no sense for ‘grand strategy’. They fought with a strong sense of discipline and duty were led by strong leadership. More importantly, wars were fought for decisive results with clear objectives. The Nine Tribes actively fought to eject invaders, expanded their territorial holdings and protected their lands through military power and strategy.

⁶⁵⁴ Schaepe, “Rock Fortifications,” 673.

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