

ETHNOLOGY OF THE COAST INDIAN TRIBES OF ALASKA.

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The strip of coast territory extending from Puget Sound to Cape Saint Elias and bordered on the east by the Cascade range of mountains, known in general as the Northwest Coast, is a continuous archipelago about 1,000 miles long and 150 miles broad. Through its narrow channels winds the steamer route to Sitka, and dotted along its shores are the picturesque winter villages of the Coast Indian tribes, an ethnic group, corresponding to one of Bastian's geographical areas, materially differing not only from the hunting Indians of the interior, but in themselves presenting some of the most interesting problems in anthropology. The northern Indians of this region, comprising the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian, may be called the wood-carving group; and the southern Indians, the Kwakiutl, Wakashan, and Coast Salish, the cedar-bark group, such designations being based on the peculiarities of each in the use of wood and cedar-bark, respectively, for industrial, ceremonial, and other purposes.

There have been three semi-official estimates of the Tlingit tribes of Alaska. The earliest is that in the archives of the Hudson Bay Company under Sir James Douglas (1839), made by Mr. John Work, a factor of the company. The total as given, including the Kaigani tribes of the Haidan stock, and adding on the Sitka and Hoonyah, which were omitted, is 8,975. In 1861 Lieutenant Wehrman, of the Russian Navy, in the employ of the Russian-American Company, compiled a census of Tlingit and Kaigani, giving the total population of free and slaves as 8,597. The third estimate appears in the Census Report of 1880, and places the Tlingit and Kaigani population at 7,225. That the enumeration is faulty goes without saying, when no real attempt was made to actually count them. What is needed is a census taken in the winter when the Indians are gathered in the villages, and it should include the enumeration of the different sub-totems and totems composing the great phratries of these tribes. This should be supplemented by an accurate plotting of the Indian hunting and fishing grounds which have been held in the different families and handed down for generations. A collection of the various myths and traditions, with all the local variations, and a study of the significance of the carved wooden columns in the villages is also needed to throw light upon their intricate totemic system. The semi-religious sects and the elaborate ceremonials and dances would in themselves constitute a special branch of study. In the U. S. National Museum is a magnificent collection of ethnological material from this region. What is needed is a systematic governmental supervision of the collection of anthropological data, and a comparison of results with those obtained in the southern portion of this region