

And bear in mind, that neither nobles, nor consequently potlaches, *'tsak* or traditional chants are known to the main body of the Déné nation. Yet it may not be amiss to mention here as an additional illustration of that race's remarkable power of assimilation that, some years ago, even the Tsé'kènné tried to adopt the potlach and its concomitants, but were obliged to desist, owing to the precarious life they lead, having constantly to roam over forests and mountains in search of food, as there is no salmon stream in their country. This abortive attempt was witnessed by my informant, an old and intelligent Tsé'kènné who died last year, and I quote it as corroborating by suggestion the thesis I am endeavouring to establish. It should not be forgotten also that such Nah'ane as have no intercourse with the Tlingit tribes have remained in all sociological particulars pure, unsophisticated Dénés, while those subdivisions of the tribe which inhabit the Stickeen River and immediate tributaries have assimilated the social institutions of the alien races wherewith they are in contact.

To return to the question of the noblemen and their origin: As a personal emblem of their rank, they wear among the Tsimshian tribes ear-rings of a particular shape. Identical ornaments are to this day worn by Hwotso'tin and Babine¹ notables, but their use had not penetrated into the other septa of the Carriers when the arrival of the missionaries prevented any further development of that custom. Everybody will see that if such a practice had been introduced from inland, the geographical circumscription within which it was prevailing would be to-day in an inverse direction.

This last remark holds good also with regard to the commemorative columns so well known through all the writers on the North-West coast. The Hwotso'tin, who pass part of the year in almost daily contact with the Kitikson, had already adopted them, as may be seen from the ruins of their old village; but they had remained practically unknown further inland. Yet—and this is another evidence of the extraneous origin of that social class—even amongst the Carriers proper, notables were often called "*khéyær hwo-tæhæn*" that is, "stick, or post, of the village"—which circumstance would seem to indicate that the Tsimshian practice of erecting such monuments had already been noticed by the islanders, who were, perhaps, unconsciously drifting towards its adoption, when they were dissuaded from going further in their assimilating process by the apparition of a new and more perfect civilization.

As a rule, it should be said that such customs as were borrowed by the Carriers had their complete expansion among the originators. Several details, it would seem, had not had time to reach the interior of the country, or, for some other reason, had not as yet been accepted. Thus, for instance, on the occasion of potlaches, destruction or burning of goods was not practised by the Carriers, nor even by the Hwotso'tin and the Babines; but the women of the two latter sub-tribes had already conformed to the custom of wearing labrets, which is so prevalent all along the North Pacific coast, though it never obtained among the Carriers proper. So far as I am aware, the phratries were still unknown among them; the traditional origin of the gentes received no definite explanation, and the secret societies common to most maritime tribes had hardly passed beyond their first or

155) that the words of those songs were claimed to be remnants of the Carriers' original language, which circumstance shows that relying upon the words of Indians, even when you cannot misunderstand them, will not always ensure to you exemption from errors.

¹ The Hwotso'tin subtribe of the Carriers immediately border on the Kitikson, and the Babines come next.