

Boaz* has divided the Tsimshian stock into dialects, those speaking the Nasqá and those speaking the Tsimshian proper. Of those speaking Nasqá he enumerates two tribes; of the Tsimshians proper he enumerates six tribes. He does not specify, however, whether this enumeration refers to former times or today; at any rate I am unable to reconcile his list of tribes to present conditions. It is to be noted furthermore that the tribes speaking Nasqá are not confined to the territory of the Nass river, but are also found on the Skeena river. As to the distinguishing characteristics of the two dialects I had no time for investigation. But from various sources I learned that those tribes which spoke the Tsimshian dialect proper could not understand the Nasqá dialect, whereas the Nasqá tribes could understand those who spoke Tsimshian proper. It appears yet further that there are two closely related groups of the Nasqá dialect, the Nasqá and the Kitksa'n, the former group being confined to the Nass river, the latter to the Skeena river.

Instead of taking up the tribes or villages according to a linguistic basis I have preferred rather to follow the natural divisions and to take up first the Skeena river villages, and then the Nass river villages and finally the coast and island villages. It will be seen from a reference to the map that the villages are numbered from 1 to 18 and from A to H. The numbers refer to ancient or modern villages, which were founded without reference to white influence. The letters refer to villages founded within recent years through recent white influence. The capital letters N, K and T on the map are for the purpose of distinguishing the Nasqá and Kiksán tribes from those speaking Tsimshian proper. These numbers and letters are retained in the text. In the spelling of the proper names I have followed as a rule that given by the missionaries of the various towns or by the traders; in some cases I have inserted in brackets the spelling given by Boaz (B) or that given in the report of the Indian Commission (R).

One of the origin myths of the Tsimshians reports that after the flood their ancestors drifted about for a long time in a canoe and finally landed at Dum-lak-am (what will be a good place). Here they rested and this was their earthly primeval home. From here they began to extend outward in various directions and so was built up the Tsimshian people. Dum-lak-am, so far as can be determined, was the region about the modern town of Hazelton, one hundred and sixty miles up the Skeena river, and at this point we may properly begin our review of the Tsimshian villages.

* Franz Boaz: Fifth Report on the Northwestern Tribes of the Dominion of Canada, B. A. A. S. 189. Page 8.