TSATTINE. *See* BEAVER (TSATTINE)

TSIMSHIAN

Tsimshian, pronounced CHIM-shee-un or TSIM-shee-un, sometimes spelled *Tsimpshean,* means "people of the Skeena River." The lower courses of the Skeena and Nass Rivers flowing to the Pacific Ocean formed the heart of ancestral Tsimshian territory in what is now northern British Columbia in Canada and southern Alaska in the United States. Yet most of their villages of roomy beam-and-plank houses were located along the ocean shore.

The Tsimshian language isolate is classified by some scholars as part of the Penutian phylum, which would make them the northernmost Penutian-speaking people. Most other tribes who spoke Penutian dialects lived to the south in present-day Washington, Oregon, and California. Tsimshian-speaking peoples actually consist of three independent groups: the Tsimshian proper, on the lower Skeena River and coastal areas; the Nisga (Niska), on the Nass River and coastal areas; and the Gitskan (Kitskan), on the upper Skeena River.

The Tsimshian, like all NORTHWEST COAST INDIANS, depended on fishing for food. In the rivers, they caught salmon and candlefish, which left the ocean every spring to lay their eggs. Off the mainland and the Queen Charlotte Islands opposite their territory, they caught halibut, cod, flounder, and other fish from their long, sleek dugout canoes. Like modern fishermen, they used whatever means was best suited to the place and species: hooks and lines, harpoons, nets, traps, or weirs (enclosures). The Tsimshian also dug up shellfish and seaweed offshore. And they went after the sea mammals that offered plentiful food and materials for tools, clothing, and blankets: seals, sea lions, and sea otters. But they did not hunt whales, as certain other Northwest Coast peoples did.

Tsimshian bow

The Tsimshian were also hunter-gatherers. They entered the tall, dense forests of the interior highlands, part of the Coast Range, to track deer, bear, and mountain goats. They used snares, corrals, spears, and bows and arrows to kill their prey. Seeking a varied diet, they foraged for edible wild plant foods as well—roots, berries, and greens.

Like most Northwest Coast peoples, the Tsimshian made exquisite woodwork and basketry. Also typically, they frequently traded for other tribes' products. Tsimshian spiritual culture—with powerful shamans and secret societies—resembled that of other Northwest Coast tribes too. The potlatch ritual, where people gave away possessions, played a central part in their society.

Among the most valuable gifts that could be given away in the potlatches were copper plaques. The Tsimshian hammered the ore into engraved metal sculptures. Copper tools were also highly valued.

The Tsimshian were famous for their Chilkat blankets. Their trading partners the TLINGIT, who lived to the north, also made these blankets, named after one of the Tlingit bands. The fringed blankets, and similar shirts, were woven from goat's hair and cedar bark into intricate animal and abstract designs. The mystical representations supposedly had the power to talk to people. On acquiring European materials, the Tsimshian and other Northwest Coast peoples became known for button blankets, a type of blanket typically blue with a red border, on which animal shapes representing clans are formed by attaching mother-of-pearl buttons.

The postcontact history of the Tsimshian was more peaceful than that of the Tlingit, since the Tsimshian were not as close to Russian trading posts. Their experience paralleled that of the more southern peoples: in the late 1700s, frequent sailing expeditions along the coast sponsored by the world's colonial powers, including the Spanish, English, French, and Russians; in the early 1800s, fur-trading posts including the Hudson's Bay Company's Fort Simpson in 1831 and Fort Essington in

Tsimshian soul-catcher, supposedly containing the soul of a dead shaman (The charm was placed in a sick person's mouth, from which point the soul was thought to enter the body and expel the demon that caused the sickness.)

1835; in the mid-1800s, missionaries, including the Episcopalian William Duncan in 1857; and in the late 1800s, with the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway, non-Indian settlements. The Klondike gold rush of 1896 led to an influx of prospectors.

Unlike some missionaries, who tried to eliminate native peoples' traditional culture, William Duncan proved a valuable friend to the Tsimshian. When he came to live among them, the Tsimshian way of life had been corrupted by liquor brought in by non-Indian traders. Tsimshian bands carried out acts of murder, rape, and thievery. Some even practiced ritualistic cannibalism. Duncan studied their language and mythology and preached to them about the Bible in terms of their own legends. By 1862, after five years among them, he had converted four of the nine principal chiefs to Christian nonviolence. That same year, he built a mission at Metlakatla. In 1887, he moved with his followers to New Metlakatla on Annette Island. There tribal members learned carpentry, blacksmithing, spinning, and soapmaking, as well as baseball and European-based music. Duncan also helped the people develop a fishing and canning operation, plus a sawmill. He stayed with the Tsimshian until his death in 1918, at the age of 85.

Today, those Tsimshian who moved to Annette Island are United States citizens, since the island is now part of Alaska. Fish processing and logging still provide ample incomes for the residents of the reservation. Many members of the Canadian Tsimshian (and Nisga and Gitskan) bands earn a living in the same occupations. The Tsimshian are resisting efforts by the U.S. federal government to allow logging in the Tongass National Forest on the island of Graving, used by tribal members for hunting and fishing. The tribes has already suffered the consequences of logging—that is, early economic gain, then long-term loss—and does not want to make the same mistake again.

TUNICA

A number of Tunican-speaking tribes once lived along the lower Mississippi River valley: the Griga, Koroa, Tiou, Tunica, and YAZOO. The name of the Tunica, pronounced TYOO-nuh-cuh and meaning "those who are the people," has been applied to their shared language, Tunican. The Tunica proper lived in what is now the state of Mississippi near the confluence of the Mississippi River and the Yazoo River. Some Tunica also might have located their villages on the opposite bank of the Mississippi in territory that is now eastern Arkansas and eastern Louisiana.

The Tunica had lifeways in common with other SOUTHEAST INDIANS. Their societies were hierarchical, with autocratic rulers. Villagers farmed the black, moist soil of the Mississippi floodplain, formed by the river overflowing its banks, cultivating corn, beans, squash, sunflowers, and melons. They hunted, fished, and gathered wild foods to supplement these staples. They erected thatched houses and temples of worship, carved dugout canoes, shaped pottery, and made a cloth fabric from the mulberry plant. They also mined salt to trade with other tribes.

The Spanish expedition of Hernando de Soto encountered Tunican-speaking peoples in 1541. Two centuries later, in the early 1700s, after René-Robert Cavelier de La Salle had claimed the region for France, a Jesuit missionary by the name of Father Davion lived among them. From that time on, the Tunica remained faithful allies of the French. In fact, some of their warriors helped the French suppress the Natchez Revolt of 1729. Their kinsmen, the Yazoo, supported the NATCHEZ, however. When the English gained control of Tunica territory in 1763 at the end of the French and Indian wars, the Tunica began attacking their boats on the Mississippi River.

After the American Revolution, the Tunica gradually departed from their homeland. Some resettled in Louisiana. In 1981, the federal government granted recognition to the Tunica-Biloxi Indian Tribe. (The Biloxi, a Siouan-speaking people, once had lived near Biloxi, Mississippi.) The tribe received grants to finance private housing for tribal members. It also opened the Tunica-Biloxi Museum at Marksville. Other Tunica joined the CHOCTAW, with whom they migrated to Oklahoma.