



The Tlingit Indians (Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural His)

George Thornton Emmons

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Lieutenant George Thornton Emmons, U.S.N., was station in Alaska during the 1880s and 1890s, a time when the Navy was largely responsible for law and stability in the Territory. His duties brought him into close contact with the Tlingit Indians, whose respect he won and from whom he gained an understanding of and respect for their culture. He became a friend of many Tlingit leaders, visited their homes, traveled in their canoes when on leave, purchased native artifacts, and recorded native traditions. In addition to an interest in native manufacturing and in the more spectacular aspects of native life - such as bear hunting, Chilkat blankets, feuds, and the potlatch - Emmons showed the ethnographer's devotion to recording all aspects of the culture together with the Tlingit terms, and came to understand Tlingit beliefs and values better than did any of his nonnative contemporaries. He was widely recognized for his extensive collections of Tlingit artifacts and art, and for the detailed notes that accompanied them.

At the request of Morris K. Jesup, president of the American Museum of Natural History (which had purchased Emmons's first two Tlingit collections), and on the recommendation of Franz Boas, Emmons began to organize his notes and prepare a manuscript on the Tlingit. During his retirement, he published several articles and monographs and continued to study and work on his comprehensive book. But when he died in 1945, the book was still unfinished, and he left several drafts in the museum and also in the provincial archives of British Columbia in Victoria, where he had been writing during the last decades of his life.

Frederica de Laguna, eminent ethnologist and archaeologist with long personal experience with the Tlingit, was asked by the museum to edit *The Tlingit Indians* for publication. Over the past thirty years she has worked to organize Emmons's materials, scrupulously following his plan of including extracts from the earliest historical sources. She also has made significant additions from contemporary or more recent authors, and from works unknown ton Emmons or unavailable to him, and has given the ethnography greater historical depth by presenting this information in chronological order. She has also added relevant commentary of her own based on her encyclopedic information about past and present Tlingit culture.

With the help of Jeff Leer of the Alaskan Native Language Center, an expert on Tlingit, she has provided modern phonetic transcriptions of Tlingit words whenever Emmons has given native terms in his own idiosyncratic and inconsistent versions of Tlingit.

This major contribution to the ethnography of the Northwest Coast also includes a meticulously researched biography of Lieutenant Emmons by Jean Low, an extensive bibliography, and thirty-seven tables in which de Laguna draws together and tightens Emmons's materials on topics such as census data, names of clans and houses, species of plants and their uses, native calendars, and names of gambling sticks. Illustrations include numerous photographs and sketches made and annotated by Emmons.

This volume will be invaluable to anthropologists, historians, and the general public - including the Tlingit Indians themselves, to whom it is dedicated.

Frederica de Laguna , professor emeritus of anthropology at Bryn Mawr College, is the author of the three-

volume *Under Mount Saint Elias (on the Tlingit of Yakutat)* and numerous other works on Alaska archaeology and ethnography.

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