

Haida Public Discourse and Its Social Context¹

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Abstract/Resume

Since the Europeans' first interaction with the Haida and other Northwest Coast Native people, the fondness for oratory and eloquent discourse has been noted. In this paper, the author focusses on the messages underlying public speeches in a social and political context, asking what are the rhetorical devices used, what is the structure of speeches and how the spoken word is interpreted by the audience.

Depuis la première interaction des Européens avec les Haida et les autres autochtones de la côte du nord-ouest, on a constaté la prédilection pour l'oratoire et le discours éloquent. Dans cet article, l'auteur examine les messages que portent les discours publics dans un contexte social et politique, s'interrogeant sur les moyens rhétoriques employés, sur la structure des discours et sur la manière dont le mot est interprété par l'auditoire.

Introduction²

Ever since the time Europeans first interacted with the Haida and other Native people of the Northwest Coast, they noted their fondness for oratory and their eloquent discourse, although they understood little of its context and meaning. In their linguistic categories, the Haida themselves express the importance of oratory as a quality of socially acknowledged persons: The term of address for chiefs, for example, is *kilsdlaay*, "one who can do things with words", while numerous hereditary chiefly names make reference to oratory and speaking. The symbol of office for the chief is his talking stick, *gaang kilsdluudaal* (Boelscher, 1989a). Thus, oratory is a valued skill and an invaluable prerequisite for those wanting to hold and maintain public office.

Yet, analyses of public discourse or oratory were lacking from the ethnographic literature for a long time. Only during the last few years has the ethnographic research of the Northwest Coast turned to making sense of the style and content of public discourse (Dauenhauer, 1975; Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer, 1987; 1990; Seguin, 1985; Kan, 1983; 1989; Boelscher, 1985; 1989a; 1989b). All these contributions have reiterated the intricacy of the style and message of Northwest Coast oratory, and have also shown its survival and continuity. Seguin, for example, has explored some of the context of Coast Tsimshian feast speeches, noting the importance of choosing words carefully so as not to insult the audience, while Kan has emphasized the symbolic restoration of the social and symbolic order through mortuary potlatch speeches.

Haida speeches, like any other form of discourse, must be understood as a culture-specific idiom. From a theoretical perspective, Hymes has pointed out that

The contribution of social anthropology may be to explore the structure of conversational interaction...and to insist on understanding discourse structures as situated, that is, as pertaining to cultural and personal occasions in which part of their meaning and structure lies (1974:349).

In this context, Hymes has drawn our attention to the analysis of style as qualifying what has been said or "modifying things talked about and saying how what is said is to be taken" (*Ibid*:437).

A central point which has been raised in some important works on the function and content of oratory, such as Paine (1981) and Bloch (1975), is the question of how political decision-making can operate in the context of highly formalized discourse. As Bloch argued, oratory in tribal society is "arthritic", that is, stifled by the formal nature of the code employed. In his

words, formal oratory..."implies the acceptance of who is top, it does not produce it" (1975:24). Paine, on the other hand, whose analysis echoes Kenneth Burke's view that all language is concerned with entitlement and thus represents rhetoric in a wider sense has shown the political functions of certain elements of formalized speech in English-speaking societies (e.g. metaphor, metonym, allusion). As we will see, Haida oratory features a number of rhetorical devices which, if taken in their proper context, have similar political functions (see also Boelscher, 1989a).

In this paper I will focus on the messages underlying public speeches in a social and political context, asking what are the rhetorical devices used, what is the structure of speeches, and most importantly, how is what is said taken by the audience. I see the purpose of this paper as follows:

- 1) It will contribute to our understanding of the Northwest Coast ethnography of speaking, and hopefully invite comparison with the mode of public discourse of other Northwest Coast and Aboriginal societies.
- 2) In analysing the socio-political context of what is said and how it is said, this paper also contributes to the theoretical debate on oratory.
- 3) Finally, there is a practical implication to the analysis of Aboriginal peoples' discourse with regards to interethnic communication: oratory should not be considered as an isolated form of speech; indeed, many of the features of oratory also occur in informal conversation or when a non-Aboriginal audience is addressed. Oratory is part of a cultural mode of discourse. Not understanding the messages underlying the forms of speech can lead to far-reaching misunderstandings in interethnic communication, as Scollon and Scollon (1981) have shown with Athapascan examples. These kinds of misunderstandings can involve everyday interaction, but as of late, they have special impetus in court cases where discourse becomes a problem (Boelscher, 1989b).

The speeches and samples of Haida discourse discussed below were recorded between 1972 and 1983. They represent the legacy of Haida oratory left by a generation of Haida elders born between the 1880s and early 1900s, almost all of whom are now passed away. With their passing, aside from these few recordings, much of the intricate skill of Haida oratory is gone.

The Ethnographic Context

To appreciate what is talked about in Haida speeches and how it is to be understood, we need to address ourselves first to the social and cultural context in which public discourse is produced.

Now amalgamated on the Masset Reserve, the Masset Haida (or *Gawa Xaadee*) comprise all indigenous Haida bands from the northern portion of the Queen Charlotte Islands (Boelscher, 1989a). The Haida divide themselves into two exogamous matri-moieties (*k'waalaa*), Raven and Eagle. Each moiety is divided into a number of matrilineages or "tribes" (*gwaay gaang*); the latter are corporate groups owning ancestral lands and their resources, as well as symbolic property, e.g. names and crests. Today, six Raven lineages and five Eagle lineages remain, with some of them further subdivided into branches. While lineages are the resource-holding corporations, the economically productive units are and were extended households usually centred around a lineage elder, his nephews, nieces and their spouses and children (Swanton, 1905a; Murdock, 1934; Stearns, 1981; Boelscher, 1989a).

Relationships within the lineage as well as those with socially and politically significant members of other lineages are expressed in the idiom of kin terms (Boelscher 1989a). Haida kin terms are highly classificatory and are applied to all members of a person's corporate group, as well as to his/her father's lineage and/or affinal lineage. Kinship terms serve as an idiom for expressing shared entitlement to symbolic and material property, as well as claims to succession and high social position.

Rank is primarily operant within the lineages rather than between them, as is the case with the Tsimshian. Each lineage or localized branch of a lineage has its own lineage chief, *7laana 7leeyga*, who is also the chief of his ancestral village. In addition, the head of each household was a chief in his own right, *7iitlgee*. The normative successors to a chief are his younger brother and maternal nephew. However, as both Stearns (1984) and Boelscher (1989a) have shown, chiefly succession was much more complex than automatic matrilineal succession, as it also involved the consent and approval of the corporate group, and criteria of fitness of the successor.

In Murdock's (1936) terms, individual rank depended largely on birth and the successful distribution of property (potlatching). According to my own recent analysis (Boelscher, 1989a), Haida rank, rather than merely depending upon high birth, *yahgid*, must be understood as a life-long process of interaction between self and the public to attain and maintain "fitness for respect", *yahguudaang*.³ Rank as *yahguudaang* involves not only high birth and the distribution of property, but also the obligation to "live

up to it". It involves moral conduct, and, moreover, *knowledge* over an entire scheme of symbolic classification revolving around aspects of food, space, pollution, nature and the supernatural, as well as work, the use of discourse, and all other aspects of behaviour which can be scrutinized by the public (Boelscher 1989a). The meanings of these categories, however, are ambiguous and depend upon context. What characterizes a *yahguudaang* person is knowing the fine balance between what is appropriate and what is "overdoing it". Rank is displayed through understatement rather than excess or boasting. A person gains respect only by showing it to others. Hence, *yahguudaang* is closely linked to social interaction. It is public opinion which provides the ultimate gauge and sanction for a person's social standing.

While showing respect for others is part of everyday life, it is most manifest and most open to public scrutiny during public events. In Haida society, the main institution for the public acknowledgement of social position, for showing and receiving respect, is the *gin gaa halaa* or "doing" involving the giving away of property, *gyaa Tisdlaa*, to the guests, thus acknowledging the host's social position or change in it. Murdock (1936) listed numerous types of potlatches for the Haida, the most important of which are the *waahlal*, "housebuilding potlatch" and the *sak'aa* or memorial/mortuary potlatch. Since the oppression of the potlatch with the anti-potlatch law, the *sak'aa* has become the most prominent kind of doing.⁴ As I have argued (Boelscher, 1989a), the process of giving and receiving during these events involves much more than mechanical acts of reciprocity; instead, it must be understood as a subtle political process through which the economic relation of giver-receiver attempts to create the political relation of leader-follower (Sahlins, 1972:133). In this context, then, potlatches are political arenas, where political goals are tested and sanctioned, although this occurs in the guise of generosity and hospitality, both of which deny self-interest. Legitimacy is granted only to the person who transforms his arbitrary and interested relationships into disinterested, gratuitous relationships (Bourdieu, 1977; 1980).

All types of *gin gaa halaa* involve speeches made by the guests and by the host after the consumption of food. The speeches, indeed, take up most of the evening of the doing, often lasting three to four hours, interspersed with the distribution of property. The list of speakers itself is carefully constructed, taking into account the members of the lineages most important to the host and the occasion. The host is careful to include and thus acknowledge all other lineage chiefs, and all those with a reputation for good oratory. Of special importance to the success of the *gin gaa halaa* is the planning meeting, *gin Tahl kilwalaa*,⁵ preceding it. On this occasion, the elders and other high ranking individuals of the donor lineage, and those of

other important lineages of the opposite moiety, are called together to give advice regarding the performance of practical tasks for the doing, but also to ensure the cooperation and consent of the lineage mates and those of the opposite side (Boelscher, 1989a). In many respects, the *gin Tahl kilwalaa* is a doing in its own right, featuring a series of speeches, refreshments and *kaawkahl*, i.e. the giving away of food.

The public discourse or oratory during doings is concerned with reiterating and reinforcing social position and the entitlement to material and symbolic property which accompanies it. By implication, speeches can also challenge the host's social position or fitness for respect. It is noteworthy that in these speeches, the speaker does not explicitly address his own entitlement and social position, but that of the host (and the deceased, in the case of mortuary doings). Implicitly, however, in belittling his own position, by extolling his host's *yahguudaang* and his kinship with the host, he also comments on his own social position and fitness for respect.

Because of the precarious nature of social relations, speeches must be carefully phrased. What Seguin expressed for the Tsimshian also holds for the Haida:

One of the most delicate problems for traditional Tsimshian society was to minimize the possibility that an aspersion might be cast on the person of a noble or chief unintentionally. Intentional slurs were a serious challenge to the person, and to the lineage, a challenge likely to be answered (1985:18).

Rhetorical Devices

Allusion: Haida oratory relies on a number of rhetorical devices which must be discussed in their cultural context. One of the most noteworthy ways of speaking is through allusion. In speeches as well as in everyday discourse (and similarly in stories). Such of what is meant is not stated explicitly but is merely hinted at; much of the meaning of discourse is implied. What is meant by a statement or a series of statements emerges from the history of the relationships of the parties involved. In a small-scale society where everyone is aware of the history of all social relationships and conflicts, the mere mentioning of names and places, or hints at events, suffices for the audience to understand a remark. There is also a culture-specific side to allusion: It allows the speaker to say what he wants to say without actually saying it. While explicit claims to land, position, names, etc. which are not universally accepted are seen as "pushy" and are hence rejected or rebutted in culture-specific ways, allusions-especially if they are disguised in the euphemizing language of kinship, obligation, generosity

or friendship-remain ambiguous. To make allusions provides a way of indirectly joking about others, accusing them or chiding them, or talking down to them.

The Haida language, like other Northwest Coast languages, lends itself to talking in allusions and hints, because much verbal discourse is expressed through nominal classifiers and predicate suffixes and prefixes indicating attributes of objects and persons 'without actually mentioning them by name.

Allusive speech, in being intentionally vague, is also intentionally ambiguous. Paine (1981) has called attention to the function of intentional ambiguity in political speeches: ambiguity is a way for the politician to negotiate with the public. The Haida have a special type of allusive speech, "high words", or "good words", *guusuu 7laa*. Swanton noted the use of "high words" abounding in metaphors as a formal code of expression in speech-making, songs and stories. His Haida texts (1905b; 1908) and songs (1912) cite many examples of "high words" and their meanings. High words consist of a series of metaphorical terms of address and reference aimed at indicating high status. For example, the term *gahlgahlwaan*, "moving while sitting down" is highly allusive in making reference to the property hat worn by persons who have potlatched: with each potlatch the wearer had hosted, a new section was added to the top of the hat. As the sections were sewn onto the hat, they moved as soon as the wearer moved his head. The term *k'aa.gaa diid guii*, "those sitting facing the woods" is a metaphor for common people: during doings, high ranking people sit in the rear of the building facing the door; the woods are behind the outside rear of the building, hence the person who "sits facing the woods" is a commoner sitting by the door, far from the seat of honour at the rear inside. In addition, *diid*, the "woods", or "back behind the village" bears association of non-civilization, wilderness and sorcery.

In a wider sense, high words are any non-everyday terms or "fancy words". For speakers who are more fluent in Haida than in English, they may thus include English terms (or terms in other Native languages) inserted into the speech. Adam Bell, who was fluent and elaborate in Haida, but spoke only broken English, frequently inserted English terms such as "chief" or *chiefgaagaan* ("he was chief") instead of *7iitlgee*, or "power" instead of *sgaanwee* into his speeches. This occurred in situations where it was clear that he knew and could have used the Haida terms.

A metaphorical statement extended into an entire text takes the form of a story, *k'eeyganaa*, told within a speech. As we will see below, the telling of stories, which are explained by elders as akin to biblical parables, is frequently a part of speeches.

Inversion is another prominent feature of Haida speeches. Many high words, indeed, are terms of inversion to express belittlement or self-abasement. As I mentioned above, a *yahguudaang* person never flaunts his or her own status, and the true quality of the elite lies in understatement rather than overstatement. By belittling himself, the speaker on the one hand symbolically elevates the status of his host and audience, and on the other implicitly makes a statement about his/her own status. Only those who are *trulyyahgid* and *yahguudaang* can afford to belittle themselves. Thus, Swanton (1912:46) noted that "Ninstints people of the best classes used in addressing one another expressions which elsewhere were only employed by or to the lower orders of people." Similarly, the child in whose honour a *Gid Kagaan* song⁶ is sung is "supposed to call others of his family [lineage] by aristocratic names and himself by a low one" (*Ibid.*). Moreover, some high ranking individuals would refer to themselves as dogs (1912:39), "dog" being in turn a metaphor for slave (Boelscher, 1989a) and thus a form of self-abasement. By verbally inverting his/her own social status, the speaker thus implies just the opposite, namely that he/she is above suspicion to be in the category of commoner or slave. Inversion therefore is a socially acceptable way of implying one's own high status. In a contemporary mortuary potlatch, the speaker used the inversion that she was "putting her little words next to [the previous speaker's] big words (*Ai ga gyaa isin hlaa isin gyaang da xusgiidang*)."⁷ In a speech during the same event the host, after citing the amounts of food donated by one person, said, "to her, it does not amount to very much." As our translator explained, the speaker was projecting the donor as so wealthy that giving hundreds of pounds of food required little effort for her. Many of the formulae of address which are intended to show respect to the host also feature the symbolic self-abasement of the speaker (see below).

Repetition: Important remarks, that is, statements which are news (*gin kingaasii*) are often repeated up to four times, the number associated with completion, and/or are reiterated throughout the speech. In a society which relies on the oral transmission of information, repetition is a significant feature of public discourse: stating something more than once ensures that it is grasped by the audience, that it has "sunk in". Repetition itself also qualifies statements as important.

Pausing is another feature of speeches which underlines the importance of what is being said. By pausing after a significant remark, the speaker reinforces it. In any form of Haida discourse, pausing is also a device which invites the listener to listen, to evaluate what has just been said and to "think along" with the speaker. It is noteworthy that pauses in Haida discourse are slightly longer than pauses in Anglo-Canadian discourse, which easily leads

to the tendency of Whites to interrupt Native people when their discourse pauses for more than an instant.

Finally, *silence* is a form of discourse which has deep meaning for the Haida.⁷ By silence I mean the act of not saying certain things in a speech which are expected of the speaker, of declining to speak when invited, of being absent altogether from a doing, or, worst of all, walking out, keeydat ("to walk out in disgust") during an event, one of the strongest forms of public protest. Silence is a socially acknowledged implicit form of protest, of showing disagreement with what the host is trying to achieve by potlatching, that is, denying his right to a name and thus position. In the Haida mode of expression, disagreement is rarely voiced in public through argument, which is seen as not befitting a respected person, but is expressed through silence, the opposite of approval acknowledged by words. Silence, in the sense of acknowledging, not speaking and/or physical absence is the withdrawal of support for the host and is always understood as such.

The Structure of Speeches

Each public speech, whether at "doings" or any other public event⁸ contains certain characteristic elements which make it a "proper" speech. These elements are:

- 1) Thanking the host and audience;
- 2) Showing respect to the host and audience and indicating their high status;
- 3) Establishing kinship links with the host;
- 4) Citing the accomplishments of the host or person honoured;
- 5) Citing the host's (or honoured person's) entitlements through mentioning hereditary names;
- 6) Telling a "story" as a parable or metaphor;
- 7) Telling an anecdote or joke;
- 8) Reiterating thanks;
- 9) Acknowledgement of the speech by the host and audience.

While 1, 3, 8 and 9 occur in every speech, the elaboration of 2, and 4, 5, 6 and 7 varies, and in short speeches they may be missing altogether. In addition, parts 1 and 3 are often re-iterated throughout the Speech. While the preferred language of speeches is Haida⁹, younger and middle-aged speakers will usually speak English, inserting a few Haida words in the manner of "high words". The structures of speeches, as well as the rhetorical devices employed, however, remain the same.

Thanking is expressed by the single word *haw7aa*, "thanks", and is then reiterated with *dalang wadluuan7aa hi kil7laagan*, "I thank you (pl.)" [lit. "do you good with words"). Thanking the host acknowledges him and implicitly acknowledges his legitimacy. The audience is also included in the "thank you" for having come to witness and lend their support to the host's doing. Conversely, the host thanks his guests for having come: he expresses his thanks to his lineage mates for supporting him in his doing, and he thanks those of the opposite side for witnessing it and thus acknowledging him. Omitting thanks or cutting them short is considered rudeness, or, depending on the context, as a deliberate denial of acknowledgement on the part of the speaker.

What in English is the response to thank you, "you are welcome", is also expressed as *haw7aa* in Haida. Just as the giver of goods counters the *haw7aa* with another *haw7aa*, the host of a doing acknowledges his guest's speech with *haw7aa* and the rest of the audience nods approval.

In addition to the general formulae of thanks, the host during his speech also thanks his lineage mates and others for their material contributions to his doing, and for their help with cooking, invitations, organizing, etc. At mortuary potlatches, the host thanks those who have given support and sympathy during the bereavement and have helped out with the funeral and funeral feast.

Along with thanking them, the host (and/or his lineage mates who speak) often verbally appreciates the number of people who have come to witness the event. A capacity crowd of guests who have come to acknowledge him reflects well on the host, whereas empty seats tarnish his/her reputation. Thus, during the planning meeting, the lineage elders remind the audience to 'be at your best On this occasion. And all of you be there. On the day of the event, people are always afraid that not everyone will come. When everyone turns up, they [the hosts] are twice as happy."¹⁰

In order not to lose face, the host will usually pretend to count on few people to turn up and then express surprise when the feast hall, in fact, is full.

Some of the formulae of respect include the following:

Xaadee 7laasii!

Good people!

T'ii.aa xed guuda7laasii.

I am below you.

Gam ginaan hi yahguudaangang.

I do not deem myself fit for respect.

Dalang.aahi saa guudangaa.

I think of you highly.

Dalang dii gud7ahl syaahlang.

You are high compared to me.

Dalang kihiguu 7laa 7iiwan.

I will speak to you in big and good words.

(See Boelscher, 1989a: 85ff for additional phrases).

The above phrases were given to me by Adam Bell (*7laanas Sdang*) as the proper way of introducing a speech and showing respect and acknowledging others. They include most of the rhetorical devices I mentioned above: repetition, inversion of own status and allusion. In saying, "I do not respect myself", the speaker is indeed saying, "I do not try to put myself above you. If I speak modestly of myself, then you will respect me accordingly." In these formulae of acknowledgement, nuances of respect are expressed as qualities of *guudaang*. *Guudaang* is a Haida term which embraces "mind", "attitude", "respect", "feeling". Thus, feelings for others are expressed as qualities or attributes of one's *guudaang*: *guudangee 7iiwan* is a "big attitude" or "big mind", "having lots of respect"; *guudangee xed* is a "low mind", or "being humble"; *guudangee saa* is an attribute of a "high minded" or high ranking person; *guudangee 7laa* means a "good mind" or happy; *guudangee st'iigan* is a "sick mind" or sadness.

Establishing kinship links: I have previously (Boelscher 1989a) analysed the use and context of Haida kinship as *categories* in the etymological sense of collective public imputations. For social and political purposes, individuals select out of the large number of *nominal* kinsmen those who are of practical significance at a given moment (Bourdieu, 1977; 1980; Van Velsen, 1964). It is in the course of public discourse, especially oratory, that socially and politically significant kinship ties are pointed out and reiterated. "That is my uncle" is thus far more than a statement of affection towards a senior member of the kin group. It makes allusion to the role-relationship between maternal uncle and nephew, which is also one of potential succession and inheritance. Pointing out hosts, or significant community members as "brothers" alludes to lineage solidarity and mutual obligation, but also to shared entitlement and ownership of property and resources. Pointing out the kinship relationship to the host, or to the deceased in whose memory a mortuary potlatch is held, establishes the speaker's legitimacy: He/she is not just anyone but has a significant relationship to the host or deceased, and moreover is of similar social status. In this public and official sense, kinship links function as a code expressing rights to positions and privileges attached to them, or the obligations these positions entail.

It is important to note that kinship terms cited during speeches are more often than not used in a classificatory sense, and are sometimes arrived at through bilateral extensions: during the late village chief's funeral feast, one community member legitimated himself as speaker in the following way: he introduced himself as the husband of the deceased's "grandmother", (mother's mother, father's mother, father's father's sister, father's mother's sister, mother's mother's sister or mother's father's sister). As it turned out, his wife, who was non-Indian, had been adopted and had received a name from the deceased's father's father's lineage, and thus became the deceased village chief's "grandmother".

During Peter Hill's memorial potlatch (Stearns, 1981; Stearns and Stearns, 1978; Stearns, Boelscher, Bell, nd.), most of the elderly speakers identified themselves as younger brothers (*duun*) or sisters (*jaas*) of the deceased. For some speakers this entailed membership in the same lineage, for others merely membership in the same moiety or a bilateral genealogical relationship (*gud 7ahl keeiwa*, i.e. their fathers were siblings, see Boelscher, 1989a). A *relationship* was also established with the male host: thus Neeylans, one of the speakers, remarked, "we are gathered to honour my older brother (Peter Hill) and we are gathered in my younger brother's (Gid kujaaws) house." The same speaker termed the deceased's wife his "grandfather's [*tsinn*] niece [*naad*]. All terms were used in a classificatory and extended sense.

Sometimes, kinship links are expressed metaphorically, or in mere allusion: during the same feast, one speaker said (translation from Haida): "Those who are descended from me (*dii st'agaa naadlanguuyaa*) are sitting beside me, and since I am the only one left, I love all of these, mine (*7angaa dii kuyaadang*)." *Dii st'aa naadlanguuyaa*, which means literally "those dangling off me like halibut drying on a rack", alludes to her children and grandchildren sitting beside her. "Mine" refers to her lineage mates of whom she is the only elder left.

Dii towlang, "my kinfolk"/"my friends" is another prominent term of address and reference in speeches. In a narrow sense, it refers to lineage mates, but in actual usage it is often employed to address all those who are present, thus "friends".

In cases where genealogical or classificatory kin ties between speaker and host or deceased do exist, the speaker occasionally mentions a *staguuhl* or "partner" relationship produced through lifelong friendship, where individuals think of one another as brothers or brother and sister. Thus, 7laanas Sdang mentioned in his speech during Peter Hill's memorial potlatch,

He [P.H.] used to come to visit me, he came three times, and he spoke to me, '*7laanas Sdang*, I am company to you [*7ahl guudaa*], as you are company to me. I know that you are happy that I come to see you and so, Peter says, I am now taking you as a younger brother to me [*7ahijii yahluu duun an.uu dang hi 7isdiiyaagan*], that's what he used to say.

This kind of relationship is understood as a partnership or friendship expressed in kinship terms. It is not a formal adoption [keydaa], which is announced in public and accompanied by the public bestowal of a name on the adoptee (Boelscher, 1989a: 108ff).

In one speech, the speaker subtly put himself in the category of elders with the following words: "In the old times, they used to say, when they first heard news of an event, 'this is the first I hear of this event, and I am happy about it.' This is the first / hear about it."

In other contexts, citing one's kinship links with the host also maps out shared knowledge over names, land and other corporate property. Thus Sandlenee of the Yaaku *71aanas* lineage, whose father was *7iljuuwaas* of the Tsiits Git7ans, an Eagle lineage, mentioned in a speech during the wedding of her *skaan gid* [classificatory father's sister's son] at Skidegate:

[the hostess] came from Juskatla. There was a Village there. Their great-great uncle had a village there, and then they had Tsiits. And they had the Yakoun River, those Tsiits Git7ans. So they came from Juskatla, and they belong to Masset [i.e. to the *Gawa Xaadee*]. But they have lots of children here, that's why they have to stay here. *7iljuuwaas* was the name of the chief of Juskatla. That was my father's name.

With this statement, the speaker re-iterates her relationship with the host of the wedding (and the groom) through her father, but more than that, she also imparts her knowledge over the traditional territories of the host's lineage, and the name associated with that lineage. The names of related, own and affinal lineages are woven into the speech, along with the locations they traditionally own, and names to which they have rights. Besides legitimizing the speaker's right to speak, they implicitly remind the public of names and places the speaker has direct or indirect rights to, and what the ancestry of the speaker herself is: in the above example, Sandlenee alludes to the fact that she is a chief's daughter.

Citing accomplishments of the deceased: This is especially done during mortuary potlatches, where the speakers remind the audience of the accomplishments of the deceased during his/her life-time. Thus, in the speeches for Peter Hill, his work with the church ("good work" -- which refers to lay work in the church) and the Church Army was frequently mentioned,

as were his positions as Band Councillor and lay teacher and his work with the Native Brotherhood (see Appendix, Chief Weah's speech).

Citing Oral Histories: It must be pointed out that the most important speakers at doings are the guests, for they are the ones who grant the host legitimacy through words. Thus, the host does not cite his own oral history, but his guests present it for him in terms of their bilateral relationship with the host or through such kin ties as younger brother, niece, nephew, etc. In many cases, oral histories are merely alluded to by mentioning lineage names and chief names associated with the host/deceased. This is the case in the example from Sandlenee's speech above. In the speech of Chief Weah during Peter Hill's doing, the latter's hereditary names were cited to point out his position; the speaker further alluded to his social standing and high lineage in the following way:

His memory stands behind a great lineage, Kun 71aanas.
He had many names.
I saw his uncles [mother's brothers] when I was a child.
There were many of them (see Appendix).

It must be pointed out in this context that the deceased's lineage was almost extinct at this time, represented only by a female elder, her daughter and grandchildren. The deceased had not been a materially wealthy man. The speaker here thus reminds the audience that his lineage once was important, that it had many housechiefs (his "uncles" were numerous), but that this was long ago (the speaker, who was in his late eighties, saw them "as a child").

In some instances oral histories are more elaborate and abound in allusions to rank and entitlement to property. A good example is the oral history of *71aanas Sdang's* mother's¹¹ succession to chiefship at *7ijjaw*. While not recorded during a public speech but at his son's home, it has all the elements of oratory with allusions and metaphors, and the formulae of thanking in the end. In his narrative, the speaker identified himself by his hereditary name, and identified his maternal uncle (actually his mother's mother's brother); this was followed by a narrative about the feasts of his maternal uncle. He then cited the names of his maternal uncle's brother and son and that he "saw" his uncle's brother: this classified his narrative as witnessed knowledge, rather than just as information passed down to him. *71aanas Sdang* then narrated how he was made town chief: The names of the people he cited as "robing" him and having been present are significant. They are the highest ranking female elders of the main branch of his lineage. The narrative of the "robing" was repeated throughout. Mentioning that someone from the opposite side validated *71aanas Sdang's* name-taking, and was paid for it, was intended to corroborate his legitimacy.,

Oral histories are often interwoven with parables which extoll the rank, virtues, and accomplishments of the deceased through metaphor. Today, episodes from the bible or other Christian parables are frequently selected in this manner. An elaborate metaphoric story was told by *71aanas Sdang* as a continuation of the narrative of his succession to chiefship: After Xilaa, his mother's mother's brother, died, *71aanas Sdang's* mother was the only potential heir left within his lineage branch. But, because she was a woman, there were attempts by another lineage branch to take over Xilaa's chiefship (See Boelscher, 1989a):

The Kueey Gandlaas Xaadee came over to try to take over the fortress that had belonged to Xilaa. But they failed. There was a Chief called Skilaawee. He was a Strang *71aanas* Chief. He was the one that sided with my mother. [He said during a speech]: 'I know how to build canoes. As others built them, so did I. In my early days, I had to make repairs to canoes. The cedar wood patches never fit. I didn't know [how to make them fit]. But now, after all this time I have built these canoes, the cedarwood patches fit perfectly. And this is what our situation with that young woman is like.'

In this re-told speech, *Skilaawee*, the speaker, is explaining that Xilaa's niece, while young and inexperienced at the time, could eventually learn to become a good chief by learning through experience "on the job". To make this point, he draws on a parable from canoe-building—a common experience for all males at the turn of the century—where, over his life-time he learned to make perfect repairs. This example demonstrates the power of metaphor and parable in drawing on familiar experience to persuade the audience of his point of view.

Anecdotes and Jokes: An often-mentioned explicit function of telling jokes during speeches at memorial potlatches is that they ease the audience's sorrow and "make your minds good" (i.e. happy). The completion of the memorial potlatch marks the official end of the period of mourning for the descendants of the deceased. As one elder explained, "on these occasions, in our hearts we are weeping but in our words we are smiling, and we want to make you laugh." It is noteworthy that jokes made during these speeches are always self-deprecating. They reiterate the "goofiness" or "foolishness" (*kuunan*) of the speaker on a previous occasion. Often mere allusions to the previous incidents suffice because everyone present has heard the entire episode before. Jokes and anecdotes about oneself made in public speeches have a function similar to belittlement and self-abasement: denying one's status through reporting one's own acts of clumsiness, foolishness or mishaps means extolling the virtues of the host and audience.

Moreover, only those whose status is intact can afford to belittle themselves symbolically through anecdotes about themselves. The anecdotes and episodes told during speeches are funny only in proper context, that is, through knowledge of the speaker, through visually remembering an episode he or she relates. They have added humour through intonation and exclamatory expressions interjected into them.

How can Haida speeches, which, as we have seen, are highly formal, change the social and political status quo and contain elements of political decision-making? As we have seen, public speeches do not represent a way of overt negotiation with the public by debating issues. One speech follows upon another and, except in the rarest instances, oratorical statements are not contradicted overtly in public. However, the key to understanding Haida oratory lies in understanding the significance of the rhetorical devices subtly employed by the speaker to convince the audience of his right to speak, his entitlement to resources, position and names and his overall yahguudaang or fitness for respect. With this in mind I suspect that what Bloch (1975) regards as the possibility to discuss, evaluate and contradict by means of argument is an ethnocentric view of rhetoric and political decision-making. Certainly, to the outsider, Haida speeches may appear as mechanized, containing nothing but a series of formulae of verbal etiquette, interminable thanks and kinship terms. The insider-and the ethnographer learning to decipher the meaning and content of these speeches-learns that what is not said can be as important as what is said. The Haida themselves constantly evaluate what was said, and what the speaker was trying to achieve by his or her statements.

The rhetorical devices I discussed above point to the importance of context. As I have shown before (Boelscher, 1989a), the total process of the evaluation of speeches by the audience-and subsequent action-must never be separated from the performance of the speech itself. To the Haida, differences of opinion and disagreements are manifest in nuances of what is said, how it is said, how many times it is said, or if it is said at all, and through the many other accompanying gestures indicating acknowledgment or withdrawal of respect and thus rank. The evaluation of all these verbal and non-verbal aspects of speeches does not occur until after the event, when individuals informally discuss what was said, when background information about claims and statements are uttered and shared. It is only after this kind of evaluation that whatever implicit claims made during speeches are backed and supported, or rejected, and then subtly reinforced or countered during future events.

In summary, my point is that Haida public discourse, while overtly marked by formality or "restrictedness" of code (see Bernstein, 1971 ; Bloch,

1975), must be understood as rhetoric, and must in turn be interpreted within the context of the Haida perception of rank, and how it can be demonstrated and acknowledged: through "euphemizing strategies" (Bourdieu, 1977), by avoiding blatant statements, by remaining ambiguous and hence elusive and allusive enough so as not to be accused of boasting.

This analysis has contributed to our understanding of what is said in Haida public speeches, and how it must be understood. It must be pointed out, however, that the above style of discourse is not unique to Haida oratory alone. Allusiveness, implicitness, silence and pausing are also features of everyday Haida discourse, as well as of any kind of address to an audience. What to non-Aboriginal outsiders is easily misunderstood as individuals "beating around the bush", "not speaking straight", or not answering questions, is instead a culture-specific idiom for conveying meanings, passing on information and negotiating consensus. The many rhetorical devices relying on metaphor, allusion, impliedness and elusiveness are vehicles for maintaining or renegotiating social and political relations.

Notes

1. This paper was originally prepared for the Tsimshian Research Symposium held at Hartley Bay, British Columbia, June 10-14, 1987. It was revised in January 1991.
2. The fieldwork on which this paper is based was carried out in Masset between 1979 and 1981, and intermittently since. Financial support was received from the Canadian Department of External Affairs, Government of Canada Award for Foreign Nationals (1978-82); the Simon Fraser University President's Research Grant Stipend (1979) and the American Philosophical Society's Phillips Fund. The recordings of the Peter Hill Memorial Potlatch were made by Mary Lee Stearns and Eileen Stearns in 1972. The Haida speeches made during this event were recently transcribed by Lawrence Bell and myself (Stearns, Bell and Boelscher, ms.). I thank Mary Lee Stearns for her generosity in making these speeches accessible to me. I would also like to acknowledge the elders whose speeches are featured on these recordings: Chief Willie Matthews, Joe Weir, Alfred Davidson, Willie Russ, Adam Bell, Percy Brown, Eddie Jones, Charlotte Marks, Peter Jones, Rose Davidson and Amanda Edgars, all deceased, as well as Florence Davidson, Ethel Jones and Victor Adams. I also express special thanks to the elders of Masset, in particular the late Emma Matthews, who adopted me into her family and taught me her language and culture, and the late Adam Bell, who instructed me in speech-making and story-telling. I am dedicating this paper to their memory.

3. *yah* = fit(ness); *guudaang* = mind, thought) respect, feeling.
4. The structure of this event has been described by Stearns (1975; 1981) and Blackman (1973), and I have analysed the symbolic and social meanings of "doings" (Boelscher, 1989a). Aside from memorial potlatches, the Masset Haida still carry out name-taking potlatches and feasts for numerous occasions which involve the distribution of goods rather than food.
5. *gin Tahl kflwalaa* = "things that are advice". Note the practical and symbolic function of "giving advice" (Boelscher, 1989a).
6. A *Gid Kagaan* is a children's cradle song, in which the mother, through metaphor and allusion, expresses the preciousness and high rank of her child.
7. Inspiring in this respect are the discussions on the meaning of silence by Basso (1972) and Seguin (1985).
8. Note that the formal mode of discourse which I am discussing here is used in discourse at any public events associated with "potlatching".
9. As with other languages of the North Pacific Coast, Haida is at present near extinction. Only individuals 80 and over can be considered as fluent Native speakers, with those 70 to 80 having some command over the language, although attempts are being made to revive the language in the school system. Most competent orators in the Haida language have now passed away.
10. Speech by Florence Davidson during Peter Hill's memorial feast.
11. While generally, only men were eligible for chiefly office, there are some recorded instances of female "caretaker chiefs" (see Boelscher, 1989a:53fn6).

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Appendix

Speech by Willie Matthews (Chief Weah) during Memorial Potlatch for Peter Hill, 1972.

[In English]: Mr. Toastmaster, Ladies and Gentlemen. I am sorry we don't have a loudspeaker in here. When I talk, I want the whole village to hear me! [English portion of speech follows]

[Haida portion of speech]:

Dalang 7aa hl kil7laagan, Gawa Xaadee

I thank you, people of Masset.

Dii kaa gid.uu 7iijang, Peter Hill.

He was my uncle's [MB] child, Peter Hill.

Gud tuuwan itl'7iinaastlagan.

We grew up side by side.

Wagyaan gwaay gaang 7iwansilii.uu l'gyaagan, Kun 71aanas.

His shadow/memory stands behind a big lineage, Kun 71aanas.

L'kee 71aakwaangan, Peter Hill.

Peter Hill, he had a good many names.

L'kaa.alang hi kingan, 7aaxudlaasdluu.aa.

His uncles, I saw them when I was a small child.

L'sk'uuluugan.

There were many of them.

Wagyaan 7aayad l'silii laa sgun gyaan, 7aayad.

And today, his shadow [remains].

Wagyaan 7ajii 7Ingeegulgyandiiyaa.usdlaangan;

This town, he was very useful to it.

7ajii 7Ingee l'tling7laangan.

This town, he made it better.

Xeeynangaan gud guusaaw taadea tlaletlehl councilgee.aa l,7lisgagan.

All his life, for fifty years, he was with-the council.

Churchgee.aa Tisin tlaaga l'guusaaw 7leeygaagan.

He was also a leader in the Church.

Choirgee.suus l'7iijang.

He was in the choir.

Church Armygee, sdaas l' tlagyaangan.

He kept the Church Army standing.

Native Brotherhood hin gin kyaa.aganan.

What they call the Native Brotherhood.

7ajii Coastgee ga sgoaan, 7ayaad gin 7laasii, laa l'tlagyaagan,

The one on the coast, this thing that is good today, he kept it standing,

Alfred Adams ahl. Wagyaan tlaa kaldaa xaada.

together with Alfred Adams. They were smart people.

Gam tlak.waanan 7eeydangue.

This should not be taken lightly.

Saa nang 7itlaagidaas gyaa gits'aadaa l'iijaan.uu.

He was God's [the chief above] disciple.

Wagyaan 7ajii 7laa tl'axeeynangaa 7intlaa.

And so his memory lives on.

Gam gin 7aan.nang.gaa 7isaang.gaa.

It's nothing to be taken lightly.

Saa nang 7iitl'aagidaa yahdii7eeyaa, gin ak'aayaa 7usleeyuu.ijaa.

Believing in God [the Chief above], it's something very mysterious.

7ajii 7Ingee xagan dalang gyaa 7laa.uslang,

If you want this village to be safe,

dalang gam hi tlak'waangadaa.anguu.

don't shortchange this.

Gam gin 7ahl naang.gaa 7iisanguee.

It's not something to play with.

Xeeynangaa guu 7laagaa 7ahlang, hi 7isdii gwaatl'alslaa.uu,

Have a good life, give it all you have,

Gain hi tlak'waangadaa.anguu[...]

Don't shortchange it.

Guudaang kil7laagaa 7usleeyuudii.aa 7iijang.

My mind is very thankful.

Dalang.aa hi kil7laagan, kwaawee 7angaa.

I thank all of you.

Kogiis, hin.uu l'kyaangan, Peter Hill.

Kogiis, that was Peter Hill's name.

Skilkeyaas, hin.uu l'kyaagan.

Skilkeyaas, that was his name.

Tljaang, hin.uu l'kyaagan.

Tljaang, that was his name.

Seeyks, hin.uu l'kyaagan.

Seeyks, that was his name.

Wagyaan l'kaalang sk'uulgan.

And his uncles were many.

Kee l'skil 7lnguu 7laa 7lijang dang l'kaaydan.

And wearing the names on his feast-hat, he walked away.

Hawaan.an.uu 7ajii gwaay gangee silyaa xeeynangaagang.

And still, his lineage's memory lives on.

Ethel gyaa 7aagee hinaasdluu dlak'edeelgan.

Ethel's children are becoming adults.

Saa nang 7iitl'aagidaas daman l'kingaakasaa.

God will look after them.

Wagyaan gwaay gangee sahldiihlangkasaa.

And his lineage will come back,

Gin sang kil7laagaa.uu 7iijang.

It is something to be thankful for.

[continuation of speech in English]

