

THE IMPACT OF THE FUR TRADE ON THE TLINGIT
DURING THE LATE-EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH CENTURIES

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By

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ABSTRACT

Anthropologists have assumed that during the fur trade period there was only minimal change in the social and political organization of the Indians of the Northwest Coast. This view is challenged by reconstructing change processes among the Tlingit from the time of first contact, in 1775, to circa 1880. The analysis relied heavily on primary historical sources, such as explorers and fur traders accounts, to interpret the existing ethnographic record. This is, then, a study in ethnohistory.

The thesis begins by presenting a broad overview of Tlingit culture, then examines the history of Tlingit involvement in the fur trade. After providing this background, it is shown that anthropologists have presented contradictory interpretations of Tlingit sociopolitical organization. By considering these contradictions in light of early historical sources, it is demonstrated that during the early contact period most wealth was owned by clans and lineage-based house groups. Social status relationships, other than those patterned by sex and personality, were largely determined by age differences. The oldest man in a house group acted as a redistributor of collectively owned wealth and as a spokesman in political affairs. The aboriginal Tlingit were thus organized into a Rank Society.

Whereas subsistence wealth was collectively owned, wealth derived in the fur trade was individually owned. This change

in property relations was of vital importance. Individuals who enriched themselves in the fur trade were able to achieve positions of social eminence by distributing wealth at potlatches. Thus, wealth replaced age as the prime determinant of social status.

However, individuals were able to use wealth for more than simply elevating their social status. Gift-giving at potlatches laid the basis for kinship or partnership relationships between wealthy individuals living in distant communities. These social alliances granted hunting rights on exclusive hunting territory, allowed travel over exclusive trade routes, and/or led to the establishment of remunerative middleman trading relationships. Wealth was also used to purchase slaves, which increased the productive capability of the owner. By these means, some individuals were able to gain a larger stake than others in the fur trade economy. A rudimentary form of economic stratification had developed.

During the fur trade period, the population became concentrated in a few large villages, which resulted in the development of more complex political forms. Rather than acting merely as spokesmen for their kinship groups, wealthy men began to assert themselves as village or territorial leaders. The Tlingit were developing the political attributes of a Stratified Society, once again in a rudimentary way.

The thesis concludes by considering the relevance of Northwest coast studies to social evolutionary theory.

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W.L.O.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

...the moment when Europeans communicate, for the first time, with newly-discovered people is that for studying them: at a later period, the intercourse of strangers produces changes in the natural habits of these people, presently the primitive features confounded with the new, and adulterated by this mixture, become imperceptible, and end by escaping observation (Fleurieu 1801:258).

Problems in Northwest Coast Ethnology

The first anthropologists who visited the Northwest Coast of America around the turn of this century made discoveries which helped to alter the course of anthropological thought. They encountered Indians who possessed only a simple fishing, hunting, and gathering technology but whose social organization was of a kind that is usually associated with a higher level of economic development. The rich ceremonial life and the complex and unequal division of wealth and social status among these Indians was reminiscent of agrarian societies. This ethnographic evidence contradicted contemporary theories of human evolution which postulated a correspondence between foraging economies and egalitarian clan organizations. The early Northwest Coast studies thus contributed to the decline of materialist and evolutionist traditions in anthropology which had flourished during the late nineteenth century and which have been only recently revived (see Harris 1968:302, *passim*).

It must be considered, though, that by the time Franz Boas inaugurated professional anthropological research on the Northwest Coast in 1886 the Indians living there had experienced roughly a century of sustained contact with European and American fur traders. This thesis will examine the importance of this period in the culture history of the Tlingit, who inhabit the northern sector of the Northwest Coast culture area.

Anthropologists have generally argued that major social change among the coastal Indians only began during the last few decades of the nineteenth century, a period that was characterized by large-scale white settlement, diversified economic development, and the establishment of complex government institutions. Ronald L. Olson (1967:v) is one anthropologist who has expressed this view:

The undermining of Tlingit culture had been slow up to the time of the gold rush [of the 1890s] but the boom was now on and the native way of life began to disintegrate rapidly.

Many anthropologists have maintained that there was sociocultural change during the fur trade period of the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but there was no sharp break with the aboriginal culture. Philip Drucker has been a major proponent of this interpretation. Referring to the Northwest Coast in general, he concluded that the fur trade brought a major influx of wealth which was incorporated into existing cultural forms:

Far reaching culture change may originate in such eras of prosperity, but it is likely to be a gradual development deriving from elaboration of existing culture

patterns and hence in accord with their fundamental principles, with the pre-existing ideals and culturally approved attitude patterns (Drucker 1965:190).

Thus, according to Drucker, the fur trade period was a time of quantitative rather than qualitative change.¹

This assessment of the impact of the fur trade must be regarded with caution. As Drucker himself conceded (1965:190), there has been no thorough analysis of post-contact sociocultural change among any of the major "tribal" groupings living on the Northwest Coast. Furthermore, the work that has been done on post-contact change has relied heavily on information which has been gathered in the field from native informants (e.g., Drucker and Heizer 1967; Collins 1950). This type of research is important but is not sufficient by itself. An informant who was born around the turn of this century obviously cannot give a thorough account of roughly two centuries of contact. This methodological consideration aside, anthropologists must also face the problem of having fewer opportunities to do fieldwork as Indians become more politicized and are less willing to give social scientists a carte blanche to do research in their communities (see Duff 1973:vi-vii; Suttles 1973:623).

Here, the Tlingit will be studied by using primary historical sources, both as a source of original ethnographic information and to lend time depth to the existing ethnographic literature.

It must be emphasized, however, that the fur trade period cannot be understood simply by applying new methods of data collection. The results of any inquiry are, of course, to a large extent determined by the questions which the researcher initially asks. Anthropologists studying the Northwest Coast as well as other areas too often begin by dismissing the possibility of major social change. There has been a tendency for many to fall victim to what M. G. Smith (1962) called "the fallacy of the ethnographic present".² Smith saw this fallacy, which involves the distortion of history, as being a characteristic of the functionalist approach to anthropology which draws analogies between human societies and the biological organisms studied by natural science. According to Smith, the premises of functionalism lead to the exclusion of change or at least to the minimizing of its importance. His comments are worth quoting at length:

In this type of functionalist theory, closure and fixity of the social system are essential assumptions without which analysis is hardly possible. Such a theoretical scheme rests on a basic fallacy, which I propose to label the fallacy of the ethnographic present. By means of this fallacy the initial exclusion of change, whether current or historical, is taken as proof that change does not occur; and current processes of change and development are either ignored where recognized, or where unrecognized, as often happens, they are represented as contributions to the maintenance of changeless conditions (Smith 1962:77; his emphasis).

It should be recalled that functionalism has had a pervasive and long-standing influence on both the British and American schools of

anthropology (see Murphy 1971).

Rather than dismissing out of hand the possibility that there was major social change during the fur trade period, I began by asking whether the aboriginal Tlingit had actually been like most other fishing, hunting, and gathering societies; perhaps, I thought, they had been a relatively egalitarian people whose culture had been drastically changed by the fur trade experience. Ethnohistorical research soon showed that this was not the case; but it also showed that the existing ethnography does not accurately represent the Tlingit as they were before the time of the fur trade.

Broadly speaking, during the first years of contact, before the fur trade was fully developed, the Tlingit were organized into a Rank Society. Most property was collectively owned by corporate kinship groups, and the leaders of those groups played a redistributive role in the economy and acted as spokesmen for their kinsmen in political affairs. After only a few years of involvement in the fur trade, the complexion of Tlingit social life radically changed. New measures of individual social and political status developed; there was a shift in the structure and meaning of the potlatch; some individuals acquired economic privileges that were not shared by their consanguinal kinsmen; and a few high status individuals became prominent in legal and economic decision-making. In brief, the Tlingit were developing some of the attributes of a Stratified Society.

My analysis of these changes is by no means definitive.

There are many years that are poorly accounted for in the historical record. Also, early documents seldom give a well-rounded portrait of Indian life. For instance, there is good information, covering a long time span, about social and political status relationships but almost nothing about the potlatch, even though that institution was central to Tlingit social organization. When the documents are silent, I have chosen to rely on inference or speculation to provide an analysis that is systematic rather than piecemeal. I have tried to indicate in the text when I have taken these liberties. This practice is, I believe, scientifically justifiable in that it provides hypotheses that can be tested by future documentary and/or field research.

This is not, however, an exercise in surmise. There is, for example, good evidence that individual social status became tied to personal wealth during the fur trade period rather than in the distant prehistoric past. This runs against our current understanding of Northwest Coast social organization, and demonstrates the importance of ethnohistorical analysis.

Sources

The primary sources that this study is based on can be broken down into three broad categories, each one pertaining to a different time period. The earliest sources are the journals of the first

Spanish, British, French, and Russian naval and commercial expeditions that explored the Northwest Coast by sea during the late eighteenth century, a time which I often refer to here as the "early contact period". Since most of these expeditions were pressed by the need to discover and explore as much territory as possible, their visits among the Indians were usually brief; they seldom remained in one area long enough to gain an in-depth knowledge of its inhabitants. However, these explorers were visiting the coast at a time when the Tlingit were not actively involved in the fur trade. In fact, they were gathering the geographical knowledge which later made large-scale trade possible. Since the early explorers met Indians who were living close to an aboriginal condition, their ethnographic descriptions warrant serious consideration.

Documents dealing with the affairs of the Russian American Company and Hudson's Bay Company are a second important source of information. Between them, these two large companies dominated trade with the Tlingit for a major part of the fur trade period. Also, since they conducted their trade from land-based establishments or by regularly sending out trading ships, they had sustained contact with the Tlingit. Unfortunately, many documents that would be relevant to the history of Russian and British trade with the Tlingit have not survived. Post journals and trade books have been particularly valuable in ethnohistorical studies of Indian cultures in other regions, but it appears that these and other specialized

records of the Russian American Company have been lost; correspondence books between the General Manager and the head office constitute most of the remaining collection (Sarafian 1971:10). To understand the Russian trade and to acquire early ethnographic data, I have placed considerable reliance on the Bancroft Library's "Pacific Manuscripts" collection, which consists of manuscript translations of the reports made by Russian naval officers, government officials, and missionaries who visited Russian America before 1867.

There are also serious gaps in the Hudson's Bay Company records. The one surviving Fort Stikine post journal provided a valuable glimpse at the daily affairs of a Tlingit village during the years 1840-1842. Also valuable were the post journals from Fort Simpson, which was located inside the territory of the neighbouring Tsimshian but which was regularly visited by the southern Tlingit.

The published observations of missionaries, military personnel, and tourists who met the Tlingit in the 1870s and 1880s, when the Americans were consolidating their hold on Alaska, comprise a third category of sources. Perhaps the most notable visitor during these years was the German geographer Aurel Krause, who spent six months among the Tlingit in 1881-1882, preparing an ethnographic account which compares favourably with later studies conducted by professional anthropologists. However, sources dating from the American period have been used with some caution, for the varied backgrounds and interests of these observers reflect the varied

forces of change which were bringing the fur trade period to a close.

These different types of primary sources have been used to supplement and interpret the ethnographic material collected in the field by John Swanton, who studied the Tlingit in 1904, and by Kalvero Oberg, Frederica de Laguna, and Ronald L. Olson, who did major anthropological studies between the 1930s and the 1950s.

Notes

¹Ruyle (1973:esp.608) is a recent example of a writer who has taken this position.

²Bishop (1975:150-51), for instance, has noted the same problem in Cree and Ojibwa studies.

CHAPTER 2

A GENERAL OUTLINE OF TLINGIT CULTURE

Prehistory

Originally an interior-dwelling people, the Tlingit moved down onto the Pacific coast, probably using rivers as routes of access through the formidable Coast Range of mountains. Archaeologists have yet to determine when these movements occurred, but it appears that the Tlingit and their Haida and Tsimshian neighbours to the south were the last native populations to move to the coast prior to the arrival of Europeans in the late 1700s. Radiating north and south from their points of access, these three groups displaced older Eskimo and Wakashan-speaking inhabitants (Borden 1962:18-19; de Laguna et al. 1964:3). By the time of first European contact, the Tlingit occupied much of the mainland coast and many of the offshore islands in a zone stretching from Observatory Inlet in the south, near the present Canada-United States border at 54°40'N. latitude, to Yakutat Bay in the north, at 60°N. latitude. The Tlingit whom the Russians met at Yakutat Bay around 1800 had only recently settled among and intermarried with the indigenous Eyak people in what was probably the last wave of prehistoric Tlingit expansion (Borden 1962:18-19; de Laguna 1953:54 ff).

Population

It is common in both the anthropological and historical literature for Tlingit individuals and groups to be identified by membership in named territorial subdivisions known as "qwans". These subdivisions did not possess strong social cohesion and their constituent kinship groups often changed through migration. The members of a qwan were loosely bound together by common residence in a locality and by pride in its resources (McClellan 1954:76). It is fitting that many of the prominent geographical features in southeastern Alaska today carry the names of the Tlingit qwans that formerly lived around them: Stikine, Taku, Chilkat, Sitka, Yakutat, Kuiu, Tongass, Auk, Killisnoo, Henya, Hoonah, and Kake.

Although in recent decades many of these qwans have died out or lost their identities through population dispersion, their histories and boundaries were well remembered by native informants who worked with anthropologists. However, there are three qwans that are often mentioned in nineteenth century historical accounts but which have not been clearly identified by ethnographers: the "Port Stewart Indians", the Sanya, and the Sumdum.

The location of two of these can be identified by consulting two maps drawn in the 1880s, one by Aurel Krause (1956) and the other by Ensign Albert Niblack (1890:chart 1) who from 1885-1887 served with the United States Navy coastal survey of

Alaska. Niblack showed the "Port Stewart Indians" as occupying Revilla Gigedo Island. The early ethnographer John Swanton met a group in 1904 that he called the "Hehl" who had formerly lived on that island and who had since moved to the town of Wrangell (Swanton 1908:396). From this it appears that "Hehl" was the Tlingit name for the people that early fur traders called the "Port Stewart" and that remembrance of this group had been lost by the time anthropologists such as de Laguna and McClellan arrived in the 1950s.

The Sanya were termed the "Cape Fox" in early historical accounts, and Krause roughly plotted their position. They appear to have been a relatively small group and by the late nineteenth century they had been submerged by their more powerful neighbours, the Tongass, with whom they had close ties (Schwotka 1900:324-25; Olson 1967:33).

The Sumdum were likely a distinct qwan until around the middle of the fur trade period, for James Douglas, reporting on his exploration of the Tlingit area in 1840, mentioned the "Saindan quanay" (Douglas 1840b:12). However, by the time Krause visited in 1881-1882 there was little known about these people, and they were seemingly well on the way towards extinction (see Krause 1956:69; Olson 1967:25). The available knowledge of the locations and boundaries of all known Tlingit qwans has been reconstructed on figure 1. below.

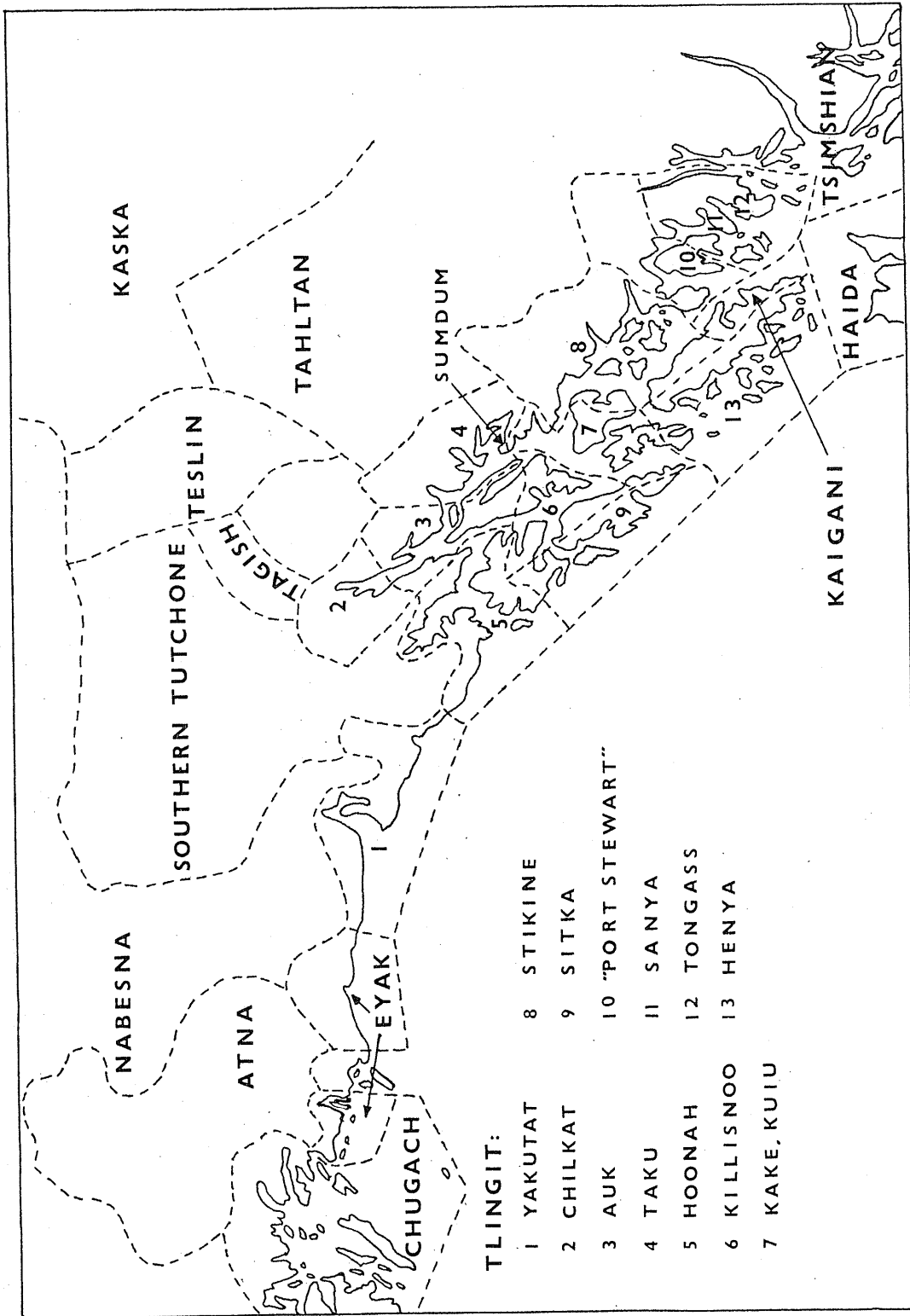


Figure 1: The Tlingit and Their Neighbours (Adapted from de Laguna 1972, 1: 14; Krause 1956; Niblack 1890)

It is difficult to determine the size of the Tlingit population around the time of first contact. Shortly after the devastating 1836-1837 smallpox epidemic, Ioann Veniaminov, a Russian priest, compiled the first detailed census of the Tlingit and of their neighbours the Kaigani Haida who live on the southern end of Prince of Wales Island. He counted a combined total of six thousand people, of whom twelve hundred were Kaigani, and estimated a combined pre-epidemic total of ten thousand. This is probably a conservative estimate of the aboriginal population size since there was at least one earlier epidemic which Veniaminov did not take into account. Nathaniel Portlock, who was one of the first maritime traders to explore the coast, noticed that some of the Tlingit that he met in the vicinity of Salisbury Sound in 1787 were scarred by smallpox; one of his boat parties made similar observations while exploring Sitka Sound, as did members of Étienne Marchand's French trading expedition which stopped off there four years later (Fleurieu 1801:221). Portlock concluded that the disease had been introduced by the Spaniards who in 1775 had made first contact with the Tlingit (Portlock 1789:271-73, 276). Years later, some Tlingit told the Russians about this (or another?) early epidemic and recalled that there had been considerable loss of life (Khlebnikov 1861a:37-38).

Settlement Patterns

The Tlingit live on the northern periphery of the Northwest Coast, which is a distinct geographical as well as cultural area. The geomorphology is characterized by steep mountains which front on the sea and which leave little room for human habitation. Almost all transport and communication between Indian communities was by canoe, some of which were large enough to carry over thirty people (Dixon 1789:173, 190-191; Fleurieu 1801:233; Kotzebue 1830:44). These canoes were hewn from red cedar, which, owing to the mild and wet climatic conditions, grows in dense stands, along with other conifers such as yellow cedar, spruce, fir, hemlock, and pine.

This timber was the raw material for a woodworking technology which employed a tool kit consisting of knives made from stone, antler, shell, or bone; stone or antler chisels and adzes; stone or wooden wedges; and the process of steaming wood to make it pliable. These tools were used to manufacture a wide assortment of fishing implements, weapons, storage boxes, and ceremonial regalia (Oberg 1973:8-9). To construct a house, log frames were raised and planked with split wood boards, a three or four foot deep pit was dug in the centre to serve as a hearth, and a raised platform was built along the inside walls for storage and for sleeping on (Shotridge and Shotridge 1914; de Laguna et al. 1964:43-45).

These houses were arranged in single and sometimes in double rows in permanent villages which were located in sheltered bays

and inlets, and on the lower courses of rivers to give handy access to the waterways. Archaeological evidence indicates that most villages were sited just above the high tide mark on beaches that were good landing places for canoes. A few villages, though, were situated on high rocky promontories and were fortified with palisades for defence (de Laguna 1960:30, 97). In 1779, Spanish naval explorers saw such a village in Bucareli Bay, and boat parties attached to Captain George Vancouver's naval expedition saw a number of small fortified villages on the west side of Kuprianov Island in 1794 (Maurelle 1799:245; Vancouver 1801, VI:46-47).¹

There are few reports on village size during the early contact period. Since the mainland coast is indented by numerous fiords and many of the offshore islands are separated by narrow channels and treacherous shoals, many villages were likely inaccessible to visiting ships. The occasional comments which early visitors made about permanent dwellings strongly suggest that around the time of first contact most villages were inhabited by fewer than three hundred people. While exploring in Salisbury Sound in 1787, Captain Portlock (1789:261) found the ruins of two permanent houses situated together on the shore. By de Laguna's (1960:31) calculation, one house was usually occupied by ten to forty people, with twenty being the average; so Portlock's abandoned village probably had been inhabited by eighty people at most, if not fewer than that number. One of Vancouver's officers,

James Johnston, made similar observations when he explored around Kuiu Island by small boat in 1794. On two separate occasions Johnston's party found single permanent houses, each inhabited by about a dozen people, and later they found a village of three houses, where forty or fifty people lived (Vancouver 1801, VI:41-43). These early observations correlate with the findings of de Laguna's archaeological survey of the Yakutat and Angoon regions. To the surprise of her and her co-workers, many of the old villages they investigated had consisted of fewer than six houses and none had consisted of more than that number (de Laguna 1960:31). The best summary statement comes from Captain Vancouver (1801, IV:167). While surveying Behm Canal in 1793, his expedition found a deserted village (being August, its inhabitants had probably moved to their summer fishing stations) which was estimated to be large enough to house three to four hundred people. Vancouver commented that this was the largest village that they had seen for quite some time. All evidence thus points towards a scattered population living in small villages during the early contact period. We shall later see that this demographic pattern was to change under fur trade conditions, with important social consequences.

Modes of Production

Villages were usually deserted for part of the summer and fall while their residents went to their fishing stations, where

they lived in roughly-built shelters made from boards and woven cedar bark mats. The duration of these expeditions varied according to the proximity of fish resources and the size of the yearly catch (Oberg 1973:56-57).²

During much of the year there were successive runs of fish ascending the rivers to reach their spawning grounds. There was sockeye salmon from July to October; king, humpback, and dog salmon from September to December; coho salmon from late November to February; and steelhead salmon and Dolly Varden trout from February to April or May (Oberg 1973:56-57). Depending on the species and the fishing conditions, these fish were either caught with hook and line, netted, harpooned and gaffed, entrapped in wiers extending from the river banks, or trapped by the falling tide in stone enclosures built out from the seashore (Niblack 1890:298; Jones 1914:103; de Laguna 1960:115). Those fish that were not immediately consumed were taken by the women to be cleaned, split, air or smoke-dried, and stored in wooden chests for use during the winter when fishing operations slackened off (Niblack 1890:279).

Fishing intensified again in May when eulachon ascended the mainland rivers. Large numbers of these small fish were caught and rendered down for oil, which added needed calories to a diet that was otherwise lacking in energy food (de Laguna et al. 1964:149).

Salmon were less abundant on the islands, and there were almost no eulachon, so the Tlingit living there relied more on

ocean fishing than did the mainland people. Particularly during March and April, many of the island Tlingit dispersed to catch halibut and cod, both for immediate consumption and for winter storage (Oberg 1973:57, 67). To make up for the lack of eulachon, large quantities of herring were caught in the spring, using rakes, each lined with a series of bone points, to impale the fish and to sweep them into their canoes. The herring were rendered for their oil or dried for later use, and herring eggs were collected as a prized addition to the common fare (Petroff 1884:59, 70; Jones 1914:104). As many as fifteen hundred to two thousand people gathered annually at the herring fishery in Sitka Sound, an event which was also marked by considerable festivity (Markoff 1856:62; Lazareff 1861:126; Khlebnikov 1861a:36-37, 131).

Although fish comprised the major part of the diet, other food resources were also collected. The thick layers of shells in present-day archaeological sites attest to the early importance of clams, oysters, mussels, sea-urchins, and crabs gathered by the women. Roots and stems of wild plants, seaweed, and the inner bark of spruce and hemlock were gathered in large quantities and pressed into cakes for winter use (Langsdorff 1814:130-131; Niblack 1890:277; Oberg 1973:8, 68, 71).

In late winter and early spring, parties of men armed with spears, and bows and arrows, and accompanied by dogs, went into the mountains to hunt bear, and to set deadfalls and snares to catch

small furred game (de Laguna 1960:114; Oberg 1973:8, 67, 68). In the fall they went in search of Rocky Mountain goat and big horn sheep. The horns of these animals were carved into spoons, and the wool of the mountain goat was woven into ceremonial blankets, which the Chilkat were especially proficient at manufacturing (Jones 1914:75, 107-108; Schwatka 1900:335; de Laguna et al. 1964:180; Oberg 1973:15, 73). Also during this season, deer were driven off the mountain sides and onto the beaches where archers were lying in wait for them. The venison that was not immediately consumed was dried and stored (Dunn 1844:290-91; Oberg 1973:71-72).

Usually in spring, hunting parties set out by canoe to hunt for seal, porpoise, and sea lion with harpoons, and to hunt sea otter with bows and arrows (Niblack 1890:299-300; de Laguna 1961:112; de Laguna et al. 1964:15). The blubber of the larger animals was rendered for oil, while the seal and sea otter furs, as well as the furs of land mammals, were given to the women, who dressed and tanned them, then tailored them for bedding and clothing (Scidmore 1885:125; Jones 1914:107; Oberg 1973:72-73). The earliest explorers described both men and women wearing leather shirts sewn down the sides, with capes, preferably of seal or sea otter fur, thrown over the shoulders, with the women also wearing an apron and a finely tanned leather undergarment stretching from the neck to the ankles (Krause 1956:101-102). The outer clothing was ornamented with bones and animal teeth, and with abalone, haliotis, and dentalium shells (Langsdorff 1814:132; Kotzebue 1830:52).

Trade

The raw materials of the aboriginal Tlingit economy were not equally distributed over their territory, and to make up for imbalances there was considerable trade between Tlingit living in different ecological zones, and between the Tlingit and neighbouring populations. Most of this trade was conducted in summer before the salmon fishing season fishing began (Oberg 1973:70-71). It is difficult to determine the nature and extent of aboriginal trade since the early explorers seldom spent enough time among the Indians to recognize patterns. We must rely heavily on ethnographic reconstructions.

Within the Tlingit habitat, there are important ecological differences between the coastal mainland and the offshore islands, and this provided the basis for trade between the populations living in these two zones. The island Tlingit had better access to seafood, which they traded to the mainland people: seal oil, dried halibut, dried king salmon, dried herring, shellfish, and herring spawn. Since the islands supported considerable numbers of deer, dried venison was also traded. Red cedar timbers were an important trade good for the southern island groups. This wood, which is noted for the ease with which it can be worked, only grows on the southern outer islands of the Tlingit area, and it was highly valued by the mainland and northern peoples (see Krause 1956:56). Yellow cedar, which was often used for decorative objects, and yew

wood, which was tough and resilient enough for bows, are also native to the islands and were traded to the mainland (Oberg 1973:108).

In return, the mainland Tlingit traded products which were abundant in their own area. There was a wider variety of furred and hoofed game on the mainland, and some groups had trading relations with interior hunting tribes as well, so there was a flow from the mainland to the islands of furs and hides, either merely dressed and tanned, or manufactured into clothing and blankets (Oberg 1973:107; see Knapp and Childe 1896:172). Since eulachon only ran up mainland rivers, dried eulachon and eulachon oil were exported to the islands (Oberg 1973:107, 109).

The Tlingit also traded eulachon to the Haida living on the Queen Charlotte Islands, an area where those fish are not found. These islands are, however, well endowed with red cedar, which the Tlingit were in short supply of, and the Haida used this wood to construct dug-out canoes which were even traded to the Chilkat and Yakutat Tlingit who lived over four hundred miles north of the Queen Charlottes (Niblack 1890:296; Seton-Karr 1891:57; Krause 1956:208; de Laguna 1972,1:352; Oberg 1973:108). There was also a trade in sumptuous items: the Haida brought ornamental shells, shark teeth, and ceremonial paraphernalia, and exchanged them for hides, Chilkat blankets, and placer copper which was originally traded from interior Indians (Krause 1956:127, 141; Oberg 1973:108).

The Eyak and in turn the Chugach live farther up the coast, to the northwest of the Tlingit, but there appears to have been little trade from that direction, other than walrus ivory, bows and arrows, and other small items which apparently originated with Inuit living north of the Alaska Peninsula (Niblack 1890:286; de Laguna 1972,1:349).

Of much greater historical significance was the Tlingit trade with the Athabaskan-speaking Indians of the interior: the Southern Tutchone, the Tagish, the Teslin, the Atlin, and the Tahltan (see figure 1. above). These Indians were organized into small, nomadic bands which roamed vast territories, primarily in search of caribou and fish, but also hunting moose, small furred game, and birds (McClellan 1953:47). To cross the mountain barrier, the Tlingit ascended the Stikine, Taku, Chilkat, and Alsek rivers, or travelled over the lengthy Chilkat Pass or the more arduous Chilkoot Pass (see Swanton 1908:414; de Laguna et al. 1964:2). With them, the Tlingit carried goods indigenous to their region: dried fish, eulachon oil, cakes prepared from spruce and hemlock inner bark, shell ornaments, and cedar bark baskets. These were traded for caribou and moose hides; thongs and sinews for sewing and binding; lichen for dyeing blankets; moccasins; birch wood bows; and placer copper from the Copper River and White River districts which was later cold hammered into arrow points, lance points, and daggers (Olson 1936:211; Krause 1956:127-28; Oberg

1973:108).

One historical source tells us that at an early date the Stikine Tlingit were trading into the interior with some frequency. The 1801 log book of the Boston trading ship Atahaulpa (quoted in Krause 1956:217) records a meeting with an Indian who spoke of

...several tribes who inhabit the country east of the Stikine. He had gotten his information from Cockshoo, the chief of the Stikine, who had been among them several times to trade.... The language of these tribes is entirely different from that of the Stikine. They learned the use of iron only recently when the Stikine traded them knives, forks, etc. for food (what kind I could not determine).

It is interesting that small iron implements, obviously originating from British and American traders, were being carried inland. By this time the Tlingit had been active in the maritime fur trade for little more than a decade, but already aboriginal trading routes were being integrated into mercantile systems based in Great Britain and the eastern United States.

Levels of Social Organization

Social relationships among the Tlingit were largely articulated through kinship ties, both known and putative, between individuals. The order of priority by which people were recruited to perform economic, political, and religious tasks was generally determined by the degree of kinship distance between them (see Emmons 1916:10; de Laguna 1952:2).

The entire Tlingit population was divided into two exoga-

mous moieties, with the members of each claiming shared matrilineal descent from one of two mythical beings, the Raven and the Wolf, with the Eagle taking the place of the Wolf among the northern Tlingit (Oberg 1973:44).³ The members of each moiety celebrated their respective mythical ancestors in songs, dances, rituals, and myths which only they had rights over. Similarly, only the members of one moiety could display totemic crests which graphically represented their mythical ancestor (Veniaminoff 1840:30; Petroff 1884:166; Jones 1914:170-71, 179; Oberg 1973:43-44). Each of these moieties was comprised of a number of named matrilineal clans which were in turn subdivided into named house groups or lineages.

The members of a house group were close matrilineal kin, and in many ways this was the most important social unit. They lived under one roof, shared their meals over a common hearth, and jointly reared their children. There were distinct nuclear families within each house group but their identities tended to be submerged by the intense communality of the group as a whole (Oberg 1973:23). The core of a house group was a number of geneological and classificatory brothers. Living with them were their wives from the opposite moiety who had left their natal house groups after marriage to take up residence with their husbands (Oberg 1973:29). Also living in a house group were the sisters' sons of the brothers. According to the practice of avunculocal residence,

these boys had left their natal house groups when they were six or seven years old. After settling among their matrilineal kin, they were given rigorous physical training, taught life skills, and were educated in the history and ritual of their house group, clan, and moiety (Oberg 1973:23, 32, 86). As their mothers' brothers died, this younger generation succeeded them, assuming their names and titles, personal property, and responsibilities. To maintain existing marriage alliances, the upcoming generation often married the wives of their deceased mothers' brothers, as well as taking their own wives (Khlebnikov 1861a:36; de Laguna 1960:192; Olson 1967:21; Oberg 1973:32). Thus constituted, each house group ranged in size from ten to forty people, with twenty as an average (de Laguna 1960:31).

The house group was the basic production unit. The men worked together in fishing, hunting, and building canoes, while the women prepared fish for storage, rendered fish oil, prepared pelts and hides, and gathered berries and shellfish (Olson 1967:11; Oberg 1973:30, 79-80, 85-86). The tools and utensils that were vital to this foraging economy were mostly owned by the house group, and those weapons and tools that were owned by individuals were often shared (Oberg 1973:30, 62). The products of group labour were collectively consumed and any surplus might be traded to other groups, the goods received in return being kept as communal property (Oberg 1973:30, 91-92).

While leading a French scientific expedition whose ships stopped at Lituya Bay in 1786, Comte de La Pérouse (1799:399) observed a number of house groups at their summer fishing stations. He gave an accurate portrait of the social life of a house group:

Eighteen or twenty persons lodged under each of these sheds, the women and children on one side, the men of the other. It appeared to me, that each hut contained a small tribe unconnected with its neighbours; for each had it's [sic] canoe, and a sort of chief; each departed, left the bay, and took away its fish and its planks, without the rest of the village appearing to take the least concern in the business.⁴

The "chief" that La Pérouse referred to was known as a yitsati. In later chapters we will focus on historical changes in the qualifications, and political and economic roles of a yitsati.

Though house groups were usually "unconnected" with each other in economic activities; in other ways they were closely tied together. Different house groups of the same clan had often formerly belonged to a parent house group which had split up because of internal conflict or because it had become too large. These historical relationships formed the basis for ongoing ties between members of the same clan, particularly if they lived in the same locality. It was common, for instance, for house groups belonging to the same clan living in one village to occupy adjacent houses (Olson 1967:24; Oberg 1973:39-40, 86).

Clan ties were given symbolic expression through distinctive crests, many of them representing animal figures, which commemorated important events, often mythical, in the clan history. It

was common for the members of a clan to paint variations of these crests on their faces and to display them on both ceremonial and utilitarian property (Petroff 1884:166; Niblack 1890:311; McClellan 1954:87). Members of the same clan also held a common identification with clan heirlooms and relics (Oberg 1973:43-45). Besides these tangible symbols of clan unity, each clan held exclusive rights over names and titles, which were passed on from one generation to the next within the clan, and over ceremonial prerogatives - songs, stories, and dances (Jones 1914:37, 176-77; Olson 1967:1; Oberg 1973:46).

Different house groups of the same clan occasionally worked together in subsistence production, and at times they shared any surplus food that had been collected (Oberg 1973:79-80, 96). But more important than this was the clan's role as a property-holding group. Although it is true that in large rivers and on the open sea there was such an abundance of fish that they were owned by all, wherever there was scarcity the resources were divided among different clans. Thus, clans owned house sites, salmon streams, hunting grounds, seal rookeries, berry patches, and passes through the mountains, and allocated usufructory rights over these resources to their constituent house groups (Olson 1967:24; Oberg 1973:40, 55-56). Clan ownership was established through continual use or occupancy, validated through legendry and the belief that the spirits of the dead occupied clan territory, and

signified by symbolic engravings and paintings that decorated rock surfaces in the locality (Garfield 1947:451; de Laguna 1953:54; Oberg 1973:64).

The clan also played an active role in politico-legal affairs. If an individual or group became involved in a dispute their entire clan united on their behalf. For lesser crimes, such as assault, accidental injury, adultery, or an insult, the matter was usually closed by a collective agreement that goods should be paid in compensation (Petroff 1884:165; Oberg 1973:131-32). Or the clans might supervise a public duel between the conflicting parties (Wood 1882:331; Niblack 1890:342; Krause 1956:172). In the case of murder, settlement might involve a property payment or public execution of the guilty party (or a kinsman standing in for him) with the consent of his clan (Khlebnikov 1861a:38-40; Olson 1967:71; Oberg 1973:130). If no settlement was agreed upon the clans feuded until the offended clan was satisfied with the losses it inflicted on its enemy, in which case disputes could remain unsettled for years or even generations (Golovin 1861a:48; Petroff: 120-21; Olson 1967:70; Oberg 1973:132).

Whether a dispute was ended by a negotiated settlement or by a feud, it mattered little if the individual(s) who committed the crime suffered. This was observed by Otto Von Kotzebue (1830: 56), a Russian naval officer who visited the Tlingit in 1824.

Besides the desire of booty, the most frequent occasion of warfare is revenge. One murder can only be atoned by

another; but it is indifferent whether the murderer or one of his relations fall, - the custom merely requires a man for a man; should the murdered person be a female, a female is required in return.

This indifference to individual personalities underscores the corporate nature of Tlingit politico-legal affairs. Each clan presented a solid front against all others and, in accordance with that, open conflict within a clan was kept to a minimum. The murder of one clan member by another was not punished. Theft did not occur - it was hardly necessary since most property was communally owned and if it was individually owned it was shared (Niblack 1890:240; Olson 1967:69; Oberg 1973:40-41). If two men belonged to the same clan and one committed adultery, the problem was usually settled with less difficulty than if the offending man belonged to another clan, although:

Passionate and hot-headed men do not always make these distinctions and then relatives wreak cruel vengeance on the offending husband (Khlebnikov 1861a:36; also see Oberg 1934:148; Olson 1967:69).

Generally, though, witchcraft and incest were the only crimes that brought severe and public punishment when they were committed within a clan.⁵

There was some solidarity between clans belonging to the same moiety, although at times it was tenuous. Since a clan had few mechanisms for dealing with internal conflict, or perhaps if a local clan became so large that it was socially or economically unwieldy, a segment might break off and emigrate to a different

locality (Garfield 1947:451; de Laguna 1952:8; Olson 1967:24).

The old and new groups could maintain a common identity, in which case there would be subdivisions of the same clan living in different localities, as with the Kagwanton clan, for example, which had branches living among both the Sitka and the Chilkat Tlingit (Krause 1956:41-42). In other cases, the emigrant group had gradually developed a separate clan identity (de Laguna 1954:90) but maintained residual ties with other clans of their moiety that they had formerly been more closely associated with.

At least when conditions were favourable, social relationships between members of the same moiety were cordial:

No matter where they go, those of their totem kindly receive them and show them the warmest hospitality. Those of an opposite totem, while they may not be regarded as enemies, yet are not looked upon as friends, nor called upon for any favour (Jones 1914:174; also see Niblack 1890:374; Swanton 1908:427).

In the event of major feuds, clans of the same moiety often joined together in opposition to disputants who came from the opposite moiety (de Laguna 1960:148-49; Oberg 1973:118-19). This was observed by Alexander Markoff (1856:69), who served with the Russian American Company in the 1840s:

These people never forget insult or injury. The most distant families of the same tribe [moiety] are always ready to avenge the slightest insult offered to a countryman.

However, although open conflict was probably more frequent between clans of opposite moieties, often there were feuds between clans

of the same moiety (Oberg 1934:146; 1973:49; Olson 1967:1, 69).

Markoff (1856:69) saw that there was social instability underlying moiety harmony:

When the Kolioosh [Tlingit] assemble at certain localities from the different villages, each of the tribes have to be on guard in the intercourse with the people belonging to the same tribe [moiety] but living in different villages. The most insignificant circumstances will give rise to quarrels and quarrels are never settled without raids upon each other which are always accompanied with bloodshed and often with murder.

It can be seen from this that moiety unity was not strong, and a moiety did not serve specific and ongoing functions, as did the clan and house group. Rather, from the perspective of any one clan, the other members of their moiety constituted a reserve of personnel whose support could be occasionally drawn upon, but only under exceptional circumstances, and then usually in political and legal affairs.

Here, we have focused our attention on consanguinal kinship. Later, in chapter 5, it will be shown how affinal kinship became increasingly important under fur trade conditions.

Notes

¹Warfare in either one of these localities might have been the result of population pressure resulting from when the Kaigani Haida left the Queen Charlotte Islands and settled on Prince of Wales Island. This move probably occurred in the late 1700s, and it appears that there was some population displacement (see Olson 1967:1, 3).

²It appears that the Chilkat were the only Tlingit who were able to live year-round in their permanent villages (Emmons 1916:13).

³Oberg believed there was a third small phratry, the Nexadi of the Tongass Tlingit, which married both Raven and Wolf people. William L. Paul, an amateur ethnologist and himself a Tlingit, says that the Nexadi were a branch of the Raven moiety (Duff 1973:viii-ix).

⁴Langsdorff (1814:130), who visited the Tlingit in 1805-1806, also indicated that house groups were very independent from one another, particularly in economic activities.

⁵Some anthropologists (Olson 1967:20; Oberg 1973:41) have said that witchcraft and incest were punished by death. However, William L. Paul says that death could be escaped by confessing witchcraft, and incest resulted in social ostracism until a person gave a feast (Duff 1973:ix).

CHAPTER 3

THE TLINGIT AND THE FUR TRADE

In their general intercourse with us we found them quiet and civil but whenever the sale of beaver skin was talked of, they displayed a restless grasping avidity with and pertinacity in drawing a hard bargain exceeding anything of the kind I ever saw (Douglas 1840a:12).

Initial Exploration

From the end of the eighteenth century through the nineteenth century, the Tlingit were involved in uninterrupted trade, varying only in intensity, with either Russian, British, or American fur traders. Starting from different home bases, these traders converged on the Tlingit during the last decade of the eighteenth century.

The crucial starting point for Russian expansion into North America which eventually brought them into direct contact with the Tlingit was the 1741 voyage of Vitus Bering. Commissioned by the Czar to explore the "Eastern Oceans", Bering set out from Siberia in the ship St. Peter and in company with the ship St. Paul under Alexei Chirikov. While Chirikov explored the southern Alaskan coast, Bering explored the north, and was later shipwrecked on the Commander Islands. A few of the surviving crew members made their way back to Siberia, carrying with them the knowledge that sea otter were abundant in North America.

Prompted by the discovery of valuable fur resources, small companies of fur hunters and merchants, the promyshleniki, shipped out from Siberia, usually from Okhotsk, bound for the Aleutian Islands (Bancroft 1886:chaps. IV, V, VI). Pushing eastward from one island to the next, they bartered and pillaged furs from the natives and hunted, leaving fur barren ground in their wake (Okun 1951:9-11).

Meanwhile, the Spanish, alarmed by this Russian activity, sent out a series of naval expeditions from Mexico to establish a claim on the Northwest Coast. One small Spanish warship, the Sonora, under the command of Bodega y Quadra, reached as far north as Salisbury Sound in 1775, and made the first recorded face-to-face contact with the Tlingit. The Sonora's visit was brief, but in 1779 the Spanish sent out the "Third Bucareli Expedition", consisting of two naval frigates, which spent two months exploring Bucareli Bay, where the Spaniards once again made contact with the Tlingit. There is no indication that at this time the Tlingit possessed European trade goods in abundance,¹ and it appears that the Tlingit were living totally under aboriginal conditions.

The Spanish did not consolidate their foothold on the northern coast, for their empire in the Americas was by this time on the decline. Only one more Spanish naval expedition, consisting of two corvettes under the command of Alejandro Malaspina, visited

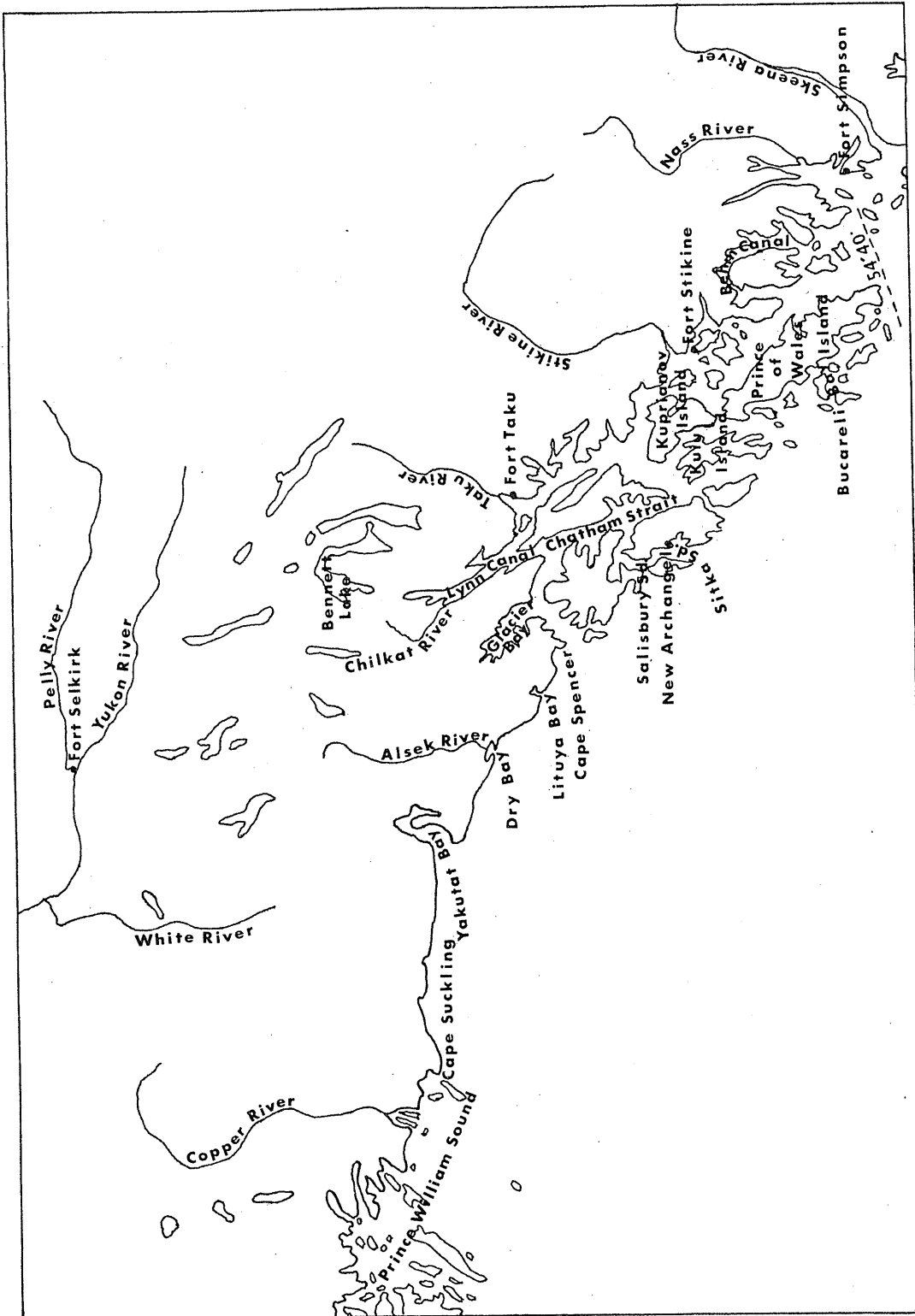


Figure 2: The Southeastern Region of Russian America

the Tlingit, stopping off for a brief visit at Yakutat Bay in 1791 while on a round-the-world voyage.

The British were the rising force in the North Pacific. In 1778, while on his third great voyage of discovery, Captain Cook explored the Northwest Coast. Like the Bering expedition of years before, the Cook expedition brought back knowledge of rich sea otter resources, which prompted another rush for furs.

The Maritime Fur Trade

Beginning in 1785, small merchant-adventurers sailed from England and from British ports in India to trade sea otter pelts from the Indians of the Northwest Coast and to sell them at markets in Canton, where the Chinese were willing to pay high prices.

It appears that the first maritime fur traders to reach the Tlingit were Captain George Dixon, commanding the Queen Charlotte, and Nathaniel Portlock of the King George. Dixon took his ship into Yakutat Bay and found that the Tlingit living there had only a few articles of European manufacture - beads, knives, and spear points - which they had doubtless traded from Indians living in the north who were in contact with the Russians. It is clear that at this time the Tlingit were not engaged in fur hunting other than to supply their domestic needs:

...we found the natives scanty stock of furs not only exhausted, but they had stripped themselves almost naked, to spin out their trade as far as possible (Dixon 1789:168).

Here, and later on at Sitka Sound, which he visited next, Dixon traded a wide assortment of bricabrac in exchange for furs, as did his partner Portlock who followed him (see Dixon 1789:181-82, 191; Portlock 1789:284). Other than iron, which was eagerly sought after by the Tlingit and which was probably cold hammered into arrow and spear points and small tools, the trade depended "...in a great measure, on fancy and caprice" (Dixon 1789:192) at this time.

Other traders followed Dixon and Portlock. American merchants, most of them sailing out of Boston, became particularly active in the trade, quickly overshadowing the British, who were hampered by restrictive monopoly rights of trade granted to the South Seas Company and the East India Company (Howay 1941:xxvi). Over the next decade, between six and twenty-one vessels a year, and possibly more, traded on the Northwest Coast (Howay 1973:24). Within short time, trinkets and small trade goods lost their value and were given only as presents to conclude a successful trade, while other more sophisticated goods became the staples of the trade (see Fleurieu 1801:240-41, 249). Lieutenant Whidbey, who served on Vancouver's expedition, met the Tlingit in 1794 and commented on this change: "...coats and trousers seemed by them to be preferred to every other article excepting arms and ammunition: copper and iron being reduced to very inferior value" (Vancouver 1801,V:443-44; also see Fleurieu 1801: 191, 230-31; Langsdorff 1814:85-86, 112, 132). By after the turn of the century, the Tlingit were so well equipped with firearms that

they had almost given up the use of bows and arrows, and spears (Langsdorff 1814:131; Lisiansky 1814:239).

Russian Encroachment

While the British and the Americans were developing a trade in sea otter pelts, the Russians, in the meantime, had been continuing their expansion along the Aleutians and, after 1783, onto the coastal mainland of Alaska. As they went farther afield in search of new fur resources, small groups of promyshleniki began to coalesce into larger companies (Bancroft 1886:chap. IX). One of these, the Shelikhov-Golikov Company, sent out an expedition in 1784 which forcibly subdued the native inhabitants of Kodiak Island, the Koniags, and there established what was to become a major Russian settlement. Operating out of this base, the Shelikhov-Golikov Company sent out hunting and exploring expeditions to the mainland coast, initially to Cook Inlet and Prince William Sound, where they met opposition from the Lebedev-Lastochin Company (Bancroft 1886:chap. XV). Wanting to outreach their rivals and faced with the rapid depletion of sea otter owing to overhunting, the Shelikhov-Golikov Company turned its attention even farther south, to the area occupied by the Tlingit. Two naval officers seconded to the Shelikhov-Golikov Company, Gerassin Ismailov and Dmitri Bocharov, shipped out on the Three Saints in 1788 and explored Yakutat Bay and Lituya Bay, where they made first Russian

contact with the Tlingit (Shelekhoff 1812:1-90).

Around this time, initially in response to poor profits caused by competition in trade, the Shelikhov-Golikov Company resorted to conscripting subjugated Aleuts and Koniags, and occasionally the Chugach, to serve as sea otter hunters. These natives were paid with trade goods - tobacco, axes, knives, needles, Chinese cloth, beads, and handkerchiefs - and with birdskin and squirrel parkas which were manufactured for the Company by their kinsmen who remained at home (Davidoff 1810:121-22). Especially after 1791, when the Company came under the management of that bold and controversial figure, Alexander Baranov, the deployment of sea otter hunting parties became the dominant mode of procuring furs along much of the coast, even in those areas where there was little or no competition (Bancroft 1886:237-38, 315).

In 1794, the first large Aleut hunting party² was sent out to encroach on Tlingit territory. Consisting of fourteen hundred native hunters travelling in seven hundred "baidarkas", the small two-man skin-covered boats of the Aleut, and under the command of Egor Purtov, this party ranged from Cook Inlet south to Yakutat Bay (Vancouver 1801:,V:385-86). By utilizing the Aleut's skills at hunting sea otter, which few other natives could match, a rich haul of almost two thousand pelts was taken (Khlebnikov 1973:15).

Inspired by this successful hunt and responding to the now serious depletion of sea otter in Prince William Sound (Berkh 1974: 82-83), the Russians further expanded their southern operations. During the following year, Purtov led another baidarka fleet to Yakutat Bay but the Tlingit prevented him from hunting and he had to move farther down the coast (Khlebnikov 1973:15-16). (Later, we will look in greater depth at Purtov's troubles at Yakutat Bay.) A larger force commanded by Baranov followed Purtov and achieved greater success. Hostages were taken from the Tlingit to ensure the safety of a few Russians and Koniags who were left behind to build a land establishment. This small force was reinforced in 1796, and the settlement of New Russia was constructed (Fedorova 1973:125; Khlebnikov 1973:15-20).

Having established themselves at Yakutat Bay, the Russians took Aleut hunters to Lituya Bay, then explored still farther south and found large numbers of sea otter in Sitka Sound (Berkh 1974:83; Khlebnikov 1973:19-20). Capitalizing on this discovery, the Russians sent hunting parties there during the following years (Khlebnikov 1973:21, 23).

While this expansion was taking place, the Russian fur trade was undergoing a major reorganization which culminated in the merger of all independent fur companies into one parent firm, the Russian American Company (hereafter referred to as the RAC), which was granted a monopoly over all commerce in Russian America (Bancroft

1959:chap. XVII). Strengthened by these mergers, the Russians established the settlement of Archangel Michael at Sitka Sound in 1799, and began to send out hunting parties which brought in rich hauls of sea otter pelts (Tikhmenev 1861-63,1:102; Bancroft 1886;chap. XVIII; Khlebnikov 1973:26-36).

Economic Competition and Warfare

Between the Russians and the Tlingit

Russian success in the vicinity of Sitka Sound was short-lived. By this time, the Tlingit had built up a sizeable trade with the British and the Americans; in fact, the Russians had expanded into the Tlingit area in part to prevent so many furs from being taken by foreigners and because they realized that large numbers of furs being traded at Canton would eventually hurt their own trade with the Chinese, which was carried on at the border town of Kiakhta (Khlebnikov 1973:24-25). Clearly, a competitive situation had developed. On one side were the Tlingit, who hunted sea otter and traded their pelts to the British and the Americans, and on the other side were the Russians, who conscripted Aleuts to hunt the same sea otter populations.

The Tlingit became hostile towards the Russians as soon as their Aleut hunting parties began to make incursions into Yakutat Bay and to the south. The armed tender Chatham, attached to the Vancouver expedition and under the command of Lieutenant Peter Puget,

happened to be surveying Yakutat Bay at the same time as Purtov took the first Russian-Aleut hunting party there in 1794. The British noted that the members of the hunting party were in a state of considerable anxiety, having skirmished with some Indians around Cape Suckling (it is not known if these were Tlingit) a few weeks before, with one Russian and six Indians being killed (Vancouver 1801,V:386). On the morning of July 3, a large group of Tlingit encamped in the vicinity of Purtov's party and the Chatham. Next morning, the Tlingit sent out twelve representatives to speak to the Russians. Puget, here paraphrased by Vancouver, recorded this revealing diplomatic encounter:

Early in the morning of the 4th, a large wooden canoe, with twelve strangers, visited the Russian encampment, and were welcomed to the shore by a song from the Kodiak Indians; this complement [sic] being returned in the same way, a conference took place; in which the native chief exerted his utmost eloquence to point out the extent of their territories, and the injustice of the Russians in killing and taking away their sea otters, without making them the slightest recompense. After these grievances had been enumerated with energetic force; the chief sent a sea otter skin to Portoff, and on his accepting this present, a loud shout was given by both parties; this was followed by a song, which concluded these introductory ceremonies (Vancouver 1801,V:402).

Clearly, then, the Russians and the Tlingit were in competition for the same economic resource. On this occasion the Tlingit were willing to use peaceful means to settle the dispute. The following year, however, when Purtov returned to Yakutat Bay with another hunting party, he was prevented from hunting, as was mentioned earlier, and the Russians were able to establish themselves there

only after Baranov arrived and put on a show of force (Khlebnikov 1973:15-16).

The culmination of this economic competition was a coordinated, armed assault by the Tlingit against the Russians in June, 1802. This was one of those few occasions when clans belonging to a number of qwans - Stikine, Kake, Killisnoo, Sitka, Chilkat, and others³ - joined together in collective action (see Khlebnikov 1861b:53). Armed "with splendid rifles and falconets" (Rezanov, 1805, quoted in Okun 1951:119), a Tlingit force of six hundred to one thousand men attacked and destroyed the Archangel Michael settlement, killed most of the garrison, and, it is interesting to note, carried off two or three thousand sea otter pelts (Lisiansky 1814:219; Tikhmenev 1861-63, I:111; Bancroft 1886:401-13). At the same time, an Aleut hunting party commanded by Urbanov was attacked by Kake Tlingit, with thirteen hundred pelts being captured (Khlebnikov 1861b:50-51). Another Aleut party, commanded by Kuskov, was travelling south to Yakutat Bay when it was met by hostile Tlingit. A parley was held in which the Tlingit cited Russian sea otter hunting as the cause for their animosity, as the RAC historian Tikhmenev (1861-63, I:113) reported:

The "toions" [a Siberian word for "chief"] entered Kuskov's tent and accused the Company's hunters in robbing the dead natives' graves. After that they declared that the friendly relations between them and the Russians were broken.

The Tlingit then attacked, but Kuskov's party was able to fend them

off, negotiate a truce, and leave (Tikhmenev 1861-63,1:113-14). The subsequent arrival of Kushov's party at New Russia deterred the Tlingit who were assembled there from carrying out a planned assault (Khlebnikov 1861b:51-53).

The Russians, under Baranov's command, returned to the Sitka district in force in 1804. They escorted a large hunting party into the archipelago, destroyed some Tlingit villages in reprisal for the 1802 attack, then moved on Sitka, where the Tlingit had built a large fort (Landsdorff 1814:84; Lisiansky 1914:149, 163; Khlebnikov 1973:44-45). The Russians bombarded the fort and attacked on foot and after a few days fighting the Tlingit withdrew to build a new fort on Chatham Strait, while the Russians commenced building a new settlement, which they named New Archangel (Lisiansky 1814:155-61, 220).

This battle did not end the conflict between the Russians and the Tlingit, for in 1805 the New Russia settlement was attacked and destroyed. The Russians never again settled on Yakutat Bay (Golovin 1861a:22; Tikhmenev 1861-63,1:185-86). New Archangel was not attacked again until 1855, although there were threats of attack in 1807, 1809, and 1813 (Tikhmenev 1861-63,1:291; Khlebnikov 1973:65). However, the Russian settlement remained in a virtual state of siege during the succeeding decades. Moreover, the Tlingit continually menaced Aleut hunting parties that set out from New Archangel during the next few years (Khlebnikov 1861a:6-7; 1973:75).

By 1809 it had become clear that competitive hunting by the Tlingit and the Aleuts had exhausted the sea otter resources of the region to the point that it was hardly profitable to exploit them. During the following year, two American vessels working on contract for the Russians escorted the last large hunting party out of New Archangel. Large numbers of armed Tlingit harassed the expedition along most of the course. After this, the Russians concentrated on finding new and richer fur territories where they were free from interference (Khlebnikov 1861a:7-8; 1973:84). From 1807 to 1812, they engaged American ship captains to take Aleut hunting parties to California, and in 1812 the Russians established the Ross colony near Bodega Bay. Working out of this base, the Aleuts quickly wiped out the local sea otter and fur seal populations (Tikhmenev 1861-63,1:250, 254-55; Khlebnikov 1973:95).

By the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century, then, the sea otter populations living in the Tlingit region had been nearly exterminated. During later years, and certainly from 1818 to 1827 and in 1832-1833, the Russians sent out small parties of Aleuts from New Archangel to hunt in the archipelago and, more often, in Yakutat Bay and Lituya Bay, where sea otter had replenished somewhat. And, just as in the past, the Tlingit repelled the hunters or simply went ahead of the baidarka fleets, killing or scaring off any sea otter they encountered (Tarakanoff 1852:346; Khlebnikov 1861a:46, 72-73; 1972:9). Sea otter continued to be an

important resource for some Tlingit, but, generally speaking, an era had ended. Adapting to changed ecological conditions, the Tlingit developed new methods of procuring furs. Before examining this next phase of the fur trade period, it should be emphasized that the turn of the nineteenth century was a time of major economic change for the Tlingit. The high degree of their commitment to the fur trade is indicated by the intensity of their conflict with their Russian competitors.

The Development of the Interior Fur Trade

As the sea otter resources were depleted, the Russians initiated a major shift in policy: they began to concentrate their efforts on trading land furs from the native inhabitants of Russian America. The available information is sketchy, but it is known that by the second decade of the nineteenth century the Russians carried on some trade with the Tlingit. At least on occasion, and perhaps with some regularity, heavily armed trading ships were sent from New Archangel to trade what furs they could from the Tlingit living in the archipelago (see Lutke 1861:147). Also, the Tlingit occasionally came to New Archangel, but the situation was certainly not conducive to large-scale trade, for the Tlingit were not allowed to live near the fort until 1822, and before then they could visit only if they arrived unarmed and if they left immediately after trading (Golovin 1861a:49; Khlebnikov 1861a:8, 131).

Russian trade was not only limited by the need to keep New Archangel on a war footing. The maritime fur traders, who were by this time mostly American, stayed on after the sea otter were exterminated and offered the Russians stiff competition for the trade in land furs (see Howay 1938:xiv). Trading statistics are not available (and probably have not survived), but it is likely that the Americans dominated the trade with the Tlingit around this time. For Russian supply routes were long and, accordingly, their trade goods were expensive and limited in selection (see Muravief, quoted in Okun 1951:207-208). Moreover, the Russians had considerable difficulty provisioning New Archangel, which had developed into a major administrative and transportation centre with a population of many hundreds of people, so large amounts of trade goods had to be expended on fish, fresh meat, and other victuals purchased from the Tlingit. This was a problem for the Russians throughout their period of tenure in southeastern Alaska (Golovin 1861a:60; Lutke 1861:148). In contrast, the Americans offered a wide variety of higher quality trade goods (Khlebnikov 1861a:88,90; Lütke 1861:147). The clearance papers of the American trading ship New Hazard, which sailed out of Boston for the Northwest Coast in 1810, show that a good selection of merchandise, most of it utilitarian, was offered to the Indians. The ship's owners declared a cargo of

musquets, bread, molasses, sugar, India cottons,
wearing apparel, hardware, gunpowder, paints, iron,

rice, sheetings, shot, tobacco, woolens, woodenware
(quoted in Howay 1938:xiv).

Among all of the goods traded, firearms were the most important, and here the Americans enjoyed a clear advantage over the Russians. Some observers maintained that by the 1820s the Tlingit had become so dependent on firearms that they no longer had the skills to hunt without them (Markoff 1856:73; Lütke 1861:145). The Russians at New Archangel, however, were bound by a general Company policy of not selling firearms to the native inhabitants of Russian America, and this ban was most rigourously imposed on the Tlingit, since they had not submitted to Russian domination (Lütke 1861:145). The Americans, on the other hand, traded firearms and ammunition with impunity, even though the trade was opposed by the Russians and outlawed by agreement with the United States in 1824 (Kotzebue 1830:54; Golovin 1861a:23-25, 112-13; 1861b:105-106; Lazareff 1861:127; Tikhmenev 1861-63,1:286, 397-98).

A major portion of the land furs that the Tlingit traded to the Russians and the Americans during this period were acquired through a middleman trade with the Indians living on the interior plateau, a region that was richer in furs than the narrow belt of rainforest that the Tlingit inhabited. Following trade routes that had been developed in aboriginal times, the Tlingit went into the interior and traded Russian and American goods in exchange for furs which they carried back to the coast. The Hudson's Bay

Company (hereafter referred to as the HBC) discovered the existence of an extensive interior fur trade in 1824, when they sent out the "Rocky Mountain Expedition", under the command of Samuel Black, to explore what is now northern British Columbia. While exploring near the headwaters of the Stikine River, Black met a small band of hunting Indians whom he called the "Thloadennis". Some of the goods these Indians carried had obviously originated from HBC posts in the Mackenzie River district, but others were of foreign make. For instance, Black noticed four roughly-made muskets of American manufacture (Rich 1955:116). The "Thloadennis" had received these and other goods - kettles, steel awls, looking glasses, and bits of metal that they had crafted into edge tools - from the "Nahanni", who may have been the present-day Tahltan (see Rich 1955:1xxiv). An old man described to Black how the "Nahanni" acquired these goods:

...the Nahannies get their trading articles from the Taodennis farther down and the Taodennis trade with white People like us at the Sea where they have a Fort, large Looking Glasses & big Animals....
(Rich 1955:112).

This fort could only have been New Archangel, and with little doubt the "Taodenni" were the Tlingit, who were carrying both Russian and American goods into the interior for trade.

The Advent of the Hudson's Bay Company

Strengthened by its merger with the North West Company in 1821, the HBC began to expand northward from the Columbia Basin, first sending out trading ships, then in 1831 establishing Fort Simpson near the mouth of the Nass River, within miles of Russia's southern boundary. Black's discovery that furs originating in British territory were finding their way to Russian and American markets through Tlingit middlemen must certainly have fueled the HBC's determination to capture the coastal fur trade.

In 1834, they sent out an expedition with instructions to establish a trading post up the Stikine River to intercept furs that were being traded to their Russian and American competitors (Galbraith 1957:143-44, 148ff). The estuary of the river was inside the Russian boundary, but the British had been granted rights of passage through Russian waters by the 1825 Anglo-Russian Convention. However, the Russians forestalled the British advance during what has been called the "Stikine incident". They built Fort St. Dionysius near the river mouth and stationed the armed brig Chirikov there to prevent the HBC ship Dryad from carrying men and supplies upriver (Galbraith 1957:145-47). From an ethno-historical perspective, it is particularly interesting that the Stikine Tlingit were willing to have the British build a trading establishment at the river mouth, but they strongly opposed inland expansion for fear that their monopoly of the interior fur trade

would be broken (Rich 1941:319, 321; Tolmie 1963:285). This clearly indicates that the interior fur trade had by this time become a vital component of the Tlingit economy. Faced with this combined opposition, the British withdrew and pressed damage claims against the Russians through the Foreign Office in London.

The HBC did, however, succeed in driving out the American maritime fur traders along the entire coast over the next few years (Galbraith 1957:137-40ff.), and they also quickly established a regular trade with the Tlingit. According to the HBC officer, Peter Skene Ogden, the refusal of the Russians to trade firearms and ammunition gave the Tlingit "anxiety to trade" with the British (Rich 1941:321). Tongass, Stikine, "Cape Fox", and "Port Stewart" Tlingit became regular visitors at Fort Simpson soon after it was opened, bypassing Fort St. Dionysius in the process (see HBCA B 201/a/3;4). Their trade with the British was substantial: in 1837, for instance, the Tlingit and the Kaigani Haida traded 1560 beaver and land otter pelts at Fort Simpson (Rich 1941:246). It is not known how many furs of these species the Russians traded at New Archangel during the same year, but a comparison with later years suggests that by then the HBC had equalled or surpassed the RAC's trade (cf. Khlebnikov 1861a:89; Petroff 1884:62-65). Later events allowed the HBC to consolidate their hold on the Tlingit trade.

The long negotiations resulting from the "Stikine incident" were finally closed in 1839 with an agreement that the HBC would lease the mainland coast from Cape Spencer south to the Russian-British boundary, while the RAC maintained exclusive rights of trade on the islands. In return for these trading rights, the HBC was to pay the RAC two thousand land otter pelts per year, transport manufactured goods to New Archangel at low freight rates, and sell victuals to the Russians. The initial agreement was for ten years, but it was renewed with modification⁴ until the Russian occupation of Alaska ended in 1867 (Galbraith 1957:chap. 8).

By leasing this territory from the Russians, the HBC gained effective control over trade with the Tlingit. The HBC's fur accounts were organized in such a way that their total trade inside the leased territory can be accurately computed only for the years 1840-1843; and surviving RAC trade statistics commence at 1842. But even a comparison between the overlapping years, 1842-1843, shows that the HBC had a commanding lead in the trade. The most important species of furs, both in terms of their value and the quantity traded, are considered in figure 3 below. It should be noted that the HBC trade actually exceeded what is listed here since the Tlingit continued to trade at Fort Simpson even after the HBC began trading inside the leased territory (see HBCA B 201/a/5; 6; PABC A-B-20 S:2. 1). Sea otter, which is not listed, was the only species of fur that the Russians traded in larger quantities

Figure 3: Comparative Fur Returns for the HBC and the RAC
For the Years 1842-1843*

		<u>HBC</u>	<u>RAC</u>
Beaver	1842	2,048	236
	1843	1,428	328
Land Otter	1842	153	162
	1843	311	241
Marten	1842	317	182
	1843	752	120
Bear	1842	415	168
	1843	431	100
Mink	1842	1,405	631
	1843	2,073	40

*Compiled from HBCA B 239/h/4:fos. 50-54; Petroff 1884:62-65.

than the British. However, this trade was small, and the RAC's fur trade for all types of furs dwindled to almost nothing after 1852 (see Petroff 1884:62-65).

In part, the dominance of the HBC can be explained by the better quality and the wider selection of their trade goods (Okun 1951:217). But the size of the HBC's trade also indicates that the middleman trade with the interior had by this time become the Tlingit's most important source of furs, for the HBC had positioned themselves to service and develop that trade. In the summer of 1840, they took over Fort St. Dionysius at the mouth of the Stikine River and renamed it Fort Stikine. The British knew that the river was navigable for many miles upstream and that they could build an

inland post, but, no doubt recalling Tlingit opposition to such a plan in 1834, they concluded that a post "...at the grand rendez-vous of the Coast Traders would suffer from their mischievous interference" (Douglas 1840b:16). They determined that it would be most expedient and economical to allow the Stikine Tlingit to retain absolute control of their interior trade.

After taking charge of Fort Stikine, an HBC force went north and built Fort Durham, more commonly known as Fort Taku, within easy reach of the Taku River, which was another great interior trading route. Here too, the British decided that it would be cheaper to rely on Tlingit middlemen to bring furs from the interior (Douglas 1840b:16-17; Ireland 1941:55-61). Another reason for establishing Fort Taku on the coast rather than upriver was to be "directly in the highway of trade at a convenient distance for the people of Chilcat and Cross Sound" (Douglas 1840b:6). The British knew that the Chilkat River did not cross the Coast Range and that it would be difficult to develop an overland route from Lynn Canal into the interior. They also knew that the Chilkat had a reputation for being "numerous, bold and enterprising" (Douglas 1840b:6) and that they made trading journeys on foot to the east side of the mountains. So the British concluded that

The only way to draw its treasures forth will be to call out the services of the natives and push the trade by their means.... (Douglas 1840b:17).

Until 1867, when the HBC's lease from the Russians finally expired, their trade was organized in such a fashion that the Tlingit were left in firm control of the interior fur trade. The only notable changes were logistical. In 1843, Fort Taku was closed down and the steamship Beaver began to service the trade in that district (HBCA A 11/70:fos. 37-38). Later, after Fort Stikine was closed in 1849, the entire trade in the leased territory was taken over by steamships which toured the Tlingit villages each summer - the Beaver until 1858, the Labouchere until 1865, and the Otter in 1866-1867 (HBCA B 201/a/8;9).

The only time that the HBC significantly interfered with the Tlingit monopoly of the interior fur trade was in 1848 when their explorer-trader Robert Campbell established Fort Selkirk near the juncture of the Pelly and Yukon rivers, which was within the trading domain of the Chilkat Tlingit. The Chilkat responded to this encroachment by forcing Campbell and his men out of the post, looting the store, and burning the buildings (Campbell 1967:77-139). The HBC did not return to that region until the Klondike Gold Rush of the 1890s.

The Logistics of the Interior Fur Trade

A review of HBC documents (especially HBCA B 209/a/1) shows that the mainland Tlingit did relatively little fur hunting; their middleman trade was their primary means of procuring furs. They

ventured into the interior each year, usually once in summer and again in the fall. During the fur trade period they continued to carry native manufactured goods, but European and American trade goods - firearms, ammunition, blankets, calico, beads, and iron tools - became increasingly important (HBCA B 209/a/1; McClellan 1950:125, 126, 141, 142; Oberg 1973:72, 108). It is reputed that they made outlandish profits exchanging these goods for furs, for an essential feature of the Tlingit monopoly was that they rarely allowed the interior Athabascans to come to the coast, and then only under escort, to trade directly with the Europeans and the Americans (HBCA B 209/a/1:fos. 32-33; Scidmore 1885:118; Seton-Karr 1891:95; Olson 1936:214; McClellan 1950:8, 27; Krause 1956:134).

As was mentioned earlier (chap. 2), there were five major trade routes into the interior. The most northerly route was the Alsek River. Setting out from Dry Bay, trading parties travelled upriver by canoe, or on foot during the winter, and traded with the southern Tutchone at the head of navigation. The ethnographic record is not clear, but it seems that from the headwaters of the Alsek these Tlingit sometimes travelled farther inland, at least going as far as Neskatahin, one of the great trading rendezvous of the Chilkat (McClellan 1950:133; de Laguna 1972,1:85-90, 350-51). The Alsek route was difficult, and at times dangerous, and it appears that few furs were carried over it.

This is suggested by the remark of a retired smuggler, then living in Victoria, who told William F. Tolmie of the HBC that during one of his cruises (probably in the 1860s) "...he saw between Cape Spencer and Mt St. Elias, only a few wretchedly poor Indians without Furs" (HBCA B 226/b/27:fos. 222-23).

It appears that the Chilkat conducted the most profitable and extensive interior trade (see Schwatka 1900:334). The Chilkat proper ascended the Chilkat River by canoe, then back packed their trade goods over the Chilkat Pass and traded with the southern Tutchone at Neskatahin, at the head of the pass. From there they travelled overland to Kusawa, which was another meeting place, then continued on to the Yukon River, which they descended by raft as far as the juncture of the Pelly River (near Fort Selkirk) where they met more Tutchone (Olson 1936:212; McClellan 1950:27, 36, 131). A branch of this route extended from Kusawa to Lake Laberge and Lake Teslin, and brought them into contact with the Tagish and Teslin people (McClellan 1950:139-40, 150). The other Chilkat subdivision, the Chilkoot, travelled over the Chilkoot Pass to the head of Lake Bennett, then travelled to the foot of the lake in umiak-like boats to meet the Tagish. Sometimes they travelled beyond this point to meet other interior Athabascans (Olson 1936:214).

The Taku Tlingit travelled up the Taku River by canoe, then travelled overland to meet the Tagish and Teslin people at a

rendezvous situated about two hundred miles from the coast (Simpson 1847 :216; McClellan 1953:47). Although this trade was undoubtedly a profitable one for the Tlingit (Simpson 1847 :216), a comparison of the Fort Taku and Fort Stikine returns suggests that the Stikine River was the more heavily-travelled route (see HBCA B 239/h/4:fos. 44-54).

The Stikine Tlingit travelled upriver by canoe and met the "Nahannie" (who were likely the Tahltan) at a rendezvous which was approximately 150 miles from the coast (Simpson 1847 :210). There, they fished and traded. Robert Campbell visited this meeting place in 1839, when he was exploring the headwaters of the Stikine River. He was astonished by what he saw:

Such a concourse of Indians I had never before seen assembled. They were gathered from all parts of the Western slope of the Rockies & from along the Pacific Coast. These Indians camped here for weeks at a time, living on salmon which could be caught in the thousands in the Stikine....(Campbell 1967:142).

Being the most southerly of the Tlingit trading routes, the Stikine River was the most accessible to the Europeans and Americans who, after the 1858 Cariboo Gold Rush, came up the coast to develop resources other than furs. In consequence, it was here that the Tlingit monopoly on the interior fur trade was first broken and new industries introduced.

The End of the Fur Trade Period

When the United States purchased Alaska in 1867, the HBC lost its lease inside Russian America and the RAC disbanded. Much of the fur trade with the Tlingit then fell to petty traders who, since the late 1850s, had been sailing up the coast from Victoria and Washington Territory in small sloops and schooners, often to trade contraband liquor to the Indians (Hinckley 1972: 92-93ff). A number of small entrepreneurs set up business in Sitka (formerly New Archangel) immediately after the Purchase, and they also took part of the fur trade (Teichmann 1963:220).

The HBC did not, however, lose all of its trade with the Tlingit. Anticipating the expiry of their lease, the British established a small trading post up the Stikine River on British territory, but within reach of the Tlingit. Later, this operation was expanded and named Boundary Post (HBCA B 226/b/33:pp. 44, 70, 682-84). The existence of this post was short, for in 1873 gold discoveries in the Cassiar district of British Columbia brought thousands of miners up the Stikine River (see Hinkley 1972:70-72). This interfered with the fur trade in a major way. Many Indians, the Stikine Tlingit among them, gave up their usual pursuits to hire themselves out as labourers and to transport the miners' outfits upriver by canoe (HBCA B 226/b/48:fos. 219-20; Jackson 1880: 209; Krause 1956:47, 149). Also, the interior Athabascans who had formerly traded furs with the Tlingit suffered badly from the influx

of miners and this also disrupted the fur trade, as the HBC trader Joseph McKay reported in 1875:

The fur returns of the Stekine Indians during the past winter have been comparatively small, the interior hunters are becoming very much demoralized, and are now mainly dependent on the charity of the miners for the means of subsistence (HBCA A 11/88:Fo. 308).

By 1877 the miners had found little gold and they were leaving the diggings, and the HBC was closing down its Stikine River operations. By the time Krause arrived in 1881-1882 the Stikine Tlingit had almost totally abandoned the interior fur trade (Krause 1956:74).

Mining also disrupted the Taku River trade. Gold was discovered on Taku Inlet and on nearby Douglas Island in 1880, and by the following year the town of Juneau was being built. Within the next few years, twelve hundred Tlingit, many of them Auk and Taku, had settled at Juneau to work as wage labourers in the mines and in the town (Hallock 1886:32, 122; Jones 1914:73-74; Krause 1956:47).

The Chilkat Tlingit, fearing that their monopoly of the interior fur trade would be interfered with, at first turned back prospectors who attempted to explore the interior via the Chilkat and Chilkoot passes (Ushin 1874-89:14-15). However, the prospectors were allowed to pass when Captain James Beardslee, commanding the warship Jamestown, intervened on their behalf in

1880 (Hallock 1886:122). By 1883, when Lieutenant Frederick Schwatka of the United States Army crossed the Chilkoot Pass to explore the Yukon River, the Chilkat were still going inland to trade furs, but the interior Athabascans could now trade directly with the Americans on the coast (Schwatka 1885:59; 1900:291-92, 334). By around 1890, the Chilkat had entirely given up the interior fur trade (McClellan 1950:97).

Mining was not the only economic innovation of the 1880s. Beginning in 1878, a number of salmon canneries were built and they employed Tlingit labourers. Just as the Tlingit had been actively involved in the fur trade, they now engaged in commercial fishing with the same determination. For instance, they resisted attempts by cannery owners to import Oriental labour (Krause 1956: 149-50).

During the 1880s, there were other, non-economic changes as well. American Presbyterian missionaries began to proselytize among the Tlingit, and by 1881 they had established schools for Indian children at Sitka, Wrangell, and Juneau, and among the Hoonah and Chilkat Tlingit (Jackson 1880:368, 371, 375, 387).⁵ In 1884, when Alaska became a Territory, the new government gave financial support to mission schools, and the American legal system was introduced (Hinckley 1972:156ff).

Clearly, the 1880s marked the beginning of a new era in Tlingit history, a time when forces of cultural change became more

varied and when Indian life increasingly came under the direction of government authorities. The fur trade was no longer the dominant agency for contact between the Tlingit and the industrialized societies of Europe and the United States.

Notes

¹The Spaniards noticed that the Tlingit possessed small quantities of iron. It is possible that this metal originated with the Russians and trickled to the Tlingit along native trade routes. But if this was the case, it is odd that other small Russian objects, beads and so on, did not also appear. I suggest that the Tlingit were not yet involved in small-scale indirect trade with the Russians, and that the iron the Spaniards saw came across from the Orient embedded in driftwood (see Rickard 1939).

²For the sake of convenience, I will refer to "Aleut hunting parties" throughout, although recognizing that other native hunters, notably Koniag and Chugach, were also employed.

³In enumerating these qwans, Khlebnikov cited Ivan Kuskov as his source. Kuskov, who had gotten his information from friendly Yakutat Tlingit, said that "chiefs" from the "Charlotte Islands", meaning Haida, were also involved. Since the Queen Charlotte Island Haida had no contact with the Russians at this time, it is more likely that it was the Kaigani Haida living on the southern end of Prince of Wales Island who participated in the attack. Indians from a place called "Konieff" are also said to have participated, but it is not presently known who these people were.

⁴The 1849 lease did not commit the HBC to supplying the Russians with provisions, and in 1856 a cash payment was substituted for the payment of two thousand land otter pelts (Tikhmenev 1861-63, 1: 174-76, 244; Galbraith 1957:chap. 9).

⁵Russian missionaries were first sent to New Archangel in 1816. However, they had little success at changing Tlingit culture (Committee on organization of the Russian American colonies 1863: 44).

CHAPTER 4

SOCIOPOLITICAL CHANGE DURING THE FUR TRADE PERIOD

...the political sector is one of those most marked by history, one of those in which the incompatibilities, contradictions and tensions in any society are best seen at work (Balandier 1970:193).

Having traced approximately a century of Tlingit involvement in the fur trade, we shall begin to examine the social changes which occurred during that time. It will be shown that the Tlingit of the early contact period were organized into a Rank Society, and that during the fur trade period which followed there were changes in the attributes and qualifications of political leaders. In the succeeding chapters we shall see that these historical political changes veil other, less obvious changes in the economic structure and in legal and economic decision-making processes.

In reconstructing the early contact period social organization and tracing political change, historical accounts dating from 1779 to the 1880's will to some extent be used as a source of original ethnographic information. However, more important than this, ethnohistorical analysis will enable us to reconcile contradictions in the existing ethnographic record.

Contradictions in the Ethnographic Record

Of the three anthropologists who have conducted major and comprehensive field studies of the Tlingit, two of them, Ronald Olson and Frederica de Laguna, give similar interpretations of social and political status relationships. The third, Kalvero Oberg, differs from them on important points.

Working independently from one another, all three concluded that there were status differences between clans and between house groups within clans. The relative status of a house group or clan could depend on any combination of a number of factors: relative strength of numbers, their military exploits, the number and grandeur of the potlatches they each hosted, and their association with legendary events (see Olson 1967:24, 47; de Laguna 1972,1:462ff; Oberg 1973:48ff.). Where these anthropologists differ is in the way they each interpreted individual social status.

According to Olson (1967:5, 47-48), the Tlingit "laid great emphasis on social rank", with each man and woman being assigned a place on a hierarchial social scale. At the most general level, women ranked below men who were otherwise their approximate social equals (1967:48). Beyond this, an individual's status was primarily determined by the amount of wealth they possessed and by their ancestry, as symbolized in an inherited name passed down matrilineally (1967:6, 47, 48). To validate their claim to a prestigious ancestral name, a person had to publically announce it at a potlatch,

when wealth was given away. Once this was done, the prestige of the name could rise or fall depending on the deeds of the new holder (1967:6, 47, 48).

These individual status differences based on wealth and ancestry were carried into the political realm. As was mentioned earlier (chap. 2), the leader or "chief" of a house group was known as a yitsati, and Olson says that he "...was chosen from among his housemates on the basis of wealth and wisdom" (1967:6). Usually, a house group selected a brother or sister's son who was heir to the wealth and names of the previous yitsati (1967:5).

Those who held yitsati positions were in turn ranked in relation to each other: "...some outranked others in influence... because of greater wealth, and more numerous kinsmen, plus a greater degree of 'highborness' through a line of distinguished ancestors...." (1967:1). In every village there was at least one high status yitsati who had established a strong enough position of prestige and influence to be accorded the title of ankaua. However, an ankaua did not possess clearly defined status rights and duties outside of his house group and clan; he was merely one of the more influential men in a community (1967:48, 49).

It is somewhat difficult to determine de Laguna's (1972) interpretation of individual social status. Her major discussion of Tlingit social organization is contained in her ethnographic report on the Yakutat people. There, her analysis does not always

surface through an overburden of informants' narratives which are often presented verbatim. It appears, though, that she essentially agreed with Olson. Like him, she believed that there was a graduated series of individual ranks (de Laguna 1972,1:462ff.). Also, de Laguna saw wealth and ancestry as having a major impact on a person's status:

Birth, that is, the rank and status of one's ancestry, determined one's social position by setting limits to what names or titles one might acquire. However,...all but the name or names given to a newborn child required validation before they could be assumed. Such validation, especially for the more honorific names and titles, took place at potlatches which, of course, meant the distribution of wealth to guests of the opposite moiety. It is no wonder that the words for aristocrat or "high-class person" ('anqawa, 'anyAdi) are also translated as "rich person" (1972,1:464).

De Laguna only discussed political relationships in passing, but here too she emphasized the importance of wealth: "The chief, especially the head of his sib [clan], was rich" (1972,1:464).¹ She then went on to emphasize that a high status individual or a "chief" should also be characterized by wisdom, good judgement, moral virtue, and a thorough knowledge of historical and ceremonial matters (1972,1:465-68).

Oberg gave a very different interpretation of how individual social and political status was determined. In contrast to Olson and de Laguna, he de-emphasized the importance of individual status differences, other than those based on sex, between close consanguinal kinsmen. There was, he said, "a fundamental principle

of social identity and equality defining the relationship of brothers" living together in a house group (Oberg 1973:30). Oberg's statement represents a social ideal rather than a reality: there are inequalities in all social relationships which, at the most basic and universal level, rest on the relative worth of personal attributes resulting from sex, age, and personality (Fried 1968:252; Balandier 1970:78-79). This qualification aside, Oberg's emphasis on egalitarian values within the house group is an important departure from Olson's and de Laguna's interpretations.

According to Oberg (1973:31), the oldest male member of a house group was its yitsati: "Age...forms a natural sequence and rhythm in the social relationships between brothers." As men died, the position was passed from older brother to younger brother, then to the eldest "nephew" in the succeeding generation, then to his younger brother, and so on. Eventually, every male member of a house group could be a yitsati. Olson and de Laguna essentially agreed with this order of succession but with an important difference. They stressed that a yitsati passed his personal wealth and his prestigious names to a successor and thereby provided him with the qualifications for leadership. Oberg, on the other hand, makes no mention of significant wealth differences between individuals belonging to the same house group. He noted that accumulation of personal wealth was possible if an individual fished or hunted on his own or if he manufactured tools or weapons,

either for his own use or for trade. But these individual activities could be pursued only after the needs of the house group had been met; collective production was paramount (1973:30, 80, 84-85, 95). Furthermore, the products of collective labour were shared equally among the members of a house group. The only exception Oberg mentioned was the case of returning hunters giving choice portions of their catch to their yitsati, a prerogative that apparently could be claimed by all of the elders of a house group (1973:31,93). By Oberg's analysis, then, personal wealth differences were not considerable enough to serve as a significant basis for social divisions within a house group. Rather, the position of yitsati was accorded to the eldest man because of his wisdom and experience; he was "...pre-eminently a ceremonial leader, a repository of myth and social usage, and an educator of the young of his house group" (1973:30). De Laguna (1972,1:425) recognized that the Tlingit placed a high value on age, but she added that an elder only acted as an advisor to a high status yitsati.

Oberg (1973:42-43) followed the same line of analysis when interpreting the attributes of an ankaua. He agreed that the position only carried influence in community affairs, but again he did not see wealth as being a qualification for leadership. To him, an ankaua was the oldest yitsati in a high ranked clan. When an ankaua died he was succeeded by the next oldest yitsati from one of the higher status house groups within his clan. The position could even pass to the yitsati of a lower status house

group, providing it was not too far down the social scale.

Clearly, we are faced with two opposing interpretations of social and political status among the Tlingit. Sexual divisions aside, Olson and de Laguna saw social status differences between individuals as being largely patterned by personal wealth differences, while Oberg singled out age as the major determinant of an individual's social position. Ethnohistorical analysis shows that both interpretations are essentially correct, but only insofar as each represents Tlingit sociopolitical organization at a different period in time.

The Contradictions Resolved

The Spaniards serving with the Third Bucareli Expedition were the second group of Europeans to contact the Tlingit and the first to contact those living around Bucareli Bay. The two Spanish ships, La Princesa and La Favorita, spent almost two months in the bay in 1779, long enough for the ships' officers to draw a few conclusions about Tlingit political organization. Bodega y Quadra, who was second in command of the expedition, recognized that political authority was held by a number of men rather than being concentrated in the hands of one "king". He commented in his journal:

They know little of government. It seems that a few old men form an oligarchy (Bodega y Quadra 1779).

Jose de Canizares (1779), a pilot on the Princessa, speculated that these old men held little power.² These comments are brief and inconclusive, but they take on significance when compared with later reports.

Another Spanish expedition, under the command of Alejandro Malaspina, stopped at Port Mulgrave in Yakutat Bay for ten days in 1791. Malaspina determined that there were a number of "families" and that an ankaua usually came from only one of them, which suggests rank differences between kinship groups:

There is no doubt that among these small tribes there is one family in which is vested the succession to the chieftomship, and which furnishes the chief who governs them in peacetime and leads them in war.
(Grunfeld and Molenaar 1972:16)

Malaspina then went on to outline the personal attributes of "Juné", an ankaua that he met.

The Ankau Juné was, in our opinion fully worthy of this public confidence, uniting all the qualities of age, valour, physique and intelligence which should be decisive in the election of a chief of even a small group in a nascent stage of social development (1972:16).

It is significant that Malaspina regarded "Juné" as being distinguished by his age and personality, with no mention being made of his wealth. Indeed, Malaspina hinted that there was economic equality:

...they rarely disturb the internal peace of the community or do harm to each other, all the less because the concepts of property, class distinctions, and a leisure class have not yet put down their frightful roots among them (1972:16).

One of the junior officers on the expedition, Lieutenant Antonio de Tova Arredondo, presented a more succinct analysis of political and economic relationships:

...there is no doubt that supreme command is vested in the chief and that his position is hereditary in his family. We also noted other subaltern authorities [doubtless, these men held yitsati positions] being able to assert that inequality of rank, so contrary to the simple and primitive state of nature, was in practice among the Port Mulgraves. But this difference in authority cannot come from the differences in wealth among men whose necessities are so limited and whose means are equally so (Cutler 1972:49; emphasis mine).

This clearly indicates that political status was based on factors other than the possession of wealth. There is other evidence that supports this view that wealth differences were negligible around this time.

As was discussed earlier, according to Oberg's (1973) analysis, collective production by a house group during aboriginal times was much more important than individual endeavour. Within this economic context, a yitsati served as a trader for his house group, collecting together surplus collective property, supervising its exchange for the surplus of another house group, and redistributing the goods gotten in return to his kinsmen. He did not appropriate any of the surplus product and he was largely occupied with trading for his house group, although a limited amount of private trade might also be carried on (1973:30-31, 87, 105, 110).

As was appropriate to a situation where collective property was being exchanged, kinsmen from both house groups were

involved in the trading negotiations, as Oberg described:

The two leaders would call out the values of the goods to be exchanged in rotation and, when the price suited the group behind each leader, a shout would go up signifying that exchange was agreeable at that point (1973:110).

When George Dixon inaugurated the maritime fur trade with the Tlingit in 1787, trade was carried on in this same manner, as Supercargo William Beresford observed:

One peculiar custom I took notice of here, which as yet we had been strangers to. The moment a Chief has concluded a bargain, he repeats the word Coocoo thrice, with quickness, and is immediately answered by all the people in his canoe with the word Whoah, pronounced in a tone of exclamation, but with greater or less energy, in proportion as the bargain he has made is approved of (Dixon 1789:189).

Malaspina made similar observations during his stay at Yakutat Bay in 1791:

They do not display the least rivalry among themselves in either buying or selling; on the contrary, in a admirable unanimity of interest they either consult with each other to approve the exchange, or if the bargain has been struck, they applaud it with one, two or three unanimous shouts, depending on whether they consider it more or less advantageous....(Grunfeld and Molenaar 1972:13).

The officers serving on Marchand's trading expedition said much the same thing about the Tlingit they traded with during the same year (see Fleurieu 1801:241).

These early observers depicted trading practices as they were just before the peak years of the British and American maritime fur trade, at a time when economic forces of change had not

yet gained momentum. Their descriptions corroborate with Oberg's ethnographic reconstruction of aboriginal trade: a yitsati acted as a spokesman for his house group, and his kinsmen participated in the bargaining, which implies that most of the wealth being exchanged was collectively owned.

However, the predominance of collective ownership of property and the general economic equality that characterized the early contact period did not continue for long as the Tlingit became involved in the fur trade.

Changing Property Relations

Oberg (1973:60-61) commented that an individual could hunt or trap on his own and hold personal ownership over the furs that he caught. During aboriginal times, no person acquired so much wealth by his own means that the social and economic unity of the house group was undermined. However, during the fur trade period, individual production became increasingly important as the Tlingit, motivated by the desire for European and American trade goods, stepped up fur hunting and trapping activities. Although collective production, such as fishing and fish processing, remained vital to the Tlingit economy, the level of individual production increased as involvement in the fur trade intensified. De Laguna (1972,1:379-80) pointed out that individual wealth differences developed from this even though attempts were made to

regulate the sea otter hunt in the hope that no one would catch more furs than his kinsmen.

However, the historical development of personal economic inequality cannot be explained simply by an increase in individual production during the fur trade period. This is not to deny that furs were individually owned or that many furs were taken by lone hunters. For instance, individual hunters sometimes armed themselves with bows and arrows, and mounted blinds above beaches or rocks where sea otter were known to sleep or bask in the sun (Niblack 1890:299-300). Such hunting techniques were likely sufficient to meet aboriginal requirements, but the demands of the fur trade called for more efficient methods (see Lisiansky 1814:242). Following the example of the Aleuts, the Tlingit adopted the surround method of hunting sea otter. Fleets of canoes, each carrying two to four men, were used to surround the animals in the open sea, and as a sea otter came up for air it was shot at with arrows, harpoons, or firearms (de Laguna 1960:112; see Niblack 1890:299-300; Jones 1914:74). The important point is that although sea otter were hunted by collective effort the furs were owned by individuals. Niblack (1890:300) observed that "by a curious rule the otter, and all other game, belongs to the one who first wounds it, no matter who kills it." De Laguna's Killisnoo informants essentially agreed with this. They told her that each hunter's arrows were marked for purposes of identification, and only those

members of a hunting party who shot a sea otter received a share of the catch (de Laguna 1960:112).

During the fur trade period, the interior trade was also conducted in such a way that some individuals acquired more furs than others. A yitsati would collect together five to ten men from his house group, and perhaps some slaves, to act as porters, carrying trade goods and provisions for the journey. Often, they joined together with other small groups to form trading parties consisting of upwards of a hundred men (Olson 1936:211-12). When they met the interior Athabascans, each yitsati was received by a trading partner who represented a group of hunters. Trading partners had ongoing alliances which were often reinforced by marriage to one another's close kin (Olson 1936:212-14; McClellan 1950:154ff; 1953:49; Krause 1956:137). All of the trade was channelled through these sets of partners, and after the exchange of furs for trade goods was completed and after feasting, the Tlingit returned to the coast to trade their furs to the Europeans or the Americans (Olson 1936:213-14). A yitsati likely gave little direct payment to a sister's son in return for his labour on the trading expedition; his reward came through inheritance when the yitsati eventually died (see Krause 1956:161). Other members of a trading party, excluding slaves who laboured only for a bare subsistence, received blankets from their yitsati in return for their work (see McClellan 1950:125). The mechanics of the wealth distribution which concluded

a trading expedition are not clearly understood, but by all appearances some received more wealth than others, with the yitsati who had an Athabascan trading partner probably taking the largest share. Heywood W. Seton-Karr, an English explorer who travelled over the Chilkat Pass in 1890, hinted at this. He met a number of Chilkat Tlingit "...some of whom, have amassed considerable wealth by acting...as middle-men"(Seton-Karr 1891:95; emphasis mine).

To summarize at this juncture, furs were individually owned whether they were acquired by individual or collective effort, whereas fish and other necessities of life were collectively produced and owned. This means that furs and the goods they purchased were placed on a different level of value from subsistence wealth. Or if you will, these two types of wealth were attached to different moral systems, one emphasizing individual rights and the other emphasizing collective solidarity.

It appears that this division between wealth received in trade and subsistence wealth was a widespread feature of the North American fur trade, if not of mercantile economies throughout the world. Charles A. Bishop (1974:294), in his study of the Northern Ojibwa and the fur trade, commented that "...the tendency to distinguish furs as a distinct type of property from food and other material possessions appears to have developed early". Murphy and Stewart (1956) examined the impact of commercial rubber tapping on the Mundurucú of Brazil and drew comparisons between them and the

Montagnais of Labrador, whose involvement in the fur trade has been studied by Eleanor Leacock (1954). In both cases, as these peoples became involved in mercantile trade, property-holding and production became individualized and the aboriginal communal-based economies and social organizations were severely undermined.

It appears that historical social change was not so complete among the Tlingit as among these other folk. The aboriginal Tlingit fishing economy co-existed with the fur trade without major modification, and this provided a basis for the persistence of clans and house groups as viable social entities. Moreover, the persistence of communal ties during the fur trade period provided the Tlingit with a degree of social unity that allowed them to resist European and American attempts to impose cultural change.³ However, the fact that aboriginal institutions persisted in some areas of Tlingit culture must not be allowed to obscure changes in other areas.

Property Relations and Political Change

Around the turn of the nineteenth century the Tlingit became heavily involved in the fur trade, primarily dealing in sea otter pelts. We saw earlier (chap. 3) that their quest for furs around this time was so intense that economic competition for the same fur resources was a major cause for armed conflict between them and the Russians. Individual differences in the amount of

fur trade wealth people owned became perceptible only a few years after the maritime fur trade began. George H. von Langsdorff, a German physician serving on the Russian ship Maria, visited New Archangel in 1805-1806. He was interested in Indian culture and, in company with an American sea captain who had formerly traded with the Tlingit, he visited the fortress that the Sitka Tlingit had established near Chatham Strait after being defeated by the Russians in 1804. Langsdorff (1814:129-130) discussed social status among the Tlingit:

Age, superiority of natural understanding, or temporal wealth obtained by good fortune in catching sea-otter, and in selling their skins to advantage, or the great number of persons of which a family consists - these seem to be the requisites for obtaining respect and distinction among the Kaluschians [Tlingit].

Langsdorff's observations are interesting for a number of reasons. Like the early Spaniards and like Oberg, he indicated that a person's age had major bearing on their social position. He also pointed out that a kinship group's size was a determinant of its rank. Most important, Langsdorff showed that individual wealth differences had been engendered by involvement in the fur trade and these differences were influencing status relationships.

Although individual wealth had by this time become a force to be reckoned with in Tlingit social life, it appears that traditional forms of political leadership, which were largely based on age differences, persisted for at least the next two

decades. Kiril Khlebnikov was a senior officer in the RAC who often had dealings with the Tlingit when he was stationed at New Archangel from 1817-1832. Also, he had definite scientific interests for which he was later honoured by being elected to the St. Petersburg Academy of Science. Khlebnikov (1861a:42), like earlier observers, emphasized the political importance of age:

Toyouns [a Siberian word for "chief"] or Chiefs are respected in their own tribe on account of their age, but they hold no power outside of that. They cannot send anybody to labor or service. Only voluntarily they are assisted in their distant journeys and their labors. The dignity of chief is hereditary.

However, these traditional leaders were not going unchallenged. Individuals who had enriched themselves in the fur trade were establishing themselves in positions of political authority. This was observed by Achille Schabelski, a Russian naval officer who stopped off at New Archangel in 1822-1823. Schabelski spent a considerable amount of time with the Tlingit, discussing their social organization, religion, and ceremonial life. His understanding of their political organization agrees with the observations of other European travellers who had preceded him, in that he emphasized that status was determined by age and the size of one's kinship group. He commented that "tribes" ("peuplades") were "...governed by chiefs who are distinguished from the others by their age, the number of their relatives or the superiority of their intelligence"⁴ (Schabelski 1826:67; my translation from French). He went on to say that

The power of their chiefs, or Ankaü as they called them, is unbounded; sometimes he punishes a subaltern with death; on other occasions nobody listens to him, and his influence totally depends on his personal qualities (1826:67; my translation).⁵

The reference to killing subordinates, incidently, probably refers to the ritual killing of slaves at potlatches. Schabelski noticed that individuals who were successful in the fur trade were challenging the authority of traditional political leaders:

Before the time of contact with civilized nations, the esteem of a chief among his subalterns was decided by the ancientness of his ancestors and the number of his relations; but now trade by introducing luxury among them, brought together the classes, and a skillful hunter, even one of low birth, is sometimes more esteemed than an Ankaü, who does not possess trade goods.

The power of a chief is hereditary, and passes not to his children, but to a nephew, his sister's son (1826:67-68; my translation).⁶

Schabelski had witnessed a major turning-point in the culture history of the Tlingit: possession of fur trade wealth was becoming an important determinant of political status. Hereafter, wealth differences are cited as corresponding to social and political status differences. Otto Von Kotzebue (1830:54), also an officer in the Russian navy, visited New Archangel in 1824-1825, and observed that "the richer a Kalush [Tlingit] is, the more powerful he becomes...." Another Russian naval officer, Fedor Lütke, was in New Archangel in 1827. He related social status to the size of a person's kinship group, the amount of wealth they possessed, and the number of slaves they owned: "In highest esteem among the Tlingits is the person who

has more relations, more wealth and slaves" (quoted in Averkieva 1971:331).

Lütke appears to have been the first to emphasize that owning slaves endowed a person with high social status. Ismailov and Bocharov observed that the Yakutat Tlingit held slaves in 1788 (Shelekhoff 1812:56-57) and from this we can conclude that slavery was aboriginal. However, it appears that only a small portion of the population were held in bondage and almost all of these were war captives (Averkieva 1971:330-31). During the nineteenth century, slavery became more prevalent and a flourishing slave trade developed (Averkieva 1971:33-31; see Oberg 1973:33). Although the Tlingit held a few Tsimshian, Haida, or other Tlingit as slaves, most were Coast Salish whom they had traded from the Tsimshian and Haida, who had captured them in slave raiding expeditions or traded them from the Kwakiutl (Veniaminoff 1840:31; Khlebnikov 1861a:41; Niblack 1890:252; Krause 1956:128; Oberg 1973:34, 108). For Indians such as the Kaigani Haida, who lacked plentiful fur resources after the sea otter were exterminated, slave trading was a specialized adaptation to the fur trade economy. They captured slaves, traded them to other Indians for furs, then traded the furs to European and American traders in exchange for manufactured goods (see Douglas 1840a:36).

By 1840, when James Douglas (1840a:55) explored the Tlingit area for the HBC, status differences were bound up with the possession of wealth, which in many cases involved the ownership of

slaves: "The wealth and consequence of all classes from the stripling, to the highest chiefdoms, are measured by the number of such dependents....[i.e., slaves]".

Later visitors also emphasized the relationship between a person's social status and the amount of wealth they owned. Ensign Niblack (1890:250), who visited in 1885-1887, commented that "rank is principally dependent upon wealth and good birth, although the latter in itself implies inheritance of rank and wealth." Aurel Krause (1956:77), the German geographer who did ethnographic field-work among the Tlingit in 1881-1882, agreed with this:

Even the rank of chief is tied up with the possession of wealth, largely the ownership of slaves....

Ivan Petroff (1884:166; also see Elliott 1886:47, 54; Knapp and Childe 1896:25, 100), who visited the Tlingit in 1880, observed much the same thing:

The chiefdomship is hereditary in the families, but the authority connected therewith is entirely dependent upon wealth, which until of late consisted chiefly in the possession of slaves.

Petroff's comment that slavery was on the decline hints at the "directed" cultural changes which were being initiated by the Americans during the 1870s and 1880s. The United States military and later the civil government were beginning to impose American political, legal, and educational institutions on the Tlingit and were forcing them to abandon customs such as slavery. As was discussed earlier (chap. 1), anthropologists have taken this period, which stretches from the late nineteenth century to the present

day, as the time when the most important cultural change has occurred. Certainly, the Indian experience of the last century has been characterized by great adaptive and forced change. But, as ethnohistorical analysis reveals, for the Tlingit the late nineteenth century was the end of another period, one marked by major, "non-directed" change resulting from involvement in the fur trade.

Discussion

By studying early historical accounts in temporal sequence we have seen that Oberg's ethnography generally represents the sociopolitical organization of the early contact period, while important facets of Olson's and de Laguna's ethnographies portray Tlingit social life as it was after it had been modified by the fur trade. The discrepancies between Oberg and his two counterparts might be attributable to Oberg having the opportunity to talk to older informants, since he did fieldwork a few years earlier than the other two. Also, Oberg, unlike Olson and de Laguna, spent most of his time among the Chilkat, who have a reputation for being culturally conservative (we will discuss their conservatism later).

By interpreting the ethnographic literature in light of early Spanish, British, French, and Russian accounts, it becomes clear that the Tlingit of the early contact period, and presumably of the pre-contact period as well, were a Rank Society.

Taking guidance from Morton Fried's (1967:chap. 4; 1968) evolutionary typology, a Rank Society can be defined by the following general criteria:

- a. There are a fixed number of status positions, and access to these positions are governed by rules of succession.
- b. The holder of the leading status position plays a redistributive role in the economy.
- c. The redistributor cannot appropriate an unequal share of the goods he collects and distributes.
- d. Holders of high status positions lack special political power.

We have seen that the Tlingit whom the first explorers and fur traders met were organized into corporate kinship groups - house groups and matriclans - which were loosely ranked in relation to each other, primarily according to differences in their size. Each house group was united in subsistence production and trade, and the products of their labour were collectively owned. Other than the sexual division of labour, the only specialized economic role was held by the yitsati of a house group, who acted as a redistributor of collective wealth in trade. (In chap. 5 we will look at the role of a yitsati in the potlatch). There was only one yitsati in each house group, and early historical sources show that Oberg was correct when he said that the order of succession was governed by age, with the oldest man being the leader. In turn, the oldest yitsati of one of the higher ranked clans in a community was an ankaua, but he did not hold a special-

ized economic role outside of his house group and clan.

There is little early information about the political role of a yitsati, but by all appearances he held authority but possessed little power. Other than by employing the strength granted by his wisdom, knowledge, and experience, a yitsati lacked the means to compel obedience on the part of his kinsmen; he was reliant on their agreement. This, coupled with early accounts that show that a yitsati was a spokesman for his kinsmen in trade, suggest that Oberg (1973:30-31, 53, 87) was also correct when he said that a yitsati was primarily an advisor and a spokesman for his kinsmen in ceremonies and in politico-legal affairs. In similar fashion, an ankaua commanded the respect but not the obedience of the community in which he lived.

We have seen that after only a few years of involvement in the fur trade, the Tlingit became differentiated not just by age, sex, and personality, but by differences in the amount of wealth individuals possessed. Abundant possession of fur trade wealth granted prestige, and probably by the 1830s, and certainly later, men of wealth were assuming formal political positions. It is likely that these sociopolitical changes were not abrupt; succession had always been flexible: if an elder brother or an elder "nephew" was unsuitable to become a yitsati, a better qualified junior was chosen instead (Krause 1956:77; Olson 1967:6). There was, rather, a change in emphasis with wealth becoming an increasingly important

determinant of social status while other personal attributes, age in particular, diminished in relative importance. It is probable that a yitsati who ascended to that position before or early in the contact period was able to retain his authority by adapting to changed economic conditions posed by the fur trade.

In the following two chapters, we shall see that the historical development of individual wealth differences resulted in more than just the creation of new measures of social and political status. By working through aboriginal institutions such as the potlatch, individuals were able to manipulate wealth to establish themselves in positions of economic and political dominance. The Tlingit of the fur trade period were emerging as a Stratified Society, which can be defined as follows, once again taking guidance from Fried's (1967:chap. 5; 1968) typology:

- a. "...some members of the society have unimpeded access to its strategic resources while others have various impediments in their access to the same fundamental resources"(Fried 1968:255).
- b. Political authority becomes based on territorial rather than kinship ties.

To understand the first of these two points we must examine the social organization of the fur trade economy.

Notes

¹Olson (1967) and de Laguna (1972) also use the term "clan chief". Since there appears to be no commonly-used term in the Tlingit vocabulary for this position, it will be given less emphasis here than they give to it. A "clan chief" can be simply taken to be the highest status yitsati in a clan, who may or may not also be an ankaua.

²I wish to thank Mr. Roger Tro of Simon Fraser University who allowed me access to and translated those segments of his Spanish archival research notes that he felt would be pertinent to my work.

³The historical record is replete with references to the bold and forthright manner in which the Tlingit asserted their independence. The remarks of Stabartz Romanowsky, a Russian surgeon based at New Archangel, exemplify this:

...the Koloshes [Tlingit]...do not acknowledge the supremacy of the Colonial Government over themselves, and are ruled by their own willfulness in their actions and enterprises (Browning 1962:35).

⁴"...governées par des chefs, distingués des autres ou par leur âge, le nombre de leurs parents or la superiorité de leur esprit."

⁵"Le pouvoir de leurs chefs, ou comme ils les appellent Ankaü, est illimité; quelquefois il punit de mort son subalterne; dans d'autres occasions personne n'l'écoute, et son influence dépend totalement de ses qualites personnelles."

⁶"Avant le tems [sic] de leur communication avec les nations civilisées, c'est l'ancienneté des ancêtres et le nombre des parents qui decidaient de l'estime, dont un chef jouissait parmi ses subalternes; mais actuellement le commerce, en introduisant parmi eux le luxe, en a rapproché les classes, et un chasseur adroit, quoique d'une basse extraction, est quelquefois plus estimé qu'un Ankaü, qui ne possède pas des objets de commerce.

Le pouvoir du chef est hereditaire, et passe non à ses enfants, mais au neveu, le fils de sa soeur."

CHAPTER 5

THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE FUR TRADE

It has been widely recognized that during the nineteenth century there was a marked increase in the frequency and intensity of potlatching throughout the Northwest Coast culture area. Two major interpretations of this historical development have been offered, both using the Kwakiutl as the case in point. Helen Codere (1950) argued that the establishment of a colonial government put an end to native warfare, with the result that animosities were then re-channelled into competitive potlatching ("fighting with property"). Drucker and Heizer (1967), on the other hand, argued that massive population decline resulting from disease caused competition, which was manifested in the potlatch, for the numerous prestigious names and titles that fell vacant as their incumbents died off.

Neither of these interpretations guide us towards a good understanding of the post-contact Tlingit potlatch. Codere's correlation between the cessation of warfare and intensified potlatching does not hold for the Tlingit. By the 1880s, when an effective territorial government was established in Alaska and was enforcing peace, the potlatch was on the decline (Krause 1956:163).¹ A cause and effect relationship between demographic change and the rise of the potlatch is a more convincing interpretation. However, population decline among the Tlingit was hardly as severe as among

the Kwakiutl, who were reduced from approximately twenty thousand to two thousand souls between the late 1830s and the 1880s (Codere 1950: 49-54). Also, Drucker and Heizer divorced population change and the potlatch from the wider social system. If the desire for unclaimed prestigious names and titles motivated increased potlatching, what motivated the desire for prestige?

Here, the potlatch will be viewed as part of a larger socio-economic strategy that was adaptive to fur trade conditions.

Historical Changes in the Tlingit Potlatch

By custom, a house group called upon its affinal kinsmen to render service, usually of a ceremonial nature, during important turning-points in the group's social history. When a member of a house group died, affinal kinsmen tended to the funeral preparations, cremated the corpse, and interned the ashes in a grave box. When a child reached puberty and was being prepared for manhood or womanhood, affines performed cosmetic surgery that marked this transition. If it was a boy who had come of age, they pierced his nasal septum or his ears (ornaments could be later inserted), or tattooed his body. In the case of a pubescent girl, they pierced her lower lip and inserted a labret, and they might also tattoo her hands. And when a house group wanted a new house built or their existing one remodelled, which was usually the case after their yitsati died and had been succeeded, their affines were called in to perform the task

(Oberg 1973:50, 81-83, 93-100, 113).

A house group held a potlatch to celebrate these important social events and to repay affinal kinsmen for their labour. They pooled their wealth, perhaps borrowing from other members of their clan as well, and gave gifts to their affines. If a new house had been built, its name was formally announced during the ceremonies. Any children who had reached adulthood were publically bestowed names that had formerly been held by lineal ancestors; this established a link with the past, a sense of continuity. The dead were commemorated, and if a yitsati had died, his honourific name was assumed by his successor, thus publically symbolizing the transfer of leadership. On the occasion of a potlatch, people also joined together in dancing, singing, and theatricals, and they displayed and venerated the crests and hierlooms belonging to their house group and clan, thereby emphasizing that kinship solidarity had been renewed (Niblack 1890:360ff.; Emmons 1910:230; Jones 1914:134-33; de Laguna 1952:5; 1954:184-87; 1972,2:606-51; McClellan 1954; Olson 1967:60-61ff., 68-69; Oberg 1973:116-28).

There is no historical information about the potlatch as it was during the early contact period and only a little information dating from the fur trade period. In chapter 4, we saw how collective ownership of property predominated during the early contact period. From this we can surmise that most or all of the wealth distributed at an aboriginal potlatch was owned by the house group

as a whole, with the yitsati probably acting as a redistributor, just as he did in trade.

We also saw in the last chapter that Oberg was correct when he said that aboriginally a yitsati or an ankaua was primarily distinguished by his advanced age. At death, these positions were passed on, probably in orderly fashion, from older brother to younger brother to the eldest sister's son, with each male member of a house group eventually taking his turn at being its leader, and with each yitsati belonging to one of the higher ranking house groups eventually becoming an ankaua. If this was the order of succession to high status political positions, and ethnohistorical analysis indicates that it was, then the aboriginal potlatch was probably no more than an event which, among other things, commemorated the death of a yitsati or an ankaua and gave formal and public recognition to his honourific names being passed on to the next oldest. This was not the case under fur trade conditions.

As we have seen, there was a significant change in property relations during the fur trade period. Fur trade wealth, unlike subsistence wealth was individually owned and documentary evidence clearly shows that during the fur trade period some individuals accumulated much larger amounts of wealth than others (see chap. 4). I believe that this historical development engendered important changes in the potlatch. The prestige of a kinship group would rise according to the size and splendour of a potlatch and so too

would the prestige of individuals who made especially large contributions of personal property (Niblack 1890:365-66; Olson 1967:48, 58, 59; Oberg 1973:120-28). For by giving away large amounts of wealth a person could lay claim to the names of prestigious lineal ancestors and enhance the prestige of names which they already held (de Laguna 1972,2:613; see Olson 1967:6). In chapter 4, we saw that wealthy men held positions of high social and political status during the fur trade period. These men did not attain these social positions merely by possessing large amounts of wealth. The determinants of social status were how often and how generously a person contributed their personal wealth to be given away at a potlatch hosted by their house group or clan: "A man may be ever so wealthy, and yet his wealth bring him no consideration until it has been squandered in a 'potlatch'" (Knapp and Childe 1896:110).

Thus, status relationships became more "open-ended" during the fur trade period. In aboriginal times, according to my reconstruction, a person's social status was ascribed by their age, and formalized in the potlatch. In contrast, during the fur trade period, a person could accumulate wealth and give it away at a potlatch to achieve a position of high social status. The following remarks by late nineteenth century observers indicate this:

By a judicious expenditure of money, and a little clever manoeuvring, it is possible to mount to the highest round of the social ladder (Knapp and Childe 1896:100).

And:

...any freeman who can accumulate property may, by erecting a house and giving potlatches and feasts in honor of his ancestors, come finally to be head of a household and be regarded as a petty chief or one of principal men of the village (Niblack 1890:372).

And again:

A common Indian can raise himself to distinction and nobility by giving many feasts and setting up a [totem] pole to commemorate them (Scidmore 1885:58).

For many individuals, ascribed social status interpenetrated with achieved status. When a man died, his wealth was not dispersed freely to the numbers of his kinship group; it was all passed on to a younger brother or a sister's son (Niblack 1890:254; Krause 1956:161; Olson 1967:21; Oberg 1973:32). Ethnohistorical analysis shows that individual wealth differences were slight during the early contact period, and from this we can infer that a person would inherit only a few personal possessions at this time (see chap. 4). With the development of significant individual wealth differences during the fur trade period, some individuals inherited much larger amounts of wealth than others, depending on how closely related they were to a wealthy man. Thus, a younger brother or sister's son could inherit a large amount of wealth, some of which they could give away at a potlatch to maintain if not enhance the status of the names which they inherited. A remark by Niblack (1890:250), which was quoted earlier, takes on added significance when considered in this context:

Rank is principally dependent on wealth and good birth, although the latter in itself implies inheritance of rank and wealth.

To recapitulate, I propose that the aboriginal potlatch was a ceremony that relied on collective means to serve collective ends. Changes in the status of individual members of a kinship group were formalized in a potlatch, thus renewing kinship group solidarity, and marriage alliances with other kinship groups were revitalized. This second function was accomplished under the guise of giving collectively owned wealth to affines in repayment for ritual services that they had rendered. To some extent the potlatch continued to serve these functions during the fur trade period. However, individuals who had enriched themselves in the fur trade, or who had inherited wealth from a close consanguinal kinsman, could achieve positions of high social status by making substantial contributions of personal wealth at potlatches. During the fur trade period, then, the potlatch increasingly served the ends of wealthy individuals. I believe that Oberg (1973:120) recognized these historical changes when he said:

It seems that originally potlatches were always associated with important events in social life, but that as the accumulation of wealth owing to white contact became easier, potlatching tended to become an end in itself.

He meant by this that the potlatch became associated with the quest for prestige.

So far we have discussed potlatches at which affines were repaid for ritual services. Oberg also distinguished what he called a "prestige potlatch", or tutxu'ix, which differed in many ways from

a repayment potlatch (the latter was termed a xu'ix, according to Oberg). The prestige potlatch was more explicitly oriented towards elevating the social status of the hosts (Oberg 1973:121). It was not generally held to commemorate specific social transitions in the lives of a group of kinsmen - puberty rites, deaths and successions, and house-buildings. Rather, a prestige potlatch was held under the pretext of venerating the host's ancestors or honouring his own children or the children of his clan (Oberg 1973: 120-21, 124; see Olson 1967:68-69). Another important difference was that the guests included members of the opposite moiety who were non-affines, and many of them came from distant communities (Oberg 1973:121f., 124; see Niblack 1890:365-66; de Laguna 1972,2:610-16). In contrast, repayment potlatches (where close affines were the principal guests) were usually village affairs, for it was customary for house groups that were united by multiple marriage ties to live together in the same village (Oberg 1973:56, 121).

Prestige potlatches were much grander affairs than repayment potlatches, and they often took years of preparation. A wealthy man who wished to be the principal host collected together his wealth and mobilized the support of his kinsman, as Niblack (1890:365) described:

...a chief is assisted by his people, whom...he invites to a feast, and from whom afterwards he receives gifts which, with those of his own, are given away subsequently at the grand potlatch.

The principal host's local clan assisted and at times even members of his clan who lived in other villages were called upon to lend their support. Thus, a successful prestige potlatch enhanced the status not only of the principal host but also of his house group and clan (Oberg 1973:124-25, see Olson 1967:59). At the ceremony itself, large amounts of food were consumed in feasting, and prestige goods were distributed. During the fur trade period, woollen blankets received in trade were the most common prestige good - (Elliott 1886:51n; Knapp and Childe 1896:118). The amount of wealth given to each guest depended on their social status relative to the other guests (Oberg 1973:123-24, 126-27). After the potlatch ended, the principal host could eventually expect to be invited to potlatches hosted by his more eminent guests to receive goods in return (Oberg 1973:121, 127). Thus, high status men living in distant villages were tied together by obligations to return gifts that they had received from one another.

If I understand Oberg (1973:120-28) correctly, the large intervillage prestige potlatch was a post-contact development.² What little historical information there is about the prestige potlatch tends to confirm this. Veniaminov, who visited the Tlingit in 1834-1839, mentioned an "anniversary feast" which was held to honour deceased ancestors and which was attended by wealthy guests who were invited from "near and far" to receive gifts which varied in size according to the status of the receiver. Obviously, this was what Oberg termed a prestige potlatch. Veniaminov contrasted

this ceremony with the "feast for children", where children were honoured to elevate their social status. Oberg also categorized this as a prestige potlatch. The third type of ceremony mentioned by Verniaminov was the "cremation ceremony". The host groups gave presents to the "friendly tribe" that tended to funeral preparations and the cremation of the dead. Obviously, this was a repayment potlatch. Now Veniaminov added that these two types of prestige potlatches were so expensive that they were rarely held (Krause 1956:163-65). This changed by the time Ensign Niblack arrived in Alaska, fifty years later. Potlatches to which guests were invited from "near and far" were no longer rare; rather, when inviting guests to a potlatch, "...a chief usually sends out to certain individuals of distant villages by name", while an "ordinary" man only invited members of his village to his potlatches (Niblack 1890:365; emphasis mine). Granted, this is sketchy but it does suggest that the intervillage prestige potlatch at least became more common during the fur trade period. Whether this type of potlatch was entirely an historical development or whether it was a modification of an aboriginal ceremony cannot be answered with certainty at present.

To summarize, there appear to have been two outstanding changes in the potlatch during the fur trade period. First, the potlatch became a vehicle through which individuals who had been enriched by the fur trade could increase their social status (or if they were children they might have their status raised for them by

a wealthy mother's brother or a father making potlatch gifts on their behalf). Second, it apparently became more common for potlatch guests to be invited from distant communities; there was a branching out of social relationships beyond the confines of the host's village. The reasons for these two developments became apparent when ecological and economic conditions during the fur trade period are examined.

The Allocation of Economic Rights

It would be incorrect to believe that all Tlingit had equal access to fur producing territories and that trade could be carried on at will. Fur hunting and trading activities were subject to restrictions of a non-technical nature which had to be overcome if a person was to operate with relative freedom.

As was discussed in chapter 3, by the 1830s the Tlingit were adopting new ways of procuring furs. Sea otter, which had formerly been widely and abundantly distributed over the region, had been overhunted to such an extent by that time that there were only a few isolated pockets of those animals left in the northern bays and on the outer coast (Khlebnikov 1861a:46; Krause 1956:58). The interior fur trade, which was carried on over five main trade routes, had become a very important source of furs. Both hunting territories and trade routes were owned by clans (Krause 1956:137; Oberg 1973: 40, 55), and there is abundant evidence to show that under the

conditions of scarcity which developed after the sea otter were largely exterminated non-clansmen were excluded from vital fur producing areas and denied rights of trade, often on threat of violence (there were important exceptions which we will discuss in the next section).

Hoonah clans, for instance, controlled Glacier Bay, which was one of those areas that was rich in sea mammals at a time when sea otter in particular were rare along much of the rest of the coast (Krause 1956:58). Eliza Scidmore (1885:127-28), a tourist and travel writer of the 1880s who often drew upon the knowledge of long-term residents of the Northwest Coast, commented that the Hoonah were willing to use force to protect their exclusive hunting rights:

The Hooniahs...claim the monopoly of the seal and otter fisheries, and have had great wars with other tribes who ventured into their hunting grounds. Indians even came up from British Columbia, and a few years ago the Hooniahs even invoked the aid of the man-of-war to drive away the trespassing "King George men".

A similar situation prevailed on the west coast of Prince of Wales Island, another area rich in sea otter (Krause 1956:58), which was controlled by the Henya Tlingit. During the late 1850s and early 1860s, as many as sixteen canoes of Tsimshian occasionally set out from Fort Simpson to hunt sea otter in the vicinity of the Henya (HBCA B201/a/8:fos. 50, 58, 94, 98; 9:fo. 18). Relations between the encroaching Tsimshian and the Henya were tense, and it

is known that on one occasion the Henya killed four sea otter hunters (HBCA B 201/a/8:fo.177).³

Hunting territories on land were also guarded from encroachment. According to Oberg (1934:149-50; 1973:169), if a person was hungry they could hunt on another clan's territory, but any furs or hides that were taken had to be given to the owners. If this was not done, the trespasser might be punished, perhaps even with death. De Laguna's informants said much the same thing. If furred game were scarce and if a non-clansman hunted them or disturbed them during the mating season, he might be shot (de Laguna 1972,1:361; also see Elliott 1886:54-55).

Krause (1956:169) tells us that access to trade routes was also restricted, with legal sanctions being imposed on trespassers:

The Indian cannot stand a peaceful, quiet existence. His great sensitivity and his strong sense of property rights are constant cause of resentment. For every bodily injury, for any damage to his goods and property, for any infringement by strangers on his hunting or trading territory, full compensation is demanded or exacted by force (emphasis mine).

There is evidence that local groups could deny access to the major trade routes into the interior. While on a summer tour of the leased territory in 1859, the HBC steamer Labouchere stopped to trade furs from the Sumdum Tlingit. Whereas the Sumdum usually had land furs to trade, on this occasion they only offered seal skins. Captain Swanson noted in the ship's fur trade journal that the Sumdum had gotten into a dispute with the Taku Tlingit who now

refused to allow them to travel up the Taku River to trade more valuable furs from the interior Athabascans (PABC A-C-20.5 L12, Sept. 10, 1859).

Some Tlingit acted as middlemen between fur traders and other Tlingit who controlled rich fur resources. Although this type of trade was probably less lucrative for the middleman than the interior fur trade (see de Laguna 1972,1:191), a middleman position was nonetheless valuable enough to be the object of a political dispute, as Krause (1956:65) observed when he was at Sitka:

Until very recent times the Chilkats and the Sitka carried on an active trade with the Yakutat who are now almost the only people who can get sea otter. In spite of this the Sitka have claimed the privilege of this trade for themselves alone, and while we were there in 1881-1882 it was extended to the Chilkat after long negotiation.

It appears that strategically located local groups could even control access to trading posts. Evidence for this comes from the Fort Simpson journals. The Tongass Tlingit acted as middlemen for the interior-trading Taku Tlingit, and perhaps with other Tlingit as well (HBCA B 201/a/4:fo. 6). To protect this trade, they apparently prevented all but their immediate neighbours - the Stikine, "Cape Fox", and "Port Stewart" Tlingit, and the Kaigani Haida - from visiting Fort Simpson, although all Tlingit had the means of travelling there. An incident which occurred in 1837 suggests this. During that year, the Tongass battled with a party of Chilkat Tlingit, with losses being taken on both sides. John

Work, who commanded the fort at that time, feared that retaliatory conflict with the Chilkat would hinder the Tongass from collecting furs from other Tlingit. Writing in the post journal, he implied that the Tongass would prevent these other Tlingit from coming to Fort Simpson on their own:

The affair...will no doubt cause a deficiency in our Returns as it will prevent the Tongass people from trading with the neighbouring tribes. And the others will probably be afraid to pass them to come here to trade (HBCA B 201/a/3:fo. 120).

There is other evidence that indicates that the Tongass were operating an exclusive middleman trade. On the few recorded occasions that other Tlingit - members of the Henya qwan - visited Fort Simpson, they were accompanied by the Tongass, and on the one occasion when the Henya arrived alone they did not part with their furs. Instead, they traded them to the Tongass, whom they visited on the return canoe voyage (HBCA B 201/a/4:fos. 7, 46, 47, 49, 166).

It is clear, then, that the near-extirmination of the sea otter left some local groups with significantly better access to furs than others. Those who controlled the few remaining fur preserves or the valuable trade routes into the interior could deny access to others. Those, such as the Sitka and Tongass, who only controlled fur-poor territory and who had no means of crossing the Coast Range to trade with the interior Athabascans gained entry into the fur trade by acting as middlemen between the trading posts and other Tlingit who had more direct access to fur resources. Whether

participating in the fur trade as fur hunters, interior fur traders, or as middleman traders with other Tlingit, local groups could use or threaten to use physical force to guard their economic positions - the quest for furs was very much a political process.

Kinship, Partnership, and Economic Rights

It was possible to overcome restrictions on hunting and trade by establishing either marriage or partnership alliances with members of an owning clan. There is considerable documentary evidence to support this.

Tikhmenev, the RAC historian, clearly indicated that a clan could allow kinsmen from distant communities to hunt on its territory. He learned from M.N. Koshkin, the Secretary to the General Manager of the Russian colonies, that non-resident kinsmen were able to partake in the annual Yakutat Bay and Lituya Bay sea otter hunts at a time when most of the sea otter populations elsewhere had been decimated:

Natives of Yakutat Bay and Lituya Bay allowed only their relatives and the most prominent "toions" (chiefs) from the villages of the Vancouver Straits where there are but few sea otters to take part in the hunting (Tikhmenev 1861-63, II:410-11).

De Laguna's research among the Yakutat Tlingit lends support to Koshkin's observation. Her informants told her that a "clan chief" could grant his affines or filial kinsmen the privilege of hunting on his clan's territories, providing they hunted under his direction (de Laguna 1972, 1:361).

Tikhmenev's comment, just quoted above, that "prominent 'toions'", as distinct from "relatives", were permitted to hunt sea otter may refer to men who had partnership relationships rather than kinship ties with the Yakutat and Lituya people. At present, there is little known about partnership; de Laguna (1972,1:352, 355, 356) is the only Tlingit specialist who has discussed the subject. According to her, partners were members of separate clans whose relationships with each other were founded on gift exchanges rather than intermarriage. At least in some cases, partners belonged to the same moiety and were hence forbidden from marrying one another's sisters. Either way, partners were considered to be "quasi-relatives" (de Laguna 1972,1:352).

Most trade between distant Tlingit communities was conducted between kinsmen or partners (de Laguna 1972,1:348, 352, 450). An example of a middleman trader who gained economic advantage from intervillage alliances was "Sitka Jack", who was head of the Tluk'naxadi clan at Sitka during the years after the Alaska Purchase. He was also one of the wealthiest members of the Sitka qwan. In 1877, for instance, he hosted a large prestige potlatch where he gave away over five hundred blankets and plied his numerous guests with large quantities of whiskey and home brewed liquor, or "hoochinoo" (Scidmore 1885:178-79). It is likely that much of his wealth was derived from trade with the Yakutat and Chilkat Tlingit, and perhaps with others as well. For Sitka Jack was the "father-in-

law" of a Yakutat man known as "Sitka Jake" (de Laguna 1972,I:181). Since the Tluk'naxadi clan were very active in the middleman fur trade with the Yakutat (de Laguna 1972,I:181, 191, 450), there can be little doubt that Sitka Jack also took part, and he probably traded with his "son-in-law". Sitka Jack was himself married to the sister of "Doniwak", a Chilkat ankaua who was prominent in the interior fur trade. Every year, Sitka Jack travelled to Chilkat to trade, presumably with Doniwak, and also to fish (see Wood 1882:234-35, 325, 328; Howard 1900:49; Scidmore 1885:87, 108, 110). His fishing privileges, which were granted by his affinal kinship ties with Doniwak (see Olson 1967:56), should not be taken for granted, considering that the Russians and later the Americans had taken the best fishing places near Sitka (Khlebnikov 1861a:35; Swineford 1886:87). Also, Sitka Jack had summer houses at both Juneau and Wrangell (Scidmore 1885:87), although it is not known what social ties he had in those places that allowed him to settle there. However, since he did have a reputation for being an active and astute trader (see Scidmore 1885:108), it seems likely that he had some sort of socio-economic relationships with members of those villages.

Kinship alliances abetted trade even if the parties concerned were not involved in a middleman trading relationship. While visiting a distant locality, one's affines or partners who resided there could offer assistance or even protection (de Laguna 1972,I:356). It is interesting to note that the only Chilkat who made large

annual trading voyages to Fort Stikine in 1840-1842 was a "father-in-law" to "Shakes", who was the senior member of the Nanyaayi clan, which was the highest ranking clan among the Stikine Tlingit (HBCA B 209/a/1:passim; see Olson 1967:24).

It is also known that clans holding rights over interior trade routes permitted affinal and filial kinsmen to accompany them on trading excursions (Olson 1936:211; Krause 1956:134). An Indian by the name of "Anathlass" serves as an example of a trader who invoked kinship relationships to increase his access to the interior. Anathlass regularly travelled into the interior over the Stikine River route, even though he appears to have been a member of Chilkat clan rather than a Stikine clan.⁴ However, Anathlass was a son of Shakes, who, as was just mentioned, was the ankaua of the Nanyaayi clan (HBCA B 209/a/1:passim). There can be little doubt that it was because of his filial connections with that clan that Anathlass was able to travel up the Stikine River. Also, because of his clan ties at Chilkat, he maintained and exercised the right to travel into the interior over the Chilkat Pass route (Douglas 1840a:37).

It is clear, then, that kinship and partnership played a vital role in the Tlingit fur trade economy. By utilizing filial kinship ties, by forming marriage alliances, or by establishing partnerships, a person could gain hunting privileges over exclusive territories, travel over exclusive trade routes, or enter into renumerative middleman trading relationships. It is likely that

these intervillage socioeconomic alliances were established, varied in intensity, or were allowed to lapse as ecological and economic conditions changed.

The Relationship Between Social Status
and Intervillage Alliance

In the preceding section we saw that Sitka Jack was one of the wealthiest and most eminent men among the Sitka Tlingit. I suggested then that he had gained much of his wealth by acting as a middleman, trading furs from his Yakutat "son-in-law" and his Chilkat "brother-in-law", and perhaps from others as well.

An examination of Anathlass' career shows that he also achieved a position of wealth and high social status because of his intervillage ties. We learned from HBC reports dating from 1840-1842 that Anathlass invoked kinship ties to gain rights of trade over both the Stikine River and Chilkat Pass routes into the interior. During this time, Anathlass had a reputation among the HBC traders for being one of the more boisterous and at times troublesome young men living in the Tlingit village at Fort Stikine. However, by the 1880s, when Eliza Scidmore visited the town of Wrangell that had grown up near the site of the old fort, Anathlass had become one of the most prominent men in the village. He had hosted a number of potlatches and commemorated them by erecting totem poles, and he was the leader of a house group - he had, in

sum, used his wealth to achieve a position of high social status (Scidmore 1885:59).

At present, there is little information about the social ties and economic activities of other high status men who were alive during the fur trade period. However, fragmentary evidence suggests that Sitka Jack and Anathlass were not atypical and that it was common for high status men to have close social ties with members of distant villages.⁵ I suggest that like Sitka Jack and Anathlass these other men were wealthy and were therefore able to achieve and maintain positions of high social status because they were involved in intervillage alliances which formed the basis for lucrative trading relationships and/or which granted hunting privileges on territories from which they otherwise would be excluded.

Thus, an individual who had strategic socioeconomic ties with the residents of distant villages was better able to overcome restrictions on hunting and trade and had greater opportunities to enrich himself in the fur trade than a person who did not have these ties. Polygamous marriage could also strengthen a person's position in the fur trade.

The Rise of Polygamous Marriage

As was mentioned earlier (chap. 2), a "nephew" often married the wife of the deceased mother's brother that he succeeded, while keeping his own younger wife at the same time. This allowed existing

marriage alliances between house groups to be maintained. There is not enough information to know for sure, but it is probable that these were the only or the most common cases of polygamy during the aboriginal period. For early historical evidence clearly indicates that polygamous marriage was seldom practiced. Malaspina, who visited the Tlingit in 1791, recognized that polygamy existed but implied that it was uncommon:

...they tolerate polygamy but obey the harmonious laws of nature relative to paternal care, as well as conjugal and filial love (Grunfeld and Molenaar 1972:16).

Portlock (1789:209), who visited in 1787, was interested in the marriage customs of the Tlingit, and he concluded that polygamy was non-existent:

Polygamy I think is not practised here, as I never observed any one of them to have more than one woman who he seemed to consider as his wife, to whom they pay very strict attention and treat with a great deal of affection and tenderness....

He was probably wrong in concluding this, but his observation does strengthen the argument that polygamy was not often practiced.

During the fur trade period, however, polygamous marriage flourished. Captain Lütke, the Russian naval officer who visited New Archangel in 1827, and Khlebnikov, who was stationed there from 1817 to 1833, both observed that wealthy men among the Tlingit were each supporting five or more wives (Khlebnikov 1861a:35; Krause 1956:154). Khlebnikov essentially stated that a man could increase the range of his social alliances by marrying a number of women:

The wealthy and distinguished among the Koloshi [Tlingit] have as many as five wives and sometimes more. They strive to obtain...through these ties...a larger relationship, thereby to increase their strength and influence (emphasis mine).

I suggest that men took a number of wives at least in part to strengthen their economic positions. We have discussed how kinship and partnership ties granted hunting privileges and set the basis for trading relationships. By forming polygamous marriages, a man could widen his sphere of economic action. There is no direct evidence for this, but it is interesting to note that polygamy was adapted to the fur trade economy of the Gitksan, a Tsimshian-speaking people who are neighbours to the Tlingit. The first Indian agent to live among the Gitksan admonished three "chiefs" in 1896 for marrying second wives. They replied that they had done so to gain access to additional traplines (Adams 1973:40). Perhaps Olson (1967:22) was saying that polygamy played a similar economic role among the Tlingit when he remarked that "men sometimes married secondary wives to gain wealth".

For groups such as the Sitka Tlingit, who controlled only fur-poor territory during most of the nineteenth century, it was necessary to build a wide range of alliances to establish middleman trading relationships with distant Tlingit who had more direct access to furs. It was probably for this reason that polygamy was more common among them than it was among the Chilkat, who seldom took more than one wife (Krause 1956:154). Since the Chilkat held

firm control over a vast and lucrative trading province, it was not so imperative that they establish numerous ties with other communities. Holding a strong position in the fur trade, they had less need to modify their culture. It may be for this reason, perhaps more than their isolation, that the Chilkat were culturally conservative in comparison to other Tlingit, as both anthropologists and laymen have noted (see Olson 1967:2; Oberg 1973:xii).

The Potlatch and the Fur Trade Economy

When viewed within an ecological and socioeconomic context, the florescence of prestige potlatching during the fur trade period can be better understood.

Competitive hunting by the Russians and the Tlingit had led to the near-extirpation of sea otter during the first decades of the nineteenth century, by which time the Tlingit had become firmly accustomed to goods received in trade from European and American fur traders. Responding to this condition of scarcity, local groups protected what fur trade resources they controlled, be they rich hunting territories or strategic trade routes leading either into the interior or to trading posts on the coast. As we have seen, political means, including warfare, were used to prevent encroachment by outsiders. To overcome these restrictions - that is, to gain hunting privileges and to develop trading relationships - individuals established alliances with non-clansmen living in other

localities. This is why it became increasingly common during the fur trade period for guests to be invited from distant villages to attend prestige potlatches. By making gifts to members of other clans, a person could, in the words of one observer, "gain popularity and influence" (Wood 1882:339) among them. In many cases, gift-giving relationships which had been established at potlatches must have developed into full-fledged marriage alliances. Partnerships must have been formed at potlatches; after all, these relationships were based on gift exchanges. Or, the vitality of existing alliances could be maintained by potlatching; relationships must have languished if one party's social status declined because they failed to potlatch. Captain Lütke, who visited New Archangel in 1827, recognized that the potlatch could play a role in alliance-building:

New alliances, new acquaintances, peace and war, all noteworthy events, funerals, etc. - all these can be a pretext for one of these ceremonies (quoted in Averkieva 1971:335).

It is significant that if there was rivalry in the potlatch it was invariably between members of the host group who were competing for the favour of the guests rather than between the hosts and the guests (McClellan 1954:86; de Laguna 1972,2:613, 615-16).

Thus, if men were using the potlatch to increase their status they were doing so not only to secure a position of social prominence in their communities. By potlatching a person could also build new

alliances which would strengthen their economic position. It is true that over the short term the potlatch was an economic levelling device, in that a relatively small number of hosts accumulated wealth and distributed it to their numerous guests; and the principal hosts only recovered part of their total expenditure through return gifts at later potlatches (Olson 1967:59, 66-67; see Oberg 1973:118-19). But an expenditure of wealth at a potlatch did not leave a man permanently impoverished, for he gained socioeconomic alliances which put him in a better position to acquire more wealth:

Sitka Jack nearly beggered himself by this great house-building [potlatch], but his fame was settled on a substantial basis, and he has since had time to partly recuperate (Scidmore 1885:179).

Slavery and the Fur Trade Economy

Speaking of the Northwest Coast in general, Morton Fried (1967:222) concluded that "...slaves did not spend their time producing commodities to enhance their master's wealth and improve his position as the giver of potlatches". He maintained that since slaves had little economic importance they did not contribute to stratification on the coast. In fact, he preferred to use the term "captive" rather than "slave" when discussing those people. Thus, Fried argued that slavery was not the same on the Northwest Coast as it was in the other societies where slaves played an important

economic role and where slavery was associated with social stratification, in that slave-holders were better able to exploit strategic economic resources than non-slave-holders (Fried 1967:216-23).

Fried's conclusions about Northwest Coast slavery may apply to the Tlingit of the aboriginal period. There is almost no information about slavery during the late eighteenth century, but it is safe to assume that the slave population was very small at that time (see chap. 4). By 1861, when Lieutenant Wehrman, a Russian naval officer, made a census of the Tlingit, the slave population ranged from a low of 3.8% of the Kujutlingit to a high of 12.9% among the Yakutat, with 10.6% of the Stikine being slaves (Petroff 1884:38). A detailed census made by the HBC in 1845, which has every indication of being accurate, supports Wehrman's findings. It showed that 10.5% of the population living in the large Tlingit village at Fort Stikine were slaves (HBCA B 209/2/1:fo.4). Since the slave population had increased during the fur trade period (Averkiewa 1971:331; see Oberg 1973:33), when these counts were made, the number of slaves must have been negligible during the aboriginal period which preceded.

We saw earlier (chap. 4) that collective ownership of wealth predominated during the early contact period, and this supports Oberg's (1973:30, 62) statement that in aboriginal times slaves were owned by house groups. Thus, if there was any benefit that was gained from slave labour it accrued to kinship groups rather

than to specific individuals. Since the wealth produced by slaves was dispersed among kinsmen and the number of slaves was small, it seems likely that slavery played only a minor part in the aboriginal economy and social organization. This was not the case during the fur trade period.

Individuals who acquired large amounts of personal wealth by hunting and trading furs were able to purchase their own slaves. By the 1820s, there were pronounced differences in the number of slaves which different individuals held (see chap. 4), and Lütke, who visited around this time, remarked that some rich men owned as many as twenty to thirty (Krause 1956:105). It was probably very exceptional for a man to hold such a large number of slaves, for according to de Laguna (1972,1:469-70) a man who owned five or so was very wealthy, although it is known that Shakes, the highest ranking Stikine Tlingit, owned twenty-four slaves in 1840 (Douglas 1840a:55).

Though slavery increased during the fur trade period, Fried was in some ways correct when he said that even then slaves did not make a major economic contribution; after all, slaves probably accounted for only about ten per cent of the population at most. Fried concluded that since slaves produced only a small portion of Tlingit wealth slavery therefore had little economic significance. But slavery was relatively unimportant only within the context of the total Tlingit economy. Fried failed to ask where

the products of slave labour were going. The point is that under conditions of individual ownership which prevailed during the fur trade period some individuals benefited from slavery more than others. It was the individual owner and not the kinship group as a whole that reaped the major benefits of slave labour.

Ethnohistorical evidence clearly indicates that a man could gain both political and economic advantages by owning slaves. James Douglas of the HBC recognized this when he visited the Tlingit in 1840. He commented in his diary that slaves:

...who tho' in many cases kept for the mere purpose of display, are also exceedingly useful as fishermen and hunters, while they constitute a body guard of generally faithful adherents, ready to protect their master or murder his enemies at the slightest intimation of his will without question or scruple (Douglas 1840a:55).

There is evidence in the Fort Stikine Journal that slaves at times constituted work groups under the direction of their owners, as the daily entry for June 26, 1840, indicates:

Shakes Father in Law [sic] arrived today paddled by 16 slaves (HBCA B 209/a/1:fo.5).

He had arrived from Chilkat, in company with his brother, to trade furs at the fort. And, the entry for September 8, 1841, notes that Shakes

...started about Noon for the interior in a small Canoe with two of his slaves (HBCA B 209/a/1:50).

The Journal is not explicit about the purpose of Shakes' voyage, but it appears that he was making one last trip to trade furs from the

interior Athabascans before winter set in.

Douglas (1840a:55) even went so far as to suggest that slaves were the basis of Shakes' position of economic and political prominence among the Stikine Tlingit:

In fact Shakes the most influential Stekine Chief has no followers of his own tribe and merely a retinue of 24 slaves, who paddle his canoes, fish, hunt and perform for him every menial office, live under the same roof, and in short uphold his cause with their every ready swords and spears.

Douglas was undoubtedly under-estimating the amount of support Shakes gained from kinship ties. To put it simply, the HBC officers disliked Shakes - he was an aggressive trader and they felt that he was cruel to his slaves -, so they were reluctant to credit him with support from the free population of the community. But Douglas did nevertheless indicate that slaves were an important source of economic and political power for their masters.

It was customary for slaves to be occasionally killed at potlatches, either to enhance the prestige of the owner or to serve him in the afterlife if he had died, and this practice continued until after the Alaska Purchase when the American authorities put a stop to it (Kotzebue 1830:54; Petroff 1884:165, 241; Schwatka 1885:38-39; Elliott 1886:64; Niblack 1890:252; Jones 1914:177-19; Krause 1956:49, 111-12; Oberg 1973:117). This should not, however, be taken as a sign that slaves were economically unimportant and that they were used merely to express inequalities in social status. As

the United States Army explorer Frederick Swatka (1885:38-39) observed when he visited the Chilkat in 1883 while enroute to the Yukon River,

...an eye was kept open toward mercenary views, and the sacrifices were nearly always of the aged, infirm, or decrepit; those who had ceased to be useful as interpreted by their own savage ideas of usefulness.

Khlebnikov (1861a:42) said much the same thing earlier in the century, at a time when ritual killing was more common:

...they kill the bad and useless slaves whom they can no longer sell or give away.

It is clear, then, that slaves were valued for their labour and not just for their prestige value. A man who owned a number of slaves was in an economically stronger position than a man who owned none.

Conclusion

In the last chapter we saw that during the fur trade period wealth replaced age as the major determinant of a person's social status.

Men may have become wealthy in the fur trade initially because they were exceptionally skillful hunters or astute traders. It is difficult to imagine, though, that a man could have remained wealthy if his hunting or trading skills were his major economic assets. Surely this would have been obviated by the vagaries of hunting and trading life. I propose that some individuals were able

to remain wealthy and maintain positions of high social status for long periods of time because they had fur hunting and trading rights that others lacked and because they had better means to exploit fur resources. A person who had inherited wealth or who had gained wealth by hard work or good fortune could enhance their social status at potlatches and thereby form alliances with members of distant communities. These alliances could give them access to exclusive hunting territories and/or lay the basis for exclusive and remunerative trading relationships. Some individuals supported a number of wives and thus gained a wider range of socioeconomic alliances. Also, by purchasing slaves and harnessing their labour a wealthy man could engage in the fur trade more intensely than his non-slave-holding kindred. I conclude, then, that in a rudimentary way the Tlingit of the fur trade period had met the economic condition of a Stratified Society: some individuals had better access than others to strategic economic resources, in this case furs.

Notes

¹This is to say nothing about the questionable assumption Codere makes about the Kwakiutl being inherently warlike.

²Oberg's discussion of the development of the prestige potlatch is vague. But in the following passage he certainly implied that the repayment potlatch was aboriginal while the prestige potlatch was not:

....the potlatch to which...myths refer is the one connected with the ceremonies of house building, burial, and the preparation of the young for adult life. Even today the more out-of-the-way villages speak of the potlatch in these terms. In this chapter, however, I have dealt entirely with the large intervillage potlatch which is not connected with ceremonial labor. One gives a potlatch when one has accumulated sufficient wealth.

Among the Tsimshian, Haida, and Kwakiutl the potlatch is purely a social affair and so it has tended to become among the Tlingit. It is difficult to say what all the causes contributing to making the potlatch more and more a competitive institution were; but the introduction of metal tools, traps, and firearms, leading to greater material wealth, certainly played a greater part" (Oberg 1973:127-28).

³See de Laguna (1972,1:284-86) for a legendary account of conflict between the Yakutat Tlingit and encroaching Tsimshian sea otter hunters, probably in the 1890s.

⁴There is inferential evidence that Anathlass belonged to a Chilkat clan. Shakes' "father-in-law" was certainly from there, and his wife often visited there, which suggests that she was also a Chilkat. Since there is no indication that Shakes had more than one wife, this woman must have been Anathlass' mother, and Shakes' "father-in-law" must have been Anathlass' "grandfather" (see HBCA B 209/a/1:passim). Also, a letter from Fort Stikine, written in 1842, says that the Indians were about to attack the fort: "The instigator of all this is the famous Anathlas - The reason he gives is this that the Bostons [American maritime fur traders] killed a great many of his relations at chil-cat and that he must kill a few whites in return" (HBCA B 201/c/1:fo.3; the writer's emphasis). As was discussed in chap. 1, people were obliged to avenge injury

or death suffered by fellow members of one's clan.

⁵So far, we have seen that Sitka Jack at Sitka had affinal ties with Sitka Jake at Yakutat and Doniwak at Chilkat, and that Shakes' "father-in-law" was a Chilkat. "Chief Kadishan" of Stikine was related to "Chief Stathitch" of Chilkat (Young 1915:69). "Quatkie", who was the second highest ranking ankaua at the Fort Stikine village in the 1840s, may also have had Chilkat "in-laws", for his wife often visited there (HBCA B 209/a/1:passim). And, de Laguna (1972,1:525) commented that it was fairly common for prominent Yakutat families to have marriage alliances with the Sitka or the Chilkat.

CHAPTER 6
THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF
MORE COMPLEX POLITICAL STRUCTURES

The second main distinguishing feature of a Stratified Society concerns the degree of political complexity. There are a wide range of political forms which can be characteristic of this type of society, but the essential feature appears to be that political authority becomes based on territorial rather than kinship ties (see chap. 4). In other words, political personages emerge who have authority in kinship groups other than the one(s) to which they belong. It is evident that the Tlingit of the early contact period had not reached this level of political development. The first explorers and traders commented on how little authority a yitsati or an ankaua had (see chap. 4). This, combined with the fact that early historical sources also show that these leaders acted as representatives in trade (see chap. 4), suggests that Oberg (1973:31, 131) was correct when he noted that the members of house groups and clans collectively decided on the course of action they would take in politico-legal affairs, while their yitsati or ankaua acted as a spokesman and negotiator.

Decisions were likely made and communicated in this fashion, except perhaps when clans joined together in political disputes or

in war. Particularly in the event of war, command must have been given to one or a small number of leaders. In 1792, for instance, Baranov and a small group of Russians and Aleuts were attacked at night by a war party of Yakutat Tlingit who had stumbled across their encampment near the mouth of the Copper River while looking for enemy Chugach. Although the Russians were able to fend off the attack, they were impressed by the order and discipline which the Tlingit displayed, and they observed that the attackers were under the command of one man (Bancroft 1886:326-27). Likewise, the Tlingit attack against the Russians in 1802, for which hundreds of men were mobilized, must have been under the direction of a small number of leaders who had been granted more authority than was normally their due. It is difficult to conceive that an attack of such grand proportions could have been planned and executed by a process of collective decision-making and negotiation between kinship groups.

These exceptional situations aside, it appears in normal day-to-day life there was no over-riding political authority who intervened in or co-ordinated the activities of the various kinship groups which constituted a community. The French officers serving on Étienne Marchand's trading expedition which visited Sitka Sound in 1791 were explicit on this point: "...every one acknowledges as a superior the chief only of the family...." (Fleurieu 1801:240).

"Family" can here be taken to mean a house group or clan.

Tlingit political organization changed during the fur trade period. Certain high status individuals began to wield considerable de facto authority outside of their kinship groups, and occasionally even outside of their villages. There tended to be a specialization of roles, with some leaders being prominent in the adjudication of legal disputes and others being prominent in economic decision-making. Historical developments in the legal realm are best considered in light of demographic change.

Demographic Considerations

As was discussed in chapter 2, during the early contact period villages were seldom inhabited by more than three hundred people and they were often smaller than this. However, for various reasons, this scattered population became concentrated in a few large villages during the fur trade period.

We saw how the Tlingit violently resisted Russian encroachment during the first years of the nineteenth century (see chap. 3). After wiping out the Archangel Michael settlement in 1802, the Sitka Tlingit banded together in a heavily fortified village which, according to Langsdorff (1814:84), was inhabited by three hundred able-bodied men, as well as an unestimated number of women and children. When the Russians re-took Sitka in 1804, the bulk of the Sitka Tlingit abandoned this fortress and established a new one on Chatham Strait. Langsdorff (1814:130) visited this fort during the

following year and estimated a total population of thirteen to fourteen hundred souls. Lisiansky, the Russian naval officer who directed the bombardment of the fort at Sitka, commented that other Tlingit were also fortifying themselves:

Other tribes residing about Sitka, had also, it was understood, been busily employed in fortifying their settlements; so that it is to be feared, our countrymen here will in a short time be surrounded by very formidable and dangerous neighbours (Lisiansky 1814:220).

Perhaps like the Sitka fortress, these other fortified villages were inhabited by people who had formerly lived apart and who had joined together to better defend themselves.

After the sea otter (the primary object of Russian-Tlingit competition) were largely exterminated and a tenuous peace was formed, the Tlingit began to settle around New Archangel after receiving permission to do so from the Russians in 1822. Throughout the rest of the fur trade period, about a thousand Tlingit permanently resided there in one large village (Wright 1883:162-64; Okun 1951:57; Krause 1956:71). Likewise, when the Russians built Fort St. Dionysius (later named Fort Stikine) in the winter of 1833-1834, Tlingit living in the locality abandoned their old habitations to take up residence next to the walls of the fort (Keithahn 1945:30, 99). A census of the Indian village at Fort Stikine for the year 1845 showed a total population of 1574 (HBCA B 209/2/1:fo.5).

It appears that people clustered around major interior trade routes as well as around trading posts. This was indicated

in a letter that A. Etholine, the General Manager of the RAC, wrote to James Douglas of the HBC in 1840. He commented that the inhabitants of the village of Kaknau had all moved away: some had gone to Sitka; some had settled among the Chilkat, who, of course, had access to the interior; and some had settled near the Alsek River, which was another interior trade route that was also handy to waters on the coast where sea otter were still relatively abundant:

-As you refer in your letter to the settlement of Kaknau, I have to explain to you that this settlement did really exist some 15 years ago, but it has been abandoned since then; part of the inhabitants migrated to Chilcat, the river Akoi[Alsek] (between Lituya Bay and Bering [Yakutat] Bay) and other places; the hereditary elder went with part of his people to the island of Sitka near the New-Archangel port, but the greatest portion were killed in the war with the Stachin people (Alaska Boundary Tribunal 1903:11).

Etholine was probably exaggerating when he said that most of the population (which probably numbered in the hundreds) was killed by the Stikine. From what is known about Tlingit warfare it is hard to imagine more than a few score people being killed.

Under fur trade conditions, then, large numbers of people concentrated around trading routes and fur-rich hunting territories where furs were in supply and around trading posts where furs were in demand. A major part of the Tlingit population, which numbered around ten thousand people before the devastating 1836-1837 small-pox epidemic, were living in only a few large villages which were each populated by kinship groups that had been drawn together from

various quarters. It would not be unreasonable to assume that at least some of these groups had little previous contact with each other. It is also conceivable that after the 1836-1837 smallpox epidemic, which reduced the Tlingit population by approximately forty per cent (see chap. 1), kinship groups called upon distant kin to join them, in order to replenish their numbers. Thus, villages of the fur trade period were both heterogeneous and large, and they must have been socially more unwieldy than the relatively small and more homogeneous villages of the pre-fur trade period. An examination of the village at Fort Stikine during the years 1840-1842 shows that a pan-village leadership had emerged which played an active role in resolving conflicts and maintaining social unity in the community.

Conflict Resolution at the Fort

Stikine Village, 1840-1842

Even as late as the turn of this century, clans acted as solidary groups in politico-legal affairs, as Livingston F. Jones (1914:56) observed:

When an individual is wronged the tribe [clan] at once takes up his cause; when shamed or insulted, the tribe at once resents it; when in need of assistance, the tribe is ever ready to help him.

According to ethnographic accounts, when two clans were involved in a dispute, a "brother-in-law" of one of the groups was

sometimes called in to mediate (de Laguna 1960:149; 1972,1:494; Olson 1967:18, 70). At the Fort Stikine village, in 1840-1842, an individual by the name of "Quatkies" served as a mediator in a number of disputes; in fact, there were few disputes that he did not involve himself in. Quatkies, it should be noted, was one of the richest men in the village and the owner of a number of slaves. According to the HBC traders, he was the second highest ranking man in the village, surpassed only by Shakes (HBCA B 209/a/1:passim; Simpson 1847:212-13, 230). The fact that Quatkies mediated disputes between a number of different parties and that he appears to have involved himself on his own initiative suggests that he had moved beyond the role of a "brother-in-law" mediator. We will review his activities during the almost two years that are covered by the Fort Stikine Journal.

On July 7, 1840, a Stikine man by the name of "Stunish" shot and killed the wife of a Kaigani Haida by the name of "Baker" who had been visiting the fort to trade. As a result, for the next three days Baker's "tribe" and the Stunish's people took up positions in lodges and fired at each other, with one of Baker's men being killed in the fray, while Baker, who had been wounded, sought refuge in the fort (HBCA B 209/a/1:fos.8-9). On July 11, Quatkies intervened:

Quatkies the 2^d chief here got a couple bottles of Rum and went and told the belligerents in the name of old king George to cease firing and make

peace that they had already killed and wounded enough (HBCA B 209/a/1:fo.9).

On the following day, it was agreed that four slaves would be paid by the Stikine in compensation for the death of Baker's wife, and his men would receive gifts as well. Baker returned home a few weeks later (HBCA B 209/a/1:fos.9-10).

On December 17, 1840, another group of Kaigani Haida arrived at the fort to demand compensation for the life of one of their people who had been killed a year before by one of Shakes' slaves. The Kaiganis danced with Shakes' people the following night, but relations between them were tense. On December 22, Quatkie discussed the situation with William Glen Rae, who was in charge of Fort Stikine at the time:

Quatkie informed me that some of the stikine Indians had determined to shoot the Kygarnies now here when they attempted to start — to which he seems much opposed — I sent him to use his influence to stop this — in the evening he came back and told me peace was made that [the] Kygarnies were to dance here two or three days — & that Shakes was to give them the value of 26 Beaver for the Indian his slave killed.... (HBCA B 209/a/1:fo.21).

By saying that he sent out Quatkie, Rae was probably exaggerating his own role in resolving the dispute. Having occupied the fort only since June, the HBC traders had not yet established a strong position in the community and they still had little influence over the Tlingit. Rae conveyed how vulnerable he and his men were when he wrote

God help us from a rumpus with the Indians, we would cut a most miserable figure should such an event take place.... (HBCA B 209/a/1:fo.6).

It was probably Quatkies and not Rae who had been most effective in encouraging a settlement.

The day after the dispute with the Kaigani Haida was ended, Shakes got into a fight with one of the post employees and received two severe cuts on his face. In his anger, he then killed one of his slaves and threatened to organize an attack against the fort. Once again Quatkies attempted to bring about a peaceful solution:

Shakes is trying all he can to get up a party [to attack the fort] but few seem inclined to Join him — and Quatkies is saying all he can to keep every thing quiet — (HBCA B 209/a/1:fo.22).

Although "Indians [were] prowling around all night with arms to try to pop off one of our fellows", Shakes agreed next day to accept ten 2 1/2 point blankets in payment for his wounds and humiliation (HBCA B 209/a/1:fo.22).

A few months later, in April, 1841, most of the Tlingit living at the Fort Stikine village had gone upriver to catch eulachon and perhaps to trade with the interior Athabascans as well. On April 21, word was received at the fort that the Stikine had quarrelled with each other and that a woman had been killed. The April 22 entry in the Journal reads:

Quatkies came down today to get some Rum as the Indians intend to Quarrel amongst themselves [;] he says he his [sic] endeavouring to make them make peace — but Shakes is opposed — (HBCA B 209/a/1:fo.34).

During the next few days, there were rumours of fighting among the upriver Stikine people, but by end of May, when the eulachon run

had ended, they all returned to the village and there is no evidence of rifts still existing between them. The dispute, whatever its cause, had been settled.

On June 11, 1841, a quarrel erupted between "Tannoch's" people and members of the Kiksadi clan as a result of the former "ill using a woman". There was no bloodshed, apparently because the Kiksadi's leader, "Cath luch ge", was absent at the time (HBCA B 209/a/1:39), but five days later, the conflict escalated.

Once again, Quatkie intervened:

"this morning Cath luch ge renewed his quarrel with Tannoch — by the interference of Quat-kie it was stopped — Cath luch ge wishes to get 10 Blkts [blankets] for the insult given to his party while he was absent — (HBCA B 209/a/1:fo.39).

It appears that the matter was settled amicably, for there is no further mention of hostility between the two groups, and a number of months later, in February, 1842, it was noted in the Journal that a formal peace had been made (HBCA B 209/a/1:fo.62).

Also in February, 1842, Tannoch mediated in a dispute between two groups whose names are not mentioned:

Tannoch one of the chiefs came to day to inform me that he has succeeded to make peace between two parties who have quarrelled sometime ago (HBCA B 209/a/1:fo.62).

Clearly, then, Quatkie and, on occasion, lesser leaders such as Tannoch were playing an active role in conflict resolution at the Fort Stikine village. By all appearances, they involved themselves in disputes which did not seriously jeopardize the interests of

their own kinship groups. They were using their influence to promote social harmony in the community as a whole, rather than just representing the interests of one of its constituent parts.

The existence of over-riding legal authorities was not just a phenomena of the years 1840-1842, and it cannot be explained merely by Quatkie's idiosyncracies. It appears that social structural rather than idiosyncratic factors were at work. Evidence for this comes from a letter written to Sheldon Jackson in 1879 by Maggie J. Dunbar, an American Presbyterian missionary and teacher who had taken up residence at the town of Wrangell (near the site of Fort Stikine, which had been abandoned in 1849). Historical accounts dating from around the 1880s make no mention of Quatkie, which leads us to assume that he had died by this time. Yet, there were a few high status men who were playing a key role in legal affairs, just as Quatkie had done almost forty years earlier. Dunbar's letter notes that a woman had been murdered. She added, however, that

Nothing had been done with the murderer. The Indians have been waiting for all the principal men to return to the village. This week they have had a council and determined to arrest and try the man. If he is found guilty they will probably execute him (Jackson 1880:251-52).

Thus, a legal dispute concerned "all the principal men" of the village, as well as the kinship groups of the plaintiff and the defendant.

I suggest that as villages grew in size during the fur trade period, and as community life accordingly became more complex, new

types of political leaders emerged. It appears that aboriginally a yitsati or an ankau was primarily a spokesman and negotiator for his kinship group. Men such as Quatkie continued to perform that role during the fur trade period (e.g., see HBCA B 209/a/1:fos.56-57). However, we have seen that at the Stikine village, both in 1840-1842 and in 1879, high status individuals were acting as village leaders rather than simply as kinship group leaders.

Particularly before the Alaska Purchase, when there were almost no external restrictions against slave-holding, political leaders may have been able to act independently from their kinship groups because they could draw on the backing of their slaves if their kinsmen failed to support them. In the last chapter, it will be recalled, Douglas (1840a:55) was quoted as saying that slaves

...constitute a body guard of generally faithful adherents, ready to protect their master or murder his enemies at the slightest intimation of his will without question or scruple.

Thus, high status men who owned a number of slaves, such as Quatkie, had their own political power bases. Also, individuals who had given away large amounts of wealth at potlatches and who had hosted feasts must have had at least the tacit political support of non-consanguinal kinsmen in the village whom they had feasted or made gifts to.

Economic Decision-Making

In the aboriginal fishing, hunting, and gathering economy, each clan was an independent property-holding unit and each house group generally worked alone in production (see chap. 2). Thus, kinship groups were economically divided from one another. However, participation in a fur trade economy fostered the development of common economic interests. For instance, groups who traded directly with fur trading posts were all subject to the same prices for their furs. Fur trading Tlingit, many of them living far apart, at times took collective action to further their common economic interests. A small number of leaders played an important co-ordinating role on these occasions. Evidence for this comes from the 1840-1842 Fort Stikine Journal and the 1859-1861 Fur Trade Journal of the HBC trading ship Labouchere.

Immediately after the HBC took over Fort Stikine from the RAC in June, 1840, the Stikine Tlingit began to agitate for the same prices that the HBC was paying for furs at Fort Simpson, which were higher than the Russian prices. The HBC and the RAC, however, were endeavouring to establish equal prices in order to minimize competition, which would be destructive to both of their interests (Douglas 1840b:3). When the HBC traders at Fort Stikine refused to give in, the Tlingit began to take action. On June 19, they began to vandalize a grist mill located outside of the walls of the fort (HBCA B 209/a/1:fo.3). Almost no trade was conducted, and

many of the Tlingit took their furs to Fort Simpson, farther down the coast (HBCA B 209/a/1:fo. 3-4). Quatkies, who had been so active in resolving legal disputes, as we have just seen, intervened and told his fellow villagers that their demands were too high and that they should trade at the lower prices that the HBC was offering. Although Quatkies's word carried weight in legal affairs, he had considerably less influence over economic matters, for the Tlingit paid little attention to him on this occasion (HBCA B 209/a/1:fo. 4). It was Shakes rather than Quatkies who gave direction to the community and who vocalized their demands for higher prices, as the journal notation for June 19 indicates:

Old Shakes told us to trade either on their own terms or be off and that if we did not one or other not one of us should live - he brought the clothing I gave him to the gates and compared it in ridicule to the presents which he had got from the Russians[.] He put on the Coys Grey milled cap and then changed it for a hansom cloth one trimmed with Fur and tinsel given by the Russians and asked which looked best - he did the same with the Indian cassots I gave him (HBCA B 209/a/1:fo. 4) -

The situation had become so serious that the commander of Fort Stikine, William Glen Rae, began to fear for the safety of the post, and he gave small arms instruction to the eleven Hawaiian Islanders who comprised half of his complement of men (HBCA B 209/a/1:fo. 6).

Despite these efforts on the part of the Tlingit, the HBC remained adamant in their determination to keep the Fort Stikine fur prices at the former Russian level. Although the Tlingit continued to take many of their furs to Fort Simpson, after a short

time they began to trade more furs at Fort Stikine. Although relations between the HBC and the Stikine Tlingit remained tense, there were no more protests about fur prices during the time period covered by the post journal. It is significant, however, that Shakes had acted as a spokesman in economic affairs for almost the entire village, with the probable exception of Quatkie and his closest followers.

According to George Blenkinsop, who was a Clerk at Fort Stikine from 1842 to 1849, Shakes died in the measles epidemic which swept the Northwest Coast in 1848 (HBCA D 5/26:fo. 21). Because of gaps in the historical record, there is little information about fur trade politics between the HBC and the Tlingit until the period 1859-1861, which is covered by the Labouchere journal. Here we see that Shakes' successor, who carried the same name, also played a prominent role in economic decision-making.

After 1859, when the HBC lost its exclusive trading licence in the territories stretching from Rupert's Land west to the Pacific coast, competition quickly developed on the Northwest Coast. Many Indians, the Tlingit among them, began to make long canoe voyages to sell their furs to the HBC's competitors in Victoria, and small sloops and schooners began to sail from Victoria and ports in Washington Territory to purchase furs on the coast (see chap. 3; Galbraith 1957:chap. 8).

In April, 1860, when the Labouchere began its annual tour of Tlingit villages, it first stopped off to trade furs from the Stikine, who, it was found, now demanded higher prices for their furs

than what they had received in the past. After a day without trading, the Stikine finally agreed to sell their furs at the old prices (PABC A-C-20.5 L12:April 9, 10, 1860). The Labouchere then steamed north to trade furs from the Kake, who apparently settled for the old prices without argument. However, the situation changed at Sumdum, which was the next village on the Labouchere's course. Captain Dodd explained in the ship's journal:

several of the influential men came aboard, and began telling us of a circular Shakes had sent round the coast telling them of the price of Furs at Victoria and advising them not to trade with me without [unless] I gave the same. They pretended to laugh at it, but I feel certain that it will be the cause of trouble to me and loss to the trade (PABC A-C-20.5 L12:April 15, 1861)[.]

Without a doubt, this was Shakes of the Stikine Tlingit. Next day, just as Dodd expected, the Sumdum refused to part with their furs unless they received higher prices. Dodd, however, refused to give in and told the Sumdum that he would not sell them tobacco or powder for their guns unless they lowered their demands. The Sumdum acceded just as the Labouchere was getting up steam in preparation for leaving (PABC A-C-20.5 L12:April 16, 1860).

Next, the ship visited the Taku Tlingit, who had also received Shakes' "circular", as the journal entry for April 18 indicates:

they seem very dis-contented and tell me of the prices given for furs at Victoria, having heard it from a canoe that returned last fall from that place [.] they are also all of them more or less influenced by Old Shakes circular [.]

The Taku reluctantly traded their furs next day (PABC A-C-20.5 L12: April 18, 19, 1860).

Even the Chilkat, who lived a considerable distance from the Stikine, had been influenced by Shakes, and they too demanded higher prices:

they commenced talking in a very angry manner telling us we were stealing their skins, that the Russians and Americans at Sitka gave much more for their furs particularly Martins (which I have every reason to believe is true) and that they had got Shake's paper (PABC A-C-20.5 L12: April 21, 1860; Dodd's comment in parentheses).

Shakes, it should be recalled, had strong kinship ties with the Chilkat (see chap. 5), and this probably gave him an important in-road into the community.

On this voyage, the HBC traders succeeded in keeping fur prices at their former standards. Shakes and his supporters had failed in their effort to increase prices, although they were more successful during later trading seasons as the HBC's competitors became better established. The important point is that Shakes had provided leadership not just for his own clan but for others as well. Tlingit living in four large villages had responded to his call for collective action to gain better prices for furs.

Conclusion

Although the case is by no means closed, it appears that during the aboriginal period a yitsati or an ankaua primarily acted

as a spokesman and negotiator for his kinship group in political affairs. In contrast, during the fur trade period a few high status individuals began to exert considerable influence on legal and economic decision-making outside of their kinship groups. Village and, on occasion (as in the case of Shakes' "circular"), territorial leaders were emerging. The Tlingit of the fur trade period were thus developing the policial institutions of a Stratified Society, even if only in an incipient form. The evidence for this is geographically skewed, in that much of it pertains only to the Stikine Tlingit, but it seems likely that the situation was much the same in other Tlingit communities. The demographic and economic context of political life had changed for many of them during the fur trade period in much the same way as it had changed for the Stikine people.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Yet to understand social change properly...we need to look at institutions less in terms of their contributions to social solidarity at a particular point in time, than in terms of the extent to which they cater for the personal and property security needs of the individual occupants of status positions and social categories (Lewis 1968:xxi).

Summary

I have attempted in this thesis to determine the extent of social change among the Tlingit during the fur trade period. By using primary historical sources in conjunction with anthropological studies, I have determined that adapting to a fur trade economy involved major changes in Tlingit social and political organization.

Although early historical sources often provide clues rather than solid evidence, there is, I believe, enough information to conclude that the Tlingit of the early contact period were organized into a Rank Society. A number of early descriptions of trading practices show that the head of a kinship group acted as redistributor of collectively-owned wealth. It is apparent that a yitsati or an ankaua did not appropriate a significantly disproportionate share of this wealth for his own use. Spanish explorers explicitly stated that there was general economic equality. During this time when most wealth was collectively owned, a person's social status

was determined by a combination of factors: sex, age, and personality. The position of yitsati was accorded to the oldest man in a house group. Clans and house groups within clans were loosely ranked in relation to each other, largely on the basis of their size, and the oldest man in a higher ranked clan was an ankaua. However, neither a yitsati nor an ankaua had special political powers; they were primarily advisors and spokesmen for their kinship groups.

Around the turn of the nineteenth century, the Tlingit became heavily involved in the fur trade, and this is reflected in the intensity of their conflict with the Russians. Involvement in the fur trade resulted in a variety of changes in Tlingit culture. Like other Indians who were active in the fur trade, the Tlingit soon became dependent on the wide range of trade goods, many of them utilitarian. These goods, and the furs that were used to purchase them, were individually owned, whereas subsistence wealth was collectively owned. Within only a few years of involvement in the fur trade, striking differences developed in the amount of personal wealth that different individuals owned. By the 1820s, wealth replaced age as the major determinant of an individual's social status. Wealthy individuals acquired positions of high social status and assumed yitsati and ankaua positions by making substantial contributions of wealth at potlatches so that they could claim prestigious ancestral names or enhance the prestige of names that they already held.

However, individuals used wealth for other purposes besides raising their social status. After the sea otter were largely exterminated in the early part of the nineteenth century, furs became scarce. Five trade routes into the interior, which provided access to fur-hunting Athabascans, and a few remaining fur preserves were the only sources of furs. Under these conditions of scarcity, local kinship groups protected what economic assets they controlled, be they interior trade routes, hunting territories, or access to trading posts. By giving away wealth at potlatches and thereby establishing a position of prestige, rich men were able to form kinship and partnership alliances with other rich men in distant communities. These alliances granted hunting rights in each other's clan-owned hunting territories, allowed travel over exclusive trade routes, or laid the basis for remunerative middleman trading relationships. Also, by purchasing slaves and exploiting their labour power, a wealthy man could increase his productive capacity. Thus, by manipulating wealth, some individuals were able to gain a larger stake in the fur trade than others, and in this way a form of rudimentary economic stratification developed.

Men who had acquired wealth and high status through the fur trade continued to speak for their kinsmen in political affairs, but they also began to acquire considerable influence outside of their kinship groups. Under fur trade conditions, the Tlingit population had become concentrated in only a few large villages, and leaders emerged who attempted to maintain social harmony in entire commu-

nities. Other high status men acquired political influence outside of their kinship groups by articulating and promoting the shared economic interests which different Tlingit groups held by virtue of common participation in the fur trade. The Tlingit were beginning to develop the political attributes of a Stratified Society.

Conclusion

We have seen that for the Tlingit the fur trade period was a time of qualitative social change rather than of "cultural elaboration". This raises the question of whether other Northwest Coast peoples experienced similar historical changes in their social structures. The Tlingit were not alone in participating in the fur trade during the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The study of historical social change, relying at least in part on ethnohistorical analysis, may reveal that the ethnography of other Northwest Coast peoples is in need of major revision. Clearly, this would have important implications for the role which the Northwest Coast plays in anthropological theory generated by cross-cultural analysis.

As was mentioned in the introduction, anthropologists have conceived that Northwest Coast social structure was more complex than what is usually found in societies with fishing, hunting, and gathering economies. This unusual complexity has been cited by those who opposed the evolutionary theories of nineteenth century

anthropologists, among whom Lewis Henry Morgan was the most eminent. Morgan especially drew parallels between foraging economies and egalitarian clan organizations. These attacks against evolutionary theory were by implication attacks against a materialist perspective in anthropology. For it had been Morgan's contention that the evolutionary development of more complex social forms was bound up with the increasing sophistication of the means of production, or what Morgan termed the "arts of subsistence". Morgan's view of pre-capitalist social evolution was adopted in large measure by Marx and Engels.

The Soviet anthropologist Julia Averkieva (1971) has recently defended Marxist evolutionary theory (which has important roots in Morgan's theory) by arguing that because the Tlingit had developed a highly specialized fishing and hunting economy they had reached a level of production comparable to that of horticultural tribes. The Tlingit, like other Northwest Coast societies, in a sense are viewed as being an aberration, an offshoot from the Marxist evolutionary schema which posits a relationship between the development of horticulture and the genesis of class society.

The position taken here is that Northwest Coast ethnologists, Marxist and otherwise, have largely ignored historical changes in the material conditions of Northwest Coast Indian life. We have seen here that although the Tlingit of the aboriginal period were somewhat more complex than other fishing, hunting, and gathering societies, they were not organized into a Stratified Society. Stratification

was the product of the fur trade, not of a rich fishing economy.

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