An Account of the Origins of Christianity in the Fraser-Skeena Headwaters and North Pacific Littoral: 1741-1873

by

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Abstract

This dissertation is an ethnohistorical account of the advent of Christianity, how it was taught and practiced, on the upper Fraser-Skeena watershed and adjacent North Pacific littoral between the years 1741 and 1873. The region was a focal point of sustained international colonial and commercial attention, and missionaries of various European Christianities played an important role in the introduction of Christianity in the vast socio-geographical space. However, they were not the only teachers and practitioners. Lay Christianities, that is, Christianity as practiced by the various workers in the maritime and continental fur trades, and later by Russian, Spanish, British, Canadian and American colonists were perspicuous features of the social field. While the presence of lay Christianities is often underdetermined in the North American historical and ethnographic records, I argue it figured significantly into the quality of social relations between newcomers and peoples Indigenous to the region. Indigenous peoples were initially interested in Christian form and content. Later those interests were augmented by Indigenous prophets interested in indigenizing Christianity; a task which entailed ensuring that Christianity originated locally. When the Hudson's Bay Company emerged as the chief commercial operator in the region at the close of the first quarter of the nineteenth century, Indigenous Christianity was mobilized as a religion of resistance against the Company's incursion into local social spaces and in the ensuing struggle with both the Company and Christian missionaries.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In nineteenth century North America, Indigenous emergent religions, sometimes termed prophet religions, with clear Christian influences blossomed on the edges and in the corners of the geo-political map. In the Northwest, on the North Pacific littoral and at the headwaters of the major rivers that drained into the Pacific, the Fraser, the Columbia, and the Skeena, such religions emerged only after a long history with Christianity.[1] The presence of Christianity among the peoples Indigenous to those spaces is not traced to the missionary vanguard but to a long history of relations with near neighbours and newcomers that stretched back to at least the seventeenth century (prior to the first quarter of the nineteenth century, with few exceptions, the newcomers were engaged in some capacity with the either the maritime or continental fur trade). There were lay or folk versions of Christianity in the Northwest that piqued the interest of the Indigenous inhabitants in the social identities of the newcomers to the land. Thus, when the nineteenth-century prophet religions emerged, the leaders of those movements addressed a local audience that was already familiar with Christianity.

The prophet religions were in the most general way an indigenization of Christianity; they were an effort to give Christianity a local origin. The process of indigenization can also be appreciated as an attempt at social formation, or the construction of group boundaries within a changing social field. Boundaries were altered

[1] Often times such religions are represented as coalescing around individuals variously termed as prophets, visionaries, or shamans. With all respects to ethnographic difference there remains a family resemblance among such figures, they are harbingers of change recognized within a community as possessing a privileged capacity for anticipating the future.

as the prophets reached out to their neighbours uniting them as a group under the banner of an Indigenous Christianity. Their reach was assisted by a radically equalizing motif that the prophets perceived within Christianity. The leaders of the movements proclaimed that Christianity was not exogenous and that the foreigners did not have special rights to the gospel. The prophets rejected European notions of history, religion and justice without rejecting Christian morality and the Christian ecstatic experience. By centering Christianity in a social field, making it the hub of all social orbits, participants in the emergent religious movements stitched together the local Indigenous residents (the Babine, Sekani, Witsuwit'en, Dakelh and Gitksan) and European newcomers in a meaningful way that preserved the priority of their own local versions of Christianity. When the missionaries came and told their story of Christian origins, a story that harked back to the time of Jesus and the apostles, the people responded with their own story of Christian origins that did not look to the Jesus of the past but to their prophets of the present.

It follows from what I have just written that my view of prophet religions is basically consistent with what Vittorio Lanternari had termed almost half a century ago the "religions of the oppressed."[2] The notion of a religion of the oppressed is a major achievement of religion's documentary record.[3] In such treatments, where religious discourse and practice are said to serve as effective rallying points against schemes of domination, the tensions among groups are often depicted in terms of a struggle over

[2] Vittorio Lanternari, *Religions of the Oppressed: A Study of Modern Messianic Cults*, trans. Lisa Sergio (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965).

[3] See Peter Worsley, *The Trumpet Shall Sound: A Study of "Cargo" Cults in Melanesia* (New York: Shocken Books, 1968); Anthony F.C. Wallace, *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca* (New York: Vintage Books, 1969); and Kenelm Burridge, *New Heaven, New Earth: a Study of Millenarian Activities* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969).

material resources. In that depiction, non-material resources are often undervalued not necessarily because they are less relevant but because they are harder to quantify. It is no surprise, then, that in the Americas, where prophet movements have been taken as exemplary religions of the oppressed, deprivation theory has been a powerful explanatory tool. The use of deprivation theory is not unique to the academic study of religion; explanations of religion in terms of denial of resources are also germane to the disciplines of history and anthropology. While the articulation of non-material resources is a challenging enough analytical task, the difficulty is compounded in religions of earlier periods where the historical and ethnographic data is quite thin. The interpretive challenge in my analysis, if not to procure more new data, is to amplify what is known by illuminating the social field in which such religions emerged so as to clarify the group dynamics and the relation of nay given group to others in the social field. In this dissertation, I am critical of deprivation theory and its application to North American prophet movements. The criticism is not rote. I offer it to distinguish my own alternative analytical venture, which considers the social reasons for the emergence of prophet movements. Treating the religious discourse and practice attendant to such movements as activity in the interest of social formation within a social field is, I argue, a useful analytical manoeuvre.

Non-material resources such as justice, respect, dignity, equality, prestige and honour, difficult to quantify and to qualify, were yet satisfied by the mobilization of religious discourse and practice. My agenda, an illumination of the social motivations of such movements, is similar to what Joseph Jorgensen accomplished in his masterful treatment of the Ute Sun Dance. Jorgensen argued the Sun Dance is a redemptive

movement geared toward individual (pace societal) transformation. Participation in the Dance offered dancers who were restricted to reservations and confined by oppressive colonial policies and attitudes a sense of happiness, respect and self worth. The Ute Sun Dance community, which included all those involved with the dance not only the dancers, was a community with its own criteria for group membership and its own system of mores.[4] What Jorgensen argues for the individual can be extended to the group; the religious movements of the Northwest were efforts in social formation and in identity formation so as to secure the integrity of the group and for its participants a "space in which to meaningful dwell."[5] The movements refused the incongruous image of the "Indian" without religion (i.e. Christianity) presented to them by others within the social field, resisted the intrusion of the Hudson's Bay Company into local social spaces, and asserted an Indigenous Christianity. While traders and missionaries often interpreted Indigenous Christianity as a failed effort, it was never that Christianity failed, but that Christianity failed to manifest itself in a certain way. Participants in the prophet movements at the time of their emergence, and those who remembered them years later, viewed them as successful efforts at creating an Indigenous Christianity and proudly claimed that Christianity was as at home in Northwest as it ever was anywhere else.

The structure of the dissertation reverses the introductory line I just set out. In chapter 2, I introduce some of the analytical terms integral to my analysis: prophet,

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[4] Joseph Jorgensen, *The Sun Dance Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972).

[5] Cf. Jonathan Z. Smith's definition of religion, "Religion is the quest, within the bounds of the human, historical condition, for the power to manipulate and negotiate ones 'situation' so as to have 'space' in which to meaningfully dwell." Jonathan Z. Smith, *Map is Not Territory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 291. Cf. Kenelm Burridge's definition: "The redemptive process indicated by the activities, moral rules, and assumptions about power, which, pertinent to the moral order and taken on faith, not only enable a people to perceive the truth of things, but guarantee that they are indeed perceiving the truth of things." Kenelm Burridge, *New Heaven, New Earth: A Study of Millenarian Activities* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), 6-7.

prophet movement, social field and social formation. I also survey – taking the scholarship on the Prophet Dance and the Ghost Dance as examples – how prophet religions and the indigenization of Christianity have been represented in the ethnological and ethnohistorical records. I argue that common to all representations is an idea of religion, specifically new religions, as crisis phenomenon, as epiphenomenal (i.e. as a consequence of certain material conditions, namely, ethnological deprivations such as epidemics and natural disasters). While such interpretations are analytically useful, they can underdetermine the social motivations that inform religious activity.

In chapter 3, I erect scaffolding for my larger argument that the prophet religions of the upper Fraser and Skeena watersheds were efforts in social formation motivated by social interests. To that end, I introduce the geographical region and corresponding social field. The latter task entails a description of the various component groups Indigenous to the field as well as their near neighbours, namely, those on the adjacent coast and the more southerly Fraser-Columbia Plateau. I refer to the geographical region at the heart of my analysis, the upper Fraser and Skeena watersheds, as the inner orbit or inner sphere of influence. I use the term "orbit" to describe this field because it suggests motion, relations in motion; that connotation outweighs, in my opinion, the comparative disadvantage of the technical meaning of the term as a cycle around some fixed point. There is no objective centre within the region but there is a movement of people, material and ideas throughout it. I refer to the orbit as "inner" because the region is the analytical focus of my investigation; it was in that region where Christianity was indigenized. Each group occupying that space had close relations with at least two other groups in the inner orbit. For example, in the early nineteenth century the Babine had close relations with the

Gitksan, the Sekani and the Witsuwit'en; the Witsuwit'en had close relations with the Gitksan and the Dakelh; the Dakelh were close with the Witsuwit'en, Babine and Sekani; and the Sekani were close with the Babine and the Dakelh. However, the inner orbit was not hermetically sealed. The circle that I draw around it is not fixed, but slouches toward and attaches itself to neighbouring spaces. It was through the neighbours who lived in those spaces that individuals in the upper Fraser and Skeena watersheds first heard of Christianity.

In chapters 4 and 5, I introduce those groups adjacent to the inner orbit and survey their history of relations with Europeans. My aim in doing so is to articulate that the peoples of the upper Fraser and Skeena watersheds knew of Christianity in advance of the arrival of representatives of the fur trade in the early nineteenth century. Prior to the establishment of trading posts the earliest, most consistent, and richest source of information about European activities outside of the inner orbit, came from contacts on the North Pacific littoral (the outer orbit of ocean and river). In chapter 4, I survey the relations between the coastal peoples and Russians, Spanish, American, and British newcomers. I am most concerned in that survey with the role of religion and just what types of things the peoples of the inner orbit were likely to have heard or seen of Christianity. In chapter 5, I shift my focus to consider a different outer orbit, the region lying to the east and south east (the outer orbit of prairie, mountain and river). Of specific interest in this chapter is the Catholic Christianity, for which there is much useful data, practiced by the fur trade labour, namely, the Iroquois, the Métis and the Canadians. Occasionally in the dissertation, I refer to the peoples Indigenous to the inner and outer orbits in the mid-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as Indigenous peoples (with a

capital "I" as is convention), yet I mean the term in a very literal sense to refer to those peoples who were literally Indigenous to the general social field at the onset of the nineteenth century; recent newcomers, in contrast, were exogenous to the field at the date when this dissertation picks up the trail.[6]

In chapter 6, I continue the discussion of lay Christianity in the continental fur trade but do so in the setting of the inner orbit. In 1805, when the process of constructing fur trade posts west of the Rockies was begun the fur traders became permanent residents of the social field and thus inextricable from the social space of the inner orbit. At that point Christianity becomes a topic of conversation and an idiom through which some traders socially related to Indigenous residents. Thus, when the first missionaries passed through the upper Fraser in 1838, the Indigenous peoples had already thirty years of direct experience with practicing Christians behind them. After the Catholics, the Jesuits and the Oblates made efforts to assert their own Christian forms and practices on the Indigenous peoples of the inner orbits. But the missionaries arrived too late. By the time they arrived, the prophets and others had already devised their own Indigenous Christianity.

The final two chapters are efforts at articulating the process of indigenizing Christianity. In chapter 7, I introduce all the data that I could find on the nineteenth-century prophet religions, the bulk of which, including nineteen oral narratives collected in the 1920s, pertains to a prophet named Bini. The narratives, so far as I know, have not been the topic of sustained scholarly analysis. I evince that the narratives can be read as an argument for Bini's success at indigenizing Christianity; what seems most important

[6] Additionally, when referring to the Indigenous religions, people and/or cultures of the inner and outer orbits specifically (the broad social field of this study), I use the capital "I." Otherwise, when I use the various forms of the verb "to indigenize" and the noun "indigenization," I use the lower case "i."

to the narrators, for example, is not the biographical or historical Bini but the Bini who introduced Christianity. Bini was also remembered, in addition to being a progenitor, as a prophet who attempted to get everyone within the inner and near outer orbits on board with it as a viable and dynamic religiosity and to convince them of its indigeneity.

In chapter 8, I consider the question of motivations and what it was that prompted or interested the prophets and others in Indigenous Christianity. Christian form was one thing that attracted the prophets. Indigenous Christianity also offered a discourse and practice that resisted the incursion of the Hudson's Bay Company into Indigenous social spaces by proudly asserting that Europeans did not have privileged rights to the gospel. Indigenous Christianity also leaped across social spaces cultivating sentiments of affinity among groups within the various orbits. Thus, Indigenous Christianity can also be seen as a part of the dynamics of Indigenous Canadian or Native American ethnogenesis. I close chapter 8 with an epilogue on the advent of Methodism among the Coast Ts'mysen suggesting how the insights of this dissertation might illuminate other cases of Indigenous Christianity in the Americas and possibly elsewhere.[7]

At least two things need mention before I close this introductory chapter. The first concerns the title of the dissertation, "An Account of the Origins of Christianity in the Fraser-Skeena Headwaters and North Pacific Littoral: 1741-1873." I have already hinted at the geographical space denoted in the title: the North Pacific Coast from Vancouver Island to the Eastern Aleutians and the headwaters of the Fraser and Skeena Rivers. Now a word on the two dates, 1741 and 1873. The first date, 1741, refers to the year of the Bering-Chirikov expedition, the first Russian expedition to visit the Eastern Aleutians

[7] In this dissertation I use the *Smalgyax* (Coast Ts'mysen language) spelling of Ts'mysen. When citing titles that render the spelling as "Tsimshian," or where "Tsimshian" is used in quotation, I follow the spelling as given within the original sources.

and the west coast of North America. That voyage is thought to have been the impetus behind Russian commercial activity and Spanish colonial activity on the North Pacific Coast. The second date, 1873, refers to the date of the founding of the Oblate mission at Stuart Lake on the upper Fraser River, the first permanent mission station in the Fraser-Skeena headwaters. Although the people at the headwaters were put onto Christianity by Europeans, the Indigenization of it had already blossomed by the time that the Oblate missionaries entered the field, erected their mission and began the task of what they took to be the introduction of Christianity.

The second point of clarification concerns the names of the chief groups of Indigenous Canadians mentioned in this dissertation: the Dakelh, the Witsuwit'en, the Babine, the Sekani and the Gitksan. It used to be common anthropological practice to refer to the first three groups collectively as "the Carrier." The *Handbook of North American Indians*, for example adopts that approach.[8] However, the *Handbook* also acknowledges that anthropologists typically distinguish the Witsuwit'en and the Babine as groups distinct from the Dakelh. More recent ethnography by Antonia Mills on the Witsuwit'en and Joanne Fiske and Betty Patrick on the Babine confirms the distinction.[9] Thus, I follow the recent trends and cite Mills' work on the Witsuwit'en and Fiske and Patrick's work on the Babine as my authorities on orthography germane to each respective setting. When I use the word Dakelh in this dissertation I mean it to refer collectively to the peoples formerly termed "Carrier"; namely, the Babine, Witsuwit'en

[8] Margaret L. Tobey, "Carrier," in *Handbook of North American Indians* 6, ed. June Helm, (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1981).

[9] Antonia Mills, *Eagle Down is Our Law: Witsuwit'en Law, Feasts and Land Claims* (Vancouver, UBC Press, 1994); Jo-Anne Fiske and Betty Patrick, *Cis Dideen Kat (When Plumes Rise): The Way of Life of the Lake Babine Nation* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000).

and Dakelh (the peoples of the region of Babine Lake, the Bulkley River, and Stuart and Fraser Lakes respectively). For the Gitksan I follow the spellings in Richard Daly's recent ethnography *Our Box Was Full*.[10] For the Dakelh, I defer to the recent ethnographic work of Søren C. Larsen.[11] Lastly, Guy Lanoue's ethnography on the Sekani is my guide for Sekani spelling and orthography.[12]

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[10] Richard Daly, *Our Box Was Full: and Ethnography for the Delgamuukw Plaintiffs* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005).

[11] Søren C. Larsen, "The Future's Past: Politics of Time and Territory among Dakelh First Nations in British Columbia," *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography* 88, no. 2 (2006): 311-321.

[12] Guy Lanoue, *Brothers: the Politics of Violence Among the Sekani of Northern British Columbia* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992).

Chapter 2

Prophet Religion in the Ethnology and Ethnohistory of the Rocky Mountain West

The topic of this dissertation in the most general sense is the origins of Christianity in the upper Fraser and Skeena watersheds. The Christianity there, as was the case wherever Christianity took root, did not grow apart from local practices. Christianity as it was indigenized by the local peoples – the Dakelh, Witsuwit'en, Babine, Sekani and Gitksan – was bound up with what scholars have called prophet religions or prophet movements.[1] Prophet movements have long attracted the interest of historians, anthropologists and comparative religionists.[2] Many scholars have considered prophet movements a hallmark of colonial religiosity the world over. The Americas are no exception; there prophet movements are a perspicuous feature of the ethnographic record. Indeed, the study of prophet movements presaged the anthropology of religion even before anthropology established itself as a professional discipline in the United States.[3]

In this chapter, I track and appraise the conversations about and representations of prophet movements in colonial North America in general and in the colonial Northwest in specific. The notion of a prophet movement is so central to treatments of religious change in the Americas that so much of what we know about Indigenous Christianity has

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[1] Alfred Cave, June Helm and Susan Neylan, for example, term the religions "prophet movements," see Alfred Cave, *Prophets of the Great Spirit: Native American Revitalization Movements in Eastern North America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006); June Helm, *Power and Prophecy Among the Dogrib Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994); and, Susan Neylan, "Shaking Up Christianity: The Indian Shaker Church in the Canada-U.S. Pacific Northwest," *History Faculty Publications* 16 (2011).

[2] Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1992), xi. Dowd wrote that James Mooney, with the publication of *Ghost Dance Religion*, inaugurated a study of millennial movements.

[3] The first academic department of Anthropology was at Columbia University and it began in 1896. Mooney's *Ghost Dance* was published the same year; however, Mooney's research began in 1890. See James Mooney, *The Ghost Dance Religion and Wounded Knee* (New York: Dover, 1973).

been constructed according to that idiom. Thus, any treatment of the matter cannot but avoid engaging the literature on prophet movements in some degree of detail. In this chapter, I contribute to that literature by critically appraising the logical underpinnings of the many scholarly treatments of prophet movements that treat them as crisis behaviours. The work is not rote and the criticism is made to clear the road for my own analysis. Doing so will allow me to situate my own voice, as in a Burkean parlour, and to give credit to all the useful work to which this project is indebted.

Before I begin my appraisal a clarification of terms as to what scholars mean by "prophet movement", "prophet" and "prophecy" is in order. There are various interpretations of those terms depending on the source. In the following section, I define them by striking a balance between the ethnographic and theoretical literature. My intention is to create a composite sketch of the terms so that that the reader is at least comfortable with the idioms as "get started terms." It is obvious and hardly requires mention that "prophet movement" and related terms are second order categories, conceptual reifications, which help a scholar identify some activity of interest. In that sense they belong to the discipline and scholars can do with them as they please. Yet, the terms cannot remain what Baudrillard would call "preceding simulation," they cannot be completely detached and free floating scholarly convictions rather they must be somewhat constrained by and attached to a set of data. Without such constraint a scholar who uses such terms would abandon all pretensions of doing the history of religion.[4] The

[4] See, for example, Gill's discussion of "preceding simulation" in Sam Gill, *Story Tracking: texts, stories and histories in Central Australia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 30-34.

situation I am describing is not too dissimilar to how such key terms as “religion”, “ritual”, and “culture" are currently used in the discipline.[5]

After I have clarified the terms, I will consider the Lakota Ghost Dance as an exemplary prophet movement, paying special attention to the theoretical commitments that have dominated scholarship on the tradition. Moving from the Ghost Dance, I consider how similar commitments are manifest in literature on prophet movements of the Northwest Plateau.[6] Much of the analysis on both movements shares a commitment to religion as epiphenomenal, more specifically, to religion as crisis phenomena. As useful as such interpretations seem they tend to underdetermine the social dynamics of prophet movements. It is my sense that a good bit of prophetic activity is also active, intentional, forward thinking, and more in line with the dynamics of what Burton Mack calls “mythmaking in the interest of social formation.”[7] Of the many things that concerned and interested the participants in the prophet movements of the upper Fraser and Skeena watersheds was the construction of a regionally Indigenous Christianity within a nineteenth century social field that included missionaries, fur traders and other Indigenous groups. In the final section of this chapter, I introduce the terms “social field” and “social formation” in more detail. The closing discussion will also set the stage for a more detailed elucidation of the social field, which is a topic germane to chapter 3.

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[5] For the category “religion,” see Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), xi; for the category “ritual,” see Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), ix-xii.

[6] When scholars use the term Northwest Plateau they usually refer to the Columbia Plateau but similar movements are manifest in the geographically proximate Fraser-Skeena watershed. I will discuss the issue of geographic and cultural boundaries in more detail later in this chapter and again in chapter 2.

[7] See Burton Mack, *The Christian Myth; Origins, Logic and Legacy* (New York: Continuum, 2006).

Clarification of Terms: Prophet Movement, Prophet and Prophecy

The term "prophet" is so frequently used in popular discourse it would seem there is hardly any need to define it. It is common to hear "prophet" referred to in a non-technical way as someone who can predict the course of future events. To focus the definition on prediction is important, but I prefer to think of a prophet as someone who is recognized by a community with a honed skill of anticipating the future. [8] Focusing on anticipation rather than prediction is useful in two ways. First, it naturalizes prophetic activity freeing it from its otherworldly or mystical connotations (e.g. prophet as sage who can divine the will of gods or pattern of the universe). Second, it locates prophetic activity firmly in the human realm; that is to say, it is focused on the human significance of events. The prophet is one with the ability to prepare for the future by reading not the writing on the wall but the *conditions of the present*. While a prophet may be unique to any given social or religious scheme, *prophetic activity* is a hallmark of the human species. Such an understanding of prophetic activity as natural and anticipatory is in perfect congruence with Daniel Dennett's claim that "Looking ahead, anticipating the future, is the crowning achievement of our species,"[9] and with Walter Burkert's notion that "religion is basically optimistic."[10] Looking ahead, prophecy and religion are human capacities.

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[8] Cf. Thomas Overholt, *Channels of Prophecy: The Social Dynamics of Prophetic Activity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989).

[9] Daniel Dennett, *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), 37.

[10] Walter Burkert, *Creation of the Sacred: Tracks of Biology in Early Religions* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 33. I take it that Burkert means "optimistic" in a non-evaluative way, neither good nor happy, but simply forward looking.

It follows from what I have just written that prophets need not be religious personages central to the so-called world religions. Martin Luther King Jr., Thomas Merton, Nellie McClung, W.E. Dubois, and Bob Dylan all qualify as prophets in the sense that they articulate change in familiar and meaningful ways, and in ways that appeal or resonate with groups or individuals. It is as if a prophet is a filter capable of distilling and focusing many latent voices, rumours, attitudes or dispositions into something that is at the same time new but eminently recognizable to those who are open to the prophet's work.[11]

Another category of prophets consists of those religious prophets whose names are so familiar they scarcely require mention: Moses, Buddha, Muhammad, the ancient Israelite prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, et al.[12] That the Judeo-Christian-Islamic prophets dominate this short list of religious prophets is no accident given my historical and geographical location.[13] Be that as it may, I do not think that the term's analytical value is irretrievable or impoverished because I have been conditioned to think of prophecy in a certain way. My hope is that it remains a useful category even when emptied of some of the more descriptive Judeo-Christian-Islamic motifs, such as: messianic proclamations, announcements of doom, the necessity of repentance, miraculous healings, allegations of

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[11] In the same vein, Liam Clancy, compared Bob Dylan to figures of Irish mythology: "In old Irish mythology they talk about the shape changers – he [Dylan] changed voices, he changed images – it wasn't necessary for him to be a definitive person – he was a receiver – he was possessed and he articulated what the rest of us wanted to say but couldn't say." *No Direction Home*, DVD, directed by Martin Scorsese (Paramount, 2005).

[12] While Jesus is often figured as the messiah he is said to have had prophetic abilities. Luke suggested Jesus was a prophet (Lk. 24:6-7). Jesus is alleged to have predicted his death and return.

[13] Burridge writes that "outside the Judeo-Christian-Islamic traditions there can in the strict sense be no prophets, messiahs or messianic traditions, or expectations." Yet, he, like me, holds onto the term prophet to refer to the leader of chiliastic, millenarian and messianic groups. Kenelm Burridge, *New Heaven, New Earth: A Study of Millenarian Activities* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), 11-12.

the depravity of kings, claims the immanence of divine rule, or any number of other such professions putatively received from a monotheistic deity.[14]

Whether religious or secular, central or marginal, prophets of the kind I have just listed are also prophets in the sense meant by Max Weber in his pioneering work on prophecy. Weber, one of the first scholars to clarify the term for sociological use, described prophets as those individuals who reveal "a unified view of the world derived from a consciously integrated and meaningful attitude toward life."[15] Prophets are those individuals who are able to align expectation and reality and thus offer a conception of the world as a "meaningful, ordered totality."[16] Additionally, for Weber, prophets could be measured in terms of their success or failure in transforming a socio-political order and aligning expectation with reality. Further, a prophet is a reformer, an innovator, and a diviner who is possessed of *charisma*: extraordinary powers, broadly defined as the ability to enter into ecstatic states, to use magic, to divine the future, and to heal.[17] Of these attributes, divination maps well to what I mean by *anticipation* as well as to the colloquial understanding of prophet as predictor. Focusing on the prophet's role as diviner renders prophecy familiar in another way in that the capacity for divination is (arguably) recognized in every individual manifest within her as *intuition*.

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[14] I am suggesting the term be used self-consciously.

[15] Max Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building*, ed. S. N. Eisenstadt (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 266.

[16] Ibid., 267.

[17] Ibid., 253.

We intuit (i.e. we prophesy) all the time. It is present in political punditry, gambling, the practice of "gaming" our friends, family and colleagues, and gossip.[18] Intuition is accorded a lot of personal relevance. We just *know* it exists and we *know* or *feel* it is deeply meaningful; intuition can help us unlock the mysteries of love and death, hence the idioms: "I knew from the moment we met we would be married" or "I knew as soon as the phone rang that mom had died."[19] It is as if at those moments of intuitive insight one is given access to some deeper perspective like that of a witness to a city traffic accident who, looking down from a building ten stories up, watched the crash develop. By virtue of her perspective she was perhaps able to form a reliable hunch about the accident before it happened.

Intuition is also congruent with religion, it is synonymous with what cognitive psychologist Bruce Hood calls *SuperSense* "a powerful sense that there are patterns, forces, energies, and entities operating in the world that are denied by science because they go beyond boundaries of natural phenomena we currently understand."[20] According to Hood, this *SuperSense* is a product of human cognitive evolution; thus, we should not be surprised if we find it operating everywhere and at all times. Hood remarks in a flippant tone typical of his prose, "It's like the mythical Hydra beast. If you chop off one

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[18] It is not uncommon to read a headline in some tabloid or popular news feed about the prophecies made some years ago about the present time. A retrospective published by the *Saturday Evening Post* on December 31, 2011, focused on the predictions that *Post* writer John Elfreth Watkins, Jr. made in 1900. Some of the things that he predicted would occur over the next hundred years included: mobile phones, pre-made meals, television, digital colour photography, free university, higher fitness levels, eradication of mosquitoes, and fewer letters sent by mail. And, then there are the movies: *Back to the Future Part II* was set in 2015, *2001 a Space Odyssey*. And, song: John Prine's, "Living in the Future." There is a current in popular culture that is all about predicting the social changes of the future.

[19] Helen Creighton richly documented presentiments of death in her monograph on Maritime folklore. See, Helen Creighton, *Bluenose Ghosts* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1957).

[20] Bruce Hood, *SuperSense: Why We Believe in the Unbelievable* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), x.

head it simply grows another."[21] While I am not siding with Hood that prophecy is a natural product of the evolution of the human mind, I am convinced that the data from comparative religion *at least* indicates that prophetic action, that is, anticipating the future, divining the course of current events, is an attribute of human religiosity.

While I have indicated that "prophecy" is a familiar term both within the academy and within popular discourse and just hinted that it is ubiquitous in the data on comparative religion, there have been surprisingly few sweeping theoretical treatments of prophecy. Gerald Sheppard and William Herbrechtsmeier lament the lacuna in the closing words to their entry on prophecy in the most recent edition of the *Encyclopedia of Religion*; they write, "[r]egrettably, no book discusses prophecy within a framework as broad as that suggested in this article."[22] In their encyclopedic overview the authors suggest that when religionists use the term prophecy they typically do so in the Judeo-Christian sense that fashions a prophet as a religious specialist who speaks for God. With that basic definition in view, they move to outline five features common to "prophets", or those who prophesy, as they are found in the world's religions: (1) prophets conceived of their activity as the result of divine commission, (2) prophetic teachings are enshrined by the various religions as heaven sent and inviolable (3) prophetic teachings are regarded as universal truths (4) prophets were social critics and (5) the founding prophets both maintained and reformed religious tradition.[23] Their heuristic is useful in the effort to cobble together under a single category the personalities which are central to many of the

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[21] Ibid., 71.

[22] The quote continues: "Hence, we suggest that the reader consult other articles within this encyclopedia for detailed bibliographies on such topics as mysticism, ecstasy, canon, scripture, and the Enlightenment, as well as on individuals that we have mentioned in the text." Sheppard and Hebrechtsmeir, "Prophecy," in *Encyclopedia of Religion* 12, 2nd ed. (Detroit: Macmillan Reference, 2005), 7429.

[23] Ibid., 7425-7426.

world's (namely western) religious traditions, but it is too constrained for me. Because my interest is broader and more categorical than descriptive, any definition of the terms "prophet" or "prophecy" must be polythetic and flexible.

My own understanding of prophet and prophecy, particularly as operative in the setting of American religious movements, is inspired by the scholarship of Max Weber, Thomas Overholt, Victor Turner, Anthony F.C. Wallace, Peter Worsley, David Aberle, James Mooney and Kenelm Burridge.[24] Of those scholars the work of Burridge has been the most influential on my own understanding. My own working definition reads: *A prophet is an individual who, in the face of real or anticipated change, articulates and organizes a new set of assumptions, cultivating new or previously latent sentiments of affinity so as to re-organize or to fashion a new community*. Note that there is nothing explicitly religious about a prophet so defined; a prophet may be the leader of a political party (e.g. Barack Obama as prophet with his slogan "change" used during the 2008 United States presidential election) or the administrative head of an institution. But I want

[24] Thomas Overholt defines a prophet as an individual whose "chief function is to communicate messages or information from the world of the spirits to the world of humans." Overholt, *Channels of Prophecy*, 4. Victor Turner qualifies the prophet as "innovator and reformer [who] confronts a tightly structured order that is moribund and points the way to religious forms that will either provide an intensified cognitive dynamic for sociocultural change or codify the new moral, ideational, and social structures that have been inarticulately developing." For Turner a prophet is a force for social change linked with the loosening of structure in large scale societies and with navigating or bridging gaps in contact situations between societies of different or incompatible scales. Victor Turner, "Religious Specialists," in *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences* 13, ed. David L. Sills (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 440. In the work of Anthony F.C. Wallace, a North American prophet is a leader of a revitalization movement, more specifically, "a deliberate, organized, conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture". Wallace continues, in North America "prophets most commonly emphasized the revival of the old culture by ritual and moral purification." Anthony Wallace, "Revitalization Movements," *American Anthropologist*, n.s. 58, no. 2 (1956): 265-276. Kenelm Burridge, who treats prophets in conjunction with millenarian activities, writes that "a prophet is he or she who organizes the new assumptions [about power; a new redemptive process, a new political-economic framework, a new mode of measuring the man, a new integrity, a new community, a new man] and articulates them; who is listened to and found acceptable; whose revelation is accorded authority for however brief a period." Burridge, *New Heaven, New Earth*, 13-14. Worsley's definition of a prophet is inextricable form his more general treatment of millenarian movements, specifically the evolution of millenarian movements of the disinherited in Melanesia. See Peter Worsley, *The Trumpet Shall Sound: A Study of "Cargo" Cults in Melanesia*, 2nd ed. (New York: Shocken Books, 1968).

to be careful about using too loose an interpretation as I want to draw attention to the notion that a prophet's activity is novel; that the prophet's activity involves actively confronting change and fashioning a new community in dialogue with those willing to participate who in turn form a collective which is not necessarily institutional. That kind of prophetic work is more deep seated and transformative than the work of those individuals just suggested. The work is less cosmetic and less about travelling in well worn channels. Thus, not only are the form and content of prophecy important but so too is the social location of the prophet. In any event, the definition is a good start, but it remains insufficient when specifying what counts as a prophet in a religious setting. To distinguish a prophet as a religious prophet two more components might be added to the definition: first, *a prophet promulgates a discourse that is grounded in revelation, scripture or immutable tradition and by virtue of such a grounding, claims for the discourse a transcendent status;* second, *a prophet introduces a set of ritual practices geared toward producing a proper and ordered world designed to bring embodied material action in-line with the vision of the world as defined and ordered by the religious discourse.* It is the alleged communication with supernatural agencies – revelation – and the subsequent discourse and practice that follow from it that characterizes the work of the religious prophet. In the record of comparative religion, it is said that prophetic revelation, communication with or reception of the supernatural, is accomplished through two general means: first, by way of divination and second, through oracles. The former is performed by those individuals who employ various learned techniques in order to inquire about the significance of future, present or past events. Divination in some form, the three most prominent being intuitive, wisdom and

possession, is practiced in all human cultures.[25] Its ubiquity is further betrayed by the fact that almost anything can be used to divine the meaning of events. Therefore, a full list of divinatory techniques would amount to a complete catalogue of nature and culture![26] The latter divinatory genre, oracular prophecy, entails possession of an individual by a deity who communicates its will in the human language. The most famous form of oracular prophecy, after which the genre was named, was that performed by the Greek oracles through whom the gods were alleged to have spoken. In the data that I am working with, namely, continental America, the Arctic notwithstanding, revelation usually comes by means of divination, namely, through visionary techniques, which is a point that will be further clarified in the next section. However, oracular type prophecy is not unknown in the subarctic and neighbouring arctic.[27]

The composite and component definition of prophet given in this section will serve as a baseline definition throughout this dissertation. In addition, two other terms, both derivative of "prophet" require definition: "prophet movement" and "prophecy." Prophecy refers to the discourse and actions of a prophet and his or her affiliated spokespeople as addressed to a community. Prophet movement refers to the community that gathers around the prophet and whose members recognize the prophet's discourse

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[25] Intuitive divination is the most basic form distributed as hunches and presentiments; possessive divination entails the seizing of humans or animals by supernatural beings; wisdom divination is performed by sages, usually in literate cultures, and is dependent on a theory of a unified field of impersonal and unified processes. See, Evan Zuesse, "Divination," in *Encyclopedia of Religion* 12, 2nd ed. (Detroit: Macmillan Reference, 2005): 2369-2378.

[26] A sense of the variation can be gleaned from a partial list of divinatory techniques given in the encyclopedia of religion: "oneiromancy", "necromancy", "ornithomancy", "haruspicy", "sortilege", "tasseography", "geomancy", "palmistry", "phrenology", "astrology", and "cartography." Ibid., 2369.

[27] Oracular divination among arctic peoples has been well documented in the work of Knud Rasmussen. For an overview of the practice see Thomas Stone, "Making Law for the Spirits: *Angakkuit*, Revelation and Rulemaking in the Canadian Arctic," *Numen* 57 (2010): 127-153.

and action as authoritative.[28] Lastly, I should note that while I have taken some pains in these opening pages to clarify the analytical terms "prophet", "prophecy" and "prophet movement," this dissertation is not about prophecy in a narrow sense. Rather it is about religious change in a more general way. It is about how it is that Christian forms, ideas, practices, sentiments and dispositions are communicated within a social field; how it is that such things are disseminated, controlled and manipulated not by the clergy but the laity (employees in the fur trade and Indigenous people); how it is indigenized and changed through myth and ritual, and, how it was used by some Indigenous people to advance an agenda of solidarity, equality and mutual respect.[29]

It just so happens that prophets are often the harbingers of Christianity. Thus, they serve a useful point of departure, my "in" on the conversation of religious change. The question of why prophets and prophet movements are perspicuous in the colonial setting has been extensively treated and remains a topic of scholarly debate. In the next section, I introduce prophecy and prophets as they are germane to the North American setting and describe and appraise the conversation on the related issue of prophet movements and religious change.

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[28] The prophet movement thus lies somewhere between church and sect in Weber's famous typology. Membership in the community is usually voluntary but it is also hierarchical. Leadership is vested in the prophet whose charismatic authority is both priestly (office charisma) and prophetic (revelatory) and the message proffered by the institution tends toward sectarian as opposed to universal, see Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic, and the Spirit of Capitalism with Other Writings on the Rise of the West,* 4th ed., trans., Stephen Kalberg (New York: Oxford, 2009), 170-171.

[29] I do not provide a biographical sketch of any prophet or set of prophets, it is not an enumeration of subarctic or northwestern prophets (although that that would be a highly useful task), it is not a comprehensive theoretical statement on prophecy in the Americas, and it is not a critical appraisal of the secondary literature on prophecy.

Prophet, Prophecy and Prophet Movement in North American Ethnology

Prophetic divination, bearing a family resemblance to the vision quest, is one of the most commonly cited revelatory techniques in the North American ethnological record. Given the close association of prophetic divination with visionary knowledge, it is useful to append a further component to my definition so as to specify the visionary quality of revelation in the North American setting. Following the religionist Lee Irwin, a refined definition of prophet as derived from the Indigenous religions of North America might read a "Native spokesperson who seeks to gather followers in accord with a unique spiritual, usually visionary, knowledge related to the welfare and well-being of his community (although sometimes relevant to other Native communities as well)."[30] Note also that while amplifying the means of revelation, that is, the vision, Irwin's definition highlights the importance of community, that is, a prophet addresses a specific community or communities.[31] Prophecy is rarely reserved for private use and rarely interiorized as a radically personal spirituality. The point is subtle but significant because religion in popular discourse, and to a degree within the academy, is often described as a private set of faith commitments directed toward some alleged god or supernatural agencies.[32] Yet, the prophet's experience is only efficacious in so far as it is made public. Prophecy reverses the tendency toward interiorization and the machinations of state that

[30] Lee Irwin, *Coming Down From Above: Prophecy, Resistance and Renewal in Native American Religions* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008), 14.

[31] Yet, a prophet is usually not too local. Cf. the claim in Matthew's gospel, following the parables and upon Jesus' return to Nazareth: "And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household.'" Mt. 13:57.

[32] In Mary Pat Fisher's popular world religions survey text, *Living Religions*, she writes that "all religion shares the goal of tying people back to something beyond the surface of life – a greater reality which lies beyond, or invisibly infuses, the world that we can perceive with our five senses." Mary Pat Fisher, *Living Religions* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall), 1.

repress and delegate to religious expression an inferior standing with respect to other public interests, commerce, for example.[33] It seems also that there is a certain kind of xenophobia, although that is probably not the right word (I do not mean it in a pejorative way), in that prophecy resists action and discourse that is not locally and communally productive. Prophecy often sets itself up in opposition to exogenous interests, to the interests of those on the outside of prophetic movements. Of course, the content and dynamics of prophet movements are much more complex and cannot be reduced to such simple binaries (private/public; state/society) as I am suggesting here. The complexity will become apparent as the dissertation unfolds.[34]

Because prophecy addresses local audiences, neither prophets nor prophecy claim for themselves a universal status. While some Indigenous prophets were directly inspired by Christianity (viewed by many scholars and practitioners as a universal religion) prophetic claims of a vision of Jesus Christ, or prophetic claims of identity with Jesus Christ, were rarely meant as the bases for a universal religious authority, at least not in the same way that Jesus, Muhammad or Bahaullah are said to have offered models of universal religiosity. This is an important point to make because the speech of prophets is often taken out of context by those who witness prophetic speech and those who

[33] Mark Juergensmeyer hypothesizes that secular authority is currently globally devalued because religion has been marginalized by the secular state, made a matter of private and not public experience. Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: the Global Rise of Religious Violence*, 3rd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 15.

[34] Cf. the work of the anthropologist Pierre Clastres, wherein Clastres evinces that the millenarian prophets among the Tupi-Guarani – and by extension among all stateless societies – arose in opposition to an attempt by chiefs to centralize power in an incipient state. He writes, "Tupi-Guarani prophetism is the heroic attempt of a primitive society to put an end to unhappiness by means of a radical refusal of the One, as the universal essence of the state." Pierre Clastres, *Society Against the State*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1989), 217.

comment upon it after the fact.[35] I think, as I will argue in the following pages, that there is a tendency to read those claims as consistent with a pinnacle of irrationality. In this dissertation, I evince that such claims can be appreciated as intentional, rational, and meaningful statements about the social field and the kind of community those living within it wish to develop.

If prophetic work did sometimes extend local boundaries, it does not follow that it had universal ambitions or from the point of view of the dominant that it was a kind of gateway drug. We would do well on that point to remind ourselves of Vine Deloria Jr.'s claim that there is no impulse to proselytize in Indigenous religion. Whether or not one agrees with Deloria Jr.'s allegation that there has always been a pan-Indigenous religiosity distinct from the European, his observation is salient.[36] I do think, as I will discuss in more detail later, that in the mid-nineteenth century peoples west of the Rocky Mountains viewed themselves as a group apart from Euro-North Americans and that prophet movements simply played a role in fostering that perspective. Deloria Jr.'s remark also serves as a critical reminder not to define one religious practice in terms of another. In this setting, prophetic claims are not purveyed as universal truths.

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[35] Sam Gill makes the point that Indigenous chroniclers have often distorted Indigenous speeches taking them out of context and presenting them as axioms of Indigenous religiosity. See, Sam Gill, *Mother Earth: An American Story* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

[36] In *God Is Red* Deloria, Jr. contrasts Indigenous and European religiosity. The former is non-proselytizing nearer to the formative processes of the earth, nearer to nature, space based and values family obligations; the latter is proselytizing, monotheistic, further from the processes of the earth, is rooted in a linear history and has little to say about family or community responsibilities see, Vine Deloria Jr., *A Native View of Religion* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum, 1994).

Prophet Movements in American Ethnography: the Ghost Dance

It would be a quiet conversation about Indigenous American prophet movements that made no reference to the work of James Mooney on the Ghost Dance.[37] Within the study of religion, the Lakota Ghost Dance is often treated "as the exemplar of Native American prophetic movements."[38] The touchstone on the movement is James Mooney's ethnography *The Ghost Dance Religion*. In 1890, ethnographer James Mooney, under the auspices of the Bureau of American Ethnology, began two years of fieldwork on the Ghost Dance and its relation to the massacre at Wounded Knee. One of Mooney's aims was to trace the Indigenous channels through which the dance was communicated. The journey took him from the central Plains through Oklahoma ("Indian Territory") across the Dakotas to the source in Northern Nevada, Paiute territory. Six years later and with more than a little resistance from Bureau directors, his fieldwork was published in the

[37] Some Lakota prefer to name the movement the "spirit dance" as "spirit" is a more accurate appellation (as opposed to "ghosts") for the deceased relatives. Because I am less interested in a thorough analysis of the movement and more interested in the representations of it by Mooney and other scholars I will use the commonly cited term "ghost dance." Michelene Pesantubbee. "From Vision to Violence", "From Vision to Violence: The Wounded Knee Massacre," in *Millennialism, Persecution, and Violence: Historical Cases*, ed. Catherine Wessinger (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 63-64. Scholarship on the ghost dance and North American prophecy comes from various disciplines; History, Religion, Anthropology, and Native Studies have been best represented. Scholars working on the topic regardless of discipline constitute an "academic discourse community." James Reither defines academic discourse communities as, "*conversations* among 'knowledgeable peers' who, through their characteristic ways of making meaning, construct the knowing and the modes of knowing that identify disciplines and distinguish them from others." As cited in Thomas Parkhill, *Weaving Ourselves Into the Land*, *Charles Godfrey Leland, "Indians," and the Study of Native American Religions* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1997), 68. Hence, I use the term conversation when referring to scholarship on the Ghost Dance.

[38] Martin acknowledges its exemplarity but cautions that "fixation upon the Sioux Ghost Dance encourages students of Native American religion to remain unversed in the many insurgencies of colonial history." He is also critical of treatments that narrowly conflate the movement with the massacre at Wounded Knee. Be that as it may, in Martin's own call for more comparative work on prophet movements he takes the violent millenarian tradition as the prototypical prophet tradition. Martin, "Before and Beyond: Native American Prophetic Movements and the Study of Religion," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 59, no. 4 (1991): 677-80.

Bureau's annual report.[39] In that publication Mooney represented the Ghost Dance as a pan-Indian phenomenon that had originated with a vision of the Paiute, Wovoka. About 1880, Wovoka died and visited God in heaven. After showing him all things in heaven, god told Wovoka:

> He must go back and tell his people they must be good and love one another, have no quarreling, and live in peace with the whites; that they must work, and not lie or steal; that they must put away all the old practices that savored of war; that if they faithfully obeyed his instructions they would at last be reunited with their friends in this other world, where there would be no more death sickness or old age. He was then given the dance which he was commanded to bring back to his people. By performing this dance at intervals, for five consecutive days, each time they would secure his happiness to himself and hasten the event.[40]

Wovoka's message was also an ecumenical one; Mooney documents that Wovoka's teachings circulated among Indigenous peoples living throughout the American West. Despite the many local variations of Wovoka's teachings, Mooney insisted that at the core of each one was a messianic faith, endemic to Indigenous American religiosity, which offered an "alternative to a world of insufferable oppression."[41]As to the dance's relation to the massacre at Wounded Knee, Mooney concluded that some Lakota

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[39] The Ghost Dance is one of the most described and theorized of all prophet movements in the Americas. Descriptions of the movement are easily available, found in most university libraries and the topic of several documentary films. An annotated bibliography on the Ghost Dance, with 109 entries, was compiled in 1991 by Shelly Ann Osterreich; see Shelly An Osterreich, *The American Indian Ghost Dance, 1870 and 1890: An Annotated Bibliography* (Westport Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1991). The Ghost Dance has been the topic of a recent monograph by the Finnish historian, Rani-Henrik Andersson, see Rani-Henrik Andersson, *The Lakota Ghost Dance of 1890* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008). Documentaries, among others, include: Tim Schwab and Christina Craton, *Ghost Dance* (New Day films, 1994); Ken Burns and Stephen Ives, *The West*, "Episode Four, Ghost Dance" (Alexandria, VA: PBS Video, 2004); Niccolo Caldararo and Tom Wells, *Ghost Dance* (San Francisco, CA: More to Come Productions, 1990); and, Fidel Moreno and Gary Rhine, *Wiping the Tears Of Seven Generations* (Kifaru Productions, 1992).

[40] Mooney, *Ghost-Dance Religion*, 771-772.

[41] Curtis Hinsley, *Savages and Scientists: the Smithsonian Institution and the development of American Anthropology, 1846-1910* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1981), 216.

integrated Wovoka's teachings into a resistance movement against the United States government in protest of its employment of ignorant and corrupt agents, its failure to comply with treaty obligations, and the aggressive stance taken by the United States Army.

Mooney's work is an excellent description of the Ghost Dance and is a model of ethnographic writing.[42] But the work is more than that. In the *Ghost Dance*, Mooney offers a history of religious movements in the Americas, beginning with Popé (the seventeenth century Tewa religious leader) and ending with Wovoka. More than journalistic expose, his coverage serves two arguments: first, that a messianic tradition is endemic to the Indigenous societies of North America, and second, that the messianic motif is a general pattern common to all humanity. The tradition is reflected in the core of all the world's religions, as Mooney suggests "the doctrines of the Hindu avatar, the Hebrew Messiah, the Christian millennium, and the Hesûnanin of the Indian Ghost dance are essentially the same, and have their origins in a hope and longing common to all humanity."[43] The messiah, following Mooney's thinking, keeps a diamond in his mind, makes life worth living, and offers hope in a hopeless world.

As inspirational as Mooney's work has been for generations of scholars, it was initially panned by his employer, the director of the Bureau of American Ethnology, John

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[42] The anthropologist Russell Thornton writes that James Mooney's classic is the "most important description of the movement." Russell Thornton, *We Shall Live Again: The 1870 and 1890 Ghost Dance Movements as Demographic Revitalization* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 12. Omer Stewart notes that "Mooney has been widely honored for his work on messianic movements" Omer Stewart, "The Ghost Dance." In *Anthropology in the Great Plains*, ed. W. Raymond Wood and Margot Liberty (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980)), 179; and, Gregory Dowd suggests that Mooney inaugurated a study of millennial movements. Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance*, xi.

[43] Mooney, *The Ghost-Dance Religion*, 657. Mooney's comparative work was disavowed by John Wesley Powell of the Bureau of American Ethnology who wrote in the foreword of the initial publication that Indian religion is not to be confused with Christianity.

Wesley Powell. The suggestion that Indigenous religion and Christianity might be similar was too much for both Powell's bourgeois Methodism and his intellectual commitment to social evolution.[44] Yet, Powell could not disparage the quality of the field work, and Mooney's work remains one of the best documentary sources on the Ghost Dance. The more serious challenge to Mooney's theory came from without the Bureau. A few decades after the work was published the students of Franz Boas, professionally trained in universities outside of the state-run Bureau of American Ethnology and regional Archaeological and Anthropological societies, replaced the Bureau anthropologists as the dominate professionals of American Anthropology .[45] It was one of Boas' students, Leslie Spier, who mounted the most sustained criticisms of Mooney's conclusions as to the origins of the Ghost Dance. In his 1935 monograph, *The Prophet Dance of the Northwest*, Spier takes issue with both of Mooney's claims that the Ghost Dance was evidence of a pan-American (or universal, for that matter) messianism and that it was a response to the brutal westward march of 'manifest destiny'; rather he suggests that the Ghost Dance teachings were initially unique to Plateau and Great Basin religiosity.[46]

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[44] David Hempton suggests that nineteenth-century Methodism drifted toward the bourgeois centre of western culture and "cozied" up to the state. David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 31.

[45] According to historian Thomas C. Patterson by the time of the First World War the centre of gravity of American anthropology had shifted from the federal government to Universities and museums, see Thomas C. Patterson, *A Social History of Anthropology in the United States* (New York: Berg, 2001).

[46] The geographical region of the Northwest Plateau roughly coincides with the anthropological culture area also termed the Plateau. The "culture area," as a heuristic device, was first introduced to American anthropology by Clark Wissler; see Clark Wissler, *The American Indian An Introduction to the Anthropology of the New World* (New York: D.C. McMurtrie, 1917). Wissler identified ten different culture areas in North America; each culture area consisted of an aggregate of cultures that had similar modes of ecological adaptation. The Plateau as a culture area, however, excludes Athabaskan speaking peoples, such as the Witsuwit'en. Athabaskan peoples, excepting the Navajo of the Southwest, are included within the Subarctic culture area, but this culture area stretches across the north from Alaska to Newfoundland. Thus, both culture areas are of limited use as descriptors. I tend to use the term Northwest Plateaus which refers to the Fraser, Columbia and Skeena watersheds. The region of the "Northwest Plateaus" represents a geographic, cultural, social and commercial zone.

Both are methodological criticisms. In Boasian fashion, Spier advises against making broad generalizations (i.e. about a pan-Indigenous messianic tradition) on the basis of culturally and historically unrelated phenomena (i.e. Pope, Pontiac, Wovoka and other prophets), and he argues that Mooney overdetermined the role attributed to colonialism in the manifestations of the Ghost Dance and religious movements in general and thus remained somewhat deaf to local religion and sociality.[47] Spier argues instead that the Ghost Dance was an Indigenous religion of Plateau and Great Basin peoples, that it was (a) a local complex and that (b) it was not a response to colonialism because it was in place long before the conflict between the Lakota and the United States government. [48] On the basis of his own ethnographic and documentary research Spier alleges that the Ghost Dance had a much longer and deeper *local* history than Mooney recognized. At the heart of both the Ghost Dance and Prophet Dance were prophets, who, just like Wovoka, died, travelled to the land of the dead, met god, learned of the coming of an apocalypse, returned to earth, taught dances meant to hasten the destruction of the current world as a prelude to the resurrection of the dead on a new earth.[49] In his appraisal of the Spier-Mooney conversation, Sam Gill writes that at the heart of the matter is the issue of

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[47] The Spier-Mooney conversation can also be read as a debate on the origins of the Ghost dance.

[48] According to Spier, the tradition was known to all peoples of the Northwest, with each social grouping possessing their own prophet(s) or prophetic lineage Leslie Spier, *The Prophet Dance of the Northwest and its Derivatives: the Source of the Ghost Dance* (Menasha, WI: George Banta, 1935), 7. Cora Dubois also postulated a Northwestern origin for the prophet dance, but traced the origins of the dance not to the Plateau but to Northern Paiute culture. See, Cora Du Bois, *The 1870 Ghost Dance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1939).

[49] While Spier was less interested in the question of origins than Mooney, he did speculate that the religious complex can be explained as a product of the contemplation of "cataclysms of nature"; namely, the seismic activity familiar to residents of the Pacific Rim. So, where Spier saw prophet activity as a conceptual elaboration on natural disasters, Mooney saw it as a response to the material and social devastation caused by the colonial invasion. The commonalty is subtle but significant and has often been understated.

whether prophet movements were wholly Indigenous in development or a response to outside pressures.[50]

Neither Spier nor Mooney formulate their opinions in a purely inductive fashion. Both bring with them to their projects their own intellectual presuppositions unique to their personal and professional backgrounds, which informed their projects. Their differences reveal not only something about how each envisioned the Ghost Dance but also something about the ideological differences at the heart of the early years of American anthropology, differences, which are still relevant today. Because Spier and Mooney continue to be evoked by Americanists and are usually configured as occupying opposing poles on the degree to which religious movements can be said to be a reaction to colonialism, it will be useful to briefly illuminate the intellectual underpinnings of both positions so as to provide the intellectual context and background for more recent treatments of prophet movements.

The Bureau of American Ethnology (BAE) and Professional Anthropology in the late 19th Century

The first institution of American Anthropology was the Bureau of American Ethnology, created by Act of Congress in 1879.[51] John Wesley Powell was the founding director and remained at the helm for twenty years. The Bureau was Powell's baby and thus his thought, informed by his Methodist upbringing and the Darwinian science of his

[50] Gill ultimately comes down on the side of Mooney and others against that of Spier and his colleagues. He writes: "it is likely that European-American influences had an effect on cultures in the interior plateau areas, particularly in giving rise to millenarian movements with elements of Christian influence, as much as a century before the earliest of the evidences we have considered [early nineteenth century]." Incidentally, for Gill the crises that motivated the "cults" concerned disputes and negotiations over land. Gill, *Mother Earth*, 55-57.

[51] Hinsley, *Savages and Scientists*, 147. The BAE was a division of the Smithsonian Institute.

time, was integral to its intellectual framework. From his Methodist upbringing he inherited a commitment to an idea of a common humanity, of a human race inextricably united by some psychic quality that inhered in every person. His Methodist universalism, however, was matched with (perhaps trumped by) a rigorous evolutionary science that was practically *de rigeur* among anthropologists in the nineteenth century.[52] Thus, Mooney's work on the Ghost Dance was produced by a Bureau whose mandate was to elucidate a theory of evolutionary monism. It was that same mandate that ushered in the rigorous program of salvage anthropology. Salvage anthropologists, distinct from folklorists, sought ethnographic data on the vanishing "Indian" to clarify the "rungs" of the ladder of social evolution; a ladder whose uppermost rung corresponded to the modern nation state. While Mooney shared the Bureau's commitment to monism, he did not share its position on social evolution. [53] For Mooney, a journalist by trade and a child of Irish-Catholic Immigrants from Richmond Indiana, human history could not be explained in terms of cultural evolution or development, but only in terms of relative

[52] Social evolutionism was strongly influenced by Darwin's work on natural selection. While some details still remained to be worked out, social evolutionism was a fait accompli. Writing of the Indigenous peoples of the Colorado and Utah territories, Powell reported to Congress in 1874: "There is now no great uninhabited and unknown region to which the Indian can be sent. He is among us, and we must either protect him or destroy him" Hinsley, *Savages and Scientists*, 146. Others in the Bureau expressed social evolutionism in more racist language. Holmes explained the relationship between race and culture to the public at the National Museum in 1903: "In the inevitable course of human history the individual races will probably fade out and disappear, and the world will be filled to overflowing with a generalized race in which the dominating blood will be that of the race that today has the strongest claim, physically and intellectually, to take possession of all the resources of the land and sea." Hinsley, *Savages and Scientists*, 113.

[53] Powell introduced the annual report in which Mooney's account of the Ghost Dance first appeared with the following disclaimer: "It may be observed that caution should be exercised in comparing or contrasting religious movements among civilized peoples with fantasies as that described in the memoir; for while interesting and suggestive analogies may be found, the essential features of the movements are not homologous. Most of the primitive peoples of the earth, including the greater part of the American Indians, represent the prescriptorial stage of culture … while white men represent the scriptorial change." Langley, the director of the Smithsonian, also expressed reservations about Mooney's cross cultural speculations. He wrote to Powell that "such words … had better have been left unwritten." Hinsley, *Savages and Scientists*, 218.

power. For Powell, on the other hand, who was a scientist committed to evolutionary theory, a champion of state-sponsored ethnology and whose progressive Methodism took the history of all peoples as headed in the same direction, cultural evolution was less a theory as it was self-evident (cf. "preceding simulation"). Thus, where Mooney saw in the Ghost Dance active resistance to oppression, Powell saw the painful but necessary extinction of an antiquated world.

While Powell was fashioning Bureau policy, Franz Boas, the German-Jewish émigré and patriarch of American anthropology, was working to legitimate anthropology as a university science. On the commitment to human unity Boas disagreed little with the Bureau anthropologists. However, Boas did not share their views that cultural variation could be explained by evolutionary science.[54] Boas' image of culture was inspired by the geological sciences and humanities and he was dismissive of the social Darwinism of which the Bureau anthropologists were so enamoured.[55] Thus, for Boas cultural variation was explained by accidental accretions and the historical diffusion of concepts, materials and behavioural patterns. Boas' understanding of the relation between culture and history was closer to that held by Mooney. Like Mooney, Boas was critical of state sponsored anthropology and criticized Powell and his predecessors at the BAE – McGee, Holmes and Langley – as apologists for the state at a time when the quality of life for Indigenous

[54] For Boas, human unity was psychological (i.e. while cultures and behvaiours are variable all human beings are cognitively the same).

[55] Patterson, *A Social History of Anthropology*, 46. It is important to note that Boas recognized a distinction between the natural and social sciences such that he was not amenable to notions of social evolution.

peoples in the Americas was continuing to decline in large part due to government policies, mismanagement and neglect.[56]

One of Boas' favoured students in his early years at Columbia was Leslie Spier, a Jewish New Yorker who held two university degrees (one in engineering and another in anthropology).[57] Spier along with other anthropologists trained by Franz Boas at Columbia were part of a new generation of university-trained anthropologists. They were specialists who considered themselves more professional than those anthropologists employed by the government run BAE. Spier, like most of Boas' students, shared his teacher's antipathy to cultural evolution.[58] While Mooney, as we have seen, was also critical of cultural evolution, his criticisms came from a different place. Spier's view was informed by an early form of cultural relativism that followed from Boas' work on culture and race.[59] Thus, Spier's theory of the Prophet Dance as the origins of the Ghost Dance was a product of Boas' "historical particularism": cultures must be understood as

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[56] Boas revealed that a number of American archaeologists working in Mexico were spies for the United States government. He wrote that they had prostituted science. For those public revelations he was censured by the American Anthropological Association in 1919. Patterson, *A Social History*, 53-54.

[57] Boas wrote of Spier in 1919, "He is without doubt the most independent and intelligent thinker that I have had for a long time." Hinsley, *Savages and Scientists*, 273.

[58] In arguing against cultural evolutionism, Mooney along with Spier and Boas, helped contribute to the discourse of cultural relativism. All argued that Indigenous practices have their own integrity on the same order of the cultural practices of any other human group. Mooney suggested that Indigenous peoples are human like everyone else and Spier argued that Indigenous peoples have sophisticated cultural concepts and whose advancements need not be explained in reference to colonialism.

[59] Boas' relativism is reflected in his appraisal of American anthropology. He wrote in 1916, "The American, on the whole, is inclined to consider American standards of thought and action as absolute standards, and the more idealistic his nature, the more strongly he wants to 'raise' everyone to his own standards. For this reason the American who is cognizant only of his own standpoint sets himself up as the arbiter of the world." Hinsley, *Savages and Scientists*, 284. Moreover, Jon McGee and Richard Warms write that Boas "pioneered the concept of cultural relativism in anthropology." McGee and Warms, eds., *Anthropological Theory: An Introductory History* (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1996), 129.

products of their local histories and not by reference to any universal standard.[60] Mooney's criticism of cultural evolution, on the other hand, was based on an understanding of world history that explained difference in terms of relative power: the powerless were victims of history. The Indigenous peoples, like Catholics in post civil war America, were marginalized by the state and publicly criticized as hindrances to Manifest Destiny. [61]

Spier and Mooney: Legacies of Interpretations of the Ghost Dance

The work of Mooney and Spier, the Bureau and the professionals, inaugurated two different perspectives on Indigenous prophet movements. On the one hand, Spier's work in the Boasian tradition presaged anthropological theories of cultural relativism. On the other hand, Mooney's descriptive ethnography, which was implicitly critical of the state, presaged theories of deprivation. With respect to the topic germane to this dissertation, both legacies are preserved in the two sides of a long standing debate among Americanists on the question: to what degree can prophet movements be said to be a reaction to colonialism? In this section I briefly parcel out the terms of that debate. In doing so, I evince that for all their differences (and they are not insignificant) scholars on both sides share a commitment to religion as epiphenomenal. A commitment that is also

[60] By the time the *Prophet Dance* was published in the mid 1930s there was little need for Spier to develop Boas' campaign for an underlying humanity. By the 1930s Boas was able to firmly and persuasively state his view that there is no direct link between race and culture. And by this time Boas and a younger generation of anthropologists established the hegemony of cultural anthropology as opposed to eugenics and physical anthropology. By 1932 one half of the doctoral dissertations in anthropology awarded by America Universities were related to ethnology. Patterson, *A Social History*, 61-65.

[61] In a future project I would like to further explore my suggestion that Mooney saw that American Catholics and Indigenous Americans were equally oppressed by a Protestant state.

one of the dominant idioms of religion in the academy, and one that I must work through to accomplish the work outlined in my introduction.[62]

Mooney's work on the Ghost Dance presaged "deprivation theory", which is now the conventional explanation among Americanists for prophet movements and other so called "acculturative" traditions from the early years of the last century through to the 1970s.[63] By "deprivation theory" I mean not one but a cluster of theoretical approaches that explain the genesis and continuance of religious movements either in terms of a loss or lack of material or cultural resources or in terms of epidemic disease.[64] Mooney's legacy in the guise of deprivation theory has been preserved in subsequent treatments of the Ghost Dance. It is present, for example, in Alfred Kroeber's and Alexander Lesser's conclusion that the Ghost Dances were responses to cultural decay, in Bernard Barber's explanation of the Ghost Dance as a response to "harsh times," and in Henry Dobyns and Robert Clark Euler's attribution of the Ghost Dance as a response to loss of land, loss of game and illness.[65] While more recent scholarship in this vein has been less mono-causally reductionistic, deprivation theory is still in play. Books by Hittman, *Wovoka and*

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[62] Such an assumption about religion has gone (mostly) unquestioned, if not among theologians, at least among social scientists but as I am doing here I think that there is good reason to excavate the assumption and to analyze it.

[63] Deprivation theory treats such movements as responses to psychological, social, political and/ or economic hurt and suffering.

[64] "Lack" as in that that image of group contact so familiar to the colonial imagination where as a product of contact the one group recognizes its inferiority to another. As in the fabricated case of first contact between the explorer Jean-Pierre Dutilleux and the Toulambis of Papua New Guinea, where the Toulambis are surprised at the colour of their own skin and hair as if it was they who were different and lacking something, see Jean Pierre Dutilleux, "The Toulambis," *Tribal Journeys: A Window to Another World and Another Time*, Jean Pierre Dutilleux, dir. (Alexandra Films, [1999?]).

[65] See Alfred Kroeber, *Handbook of the Indians of California* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1925); Alexander Lesser, "Cultural Significance of the Ghost Dance," *American Anthropologist*, n.s., 35 (1933): 108-115; Bernard Barber, "Acculturation and Messianic Movements," *American Sociological Review* 6 (1941): 663-69; Henry Dobyns and Robert C. Euler, *The Ghost Dance of 1889* (Prescott, AZ: Prescott College Press, 1967).

the Ghost Dance (1997) and Andersson, *The Lakota Ghost Dance of 1890* (2008) are cases in point.[66] While broader in scope than earlier treatments, both books flog the analytical importance of "deprivation theory." Andersson, for example, bills the Ghost Dance as a "revitalization movement" rooted in the "collision between Native American and Euro-American cultures and in the devastation […] contact gradually brought to Indian cultures."[67] Although the Ghost Dance is one of the most notable movements to which deprivation theory has been applied, it is not the only one. Deprivation theory is ubiquitous in North American ethnological record. In *Death and Rebirth of the Seneca*, Anthony F.C. Wallace offers a popular and insightful portrayal of the Longhouse Religion as a "revitalization movement": a deliberate attempt by the Seneca to construct a more satisfying culture in the face of alcoholism, poverty and an oppressive American political regime.[68] About the same time that *Death and Rebirth of the Seneca* was released the anthropologist David Aberle published *The Peyote Religion among the Navajo*, wherein he coins the term redemptive movement in the course of explaining peyote's appeal to Navajo living in a culture of poverty. Inspired by Aberle, Joseph

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[66] In addition such works are broader in perspective, attending, for example, to matters of source criticism and internal dynamics (i.e. oral history and psychological insights [theories of altered states of consciousness and near-death experiences]).

[67] Andersson, *The Lakota Ghost Dance*, 23. My aim is not to criticize revitalization or deprivation theory in general or even the application of that theory to any given case. But I am critical of its application to all American religious movements. The tendency toward generalization is reflected in Andersson's work where he writes: "All of these [religious prophetic] movements were typically born as a result of tremendous cultural change and in the midst of cultural crisis." And, Hittman cites the deprivation theory of both Aberle and Jorgensen as useful ways of characterizing the two movements. Hittman writes that the 1870 movement was "transformative" seeking radical social change in response to loss of land, loss of grazing and fishing rights, failed and broken government policies, overcrowding, starvation and epidemics. Michael Hittman, *Wovoka and the Ghost Dance* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 97.

[68] In an earlier article Wallace coined the term "revitalization movement." See, Wallace, *Revitalization Movements*, 1956.

Jorgensen in his book, *The Sun Dance: Power for the Powerless*, argues that the Ute Sun Dance redeems individual and community well-being while allowing it to stand strong in the face of colonial policy.[69] Wallace, Aberle, and Jorgensen have proven to be influential to Americanists and religionists. Wallace's work, in particular, has had much traction among scholars of religious change in the Americas. Wallace's appeal is, at least in some measure, due to the clarity and precision with which he outlined his concept of the revitalization movement.[70] Wallace's theory of revitalization movements has recently been revived by historian Alfred A. Cave in his interpretation of the activities of a number of the more notable Indigenous prophets of the east.[71] Even more recently, in an article published in *Plains Anthropologist* in 2010, archaeologist Colin Betts argues on the basis of archaeological evidence from the Blood Run site in Northwest Iowa that Oneota Mound construction of the late seventeenth century was a religious, ritual based response to population loss caused by European diseases, in short, a "revitalization movement."[72]

Mooney's insights have also been influential beyond the American setting. Historian Gregory Dowd says of Mooney's work that it inaugurated "a century of

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[69] More specifically he argued that Ute Sun Dance resists oppressive, ignorant and inefficient colonial policy, while also promoting individual and community interests. Joseph Jorgensen, *Sun Dance Religion: Power for the Powerless* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972).

[70] He defined a revitalization movement as "a deliberate, organized, conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture." Anthony F.C. Wallace, "Revitalization Movements," *American Anthropologist*, n.s., 58, no. 2 (1956): 265.

[71] Cave writes that despite the wealth of scholarship on revitalization movements and syncretic religions "the basic definitions in Anthony F.C. Wallace's 1956 analysis remain the most useful." Alfred Cave, *Prophets of the Great Spirit: Native American Revitalization Movements in Eastern North America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 6.

[72] Colin Betts, "Oneota Mound Ceremonialism: An Early Revitalization Movement," *Plains Anthropologist* 55, no. 214 (2010).

scholarly investigation of millennial movements, not only in North America but also around the globe."[73] I agree with Dowd and see in Mooney's work a precursor to scholarship in the field of religion and resistance. The loosely defined field took shape in the mid-twentieth century coalescing around scholars who in a revision of Marxist thinking on religion took religion in general, and millennial traditions specifically, as a dynamic force for social change. Some of the better known scholars associated with the field include Anthony F.C. Wallace, Peter Worsley, Vittorio Lanternari, David Aberle, Bryan Wilson, Kenelm Burridge, James C. Scott and Joseph Jorgensen.[74] The field is now thoroughly interdisciplinary and claims the work of anthropologists, religionists and historians to its record.[75] My aim here is not to survey the field; the point I wish to make is that the Ghost Dance is exemplary of those millennial traditions, prophet movements, chiliastic cults and the like elsewhere in the Americas and around the globe that emerged as responses to deprivations and as attacks on colonial rule. At the heart of much of such work lies an image of religion as epiphenomenal, or as the reflection of more fundamental material or psychological factors.

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[73] Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance*, xi.

[74] See Burridge, *New Heaven, New Earth*; F.C. Wallace, *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca*: Worsley, *The Trumpet Shall Sound*; Jorgensen, *Sun Dance*, 1972. Also, see Vittorio Lanternari, *Religions of the Oppressed: A Study of Modern Messianic Cults*, Lisa Sergio trans. (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965): David F. Aberle, *The Peyote Religion Among the Navajo* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); James C. Scott, *Domination and the arts of resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); and Bryan Wilson, *Magic and the Millennium: A Sociological Study of Religious Movements of Protest among Tribal and Third World Peoples* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973).

[75] Lanternari's *The Religions of the Oppressed* (1965), first published in Italian in 1960 as *Movimenti religiosi di liberta e di salvezza dei popoli oppressi*, treats Indigenous religious movements of America, Africa, Oceania, Australia and Asia as early, pre-political, responses to colonial invasions. See also, Bruce Lincoln, ed. *Religion, Rebellion, Revolution* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985); Bruce Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction of Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) and Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006). Contemporary with Lincoln, Mark Juergensmeyer, former president of the American Academy of Religion, has contributed to the study of religion and resistance and has also helped to shape it as a veritable field within the discipline of religion. See, Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

Deprivation theory is of course not the only interpretive angle on such movements. Remember that it was Spier who, at a very early date, charted a different course. Spier's work highlighted that such movements were wholly Indigenous. Scholars who approach movements from that angle tend to do so from one of two general approaches: the ethnotheological and the ethnohistorical.[76] The ethnotheological approach is wonderfully exemplified in the work of the religionist Lee Irwin. Irwin refers to himself as an ethnohistorian of religion but he means historian in the tradition of Eliade for whom the task of the historian was phenomenological: the description of manifestations of the sacred as they appear in history. Thus, the work strikes me as not so much historical as metaphysical with an interest in an analysis of transcendental stasis as opposed to historical process.[77] In any case, Irwin, in a detailed survey of Indigenous American prophecy covering all the major North American prophetic movements (e.g. the Longhouse religion, the Shawnee prophet, the Ghost Dance) going back to the time of the Aztecs, sketches a program for ethnotheology or Indigenous theology.[78] From an

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[76] I group the anthropological and the historical together under the ethnohistorical. The chasm between the two disciplines does not need to be as wide as it is often portrayed. Consider for example that Lévi-Strauss viewed anthropology as a genre of history, in conversations with Didier Eribon, Lévi-Strauss referred to anthropologists as the "rag pickers of history". It was a particular kind of world history, one which dissolved difference against which Lévi-Strauss was opposed. Claude Lévi-Strauss and Didier Eribon, *Conversations with Claude Lévi-Strauss*, trans. Paula Wissing (Chicago; University of Chicago Press, 1991), 122. See also, David Pace, *Claude Lévi-Strauss: the Bearer of Ashes* (London: ARK Paperbacks, 1986).

[77] Ethnotheological is a more appropriate term and Irwin himself refers to himself as an ethnotheologian in places. In the final chapter of *The Myth of Eternal Return* titled "The Terror of History" Eliade suggests that humanity has taken comfort in religion as offering hope and meaning in the face of the terror of history. Eliade, *Myth of the Eternal Return*, trans. Willard Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

[78] Irwin writes that *ethnotheology* reveals "the creative synthesis of indigenous religious beliefs (and practices) with a variety of Christian theological ideas, particularly sin, salvation, reward and punishment after death, and the moral teachings of kindness, non-violence and the preservation of family and communal values." Irwin, *Coming Down From Above*, 7. For a sustained and focused exposition of Irwin's ethnotheological approach, see Lee Irwin, *The Dream Seekers: Native American Visionary Traditions of the Great Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994).

ethnotheological perspective, the Ghost Dance and other prophet movements are born of a special relationship between a prophet and some metaphysical reality and thus they reflect the "authentic heart of native belief and religious concern."[79] Because Irwin locates religion in a realm that is exempt from empirical verification and testability, social scientific and historical analyses have no place in his ethnotheological program. He is forthright about his agenda and I do not criticize him for it; theological treatments of religion form a major part of the discipline's scholastic record and continue to sustain rich conversations. The work is insightful but his interest in religion is different from my own – which is one that *is* informed by ethnohistorical and anthropological discourses – and thus lies beyond the scope of my dissertation so I am not going to take it up here.[80]

Ethnohistorical perspectives on the Ghost Dance are different matters. My own method is basically ethnohistorical so I take those perspectives more seriously. Ethnohistorical interpretations of the Ghost Dance have been offered by Raymond DeMallie and Alice Beck Kehoe.[81] DeMallie's work is exemplary. DeMallie creatively

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[79] Irwin, *Coming Down From Above*, 6. Irwin also writes that social scientific analyses tend to obfuscate the heart of the matter.

[80] Because I treat religion as a social formation I am more interested in social dynamics than metaphysics. It is true that Irwin writes about the social dynamics of prophecy, but he always treats prophecy as *sui generis* tracing it back to contact with some other reality that lies beyond the temporal and contingent.

[81] Raymond J. DeMallie, "The Lakota Ghost Dance: An Ethnohistorical Account", *The Pacific Historical Review* 51, no. 4 (1982): 385–405; Alice Beck Kehoe, *The Ghost Dance: Ethnohistory and Revitalization* (New York: Holt Rhinehart and Winston, 1989). Not all anthropological perspectives have been ethnohistorical. A more social scientific perspective is Russell Thornton's treatment of demographic revitalization. Thornton concludes that the Dances were efforts to restore Indigenous societies devastated by contact with Europeans by bringing the dead back to life. Thus, the Ghost Dances were attempts "to assure survival as physical peoples through regaining population – bringing the dead to life – by performing Ghost Dance ceremonies." Thornton, *We Shall Live*, 7. The nature of the anticipated resurrection is unclear. I think Thornton figured the dancers were gaming on a physical resurrection; such an objective would have been sensible from an Indigenous perspective. On the other hand, he attributes claims of resurrection an ideological edge when he asserts that the dances worked – not by returning the dead to life – but by strengthening tribal boundaries and restricting out migration, and thus encouraging population growth.

reverses the logic of deprivation theory suggesting it was not that the Ghost Dance was a response to colonial pressures but that both colonial pressures and the Ghost Dance were responses to an underlying religious crisis. The religious crisis: the Buffalo retreated to an underlying sanctuary because both the whites and the Lakota had offended them. Thus, the Ghost Dance was the plan the Lakota devised to persuade the Buffalo to return. In the end, the Ghost Dance was "a fundamentally religious movement which was to bring about radical transformation completely through religious means."[82] According to DeMallie, the problem with deprivation theory is that it fails to consider seriously the symbolic content of Indigenous cultures. On the other hand, I add that an over sensitivity to ethnology can afford a methodological agnosticism which simply reproduces theological claims. For example, both DeMallie and Kehoe describe Indigenous religion in terms of core fundamental beliefs, values and symbols that persist through time that shape history but are not shaped by it.[83] By exempting religion from change, an implicit claim is made for its transcendence as a metaphysical phenomenon.[84] Irwin does that too, but he basically announces at the outset that he is coming at things from a theological perspective. It may well be that there is also something theological about the analyses of Demallie and Kehoe.

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[82] DeMallie, "The Lakota Ghost Dance: An Ethnohistorical Account," *The Pacific Historical Review* 51, no. 4 (1982): 404.

[83] If they are talking about structures in the sense of a semiotic structural anthropology, then, that is something else, but Marshall Sahlins who writes in that tradition suggest that structures persist and inform historical action but are not themselves ahistorical. They are acted upon by history and change. I am not certain he would admit of fundamental or core structures. See, Marshall Sahlins, *Islands of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

[84] The claim is interesting in this setting, especially in the case of Kehoe who has excoriated Mircea Eliade and other scholars for imaging Indigenous religion as "primitive" and unchanging. See, Alice Kehoe, "Eliade and Hultkrantz: the European Primitivist Tradition." Special Issue, *American Indian Quarterly* 20, nos. 3-4 (1996): 377-392.

At any rate, my aim is not to criticize. I am working toward illuminating my hypothesis that the two sides in the indigenous/exogenous debate, in so far as neither is theological, can easily be dissolved in face of the fact that participants on both sides tend to share an important presupposition: prophet movements are *crisis phenomena*.[85] Moreover, the insight usefully appraises the conversation by offering a critical angle that allows for a richer appreciation of the current ethnographic data and offers a way out of the indigenous/exogenous impasse. The presupposition is clear in work in the tradition of deprivation theory, yet it is present in ethnohistorical studies as well. I can better illuminate both facets of my hypothesis that prophet movements are (1) a response to (2) a crisis by reference to those traditions more germane to my area of focus in this dissertation. The illumination will also provide occasion for introducing data and analysis relevant to those nineteenth century traditions that emerged in the Fraser, Skeena and Columbia watersheds.

Plateau Prophet Movements: The Conversation Continued

Based on eighteenth and nineteenth century descriptions, Leslie Spier, in *Prophet Dance* argues that the origins of the Ghost Dance are to be found in the "Prophet Dances" (Indigenous prophet traditions) of the Northwestern Plateau. When Spier uses the descriptor "Plateau" he means the culture area as defined by *Handbook of North American Indians*, the centre of which is the Columbia Plateau: an area of semi-arid, high desert grassland carved through by the Columbia River as it passes between the Rocky

[85] I use the shorthand term "indigenous/exogenous" when referring to the contrasting voices in the scholarly debate on the degree to which prophet movements can be read as a reaction to colonialism (or, alternatively, the degree to which they can be read as a product of internal conditions). Otherwise, when I use "Indigenous" as a noun to refer to a people, a culture or a religion I capitalize the "I."

and Coast mountains. However, the cultural region so narrowly circumscribed betrays a United States political bias that can be misleading. For example, some of the traditions covered in Spier's text originate outside of the region delineated by the Columbia Plateau, and are found among peoples living in the Fraser and Skeena watersheds. Thus, when referring to the Northwest Plateau, I refer not only to the narrow culture area corresponding to the Columbia but to the large interior plateau west of the Rockies that extends from the Columbia watershed in the south to the Skeena watershed in the north. That vast region is geographically speaking a plateau, that is, a high table land. Lastly, in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the social field and commercial zone containing the Columbia Plateau also incorporated the Fraser-Skeena watershed and places on the periphery. Thus, when I refer to the Northwest Plateau I include the upriver regions of the Fraser.

Spier's work on the plateau prophet movements touched off the indigenous/exogenous debate among scholars interested in the Indigenous religions of the Northwest. In this section, I survey and appraise the conversation that followed from Spier's text. Scholars siding with Spier's view, that prophet movements are endemic to the Indigenous religions of the Northwest Plateau, mostly anthropologists, include Wayne Suttles, Robin Ridington, Melville Herskovits and Julie Cruikshank.[86] Suttles and Ridington build their work directly on Spier's *Prophet Dance*. Beginning with the premise that prophet traditions arose within Indigenous traditions, they argue that the traditions were subsequently developed under Indigenous conditions. Suttles, with

[86] As we saw in the case of the Ghost Dance, scholars writing on the prophet movements in the anthropological tradition tend to figure religion theologically, albeit, not as explicitly as Irwin, more in the vein of Kehoe and DeMallie.

reference to the tradition as manifest among the Coast Salish, argues that a prophet tradition of some antiquity diffused from the Plateau to the coast at which place it was adopted by the Salish to deal with problems brought on by the fur trade, namely, a power vacuum created by population depletion (caused by epidemics and famine), which in turn resulted in intensified competition for those positions (amplified by an introduced ethic of individual competition). Within that scenario, the prophets emerged as the most likely candidates for new leadership. While it may seem as if Suttles attributes prophetic activity to deprivations, he is adamant that (a) the prophet tradition is endemic to the Plateau and (b) Salish prophets dealt with Salish problems (population loss and political vacuums) on Salish terms (prophecy). According to Suttles, prophets only *amplified* an existing prophetic repertoire with the competitive work ethic of the fur trade. Thus, prophet movements are ultimately features of Indigenous religiosity.[87]

Across the Coast Mountains, on the eastern ridge of the Plateau, Robin Ridington, working with the Dunne-za prophet traditions, follows a similar line. Ridington lauds Spier's work remarking that it brought into focus "a distinctive and coherent system of belief and practice characteristic of the cultural experience of native people in the area."[88] He continues that the prophetic motif, itself rooted in ancient shamanic practices, is characterized by prophets charged with the task of interpreting history in socially and

[87] Wayne Suttles, "The Plateau Prophet Dance Among the Coast Salish," in *Coast Salish Essays*, eds. Wayne Suttles and Ralph Maud (Vancouver: Talon Books, 1987).

[88] Ridington writes that his conclusions are convincing because they are also "those of the Dunne-za prophets themselves who present their historical tradition as a distinctively Indian way of dealing with adaptive changes brought about by contact conditions." He consumes their discourse uncritically. Robin Ridington, *Swan People: A Study of the Dunne-Za Prophet Dance* (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1978), 1.

personally meaningful ways.[89] In the late seventeenth and eighteenth century, the historical changes front and centre in the prophetic imagination were firearms, epidemics and population dislocation. To meet those challenges, prophets organized dances designed to reduce interpersonal hostility, to cultivate a sense of togetherness, and to focus their individual and collective energies on living in accord with the path to heaven. Ridington recorded that among the Dunne Za it was said that "if people follow the path of the sun like Saya in the [prophet] dance they will reduce the level of interpersonal hostility that is believed to prevent people from rising along the trail to heaven (yaga' tunne). People who dance along the sun's path together while they are alive will have less distance to travel as ghosts backward along the trail of their past lives."[90]

Julie Cruikshank, like Ridington and Suttles, connects prophet traditions to shamanic activity. Yet, in significant departure from them she does not relate the traditions to the introduction of firearms, epidemics, competition and the like. Based on her fieldwork among peoples of the Southern Yukon Territory, to the north of the Northwest Plateau, Cruikshank concludes that prophetic behaviour was (and remains so today) the routine behaviour of shamans.[91] While prophetic insights may be profound, prophetic activity itself is commonplace. Prophetic narratives are part of the shamanic "tool kit" for articulating the meaning of current and historical events. Prophetic narratives are meaning-making strategies that enable people to manipulate the vicissitudes of history in a way that matters to them. According to Cruikshank, prophetic

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[89] Ibid., 2.

[90] Ibid., 38-39.

[91] Julie Cruikshank, "Claiming Legitimacy: Prophecy Narratives from Northern Aboriginal Women," *American Indian Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (1994): 148.

narratives give storied form to proper relations so as to "provide listeners with ways to think about how they should respond to external events."[92] Viewed from this angle Wovoka's narrative, for example, might be seen as one of many continuous and ongoing prophetic efforts to imbue life with meaning by offering a creative way to think about change and how to act in the face of it. The fact that Wovoka's story is associated with Wounded Knee might, then, be seen as coincidental and one of innumerable potential outcomes of his teachings. Moreover, Wovoka's prophecies neither ended at Wounded Knee nor with the life of the prophet. Thus, there is no special link between prophecy and the circumstances of contact. Prophecy is ongoing and persistent; it plants seeds that either flourish or dry out.

For the theorists, Suttles, Spier, Ridington, and Cruikshank, prophet movements are basic features of an Indigenous North American religiosity, in other words, they are pre-contact traditions that did not arise under the influence of contact with Europeans. Deprivation theorists, as we have already encountered, tell different origin stories and treat prophet movements as responses to colonialism.[93] With respect to the Northwestern Prophet movements, the "deprivation theory" of David Aberle and Deward Walker has garnered the most attention. Aberle, critical of Spier's theory, argues instead that prophet movements were *likely* responses to deprivations related in some way to colonialism and that the movements are examples of the kind of "religio-magical" techniques that people

[92] Ibid., 161.

[93] "Deprivation theory" contains within it the implicit (and sometimes explicit) assumption that prophecy is a fundamental quality of the Indigenous religious traditions of this continent. Such a claim may be true but there is no clear logic in support of it. It is not evident, for example, if the assumption is grounded in ethnology, archaeology, cultural ecology, psychology, historical diffusion, or ethnotheology; albeit the arguments do not hinge on whether the assumption is true or false. Moreover, their analyses are not meant to be comparative. Ridington, is interested in Dunne-Za prophecy and Suttles in Coast Salish prophetic traditions.

all over the world have been known to resort to when they can no longer cope with deprivations by empirical means.[94] More specifically, Aberle refers to such movements as "redemptive movements," which came about "when practical action within the world is deemed unable to rectify a negative discrepancy between expectation and actuality."[95] Picking up on Aberle's insight, Walker illustrates that such deprivations could be proven to have existed in the Northwest in advance of contact. For example, Walker suggests that an increase in talus slope burials in pre-contact times is likely suggestive of cult activity.[96] He attributes the deprivations to indirect colonial pressure, namely, epidemics, population decimation and what he termed "the exposure to new wants."[97] Walker's conclusions attempt to show that what Spier, Suttles, Ridington, et al. took as pre-contact prophet traditions (dated to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries) were not

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[94] In one instance Aberle, cites a Chipewyan movement reported as exemplary of a cargo cult like those of Melanesia where deprivation is seen as coming from white colonialists: "Sir John Franklin reported in 1820 that one group of Chipewyans in about 1812 accepted the views of a prophet who said 'that there would soon be a complete change in the face of their country; that fertility and plenty would succeed to the present sterility; and that the present race of white inhabitants, unless they became subservient to the Indians, would be removed, and their place be filled by other traders, who would supply their wants in every possible manner. The poor deluded wretches, imagining they would hasten this happy change by destroying their present traders, of whose submission there was no prospect, threatened to extirpate them.' David F. Aberle, "The Prophet Dance and Reactions to White Contact," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 15 (1959): 79.

[95] Ibid., 81. Compared to his work with the Native American Church his treatment of Plateau traditions – a single article – was more hypothetical, meant to spur future research. In that effort it had scarcely a modicum of success. However, it did provoke a powerful retort by Spier, Suttles and Herskovits: "there is no positive evidence that this cult had its *origins* in deprivation." Leslie Spier, Wayne Suttles, Melville J. Herskovits, "Comment on Aberle's Thesis of Deprivation," *Southwest Journal of Anthropology* 15, no. 1 (1959): 85.

[96] Why such a tiny piece of evidence as talus slope burials is considered to be of such weight puzzles me.

[97] Deward Walker, "New Light on the Prophet Dance Controversy," *Ethnohistory*, 16, no. 3 (1969): 252. Vibert lauds Walker's work, but there is much to be critical about the conclusions he draws from the evidence. Walker alleges that an increase in talus slope burials in the eighteenth century suggests increased cult activity and is thus proof of indirect contact influencing religious change. A change in burial practice may suggest a change in religiosity but it is does not have to; even if it did, it does not follow that the new form of religiosity was prophet activity.

pre-contact at all, rather they emerged during a period of *measurable* indirect contact that was sufficiently depriving so as to be conducive to the emergence of prophet movements.

Walker's article, published in 1969, seemed to close the matter, until the conversation was resurrected twenty-five years later by the ethnohistorian, Liz Vibert. In an article published in 1995 that also appeared as a chapter in her book *Trader's Tales* based on her Ph.D. dissertation, Vibert charted a middle road between the indigenous/exogenous divide. At the onset of her 1995 article, Vibert announces that "in order to understand such movements, it is essential to consider their internal logics" within the broader historical field in which they were embedded.[98] Vibert, inspired by DeMallie's insights on the Ghost Dance and Walker's work on pre-contact "deprivations," claims that prophecy was a religious response to a religious problem. More specifically, Vibert suggests that "the aim of prophecy was *internal* cleansing and renewal" in the face of serious illness, namely, the small pox epidemic of the 1770s (which she suggests was the normative Plateau response to sickness).[99] Thus, prophecy was perspicuous in the eighteenth century because it coincided with the timing of some of the most virulent small pox epidemics known to have ravaged the Northwest.[100] Also reminiscent of Suttles, who ultimately viewed the Salish prophet tradition more as a response to "Native" problems regardless of the sources of those problems, Vibert asserts

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[98] Elizabeth Vibert, "'The Natives Were Strong to Live': Reinterpreting Early-Nineteenth-Century Prophetic Movements in the Columbia Plateau," *Ethnohistory* 42, no. 2 (1995):197-199.

[99] Ibid., 220.

[100] The documentary evidence indicates that there were at least five major small pox epidemics widespread on the coast and the plateaus in the period of early contact: 1770s, 1800-1801, 1836-37, 1852-53 and 1862. For the outbreak of the 1770s, Robert Boyd approximates the true mortality rate as 33% throughout the entire Pacific Northwest. Robert T. Boyd, "The Introduction of Infectious Diseases among the Indians of the Pacific Northwest, 1774-1874" (University of Washington, Ph.D. thesis, 1985), 95.

that to link prophecies to "a contemporary epidemic is not necessarily to cast them as reactions to the colonial incursion."[101] Prophet traditions were prompted by indirect colonial contact (i.e. epidemics), but they were ultimately attempts on the part of Indigenous people to renew and revitalize a world that appeared "sick to the core."[102]

I like Vibert's use of ethnography in historical perspective, but there are two things about her work that lead me to think she has not moved us that far beyond the indigenous/exogenous debate. First, Vibert highlights the analytical importance of Indigenous explanations for prophetic behaviour (i.e. as responses to illnesses) suggesting that consideration of such explanations balances an (over) emphasis on written documentation, namely, the primary source as written by a non-Indigenous hand. I like the spirit of her claim, but it does not exempt Indigenous religious explanations from critical consumption. Ethnographic evidence of the sort pertaining to religion is often represented in ethnographic texts (Vibert's chief source) as manifestly theological and/or bereft of any contextual framing.[103] For example, Sam Gill has shown that the speeches of Indigenous people, which scholars often take for theological proclamations, that is, as narrowly religious, actually have much broader political and metaphorical connotations.[104] Thus, when Vibert cites Indigenous claims connecting disease and world

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[101] Vibert, "'The Natives Were Strong to Live,'" 199.

[102] Vibert, "'The Natives Were Strong to Live,'" 219.

[103] Cf. Bruce Lincoln's fourth theses on method: "The same destabilizing and irreverent questions one might ask of any speech act ought be posed of religious discourse. The first of these is 'Who speaks here?' i.e., what person, group, or institution is responsible for a text, whatever its putative or apparent author. Beyond that, 'To what audience? In what immediate and broader context? Through what system of mediations? With what interests?' And further, 'Of what would the speaker(s) persuade the audience? What are the consequences if this project of persuasion should happen to succeed? Who wins what, and how much? Who, conversely, loses?'" Bruce Lincoln "Theses on Method," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, 8 (1996): 225.

[104] Gill, *Mother Earth*, 66.

destruction, the claims may be as much metaphorical and political as they are medicinal. The point is simply that the claims do not speak for themselves. For example, analytical treatments of the emergence of the Church of Christ Scientist as a religious movement would not rest adequately on Mary Baker Eddy's theological exposition of the Gospel stories in her *Key to the Scriptures*.[105] Any exposition would need at least to set the movement in the sociological and religious context of "alternative" Christianities in late nineteenth-century America. There is a social dynamic to all religious movements and people do things for reasons other than what they might announce (to an ethnographer, for example).

The second thing that makes me think Vibert has not done away with the indigenous/exogenous debate is that her work appears to me a union of both sides. As opposed to dissolving the debate, she actually unifies it by drawing out the logical premise shared by both sides: religion is a response to troubled times.[106] Despite her focus on "internal logics," for Vibert the origins of the eighteenth-century traditions lie in a response to smallpox. Notice that there is something of Aberle's work in her analysis: in times of trouble people resort to religio-magical techniques to ameliorate their situation. Prophecy is a response to the extraordinary, and thus is non-normative behaviour. Such logic represents prophecy, and by extension religion (at least Indigenous

[105] Such treatments may suffice if one is a practitioner or interested in journalistic exposition (e.g. "this is what Christian scientists say they do …").

[106] In addition to the treatment of religion, there is something to be said about Vibert's selection and framing of data. The degree to which the Plateau represented a discrete cultural unit is debatable. The boundaries that she draws are pretty arbitrary and strike me as more geographical (corresponding to the upper Columbia Basin) than cultural. The cultural or social field extended north and south (at least) beyond the narrow boundaries of the basin. Moreover, her ethnographic sources pertain mostly to the Thompson; would the same data hold for other "Plateau" peoples? Lastly, it is difficult to re-construct eighteenth century theories of disease health and wellness from nineteenth and twentieth century ethnographies after much contact with new medicines. It is possible but she makes a bold claim on the basis of thin evidence.

religion), as a special kind of phenomena, or as the road of last resort to follow when all rational means for dealing with a situation have been exhausted.

The connection between prophecy and illness is a common motif in the literature on prophecy and on religion more generally in the North American setting and elsewhere. Closer to home, the line is particularly manifest in nineteenth century mission historiography. The examples of two well known texts will serve my point: *Nineteenth Century Protestant Missions to the Tsimshian*, by Susan Neylan, and *Oblate Missions to the Dene*, by Martha McCarthy.[107] In her monograph on Christian missions to the Ts'mysen (Tsimshian), Susan Neylan cites Vibert's work when introducing Bini's prophet movement and is open to the idea that epidemics played a role in either its emergence or its decline. Martha McCarthy, in an appendix to her book on Oblate missions to the Dene, correlates the many prophet traditions uncovered in her archival research with the timing of known epidemics. McCarthy's reasoning is even less explicit than Neylan's and so far as I can tell the appendix – which is a very rich catalogue of prophet movements and epidemics – is left to speak for itself.

Religion as Epiphenomenal

Framing the discussion of prophet movements, whether the Ghost Dance or the Prophet Dance, in terms of the indigenous/exogenous debate misrepresents an important ideological similarity shared by many of the participants on *both* sides: prophet movements are crisis activities of some kind. The position is clearly evident in the work

[107] Susan Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing: Nineteenth-Century Protestant Missions and Tsimshian Christianity* (McGill-Queen's University Press: Montreal, 2003); Martha McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth: Oblate Missions to the Dene, 1847-1921* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1995).

of the deprivationists (there is no need to review the work here) but it is also present in the work of those scholars who treat prophet movements as deeply seated in Indigenous religion. Spier, for example, figures that prophecy was an aspect of Indigenous religiosity *but* that it ultimately originated in Indigenous thinking about ecological disasters, most notably, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and climatic cataclysms. Mooney also sees prophecy as a pan-Indigenous movement that emerged in the moment of colonial conflict or in any situation of cultural oppression. Raymond DeMallie is adamant that the Ghost Dance was a response to crisis, an imbalance in the spirit world. Kehoe explains that the Dance (and prophecy in general) is psychologically beneficial; as cathartic enthusiast behavior it has important benefits to the health and well being of individuals. In a similar vein, Robin Ridington explains Dunne-za prophecy as a distinctively subarctic Athabaskan means of coping with a colonial field marked by increased interpersonal hostilities.[108] Wayne Suttles sees Coast Salish prophecy an archaic form of religiosity that helped the Salish to cope with the population decimation and an ethic of competition introduced by the fur trade. Lastly, even Vibert, who wrote that "it is short sighted—and one is tempted to say arrogant—to view everything that happened in the time of colonial penetration as a reaction to it," ultimately concludes that prophet activity was a response to epidemics caused by the colonial penetration.[109] The historians McCarthy and Neylan

[108] The term "Athabaskan" denotes the Athabaskan speaking peoples of the western subarctic. The term has been spelled variously as "Athapaskan," "Athabascan," and "Athabaskan." I use the latter spelling following the suggestion of linguist Michael Krauss. See Michael Krauss, "The Name Athabaskan," in *Faces, Voices & Dreams: A celebration of the centennial of the Sheldon Jackson Museum, Sitka, Alaska, 1888-1988*, ed. Peter L. Corey (Sitka: Division of Alaska State Museums and the Friends of the Alaska State Museum, 1987).

[109] Vibert, "'The Natives Were Strong to Live,'" 220.

are content to follow the work of the anthropologists, to exempt religion from analysis and to present prophecy as responsive behavior connected with epidemics.

The premise that religion is unusual behavior – whether behaviour focused on the sacred or behaviour born of desperation – is what unites the indigenous/exogenous divide. If my framing of the conversation is useful for the purposes of explication, it is also banal. The tendency to treat religion as epiphenomenal, as the reflection of fundamental material or psychological factors is representative of a rich analytical tradition in the social sciences. Aberle observed that anthropologists have long assumed that people resort to religio-magical techniques when they cannot cope with deprivations by empirical means, the assumption, he says is of "considerable antiquity in anthropology."[110] I do not know what he has in mind by "antiquity," but the assumption must go back at least to Auguste Comte who, in the first half of the nineteenth century, characterized religion as the hallucinatory activity produced by an intellect "at the mercy of the passions."[111] The sociologist Rodney Stark offers a more recent illustration citing the typical reasons given for the emergence of new religious movements in contemporary times: "change in the economic position of a particular group . . . industrialization and urbanization . . . the failure of the social system to accommodate particular age, sex and status groups [or] some process of social change."[112]

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[110] Aberle, "The Prophet Dance," 81.

[111] Auguste Comte, *The Positive Philosophy*, trans. Harriet Martineau (London: George Bell and Sons, 1896), 554.

[112] Rodney Starke and Roger Finke, *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 29.

My intention is not to be critical of such analyses. As I noted in the introduction, a study such as Jorgenson's on the Sun Dance relating religion and resistance is analytically very useful. The point I wish to make is that the correlation between prophecy and cataclysm, deprivation or epidemic is the product of a particular way of thinking about religion that makes it out to be a special kind of human behaviour that is ontologically distinct from the social, the economic, and the political.[113] That view is so commonplace that when a movement is encountered in primary source data the well worn analytical process is first to seek out a movement of upheaval that is historically and geographically near to the prophet movement, second, draw connections between the upheaval and the movement (e.g. make the case that there is some causal relationship between the two, that they are in the same historical and geographical orbit) and, third, establish the priority of the disaster and assert that the movement followed from it. The rationale is so self-evident that all that is required is to account for a prophet movement is to place the movement and the disaster in the same vicinity and assume a relation.

The appendix in McCarthy's text that juxtaposes epidemics with prophet movements is a case in point. When prophet movements are configured as responses to stressful events: natural disasters, epidemics, famine, and cultural deprivations, they appear as atypical and sometimes irrational behaviour. It is almost as if the presence of a prophet movement is evidence of a lack of something, a lack of more rational ways for dealing with stress of whatever kind. To take Vibert's work as example, if the peoples of

[113] With much historical breadth and ethnographic rigour Jorgensen masterfully shows how the Ute Sun Dance promoted the individual and community interests of Indigenous people while also serving as a point of resistance against colonial oppression.

the Plateau only had knowledge of virology, then, perhaps they would have no need for prophet traditions.[114]

According to the logic I am outlining here, people resort to religion only when all other avenues for managing a situation have failed. Once the economic, medical, political, nutritional, social, juridical and military conditions within a society worsen, religion is invoked as a form of personal consolation, e.g. *redemption*, or as source for active resistance, e.g. *transformation*.[115] While I do not dispute that religion offers personal consolation and meaning, that it enters into political negotiations and that it can be a source of armed resistance, the questions I raise are: if religio-magical techniques are so efficacious then why is it that they are always held in reserve? Why not put the best foot forward? If prophet movements are so useful in times of change, why are they restrained until the big change comes? Is it that there is unspoken knowledge that religion is not really the most reliable way to deal with troubles? Perhaps prophet movements only address the big changes; changes that from an outsider's perspective are hard for any people not "in the know" to grasp?[116] The analyses seem to affirm the latter, in so far as there is a political or military chance religion is not necessary. Only when all other means fail is religion used to mobilize people against a problem; hence, when the response is a

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[114] The tendency to account for religion in medical terms is reminiscent of what Mary Douglas has termed medical materialism (albeit in this case an ill-informed or ineffective medical effort). Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: an Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 36.

[115] The tropes redemption and transformation are borrowed from Aberle's analysis.

[116] Aberle, I think knows this and that is why he worked to get peyotism recognized by the United States as a religion under the name of the Native American Church. While freedom of religion is a constitutional right, the form of religion matters. The more orderly religious behavior the more defensible it is as a right. It is incumbent upon the new religion to create an image of itself as rational and my sense is that this is because of its long association with fanaticism.

religious response the assumption is that there must be big a problem somewhere. The logic is also tautological in that religion cannot be extracted from the social stress.[117]

Yet, not all the scholars involved in the debate are so overtly materialist in their analyses. DeMallie, Vibert, Ridington and Kehoe treat prophecy as a cultural construct that is both relative to and dependent upon other concepts within locally particular schemes of things. Their approaches interest me because they are sensitive to social and cultural difference and because they *relativize* rationality, treating rationality as ethnographic as opposed to universal.[118] Yet, in the end, their analyses end up preserving the logic of crisis behavior, but instead of figuring the crisis as material they see it as religious or spiritual. I think their work leads them in that direction because they persistently employ an image of religion as something that is responsive to instability. Therefore, prophetic religion can never be suited for any stable system in the long run. Thus, the scholars end up shifting the crisis from the material sphere to the cultural sphere: prophet movements do not address material deprivations but religious (cultural) crises.

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[117] Although this presupposition informs the majority of the treatments of prophet movements covered here, it is not the only angle. Recent social scientific perspectives, such as those within the cognitive psychology of religion, suggest that religious beliefs are not strange or irrational but natural and inevitable. Justin L. Barrett's argument nicely sketches the view of such cognitive psychologists: "Operating largely without our awareness, mental 'tools' encourage us to think similarly about many banal features of the world around us. These mental tools also encourage people to think about and believe in gods, the Judeo-Christian God enjoying particularly favorable treatment, especially during child development. Once introduced into a population, belief in the existence of a supreme god with properties such as being superknowing, superpowerful, and immortal is highly contagious and a hard habit to break. The way our minds are structured and develop make these beliefs very attractive." Justin L. Barrett, *Why Would Anyone Believe in God?* (Lanham, Maryland: Alta Mira Press, 2004), vii-viii.

[118] Cf. Sahlins critique of "practical rationality" in Marshall Sahlins *How "natives" think: About Captain Cook, for example* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

One notable exception to the aforementioned emic analyses is the work of Julie Cruikshank.[119] Instead of treating prophecy as sensational behavior, Cruikshank treats it is quotidian activity, as a familiar and recognizable element of Indigenous religiosity. Prophecy might manifest in relation to an illness or epidemic, but it might also manifest for any number of *other* reasons. While epidemic is rare, prophecy is always happening. For example, she cites the case of Angela Sidney, a Tagish elder, who took the ability of prophets to continuously communicate with the supernatural as a given. Cruikshank records Sidney asking: "What about Oral Roberts? He got messages from God. What about Father Divine? Well, that's why I think Indians are like that … [able to communicate directly with supernatural beings]. But we call it Indian doctor."[120] Sidney also used a prophetic narrative about a Pelly River prophet, Major, to draw together three forms of religiosity with which she had been involved throughout her life: Anglicanism, Bahai, and Tagish. By thinking about Major's story, she was able to reconcile those traditions so as to provide a satisfactory explanation for their advent and for their continuing place in her life and the community; a reconciliation that she subsequently

[119] Cruikshank's analysis reminds me of a case that can be made for Aztec prophecy. Prophecy was a central feature in Aztec religion at the onset of the Spanish invasion. Prophecy was quotidian and consistently employed to make sense of the present. David Carrasco writes: "present situations were understood as having been set in motion in a remembered mythic past by a prophetic event or figure and which would move into a 'known' or prophesied future." David Carrasco, *Quetzacoatl and the Irony of Empire: Myths and Prophecies in the Aztec Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 77. When Montezuma prophesied the arrival of Cortes as Topiltzin Quetzacoatl (the Toltec ancestor and culture hero) he made the connection only sometime after he had heard about the Spaniards on the coast. It was as if he searched the mythological/prophetic record for a way of framing Cortez that had some strategic purpose (of which motivations I am uncertain). Only an uncritical theological perspective would suggest that Montezuma hit on the "right" one. Prophecies are always present it is how they are applied in rational and thoughtful ways that breathes life into them and gives them traction.

[120] Cruikshank, "Claiming Legitimacy", 158.

shared with others.[121] Prophecy helps with the explanation for religious change even when there is little of the ethnological crisis about the change.

I like Cruikshank's insights because she frees prophecy from its close association with crises. She treats prophecy as eminently social and as something that is present in both the mundane and the extraordinary. She suggests that prophecy offers not only an interpretive read of past events (e.g. as explaining one thing in the past, including illness, volcanic eruptions or what have you) but an anticipatory glimpse into the future. She treats prophecy as ubiquitous and in itself not particularly attention grabbing. Lastly, she reminds me that the relation between prophecy and dramatic event only seems self evident for scholars who want to focus on a dramatic moment within a diverse field, as if looking through a viewfinder trained on a single slope in a sea of hills. Cruikshank does not have that agenda as she is interested in the role of female elders, within which prophecy plays one role alongside many others.

Mooney's work is wonderfully illustrative of how perspective conditions one's view of prophecy. His work is very descriptive, well documented and above all *focused*, geared toward illustrating the miserable situation in which the Lakota were placed leading up to Wounded Knee which, in turn, serves as a long prelude to the advent of the Ghost Dance and its climax in relation to events at Wounded Knee. The way he tells the story makes sense: the Ghost Dance came along and offered hope at that particular time because everything else was a shambles. But that is *Mooney's* story. Not everyone got on board with the Ghost Dance. Moreover, according to Wovoka, the way it took off among the Lakota was not at all how Wovoka himself had envisioned it. Thus, Mooney's position could be inverted: the Ghost Dance among the Lakota was an atypical form of

[121] Cruikshank, "Claiming legitimacy", 160.

prophet activity, and Wovoka's Ghost Dance was not a response to deprivation. I like Mooney's story and I think it is accurate, but only when applied to the circumstances surrounding the Wounded Knee Massacre (a Ghost Dance without the circumstances leading to Wounded Knee would be possible and would be a different story). Cruikshank's insights, in contrast, remind us that colonial deprivations are not the only sort of conditions conducive to the flourishing of prophecy.[122] Prophecy is quotidian and anticipatory behavior endemic to social life. People are always primed to look ahead; the disposition is reflected in what Burkert calls the optimism of religion and, I would add, in virtually every corner of public life![123] It is in gambling, in fantasy sports, in playing the stock market and in the banal practice of reading the daily horoscope. Viewed against this backdrop, religious prophecy is a particular kind of anticipatory action that among some peoples and at various times has received a high degree of conceptual elaboration. Among some peoples religious prophecy is a facet of their sociality; it is integral to the way that they conceive of themselves as a social group. In such settings, as among the Tagish discussed by Cruikshank, and as I will argue later among the peoples of the upper Fraser-Skeena watershed, prophecy can be very important to processes of identity formation.

The connection between religion and identity goes back at least to Durkheim's celebrated sociology of religion, which explained how it was that nationalism became the religion of a secular modernity (e.g. the cult of a nation). It is also reflected in Geertz's celebrated definition of religion where religion formulates a general order of existence

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[122] Ibid., 148.

[123] Walter Burkert, *Creation of the Sacred: Tracks of Biology in Early Religions* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 33.

and explains a peoples place within it.[124] Because religion and identity have been so closely related it is a little surprising that the relationship has not been more widely and closely treated within the discipline of religion as a whole.[125] Then again it is true that thoroughly social investigations of religion have not been a central concern to scholars in the field who have been more interested in defining religion as an autonomous sphere of personal experience or who see a primitive rationality in religious activity.[126] In the next section, I explore the relationship between religion, prophecy, and social identity in more detail. My gambit is that the relation between religion and social identity, or better, between religion and ethnogenesis (the formation of an ethnic community), can move us beyond the fixation on religion and crises.

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[124] Geertz's defined religion as "(1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic." Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 90. Note the symbolic-functional tenor of his definition where he writes of symbols effecting moods and motivations. Yet, there is something distinctly a-historical about Geertz's definition. Talal Asad forcefully evinced as much in his well known critique of Geertz's definition. According, to Asad Geertz's definition takes symbols as *sui generis* and culture as an *apriori*. Thus it is not particularly attentive to the conditions which explain how symbols come to be constructed and established as authoritative. In contrast, and in a fashion that resonates with my own analytical perspective, Asad suggests that what requires investigation are "the ways in which, in each society, social disciplines produce and authorise knowledges, the ways in which selves are required to respond to those knowledges, the ways in which knowledges are accumulated and distributed." Talal Asad, "Anthropological Conceptions of Religion: Reflections on Geertz," *Man* 18, no.2 (1983): 252.

[125] An understanding of culture that more clearly points out the connection between religion and identity is Lincoln's in which he specifies the content of culture as ethics, aesthetics and religion. Religion interacts with the other two components in a way that buttresses and stabilizes them. Religion "invests specific human preferences with transcendent status by constituting them as revealed truths, ancestral traditions, divine commandments, and the like." Lincoln, *Holy Terrors*, 55.

[126] Burton Mack, "Social Formation," in *Guide to the Study of Religion*, ed. Willi Braun and Russell McCutcheon (New York: Continuum, 2000), 285. Mack writes: "religion has customarily been defined as an autonomous sphere of personal experience and belief determined by extra-social and superhuman attractions."

Religion, Prophecy and Identity

One of the few works I know of to explore the relationship between prophecy and identity in Indigenous North America is Gregory Smoak's book *Ghost Dances and Identity: Prophetic Religion and American Indian Ethnogenesis in the Nineteenth Century*.[127] Smoak argues that the Ghost Dances (the major dances of 1870 and 1890 and other lesser known manifestations) fostered a "unifying pan-Indian sprit" and were a "vehicle for the expression of ethnic and racial identities."[128] Ghost Dance prophecies, in particular, were successful in achieving those ends because they happened to come about at the right time, offering useful advice on how to respond to military aggression, ecological devastation, cultural oppression and assimilation. The prophecies served as a call to resistance that beckoned individuals from otherwise diverse social and political groups to unite together under the banner of religion. The Ghost Dance prophecies as presented by Smoak are illustrative of what I will later call mythmaking in the interest of social formation. The Ghost Dance participants generated a set of mythic discourses and practices, grounded in the transcendent. In the interest of engendering a social movement, they used "religion to create an identity and resist white territorial and cultural encroachments."[129] Smoak's suggestion that the Ghost Dances are a specific manifestation of a general category of religious movement observed throughout the history of the Americas which expressed ethnic and racial identities among peoples

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[127] Other works are Gregory Dowd's *A Spirited Resistance* and, see also Armin Geertz, *The Invention of Prophecy: Continuity and Meaning in Hopi Indian Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

[128] Gregory Smoak, *Ghost Dances and Identity: Prophetic Religion and American Indian Ethnogenesis in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 198-202.

[129] Smoak, *Ghost Dances and Identity*, 197.

Indigenous to the continent is not too dissimilar to Dowd's suggestion of a pan-ethnic unity among eastern peoples at the onset of the nineteenth century, Mooney's notion of a re-emerged pan-Indian messianism in the late nineteenth century, or the American Indian Movement begun in the late 1960s.[130] All those movements employed religion (to some degree) to unite Indigenous peoples against the dominant political force of the American state and its colonial pursuits.

I like Smoak's work. His treatment of prophet movements is thoroughly social and his analysis does not entirely hinge on deprivation theory. In a way, Smoak's treatment of the Ghost Dances mirrors what I wish to accomplish with the Prophet Dances: an appreciation of religious movements in terms of the construction and maintenance of group identity. Yet, Smoak does some things I wish to avoid. First, he claims that prophet movements were indigenous to Newe religion (ancestors of the Shoshone and Bannock of the Great Basin-Plateau area) without any historical support.[131] That leaves him in a bit of bind, making a historical claim about prophecy that is at the same time not historical. Smoak writes: "there is simply no way at this date to draw a defensible line between a 'pre-Christian' and 'Christian' Prophet Dance or between pristine tradition and post-contact syncretism; but what can be surmised from the historic and ethnographic evidence is that Christian concepts entered Indian religious understandings through the shared discourse of prophecy."[132] The sexualization of the

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[130] On the American Indian Movement see Dennis Banks and Richard Erdoes, *Ojibwa Warrior: Dennis Banks and the Rise of the American Indian Movement* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004).

[131] The two positions (origins and history) are not easily reconcilable. The records can only take us so far back and are most always a post-contact phenomenon (but not always, there are important exceptions, *Wampum* and the Northwest Coast *Coppers* are two well known examples).

[132] Smoak, *Ghost Dances and Identity*, 64.

encounter aside, if the two groups are separate yet share a prophetic discourse, then logically that discourse must have been present in *both groups* at the moment of contact. Such may well have been the case but it cannot be concluded from the historical data; however, it may be made by appealing to sociological invariants (but Smoak does not make that case). Historically, it is just as likely that prophecy was a product of the encounter (an explanation that I like because from the moment we have written records we have an account of a social field). While it is a very easy argument for Smoak to make, he does not do it. My sense is that he wants the two groups to *share* a prophetic discourse so as to allow him to contrive prophesy as a feature of Indigenous religion. That way he can maintain the integrity and sophistication of each prophetic tradition (that neither is the source of the other) and not, for example, run the same political risks as Sam Gill when he went ahead and suggested that Mother Earth was a product of a Euro-American and American Indian *interaction* and not a pan-Indian goddess. I am sympathetic with Gill's argument as he reminds us that the data that with which are all working was composed after contact. The data on prophesy is thus a product of the social field, and all the speeches and the behaviour recorded in that setting must have been addressed to that setting. It is not that prophecy cannot be age old but that it is does not help me to think of it as age old (or brand new for that matter); when prophetic claims address present conditions with implications for the future it is useful to keep in mind Greg Johnson's reminder: "it is analytically useful to assume that all religious claims are human and only human, emerging from the present and for the purposes of the present."[133]

[133] Greg Johnson, *Sacred Claims: Repatriation and Living Tradition* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007), 23.

My second concern with Smoak's work is his presentation of the pan-Indigenous community engendered by the dance as an inclusive category. In reality, not all Indigenous peoples claimed membership in the community. How, then, are the identities of Indigenous people who do not identity as Euro-American and who also do not identify as Ghost Dancers to be constructed? Smoak uses the term "American Indian" in reference to an ethnic community but it strikes me more as a political grouping inclusive of those Ghost Dancers who were in active rebellion against the United States. Yet, we know that there were ethnic Indigenous people who did not participate in Ghost Dances. When the Bannock leader Buffalo Horn was engaged in armed conflict with the United States Army he tried to coerce the Paiute Bruneau John to his cause, telling him: "You have the same kind of skin as I have, and if you don't join me I will kill you too …. I am going through Bruneau and Duck Valley and I will eat you and the whites too."[134] If the Ghost Dances were about Indigenous ethnogenesis, then, what is Bruneau John's identity? And what of the identity of the Kiowa and others who refused to join the Ghost Dancers? From the point of view of Buffalo Horn, were they not properly Indigenous? Why, then, would Buffalo Horn's opinion matter more than Bruneau John's? Smoak probably means his "Indian ethnogenesis" to refer to group identity that need not include every person of Indigenous descent, but I think it is important to clarify that the group is disconnected from individual ethnic identities. In the absence of that clarity, the implication is that those who are not part of the ethnogenesis described by Smoak are not "American Indian."

I have been critical of Smoak's work on a couple points but I like his basic insight about the power of prophecy to unite groups on the basis of shared discourse and

[134] Smoak, *Ghost Dances and Identity*, 147.

practice. My own research on nineteenth-century prophet movements in the upper Fraser-Skeena watershed also evinces that the movements were social formations concerned with ethnogenesis. Like the Ghost Dance, the movements were resistive efforts, but they also cut across ethnic boundaries and reached out to non-Indigenous communities. With respect to the latter goal, the self-conscious prophetic indigenization of prophecy was particularly useful. Not everyone got on board with the prophetic message but those who did found in prophecy a way to assert multiple identities, or a way to be Gitksan, Dakelh, Sekani, Witsuwit'en, and Babine as well as Christian.

One of the more difficult things to do in a project such as this one is to appreciate how group allegiances (sentiments of estrangement and affinity) were constructed in context within the social field.[135] The academic heuristics at hand – culture, society, contact zone, structure, race, etc. – are not always the most useful for appreciating difference and change. Two of the analytical rubrics that I have found helpful for approaching local conceptions of sameness and difference are the notions of social formation and social field. Prophet movements and other Indigenous Christianities can be envisioned as social formations within a social field.

The Social Location of Prophecy, "Contact Zones", Social Field and Social Formation

At the beginning of this chapter I remarked that any treatment of prophecy would do well to inquire into its social location, that is, into the social settings in which

[135] How, for example, was difference conceptualized in the trenches of the Rocky and Coast mountains in the 19th century? Was it done in terms of race? Ethnicity? Language? Religion? Culture?

prophetic acts occur.[136] The social location of nineteenth-century prophecy, as represented in each of the preceding analyses, has been labeled a "contact zone" within post-colonial scholarship. [137] The term was coined by Mary Louise Pratt who defined such zones as "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination – like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today."[138] The concept of a contact zone is a useful enough start on articulating social location but with its emphasis on a clash of cultures its connotations can be distracting. Thus, it needs to be modified to suit the data with which I am working.

The contact zone beckons the question of just how cultures or groups were constructed in the contact zone. The easy answer is that the contact zone was a meeting space of Indigenous and European cultures, a space within which the former were exploited by the latter. The cultures within that space can, then, easily by constituted by "the sum of all communications circulating within a group that the group recognizes as its own, and through which it constitutes itself and distinguishes itself from others."[139] But the reality is far from that simple – there were many ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups interacting with each other in the nineteenth-century Northwest. There were Kanakas,

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[136] Overholt, *Channels of Prophecy*, 73.

[137] See, for example, R. Mark Hall and Mary Rosner, "Pratt and Prattfalls: Revisioning Contact Zones," in *Crossing Borderlands: Composition and Post Colonial Studies*, ed. Andrea A. Lunsford and Lahoucine Ouzgane (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004); Jehanne Teilhet-Fisk and Robin Franklin Nigh, *Dimensions of Native America: The Contact Zone* (Tallahassee. FL: Museum of Fine Arts, Florida State University, 1998); and Renisa Mawani, *Colonial Proximities: crossracial encounters and juridical truths in British Columbia, 1871-1921* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009).

[138] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York; Routledge, 1992), 4.

[139] Bruce Lincoln, "Culture," in *Guide to the Study of Religion*, eds. Willi Braun and Russell McCutcheon (New York: Continuum, 2000), 412.

Métis, Canadians, Swedes, Americans, British, Iroquois, Alognonkian, Athabaskans, Ts'mysen and Japanese. Yet, such groups were also just as likely to be defined by ethnic, linguistic or national terms. Cultural identity and belonging are never fixed or ascribed by birth, and cultural groups are never whole or seamless. For example, the cases of a Métis who marries a Kanaka or an American who marries a Dakelh create serious problems for the conflation of cultural, linguistic and ethnic identities. Because there are cracks, divisions, and segments within cultures and because there is the potential for individual mobility between cultures, there is reason to think that cultures are more a product of a contact zone than simply encompassed by it.

If the contact zone is a place where cultures collide, it is also a place where cultures are formed. Thus, the contact zone must equally hold out a potential for creativity, birth, and gestation as well as struggle, violence and death. Preferences shift and allegiances change. For example, we can get the sense from fur trader correspondence that the officers in the Hudson's Bay Company conceived of themselves as a group distinct from not only the surrounding local populations but from labourers and servants of similar ethnic, racial, and linguistic pedigrees as themselves. Yet, even among the officers there were ethnic fractures. There were Canadians, British and Métis officers, and there were also hierarchical segmentations, officers of higher rank and officers of lower rank, officers who took a salary and officers who were paid a percentage of profits. The contact zone is useful if we maintain an image of a frontier characterized by contact between colonizer and colonized, European and Indigenous, the traders and the locals, but when that zone is put under a microscope the model of a frontier no longer

holds. The point I want to make is simple: the contact zone is a space for cultural incubation as much as for cultural clash.

The notion of a contact zone is also defined in unmistakably violent terms. It is a place where cultures "clash" and "grapple" with each other. It would be inaccurate to deny the violence within such spaces but sometimes the clashing and grappling precedes culture contact. Individuals anticipate meeting new people, novel ideas, strange practices, and new material goods, and consider how best to greet the newcomers. They engage in intellectual struggle. For example, when David Thompson crossed the Rockies and descended the Columbia River he had a sense of what to expect, and so too did those living on the other side of the mountains waiting there to greet him. Some people greeted him with dances not because they thought he was some long dead ancestor who came back to usher in a golden age, but because they were told by others in advance that he and his crew liked dancing.[140]

The violence of the field is not always between the two cultures. In some zones a faction within one culture might ally with a faction within another. Some Indigenous, Métis and Canadian labourers employed by the Hudson's Bay Company developed collegial relationships with Indigenous neighbours and as a collective group they all stood apart from company officers. On the other hand, factions within Indigenous

[140] In *Prophet Dance*, Spier cites an event in David Thompson's journal where he is greeted by Indigenous people along the lower Columbia with a dance as evidence of an Indigenous prophet dance. The dancing, however, may have been started by Thompson himself. If we read Thompson's journals closely it appears that the first people to dance for Thompson on the Columbia did so because Thompson asked them to dance. To Thompson's request, the chief "instantly made a short Speech to them, & all of them young & old, Men, Women & Children began a Dance, to the sound of their own Voices only, having no musical Instruments of any kind whatever. The Song was a mild simple Music, the cadence measured, but the figure of the dance was quite wild & irregular." David Thompson, *Columbia Journals*, ed. Barbara Belyea (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 144. It is possible that word spread in advance that Thompson enjoyed the people's dances. In a similar vein, Lewis and Clarke, who preceded Thompson five years earlier, also asked the peoples of the lower Columbia to dance. Ibid, 266.

cultures could expect from officers gifts and special attention that might not be forthcoming to others who were attributed less prestige. The Witsuwit'en Chief Kwah, for example, was the recipient of gifts and recognition by HBC officers. Kwah enjoyed special treatment when Governor Simpson visited the region in 1829. On New Year's Day of the same year after a night of drinking on the part of post employees and local dignitaries, the post employees at Stuart Lake, assaulted Kwah's peers while Kwah himself was spared the treatment.[141] Kwah's son, Prince, continued to enjoy a privileged relationship with the Hudson Bay Company's traders after his father's death. The point I wish to make here is that group boundaries and sentiments of affinity felt between individuals within a social field are not necessarily conditioned by cultural borders.

The "contact zone" imagines culture as a bounded and unified totality, which can obfuscate precisely the dynamics of formation and change that I wish to analyze. Marilyn Strathern's critique of such a modernist image of culture clearly illustrates its limitations, she writes: "To think of society as a thing is to think of it as a discrete entity. The theoretical task then task becomes one of elucidating 'the relationship' between it and other entities. This is a mathematic, if you will, that sees the world as inherently divided up into units. The significant corollary of this view is that relationships appear as extrinsic to such units: they appear as secondary ways of connecting things up."[142] The concept of culture as a bounded totality actually makes it difficult to articulate relations between social groups, those relations that characterize the zones. In place of the

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[141] Charles Bishop, "Kwah: a Carrier Chief," in *Old Trails and New Directions: Papers of the Third North American Fur Trade Conference*, eds. C.M. Judd and A.J. Ray (Toronto, University of Toronto Press: 1980), 203.

[142] Tim Ingold, ed., *Key Debates in Anthropology* (London: Routledge, 1996), 61. Other criticisms have been advanced by Patrick Sullivan, Christina Toren, et al.

analytical concept "culture" (and this also goes for "society"), Strathern proposes the concept "sociality," which can be defined as the quality of relations among persons or "the relational matrix which constitutes the life of persons."[143] The idea that groups are constituted in relation with other groups resonates with the data I have at hand.

Of course, Strathern has not been the only scholar to criticize the modernist image of culture. There have been detractors since it was first popularized by the pioneering work of Bronislaw Malinowski who famously defined culture as a "well integrated whole," an institution characterized by, "a group of people united for the pursuit of a simple or complex activity; always in possession of a material endowment and technical outfit; organized on a definite legal or customary charter; linguistically formulated in myth, legend rule and maxim; and trained and prepared for carrying out its task."[144]Max Gluckman as early as 1945 criticized Malinowski's image of culture as being particularly unsuited to account for change. Gluckman argued that such a static view of culture as proffered by Malinowski entirely misrepresents the field of study: cultures are not really so discrete and well bounded as the anthropologist might think. Cultural boundaries are always shifting and those shifts are often a result of historical processes. Cultures are products of historical processes – they are not given, they are seldom well integrated and they are always in the process of change. When Malinowski, a Polish Brit who honed his theory while trapped in the Trobriands during WWI, looked at colonial Africa he saw three cultures: the African, the Western and the Transitional. In contrast, when

[143] Ibid., 64. This angle is consistent with relational anthropology that focuses on the "dynamic social processes in which any person is inevitably engaged." A corollary of such a focus is that meanings inherent to those processes are mutually constituted by structure and process, "this perspective on meaning [as inherent in social relations] is *inevitably historical* for it allows our analyses to accommodate the material nature of social relations and thus to handle both continuity and change." Ibid., 75.

[144] Max Gluckman, *An Analysis of the Sociological Theories of Bronislaw Malinowski* (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), 14.

Gluckman, a Jew who grew up in South Africa, looked at the same space he saw a social field characterized by interactions and tensions among multiple groups and personalities. In the colonial field all personalities and groups were mutually interdependent and they could not be wrenched apart. Gluckman had no interest in parceling out Indigenous components from exogenous components. He took all elements as being *indigenous to the social field*. If Gluckman had waded into the conversation on the Plateau Prophet Movements he also might have tried to dismantle its scaffolding built on the indigenous /exogenous divide. For Gluckman, components of the social field intersect in ways that make it impossible and unhelpful to draw them apart analytically. Gluckman's "social field," a field of interdependent relations, is a key analytical term for me. While Gluckman never explicitly defined the term, he did convey his meaning well through example. When taking the case of the South African gold mines, for example, Gluckman insists that the employees of the Rand Mines and Indigenous Africans be taken not as separate cultures but considered as part of a "single social field; that the administrator who represents a government in London ruling over settlers and Africans, and the chief who rules over only a tribe whose members are in constant relationships with settlers and with government, are both parts of a single political body."[145] Elsewhere he argues that an appreciation of nineteenth-century Zulu history should entail not the study of Zulu culture as isolated and self-contained, but the analysis of the relationships between Europeans (Boers and English), Zulu (and factions within that group), and other African societies within the setting of a single social field, "one that is occupied by unlike

[145] Gluckman, *Analysis*, 7.

territorial states."[146] As I take it, a social field is a space where groups, institutions, personalities and interests are constituted by mutual and varied relations.

In the chapter that follows, I introduce the social field of the upper Fraser and Skeena watersheds in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The elucidation is meant to appreciate, in the spirit of Gluckman, "the drives which lie beneath the changes in the relationships of personalities and groups."[147] Some Dakelh, Gitksan and Sekani of the Fraser and Skeena watersheds were driven to indigenize Christianity, to claim it as their own and to use it as an idiom to unite like-minded individuals in response to changing relationships in the mid nineteenth-century social field. Indigenizing Christianity was part of an effort in social formation or group construction within a social field. Before I begin my survey of the social field, I do want to introduce and clarify one last analytical term: social formation.[148]

I am borrowing the term "social formation" as used by Burton Mack.[149] The concept social formation is roughly equivalent to that of society, with the former being more polythetic containing within it various spheres, components, attributes or conceptualizations that are internally heterogeneous and segmented. It is, as Althusser put

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[146] Ibid., 19.

[147] Ibid., 3.

[148] Note that it is not my intention to enumerate all groups and persons within the social field but rather I will refer to those, or aspects of those that bear directly on the movement(s) that lies at the heart of my analysis.

[149] Mack cites the work of Louis Althusser as influential on his use of the term. Thus, Mack, following Althusser, treats a social formation as a structure of structures, where a structure is a semi-autonomous instance or pattern of practices. See Burton Mack, "A Radically Social Theory of Religion," in *Secular Theories on Religion: Current Perspectives*, ed. Tim Jensen and Mikael Rothstein (Denmark, Museum Tusculanum Press, 2000).

it a "structure of structures." [150] Each of the various groups considered within the social field may be conceived as social formations: a fur trade post (as representative of "fur trade society"), a mission station (as representative of mission society), or a prophet movement (as representative of Indigenous society). The components or "semi-autonomous" instances within a social formation would include at least the political, economic, and the religious. Each sphere could then be further segmented. Take religion for example, it is composed of at least the domains of mythmaking and ritual. Myth and ritual can be mobilized as integral to the construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of society (not only as related to the semi-autonomous instance of religion but to society as a whole). Mack states the case clearly: "religion may be defined as a practice that produces myths and rituals of ideational consequence for the structure of society as a whole."[151]

Indigenous Christianities, for example, prophet movements, can be seen as exemplary efforts of mythmaking in the interest of social formation. The prophet or leader (the leader may be more manifestly political) naturalized Christianity through establishing his or her own myth of origin (i.e. he or she constitutes the community as the first community, not as one in a long line of reformation traditions). Myth in the broad sense (as also instantiated in practice) is a particularly effective tool in the interest of social formation because it establishes for itself the status of transcendent truth.[152] It is stabilizing and attractive. The prophetic discourse analyzed later in this dissertation can

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[150] Ibid., 123.

[151] Mack, "Social Formation," 292.

[152] Lincoln writes that once discourse is grounded in "[s]cripture, revelation or immutable ancestral traditions" it "becomes religious because of its claim to transcendent authority." Lincoln, *Holy Terrors*, 5-6.

be considered as mythic precisely because it was thought to have been authorized by the supernatural. Thus, mythic discourse established the authority of the prophet as transcendent and the validity of the community as sacrosanct.

A social formation is also rhizomatic in the sense meant by Deleuze and Guattari. The rhizome is a provocative a way of thinking about social formation as it is decentered, emergent, never whole, never bounded, and laden with unanticipated potential. The rhizomatic model stands opposed to an arborescent model of culture that is unified, contained, composed of coherent multiplicities, and grows in straight lines from the ground up.[153]

Later in this dissertation I evince that prophet movements were experimentations in social formation; that they were creative attempts to articulate change and pending change. The movements were constituted by various lines that stretched out in all direction through other social formations in the social field. The movements were never whole and always becoming. The tropes "varied lines", "becoming", and "rhizome" are revealing at this point as they at least suggest what the movements were not. All of those descriptors vex the use of culture and in the major language of Malinowksi would relegate the movement to the realm of the intercultural. The movements were neither Christian, nor wholly Indigenous; they were also not syncretic. Once the concept of culture is put under critical suspicion, what can the movement be said to lie between? Where is the space between cultures when there are no cultures? A corollary of my

[153] I take the social field as the rhizome and the social formation as the plateau. Deleuze and Guattari configure the relation between rhizome and plateau in *A Thousand Plateaus*. See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brain Massumi (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1987). The notion of a rhizome is also treated in several commentaries on their work; see Ronald Brogue, *Deleuze and Guattari* (New York: Routledge, 1989) and Claire Colebrook, *Gilles Deleuze* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

perspective as one that is “relational” opposed to a “modernist”, is that it eschews conventional, usually dichotomous, language used in conversations about these movements such as: contact/ pre-contact, indigenous/exogenous, Christian/non-Christian, and also, significantly, the intercultural/cultural. Thus, I treat these movements as products or formations within a social field.

Within the social field of the upper Skeena and Fraser watersheds there was Deluezian “geography of relations.” Relations which cross chasms and gaps, plateaus, jump from one line to next, and leave space for play. Play, for example, as experimentation in social formation across gaps is a useful way of glimpsing the prophet movements. Like the rhizome, there is no permanent centre to the social formation, it is always only ever temporary and inextricable from the relations that constitute it; in other words, processural in all directions it is also historical. Such a way of figuring society and identity seems counterintuitive when presented, as we often are, with a model of society as a thing composed of discrete self-gratifying individuals (bounded parts of a whole), and with a model of identity that is conceived of in terms of personal identity. But those are idealized models; moreover, they are specific conceptualizations of society and identity that are more ethnographic facts of our own world than they are universally axiomatic. As I have already said, such an image of society is one that I do not find particularly useful. Thus, I do not treat the movements as a sub-component of society; such a view does not lend itself well to the data with which I have to work.

Why do this? Why construct a social formation? What are the interests? What are the motivations? Why are peoples in the social field of the nineteenth-century upper Fraser and Skeena watersheds involved in mythmaking in the interest of social

formation? Questions of motivations and of social interests are important to my task. To glimpse interests and motivations, to speculate upon what they might be, a richer appreciation of the social field, both in depth and in scope, is required. With that end in view, I will begin the next chapter with an overview of the peoples of the upper Skeena in the nineteenth century and then discuss the activities (and potential influences) of the Spanish, Russian, Americans, Canadians (French and English) and British. I argue that the Christianity that those colonists and traders brought with them at such an early date moved the peoples of the upper Fraser and Skeena watersheds to an interest in Christianity well in advance of the arrival of the first representatives of the continental fur trade.

Chapter 3

The Social Field and Inner Orbit: Fraser-Skeena Headwaters in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries

In June1833, Simon McGillivray set out from Fort St. James on what would prove to be a month long voyage to the headwaters of the Skeena River.[1] He was sent by Governor George Simpson to continue explorations in the region begun ten years earlier by trader William Brown.[2] The journeys of discovery undertaken by Brown and McGillivray on behalf of the company were meant to ascertain the viability of certain transportation routes from the interior to the sea and to sound the region's potential for trade. On McGillivray's trip he determined – if only to his own satisfaction – that the Skeena was navigable from its "forks" to the sea.[3] While McGillivray was gathering his intelligence at the forks, he visited briefly with the Witsuwit'en residents of Tse Kya and the Gitksan of Gitanmaax. McGillivray's journey from Fort St. James to the forks and back again, a total distance of about 400 kilometers, took him most of the month of June.

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[1] Simon McGillivray was the son of William McGillivray and nephew of Simon McGillivray. The latter was a shareholder in the McTavish, Fraser and Company, the well known firm that supplied the North West Company. Simon was born March 1st, 1791; his mother, Susan, has been described as either a plains Cree or a Métis. He first entered the service of the NWC and later, despite a violent confrontation with George Simpson at Lac La Pluie, worked for the HBC. Biographical detail was taken from Marjorie Wilkins Campbell, *Northwest to the Sea: A Biography of William McGillivray* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company Limited, 1975).

[2] George Simpson, *Part of Dispatch from George Simpson, Esqr., Governor of Ruperts Land, to the Governor & Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company, London, March 1, 1829: continued and completed March 24 and June 5, 1829*, ed. E.E. Rich (Toronto : Champlain Society, 1947), 241. In 1825 Brown was instructed to "prosecute the discoveries and extend the Trade in that quarter as also to the North and West thereof." He made one voyage to the forks in the late winter of 1826. While there he recorded that the people there had trading relationships that extended to the Russians and the coastal traders. On that journey he also noted that one Sekani chief had visited the Russian post at the mouth of the Stikine River. William Connolly also suggested that the forks be explored as a potential place to erect a settlement. In 1823, Samuel Black was ordered by Simpson to explore the upper reaches of the Finlay River.

[3] The forks: the place of confluence between the Skeena and the Bulkley River or perhaps, at this time, the confluence of the Babine and the Skeena. My sense is the former as that is where the party ended up.

The journal that McGillivray kept for his trip was typical of the genre; it contains comments on the terrain, notes on the region's trading potential, observations of the local inhabitants and concerns about the morale of his crew. While the journals are thin on ethnographic detail, what detail McGillivray did record remains instructive. At Tse Kya, for example, he was impressed by the architecture and noted what must have been some of the first written records of Witsuwit'en perceptions of Europeans:

> We had rain all day and every part of our things were perfectly wet – fortunately the natives lent us a house – I visited a very large one next to where we lodged. Most hideous large figures were carved in the Post, and on the sides a three masted vessel under full sail, with two tiers of canon – there were also two armed brigs. These vessels were well depicted – I measured a cedar plank of 28 inches breadth – there were several planks of this dimension, which covered the side of the house – The cedar is procured from the mountains near us.[4]

Here was McGillivray at a village whose inhabitants he wrote "might never have saw whites before," while at the same time standing in front of a massive house that depicted elaborate images of European ocean vessels. The irony of his claim is further amplified by two other things that happened to him on that day. First, McGillivray met a young Gitksan who "talked broken English, but not sufficiently enough to carry on a conversation."[5] Second, he was handed a note by another Gitskan, written a few months earlier in the hand of Peter Skene Ogden, then, trader at Fort Simpson located at the mouth of the Nass River: "Reports are in circulation that a party of whites are in quest of this place; if so, I shall be happy to see them."

Although McGillivray was at the forks for only a few days, he observed a house with elaborate carvings of European maritime culture, he met a local man who spoke

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[4] Fort St. James Post Journal, 19 June 1833, B.188/a/18, Winnipeg, MB: Hudson's Bay Company Archives (hereafter cited as HBCA).

[5] The Gitksan, he surmised, "had been taken a prisoner when a child, by Indians of the coast, who had come to war on the Atnahs in Babine River, and on serving his countrymen deserted to them." Ibid.

English, and he was handed a handwritten note composed a few months earlier by a colleague down river who had heard of him before he had even arrived. But those things were evidently not enough to shake his suspicions that the people had never seen whites before.

Yet, when McGillivray's views are juxtaposed against a history of scholarly imaginings of the Rocky Mountain West they do not seem so out of place. Consider, for example, those scholars treated in the previous chapter who questioned whether or not there was any contact or measurable awareness of Europeans prior to the establishment of overland trading posts or those who argued that prophet movements were kindled by deprivations stemming from eastern activity. McGillivray's anecdote reveals just the opposite. The people living in the interior knew a great deal about Europeans to the east and west before they had ever met them. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the peoples of the Northwest Plateau were likely more familiar with the Europeans to the west than those to the east. Scholars of the colonial Americas have often represented the colonial field as a field of western expansion, as defined by a movement from east to west.[6] The following two chapters are meant as exceptions to that trend.

McGillivray's anecdote is instructive in another way. It touches on the space, the personalities and the groups that I will amplify in this chapter; in other words, it surveys the geographic and social fields of the upper Fraser and Skeena watersheds at the close of the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Moreover, Indigenous peoples in that field took

[6] Cf. The historiography of the Turnerian tradition that represented civilization moving from east to west across a mostly empty frontier. While scholars rarely write within that tradition today, a recent text by the ethno-historian Daniel Richter preserves something of the logic of the east-west movement although the perspective is significantly reversed. See Daniel Richter, *Looking East from Indian Country: A Native History of early America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 2001). It is true that Richter is interested in early America but it is the preoccupation with the east suggested in the image that interests me.

an *interest* in and *anticipated* interaction with Europeans long before traders such as McGillivray and Brown stumbled out of the mountains. In the following chapter, I overview the geographical and social spaces of the nineteenth century upper Fraser and Skeena watersheds. I am particularly interested in the Indigenous peoples of that space prior to the advent of fur trade settlements. In subsequent chapters, I will discuss the activities (and potential influences) of the Spanish, Russian, Americans, Canadians (French and English) and British, paying particular attention to the role of religion and how it figured into relations with locals. I accomplish the tasks as staging for my argument that the nineteenth-century prophet religions were motivated by a long standing interest in Christianity that was piqued in the setting of the continental and maritime fur trades.

Inner Orbits within the Social Field: the Gitksan, Witsuwit'en, Babine, Dakelh, and Sekani of the upper Fraser-Skeena watershed

Both nouns in the descriptors "upper Skeena" and "[upper] Fraser" refer to the two longest rivers in the province of British Columbia. The adjective "upper" refers to the headwaters of those rivers. The Fraser River at more than 1,300 kilometers long is by far the longest river in the province of British Columbia. With headwaters at Mount Robson, the Fraser first flows northwest before slowly turning south, running about half the length of the Province and emptying into the Pacific at Vancouver. The upper Fraser region extends from about Prince George in the north (the confluence of the Fraser with the Nechako) south to the northern end of the Fraser Canyon (the confluence of the Fraser with the Chilcotin River). Major tributaries of the Fraser in that region include the Nechako and the West Road Rivers. Some of the larger and well known interior lakes are

also part of the upper Fraser watershed. Stuart Lake, Francois Lake, Fraser Lake, Ootsa Lake, and Cheslatta Lake, for example, are all drained by the Fraser. The Skeena is the second longest river in British Columbia. It is more than 550 kilometers long and drains an area of approximately 25,000 square kilometers and empties into the Pacific Ocean at Port Simpson. The upper Skeena River region extends from the Kitselas canyon, about one third the total length of the river upstream from its mouth, to its source near the base of Gunanoot Mountains. The major tributaries of the river, the Babine, Bulkley and Kispiox Rivers, run through the heartland of Gitksan, Witsuwit'en and Babine territories.[7]

The upper Fraser and upper Skeena do not correspond well to any conventional cultural arrangement. The Skeena falls within the Northwest Coast Culture Area and the Fraser, at least its upper reaches, is part of the Subarctic Culture Area. In the nineteenth century it was a commercial region in the fur trade, but even then northern sections were excluded. Now, the region corresponds roughly to the Bulkley-Nechako census region in the North Central Interior of British Columbia. I use the region as heuristic to delimit the boundaries of my analysis as I contend, which should be manifest in the course of the chapter, that in the nineteenth century, if not earlier, the region can be seen as a large social field. The peoples living within the region were all drawn together through ties of marriage and exchange, and more often than not relations among them were friendly. News that happened in one spot could quickly travel to another. The region was heavily reticulated with lakes and crisscrossed with numerous rivers, such that almost any village

[7] Other tributaries in the region on which the Witsuwit'en, Babine and Gitksan also had villages are Kitwancool, Kitseguecla and Sustut Rivers. R. Geddes Large, *The Skeena – River of Destiny* (Vancouver: Mitchell Press, 1957), 2-5.

could be reached by river with only the shortest of portages. The peoples in the region had similar religious notions and socio-spatial organizations. Of the people in the field, the Dakelh, Witsuwit'en, Babine, Sekani and Gitksan the former three the Witsuwit'en, Babine, and Dakelh, are the most central to the project. The prophets among those people are the most richly represented in the ethnographic record. Yet, as I stated at the outset of my analysis, because I take the region to be a social field reaching those narrow cultural boundaries it is hard to do an analysis of the region without considering their near neighbours.

The near neighbours occupied the outer orbits of the region: the Columbia Plateau, the Pacific Coast and the eastern fringes of the Rocky Mountains. The people of the upper Fraser and Skeena – the people of the inner orbits – had a long history of relations with their neighbours; it was through those relations that they were first put onto European activities. In the next chapter, I discuss the happenings on the outer orbits in more detail and I take it that much of what happened within those orbits was known to the peoples of the interior. Those orbits served as the first source of Christianity. When Dakelh, Babine and Witsuwit'en prophets emerged in the nineteenth century they spent much time travelling throughout the social field. While some voyaged beyond inner orbits as I configure them, the region was their home territory.

Another way of thinking of the two orbits in relation to each other is in terms of two social fields, one broad and the other narrow. The narrow social field corresponds to the inner orbits, that is, the upper Fraser and Skeena watershed, while the broad social field maps onto the outer orbits and extends to the regions of the Pacific Coast from Vancouver Island to the Aleutian Islands, the Columbia Plateau or that wide area to the

south drained by the Columbia River, and to the eastern fringes of the Rockies including the western plains and the headwaters of the Peace River. The peoples of the Fraser and Skeena had social relations and connections to peoples in all those places. While the inner space – its boundaries and its people – is the focus of my analysis, an appreciation of events on the outer orbits is significant to understanding the indigenization of Christianity within the inner orbit.

In the early nineteenth century, and for many years prior to that, the upper Skeena was home to the Gitksan, Witsuwit'en, Babine and some groups of western Sekani.[8] The Witsuwit'en and Babine are the names of local groups that also correspond to what anthropologists have termed socio-territories or sub-tribes of the Dakelh. The Babine were located at Babine Lake and Bear Lake (near the confluence of the Sustut River with the Skeena). The Witsuwit'en had settlements on the Bulkley River at Hagwilgate (Tse Kya) and Moricetown (Kya Wiget). The western Sekani, having some sociological features in common with their fellow Athabaskan speakers, were composed of three socio-territories: the Sasuchan, Yutuwichan and Tsekani. The Sekani also had a settlement at Bear Lake, north of Babine Lake, and at a few other places in the vicinity of McLeod Lake; both Bear Lake and McLeod Lake are technically part of the Arctic watershed as they drained into the Peace River.[9] Each socio-territorial group was united by a shared dialect, regional cooperation in fishing, hunting and resource management, some intermarriage and proximity of members. Within each grouping were scattered

[8] Large, *The Skeena*, 1.

[9] For the location of the Ts'mysen villages, see Margaret Seguin Anderson, "People of Salmon and Cedar: An Overview of the Northwest Coast," in *Native Peoples: The Canadian Experience, 2nd edition*, ed. R. Bruce Morrison and C. Roderick Wilson (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1995), 560. For the geographic location of the Witsuwit'en and Babine villages, see Large, *The Skeena*, 5.

distinct villages, which tended to be situated at the confluence of rivers or at the discharge of lakes. The Dakelh on the Fraser were also diffused according to socio-territorial groupings, and the pattern also corresponds to the regional bands of the vast Mackenzie drainage. Thus, the motif may be thought of as an Athabaskan socio-spatial organization. The Gitksan situation was somewhat different. The Gitksan were Ts'mysen speaking peoples and were linguistically and sociologically nearer to the orbits of the Pacific coast. Among the Gitksan, and the Ts'mysen more generally, each individual village was largely self-contained. As Margaret Seguin put it, each village "was held to be a world apart, distinct in history, custom and law."[10] Additionally, in James McDonald's ethnohistory of Kitsumkalum on the lower Skeena he says that the inhabitants refer to themselves as like other Ts'mysen but different.[11] While we know that laws, customs and social organization actually translated quite well across village boundaries, Seguin's point about the integrity of the village is well taken. An implication of which is that Gitskan settlements were more permanent and densely populated. The Gitksan had villages on the Skeena at Kitselas, Kitwanga, Kitsegukla, Hazelton, Kispiox and Kuldo, on the Kitwancool at Kitwancool and on the Babine at Kisgegas.

On the upper Fraser River there were Dakelh socio-territories or sub-tribes at Stuart Lake, Stuart-Trembleur Lake (north of Stuart Lake), Fort George, Nulki, Tachick,

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[10] Margaret Seguin, *Interpretive Contexts for Traditional and Current Coast Tsimshian Feasts* (Ottawa, ON: National Museums of Canada, 1985), 1.

[11] Kitsumkalum resident Alex Bolton articulates the subtle difference felt by Gitskan in relation to their Indigenous neighbours: "I don't want to say we're different but we are. We do work with other nations and when we sit down and talk, we can see the differences. We can feel a difference. It's hard to put that into proper words, you know, besides we're also part of the Tsimshian nation, the 14 tribes, but we have our own territory […] and we have our own resources down the river and coast." James Andrew McDonald, *People of the Robin: The Tsimshian of Kitsumkalum* (CCI Press and Alberta Acadre Network, 2003), 12.

Fraser Lake, Stellaquo, Kluskus, Ulkatcho, and Cheslatta.[12] The latter three groups, located along the West Road River and Anahim Lake, are usually distinguished from the others as lower Dakelh. The geographical separation from the others and nearness to the influence of the Chilcotin and Nuxalk are some reasons for that. In addition to the various Dakelh settlements in the Fraser watershed, the Sekani had settlements in the early nineteenth century at Tachy-Stuart Lake and at Fraser Lake.[13]

The foregoing survey of nineteenth century settlements, while accurate, is anthropologically unconventional. The field is usually described as home to three cultures: the Ts'mysen (the represented by the Gitksan), the Dakelh (including the Witsuwit'en and Babine) and the Sekani.[14] The three cultures are then slotted into two different culture areas, the Gitksan who are Ts'mysen speakers are placed in the Northwest Coast culture area, and the Dakelh and Sekani, Athabaskan speakers, are placed in the Subarctic culture area.

Given the prominence of the culture area concept in American anthropology it is not surprising that because the Gitksan and the Babine, Witsuwit'en, Dakelh and Sekani were said to occupy different geographical areas, the North Coast and the North Central Interior respectively, they were also taken in the ethnographic literature to represent two different societies. In North American anthropology, the Athabsakans are typified as Interior Athabaskans (Dene) and placed in the subarctic culture area (a culture area that extends all the way east to Labrador) and the latter are, as mentioned, representative of

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[12] I regret that time has not allowed me to input the Dakelh names for these territories.

[13] Daniel Williams Harmon, *Harmon's Journal 1800-1819*, ed. W. Kaye Lamb (Surrey BC: Touchwood, 2006), 135-148.

[14] The Dakelh have also been classified into three groups: the lower, middle and upper or lower and upper.

the Ts'mysen of the North West Coast Culture area.[15] According to the culture area heuristic, the peoples of the western sub arctic and the peoples of the northwest coast differ mainly in language and material culture. Otherwise, it seems that they shared many socio-cultural traits, were similar in social organization and religion, had similar economies and the same subsistence base, peoples from neighbouring areas often intermarried with each other and sometimes shared village sites. Despite the apparent heterogeneity, the culture area scheme persisted throughout the twentieth century. Interestingly, while the culture area scheme is often viewed as a heuristic it was at first conceived as a way of explaining cultural variation; that is, people were different because they lived in different ecologies. That logic is preserved today in cultural ecology.[16]

While the culture area concept reigned supreme in American anthropology, scholars have not always agreed with such a carving up of the land and peoples west of the Rockies. Many years ago, the ethnologist Horatio Hale remarked on the cultural matrix that he saw as existing in the coastal and interior region west of the Rockies; a matrix defined by similar social organization, religion and economics (note that Hale's remark applies to the entire province of British Columbia and not only the Northwest Coast):

> Not merely in their modes of speech (as distinct from their languages), but also in more important points, do the northern coast tribes show a certain resemblance, which, in spite of radical differences of language, and doubtless of origin, seems to weld them together into one community, possessing what may fairly be styled a

[15] Classifications were also made on the basis of linguistic criteria, but cultural ecology seems to have been the determining factor. For example, within the single culture area of the Northwest Coast there are six linguistic/ethnic divisions. See, Wilson Duff, *The Indian History of British Columbia* (Victoria: Royal British Columbia Museum, 1997), 20-23.

[16] Jason Redden, "The Culture Area Concept and the Study of Religious Change on the Northwest Coast" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Canadian Society for the Study of Religion, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, SK, May, 2007).

> civilization of their own, comparable on a small scale to that of the nations of Eastern Asia. Dr. Boas is the first investigator whose researches have extended over this whole region. [. . .] Two institutions which are, to a greater or less extent, common to all the coast tribes, and which seem particularly to characterize them and to distinguish them from other communities, may here be specially noted. Both appear to have originated in the Kwakiutl nation, and to have spread thence northward and southward. These institutions are the political secret societies and the custom of "potlatch." [. . .] [Moreover] Dr. Boas informs us there are in all the tribes three distinct ranks the chiefs, the middle class, and the common people or, as they might perhaps be more aptly styled, nobles, burgesses, and rabble.[17]

Hale was not the only person to view the region west of the Rockies as a large cultural zone, Lévi-Strauss, in a discussion of Northwest Coast myth and ritual referred to the region as a social or cultural "ecumene."[18] The American anthropologist and ethno-historian Sergei Kan also argued that similarities between coastal and interior peoples suggest a long history of relationships and possibly even common origins.[19]

The observations of Kan, Lévi-Strauss, Boas and Hale support my delimitation of the upper Fraser and Skeena watershed as single social field. The peoples of the upper Skeena and Fraser Rivers inhabited a shared geographical region that was collectively riverine, oceanic and lacustrine and thus also participated in shared social spaces. The given culture scheme that rips the social field apart exposes the limitations of the culture concept. The process of tearing apart the field has a long history; a history that was begun not by anthropologists or colonial governments, but by the fur traders of the mid-

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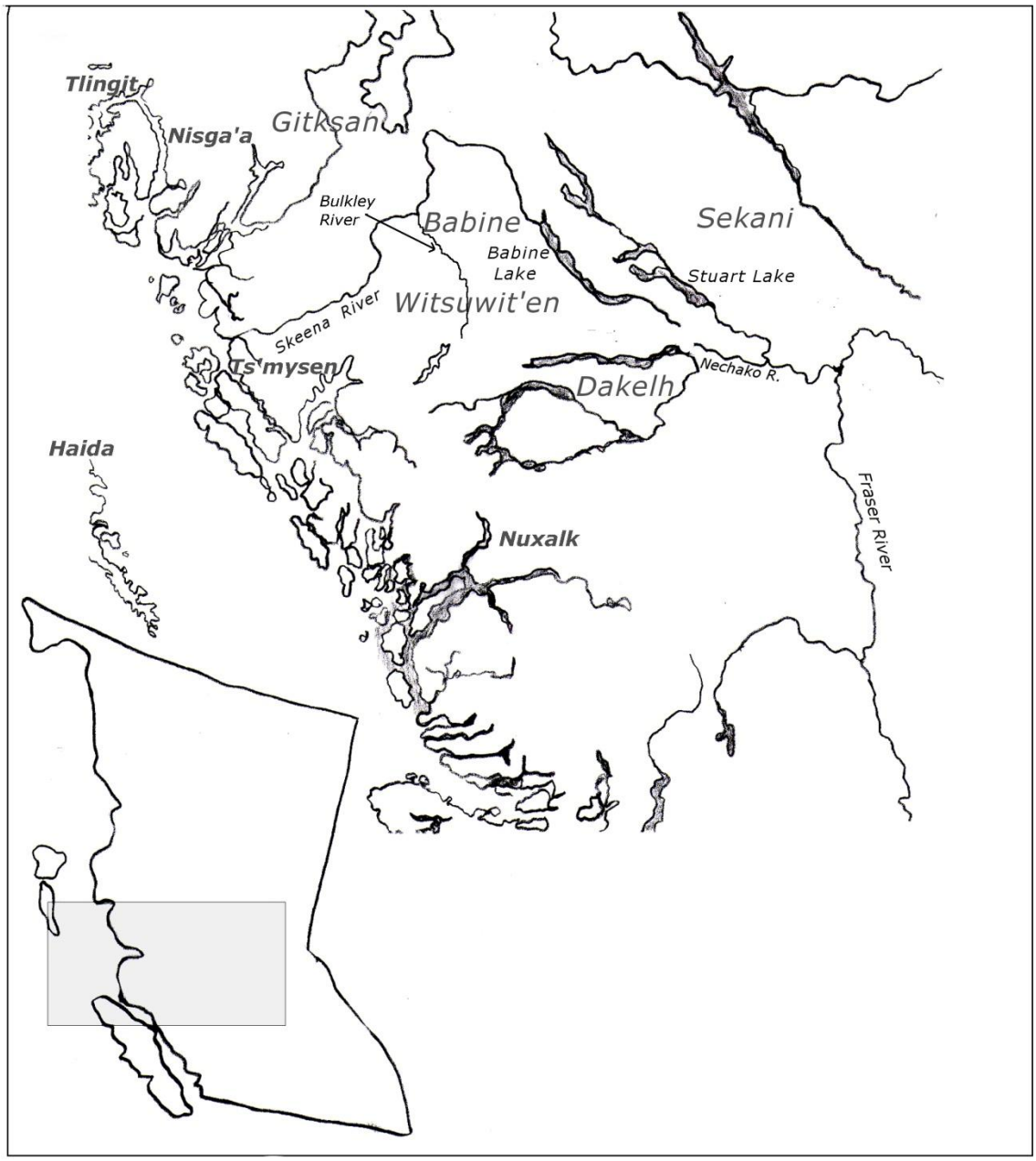
[17] Horatio Hale, "Remarks on the ethnology of British Columbia: Introductory to the Second General Report of Dr. Franz Boas on the Indians of that Province," in *Fifty-Ninth Report of the British Association for the Advancement of Science* (London: British Association for the Advancement of Science, 1890), 556.

[18] Lévi-Strauss suggested the region extended from Alaska to the Columbia River and included the interior Dene. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Way of the Masks*, trans. Sylvia Modelski (Washington: University of Washington Press, 1979), 129.

[19] See, Sergei Kan, *Symbolic Immortality: The Tlingit Potlatch of the Nineteenth Century* (Washington: Smithsonian Press, 1989).

nineteenth century. One of the things that the prophets, who will be introduced later, were trying to do was to keep the field stitched together.



Map 1. Inner Orbit: Fraser-Skeena Headwaters [map outline adapted from "British Columbia with Names," The Atlas of Canada (Natural Resources Canada, 2002)].

Ecology

The inhabited areas in the both watersheds fall within the sub-alpine forest biotic area and thus they have much in common with the flora and fauna of the boreal forest to the east. The region is considered a topographic plateau but it is by no means flat land, and compared to the Columbia Plateau to the south is very hilly and reticulated with numerous lakes. The elevation typically exceeds 4,000 feet and although proximate to the Pacific and the moderating influences of the Maritime currents, the elevation contributes to a climate of cold winters and cool summers. Traders stationed in the region often bemoaned in journals and correspondence the cold weather and early frosts as uncomfortable and ill suited for horticulture. However, the cold weather produced the single most important thing that company wanted: thick animal fur.

It was the region's potential in furs that first drew traders to the Fraser and Skeena headwaters in the early nineteenth century. When they entered the region, they had to adapt themselves to the eco-zone and to the local schemes of ecological management and ownership. One of the first things the traders noted is that the land and its resources were claimed by local groups; more specifically, clan nobility owned and managed resources in trust of its members. The land owned by the clan included not only interior territories, most frequently used for hunting, and the land on which houses were constructed but also salmon weirs and fishing stations. Salmon was one of the most important resources for peoples of the region. Morice once compared the place of salmon in the Dakelh diet to

the place of wheat in the European diet.[20] Salmon ascended both the Skeena and Fraser Rivers in considerable numbers, but the runs on the Skeena, namely the sockeye, were larger and more consistent. Salmon was eaten fresh but also sundried or smoked and thus preserved for winter use. Of course, salmon, fresh, dried or smoked, was note the only food eaten by peoples of the field; however, judging from the trading post journals it seems that the traders were more dependent on it than the locals in large part because of their more limited movement. In the nineteenth century sub alpine forest, caribou, elk, moose and bear were particularly numerous and were taken on clan territories throughout the winter. However, Caribou seemed to have vacated the region about the same time the fur trade was established. Muskrat, beaver and mountain goat were also present, the former in great quantities, and they were taken for their furs and for food. Other fur animals were present and hunted for their furs but not eaten, namely, marten, fishers, lynx, wolverines, foxes, wolves, coyotes, weasels and minx.[21] I do not know if the meat of those animals was traded to traders as food but it is certainly within the realm of possibility.

In addition to fish and meat, berries were also dried and preserved in cakes for consumption in the winter, moistened into berry cakes, and whipped into froth. Fruits and vegetables were more than a supplement to meat or fish; numerous edible roots were harvested, celery, parsnips, rhubarb, fireweed and a fern-like tuber similar to the North American sunchoke. Juice was also made from the cambium of the poplar and jack-

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[20] Morice: "Salmon is to the Carrier and Chilhcotin what seal is to the Esquimaux, rice to the Chinaman and wheat to the white man." Adrien G. Morice, "The Western Dénés - Their Manners and Customs," in *Proceedings of the Canadian Institute* XXV, no. 152 (Toronto: Copp Clark Limited, 1889), 128.

[21] Vernon Kobrinsky, "Ethnohistory and Ceremonial Representation of Carrier Social Structure" (PhD Diss., University of British Columbia, 1968), 36.

pine.[22] While a comprehensive list of food stuffs and ecological management is rote in this setting, I do want to highlight the importance of salmon in what was predominately a riverine and lacustrine environment that abutted a Pacific littoral, and that the peoples of the region practiced some degree of resource management, namely, in the form of food storage. The Dakelh elder, Betsy Leon, for example remembers that one of the most important female roles was the preparing of winter food caches.[23] The availability of resources and the willingness to prepare food for storage suggests that famine was quite rare in the upper Skeena.[24] None of the elders in *Nak'azdli Elders Speak* talk of famine. I have read only one instance of famine cannibalism: Louis B. Prince told his daughter Lizette Hall said he knew of only one case and that it happened when he was very young.[25]

Archaeology and Theories of Pre-History

According to the available archaeological evidence, the upper Fraser and Skeena have been continuously inhabited for thousands of years. Hagwilgate, on the upper Skeena River, for example, has been occupied for at least the last 4,000 years.[26] However, there is some question in the record on pre-history as to how long the current

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[22] Lizette Hall, *The Carrier: My People* (Cloverdale, BC: Friesen, 1992), 16.

[23] Betsy Leon, cited Lillian Sam, ed., *Nak'azdli Elders Speak = Nak'azdli t'enne Yahulduk* (Penticton, BC: Theytus Books, 2001), 38.

[24] Pace the eastern Cree who in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, had resources but often opted not to store large quantities. See Robert Brightman, *Grateful Prey: Rock Cree Animal-Human Relationships* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

[25] Hall, *The Carrier*, 10.

[26] Kenneth M. Ames, "Report of Excavations at GhSv 2, Hagwilgate Canyon," in *Skeena River Prehistory*, Archaeological Survey of Canada paper no. 87, ed. Richard Inglis and George MacDonald (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1979).

inhabitants, the Witsuwit'en, Dakelh and Sekani, in particular, have been resident in the region. For some time, the dominant anthropological opinion was that the Athabaskans only first came to the region in the proto-historic and early historic periods. The line of thought was largely informed by Julian Steward's cultural ecology, which for reasons owing to the fur trade and ecology figured the Athabaskans as recent migrants. Because Steward's theory has been instrumental to shaping theories of pre-history in the subarctic and in the discipline of Anthropology more generally I think it is useful to consider it in some detail here.

Steward and others thought that the Athabaskan speaking peoples migrated west from the Mackenzie drainage into the Fraser and Skeena watersheds.[27] Once settled in the Northwest Plateau, the Athabaskans picked up salmon fishing from the Ts'mysen neighbours along with other elements of social organization. Hence in the historical period scholars suggest that the Athabaskans were proceeding toward adopting Ts'mysen patterns. The point was made by Julian Steward in his theory of multi-linear evolution. The theory, heavily reliant on Steward's cultural ecology, was that the Dakelh evolved, in a very short time (about 200 years he guessed), from a primitive "patrlineal band" to a "stratified society" and, then, to a "contact-transitional" society. According to Steward, prior to the eighteenth century the Dakelh were living in primitive bands as simple hunters and fishers without any social stratification. Once the bands started hunting large caribou herds (a task that required the cooperative effort of many people to track and hunt

[27] Steward's cultural ecology and "multilinear evolution" is powerfully explicated in Julian Steward, *Theory of Culture Change: The Methodology of Multilinear Evolution* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1955). Jenness and Morice were both of the view that the Dakelh and Witsuwit'en were recent arrivals to the region. Vernon Kobrinsky's ecologically informed theory also posits that Athabaskans were recent arrivals to the Fraser-Skeena headwaters. See Vernon Kobrinsky, "The Tsimshianization of the Carrier Indians," *Prehistory of the North American Sub-Arctic: The Athabaskan Question*, Proceedings of the Ninth Annual Conference (Calgary: University of Calgary Department of Anthropology, 1977).

the animals) they eventually became composite, larger and more integrated. The stage was short lived because their hunting patterns changed and increased population pressures on their eastern orbits forced them further and further west. However, their western progression was eventually halted by the Gitksan. Thus, the Dakelh settled and organized in a fashion similar to the Gitksan (i.e. the northwest coast pattern) in a way that allowed them to efficiently exploit the new found salmon wealth. Efficient exploitation necessitated social stratification, which resulted in yet further modification of the culture core. When the fur trade came to the region, the wealthy nobility funnelled the new wealth along existing channels that affirmed and strengthened their own statuses and wealth. However, the apex of Dakelh stratification, which allowed the nobles to amass a lot of wealth over a short period of time, leaving them wealthier than they had ever been, was short lived. When missionaries and settlers followed the fur traders, the Dakelh were encouraged to adopt a more permanent residential pattern and to privatise their economic interests. Subsequently, they entered the contact-transitional phase and were fully on their way to complete integration into the Canadian nation, a yet further evolved stage.[28]

I cite Steward's work to register my suspicions of the claim that the Dakelh were recent migrants. Steward's cultural ecology, which explains cultural change in ecological terms, is exemplary of just the kind of work that I am trying to avoid here. There are many problems with it. First, in any contact situation for which there is no documentation it is always difficult to determine the direction of influence. Did the Gitskan meet the Witsuwit'en or the Witsuwit'en the Gitksan? Second, Witsuwit'en oral history suggests

[28] On Steward's theory applied to Dakelh as just summarized here, see Julian Steward, "Carrier Acculturation – The Direct Historical Approach," in *Culture in History: Essays in Honor of Paul Radin*, ed. Stanley Diamond (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960).

that they were resident in the region for some time.[29] Third, as mentioned, archaeological evidence from the Bulkley River, namely, artifacts indicative of intensive habitation and continuous occupation, have been carbon dated to 4,000 years ago.[30] Such an early date should not be surprising. Despite Jenness' claim, based only on his impressions that flew in the face of all local theories, that the Bulkley River had not been inhabited for very long, even the most conservative of estimates suggest the Americas were inhabited 12,000 years ago. Fourth, recent scholarship has challenged that line of thinking and places the Athabaskans at their current location for a very long time. Their ancestors, as proto-Athabaskans, may well have lived in the region since the emergence of the ice free corridor.[31] Fifth, the suggestion that the Dakelh are cultural hybrids, a mix of two cultures in the melting pot of the upper Skeena, makes sense only if we admit of cultural cores or cultural centres. My use of the social field is meant to de-stabilize just such notions of core or centre. Sixth, the issue of migration is a red herring for my study that picks up the trail of change in the late eighteenth century. When Mackenzie crossed the region en route to the sea the Dakelh and Sekani were already distributed throughout the area in socio-territories and the Gitskan are established in their villages. Moreover, given the archaeological and oral evidence, there is every reason to think the Dakelh were living in the region for many years prior to contact and that the relations they established with their neighbours, while not without their tensions, were deep seated.

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[29] See Antonia Mills, *Eagle Down is Our Law: Witsuwit'en Law, Feasts and Land Claims* (Vancouver, UBC Press, 1994). 76-87.

[30] Mills suggests that the material from the Bulkley River has been radio carbon dated to 4,800 years ago. Yet, her specific source for this date is not overly clear to me. Mills, *Eagle Down*, 88.

[31] John Ives' linguistic research indicates that the Athabaskans have been living at their current locations for a very long time. See John Ives, *A Theory of Northern Athapaskan Prehistory* (Boulder: Westview, 1990).

Social Organization

The description of social organization was characteristic of basic, or at least recognizable, patterns in the social field, and is dependent on information drawn from the Witsuwit'en and Babine settings. The focus is useful because the peoples of each location have their feet, so to speak, in both the upper Fraser and Skeena Rivers.

As mentioned, the peoples of the upper Fraser and Skeena Rivers lived in permanent villages. Villages were typically located at the confluence of rivers and permanently inhabited in summer from about May to October. Within each village were a number of multi-family residences; each house was occupied by a group of brothers, their wives and children. In winter they vacated their waterfront properties to move to winter residences situated offshore from the lakes and rivers. While families tended to remain together throughout the year, the winter villages were smaller, composed of fewer families and more widely dispersed.[32] Each village was further divided into a number of clans (phratries, fraternities, gentes, or sibs), which were further divided into a number of houses (crests or clans). [33] The clan is a matrilineal descent group whose members claim descent from a common, although unspecified, ancestor.[34] Within each clan there existed a number of matrilineages. Each matrilineage was referred to as a *house* and was

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[32] Adrien Morice, "The Western Dénés - Their Manners and Customs," *Proceedings of the Canadian Institute* XXV no. 152 (Toronto: Copp Clark Limited, 1889).

[33] Jenness refers to the village as the subtribe. See, Diamond Jenness, "The Carrier Indians of the Bulkley River – Their Social and Religious Lives," *Anthropological Paper no. 25, Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 133* (Washington: Smithsonian, 1943), 482. As the various descriptive terms in parentheses suggest, there has been much ethnological debate on how best to describe these internal segementations. One of the simplest and more recent heuristics is that of clan and house employed by Antonia Mills. See, Antonia Mills, *Eagle Down*.

[34] Mills, *Eagle Down*, 102.

composed of one's closest relatives on one's mother's side.[35] The houses were occupied, as mentioned, by a group of men closely related on their mother's side approximating sibling groupings which tended towards matrilineal descent and patrilocal residency.[36] In any case, it was the clan and house that served as the most frequent markers of identity.

Every clan and lineage claimed the exclusive ownership of a number of titles and associated crests which carried a more or less definitive ranking.[37] The titles were held by a class of nobles, the holder of the highest ranked title within a house served as house or lineage chief; the highest ranking lineage chief served as clan chief. The chiefs and title holders owned the land; Morice observed that the land is "by right, held in proprietorship by the titular only; but only by a sort of tacit concession, other heads of families as the same clan of the legitimate proprietor share the usufruct thereof during his good pleasure."[38] While title holders owned the land and controlled access to it they had little recourse to coercive power; their powers were more persuasive than obligatory; wealth, generosity and liberality were the respected qualities of authority.[39] Chiefs were community oriented people responsible for managing the fishing and hunting resources in trust of the clan.[40] Rights to land were recorded in oral history, yet, the various histories were not always in agreement, which could and indeed has resulted in competing land

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[35] Mills, *Eagle Down*, 107.

[36] This feature offers yet further evidence that the peoples of the upper Skeena were closely related. The lower Dakelh component groups, in contrast, tended to be non localized and reckoned descent bilaterally; a motif that found among many peoples of the Columbia Plateau.

[37] Jenness, "The Carrier," 489.

[38] Adrien Morice, "The Western Denes," 125.

[39] Morice, "The Western Denes," 143.

[40] Jo-Anne Fiske and Betty Patrick, *Cis Dideen Kat (When Plumes Rise): The Way of Life of the Lake Babine Nation* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000), 42.

claims. The potlatch or the feast was one mechanism for the resolution of competing claims.[41]

Crests or emblems were frequently associated with the various titles and were thus perspicuous indicators of rank. These crests were carved on clan "totem" poles, painted or carved on the grave boxes of chiefs, represented on ceremonial clothing, on everyday blankets and tattooed on the body.[42] In addition to crests associated with social status, each individual had his or her own personal crest. Personal crests were announced and displayed in ceremony, typically at a potlatch or winter ceremonial; however, personal crests were not ranked. They might, however, be indicative of membership in one of a number of secret societies, as remarked upon by Hale.

Not every participant in the scheme just described possessed a title. There were two other classes of non-title holding individuals almost also termed "commoners" and "slaves." Commoners claimed clan and house membership and had access to the resources of their clan as it was managed by the chief but they did not possess titles. Throughout the Northwest it seems that wherever a class of nobles and commoners is observed one can anticipate a class of slaves, and the peoples of the upper Fraser and Skeena were no exception to that trend. Slaves were typically foreigners or marginalized individuals with no formal clan or house membership; quite often slaves were taken as captives of war or acquired through trade.

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[41] For example, the Nisga'a and Gitksan have long held competing claims for land in the Nass watershed. Both peoples have recently challenged the Federal government in court on the matter of land claims.

[42] Jenness, "The Carrier," 495.

Population

Government censuses of the region were not made until Indian agents were appointed in the 1880s and 1890s.[43] Prior to that, the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) occasionally requested its clerks to record the number of natives living around its various forts. Before the arrival of the HBC even less is known of Indigenous populations. For the period covered by this dissertation, the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, population counts are nothing other than raw estimates so it is difficult to gauge just how accurate they might have been. In aboriginal times, by that I mean the eighteenth century and earlier, the entire native population of British Columbia probably exceeded 80,000. James Mooney estimated that there were 86,000 people in British Columbia prior to contact and of those 8,500 were Dakelh.[44] The Oblate Adrien Morice's estimate was much lower; he gave a number of 3,200 Dakelh in the decades leading up to contact. [45] In the early nineteenth century, Daniel Harmon estimated the Dakelh population at 1,443. William Connolly, in 1829, estimated the population of Kya Wiget at 100; Joseph McGillivray in 1827 estimated the population of the lower Dakelh at 502.[46] In 1835, the Ts'mysen population was estimated at 8,500, of which 2,600 were Gitksan.[47] In the 1880s, Morice estimated the total Dakelh population at 1,600. In 1883, HBC officers

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[43] Wilson Duff, *The Indian History of British Columbia*. (Victoria: Royal British Columbia Museum, 1997), 201 and 242.

[44] Tobey, "Carrier", 415.

[45] Morice, "The Western Dénés," 110-111.

[46] See Simpson, *Part of Dispatch from George Simpson*.

[47] Marjorie M. Halpin and Margaret Seguin, "Tsimshian Peoples: Southern Tsimshian, Coast Tsimshian, Nishga, and Gitksan," in *Northwest Coast, vol. 7, Handbook of North American Indians*, ed. Wayne Suttles (Washington, DC: Smithsonian, 1978), 282.

estimated a population of 1,724 Dakelh. In 1885, the Ts'mysen population was estimated at 4,500.[48] Current population estimates for the entire province of British Columbia in the mid-eighteenth century are higher than those given by Mooney and range from 80,000 to 500,000.[49] Anthropologists accept numbers between 200,000 and 300,000, and speculate that population density was much higher on the coast than it was in the interior. [50]

Although recent estimates are already quite high compared to other regions in Canada, there is some reason to think they might have been higher even in the interior. First, fur traders never visited and counted all the peoples of the region claimed by their estimations. Harmon attempted a thoughtful, but not statistically reliable, method of having every person who came to the fort count one stick for every member of their family and/or village. Second, Morice's projections strike me as a back projection of the earlier fur trader estimates because other than those estimates I do not know on what he is basing his information. Third, Antonia Mills, citing Peter Skene Ogden's observation made on a visit to the Dakelh village of Kya Wiget (Moricetown), suggests that some villages were much larger and densely populated than traders had estimated. When Ogden visited Kya Wiget in the early 1820s, he counted 28 houses of "large size, each affording accommodation, on an average to 6 or 7 families." If each family was composed of six people, the population of this one village must have been at least

[48] Ibid., 282.

[49] John Douglas Belshaw, *Becoming British Columbia: A Population History* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009), 24.

[50] The reason for the variation, according to Belshaw: "Societies on the Northwest Coast were exceptionally well endowed by Nature. An abundant food base dominated by salmon, herring, oolichan, shellfish, and sea mammals produced communities of relatively high densities and complexity." Belshaw, *Becoming British Columbia*, 23.

1,000.[51] Even if we assume that that the population was most densely concentrated among the Witsuwit'en, the estimate of 1,000 for one of the two principal Witsuwit'en villages, with no mention of the thirteen other component groups suggests higher numbers than those estimated by Harmon or Mooney. If population density was comparable for all the major villages on the upper Skeena, it is possible that the population of the upper Fraser and Skeena was in excesses of 10,000 people for the Witsuwit'en, Dakelh and Babine alone (not to mention the Sekani and Gitksan). While I admit that this is a generous estimate and out of synchronization with most authorities, it suggests the possibility that population figures were higher than what has been written. The matter is not without implications, for if population counts were higher than deaths due to the introduction of firearms, alcohol, and disease, namely, small pox and also the number of cases of "intermarriage" may have been much higher that what is normally thought.[52] Such a scenario would also be suggestive of close and frequent contacts with neighbours.

If the population figures were in the higher estimates, that would approach or exceed the current rural population of the region today. According to the 2006 census, the Bulkley-Nechako census region, which corresponds roughly to the region considered

[51] Peter Skene Ogden, *Traits of American-Indian life and character* (London: Smith, Elder and Company, 1853), 43-44. Ogden alleges his visit to Hotset took place in 1822 or 1823 but that date is unlikely. In 1822, he left the Columbia District to travel to London to petition that he be hired on by the Hudson's Bay Company after its merger with Northwest Company. He may have made the visit en route, but that too is unlikely as the village was not on the brigade trail on which Ogden would have travelled. It is possible that Ogden meant to set his story in the 1830s when he was stationed in New Caledonia, or it is possible that Ogden is repeating what another clerk told him of his visit at the time. Lastly, it is possible he fabricated the entire scene but I have never read his numbers directly challenged.

[52] Wilson Duff, for example, suggested that the Indigenous population of British Columbia was reduced by 50 per cent between the years 1806 and 1885. Duff, *Indian History*, 57.

here, claimed a population of 38,243. More than half of whom were concentrated in seven major town centres.

Religion

I will discuss the religion of the peoples in the upper Skeena and Fraser Rivers in more detail in subsequent chapters, namely in chapters 7 and 8, when I discuss the indigenization of Christianity. My treatment here is intentionally brief and meant to set the stage of the analysis by beginning to qualify the social lives of the people living in the region and to adumbrate a few things that emerge in subsequent analysis. With that aim in mind, I want to introduce four religious motifs that, each in their own way, are unique to the peoples of the region: potlatch, secret society, myth, and guardian spirit complex.

For some time in the discipline of religion, and I suspect this may still be the popular conception, it was common to speak of religion as a personal experience dominated by a set of personal beliefs in spiritual or otherworldly attractions. Nowadays, for a variety of reasons that are not directly relevant here, it is more common to read colloquial definitions employed within the field that more resemble Melford Spiro's classic definition, "an institution consisting of culturally patterned interaction with culturally postulated superhuman beings."[53] I like this definition, but it is limiting in the sense that I see it preserving a notion of religion as irrational, a notion of which I was highly critical in chapter 2 (i.e. it suggests that a desire to relate with supernatural entities

[53] Melford E. Spiro, "Religion: Problems of Definition and Explanation" in *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, ed. M. Banton (London, England: Tavistock Publications, 1971), 96. For the centrality of a configuration of the supernatural in current definitions see Craig Martin. "Delimiting Religion," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 21 (2009): 157-176. For an effort to detach the study of religion from theology see, Russell McCutcheon, *Manufacturing Religion: The Discourse on Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia* (New York: Oxford, 2003).

lies at the heart of religion). Moreover, an emphasis on the supernatural is further problematic as it risks the importation of certain religious ideas, our religious ideas, in other systems where they have no home. The analytical concept of supernatural, for example, would not be particularly helpful in explicating Indigenous conceptual schemes that do not recognize an ontological dualism between nature and society.

In contrast to Spier's definition, the work of Bruce Lincoln, James C. Scott, Joseph Jorgensen and Greg Johnson illustrating that religious practice and discourse – regardless of one's attitude toward the supernatural – are deeply embedded in social life and are deployed to advance agendas that have little to nothing to do with the supernatural (at least in so far as it is conceived in terms of putative relations with deities, spirits etc.).[54] Of those scholars, I have found Lincoln's polythetic definition of religion helpful. According to Lincoln, religion encompasses at least four domains: discourse, practice, institution, and community.[55] A religious discourse is religious for its form as much as for its content. A religious discourse transcends the temporal and claims for itself a transcendent status. Religious practices aspire to the creation of a properly ordered world as defined by religious discourse. A religious community encompasses those individuals who define themselves in accordance with religious discourse and practices. An institution regulates discourse, practices and community membership, modifying its discourse as necessary but never relinquishing its claim to eternal validity. These domains are found not only in what are considered the major world religious systems but are an attribute of many social communities; they are particularly appealing because their

[54] The position could be radicalized by following a line in cognitive psychology that suggests supernatural thinking is natural to human cognition, and therefore rational.

[55] Lincoln, *Holy Terrors*, 7.

form is useful in giving a firm grounding to a peoples values, ethics and aesthetics. It is because those things are religious that they really matter or are really meaningful.[56]

The description that follows provides a glimpse into each of those domains with reference to four motifs that are germane to the social field: the potlatch, secret societies, myth and the guardian spirit complex.

The potlatch is one of the most described and theorized of all the recorded Indigenous ceremonies in North America if not the entire colonial world.[57] In light of the amount of scholarly labour that has been devoted to the potlatch, I pretend to do nothing more here than give a brief overview of some of its descriptive features on which many sources are in agreement. The term "Potlatch" is from the Chinook language, and translates as "to give" or "to feed" or "to consume." More specifically, the potlatch has been termed the "feast" by the Witsuwit'en, the "Balhats" by the Babine and the "Yukw" by the Gitksan.[58] The ceremony was, and still is, characterized by gift giving, feasting and ceremonial pageantry. In structure the potlatch was the definitive politico-legal system of the peoples of the region; it was the means by which "the social order was maintained and expressed, inheritance and succession were validated, and conflict was expressed and managed."[59] The religious elements of the potlatch are evident in the invocation of the ancestors and the ceremonial recitation or performance of oral history

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[56] Lincoln, *Holy Terrors*, 5-8.

[57] The Trobriand "kula" and subarctic shamanism would be close seconds to the potlatch. It is interesting that both the "kula" and "potlatch" are exchange ceremonies, or ceremonies of "the gift."

[58] more specifically still the Witsuwit'en term "feast" translates "people coming together," Mills, *Eagle Down*, 43; Fiske, *Cis Dideen Kat*, 4; Neil J. Sterritt, Susan Marsden, Robert Galois, Peter R. Grant and Richard Overstall, *Tribal Boundaries in the Nass Watershed* (UBC Press: Vancouver, 1998), 11.

[59] Halpin and Seguin, "Tsimshian Peoples," 278.

that established a sacrosanct setting for the transactions which occurred therein. The potlatch was also a life-cycle rite. Marriages and funerals, for example, were all accomplished with the potlatch.[60] Because the potlatch was implicated in so many facets of social life Marcel Mauss took it as exemplary of his "total social phenomenon," a practice in which "all kinds of institutions are given expression at one and the same time – religious, juridical, and moral, which relate to both politics and the family; likewise economic ones, which suppose special forms of production and consumption, or rather, of performing total services and of distribution."[61]

Potlatches also inducted an individual or individuals into a secret society. Secret societies have been well documented on the Northwest Coast, for example, they were the object of much elaboration by the Kwakiutl.[62] Where these societies were manifest it was typical for every individual of rank to belong to at least one society. Among the Tsmshian, for example, there were four secret societies, each led by a "great dancer" who was often also a chief.[63] Diamond Jenness recorded evidence of three such societies among the Witsuwit'en: the Kalullim, the Kyanyuantan and Komitt'la.[64]

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[60] On rituals associated with the human life cycle, see, Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*.

[61] Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. W.D. Halls (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000), 3.

[62] See, Franz Boas, *Kwakiutl Ethnography*, ed., Helen Codere (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966).

[63] Halpin and Seguin, "Tsimshian Peoples," 279.

[64] Jenness, "The Carrier," 580. Of the three societies listed by Jenness, Antonia Mills has recently observed that the Kaluhim, in particular, is still active. See Mills, *Eagle* Down, 173-6. The description of secret societies is very short here; I draw attention to them as a shared regional motif upon which most scholars agree. For more information on secret societies I might begin with the well known *hamatsa*, or "cannibal" society. See Jim McDowell, *Hamatsa: the Enigma of Cannibalism on the Pacific Northwest Coast* (Vancouver: Ronsdale, 1997); and Stanley Walens, *Feasting with Cannibals: an Essay on Kwakiutl Cosmology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).

One of the more perspicuous qualities of myth among the Indigenous peoples not only of the upper Fraser and Skeena but of the Americas is its sophisticated elaboration of animal-human relationships. Lévi-Strauss observed that all Indigenous American myth can be described as "the story of the time before men and animals became distinct beings."[65] The Dakelh elder, Sarah Prince, exemplifies Lévi-Strauss' observation, when she states that "Long ago, animals used to be people."[66] Myth speaks of a time before the tragic break between culture and nature; a break that is never a clean break. Save the Judeo-Christian effort to conceal the rupture, in many Indigenous American societies' humans and animals are seldom thought to occupy distinct ontological realms. Although animals may no longer be people and they may differ in corporeal form, they have retained attributes of human sociality. Both animals and humans are animated by the same order of vitality and thus humans continue a special social relationship with animals. One of Jenness' Bulkley River (upper Dakelh) informants attests to the special relationship humans have with animals: "We know what the animals do, what are the needs of the beaver, the bear, the salmon, and other creatures, because long ago men married them and acquired this knowledge from their animal wives"[67] Similarly, as humans know the needs of the animals, the animals are possessed with a sort of omniscience over human affairs. Jenness writes, "Every word that was spoken, every act that took place in a village or camp, the animals knew."[68]

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[65] Claude Lévi-Strauss and Didier Eribon. *Conversations with Claude Lévi-Strauss* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 139.

[66] Sarah Prince cited in Sam, *Nak'azdli Elders Speak*, 16.

[67] Jenness, "The Carrier," 540.

[68] Ibid., 540.

The special relationship that human beings had with animals was further elaborated in the guardian spirit complex. The capacity for animal-human communication as reflected in the guardian spirit complex was said to be a unique gift of the peoples Indigenous to the social field. Jenness, reports that the Witsuwit'en believed they possessed "a special gift lacking in white men, the gift of communing with the animal world in dreams, when his shadow wandered abroad and associated with the shadows of animals."[69] The wandering shadow is a euphemism for what we would call dreaming. The dream was particularly conducive to fostering a positive atmosphere for animal-human communication. Frequent dreams that established an intimate relationship between the dreamer and the animal dreamed afforded for the dreamer the possession of medicine-power. Within some Dakelh communities, particularly eastern communities, every youth was encouraged to seek a guardian spirit through dreams in a manner consistent with the guardian spirit complex noted among other peoples in the neighbouring regions, particularly on the Plains. The complex will be discussed more detail in later chapters where it is more appropriate to my analysis of the prophet movements. However, among the Ts'mysen and Witsuwit'en, not every youth was successful in obtaining a guardian spirit. Those few who were successful became medicine people with the unique abilities of healing and clairvoyance. Among the Dakelh and Sekani, any individual regardless of his or her rank or sex had access to guardian spirit power.[70] In any case, regardless of the many nuances of the guardian spirit complex there is reason to think that all peoples of the Fraser-Skeena watershed were equipped

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[69] Ibid., 541.

[70] Wayne Suttles, "Introduction," in *Northwest Coast, vol. 7, Handbook of North American Indians*, ed. Wayne Suttles (Washington: Smithsonian, 1978), 4.

with the ability to dream and to communicate with the animals and thus were also possessed of some degree of healing power and clairvoyance. Indeed, the distinction in the powers of a medicine person and any other individual may well have been one of degree. Even Jenness' work among the Witsuwit'en, who allegedly had a notion of restricted access to guardian spirit power, suggests as much. Jenness observes that, "the lay Indians did not cease to dream, or to believe that his dream opened up contact with the spiritual world and thereby brought him substantial benefits; for even the layman's dreams gave him power to accomplish whatever they signified."[71] Moreover, because the aptitude was integral to social and economic life, essentially to survival, it is reasonable to think that all peoples had the ability to communicate with extra-human vitalities, because being without such a capacity would leave an individual in a precarious position.

The vitality that animated all life had durability akin to the Hindu *atman* or the Buddhist *skandhas* that allowed it to be reincarnated after the death of the corporeal body. Although the notion of reincarnation has neither been richly reported nor analysed in the early ethnographical or historical records, it is there and has been the topic of scholarly inquiry.[72] Among the Gitksan, the general understanding seems to be that individuals were reincarnated within their own lineage and usually as their own grandchildren.[73] Margaret Anderson suggests that among the Ts'mysen the potlatch is necessary "to make it possible for lineage members to be reincarnated properly."[74]

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[71] Jenness, "The Carrier," 546.

[72] See Antonia Mills and Richard Slobodin, eds. *Amerindian Rebirth: Reincarnation Belief among North American Indians and Inuit* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994).

[73] Halpin and Seguin, "Tsimshian Peoples," 279.

[74] Ibid., 279.

Among the Witsuwit'en, Antonia Mills reports that that Bini, one of the nineteenth-century religious leaders I will discuss later, is considered by some to be reincarnated as Chief Wigetemskol.[75] In any case, the point I want to highlight is that the religious motifs just outlined were shared among the peoples of the upper Fraser and Skeena watersheds and were part of a general religious complex typical of the inner orbits and also the larger social field. The peoples of the inner orbits had common religious notions, social organization and occupied similar and adjacent geographical paces. My description is meant to suggest a measure of homogeneity within the social field, which lends support to my justification for grouping it as such.

Relations with Neighbours

The social field as I have sketched it is to some extent arbitrary. Moving the compass in any direction would offer up a new analytical field and alter the participants and the dynamics. The field was not self-contained and it was because its borders were permeable that the people living there knew of what was happening on the Pacific, the Columbia Plateau the Aleutian Islands, the Western Plains and the subarctic boreal forest. That knowledge came through direct contact, as exemplified by the young Gitksan encountered by McGillivray mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, but also through conversations with neighbours at the outer orbits who occupied the broader social field.

All Gitksan peoples had close relations with the Haida, Tlingit and Tsetsaut. The Haida occupied the Queen Charlottes, the Tlingit occupied the coastal region to the north

[75] Mills, *Eagle Down*, 176.

and the Tsetsaut lived in the northern interior.[76] The closeness is reflected in the fact that all shared similar clans, crests (marriage between foreign friends – clan members – was proscribed) and kinship terms.[77] The Gitksan kept up close relations with the peoples of the Nass and Stikine, the Nisga'a in particular, by travelling back and forth across one of the most used grease trails west of the Rockies that connected the Gitksan and the Nisga'a settlements. There is some indication that the Witsuwit'en prophet Bini, travelled to the Nass by that trail.[78] The grease trails, so named for the eulachon oil, a primary item of trade that flowed along those trails from coast to interior, were veritable local highways.

The Tlingit, as we will see in more detail in the next chapter, drew on their close relationships with southern neighbours to staff and help finance a long running military campaign launched against the Russians at Sitka in the early years of the nineteenth century. Among the Ts'mysen neighbours to the south were the Heiltsuk and Haisla. While the current scholarship would seem to indicate that the material trade was not as strong with those peoples of the south. Oral histories suggest that social relations were frequent and that there was some trade. Dancing societies, for example, were said to have been received from the Heiltsuk and Haisla.[79]

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[76] The Haida and Tlingit remain discrete First Nations today, the Tsetsaut affiliated with the Nisga'a in the late nineteenth century.

[77] Halpin and Seguin, "Tsimshian Peoples," 280.

[78] Semedeek and Alfred Sinclair in Barbeau Files, B-F-322.2, Victoria B.C.: British Columbia Archives (hereafter BCA); Mark Wiget in Barbeau Files, B-F-322.15, BCA.

[79] John Swanton, "Haida Texts and Myths" *Bulletin no. 29, Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology* (Smithsonian: Washington, 1905), 156-160.

In the upper Skeena, the Gitksan, Witsuwit'en and Babine were particularly close. They were also connected by well worn trails, some of them grease trails and others local roads, and shared the same geographic space at the confluence of the Bulkley and Skeena Rivers and on the tributaries of the upper Skeena. The Witsuwit'en used routes that connected the Bulkley River valley to the Skeena, Nass and Stikine Rivers to the north, to the Peace River to the east, to Hartley Bay, Port Essington and Kemano in the south, and to other Dakelh settlements in the Fraser watershed.[80]

On the Fraser, the Dakelh had socio-economic ties to the Nuxalk and the Northern Kwakwaka'wakw to the west and to the Chilcotin in the south.[81] Grease trails also connected Dakelh lands to the sea. One road led form the Fraser to the West Road River to the Bella Coola Valley, another led from the Bella Coola Valley overland to the Bulkley River. On those routes the coastal Nuxalk traded marine goods, such as eulachon oil, and perhaps also whale material procured from the Nuu-chah-nulth of Vancouver Island, with the Dakelh who brought with them to trade inland trout, furs, obsidian, hides and berries. Alexander Mackenzie travelled by way of the West Road River to the sea and the same trail was later followed by CPR surveyors when exploring potential routes for the transcontinental railway.[82]

While I have been referring to the upper Skeena and upper Fraser or Fraser-Skeena watershed, as a "cultural region" or "social field," that does not meant the people

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[80] George MacDonald, "The Epic of Nekt," in *The Tsimshian: Images of the Past; Views for the Present*, ed. Margaret Seguin (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1984), 75.

[81] Irving Goldman, "The Alkatcho Carrier: Historical Background of Crest Prerogatives," *American Anthropologist*, 43, no.3 (1941): 416; Mills, "Eagle Down," 39.

[82] Andy Motherwall, "Grease Trail Evidence Disappearing," *Quesnel Cariboo Observer*, February 4, 2010.

living there were part of a single homogeneous group. Focusing on the Witsuwit'en, Babine, and Gitksan as exemplary, each of those groups occupied and laid claim to a specific territory, claims that were mostly acknowledged by their neighbours. There were cases of trespass punishment and retribution. Sometimes those things were worked out in a potlatch and other times were resolved through open warfare.[83] Each group also possessed its own oral history, social genealogy, style of crest representation, and mythology. Taking oral history for example, the Gitksan referred to their traditions as *Adaawk*. The Gitksan scholar Neil Sterritt defines the *Adaawk*: "The Adaawk describe the ancient migrations of a house, its acquisition and defence of its territory, and major events in the life of the house, such as natural disasters, epidemics, and war, as well as the arrival of new peoples and events surrounding the establishment of trade alliances and major shifts in power."[84] In the Witsuwit'en setting, crest origin myths are composite parts of a more general category of oral history called *Kungax*. Unlike the *Adaawk*, the *Kungak* do not depict ancient migrations, but they do depict the founding of the two most ancient Witsuwit'en villages at Dizkle and Kya Wiget along with the subsequent conflicts

[83] The Chinlac massacre was an event that precipitated a long and bloody feud. The belligerents were two groups of Dakelh: the Nazko and the Stuart Lake. According to the Dakelh at Stuart Lake, the whole thing was started by a Nazko raid on a Stuart Lake settlement. The Stuart Lake people retaliated with a raid of their own. The Nazko responded with a raid at Chinlac that turned out to be a real slaughter. The Chinlac massacre was a savage affair that resulted in the death of many men and children. A year later, a successful retaliatory campaign was launched against the Nazko after which many of the prisoners taken at Chinlac were freed and reunited with their families. The potlatch was also another means to settle disputes. In the nineteenth century, William Brown, trader at Fort Kilmaurs that chiefs managed disputes so that they would not get out of hand and that when that failed they could be resolved by physical force or by the practice of giving presents. Fiske, *Cis Dideen Kat*, 137.

[84] Sterritt, et al., *Tribal Boundaries*, 293.

and negotiations waged over disputed territories.[85] That *Kungax* and *Adaawk* might be contested is no surprise and is not suggestive of a lack of common ground between peoples because history and social life are characterized by tensions. One Witsuwit'en phrased it, "I don't believe there's a community where everyone agrees together on anything. If there is such a village tell me and maybe I should move over there."[86] The borders between cultural groupings, villages and families could be the site of much tension. The situation is by no means rare; J.Z. Smith states the matter succinctly, "it is the proximate 'other,' the near neighbour who is most troublesome."[87]

As mentioned already in this section, the Dakelh and the Gitskan spoke entirely different languages. The linguistic dissimilarity is hardly surprising; on the coast of British Columbia there are at least six different language families.[88] The Gitksan spoke a language within the Ts'mysen language family and the Witsuwit'en along with the Sekani, Babine and Dakelh spoke various languages and dialects with the Athabaskan language family.[89] Considering the intensity of cross group connections in the region in view of the linguistic diversity, language difference did not preclude communication. The

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[85] Mills writes that *Kungax* is the possessive of the word *Kun*, which means "song" or "spirit." Thus, *Kungax* means "one's own song" or "one's own spirit." In addition to *Kungax* that detail the early times of various Witsuwit'en villages, there are also personal *Kungax* which entail the enactment of a crest, and *Kungax* that recount the assumption and transfer of names. Both crests and titles are expressive of an individual's own "trail of song," power or spirit. See Mills, *Eagle Down*, 122-3.

[86] Mills, *Eagle Down*, 71.

[87] J.Z. Smith, "Differential Equations: on Constructing the Other," in *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 245.

[88] Laurence C. Thompson and M. Dale Kinkade, "Languages," in *Northwest Coast, vol. 7, Handbook of North American Indians*, ed. Wayne Suttles (Washington: Smithsonian, 1978), 34-35.

[89] By language family I mean a group of languages that have been shown to be genetically related and by dialect I mean mutually intelligible varieties of a one language.

claim is probably axiomatic, notwithstanding the possibility of bilingualism, language barriers are often negotiated with ease (by using a pidgin language, for example).[90]

Lastly, the Witsuwit'en, Dakelh, Sekani and Gitksan buffered each other from their neighbours on each side. Consequently, the relationships with distant neighbours were more distant and not always harmonious. While sentiments of affinity prevailed among the Gitksan and Coast Ts'mysen, they were more estranged between the Coast Ts'mysen and Babine with the Gitksan in the middle. Relations between the Coast Ts'mysen and the Babine were particularly strained in the 1860s when, following a trading dispute, war nearly erupted between the two peoples. It seems that the Witsuwit'en did most of their trading with the Gitksan. In addition, while the Babine had close and amicable relations with the Gitksan, relations between the Gitksan and the Sekani, with the Babine in the middle, were often tense.[91]

Social Field and Social Formation (Revisited)

In this chapter I have characterized the social field as constituted by various groups that approximate cultures, that is to say as people who share a common language,

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[90] Chinook was a popular pidgin in the fur trade era. Yet, pidgins do not lend themselves well to preservation in the historical linguistic record. For example, when written records appear where pidgin is spoken they tend to be composed in a cosmopolitan version of the dominant language. For Chinook, see Terence Kaufman, "A Report on Chinook Jargon," in *Pidginization and Creolization of Languages*, ed. Dell Hymes, 275-78 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971); Christopher F. Roth, "Towards and Early Social History of Chinook Jargon," *Northwest Anthropological Research Notes* 28, no.1 (1994): 157-75; and, George Lang, *Making Wawa: the genesis of Chinook jargon*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008.

[91] The Dakelh also had a long history of trade with the Sekani. The Dakelh, Sekani and Babine frequently got together to trade and socialize at Bear Lake. The Sekani also received much of their iron from the Dakelh. The iron that Mackenzie saw among the Sekani in 1793 was probably procured from the Dakelh. Morice also suggested that the Dakelh obtained the crossbow from the Sekani years before the European trade. Adrien Morice, *Notes Archaeological, Industrial and Sociological on the Western Dene* (Toronto: Transactions of the Canadian Institute, 1893), 59.

are in frequent interaction with each other, share practices and idioms that they recognize as their own and in those peoples with whom they feel a sense of affinity and lacking in those toward whom they feel estranged.[92] In that view of culture, I suppose the entire field can be called a culture writ large, but then I lose track of the internal variations and would also have to exempt the criterion of shared language from the configuration. Moreover, the term culture as so defined and deployed in the region as I have figured it does not usefully fit the data. For example, the Witsuwit'en and Gitksan were socially and geographically closer to each other than either was to the various other component groups of each respective parent culture the Ts'mysen and the Dakelh. In the previous chapter, I was critical of such a notion of culture and in place tentatively suggested the use of social formation. In the inner orbits, for example, each Witsuwit'en socio-territory or Gitksan village might be seen as social formations within a social field. Each group, or formation, overlaps with the other in some areas and differs from it in others. On the one hand, the Gitksan at Gitanmaax and the Witsuwit'en had similar clan structures, sometimes intermarried and potlatched with each other; on the other hand, the two communities had different myths of ancestry and spoke different languages.

Another way of appreciating these component groups is in terms of the notion of an *ethnie*. The anthropologist David Dinwoodie has termed such groups as *ethnies*, where an *ethnie* is "a named human population with myths of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more elements of shared culture, a link with a homeland, and a measure of solidarity, at least among the elites."[93] As just illustrated, each of those

[92] Lincoln, *Holy Terrors*, 51.

[93] David Dinwoodie, "'He Expects We Would Be Off from His Lands': Reported Speech-Events in Tsilhqut'in Contact History," *Anthropological Linguistics*, 49, no. 1 (2007), 6.

descriptors might also be appreciated as components of a social formation. It seems also, then, based on the anthropological, fur trade and missiological records, that the Witsuwit'en, the Dakelh socio-territories, the Babine, the Gitksan and the Sekani might each qualify as an *ethnie*. Each group has its own nobility, origin myths, crests and territory. Moreover, each group is symbolically constituted, formed self consciously and born out of relations in a social field. Dinwoodie amplifies the latter point, "historical circumstances rather than internal development provide the stimuli for symbolic unification."[94] Moreover, Anthony Smith, whose theory of ethnic origins of nations Dinwoodie draws from, observes that the most salient factors that lead to the formation of *ethnies* are cultural contact, political change, and, significantly, religion.[95] Employing the notion of an *ethnie* helps to steer me away from those connotations of culture that I find particularly problematic. The notion is conducive to my argument that the religious movements of the mid-nineteenth century were attempts at establishing a new *ethnie*, a new kind of a community, a new kind of *social formation*, with its own practices, concepts of leadership and myths of origin within the historically constituted social field. The religious movements arose against, while in conversation with, the community of fur traders and missionaries; specifically against their efforts to draw the component groupings, the local formations, into the orbits of the fort and mission. In other words, they were attempts to circumvent anticipated disruption and loss of control. But that effort did not simply follow the traditional tracks, it reached across component groupings stoking latent sentiments of affinity among Indigenous peoples of the social field in a

[94] Ibid., 6.

[95] Anthony Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 32.

manner not too dissimilar to the dynamics of Smoak's ethnogenesis covered in the previous chapter.

In this setting there is no contact zone between two cultures, say, the "Indigenous" and the "European", because both groups are heavily fractured. There are people and groups and relationships among peoples and groups that constitute a large field of relations in which there is no centre, and, thus, no borders and no groups that yield objective and hermetic cultures. I should clarify that my criticism here is directed at the analytical construct "culture" and not at local group formations, conceptual schemes and organizational networks. Moreover, the criticism is apposite in any cultural analysis and thus is not restricted to this particular time and place (what I am suggesting is characteristic of social formations, our own included). The people living within that field – as must be the case with all social fields present and past – created meaningful alliances, affinities, friendships, and social formations.[96]

I have suggested in this chapter that the peoples of the upper Skeena and Fraser were participants within a social field and composed, for the purposes of my analysis, a cluster of inner orbits. But the orbits were not hermetically sealed they extended east, north, south and west. If the orbits slouched in any direction they bent downhill and reached, like the hand of Franklin, toward the western sea. That the people west of the Rockies were, as Lévi-Strauss put it, living "elbow to elbow," should not be understated.[97] The observation is significant because a consideration of social and

[96] Cf. Jonathan Z. Smith's definition of religion: "religion is the quest, within the bounds of the human, historical condition, for the power to manipulate and negotiate one's 'situation' so as to have 'space' in which to meaningfully dwell. It is the power to relate one's domain to the plurality of environmental and social spheres in such a way as to guarantee the conviction that one's existence matters." Jonathan Z. Smith *Map is Not Territory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 291.

[97] Lévi-Strauss, *Way of the Masks*, 145.

religious change that begins with the story of direct contact can overdetermine the influence of that contact. For example, I had earlier called attention to a tendency to connect prophet movements directly with events in the continental fur trade, such as a missionary, a group of catechists, a clash of cultures, a war or an epidemic. Such a narrow view also underdetermines not only the influence of indirect contact but the thinking and experimentation that may have been stimulated by it.

My use of the notions of social field and social formation in place of, say, such notions as "cultural region" and "culture area" meant to indicate that I am suspicious of the cultural holism of the current ethnological map that carves the region and peoples up into culture areas and cultures. I am suspicious because I see that the effort can obfuscate analysis. The work of "cultural creation" that we have inherited was the work of scholars. It was the result of the conflation of a number of scholarly programs such as: an ecological anthropology, the influence of Malinowksian methodology, cultural evolutionary theory, and a documentary history left behind by the fur trade that carved the region into administrative districts. In addition, I should say that I do not intend to accomplish a theoretical exposition of the terms social formation and social field. If anything my use of them is meant to register my self-consciousness with respect to the discipline's analytical lexicon.

In the following chapter, I broaden the social field extending it beyond the inner orbits as I have outlined them here. In that chapter, I argue that in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century missionaries, fur traders and colonists were drawn into the inner orbits of the Fraser and Skeena watersheds long before they physically arrived on the scene. Their distant presence bore to some degree on how the individuals in the inner

orbits anticipated their eventual arrival. The first peoples who approached came by sea and river and were known as "driftwood" by the Ts'mysen.[98] It is the story of their advent and establishment in the region that I take up next. While I am chiefly interested in those perspectives that look outward from the head waters of the Fraser and Skeena Rivers, I do not have access to a thick record of that view to accomplish a thorough exposition. Thus, in the narrative that follows, I have found it helpful, in order to arrange the data, to string together dates and events from historiography derived from the records of traders and explorers as they looked inland toward the headwaters of the Fraser and Skeena Rivers.

[98] Robert Bringhurst. *A Story As Sharp As a Knife: The Classical Haida Mythtellers and Their World* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2011), 447.

Chapter 4

Outer Orbit: Ocean and River (1707-1858)

In this chapter, I survey activities on the western periphery of the upper Fraser and Skeena watersheds in what I am calling the "western outer orbits." When I use the term "orbit" I do not mean it in a technical sense as in the gravitational path of a body as it cycles around another body or fixed point. Rather I mean orbit in the sense of a range of knowledge, or as a sphere of influence. At the western outer orbits, then, it was the Russians, the Spanish and later the British and American mariners who were most active. The peoples of the interior knew of their activities, the religions they practiced, and the various ways in which they related with other coastal and interior peoples. In some cases the Witsuwit'en, Gitksan and/or Dakelh had direct contact with European mariners; in other cases contact was mediated by coastal peoples. The knowledge of affairs at the western orbits helped them to anticipate the arrival of traders and missionaries who later crossed the Rockies. It was in part because the peoples of the interior were aware of coastal activities that they were not shocked by the traders or their Christianity – neither were terribly novel. When the continental traders arrive in the upper Fraser and Skeena watersheds they find that the people there have had a long history of facing westward toward the sea.

Russian Colonial, Commercial and Religious Activity in the Pacific Northwest

In a recent book on Russian America, Ilya Vinkovetsky, laments the fleeting attention devoted to Russian America by Americanists and Russianists.[1] His lament is

[1] Ilya Vinkovetsky, *Russian America* (New York: Oxford, 2011), 15.

appreciable when we consider that throughout much of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, up to the time of the 1867 sale of Russian's American colony to the United States, Russia was an integral player in the political and commercial life of the Pacific and continental North America.[2] The Russian administrative capital of Sitka, for example, possessed for a time the best port facilities in the entire North Pacific. Moreover, the agreement reached in 1839 between the Hudson Bay Company (HBC) and the Russian American Company was impetus for the Company's diversification efforts west of the Rockies.[3] Had America's Alaskan purchase not gone through the North American geo-political scene would have been much different today; Russia would span three continents.

Russian activity in America can be usefully grouped into three periods. The first is the period of early expansion and exploration marked chiefly by the exploratory work of Vitus Bering and his colleagues in the early part of the eighteenth century. The second is the *promyshlenniki* period, the period of the "fur traders" or of merchant activity in the Aleutians and Alaskan Peninsula that flourished in the latter half of the eighteenth century. The third is the colonial period spearheaded by the Russian American Company (RAC). The company served as empire builder and colonial contractor and was the first to erect trading posts on Tlingit land. The colonial period lasted from 1799 until the sale of Alaska to the United States in 1867. On the whole my objective in this section is to introduce Russian actors as encompassed within the outer orbits of the Interior Plateau, namely, the Alaskan Coast and Alexander Archipelago. Those outer orbits were not

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[2] Vinkovetsky, *Russian America*, 37.

[3] See Richard Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains: the British Fur Trade on the Pacific* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998).

insignificant; the Russian presence in America was an important source of material and non-material desiderata about European activities in advance of the approach of the land-based fur trade. Russian material goods, Russian deserters, Russian trade, Russian aggression, and, significantly for my purposes, Russian Christianity must have been known to peoples of the Interior Plateau in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (if not earlier).

Early Expansion and Exploration

According to the historian Andrei Grinev, Russia's Imperial designs on the Far East were logical extensions of Ermak's sixteenth-century campaign to "meet the sun."[4] The Cossack mercenary of the powerful Stroganov family is remembered as folk hero for having conquered the lands of the Volga and for opening the way to the Ural Mountains. A mere one century later the eastern boundaries of Imperial Russia stretched to the shores of Lake Baikal. While the lands were claimed by the Russian state and the peoples living in them were forced to pay homage and *iasak* (tax) to the Tsar, it was the merchants and labourers in the fur trade who stood at the vanguard of the eastern march. Thus, even after the shores of Lake Baikal were reached, merchants, lured by the prospect of greater riches in "soft gold" (furs), continued to extend the trade further north and east.

A key figure in that extension was Semen Dezhnev, one the first Russians to pass through what would later be known as Bering Strait.[5] In 1648, Dezhnev backed by a

[4] See Andrei Grinev, *The Tlingit Indians and Russian America, 1741-1867* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 92.

[5] Dezhnev was a Pomor (Russian from the White Sea Region) tax collector living with his Yakutat wife and children in the Kolyma region (Eastern Siberia).

Moscow merchant, led an expedition from the Kolyma to the Arctic Ocean, east around the Northeastern tip of Asia, south through the Bering Straits, and into the Andyr' river (that flows east into Pacific on the Chukota Peninsula). Upriver on the Andyr' he established a trading post and collected enough furs to stimulate colonial and commercial interest in the region.[6] Dezhnev's journey is a useful point of departure for my narrative for two reasons. First, despite Dezhnev's personal triumph the voyage ripped his party apart. More than half his crew was lost on the journey, losses which represent the first in what would be a long line of rumours about Russian deserters or castaways who had made it to the "great land" across the sea.[7] Second, Dezhnev's voyage signaled the commencement of exploratory and commercial interest in the North American continent.[8] As early as 1710, stories about the nearness of the American continent and its potential fur wealth were current in St. Petersburg and prompted the Tsarist government to commission three expeditions to the American coast in 1728, 1732, and 1741.

In 1728 Vitus Bering charted the eastern Siberian seaboard determining that the two continents of America and Asia were separated by a small strait dotted with Islands.[9] In 1732 the Tsar commissioned Ivan Federov to map the Island chain spotted by

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[6] Raymond H. Fisher, *The Voyage of Semen Dezhnev in 1648: Bering's Precursor* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1981), 124.

[7] Of the seven koches that left the mouth of the Kolyma under Dezhnev's command only three reached the Andyr'. The loss of the four koches generated rumours in Siberia and abroad about the fate of the lost men. Koches were small, wooden single-masted sailing ships used in polar navigation in the late medieval and early modern periods.

[8] Rumours were that the great land had been settled by the "lost" members of Dezhnev's exploration. Svetlana G. Fedorova, *The Russian Population in Alaska and California, Late 18th Century – 1867*, trans. and eds., Richard A. Pierce and Alton S. Donnelly (Kingston, Ontario: Limestone Press, 1973), 40- 41.

[9] Hector Chevigny, *Russian America: The Great Alaskan Venture: 1741-1867* (New York: Viking Press, 1965), 27.

Bering.[10] Nine years later Bering was pressed into service again. In 1741, with the assistance of Alexei Chirikov, the Bering-Chirikov expedition surveyed the American coast and ventured into the Alexander Archipelago going as far south as Prince of Wales Island.[11] When news of the expedition's findings was publicized in Siberia, namely, the great number of sea otter rafts of in the North Pacific, the great interest generated among merchants in the "fur town" of Irkutsk was comparable to that generated among the English and Americans after the publication of Cook's third journals.[12] The impact of those three later expeditions echoed Dezhnev's voyage but on a grander scale; the work of Bering and his crews attracted an interest not in the vague "far east" but in the specific Aleutian Islands and American continental coast.

The Bering-Chirikov expedition also had its castaways. While coasting the Alaskan panhandle, Chirikov sent a launch ashore to look for mineral ores and when the launch did not return he dispatched a second. Neither launch ever returned. The loss of Chirikov's two boats led to rumours that "Chirikov's men" deserted, lost their way, or were captured by locals. In any case, rumours circulated within and without Russia that

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[10] Michael Oleksa, *Orthodox Alaska: A Theology of Mission* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1992), 81.

[11] The expedition left Kamchatka in 1741 but the two boats were separated en route. Bering sighted the shores of Kodiak Island and saw Mt. Elias on the distant mainland before doubling back to Kamchatka. Chirikov made even further progress toward the American continent. He ventured southeast into the Alexander Archipelago and recorded the location of Prince of Wales Island before he too decided to return to the Kamchatkan port of Petropavlovsk. Although Bering was the first to turn back, his prudence did not serve him well. On the return voyage he was shipwrecked on Bering Island (about 225 km off the coast of Kamchatka). The crew that survived the wreck attempted to winter on the island but no one is thought to have survived that winter. It was Bering's 1741 voyage that earned him the honour of having the straits that separated the two continents named after him. Yet, Bering was not the first to sail through them. In 1643, the Dutchman De Vries is thought to have sailed north from Japan to the strait that lied between Asia and a great mid-oceanic body of land which the Japanese called Jesso, see Godfrey Sykes, "The Mythical Straits of Anian," *Bulletin of the American Geographical Society*, 47, no. 3 (1915): 167.

[12] Fisher, *The Voyage of Semen Dezhnev*, 78. The journals of Cook's third voyage essentially opened the maritime fur trade of the Pacific Northwest to American and British capitalists.

they settled on the Alaskan mainland.[13] An extant Tlingit oral tradition would seem to validate those rumours. According to the tradition, Chirikov's men willfully deserted because of the cruelty and squalid conditions that prevailed on their ship the *St. Pavel*.[14] The sailors were welcomed by the Tlingit and eventually married local women and settled into family life. At some length, however, the sailors, fearing the charge of desertion if discovered by the Russian expeditions that followed, loaded their canoes with their families and headed south to Prince of Wales Island where today their descendants head some of the most prestigious families in the village of Klawock.[15]

While deserters may have been a direct source of Russian artifacts, items of European manufacture were already present in the Americas before Russian traders came to the continent's shores. The goods most likely arrived by way of the Indigenous trade network that stretched from Siberia across the Bering Strait to the Interior Plateau and beyond. Witsuwit'en oral history, for example, relates that iron, procured from their western neighbours, was available in the upper Skeena as early as the 1730s.[16] Historian Barbara Smith has claimed that the interior Athabaskans had traded for several generations with the Eskimos of Norton Sound (who served as middlepersons in the exchange of goods between the peoples of Siberia and the Alaskan interior).[17]

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[13] The launches were dispatched at 57° 50′ north. Federova, *The Russian Population*, 79; and, Oleksa, *Orthodox Alaska*, 81.

[14] The expedition consisted of two ships, the *St. Petr* and the *St. Pavel*.

[15] Grinev, *The Tlingit Indians*, 93.

[16] The iron likely originated either in Japan (and procured from a Japanese shipwreck) or in Russia. A.G. Morice, *The History of the Northern Interior of British Columbia, formerly New Caledonia*, second edition. (Toronto: William Briggs, 1904), 9.

[17] Smith writes that "furs were traded for tobacco and a wide range of metal implements from Siberia." Barbara S. Smith, *Orthodoxy and Native Americans: The Alaskan Mission* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980), 15.

The Promyshlenniki Period

In the early phase of Imperial exploration and mercantile activity the primary Indigenous peoples with whom the Russian explorers and fur traders had contact were the Aleut. In the second phase, the American *promyshlenniki*[18] period, the Russians came into direct contact with the Koniag or Alutiiq of the Alaskan mainland and Kodiak Island. Lured by the Bering-Chirikov announcement of rich sea otter rafts private companies began outfitting expeditions to Aleut and Alutiiq territories.[19] Between 1743 (the date of the first commercial expedition to the Bering Strait) and 1799 (the date of the founding of the Russian American Company in 1799) more than one hundred expeditions sponsored by forty-two different companies travelled to the Aleutians, Kodiak Island, and/or the Alaskan mainland in search of the "soft gold."[20] Despite the intense merchant competition, or because of it, one company, the Golikov-Shelikov company, through amalgamation, consolidation, and use of powerful connections in St. Petersburg, eventually emerged as the dominant Russian commercial force on the American

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[18] The *promyshlenniki* were ethnically diverse: many were free peasants of the White Sea area (as Dezhnev was, for example) others were Russian settlers, still others were Indigenous Siberians, namely Itel'men and Koryak. After the Russians established colonies in America the *promyshlenniki* included Aleut, Yupik, some Tlingit and the children of Russian-Indigenous marriages. Although the clerks and managers remained nominally Russian, even that category was not so clearly defined – the famous governor Baranov was born in St. Petersburg but ran away from home at a young age and grew up in Siberia. Sergei Kan, *Memory Eternal: Tlingit Culture and Russian Orthodox Christianity Through Two Centuries* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), 35.

[19] Most of those companies were based out of Siberia and shipped furs procured in the Russian Far East (including America) overland to Moscow for distribution in Western Europe. For diplomatic reasons Russians rarely shipped furs directly to China from Irkutsk (although such a route, being much shorter, would have greatly reduced transportation costs).

[20] Oleksa, *Orthodox Alaska*, 81; S.B. Okun, *The Russian-American Company*, trans. Carl Ginsberg, ed. B.D. Grekov (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951), 8-9. The first company to do so was the partnership of Andrei Serebrennikov and Yemelyan Basov subsidized by the Siberian entrepreneur Nikifor Trapeznikov in 1743.

continent.[21] The company's mercantile dominance was buttressed by a colonial program. In 1784 a contingent of colonists, recruited by the Golikov-Shelikov company, arrived to establish the first Russian colony in the Americas, with headquarters at Three Saints Bay on Kodiak Island.[22]

Developments of the *promyshlenniki* period must have been felt by the Athabaskan peoples living further inland. In the *promyshlenniki* period the Russians wintered and established permanent homes in America. They entered into marriage and/or sexual relationships with local women and friendships with local men.[23] While some relationships were tender, labour relations between Russians and Indigenous peoples tended to be violent and exploitive in favour of the Russian merchants. Consider for example the Russian means of acquiring furs: unlike their Canadian colleagues in trade, when the *promyshlenniki* entered Chukota and later North America, they employed brigades of Indigenous peoples which required workers to procure furs for the company for which work they received no compensation. The *promyshlenniki* procured their labour often under duress by abducting workers, by holding families hostage, by acquiring local slaves, or by otherwise extorting local populations to work for the trader without any compensation other than the material that was required to hunt.[24] In that manner of

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[21] Founded in 1781 by the businessman Ivan Golikov and the customs officer Gregory Shelikov called the Golikov-Shelikov Company.

[22] The Company sent its first colonists to Russian America in 1783 aboard three ships: the *Three Saints*, the *Saint Michael Archangel*, and the *Saint Simeon*. In 1784 the *Three Saints* and the *Saint Simeon* landed on the southeastern shore of Kodiak Island with Shelikov and "130 frontiersmen." Subsequently, outposts were established on Afognak Island north of Kodiak and on the Kenai Peninsula of the Alaskan mainland. The *Saint Michael Archangel* lost its way en route but appeared unexpectedly at Unalaska three years later. Chevigny, *Russian America*, 54.

[23] As the trade developed and spread *promyshlenniki* and local women became sexually involved. From those relationships arose what ethno-historians have called the Alaskan "creole" population.

[24]Sergei Kan, *Memory Eternal*, 35.

slavery, Chugach, Aleut and Yupik were employed in the fur hunt by the *promyshlenniki* who later sent them as far south to Fort Ross and the Farollone Islands in what is now the state of California.

The commercial and social relationships formed between fur traders and Indigenous peoples served also as a forum for the introduction of Christianity. Many of those *promyshlenniki* were observant Orthodox and those who married local Indigenous peoples often baptised their children. Baptism may have also entered into employment contracts arranged between *promyshlenniki* and Indigenous Aleut, Yupik and Tlingit people. According to Father Veniaminov, "Aleuts honor their sponsors [those who sponsored them for Baptism] as fathers and will serve them exclusively and diligently: no other Russian can lure away another's 'godchildren.'"[25] The prevalence of lay baptism, regardless of the motivations that informed the practice, is not at all inconsistent with the Orthodox tradition. Lay baptism is a perspicuous feature of the *bezpopovtsy* (priestless) within "Old Believer" Orthodoxy. Moreover, in cases of emergency any Orthodox Christian can baptize, in fact, the famous priest and missionary Veniaminov recommended that the laity baptise, provided that a priest formalize the baptism on his next visit.[26] In addition to the introduction of Christian forms, the Orthodox historian Michael Oleska suggests that *promyshlenniki* also acted as lay missionaries who introduced Christian content.[27] Like baptism lay mission work is consistent with the

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[25] Paul D. Garrett, *St. Innocent: Apostle to America* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1979), 28. Sergei Kan also observed that the baptismal ritual had an "aura of adoption." Kan, *Memory Eternal*, 81.

[26] Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 3rd ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), 278.

[27] Oleksa, *Orthodox Alaska*, 129.

Russian Orthodox tradition.[28] While there is little published information detailing what exactly was taught by the early fur traders, evidence from early mission journals suggests that the traders did teach some things of Christianity.[29] Veniaminov, for example, bemoaned the presence of a lay Christianity among his Aleut charges because it rendered them neither wholly Christian nor Indigenous. One might read that as "progress" but it was vexing for the nineteenth-century priest-ethnographer, who hoped his charges would remain traditionally Aleut just long enough to be described before they were "Christianized." Veniaminov remarked that when he first arrived among the Aleut it was exceedingly difficult to parcel out the Russian from the Indigenous. Veniaminov wrote, "Since all the Aleut's rules and opinions which I gathered come after almost a century of acquaintance with the Russians, and as almost all of them are acquainted with the precepts of the Christian faith, are these really their own ideas? Nevertheless, it is pleasing to see in them the ability to adopt."[30] Veniaminov's claim is telling; made in the early 1820s it suggests that there is already a recognizable Indigenous Christianity among those people who had contact (indirect or not) with the *promyshlenniki*. Given the existing trade networks that extended inland from the North Pacific it would not be surprising if news of family relationships, baptisms, Christianity, and Russian forced-labour practices found its way up rivers. While there is reason to think the news was

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[28] Pierre Pascal, *The Religion of the Russian People* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976), 21. In those expanses of Russia where the parish priest was able to visit only infrequently the laity was tasked with some priestly duties. When a lack of priests meant that mass could be performed only irregularly, the head of each family was expected to read prayers and psalms and cense the icons. When priests were unavailable to conduct burial rites, lay persons were expected to perform those as well.

[29]Yet, the missiologist Michael Oleksa implies that much more can be learned as "few people have attempted to consider and evaluate all the archival evidence." Oleksa, *Orthodox Alaska*, 84.

[30] Garrett, *St. Innocent*, 58.

present in the inner orbits by the turn of the nineteenth century, at the latest, it is more difficult to tell how that news was received.

Another effect of the Russian incursion in the *promyshlenniki* period was the disruption of Indigenous trading networks and relationships. The presence of the RAC and its practice of dispatching Aleut and Koniag hunters into foreign lands exacerbated tensions among resident communities in the North Coast. When the newly appointed governor of the Golikov-Shelikov company Alexander Baranov, for example, arrived at the colony's headquarters on Kodiak Island in 1791, he sent hunting parties southward into Tlingit territory in the Alexander Archipelago and lent support to those parties by founding a colony at Yakutat Bay named New Russia in 1796. The Yakutat colony was the first Russian settlement in Tlingit territory. The Tlingit resented the colony and the hunters it attracted to their lands and actively resisted the colony and its flotillas.[31] The amplification of coastal violence caused by the advent of the Russians engendered new hostilities and, as we will see in the next section, new alliances.

It was also in the *promyshlenniki* period, during the regime of the Golikov-Shelikov company that the first Russian missionaries came to the burgeoning colonies. In 1786, on a visit to St. Petersburg, Shelikov persuaded the Metropolitan of St. Petersburg to dispatch an orthodox mission to the colony.[32] The missionaries, the New Valaam

[31] Andrei Grinev, *The Tlingit Indians in Russian America 1741-1867*, trans., Richard L. Bland and Katerina G. Solovjova (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 106.

[32] When Shelikov made his trip to St. Petersburg in 1788 to petition Tsar Catherine for a trading monopoly, he also had an audience with the Metropolitan Gabriel. He boasted to the Metropolitan that many Aleut had already accepted baptism and that his company had started a school among them. Furthermore, the company, he said, intended to send the best pupils to Russia to further their education in Christianity with hopes that they might return and evangelize their relations. Shelikov's claims prompted the Metropolitan to issue a call for recruits to take up mission work in Russian America.

Mission, arrived at Kodiak Island on September 24th, 1794.[33] That same year the Church in St. Petersburg created the new See of Russian America and named Father Josaph, leader of the Valaam mission, "Bishop of Kodiak." Despite the Church's optimism for the new See, the mission was fraught with troubles as soon as the missionaries set foot on the Island. Shelikov's promises to the Metropolitan turned out to be empty, five missionaries were killed within the first five years, and the missionaries were neither welcomed nor much assisted by the manager, later Governor, Alexander Baranov.

While Shelikov was in St. Petersburg in 1786, he boasted to the Metropolitan of the colony's religious infrastructure. Missionaries would be fed, housed and universally welcomed in the colony, but it was a much different situation when the missionaries arrived. Shelikov had erected neither church nor school and there were no resources wherewith to feed, house or equip the missionaries. Moreover, the colonists and the *promyshlenniki* were not as desiring of missionaries as Shelikov had led the Church to believe. The *promyshlenniki* were particularly hesitant to have marriages formalized by the priests.[34] Father Josaph wrote to Shelikov shortly after his arrival that, "Only with

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[33] The New Valaam mission, named for the monastery from which many of the recruits were affiliated, set out from Russia in 1793 and arrived at Kodiak Island the following year. The contingent consisted of ten recruits: eight clerics and two novices. Veniaminov names the eight monastic clerics: (1) Archimandrite Iosaf (2) Hieromonk Iuvenalii (3) Hieromonk Makarii (4) Hieromonk Afansii (5) Hierodeacon Stefan (6) Hierodeacon Nektarii (7) Monk Iosaf (8) Monk German. Oleksa and Bearne also name, with variations in spelling, the same eight clerics. See, Oleksa, *Orthodox Alaska*, 107; Richard Pierce, ed., *The Russian Orthodox religious mission in America, 1794-1837: with materials concerning the life and works of the Monk German, and ethnographic notes by the Hieromonk Gedeon*, trans. Colin Bearne (Kingston, ON: Limestone Press, 1978), 26-27; Robert Nichols and Robert Croskey, *The Condition of the Orthodox Church in Russian America*. *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 63, no. 2 (1972): 43. Lydia Black gives the names of the two novices: postulants Nikita Semenev and Dimitrii Avdeev, see, Lydia Black, *Russians in Alaska, 1732-1867* (Fairbanks, AK: University of Alaska Press, 2004), 231. Sergei Kan, however, notes that the mission consisted of 10 monastics and two novices, but he cites no names. See, Kan, *Memory Eternal*, 38.

[34] The situation was not unlike the Canadian fur traders on the continent; the *promyshlenniki* may have resented the presumption of the priests when they refused to acknowledge their marriages as legitimate, cf. Sylvia Van Kirk, *"Many Tender Ties": Women in Fur-Trade Society in Western Canada, 1670-1870* (Winnipeg: Watson and Dwyer, 1980).

difficulty did I persuade a few Russian hunters to get married. The rest of them do not even want to listen to me. Everyone openly keeps one or several girls, which greatly offends the Americans; you know how they treat their women; they are capable of bringing disaster to the Russians to obtain revenge."[35]

In addition to local resistance the mission suffered the tragic losses of five of its initial ten members within its first five years. In 1796 Father Juvenali was killed somewhere in the region of Lake Iliamna while en route to establish a mission among the Tlingit of the Chilkat River. The same year one of the novices, Dimitrii Avdeev, died in a shipwreck. In 1799 or 1800, Father Josaph, along with Fathers Stepan and Makarii, were killed in a shipwreck.[36] The mission's mandate was further weakened when Father German adopted a monastic lifestyle and isolated himself on Spruce Island. By the turn of the century the mission, which at first seemed so promising, was reduced to three active clergy and one novice.[37]

In view of all the tragedies that befell the mission in its early years, it is surprising that its field staff were able to boast of any successes. Yet after erecting and consecrating the church of the Holy Resurrection (the First Orthodox Church in America) at St. Paul's Harbour, the missionaries were reporting advances in the field of Indigenous missions. The missionaries baptized 7,000 Indigenous people on Kodiak Island and dispatched clergy to the neighbouring islands and mainland.[38] The satellite missions, led at first by

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[35] Oleksa, *Orthodox Alaska*, 110.

[36] The three priests left Kodiak in 1799 destined for Irkutsk where father Josaph was to be formally induced as Bishop of Kodiak. While the entourage made it to Irkutsk successfully, their ship was wrecked on the return voyage and the entire crew is believed to have perished.

[37] The novice returned to Russian within a few years.

[38] Oleksa, *Orthodox Alaska*, 113.

the energetic Juvenali, reported an additional three to five thousand baptisms by 1796.[39] Despite those early triumphs the deaths of Fathers Makarii, Juvenali, Stepan, Josaph and the novice of Adveed, and Father German's renunciation, left the mission short-staffed and seriously comprised the church's missionary agenda. The duties of the remaining missionaries were largely parochial and there is no indication that they spent much, if any time, on either the Alexander Archipelago or the eastern Alaskan mainland.[40]

Lastly, the work of the missionaries was distracted by the combative relationship they developed with Governor Baranov. Sentiments between the two sides were estranged throughout Baranov's tenure.[41] One point of contention, familiar to any student of the North American fur trade, was the company's fear that the missionaries would interfere with the trade. And the company had good reason to fear as much, as we know that the missionaries were critical of the company's labour practices and reported abuses to St. Petersburg.[42] In 1804 the Russian Orthodox Synod finally decided to investigate the litany of complaints that its missionaries had been leveling against Baranov since their arrival, and dispatched Father Gedeon to Russian America to report on affairs in the colony.[43]

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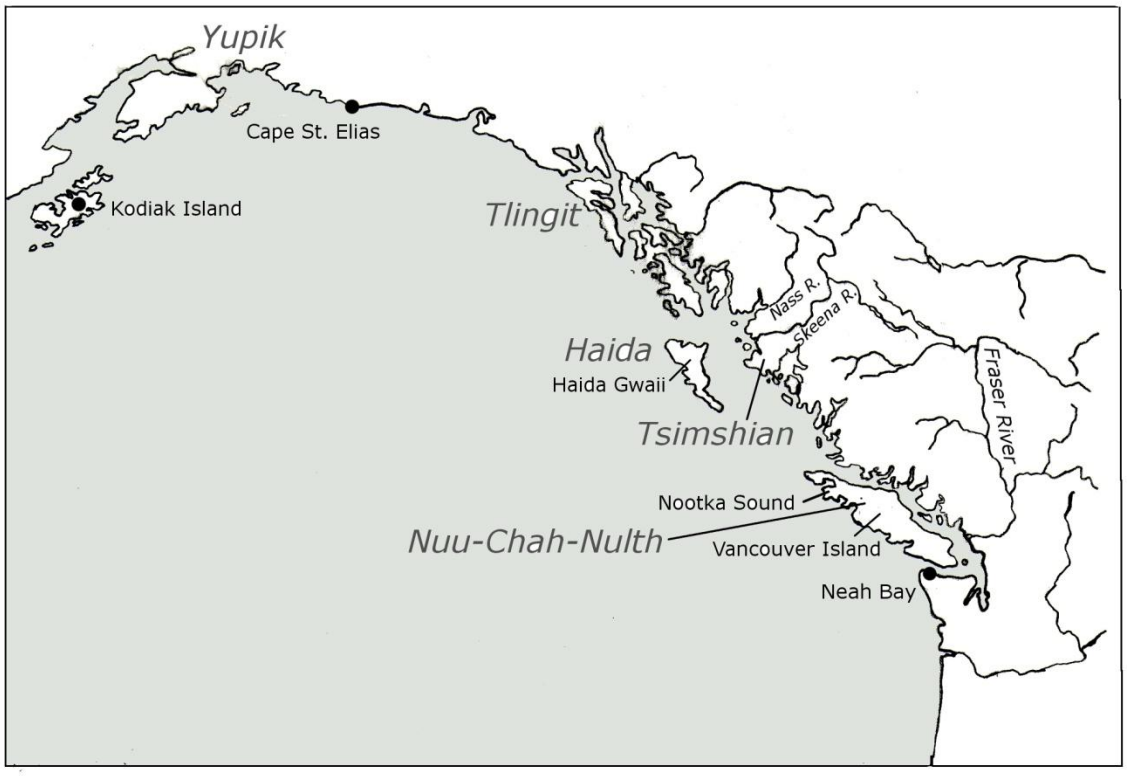
[39] Pierce, *The Russian Orthodox Religious Mission in America*, 46; Kan, *Memory Eternal*, 38-39.

[40] Kan, *Memory Eternal*, 40-41.

[41] The missionaries consistently accused Baranov of being an autocratic, ruthless and cruel manager who was not only completely opposed to the spirit of the mission, but opposed to the objectives and policies of the company. Baranov, for his part, accused the missionaries of inciting the local Indigenous people against him and the Company. For those reasons, Baranov was forever threatening them with arrest and/or expulsion. Kan, *Memory Eternal*, 39.

[42] On the other hand, Baranov might have been fine to see them spend some time away from the colony.

[43] Father Gedeon's stay was not meant to be permanent and he stayed only until 1807; however, during his tenure he did find the time to found a two grade school for Indigenous children. Kan, *Memory Eternal*, 40.



Map 2. Outer Orbit: North Pacific Littoral [map outline adapted from "Maritime Fur Trade - Northwest Coast," Wikipedia Commons (created by Pfly, 2010)].

The Russian Colonial Period

By the time that Father Gedeon arrived in America the RAC was already five years old. While Vinkovetsky marks the beginning of the colonial period with the founding of the RAC in 1799 the two dates do not perfectly match up, as much of the colonial ground had already been laid by the Golikov-Shelikov Company before it became the RAC. After all it was Shelikov who petitioned the Metropolitan to send missionaries to Russian America. In any event, in 1799 the RAC, successor to the

Golikov-Shelikov company, was incorporated by Tsar Paul I.[44] The terms of the company's charter granted it a trading monopoly with respect to "all hunting and mining on the north-east coast of America from latitude 55º to Bering Strait and beyond it, also on the Aleutian Islands, the Kuriles, and others situated in the North Eastern Sea."[45] In addition to trading rights the company was empowered to create colonies. It was also granted the right to make new discoveries, "not only above latitude 55º but beyond it, farther south, and to occupy the lands it discovers as Russian possessions, according to the rules prescribed."[46] The statues and franchise of the company were preserved for twenty one years and were subsequently twice renewed by the Russian government. Until the sale of Alaska to the United States in 1867, the company served as the sole empire builder and colonial contractor in Russian America.

Vinkovetsky characterizes the Russian American colonial period as an upgrade of Russia's initial extension into America, during which time the RAC expanded its sphere of influence southward acquiring new territory, trading partners, and introducing new forms of labour, while at the same time engendering local opposition.[47] In addition, the company would develop a stronger more cooperative relationship with the Russian Orthodox Church, slowly making space for an increased missionary presence in Russian America.

In 1799, consistent with the Company's plans to stretch its land claims as far south as Nootka Sound on Vancouver Island, Baranov established Fort Mikhailovskii

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[44] Chevigny, *Russian America*, 93.

[45] Okun, *The Russian-American Company*, 44.

[46] Okun, *The Russian-American Company*, 44.

[47] Vinkovetsky, *Russian America*, 187.

(Sitka) on Sitka Island[48] (see map 2, p. 134). It was a bold first move and one that was quickly countered by the Tlingit of the Alexander Archipelago. In 1802 the Sitka Island Tlingit, with the help of allied Ts'mysen and Haida, launched a major offensive against Fort Mikhailovskii thoroughly routing the Russian defences and successfully capturing the fort. The Tlingit occupied the fort for two years before the Russians launched a successful counteroffensive in 1804, destroying the fort and rebuilding it as Fort Novo-Arkhangelsk.[49] Although the fort was retaken, the Tlingit resistance essentially stopped Russian southward progress in its tracks. [50] With the exception of a single fort, Dionisievskii Redoubt, erected near the mouth of the Stikine in 1834, the RAC was unable to make further progress in Tlingit lands.[51] The company did, however, leap the Tlingit entirely, when in 1812 it erected Fort Ross in New Albion, Alta California, as a company farm and sealing base.[52]

Despite the successful Tlingit resistance and counter-insurgency during its early North American tenure, the company claimed on behalf of the Russian empire the North American coast from California to the Aleutians. But the reality is that the Russians had little influence on the ground south of Tlingit land and her claims were not taken any

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[48] Andrei Val'terovich Grinev, *The Tlingit Indians in Russian America, 1741-1867*, trans. Richard L. Bland and Katerina G. Solovjoa (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 111.

[49] Oleksa, *Orthodox Alaska*, 116. In 1808 the capitol of Russian America was moved there from Kodiak Island. Aurel Krause, *The Tlingit Indians*, trans. Erna Gunther (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1956), 37.

[50] Grinev, *The Tlingit Indians*, 139. The Tlingit also destroyed the Russian settlement at Yakutat in 1805.

[51] The fort was erected to allow the Russian access to the Stikine trade networks and as a show of force to demonstrate to the international community that they intended to defend and occupy lands north of the boundary 54º40'.

[52] Grinev, *The Tlingit Indians*, 150. As early as 1803 he had sent hunting parties to New Albion.

more seriously internationally. The company itself gave up on the claims when, in the 1820s a series of treaties signed between Russia, the United States, and Great Britain established the border of Russian America at 54º40' latitude and 141º longitude (the modern boundary between Canada and the Alaska).[53] Russian territories were further scaled back in 1839 when the RAC leased to the HBC the Alaskan coast from Cape Spencer in the north to Portland Canal in the south (from Cross Sound to the mouth of the Stikine, or about the length of the Alaskan panhandle).[54] The agreement between the two companies came into effect in 1839 and was repeatedly extended until Russian America was sold to the United States in 1867.[55] The agreement of 1839 was a clear signal that Russia's colonial activities in North America were at ebb tide, where they remained until they were halted altogether with the 1867 sale. While the RAC still occupied Sitka Island during those later years, the HBC took possession of Dionisievskii Redoubt and renamed it Fort Stikine.[56]

In this third phase of Russian activity the RAC invaded and settled on Tlingit land. The Tlingit, the third major cultural grouping with whom the Russians had dealings during their tenure in America, unlike the Aleut and the Aluttiq, were openly hostile to the Russians and were never forcefully subdued and made to hunt for furs. Yet, a Tlingit community did settle around the fort and the Russians were able to induce those Tlingit as well as some of their neighbours to trade with them. Moreover, some Tlingit were

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[53] Ibid., 185-6.

[54] Okun, *The Russian-American Company*, 218.

[55] Chevigny, 205. While the RAC continued to administer its American trade and colonies from its capitol on Sitka Island between 1839 and 1867, it no longer looked to the south, but concentrated its energies instead on the Alaskan mainland, namely, along the Yukon, Nushgak and Kuskokwim Rivers.

[56] The HBC shortly abandoned the fort and erected another further up river in 1840 named Fort Taku (or Fort Durham). Grinev, *The Tlingit*, 196.

employed by the company as labour, and those who did worked side by side with the Russians. Some Tlingit worked on board Russian vessels and at least one Tlingit went on a round the world voyage.[57]

Just as some Tlingit left their homes to trade, work and live with Russians, some Russians deserted their homes and jobs to live with the Tlingit. Desertions, as we have seen, have been a part of Russia's American story since the voyage of Dezhnev. Far from rosy working conditions is usually given as the reason for desertion as was the alleged case, for example, with Chirikov's deserters. In 1838 the company enlisted the help of local Tlingit to track down and apprehend three Russian deserters.[58]

Although the Tlingit checked the Russian colonial wave, with their settlements at Sitka, the Russians remained firmly settled on Tlingit territory until the Alaskan sale in 1867. And so long as they were present they were a likely source of contact for the peoples of the Interior. Interior peoples have long had direct contact with the Tlingit. The Sekani, Gitksan, Babine, Witsuwit'en and Dakelh were all known to travel to Tlingit territory by way of the Stikine River for trading and for oolichan fishing.[59] William Brown, in his Fort Kilmaurs (Babine) report of 1822-1823 remarked that he met a Sekani chief who visited a Russian trading post at the mouth of the Stikine River.[60] In the 1830s

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[57] Urey Lisiansky, *A Voyage Round the World, in the years 1803, 4, 5, & 6* (London: John Booth and Longman, Hurst, Rees Orme & Brown, 1814), 156.

[58] Vinkovetsky, *Russian America*, 110. The Tlingit were recompensed for their assistance.

[59] Jenness, "The Carrier Indians," 532.

[60] William Brown Fort Kilmaurs (Babine) Post Journal 1822-1823, B.11/e/1 1822-23. According to Brown "There is an extensive Lake, not far from Webster's Lake, out of which falls a very large River. At the place where the river discharges itself into the Pacific Ocean – There is an establishment where they trade their furs, but it is now two years since the chief was there. This I suppose to be a Russian settlement […] I endeavoured to ascertain what kind of property these people have for trade. But all I could learn was, 'That they sold muskets and coarse powder and the chief had a piece of strouds[?] of an inferior quality, which he had received from them."

Robert Campbell of the HBC was dispatched to the Laird River to erect a trading post and while en route he met a party of Russians assembled with a group "Nahanie" Indians.[61] Campbell alleged that the Russians ascended "the river in boats to a cataract far within the British lines, at the foot of which there is a splendid salmon fishery. There were a number of men, commanded by four ragged, drunken officers, who spoke a few broken words of English."[62] While it is likely that the Tlingit desired to buffer most relations so as to preserve their role as middle persons there were opportunities for the Russians to insert themselves into the inner orbits of the plateau.[63]

Trading channels between coast and interior by way of the Nass and Stikine Rivers may also have been the means by which smallpox was introduced to the peoples of the interior in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. In 1835 smallpox was introduced at Novo-Arkhangelsk (Sitka) by a passenger aboard one of the many Russian vessels anchored in harbor. The Tlingit at first relied on their healers to make them well and only after a time relented to vaccination. Some Tlingit healers who had been infected by the disease and survived alleged to have entered alternate worlds returning with certain esoteric skills. From the Tlingit the disease spread to the interior Ts'mysen and may have reached the interior Dakelh. According to Jenness a Dakelh community about

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[61] The "Nahanie" may have been Kaska, Tahltan, or some other Athabaskan group living in the region of the Laird River. Hongimann observed that the term Nahani "has at various times been applied to quiet distinct groups of people" and that it should be used only as a geographical place name (i.e. the current Nahanni National Park Reserve). See John J. Hongimann, "Are there Nahani Indians?" *Anthropologica* 3 (1956): 35-38.

[62] Thomas Simpson, *Narratives of the Discoveries on the north coast of America, effected by the officers of the Hudson's Bay Company during the years 1836-39* (London: Richard Bentley, 184), 127.

[63] On preserving their role as middlepersons they resisted British efforts to erect a trading post on the upper Stikine River.

Eutsuk Lake was wiped out about 1838.[64] I do not know Dakelh perceptions of this early epidemic but the nearby Nisga'a have a story about a prophet who became an infected and returned and assuming the shape of an owl, who prophesied that "nobody would be left."[65]

Another way in which the interior peoples were introduced to Russians was through their involvement in the Tlingit resistance. When the Tlingit of Sitka Island defeated the Russians at Sitka in 1802 they did so with the cooperation of other Tlingit, the Ts'mysen and the Haida. The attack on the Sitka fort was the largest Indigenous battle in the history of Russian America if not the entire northwest coast. Grinev estimated that the battle involved 10,000 Indigenous people from an area spanning 120,000 square kilometers.[66] I do not know whether any of those numbers were Gitksan but I cannot strike out the possibility: it would be hard for the Gitksan and their near neighbours not to notice a military campaign of such size.

During the tenure of the RAC the Russian Orthodox Church gradually increased its missionary activity in the American colony. But it was a slow growth and did not really take off until after the company's charter was renewed in 1821. The deaths of the early missionaries, subsequent staffing difficulties, and confrontations with Governor Baranov were among the chief reasons for the ebb in missionary activity after the company's formation.

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[64] Jenness, "The Carrier Indians," 475.

[65] Robert Boyd, *The Coming of the Spirit of Pestilence: Introduced Infectious Diseases and Population Decline among Northwest Coast Indians, 1774-1874* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), 125.

[66] Grinev, *The Tlingit Indians*, 130.

In the period between 1799 and 1821 only two new priests came to the colony. As mentioned previously, Father Gedeon came in 1804 to investigate the relationship between the governor and the Kodiak missionaries. Nine years after Gedeon's departure, in 1816, Father Alexei Sokolov was sent to the colony's capital at Sitka.[67] It was likely Sokolov whom the Protestant missionary Jonathon S. Green met in 1829. Green sailed to the North Pacific aboard an American merchant vessel to investigate the feasibility of establishing a Protestant mission to the Indigenous peoples on the coast. [68] After his stop at Sitka, Green held a dim view about the region's mission prospects. Green wrote that he "made a few inquiries respecting the Indians, but he [Sokolov] seemed to know little about them. He seemed to regard them, however, as in a hopeless situation."[69] And after the last of a number of visits to the Russian post Green concluded that "this is an unsuitable place to attempt anything for the Indians. I am almost certain, that no Russian

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[67] Chevigny, *Russian America,* 164; Nichols and Croskey, "The Condition of the Russian Orthodox Church," 44.

[68] See, Jonathan S. Green, *Journal of a Tour on the North West Coast of America in the Year 1829. Containing a description of part of California, Oregon and the Northwest Coast* (New York: CF Heartman, 1915). In 1829 Jonathan S. Green was sent by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions to the Pacific Northwest to report on the possibility of founding a mission and planting a small colony there. Green visited Sitka and other places on the coast, such as the lower Nass River and Haida Gwaii. At Sitka, he "called upon the old priest, who has resided here twelve years" (60). He must be referring to Father Sokolov who came in 1816. Green makes no mention of Sokolov's missionizing efforts. There may well be a grain of truth in that as the Russian relationship with the Tlingit at this point was not terribly affable; however, the possibility remains that Sokolov wanted to discourage Green from considering the region as a potential mission field. That Sokolov may have been downplaying his missionary effort is further attested by Green's somewhat confused report about Indigenous religion and Russian influence. On the one hand, Green reports that the Russians seemed little interested in Christianizing the Indigenous peoples. On the other hand, he says that he had trouble getting accurate reports of their religions for Russian influence, which is not to say that he made accurate reports elsewhere. In his short report [about 60 pages] he frequently refers to Indigenous practices as too "ridiculous" to note. In a short section on their religion he writes: "Certainly to no higher notion do they ascribe the formation of this godly frame, and the being who, made in the image of God, was placed upon its surface to subdue it, while others entertain notions too ridiculous to be repeated" (47). Because the religion of the peoples at Norfolk Sound seemed to Green to differ much from other tribes along the coast he suspected that "their neighbours the Russians" had influenced them (52). In any case, that the Russians lived in proximity to the Tlingit at such an early date is widely known and sheds no further light on the suggestion that Orthodoxy diffused to places south through Tlingit intermediaries.

[69] Ibid., 60.

here could cordially approve of such efforts. Nor have I any very sanguine expectations, that anything will be attempted by the Greek church."[70]

Father Sokolov remained at Sitka for eighteen years and there is little reason to think he ventured much beyond it. Green's less than sanguine expectations were confirmed by the fact the Tlingit and Russians were not on the best of terms during Sokolov's tenure and even the beloved Veniaminov had only a little success with the Tlingit (and, then, he was helped by his small pox vaccine). [71] Yet, despite the dearth of missionaries to work among them, the Tlingit were doubtless aware of Christianity through their contact with the Russian traders or through their northern neighbours who did have contact with the Russians missionaries.

Although Green did not see it at Sitka when he was there, and it would take a few years yet for the force of it to arrive, he was in Russian America at a time of renewed missionary zeal in the nation and in the colony. When the company renewed its charter in 1821 a missionary enthusiasm was gripping the Orthodox Church and with new vigour it re-initiated the recruitment of missionaries for its Far Eastern and American territories. This enthusiasm is perhaps best exemplified by the efforts of Father Ivan Veniaminov, one of the most famous Christian missionaries of any denomination to work on the North Pacific Coast. In 1824, Father Veniaminov arrived in the Russian American colony on Unalaska Island. Ten years later, Veniaminov was transferred to Sitka.[72] While he is well known for his ethnographic work at Unalaska, his activities at Sitka interest me the most;

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[70] Ibid., 89.

[71] Chevigny, *Russian America*, 73.The sparse missionary work might not seem a lacuna in the colony's operations if it were not for the first objective in the company's statues, which stated that the Company was to be "engaged in the propagation of the Holy Gospel." The claim about the importance of spreading the gospel may also have been a formality.

[72] He was replaced at Unalaska by Fr. Gregory Golovin.

of all the peoples most directly involved with the Russians, the Tlingit were closest to the peoples of the interior. During his first two years at Sitka, Veniaminov's priestly duties were largely parochial and performed within the confines of the fort; by 1836 he reported that he had been able to baptize only nine Tlingit men and women.[73] His missionary aspirations among the Tlingit (which were also often bound up with his ethnographic work) were vexed by the fact that the Russians and Tlingit were rarely on the best of terms. Veniaminov wrote shortly after his arrival, "I haven't yet been able to gather much information about them that is *trustworthy*, for although I'd like to become acquainted with them – as I did with the Fox-Aleuts among whom *I lived* and who opened their hearts to me – these [Tlingits] can only be watched, and so my observations must remain merely superficial."[74] The situation was somewhat reversed in 1837 when Veniaminov was able to visit nearby Dionisievskii Redoubt on the Alaskan mainland near the mouth of the Stikine River. At that Fort he performed the Divine Liturgy in front of an estimated 1, 500 Tlingits, conducted funeral ceremonies, and gave private instruction.[75] Despite the Tlingit interest in Veniaminov, particularly in the funeral rites he performed, he did not remain long on the Stikine. He was back at Sitka in 1838 and later that year left for St. Petersburg and Moscow to promote and oversee the publication of his linguistic and

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[73] Kan, *Memory Eternal*, 94. In addition, according to his journals translated by Kisslinger during his time at Sitka up to 1836, beyond his priestly duties, Veniaminov occupied his time building a clock for the belfry, copying the Aleut Gospel and editing the Aleut grammar, editing his manuscript pertaining to the Unalaska District in the Aleutian Islands, alphabetizing and rewriting an Aleut Russian Glossary, and beginning to make meteorological observations as requested by the Academy of Sciences. See, Ioann Veniaminov, *Journals of the Priest Ioann Veniaminov in Alaska, 1823 to 1836*, trans., Jerome Kisslinger (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 1993), 197-198.

[74] Garrett, *St. Innocent*, 106 [italics in the original].

[75] The positive reception Veniaminov received was perhaps due to the friendlier relations that prevailed between the Russians and Tlingit of that place. See Garrett, *St. Innocent*, 110; Nichols and Crosby, "The Condition of the Orthodox Church", 48; and Lev Puhalo, *Innokenty of Alaska: The Life of Bishop Innocent Veniaminov* (Chilliwack: Synaxis Press, 1981), 21.

geographical works on the Aleut and the Aleutian Islands.[76] The voyage kept Veniaminov away from Sitka for three years, and when he returned in 1841 it was not as a parish priest but as the Bishop of Kamchatka, the Kuriles and Aleutian Islands.[77] The duties associated with the new title essentially brought an end to his missionary career. As Bishop, Veniaminov was tasked with visiting and administering his vast diocese that extended along the top of the Pacific from Alaska to Siberia. Between 1842 and 1852 he undertook three visitations of his See and each tour covered more than 15,000 miles.[78] In 1853 he was elected to the rank of Archbishop which required that he move from Sitka to Yakutsk; later in life he was appointed Metropolitan of St. Petersburg and he never again returned to Alaska.

Although during his career Veniaminov was more a parish priest than missionary (in part at least because of the vast administrative responsibilities expected of him), he did have a brief missionary career among the Tlingit that began about 1836 and lasted until 1838.[79] During that period we know that Veniaminov performed Divine Liturgy, funeral rites and that he gave private instruction. What sort of things might Veniaminov

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[76] During his brief return to Sitka Veniaminov was did begin a short-lived mission to the Sitkan Tlingit. Veniaminov attributed the inroads to a smallpox epidemic that broke out there in 1836. Veniaminov was part of the vaccination effort started among the Tlingit in those years and referred to the epidemic as an act of "Providence" that allowed him greater contact with the Sitkan Tlingit and contributed to the cause of their Christianization. Kan, *Memory Eternal*, 99. By the time of his departure from Sitka in the fall of 1838, he thought that many Tlingit were on the verge of converting to Orthodoxy. In addition to the *rapprochement*, Veniaminov cited a number of indicators that reflected the Tlingit's changing attitudes: curiosity about the Orthodox rites, predominately funeral ceremonies, an interest in hearing the clergy speak; and an acceptance of baptism and conversion. Kan, *Memory Eternal*, 106. Had the Tlingit by this time heard of Bini?

[77] H.A. Shenitz, "Father Veniaminov, the Enlightener of Alaska." *The American Slavic and East European Review*, 37 (1959): 79. In 1839 his wife died and Veniaminov decided to become a monastic, those circumstances led to him being tonsured Bishop in 1840. When Veniaminov returned to Sitka in 1841 he took the name St. Innokenty of Irkutsk who had been the first patron of Alaska.

[78] David Nordlander, "Innokentii Veniaminov and the Expansion of Orthodoxy in Russian America," *The Pacific Historical Review*. 64, no. 1 (1995): 29.

[79] Veniaminov, *Journals of the Priest Ioann Veniaminov*, xxxix.

have taught? There are hints of Veniaminov's missionary pedagogy throughout his writings. One of his more programmatic pieces was his *Instruction* that he issued to the Nushagak missionary Theophanus.[80] He advised, like the Catholics west of the Rockies, that the missionary should begin by acquainting his audience with Christian religious history. Veniaminov's program for introducing Christianity to his audience included the following topics, and be introduced in the following order: (1) the creation of the world by God, (2) the emergence of the human being, sin and the immortality of the soul, and (3) Christ as the savior and his eventual second coming, with particular emphasis placed on his powers of salvation (that Christ saves everyone and that all human beings, including them, have a chance at salvation). The local peoples were encouraged to devote themselves to Christ and to live according to the virtues outlined in the Gospel. They were reminded that to do so would lead to just rewards in the life hereafter.[81] The regular practice of prayer was emphasized as a means of signifying one's Christian's dispositions. The Ten Commandments were also covered and possibly conflated with extant local practices to facilitate their understanding; such conflations of Christian and Indigenous concepts and practices was justified by Veniaminov as he took Biblical guidelines to be basically reflective of universal human values.[82] The instruction given the Indigenous people in Christian concepts, history and practice was not an end in itself but conceived as the preamble to their eventual "salvation through baptism."[83]

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[80] See, Ioann Veniaminov, *Instruction to the Nushagak Missionary Theophanus, Hieromonk* (New York: Russian orthodox Missionary Messenger, 1899).

[81] Kan, *Memory Eternal*, 102.

[82] Kan, *Memory Eternal*, 100.

[83] Ibid., 100.

While Veniaminov presented Christianity to Indigenous people as a universal religion, they must always have understood it as the religion of the Russian people. I think that the dissonance between the message of universality and the ethnicity of those delivering that message must also have been apparent to the Tlingit. On the one hand, there were Aleut, Yupik, "Creole", and some Tlingit laity; and some of whom also served as the teachers and assistants that made up the entourage of the Russian priest-missionary who spread the word of charity and ecumenism to the Tlingit. On the other hand, there were no Indigenous priests and no Indigenous people in a position of authority vis-à-vis the Russian clergy and/or Russian colonists. Both the Tlingit and Russians were separated on the grounds of Sitka (Novo Arkhangel'sk): the Tlingit had their village and their own church and the Russians had their fort and their own church. When the priests spoke of the importance of the inner conviction of the heart and that everyone can attain salvation, (Orthodoxy takes pride in its affectivity and its appeal to matters of the heart) the heart of all men and women must have been conceived as fundamentally the same: the Tlingit were human like the Russians. Yet, such universality did not prevail in the social field. It is a sociological and ethnographic fact that when human groups mark difference they are assisted by the application of a set of values to others. But Veniaminov's Christianity ran counter to that that tendency and attempted to collapse difference by rendering everyone the same. If there was no missionary impetus among Indigenous peoples of the Americas, as for example, Vine Deloria Jr. has suggested, then, this message might have struck them not only as peculiar but at odds with what was actually happening: the Russians were mostly keeping to themselves and so too were the Tlingit.[84] And it is, as I suggest elsewhere, the confusion generated by the dissonance

[84] See Vine Deloria Jr. *God is Red: A Native View of Religion*. Golden, CO: Fulcrum, 1994.

between what was said and what was done that gives rise to creative contemplation, such as the application of an evangelical Christian message of universality to a local setting (i.e. a prophet religion). Christianity was complicated, people were cautious with it and experimented with it and those things took time. If the people of the interior picked up on Christianity by way of the Tlingit, and I think that they did, it must not have been neatly packaged. Moreover, they are already thinking about Christianity as something that it is not only coming from the east. Despite what the traders or missionaries might say as they come over the mountains, they already know from their western neighbours that they do not have sole rights to the gospel.

Veniaminov and Bini

By the time that the Russians had settled among the Tlingit, the peoples of the interior had already heard of them, of their trespass on coastal waters, their frequently hostile relations toward coastal peoples, the goods they brought with them, and their religion. There is just too much evidence pointing in that direction to suggest otherwise. The Ts'mysen and the Haida participated in the Tlingit attack on Fort Michaelivskii in 1802. News and material goods was spread upriver from the annual trading fairs held on the Stikine and Nass Rivers and attended by Ts'mysen, Tlingit, Haida, and Kwakwaka'wakw. The fair was a prominent feature of Indigenous North American cultural and economic life "was a time to bind the people together with ritual worship, arranged weddings, exchanges of presents, and group merry making."[85] There were at least two routes by which news circulated at the fairs might reach (or be brought back to)

[85] Francis Jennings, *The Founders of America* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1993), 79.

the upper Fraser and Skeena Rivers. One was an overland trail that led from Babine Lake and Hazelton to ether the Nass or Stikine Rivers. The other was a river route that led down the Skeena and from its mouth along the Coast to either river. Such trading fairs would have provided a venue to discuss Christianity.[86]

It was perhaps at those fairs where news of Christian missionaries was circulated. The claim has been made, for example, that Bini, the Witsuwit'en prophet about whom we will learn more about in chapter 7, first learned of Christianity from Veniaminov at one such rendezvous. I want to explore that claim in some detail in the remainder of this chapter as the matter of the alleged Bini-Veniaminov relation has yet to be adequately satisfied. I am not convinced that Bini had anything more than a distant, if that, awareness of Veniaminov's teachings. Clarifying the relation will also serve as a caution against overdetermining the influence of Christianity on the basis of little evidence.[87] In Neylan's comprehensive history of Protestant missions to the Ts'mysen, she argues that the early nineteenth-century prophets among the Witsuwit'en and Gitksan learned of Christianity from one or more of four possible sources: Indigenous catechists, employees

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[86] William Swagerty suggests that prior to onset of the fur trade in western North America the major trading fairs were located among sedentary populations with surplus abundant economies; precisely the conditions that prevailed on the Northwest Coast. Swagerty identifies major trade centres on the lower Columbia (the Dalles) and on the lower Fraser. On the basis of the ubiquitous references in the historical and oral historical material to the considerable traffic that passed through the mouth of the Stikine and Nass rivers, in conjunction with Swagerty's insights, I suggest that similar trading fairs were operative at those places as well. While Swagerty does not refer to the trading centres as fairs, to capture the sense that these were also spaces of heightened sociability and cultural interaction I refer to them as fairs. Further research may well amplify my claim about the presence of such fairs on the Nass and Stikine. See William R. Swagerty, "Indian Trade in the Trans-Mississippi West to 1870," in *History of Indian White Relations, vol. 4, Handbook of North American Indians*, Wilcomb E. Washburn and William C. Sturtevant, eds. (Washington: Smithsonian, 1978), 351-2.

[87] That Bini met with and learned his version of Christianity from Veniaminov is dealt with in three sources: Susan Neylan's book on Protestant missions to the Ts'mysen, *The Heavens are Changing*; Hilary Rumley's MA thesis, "Reactions to Contact and Colonization: An Interpretation of Religious and Social Change among the Indians of British Columbia"; and George Henry Raley's "Brief History of the Kitimaat Mission."

in the fur trade, early Catholic missionaries, and Russian Orthodox missionaries. With respect to the Orthodox, she writes,

> Another interesting theory [regarding the origins of the Bini movement] postulated by the Methodist missionary George H. Raley suggested that knowledge about Christianity came from the north directly from Russian Orthodox missionaries. This idea has also been explored by Hilary R. Rumley. While stationed at Kitamaat, Raley learned how missionized Alaskan Native groups transmitted knowledge of Christianity to some of the first nations of British Columbia during the spring oolichan fisheries. He discovered that *Beni* was an abbreviation of the name of one of the best known eighteenth-century Russian missionaries, Innocentious Veniaminoff. Raley's informant, Abpsileahkus, related to the missionary his father's message that "the great spirit had sent Bini with a strange and wonderful message to this effect the chief above is our father. He wishes us to be good, if we do good and live in peace he will reward us; if we do evil he will punish us. Raley also heard the same story circulated among the Tsimshian [Ts'mysen]. This version held that Venaiminoff "in his travels by canoe visited various tribes on the Stikine. The Stikine Indians contacted the Tsimpsheans on the Skeena." Once again, although Euro-Canadians deemed themselves the original source of Christianity, the actual transmission of Christian elements occurred through the indigenous forms in the pre-mission period.[88]

According to Neylan, George Raley "discovered" that "Beni" was the abbreviated form of Veniaminov. While Raley did *suggest* that "Beni" was the abbreviated form of Veniaminov he did not *discover* it. Here is what Raley writes about the Bini-Veniaminov connection in his "Brief History of the Kitamaat Mission" (the source that Neylan cites),

> "In reference to No.(1), Innocentious Veniaminoff, in the first issue of 'Na-Na-Kwa' we read:
>
> 'A bright old man, Abpsileahkus, related the following to me about three years ago: -
>
> 'In my father's days the Stikine Indians came across the country to trade with us at Kitamaat for the oil of the oolichan fish. They told my father that the great spirit had sent Bini* with a strange and wonderful message to this effect that the chief of the above is our father. He wishes us to be good, if we do good and live at peace he will reward us; if we do evil he will punish us.'
>
> (* Short for Veniaminoff. The nearest approach to the name contracted, as pronounced by the Coast Indians.)

[88] Susan Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing: Nineteenth-Century Protestant Missions and Tsimshian Christianity*. (McGill-Queen's University Press: Montreal, 2003), 186.

> The story of "The Chief of the Above" was repeated by several of the Kitamaat people and left a permanent impression. On visiting Port Simpson in the early 1900's, the Tsimpshean people told me a similar story. Veniaminoff, in his travels by canoe, visited various tribes on the Stikine. The Stickine Indians contacted the Tsimpsheans on the Skeena. The missionary's influence had a permanent effect, through his inspired message, on the Kitamaat people who, in their travels, met many Christians …"[89]

The cited passage of Raley's "History" can be broken into three parts: the presentation of Abpsileahkus' narrative, a short editorialization (the part followed by the asterisk), and a note regarding his voyage to Port Simpson. In the first part, Raley relates Abpsileahkus' narrative in which he says that Abpsileahkus' father told him that the Great Spirit had sent Bini to the people. Abpsileahkus, however, does not say that Bini is short for Veniaminov; it is Raley who makes that claim in his editorialization. The asterisk that follows the name "Bini" in the main part of the narrative is partnered with an asterisk at the end of the paragraph, where Raley writes, "Short for Veniaminoff. The nearest approach to the name contracted, as pronounced by the Coast Indians." The asterixed material is Raley's interpolation and does not follow as part of Abpsileahkus' narrative. In the third part, Raley writes that the Ts'mysen of Port Simpson told Raley that Veniaminov traveled by canoe among the Stikine and that the Stikine contacted the Ts'mysens on the Skeena who then shared his teachings amongst one another. It cannot be disputed that Veniaminov visited the Stikine and that the Stikine visited the Ts'mysen,

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[89] George Henry Raley, Correspondence, Transcripts, and Misc. In George Henry Raley Collection. H/D/R13.5, Victoria: British Columbia Archives (hereafter BCA). Raley was born in Yorkshire England in 1864 into a Methodist family. At eighteen he left England for Ontario to work on one of the province's farms. Shortly after arriving in Ontario he joined a Methodist Mission and six years later he married Maude Giles from Brockville, Ontario. In 1893, the two moved to British Columbia to work as Methodist missionaries and were stationed among the Haisla people at Kitamaat, a coastal settlement south of the mouth of the Skeena. The two served at Kitamaat for fourteen years and in 1907 Raley and his wife relocated briefly to Port Simpson. After a short stay they moved again, this time to the southern coast of the province, where he took up the position of principal at Coqualeetza Residential School in Chilliwack. Raley died in British Columbia in 1958. Sarah de Leeuw, Sarah, *Artful Places: Creativity and Colonialism in British Columbia's Indian Residential Schools* (PhD diss. Queen's University, 2007), 111-112.

so in a sense, Raley may well be correct about Veniaminov's legacy. But it does not follow from that, as Raley suggests in his "Brief History," that the only Christian influence among the Ts'mysen prior to the establishment of the Anglican and Methodists missions came from the Orthodox in the north.[90] In any case, Bini, the Witsuwit'en prophet, has been so well documented elsewhere that it is unlikely that he was identical with Veniaminov and nowhere else have I read the claim that Veniaminov's name was contracted as Bini.

The other argument for a Bini-Veniaminov connection was made by Hilary Rumley. In her MA thesis on the religious response to contact and colonization by the Indigenous people of British Columbia, Rumley grounded her argument in Raley's "History", arguing that Bini was not Veniaminov but that he was influenced by him. In contrast to Raley, Rumley speculated that Bini visited the Stikine, met Veniaminov and subsequently "gave himself the contracted version of the missionary's name and went back to teach his people the new religion."[91] This is an interesting theory and not without plausibility; there is very much about Bini's life that remains unknown, but it is not a particularly well-supported. Rumley provides no other evidence in support of her claim other than the pertinent section of Raley's history already cited. And as I have already shown, because Raley's Bini-Veniaminov relation is questionable there is no reason to even place them in the same space. Remember that Raley's conflation is entirely dependent on Veniaminov's fame and the voiced consonants, that begin each name,

[90] My thinking is that Raley was led to this conclusion when after hearing about Bini from Abpsileahkus, and already aware of Veniaminov's work with the Tlingit (Veniaminov was no minor figure in the history of the coast), he either failed to distinguish between the two personages or took the one name to mean the other.

[91] Hilary Rumley, "Reactions to Contact and Colonization: An Interpretation of Religious and Social Change Among Indians of British Columbia" (MA Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1973), 52.

consonants which, it is true, sound remarkably similar in Russian and English. While Veniaminov did live at Sitka for more than fifteen years, it was only between 1836 and 1838 that he had much of any contact with the Tlingit. During that period he did make one visit (perhaps two) to the Stikine Tlingit, yet there is no indication that he ever undertook much of a mission among them. Veniaminov was indeed famous for his "travels by canoe" but those travels were largely restricted to his parish at first and later to his diocese, a diocese that extended north and west of Sitka into the Aleutian Islands, the Alaskan mainland, Kamchatka and Siberia. The Russian possessions on mainland North America included only Alaska and its panhandle so it is highly unlikely that Veniaminov, either as parish priest or Bishop, would have undertaken any mission on the Stikine or down the coast past Dionisievskii Redoubt into British occupied territories. Of course it is possible that Bini was one of those present in the crowd of 1,500 that came to see Veniaminov perform the liturgy in 1836, but to make the claim with any degree of certainty more evidence than that presented by Rumley and Raley is needed.

My coverage of the putative Veniaminov-Bini connection suggests that the attempt to link a prophet movement to a particular event or a particular missionary may be an overreaction. Such movements need not be explained by establishing a point of contact between missionary and Indigenous person. A movement may have its origins in such a meeting but that is not the way that it always happens. In the end it seems that a direct connection between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Bini prophet traditions hinges entirely on Raley's allegation that "Beni" was short for Veniaminov. If that is the case and Raley made the editorialization, then, why did he do it? Why did he make Bini out to be the contracted form of Veniaminov? I do not want to get side tracked by those

questions but a bit of speculation will serve as a caution against the uncritical consumption of mission literature.

Raley may have made the conflation because he was more familiar with the missiological record than he was with the ethnographic record and applied Occam's razor: he knew Veniaminov was a well known missionary who worked among the Tlingit and settled at Sitka and thus concluded any knowledge of Christianity in the north originated with him.[92] Second, the setting in which Abpsileahkus' story was initially published offers another clue. His narrative appeared in the very first edition of *Na-Na-Kwa*, or *Dawn on the Pacific Coast*, the missionary journal that Raley published while at Kitimaat. The stated aim of the publication was to inform those "who contribute, and pray for the success of Indian work, especially that of the Kitamaat Mission [and] to let them know a little of the good they are doing." Because *Na-Na-Kwa* was addressed to patrons of the Kitamaat mission and those with an interest in the Methodist evangelization of the Pacific coast, its mandate was neither historical nor anthropological. When presenting his history in *Na-Na-Kwa* Raley may well have saw fit to distill it in a straightforward and easily palatable fashion given his readership. Highlighting that "Beni" was Veniaminov (and not one of other options) would have served that purpose. Moreover, Raley's understanding of the genesis of the Kitamaat mission is perfectly sensible for a Methodist evangelical Protestant. Raley cites three major waves of Christianity that preceded the Methodists at Kitimaat. The first was represented by the

[92] That the Stikine did visit the Ts'mysen of the Skeena region is without question. On the coastal trade route between the Stikine and Nass see Susan Marsden and Robert Galois, "The Tsimshian, the Hudson's Bay Company, and the Geopolitics of the Northwest Coast Fur Trade, 1787-1840." *The Canadian Geographer* 39, no.2 (1995). The Fort Simpson Post Journals for the years 1852 to 1853 and 1855 to 1858 frequently refer to peoples from the Stikine coming to trade and to visit the Ts'mysen around the post. See Ft. Simpson Post Journal, 1852-1858, B201/a/7-8, HBCA.

Russian Orthodox priest Veniaminov, the second was expressed by the Anglican William Duncan, and the penultimate wave was ushered in by the famous Thomas Crosby a Methodist like himself.[93] The logic of this presentation is clear: Veniaminov represents the first and oldest form of Christianity – a form which is still obscurely preserved in Indigenous oral tradition – and successive waves only became more evangelistic and freed from institutional structures. Raley's history of the Kitamaat Mission is a progressive one that echoes what, from his perspective, might be seen as the progressive Christian history of Western Europe (albeit at Kitamaat the Orthodox stood in place of the Catholics). The older versions get the ball rolling but it is Crosby, the Methodist, who makes Christianity accessible to all the Ts'mysen.

While the Veniaminov-Bini connection is weak, and I have been critical of both Rumley and Raley, there is something important to salvage from their work: both authors remind us that a consideration of the religious history of the region must wrestle with the possible influence of the Russian Orthodox Church. Moreover, the Veniaminov-Bini connection keeps the western littoral on the analytical radar. I am arguing here that in the opening decades of the nineteenth century newcomers approached from the north and east as much as they did from the east and south.

Like the Russian Far East or the American Northwest, the peoples of the upper Skeena and Fraser Rivers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had frontiers and, also like Russians and Americans at their respective metropoles, they knew what was

[93] More specifically, Raley cites a local from Kitimaat, Wahuksgumalayou, as the impetus for the Methodist expansion to Kitimaat. Wahuksgumalayou was renamed Charles Amos by the Methodists after a visit to Victoria in 1876 where he was converted by William Pollard. Upon returning home he travelled the following year to Fort Simpson to request a teacher from Thomas Crosby. Strongly influenced as he was by the Methodist tradition of itinerancy, Thomas seized on Amos' interests and promised to visit him when he could. He thus prepared the way for the eventual arrival of Susanna Lawrence in 1882 and, later, Raley. See, Jan Hare and Jean Barman, *Good Intentions Gone Awry: Emma Crosby and the Methodist Mission on the Northwest Coast* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 130.

happening in their frontiers; events among the Tlingit, the Alutiiq, and Aleut, were in all likelihood not completely unknown to them. They would have been aware of the Russians, of Christianity, of the fur trade, of the Tlingit resistance and of the Aleut servitude for more than fifty years before the North West Company established its first post in the region in the early nineteenth century. Europeans were first drawn into their orbit that tilted downward, encompassed the rivers, the Stikine, the Nass and the Skeena, and stretched elliptically into the sea. The Russians, however, were not the only European peoples to enter that orbit in the eighteenth century. The Spanish had colonial designs on the coast, designs that culminated with the establishment of a colony at Nootka Sound.

Spanish Commercial, Colonial and Religious Activity in the Pacific Northwest

When Alexander Mackenzie crossed through Witsuwit'en territory on his famous voyage to the sea in 1793 the peoples he met with him told him that they had traded with the Spanish for as long as they could remember.[94] Indeed, the Spanish had been active in the North Pacific for at least as long as the Russians. The early period of Spanish activity, from the mid-sixteenth to the mid-eighteenth centuries, was characterized by intentional exploration and accidental landfalls. The second period, after 1741, the year of the Bering-Chirikov voyage, was a time of intensified exploration and helped pave the way for the formation of the Spanish colonies at Nootka Sound and Neah Bay (1790 and 1792). The third period, the colonial period, began with the founding of Nootka in 1790 and ended when the Spanish left in 1795. The colonial period was also a time of much exploration and sustained contact with the peoples of continental coast and Islands.

[94] W. Kaye Lamb, ed., *The Journals and Letters of Sir Alexander Mackenzie* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1970), 320.

Accidental Landfalls and the Beginnings of Exploration

In the beginning, and this is true for the length of the Spanish tenure on the coast, Spanish mariners and colonists were little interested in exploiting the commercial potential. It is true that they had some designs on extracting coastal resources for use in the Californias but they never involved themselves in the fur trade in anywhere near the capacity as the Russians, British and Americans. Yet, it was commerce, the lucrative Manilla-Acapulco trade, that first brought Spanish mariners, albeit accidentally, to the grey pacific coast. [95] According to Spanish colonial records, between 1578 and 1750 at least six Spanish galleons failed to return to their home port of Acapulco after leaving Manilla.[96] The fates of two other wrecks, both occurring in the vicinity of the Columbia River, are better known and are pertinent to this discussion. In 1707 the galleon *San Francisco Xavier*, on her return trip to Acapulco, was driven ashore by pirates near the mouth of the Columbia River at Nehalem. The ship was laden with beeswax, which the locals recovered from the beached vessel and buried it. The wax remained buried until the mid-nineteenth century when it was unearthed and traded to the Hudson's Bay

[95] In addition to Spanish activity, trans-Pacific travel by other peoples might have brought other newcomers to the coast. Marius Barbeau suggested that Siberian migrations to America and Japanese shipwrecks (with survivors) on the coast were both likely possibilities. See Wilson Duff, "Contributions of Marius Barbeau to West Coast Ethnology," *Anthropologica* 6, no. 1 (1964). In 1833, a Japanese boat was washed ashore near Point Greenville. The three survivors of that wreck were integrated into the local Indigenous population and traded to the HBC. See George Simpson, *History of a Voyage Around the World During the Years 1841 and 1842* (London: Henry Oolburn, 1847). Thus, Trans-Pacific travel had been documented even before Thor Heyerdahl's *Kon-tiki* expedition, in which Heyerdahl and a small crew crossed the Pacific aboard a South American built balsa raft. The potentiality of trans-Pacific (and more generally trans-oceanic) travel in "pre-Columbian" times was discussed in number of papers written the Society for American Archaeology in 1968. See C. L. Riley, J. C. Kelly, C. W. Pennington and R. L. Rands, eds. *Man across the Sea, Problems of Pre-Columbian Contacts* (University of Texas Press: Austin and London, 1971).

[96] The route from Manilla looped toward the north before descending south.

Company.[97] At some point either shortly before or after the incident at Nehalem another Spanish crew was cast away at the mouth of the Columbia. Gabriel Franchère, servant of the Pacific Fur Company on the Columbia River, alleged that he met the son of one of the castaways living among the Clatsops in 1812.[98] Warren Cook has also alleged that other castaways of the same wreck crossed the continent to British North America where they publicized the news of a "great river to the west" (i.e. the Columbia).[99]

New Spain's colonial explorations, that is, apart from the occasional commercial venture and crash landing, began in 1595 with the voyage of Sebastião Rodrigues Carmenho.[100] Carmenho was commissioned by the viceroy of New Spain, Luís de Velasco, to explore the California coastline North of Acapulco. His objectives were to search for the "Strait of Anián" (i.e. a Northwest Passage) to scout locations for potential colonial settlement and to locate safe anchorages where water and ballast might be

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[97] Warren Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire. Spain and the Pacific Northwest, 1543-1819* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 33.

[98] Franchère records his encounter: "We found here [in the vicinity of Point Vancouver on the Columbia] an old blind man, who gave us a cordial reception. Our guide said that he was a white man, and that his name was *Soto* […] he was the son of a Spaniard who had been wrecked at the mouth of the river […] a part of the crew on this occasion got safe ashore, but were all massacred by the Clatsops, with the exception of four, who were spared and who married native women […] these four Spaniards, of whom his father was one, disgusted with the savage life, attempted to reach a settlement of their own nation toward the south, but had never been heard of since; and that when his father, with his companions, left the country, he himself was yet quite young." Rueben Gold Thwaites, ed., *Franchère's Voyage to the Northwest Coast, 1811-1814*, in *Early Western Travels, 1748-1846* 7 (Cleveland, OH: A.H. Clark Co., 1904-1907), 248-9.

[99] Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire*, 39.

[100] Earlier explorations include the 1584 voyage of Captain Francisco Gali who approached the coast about Kodiak Island and at 57.50 "admired the beauty of the majestic mountains whose peaks were covered with eternal snow while their bases were adorned with beautiful vegetation." Krause, *The Tlingit Indians*, 11-12. The 1587 voyage of Pedro de Unamuno also sailed in northern latitudes along the coast. Additionally, Grinev cites some Tlingit oral history suggesting that the first Europeans with whom the Tlingit had contact were the Spanish and not the Russians. Grinev, *The Tlingit Indians*, 91.

procured for the Trans-Pacific galleons. [101] Carmenho made it as far as Trinidad Head (approximately 350 kilometers north of San Francisco) before returning south. En route he stopped in San Francisco Bay, so named by Carmenho, when a storm arose and drove the galleon ashore leaving its cargo of beeswax and silk scattered upon the beach. [102] Seventy of Carmenho's crew survived and followed the coast safely back to New Spain. Carmenho's voyage was followed in 1602 by Sebastián Vizcaino. With similar instructions to Carmenho's, Vizcaino succeeded in charting the coast between Cape San Lucas (the southern extreme of the Baja peninsula) and Cape Mendocino (California's "lost coast") but brought no news of a northwest passage.[103] While Vizcaino produced useful charts, the Spanish were not moved to resume exploration until the mid-eighteenth century, at about the same time that news of the Bering-Chirikov expedition reached Madrid.[104]

In the early phase of Spanish activity on the coast, characterized by infrequent explorations and shipwrecks, there was probably very little, if any, interaction between coastal peoples and Spanish clergy. While it is true that a chaplain, or some other crew

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[101] The term "Straits of Anian" was borrowed from Marco Polo's explorations in the thirteenth century. In the sixteenth century, the Straits were thought refer to a passage that separated Asia from the New World. At other times, the straits were meant to refer to a Northwest Passage that allegedly connected the Pacific to the Atlantic as hypothesized by Martin Chacke (1567), Juan de Fuca (sometime before 1592), Ferrer de Maldonado (1598), and de Font (1640). See Godfrey Sykes, "The Mythical Straits of Anián." *Bulletin of the American Geographical Society*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (1915), 161-172. Carmenho is probably looking for a Northwest Passage or an opening into the North American continent. Spanish policy throughout its exploration of the coast was focused on three things: claiming the land, checking the Russian advance, and searching for an alleged Northwest Passage. John Kendrick, *The Men With Wooden Feet: the Spanish Exploration of the Pacific Northwest* (Toronto: NC Press, 1985), 14.

[102] Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire*, 10-11.

[103] Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire*, 12.

[104] Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire*, 3. Cook attributes the hiatus to Spanish secrecy. If a Northwest Passage was discovered Spain was not yet prepared to extend their colonies northward to meet it. In 1757 a version of Tabbert's work that duplicated Bering's maps and discoveries was published in Madrid.

member, may have survived a ship wreck, been adopted into an Indigenous community, and shared Christian teachings at some length, I think that very little of Christianity would have been imparted that way, without continuous contact Christianity such knowledge would have fizzled out over time. That is not to say the shipwrecks were without significance: they at least confirmed the existence of Spaniards to the south, which among other things, meant coastal peoples could anticipate future visits.

Spanish Exploration of the North Coast

The Bering-Chirikov reports re-awakened Spanish interest in the Pacific Northwest. Fearing that the Russians, having made the leap across the straits, were advancing toward Spanish claims in the south, the colonial administration moved for a twofold response: the colonization of Alta California and the further exploration of the north coast to claim all lands not yet possessed by the Russians.[105] In 1767 Inspector General Gálvez implemented the first phase of the plan by occupying and settling Monterey and the coastal explorations were begun shortly thereafter. In 1774, Juan Perez, former pilot on the Manilla-Acalpulco route sailed the *Santiago* north to the Queen Charlotte Islands (about 54˚ – 55˚ north). Perez also anchored at Nootka Sound where his crew made the first recorded contact with the peoples of Vancouver Island.[106]

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[105] The plan for colonization of California and the exploration of the Northwest Coast as far as the Russian territories was drafted by Inspector General of the colony José de Gálvez and Viceroy Carlos Francisco de Croix Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire*, 48.

[106] Oral traditions of initial contacts between the Nuu-chah-nulth and the Spanish are extant today. Kendrick cites an oral tradition recorded by Father Brabant in 1874 about the Nuu-chah-nulth impression of the *Santiago:* "At first their ancestors had thought that *Santiago* was an immense bird, then that it was a canoe 'come back from the land of the dead with their bygone chiefs.' One Indian tradition has it that the blocks used for tightening the rigging, which sailors call deadeyes, looked like skulls, so they thought the big moving island with trees was inhabited by dead men." Kendrick, *The Men With Wooden Feet*, 15.

A second expedition followed the next year. Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra in command of the frigate *Sonora* and Don Bruno de Hezeta in command of the schooner *Santiago* left San Blas in 1775 to extend the work begun by Perez. After the two vessels were separated off the coast of present-day Washington State, Hezeta returned south to Monterey while Quadra continued north making it all the way to the Alexander Archipelago. Quadra made landfall at Cape Edgecumbe on Kruzof Island twenty miles west of Sitka, performed an act of possession and erected a cross. When the crew returned to the ship a group of Tlingit emerged on shore and moved the cross in front of their own houses. The Tlingit motivation for moving the cross is neither discussed in Father Benito de la Sierra's description of the event nor in the related secondary literature.[107] My own sense is that they did it to affirm ownership of the coast; things left on the coast belong to them as it is their land. If I am right, the act of moving the cross, claiming it as their own, is illustrative of the indigenization of Christian form.

In 1779, a third Spanish voyage, the Artaega-Quadra expedition, consisting of two armed frigates, *La Princesa*, commanded by Ignacio Arteaga and *Favorita*, commanded by Quadra, was outfitted for the northwest coast.[108] The Artaega-Quadra expedition headed straight for Bucarelli Sound, where the crew made landfall, erected a barracks (the first Spanish post on the Northwest coast) and met with local Tlingit.[109] The frigates were armed because one aim of the expedition was the arrest and capture of Captain

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[107] There were two chaplains aboard the Quadra-Hezeta expedition: Father Benito de la Sierra and Father Miguel de la Campa. De la Sierra's journal is extant, see Benito de la Sierra, A. J. Baker, and Henry R. Wagner, "Fray Benito de la Sierra's Account of the Hezeta Expedition to the Northwest Coast in 1775," *California Historical Quarterly* 9, no. 3 (1930): 201-242.

[108] Kendrick, *The Men With Wooden Feet*, 30.

[109] Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire*, 94-97. Artaega made two further landfalls – one somewhere within Prince William Sound and another at the tip of Kenai Peninsula (Port Chatham) – but I do not know if they met with the Indigenous people of those places.

Cook; however, while the crew missed Cook by an entire year, the effort betrays that Spain was aggressively pursuing her claims in the North Pacific.[110]

The next expedition followed nine years later. By that time Cook's journals had been published and the commercial draw of the North Pacific were out of the bag. In 1788 the Spanish sent Estéban José Martínez de la Sierra north to monitor the burgeoning commercial activity and to provide an account of the Russian settlements. When Martinez returned later that year he reported on Russian settlements at Three Saints Bay (Kodiak Island) and Dutch Harbour (Unalaska) and added that the Russians intended to soon establish another colony at Nootka on Vancouver Island. That last piece of news really set the colonial government a buzz – the Spanish, or so they alleged, had already claimed those lands and so that there be no doubt about that they made plans to establish their own colony at Nootka.

The following year Martinez was back on the northwest coast. He arrived with instructions to erect a fortified settlement at Nootka so as to pretend that the Spanish "already formally occupy it."[111] The settlement was a show of pretence and thus dismantled in the fall.[112] Yet the move was an opening gambit in a larger Spanish plan to stretch their colonies from Alta California north to Vancouver Island.

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[110] The Spanish were aware that Cook intended to chart the northwest coast in 1776. At that point, the coast was considered by the Spanish as part of her imperial domain for at least three reasons: Spain had a documented history of residency in the western Americas, the Quadra-Hezeta performed three acts of possession on the northwest coast and the Papal Bull, *Inter Caetera*, issued in 1493 gave Spain alleged possession of the Western Coast of America.

[111]The instructions continued "in order to assure [their] permanence a commandant and respectable body of troops go about on shore, with missionaries, settlers, cattle, and other auxiliaries proper to such enterprise." Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire*, 130.

[112] While at Nootka, Martinez arrested four British merchants and detained their crews and their ships for allegedly operating illegally in Spanish waters. The merchants were employees of the British capitalist John Meares. Meares contested the arrests and alleged that he had already built a trading post at Nootka the year before the Spanish arrived, and took his case to the British Prime Minister William Pitt.

Two places where the Spanish explorers most frequently met with Indigenous peoples during this period were in the Southern Alexander Archipelago and in the vicinity of the Columbia River. Both locations are significant as they set at the termini of the major rivers originating in the Rocky Mountains. The Southern Archipelago, for example, was one node in a quadrilateral that connected the Archipelago, the mainland, namely, the Nass and Skeena Rivers, the Queen Charlotte Islands, and Vancouver Island.[113] So when Quadra's crew came ashore at Kruzoff Island in 1775, held a service and erected a cross, word may have spread along the lines of the quadrilateral. Moreover, anthropologist Robert Boyd's work on the history of infectious diseases on the coast suggests that the smallpox epidemic of the late 18th century was introduced along to those lines of the quadrilateral by the Quadra-Hezeta expedition of 1775.[114] He surmises that the disease would have affected everyone on the north coast – how far it spread up the Stikine, Nass and Skeena Rivers is difficult to say. It doubtless generated conversation; the Tlingit have an oral tradition of the small pox coming from "disease boats."[115] Moreover, when the Artaega-Quadra expedition built a barracks at Bucareli Bay and

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Subsequently, Pitt complained to Spain of the injustice suffered by one of Her Majesty's subjects at the hands of the Spanish, adding that if appropriate satisfaction were not made England was prepared to go war. Pitt was an unyielding and aggressive supporter of Meares and forced the Spanish into negotiations over the Nootka Incident. In the end, when the incident was finally resolved (a process which took five years) it was decided that that all of Meares' alleged land and property be returned to him and that all lands to *the north of colonies already occupied by Spain on the Northwest Coast* be open to both nations for commercial purposes. However, the two parties agreed but that no permanent settlements could be erected by either nation on those lands. The Nootka incident, or Nootka "Crisis," has been the topic of numerous scholarly articles and at least one monograph, Derek Pethick, *The Nootka Connection: The Northwest Coast, 1790-95* (Washington: University of Washington Press, 1980).

[113] Fur trade records at Fort Simpson on the Nass from the early nineteenth century, for example, suggest a constant motion and traffic of Indigenous peoples through each of those nodes see. See, for example, Ft. Simpson Post Journal, 1852-1853, B201/a/7.

[114] Boyd, *The Coming of the Spirit Pestilence*, 36.

[115] Ibid., 54.

purchased five "slaves" from the Tlingit whom they took back with them to New Spain, that transaction must also have passed through those nodes.

The Columbia, on the other hand, was arguably the most significant transportation, trade, and communication artery on the entire northwest coast north of Mexico. While it is true that the mouth of the Columbia is some distance from the Skeena-Fraser region, its upper reaches approach very near to the traditional lands of the Dakelh. When the Northwest Company was established on the Columbia in the early nineteenth century, its agents made use of extant Indigenous communication links to quickly courier documents between posts on the Columbia and posts on the Fraser. Moreover, the Dalles, on the middle Columbia, was a major trading centre; the high volume of trade that happened there was arguably unparalleled in Indigenous North America.[116] The archaeological record also reveals that items traded at the Dalles have turned up as far away as Alaska, California and throughout the length of the Missouri.[117] It is possible that it was via the Columbia that the Witsuwit'en and Dakelh first heard of the Spanish. Indeed, as I had mentioned at the onset of this section, the Dakelh told Mackenzie in 1793 that they had known of the Spanish for as long as they could remember.

The many wrecks near the mouth of the Columbia, of which there were at least three, the wreck at Nehalem, the castaways noted by Franchère, and a launch lost during the Quadra-Hezeta expedition would have been consumed by the orbit of the upper Fraser River. When the Quadra-Hezeta expedition made landfalls north and south of the

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[116] Francis Jennings, *The Founders of America* (Norton: New York, 1994), 79.

[117] William R. Swagerty, "Indian Trade in the Trans-Mississippi West to 1870," in *History of Indian White Relations, vol. 4, Handbook of North American Indians*, ed. Wilcomb E. Washburn (Washington: Smithsonian, 1978): 351-374.

Columbia in 1775, the journals of the exploration give some sense of the qualities of relations between the Spanish and locals. At Puerto de la Trinidad in 1775, the crew got along well with the local people and stayed on shore for a number of days. They visited local houses, talked with the people who lived there, and taught them some Spanish hymns and phrases. When the Spanish said their goodbyes the locals responded with shouts of: "Long Live Charles III!" and "adios amigo."[118] At Point Greenville, on the other hand, things were different and relations became outright hostile. The Spanish were initially well treated but as they were preparing to leave a launch was attacked and confiscated. There is every reason to think those details made their way some distance up river and diffused through the Columbia watershed. Moreover, the missionaries aboard those Spanish expeditions served as a direct source of Christianity.

It was in part because the Spanish voyages of the 1770s and 1780s were meant to assert Spanish ownership of the land that chaplains served on each of the four major expeditions mentioned here. It was the chaplains who were charged with performing the religious elements of the ceremonial acts of possession.[119] In addition to their ceremonial presence at each landfall the chaplains were, more often than not, brought into contact with local peoples. The chaplains Juan Crespi and Tomás de la Peña y Seravia who accompanied the Perez expedition of 1774, met with the Haida somewhere off the coast of Haida Gwaii and the Nuu-chah-nulth at Nootka Sound.[120] Crespi wrote in his journal that more than 200 Haida came out to greet the ship, many of whom had iron points

[118] De la Sierra, et al. "Fray Benito de la Sierra," 219-224.

[119] On the religious elements within symbolic acts of sovereignty, see, Manuel Servin, "Religious Aspects of Symbolic Acts of Sovereignty." *The Americas* 13, no. 3 (1957): 255-267.

[120] Emilen, Lamirande, "L'établissement espagnol de Nootka (1789-1795) et ses aspects religieux." *Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa* 48 no. 3 (1978), 213.

fastened to their weapons and wore bracelets of iron and copper (doubtless indicative of the Asian trade). When Captain Perez invited a few of the Haida on board the ship, Crespi showed them some religious paraphernalia. Of all the items shown to them they were particularly interested in a picture of Mary.[121] Among the Nootka the reception was a bit cooler. They initially waved the Spanish away but when the Spanish did not leave, fifteen canoes approached the following day loaded with animal skins, largely beaver. Crespi wrote that their chief interest was trade but because the Spanish were little interested in the goods they had to offer that the encounter was brief.[122]

The Quadra-Hezeta expedition of 1775 also employed two chaplains: Miguel de la Campa Cos and Benito de la Sierra. At Puerto de la Trinidad, de la Sierra described the landing and act of possession in some detail: "Fray Campa said Mass and preached a sermon with great tranquility as the Indians consented themselves with observing from their settlement what we were doing." He continued, "We went to visit them [the locals] and explained by signs what it signified [the ceremony] and that they were our friends. We pointed out the cross to them, charging them not to remove it; whereupon our chief harangued them and they promised not to tear it down."[123] The crew stayed about a week with the peoples of Puerto de la Trinidad. During that time the chaplains and crew taught both religious hymns and Spanish songs. Relations were not always so pleasant. We have seen, for example at Bucareli Sound in the Alexander Archipelago that the sentiments

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[121] Crespi's illustration is one of the more descriptive early first-hand accounts of the Haida. See Juan Crespi and Herbert Eugene Bolton. "The Perez Expedition As Told in Crespi's Diary." In *Fray Crespi, Missionary Explorer on the Pacific Coast, 1769-1774* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1927): 321-333.

[122] Crespi and Bolton, *Fray Crespi*, 350. That the Nuu-chah-nulth were pushing their supply of beaver, and that they had such a ready supply to trade, suggests to me that they were already trapping beaver to market in the continental fur trade.

[123] De la Sierra, "Fray Benito de la Sierra's Account," 220.

were not amicable. De la Sierra felt he had to rush the ceremonial act of possession for fear of Tlingit hostilities, and it was there that the Tlingit cut down the cross almost as soon as the Spanish had set it up.

The Artaega-Quadra expedition that left San Blas in 1779 employed three chaplains: Juan Antonio García Riobó and Matais Santa Catalina Noriega and the cleric Don Cristóbal Díaz.[124] This expedition also made landfall at Bucareli Sound but this time the Spanish were better received by the Tlingit who supplied them with fresh food and water. The expedition rested there for more than a month, during which time the crew erected a cross, built a barracks, and sent boats to survey the various channels. It was on that voyage that the chaplains procured five children from the Tlingit in exchange for iron, beads and clothes. All five returned south with the Spanish; three were left with the mission at San Francisco and the other two were taken to San Blas. Three chaplains were also included in the 1788 expedition of Martinez and Lopez de Haro. In addition to serving at ceremonial acts of possession, the chaplains were expected to bring back to New Spain "one Indian of each different idiom, if they would come voluntarily, to prepare good interpreters for future expeditions."[125]

The early contacts suggest that the peoples of the Northwest Coast between California to Alaska were aware not only of a Spanish presence in the south but had direct contacts with them prior to their entry into Nootka Sound and years before Alexander Mackenzie passed through Dakelh territory. When the Spanish did set out a permanent colony in 1790 relations with neighbours both near and far were intensified.

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[124] Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire*, 94.

[125]Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire*, 122. I have been unable to discover the names of the chaplains or whether they were successful in procuring Indigenous linguists.

The Spanish Colonies at Nootka and Neah Bay

In 1790 Francisco de Eliza was given command of three frigates, seventy five settlers, and a company of soldiers led by Captain Pedro Alberni, altogether a crew of 250 men that also included two priests and four Franciscan missionaries, and instructed to erect a permanent fortified settlement at Nootka Sound.[126] Eliza arrived in April and started a settlement that would last for the next five years.

The ceremonial act of possession performed upon landing at Nootka was conducted with much pageantry; the notary Rafaël Cañizares described the scene:

> When the cross was planted, they worshipped it once more, and all prayed, demanding in supplication from our Lord, Jesus Christ, that he should accept their offering, because everything had been done for the glory and honour of his Holy Name, and in order to exalt, and enrich our holy Catholic faith – and to introduce the word of the holy Gospel among these savage nations, which until the present time had been kept in ignorance of the true knowledge and doctrine – which will guard them and deliver them from the snares and perils of the Demon and from the blindness in which they have lived – for the salvation of their souls.[127]

The ceremony was then followed by Mass and a sermon preached by Brother Patero. The content of the Spanish acts of possession, such as that described by Cañizares, betrays that the missionary program went hand in glove with colonization. Spain alleged that the Papal claims entrenched in the treaty of Tordesillas gave it all rights to the coast – rights over the land, the right to mission to the inhabitants and the right to force them into the colonial embrace of state and church. While the religious accolades attached to the ceremonial act were largely symbolic and, as the historian Warren Cook observes, the

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[126] Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire*, 276. The priests were José Lopez de Nava and José Maria Diaz and the missionaries were Brothers Severo Patero, Lorenzo Lacies, José Espi and Francisco Sanchez. See, Frederick William Howay, "The Spanish Settlement at Nootka," *Washington Historical Quarterly* 8 (1917): 165.

[127] Howay, "The Spanish Settlement," 166.

Spanish were not interested in establishing a mission at Nootka (or anywhere else on the North Coast) after the model of those established in Alta California – religion was bound up with everything the Spanish were doing.[128] Whenever the script of possession was read everyone present was witness to Christian religiosity. Wherever the Spanish landed they went through (or tried to) the same motions: they erected a cross, supplicated it, sang hymns, said Mass, preached a sermon, and intimated to the Indigenous people the significance of it all. Those actions proffered meaning for the participants; after all, it was because they were *done* that Spain was able to justify her claims to the entire American coast as part of her Imperial domain.

The Spanish were not the only witnesses to the ceremonies; the Indigenous people were present too. They watched what the Spanish were doing, paid attention to the ceremonies, learned Spanish hymns and songs, asked questions about it all, and remembered what they heard and saw. The ceremony and pageantry attendant to the Spanish activities must have been in the air, so to speak, up and down the coast. We do not know how all of it was appreciated by various people at various places but we know it was there. Subsequent happenings at Nootka and surrounding places after the Spanish first took possession further affirm the presence of and interest in Christianity.

Among the many things that the colonial contingent was ordered to do by the governor after its arrival in 1890 was to learn the character of the local Indigenous people, to estimate their population, to work to gain their friendship and to treat them fairly.[129] Clergy were, of course, stationed at Nootka throughout the duration of the

[128] Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire*, 57.

[129] Lamirande, "L'établissement espagnol de Nootka," 223.

Spanish tenure.[130] Despite their orders to attempt missionization, missions historian Emilen Lamirande has suggested that because a cloud of uncertainty hung over the settlement from the very start the clergy never established a systematic plan for evangelization and instead concentrated on their parochial duties at the fort. Be that as it may, the Nuu-chah-nulth and neighbouring peoples must have been aware of and took some interest in the activities of the clergy. For example, the clergy traded for Nuu-chah-nulth children and then shipped them to their southern missions where they were educated in Spanish Catholicism.[131] I do not know if those children were ever returned to Nootka, but if they were expected to be fully educated in the Catholic system and given the short life of the settlement it seems unlikely. It is also hard to tell if the locals were aware of just where the children were being sent. They might not have cared much at all if they themselves had acquired the children as slaves, but in any event it does strike me that what the priests were doing would also not go unnoticed; someone at least must have been curious.

At Nootka, the Nuu-chah-nulth also took an interest in Spanish religious activities. Father Magin Catala, who was at Nootka for thirteen months (between 1793 and 1794), was remembered by the Nuu-chah-nulth nearly one hundred years later. According to oral traditions collected by Father Augustin Brabant, Catholic missionary who first came to Nootka in 1875, Catala was remembered by the Nuu-chah-nulth as "the

[130] The two priests who came to Nootka in 1791 were José Joaquin Villaverde and Nicholas de Lucra. In 1793, Father Magín Catala arrived at Nootka, stayed for thirteen months and was replaced by Father José Gomez. Ibid., 225.

[131] Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire*, 314. During Eliza's time at Nootka between 1791 and 1794, he boasted that the Spanish were successful in purchasing fifty six children.

possessor of a strange magical power, akin to that of other medicine men."[132] According to Brabant, some of the Nuu-chah-nulth also remembered other priests. They claimed there were "two priests, very heavy and very corpulent – they had no hair, were almost completely bald, and when the sun stops [solstice of winter] they had two babies." They continued: "My granduncle used to go and see the people in church (indicating the place where the chapel was erected, close to where the chief has his house now) and the people would go on their knees and get up; yes there were priests – two big bald men, and the Spaniards kept Sunday."[133]

During the Spanish tenure time at Nootka, her activities were not only restricted to the colony proper. The Spanish, from their home base at Nootka, explored the range of the Pacific coast between Alaska and the Columbia River. Because some of that exploratory work brought the Spanish within the inner orbits of the Plateau, a couple of those ventures are worth highlighting. In August 1791 the Eliza expedition, while exploring the Haro Straits (to the southeast of Vancouver Island connecting the Strait of Georgia with the Strait of Juan de Fuca) stopped briefly near the Makah village of Classet

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[132] Howay, "The Spanish Settlement at Nootka," 168.The conflation of Catala with the description of a person given by the Nuu-chah-nulth should be taken cautiously. Catala was famous in the American Catholic community for allegedly performing various miracles, such as the ability to control the natural world (he brought rain and dispelled plagues), the power of prophecy (he allegedly predicated the 1906 San Francisco and the time of his own death) and the mystery of bilocation (the ability to appear in two places at one time). Zephyrin Engelhardt, *The Holy Man of Santa Clara* (San Francisco: James H. Barry Co., 1909), 143-181. I want to note for the record that when the clergy possess these qualities they are considered auspicious but when Indigenous people claim the same skills they are almost always ridiculed.

[133] Howay, "The Spanish Settlement at Nootka," 170. Lamirande disputes the veracity of this account on the grounds that there that there may not have been a church at all at the settlement. Even if Lamirande is right, his observation does not disqualify the possibility that some building may have been used for religious service. Moreover, if the Spanish observed Sundays and feast days on board ship, as we know they did, it is highly likely they did same at Nootka. Moreover, the Nuu-chah-nulth have oral traditions concerning early contacts with the Spanish that precede the Nootka settlement. My sense is that stronger evidence – in addition to the lack of a church and the absence of a preserved missiological program – is needed to discount the Nuu-chah-nulth claims recorded by Brabant.

near Cape Flattery.[134] Shortly after Eliza left the American merchant ship the *Columbia* visited the same spot on September 15th, 1791. the *Columbia's* clerk, John Hoskins, observed: "a chief named Clahclacko wished to inform me the Spaniards had been here since us endeavouring to convert them to Christianity that he and several others had been baptized as also several of their children this ceremony he went through as also the chanting of some of their hymns with a most serious religious air though it was in broken Spanish and Indian yet he imitated the sounds of their voices their motions and religious cants of their faces to a miracle at the same time condemned our irreligious manner of life."[135] It seems that the *Columbia* had just missed Eliza's expedition to the Haro Straits.[136]

The following year Jacinto Caamaño en route to explore the northern coast in Russian territory spent one month, from July 31 to August 30, off the coast of the Ts'mysen village of Citeyats, near the confluence of the Grenville and Douglas channels. On August 1st Caamaño went ashore performed an act of possession and put up a cross.[137] The Ts'mysen were very hospitable during Caamaño's stay, making numerous visits to his ship. Toward the end of August, both Caamaño and the ship's chaplain were, on different occasions, invited to the village, feasted, and treated with dances. Caamaño

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[134] Frederic William Howay, ed., *Voyages of the "Columbia" to the Northwest Coast 1787-1790 and 1790-1793* (Boston, MA: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1941), 245. According to Hoskins' account the Spanish were present sometime around August 7 and 11.

[135] Howay, ed., *Voyages of the "Columbia"*, 245.

[136] Howay, ed., *Voyages of the "Columbia"*, 250. I suppose it is also possible that Hoskins misunderstood or made the account up. However, excepting the baptismal rite, Hoskins' account gels with what we know the Spanish taught coastal inhabitants elsewhere: hymns, Spanish songs and phrases, and the privilege of Spanish friendship. In addition it was likely the Spanish, and not some other crew, because coastal peoples recognized differences among the various vessels, crews and nationalities that frequented the coast.

[137] Jacinto Caamaño, "The Journal of Jacinto Caamaño," trans. Harold Grenfell, *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* 2, no. 4 (1938): 274.

evidently got on quite well with the Ts'mysen chief Jammisit.[138] He also remarked on the high degree of European trade as well as the Ts'mysen position as middle persons in the trade between Europeans and inland peoples.[139] It seems that by the time of Caamaño's visit the Ts'mysen had integrated their European trading partners into the local economy. The Witsuwit'en and Babine had a long history of economic ties to the Ts'mysen; ties that might help explain why the Witsuwit'en with whom Simon McGillivray stayed in 1833 had such ornate depictions of European sailing vessels on their homes.

In 1792 the Spanish extended their colony by erecting a second settlement called Núñez Gaona at Neah Bay, on the northwestern tip of Washington State.[140] However, the settlement was abandoned at the end of the year. The local Makah people resented the Spanish presence from their first arrival and relations between the two groups were frequently marked by violence. The year 1792 was also the high-water mark of Spanish activity on the coast. Although Nootka remained garrisoned until the spring of 1795, after 1792 the Spanish turned their back on the North Pacific and focused instead on exploring regions between the Fuca Straits and San Francisco. They even considered erecting a settlement at the mouth of the Columbia; however, nothing came of that plan.[141] In 1795

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[138] Caamaño, "Journal of Jacinto Caamaño," 285-293. Caamaño's account of the village is highly descriptive, and is one of the earliest firsthand accounts by a European of what seems to me to be a potlatch.

[139] Caamaño, "Journal of Jacinto Caamaño," 273; Clarence Bolt, *Thomas Crosby and the Tsimshian* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992), 15.

[140] Salvador Fidalgo was sent to Neah Bay from San Blas to erect the Spanish settlement of at Neah Bay.

[141] Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire*, 405.

the Spanish abandoned Nootka.[142] Once the demolition of Nootka was complete the Nuu-chah-nulth re-erected their villages on the places where they once stood prior to the Spanish settlement.[143] With the loss of Nootka, Spanish activity on the northwest coast went into full retreat. In the aftermath of Nootka, the viceroy continued to send ships north to Bucareli Bay once every six months in to investigate happenings on and off shore, but that practice was discontinued in 1797, the year after Spain and Britain went to war and, for at least that reason, Spanish attention was drawn toward the Caribbean.[144] In the next section I discuss the third group of sea travelers: the British and American maritime merchants.[145]

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[142] International diplomacy required that the Spanish withdraw. The Spanish and British agreed to recognize each other's rights of trade at Nootka and all places north of the Spanish colonies in Alta California, but stipulated that neither nation be permitted to erect permanent settlements, factories or garrisons. In 1795 Thomas Pearce of the British Navy arrived at Nootka to ensure that the fort was properly dismantled and that the Spanish vacate the sound. Although the terms of that convention continued to permit Spanish exploration and mercantile activity, exploration continued sporadically and merchant ships only rarely visited the area. The lack of mercantile activity is probably not surprising. Although the Spanish were at Nootka during some of the most profitable years of the maritime fur trade, only one Spanish merchant ship visited the coast during the Spanish tenure at Nootka and that was the *Princesa Real*, which came in 1790. James R. Gibson, *Otter Skins, Boston Ships, and China Goods: the Maritime Fur Trade of the Northwest Coast, 1785-1841* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), 299.

[143] Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire*, 422-23.

[144] Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire*, 427.

[145] Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire*, 508-511. In addition to coastal exploration Spain engaged in continental exploration. That work deserves at least a note as it suggests yet another avenue by which the peoples of the Plateaus may have been put onto European activities. Between the years 1794 and 1819, the year that Spain signed the Transcontinental Treaty with the United States, Spain sent eight overland expeditions north of Santa Fe. The expeditions were to survey Spanish territory west of the Mississippi, to treat with the peoples living there, and to apprehend representatives of other nations trespassing on alleged Spanish land (one of which was outfitted to arrest Lewis and Clark). The expeditions made no arrests, but they covered a lot of ground. One outfit made it as far as North Dakota and Mandan territory. Another, but not one of the eight official voyages alluded to, was made by two Franciscan friars who set out to explore the headwaters of the Colorado River. Sometime in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, the two friars travelled up the Colorado and from its headwaters crossed over to another major river (either the Columbia or the Klamath). They descended that river to the Pacific and from there coasted down to Monterey.

British and American Commercial Activity on the North West Coast

The story of the trade in otter skins as a trade dominated by British and American merchant vessels, despite its late onset and relatively short duration, is perhaps better known in North America than either Spanish or Russian venture discussed in this chapter. The dominance of the Americans and British merchants in the fur trade, the legacies of the geo-political victories secured by the American and British states over their rivals, the voluminous historical record left in English, and the easy accessibility of archives are doubtless all reasons for its relative popularity. The story begins, as we have come to expect, with a voyage of exploration, in this case it was the third voyage of Captain James Cook. In 1778 Cook, sailing north from New Zealand, came in view of the North American continent about the coast of Oregon and made landfall at a cheery place he named Cape Foulweather. From there he continued on to Nootka Sound where he spent late March and early April refitting the *Resolution* and *Discovery*.[146] While at Nootka, Cook's crew acquired a supply of sea otter skins from the local Nuu-chah-nulth, pelts that were subsequently traded for more than 1,000 percent profit in China.[147] When the record of the voyage was published upon return to England, the revelation contained therein of the value of sea otter skins proved a major attraction for British, and later American,

[146] The first impressions of Cook are detailed in an oral tradition related by Mrs. Winnifred David. David indicates that Cook and his crew were appreciated as fish people who came back as humans. Winnifred: "The Indians didn't know what on earth it was when his [Cook's] ship came into the harbour. They didn't know what on earth it was. So the Chief, Chief Maquinna, he sent out his warriors. He had warriors you know. He sent them out in a couple of canoes to see what it was. So they went out to the ship and they thought it was a fish come alive into people. They were taking a good look at those white people on the deck there. One white man had a real hooked nose, you know. And one of the men was saying to this other guy, 'See, see … he must have been a dog salmon, that guy, there, he's got a hooked nose.' The other guy was looking at him and a man came out of the galley and he was a hunchback, and the other one said, 'Yes! We're right, we're right. Those people they may have been fish. They've come alive into people. Look at that one, he's a humpback. He's a humpback!'" Efrat and Langlois, "Nu-tka-: Captain Cook," 54.

[147] Gibson, *Otter Skins, Boston Ships*, 22.

merchants. The first merchant ship arrived on the scene in 1785 and that was the *Sea Otter* captained by the British merchant James Hanna. After a two month stay, Hanna acquired 560 sea otter skins which he subsequently unloaded on the Chinese market for 5,000 pounds sterling.[148] Hanna's trade rang in a commerce that boomed for more than forty years and brought as many as 23 trading vessels yearly to the Northwest Coast. The early years were dominated by British merchants but Americans were not long to enter the trade. In 1788, Captain Robert Gray of the *Columbia Rediviva* arrived on the coast from Boston and spent the season trading. When Grey returned to New England by way of China he further publicized the news of the wealth to be made in the coastal trade; subsequently, so many American traders put off for the coast such that they soon outnumbered the British. American dominance continued until the 1830s.[149] In some years, particularly during the first two decades of the nineteenth century, as many as a dozen American ships were the only vessels trading on the coast.[150] Between 1788 and 1826, American traders alone made 127 voyages between Boston and China by way of the Northwest Coast.

The one thing that most of those crews were after was the thick and shiny fur of the sea otter; as a rule, the thicker the better.[151] While it is a fact that the merchants would

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[148] Joyce Wike, "The Effects of the Maritime Fur Trade on Northwest Coast Societies." (PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 1951), 8.

[149] Gibson, *Otter Skins, Boston Ships*, 300-308. Several reasons for the American domination have been suggested: the British monopolies on the China trade did not integrate the trade effectively, the monopolies discouraged private entrepreneurs, the Napoleonic Wars slowed British commercial expansion, and American ambition after the war for Independence severed American and British trading relations.

[150] Gibson, *Otter Skins, Boston Ships*, 303-4.

[151] Euro-American traders also traded for more than furs. Crew members were sent ashore to fell spars, make charcoal, collect firewood, collect water, acquire local food, gather grass to feed the ship's cow or goat and cut boxes for packing skins. Coastal peoples expected payment in trade goods for any resources drawn from their lands. Gibson, *Otter Skins, Boston Ships*, 43-44.

trade for any fur that could bring a return on the market, the most desired was that of the sea otter. The otter ranged from the coast of Kamchatka through Bering Strait to the Aleutians around the bend of Alaska all the way down to the Californias. Yet because it was the thick fur that was most desired, unlike other sea mammals the otter had only fur and no blubber for insulation against the cold sea water, the merchant vessels tended to hunt for those in the colder northern waters.

In the early years of the trade the vessels huddled together in those regions that were known, namely those charted by Cook such as Nootka Sound, Cook Inlet and Prince William Sound. As the coast became better known vessels plied the inlets and fjords between Cross Sound in the north and Puget Sound in the south. Favoured stopping places included the Queen Charlotte Islands, Tongass (at the entrance to Clarence Strait), Kaigani (at Prince of Wales Island), Clemencitty (at the entrance to Portland Canal), the mouth of the Nass River, and Newhitty (at the northern end of Vancouver Island).[152] Those places correspond to each of the four nodes of the north Pacific quadrilateral that connected the Haida, Tlingit, Ts'mysen, and Kwakwaka'wakw. The latter three peoples were the major intermediaries between interior peoples and coastal vessels.

As a rule the spring and summer were the seasons for trade. The seasons were convenient for both trading partners, the traders, coming from Boston, preferred to round Cape Horn in the Antarctic summer, which placed them on the coast in spring about the same time the locals were also returning to the coast from the interior to set up their summer residences. When the traders arrived the captains spent the spring and summer beating about the coast at places from the mouth of the Columbia to Sitka looking to unload their trade goods for furs. Once the trading season ended in late summer or early

[152] Ibid., 204.

fall many vessels left the coast to winter at the Sandwich Islands before proceeding to Canton to unload their furs. Some captains elected to spend the winter on the coast but when they did that southern locales seem to have been preferred.[153]

The customary mode of business for the European and American traders was to anchor off shore from a local village and then either fire a canon to signal their readiness or simply wait for willing traders to venture out. Trading usually happened aboard ship. Although trade standards were established early on in the trade, supply and demand varied and both sides strove for a bargain. Thus trading could take some time and tried the patience of everyone involved as trader and locals haggled on the deck of a tiny vessel while speaking through interpreters, gestures or a rough and ready trade jargon. The process certainly seems to have vexed the traders. The trader Ingraham remarked of the Haida, "The people of these Isles in generall possess a truly mercantile spirit but none more so than the tribe of Cummashawas (Haida) for they will not part with a single skin till they had exerted their utmost to obtain the best price for it."[154]

My interests in the methods of trade are not rote. The coastal trade betrays a very important feature of all exchange: trade, not even the silent trade so celebrated as non-invasive, is never only about the simple exchange of material items. The trade that happened aboard the coastal vessels was the tip of an iceberg and had implications for the lives of coastal and interior peoples beyond the acquisition of material items. Having already discussed Spanish and Russian involvement some of these implications, if they

[153] The mouth of Columbia and various places along what is now the coast of Washington State were among some of popular winter anchorages. Sometimes when crews wintered on the coast they would keep in contact with Indigenous villages on shore and there might be some trading and mutual visiting. Gibson, *Otter Skins, Boston Ships*, 205-209.

[154] Wike, "The Effects of the Maritime Fur Trade," 27.

have not already been covered, can easily be intuited, yet the merchant scene did add other dynamics to the field.

Merchant accounts, for example, offer a different view of gender relations than that which is usually depicted in Russian accounts. In merchant narratives Indigenous women, for example, are not concealed as passive objects. Among the Haida, in particular, women were said to have been the principal agents of trade such that all negotiations went through them. On other occasions women were taken as hostages and/or as sexual partners of male crewmen. How such relationships were understood by the women and their families is difficult to say. Many women were slaves and were prostituted to the traders. In other cases it depended a lot on the woman; her family, her status and her age, the desired relationships with the trader, what they expected in return, and the place where she was taken aboard. In that way, many women contracted venereal disease. How far gonorrhea and syphilis worked their ways up the coast is difficult to say. Boyd seems to think the cases were restricted to coastal populations. However, Joseph McGillivray at Fort Alexandria in 1827 remarked that many lower Dakelh women were infected with gonorrhea and syphilis.[155] That may have been the case in the period of early contacts; however, it is also known that Dakelh men married Haisla and Heiltsuk women of the coast, and thus the diseases may have been present in the interior.

Women were not the only people taken as hostage. Remember, for example, McGillivray met a man at Tse Kya who claimed he was taken aboard one of the ships as a hostage. There is reason to believe his story as traders and local peoples did swap

[155] On the introduction of venereal disease by merchant vessels, see Boyd, *The Coming on the Spirit Pestilence*, 65-71. The trader Joseph McGillivray recorded an allegedly local cure: a concoction of evergreen berry, sarsaparilla and bear root, see Simpson, *Part of Dispatch from George Simpson*, 191.

hostages for the duration of a trading rendezvous to ensure that the trading be conducted on fair, agreeable or at least tolerable terms. The fact that hostages became a necessary part of the trade suggests there were mutual suspicions (along with a measure of trust) and that the trade did not always go smoothly. When relations did become hostile, that is, when one group launched an attack on another, prisoners could be taken by one or both sides.[156] In fact, one of the most well known events in the history of the Pacific coast sea otter trade is the tale of the American ship *Boston* and her crew. The ship was attacked by Chief Maquinna in 1803 while in Nootka Sound.[157] All aboard were killed except the amourer John Jewitt and the sailmaker John Thompson. Jewitt and Thompson lived with the Nuu-chah-nulth for three years until they left finding passage aboard the American brig *Lydia*. Jewitt later published a narrative about his captivity.[158] According to Jewitt, during his captivity Maquinna allowed him and Thompson to take time on Sunday to read scriptures, rest and pray. The narrative offers one glimpse into how Christianity may have been introduced to Indigenous communities by captives or deserters.

While Jewitt, Thompson and the man McGilivray met at Tse Kya were held as captives by their other "sides", the boundaries between sides, the ship's crew and local populations, were not always so clear. Sailors deserted and Indigenous peoples were

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[156] John Jewitt of the American ship *Boston* was held prisoner by the Nuu-chah-nulth chief Maquinna for two years (1803 to 1805). The Haida chief Cow (or Keow) and two others were taken prisoner in 1795 by Captain William Wake of the *Prince William Henry* and ransomed for 200 otter skins each. Gibson, *Otter Skins*, 160.

[157] The attack seems to have been in response to an altercation between Maquinna and Salter the previous day.

[158] While the text is considered a classic of captivity literature, it is worth noting that it was well contrived by the American author Richard Aslop, see John Jewitt, *A narrative of the adventures and sufferings, of John R. Jewitt, only survivor of the crew of the ship Boston, during a captivity of nearly three years among the savages of Nootka Sound* (Middletown, Conn., 1815).

taken on as employees serving as interpreters, hunters, crewmen, and/or pilots.[159] As we saw with the Tlingit among the Russians, sometimes Indigenous people were hired or engaged for the duration of a season and accompanied the ships visiting other peoples far away from their home territory.[160] The son of one Indigenous chief was sent with a ship to Boston.[161] Not only did the ships employ North American Indigenous people, but they also employed people with whom they came in contact at other ports, Hawaiian Islanders and Chinese.[162] Life aboard the ship was itself a veritable social field.

Much of what happened on the coast would have been drawn into the orbits of the interior Plateau. The interior peoples were involved in conflicts and captivities and they procured new material goods, the quantity of which greatly increased once the American and British merchants arrived on the scene. But those goods did not come without a price. If they wanted them, for example, they had to spend more time hunting, and we know that they did hunt for the trade not only because Brown and McGillivray said as much but because large numbers of beaver procured in the interior were traded by coastal peoples. One of the implications of increased hunting, except perhaps in those rare cases where game is temporarily overabundant, is competition over resources. It might be useful to recall here that Suttles suggested an ethic of competition was exacerbated by the fur trade. Competition over resources can also lead to an increased concern with boundaries, with what belongs to whom, and who has rights to go where. Coastal peoples devoted much effort to the creation and maintenance of group boundaries as well as to the

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[159] Gibson, *Otter Skins, Boston Ships*, 152, 143, 211.

[160] Gibson, *Otter Skins, Boston Ships*, 211.

[161] Gibson, *Otter Skins, Boston Ships*, 126.

[162] Gibson, *Otter Skins, Boston Ships*, 212-213.

management and enforcement of resource rights. Merchants bemoaned that every single coastal resource belonged to someone and had a cost attached to it: the trees, the water, the food, all belonged to some person or group. Moreover, the coast Ts'mysen and Tlingit worked very hard to establish boundaries between coast and interior that would preserve their roles as middle persons between merchant vessels and interior peoples.

The historian of the North Pacific, James Gibson, suggested that the trade in sea otter on the northwest coast was a short affair: the game was depleted and the market glutted almost as soon as trade began. Be that as it may, the trade was still an important source of knowledge about European activities for the peoples of the Plateau such that by the time the first forts were erected on the western side of the Rockies, the peoples living there were already involved in a theatre of improvisation and experimentation in relating to the newcomers. It is true that much of that record is deeply buried in sources by European hands or in the oral historical record that is yet to be complete, it remains true that their coastal orbits were no marginal frontier.

The maritime trade declined in the late 1820s but it did not stop. The Russians continued commercial activity on the north coast until 1867 and American vessels continued to come to the coast up to the 1840s, ceasing only after the HBC took over the coastal trade through the use of coastal forts and her steamship the *Beaver*. For more than forty years the Kwakwaka'wakw, Tlingit and Ts'mysen, the principal trading partners of interior peoples, had continual and sustained contact for at least five or six months out of each year with American and British maritime traders. The American mariners never succeeded, if they attempted, in erecting on shore settlements, but that does not mean their presence was not permanent. Where a home is where you lay your head, the

northwest coast as well as the entire Atlantic and Pacific were veritable seas of island homes throughout the nineteenth century. The American and British merchants on the northwest coast were key participants in what Gibson suggested was the nineteenth century "cosmopolitanization" of the coast.[163]

The orbits of the upper Fraser and Skeena Rivers doubtless encompassed the European commercial and colonial activity on the Northwest Coast throughout the eighteenth century, at least a decade before agents in the continental fur trade erected trading posts in the region at the turn of the nineteenth century. By illuminating the seaward orbit, I am not suggesting that events within them were a major influence and pre-occupation of the social lives of the peoples on the upper Fraser and Skeena Rivers, I am only saying that because Europeans were there at such an early date, and present in all directions, that there is reason to think that the peoples of the upper Skeena River were aware of and thinking about them and that they were not transfixed by the eastern horizon.[164] When representatives of the eastern trade did arrive, while their influence would be far from negligible, they were neither terribly surprising nor interesting.

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[163] Gibson, *Otter Skins, Boston Ships*, 272. Cf. Caamãno's remark that the Haidas bore "comparison with the character and qualities of a respectable inhabitant of Old Castille" (272).

[164] I should note that some French vessels were also active on the coast, both as merchants and explorers. If I had more time or were interested in a complete historical outline, I would have considered them. I think I have provided enough detail here to illuminate that contact between mariners and locals was frequent and that the quality of relations varied and ran the spectrum from hostile to amicable.

Chapter 5

Outer Orbit: Prairie, Mountain and River (1731-1821)

This chapter extends the analysis I had begun in chapter 4: the illumination of commercial, colonial, social and religious activities on the outer orbit of the upper Fraser-Skeena watershed. Whereas in chapter 4 my focus was on the western orbit, in this chapter I focus on the eastern orbit: prairie, mountain and river. From the perspective of those in the upper Fraser-Skeena watershed the eastern orbit differed from the western orbit not only in terms of east and west but also in terms of up and down. The eastern orbit approached the upper Fraser-Skeena watershed horizontally across the mountains, and the western orbit ascended vertically up river. In surveying the outer orbits my argument is twofold: (1) the peoples of the upper Fraser-Skeena watershed knew of Christianity in advance of direct contact with European traders and missionaries and (2) the European invasion of social spaces west of the Rockies came first by way of the Pacific and cannot adequately be represented as a single wavy line that tracked east to west across the continent. This second argument also refuses the image of the Rocky Mountain west as a frontier. Frontier is a matter of perspective; from the perspective of the Fraser-Skeena plateau the outer orbits are frontiers.

Looking east, I think the approach of newcomers associated with the fur trade can be described as unfolding in three periods: first, a period of indirect contact of approaching prairie orbits characterized by few and fleeting contacts with the Canadian fur trade (1731 to 1756), second, a period of fur trade exploration and encroachment in the inner orbits characterized by more frequent contacts and familiar relations (1763 to 1805) and, third, a trading post period characterized by the establishment of trading posts

in the upper Fraser watershed (1805 to 1821). While the trading post period continues west of the Rockies past 1821, in this chapter I cease my coverage in that year because that is the date that the Northwest Company (NWC) merged with the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC). The merger resulted in a shift in policy and the quality and intensity of relations with local peoples (there is also more documentary material available for the period after 1821). The prophets, I argue in chapters 7 and 9, emerged, at least in part, as a result of those changing relations. Hence, in this chapter I treat the NWC's trading posts west of the Rockies and in the following chapter I go into more detail on the social relations in the inner orbit of the upper Fraser and Skeena Rivers after the first quarter of the nineteenth century.

Approaching Prairie Orbit (1731-1756)

News of Europeans may have reached the headwaters of the Fraser and Skeena through Indigenous channels almost as soon as trade between peoples of the Atlantic coast and European mariners began. As early as the sixteenth century, French fishermen were regularly crossing the North Atlantic to trade with peoples of the Atlantic coast. [1] Eventually, a major trade centre grew up around Tadoussac at the confluence of the St. Lawrence and the Saguenay Rivers. Tadoussac was frequented by the French and eastern Algonquian of what is now Northern Quebec and served as a hub from which news and

[1] News of Europeans may also have preceded the French. Consider, for example, the claim made by the Central Yupik in the early nineteenth century that they not only knew of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) traders far to the east but that they often travelled to trade with them. In 1821, while in southwest Alaska near the Kuskokwim River, the Russian explorer A.P. Avinov learned that the Yupik peoples had a long history of trade with the HBC. The Yupik told Avinov that it was "necessary to travel for a summer and a winter to reach the white people [...] the way to them is by small rivers, and in many places baidarkas must be carried along the bank; and they showed them [the Russians] the way to the east." Fedorova, *The Russian Population in Alaska and California*, 74.

merchandise was spun out in all directions.[2] It is possible that some of the information and materials exchanged at Tadoussac reached as far west as the Rocky Mountains. While it is no small step from the St. Lawrence to the Rockies, the stretch of land was home to a vast trading network strung together by many rivers which stretched from the Hudson Bay Lowlands to the Rockies.[3] The peoples living in that region shared much in common, so much so that anthropologists have deemed the region a single culture area: "the Subarctic." Two major linguistic groupings defined the culture area: the Athabaskan and the Algonquian. Otherwise, the peoples living within that vast region were said to have shared a common material culture, religious attitudes and economic, social and political institutions. The economic homogeneity of the region was confirmed by the early exploratory work of the agents of the major fur trading companies that followed to North America in the tracks of those early French mariner-traders.[4]

In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the two major fur trading interests operating in eastern North America: the HBC and various French-Canadian traders. [5] The HBC, based in London and financed with British capital, owned and

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[2] E.E. Rich, *The Fur Trade and the Northwest to 1857* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967).

[3] Some of the major rivers included the Saskatchewan, the Churchill, the Athabaska and the Peace.

[4] There is reason to think that the networks were either brought into being or amplified only after European goods were introduced into the continent. Yet, given the history of movement in the Americas and the archaeological evidence placing coastal items on the plains and plains items on the coast, there is reason to think that Indigenous networks were already in place in advance of the commencement of the continental fur trade. In any event, they were existent and operational in the eighteenth century.

[5] It is worth noting at this point that my intention in this section is to bridge the gap from east to west with only a quick survey of the kinds of relationships that developed, the interests of those involved, and the specific groups and individuals with whom the peoples of the Northwest Plateau were likely to have had contact. A history of the overland fur trade as it approached the Rockies from Hudson's Bay and the St. Lawrence is beyond the scope of this dissertation. There are already many good works that tell that story. See Richard Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains: the British Fur Trade on the Pacific* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998); Arthur Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade: their role as trappers, hunters, and middlemen in the lands southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974); Kerry Abel, *Drum Songs: Glimpses of Déné History* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993).

operated a string of posts all situated at the mouths of the various rivers that drained into Hudson's Bay.[6] The French-Canadian merchants were based in Montreal and employed field agents (later known as wintering partners) who traded with Indigenous peoples west of the St. Lawrence River through to James Bay and the Great Lakes. In the early eighteenth century, both interests increased their capital investment and sought to extend the trade by dispatching exploratory expeditions further west. The reconnaissance work was meant to survey the land, to treat with the people living there and to investigate the region's population of fur bearing animals. A few of the exploratory expeditions reached the Rocky Mountains, which placed them near the inner orbit of the Fraser-Skeena watershed. Some of those more notable expeditions include the voyages of Anthony Henday, Pierre Gaultier de Varennes et de la Vérendrye, Chevalier Boucher de Niverville and Chevalier St. Luc de la Corne.

The French traders were the first to make inroads west of Lake Superior and to approach the height of land. As early as 1684 and 1685 they established trading posts at Lake Nipigon and Kaministiquia, the latter was located on the western shores of Lake Superior.[7] In 1731, the now famous explorer Pierre de la Vérendrye was made commander of the Canadian trade in the Northwest and he extended the trade further west, he established Ft. La Reine (at Portage), Ft. Rouge (at the forks of the Assiniboine and Red Rivers), Ft. Maurepas (at the mouth of the Winnipeg River), and Ft. St. Charles

[6] The earliest posts were Prince of Wales Fort on the Churchill River, York Fort on the Hayes River, Fort Albany on the Albany River, Moose Fort on the Moose River and Fort Charles on the Rupert River. At those posts, or forts, the principal people with whom the company traded were the Cree and the Chipewyan. Rich, *The Fur Trade*, 24.

[7] The posts were placed under the command of Claude Greysolon de La Tourette, see *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, s.v. "Daniel Greysolon Dulhut" (by Yves F. Zoltvany), http://www.biographi.ca/index-e.html (accessed February 22, 2011).

(at Lake of the Woods).[8] In the years 1742 to 1743, La Vérendrye himself ascended the upper Missouri and entered (possibly) the Yellowstone River (in present day Montana) at the foot of the Rocky Mountains.[9]

La Vérendrye was eventually replaced as leader by the Chevalier Boucher de Niverville.[10] In 1751, Niverville travelled west to the Bow River and built a fort where Calgary now stands.[11] In 1753, Chevalier St. Luc de la Corne further entrenched French trade on the Saskatchewan River by erecting Fort la Corne near the Forks of the South and North branches of that river.[12] After Fort La Corne was erected further westward further expansion was cut short by the outbreak of the Seven Years War (1756-1763).

The HBC's venture west was initially more cautious. In early its years the Company's Governor and Committee were content receiving the furs that the Indigenous people brought to trade at their coastal forts.[13] However, starting as early as the 1750s, and partially as a response to French efforts to outflank them, the HBC explored the possibility of establishing continental posts on the river highways to the west of Hudson's

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[8] The Saskatchewan was one of the most used transportation routes between Hudson Bay and the interior, The establishment of posts along the Saskatchewan, it was thought, might intercept furs destined for the HBC forts. Abel, *Drum Songs*, 67.

[9] For a quick sketch of the places visited by La Vérendrye during his journeys see, Rich, *The Fur Trade*, 83-95.

[10] A.G. Morice, *History of the Catholic Church in Western Canada: from Lake Superior to the Pacific (1659-1895)* (Toronto: Musson, 1910), 36. After La Vérendrye retired he was replaced as leader of the northwestern trade first by Captain Charles Joseph Fleurimont de Noyelle and later by Jacques Repentigny Legardeur de Saint Pierre.

[11] However, the fort, known as Ft. Jonquiere, was abandoned the following year. Morice speculates the fort was on the Bow River. Rich locates it at the forks of the Saskatchewan Rivers. Morice, *History of the Catholic Church*, 47; Rich, *The Fur Trade*, 94.

[12] Rich, *The Fur Trade*, 94.

[13] In its early years the HBC preferred to operate from its posts on the Bay because it was thought that "inland posts would merely take the trade to Indians who would otherwise bring their furs to the posts by the Bay." Rich, *The Fur Trade*, 122.

Bay.[14] Thus, in the summer of 1754, Anthony Henday, following in the footsteps of Henry Kelsey, left on a reconnaissance expedition that took him along the Saskatchewan Rivers as far west as the Rockies – about the regions of Banff and Jasper.[15] Henday's voyage revealed that the prosperity of the English posts was largely dependent on furs that were procured as far west as the Rocky Mountains and that some Plains peoples had given up trapping for furs entirely to serve as middle persons between the Company and their western neighbours.[16]

How these voyages were felt, if they were felt at all in the orbit of the Fraser and Skeena watersheds, is very difficult to gauge. The early expeditions by all accounts did not cross the Rockies and enter the orbit directly. On the other hand, they all approached mountain passes at the headwaters of the Saskatchewan and Missouri Rivers. Yet, the expeditions produced no descriptions of the peoples of the Rocky Mountains and the Gitksan, Dakelh and Sekani oral histories I have read make no specific mention of these early voyages. However, the gap does not mean they went unnoticed, remember that the explorers did not travel alone and the space through which they travelled was not empty. They employed Indigenous guides, interpreters and labour and conversed with those over whose lands they travelled and those conversations – given what we know of the material trade – would have been communicated to areas far from their point of occurrence. If the traders spoke of anything it was to inquire about travel and trading patterns, fur bearing animals, populations, and the disposition of the various peoples. While local peoples

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[14] Rich, *The Fur Trade*, 151. Cumberland House founded in 1774 at Pine Island on the Saskatchewan River was the first inland post erected west of Hudson's Bay.

[15] Henry Kelsey, in 1690-92, was the first HBC officers to travel to the Canadian Plains.

[16] Abel, *Drum Songs*, 67-8; Rich, *The Fur Trade*, 125.

probably learned little of Christianity from these early voyagers, at least some of the labour were practicing Christians and may have been an early source of the religion. As far as missionaries are concerned, so far as I know, no chaplains or missionaries employed on the reconnaissance expeditions to the west; although the French traders did employ some missionaries at their forts on the eastern plains. In any, event, the journeys would have keyed locals into eastern activities, the intentions and motivations of the explorers as well as the burgeoning trade.[17] Thus the voyages piqued the interest and curiosity of at least some.

Fur Trade Exploration and Initial Encroachment in the Inner Orbits (1763 to 1805)

While there is no documentary evidence indicating that the peoples of the Fraser-Skeena Plateau met those early explorers, we know that by the mid-eighteenth century their near neighbours were trading with the British and the French and that they had met representatives of both commercial interests. While the Seven Years War slowed exploration and commercial activity in the west, commerce continued in the eastern plains and around the Great Lakes. After the Treaty of Paris signalled the end of the war, which ceded all lands east of the Mississippi in North America to the British, Montreal merchants continued to engage voyageurs, who in exchange for an outfit and a share in

[17] Some missionaries did accompany the work of the early French traders. The Jesuit Father Charles Michel Mesaiger accompanied de la Verendrye's early journeys to Rainy Lake, to Fort St. Charles, and to the Lake of the Woods. Later, at some point between 1742 and 1743 the Jesuit Father Claude Godefroy Coquart – perhaps the first permanent priest in Manitoba – was at Fort La Reine. Coquart was later replaced by Father Jean-Baptiste de la Morinie; however, according to Morice he was so despondent about the little work that he could do among the locals he returned to Michillmakinac in 1751. Father Jean-Baptiste de la Morinie was the last missionary in the west for about 65 years. Morice suggests that Mesaiger performed baptisms: "[although no contemporary record of the Father's activities exists] it is inconceivable that, with the large numbers of Indians who constantly pressed on their footsteps, none should have been baptized. Nay, the late discovery of the remains of three Indians who had been buried within the fort, alongside of Canadians, clearly proves that some of them had received the sacrament that gives a right to Christian sepulture." Morice, *History of the Catholic Church*, 20-47.

the profits headed west to procure furs for the company. [18] The system used by the Montreal merchants afforded the emergence of a class of "free traders" (traders who were not contractually obliged to the HBC) of diverse linguistic, religious, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, the traders were Canadian, English, Métis, Algonquian, and Iroquois. Throughout the remainder of the decade both Montreal and London interests actively pursued the western trade. They competed with each other, and as each interest tried to outflank the other they ended up driving trade further and further west.

As the trade extended west explorers were often given credit by their employers for discovering new regions and trading partners. In that setting, in the early years of the western drive, it was the Iroquois and Métis trappers who were the real vanguards of the trade. The journals of two of the most well known explorers, Alexander Mackenzie and David Thompson confirm the pioneering work of Iroquois trappers. Moreover, while explorers travelled through a region quickly, only sometimes returning to people and places visited, the Iroquois and the Métis were the first newcomers to maintain permanent presences in western lands and communities. The following two sections detail the pioneering efforts of the Iroquois, Métis and Canadians.

Iroquois Trappers and Traders

In Mackenzie's famous *Voyages*, first published in 1801, he describes the country west of Hudson's Bay as destined to form a large preserve reserved for use of those

[18] Rich *The Fur Trade*, 133. In 1763, King George III also issued the Royal Proclamation, announcing that, all lands not already surrendered by Indian tribes were to be reserved for them and that no European was permitted to settle on that land or to attempt a private purchase of it.

people "who prefer the modes of life of their forefathers."[19] The recent migration of Iroquois to the region Mackenzie mentioned are cases in point: "A small colony of Iroquois emigrated to the banks of the Saskatchiwine, in 1799, who had been brought up from their infancy under the Romish missionaries, and instructed by them at a village within nine miles of Montreal."[20] Mackenzie was not the only trader to observe the population change. In 1794, the Nor'wester Duncan M'Gillivray, en route to Fort George on the North Saskatchewan, observed that there were Iroquois in the service of the Northwest Company (NWC) trapping along the Sturgeon River near Prince Albert Saskatchewan.[21] In 1798, David Thompson wrote that 250 Indigenous peoples from the east, at least half of whom were Iroquoian, were trapping along the Saskatchewan River about Fort Augustus (Edmonton).[22] Two years later, Thompson, this time on his way to the Ktunaxa (Kootenai), was actively employing Iroquois trappers in the eastern slopes of the Rockies. En route he advised the Piegan (Blackfoot) that the company was about to introduce "a number of Iroquois and Sauteaux into this country about the Mountain." Thompson continued, "We informed them [the Piegan] that their Country [that of the

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[19] Alexander Mackenzie, *Voyages from Montreal on the river St. Laurence through the continent of North America to the Frozen and Pacific oceans, in the years 1789 and 1793* (Edmonton, M.G. Hurtig, 1971), 344.

[20] Mackenzie, *Voyages*, 345.

[21] Jack A. Frisch, "Some Ethnological and Ethnohistoric Notes on the Iroquois in Alberta" *Man in the Northeast* 12 (1976): 51-64.

[22] Frisch, "Ethnological and Ethnohistoric Notes," 52. The numbers noted by Thompson are high compared to the NWC's employment records, or the "Repertoire des engagements pour l'ouest." Trudy Nicks investigated those records and noted that between 1797 and 1803, 41 Iroquois were hired by the NWC and 4 by the XY Company. However, Trudy Nicks questions the accuracy of the "Repertoire." It was common for fur companies to make private contracts and for independent Iroquois to move west as free traders. Trudy Nicks, "The Iroquois and the Fur Trade in Western Canada," in *Old Trails and New Directions: Papers of the Third North American Fur Trade Conference*, ed. by Carol M. Judd and Arthur J. Ray (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 88.

Iroquois] was so very poor, as to be utterly incapable to maintain them – for which reason they had applied to us to bring them up to the Mountains, which request we had not complied with, as we did not know how they would be pleased with it. We also added that those Indians would behave quietly, would reside in the woody Hills at the foot of the Mountain & serve as a Barrier between them & their Enemies – upon these Terms they gave us Permission to bring them up as soon as we pleased."[23] While the Piegan would later retaliate against what they took as aggressive Iroquois poaching, Thompson did not record any Piegan objections at the time (that is, he did not write them down).

The Iroquoian communities on the eastern ridge of the Columbia and Fraser watersheds were not insignificant and isolated groups. Both left local legacies that reveal much about the movement of Christianity through Indigenous communities. Some of the Iroquois mentioned by Mackenzie, M'Gillivray and Thompson settled in the upper Saskatchewan. Three communities in Northwestern Alberta can be traced back to these early Iroquoian settlers: the Jasper House or Rocky Mountain Iroquois, the Grand Prairie Iroquois and "Michel's Reserve." The founding ancestors of the latter community, located on forty square kilometers of land northwest of Edmonton, are thought to be brothers Louis and Ignace Kwarakante and Ignace Wanyante. Ignace later married a Sekani by the name of Marie; the two settled near the Yellowhead pass had three sons and two daughters. [24] The Yellowhead pass was a major transportation route that led from the eastern foothills of the Rockies through to Dakelh and Sekani territory. The Dakelh and Sekani would have met the Iroquois along that route. Marius Barbeau speculated that

[23] David Thompson, *Columbia Journals*, ed. Barbara Belyea (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 15.

[24]Frisch, "Ethnological and Ethnohistoric Notes," 54-58.

the Dakelh were first introduced to Christianity by the Iroquois living there.[25] Moreover, while stationed in New Caledonia in the 1820s, Chief Factor William Connolly commented on the ongoing problem of Iroquois free traders siphoning furs from the HBC's New Caledonia Department. The Iroquois, he complained, were trading ammunition to the Dakelh along with telling them "a number of stories which are very prejudicial to our interest."[26]

In the southern Rockies, the Iroquois played a key role in what has to be one of the most famous incidents in North American Missions history: "the Macedonian Cry" of the Nez Perce. In 1831, a delegation of Nez Perces, allegedly inspired by Iroquois Catholicism, made the long journey to Saint Louis to request that a priest be sent to live among them. That incident is widely thought to have opened the northwest to Catholic and Protestant missions and to have adumbrated the traffic on the Oregon Trail leading to the settlement of the Northwest. These preliminary examples are meant to illustrate the range and depth of the Iroquoian presence in the Rocky Mountains from a very early date. Iroquois approached the Rockies in the 1790s and migration to the region continued into the nineteenth century. Historian Jan Grabowski estimates that between 1800 and 1820 more than 1,100 Amerindians (the majority of whom were Iroquois) signed engagements with fur companies.[27] Throughout that period the Iroquois were ubiquitous

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[25] Barbeau to Spier, 27 March 1933, B-F-198.9, BCA.

[26] Connolly in Rich, *Part of Dispatch from George Simpson*, 240. What might the Iroquois have been telling the Dakelh? Connolly does not say. Perhaps they warned them about the HBC incursion and that their plans were much more invasive than those of the NWC before them? At the time relations between the traders and the Dakelh were particularly tense because of the murder of a local Dakelh committed by the trader James Douglas the previous year.

[27] Jan Grabowski and Nicole St-Onge, "Montreal Iroquois *engages* in the Western Fur Trade, 1800-1821," in *From Rupert's Land to Canada*, ed. Theodore Binnema, Gerhard J. Ends and R.C.Macleod (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 2001), 24.

throughout the Rocky Mountain west.[28] In 1810, David Thompson came across a group of six Iroquois at Salish House who "had come [...] to trap Beaver."[29] In 1816, the NWC began employing Iroquois in their trapping brigades to scour regions east and south of the Columbia River.[30] In 1821, Alexander Ross remarked that nearly one-third of the NWC employees on the Columbia were Iroquois.[31] Once the Iroquois arrived in the west, in addition to their service as trappers, they worked as labourers, interpreters, guides, provision hunters and couriers.[32] While we know that the company did hire Iroquois trappers, others worked as "free" trappers (not on contract to any particular company).[33]

There is no doubt that many of the Iroquois who came west were Catholic as the majority were at first recruited by the North West Company from the settled Catholic

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[28] Grabowski's earlier cited number of 1,100 Amerindians on contract includes only those Iroquois under *signed* contract; other Iroquois may have been free hunters or worked "under the table." The most intense period of Iroquois migration seems to have been between 1799 and 1804, which coincided with the period of NWC and XY Company competition. Moreover, the records left by explorers, priests, and fur traders in the nineteenth century make frequent mention of Iroquois settlements and activities. See, for example, James Carnegie *Saskatchewan and the Rocky Mountains: a diary and narrative of travel, sport, and adventure, during a journey through the Hudson's Bay Company's territories, in 1859 and 1860* (M.G. Hurtig: Edmonton, 1969), 174; Hiram Martin Chittenden and Alfred Talbot Richardson, *Life, letters and travels of Father Pierre-Jean de Smet, S.J.: 1801-1873*, 4 vols. (New York: Francis P. Harper, 1905), 536; and Alexander Ross, *The Fur Hunters of the Far West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956), 211.

[29] He subsequently hired the Iroquois to procure birch bark for his canoes. David Thompson, *David Thompson's narrative of his explorations in Western America, 1784-1812*, ed. Joseph Burr Tyrrell (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1916), 418-419. The following year he met two more Iroquois who were in pursuit of deer and beaver in the upper Columbia drainage, both of whom he hired as boatmen on his famous descent of the Columbia. John C. Ewers, "Iroquois Indians in the Far West," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 13, no. 2 (1963): 5.

[30] It was decided by the NWC that "Iroquois would be introduced from Montreal as exemplary hunters and trappers; and the 'costly' mode of conducting the express would be abandoned and entrusted to natives, with the exception of the annual general express." James R. Gibson, *The Lifeline of the Oregon Country: The Fraser-Columbia Brigade System, 1811-47* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997).

[31] Alexander Ross, *The Fur Hunters of the Far West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956), 195.

[32] Nicks, "The Iroquois in the Fur Trade," 89.

[33] Nicks, "The Iroquois in the Fur Trade," 89.

communities around Montreal: Kahnawake (Sault Saint-Louis at the time), Akwasasne (St. Regis) and Kanesetake (Lake of Two Mountains).[34] Whatever their reason for entering the western trade and traveling far from home – the erosion of their land base and the exhaustion of their hunting territories were at least two reasons – many of the Iroquois who came west they saw the opportunity as more than temporary employment and elected to settle permanently.[35] Some Iroquois married into local populations, others brought along their families and others still went it alone. [36]

The Iroquois were quite likely the first eastern peoples directly connected with the fur trade to become fixed in the inner orbit of the upper Fraser and Skeena Rivers.[37] As might be expected, feelings between the Iroquois and the local peoples varied, sometimes the groups got along quite well and other times relations were downright hostile. In the remainder of this section I will attempt to clarify those relations, with a focus on the place of Iroquois Catholicism in the lay Christianity of the fur trade.

Violence was often an initial response to what must have been perceived by local peoples as Iroquois intrusion. There is no question that at least some Indigenous peoples viewed the Iroquois as intruders. The Dunne-za in the area of the Peace River made a stand against the HBC's plans of introducing Iroquois there.[38] The Piegan murdered

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[34] Ibid., 86.

[35] The westward migration of the Iroquois and Sauteaux is often accounted for in economic terms: coupled with a demand for Amerindian labour by the fur companies encouraged them to enter into the western fur trade. Grabowski and St.Onge, "Montreal Iroquois *engages*," 32.

[36] According to Frisch, the contracts signed between the Iroquois and the NWC required the Iroquois to work for the company for the period of three years. At the end of their service if they were not rehired they could seek new employment with whomever they wished or remain in the country as free traders (not on contract with any company). Frisch, "Some Ethnological and Ethnohistoric Notes," 53.

[37] The Sauteaux that worked in the trade and were also mostly from the Great Lakes Region.

[38] Nicks, "The Iroquois in the Fur Trade," 93.

twenty-five of the group of 250 Iroquois that moved west in 1798.[39] The murders were alleged to have been precipitated by a gambling dispute, but because we know that David Thompson directed the Iroquois to trap on Piegan lands disputes over land rights may have factored into the murders. Daniel Harmon, while stationed at Fort St. James in 1818, recorded that a group of Dakelh killed an Iroquois and his family allegedly because the Iroquois had been encroaching on their lands for several years.[40]

Violence was not the only response to the Iroquoian migrants; at other times relations between Iroquois and local peoples could be much more pleasant. Many Iroquois, like their Canadian neighbours, entered the trade as single men and like their neighbours married local women *in country*.[41] In the Rocky Mountains, for example, Iroquois men married Secwepemc, Dunne-za and Sekani women.[42] Ignace Wanyate, as mentioned previously, married a Marie, a Sekani woman.[43] In 1824, when George Simpson and party crossed the country they met several families of Iroquois at "Boat Encampment" on the west side of Athabasca pass and many of the men among them had

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[39] Jack A. Frisch, "Iroquois in the West," in *Handbook of North American Indians, Vol. 15, Northeast*, ed. Bruce Trigger (Washington: Smithsonian, 1978), 544. For that treatment the Iroquois planned retaliation but were dissuaded from doing so by the Cree.

[40] Daniel Harmon, *Harmon's Journal 1800-1819*, ed. W. Kaye Lamb (Victoria: Touchwood Press, 2006), 173-4.

[41] Nicks, "The Iroquois in the Fur Trade," 100. Nicks also writes that many of the Iroquois elected to remain in the Northwest even after their contracts had expired to work as free trappers or for the HBC.

[42] Frisch, "Ethnological and Ethnohistoric Notes," 53; Kenneth Morgan, and Trudy Nicks, "Grande Cache: The historic development of an Indigenous Alberta Métis population" in *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America*, ed. Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S.H. Brown (Manitoba: University of Manitoba Press, 1985), 168.

[43] Nicks and Morgan add that the Iroquois in the region of Jasper House married Sekani, Dunne-za, Cree and Ojibwa. Morgan and Nicks, "Grand Cache," 168.

Dakelh wives.[44] Unlike some of the Canadian voyaguers, many Iroquois stayed in the west and managed to carve out a niche for themselves within local communities. Other Iroquois were more groupish. The historian Trudy Nicks alleged that the Iroquois maintained a low profile by settling in thinly populated areas and adds that when Iroquois men did marry local women they tended not to integrate themselves into local groups but were, on the other hand, more apt to attach themselves to a trading post or a mission.[45] The social pattern may have depended to some degree on the quality of relations with locals. Other Iroquois, in yet another departure from the Canadian pattern, settled in the west with their families that they brought with them from the east.[46]

Most of the Iroquois who did come west were Catholic or at least from Catholic mission towns.[47] The Catholic Iroquois who settled just east of the Dakelh and Sekani were an early source of knowledge of Christianity for the peoples of the headwaters of the Fraser and Skeena before the arrival of European traders and Catholic missionaries.[48] While the Iroquois were present and a potential source of Catholicism, the degree of their influence on local populations is difficult to gauge. We know that many of the Iroquois were at least nominally Catholic but in the Northwest, where there was neither parish nor

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[44] Barbeau to Spier, 27 March 1933, B-F-198.9, BCA.

[45] Nicks, "The Iroquois in the Fur Trade", 94-95.

[46] The Grand Prairie Iroquois for example followed that example.

[47]Nicks, "The Iroquois in the Fur Trade," 96. Michel's band, in particular, welcomed the establishment of the Catholic mission at Lake Ste. Anne and moved to be closer to it.

[48] The claim may be read as suggesting that Indigenous peoples were active in their own colonization and that will be unacceptable to some. I discuss this issue later. Now I simply want to say that I am not interested in explaining the past by the present. While the prophets tried, the future can never be predicted with complete accuracy. Indeed, it seems to me Indigenous peoples were very interested in how things were going to turn out and to that end sought out and made use of all resources at their disposal. This creativity was something that the missionaries lacked because for the most part they did not seriously challenge their own historical and religious narratives.

mission, some Iroquois might have welcomed the opportunity to be free of the Catholicism practiced at home.[49] While freedom from religion, or mission life, may have been the case for some, others made every effort to adhere to at least the basic sacraments. When Fathers Modeste Demers and F.N. Blanchet crossed the country destined for the Columbia in 1838, they baptized numerous Iroquois children who were born in the vicinity of Ft. Augustus (Edmonton).[50] When the Jesuit Pierre De Smet travelled north through the Rocky Mountains in the years 1845 and 1846 in search of the Blackfoot, he was met by some Iroquois families near Fort Jasper among whom he taught catechism, performed baptisms and blessed marriages. [51] About that time the Oblates founded a mission at Lac Ste. Anne that became home to a number of Iroquois families, which may have included those met by De Smet.[52]

The priests were not the only individuals to record Iroquois religiosity. The trader Ross Cox who came to the Columbia in 1812 as an employee of the Pacific Fur Company wrote of the Iroquois in the service that they "have been all reclaimed from their original state of barbarism, and now profess the Roman Catholic religion."[53] Cox's colleague,

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[49] Handsome Lake's teachings were anti-Catholic and anti-Colonial. Handsome Lake, or Ganio'dai'io as he was called in Iroquoian, was Seneca born about 1735. In 1799, he began receiving a series of visions that formed the basis of his "Longhouse Religion." The religion was nativistic and consisted of a behavioural code and a set of moral values meant to strengthen Iroquoian communities and families, see Anthony F.C. Wallace, *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca* (New York, 1969).

[50] For the records of baptisms, marriages and burials that Demers and Blanchet performed on this trip see, Harriet Munnick, *Catholic Church Records of the Pacific Northwest: Vancouver, volumes I and II and Stellamaris Mission*, trans., Mikell De Lores Wormell Warner (St. Paul, Oregon: French Prairie Press, 1972).

[51] De Smet's journey was undertaken to facilitate a peace between them and the Blackfoot and the Interior Salish (Flathead).

[52] Nicks, "The Iroquois and the Fur Trade", 96.

[53] Ross Cox, *The Columbia River* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1957), 364.

Alexander Ross, was more descriptive. Referring to the period about 1821 – at the time of the amalgamation of the NWC to the HBC – Ross wrote that, "among the people employed in this trade are a set of civilized Indians from the neighbourhood of Montreal. These are chiefly of the Iroquois nation, at the period they form nearly a third of the number of men employed by the Company on the Columbia."[54] One reason Ross qualified the Iroquois as civilized, he continued, was because they were "brought up to religion" and "sing hymns oftener than paddling songs."[55] The observations of Cox and Ross further confirm that Catholic Christianity was a part of Iroquois religiosity and that Iroquois made up a large portion of the labour force west of the Rockies in the early decades of the nineteenth century. While Ross describes the Iroquois as keeping their religion to themselves, we know that such was not the case for all Iroquois migrants. Some were vocal about their religion and attempted to proselytize local populations.

The most well known case of Iroquois proselytization involved a group of twenty-four Catholic Iroquois who settled among the Interior Salish about 1820. The party, led by Ignace Partui or Big Ignace, initially set out from the Montreal missions as a band of free trappers but later settled in the Bitter Root Valley in Southwestern Montana.[56] There the Iroquois established a good relationship with the local Interior Salish chief Tjolzhitsay. Ignace in particular ingratiated himself with the Interior Salish and their Nez

[54] Ross, *The Fur Hunters*, 195.

[55]Singing was not always perceived by Ross as a virtue. While leading a brigade composed of a large contingent of Iroquois he took hymn singing as a sign of rebellion and warned that "the singing of sacred music by these hypocritical wretches is a sure sign of disaffection" (211). The singing is perhaps exemplary of a rite of resistance.

[56] The Montana Iroquois have been the subject of recent work by John C. Mellis. See, John C. Mellis, "Ignace Partui: Iroquois Evangelist to the Salish, ca. 1780-1837," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* no. 4, 33 (2009), 212-215. For the Iroquois in the place of Salish Christianity, see John Mellis, "Coyote People and the Black Robes Indigenous Roots of Salish Christianity" (PhD Diss., St Louis University, 1992).

Perce neighbours. It was from Ignace and his compatriots that the Interior Salish and Nez Perce learned a great deal about Catholic notions of God and the resurrection; Catholic rites, hymns and prayers; as well as the privileged authority of the Catholic priests with respect to matters religious. In 1831, perhaps motivated by Ignace's stories, four Nez Perce arrived in St. Louis allegedly for the purpose of persuading the Catholic priests there to dispatch missionaries west.[57] The missiological literature has often interpreted the journey as a Macedonian cry. Yet, for all the attention the story garnered within the popular press and missionary journals there is scarcely any extant testimony from the Nez Perce as to why they left home and as to just what exactly they were doing in St. Louis.[58] In 1835, a second deputation consisting of Ignace and his two sons repeated the journey of three years earlier. The reason for the voyage, at least ostensibly, was to have Ignace's sons baptized and enrolled in the Catholic school there.[59] Old Ignace may also have used his audience with Father Helias to request that a missionary be sent to the Interior Salish and Nez Perce. If he did in fact make such a request there was nothing the Catholics in Saint Louis could do about it at the time. Old Ignace set out again for St. Louis in 1837, but this time he was accompanied by Chief Tjolzhitsay's two sons, two other Interior Salish, one Nez Perce and a party of three Presbyterians led by William Grey. The third time was no charm, tragedies befall the party en route and Ignace along with the Interior

[57] Of the four who made the journey, only one returned home; two died in St. Louis and a third died on the return voyage.

[58] The Protestants were particularly excited by this. The Methodist William Walker published the account in the mission journal *The Christian Advocate* in March 1833. The same edition was accompanied with an editorial by the President of Wilbraham College titled, "Who will respond and Go Beyond the Rocky Mountains and carry the Book of Heaven?" Oliver W. Nixon, *How Marcus Whitman Saved Oregon* (Oliver Nixon, 1895).

[59] Father Ferdinand Helias at St. Louis baptized the children but would not enroll them in the school.

Salish and Nez Perce were killed by Lakota warriors at Ash Hollow on the Platte River.[60] The following year, two of Ignace's expatriate Iroquoian countrymen, Pierre Gauche and Le Jeune Ignace, undertook yet another voyage to St. Louis ostensibly to request a Catholic missionary. On their voyage the two stopped in at Jean Pierre De Smet's Jesuit mission to the Potawatomis at Council Bluffs. De Smet was pleased to receive them and wrote them a letter of introduction to give to Bishop Rosati upon their arrival in St. Louis. When the Iroquois arrived, the Bishop heard their confessions, and confirmed and administered communion to the young men. Before sending them back home he promised them that a missionary would be sent among them soon. The following year, Le Jeune Ignace returned to the Potawatomi and led De Smet to Pierre's Hole, Interior Salish territory, where he was welcomed by Chief Tjolzhitzay and there began the first Jesuit – and one of the very first Catholic – missions west of the Missouri.

Scholars of North American missions have attributed much influence to the activities of those early Iroquois who settled in the Bitterroot Valley. They are said to have warmed the Interior Salish to the Jesuits; to have been responsible for the Macedonian Cry of 1831 that resulted in the westward migration of numerous Protestant missionaries in the 1830s and 40s; and to have been the source of the Christianity Prophet religions of the Northwest.[61] Spier was so convinced that the Iroquois were the only

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[60] Grey, who was initially hired by the Whitman's to manage their expedition, survived the attack and returned the next year with reinforcements for the Presbyterian mission. The composition of this party strikes me as strange. Since Ignace was said to have warned Tjolzhitsay against accepting Protestant missionaries why would he want to travel with them and why would the Protestants want his company? Moreover, tensions within the group would have been further exacerbated if Ignace was destined for St. Louis to request Catholics. On the other hand, the composition of the party might suggest the lack of discrimination among Indigenous peoples between Protestants and Catholics at this date in history and/or the practical gambit of safety in numbers.

[61] See Spier, *The Prophet Dance*, 35; and Albert Furtwangler, *Bringing Indians the Book* (Seattle WA: University of Washington Press, 2005).

agents of Christianity on the Northwestern Plateau in the early decades of the nineteenth century that he dismissed all other sources, even the employees of the fur trading companies, as negligible or non-existent.[62] He sharply dismissed the suggestion made by Captain Bonneville that Indigenous peoples had learned Christianity through communication with traders. Bonneville claimed that the HBC trader P.C. Pambrun told him that he deliberately attempted to introduce Christianity to Indigenous peoples near his postings, but Spier was not convinced Pambrun's efforts met with any success.[63]

Just as the Iroquois of Montana were said to have been a major Christian influence on the Northwestern Plateau, Marius Barbeau claimed that the Iroquois of northwestern Alberta were the major source of Christianity in the Northern Cordillera. Bini's movement, he alleged could be traced to the Iroquois living in the region of Jasper Park.[64] In their attempts to account for a pre-missionary Christianity, Spier and Barbeau make some insightful suggestions that are probably not without some merit. But the Iroquois were not the only Christians living and working in the Rocky Mountain West in

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[62] Spier cites a Ktunaxa tradition as the only other source of Christianity: "long ago a Frenchman, not a priest, came to the Kutenai [Ktunaxa] country and took away to an Island on the Pacific coast two Kutenai youths, one Pend d'Oreille, and one Flathead." When the Ktunaxa returned he instituted a Sunday ceremony. But Spier is ultimately suspicious of this tradition and adds that they were "much more likely to have received the Christian elements from their immediate neighbours to the south, the Flathead." Spier does suggest that the influence of the Iroquois was later amplified by Spokan Garry (he and another youth, "Kutenai Pelly," spent some years at the Red River academy; Pelly died there but Garry returned home in 1830). According to Spier, Garry gave impetus to the religious movement observed by McLean in the mid-1830s and thus represents a "secondary wave" of Christianity Spier, *The Prophet Dance*, 38.

[63] Spier writes, "knowing that the Iroquois had arrived in Montana some twenty years before and had successfully proselytized the Interior Salish and their neighbours, we can interpret this as meaning that Pambrun's role was not quite what he represented."Spier, *The Prophet Dance*, 33.

[64] Barbeau claims that Bini visited those Jasper Park Iroquois during his pretended death. According to Barbeau, those Iroquois were also heavily influenced by the doctrine of Handsome Lake. The latter suggestion seems to me to be entirely speculative and not particularly well grounded. As mentioned, the Handsome Lake religion [Longhouse Religion now refers to traditional Iroquois religion] had strong anti-colonial and anti-Catholic sentiments; moreover, its influence was mostly restricted to the Iroquois around New York – I do not know if it ever had much attraction among the "Canadian" Iroquois. Today the three communities near Montreal show little influence from Handsome Lake although there is more at Six Nations in Southern Ontario.

the early nineteenth century. The Iroquois were not alone, there were other traders and trappers of various backgrounds – Algonquians, Métis, French-Canadians, English-Canadians, Americans and Europeans – living in the Rocky Mountain west at the turn of the century. Moreover, the Iroquois were neither the only Christians nor the only people to settle in western lands and to be absorbed into local populations.

I think that the Iroquois occupy such a central place in the missiological narrative for both ideological and practical reasons. The ideological line is an apology: it was because the Iroquois requested missionaries that the missionary enterprise to Indigenous peoples could be justified or legitimated. In addition, placing the Christian Iroquois in the west is useful when composing a "frontier history." The Iroquois bridge the gap between the Christian and the non-Christian and the Euro-American and the Indigenous-American; thus making the Iroquois inter-cultural or inter-religious. In Malinowski's scheme discussed in chapter 2 the Iroquois (along with the Métis) would be "transitional." There are also practical reasons for placing the Iroquois front and centre in the missiological record. Because the Iroquois are important to the missionary history of North American Catholicism and Protestantism a fair amount of research there has been done on them; research that has been aided by the fact that much evidence pertaining to the Iroquois, namely their journeys to St. Louis, are well preserved in the documentary record. My sense is that the example of Iroquois living in the west is not at all unique. Traders and trappers, whether Iroquois or not, of predominately Catholic religious backgrounds settling down and marrying into local communities, were ethnographic facts of fur trade society. The religiosity, as I will argue in more detail in the following

chapter, pervaded the fur trade and was present, at least in the background, whenever fur trade employees interacted with Aboriginal populations.

The Canadians, Métis and lay Christianity

At the close of the eighteenth century agents of the NWC were actively trapping and trading along the eastern edge of the Rocky Mountains and occasionally passing into them. The Iroquois played a very important role in that early work but they were not the only ones to labour in the task as they worked alongside Métis and Canadian Voyageurs.[65] With the Iroquois, the Métis and Voyageurs were the vanguard of the western fur trade. When Peter Pond of the NWC went to establish a post at Great Slave Lake in 1785, he found that there was already a Métis family living there. Some Métis, like the Iroquois, married into Dene families and adopted their customs and languages.[66] The Dene also adopted some Métis customs; in 1791 at Île-à-la Crosse Philip Turnor met a Chipewyan who he described as "quite a frenchified fellow."[67] Because many of the Métis had a long history with the NWC they gave the company an important advantage in the western trade. George Simpson remarked in 1821 that the NWC "have a host of attached Half-breeds who are a most useful set of people," and then lamented that the HBC has "not one of that description; their Women are faithful to their cause and good

[65] In this chapter use the term Métis but do not draw a sharp line between the Métis and the Canadians. It is often difficult to distinguish between Métis and French Canadian because the historical record often refers to the Métis as "French Canadian" or "Canadian." The Métis are defined by Goulet as a people of mixed American Aboriginal and European descent. George D. Goulet, *The Métis in British Columbia: from fur trade outposts to colony* (Calgary: FabJob, 2008), 7.

[66] According to the ethnohistorian Kerry Abel, "large numbers of Métis and French Canadian traders lived more or less permanently with Dene families, assisting in the hunt and making arrangements for the harvest to be transported to the nearby post." Abel, *Drum Songs*, 83.

[67] Abel, *Drum Songs*, 76.

Interpreters."[68] Their very appellation betrays that the Métis integrated themselves into local communities and like the Iroquois were a source of knowledge about Christianity and about European thought and attitudes in general. One thing that must have been clear for both Métis and Iroquois is that although they practiced the same religion as their English or American employers and managers, they were different classes of people. Their opportunities and upward mobility were restricted within trading companies. They were a class apart from the officers and the "country" was their permanent home; they were not just passing through or serving out a contract before returning east.

While the Canadian and Métis were integral to the scaffolding of the fur trade west of the Rockies, and their legacy is preserved there today by in the "Frenchtowns" of eastern Washington, less is known about the religious and cultural lives that they led there in the early nineteenth century.[69] Fortunately, scholarship on the Métis east of the Rockies is not so thin and what there is can be useful. Because the organizational structure of both companies, the NWC and HBC were similar on both sides of the Rockies and because the employees of both companies had similar religious (and cultural and ethnic) backgrounds an examination of Métis labour, culture and religion east of the Rockies might provide some clue into what was happening in the west.

In Brenda MacDougall and John Foster's work on Métis ethnogenesis in the western plains they suggest that a lay or folk Catholicism was part of Métis religiosity

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[68] Abel, *Drum Songs*, 86.

[69] Marie Elliott, in her recent book *Fort St. James and New Caledonia*, notes that apart from her book, the only other text to treat in detail the history of the Northern Interior of British Columbia is Morice's 1902, *The History of the Northern Interior of British Columbia*. Marie Elliott, *Fort St. James and New Caledonia: Where British Columbia Began* (Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 2009).

from the very start.[70] Carolyn Podruchny's work on the French Canadian *voyageurs* also indicates that Catholicism was a part of the social life of the labour force of both the NWC and HBC.[71] Many of the voyageurs, for example, were sabbatarians.[72] On the Sabbath the labourers were typically given the day off – although it was expected they reserve some time for post cleaning and maintenance – and sometimes prayer was read by the clerks or officers in charge. Religious holidays too, namely, Christmas and Easter, at least at the trading posts, were occasions for rest, celebration and marked with Christian pageantry. Baptism was a perspicuous practice throughout the trading region west of the St. Lawrence. When novices entering the trade and passed certain spots on well worn trading and supply roads, they were baptized by their colleagues and either dunked or sprinkled with water.[73] Another initiation rite, the erection of lopsticks to "honour" novices who passed by a given spot was a well known practice at Boat Encampment on the Columbia. While the action itself may not have made explicit reference to Catholicism, there was Catholicism in the background as crosses were erected at those passages and prayers were recited as they passed.[74] The practices were

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[70] See MacDougall, *One of the Family,* and John Foster, "Wintering, the Outsider Adult Male."

[71] Podruchny writes of the voyageurs that they "sang French songs, practiced Roman Catholic rites, and maintained the values and cosmology of their French Canadian home." Carolyn Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World: travelers and traders in the North American fur trade* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 12.

[72] The question of whether this is top down or bottom up observance interests me.

[73] Three spots were particularly well known baptismal places: (1) on the Ottawa River at its confluence with the Deep River, (2) at the height of land that separated the Great Lakes and the Hudson's Bay watersheds (just west of Lake Superior) and (3) at Portage La Loche the height of land that separated the Rivers of Hudson's Bay from those of the Arctic. Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World*, 59. Aside from the three well known baptismal spots, any place deemed an appropriate site of passage could afford opportunity for a ritual of baptism (65).

[74] Grace Lee Nute, *The Voyageur* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1972), 165.

part of the cultural life of the trade, Podruchny avers that at every portage voyageurs took off their hats and made a sign of the cross.[75]

In addition to the baptisms of voyageurs, young and old men, the children of labourers and Indigenous and Métis women were baptized by one or both of their parents.[76] The situation of infant baptism in this setting calls to mind the practice already noted among the Russian *promyshlenniki*, among whom the laity baptized in lieu of a priest though it might be expected that the act would be confirmed by a priest when or if he was accessible. Of the other Catholic sacraments there is even less evidence. It is unlikely that the Eucharist was performed (the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation would call for the priestly liturgy – but it is not impossible that some people improvised the ceremony in their own way), and neither ordination nor confirmation would apply in this setting. The latter would "confirm" the presence of catechistic teachings but there is already good reason to think there were basic theological notions already on the ground. Marriage, reconciliation and last rites – or versions of those were more likely to have been practiced. It is clear that labourers were married to locals. In many instances, especially in the earliest times, marriages were conducted in an Indigenous idiom which typically involved a period of bride service. It is possible that such husbands to be attempted to make known their understanding of marriage consistent with the Catholic life cycle. In later times, after forts were constructed and local communities around them

[75] Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World*, 71-72.

[76] Ibid., 85.

established, marriage ceremonies were conducted close to the fort and were attended with Catholic pageantry.[77]

Many early missionaries to the North American west observed what they took to be an Indigenous form of confession and remarked at how cooperative and familiar Indigenous peoples seemed to be with the sacrament. The familiarity may well have been a product of early Catholicism that was picked up from company employees and freemen. Podruchny says that voyageurs performed Catholic rites in times of danger.[78] Along with baptism, the sacraments of reconciliation and last rites strike me as the most suited to fearful times. Prayer and sacrifice that proffer hope are appropriately religious responses to panic and anxiety evident throughout the record of the world's religious traditions.[79] The saints were surely prayed to, the holy family venerated, and so it would be hard to imagine that rosaries were not said.[80] In addition, voyageurs offered prayers to a figure or force known as the "mother of wind." Podruchny writes: "Clerk George Nelson recorded an incident involving one of his voyageurs, Joseph Labrie, who prayed to the "'mere des vents,' or Mother of the Winds, while the crew was in Lake Superior in June 1802. He

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[77] When clerk Donald McLean was stationed at Fort Babine between 1846 and 1848, he married a local Babine woman, with whom he had one child, John Allen (b. 1847). The occasion of McLean's marriage may have been cause for local celebration. See McLean, Donald 'C', "Hudson's Bay Archives Biographical Sheets."

[78] Podruchny writes, "Catholic rites were primarily observed in times of danger or death and served as vivid signs of voyageurs' roots." Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World*, 85.

[79] Walter Burkert suggests that such rites of sacrifice are parasitic upon natural (biological) tendencies observed in humans and animals to "flee from devouring dangers" and to make "sacrifices to assuage and triumph over anxiety." See Walter Burkert, *Creation of the Sacred: Tracks of Biology in Early Religions*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996.

[80] When crossing Lake Winnipeg during a storm Alexander Ross observed the voyageurs say prayers to Mary and to the saints. Such practices, he writes, were "religiously observed by old voyageurs." See MacDougall, *One in the Family*, 81. MacDougall also writes that they had an understanding of the Holy Family and acknowledged the power of saints over their lives. MacDougall, *One in the Family*, 4-5.

dropped a penny piece, a bit of tobacco, and flint steel into the lake as sacrifices for a good wind. Labrie was successful, as a good wind filled the sail."[81]

When danger was not avoided and workers were killed the deceased were buried and crosses were erected *in memoriam*. Crosses dotted the well worn routes taken by voyageurs. En route to Grand Portage early in the nineteenth century Daniel Harmon observed that "at almost every rapid that we have passed since we left Montreal, we have seen a number of crosses erected, and at one I counted no less than thirty!"[82] Burial as a means of disposal of the dead was encouraged by both companies and was subsequently introduced to Indigenous peoples – at least to those people in the near vicinity of the fort – at a very early date. When Peter Skene Ogden arrived at Fort St. James to take charge of the New Caledonia district, he remarked that the Dakelh around the fort were burying their dead. Prior to the arrival of the traders the Dakelh practiced cremation and continued that manner of disposition until the mid 1830s. One year after his arrival at Fort St. James Ogden remarked that "In Western Caledonia […] the civilized mode of interment is gaining ground, for in 1835, out of eleven deaths which came under my notice, five bodies only were disposed of by burning; and in the two succeeding years three out of five were decently interred."[83] Subsequent post journals confirm that the Dakelh settled around the local forts continued to bury their dead in means that was consistent with their own funerary rites. When employees died they too were buried in Christian ceremonies – with prayers said, crosses made and passages of the Bible read.

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[81] Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World*, 72.

[82] Harmon, *Harmon's Journal*, 9.

[83] Peter Skene Ogden, *Traits of American-Indian Life and Character* (London: Smith, Elder and Company, 1853), 130. Ogden suggests that the company convinced the Dakelh to bury their dead, but my sense is that they took the initiative themselves. It may not be coincidental that the change can be dated to the arrival of the HBC and the emergence of prophet movements.

Wives of employees might also be buried according to a Christian ceremony but if they were local it would be more likely that their family would conduct the funerary rites with which they were accustomed, at least that seems to have been the case into the 1840s.

Alexander Mackenzie and 1793 to the Sea

As the Métis and Iroquois were approaching the Rockies at the close of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries Alexander Mackenzie was preparing for his famous journey to the sea. On that 1793 trip to the Pacific that is now etched in the Canadian national memory he passed through Dakelh and Sekani territory and thus his record of the inter-montagne leg of that trip, will be useful to consider here. The crew on Mackenzie's voyage served as yet another source of information about Canadian, Métis and European life ways for peoples west of the Rockies. Moreover, while Mackenzie may have been the first Euro-Canadian trader to pass through their lands he was not new to them. Mackenzie's journal suggests that he had little difficulty communicating to the locals the reason for the voyage, it did not take them long to game Mackenzie and to figure out what he was doing. Their adroitness suggests that they were already equipped with some tools for dealing with European traders.

Mackenzie's journey began on May 9, 1793, when his crew put into the Peace River at Fort Fork. One month later, while in the Parsnip River (the Peace's headwaters), they met a group of Sekani.[84] The Sekani had iron that they said they had procured from peoples to the west who in turn received it from people in boats on the sea. The Sekani were in possession of so much iron that Mackenzie figured the trade must be well worn

[84] Adrien Morice, *The History of the Northern Interior of British Columbia, formerly New Caledonia*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: William Briggs, 1904), 38.

and the path to the sea not too difficult.[85] From the headwaters of the Parsnip, Mackenzie portaged to the Fraser where he met with some Dakelh. The Dakelh told Mackenzie that they, like the Sekani, had a lot of iron which they received through western trade routes but added that the "white men" who brought iron to the sea were now building a house at Nootka. The Dakelh showed no alarm that such a settlement was being erected, besides, they told Mackenzie, they had always known of those people who lived in the south.[86] In fact, one elderly Dakelh showed Mackenzie a long knife made of iron that he received from southern routes many years ago.[87] Leaving the Fraser Mackenzie next entered the West Road River and on July 10, he came to the Dakelh settlement of Kluskus. There Mackenzie learned that the people had been to the coast before and that it was only a short journey to the sea.[88] Continuing upstream on the West Road River, Mackenzie ascended its tributary, Ulgako Creek, and from there he hoped over to the Bella Coola River. On July 18, he arrived at the Nuxalk (Bella Coola) village of Nooskulst where he was fed salmon and cloaked in a sea otter skin by the local inhabitants.[89] The Bella Coola (Nuxalk) possessed iron as well as copper, brass and European clothing. A local chief

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[85] W. Kaye Lamb, ed., *The Journals and Letters of Sir Alexander Mackenzie* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1970), 320.

[86] The Spanish began their advance into Alta California in 1769 and of course were in Mexico since Cortes. Juan Crespi and Herbert Eugene Bolton, *Fray Crespi, Missionary Explorer on the Pacific Coast, 1769-1774* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1927), xvii.

[87] It does not stretch credulity too much to think that the people with whom Mackenzie met at this stage in his voyage were familiar with the Spanish at Nootka. According to John Hoskin's narrative of the second voyage of the *Columbia*, the Nuu-chah-nulth of Opitsaht told him that a trade route led from Nootka to the east side of Vancouver Island, and thence across the Johnstone Strait to the mainland. Moreover, the pass that led across the island could be covered in two days. When Mackenzie landed at North Bentinck Arm on the Pacific he was just two degrees of latitude north of the Johnstone Strait.

[88] Lamb, *The Journals and Letters*, 347.

[89] Lamb, *The Journals and Letters*, 364.

showed Mackenzie a blue cloth decorated with brass buttons and another made of flowered cotton.[90] The next day, July 19, he was treated with similar hospitality at another Nuxalk settlement and from there, Mackenzie wrote, "I could perceive the termination of the river, and its discharge into a narrow arm of the sea."[91] So he saw the sea and on July 23, he began his return journey; travelling over the same ground he was back at Fort Chipewyan in little more than a month, August 24.[92]

Mackenzie's journals offer further evidence that the peoples of the inner orbit had easy and deep seated contact with a seaward orbit in advance of the continental trade. The interior peoples were no stranger to trade with Europeans. In chapter 2, I discussed the objection of Spier, Suttles and Herskovits to Aberle's deprivation theory on the grounds that Aberle could not document the influence of European trade in the Plateau during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. They were firm on their criticism:

> The evidence shows that the Prophet Dance is at least as old as the late 18th century in the Plateau. At that time there were no Europeans there nor even very near. The supposition that about 1800 or earlier, the Plateau tribes could have been affected in some ill-defined way by Whites at a remote distance will have to be demonstrated before it is acceptable. Without proof this is no more than speculation. The mere knowledge that Whites were on the Missouri or touching at the Coast (if indeed there was such knowledge) is hardly warrant for assuming that tensions were rife.[93]

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[90] Mackenzie assumed the garments were of Spanish origin. Lamb, *The Journals and Letters*, 369.

[91] Mackenzie spent the next few days cruising about this reach of the sea (the North Bentick Arm and Dean Channel). Lamb, *The Journals and Letters*, 372.

[92] On July 22, Mackenzie wrote upon a rock with a mixture of vermilion and melted grease: "Alexander Mackenzie, from Canada, by land, the twenty-second of July, one thousand seven hundred and ninety-three." Lamb, *The Journals and Letters*, 378.

[93] Leslie Spier, Wayne Suttles, Melville J. Herskovits. "Comment on Aberle's Thesis of Deprivation," *Southwest Journal of Anthropology* 15, no. 1 (1959): 36.

While it does not follow from my work that tensions were rife (though a case could be made), it does follow that the interior peoples knew much about the activities of the Euro-Canadian and other traders and that they were influenced by them.

Mackenzie's voyage was also significant in that it must have primed the Dakelh and the Sekani to think that a continental trading post might soon be established somewhere in his tracks.[94] If Mackenzie himself did not tip his hand to such a possibility, then, the Iroquois, Métis and others who were trapping in their eastern regions would have tipped theirs. When first contacts are explained as neither shocking nor radically destabilizing, as is my intention here, it becomes difficult to explain prophet religions as the result of the shock of contact or as the result of too little contact for that matter.

In any event, Mackenzie's voyage did adumbrate the trading post period. Shortly afterward continental trading posts were established almost simultaneously on the Fraser and Columbia Rivers. The Fraser posts were built by Nor'westers who acted upon Mackenzie's intelligence. The Columbian posts were built by John Jacob Astor's Pacific Fur Company (PFC). While Astor got the ball rolling on the Columbia his company was acquired by the NWC almost as soon as it began. The northern posts, those that went up along Mackenzie's tracks, were built in the inner orbits of the northern plateau and so I will deal with those first.

[94] Albeit Mackenzie's intentions were less about trading relationships and more about finding a navigable river draining into the Pacific. Mackenzie particularly desired a feasible sea route. He had envisioned a broad trade that merged the Canadian fur business (including both the NWC and the HBC) with the East India Company permitting furs to be shipped from the Pacific coast to market in China. *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, s.v. "Alexander Mackenzie" (by W. Kaye Lamb), http://www.biographi.ca/index-e.html (accessed February 22, 2011).

Simon Fraser across the Mountains

A little more than ten years after Mackenzie's voyage to the sea Simon Fraser, in 1805, following in the "Knight's" tracks established Rocky Mountain Portage House at the east end of the Peace River Canyon and Fort McLeod near McLeod Lake on the Parsnip River, the southern branch of the Peace River (see map 3, p. 216).[95] The latter post was the first post erected by the NWC west of the continental divide. The following year, Fraser, along with John Stuart and a party composed of French-Canadians, Métis and Iroquois, built Fort Saint James on the southern shores of Stuart Lake. [96] As the traders anticipated a warm reception, it was to their dismay that the local Dakelh neither wanted to trade furs nor food with the voyageurs.[97] Determined, however, Fraser erected a second trading post on the shores of Fraser Lake (Fort Fraser) in 1806. The following year, in preparation for his descent of the river that would later bear his name, he had Fort George built as a launch pad at the confluence of the Fraser and Nechacko Rivers. [98] In 1808, Fraser, accompanied by a crew of twenty four men: nineteen French Canadians and Métis, two Indigenous people, and two clerks (John Stuart and Jules Quesnel) left Fort George intending to descend the Fraser River to the sea.[99] Among the Métis was Jean

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[95] Fraser took with him a copy of Mackenzie's journal and when referring to him often did so cheekily calling him the "Knight." The lake was initially named Trout Lake and the fort Trout Lake Post.

[96] Fort St. James, initially Stuart Lake Post, was built on the shores of what the traders called Stuart Lake and the Dakelh *Na'kal-ren*. Fort Fraser was built on the shores of what would later be called Fraser Lake, but was initially called *Natleh* by the Dakelh. Dakelh names are from, J.B. Munro, "Language, Legends and Lore of the Carrier Indians" (PhD Diss., Ottawa: University of Ottawa, 1944)

[97] The Dakelh evidently preferred trading with their Gitksan neighbours and for many years remained hesitant to trade at the inland posts.

[98] Mackenzie called the river "Tacouche Tess." Elliott, *Fort Saint James*, 43.

[99] Petitot met a family of Métis in the Northwest who spoke a dialect of Dene and who told him they were a big nation that lives all along the Fraser River. *Missions*, 12, 486.

Baptiste Boucher or Waccan who would later become one of the longest tenured fur trade employees in the early years of New Caledonia. After a tense and frightful journey the crew made it to the sea, or at least the Strait of Georgia, at the end of June and was back at Fort George on August 6.[100] While Fraser made it to the sea, his expedition, like that of Mackenzie's previously, was disappointing in that it dashed Company hopes that the Fraser River might be navigable to the sea. [101]

From the outset of Fraser's work in the Rocky Mountain west the Company expected that, in addition to exploration, he would build upon Mackenzie's reconnaissance explorations and expand the NWC trade west of the Rockies. After returning from the Pacific, Fraser spent the winter of 1808-1809 at Fort George in New Caledonia (the name given to the region west of the Rockies). In 1809, he was granted a year's furlough and left John Stuart in charge of the four western posts. Stuart remained in charge of New Caledonia for much of the next fourteen years, retaining his post even after the NWC merged with the HBC in 1821.[102] The three forts erected by Fraser, with Stuart at their helm, would remain the only forts erected in New Caledonia until 1821.[103] Early in that year, just before the merger of the two companies, the NWC built one additional fort in New Caledonia and that was Fort Alexandria on the Fraser.

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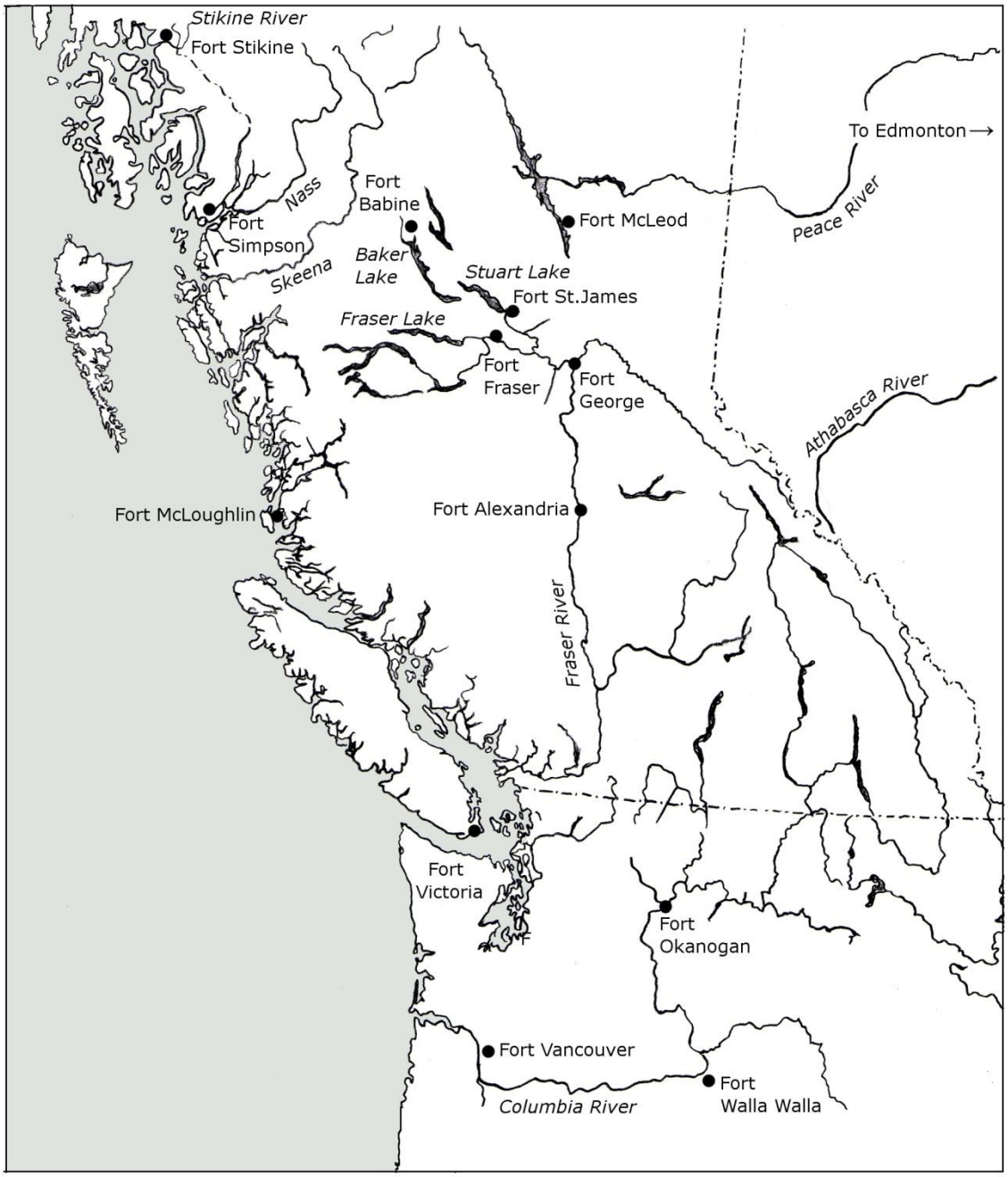
[100] The following year Fraser left Fort St. James for the annual NWC rendezvous at Fort William where he was granted a year's furlough. When we returned to the west in 1810 he was assigned to the Athabasca Department and eventually given charge of the Mackenzie District. He would never again return to that region where his journeys of 1805-1808 earned him so much fame. Fraser's journey is described in his journals edited by Lamb, see, Lamb, *Simon Fraser*, 61-161.

[101] Lamb, *Simon Fraser*, 40-59.

[102] Stuart left the region permanently in 1824. Elizabeth Browne Losey, *Let Them Be Remembered: The Story of the Fur Trade Forts* (New York: Vantage, 1999), 369.

[103] According to Kaye Lamb, Fraser family tradition attests that Fraser named the region "New Caledonia", because the scenery reminded him of the Scottish Highlands as his mother described it to him as a child. Lamb, *Simon Fraser*, 28.



Map 3. Outer Orbit: Prairie, Mountain and River [map outline adpated from "North America, Political," Premier World Atlas (Rand McNally and Company, 2003)].

The North West Company beyond the Mountains (1805-1821)

If things settled into a routine in New Caledonia after Fraser's departure, events on the Columbia River were more volatile. New Caledonia was one of two Departments established by the NWC west of the Rockies prior to the 1821 merger. The other Department was the Columbia. The Columbia came about as a result of a combination of David Thompson's explorations and the pioneering work of the Pacific Fur Company (PFC).

As early as 1800 Thompson attempted to establish direct contact with the Ktunaxa of the Rockies.[104] Thompson attempted to cross the Rockies again in 1804 by way of the Ram River but was forced back down the North Saskatchewan by high waters. Two years later, while at Rocky Mountain House, he planned another crossing. [105] This time he sent the Métis Jaco Finlay ahead to clear a road though the mountains. Finlay's route – later known as Howse Pass – was the way by which Thompson in 1807, with a crew of nine others including his wife and three children, crossed the Rocky Mountains.[106] In the years that followed he erected three forts in the Columbia watershed: Kootenai House, Kullyspeel (Kalispell) House among the Pend Oreilles and Saleesh House among the Interior Salish.[107] In 1810, Thompson received instructions to descend the Columbia

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[104] As with Mackenzie's and Fraser's voyages, it was hoped that Thompson's explorations would yield an economical route to the Pacific.

[105] Rocky Mountain House was on the North Saskatchewan, not to be confused with Rocky Mountain Portage House or with Rocky Mountain Fort, both of which were on the Peace River.

[106] Goulet, *The Métis in British Columbia*, 27-28.

[107] *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, s.v. "David Thompson" (by John Nicks), http://www. biographi.ca/ index-e.html (accessed February 22, 2011).

River.[108] The following year he began his descent of the river and on July 15, 1811, he arrived at the mouth of the Columbia only to find a crew of traders representing the PFC, under the leadership of the former Nor'wester Duncan McDougall, at their newly erected fort, Fort Astoria.[109]

The PFC was established in 1810 by the American fur trader John Jacob Astor. Astor intended to establish a series of trading posts along the Columbia River with a base at its mouth from which furs procured in the interior could be sent directly to China. To those ends he dispatched two expeditions, consisting mostly of former Nor'westers, to the Columbia. One travelled over land and the other by sea. The sea bound expedition aboard the ship *Tonquin* arrived in advance of the overland party on April 11, 1811.[110] When the crew arrived they were greeted by local Chinook who appeared to them to be old hands at the fur trade. Alexander Ross observed that "on our first arrival among them, we found guns, kettles, and various other articles of foreign manufacture in their possession, and they were up to all the shifts of bargaining."[111] The behaviour of the Chinook is further indication that the peoples west of the Rockies were deeply embedded in activities of the

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[108] Thompson was scheduled for furlough in 1810 and he was not informed of his Columbia directives until after he had returned to the Rainy Lake headquarters. Thompson's return voyage was also slowed by logistical difficulties and fears of attack by the Piegans, who resented the end around performed by the NWC that cut them out of their role as middlepersons and feared the company might trade firearms to their estranged neighbours the Ktunaxa (and perhaps also resented the Thompson's support of the Iroquois trappers). When he finally did cross the Rockies he his crew, for desertions and bad directions, had been reduced to three persons and were forced by winter weather to remain on the banks of the upper Columbia, near its confluence with the Canoe River. *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, s.v. "David Thompson" (by John Nicks), http://www.biographi.ca/index-e.html (accessed February 22, 2011).

[109] Scholars agree that Thompson's instructions to return to the Columbia in 1810 had something to do with the activities of the PFC. However, the specific instructions are a matter of historical debate, it is not agreed upon, for example, whether Thompson was instructed to out race the PFC to the mouth of the Columbia or to simply survey the feasibility of the Columbia as a river route.

[110] The party aboard the *Tonquin* consisted of 39 persons, the majority of whom were Canadian.

[111] Alexander Ross, *The Fur Hunters*, 88.

Pacific orbit well in advance of the arrival of the continental trade. Once disembarked, the crew set about to construct Fort Astoria to serve as a trading post and depot.[112] Subsequently, a small trading party was dispatched up river to erect a fort about where the Columbia joins the Okanagan (Fort Okanagan). While the Astorians were hunkered down for the winter, the overland party, after losing its way and its supplies en route, arrived at the mouth of the Columbia. The following spring reinforcements and supplies arrived by sea aboard the PFC ship *Beaver*. Meanwhile, the Astorians continued their trade with the locals and four new posts were established.[113] Although the company showed early promise, its feet were swept out from under it as soon as it got to speed. In 1812, war between Britain and the United States broke out and the Astorians feared a British attack on their Pacific posts. The threat of war coupled with the failure of reinforcements to arrive in the spring of 1813 stunted the company's activities. Ill equipped and fearful of the prospect of British invasion the Astorian clerks decided, in July of that year, to dissolve their concern and to sell their furs, goods and posts to the NWC. On November 12 agents of the NWC agreed to the purchase.[114]

The purchase of the PFC gave the NWC almost complete control of the continental fur trade west of the Rocky Mountains. They took over PFC posts Spokane and Okanagan and subsequently erected the new posts of Nez Perces (Fort Walla Walla)

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[112] The fort, named Astoria, went up quickly, and was standing by mid July when David Thompson and his crew of eight Iroquois descended to the mouth of the Columbia. Alexander Ross, *The Fur Hunters*, 85.

[113] The forts were: Wallace House (or Willamette Post), Fort Flathead, Fort Kootenay, and Fort Spokane. In addition to the new forts three outposts were also constructed in 1812: McKenzie's outpost, Oak Point Fishing Station and She-wapps Outpost. R. Cole Harris, ed., *Historical Atlas of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 167.

[114] Ross, *The Fur Hunters*, 283. Later that month the feared British war ship finally arrived at the mouth of the Columbia. On December 12, Captain Black aboard the sloop the *Raccoon* claimed possession of the land for Great Britain and renamed Astoria Fort George.

and Kamloops.[115] After the sale the NWC boasted a total of nine posts west of the Rockies.[116] In the absence of competition the NWC set about consolidating its western trade: pack horse trails were constructed to connect New Caledonia with the Columbia, two well worn routes were carved out of the Rockies (north by way of the upper Peace River and south by way of the Athabasca and Saskatchewan Rivers). Fort George was set up as a depot from which the furs of the Columbia could be sent directly to China, and trapping brigades were formed (composed largely of Indigenous peoples from the east) to procure furs from throughout the Columbia watershed.[117]

It was during the period of NWC activity beyond the mountains that Christianity became firmly rooted directly in the inner orbits of the upper Skeena and Fraser Rivers. The trading posts and its employees were loci of information about Christianity. Excepting the officers (or wintering partners), many of the NWC employees, Métis, Canadian and Iroquois regularly worked and slept side by side their Dakelh and Sekani neighbours and thus providing many occasions for the forms and content of lay Christianity to be shared among colleagues, neighbours and families. We do know that the locals were keyed into Christianity during this period because when wintering partners did go out to explore, or to treat with their neighbours, they left records that betray as much. In the remaining section of this chapter, I want to look in some detail at

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[115] Harris, *Historical Atlas of Canada*, 167.

[116] The nine forts were George, Fraser, St. James, McLeod, Spokane, Okanagan, Kamloops, and Saleesh House. The first four were located in New Caledonia and the latter in the Columbia.

[117] Despite the labour invested and the innovative strategies employed by the NWC, the returns of New Caledonia and the Columbia were not profitable. Many reasons have been given for the failed profits: the contract with the American company to import furs from Fort George to China was expensive, the distance of the regions from Montreal meant that outfitting the forts was costly, the trapping brigades while composed of cheap labour were not well managed, and the Indigenous peoples preferred to trade their furs either directly with coastal vessels or with Indigenous middle persons who in turn traded directly with the coast. See Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains*.

the representations of Christianity in the journal of NWC clerk Daniel Harmon. Harmon's journal is one of the richest fur trade journals in print today and, fortunately for me, it pertains to the both the place and the period of interest.

Christianity in Daniel Harmon's Journal

Daniel Harmon, a Vermonter who left that colony after the American War for Independence, served in New Caledonia between 1810 and 1819. Harmon followed John Stuart as the second NWC Post Manger at Fort St. James. Harmon left detailed journals of his career in the fur trade, which indicate among other things that so far as Christianity was concerned he behaved as the voyageurs employed by the NWC: he erected crosses in memory of employees who had lost their lives, he prayed when he in fear or escaped danger, he observed the Sabbath, he married a Métis woman (Lizette Duval), he had children with her, he instructed both his wife and children in Christianity, and he talked about Christianity with the Dakelh and neighbouring peoples.[118] In addition to confirming all those practices, Harmon's journals provide insight into how the Dakelh and neighbouring peoples appreciated and responded to Christian myth and ritual.

Harmon, not unlike other commentators on Indigenous religions, observed that the Dakelh and neighbouring peoples attributed a magical quality to books and writing,

[118] Although Harmon was a participating Christian, he complained that the voyageurs were not as observant of the Sabbath as he would have wished. According to Harmon, the NWC employees were always working on the Sabbath. When he left New Caledonia in 1819, he complained that the young men entering the service "do not appear to observe the Sabbaths or any manner of worship but little more than the Savages themselves." Harmon, *Harmon's Journals*, 178. While this might call in to question the religiosity of the voyageurs as already discussed, it is possible and likely that he either disapproved of their religiosity or had different standards with respect to what constituted proper religiosity. After all, Harmon was distant from the voyageurs in many ways: he was a clerk and a Vermonter, raised as a Congregationalist. It is not unusual in the HBC records for religious services to be held in the morning and for the employees to tend to the maintenance of their own quarters on Sunday. Sunday was a day off from official pursuits, in some measure, but not from labour.

such as the ability to cause death and to effect changes in meteorological conditions. Harmon writes:

> They think that I or anyone who can read and write is able by looking into our Books to take the life from any one we please let the distance be ever so great between him and us. And they as fully believe that we can make it fair or foul weather at pleasure, therefore whenever they are desirous of going any considerable distance from this Village they previous to their departure will come to ask us to allow or make it fair weather during their jaunt, and for which service they will promise a recompense. But I have often told them it is that Being alone who made the Sun, Moon, Stars, and this World and everything that is in it Who has power or influence over the wind & weather as well as of the lives of His Creatures &c. and yet none of them appear to believe me.[119]

While Harmon suggests that the Dakelh associated writing with power over death and perhaps by implication with power over meteorological events, my sense is that the Dakelh did not recognize anything mystical about writing itself as the distinction between those with writing and those without is a distinction that Harmon makes. Harmon suggests the Dakelh view writing as an entirely different order of technology than anything with which they are familiar, but they may see it as simply a different kind of *method* to accomplish things that they accomplish through other means. If the Dakelh viewed Harmon and others (their new neighbours) as they viewed themselves, that is, as other human beings who had sophisticated strategies for dealing with such things as death and social disruption, then, it seems only reasonable that they would express an interest in them. The Dakelh, like other peoples, viewed death as the result of some human or supernatural agency – death never just happened. Of course, I am not saying that the Dakelh did not understand the event of physiological death but that they were concerned with a higher order of meaning. They were concerned with cosmological questions, with why questions as opposed to what, when who and where questions The concern itself is

[119] Harmon, *Harmon's Journals*, 124.

banal and quotidian; it is apparent, for example, in contemporary times among those who understand and accept the reality of physiological death but attribute a different order of meaning to death by envisioning it as the will of God or Allah. It is like the case of Azande witchcraft so convincingly documented by Evans Pritchard. The Azande, according to Evans-Pritchard, *knew* that if termites gnawed through load bearing walls the roof of a house would collapse and that if people were inside the house at the time their physical bodies would be crushed. That much was obvious, but what interested the Azande was the question of why the roof fell on *those* specific people at *that* specific time.[120] The Dakelh were, like the Azande, interested in a higher order of meaning. And when they inquired into how Harmon conceptualized death, the weather and other things by wagering it might have something to do with writing he responded by telling them about God. Harmon said God was the agency behind the weather and behind death. That the Dakelh were not keen on his explanation is no more surprising than Harmon's refusal to accept the Dakelh account of such things. At any rate, what interests me about the exchange is that Harmon is making a concerted attempt to respond to Dakelh curiosity by introducing theology, and by Harmon's own admission he had done so more than once – it is only too bad (for me) that he did not record them in more detail.[121]

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[120] See, E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1937), specifically chapter 4, "The Notion of Witchcraft Explains Unfortunate Events".

[121] Shortly after his arrival, Harmon attempted to impress upon the Dakelh his knowledge of meteorological conditions. In 1811, while visiting the Babine, Harmon attempted to explain the solar eclipse by saying it was the work of God. He writes: "Between nine and ten O'Clock this forenoon, the Sun was eclipsed for nearly a half an hour … therefore they began crying and made a terrible Savage noise but their Priest or Magician took handfuls of Swans Down and threw or rather blew it up towards the Sun and implored that luminary to accept the offering to put upon his Sons head, but to spare the Indians for they suppose the Sun has Children, and they like the Carriers are fond of putting Swans down on their heads when they dance. But when I had informed them of the real cause of the darkness they appeared to be pleased and said the way I accounted for it appeared reasonable, but were much surprised and astonished that I should have knowledge (as they expressed themselves) of such hidden things." Harmon, *Harmon's Journals*, 127.

In the above cited example, Harmon implies that it was the Dakelh who first expressed an interest in how he conceptualized death. Harmon was not always the passive respondent, in other cases Harmon took the initiative. While he was at Fraser Lake in 1815, the Dakelh steadfastly asserted that human agency played a role in death. Yet Harmon, the devout Christian was unmoved, he replied,

> I took this opportunity to repeat again what I had often told them before – that no human being had the powers that they imagined were possessed by their Magicians of being able by magic to take the life of any one. But I told them that God who made every created thing had alone the power of causing their dissolutions whenever *He* thought proper. Hereupon one of their Chiefs who thought himself more knowing than the others said that it was the God who remained at the Sea, who was taking her life from her. But I told them that god was in Heaven above but had so penetrating an eye that He could see every thing that gook [sic] place on the face of the earth. They said it might be so but they could not connive by what means I came to have knowledge of those things – which I endeavoured to explain to them.[122]

Harmon had more than one conversation with them on the topic of death and whenever the matter came up in his journals he told them about the omniscience of god and of God's power over life and death. In this case, as in the previous example, it is clear that the Dakelh are not so sure about Harmon's explanations but Harmon is trying and whether they accept what he says or they must be starting to appreciate his perspective. They are engaged to some extent because they ask Harmon to prove what he knows – on what basis, they ask, can he justify his claims? Harmon was not without a justification, or so he says, but he does not write it in his journal. How did Harmon respond? Did he explain creation history? Did he introduce the Gospel – the life, death and resurrection of Jesus? Did he tell them about the experts (the priests and ministers) who had special knowledge about such things? We do not know how Harmon responded but because we

[122] Harmon, *Harmon's Journals*, 164.

know that Harmon was deeply committed to his religiosity and interested in theological conversations he must not have been without reply.

By the time the company amalgamated with the HBC in 1821, the Dakelh had almost twenty years of direct conversation with Europeans and other Christians or interested parties on the topic of Christianity. It is therefore not necessary to account for the advent of Christianity in any given region by extending a direct line to a missionary, priest or catechist (Iroquois or otherwise). When the HBC enter the inner orbits, which I will consider in the next chapter, the local interest in Christianity is both continued and intensified. As a result of HBC policies, contact with early missionaries and changing relationships among Indigenous groups in the social field there emerges a movement toward the indigenization of Christianity in the interest of social formation. In the next chapter, I survey the changing social field; the field addressed by the prophet religions of the mid-nineteenth century and within which they emerged.

Chapter 6

Christianity in the Inner Orbit: the Fraser-Skeena Headwaters (1821-1873)

When the HBC took over the fur trade west of the Rockies it expanded and made some changes to the NWC system.[1] Governor Simpson continued the Columbia River brigades and encouraged the parties to "trap bare" the Snake River so as to provide a buffer between the HBC on the Columbia and the American traders to the east.[2] He attached New Caledonia to the Columbia so that both could be outfitted from London by boat once every two years.[3] He ordered the exploration and the construction of new posts in New Caledonia.[4] The exploratory work of William Brown and Simon McGillivray as already cited was a part of those renewed efforts. The HBC also erected new posts at Fort Langley at the mouth of the Fraser (1827), Fort Simpson at the mouth of the Nass (1831), and attempted to establish a fort at the mouth of the Stikine (1834), although this latter effort was prevented by the Russians. On the mainland, Fort Kilmaurs was erected at Babine Lake in 1822 as a trading and provisions post.[5] Fort Connolly was erected in 1826 near Bear Lake at the place of a rendezvous frequented by the Sekani, Gitksan and

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[1] Governor George Simpson initially considered the economic situation west of the Rockies to be so dire that he contemplated giving up the Columbia entirely and attaching New Caledonia to the Athabaska.

[2] E.E. Rich, *The Fur Trade and the Northwest to 1857* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967), 272.

[3] James R. Gibson, *The Lifeline of the Oregon Country: The Fraser-Columbia Brigade System, 1811-47* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 25.

[4] New Caledonia had long been recognized as a region that yielded good quality fur; however, little development or exploration had been done there since Fraser. A chief problem that the Nor'westers faced there was the Indigenous preference to work with coastal traders. Simpson sought to address that problem by establishing posts both on the mouths of the major rivers that drain into the Pacific (so as to intercept trade headed for coastal vessels) and within previously unexplored regions of New Caledonia.

[5] Situated on the Lake it was also meant as a place from which salmon could be harvested and distributed to other posts in the region. In 1836, it was moved to the end of Babine Lake. Morice, *History of the Western Interior*, 190.

Witsuwit'en. Fort Chilcotin was erected at the forks of the Chilcotin and Chilko rivers in 1829 as a seasonal outpost of Fort Alexandria.[6] Lastly, Dease Lake post on Dease River, but very near the Stikine River, was established in 1838.[7]

If exploration and expansion was the rule in New Caledonia after the sale of the NWC, a different tack was taken in the Columbia. There the Company faced stiff competition (for an inferior quality of fur) from American trappers and settlers.[8] Yet, Simpson held onto the region in the hopes that the Columbia River might form an eventual boundary between British North America and the United States.[9] To bolster that hope Simpson encouraged settlers with ties to the Company or to British North America to settle north of the Columbia. To further those designs he established farming communities at Fort Vancouver, on the Cowlitz River, on Whidbey Island, and at Nisqually at Puget Sound (all north of the Columbia); farms at those places also served the Company's agricultural needs west of the Rockies.[10] Simpson also tried to bolster

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[6] Fort Chilcotin was meant to collect furs from the Southern Witsuwit'en and Chilcotin. David Dinwoodie, "'He Expects We Would Be Off from His Lands': Reported Speech-Events in Tsilhqut'in Contact History," *Anthropological Linguistics*, 49, no. 1 (2007), 12.

[7] The expansion of the New Caledonia trade was also facilitated by the agreement that the HBC signed with the RAC that went into effect in 1840. The Russians agreed to cede the coastal trade from Cape Spencer in the North to 54˚40' in the south (essentially, the entirety of the Alaskan panhandle). In exchange, the HBC supplied provisions to the Russians at fixed prices and paid an annual rent of 2,000 land otter skins. Because the HBC already claimed possession of the inland area adjacent to the Alaskan panhandle, the agreement essentially meant that they held a monopoly on trade from the Columbia River to the Arctic Ocean up to the 141st meridian (the present Alaska-Yukon border). Rich, *The Fur Trade*, 277.

[8] American settlers with little interest in participating in the fur trade continued to crowd in on Simpson's buffer zone. In the 1830s, American traders continued to crowd into the region only to be followed by missionaries and settlers.

[9] "Governor and Committee to James Douglas", Fort Vancouver, 15 November 1837, A.6/24, fos. 116-117, HBCA. Simpson speculated that the Columbia would be the border and that settlers should therefore be encouraged to settle north of the River.

[10] In 1839, the latter two farms were organized into the Puget Sound Agricultural Company. Steve Fountain, "Hudson's Bay Company," in *Britain and the Americas: culture, politics and history* 1, ed. Heidi Slettedahl Macpherson and Will Kaufman (ABC-CLIO: Santa Barbara, 2005), 447.

those settlements with a contingent of Métis colonists from Red River.[11] Simpson's early efforts as settlement are not without relevance to the religious history of the west as the settler retirees were instrumental in drawing Roman Catholic missionaries into the region.

As bright as Simpson was about some things, his settlement efforts were poorly developed. He reneged on the promises made to the Red River colonists resulting in many picking up and moving south of the Columbia into what Simpson feared would become American territory.[12] For other retirees the southern Willamette valley was simply a more attractive option than the region north of the Columbia: it offered better agricultural land, had already been settled by NWC retirees before the HBC took possession, and boasted a large Catholic population. Little wonder, then, that the priests who came in the late 1830s refused to abide by Simpson's terms (made in exchange for allowing them passage with the brigade and meant to restrict their activities north of the Columbia) and freely visited with the southern settlers.[13] Lastly, Simpson was wrong about the British-American boundary. In 1846, the United States and Britain signed the Oregon Boundary Treaty, which extended the boundary between British North America and the United States along the forty-ninth parallel.[14] The treaty allowed the HBC to

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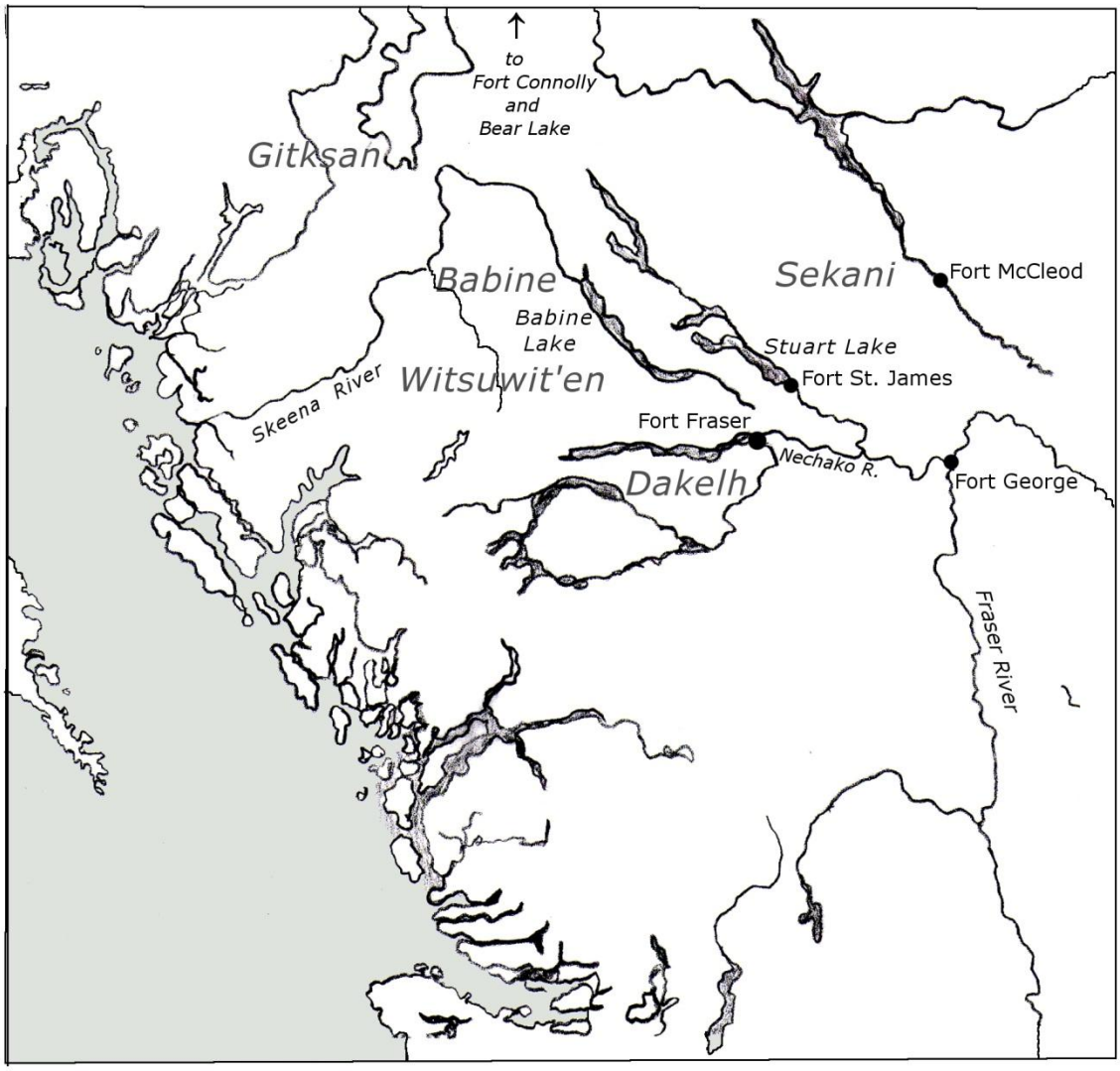
[11] John Jackson, *Children of the Fur Trade: Forgotten Métis of the Pacific Northwest* (Missoula, MT: Mountain Press, 1995), 111. In 1841, James Sinclair led a party of more than 100 Métis from Red River to Oregon and 115 arrived at Fort Vancouver in the fall of that year.

[12] Ibid., 116-118. Governor Simpson promised the settlers farms and supplies on tracts north of the Columbia; when he reneged some departed for the agriculturally fertile Willamette Valley.

[13] It was hoped that a large contingent of Canadian settlers north of the Columbia could be used as leverage in making the case that the Canadian-American border should be drawn along the Columbia. Simpson allowed the missionaries passage with the HBC brigade in 1838 on the condition that they restrict their activities north of the Columbia but he was ultimately unsuccessful in preventing them from visiting the region. "Governor and Committee to James Douglas," Fort Vancouver, Nov. 15, 1837, A.6/24 fos. 116-17, HBCA.

[14] Rich, *The Fur Trade*, 283. The treaty also allowed the British to retain Vancouver Island, and granted share rights of passage to the mainland through the Straits of Juan de Fuca.

retain its agricultural interests in what was then Oregon territory but as far as the fur trade was concerned they lost their monopoly. The HBC began signalled their withdrawal from the Columbia almost immediately after the treaty was by announcing that its fort on Vancouver Island, renamed Fort Victoria for the occasion, would replace Fort Vancouver as its chief port on the Pacific.



Map 4. Inner Orbit with Fur Trade Posts [map outline adapted from "British Columbia with Names," The Atlas of Canada (Natural Resoruces Canada, 2002)].

HBC Labour

The composition of the NWC and HBC labour force west of the Rockies in the first half of the nineteenth was predominately French Canadian and Métis. For example, the entourage that accompanied Fraser, Stuart and John McDougall across the Rockies was almost entirely French Canadian and Métis. Moreover, Carolyn Podruchny in her cultural history of French Canadians in the fur trade, *Making the Voyageur World*, indicates that, while the NWC occasionally hired Indigenous labour, the majority of the of the labour force was drawn from Lower Canadian parishes. Podruchny's observations resonate with later HBC records. After the amalgamation of the two companies many NWC employees signed on with the HBC and the Company's "Statement of Servants Accounts" for outfit 1826-1827 list fifty eight servants, twenty of whom are from Lower Canadian Parishes and 17 are identified as either "Iroquois" or "Native."[15] An almost identical demographic is reflected in the "Statement of Servants Accounts" for 1836-1837.[16] By that time the HBC had expanded its operations and added three new posts: Babine, Connolly's Lake and Chilcotin (see map 4, p. 229). Despite the addition of the new posts, there was virtually no increase in staff; but that is not surprising as Simpson was determined to reduce the number of the Company's employees after the 1821 amalgamation. Partly as a result of Simpson's policy, the clerks in New Caledonia continuously complained that they had inadequate staff on hand to perform the duties required of them.

[15] Fort St. James Account Book, 1827-1828, B.188/d/14, HBCA. When the parish was designated as "Native" it meant that the employee was born "in country" or west of the Canadas.

[16] Fort St. James Account Book, 1836-1837, B.188/d/15, HBCA.

By the late 1820s, shortly after the Iroquois had settled in Montana, there were eight posts in the New Caledonia District staffed by about sixty labourers ("servants") and six or more clerks and traders ("gentlemen").[17] Most of the New Caledonian posts remained operational throughout the 1840s and beyond. [18] Each post, if it was not built within or near an existing Dakelh or Sekani village, attracted temporary communities of those peoples. The residents of those communities were the people with whom the employees fostered a variety of relationships. The quality of those relationships deserve consideration as they are germane to the task at hand: elucidating the sentiments of affinity and estrangement that prevailed among the Sekani, Dakelh and Company labourers, clerks and traders. Company employees married local women, they became friends with some and enemies with others, they deserted the Company to be absorbed by Indigenous societies, and clerks (and perhaps by other employees as well) hired the locals to do a variety of jobs that at least included delivering letters, chopping wood, sowing and harvesting crops, fishing, hunting, and tending the cattle and horses. In addition to the relationships established around each fort, the Dakelh, the Sekani and Company

[17] According to Philip Goldring, there were two classes of employment within the HBC in North America: Gentlemen and Servants. The former consisted of Chief Factors and Chief Traders (commissioned officers who were paid a percentage of profits in lieu of salary) and Clerks, Postmasters, Apprentice Clerks and Apprentice Post Masters (salaried employees). The class of servants consisted of Labourers, Middlemen, Bowsmen, Steersmen, Guides, Tradesmen, Interpreters, Farmers and Fishermen (servants were paid a fixed wage according to their job and fed and housed by the Company year round). I use "traders and clerks" to refer the first class and "labourers" to refer to the second class. While both classes were labourers in an actual sense, in that they were working for capital, I am sticking with this short hand until I come up with something better or more appropriate. See, Philip Goldring, *Papers on the Labour System of the Hudson's Bay Company, Vol. 1*. (Ottawa: Parks Canada, Manuscript Report, no. 362, 1979); Edith Burley, *Servants of the Honourable Company: Work, Discipline and Conflict in the Hudson's Bay Company, 1770-1879* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 1997); Carol M. Judd, "Native Labour and Social Stratification in the Hudson's Bay Company's Northern Department," *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 17, no. 4 (1980): 305-14; and Brenda Macdougall, "'The Comforts of Married Life': Métis Life Labour, and the Hudson's Bay Company." *Labour/Le Travail* 61 (2008): 9-40.

[18] The posts were: Connolly, Babine (or Kilmaurs), McLeod, St. James, Fraser, George, Alexandria and Chilcotin. The latter was closed about 1844 and Fort George was staffed only intermittently. The remaining posts were operational through to the end of the decade and beyond.

employees within each “fort community” were continuously passing back and forth between neighbouring fort communities to exchange letters, to make social visits, to bring food and furs, and to assist at times of troubles or illness. Far from isolated bastions or islands in the wilderness, the forts were veritable installations in the Dakelh and Sekani geographic and social spaces. Life within the forts was characterized by continuous passage of people and goods in and out. Almost daily the post journals record the arrival and departure of Indigenous trading parties, of social visitors from other fort communities, of couriers, of regional brigades, of exploration parties and of hunting parties. While it is true that the forts were often surrounded by palisades and that clerks often insisted that those were necessary to keep the locals out and to increase their control over the trade, my impression is that the palisades were more symbolic markers of space than they were physical boundaries. To the extent that the palisades served a practical purpose I think their practicality was more to keep employees in than to keep Aboriginal peoples out. With social life characterized by frequent passages the walls could not but have been encumbrances.

From the perspective of the clerks and traders, the walls and fort gates assisted with the organization of the interior space and management of the trade; they kept the outside out and the inside in and all passage between inner and outer was ideally closely monitored at a central gate. It was because the clerks and traders viewed the Dakelh and Sekani as primarily economic objects that – at least this is the image presented in post journals – they attempted to rigorously regulate access to the fort; only those with furs or food to trade were, in theory and principle, permitted inside. Daniel Clayton’s analysis of Fort Simpson on the Skeena situated among the Coast Ts’mysen powerfully illustrates

this image of the fort. For Clayton the palisades were meant to serve as an impervious physical boundary to separated Indigenous peoples and Company employees. He describes the hefty fort and the locked gate as tools necessary to isolate the Company employees from the Ts'mysen village. In a similar vein Cole Harris, writing on the cordilleran forts, refers to them as "power containers," meant to demonstrate the Company's identity as distinct from Indigenous peoples as well as the Company's power over them.[19] In the image of the fort presented in the journals and in the work of Harris and Clayton, the fort walls were meant to be crossed only rarely and when necessary in the interest of profit or self preservation. On the one hand, when employees left the fort they did so to secure trading alliances with local elites, to go on exploratory expeditions to extend the horizon of trade, and to go on hunting and fishing trips so as to provision the fort as required. On the other hand, when Indigenous people came to the fort they were treated as "bearers of furs and foodstuffs, abstract economic objects" and their access to its interior heavily regulated.[20]

I am aware of the representation in the journals that portray the Dakelh and Sekani as "abstract economic objects" but at least one reason for that has to be because that is what interested the Governor and Committee, the intended audience of the

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[19] Harris describes the spatial arrangements of the typical cordilleran fort in some detail: "A characteristic fort in the Cordillera contained a rectangular palisade of cedar, fir, or pine logs, usually squared on two surfaces (to fit tightly), planted four feet in the ground, standing fifteen to eighteen feet above it, and pegged to cross-pieces four feet from the top [and a] gallery six to seven feet wide on the inside of the palisades, four and a half feet below the top … from which men could fire through loop holes." Cole Harris, *Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographical Change* (UBC Press: Vancouver, 1998), 35-36.

[20] Daniel Clayton, "Geographies of the Lower Skeena," *BC Studies* 94 (Summer 1992): 39. Clayton cites the HBC trader John McLean's remark in support of his argument: "I never saw any [caring]. The history of commercial rule is well known to the world; the object of that rule ... is gain. In our intercourse with the natives of America no other object is discernable, no other object is thought of, no other object is allowed." While there doubtless was a lack of care on the part of Company employees, McLean is not the most reliable source on matters pertaining to the HBC; his memoirs are generally thought to be a polemic against the Company.

journals. The Company was not hugely interested in social relationships unless it impacted profits. The Company was interested in *economy* and the clerks and traders, the authors of post journals, hammered home that line. Doubtless the clerks and traders themselves were more interested in profit than the regular labourer (the salaries of traders and factors depended on the success of the trade). Moreover, because they were considered to be a class apart from the servants and charged with their management, clerks and traders had an interest in controlling all activity around the fort so as to maintain regimented discipline and to maximize their own profits. Discipline betrayed control and the fort walls facilitated the controlled organization of interior space. There was some on the ground truth to the narrative of a highly disciplined work force isolated from the local peoples, and motivated only by the pursuit of profit, but that narrative served the interests of the clerks and traders more than it did those of labour. The labourers, did not always follow that line or behave accordingly: they deserted to live with Indigenous peoples, they married Indigenous peoples and brought their wives to live with them in the fort, they had romantic encounters and traded for sex, they attended Indigenous games and feasts, they left the fort at night or the trader's absence to be with their friends, and sometimes they got on well with their wives and friends and other times they quarreled with them. The traders did some of those things as well but they nevertheless took it as their responsibility to regulate and to separate relations between local Indigenous people and Company servants.[21] The extant journals for the New Caledonian forts in the 1830s and 1840s betray the kind and to some extent the degree of

[21] Traders may also have perceived labourers and Indigenous people as part of the same uncouth order in the same way that the Oblates conflated French peasants with Indigenous people. Because of that perceived nearness and to keep the labourers on their side or to prevent them from "going native" they might have taken enforcing a separation as part of their job.

relationships cultivated between labourers and the local Dakelh, Sekani and Babine as well as the Company efforts to control them. In some cases, as I will outline below, the labour preferred local relationships over Company service.

Desertions

Desertions were not an uncommon occurrence in the New Caledonia District. In September 1846 four men had deserted about the region of Fort Alexandria while travelling with the inbound brigade. The men were quickly captured by Company employees and forced back to work, but two days later one of the deserters, William Davis, tried again to desert. He was only prevented from doing so when one of his colleagues informed Chief Trader Anderson of his intentions. Subsequently, Anderson had Davis tied up and publically "chastised" (likely whipped). The four desertions that occurred over a span of two weeks led Anderson to lament: "I am sick and weary of these deserters and all the anxiety and trouble they occasion."[22]

Joseph Jocque deserted from his post at Fort St. James in April 1847. The entry in the post journal for April 23 reads "Joseph Jocque deserted during the night and is supposed to have gone towards Nautly as his wife who accompanied him is a woman of that place."[23] On May 2, when word reached the fort that Jocque was living with the Dakelh near Fort Fraser a party was formed "for the purpose of assisting Mr. Ogden to lay hands on Jos. Jocque the deserter who I am informed is camped with the Indians of

[22] Fort Alexandria Post Journal, 16 September 1846, B.5/a/7, HBCA.

[23] Fort St. James Post Journal, 23 April 1847, B.188/a/20, HBCA.

that place a short distance from the establishment."[24] A week later the party returned "with the deserter Jos. Jocque," the journal continues, "Mr. Ogden writes that they had no trouble to apprehend him and that he appeared sorry for his past conduct. It was my attention of having him flogged on arrival, but having no irons or a place to secure him, I thought it best to defer my doing so."[25] While fort staff was typically quick to "lay hands on" deserters some vanished from the Company's records entirely while others re-appeared in the account books many years after they were first listed as "deserted." Baptiste Lapierre who had been given temporary charge of Fraser's Lake in the absence of clerk William Thew and Post Master William McBean deserted his post in 1841 and as far as I know never returned to the service (at least in New Caledonia). According to the Fort St. James Journal, "[Lapierre] had prior to his departure made free use of Mr. Thew's stores of liquor and being well aware on the return of the latter he would be called to account for his misconduct has deserted taking with him a new gun and a supply of ammunition, it is said he purposes abandoning himself with the Fallen Rock Indians [Witsuwit'en] and there he may remain."[26] In 1839, Narcisse Montigny deserted from the Columbia Department and four years later sought re-engagement with the Company and was hired on as a labourer in New Caledonia in 1843.[27]

Employees probably had more than one reason to desert. Historian Elizabeth Losey attributes the desertions to the severity of the discipline and "club law" practiced

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[24] Fort St. James Post Journal, 2 May 1847, B.188/a/20, HBCA.

[25] Fort St. James Post Journal, 9 May 1847, B.188/a/20, HBCA.

[26] Fort St. James Post Journal, 4 March 1841, B.188/a/19, HBCA.

[27] Narcisse Montigny, "Hudson's Bay Archives Biographical Sheets." Two years later he left again and there is no indication that he sought re-employment or was hired on again. He was listed as "gone to California."

by clerks and traders; the discipline of Donald Manson in New Caledonia in the 1830s and 1840s was singled out as being particularly severe. There may well be some truth to that observation, but it also seems likely that Baptiste Lapierre and Joseph Jocque deserted because they felt strong attachments romantic, emotional or otherwise, to someone (or some people) living in Dakelh settlements. As severe as the fort discipline may have been, any desertion or line of escape must always lead somewhere into some new nexus of relationships (people usually run to something as much as they run away from something). If an individual was not affiliated with the Hudson's Bay Company in the New Caledonia District, he would have to be welcomed or in some way integrated into an Indigenous society or family in order to survive. It would be almost impossible to go it alone and the voyage to Canada or the United States would be near suicide to attempt alone without adequate preparation and provisions.[28] It is possible that some deserters aspired to undertake such a voyage but if they did not die en route or were not hired on at another post (or perhaps with another Company or outfit) then they would have had to fall in with some Indigenous group; maybe a handful who really wanted to take a straight line back home got lucky, but they would need to get lucky.[29]

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[28] A party of three Europeans (led by William Milton) and two Assiniboine guides nearly lost their lives more than once due to famine, accident and for getting lost when they attempted to cross the Rocky Mountains from Jasper House to the Fraser River. See William Fitzwilliam Milton and W.B. Cheadle**,** *The Northwest Passage by Land*, 6th ed. (Toronto: Coles, 1970).

[29] There is every reason to think that voyageurs in New Caledonia working for the NWC also deserted. Lamamlice, for example, abandoned Trout Lake outpost (Fort McLeod) in the winter of 1805-6. While Lamalice was re-engaged by the NWC, some voyageurs that deserted were absorbed within Indigenous societies. Rene Jussman, for example, quit the service, married a Mandan and lived with them. Moreover, it was not uncommon for voyageurs that deserted to remain in "Indian country" with their families as freemen. Others remained as "freemen" after their contracts expired. That pattern partially accounts for the substantial Métis populations on the Great Plains. While there are fewer reports of "freemen" in New Caledonia, those voyageurs working west of the Rockies who opted not to return to their home parishes settled in some numbers on the lower Columbia. Indeed, it is possible that some of those who deserted the HBC's service intended to go to the Columbia, to the Willamette Valley specifically, which was mostly beyond the HBC's sphere of influence.

Social Relations between Labour and Locals

There is much in the historical record that pertains to relationships between traders and Indigenous women. Scholars have convincingly demonstrated that such unions were often quite stable and lasting. [30] However, there is far less documentary material on the relationships between Indigenous women and regular labourers. As much as the clerks may have wanted to keep fort life a thing apart from its local surroundings, they were unable to maintain a rigid and impermeable boundary between the two and/or they were willfully blind to passages in and out of the fort.[31] Joseph Jocque left the fort to live with his wife but he had married her *prior* to his desertion; she must have lived with him inside the fort for some time before deciding to return to her relations. Jean Baptiste Boucher who settled near fort St. James married a local Dakelh. When labourers did marry local women and those women at times came to live with their husbands inside the fort.[32]

Even when some officers married they took a wife for only the duration of their tenure "in country" leaving them behind when they left, as was the case with William Brown at Fort Babine. Others, such as Daniel Harmon, took their local brides with them when they returned east after their term of service expired.[33] That the locals were aware

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[30] See Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*; and Jennifer S.H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (UBC Press, Vancouver, 1980).

[31] In the nineteenth century, it was the policy of the NWC and the HBC to discourage marital unions between employees and Indigenous women. Among other things, employees with families were seen as financial liabilities. Nevertheless, the records are unmistakably clear that the policy was not followed in New Caledonia or the Columbia as clerks, traders and labourers continued to marry.

[32] Journals make occasional reference to the births, deaths and illnesses suffered by the wives of regular labourers

of the marriage patterns is clearly evinced in their speculations about what happens to those who leave. In a myth recorded by Jenness, "The Magic Flowers," a Dakelh woman crosses the sea to track down her children and husband who had left her for the east. In that story the woman wins her husband and children back from his second wife and thus accomplishes a mythical re-alignment of how such relationships ought to work.[34]

Journals also record cases of couples separating. Sometimes the men found the separations emotionally painful, thus at least some relationships between Indigenous women and Company employees were about romantic love. When Michel Tokatane's wife left him, John Tod had difficulty consoling (or controlling) him, he wrote, "Michel Tokatane disappeared after Breakfast and I had reason to believe that he had deserted, his wife having left him since his return from Stuarts Lake. In the evening he returned, when I threatened to give him a thrashing. The poor Devil appears to be nearly out of his wits."[35] Just to the west of New Caledonia, at Fort Simpson not far from the mouth of the Skeena River, Pierre Turcot, seriously injured his leg trying to scale down the palisades in order to a visit a Ts'mysen woman. The following day a party was sent to seize him and bring him back to the fort. Turcot was recalcitrant and it was only by force that the party was able to carry him back. His injury kept him laid up for more than a week. The same day that Turcot was brought back to the fort, another servant, Pierre Ladabouche,

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[33] Chief Trader Brown married an Indigenous woman named "Fanny Brown" in the HBC records. She was wife of one of Quas' second sons after Brown left. But we do not know if Brown married her in New Caledonia, or whether Brown brought her there from some other posting. She died in the region of Fort St. James on Dec. 28th, 1843. Fort St. James Post Journal, 1840-1846, B.188/a/19, HBCA.

[34] Jenness, "Myths of the Carrier Indians", 166-168.

[35] Fort Alexandria Post Journal, 30 September 1842, B.5/a/5, HBCA.

tried to sneak a woman into the fort without permission but he was prevented from doing so and punished for it.[36]

Others employed more stealth when it came to sneaking out of the fort. At Fort Chilcotin, William McBean occasionally allowed Iroquois to leave the fort alone to go among the Chilcotin to "beg" for food. For example, according to McBean, "Charles and Thomas [two employees] expressed the wish to visit the Indians alone for the purpose of begging some of their roots to eat (these Indians think nothing of exposing their lives for their guts) however, I think proper to put a stop to it."[37] McBean had evidently heard the request before; my hunch is that he was wise to the possibility that it was more than food the Iroquois were after.

One reason that Turcot, Ladabouche and the Iroquois wanted out of the forts was so that they could see their girlfriends. If a degree of sexual relationships has not already been intuited, the prevalence of venereal disease at many of the posts attests that it was a fact of life. Peter Ogden, while at Fort St. James in 1843, wrote that a "Number of sick men are fast increasing flux and syphilis are the prevailing diseases."[38] A few years later, at nearby Fort Simpson the staff suffered similar complaints. The chronicler, perhaps John Work, lamented at the time that it was a serious impediment to work: "our work goes on slowly, our men being nearly all diseased with the venereal are continually laid

[36] Fort Simpson Post Journal, 26 December 1852, B201/a/7, HBCA.

[37] Fort Chilcotin Post Journal, 6 January 1838, B.37/a/1, HBCA.

[38] Fort St. James Post Journal, 5 January 1843, B.188/a/19, HBCA.

up, we now have no less than five men with the ladies fever on them. Most of our outdoor work is done by Indians."[39]

While relationships between labourers and women were at times carried on out of view of clerks and traders or anyone else who might not be trusted not to inform, sometimes servants were bolder and attempted to give up residence within the fort without giving up their work with the company.[40] One of the clearest examples of this involved an incident at Fort Fraser in 1848. On February 2, 1848, the clerk in charge, Peter Ogden Jr., was recalled to Fort St. James where he was to receive instructions for his new posting at McLeod Lake. Meanwhile, Fort Fraser was left without a clerk or officer until April when the new clerk, Montrose McGillivray, arrived. That left the servants at Fort Fraser without a supervisor for two months. On April 6, when McGillivray finally arrived at the fort, he was not at all impressed with what was waiting for him. Donald Manson described the scene as he learned of it at Fort St. James:

> In the evening Baptiste Ladoux arrived from Frasers Lake and handed me a letter from Mr. Montrose complaining that on arriving there he found the men had been in the habit of passing the nights in the Indian village and very properly gave notice that such should not be the case in future, in the face of this however, Ladoux again went there and when called to account for their having disobeyed his orders he became very impertinent, & to avoid a repetition of such conduct

[39] Fort Simpson Post Journal, 21 March 1853, B201/a/7, HBCA.

[40] To appreciate the quality of the relationships between Indigenous women and Company labourers, it is necessary to understand Indigenous women in their own cultural context as well Indigenous conceptions of sexuality. Women doubtless had relationships with employees for reasons other than romantic love or marriage. The creation of economic alliances strikes me as one prominent reason. Other reason may have included novelty or difference and strained family relations. Additionally, as far as trading sex is concerned, women who participated in that trade may not have occupied a separate social category with negative stigma such as that connoted by the English word "prostitute." Women may have used sex to pay for trade goods – a form of payment may have had no stigma whatsoever attached to it in the Indigenous setting rather it may have been indicative of the degree of freedom accorded female sexuality (the power to do as she wishes). In any event, what interests me here is not the quality of such relationships – which I have given only scant consideration here – but that the fact that they did exist opens the possibility that those relationships provided a forum for the introduction and discussion of varieties of Christian myth and ritual.

> Mr. Montrose sent him hither with the request that I would exchange him for another man.[41]

The following day Manson interviewed Ladoux about the scene: "After breakfast called Ladoux and asked him what he had to say for his conduct at Frs. Lake he acknowledged his error and also said that on being struck by Mr. Montrose, he returned the blow for which conduct I immediately fast him in irons & confined him in the bastion."[42] While it is possible that the previous clerk Peter Ogden Jr. was more lenient with the men and allowed them more liberty, it is more likely that the workers at Fort Fraser took advantage of his absence to pass in and out the fort as they pleased. When Montrose McGillivray, the new man, attempted to restrict the movement labour resisted and the tensions culminated in a fist fight between Ladoux and McGillivray.

Another case of a labourer taking up residence outside of the fort and the consequences that befall him is reflected in the post journals for Fort Chilcotin. When the post master at Fort Chilcotin left the post to go on a five day hunting trip in May 1840, he was shocked at the circumstances that awaited him on his return. He learned that a servant, Baptiste Trudelle, had been leaving the fort daily in an effort to persuade a local girl to come and sleep with him and worse, that the fort stores had been broken into and pilfered. Upon further investigation Trudelle admitted that he left the fort for the girl but denied any role in the robbery placing the blame instead on the local Chilcotin. When the truth finally surfaced the post master was irate:

> I have learnt since writing the above, from Indians at last from the thief himself [Trudelle] that he was the identical rogue who broke into the Fort store and the officers house which was also locked from which places I am made to understand that he took the following articles which he acknowledges to be correct [articles

[41] Fort St. James Post Journal, 10 April 1848, B.188/a/20, HBCA.

[42] Fort St. James Post Journal, 11 April 1848, B.188/a/20, HBCA.

> listed]. Of course he got another lash of this whip – and such a one that I think he cannot easily forget. I have besides fined him £ 5 for his audacious and notorious robbery, which I trust the gentlemen superintending the affairs of Alexandria & this place will put in force.[43]

He was whipped for sneaking out of the fort and for the theft, and there is no reason to think the whipping was anything but savage. A month later the post master reminded his audience: "the horse whipping I gave Trudelle some time ago seems to have done him some good."[44]

The cases of Trudelle and Ladoux and of sneaking out of the fort in general, bear directly on the issues of discipline and control. The cases reminded the intended audience (the Company) and probably also the chroniclers themselves of the necessity of discipline and the importance of having an adequate staff on hand to properly control the labour. The angle presented in the journals was that without proper discipline and measures of control the trade would be in a chaos. It also strikes me that the clerks by recording disciplinary problems are indulging in some self-aggrandizement. They let the Company know, while also reminding themselves of their own self importance, that they are indispensible to its interests.

Podruchny writes that, among the voyageurs employed in the NWC, it was not uncommon for some to be sent out to stay with Indigenous people for long periods of time so as to trade and treat with them and to encourage them to trade at nearby posts and to hunt and fish to provision the posts.[45] While this practice was sanctioned by the NWC, based on the post journals it does not appear to have been common practice with the HBC

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[43] Fort Chilcotin Post Journal, 19 May 1840, B.37/a/2, HBCA.

[44] Fort Chilcotin Post Journal, 14 June 1840, B.37/a/2, HBCA.

[45] Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World*, 223.

in the New Caledonia District. One exception may have been the trading routine developed for the post at Connolly Lake. According to the HBC records, that post was established in 1827 and subsequently went unstaffed after 1834 due to its returns falling off after the establishment of Fort Halkett located to the north. Nevertheless, the Fort St. James post journals and account books for the 1830s and 1840s maintain that trading parties led by a clerk were yearly dispatched to that place and where they remained with local residents for months at a time.[46]

Servants left the forts to meet women and possibly men for romantic affairs, but they may also have left just to get out, to visit friends, to play games and to attend feasts. Because labourers and the Dakelh and Sekani not only visited each other socially but sometimes worked side by side, there were many opportunities for friendships to develop among them. The two groups worked most closely together when locals were hired on as temporary hunters and labourers. Those work environments were less structured, more sociable and involved men and sometimes women labouring together at the same tasks often beyond the watchful eye the clerk or trader. There is every reason to think that friendships were born in those settings. Moreover, all of the post journals list the names of the frequent and friendly visitors to the fort. Those visits were doubtless as socially motivated as they were about a narrow trade in goods.[47] Indeed, friendships must also have developed as locals worked by side with newcomers on exploratory expeditions, fort labour and fur trapping.

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[46] Fort St. James, Account Book 1836-1837, B.188/d/15, HBCA. In 1836, for example, Paul Fraser, Joseph Letendre, and Louis Gagnon were sent to spend the summer at Connolly's Lake. Is it possible they lived among Sekani of that place?

[47] For example, among the frequent visitors to Fort St. James were: the "Prince", "Mal du Gorge", "Atile", and "Chief Hoolsan." Those are but a few of dozens of names recorded.

It is also possible the employees participated in local games and festivals. Jean Baptiste Lolo, from the Kamloops region, who was variously employed by the Company throughout the 1820s, 30s and 40s, was known to visit locals to gamble. Because Lolo was Indigenous to the New Caledonia District (perhaps a Secwepemc) and was integrated into local kinship relations he could not be made to suffer the same discipline as the permanent staff. As a casual employee of the Company, Lolo was not as economically dependent on and thus as submissive to the Company as were some others. Nevertheless, the relationships he developed are telling. Alexander Fisher wrote in the Fort Alexandria post journal in 1833 of Lolo's gambling: "Lolo gained at gambling with the natives twenty horses and lost them again, he wants from this post Powder, Shot, Ball Tobacco & Provisions of the latter sent him ten salmon and of the former articles none, thinking he may gamble it away."[48] In addition to being a gambler, Lolo was one of the Father Nobili's guides – paid for by the Company – when he visited New Caledonia in the 1840s. Lolo had many irons in the fire; he was close with the priests, close with the Company and close with the various Indigenous groups.

Another individual employed by the Company, but who lived outside the fort and kept close ties to the Dakelh and Sekani was Jean Baptiste Boucher, or Waccan. Waccan was one of the Métis who crossed the mountains with Simon Fraser in 1806. He first married a Dakelh woman from the village of Nacosley at Fort St. James, but later separated from her and married Nancy McDougall the Métis daughter of trader James McDougall. Waccan was employed by the Company and served in New Caledonia from the time he first crossed the mountains until his death from measles in the spring of 1850. During his long tenure in New Caledonia he and his family, which eventually grew to

[48] Fort Alexandria Post Journal, 23 July 1833, B.5/a/3, HBCA.

seventeen children, lived in a house just outside the palisades of Fort St. James. Some of the many duties Waccan performed for the Company included interpreter, hunter, enforcer, trader and covert operative. Those roles kept him in close contact with the many communities of Dakelh and Sekani scattered throughout the region. Waccan would travel *en derouine* to outlying settlements to collect furs and also to attend feasts and to gamble.[49] He was constantly on the move hunting, collecting furs, attending feasts and reporting his intelligences to the fort. Waccan was often dispatched by his employers to feasts for investigative purposes – to see who was present and to note the quality and quantity of goods exchanged at them – he might also have wanted to attend for other reasons, such as for the sociability, the food, and the festivities. For example, he asked Peter Ogden, Chief Trader at Fort St. James, for leave to attend a feast that was about to get underway at "Kur-chue."[50] Waccan was given the "okay" and he spent six days at the feast.

While there can be no doubt that the fort walls were an encumbrance to those servants who wanted to get out, for those employees who were content to be coddled by them the walls afforded them some measure of comfort and security. At Fort Alexandria in 1842, the staff had to keep the servant Trudelle inside and out of sight because some Dakelh, who suspected his involvement in the death of one of their relatives, threatened his life. The circumstances were recorded in the Fort's journal: "This evening an Indian, Papillard died. One of the Relatives of the deceased wished to kill one of our men

[49] *En derouine* was a term unique to the fur trade, for which there is no exact English equivalent. It roughly translates as "traveling with a small complement of goods to Indigenous homes or hunting lodges, singly or in pairs, to trade for furs on small scale on behalf of the a fur trade company." Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World*, 201.

[50] Fort St. James Post Journal, 7 March 1843, B.188/a/19, HBCA.

Trudelle, on the supposition that he was the cause, of the old mans death, having struck him about nine months ago."[51] At adjacent Fort Chilcotin, relations between post staff and the local Chilcotin were more frequently tense. Chief Allaw, for example, once threatened to pillage and burn the fort if the staff were not more hospitable and liberal in their trade.[52] Such menaces could keep the employees at the fort on their guard and more than once had them scrambling to buttress the fortifications.

Beyond verbal threats, relations at times could be out right physically violent. The situation surrounding the confrontation between Dakelh Chief Kwah and clerk James Douglas in 1828 is an exemplary case of the conditions surrounding hostilities. There are many versions of the story; I prefer to rely on Frieda Klippenstein's construction as it is informed by both the documentary and the oral historical records. The catalysts for the confrontation were events that happened at Fort George five years previous in 1823. In the summer of that year, James Yale, the clerk in charge at Fort George left his post to visit Stuart and Fraser Lake posts leaving behind his wife and two men to keep the fort. While away, a local man and Yale's wife rekindled an old relationship. However, the two failed – if they tried – to keep the relationship secret and were found in "criminal conversation" by the two men left in charge by Yale. The men subsequently warned the couple that they would tell Mr. Yale if they did not discontinue their relations. That night the lover of Yale's wife and an associate returned to the fort and killed the two men as

[51] Fort Alexandria Post Journal, 14 October 1842, B.5/a/5, HBCA.

[52] Interestingly, Allaw's threats seem to have been directed at the fort rather than the people within it: "He [Allaw] set off quite displeased and the day an Indian was sent to me by his order to apprise me that he had forbidden all the Indians to hunt and that he expected we would be off his lands immediately so that they might have the pleasure of burning the fort." The traders might not have realized or cared about the subtle but significant distinction between attacking the men and attacking the fort, but either way they might have felt obliged to defend both themselves and the structure. December 23, 1837. See Fort Chilcotin Post Journal 1837-1838, B.37/a/1, HBCA.

they slept. They also removed some property from the fort and hid the guns. When Yale returned and found the two men dead, he and the Company took pains to ascertain the identities of both perpetrators. One of whom disappeared shortly thereafter under mysterious circumstances. The other was the man who was killed by the order of James Douglas five years later. In 1828, he was pulled from Chief Kwah's tent just outside of Fort St. James and beaten to death. When Chief Kwah found out what had happened to the man who had taken refuge in his tent he was outraged. Regardless of what the person did or even who he was, the man was in the Chief's tent, which in Witsuwit'en law was a place of refuge comparable to a Christian church. Kwah was enraged. It was as if he was the one attacked and so he marched on the fort ready to confront Douglas and allegedly to kill him if it went that way. Kwah easily gained entrance to the fort and threatened Douglas, but was restrained from physically harming him only by the efforts of his two grandsons.[53] After the event Douglas found that he was in a very precarious position in New Caledonia. Both he and the Company feared for his life so in January 1830 he was transferred to Fort Vancouver to serve under Dr. McLouhglin.[54]

The circumstances of the Kwah-Douglas confrontation reveal something about how the presence of the posts and their staff changed relationships within local communities. Kwah was a wealthy and prestigious chief but he was also a "fur trade chief" with close ties to the fort. In that capacity Kwah was expected to re-direct trade

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[53] Klippenstein, Frieda Esau. "The Challenge of James Douglas and Carrier Chief Kwah," in *Reading Beyond Words: Contexts for Native History*, eds., Jennifer S.H. Brown and Elizabeth Vibert (Peterborough, Ont. Broadview, 1996). According to Klippenstein, the grandsons acted in the fear that it was not Kwah's place to kill rather the deed should be left up to warriors.

[54] Chief Factor Connolly recommended to Simpson that he be transferred, He writes, "Douglas' life is much exposed among these Carriers, he would readily face a hundred of them, but he does not much like the idea of being assassinated, with your permission he might next year be removed to the Columbia." Rich, *Part of Dispatch from George Simpson*, 244.

away from the Pacific and to channel it to the fort. Kwah drew a lot of water with the traders: he was a source of information and food when they were hungry, and Kwah did bring a lot of trade to the fort.[55] The traders treated Kwah with gifts (every new year he received gifts of sugar tea and tobacco from the HBC), he received adulation when Governor Simpson passed though the region in 1828 and was spared indignities doled out by the traders to his peers.[56] Kwah was also one of the first to be buried and not cremated in local tradition.[57] But Kwah was no pushover, he was not beholden to the fort, and if he felt affronted he was willing to sever those ties. While he cooperated with traders, he was not responsible to the Company in the same way that he was to his community and to his family. In any event, the privileged relationship between Kwah and the traders also reveals that local communities were also segmented. Not everyone had access to the same privileges enjoyed by Kwah. Moreover, the Douglas-Kwah confrontation was brought to a fever pitch by Douglas's hard headed efforts to avenge a murder. Not all murders were pursued with such vigilance and harbored as grudges for so long. When Chief factor William Connolly recorded the murder of Company employee Jacques Toranqaush by the Dakelh about Fort St. James, the case was evidently not cause for much frenzy. Connolly recorded that "the murderer could have no resentment against the deceased and must have been actuated to that deed by a diabolical wish to shed blood."[58] Another

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[55] *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, s.v. "KWAH (Quâs)" (by Charles A.Bishop) http://www. biographi.ca/ index-e.html (accessed October 2, 2012).

[56] Hall, *The Carrier, My People*, 63. Hall records her father's reminiscences that Kwah was treated quite well by the traders.

[57] Incidentally, it seems that it was about the time of Kwah's death that the local Dakelh altogether ceased the practice of cremation and began opting for burial.

[58] Rich, *Part of Dispatch from George Simpson*, 240.

particularly violent episode happened at Fort Babine in 1842. A servant stationed at the fort, Charley Toin, had a heated argument with a Babine, Lawquaw. The verbal sparring escalated to physical violence when Toin shot and wounded Lawquaw and the latter responded by stabbing Toin in the arm. Lawquaw managed to escape home where he was treated for his wounds by his wife and nephew Grand Visage. Lawquaw's nephew was understandably enraged at the shooting and returned to the fort determined to quiet his passion. To that end, upon coming on the fort, he nudged the barrel of his gun through the fort gates and shot and killed the clerk, Mr. Morwick. When the staff at Fort St. James learned of Morwick's death they recruited a party of eight men to seek out and kill Grand Visage. After only a short time, by feigning friendship and reconciliation, the party was able to persuade Grand Visage to give himself up but when he did that the party shot him dead.[59]

The Company could use the circumstances surrounding the death of Morwick and Grand Visage as evidence for the importance of making sure servants and locals kept separate Company. Be that as it may, servants, clerks and locals continued to pass in and out of the fort to socialize, marry and sleep with one another. Moreover, even though the clerks aspired to keep the fort – the only space over which they had control – free of Indigenous people unless they were present to trade, it seems that even that policy was not always followed. Not only were local wives allowed to live with their husbands in the fort but at Fort Chilcotin where relationships were often tense between staff and the Chilcotin, locals were occasionally allowed to sleep in the fort: "Several Indians arrived

[59] Morwick and Grand Visage were killed in the winter of 1842. See Fort St. James Post Journal 1840-1846, B.188/a/19, HBCA.

late in the Ev. with a few furs intending to trade tomorrow and requested permission to sleep inside which I permitted."[60]

The close relations between employees of the trade and local peoples also reveals just how near to each other fort-residents and locals lived. Typically, once a fort was erected in a region a local community grew up around it thereby changing settlement patterns. That dynamic has been most richly reported among the Cree of the lowlands around Hudson Bay, or the "home guard," but it happened elsewhere and the New Caledonian forts were no exception. At Fort Alexandria, on the border between the Columbia and New Caledonia districts, for example, the lower Dakelh gradually moved closer and closer to the front to bolster their defences against the Chilcotin.[61] At Fort McLeod a community of Sekani took up residence near the fort.[62] As forts were established and communities grew up around them, the forts became a new hub of trade. Once the regional trade was made to flow toward the forts the trade networks of the interior orbit were inevitably altered. Those peoples who served as middle persons between coast and mountain, for example, lost their strategic advantage. The seaward orbit was attenuated as the interior trade was siphoned toward the forts. Because the focus on the fort and the fort community restricted the flow of goods and services outside of the community, the closure of the forts had negative consequences for the community that had come to depend on them. Those changes and the increased involvement of the HBC in local affairs are reasons behind the emergence of the Prophet religions discussed in the next chapter.

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[60] Fort Chilcotin Post Journal, 8 November 1839, B.37/a/2, HBCA.

[61] Rich, *Part of Dispatch from George Simpson*, 211.

[62] Lanoue, *Brothers*, 166.

As the traders crossed the mountains they brought with them new goods and new wants. While the introduction of new material items has been highlighted as a key change introduced by the continental trade, the peoples of the interior had a long history with European goods by the time the overland trade arrived. The quantity of items may have increased but my sense is that the material items, while significant desiderata, were not necessarily the things that interested the people the most about the overland traders. After all, they were not bringing anything terribly new that could not already be acquired from the maritime trade. Indeed, the people had other ways of procuring those things and it took them some time to relent to trade their furs at the interior forts. Moreover, as the case of Fort Babine indicates, the traders were never really successful at convincing the locals to trade there.[63]

While the traders, whether they came by land or sea, brought new material goods, they were also vectors for venereal disease and pestilence. In addition to the cases of venereal disease about the forts already mentioned, in the first half of the nineteenth century numerous epidemics struck trading post communities and radiated outward along well travelled lines. The epidemics, which included influenza, whopping cough, tuberculosis, malaria (on the south cost), dysentery, measles, and smallpox, were causes of illness and fatalities. Of those epidemics the latter two, smallpox and measles, were the most virulent. There was at least one measles epidemic and three smallpox epidemics in the first half of the nineteenth century (there was also a major smallpox epidemic in 1862). The first two smallpox epidemics (early 1800s and 1824-5) originated in the east

[63] In 1829, the Chief Factor at Fort St. James wrote to George Simpson that the fort "can never be of any advantage" and that he had "come to the determination of abandoning it this Spring." Rich, *Part of Dispatch from George Simpson*, 239.

and were spread to the Columbia and Fraser-Skeena Plateaus by traders. The latter was particularly severe throughout the entire subarctic affecting peoples who traded at all of the Company's New Caledonian posts.[64] How those epidemics figured into early relations between local peoples and traders is difficult to say as the documentary record pertaining to those times is thin. Thus, perhaps for the dearth of data, I have not come across any specific link between the epidemics and the overland trade or to hostilities between the two groups. Such was not the case, however, for the measles epidemic of 1847-48 on the middle and lower Columbia.[65] The epidemic is well known in missiological literature particularly because it is associated with the events surrounding the murder of Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and eleven other residents of their Presbyterian mission by some Cayuse and Umatilla. The locals linked a measles outbreak to the machinations of the Whitmans and responded with deadly force. Although the circumstances surrounding the murders, the pursuit and execution of the murderers and subsequent warfare, were well known throughout the Plateau, illness was never a major reason for hostilities in the Fraser-Skeena Plateau. Whether or not the conflation of violence and epidemic is a lacuna in the data or whether the connection was never developed is an open question. My own sense based on what is known of later times is that such a conflation was mostly absent on the more northerly Plateau.

As the traders came to live on the lands of those who owned them, divisions within the local community were amplified; settlement patterns changed, trading relationships changed, and new sentiments of affinity and estrangements were

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[64] The latter epidemic was the smallpox that introduced at Sitka and that spread upriver to the interior. Boyd, *The Coming of the Spirit Pestilence*, 50.

[65] Boyd, *The Coming of the Spirit Pestilence*, 148.

engendered. Once the time the Hudson Bay Company took over operations in the 1820s, those changes would only become more fixed. By the 1840s and the time of HBC retreat from the Columbia, all the major forts on the Plateau and particularly those on Dakelh and Sekani lands had already been established: Forts St. James, Fraser, Babine, Connelly and George in the interior and Fort Simpson on the Coast.[66] It was also in the 1840s that the first Roman Catholic Missionaries visited the Witsuwit'en. When the missionaries arrived, the Dakelh had nearly forty years of relationships with employees in the fur trade already behind them. Those employees were Métis, Iroquois, Algonquians, French, English and later Hawaiian Islanders, most were Christian and many of those observant. If it were not for the traders, the missionaries may not have been as well received where they were. Christianity was integral to the assumptions the peoples of the interior had about the newcomers and how it is that they articulated and anticipated their arrival.

Lay Christianity West of the Rockies

Between 1806 and the first Catholic missionary voyage to the New Caledonia District in 1842, the Dakelh and Sekani had continual and sustained contact with employees of first the NWC and later the HBC. The vast majority of those employees – and those with whom the Dakelh and Sekani had the most contact – were French-Canadian, Métis and Iroquois labourers. If those labourers were not brought up Catholic (and there is really little reason to think that they were not), they at least had some basic knowledge of Christian myth and ritual. Those twenty-four Iroquois that settled in the

[66] Fort George was abandoned after Fraser left the country. It was re-occupied by the HBC in 1821 after the companies merged, abandoned again in 1824, and reoccupied for a third time in 1829. Fort Simpson was originally erected at the mouth of the Nass in 1831; it was relocated south to the Ts'mysen peninsula halfway between the Nass and Skeena in 1834.

Bitter Root Valley are but one example of a dynamic that was endemic to the cultural atmosphere of the New Caledonian fur trade. There is every reason to think that P.C. Pambrun and others, just as the Iroquois are said to have done in Montana, actually did make an effort to teach Christian thought and practice to the Indigenous people with whom they had regular contact. In the next section, I will illuminate some of the personalities who introduced Christianity and in the course of doing so evince the Christian content, forms and idioms that were introduced to the social field. I do that in the service of my argument that the religious movements among the Dakelh, Sekani and neighbouring Gitksan were the product of sustained, long and thoughtful reflections on Christianity. Thus, the movements were more a means of coming out to meet the priests than they were as Wilson Duff one put it a "garbled" response to the shock of a missionary impact.

In the previous chapter I mentioned that traders frequently observed Sabbath and holidays. Those practices were actually sanctioned by the Company and ostensibly at least encouraged in the field. In the HBC's Minutes of Council for 1823 four regulations concerned with promoting moral and religious improvement were approved. The first of which required that religious services be held at all forts every Sunday, more specifically, the regulation stated:

> That for the moral and religious improvement of the Servants, and more effectual civilization and instruction of the families attached to the different establishments, and the Indians, that every Sunday divine service be publicly read with becoming solemnity, either once or twice a day, to be regulated by the number of people, at which every man, woman and child resident will be required to attend together with any of the Indians who may be at hand, and whom it may be proper to invite. And for which purpose appropriate Religious Books will be furnished by, and on account of the Company.[67]

[67] R. Harvey Fleming, ed. *Minutes of Council Northern Department of Rupert Land* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1940), 230.

Of course, promulgating a regulation is one thing but ensuring it is observed is another. That tension between edict and practice is clearly reflected in attitudes toward marriage; both the HBC and NWC had at various points in their histories enacted regulations prohibiting "country" marriages but that policy was rarely followed. Nevertheless, the post journals in New Caledonia frequently record the performance of Sunday service, which at the very least entailed the public recitation of prayers.[68]

While Christmas and New Year's were the most popular holidays around the fort, All Saints Day and Easter (namely, Good Friday) were also observed.[69] Dakelh, Sekani and Babine peoples living near the fort were occasionally invited to participate in those holidays. In New Caledonia, holiday celebrations are muted and colourless in the journals, but my sense is that given that they were mentioned as holidays at least someone at some point during the major Christian holidays of Christmas and Easter talked about Jesus, the resurrection, the saints, the soul, salvation and creation. Babine, Dakelh and Sekani who visited the fort year after year would have had been present at some of those holidays and would have picked up some knowledge of the Christian religiosity, predominately Catholic, of those living at the fort and would have been made aware of the influence it had over the relationships that existed among employees, between employees and locals and between employees and the natural world. In addition to picking up on some Christianity during the Sabbath and holidays, the Dakelh and

[68] Occasionally employees were required to work through the Sabbath. At Fort St. James in the fall of 1841 Ogden observed that "this has been the first Sabbath the men have ceased from labour and glad I am to say our fall work is at an end – as usual read prayers – to a very thin congregation." On subsequent Sundays the Sabbath was observed and the congregation grew. On December 5, 1841, he recorded, "Prayers are read to a more numerous congregation than usual." The next week, on the December 12, he wrote: "Prayers read in full attendance." Fort St. James Post Journal1841, B.188/a/19, HBCA.

[69] Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World*, 174.

neighbouring peoples would have been kept in the know about Christianity as they worked side by side with Company labourers.

While traders and factors stationed in New Caledonia were obliged to hold Sunday services and observe religious holidays, some were doubtless more zealous than others in their efforts to introduce Dakelh and neighbouring peoples to Christianity. Although the records are not very clear on the matter, there is evidence that some employees acted as lay missionaries to the Dakelh and Sekani. At least five traders can be singled out as having done some degree of lay missionary work: William McBean, Peter Warren Dease, P.C. Pambrun, Peter Ogden (and/or his wife Julia), and Daniel Harmon. I discussed Harmon in some detail in the previous chapter where the focus was on the activities of the NWC. In what follows I treat the lay Christianities of the HBC employees William McBean, P.C. Pambrun, Julia Rivet and husband Peter Ogden, and Peter Warren Dease.

William McBean

William McBean served in New Caledonia between 1834 and 1844. During that period he served at a number of forts and occupied a number of positions. He was postmaster at Fort Chilcotin and Fort Babine, and clerk in charge at Fraser Lake and Connolly's Lake. According to Father Morice, who began mission work on behalf of the Oblates among the Dakelh and neighbouring peoples in 1885, McBean was remembered by the Babines as a veritable missionary who made them "dance previous to addressing them on religious topics."[70] Morice adds that they fondly remembered McBean "as a sort of lay preacher whose hybrid religion betrayed his own Cree origin, since it consisted

[70] Morice, *The History of the Northern Interior*, 207.

mostly of vague notions about the Deity and the primary precepts of the natural law, coupled with vain observances, the main burden of which was reduced to shouting and dancing."[71] Diamond Jenness, who did fieldwork among the Witsuwit'en and Dakelh in the 1920s, noted that the Dakelh told him that an HBC employee at Fort Babine, Misamombin, attempted to introduce a Christian ceremony among them. Jenness hypothesized that Misamombin was "probably William McBean." According to Jenness, Misamombin (McBean?):

> dressed in white clothes and white shoes, strung a rosary around his neck, hung a cross at his side, and sang and danced among them. He then ordered them to throw sundry skins and clothes into the fire as an offering to God, forbade them to work on Sundays, and warned them against the 'black coats' who would come after him to corrupt them with false teachings. If the Indians followed his instructions, he told them, they would become white men when they died, but if they listened to the 'black coats' they would turn black.[72]

Jenness' identification of Misamombin with McBean is purely speculative and there are some reasons to doubt it. Jenness was never one to be very attentive to Witsuwit'en and Dakelh traditions and at times refused outright to accept them (not the best quality in an ethnographer). I think Jenness conflated the two persons on the basis of Morice's work – instead of listening to the Dakelh and Babine about Misamombin he may have already had his mind made up about him. Antonia Mills also dismissed Jenness' conflation of Misamombin–McBean stating that Misamombin was likely a "mixed blood" who attempted to synthesize Indigenous and trader-trapper worldviews. Mills' suggestion that Misamombin was someone other than McBean makes sense but her dismissal is not without its own problems. McBean *was* a "mixed blood," according to HBC employment

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[71] Morice, *The History of the Northern Interior*, 221. Morice, however, did not have such a positive appraisal of McBean referring to him as a "religious fakir." Morice, *The History of the Northern Interior*, 207.

[72] Jenness, "The Carrier Indians," 548.

records he was born about 1807 in the parish of Folle Avoine, an NWC post in the vicinity of Lake Superior. His father John McBean was first appointed to the post in 1806. After the merger of the NWC and HBC, John McBean was promoted to the rank of Chief Factor. McBean's mother was Madeline Cloutier who was of Chippewa descent. In any event, what concerns me about the Misamombin-McBean conflations is not whether or not McBean was a Métis but the claim that Misamombin was anti-Catholic (he warned the Dakelh and Babine to not listen to the 'black coats'). The claim strikes me as incongruous as McBean was one of the few traders in New Caledonia whose Catholicism can be clearly and persuasively documented. In 1834, shortly after arriving in New Caledonia, McBean married Jane Boucher (b. 1821), daughter of Waccan and Nancy MacDougall. In 1844, the year that McBean was transferred to the Columbia Department, the two had their marriage solemnized according to Catholic tradition at Fort Vancouver. In the same year McBean's wife Jane and their two daughters were baptized by Father Modeste Demers. To prepare his family for their baptisms Morice noted that McBean requested a Catholic catechism to instruct his family. Moreover, Catholic Church records for the early years of the Vancouver Mission (the 1840s) indicate that McBean witnessed nine baptisms and was present for nine funerals.[73] His final posting, prior to retiring to Frenchtown in the Columbia, was at Fort Walla Walla. While at Walla Walla, he was remembered by Bishop Blanchet as an "affable, kindhearted, francophone compatriot" who welcomed him warmly.[74] McBean was also in charge at Walla Walla at the time of

[73] See Harriet Duncan Munnick, *Catholic Church Records of the Pacific Northwest; Vancouver, volumes I and II and Stellamaris Mission*, trans. Mikell De Lores Wormell Warner (Ste. Paul, Oregon: French Prairie Press, 1972).

[74] Roberta Stringham Brown, "A *Canadien* Bishop in the Ecclesiastical Province of Oregon." *CCHA Historical Studies* 6 (2000), 44.

the Whitman massacre. In the stormy aftermath of that event, McBean's staunch Catholicism came under fire from local Protestants who accused him of inciting the local Indigenous populations against the Protestants and for not acting quickly enough to assist the captives after the massacre. After McBean retired, he ran a local school in a small cabin, which also doubled as a church for Catholic missionaries when they made their annual visits to Frenchtown. McBean was clearly in favour of Catholicism and seems to have had made every effort to abide by the Church's sacraments.

McBean may well have introduced something of Catholicism to the Dakelh and neighbouring peoples while in New Caledonia but it is unlikely that he warned them against the priests or the Catholic religion. If McBean was Misamombin either some of the details attributed to him by Jenness are incorrect or they were part of some pretence on the part of McBean. The other possibility was that Misamombin was not McBean at all but another employee, perhaps a Protestant. Such a possibility is not at all unlikely but I cannot verify an employee of that name in the New Caledonia servants' accounts. It actually strikes me as more likely to think of Misamombin as an Indigenous Christian, perhaps a prophet, either a local or an individual who came west with the trade, than a Protestant aligned with one of the more recognizable denominations of that category. In chapters 7 and 8, I will illustrate that the prophets were known to warn people against the work of the missionaries. In any event, the story of Misamombin – McBean reveals something of religion in the fur trade: some fur traders were engaged and practicing Catholics who taught Catholicism.

Pierre Chrysologue Pambrun

The HBC Clerk P.C. Pambrun was another employee who was a bit of a lay missionary. Pierre Chrysologue Pambrun was born in Vondreuil, Lower Canada in 1792. He entered the service of the HBC in 1815, and in 1824 he was stationed as the clerk at Fort Babine. He remained in New Caledonia for the next six years serving as a clerk at Fort Babine and Fort St. James. He was sent to the Columbia in 1831 where he served as a clerk first at Fort Walla Walla and then at Fort Nez Perces. In 1840, he was promoted to Chief Trader and sent to Walla Walla; however, less than one year into his new posting he died from injuries suffered after a fall from a horse. Not much is known about Pambrun's career in New Caledonia, but while in the Columbia he attempted to introduce Christianity to Indigenous peoples.

When Pambrun was stationed at Fort Walla Walla in 1834, he received a visit from the American Captain B.L.E Bonneville.[75] According to Bonneville,

> [Pambrun] had been at some pains to introduce the Christian religion, in the Roman Catholic form, among them; where it had evidently taken root; but had become altered and modified, to suit their peculiar habits of thought, and motives of action: retaining, however, the principal points of faith and its entire precepts of morality. The same gentleman had given them a code of laws, to which they conformed with scrupulous fidelity. Polygamy, which once prevailed among them to a great extent, was now rarely indulged. All the crimes denounced by the Christian faith, met with severe punishment among them. Even theft, so venial a crime among the Indians, had recently been punished with hanging, by sentence of a chief. There certainly appears to be a peculiar susceptibility of moral and religious improvements among this tribe: and they would seem to be one of the very, very, few, that have benefited in morals and manners by an intercourse with white men.[76]

[75] Bonneville was a captain in the American Army who requested leave from service to go on a trading expedition in the northwest. His request was granted on the condition that he must gather statistical information on Indigenous peoples for the Army. Financed by New York capital, Bonneville made two trading trips to the Rockies between 1832 and 1835. See, Washington Irving. *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*, ed. Robert A. Rees and Alan Sandy (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1977).

[76] Irving, *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*, 189-190.

If Pambrun was being honest with Bonneville it is possible that he attempted similar things during his earlier tenure in New Caledonia. Moreover, according to Bonneville, the phenomenon of HBC traders introducing Christianity to local Indigenous populations was not at all uncommon. He observed that among the Nez Perce and Interior Salish it was "a convenient policy of some of the more knowing traders; who have derived great credit and influence among them, by being considered 'medicine men:' that is, men gifted with mysterious knowledge. This feeling is also played upon by religious charlatans; who are to be found in savage, as well as civilized life."[77] According to Bonneville, traders or entrepreneurial Indigenous people would introduce religious doctrines and ceremonies in order to secure some material advantage. The pseudo-religion, according to Irving, was particularly effective in swaying women, children and the weak minded over to some cause. It is possible that the American Washington Irving, the compiler of Bonneville's diaries, amplified the exploitive trading relationships that favoured the HBC over other interests and that he had a negative appraisal of the power of religion to challenge entrenched socio-political orders. In other words, religion as a socially mobilizing force may have appealed to "the women, children, and weak minded" not because of any "natural" character traits but because as marginalized peoples they had the most to gain from change. Thus, he may have overdetermined the degree to which Pambrun and other traders taught religion and portrayed the "religious instability" of the frontier in a negative light. Nevertheless, it seems to me that the alleged behaviour of Pambrun and other traders, as purveyors of Christianity, is consistent with both the

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[77] Irving, *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*, 250.

stated HBC policy and the social atmosphere that pervaded relationships between Indigenous peoples and HBC employees.

Although both Pambrun and McBean were traders, the former a clerk and the latter a postmaster, they were culturally closer to the French-Catholic labouring class within the HBC than they were to their own Canadian and European born, English speaking, colleagues. But Christianity, as it was introduced to Indigenous peoples west of the Rockies, did not only come from that quarter. Chief Traders and Chief Factors whether because they were mandated to do so or not also introduced Christianity.

Peter Skene Ogden

Peter Skene Ogden was Chief Factor at Fort St. James from 1835 to 1844. While there, he made some efforts to introduce Christianity around the fort. I had already mentioned, for example, that Ogden encouraged the Dakelh to bury their dead. Ogden was born and baptized a Catholic in Quebec in 1790. He entered the service of the NWC in 1810 and was first posted to Île-à-la Crosse. In 1818, he was transferred to the Columbia Department where he served at Fort George, Thompson's River Post and Spokane House. Shortly after his transfer to the Columbia Department, he married Julia Rivet, a Spokan, who was the step-daughter of the French trader Francois Rivet.[78] The two would remain married until Ogden's death in Oregon City in 1854. During his tenure at Fort St. James, Ogden seems to have done his best to observe the Sabbath, at least in so far as it did not interfere with what he took as the essential work of the fort. Ogden was

[78] Cline, in her biography of Ogden, suggests that Julia was a Nez Perce. See Gloria Cline, *Peter Skene Ogden and the Hudson's Bay Company* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1974). The Dictionary of Canadian Biography entry on Ogden, by Glyndwr Williams, has it that Julia was a Spokane, See *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, s.v. "Peter Skene Ogden" (by Glyndwr Williams) http://www. biographi.ca/ index-e.html (accessed October 2, 2012).

also a supporter of the work of the Catholic missionaries. In 1841, three years after the first Catholic missionaries west of the Rockies passed through New Caledonia, Fathers Modeste Demers and F.N. Blanchet, Ogden wrote to those clerks serving under him requesting that they contribute funds to the Catholic mission.[79] The following year, he escorted Father Demers on his voyage from Fort George to Fort St. James. Demers stayed a little more than a week with Ogden at the fort during which time he said Mass, gave religious instruction, and gave a brief mission to the local Dakelh. While Ogden spoke positively of Demers' work among the HBC employees, it seems that he held out little hope for the success of his mission to the Dakelh, Ogden wrote in the post journal, "In the afternoon [Sunday, September 18th] the Indians were assembled and listened attentively to our worthy Divine but with them I fear the case is hopeless they are too far gone in ignorance vice and superstition ever to reform, with the rising generation hopes may be entertained and God grant they be realized."[80] Despite his uncertainty about the prospect of the missionary program, Ogden seemed to have a positive impression of Catholic missionaries in general. He got on well with Demers and was also a friend to the Jesuit Father J.P. De Smet. He helped De Smet make his way from Colville to Fort Vancouver and back again in 1842. For that assistance De Smet reminisced that he would "never forget the kindness and friendly manner with which this gentleman treated me throughout the journey, nor the many agreeable hours I spent in his company."[81] As friendly as he may have been to the missionaries he clearly had some reservations about

[79] Morice, *History of the North-Western Interior*, 229.

[80] Fort St. James Post Journal, 27 September 1842, B.188/a/19, HBCA.

[81] Cline, *Peter Skene Ogden*, 142.

proselytizing the Dakelh so he may not have had that much patience with them on the topic of Christianity.

I am curious about the influence of Ogden's wife Julia over Ogden's Catholicism and the religious affairs of those districts to which Ogden was appointed. Julia's step-father was a French Canadian and Julia was born and lived in the middle Columbia for nearly fifteen years before coming to New Caledonia. Beginning in the 1830s, if not earlier, the middle Columbia was a hotbed of Christian interest. I do not know much about their marital dynamic but Ogden was fond of both his wife and children and there is something about his own behaviour that suggests he may not have been as enthusiastic about the missionary agenda as Morice suggested. Ogden was baptized a Catholic and by all accounts observed the sacraments and was fond of the missionaries. However, he sent his first son to Protestant school in Red River, refused to allow his marriage to Julia to be solemnized by the Catholic Church, and on Demers' first visit to New Caledonia, the priest stayed only one week at Fort St. James with Ogden at Fort St. James before Ogden sent him to Fort Alexandria to spend the winter with A.C. Anderson (a Protestant). Moreover, in Gloria Cline's biography of Ogden, her impression is that Ogden "did not have any deep religious convictions."[82] There seems to have been some dissonance between Ogden's attitude toward the Church and its missionaries and his own feelings toward Christianity. It is possible, then, that Julia influenced and nurtured any positive feelings that Ogden had toward the Catholic Church.[83] Even if Julia had no influence whatsoever over Ogden she must have had some influence around the fort. She would

[82] Cline, *Peter Skene Ogden*, 132.

[83] He may have been following McLoughlin's lead, and/or he may have been doing so on behalf of his employees (the majority of whom were Catholic).

have had her own local servants or attendants and would have had ample opportunity to introduce something of the Catholic religion to them.

Peter Warren Dease

Peter Warren Dease, Ogden's predecessor at Fort St. James, also made some efforts to introduce Christianity to the Dakelh at the Fort. Dease was Chief Factor at Fort St. James for four years, serving there between 1831 and 1835. Morice alleges that during his tenure, Dease had, with indifferent success, "done his best to impart to those in his immediate vicinity at least a smattering of Christianity."[84] Morice is not the most reliable of sources – he harbors much personal bias and he rarely reveals his own sources – but Dease's efforts as noted by Morice are further corroborated by the HBC trader John McLean. While McLean was the clerk at Fort St. James, about 1834, he wrote that a religious movement kindled by two Oregon Indigenous people who had received some training at Red River spread to New Caledonia from the Columbia.[85] According to McLean,

> the movement consisted chiefly in singing and dancing. As to the doctrines of our holy religion, their minds were too gross to be comprehended, and their manners too corrupt to be influenced by them. They applied to us for instruction, and our worthy chief spared no pains to give it. But, alas! It is for the most part labour in vain. Yet, an impression seemed to have been made on a few; and had there been missionaries there at the time, their efforts might have proved successful.[86]

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[84] Morice, *The History of the Northern Interior*, 221.

[85] The Oregonians McLean mentions were likely Kutenai Pelly and Spokan Garry. Both were sent to Red River, Pelly died there and Garry returned home in 1829 (Smoak thinks Pelly returned to Red River and died there in 1831). It is typically thought that those two men introduced Christianity west of the Rockies. They were important to Spier's treatment of the Prophet Dance. Smoak says they were the source of the Christianity noted by trappers working the Northwest Plateau in the 1830s and that they were the inspiration behind the Nez Perce delegation to St. Louis in 1831. Smoak, *Ghost Dances and Identity*, 66.

[86] John McLean, *John McLean's notes of a twenty-five year's service in the Hudson's Bay Territory*, ed. W. S. Wallace (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1932), 159-160.

The worthy chief to whom the Dakelh appealed must have been Dease as he was the Chief Factor at the time. Even in McLean's highly prejudicial and unhelpful assessment of the Dakelh as being a people too corrupt to be influenced by Christianity, Dease labored and made some impression on them. The Dakelh were no strangers to Christianity, and their conversations with Dease indicate that they were really trying to make sense of it for themselves.

Dease, McBean, Pambrun, Ogden, Harmon and other fur trade employees were offering some instruction in Christian myth and ritual. Efforts by employees of the fur trade to introduce Christianity to their trading partners were far from restricted to New Caledonia. As I have suggested, such attempts were made throughout the trading region west of the Rockies in the early nineteenth century. Thus, it seems highly reasonable that such efforts also resulted in an Indigenous curiosity about Christianity. In fact, in southern regions of the Columbia – where the personnel and labour systems were similar to the New Caledonia scene – there is even stronger evidence of an Indigenous interest in Christianity. Because the NWC, and later the HBC, employed similar strategies and a similar work force in the continental trade west of the Rockies reference to a few cases of the Columbia may further illuminate the New Caledonian dynamic.[87]

Lay Christianity on the Columbia (a Southern Orbit)

About the same time that the Dakelh were conversing with Peter Warren Dease about Christianity at Fort St. James, Drs. William Fraser Tolmie and Meredith Gairdner,

[87] Employee records at Fort St. James, the headquarters of New Caledonia, indicate that any given employee had his postings alternated between New Caledonia and the Columbia.

in London, signed five year contracts with the HBC to serve as the Company's medical staff in the Columbia. The two arrived at Fort Vancouver on the HBC supply ship *Ganymede* in May 1833. On the first or second Sunday after his arrival, Tolmie, while being given a tour of the Company's farms by Chief Factor John McLoughlin, met with several Indigenous people – perhaps local Chinook – praying around their fires. Tolmie was moved by the sight and recorded in his journal that he "Felt a sensation of awe come over [him] when they knelt & prayed. The Govr. Says that they have imitated the Europeans in observing the 7. As a day of rest."[88]

A few months later Tolmie was at Fort Nisqually, which was then under construction at the south end of Puget Sound. While he was detained there treating an injured employee, Tolmie began trading with the locals on behalf of the Company. Before long, Tolmie was trying his hand at sermonizing. On Sunday, July 28, 1833, Tolmie observed,

> the Indians assembled in front of the house to the number of 70, or 80 male & female. With Brown, as interpreter who spoke in Chenook. H [Mr. Heron] & I explained to them the creation of the world, the reason why Christians & Jews abstained from work on Sunday & had got as far as the Deluge in the Sacred History when we were requested to stop & the indians could not comprehend things clearly. The Chinook is such a miserable medium of communication, that very few ideas can be expressed in it. The savages seem anxious for instruction & with a good interpreter, could be induced to alter for the better their conduct.[89]

Tolmie, as Harmon had done before him, was attempting to get Indigenous peoples, in this case the Nisqually of Puget Sound, interested in Christianity. He also experienced the same difficulty as Harmon: his audience was never as subordinate as he wished they might be. Tolmie figured that a big part of the problem was the fact that the Chinook

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[88] William Fraser Tolmie, *The Journals of William Fraser Tolmie; Physician and Fur Trader* (Vancouver: Mitchell Press, 1963), 172.

[89] Tolmie, *Journals of William Fraser Tolmie*, 222.

Jargon was unsuitable for articulating theology. The unsuitability of Chinook for sermonizing was a common complaint of later missionaries as well. While priests and preachers may have had trouble using the idiom to convey precisely what *they* wanted to say, Indigenous people might have received what *they* wanted to hear with either interest or disinterest. That is not to say Indigenous people were neutral on all topics introduced, but that they were interested for their own reasons. For example, in chapter 8, I will evince that some Indigenous peoples were interested in orienting themselves at the centre of their own historical narrative.

The following Sunday, Tolmie was back at it, but this time he had more success. He began his journal entry for that day with the exclamation "Great doings" and continued,

> Mr. H got Watskalatchet, Chilialucum, Babyar & Sialah (a brawny Soquamish with a roman countenance & black curly hair, the handsomest Indian I have seen) into his room with Lachalet as interpreter and told them to confess to him all their evil actions beginning with murders & next the thefts [after much hesitation they relent and Tolmie lists the murders and thefts of each]. The enormity of the crime of murder was then pointed out to the worthy assemblage & they were told it was as contrary to the Almighty's express command – they all promised, never again to commit the action, but in self defence & by way of expressing it more strongly on their minds they were made to mark with a pen a sheet of paper on which they names were written. Afterwards the multitude outside received an address from Mr H in which there was nothing objectionable & the Samanowash terminated the ceremony.[90]

Here Tolmie is talking about morality (namely murder and theft), the importance of public confession of wrongdoings, the omniscience of God (suggesting that the wrongs discussed are religious and not subject to a moral conversation), and all of which are connected in some fashion to pen, ink and paper and the act of writing. While Tolmie hailed the conference a success, it is possible that the participants feigned some or all of

[90] Tolmie, *Journals of William Fraser Tolmie*, 222.

their confessions. All initially refused to divulge any information about murder and theft, but once they all began talking the information seems to just pour out, each one in turn confesses to one, two, three and five murders! The longer their confessions the more their murder victims are made to appear as stronger and stronger adversaries such that it seems they are bragging as much as confessing (bragging of their own creativity). At any rate, even if the initial conference was a success according to Tolmie's estimation, his efforts must have been somewhat disappointed when the following Sunday he reported that there were "No indians on the ground except those residing on the beach." But their absence, like their suspicions about Christian theology noted elsewhere, do not necessarily betray a lack of interest. They might have been visiting their own friends and relations, telling them about the meeting and consequently of all those things that the traders divulged to them as important to social relationships. After all, we do know that the Indigenous people were using some of which they learned from the traders.

Further Indigenous interests in the Columbia can be cited. In 1835, Tolmie's colleague Dr. Gairdner observed what he took to be Christian prayers and hymns among the Snake and Walla Walla. According to Gairdner the rites were introduced five years previously, but because he gives no reason for that assessment it is possible that they were introduced earlier.[91] In 1833, the same year that Gairdner and Tolmie arrived at Fort Vancouver, Nathanial Wyeth, claimed to have witnessed Christian ritual among the Salish. On several Sundays Wyeth observed the Salish about Fort Walla Walla singing, praying and refraining from work. He specifically describes the action,

[91] Gairdner, *Notes on the Geography of the Columbia River*, cited in Spier, *The Prophet Dance*, 33-34.

> every morning some important Indian addresses either heaven of his countrymen or both / I believe exhorting the one to good conduct to each other and to the strangers among them and the other to bestow its blessings / he finished with 'I am done[’] / the whole set up an exclamation in concord during the whole time / Sunday there is more parade of prayer as above / nothing is done Sunday in the way of trade with these Indians not in playing games and they seldom fish to kill game or raise camp / while prayers are being said on week days everyone ceases whatever vocation he is about / if on horseback he dismounts and holds his horse on the spot until all is done.[92]

Two years later, in 1835, Wyeth observed similar practices among the Sahaptins of the Deschutes River, "At day dawn [Sunday] the chief called the Inds. To prayers which consist of a short recitation followed by a tune in which all join without words after which a note is accord to wind off / this is repeated several times on Sunday and is a dayly practice."[93] Wyeth gave little interpretation but gives some decent description of a Sunday propitiation rite that served as the model for smaller performances during the week.

Based on data from the Columbia pertaining to the early as the 1830s, the Indigenous peoples in the region were already attempting to articulate Christianity by the time missionaries arrived. My hunch is that similar things were happening in New Caledonia about the same time – remember, for example, that John McLean documented Christian practices among the Dakelh at Fort St. James in the mid 1830s. One reason that we know more about the manifestation of Christian forms among Indigenous peoples in the Columbia at such early dates (in advance of the missionaries) may be of a practical nature: in comparison to the New Caledonia district there were more traders, more

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[92] F.G. Young (ed.), *Sources of the History of Oregon*, cited in Spier, *The Prophet Dance*, 31.

[93] F.G. Young (ed.), *Sources of the History of Oregon*, cited in Spier, *The Prophet Dance*, 32.

visitors, and more written sources pertaining to the Columbia.[94] Fort Vancouver, for example, was the centre of operations west of the Rockies. Additionally, employees who retired from the service (whether from New Caledonia or the Columbia) settled in the Columbia and Americans (fur traders, settlers, army officers) were also much more active in the region.

As indicated by the cases of the servants of the trade stationed in New Caledonia and Columbia there were sustained efforts on the part of the traders to teach Christianity to the locals. While it is more difficult to see how those teachings were articulated in New Caledonia because the documentary record is thinner, they were a part of the social atmosphere that pervaded relations between employees and Dakelh. The Dakelh, as all hints seem to suggest, were to some extent curious about Christianity. NWC employees and later those engaged with the HBC primed the Dakelh on God years before the missionaries arrived. By the time they arrived, some Dakelh already had, if not what they considered an operative knowledge of Christianity, at least an interest or curiosity in it. And it was partially because of their previous introduction to Christian teachings in conjunction with their own sociological interests, that they were not all convinced that the priests' knowledge of Christianity was especially privileged.

Catholic Missionary Christianity in the Upper Fraser and Skeena Watersheds (1838-1885)

Up to this point I have been writing of the presence of a pre-missionary Christianity in the upper Fraser-Skeena watershed in the early nineteenth century. That

[94] I have not accomplished a thorough read of the literature. However, based on what I have read and the volume of material that remains my sense is that further research would at least yield more accounts similar to those covered here.

Christianity first made its way into the region through Indigenous channels, by those who had some contact with Europeans on the periphery (namely the Spanish, Russians and Euro-Canadians). Once the fur trade became established in the area folk Christianity was brought directly to the region by fur trade employees. Soon thereafter Christianity would take on a new form of its own among local residents. Indigenous Christianity was in part a reaction to the advent of missionaries or rumours of them. In this section, I discuss the arrival of missionaries in the upper Fraser-Skeena watershed, more specifically, who they were, where they went and what they taught.

The first missionaries to pass through the region were Fathers Modeste Demers and F.N. Blanchet. In 1838, the pair travelled with the incoming HBC brigade through the lands of the southern Dakelh (and perhaps also those of eastern Sekani) destined for Fort Vancouver on the Columbia. Their passage came as no surprise to anyone attached to the fur trade. In fact, many may have wondered what had taken them so long to arrive in the first place. Blanchet writes that the locals with whom he met on his 1838 voyage were expecting the "blackgowns who had been so often spoken of by the Canadians."[95] Employees had been requesting Catholic missionaries at least as early as 1821, in that year an unnamed woman on the Willamette petitioned Bishop Dubourg in St. Louis for priests.[96] In 1833, 1834 and again in1835, John McLoughlin on behalf of Canadian settlers on the Willamette, some of whom had been previously employed in New Caledonia, wrote to Bishop Provencher at Red River requesting that he send

[95] F.N. Blanchet, *Historical Sketches of the Catholic Church in Oregon During the Past Forty Years (1838-1878)* (Ferndale Wase, 1910), 10.

[96] Schoenberg, Wilfred P., S. J. *A History of the Catholic Church in the Pacific Northwest 1743–1983* (Washington, DC: The Pastoral Press, 1987), 3.

missionaries.[97] Provencher response to the petition was twofold: he sent the settlers some catechisms and wrote to George Simpson requesting that he be allowed to send priests to the Willamette.[98] Simpson replied to Provencher in 1836 in the negative citing the presence of Protestant missionaries and the uncertainty over the British/American boundary as reasons for his refusal.[99] Two years later, the Company reversed its position and allowed Catholic missionaries passage to their operations in the lower Columbia. In 1838, the Governor and Committee wrote to the council of the Northern Department recommending that the Bishop of Juliopolis be allowed to send one or two priests to form a Catholic mission on the Columbia provided that they go where they were told by the Company's officers and, more specifically, that they refrain from establishing themselves on the south side of the Columbia.[100] So it was that in 1838 the two priests took passage with the summer brigade destined for Fort Vancouver.

The brigade travelled west along the Saskatchewan River to Fort Edmonton. From there, after the Priests made a short visit to Jasper House, the brigade crossed the Rockies, embarked on the Columbia at Boat Encampment and travelled downstream to Vancouver. The priests were much more than passengers in the brigade that summer, at every fort en route, in so far as it was permissible for them to do so they heard confessions and taught catechism to employees, children of employees and Indigenous

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[97] "The George Forbes Collection," Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Archives.

[98] Provencher was hamstrung by short staff and the fact that in 1834 Pope Gregory XVI had entrusted the Jesuits to mission to the Indigenous peoples of North America.

[99] Simpson to Rt. Rev. Bishop of Juliopolis, 18 September 1836, "Missionaries," search file.

[100] The Company recommended that the missionaries establish themselves on the Cowlitz River. The Company was starting a farm there and hoped that the presence of missionaries would induce settlement (i.e. draw settlers from the Willamette, south of the Columbia, to places north). Governor and Committee to Council of the Northern Department, 7 March 1838, A.6/24, fos. 139d.-140, HBCA.

people. With respect to the latter, they took the opportunity to instruct them in "the redemption of the son by God."[101] The priests also said Mass and administered the sacraments at the various forts and encampments. At Jasper House and Fort Edmonton, for example, they baptized ninety Indigenous people and employees, performed three marriage ceremonies and one burial service. West of the Rockies on the upper Columbia the priests performed fifty-three baptisms.[102]

On November 24, 1838, the priests arrived at Fort Vancouver and immediately too up work among the Canadian settlers and local Indigenous peoples.[103] Although one condition of passage stipulated that they not work south of the Columbia that restriction was soon lifted. Before the priests had even set out in 1838, John McLoughlin wrote to the Governor and Committee informing them that there were many settlers on the Willamette who do not want to move to the Cowlitz River and as such he would be forced to allow one of the missionaries to work on the Willamette.[104]

After three years of work in their vast territory (which corresponded to the Columbia River drainage and more) Governor Simpson was so impressed at their efforts that he wrote to the Governor and Committee recommending that a recent request by the

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[101] Blanchet, *Historical Sketches*, 10.

[102] Blanchet, *Historical Sketches*, 8.

[103] With respect to their objectives as missionaries, Bishop Signay advised the two priests before they departed: "You must consider as the first object of your Mission to withdraw from barbarity and the disorders which it produces, the Indians scattered in that country. Your second object is, to tender your services to the wicked Christians who have adopted there the vices of Indians, and live in licentiousness and the forgetfulness of their duties." Phillip Hanley, *History of the Catholic Ladder* (Ye Galleon Press, 1993), 13.

[104] Governor and Committee to James Douglas, Officer in charge at Fort Vancouver, Oct. 31, 1838, HBCA A.6/25, fo. 9.

Bishop of Quebec for permission to send two more priests to the region be granted.[105] Following Simpson's recommendation, Fathers Langlois and Bolduc were dispatched from Quebec and arrived at Fort Vancouver on September 17, 1842.

While the French Canadians were working the Columbia, the Jesuits operating out of St. Louis were advancing toward the Rockies. In 1840, the Jesuit Father Jean-Pierre DeSmet left St. Joseph's Mission to the Potawatomi at Council Bluffs, a mission he had founded five years earlier, to work among the Flathead. The Flathead had requested a missionary the previous decade and De Smet was well received upon arrival. Among the Flathead DeSmet translated prayers and instructions, performed marriages, confessions and baptisms, and appointed Indigenous missionaries to spread the Gospel and to "baptize the dying, and the children in case of necessity."[106] In 1842, De Smet left the Flathead mission (St. Mary's), destined for Fort Vancouver and a meeting with Fathers Demers and Blanchet. En route De Smet fell in with the outgoing New Caledonian brigade, also headed to Fort Vancouver. The brigade was led by Chief Factor Peter Ogden, and he invited De Smet to join him for the remainder of the voyage. When De Smet met with Demers and Blanchet, the three devised a plan to further the Catholic mission: Demers was to mission to the Indigenous peoples of New Caledonia, meanwhile, De Smet was to head to Europe to obtain funds and missionary recruits and

[105] In 1841, Simpson wrote: "… The two Roman Catholic Priests, M. Blanchet and M. Demers, who were brought into the country under the auspices of the Hon. Company 3 years ago, have been very zealous in the discharge of their missionary duties; the former is established at the Willamette and the latter at the Cowlitz settlement; & I consider it due to these gentlemen to say, that their presence here has been productive of much good, & that we have every reason to be satisfied with them. Two other Roman Catholic priests, I think might likewise be employed in this quarter with advantage; I have, therefore, to recommend that the request made last winter by the Roman Catholic Bishop of Montreal for this part of the country be complied with." Sir George Simpson to Governor and Committee, 25 November 1841, "Missionaries," search file, HBCA.

[106] Prayers and instructions translated by DeSmet include: the Pater, the Ave, the Credo, the Acts of Faith, Hope, Charity, Contrition and the Ten Commandments. W. N. Bischoff, *The Jesuits of old Oregon, 1840–1940* (Caldwell, Idaho, 1945), 23.

Blanchet was to remain at Fort Vancouver to tend to the needs of the Oregonians.[107] According to De Smet, the mission to New Caledonia was imperative because the locals there "had repeatedly asked for Catholic missionaries."[108] De Smet does not identify the source of the request and because he had at that point never been to New Caledonia his assertion that the Indigenous peoples of New Caledonia had repeatedly asked for missionaries is curious. I think he was repeating what Ogden told him as the two men travelled together to Fort Vancouver earlier that year. Recall, for instance, that in 1841 Ogden requested missionaries and that Ogden's wife, Julia Rivet was a practicing Catholic and a lay missionary.[109]

Demers departed for New Caledonia in June 1842. He arrived at Fort Alexandria on August 24. After a four day layover, he resumed travel with the brigade and arrived at Fort St. James on September 16. On Sunday, June 18, he said Mass with numerous Dakelh and fort employees in attendance. The following day he departed for Fort Alexandria at which place he arrived on June 24. Demers remained at Fort Alexandria for the next five months. On February 21, 1843, he departed on his return journey to the Columbia. During his tenure at Fort Alexandria, Demers' visited with Dakelh, Chilcotin and Secwepemc. He also oversaw the completion of a church near Fort Alexandria; much of the construction was actually completed by the Dakelh in the late fall while Demers was on a mission to the Shuswap. While among the Shuswap, he coaxed the locals into erecting the second of the two chapels constructed on his trip.

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[107] Blanchet, *Historical Sketches*, 49.

[108] De Smet, Pierre Jean. *Oregon Missions and travels over the Rocky Mountains in 1845-46* (New York: Edward Dunigan, 1847), 38.

[109] McIntosh, Donald J. Aug.7, 1933. "Fort St. James – Past and Present," manuscript, 13-15, Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Archives.

By April Demers was safely back at Fort Vancouver. The following year, 1844, neither Demers nor any other Catholic missionary made the trip to New Caledonia, but the missionaries were only on hiatus as future prospects were brightened that year by the return of De Smet from Europe. On August 4, 1844, De Smet arrived at Fort Vancouver along with four Jesuits, some lay brothers and six Sisters of Notre Dame of Namur. Of the new priests the Italian Giovanni Pietro Antonio ("John") Nobili was earmarked for work among the Dakelh.[110]

In June 1845, Nobili left Fort Vancouver with a Jesuit novice and interpreter Baptiste (Battiste) destined for New Caledonia.[111] Nobili arrived at Fort Alexandria sometime in late August or Early September. On September 12, he was at Fort George; on September 24, he was at Fort St. James. Nobili spent eleven or twelve days at Fort St. James. On October 9, he was back at Fort Alexandria. As Demers had done three years earlier, Nobili wintered at Fort Alexandria, spent time with the local Dakelh and visited neighbouring groups of Shuswap and Chilcotin. Nobili remained at Fort Alexandria through the winter before leaving in April the following year (possibly early May) to reconnoiter with De Smet at Fort Colvile. At Colvile De Smet informed Nobili that he was to continue his mission to the peoples of New Caledonia for another year. After two months of recuperation at Colvile, Nobili left for the upper Fraser-Skeena headwaters in July, 1846. By October of that year Nobili had made it as far as Fort Babine (the

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[110] The other three were fathers Ravalli, Accolti, and Vercruisse.

[111] Baptiste was likely a Métis from the Fort Vancouver area who the Catholics were grooming for service. Nobili referred to his travelling companion as a "certain Battiste who sought membership in the Jesuit order" See J. B. McGloin, "John Nobili, S.J., founder of California's Santa Clara College: the New Caledonia years, 1845–1848," *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* 17 (1953): 219. De Smet referred to his companion as a novice brother: "In the month of June Father Nobili, accompanied by a novice brother, left Willamette to visit the tribes of New Caledonia." W. N. Bischoff, *The Jesuits of old Oregon, 1840–1940* (Caldwell, Idaho, 1945), 56.

northernmost post in New Caledonia). Nobili was the first Catholic missionary to visit the Babine, but he was far from the first Christian to visit with them. After his visit to the Babine he turned south and arrived at Fort St. James on November 7. He spent the Christmas season of 1846 on the shores of Stuart Lake and in the New Year began a "vigorous campaign of instruction" among the Dakelh that continued "until the beginning of Lent."[112] On February 15 he left Fort Saint James destined for Fort Alexandria. He stayed at Fort Alexandria though March and in May he retreated to Lake Okanogan where, on the southern shore of the lake, he founded St. Joseph's Mission. Later that year Nobili was joined by a colleague, Father Anthony Goetz. The two labored together among the Okanogan throughout the winter but the mission would prove short lived. Early in 1848 Father Goetz was withdrawn to serve among the Coeur d'Alene. Later that same year Nobili was dispatched to California, an appointment that terminated his missionary career in New Caledonia.

The fourth missionary to make contact with the peoples of New Caledonia during the early phase of Catholic missions was De Smet. In August 1845, the same year that Nobili made his first trip to New Caledonia, De Smet left Lake Pend Oreille destined for the Canadian Plains. According to De Smet the reason for his voyage was to make contact with the Blackfoot so as to initiate peace talks between them and the Interior Salish. From Lake Pend Oreille De Smet travelled north along the upper Columbia through Secwepemc and Ktunaxa territory. From the head waters of the Columbia he crossed the Rockies by way of "White Man's Pass" and descended into the Bow River Valley. Passing though the Bow River, he travelled north to Rocky Mountain House and Fort Edmonton where he spent the winter. On March 12, 1846, he left Fort Edmonton

[112] McGloin, "John Nobili," 220.

heading in the direction of Fort Jasper. En route he fell in with a number of Dakelh who, according to De Smet, had come east to hunt.[113] After a short stay at Fort Jasper he resumed his journey west toward the Athabasca Pass, where he hoped to meet with the incoming brigade and return to the Columbia with them. Near the Athabasca pass he encountered another group of Dakelh who made the sign of the cross, recited some prayers and urged him to baptize them. While De Smet was moved at their apparent devotion, he told them that he was not the missionary who had come to see them. De Smet advised them to return "to their own country, where they would find a Black-gown (Father Nobili) who would instruct them."[114] After leaving the Dakelh he traversed the pass, hooked up with the brigade and rushed down the Columbia. On May 29, 1846, he arrived at Fort Colvile where he found Nobili there waiting for him, and readying himself for his second journey to New Caledonia.

A few things follow from the voyages of these four missionaries (Demers, DeSmet, Blanchet, and Nobili). From the beginning the missionaries were invited by fur trade employees. Rivet and Ogden requested missionaries on behalf of the Dakelh around Fort Saint James and almost as soon as the request reached Fort Vancouver, Demers headed straight for that place. Clearly by the 1840s the Dakelh had a long history of engagement with Christianity. The degree of engagement is further betrayed when we consider that the Dakelh themselves had also requested missionaries. Perhaps, then, it was the Dakelh who made the request through Ogden and Julia? Might that explain Ogden's less than sanguine reception to the missionaries? A second request was clearly

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[113] De Smet, *Oregon Missions*, 192.

[114] Pierre Jean De Smet, *Life Letters and Travels of Father Pierre-Jean De Smet* (New York: Krauss Reprint, 1969), 539.

made by the Dakelh in 1844. Blanchet wrote that "a deputation of Indians came down from New Caledonia to Vancouver in 1844 to ask for a missionary."[115] And, the following year when De Smet was in the Rockies, his party met a group of Dakelh who, "appeared overjoyed at seeing us, particularly when they discovered that I was a Black-gown; they crowded around me, and begged me to baptize them with an earnestness that affected me to tears."[116] The invitations and enthusiasm (even if exaggerated) reported by traders and missionaries suggests previous knowledge of Christianity.

The two dominant lines in Canadian mission literature accounting for how and why Christianity was picked up by the Dakelh, the Sekani or any other Indigenous people for that matter are (1) that they learned it directly from missionaries or (2) that they learned it from Indigenous catechists who had seen Roman Catholic ceremonies performed elsewhere.[117] Both lines lead directly to a missionary source; I do not dispute that there were such lines of connection but I argue instead that it is not necessary to look beyond the social field to find Christianity. Christianity is already present and had been at least since the first posts were erected. Employees of the fur trade, especially those from Lower Canada, probably learned Catholicism from priests, but some Métis may have only learned of it from their parents. In any event, the case of employees is represented as different because they (for the most part) did not have missionary ambitions and so their Catholicism is not as "genuine" as that of the missionaries or catechists who learned of it from a clearly defined denominational source.

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[115] Blanchet, *Historical Sketches*, 58

[116] De Smet, *Western Missions and Missionaries: a series of letters* (New York, 1863), 199-200.

[117] In Canadian mission literature it is often said that Indigenous people first pick up on Christianity by mimicking priests. Remember, for example, Wilson Duff's claim that after the first visits of priests the local Indigenous people came away with a garbled Christianity. According to Barbeau and Spier, Christianity was learned from Iroquois catechists.

I am guessing that the logic just sketched is part of the reason why lay or fur trade employee Christianity receives little attention in the historical record: employees were not missionaries and thus not properly religious and to the extent that they might have made missionary efforts, not being missionaries, their brand of Christianity was somewhat deviant. That outlook reflects a more general tendency to separate religion from culture and to treat it as an autonomous sphere. I am arguing just the opposite, religion is thoroughly embedded in and inextricable from anything we might call culture. I am also arguing that the influence of priests and catechists in teaching Christianity has been overdetermined, which is not to say that the influence of missionaries and catechists was ineffectual. The missionaries did much labour to affirm what in some cases was already present and provided new models according to which Indigenous peoples could construe Christianity in their idiom and in a way that would be intelligible to others such as priests, traders and, to some extent, Indigenous neighbours.

Demers and Nobili baptized a number of Dakelh both young and old. Demers baptized 436 people during his voyage in 1842 and Nobili baptized at least 60 during his two journeys.[118] Of all the things they did Nobili and DeSmet indicated that baptism was what interested the Dakelh the most. But they also did much more than that. Both missionaries taught prayers, canticles, the sign of the cross, and how to make and use rosaries. They also taught salvation and creation with the assistance of the Catholic ladder.[119] The Catholic ladder was a catechistic aid devised by Francois Blanchet shortly after he arrived at the Cowlitz mission on the Columbia meant to show the Biblical account of creation and salvation history and emphasize the Christo-centric concept of

[118] McGloin, "John Nobili", 217; Bischoff, *The Jesuits*, 57; McGloin, 220.

faith. According to Blanchet, the stick was meant "to show the beginning of the world, the creation, the fall of the angels, of Adam; the promise of a savior, the time of his birth, and his death upon the cross, as well as the mission of the apostles." [120] The original form of the ladder was a stick, a piece of wood, about four feet long, but Blanchet soon afterward changed the plan to a large chart. Nobili and Demers taught using the stick and/or the chart. Both also distributed copies to Indigenous catechists with instructions to teach their own people in the absence of a priest. Blanchet himself encouraged putting the stick in the hands of Indigenous catechists and sent copies to fur traders for their own missionary labours.[121] Prayers, catechisms, and other teachings were given in the "local idiom", likely French and/or Chinook.[122]

Nobili married at least nine Dakelh couples. The "problem" of polygamy was at least one reason that compelled him to do that. He wrote "Polygamy prevailed everywhere, and everywhere I succeeded in abolishing it."[123] Of course, he highly overrated his success at "abolishing" the practice; the Oblates in the latter half of the nineteenth century still complained that it vexed their agenda. The priests, like the traders before them, discouraged cremation and, at least among those Indigenous people in the

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[120] Hanley, *History of the Catholic Ladder*, 19.

[121] In a letter sent by Mr. Pambrun, the HBC agent at Walla Walla to Fr. Blanchet in the 1840s, Pambrun remarked, "I have cop'd the ladder chronnic [sic] and have given each of them [Chief Cayuse and his brother Five Crows] one in your name also one to the Walla Walla Chief […]." In a letter sent to Blanchet later the same year Mr. Pambrun acknowledges receipt and distribution of Blanchet's catechistic aids, "[…] acknowledge the honour and receipt of your kind and much esteemed letter of 7th April last bearing enclosed Echelle Cath. Historique. Of the latter having seen but few of the Indians since its receipt not many as yet have seen it. But the former sent I have sirculated [sic] and most of the Chiefs have one" (Hanley, *History of the Catholic Ladder*, 21 and 33.

[122] Fowler suggests that Demers also learned Secwepemc and lower Dakelh. R. A. Fowler, *The New Caledonia mission*: *an historical sketch of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in north central British Columbia* (B.C. Heritage Trust, New Caledonia heritage research report, Burnaby, 1985), 130.

[123] De Smet, *Western Missions*, 514-515.

vicinity of the forts, were successful in introducing burial.[124] The missionaries also built chapels and erected crosses. Demers built two churches, or rather he had local peoples the churches for him, and Nobili consecrated four more. At Stuart Lake, Nobili was successful in having a "large medicine lodge where they were accustomed to practice their superstitious rites" converted into a church.[125] The church was subsequently "blessed and dedicated to God under the patronage of St. Francis Xavier. The planting of the cross was solemnly performed with all the ceremonies proper to such occasions."[126]

The missionaries modeled themselves as the people with real authority when it came to Christianity. In contrast, Christianity was probably not so neatly packaged by the Dakelh and their neighbours – or even the missionaries and traders themselves – as a discrete sphere of activity but the priests hammered home why they were doing what they were doing was important. The Christo-centric concept of history and the omniscience of God were important to explain God's control over and work in the world (everyone was equally humbled and powerless under God), the possibility of life after death meant the possibility of salvation, and the importance of modeling one's behaviour (to do good works) after God's revelations made salvation possible. Those are all things the Dakelh had heard before, but when the priests appeared it may have seemed to the Dakelh they have had a hyper consciousness of such things.

The early missionaries provided a model according to which Dakelh and Sekani prophets and traditions about prophets could conform. Whether they heard of the priests

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[124] Bischoff, *The Jesuits*, 57.

[125] Bischoff, *The Jesuits*, 57.

[126] De Smet, *Western Missions*, 225-226.

through hearsay or direct contact, the prophets contrasted their work with that of the priests. In the final part of this chapter, I show in more detail how the two are contrasted in the prophetic narratives. If the prophets borrowed anything from the priests, it was not to mimic but to learn a language that was instantiated to some degree in practice. The language helped the prophets announce to missionaries and traders that they understood the gospel, that they can use it in their own lives, to do their own baptisms, their confessions and their own marriages. Missionaries may have provided a stimulus – or more likely a reason for continuing to work – and in that sense were a cause of prophet religions. But the religions were less a critical appraisal of them. The prophet movements were the product of a long process of thinking about Christianity and not the raw consumption on a direct line of transmission from any one source.

Missionary Epilogue: The Oblates

After Nobili left New Caledonia in 1847, it would be more than ten years before Catholic missionaries returned to the region and, then, it would not be the Jesuits but the Oblates. One reason for the Catholic withdrawal was that following the Oregon Boundary Treaty of 1846 the Jesuits re-focused their attention on their American missions in California and Oregon. We have already seen, for example, that Nobili and Goetz were withdrawn by the Jesuits from the Okanogan mission and relocated to parts south in 1848. The lacuna left by the departure of the Jesuits was quickly filled by Oblate missionaries who first arrived in the Columbia in 1847. While the Oblates were quick on the heels of the Jesuits in the Columbia it would be a decade before they received a mandate to mission to the peoples of the New Caledonian interior. I treat the Oblates as

an epilogue because the prophet movements or the indigenizations of Christianity discussed in the following chapter were developed prior to the advent of the Oblate missionaries. Yet, my hunch is that the Oblates helped to drive the movements underground so in that sense might be read as actively responding to them. I base this on the fact that the Oblates wrote little about the movements and by the end of Morice's tenure he considered them a thing of the past. Morice was mistaken; they were still remembered in the 1920s in a vein that suggested there was still a resistance to imposed Catholicism.

Pope Leo XII approved the Oblates as a religious order in 1826. The first Oblate clergy, four priests and two brothers, arrived in Canada to serve in the Diocese of Quebec in 1841.[127] Three years later, in 1844, Bishop Provencher of Saint Boniface requested missionary assistance from the Oblate Founder, Eugene de Mazenod.[128] De Mazenod complied and on the August 25, 1845, the Oblates Alexandre Taché and Pierre Aubert arrived at Red River.[129] From their beginnings at Red River, the Oblate enterprise was meant to reach to the Arctic Ocean in the North and to the Pacific Ocean in the west. Their movement in those directions was quick. In 1847, the Oblate Father Pascal Ricard, along with four lay brothers, was sent to assist in the newly created diocese of Walla Walla, where the retinue founded Saint Rose Mission near the HBC post at Walla Walla.[130] In 1850, another contingent of Oblates led by Father Louis D'Herbomez arrived

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[127] McCarthy, *From the Great River*, 9.

[128] Ibid., 9.

[129] Gaston Carrière, O.M.I. ,ed. *Dictionnaire Biographique Des Oblats de Marie Immaculée au Canada*, *Tome III*., s.v. "Alexandre Taché" (Ottawa: Editions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1979), 210.

[130] The lay brothers that accompanied Ricard were Casimir Chirouse, Charles Pandosy, Georges Blanchet and Celestin Verney.

at Oregon City (the second of the three dioceses west of the Rockies).[131] In 1854, Oblate efforts were further invigorated by the arrival of two new priests, Paul Durieu and Pierre Richard. For their first ten years west of the Rockies, the Oblates worked mostly among the Indigenous people and mostly within the diocese of Walla Walla. That situation began to change in 1858. In that year, Father D'Herbomez, acting Superior of the Oblates on the Pacific Coast, at the invitation and encouragement of Modeste Demers, then, bishop of Vancouver Island relocated the centre of Oblate operations from Oregon to Demers' diocese. At that point the Vancouver Island diocese included the Island itself, the province of British Columbia and the Yukon Territory. The diocese was enormous, but the Catholic presence within it was mostly restricted to Fort Victoria and the small HBC coal mining establishment at Nanaimo. Demers wanted Oblate assistance on the Island and also hoped they would lead the Catholic missionary program on the mainland. The Oblates obliged Demers on both counts but were particularly interested, if a little too keenly so for Demers' liking, in work on the mainland. The Oblates hoped, and de Mazenod, made no secret of it, to secure for the Oblates an autonomous Vicariate on the mainland as he had previously done at St. Boniface and Ottawa.[132]

In 1859, the Oblates made the move to the mainland and established a mission at Okanogan Lake. The following year, they established a second mission on the mainland, St. Charles, at New Westminster with outposts at Port Douglas, Hope and Yale on the lower Fraser River. The Oblates were tracking the Fraser River north. In 1861, a third

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[131] In addition to Oregon City and Walla Walla the third diocese west of the Rockies was Vancouver Island. The brothers that accompanied D'Herbomez were Philippe Surel and Gaspard Janin.

[132] McNally, *The Lord's Distant Vineyard*, 28.

mission, St. Mary's on the Fraser, was erected at the present site of Mission city.[133] After the establishment of St. Mary's mission, the Oblates continued their drive up the Fraser with numerous visits to the Cariboo. Father Leon Fouquet visited the Cariboo in 1864, Gendre came in 1865 and Charles Grandidier made the trip in 1866. In the same year of Grandidier's visit, Bishop D'Herbomez gave Father James McGuckin instructions to establish a permanent mission in the Cariboo. The following year McGuckin bought a farm near Williams Lake and converted it into St. Joseph's mission, the fourth Oblate Mission on the mainland.

While a big part of the Oblate missionary program involved Indigenous missions, their leap to the mainland was inspired in no small part by their missions to miners involved in the Fraser River Gold Rush of 1858 and the Cariboo Gold Rush of 1862. It was the Gold Rush to the Cariboo, in particular, that vaulted the Oblates up the Fraser. In fact, McGuckin's instructions in 1866 directed him to establish a mission in Richfield in order to serve the miners settled there. Be that as it may, McGuckin soon gave up on the Richfield site as the base of operations when he purchased the farm on Williams Lake.[134] The farm would serve not only as the site of St. Joseph's mission but in the course of ten years McGuckin would expand the Oblate land holdings in its vicinity from 70 to 1600 acres making it one of most productive ranch-farms in the region.[135]

In 1867, D'Herbomez sent Father Jayol and Brother Philip Surel to assist McGuckin at the mission-farm. The following year Jayol and Surel were replaced by

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[133] Margaret Whitehead, *The Cariboo Mission: a History of the BC Oblates* (Victoria, BC: Sono Nis Press, 1981), 22.

[134] Levasseur, *Les Oblats*, 101.

[135] McNally, *The Lord's Distant Vineyard*, 93.

Father Jean-Marie LeJacq and Brother Georges Blanchet.[136] Bishop D'Herbomez accompanied LeJacq and Blanchet on their inbound trip in 1868 and spent five months with McGuckin. During D'Herbomez's visit he and McGuckin made several visits to the nearby Lillooet, Secwepemc, Chilcotin and Dakelh, among whom he took the opportunity to bless nine Indigenous chapels.[137]

In the four years that followed, McGuckin, as he made his annual rounds throughout the Cariboo, which at times took him as far north as Stuart Lake, baptised a total of 600 Indigenous peoples. McGuckin estimated the total population of the mission field at 2,600, a great many of whom had already been baptised by Demers and Nobili. He figured that many more would be able to receive the Christian sacraments if a missionary could be sent to live among them and to learn their languages.[138]

In 1873, D'Herbomez sent Father LeJacq to Stuart Lake where he founded Our Lady of Good Hope mission. LeJacq seemed a good choice over McGuckin. LeJacq was more interested in Indigenous missions whereas McGuckin, with good command of English, was adept at administrating the mission's affairs. LeJacq served at Stuart Lake for the next seven years during which time he made several annual rounds to the six central villages in the mission district. At each location, consistent with the Durieu method, he appointed watchmen, prayer leaders and catechists.[139] Moreover, at Stuart Lake LeJacq instituted the custom of holding four religious celebrations annually for all

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[136] Levasseur, *Les Oblats*, 177.

[137] McNally, *The Lord's Distant Vineyard*, 91.

[138] Levasseur, *Les Oblats*, 102.

[139] The Indigenous administration comprising Durieu's system consisted of a chief, subchief, watchmen, catechists, policemen, chant men, and "la cloche" men (bell-ringers, or "tin-tin men").

residents of the Lake District.[140] Following LeJacq, the priests who served at Stuart Lake for the remainder of the nineteenth century were Father Charles Marchal (1880-87) and Father Adrien Gabriel Morice (1885-1906).[141]

By the time the Williams Lake and Stuart Lake mission were founded, some prophet religions had already been born, grown and died, others were still alive, and others were being born. Yet, of those that were active they were either kept out of view of the Oblates or the Oblates had little to say about them. My guess is that there were prophets but the Oblates took little notice of them as their records give only hints that prophets were around. There are some reasons for the lack of documentation. First, the Oblates tended to erect missions in only those places where they were well received and exerted control over the local populations. Second, the Oblates left very little records pertaining to prophet movements. They were interested in learning Indigenous languages but (Morice not withstanding) they were not interested in ethnography. To the little extent that they were interested in Indigenous practices, they were only interested in practices thought to be of ancient or bygone times. Prophet religions were made out to be Indigenous corruptions of Christianity and not worthy of much documentation. From the perspective of the dominant faction in the social field the prophet movements, because they present a challenge to that authority, were an obstacle to overcome and the quicker they could be expunged the better. They had no interest in drawing attention to corrupted Christianity. Third, by the time the Oblates arrived, the social field of the early fur trade period was changing. British Columbia was preparing to enter into the Canadian

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[140] Levasseur, *Les Oblats*, 176.

[141] Levasseur, *Les Oblats*, 177.

Dominion. In that setting, racial and ethnic boundaries were rigidifying. The open passage that characterized relations between groups in the early period was less open in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Former relations were being occluded and driven underground. Some Indigenous peoples at that time began to withdraw their participation in Christianity once it became imposed on them or once they were denied their own freedom and creativity to experiment with it. The cultural or religious mixing endemic to prophet movements in the fur trade period, prior to the formation of colonial British Columbia, is exemplary of the very thing that missionaries, government and colonists are trying to suppress. In the next chapter, I introduce the prophet religions that emerged at the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth century. More specifically, I evince how those religions helped to indigenize Christianity within the broad and varied social field of the Fraser-Skeena headwaters in the early to middle years of the nineteenth century.

Chapter 7

The Bini Traditions: Prophet Movements. Myth and the Indigenization of Christianity

By the second quarter of the nineteenth century very few people in the upper Fraser-Skeena watershed would have been ignorant of Christianity. It was about that time, the 1820s – 1830s, perhaps a bit earlier, that local prophets began indigenizing Christianity. The bulk of the extant data on the prophets pertains to the prophet Bini. Bini is an interesting case because most of the information that we have on him comes from Indigenous oral narratives. The narratives, nearly forty single spaced type written pages long, the majority of which were collected by William Beynon and Marius Barbeau from more than a dozen informants in the 1920s, make him one of the best documented prophets in the nineteenth century west, perhaps second only to Wovoka. One of the perspicuous themes in each of the narratives is the assertion that Bini was the progenitor of Christianity. While the claim is headlined in the narratives, it is curious on the heels of the historical data already presented. I had just spent the previous chapters illustrating that knowledge of Christianity was present in the upper Fraser-Skeena watershed by the time the NWC crossed the mountains in the first decade of the nineteenth century. How can that be? At least one record must be mistaken. How can he be the progenitor of a thing that already exists? To resolve the dissonance between the two claims it is not necessary to prove the one or the other false; it is not necessary to claim, as some have, that the narrators were poor historians or had confused memories. I argue that the historical Bini is not to be found in the narratives. Christianity was already present by the time Bini began his work. Bini was progenitor in the mythic sense in that Bini brought

Christianity home. He indigenized it and hence he was the author of the first Christian story – the claim of authorship is true in the *logical* if not the *chronological* sense.

In this chapter, I disentangle myth from history and present the Bini myth. The story of how Bini brought Christianity home, what he did with it, and why it was considered important that he brought it. The manifest presence of Christianity, which now is so obvious as to be banal, is far less important that the fact that Bini brought it. It was with the work of Bini that early Christianity is given meaning. Bini was thus involved in the religious quest *par excellence*, the quest for meaning. In this case the quest was as much about cultivating meaningful social space; a space in which people could secure for themselves dignity, prestige and fairness. Bini's audiences must have known about Christianity, and Bini must have known that they knew. The narrators of the Bini traditions must have known as much as well. If Bini was talking about Christianity he must have known that his audience was already familiar with it. This is true not only historically, as I have already argued, but rhetorically because any speaker must "game" her audience to some degree if she can anticipate her speech to resonate.

The Bini story is also familiar, but in different ways, to an entirely different audience: religionists. The story resonates with at least three well known religious motifs: the Shaman's Tale, the Orpheus tradition, and the Vision Quest. Once I have presented the Bini story I will consider how scholars have interpreted the Bini story according to those three motifs. The work is insightful but there is not perfect congruence between the Bini story and the motifs considered. The gap, the imperfect fit, leaves space for my assertion that Bini stories reflect the effort to naturalize Christianity. To further strengthen my point, in the final section, I consider Witsuwit'en myth as yet another

effort to indigenize Christianity. Where the prophet movements accomplish the goal of indigenization in dramatic and embodied form the myths accomplish it through discourse and lyrics.

In the following chapter I consider why Bini and his colleagues emerged when they did as responses to changing conditions within both the inner and outer orbits. The following treatment of prophet ritual and myth is structured in four parts. The first section, Locating Bini [Historical Hoopla], covers the documentary evidence on Bini and more specifically how scholars have used that evidence to create a historical Bini. The second section, The Bini Narratives – the Barbeau and Jenness Collections, introduces the oral material on Bini collected by Diamond Jenness and Marius Barbeau in the 1930s. That material is some of the richest information that we have about Bini and his efforts at Christian myth making. The third section, Scholarly Interpretations of the Narrative Form and Content, surveys scholarly analyses of the oral traditions. All three parts together introduce ethnographic information pertinent to the discussion in the following chapter. The fourth section, Myth and Social Formation, introduces three Dakelh myths collected by Jenness and analyzes them so as to show how they betray an intellectual effort to indigenize Christianity, mythmaking in the interest of social formation.

Locating Bini [Historical Hoopla]

Even before the Oblates began their annual tours of the upper Fraser in the early 1860s the Dakelh along with their Gitksan and Sekani neighbours had their own angles on Christianity. Those angles were most clearly reflected in the activities of a series of prophets and the individuals attracted to them in the early and mid-nineteenth century.

The best documented nineteenth century prophet among the peoples of the upper Fraser and Skeena Rivers was Bini.[1] Information on Bini – his life and his teachings – is found in two kinds of sources: oral narratives and documentary material.[2] The narratives were recorded by the anthropologists Marius Barbeau, William Beynon and Diamond Jenness in the 1920s. The documentary evidence exists in the missiological and fur trade literature of the late twentieth and early nineteenth centuries.

All evidence, as we will see below, points to the fact that Bini was a historical person, a Witsuwit'en from the Bulkley River region who lived and died in the nineteenth century. Within the evidentiary data Bini is remembered as a prophet who spoke at some length about visionary experiences, namely, mystical journeys to "heaven," where he claimed that he was instructed by a deity type figure on various points of doctrine and ritual (some of which clearly resembled Christian forms and tenets). As strange as it may seem, those two points of agreement – Bini as historical person and Bini as renowned prophet – vex as much as they assist efforts at attempting a biography of Bini. As rich as the oral narratives are, they contain very little biographical data and appear more interested in detailing information on Bini's prophethood, that is, his religious teachings and activities. The effort to cull biographical data from the narratives is further complicated by the fact that within both the oral narratives and historical documentation there are conflicting accounts of Bini's life. When challenged by the diversity of accounts previous scholars have taken one of two tacks. One, they have produced composite

[1] Also called Beni, Beeny, Benee, Peni, Pe-ni, Kwis, Kwes, the Bulkley River Prophet or the Carrier Prophet.

[2] Those are exemplary sources for ethnohistorical analysis, Trigger writes that "ethnohistory uses documentary evidence and oral traditions to study changes in non-literate societies from about the time of earliest European contact." See, Bruce Trigger "Ethnohistory: Problems and Prospects." *Ethnohistory* 29, no. 1 (1982): 2.

sketches of Bini by foregrounding common elements in multiple Bini narratives in a manner not so dissimilar to the spirit of the Jesus seminar.[3] Susan Neylan, for example treats the multiple narratives together as a composite sketch.[4] Such tendencies are at least partially informed by the scholarly consensus that narrators or informants had misremembered the historical Bini, thus leaving the job of reconstruction (adjusting otherwise bad memories) up to the analyst. Two, scholars have explained the variation claiming that there were multiple prophets named Bini. While there is some reason to think that there were in fact multiple "Binis"– a point that will be discussed in further detail below – my read of the material is that when narrators or informants spoke of Bini they were not interested in reproducing a biography of one or numerous Binis. The variation among the narratives does not suggest a confused or misremembered historical Bini(s) but a mythic Bini, that is, a Bini who played a formative role in the local story of Christian origins. The Witsuwit'en and Gitksan who spoke of Bini were highlighting what they thought was important to know, to remember, and to take away from the moment when Bini was alleged to have lived and worked, a time before the arrival of Christian missionaries. That was when their own prophets, their own "priests", brought home an understanding of Christianity. In order to illuminate my claim that the narrative Bini is a mythic Bini and not a historical Bini I want to first introduce my data: the

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[3] See Marius Barbeau, *Indian Days in the Canadian Rockies* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1923); Susan Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing: Nineteenth-Century Protestant Missions and Tsimshian Christianity* (McGill-Queen's University Press: Montreal, 2003); and Diamond Jenness, "The Carrier Indians of the Bulkley River – Their Social and Religious Lives," *Anthropological Paper no. 25, Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 133* (Washington: Smithsonian, 1943). Although Jenness provides a composite sketch, he is dubious of the value of such a reconstruction as he seems to think that the Witsuwit'en had a deficient historical consciousness and that the real Bini could never be recovered.

[4] Neylan writes, "Common elements in multiple versions of the Bini narrative include his death and subsequent resurrection, his ascent to heaven, and his meeting with a strange people dressed in white or who resembled ghosts, known as the 'sky people.'" Neylan, *The Heaven's are Changing*, 181.

narrative and historical representations of Bini. I will overview the oral material first, the documentary material second, and end with a discussion of the way that Bini's life has been constructed within the secondary literature.

Oral Narratives

Oral narratives on Bini were collected by Marius Barbeau, Diamond Jenness, William Beynon and Viola Garfield.[5] The set collected by Barbeau is the richest. Barbeau, as ethnologist for the Geological Survey of Canada, collected twenty oral narratives on Bini during three seasons of fieldwork on the Skeena River in the 1920s.[6] Fifteen different informants supplied Barbeau with narratives, most were male Gitskan chiefs from the upper Skeena River.[7] Six informants alleged to have met Bini when they were children, six others claimed to have heard about Bini from their parents, and the other three informants did not specify their connection to Bini. The narratives are not of uniform length; the shortest is less than one single spaced typewritten page and the longest more than five. When taken together they run nearly forty pages. All of the narratives were recorded in English, some informants spoke English and others spoke Gitksan through an interpreter.[8]

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[5] Jay Miller mentions that an oral narrative was collected by Viola Garfield is found in the Garfield collection at the University of Washington Archives. I have not consulted the Garfield material. See Jay Miller, "Shamans, Prophets and Christ," *Tsimshian Religion in Historical Perspective*, ed. Jay Miller and Carol M. Eastman, 137-147. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984.

[6] Barbeau made a total of six field trips to the coast in the 1920s, four to the Skeena and two to the Nass. See Laurence Nowry, *Man of Mana, Marius Barbeau: a Biography* (Toronto: NC Press, 1995).

[7] See appendix for the biographical detail on each narrator.

[8] When an interpreter was used Barbeau pressed either William Beynon or Constance Cox into service.

Many of the narratives are richly detailed but none take up the topic of Bini's birth; there is no Lukan nativity story. All accounts of Bini's life begin with him as a young man and only one narrator, Mark Wiget, attempts to pinpoint the historical onset of Bini's prophetic career. Wiget alleged that Bini began his career the same year that he himself was born, about 1834.[9] Most narratives indicate that Bini began teaching among the Gitksan and Witsuwit'en late in life, that his teaching career was short (the length is rarely quantified), and that he did not live to be terribly old (the age is never stated). According to some informants, Bini's mission did not last very long, about ten years; according to others, Bini taught for more than 30 years and was still active at the time the Western Union telegraph was constructed (about 1866).

Outside of the Barbeau material, Wiget's date of 1834 for the commencement of Bini's teachings is supported by an oral tradition collected by the Ts'mysen ethnographer William Beynon. Beynon was born in Victoria in 1888 to a Welsh father and Ts'mysen mother.[10] Beynon and Barbeau met during Barbeau's first trip to Port Simpson over the winter of 1914-1915 and for more than the next thirty years Beynon was variously employed as field ethnographer and interpreter by both Barbeau and the Geological Survey of Canada.[11] Beynon assisted Barbeau in the collection of narratives and he also did his own research into the Bini movement. He collected a Bini narrative from Joseph

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[9] Or according to Wiget about 90 years prior to the year he provided his narrative which was 1924. According to R.M. Galois, Wiget was born about 1835 or 1860, the former date is just about ninety years earlier than 1924. Robert Galois, "The Burning of Gitsegukla," *BC Studies* 94 (Summer 1992): 72.

[10] His mother was the daughter of Arthur Wellington Clah and his wife Dorcas.

[11] Beynon was himself an accomplished ethnographer. In the course of his relationship with Barbeau he produced 54 volumes of field notes. Beynon also worked with Boas and Philip Drucker. While working with Drucker, Beynon produced six ethnological volumes in which he attempted to synthesize the traditional histories of a number of Ts'mysen groups. See Marjorie Halpin, "William Beynon, Ethnographer, Tsimshian, 1888-1858," in *American Indian Intellectuals and Scholars*, ed. Margot Liberty (St. Paul: West Publishing Company, 1978).

Bradley at Fort Simpson and researched Bini in the diaries of his maternal grandfather, Arthur Wellington Clah. On the basis of remarks made in Clah's diaries Beynon suggested that news of Bini reached the Ts'mysen about 1831 or 1834.[12] In the Beynon material there is neither indication of how long Bini lived after he began teaching nor of how long his teachings were in vogue. The date given by Beynon and that given by Wiget seem to validate each other as both individuals place the commencement of Bini's work in the early 1830s. Yet, it is important to keep in mind that there is neither universal agreement within the oral traditions nor the documentary evidence. Some narratives do not date Bini at all, and one narrative, related by Donald Grey and his wife (both Witsuwit'en from *Tse-Kya*) puts Bini's death *before* the date that Wiget and Beynon allege Bini began his work. The Grey's allege that no one alive in 1924 could have ever saw Bini and that they had only heard of him through Donald's grandmother.

Another set of oral narratives on Bini was recorded by Diamond Jenness during field research among the Witsuwit'en and Dakelh over the winter of 1923-1924.[13] Unlike the Barbeau narratives, however, Jenness does not publically identify his informants. Moreover, his narratives are cut up and embedded in composite fashion within his more

[12] Beynon's grandfather, Arthur Wellington Clah was born in 1831. Clah alleged that there was a religious revival at Fort Simpson about the year of his birth 1831 or 1834 and Beynon was convinced that the religious revival mentioned by Clah was Bini's. In a letter to Barbeau, Beynon writes: "I have made what inquiries I could in the matter and it seems to bear out what I have discovered in these old notes that it refers to Bini." See Beynon to Barbeau, 27 March 1923, Barbeau Files, B/F/197.6, BCA, and Clah, Diary and Notes, H/D/R13/C52A, BCA. Susan Neylan, however, provides a different insight into the Clah journals observing that Clah referred to the revival of 1834-36 as "mooden" and a revival in 1855 as "Benee." Neylan, *The Heavens*, 184.

[13] For a short biography of Jenness, see Nansi Swayze, *The Man Hunters* (Toronto: Clarke Irwin, 1960).

general ethnography on the Dakelh.[14] According to Jenness' informants (allegedly) Bini began his career about 1860, more than twenty years later than the start date suggested by Beynon and Wiget.[15] In correspondence with Barbeau, Jenness stated that Bini died about 1868 and that his death was witnessed by his informant, a Witsuwit'en by the name of "Old Sam."[16] Contrary to Jenness' intimation that the Witsuwit'en had poor memories, the dates given by Old Sam and Mark Wiget do not necessarily contradict. It is possible that Bini began work in the 1830s and continued work into the 1860s. Jenness averred that Bini was one individual in a line of "reforming prophets" influenced by various expressions of Christianity introduced to the upper Fraser River beginning in the 1830s by a few fur traders, two Indigenous evangelists from Oregon and a couple Catholic missionaries. But it was only after the visit of the Catholic priests in the mid 1840s that the "reforming prophets" really gained popularity.[17] The first prophets were two men, Uzkali from Babine Lake, and Senesaiyea from Fraser Lake. According to Jenness, Uzkali and Senesaiyea subsequently influenced two female prophets from Fraser Lake,

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[14] While Jenness does not list his informants in his published material, in a letter to Barbeau he confirms that his chief informants on Bini were Moosekin Johnny (Bini's nephew), Old Sam, Old Dennis, and William Chicken. Moreover, "all four had been with him; all four were old enough to hunt when he died" (Jenness to Barbeau, 13 January 1924, B-F-198, Barbeau Files, BCA. There may be more narratives in Jenness' notes in the National Archives but for time and financial constraints I was unable to visit.

[15] I say allegedly because when Jenness dates Bini he does not cite his informants but the work of the Oblate Adrien Morice.

[16] Jenness writes: "Bini took up his mission and about a year after his brother's death made his first visit to the sky; this was about 1860. Bini died about 1868' at Old Fort Babine. Old Sam had witnessed his death; had in fact gone to Old Fort Babine with him" (Jenness to Barbeau, 13 January 1924, B-F-198, Barbeau Files, BCA.

[17] Jenness' source for those dates seems to have been Father Adrien Morice. In the aforementioned letter to Barbeau he writes: "As Morice says, many Messiahs arose after the visit of those early priests. In the Fraser Lake area there was a woman who "went up to the sky, brought back songs and names, heard confession, etc., about 1840-45." He disregards the Dakelh claims, for example, that no priest came to visit them prior to 1870: "The natives here have no recollection of the visit of any priest prior to about 1870, though Morice records the visit of two to Carrier territory about 1837."

Bopa and Nokskan, and two male prophets from the Bulkley River, Lexs and his brother Bini. It is in Jenness' material where we learn of numerous other prophets and specifically of the deep seated prophetic activity about Fraser Lake. Of all the prophets Bini's influence was the most lasting and widespread; his mission lasted 15 years and he died about 1870. While Jenness alleged that Bini was a prophet of some local repute, he was more cautious than Barbeau on Bini's notoriety. He advised Barbeau that "Bini's influence was restricted to the Carriers [Dakelh] between Burns Lake and Hagwilgate; other branches of the Carriers had their own prophets. Bini affected also the neighbouring Gitksan to some extent. He does not seem to have established anything like a hegemony even in his own tribe."[18]

The only other anthropologist to collect a Bini tradition was Viola Garfield. Unfortunately, I know only of Garfield's work through a short article by Jay Miller on Ts'mysen religion and Christianity. According to Miller, there are two biographical accounts of Bini in the Garfield collection at the University of Washington archives. One was collected at Hazelton (presumably by Garfield) and the other was collected at Fort Simpson by William Beynon. Those are the only specific details Miller provides about the narratives. He cites neither at any length and we are simply left to trust him when he dates the onset of Bini's teachings to about 1800.[19] Miller's date could provide

[18] Jenness to Barbeau, 13 January 1924, B-F-198, Barbeau Files, BCA.

[19] Miller, "Shamans, Prophets, and Christ," 139. Miller writes that "sometime around 1800 a prophet-cum-shaman of the Carrier (Athabaskan-speaking) people named Bini preached an early revitalistic form of religion among the Ts'mysen. After his death, he had several imitators who also used his name, which makes it difficult to sort out the different persons named Bini." I do not know, for example, if the date he gives is a product of Garfield's narrative, if he reached the conclusion based on other evidence, or if it was some combination of the two.

verification of the dates given by Mr. and Mrs. Donald Grey, but his reasons for dating the commencement of Bini's teachings to the turn of the nineteenth century are not clear.

In sum, the oral material on Bini agrees that he was a religious specialist of some kind (prophet, healer, shaman and/or priest) from the Bulkley River region but gives a wide range of dates for his activities; some say he began work as early as 1800 – perhaps earlier – or as recent as 1860. [20] Sources seem to agree that he taught as an adult and that his career lasted anywhere from a few to fifteen years. In addition (or as complement) to his religious work, we also learn from the narratives that Bini acceded to clan chief at Hagwilgate at some point in the mid-nineteenth century. In fact, the narratives seem to agree that he was chief Kwis before he was a prophet. While the narratives seem to set out the general contours of Bini's life, they are not terribly useful in locating Bini historically. There is disagreement among the sources and the narrators seem little interested in historically dating the Bini movement. I have to think that Barbeau was interested and did inquire, he did, for example, ask Jenness about dating. In my opinion, Old Sam's date and Wiget's date are the most likely. The dates suggest that Bini was teaching in the 1830s and that he continued to do so until his death in the 1860s. Both sources allege to have met Bini and the dates work together. Moreover, remember that according to Jenness other prophets preceded Bini; it is therefore possible that the earlier dates refer to other prophets. That said a date of 1800 strikes me as quite early, but not implausible.

[20] I follow Mircea Eliade's and Willard Park's definition of a shaman: a person with the capacity to enter a trance state. A shaman's training is highly intuitive and as vocation is, in theory, open to anyone. There are problems with that configuration and with Eliade's work more generally, I will discuss those later in this chapter when I take up the topic of shamanism in more ethnographic detail.

Documentary Evidence

There are two genres of documentary evidence on Bini: the data produced by Christian missionaries and fur trade related material. The missiological data is the richest. The only reference to something that might resemble a prophet religion within the fur trade material was made by the HBC clerk John McLean who served in the Western department between 1833 and 1837.[21] While stationed at Fort St. James on Stuart Lake, McLean wrote that a religious enthusiasm, what he called the "Columbian Religion" swept through the region. The religion entailed a heightened interest in Christianity and was indulged for that by Chief Factor Peter Warren Dease. McLean's observations are interesting because they are suggestive of the movement of Christianity via Indigenous channels, but I cannot be sure that the religion had anything to do with Bini (McLean neither mentions Bini nor any other prophet for that matter). In fact, there is reason to think just the opposite. McLean suggests the enthusiasm arrived at Fort St. James from the south, from the Columbia; Bini, a Witsuwit'en from the Bulkley River was situated northwest of Fort St. James. Despite McLean's assertion that the religion came from the south and his inability to name any specific prophetic leader, scholars tend to think that Bini was either influenced by or a part of the movement described by McLean.[22]

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[21] By "fur trade material" I mean extant post journals from the New Caledonia district between the years 1821 and 1840 and published journals or memoirs of employees who served in the region at some point in the early to mid nineteenth century. Cf. Daniel Williams Harmon. *Harmon's Journal 1800-1819*, ed. W. Kaye Lamb (Surrey BC: Touchwood, 2006); Peter Skene Ogden, *Traits of American-Indian Life and Character* (London: Smith, Elder and Company, 1853); and John McLean, *John McLean's notes of a twenty-five year's service in the Hudson's Bay territory*, ed. W. S. Wallace (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1932).

[22] See McLean, *Notes of Twenty-Five Year's Service in the Hudson's Bay Territory*. Although Mclean does not mention Bini by name, his reference is often taken to be one of the most reliable historical sources when dating Bini, which among other things indicates the value accord documentary evidence over oral tradition.

The missiological literature is more direct. At least three missionaries wrote specifically on Bini and each learned of him through Indigenous informants: George Henry Raley (Methodist), William Henry Collison (Anglican) and Father Adrien Gabriel Morice (Catholic [Oblate]).

The Methodist George Henry Raley arrived at the Kitimat mission in 1893 and he served there until 1906. While at Kitimat, Raley learned of Bini from Abpsileahkus, a local Ts'mysen, who told him that in his father's time people from the Stikine River had brought them Bini's message. Raley added that he heard similar stories about Bini and his legacy while traveling among the Ts'mysen.[23]

In 1873, William Henry Collison arrived at Metlakatla to serve as a lay assistant to William Duncan. Accompanied by his wife, Marion Goodwin, he remained three years at Metlakatla before leaving to set up a mission at Masset among the Haida.[24] In 1884, he and his family were back on the mainland directing the Nisga'a mission at Kincolith. While at Kincolith, Collison witnessed a "*Peni* performance," a religious dance demonstrated for him by an old and unnamed blind man. Collison's informant had a "vivid memory" of Bini, his teachings and his dances. He alleged that Bini was a member of his own group who once on a hunting trip encountered a visitor that spoke in a strange tongue, chanted, crossed himself, prayed and then departed. Bini was so struck by what he saw that he adopted the mannerisms of the strange man as his own, and began telling

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[23] Raley, Correspondence, H/D/R13/R13.5, BCA. Raley remained at the Kitimat mission for thirteen years before transferring to Port Simpson in 1906 and then on to Sardis in 1914.

[24] For more on Collison see *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, s.v. "Collison, William Henry," http://www.biographi.ca/EN/009004-119.01-e.php?id_nbr=8081 (accessed, September 23, 2012); E.P. Patterson, *Mission on the Nass: the evangelization of the Nishga (1860-1890*) (Waterloo, ON: Eulachon Press, 1982); Frank Peake, *The Anglican Church in British Columbia* (Vancouver: Mitchell Press, 1959); and William Henry Collison, *In the Wake of the War Canoe*, ed. Charles Lillard (Victoria, Sono Nis Press, 1981).

his friends about them such that soon "they were engaged in repeating it night and day from tribe to tribe all along the river, chanting and dancing and praying, often till daybreak."[25] According to Collison, the movement originated in the late 1840s and was inspired by a meeting between Bini and Father Nobili near Babine Lake. Collison's hypothesis is not without logic but he provides no corroborating evidence for the Bini-Nobili connection. The blind man who told Collison about Bini said nothing about a priest and claimed only that he met a "strange visitor" from the spirit land. Collison conflated the "strange visitor" with Nobili. My hunch is that Collison's conflation was lifted from the work of the Oblate Adrien Morice. Morice was the first person to publish the claim that Bini was influenced by an encounter with or knowledge of Father Nobili and appeared in print eleven years earlier in his autobiography, *In the Wake of the War Canoe*.[26] Collison must have read the work because he adopts Morice's spelling of *Peni* and cites Morice on the range and influence of Bini's teachings.[27]

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[25] Collison, *In the Wake*, 190-191.

[26] Collison's work was published in 1915, eleven years later than 1904, when the claim was first advanced by Morice in his monograph, *History of the Northern Interior of British Columbia*, see A.G. Morice, *The History of the Northern Interior of British Columbia, formerly New Caledonia*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: William Briggs, 1904).

[27] The Anglican missionaries William Duncan and James McCullagh may also have made reference to Bini. Shortly after William Duncan arrived at Port Simpson in 1857, he heard a story about a prophet: "The sum total of his teaching amounted to a few popish ceremonies, mixed with Indian customs. Crossing – bowing – wearing crosses around the neck - singing and dancing without laughing – were all demanded. The enthusiasm of the man was so great and his appearance and tenets so startling that the Indians almost to a man welcomed him and obeyed his injunctions." (Jean Usher, *William Duncan of Metlakatla: a Victorian missionary in British Columbia* (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1974), 46). In 1883, James McCullagh was appointed to Aiyansh. McCullagh served there until 1920. During his tenure McCullagh heard that Bini, active in the 1840s, "prophesied an approaching change in the Indian world, that slaves should become chiefs, and chiefs common men; that messengers would come from the Great Spirit to teach the people – men who would read the very contents and thoughts of the heart." (Patterson, *Mission on the Nass*, 151). Patterson's citation is lifted from McCullagh's booklet *Red Indians I have Known* (published in London by the Church Missionary Society). Unfortunately, I have been unable to consult McCullagh's booklet; the nearest copy I have found is in Columbia University's Archives.

The Oblate A.G. Morice was the first to write about Bini and perhaps the most informed given his long tenure among the Dakelh, Witsuwit'en and Babine. He worked among the Dakelh from his headquarters at Stuart Lake for twenty one years (1885 to 1906).[28] According to Morice, Bini was one of a number of "pseudo-priests" that emerged in all the villages of New Caledonia after Nobili's visits in the 1840s. The "priest" of the Babines was known as Uzkale and the priest of the people at Rocher Deboule (*Tse-Kya*) was Kwes (who subsequently changed his name to *pe-ni*, meaning "his own mind"). Pe-ni, Morice added, was also well known among the Gitksan and the Coast Ts'mysen. According to Morice, the devil inspired Bini to ape the ministrations of the priests and thus fooled the gullible in playing "the part of a minister of religion."[29] In addition to acting the part of a priest Bini prophesied and performed miracles.[30] As a prophet Bini was unanimously successful, according to Morice anyone who had anything to say about Bini told him that all of Bini's his predictions have been fulfilled. Morice does not indicate how long Bini taught and estimated neither the date of Bini's birth nor his death; on the latter topic he only notes that Bini "died miserably at Babine, struck

[28] Morice was born in France at Saint-Mars-sur-Colmont in 1859. In 1877, he was dispatched to Mission City (St. Mary's) British Columbia. He was ordained priest two years later and the same year of his ordination he took up a mission to the Chilcotin. In 1885, he was transferred to the Stuart Lake mission to work among the Dakelh where he remained until 1906. For more on Morice's life and career see *Dictionnaire Biographique: des Oblats de Marie Immaculée au Canada*, 4 vols. (Ottawa: Editions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1976), s.v. "Morice, Adrien"; David Mulhall, *Will to Power: The Missionary Career of Father Morice* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986); and Gaston Carrière, *Adrien-Gabriel Morice, o.m.i. (1859-1938) Essai de bibliographie*, Revue de l'université d'Ottawa 42 (1972): 325-341.

[29] Morice, *History of the Northern Interior*, 234.

[30] Morice, *History of the Northern Interior*, 236.

with apoplexy while playing the rôle of a common shaman."[31] His short exposition of the reforming prophets just paraphrased is about three pages long and is the only reference to Bini in all of Morice's works I have consulted. The lacuna is somewhat remarkable. If Bini was as popular as Morice alleged and given the volume of work Morice produced, you would think he would have had more to say about it. Barbeau also remarked on this absence in Morice's work, in a letter to Spier he surmises that "Morice likely heard a lot about Bini but did not pay much attention to what he had heard in his writing."[32] Yet, Morice was not the first Oblate to mission to the Dakelh, and he was not the first Oblates to write about a Dakelh prophet. Oblates first visited more than twenty years before Morice's arrival.

Prior to the 1860s the only missionaries to visit the headwaters of the Fraser and Skeena were Demers, Blanchet and Nobili. Demers and Blanchet passed through the region in 1838 and Demers and Nobili visited at various times in the 1840s. Nobili was the last clergy to visit prior to the 1860s and he left in 1847.[33] In the early 1860s, after the creation of the diocese of British Columbia in 1863 (which included the former district of New Caledonia) and the gold rushes of 1858 and 1862 Catholic activity in the region was re-ignited.[34] The same year that the diocese of British Columbia was created the Oblates started the habit of making yearly missions to the Cariboo. In 1867, the Oblates

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[31] Morice, *History of the Northern Interior*, 236. Why it is that Morice considers a death from apoplexy as more miserable than others or other reasons for Bini's misery he does not say; my hunch is that for Morice any death that is not a death in Christ is a miserable death.

[32] Barbeau to Spier, 27 March 1933, B-F-198.9, Barbeau Files, BCA.

[33] Wilfred P. Schoenberg, SJ, *A History of the Catholic Church in the Pacific Northwest 1743–1983* (Washington, DC: Pastoral Press, 1987), 21-22. The Catholic Church named New Caledonia a mission district in 1846.

[34] Kay Cronin, *Cross in the Wilderness* (Vancouver: Mitchell Press, 1960), 105. In late 1863, the New Caledonia district became a part of the newly established diocese of British Columbia with D'Herbomez as Vicar Apostolic.

established a permanent mission at Williams Lake, which became the centre of Oblate operations in a region that stretched as far north as the headwaters of the Skeena River. The following year Bishop D'Herbomez visited Williams Lake and he, along with Father McGuckin, toured the northern areas of the mission district stopping at Fort St. James, Fort Fraser and Babine Lake. The 1868 tour by D'Herbomez and McGuckin was the first of a series of annual (sometimes biannual) tours made by the Oblates to various Dakelh, Witsuwit'en and Babine communities. In 1873, the Oblates established a mission at Stuart Lake but continued the precedent of making annual visits (sometimes biannual) to neighbouring and outlying Dakelh, Witsuwit'en and Babine residencies. Missionaries who visited the north central interior between D'Herbomez's tour in 1868 and the arrival of Father Morice in 1885 occasionally mentioned encountering prophet-type figures among the Dakelh, the Babine, the Sekani and the Secwepemc.[35] One of the best descriptions of prophet activity comes from D'Herbomez's account of his 1868 visit to Dakelh and Witsuwit'en communities. According to D'Herbomez there were numerous "false" prophets who acted as priests. Such prophets pretended to die, converse with God, resurrect themselves, and then return to life to share with others what they had learned while "dead." Such figures were known to prophesy, teach dances and to bestow new names on their followers.[36]

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[35]These records are preserved in the Oblate Mission journal, *Missions de la Congrégation des missionnaires oblats de Marie Immaculée*. In 1862, Father Paul Durieu wrote to D'Herbomez that Father Ricard's work among the Shuswap was experiencing resistance from "visionnaires." *Missions* 4, no. 15, 310. In 1868, D'Herbomez met a "prophet" among the Babine (*Missions* 9, no. 33, 101). In 1872, LeJacq reported three "visionnaires" among the Sekani (according to LeJacq they were the same individuals that D'Herbomez had met in 1868). *Missions* 12, no. 46, 227.

[36] One of the more descriptive accounts of one such prophet is found in D'Herbomez's 1868 report. According to D'Herbomez, a prophet entered a trance state and visited heaven where he was told by God to expect a flood and to prepare for that by constructing a large number of canoes. *Missions* 9, no. 33, 99-100. A similar story about a canoe was recorded by geologist George Dawson a few years later.

While the reporting is thin, according to Morice, D'Herbomez and LeJacq (the latter two priests made visits to the Dakelh and Witsuwit'en prior to Morice's arrival) there were several prophets moving about the headwaters of the Fraser and Skeena. Morice alleged that the most well known was Bini. However, none of those early missionaries mention Bini specifically. The absence should not be surprising for at least two reasons. First, when prophet-figures are mentioned they are rarely singled out by name. Second, the populations of those socio-territories and villages where prophets were active tended to resist missionaries. Yet, it is possible that Bini was one of those to whom D'Herbomez and LeJacq referred (it is also possible that he was not). Unlike the Raley, Collison and Morice material, the data in the Oblate journal *Missions* does not mention the names of prophets and does not suggest that Christian missionaries were the direct source of prophetic activity. Although D'Herbomez refers to a Noah's ark type story and LeJacq refers to the prophets as "priests" neither D'Herbomez nor LeJacq trace the work of the prophets to contact with Nobili. Thus, it is my opinion that the Bini-Nobili connection was Morice's brainchild. Strangely, however, Morice seems to contradict even himself on that score when he writes that neither Uzkale nor Bini "had been privileged to see Fr. Nobili," rather they may have just heard of him.[37] Following Morice's logic, if Bini was not inspired by Nobili, but word of mouth, then, Bini could have been inspired by any missionary and there is no reason at all to date Bini in connection with the arrival of Nobili. The possibility of a missionary connection may also lend support to the Raley – Veniaminov relation mentioned in chapter 3, but that is even

[37] Morice, *The History of the Northern Interior*, 255. Morice wrote that Nobili was "handicapped by a rather timid disposition" and that he did not have the respect of the Dakelh. It is possible that Morice is blaming Nobili for the prophet movements and for losing control of the Christian message. Nobili's story may serve a cautionary tale against sending "weak" missionaries into the field. Morice had many axes to grind.

more problematic than Morice's origin story. There are just too many sources that attest to Bini being a Witsuwit'en to allow me to accept Raley's claim that Bini and Veniaminov were the same person.

If the connection between prophet and missionary is so slender why do later missionaries, Morice and Raley, for example, insist on it? The question is not central to my work but I can make a few speculations which may usefully serve as a critical appraisal of missionary sources. In chapter 4, I already discussed and dismissed Raley's and Rumley's reasons for conflating Beni and Veniaminov. Collison, on the other hand, lifted his information from Morice. And Morice made the priest-prophet connection on the basis of impressionistic similarities between missionary practice and what the leaders of the religious movements were reported to have done: teach the sign of the cross, perform baptisms, list versions of the commandments, and hold confessional. While it is true that priest missionaries were doing those things, remember that they were not the only practicing Christians in the social field. While much of the earlier part of the dissertation was a scholarly exposition of lay Christianity, the missionaries on the ground at the time must have knew about the lay Christianity as well.

Missionaries in the late nineteenth century, and not only Morice, knew that Christianity preceded the Oblates in the mission field. They knew of the Métis and Canadian Catholic families that had deep roots in the area. Morice himself commended the Catholic devotion of those HBC employees who had preceded the missionaries by some years; the retirees on the Willamette and Peter Ogden were particularly singled out for praise. When William Duncan of the Anglican Church arrived at Fort Simpson, one of the first things he recorded was testimony of a recent religious revival. If Morice and

others, such as the Anglican Collison, knew there was lay Christianity on the ground long before missionaries arrived why not include it in his work? A brief glance at the audience and agenda of mission literature might shed some light on the matter. Mission societies, mission contributors and colonial governments were some of the more interested audiences. With those readers in mind Morice can make his case for the importance of a directed and orderly Christianity. Moreover, in Morice's case, writing to a Catholic audience of the necessity of a priest to administer the sacraments is self evident. In both cases the presence and financial support of missionaries is justified. If missionaries are forced to withdraw, then, there is the risk of Indigenous people formulating ideas inimical to mission aspirations (e.g. irreligion), to State order and to State discipline. Morice's not so implicit argument is that inconsistent mission work breeds problems for both missions and for the State; thus, persistent missionary work is necessary for the introduction, reception, spread and control of Christianity.[38] The chief reason given for the suppression of Indigenous religion throughout the North American colonial period was the importance of discouraging large gatherings of Indigenous people, regardless of the religious reason for gathering, Indigenous, Christian or otherwise.[39] In any case, my point is that there is no reliable evidence to support the claims of Morice, Collison and others that the religious movements in the North Central interior are an off shoot, or a garbled form of Christianity taught by missionaries. Christian notions and practice arrived via

[38] Morice may well have had other literary, religious or personal reasons for developing his teleology. Morice, for example, considered himself a member of the literati and thus may have been paddling within the frontier narrative current at the time (i.e. only through much hard labour is the savage frontier tamed). Additionally, his dislike of the Jesuits, and Nobili in particular, may have informed his allegation that the reforming prophets were a result of Nobili's *failed* work.

[39] This reason was cited, for example, in support of enforcing the anti-potlatch legislation as well as circular 1665 issued by the United States Bureau of Indian affairs in 1885 aimed at suppressing Indigenous religious ceremonies.

different channels and by the time missionaries arrived the people were already conversant with the religion.

The documentary material is no more reliable in situating Bini historically than the oral historical data. In fact, the case can be made that more reliable evidence is found within the Barbeau files (including Jenness' letters) where narrators allege to have met Bini and to have received their stories and songs about him from near relatives. Yet, there are inconsistencies in that material too. The data associated with the oral material suggests that Bini was working as early as 1800 or as late as 1860. There is not unanimity as to when Bini began teaching and how long his mission lasted. The outliers are Grey and Garfield. There are also two different dates in Clah's diaries. One way to explain the inconsistencies is by attending to the claim made by many of the narrators and also by Morice that there were several "prophets" who shared the name Bini. But even then, the narrators often insist, that there was only one genuine Bini, and thus the difficulty (impossibility) of parceling out which narratives speak of the "real" Bini and which narratives speak of the imposters remains. In view of the inconsistencies and internal contradictions on the matter of dating my own sense is that multiple prophets or even multiple prophets named "Bini" explain the outliers, but even if I am right on this, the date of 1800 still strikes me as an early date for a prophet movement of the kind described in the narratives. I think that the onset of the prophet movements can likely be dated to the 1820s possibly the 1830s. Other scholars have made their own estimates on the basis of some of the data considered here. So far as I know my treatment given here makes the most thorough use of the available data, other scholarly estimations may offer further insight on my hypothesis.

Secondary Source Estimations

The dating multiplicity has generated a number of scholarly attempts to arrive at a consensus on when Bini lived and taught. The two most thorough treatments are those of Leslie Spier and Susan Neylan. Additionally, Lee Irwin, Hilary Rumley and Wilson Duff have also made attempts to date the movement.

Leslie Spier reckoned that the Bini movement was part of a Christianized version of an Indigenous prophet dance that was popularized on the north fringes of the Columbia Plateau in the 1820s and 1830s. While Spier alleged that Bini was contemporary with the phenomena, he was not certain of the dates of Bini's activity. The best he could do on that score was to rely on the work of McLean and to generalize that Bini was active sometime between 1820 and the mid 1840s. He concluded his treatment of Bini claiming: "It may yet prove when this snarl [the issue of dating] is unravelled that definite Christian elements first came to the Athapascans in 1835."[40]

Susan Neylan's analysis is the most thorough and recent treatment of Bini. However, her chief interest lies with Bini's influence on the Ts'mysen. In *The Heavens are Changing*, Neylan, with reference to much of the same primary source material covered here, follows the anthropological literature and concludes that Bini (or his teachings) first reached the coast Ts'mysen either in the 1830s or the 1850s. In support of the earlier date, the one that she favours, Neylan cites the researches of William Beynon,

[40] Spier, *The Prophet Dance*, 36.

the oral traditions, and anthropological consensus.[41] In addition, she introduces as new evidence the event of the raising of a totem pole in his honour at Hagwilgate in the mid nineteenth century. That event, she says, was "likely connected to Bini's rise to power."[42] There may be an argument there but I would like to know more about the relation of the raising of the pole and Bini's popularity. The socio-political elements connected with the installation of a totem pole need not, necessarily, have anything to do with an individual's career as prophet, shaman or priest. Moreover, the record is unclear on just how popular Bini was among the Witsuwit'en at Hagwilgate. Jenness, for example, wrote that Bini did not appear to have established "a hegemony among his own people."

The efforts of the remaining scholars, Duff, Rumley, and Irwin strike me as more speculative. Yet, it is worth considering them briefly as they are instructive in two ways. First, they are illustrative of how Bini has been constructed in theories about the movement of Christian forms through Indigenous channels. Second, they betray the often unstated privilege accorded historical documents over oral historical materials.

Wilson Duff, citing the Jenness material, treats Bini and other profit figures in his *Indian History of BC* as mediators between Christianity and Indigenous religiosity. Duff suggests that Bini was influenced by a form Christianity introduced by peoples of the Plateau in the 1820s or 30s. In general, Duff portrays a pejorative view of Bini and other prophets as they were inimical to his desire to recover a kind of unadulterated Indian

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[41] Neylan writes: "Anthropologists concur with this dating of the Bini prophet movement to the 1830s or 40s, making the prophet's predictions about European cultures not prophetic at all." Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing*, 184. The note that follows this sentence directs readers to Miller's piece on Bini cited above and an article by E. Palmer Patterson "Nishga Perceptions." Yet, Miller dates Bini to about the year 1800, and Patterson does not mention him at all. In support of the later date, she cites Arthur Wellington Clah's journal and Duncan's observations about a Bini religious revival that happened just before he arrived at Port Simpson in 1857.

[42] Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing*, 333.

history. Duff writes that the prophets taught "garbled inklings of Christian beliefs and rituals" and "travelled among the tribes and harangued them."[43] Thus, the prophets have made it "very difficult for us now to determine what the purely aboriginal beliefs were. Most Indians today, for example, are convinced that their forbears worshipped a supreme being equivalent to the Christian God, but among most tribes, such was probably not the case."[44]

Bini was also a key figure in Hilary Rumley's MA thesis on religious change among the Indigenous peoples of British Columbia. The thrust of her argument in that work is that indirect contact with Christianity, namely, by way of the Russians to the north and on the coast, de-stabilized "closed social systems" (i.e. Indigenous) fostering conditions conducive to the emergence of prophet-type figures required to re-orient traditional thinking towards the future.[45] The line resonates well with the work of Kenelm Burridge.

The religionist Lee Irwin discussed Bini as typical of a general category of "Athabaskan shaman prophets" influenced to a minimal degree by forms of Christianity that had arrived in the upper Fraser River through Indigenous channels via the Columbia Plateau about the 1830s. The Athabaskans, Irwin asserts, had prophetic lineages that preceded Christian influence, and because of their antiquity (i.e. in existence since time immemorial) Christian forms and tenets were simply super structural or cosmetic.

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[43] Wilson Duff, *The Indian History of British Columbia* (Victoria: Royal British Columbia Museum, 1997), 128-130.

[44] Ibid., 130.

[45] Hilary Rumley, "Reactions to Contact and Colonization: An Interpretation of Religious and Social Change Among Indians of British Columbia" (MA Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1973).

Prophets only secondarily and selectively borrowed them only to amplify their own prophetic call oriented toward enriching and promoting community wellness.[46]

One thing that strikes me about the scholarly efforts at dating Bini is that each relies heavily on the documentary source material for information pertaining to Bini's life, namely, McLean's book and the theories of the later day missionaries. Even Barbeau cites fur trade sources to argue that it was a group of Christianized Iroquois settled in the Yellowhead Pass who influenced Bini's movement. Jenness, even though he spent time in Bulkley River, hardly placed any stock at all in what the locals had to say. McLean influenced Spier and Irwin and his influence is still being felt. In a recent book by Larry Cebula, McLean's observations are taken as the grounds for speculation about a movement called the "Columbian Religion" (the title of the movement itself is borrowed from McLean's text).[47]

Of all the efforts at locating Bini surveyed in this section, the work of Irwin, the least historical of the bunch, most piques my interest. I am in agreement with his basic premise that the precise dating of Bini's prophetic activity is somewhat irrelevant to an understanding of the Bini stories. I make the claim not because I am in agreement with Irwin's phenomenology but because if there is going to be a historical account it should be made in a rigorously critical fashion. Irwin is up front about the mythological content of the data. Further to that point and as I have already suggested, the most descriptive and reliable data available on Bini are the oral traditions. Within all that oral material only a

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[46] Lee Irwin, *Coming Down From Above: Prophecy, Resistance and Renewal in Native American Religions* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008).

[47] Larry Cebula, *Plateau Indians and the quest for Spiritual Power, 1700-1850* (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 2003).

few narrators attempted to date the life and career of Bini, but those that do are not even in agreement with each other. If the narrators are as close to the source as they allege, perhaps the reason there is scant and conflicting information on the dates of Bini's life and activities is because they were not interested in relating that kind of factual information. If dates were important they would have been remembered and re-told or preserved. The reason they are not recounted is because they are not so important. The Bini stories are not biographical accounts of a misremembered Bini rather they are data that reflect Witsuwit'en and Gitksan efforts at imaging Christian origins – Christian origins as told from their local perspective. The question of the historical Bini or of Bini biography or of the genesis of the prophet movements might better be replaced with the question of motivations. Questions such as, why are the Dakelh and Gitskan not interested in the historical Bini? What might be of interest to them? Based on their images of Bini what motivated the work of Bini and the prophets?

The differences in the accounts of Bini's life are not the result of confused memories rather they are variations on a single theme: Bini brought Christianity home. Bini, a local from the Bulkley River, made Christianity homegrown. For something to matter it has to be owned, to be made one's own.[48] The narratives hypothesize how Bini ought to have acted in his effort to bring Christianity home; and it is precisely because

[48] I am not arguing for the narrative construction of self, or that the narrators are writing or weaving Bini into their own autobiographies. Cf. Daniel C. Dennett, "The Self as a Center of Narrative Gravity," in *Self and Consciousness: Multiple Perspectives*, ed. F. Kessel, P. Cole and D. Johnson (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1992). I only want to say that the narrators are positioning the Witsuwit'en and Gitksan at the centre of events (this includes the history of Christianity), and thus are accomplishing a local history, and in the course of which they are indigenizing or appropriating a foreign concept to a local setting.

there are slightly different hypotheses that are there are variations in the accounts of Bini's life.[49] To further illuminate this claim I need first to introduce the narratives.

The Bini Narratives – the Barbeau, Jenness and Beynon Collections

The Bini narratives collected by Barbeau, Jenness and Beynon follow two distinct patterns. First, there are narratives that set out in some detail the events leading up to and after Bini's return from heaven. Those accounts are properly narrative in that they describe a sequence of events. Second, there are accounts that are more descriptive; those accounts describe things that Bini did and said with a specific focus on his prophetic revelations but have minimal narrative structure. Thus, the two patterns differ more in form than content.

The First Pattern

The majority of accounts adhere to the first pattern. Beynon's, Jenness' and almost two thirds of the narratives in the Barbeau collection give a sequential account of Bini's life. When scholars introduce Bini the various narratives are usually reduced to a composite sketch. The approach was tried by Jenness in his Bulkley River ethnography, by Barbeau in *Indian Days*, and by numerous scholars already discussed in the previous section (e.g. Mills, et. al.). A composite sketch is useful and easy enough to do but it can also hamper analysis by reducing the data set, minimizing difference and amplifying similarity in a way that takes the amplification (and attendant minimization) as self evident (or at least not requiring explanation). In what follows, I introduce the sequence

[49] The stories tell something about how they imagine Bini ought to have acted. In a similar vein, Renato Rosaldo argues that "stories often shape, rather than simply reflect, human conduct." Renato Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth: the Remaking of Social Analysis* (Boston: Beacon, 1989), 129.

but try, as much as possible with any narrative representation, to allow difference to be heard. Difference matters, in this case it speaks to perspective and that there is a multiplicity within any imagining of origins. In terms of structure or form, however, there is some similarity among the narratives in this first pattern in that they all seem to turn on the following functions: Bini is separated from his friends and relations, he dies and journeys to heaven, he is recovered, he is resurrected, and he reveals the knowledge imparted to him in heaven, he solicits followers, and he dies.

The sequence begins with Bini in the company of friends or relations, sometimes described as hunting companions, other times as his wife, and other times he is with both his wife and his companions. In most narratives, Bini and the group are out hunting, but in others they are all gambling. Next, through some circumstance, Bini finds that he is alone in the woods. His disappearance is most often portrayed as accidental, but in one narrative it is said that Bini requests to be left alone. Once his companions are put on to Bini's absence they grow concerned and start up a search. The search lasts for a period variously described as five days or two months. Whatever the stated length, all accounts report that the search is a success. In most narratives a strange growth of trees (described variously as birch, pine or poplar) tip-off some searchers as to his location and he is found either under or among their branches. In one narrative, for example, the narrator relates that Bini was found lying in two birch trees that were grown together as "high as he could see."[50] On first sight his rescuers take him for dead, or as Semedeek and Alfred Sinclair put it: Bini was "still dead but not quite dead." Bini is then wrapped in a cloth

[50] Patsey, B-F-322.5, Barbeau Files, BCA.

and taken to a house in a nearby village.[51] His rescuers place him on a bed in the rear of the house, feed the fire and keep vigil.[52] After four days and four nights he begins to sing (four days and nights is the time required for him to regain his consciousness according to those narratives that list it). His voice is soft at first requiring those listening to struggle to hear him, but as the voice grows louder they still find it difficult to hear him. Some narratives attribute their listening difficulties to the fact that Bini is singing in a foreign language, and others allege the trouble is due to Bini's voice having been weakened by his recent experiences. Those that follow the former line add that because Bini spoke in a foreign language he required the services of an interpreter(s). In one narrative it is described that Bini could make anyone an interpreter by spitting in his or her ears. In other narratives the interpreter is specified as Samali, a "half breed" or someone who "looked like a half breed."[53]

Once Bini recovers and is able to make himself understood he tells those assembled that during his absence he had been to heaven. In some narratives, Bini says that he was helped to heaven by one or two strange men he met on the track; in another, he says he crawled up a ladder that led to the sky; in others, he says that he fell down dead only to wake up in heaven. Despite the length of his absence (days and in some cases months) the narrators do not dwell on what it was exactly that Bini saw or sensed while in heaven. Some specify that Bini met and had conversations with the Great Chief

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[51] In two narratives Bini is said to have returned to his village on his own after five days absence. See Brown, B-F-322.9, Barbeau Files, BCA, and Grey, B-F-322.16, Barbeau Files, BCA.

[52] In one narrative, as Bini's rescuers are laying him out, they notice the sign of the cross on his forehead and chest. See Lagaxnitz and Sinclair, B-F-322.17, Barbeau Files, BCA.

[53] Isaac Tens, B-F-322.3, Barbeau Files, BCA. Samali's age and gender are never identified. In other narratives Bini selects multiple interpreters, bestowing the gift of language upon them by spitting into their ears, cf. Brown, B-F-322.9, Barbeau Files, BCA.

of the Sky, the Great Father and/or Sesikri. In addition to meeting the great chief some narrators indicate that Bini saw many people drumming and dressed in white clothing. Two narratives indicate that he also underwent a baptism. The remainder (approximately half) are completely silent on the details of Bini's experience. Yet, all narratives establish that Bini was, in fact, in heaven during his disappearance and that while there he learned more than a few things.[54]

Next, as the narratives go on to relate Bini's teachings, the narrators persistently allege that Bini learned his teachings on his own and that his mission was evangelical; he was meant to teach *everyone* who would listen and assured that *everyone* who would listen would benefit. Bini had no assistance, there is no mention of a priest or missionary or anyone other than Jesus or the Father in heaven helping or instructing him. And the narrators are persistent in their claim that Bini was the first person to teach Christianity among them. The only exception is a claim by Moses Sanaus that there was a Ts'mysen priest at Hagwilgate before Bini, but by the time Bini arrived the priest had returned to his own people. Sanaus states that the priest was Ts'mysen but as there were no Catholics among the Ts'mysen in the nineteenth century Sanaus is most likely either referring to another prophet-type figure like Bini (perhaps someone who was taught by the Russian or Spanish missionaries) or an Anglican catechist who travelled up river from the coast.[55]

It was during his trip to heaven that Bini said he learned of the seven day week, and that people should work hard five days in a row, have a bit of a rest on the sixth day and take a complete break from work on the seventh day. The seventh day Bini named

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[54] The majority of narratives relate that Bini died only one time. Others suggest that he died and traveled to heaven on more than one occasion.

[55] Moses Sanaus: "there was one Tsimshian Priest at this time who was living at Hagwelgate. He later returned to his own people." Moses Sanaus, B-F-322.6, Barbeau Files, BCA.

"dimace." He also picked up many new songs, dances and prayers. In addition, he was given (or inspired to make) a stick or board on which was engraved a series of instructions, things to do and not to do. He was entrusted to live by and teach a moral code (do not be jealous, do not steal, do not tell lies, do not commit adultery).[56] He learned how to baptize, how to christen and how to make the sign of the cross. In one narrative it was said that Bini was given a new pair of clothes. He also acquired a number of prophecies in heaven either from Jesus or the Great Father directly. In other narratives it is implied that his visit to heaven alone bestowed him with a prophetic capacity. Among the prophecies accredited to Bini are the prediction of the arrival of domesticated animals, new houses (with glass windows), new food (flour, bread, new fish, beef), and new people (sometimes said to be white people, in other narratives they are called strange people). Bini was also said to have special knowledge of natural phenomena. He allegedly predicted forest fires, the coming of an epidemic, changes in the weather, the passing of an eclipse. In a few narratives he is accredited with an apocalyptic prophesy: the destruction of the earth and its consummation by flames. Lastly, Bini anticipated the coming of the telegraph, steamboats, the railway and even airplanes. All of those things, the narrators allege, were valid claims as they have since come to pass (the prediction of an earth being consumed by flames was read as a forest fire).[57]

After relating Bini's teachings the narratives lay out his subsequent career and further augment his repertoire of teachings. The length of his career, as previously discussed, is difficult to determine, but it was long enough for the narrators to detail a few

[56] Isaac Tens, B-F-322.3, Barbeau Files, BCA.

[57] Jenness adds that not only the Witsuwit'en but the local white community believed that all that Bini had said had come true.

things about it.[58] In those narratives that are most descriptive of Bini's career he is said to have gathered people every Sunday to dance, to sing and to give a sermon (the form and content of those activities are never precisely given). He scheduled Sunday services and other festival days according to a calendar he devised of marked sticks. In addition to Sunday gatherings, one narrative relates that Bini prayed and danced three times a day. Bini also performed marriages, baptisms, and penance. He taught people to make the sign of the cross and gave moral instructions sometimes using a "prayer board" of his own design. Many of the narratives also amplify Bini's role as a healer; sometimes he healed the ailing by whipping patients with a cloth dipped in water and other times by sucking. Bini also performed at least three miracles. The first was a "feeding of the multitudes" type miracle in which he produced numerous trout from an ostensibly empty dish of water. The second was the ability to walk over water as if it were dry land.[59] The third and most commonly cited miracle involved Bini ripening a bushel of saskatoons in a matter of seconds by placing their blossoms in his mouth. The latter miracle was performed by Bini in the presence of the recalcitrant to convince them of his powers.[60]

Bini's activities and influence extended beyond the Witsuwit'en and Gitksan communities along the Bulkley River. In some narratives Bini travels to Stuart Lake, the Nass River and to places as far away as Haida Gwaii. In other narratives, Bini does not leave the Bulkley River region himself, rather he sends out emissaries or "apostles" to

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[58] Narratives given by Charles Martin, Semedeek, Alfred Sinclair, Isaac Tens, Johnny Patsey, Donald Grey and wife, and Lagaxnitz are the most descriptive of Bini's life and career, see B-F-322.1-17, Barbeau files, BCA.

[59] Frank Nawks, B-F-322.13, Barbeau Files, BCA.

[60] According to Johnny Patsey, he performed the miracle whenever "he thought some person doubted him." Patsey , B-F-322.5, Barbeau Files, BCA. The miracle also appears as a central motif in Bini's efforts at conversion in Barbeau's *Indian Days*.

spread his news to the Ts'mysen, Tlingit and Haida. The narratives give scant detail on the topic of Bini's wife and family. In one narrative, Bini and his wife were said to have had no children but in another a nephew is mentioned. In another narrative, Bini takes a second wife named Mali, but no mention is made of his first (or other) wives.

Most of the narratives, but not all of them, cover the topic Bini's death. When Bini's death is covered the narrators allege that he died after adopting the practices of a medicine man in a healing rite – the very type of practice that he was supposed to have renounced on his trip to heaven. Donald Grey and his wife say he died because he deigned to follow man's laws, those of "the Indian Doctor", and not the laws of heaven. If he had not done that, the Greys allege that he would have lived forever. While it seems that Bini is implicated in his own death the narratives hint that he stood the chance at being resurrected (as he was after his first trip to heaven) if his friends and relations had not buried him too deep in the ground and/or dug him up after death as Bini had instructed. Yet, either out of fear or inattention, they failed him on both scores and for that final failure Bini died for good. However, in one and only one narrative, Bini recovers from his death. In that account he journeys to heaven and is given an ultimatum by the chief of the skies: renounce the use of rattles in curing rites and live again to spread his teachings or refuse to renounce and remain dead forever. Bini agrees to renounce, returns to earth, and continues teaching until a very old age.

In some narratives Bini's death is accompanied with auspicious signs. In one instance, streaks of light appeared above him that gradually took the form of angels with crossed arms. In another many dancing lights appeared above him. The location of Bini's death and burial are most often specified as Hagwilgate or Fort Babine. Some narratives

bring both places into play and note that he was buried at Fort Babine, dug up by relatives and carried to Hagwilgate and either re-buried or cremated at that place.

The Second Pattern

The narratives in the second pattern cover only Bini's prophecies and activities. They rarely give any sort of biographical information and in form they are more synchronic description than sequential narrative. Accounts of this pattern are both shorter and fewer in number than those of the first. The first sort are longer and average two to three pages in length whereas narratives of the second sort are much shorter and average half a page. Reports of Bini's powers and prophecies make up the biggest part of these descriptions. The accounts mention that Bini visited heaven but do not situate the visit in any sequence. The visit serves to establish heaven as the source of his special teachings, healings and miracles. On the latter point, for example, the miracle of the "saskatoon bush" is related more than once. In this pattern Bini is bestowed with the gift of song and dance. Those two things are frequently said to figure into his healings and miracles and also into his prophetic exclamations. For example, it was after singing and dancing that Bini is said to have done such and such or prophesied such and such. Many of the prophecies listed were repeated (or vice versa) in the longer narratives, for example, the arrival of domestic animals, the telegraph, the steamboat, airplanes, etc. Two prophecies are particularly perspicuous in these descriptions and appear in almost every account. The first is that the rich would become poor and the poor rich, as Moses Sanaus and Ms. Cox put it, Bini claimed, "Those that were rich will be poor and the poor will be rich."[61] The second is that all people would soon be like white men. Paul Dzius said that Bini said

[61] Moses Sanaus and Constance Cox, B-F-322.18, Barbeau Files, BCA.

everyone that "they would all become white people."[62] Two prophecies mentioned in the short descriptions are not covered in the longer narratives. The first has an apocalyptic tenor, wherein Bini alleged that "on the day of his death blood red flakes of snow will come from the sky" (something that the narrators claim happened).[63] The second is a prophetic talent: Bini was said to have been able to prophesy the death of specific individuals by merely observing their speech and actions.[64] On the whole, Bini's teachings and prophecies as reflected in the second pattern overlap with those in the first but are stripped of narrative framing. Yet, the difference in form may not be neutral. The prophetic component of Bini's activities stands out as particularly clear here, what strikes me as most important where the prophecies are highlighted is not so much that Bini prophesied but that he got things all right when he did. And, in this pattern, as in the first, the prophetic faculty was Bini's own, and there is no mention of priests or missionaries in connection with them. Bini received his power from heaven and one narrator speaks of Bini in the same breath as Isaiah.[65]

Bini as Progenitor of Christianity

In almost every narrative the point is forcefully made that Bini is the key source of, and authority on, Christianity. Yet, while the religion is "new" (remember that Christianity was known by the time of Bini's ascent to heaven), Bini's means of

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[62] Paul Dzius, B-F-322.7, Barbeau Files, BCA.

[63] Jack Wimenazek and Constance Cox, B-F-322.11, Barbeau Files, BCA.

[64] Wimenazek and Cox, B-F-322.11, Barbeau Files, BCA.

[65] "He just like the prophet Isai he seemed too good." Sanaus and Cox, B-F-322.18, Barbeau Files, BCA.

accessing it is thoroughly local and familiar. Moreover, it is qualitatively different than the behaviour and experiences of newcomers associated with the fur trade.

Bini is taken up to heaven in a trance, an experience that is similar in form to the vision quest as described in chapter 3 (I will also discuss the form of the quest in further detail in the next section of the current chapter). His trance experience is often said to have happened before a gambling match and while on a hunting trip. Both were local activities. Gambling, in particular, was a very popular pastime and economic activity west of the Rockies. It was also an activity that was frequently criticized by missionaries and traders. When Bini was taken to heaven he meets the Chief of the Skies and/or Jesus Christ. While there, Bini saw people drumming and people dressed in white. When he returned he introduced his experience to his fellow men and women with a song. Compare in this setting the importance of songs attached to the vision, to crests and to oral histories as discussed in chapter 3. He subsequently spoke in a foreign language and required the assistance of an interpreter, a “half-breed” interpreter. The interpreter was Bini’s assistant and subordinated to Bini’s authority. Bini was told to evangelize, he was told to spread the word among all peoples, namely, to his Indigenous neighbours, to the people Indigenous to the inner and outer orbits, but he was given no mandate to evangelize the newcomers. Bini also sent out his own catechists who looked to him for instruction. Bini taught sabbatarianism, a moral code, the sign of the cross and prayers. He performed baptisms, marriages and confession. He gave sermons, he gave instructions from a board (regrettably the topics of those instructions are not revealed), and he taught a means of keeping time using notched sticks. In other words, Bini did all the things that Catholic missionaries did. But Bini was also more than a missionary. He worked miracles

and he prophesied, and he anticipated the future by keying people into pending changes. Bini was concerned about change and the narrators remembered that about him. He focussed attention on change and reached out to others to get them on board, to get them thinking about change along with him. It was the anticipatory – as opposed to the mystical – feature of Bini's prophecies that the narrators remember. None of the things that Bini prophesied were unheard of at the time of his work, save perhaps the eschatological prophecies. Moreover, those things about Bini that seemed strange or uncertain to the narrators were re-interpreted as pertaining to the advent of contemporary items and events. Because Bini was concerned with change, because he was a prophet, what he had to say was continuously revised and reread to imbue the present with meaning.

The narrators, many of whom were Catholic, remember Bini as the first Catholic. Given the depth of similarities among the narrators there is reason to think that Bini and the prophets acted the part, much of the lay Christianities on the ground at the turn of the nineteenth century were variants of the Catholic Christianity of the servants. But Bini was more than a messenger, he articulated Christianity in a local idiom in way that was quantitatively and qualitatively different from the religion of the traders. Bini and the prophets attempted to demonstrate that the traders and professed missionaries did not have all rights to religion in general and to the gospel in specific.

Scholarly Interpretations of the Narrative Form and Content

Of the two patterns covered, the sequential narratives have received the most scholarly attention. Those narratives have been most used in the quest for a historical

Bini, in theological interpretations of Bini's career and in the work of deprivation theorists. For all their differences the three angles share a fundamental interest in the socio-religious dimension of Bini's movement and its location in the historical record. In addition to the socio-religious analyses, there have been literary and hagiographical interpretations of the Bini narrative story. More specifically, Bini's journey has been read as a vision quest, an Orphic journey and a shaman's tale. The three motifs are also salient to the discipline's comparative record, particularly when used to describe Indigenous societies said to represent vestigial or primordial religious phenomena. In literary terms, all three religious motifs share a narrative structure composed of the following *motifemes*[66]: separation from community, journey to heaven, return to community and community transformation.[67]

In the following section, I illuminate and appraise each of the three motifs. Such treatment will also yield ethnographic data useful for my analysis in the following chapter and thus round out my critical appraisal of the scholarly material on Bini and similar narratives.

The Vision Quest

The Vision Quest is one of the better described religious phenomena in anthropology's North American ethnographic record. Lee Irwin, who has researched the

[66] I mean motifeme, the structural unit of a narrative plot, in the sense used by folklorist Alan Dundes, see Satu Apo, "Motifeme". In *Folklore: an encyclopedia of beliefs, customs, tales, music, and art, Volume 1*, ed. Thomas A. Green (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 1997), 565.

[67] The functions are similar to Van Gennep's rites of passage scheme which was further developed by Turner and Crapanzano. See Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (London: Routledge and Paul, 1960); and Vincent Crapanzano, "Rite of Return: Circumcision in Morocco," in *The Psychoanalytic Study of Society* 9, ed. Werner Muensterberger and L. Bryce Boyer (New York: Psychiatry Press, 1980).

practice among Plains peoples, writes that the vision quest is a means of securing essential healing and medicinal practices.[68] The vision quest of the plains has also been highly popularized by John Neihardt's, *Black Elk Speaks*. Neihardt's treatment of the story of the life and career of the Lakota visionary is one of the most well known accounts of the complex in all of North American literature. According to Black Elk, the quest entails the seclusion of an individual for one or a number of days during which period he or she "cries for" a vision to yield some clarity on the vicissitudes of his (and it is usually a he) social or psychological situation and to help meaningfully anticipate appropriate courses of action for the future.[69] The quest is attended with much ritual activity leading up to, during, and after the quest itself (the period of physical seclusion). The ordeal is said to be a very auspicious undertaking for both the individual and the community. The process may be repeated numerous times over the course of an individual's life, and as such any given visionary experience can be envisioned as a single stage of a life long journey.[70]

The vision quest has also been well recorded among the Witsuwit'en and their neighbours, primarily their Athabaskan speakers to the north and east.[71] Jenness devotes

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[68] Lee Irwin, *The Dream Seekers: Native American Visionary Traditions of the Great Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 192.

[69] The Lakota term for the vision quest is "hanblecheyapi" or "Crying for a Vision." The aims and motivations for undertaking a vision are taken from Elaine Jahner, "The Spiritual Landscape," in *I Become Part of It: Sacred Dimensions in Native American Life*, eds. D.M. Dooling and Paul Jordan-Smith (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1989).

[70] The Lakota Arthur Amiotte describes the process leading up to, during and after a vision quest intimating that it is a very auspicious undertaking for both the individual and the community. See Arthur Amiotte, "Eagles Fly Over," in *I Become Part of It: Sacred Dimensions in Native American Life*.

[71] See Diamond Jenness, *The Sekani Indians of British Columbia* (National Museums of Canada, Bulletin 84, Ottawa, 1937); Robin Ridington, "Telling Secrets: Stories of the Vision Quest," *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 2 (1982): 213-219; and Jean-Guy Goulet, *Ways of Knowing: experience, knowledge and power among the Dene Tha* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998).

some space in his Dakelh ethnography to the vision quest among the Dakelh. According to Jenness, the vision was an elaboration on the "dream" concept.[72] The ability to communicate with animals in dreams was, according to the Witsuwit'en, a skill that they alone possessed, a capacity that was lacking in white men. In dreams, animals could provide all sorts of strategic information: medicine to cure illness and to facilitate good hunting and knowledge about future events.[73] Jenness explained the dream as an atavistic trait, a throwback to mythic times before humans and animals were distinct beings.[74] The dream was symptomatic of the general inability on the part of the Dakelh to disentangle myth from history leaving them confused about the proper order of animal human relationships.[75]

In Jenness' estimation, the dream concept was developed among the Dakelh as the guardian spirit quest. Among the eastern and southern Dakelh, every youth was expected to seek an animal protector or guardian spirit. In the Witsuwit'en setting, however, expectations were not as high, only a few were successful in their quest, and those few who were became medicine people able to cure illness and foresee the future. Bini's journey can thus be seen as a vision quest in which he returned with Christian forms that were useful only in so far as they were congruent with existing religiosity, with the basic structure and experiential content of the quest, and as they were relevant for the community.

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[72] Jenness suggests that the dream as an atavistic trait, a throwback to mythic times before humans and animals were distinct beings. Jenness, "The Carrier Indians," 541.

[73] Ibid., 561.

[74] Ibid., 541.

[75] Jenness adds that they were unlike the Polynesians on that score who possessed a much more rigorous historical consciousness.

There is no doubt a family relationship between the vision quest and Bini's voyage, but there remain some noteworthy differences between the two phenomena. First, vision seekers prepare for the quest in advance, are often schooled by religious specialists and go in a deliberate and conscious quest for a vision. Yet, Bini undertook no training or preparation, the narrators say that he was taken up to heaven by surprise or by some chance encounter; moreover, there is disagreement within the narratives as to whether Bini had any potential as a medicine person prior to his ascent. Secondly, a vision seeker often goes in anticipation of meeting an animal spirit, vitality, or one's guardian spirit. Bini, however, did not meet with an animal or guardian spirit. Thirdly, a successful visionary experience can lead to future visions. In the Bini material there is no consensus on the number of trips that Bini made to heaven. In some accounts, Bini makes only the one trip and it is very much a watershed moment in his life serving as the basis of his future teachings and prophesies. In other accounts, Bini does make several visits to heaven. The latter theme would be more in line with what is typical of the visionary complex, but the point is that there is no unanimity.

While there are important differences between the vision quest and Bini's journey, that does not mean there is nothing to the similarities. I caution only that the comparison be made carefully. Moreover, it strikes me that where there are differences something more or different might be happening, that is, Bini's journey is not only another case of the vision quest as it is conventionally understood.[76]

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[76]Jenness concluded that, because the Witsuwit'en had a fantastic and irrational understanding of history and that they were wrong about where they lived in the past. A judgment that had negative impact in later Witsuwit'en land claims cases. See Antonia Mills, *Eagle Down is Our Law: Witsuwit'en Law, Feasts and Land Claims* (Vancouver, UBC Press, 1994). The enlightenment motto is from Montaigne's quote, "I am a man, nothing human is foreign to me."

The Orpheus Tradition

The motifemes in the Bini sequence are also shared by one of the archetypal stories of ancient Greece: Orpheus' descent to the netherworld. In fact, the story of Bini is but one of several Indigenous North American traditions said to bear a resemblance to the Orpheus tale.[77] Anthropologist and folklorist, Anna Hadwick Gayton was one of the first to do an ethnology of North American (or North of Mexico) Orpheus-type stories. Gayton defined the Orphic genre as "tales of the recovery of a beloved person from the land of the dead."[78] While Gayton highlights the recovery of the beloved, in Orphic tales the recovery is incomplete and the gulf between the living and the dead is always reaffirmed. Gayton demonstrated that Orpheus tales were well distributed throughout North America and were particularly rich in on Columbia Plateau and Pacific Slope

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[77] To the extent that it is possible to outline a standard version of the Orpheus tradition in its early Greek setting (as myth is always contingent and interested) such an outline might run as follows. Born of Apollo and Cailiope in the generation before the Trojan War, he traveled with Jason and the Argonauts to recover the Golden Fleece from Colchis. He was a singer and player of the lyre, tamer of wild and animals, a very gentle character. He was also a prophet and magician, who traveled to the land of the dead to bring dead souls back to the world of the living, in particular, the soul of his wife, Eurydice. In that story, Orpheus successfully persuades the King and Queen of the dead to release Eurydice but, en route to the world of the living, he transgresses the proscription of looking back at his wife and she is lost to him forever. The loss plunges him into a deep depression and he retreats to the wilds of Thrace and is eventually torn to pieces by Bacchants. His head and lyre are subsequently carried to the island of Lesbos where the lyre is buried and the head continues to prophesy until Apollo, at length, forbids it (John Warden, ed., *Orpheus: the metamorphoses of a myth* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), viii-ix). While Orpehus is doubtless a mythological figure, some scholars think he may have been an actual historical person; perhaps a shaman-priest connected with the cult of the mother goddess that flourished in early or pre-Mycenaean Greece. An introduction to the conversation on the historical Orpheus and Orpheus as shaman-priest can be found in Emmet Robbins, "Famous Orpheus," in *Orpheus: the metamorphoses of a myth*, ed. John Warden (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982).

[78] Gayton, "The Orpheus Myth in North America," *The Journal of American Folklore* 48, no. 189 (1935): 263. Tylor was one of the first anthropologists to make comparisons between North American myth and the Greek Orpheus tradition. See E.B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom* 2 (London, 1871). Stith Thompson also identified North American "Orpheus Tales" as variations on an Orpheus theme, see Stith Thompson, *Tales of the North American Indians* (Cambridge, MA, 1929); and Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* (Bloomington, 1933).

between central California and Southern British Columbia. More interested in literary form and etiological function than in distribution patterns, Gayton explained that the Orpheus tradition is of some antiquity in the Americas and speculated that it was long valued for its psychological benefits. The Orpheus tradition explained what happens to dead people, why it is that human beings cannot visit them and how it is that human beings figured it all out (i.e. some real person – spouse, lover, parent or child – was motivated by grief to navigate the chasm between life and death only to fail).

The religionist Åke Hultkrantz also alleged that Orphic tales were particularly rich on the Northwest Coast. Hultkrantz refined Gayton's work by specifying the operative definition of the Orphic tradition in order to distinguish it from other narratives of visits to the dead. According to Hultkrantz, in Orphic tales (1) a living person must visit the land of the dead and attempt to bring the deceased back with him or her and (2) the living person must be a close relative of the deceased.[79] In his detailed monograph of the North American Orphic tradition, Hultkrantz argued that the tradition was of particular interest to comparative religionists for four reasons. First, the tradition preserves core elements of a primordial shamanic procedure (i.e. the "experience of psychic twilight"). Second, it contributes to an understanding of a pan-North American eschatology. Third, it serves an important etiological function by explaining the origin of death. And, fourth, it serves as an origin story for nineteenth century revivalist movements such as the Ghost Dance.[80] The latter angle was explored by folklorist and photographer Lee Brumbaugh.

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[79] Åke Hultkrantz, *The North American Orpheus Tradition: a Contribution to Comparative Religion* (Stockholm: Ethnographical Museum of Sweden, 1957), 19. He defines the tradition as "the narrative of a man who, driven by love for his deceased wife, seeks her out in the realm of the dead and tries in vain to restore her to life." Yet, he qualifies that claim noting that the principal characters need not necessarily be spouses; they may be family members, alternatively the female may also pursue the male.

[80] Hultkrantz, *The North American Indian Orpheus*, 310-12.

Brumbaugh argued that the Ghost Dances and like revivalist movements were derived from an Orpheus ur-plot endemic to Indigenous American oral traditions that were teased to consciousness in times of severe distress brought on by death and illness so that they might provide hope in dangerous times.[81] Thus, Brumbaugh's treatment accounts for why it was that Gayton and Hultkrantz saw so many Orpheus narratives preserved among peoples of the northwest: devastation of the European invasion, largely as a result of the many smallpox epidemics. On Brumbaugh's line the rapid pace of the colonial program – the race to the Pacific – in the Northwest Plateau produced a kind of colonial crescendo in the nineteenth century that was met with various resistance movements whose participants were inspired to do so in Orphic fashion.

I am not interested here in Brumbaugh's myth-ritual connection, the Orpheus "ur-plot," or that the Ghost Dance was part of a pan-Indigenous resistance movement. But I think he is onto something when he connects the distribution of the Orpheus tradition with American Imperialism. For example, the Orpheus traditions, whether in Brumbaugh, Hultkrantz or Gayton are concentrated most thickly on the American borders, namely, the Mexican-American and Canadian-American borders (more specifically: the Southwest [Texas], the Northwest [Washington and Oregon] and the Great Lakes region). Those three regions were also the focal points of American and European Imperialism in the nineteenth century – the time when most of the tales were collected. In the Pacific Northwest in particular, the Columbia and Fraser river systems were the two nodes of capitalist commercial activity on what was then considered the North American frontier. As Britain and the United States were competing for control over the Northwest Plateau

[81] Lee Brumbaugh, "Quest for Survival: The Native American Ghost Pursuit Tradition ("Orpheus") and the Origins of the Ghost Dance," in *Folklore Interpreted: Essays in Honor of Lana Dundes*, ed. Regina Bendix and Rosemary Levy Zumwalt (New York: Garland Publishing, 1995), 183-4.

the two governments sent expeditions to advise and to report on local conditions. The officials who produced those reports, some of whom were also amateur ethnographers, also returned with records of Orpheus type narratives and practices. At the same time as Orpheus narratives were being recorded, authors and artists who worked or traveled in the region returned with depictions of the "vanishing Indian" or "the vanishing frontier."[82] In any case, all I want to suggest here is the possibility that one reason for the predominance of Orpheus type traditions in the Northwest Plateau is because of the kind and volume of data – data on Indigenous religion and/or the Indigenous-settler/colonial government relations – that was being produced either at or about that particular place and that particular time. A.H. Gayton, for example, one of the first to draw direct attention to the North American Orpheus tradition, did fieldwork and memory ethnography – with a specific interest in shamanism – among the Yokuts and Western Mono of Northern California in the early twentieth century.

Where Brumbaugh suggested that the Ghost Dance was exemplary of an Orpheus tradition, the anthropologist Guy Lanoue averred that the Bini narrative was also an Orphic tale. Lanoue fused social psychology and cultural ecology to explain the prevalence of Orpheus traditions on the Fraser-Skeena Plateau. According to Lanoue, Orpheus traditions were the product of social anxiety and on the Plateau there happened to be a lot of anxiety. Because Plateau peoples possessed large territories, small dispersed hunting groups and weak political organizations there was always a lot of uncertainty at their borders – they felt incapable of physically controlling them and were always ill informed about what was happening on them. That anxiety afforded a hyper-concern or

[82] As reflected in the work of the artist Paul Kane, for example, see Paul Kane, *Wanderings of an Artist Among the Indians of North America* (Rutland, VT: C.E. Tuttle, 1968). See also the memoirs of fur traders Alexander Ross and Gabriel Franchere, et al.

paranoia about the future a general sense of pending doom. Thus, the shamans, individuals able to provide strategic information about the future, were more esteemed than chiefs or political leaders. Shamans were always anticipating crises and, thus, the best informed about them and the best people to turn to about the proper course of action to follow in any novel situation. Bini (Peni), according to Lanoue, was exemplary of such a figure: a shaman who visited the land of the dead for information about historical change.

I like Lanoue's thesis that prophecy is geared toward anticipating changes but I am not moved by the genealogical he posits between social organization and individual paranoia. In any case, I see prophecy as endemic to social life in general (a point picked up in the concluding chapter) and not to a specific set of social configurations. The other thing that strikes me about Lanoue's prophetic thesis is that the whole Orpheus motif seems unrelated to it. In fact, other than in the title, Orpheus is hardly visible in his analysis. My hunch is that Lanoue contrived the title, "Orpheus in the Netherworld in the Plateau of Western North America: The Voyage of Peni", to dovetail with the volume in which it appeared, "Orfeo e l'Orfismo."[83] Indeed, the Orpheus connection is highly attenuated; to make the connection Lanoue redefines the orphic tradition as referring to the voyage of a shaman to the netherworld in search of new and vital information.[84] In Lanoue's configuration only two elements of the Orpheus story are preserved: the quest or pursuit and the voyage to the land of the dead. Yet, in the Bini narratives there is no

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[83] See, *Orfeo e l'Orfismo*, ed. Agostino Masarachhia (Roma: Gruppo Editoriale Internazionale, 1993).

[84] Guy Lanoue, "Orpheus in the Netherworld," in *Orfeo e l'Orfismo*, ed. Agostino Masarachhia (Roma: Gruppo Editoriale Internazionale, 1993), 453.

pursuit, Bini is not after anything. Lanoue seems to think that Bini is looking for something. Lanoue seems to be led down that road by his source, Barbeau's *Indian Days*, which is a highly embellished depiction of Bini that portrays him as a self-conscious reformer in conflict with tradition. As for the second element, the trip to the netherworld, only a few of the Bini narratives suggest that he visited the land of the dead. In most it is said that Bini visited heaven, and that he saw God and Jesus but not dead people. Moreover, there is no consensus on whether or not Bini was a shaman. Bini is variously described as a shaman, as a chief, and also as commoner, a rake and an all around untrustworthy man. Lanoue's analysis may have some merit but Bini might not be the best candidate to use for illustration.[85]

Considering the "North American Orpheus" topic in connection with Bini, I have to say, strikes me as strange. It is not clear to me what these scholars want to do by dragging the Greek tradition into the picture. Why foreground "Orpheus"? Why are that name and that motif so important? Why is it that the Orpheus tradition is considered the scale against which other stories are measured? Is it that the Greeks have perfected the tradition? What, then, is the scale according to which that perfection is measured? Is it assumed that the Greeks perfected human nature, along with archaic shamanism? Are the Greeks the measure of human nature and religiosity? Or, is there a diffusionist argument

[85] In any event, there are other myths that I think better resemble the Orpheus tradition, such as "The Steelhead Salmon and the Child" collected by Barbeau and "The City of the Dead" collected by Jenness. See Marius Barbeau and William Beynon, *Tsimshian Narratives*, ed. John J. Cove and George F. MacDonald (Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1987); and Diamond Jenness, "Myths of the Carrier Indians of British Columbia," *Journal of American Folklore* 47, no. 133 (1934): 97-257.

at work? Hultkrantz suggests diffusion is possible – and he means diffusion across the Pacific by way of East Asia – but ultimately concludes it is unlikely.[86]

Something else interests me about this Orpheus material. The fact that all scholars see an Orpheus tradition in the Pacific Northwest reminds me of Spier's insistence on a prophet tradition Indigenous to the Columbia Plateau. Is the Orpheus tradition the prophet tradition by a different name? Possibly, it seems to me that many of the scholars considered in this dissertation have turned the nineteenth century Pacific Northwest into a last pocket of indigeneity. In doing so their work is not dissimilar to that of the nineteenth-century chroniclers: both give a final voice to a vanishing indigeneity. It is very easy to see the role played by the nineteenth century geopolitical map in such a conception. A North American map centred on the plains casts the west as a frontier. Maps are still centred on the plains, think of the focus on Winnipeg as the geographic centre of North America and think also of the shape of the political boundaries that make the spacious western states and provinces. However, a historical map centred on the Plateau in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century would depict much more activity in the ocean orbits to the west than on the mountain orbits to the east. One of the aims of this project is to challenge the image of the North American west as a frontier or an edge. Such an image that preserves the idea of a colonial space as a contact zone occupied by discretely bounded population groups that clash and grapple with each other.

[86] The Orpehus tradition may have crossed the ocean alright, but just not the ocean Hultkrantz had in mind. It came across the Atlantic, not the Pacific, and was carrier by westerners already familiar with the tale. Sam Gill made a similar argument with respect to the Mother Earth story suggesting that the story was invented by Euro-North Americans already familiar with earth mother stories in European traditions. See Sam Gill, *Mother Earth: An American Story* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

The Shaman's Tale

The elephant in the room up to this point has been the shaman. In each of the analysis considered above Bini is viewed as a shaman. Lanoue and Hultkrantz cast the prophet as an Orphic shaman. [87] Jenness, Hultkrantz and Irwin connect shamanism to the vision quest.[88] The relation of shamanism to the vision quest is also found in the classic treatment of the topic by Mircea Eliade who defined shamanism as an archaic technique of ecstasy.[89] More specifically, according to Eliade, "the shaman specializes in a trance during which his soul is believed to leave his body and ascend to the sky or descend to the underworld."[90] When a shaman ascends to the sky it is not uncommon for him or her to communicate with a celestial god and his male off spring.[91] The primary methods for recruiting shamans are hereditary transmission or spontaneous vocation. Once selected a shaman receives two kinds of teaching: ecstatic (trances and dreams) and didactic (mythology and ritual). The first is rooted in personal experience and the second is procured or learned from a larger community of shamans. The didactic, according to

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[87] Hultkrantz argues shamanism lies at the heart of the Orphic tradition and the Vision Quest. He sees in the Quest "the democratization of shamanism." Interestingly, Jenness spins the teleology around, and has shamanism resulting from the concentration of visionary powers into the hands of spiritual elites, which was a point that Mircea Eliade also developed.

[88] Brumbaugh, "Quest for Survival", 183. Brumbaugh disagreed: soul-retrieval (involving a journey to the land of the dead) is the least common kind of North American shamanism. In North America, shamanism is more generally manifest in the vision quest setting and involves communication with supernatural vitalities, usually in animal form. Yet, according to Jenness, as discussed below, it seems that soul retrieval was an important element of shamanism on the plateau.

[89] Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), 4.

[90] Ibid., 5. Both the shaman and the deity are typically presented as male

[91] Ibid., 9. Eliade seems not to consider the possibility that ethnographic or traveler chronicles about a "Great God" and his offspring who live in the sky were influenced by an understanding of Christianity. If the reports were influenced by Christianity, and there is every reason to think that they were, Eliade is documenting the kinds of religious change that interest me.

Eliade, is essential to the shamanic vocation because it is successful teaching and initiation that best qualifies a person for the job. In general terms, the shaman is a community oriented individual who employs his or her talents for medicinal purposes, chiefly, to address illness caused by the insertion of a pathogenic object or soul loss. By invoking Eliade, I do not intend to consume his treatment of shamanism uncritically. There is good reason to proceed cautiously when sourcing Eliade's work on shamanism as it has been the subject of sustained and rigorous criticism. Alice Beck Kehoe, for example, excoriated Eliade's presentation of shamanism as a timeless, transposable, phenomenon and raised serious doubts about the degree to which his configuration of shamanism is even reflected in the Siberian cases that are taken as his template.[92] I introduce Eliade's sketch shamanism because for all its failings it nicely illuminates what scholars refer to as the "shaman's tale."[93] When the Bini sequences are cast against that motif it is clear why the shaman has served an important analytical construct. My other reason for introducing Eliade's presentation of shamanism is ethnographic, which may seem poor form given that Eliade's work has been panned by so many religionists. Despite all the bad things that religionists have been saying about Eliade of late and despite the problems with the shamanic construct (a subarctic, Siberian, motif wrenched from its context and applied to Indigenous settings everywhere) his characterization

[92] In the end, Kehoe's problem with Eliade is that he was deceitful; he mislabelled his work "history of religions" when it was really more of a poetic inquiry into the religious life. His work impacted, often negatively, the lives of Indigenous peoples all over the world as it served as both a method and justification for cultural appropriation. See Alice Beck Kehoe, "Eliade and Hultkrantz: the European Primitivist Tradition," Special Issue, *American Indian Quarterly* 20, nos. 3-4 (1996): 377-392.

[93] The motif has also been important to other theories of religion; for example, it is important to the work of Water Burkert on the origins of religion and to the Chadwicks' on the origin of storytelling. See Burkert, *Creation of the Sacred*, and H.M. Chadwick and N.K. Chadwick, *The Growth of Literature* 3 (Cambridge, 1940).

resonates with what has been reported or described of shaman-type spiritual specialists among the Gitksan, Witsuwit'en and Dakelh.[94] Indeed, even those critical of Eliade's work suggest that subarctic and Eurasian shamanism are historically related and share similarities in form and content. Kehoe, for example, identifies something of a shamanic complex among subarctic peoples on both continents and terms the complex "Subarctic Shamanism."[95] According to Kehoe, the complex is typified by the use of the drum in ceremonies, the appeal to tutelary spirits, and the ability to enter a trance state (sometimes facilitated by fasting and hallucinogens). During trance the soul leaves the body to journey to alternate realms where it meets with spirits that can assist with healing and divining.[96] In the North American setting, leaders of revitalization movements are often considered shamans.

Yet, there is not a perfect congruence between the shaman figure at the head of a revitalization movement and the typical ethnographic shaman outlined by Eliade. The

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[94] Eliade has been criticized on many counts, as a poor academic, as a racist and as a cultural imperialist. On his scholarship, see Russell McCutcheon, *Manufacturing Religion: The Discourse on Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia* (New York: Oxford, 2003); on his use of sources, specifically on shamanism, see Willard Park, Review of *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, by Mircea Eliade, *American Anthropologist* 67, no. 5 (October 1965): 1305-1306; on his racial politics, see Daniel Dubuisson, *Impostures et Pseudoscience: l'oeuvre de Mircea Eliade* (Paris: Septentrion, 2005). Eliade's scholarship has also been implicated in cultural imperialism and appropriation. The New Age movement inspired by Eliade has long been accused of appropriating Indigenous religion, Gerry Hobson refers to such "New Agers" as "plastic shamans"; see Gerry Hobson, "The Rise of the White Shaman as a New Version of Cultural Imperialism," in *The Remembered Earth*, ed. Gerry Hobson (Albuquerque, NM: Red Earth Press, 1978).

[95] Originally a Siberian practice, Kehoe hypothesizes shamanism diffused to North America at some point in the first millennium C.E. The historical conjecture is based on increased travel and trade among peoples of the Pacific Rim due to a rise in sea mammal hunting that allegedly took place some point in the first millennium. See Kathryn Holland, "In the Wake of Prehistoric North Pacific Sea Mammal Hunters," *Arctic Anthropology* 29, no. 2 (1992): 63-72. Kehoe is not the only scholar to refer to shamanism in North America. The anthropologist Willard Park wrote a monograph on Shamanism in western America that is still cited today, see, Park, *Shamanism in Western North America*. Gregory Smoak uses Park's book as his principal source on Newe shamanism in his treatment of the Ghost Dance among the Shoshone and Bannock in the nineteenth century.

[96] Kehoe, "Eliade and Hultkrantz", 380-381.

latter, according to Eliade and Willard Park, are typically conservative and of the status quo whereas leaders of revitalization movements hold that "the time had come for the whole Indian people to obtain the shaman's privileged state."[97] Such a re-configuration of shamanism might be read in the terminology of Hultkrantz as its further "democratization." The tension between the traditional shaman and prophet at the head of such revitalization movements should not be understated and problematizes the conflation of the one with the other. The records of the early Oblates who visited the upper Fraser and Skeena Rivers give further reason to think that there were tensions between shamans and prophets.

In chapter 6, I covered the Oblate entrance into the upper Fraser-Skeena watershed. In 1868 a year after the establishment of the William Lake Mission, Father LeJacq visited Quesnel, Richfield, Alexandria, Fort George, Fort St. James, Fraser Lake, Stoney Creek, the Bulkley River and Babine Lake.[98] Once begun, the Oblates continued annual tours of their reunion stations at those places well into the twentieth century.

D'Herbomez's report of his 1868 visit and several of LeJacq's subsequent reports printed in *Missions* contain some of the earliest ethnographic data on shamans and prophets. Of particular interest is the distinction made by the Oblates between the two figures. On the one hand, prophets were referred to as prophets, priests or visionaries. Prophets were alleged to have the power to die, to resurrect and to predict the future.

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[97] Eliade, *Shamanism*, 322. Eliade amplifies the eschatology of Ghost Dance type movements. He seems most interested in their apocalyptic tenor and the theme of restoration or renewal. Many scholars have since argued that theological or doctrinal claims about a pending utopia are not the only feature of such movements. They can be seen as rites of resistance (as seen, for example, in Joseph Jorgensen's monograph, *Sun Dance*) or rites of healing (as seen, for example, in the documentary, *Wiping the Tears of Seven Generations*, which is about the Big Foot Memorial ride commemorating the Wounded Knee massacre).

[98] Cronin, *Cross in the Wilderness*, 112-113.

Shamans (*diiyinii*) were referred to as sorcerers, jongleurs or *tamanoas*, and described as great gamblers. They were also said to be healers who worked with the drum, the tambourine and the rattle. While prophets and shamans were reported in most of the villages visited by the priests, shamans were particularly numerous at *Tse-Kya*, which was also described by the Oblates as a great gambling centre. Priests or visionaries were more frequently reported among the Sekani and Babine. While among the Babine, for example, LeJacq befriended the famous prophet Uzkali whom he referred to as an "ex-pretre" (this must be the same Uzkali whom Jenness alleged taught Bini and whom Morice referred to as the priest of the Babines).[99] The high number of shamans at *Tse Kya* compared to the high number of priests at Babine gives some credence to Jenness' claim that Bini, as a prophet and a reformer, was better received among the Babine.[100]

While I called attention to the difference between a shaman and prophet in the Oblate material, the distinction has been noted elsewhere in the North American ethnographic record. The distinction between prophet and shaman and the notion that prophecy was its own specialization was also noted by ethnologist Willard Park in his description of Paviotso shamanism.[101] Jenness also differentiated between prophets and *diiyinii* among the Witsuwit'en but cautioned that the difference was mostly cosmetic and that the prophets frequently employed the techniques of shamans. Consistent with the classic definition of shamanism, *diiyinii* were equipped with the ability to restore human shadows, to control the weather, and to perform fantastic physical feats (fire swallowing

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[99] D'Herbomez to De Mazenod, 28 November 1868, *Missions* 9, no. 33.

[100] Cf. Jenness' claim that Bini never established anything like a hegemony among his own people.

[101] Willard Park, *Shamanism in Western North America: A Study in Cultural Relationships* (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1938), 69-71.

and fire walking, for example).[102] The *diiyinii* also banded together to form healing societies. Among the Witsuwit'en the two prominent healing societies were the kyanyuantan and kalullim. Lastly, the *diiyinii* were not selected for the role by any committee and they did not seem to belong to a caste but were called to their vocation by the spirit world.[103] Both *diiyinii* and prophets, for whom I have not come across a local descriptor, received medicine songs and power from supernatural forces; the difference was not so much the source of their power or even the kind of powers, but the position of the source: the *diiyinii* procured powers from visits to the animal spirit world and the prophets from visits to the sky. Moreover, the shaman was almost always represented as a traditional healer, the prophet's position as healer was somewhat ambiguous – remember that Bini was sometimes cast as a shamanic healer and sometimes differentiated from someone who might play such a role.

The ethnographic data of Jenness, the Oblate material, and Barbeau's Bini narratives, indicate that at the turn of the last century the *diiyinii* and prophets were two different classes of spiritual specialists.[104] As Jenness' informants forcefully put it, "Bini was not a medicine man. And did not adopt medicine man's practices."[105] Because the

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[102] Jenness, "The Carrier Indians," 566.

[103] The *diiyinii* assisted an incipient *diiyinii* by retrieving his soul or by helping him extricate a pathogenic object, such as a medicine song, or a shadow (bird or animals) that had lodged itself into a patient's body. Interestingly, one of Jenness' informants alleged that after one is selected by the spirit world he needs to sing out his medicine song or else he will die (Jenness, "The Carrier Indians," 562). Once elected, the *diiyinii* required the assistance of his or her colleagues to overcome the initial shock or sickness that accompanied selection and to train him or her in the duties and responsibilities of the position.

[104] Jenness does not indicate there were prophets present at the time of his fieldwork (they had already served their purpose as "grafters"). With respect to medicine people, he says that only vestiges of the "old medicine" are preserved in the two healing societies. In addition, Maureen Cassidy's history of Tse Kya, Cassidy writes that Bini "was not one of the deeyinee and did not use their practices" (Cassidy, *The Gathering Place*, 27).

[105] Jenness to Barbeau, 13 January 1924, B-F-198, Barbeau Files, BCA.

prophets and *diiyinii* were considered two different classes – or could be considered two different classes – it is possible that there was some tension between the two.[106] That tension is minimized by Jenness in his ethnography where he writes in general terms about medicine men. The tension is maximized by Barbeau's in his fictionalized account of Bini in *Indian Days* wherein he presents Bini as a reformer who breaks with the past. The Barbeau narratives are ambiguous about the tension. In any case, the issue of degree is of less interest than the fact that there was a difference, because of that difference the identification of prophets as shaman type figures is not as straightforward as Lanoue, Spier and others have suggested. The difference between the two suggests that the two had different concerns, techniques and interests. Moreover, the Bini narratives play on those differences in order to make a point about the genesis of Christianity: it is one and the same time indigenous *and* novel. They indicate that it is only when Christianity is made indigenous that it becomes meaningful. The narrators construct prophet-type figures as liminal figures occupying a threshold between the past and the present. Thus, in what appears as a reversal of the contemporary political scene and courtroom manoeuvre Indigenous narrators amplify *change* over *stasis* to elevate their own pasts.[107]

The distinction I make between prophets and shamans is not an effort to establish the priority of the one over the other. That is, I am not arguing that the prophets emerged as re-configured or reformed shamans when Christianity arrived as, for example, Barbeau seems to do. I think it would be impossible with what we know now to untangle those

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[106] Cf. Lincoln's illustration that there are always tensions between subsections of a society. Bruce Lincoln, *Discourse and the construction of society: comparative studies of myth, ritual, and classification* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

[107] On the way in which Indigenous tradition is represented as static to serve contemporary political interests see Greg Johnson's work on the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, see Greg Johnson, *Sacred Claims: Repatriation and Living Tradition* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007).

lines of the "pre" and the "post" contact manifestations. Such a distinction is also problematic because of its implied evolutionism. Moreover, it tends to attribute a special almost ahistorical quality to Christianity: when Christianity enters an area the change it initiates is so unique and radical that only a unique and radical response such as prophecy can appropriately manage it (shamans are no longer capable). I see the prophetic capacity – the concern with anticipating future conditions so as to secure meaningful social space – to be fundamental to the religious activity of human beings. There is no doubt that the prophetic content was influenced by knowledge of Christianity but the prophetic capacity is present in human religiosity.

At the outset of this lengthy section I had given as one reason for reviewing the literature on the vision quest, the orphic tradition, and shamanism that the treatment would also allow me to introduce salient details of the ethnographic record. In view of the detail covered, all those things that Bini was said to have done are not particularly strange when considered in their ethnographic setting. They are all there in the "background,"[108] healing, medicine songs, superhuman feats, seizure by the supernatural, prophecy, and shaman interpreters (or talkers).[109] Moreover, we know from the previous chapter that Christianity was also in the background (and its presence extended a century into the past). Yet, what stands out as unique in my mind, is the way in which Bini – of all the potential other prophets – is made out to be the progenitor of Christianity. Christianity is

[108] Cf. John Searle's "background" and Pierre Bourdieu's "habitus," see John Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality* (New York: The Free Press, 1995); and Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a theory of practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

[109] Park, *Shamanism*, 50. According to Park, shamans were accompanied by two assistants, one of whom was "the talker." The talker was employed during healing ceremonies to repeat the shaman's songs and words in a loud and clear voice so that those present might be able to follow along with the ceremony. The priests also employed interpreters whose job was to translate and to repeat the priest's words for all to hear.

the item that does not fit nicely into the background and but it is also the very thing for which Bini was able to account. Yet, there is reason to think that Bini was not the only person concerned with the task of indigenizing Christianity.

Myth and Social Formation

The treatments of Bini and related prophets considered in the previous chapter make good use of the discipline's lexicon and for that are not without instructive value. While I criticized the data's "fit" with respect to the heuristics covered, I did so chiefly to clarify my own interest: the Bini material is evidence of ritual and mythmaking in an effort to indigenize Christianity in the interest of social formation. Bini was part of a larger process of the appropriation of Christianity. Myth is another means by which Christianity was made local.[110] One feature of myth is its capacity to account for novelty; explanatory efforts are particularly salient in myths about a "high god" or "a chief of the skies." Such a god-like figure, as we have already seen, was pivotal to Bini's education.

Even before anthropology took an evolutionary turn in the nineteenth century much academic labour had been invested debating the topic of a high god in Indigenous societies.[111] The case is still not closed; Keith Carlson re-opened the issue in his recent ethnohistory of the Lower Stó:lō.[112] Among the Witsuwit'en, scholars think that there

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[110] Cf. Jonathan Z. Smith's assertion that myth provides "an answer to the question of how do we account for something we once did not have and know we have?" Robert G. Hammerton-Kelly, ed. *Violent Origins: Walter Burkert, Rene Girard, and Jonathan Z. Smith on Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation* (Stanford University Press, 1987).

[111] On the history of anthropology as a history of conceptualizing the other, see Bernard McGrane, *Beyond Anthropology: Society and the Other* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989).

[112] See Keith Carlson, *The Power of Place, The Problem of Time: Aboriginal Identity and Historical Consciousness in the Cauldron of Colonialism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010).

was some concept of a sky or celestial deity before there was any knowledge of Christianity and that once Christianity arrived on the scene the sky deity gradually assumed more importance.[113] The opinion goes back to Morice. According to him,

> [the Dakelh] vaguely believed in a kind of impersonal and undefined Divinity, not quite pantheistic; but rather more so than individual, almost co-essential with the celestial forces, the cause efficient of rain, and snow, winds, and other firmamental phenomena. They called it *Yuttoere* ("that which is on high"). But they did not worship this power – they rather feared it and endeavoured to get out of its reach, or, when this was impossible, to propitiate it and the spirits who were supposed to obey it, with the help and through incantations of the *nelhgèn* or conjuror.[114]

Jenness had a similar opinion, but in his estimation the divinity was much better defined by the Dakelh than Morice gave them credit for. According to Jenness, the Dakelh had a veritable sky God called *Uttake* or *Sa* "that which is on high." In the following discussion I will use *Sa* and *Uttake* interchangeably to refer to the same deity or category of deity as the difference is not clear in my read of Jenness (it may be a matter of dialect). In any case, the Witsuwit'en assured Jenness that *Sa* was a purely aboriginal deity who assumed a prominent position only after elements of Christianity were integrated into Dakelh religiosity.[115] *Sa* lived in the sky and was responsible for meteorological phenomena, for punishing the unjust and for rewarding the virtuous. Sometimes *Sa* descended from the sky to intercede with human affairs, at other times he sent his son in place of himself.[116] Contemporary scholarship and oral tradition echo Jenness on this score. Mills suggests

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[113] The logic strikes me as having a rather Christian trajectory. Take Paul of Tarsus and his portrayal of Christ as the unknown Roman god, for example.

[114] See Adrien G. Morice, "The Western Dénés - Their Manners and Customs." The vitality said to course through all of reality reported by Morice reminds me of the notions of *Mana* among the islanders of the South Pacific, or *Bo'ha* among the Newe on the Plateau or *Wakan* among the Lakota on the plains.

[115] Jenness, "The Carrier Indians," 539.

[116] Ibid., 539.

that the Witsuwit'en conflated the Christian god with their own sky god, *Sa*, such that Bini appeared like the sons of *Sa* related in Witsuwit'en *Kungax* (oral tradition, such as those collected by Jenness discussed below) and like the son of God in the New Testament.[117]

The single richest source of Dakelh myths or *Kungax* that I know of is Jenness' *Myths of the Carrier Indians*; a collection of eighty myths recorded over the winter of 1924-25 at Hagwilgate, Fraser Lake, Fort Fraser and Stony Creek.[118] Of those eighty myths twelve contain mention of *Sa* or his son. In those myths *Sa* is a creator god who maintains a continuous involvement with human affairs (with the power to punish the "bad" or reward the "good"), influencing them from a distance or directly either by his own hand or through the instrument of his son. It is possible that *Sa* and the powers associated with him are purely Indigenous (by "purely Indigenous" I mean native to the field prior to the temporal parameters of this dissertation), I do not dispute the possibility, regardless I think those powers are amplified in myth because of the presence of Christianity.[119] What can be surmised from the data and what we know about the capacity of myth is that the Witsuwit'en mythmakers were aware of Christian concepts, (i.e. God and his son Jesus) and that they integrated them into their own mythology in the effort to make Christianity a local product. Everyone in the nineteenth century knew about

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[117] Mills, *Eagle Down*, 168-169.

[118] As rich as they myths are the collection is not without its problems. Jenness provides no contextual information about the myths. Those omissions prevent us from answering some of the basic questions we ought to ask of any speech act: Who is speaking? How is the speech mediated? To what audience? In what context are the claims being made? However, we are not completely in the dark. In a letter to Barbeau Jenness says that his chief informants were Moosekin Johnny, Old Sam, Old Dennis, and William Chicken.

[119] It is impossible at this date to conclude the extent to which a concept of a high god was purely Indigenous. In my opinion, Morice's suggestion seems to me to be the most likely as it resonates with other Amerindian notions, but that is only a guess.

Christianity, the fur trade employees, the missionaries, the Witsuwit'en, the Gitksan, the Sekani and everyone was talking about it. It was not an obsession and might never have been the topic de jour but it was there. One product of those conversations, I hypothesize, is the amplification of Sa in myth as a creator, as someone to propitiate for assistance, as someone who is both foreign and local, as someone who connects or links up the Witsuwit'en with outside others. An extended discussion of a few myths will help illustrate how Sa is conceptualized as a unique Witsuwit'en/Christian deity. The myths are entitled "The Creation of the Tribes," "The Gambler" and "The Sky Boy and the Magic Arrow."

Myth I: "The Creation of the Tribes"

The myth "The Creation of the Tribes," collected at Hagwilgate unfolds in four parts. The first two are aphoristic. First, a claim is made about *Uttake's* (a synonym for *Sa*) role in the creation of all peoples "In the first times people multiplied and scattered. Some went in one direction, some in another. Thus arose white men, the Stikine, Carrier and other Indians. Each race received a different blessing from the sky-god Uttake".[120] Second, is the caveat that regardless of *Uttake's* role in creation, Indigenous peoples were ultimately descendent from some animal: the Babine from the loon; the Hagwilgate from the Grizzly; the Sekani from a wolf; the Fraser Lake people from a Mink; and the Kiskargas from a mountain bird. The final two parts tell of the initial unification and subsequent separation of the people throughout the land. All of the people mentioned above initially settled in one of two villages: Mosquito Flat and Temlaham. At Mosquito Flat lived Dakelh, Sekani and Gitksan. However, the fourth part continues, things are

[120] Jenness, "Myths of the Carrier Indians," 240.

now different today. The people live all over and the reason for that is that many years ago a squirrel portended that a great sickness or calamity was about to be fall the people. The warning was interpreted as a sign from *Uttake*, this frightened the people and so they dispersed and settled where they are still found today.

In the first part of the story *Uttake* is accredited with the creation of all peoples, the whites, the Dakelh, and the Sekani; *Uttake* created everybody. All are connected through him, but he bestowed each with their own unique message. The same theme is repeated in the final two parts at a micro-level vis-à-vis the Dakelh and their neighbours. All came from the same source and settled in the same place but something happened that caused them to separate. *Uttake* had sent them down a sign (the why is not revealed). Through myth *Uttake* is integrated into their own history. Archaeologists – contrary to Jenness' conclusions – have also suggested that a large community existed at Temlaham and Mosquito Flats, in the not too distant past. The Witsuwit'en no doubt knew that, and they implicate *Uttake* in the genesis of that community and its subsequent disbanding.

Myth II: "The Gambler"

The myth introduces an inveterate gambler who in one night of gambling stakes and loses all his possessions: his hair, his wife, his children, and his parents. Having nothing else with which to gamble he leaves his village in poverty and despair and wanders away into the woods alone and weeping. After wandering alone for some time he comes across a small house; he approaches it and is greeted by a man's voice inviting him to enter. His host treats him kindly, dresses him, feeds him and makes him a bed. In the morning his host invites him to gamble, the gambler accepts but he finds his luck has

not changed. When all seems lost his host teaches him a trick – how to never lose sight of the marked stick – to change his gambling fortunes and to pull that bad luck out by the weeds. Before the two separate the host reveals himself as a rabbit and gives him some blankets to wager and offers him his shin as a gambling stick. The gambler returns home. He is met there by his old adversary who spots the easy mark and invites him to gamble. The gambler accepts but because he is equipped with his new skill it is the gambler who is victorious. He wins back not only his wife, children and his parents but also the wife, children and parents of his adversary! Over time the gambler becomes very rich. Then, one day at the height of his success, a big man in a large hat appears before him. The man is quickly revealed as *Uttake*, and *Uttake* announces that that he is prepared to gamble; he will wager the sky for the entire country and its inhabitants. Not without some hesitation the gambler agrees to the stakes and the two decide on a best of three contest. The gambler wins the first round and *Uttake* the second. The stage is set for a thrilling finish. But before the decisive round the gambler is so frightened at the prospect of losing such a large stake he refuses to continue and says, "Let us stop. It is not good to keep on gambling."[121] The contest ends and so does the myth.

In this story *Uttake* is familiar with but inimical to Dakelh games. Gambling, as we see in this myth and know from the ethnography and historical documents, was not only a common pastime but a source of prestige, a form of reciprocity and integral to some Indigenous economies.[122] But it was also the object of much hostility for

[121] Jenness, "The Myths of the Carrier Indians," 162.

[122] On the prestige and economic value of gambling in this religious milieu, see Gerald R. Desmond, "Gambling Among the Yakima," PhD Diss. (Washington: the Catholic University of America, 1952).

missionaries and traders, albeit for different reasons. It was the presence of gamblers, for example, that so discouraged the Oblates form their work at Tse-Kya. In this myth, the legitimacy of the activity is not questioned until *Uttake* comes onto the scene and only then are the Dakelh prompted to reconsider it, but it is their decision to reconsider. *Uttake* does not tell or force the gambler to stop gambling, both are willing to go along with it, but the presence of *Uttake* means that he needs to think about it. Although the gambler stops this particular match there remains ambivalence toward gambling. *Uttake* does not prohibit it; it is the gambler who gives it second thought after he considers the stakes and the opponent. Moreover, it is possible that the problem that *Uttake* has with the gambler is not that he is gambling but that he is cheating. He might be making a moral admonition within the context of the game and not placing a value on the game itself.

Myth III: "The Sky Boy and the Magic Arrow"

In the myth "The Sky Boy and the Magic Arrows" collected at Hagwilgate and Fort Fraser, *Uttake* sends his son to assist a village whose children had been kidnapped by a malicious woman. The myth opens with a group of boys at play on a sandy beach some distance from their village. The play is interrupted when a big woman comes along and captures them. She rounds them all up, seals their eyes shut with spruce gum and puts them in a large box. However, one boy, a slave child, escapes and restores his sight by applying grease to loosen the spruce gum. He returns to the village and reports what happened. The village despairs over news and the people began to weep. One of the tears, shed by a chief's wife, falls to the ground and begins to tremble; amazed at the animation, she picks it up tucked it into her belt. The tear changes into a child and the woman later

gives birth, but not to a Dakelh baby, to a white baby. The child grows into a tall and handsome boy and one day asks his parents why it is that he is the only child in the village. Finding his parents evasive he takes the question to the escaped slave who tells him the full story of the big woman and the kidnapping. Upon hearing that, the boy persuades the slave to help him search for the woman and the captives. The two take a canoe back down to the sandy beach. The slave is made to stand guard at the boat while the other child leaves to track down the woman. He is able to find her in short time, and the woman is immediately struck by the boy's beauty. She greets him cordially, invites him back to her house and proposes that the two marry. Inside her house he sees the bones of the children strewn everywhere and in that way the fate of the children is made painfully clear to the boy. The woman pays no mind to his realization, still captivated by his beauty, she asks, "How did your mother make you skin so white and beautiful?" The boy responds that when he was a young boy he had his face chiseled with a stone. The woman is so admiring of the boy's features she requests that he make her beautiful by the same method. After much hesitation, a ploy to further convince the woman of her own desire, the boy agrees. The woman lies down in preparation for the surgery and the boy brings the stone fast down upon her head crushing her skull. Afterwards he gathers up the bones of the children, stacks them in a pile and asks the sun to circle around them and restore them to life.[123] After the resurrection, the boy leads everyone back to the village where he boy remains there with his parents for many years. One day out of the blue he calls to his father and asks him to gather all the men in the village and have them carve as many arrows for him as they can. The request is readily accepted and his house is quickly

[123] The theme of Uttake raising the dead is noted elsewhere, particularly in myths that contain specific mention of Uttake. Interestingly, the theme is notably absent in Dakelh, Witsuwit'en and Gitksan prophet narratives.

filled. Once it is all packed up the boy announced he is returning to the sky to be with his real father. He explains that his father had sent him down because the people in the village were so poor and unhappy, but now that the children have been restored to life his job is finished so he is returning home. After he gives that speech he fires arrows one after another until they form a ladder reaching to the top of the sky. As he climbs over the arrows the people watched him ascend until he disappeared from view. Once out of sight the people retire to their houses and when all the doors are shut they hear a noise like heavy rain. Once the noise subsides the people go outside and see that "all the arrows had fallen to earth in a pile."[124]

The opening scenes turn on a tragedy: the youthful play is shattered by abduction and death. When the lone survivor, a slave, returns home with news of the massacre the village is reduced to tears. One of the tears shed by the wife of a chief is unusual; because there is something animate about it, the woman tucks it into her bosom and from that tear a child is born, who is later revealed as the son of *Uttake*. It is the tears, or prayers, as they are often conflated in myth, "in the sight of God tears are prayers", that prompted *Uttake* to send down his son.[125] The action is beneficent, *Uttake* is beseeched and he sends help. The child he sends is not Dakelh but he is not completely exogenous either. He is born of a Dakelh woman and socialized as Dakelh. If this birth is read to echo the Jesus story, then, Jesus is as much Dakelh as he is from somewhere else. When the boy resurrects the dead children, accomplishing what he was sent to do, he retires, withdraws from public life until his eventual return to the sky. Part of the missionary kerygma is that God sent his son to help a despairing people by offering them the possibility of

[124] Jenness, "The Myths of the Carrier Indians," 165.

[125] Jenness, "The Myths of the Carrier Indians," 127.

everlasting life, and all of those elements are present in the story. While the Dakelh may have been told by missionaries and others that they were in dire straits, it is doubtful that the Dakelh accepted the missionaries at their word, but the kerygma may have captured their interest enough to tell a story about it.

Something else of interest is accomplished in this myth: the relationship between *Uttake* and the Dakelh is configured on the same order as that between chiefs and commoners (or nobility and everyone else). In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Dakelh society was composed of various sub-sections, horizontally divided into clans and smaller units called houses and vertically divided into three classes (Nobles, Commoners and Slaves). The nobility – clan and house chiefs – were elevated to their position by the fact that they claimed ownership of clan titles (honorifics) and all the land and resources attached to them. In exchange for rights of access to the land and its products, individuals owed their house chiefs a modicum of respect and reciprocation. Chiefs, for example, could anticipate the support of his or her house members whenever he or she gave a potlatch; conversely, when a chief was entertained at a potlatch he or she was obliged to re-distribute the goods received among members of his or her own house. The idiom of reciprocity that informs chief and commoner relations betrays the contrastive characteristics that lie at the heart of chieftainship: wealth and aggrandizement on the one hand and generosity and liberality on the other. The people are expected to contribute to the wealth of the chief and in that way also to contribute to the prestige of the titles; a prestige in which he or she also shares by virtue of the fact that titles are owned collectively by the house. The chief, for his or her part, is expected to return what he or she has to the people, to assist with mediation and to foster a positive community culture

that he or she can draw from in times of need to serve his or her own interests and/or the interests of the house. Chiefly authority springs from his or her control of material and symbolic resources (i.e. crests and titles). Economic and symbolic capital taken together consolidate chiefly power.[126] While it is true that titles were inherited, possession of them was never certain and never permanent. House members could withdraw their support from a chief if they felt for whatever reason he was not living up to the responsibilities expected of him or her. In addition to allocating usufruct rights, coordinating defense, and generally standing up for the house, chiefs were expected to relate to their house members with "pity."

Joanne Fiske in her work with the Babine Lake First Nation evinces the notion of pity in a way that is helpful in this setting. Fiske writes that it is incumbent on those individuals who hold titles to pity those who do not, according to Fiske, "to 'pity' is to recognize the circumstances of another and to show sympathy, concern, and understanding. Respected persons will say, 'I pity her/him' ('I feel for her/him'), meaning that they understand another's situation and will respond generously if called upon."[127] To "feel for" an individual is not about a display of empathetic emotion but a rational idiom instantiated through practice: the chief is obliged to pity to, to look after, to feed and provide for members of his or her family and house. As a contemporary Babine put it, "Our laws made the chiefs responsible for feeding us."[128] Chiefs pity the less fortunate, in that they advocate and provide for them. Not everyone can hold a title but it

[126] Antonia Mills adds that this authority is further bolstered by a privileged access to the supernatural.

[127] Jo-Anne Fiske and Betty Patrick, *Cis Dideen Kat (When Plumes Rise): The Way of Life of the Lake Babine Nation* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000), 55.

[128] Ibid., 133.

is incumbent upon those who do to pity those who do not. Pity and the attendant notions of liberality and compensation are integral to Babine and Dakelh sociality.

The relationship between *Uttake* and the Dakelh is also conceived of in terms of pity; *Uttake* is literally a Great Chief, because of his capacity for pity. In those myths where *Uttake* is said to respond to the entreaties of the people to ameliorate a given situation he is moved to act out of "pity." In the myth of the sky boy and the magic arrows, the chief's wife conceives for *Uttake's* pity, "for in the sight of God tears are prayers."[129]

In myths where *Uttake* intercedes in human affairs, it is almost always pity that motivates him to act. Reference to one last myth appropriately titled, "Do Not Mock the Poor," should really drive home the point I want to make that ideal chiefly characteristics are conflated with *Uttake* in myth as a means of indigenizing Christianity. The myth begins with a story of the humiliation of a poor old man by a wealthy chief. The old man is a commoner and has to depend on the goodness of the chief to be fed, but each time the chief feeds him he demands that the old man dance for him. The old man's nephews are eventually put onto the sufferings of the uncle and are angered about it. They have it in for the chief and conspire to kill him. Their conspiracy succeeds and after the murder the boys flee the village. In hiding they amass a number of animal skins to serve as compensation for the murder they had committed. They return to the village and offer their skins (along with their own their sister) to the new chief as *wergild* (compensation for a crime). The chief accepts, and everything seems to return to normal. However, through a series of events one nephew is accused of trying to seduce a noble woman and in anger the chief has the four nephews killed. Shortly afterward a younger brother of the

[129] Jenness, "Myths of the Carrier Indians," 126.

nephews is making his way back to the village and is intercepted by a stranger. The stranger tells the young man that his brothers have been killed during his absence and his sister is now being treated as a slave. The youth and the stranger concoct a plan – that involves deception and dressing in the skin of a medicine man – to burn the village and rescue the sister. The plan is a success and in the aftermath the stranger reveals himself as *Uttake*. He subsequently tells the siblings to gather up the bones of their brothers and to bring them to him so that he might resurrect them. After the nephews are resurrected and reunited with their brother and sister *Uttake* announces, "The people mocked your sister because she was poor and had no one to protect her. That is why I helped you."[130]

In this myth, as in the others, *Uttake* helps the poor and pities those who need it. He is a provider. Yet, he is no panacea. He does not help the old man, and he does not help the nephews, but he is present in the story (and that he helps a woman may be of unique significance, but I am not developing that line here). *Uttake* appears in myth as a family man (living in the sky with his children), as a chief-type figure who has the power to pity, to protect and to provide for those who need it. He is not described as an animal spirit being, in no myth is *Uttake* referred to as an animal – a striking departure from all other mythological figures. He is configured as a medicine person, a shaman, almost but not quite, he does not enter a trance state and does not perform traditional healings, but he has the ability to raise the dead. He is not a trickster or a culture hero who transforms the landscape. He is not a commoner that enters the system from below, he is not an "orphan child" of which there are many myths; he is literally "the chief above" who pities the poor when he is moved to do so, usually at the sight of tears.

[130] Jenness, "The Carrier Indians," 184.

Uttake's concern with the poor as reflected in myth is echoed in the material on Bini. The most frequently mentioned prophecy in the Bini narratives has nothing to do with the arrival of white people, an epidemic or any other cataclysm but is the claim that the poor will soon be rich and the rich will soon be poor. In addition, one of the most frequently cited of Bini's teachings is the instruction: do not laugh at the poor. In the narratives and myth the chiefly concern with pity is amplified in the character of *Uttake*, his person or his teachings.

The conflation of *Uttake* with a chief is no real surprise. Doubtless missionaries and traders played up the comparison in the service of fostering paternalistic relationships in their own favour. Consider also that the name for God in Chinook Jargon is *Sagahlee Tyee*, or the chief above.[131] While the traders may have played up the connection, the Dakelh are the ones who appropriate Christianity, and make it work for them in the social field; in short they do all the intellectual labour. Why invest that energy? I argue that it is part of the process of indigenization; if Christianity is going to matter, and it does matter whether a person is for it or against it, it needs to be local. There may well be another reason. When God is made out as a chief, specifically, as someone who pities the poor then it is morally incumbent upon missionaries and colonial officials, who also express their allegiance to the same God – and who perhaps profess a more direct relationship with him – to act accordingly.[132] The Dakelh and others morally oblige the missionaries,

[131] George Gibbs, *Dictionary of the Chinook Jargon, or Trade Language of Oregon* (Middlesex: The Echo Library, 2007), 34.

[132] Cf. Smith's discussion of reciprocity in his comparison of Jonestown and Melanesian cargo cults in Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

the traders and other colonial agents to act. They do their part making it incumbent on the others to give something in return.

When myths are told in the Indigenous context the act of telling socially binds the tellers and listeners together keeping their collective moral expectations alive. When myths or narratives are told to anthropologists the morality of the narrative may be present but the audience differs and thus the telling may be contrived to address the power imbalance endemic to the relationship. The mythographers, Jenness and Barbeau, were employees of the state and while they may have claimed, following Sapir's commendation, to remain impartial, the Dakelh, could not have failed to make the connection that they when they told their stories to anthropologists they were telling them to stories outsiders who had some privileged connection with the colonial State.[133] Isaac Tens ends his narrative to Barbeau conscious of his audience: "I have often gathered and thought how good it would be for the younger people it the government would give only four good instructors such as a blacksmith and the trades, which the younger people could settle down and learn. Because the government wants us to become citizens and what would be the use of my becoming a citizen or any other of the Gitksan, we are all blind as to all walks of life. Until they are able to do this, they should not ask us to become citizens."[134]

In this chapter, I introduced the data on Bini and other prophets evincing that while Bini was doubtless a historical person the richest data source, the oral narratives are

[133] Sapir advised his ethnologists that there was to be "no communications touching on Indian affairs sent to the Department of Indian Affairs without the consent of the proper authorities within the Geological survey. [Otherwise] we will find ourselves drifting into the position of genteel spies for the Department of Indian Affairs. We cannot afford to be misunderstood by any Indians in Canada." Nowry, *Man of Mana*, 197.

[134] Tens, B-F-322.3, Barbeau Files, BCA.

neither concerned with nor analytically useful for establishing Bini's historicity. That does not mean they are confused, garbled, misremembered, or that they are not true. On the contrary, they are true stories, first stories, and in that way have the gospel truth about them. I also considered the data's potential fit with familiar analytical concepts frequently deployed in treatments of Indigenous religions in the Americas and elsewhere. The three most likely candidates the shaman, the Orpheus tale, and the Vision Quest do not clearly illuminate the full range of Bini's alleged activities. Those conceptualizations, in my opinion, miss the importance of Bini's role as progenitor of Christianity. However, the task of indigenization did not fall to Bini alone. Witsuwit'en myth also suggests an intellectual struggle with indigenizing Christianity. Lastly, although I did not dwell on it, yet it is apparent for its lack, the data on myth and ritual does not betray a concern with the loss of resources or smallpox (or any other epidemic for that matter). It is true that a few narratives express a concern with colonial activities and that disease is mentioned in a couple of them; however, the circumstances of Bini's journey, his return with Christian paraphernalia and subsequent teachings dominate the representations. What then, might they be used to reveal? I just hinted at it: they are part of the quest for instantiating Christian origins in the social field.

Chapter 8

Bini, Prophet Movements, Ritual and Social Formation

In the previous chapter I evinced that prophet movements and Witsuwit'en myth betray efforts at indigenizing Christianity. In this chapter I focus on the question of motivations: why bother to indigenize Christianity? More specifically, why indigenize Christianity near the close of the first quarter of the nineteenth century? The answer to both questions has to do with the form and content of Christian religiosity that entered the social field in relation to the socio-economic changes of the inner orbits brought on by the HBC after its amalgamation with the NWC in 1821. The mid 1820s was a period of HBC socio-economic intrusion into local social spaces. The company pushed hard to attenuate relations among people within the inner orbits and to sever relations within the broad social field. The historian J.C. Yerbury refers to the period between1821 and 1860 in the subarctic as the trading post dependency period, a period characterized by relaxed and predictable relations between the company and locals and the establishment of stable populations of "trading post Indians."[1] My read of conditions in the western subarctic, namely, the upper Fraser-Skeena watershed, is that the emergence of prophet religions during the trading post dependency period gives reason to think that the period was less settled and stable than Yerbury suggests.

To facilitate my illustration of the foregoing claims I have divided the chapter into three parts. In the first part I survey the various things about Christianity that initially appealed to the peoples of the upper Fraser-Skeena watershed. In the second part I treat

[1] J.C. Yerbury, *The Subarctic Indians and the Fur Trade 1680-1860* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986).

the indigenization of Christianity as accomplished by Bini and the prophets through ritual practice. In the third part, I test the predicative capacity of my thesis, when Christianity is employed as a religion of resistance its form matters, by reference to the Coast Ts'mysen indigenization of Methodist Christianity.

Initial Interests in Christianity

As seen in the previous chapter, the narrators in the Barbeau collection alleged that Bini was the first to speak of Christianity. However, when that claim is juxtaposed against the social field of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries there is reason to doubt it. My guess is that the Gitksan and Witsuwit'en narrators were also aware that the claim was historically incongruous. Although it does not really matter if they were conscious of it or not, all I want to say is that they were not aspiring to be amateur historians. Bini, the prophets and the narrators acted and spoke as if the prophets were the progenitors of Christianity because they wanted to give it a local origin.[2] But indigenization cannot happen overnight. A people need to be familiar with a thing in order to recognize it as their own. The prophet movements addressed and informed the local audiences and were the end product of a long process of conscious thoughtful reflection upon Christianity. The process was sustained by a continuous engagement and interest with Christianity that began before Simon Fraser erected the first trading posts west of the Rockies. I have already hinted at some of the things that Dakelh, Sekani and Gitksan found interesting about Christianity. They were interested in Christianity as a new source of power that offered access to material goods; augmented relations with the

[2] While I am conflating Bini and the narrative accounts of his life, I am aware that the two are addressing different audiences and will consider that point shortly, but I do consider them all participants in a similar process.

supernatural; added clarity to moral obligations; assisted with healing arts; offered a window into the world of the fur traders; and as a source of entertainment or as something that felt good. In this section I want to more fully illuminate some of those things interests. Doing so will evince, in the first place, that there was indeed an interest in Christianity and, in the second place, my claim that a social interest in Christianity (e.g. as a social formation) is a different order of interest than a narrow interest in the practical or thaumaturgical value of Christianity (e.g. securing wealth, warding off danger, or providing access to a new power). The insight that there was a social interest in Christianity, so far as I know, has yet to be developed in the setting of the North American prophet religions.

Bini's prophecies, in so far as they concerned the acquisition of technology and new possessions, have been compared to the cargo cults of the South Pacific. Perhaps a better example of such a prophet movement from the west of the Rockies might be the Smohalla or Dreamer Religion from the middle Columbia. Smohalla preached of the coming destruction of whites, the return of the ancestors and a renewal and fructification of the land.[3] The relationship between Christianity and material resources was not always coached in mystical terms. It is well known that in the early years of missions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries parents sent their children to mission schools anticipating that the schools would provide access to literacy and material benefits.[4] That process was begun even before missions and mission schools were established west of the Rockies, families on the Columbia Plateau during the 1820s and 1830s sent children,

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[3] Leslie Spier, *The Prophet Dance of the Northwest and its Derivatives: the Source of the Ghost Dance* (Menasha, WI: George Banta, 1935), 41-49.

[4] Susan Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing: Nineteenth-Century Protestant Missions and Tsimshian Christianity* (McGill-Queen's University Press: Montreal, 2003), 23.

a total of seven boys, to the mission school at Red River. According to Larry Cebula in his book on Christianity on the Columbia Plateau, one motivation for doing so was the thought that direct access to Euro-American spirit power would afford material desiderata.[5] Harmon observed during his tenure west of the Rockies that the Dakelh thought his books and navigation instruments were somehow linked to weather control.[6] The connection between religion, Christianity, and the ability to control the weather has been made elsewhere: Smohalla, for example, was alleged to have predicted meteorological events.

It was also thought that Christianity could augment spiritual resources or symbolic capital. If Vine Deloria Jr. was right about there being little history of proselytization in Indigenous religion, there was at least a rich history of borrowing. It is thought, for example, that the Ts'mysen developed secret societies from sustained contact with Wakashan speaking peoples to the south. Similarly, there is reason to think based on the historical and archaeological records that the Witsuwit'en and Dakelh developed the crest/clan system and transformed their guardian spirit motif through contact with the Gitksan and Nuxalk respectively.[7] Christianity, like the secret societies and the guardian spirit motif, may have offered an additional angle on relations with supernatural agents. Christianity, whether Oblate or Jesuit, expressed in terms of an individual's relationship with Jesus or some other deity(s) as witnessed in prayer, resonates with the guardian

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[5] Larry Cebula, *Plateau Indians and the quest for Spiritual Power, 1700-1850* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 75-81.

[6] Harmon, *Harmon's Journal*, 124.

[7] Irving Goldman, "The Alkatcho Carrier: Historical Background of Crest Prerogatives," *American Anthropologist* 43, no.3 (1941): 396. Goldman suggests the lower Dakelh borrowed crest prerogatives from the Nuxalk.

spirit motif where in both cases there is a one on one relationship with a spiritual being. Thus, Christianity may have offered an alternative power that could be called upon for help in a fashion not too dissimilar to the uses made of prayer. Speaking of prayer, when the geologist George Dawson stopped among the Dakelh in the 1870s he remarked that they were all very diligent with their prayers. Christianity, as an alternative source of power, could also have served as a source of prestige for the elite or those wanting to challenge the status quo. Such a use would have been particularly appealing to people of the hierarchical Gitksan and Witsuwit'en societies.[8]

Christianity was also in some ways compatible with Witsuwit'en and Gitksan morality. Lizette Hall, when recounting the stories of her father, Louis B. Prince at Fort St. James, told that Christianity, consistent with Witsuwit'en morality, encouraged respect and non-abuse of all living things.[9] Animal-human relations are central feature of Witsuwit'en morality. Among the Ts'mysen, Christianity encouraged reciprocity and generosity, which are definitive of their sociality.[10] Moreover, evangelical Christianity as presented to the Ts'mysen, and I suggest in the course of this chapter that the Dakelh appreciated Catholicism in evangelical terms, corresponded with the importance of transformation and human fulfillment through power acquisition.[11] The diaries of Arthur Wellington Clah reveal his personal struggle to lead a Christian life and attributed his success to those efforts. The Salish prophet Shining Shirt from the Columbia Plateau

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[8] Neylan, *The Heaven's are Changing*, 44.

[9] Hall, *The Carrier*, 9-10.

[10] Ibid., 167.

[11] Ibid., 75.

predicted that the Catholic missionaries would come with a new moral law and a new way of praying and the advent of both those things would bring peace to the land.[12]

Christianity, as figured into animal-human relations, the guardian spirit complex, and the social fabric complemented the pursuit of the good life by helping to secure a supply of material resources and long life.[13] The complement was present even if it did not align perfectly with what a missionary might take as the good life, the Jesuit Father Gregory Mengarini on the Columbia Plateau complained that Interior Salish prayers, "consisted in asking to live a long time, to kill plenty of animals and enemies and to steal the greatest number of horses possible."[14] While Mengarini saw in those prayers evidence of insincerity, the desires seem consistent with the aspirations of his Christian contemporaries the world over Christian: commercial success, safety and security.

I have already mentioned that Christianity was used in the healing arts. I argued in an earlier chapter that scholars ought not to over determine the role of religion in a peoples response to epidemics but that does not mean it had no place in times of illness. The relation is quite familiar in Christianity, which has long been valued for its healing powers and it continues, as many religions do, to provide comfort to the dying and bereaved. The Dakelh are no exception, Christianity was used as a source of power during times of illness. The Dakelh Ease Paul attributed the cause of one of the

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[12] Jacqueline Peterson, *Sacred Encounters: Father De Smet and the Indians of the Rocky Mountain West* (Norman, OK: Oklahoma University Press, 1993), 17.

[13] Cebula, *Sacred Encounters*, 79-89; Mills, *Eagle Down*, 76.

[14] Peterson, *Sacred Encounters*, 24.

nineteenth century smallpox epidemics to a failure to observe Christianity.[15] The Dakelh Chief Kwah famously expressed the desire to be buried as a Christian.[16] In the early twentieth century, at Port Simpson, Christianity was credited with curing an individual afflicted with a great sprit sickness.[17]

Christianity, its forms and festivals, was also a source of entertainment. Christmas and New Year's Day were occasions for celebration at many trading posts.[18] In addition to those holidays, Nakazdli elder William Julian remembered that the Easter Season, Feast of Ascension, and Corpus Christi were major festivals that brought people from all over to celebrations at Stuart Lake.[19] On the coast, where Protestant missions were more prominent, Christmas and New Year's were depicted by the Ts'mysen of the late nineteenth century as highly festive affairs. Moreover, the historical and ethnographic records are replete with references to the attractions of Christian hymns and songs. The Jesuits in the Northwest, for example, composed music in Indigenous languages and were inspired to write Christian words to Indigenous melodies.[20] The music found a captive

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[15] Diamond Jenness, "The Carrier Indians of the Bulkley River – Their Social and Religious Lives," *Anthropological Paper no. 25, Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 133* (Washington: Smithsonian, 1943), 559.

[16] His reasons for doing so remain obscure. Lizette Hall gives the following reasons as learned from her father: "When K'wah was dying, he told his family to bury him at the outlet of Stuart Lake. So that the salmon would never fail to return. (Evidently he was a dreamer of salmon). And so he was buried there at his request." Hall, *The Carrier, My People*, 63. It strikes me that Kwah was also indigenizing Christianity; he was making Christianity a part of the landscape while using it to secure something positive for the community.

[17] Jay Miller, "Shamans, Prophets and Christ." In *Tsimshian Religion in Historical Perspective*, ed. Jay Miller and Carol M. Eastman (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), 144-46.

[18] Harmon, for example, wrote about charged up and excited New Year's festivities. See Daniel Williams Harmon, *Harmon's Journal 1800-1819*, ed. Kaye Lamb (Surrey BC: Touchwood, 2006).

[19] Sam, *Nak'azdli Elders Speak*, 52-61.

[20] Cebula, *Plateau Indians*, 120.

audience; missionaries in the Columbian Plateau in the nineteenth century remarked that the people there were very fond of music. Given its presence and appeal it is unfortunate that the place of music is so often underdetermined within the ethnographic record. The Barbeau Files contain a rich collection of Ts'mysen dirges and in those files William Beynon remarked to Barbeau that it was impossible to understand much of Ts'mysen culture without an appreciation of its music, specifically, the dirges.[21] Cebula has made a connection between songs and power, specifically that learning songs augments spiritual power.[22] There may be something to that. While we cannot say for certain, the songs were doubtless about a point of interest and curiosity.

Lastly, curiosity motivated interest in Christianity. Curiosity is very difficult to quantify but surely some people were curious. Consider the stories of the prophets, of a god becoming man, of Paul's dramatic conversion, of the first Christian martyrs, and of the rich catalogue of Christian hymnology, prayer and song. There are many things that might pique someone's interest. The deserters, those employees who leaped the walls to spend time in local communities, those who married into local communities, and those who worked alongside Indigenous people shared their knowledge and interest in Christian stories. Exaggerating or fabricating the stories would have made them all the more interesting. When the Catholic missionaries came to the Dakelh they attracted an audience, according to Demers and Nobili both men preached to hundreds if not

[21] Barbeau's interests in dirges were motivated in large degree because he desired to them compare with Buddhist chants. Barbeau thought the peoples of the Northwest Coast were descendants of Ghengis Khan. Barbeau Files, B.F.154, BCA.

[22] Cebula, *Plateau Indians*, 120. Specifically, Cebula writes: "Sacred songs were a large part of traditional religion. Part of the vision quest was learning a song of power, and the Indians were eager to learn the songs of powerful whites" (120).

thousands of Dakelh.[23] Lizette Hall recounted her father's stories about the visits of Demers and Nobili more than a hundred years after they had already come and gone.[24]

Some Witsuwit'en and Gitksan were receptive to Christian notions because they were interesting and novel. The interest extends back to the beginning of the nineteenth century if not earlier. Remember that Daniel Harmon wrote that he had discussions with the Dakelh about Christianity. The religion was inextricable from the quality of relations that developed among those attached to the fur traders and the peoples of the upper Fraser and Skeena Rivers from a very early date. Thus, the Witsuwit'en, Dakelh, Gitksan and Sekani had to come up with some read on Christianity so as to converse with the newcomers and to situate them in the changing social field.

While there were some interesting things about Christianity, not everyone wanted something to do with it. Remember, for example, that the Babines resisted Christian missionaries, according to Margret Tobey "as late as 1958, there were indications that the Church had yet to gain the unanimous support of the Babine Lake Carrier."[25] The narratives collected by Barbeau convey the sense that Bini experienced some resistance from traditional shamans because of his Christianity. The Witsuwit'en also resisted missionaries to varying degrees. There were many reasons to refuse Christianity at least

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[23] On Demers' first voyage to the upper Fraser-Skeena headwaters region he held missions at each fort and mission station he erected and baptized no fewer than 436 children on his first visit to New Caledonia. Blanchet, *Historical Sketches*, 51. On Nobili's second voyage to the region he conducted missions at Fort Babine and Fort St. James. At the latter place, beginning in January, he began a "vigorous campaign of instruction" that he continued "until the beginning of Lent." McGloin, "John Nobili," 200. Given the number of child baptisms, the places visited the professed vigor of Nobili's program, and that Dakelh remembered those visits so many years after the fact suggests that it is not unreasonable to think that their audiences approached a thousand or more.

[24] Hall, *The Carrier*, 85-86.

[25] Margaret L. Tobey, "Carrier," in *Handbook of North American Indians* 6, ed. June Helm (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1981), 430.

the versions imposed by missionaries and traders. I make the point now to caution against thinking of an interest in Christianity in terms of whole-scale consumption. I think that the resistance of missionaries, as strange as it may sound, is actually significant to its indigenization; resistance, in its own way, is a form of indigenization.

The historical and ethnographic records contain the narratives of many Indigenous peoples who refused Christianity. There is no doubt about that, but does not explain why some remained interested in Christianity. It seems easy enough to outright refuse Christianity, but that was not the case. The questions remain. Why bother with it? More specifically, why take the pains to claim ownership of and indigenize Christianity? If Christianity was approached only as new supernatural power with certain practical benefits why was there such an effort to localize and socialize it, to give it origins in the upper Fraser and Skeena watersheds? Why is it so important to have Christianity a local part of the environment?[26]

Before proceeding to the next section in which I take up those questions directly, a word of clarification is in order with respect to the relation I see between the Bini narrators and Bini's activities. To wit I have been conflating the efforts of Bini with the efforts of the narrators. They are not necessarily the same. They had different audiences and operated in different contexts. Bini was operative in the nineteenth century at the zenith of the fur trade. While there was no fur trade post in Bini's territory there were posts on the fringes and before that there was the coastal trade. The posts and coastal trade drew the Witsuwit'en into complex trading relationships with the Gitksan and Coast Ts'mysen to the west and with the Dakelh to the east. Bini's audiences were the

[26] I am reminded also of the image of an Iroquois cross depicting an Indigenous Jesus (perhaps Iroquois) in Jacqueline Peterson's illustrative text *Sacred Encounters*.

Witsuwit'en and their neighbours and possibly also a few traders and Oblate missionaries that passed through the region before the 1870s. Bini, without question, was anticipating the arrival of the latter. The emphasis on anticipation reverses the missiological line that takes Bini as being caught by the Catholics by surprise.

The narratives, on the other hand, were collected in the 1920s, during the decline of the fur trade period and the near the beginning of the era of contemporary Aboriginal politics, government intervention and regulation of Aboriginal affairs and settler intrusion.[27] The audience of the narrators was neither the Witsuwit'en nor their neighbours but two agents of the state: Barbeau and Jenness. In addition to the fact that both Jenness and Barbeau were employed by the Ethnology Division of the Department of Mines and Geography, Jenness lived in a house frequently used by government officials and the wages of Beynon and Cox, two locals, were paid by the government. There was a power imbalance between narrator and audience. The narrators could not have been but aware of their audience. When the narrators gave their Bini stories they may have told them cautiously attempting to portray Bini as a good Christian in an effort to highlight their equality with their perceived audience as well as to distance themselves from potential criticism.[28] But they also told their own history, they told of things that happened in the past, and although they must have been aware that the church disagreed

[27] On the period of Aboriginal relations with the Canadian State, settler intrusion after the Fraser Gold Rush (1858), and the onset of the period of contemporary Aboriginal politics (turn of the twentieth century), see Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002).

[28] Arens' book on cannibalism, for example, suggests that Indigenous informants, when wanting to distance themselves from the past, amplified how big of a problem cannibalism was in the old days, even if it had never been engaged in with much frequency if at all. In the setting that interests me here, however, there is not a concern with distancing the past from the present but with establishing a continuation. See W. Arens, *The Man Eating Myth: Anthropology and Anthropophagy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

with some of those things, they were adamant above all that Bini was the first priest. The narrators explained to the agents of the State what Bini had explained to them. Many of the narrators thus remembered Bini as the person who brought home Christianity. Does that mean they remembered him correctly? I do not know, but what it does mean is that that those things that Bini did at that time were important to them and they hammer that point home when they tell his story. It is certainly not that the stories were fabricated. So many different narrators with different group allegiances, Gitksan, Witsuwit'en and Dakelh, have so many similar things to say. Moreover, the narratives are compatible with what we know from Morice and the early Oblate journals. On the one hand, the narratives have to be appraised with the audience in mind. On the other hand, given the various sources on prophets, the close proximity of the narrators to the person of Bini and other prophets, the narratives cannot be fictitious. According to the narratives, Bini is mythmaker even if the narrators also contribute to the myth. I am assuming, and I hope it is not too much of an assumption, that what they remembered about Bini was also important during the life of Bini.

Bini and his colleagues were constructing a rhizomatic node of Christianity. Christianity was the product of cobbling into formation a series of crossed lines. The formation was directed toward satisfying a number of interests, chief among which was an interest in articulating an identity in religious terms by cultivating sentiments of affinity among some peoples and affirming the sentiments of estrangement felt among others. Bini and his prophetic colleagues were engaged in a conscious effort to make Christianity meaningful, to construct a shared idiom through which they could relate to outsiders, those from whom they feel estranged, that neutralized hierarchies and

preserved group difference within the setting of a universal Christianity. I illustrate those efforts as reflected in prophet ritual in the next section.

Prophet Ritual and Social Formation

Many scholars have conflated the material and spiritual appeal of Christianity seeing in it the effort to secure tangible benefits by capturing the "spirit of the white man."[29] There may be something to the explanation but I am saying there is much more to its appeal. Prophet movements are indicative of an interest in Christianity beyond the narrow material and spiritual ends just discussed. Prophet movements, what Cebula called, for example, the Columbia Religion, were conscious efforts at indigenizing Christianity in the interest of social formation. They were a reflective and thoughtful articulation of Christianity that provided a master narrative that stitched together the Indigenous and the Christian on the terms of the former. In this section, I evince why Christianity and prophet movements were effective in achieving those ends and what, specifically, motivated the prophets. In other words, I treat the Bini and related movements collectively as *ritual activity in the interest of social formation* by attending closely to the question of motivations. I will then close the chapter with an epilogue, which intimates how it is that questions of interests and motivations might be useful in appreciating the indigenization of Christianity in other parts of the continent. In that treatment, I argue that Christian form and theology matter in the missionary context, and more specifically that certain forms and theologies matter more than others. Indeed, part of the reason for Christianity's appeal is because of its diverse expressions. If Bini and the prophets were, in a prophetic fashion reminiscent of Liam Clancy, doing what

[29] Cebula, *The Plateau Indians*, 187.

everybody was thinking but could not say, what I have to say may help to explain the indigenization of Christianity elsewhere.

In the interest of social formation Bini and the prophets were drawn to a few things about Christianity. First, they were drawn to an ecstatic element of Christianity that resonated with other local religious forms and which they found particularly attractive for all the reasons that ecstatic religion is said to be attractive; it is cathartic, emotional and affective. Second, the indigenization of Christianity requires that it be indigenized, in other words, Christianity requires a local place of origins. Third, Christianity was a part of a socio-religious response to the efforts of the HBC officers to transform, specifically to truncate, the inner orbits after the 1821 amalgamation of the two fur trading companies. Those efforts were met with a two pronged response wherein the prophets took control of the means of relating to the personnel attached to the fort and later to the missionaries while also requiring that they keep a firm separation. Fourth, the prophets were part of a resistance movement waged against the imposed Christianity of the Catholic and lay missionaries. By the time that the Oblates founded a mission at Stuart Lake the Dakelh already had their own lines on Christianity and when the Oblates did not indulge them they refused to participate in the Oblate system without giving up their rights to participate in Christianity.

Ecstatic Religion

Bini's Christianity was in part an ecstatic form of Christianity. If ecstatic Christianity is attractive for no other reasons it is attractive for its cathartic and affective qualities, like intoxication Christianity can feel good. As we have seen Bini's activities

were related to those of a shaman, a Witsuwit'en *diiyinii*. Shamanism and spirit possession are both characterized by a trance state and alleged communion with the supernatural.[30] In I.M. Lewis' definitive work on ecstatic religion, he defines the trance as "a condition of dissociation, characterized by the lack of voluntary movement, and frequently by automatisms in act and thought, illustrated by hypnotic and mediumistic conditions."[31] The degree to which the Witsuwit'en shamanic experience was ecstatic is difficult to gauge from Jenness' ethnography, but he does indicate it was present when a *diiyinii* was seized or transfixed by a spirit at various stages during his career and when fire-walking.[32] Moreover, Jenness did describe a healing ceremony, presided over by a *kyanyuantan* (a shaman associated with a specific kind of spirit illness), in which the participants were taken up in a frenzied dance which he described as an "extreme paroxysm."[33] In a similar vein, many of the Bini narrators say that Bini entered a trance and that he was taken up into the sky.[34] It was while in a trance that Bini was put onto the content of Christianity. Moreover, Bini shared his ecstatic experience with others by way of a collective dance. Eleven of the twenty oral narratives report that Bini taught dances

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[30] A shaman in the classical sense is one who ascends to the Gods, whereas spirit possession is the descent of the gods onto human beings. Yet, as I.M. Lewis suggests, there is no reason to distinguish between them in form as both entail a seizure by the supernatural in the trance state. See I.M. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion: An Anthropological Study of Spirit Possession and Shamanism* (Hamondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1971).

[31] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 38.

[32] Jenness writes of medicine men that "a spectacular but not uncommon feat was fire-walking … An eyewitness on that occasion stated that after the unconsumed logs from a large fire had been rolled to one side, leaving a bed of red-hot coals and ashes, the medicine man, a Moricetown Indian, walked four times barefooted through the glowing embers and emerged unscathed, although his feet sank nearly 5 inches into the ashes." Jenness, "The Carrier Indians", 566.

[33] Jenness, "The Carrier Indians", 576.

[34] Semedeek, B-F-322.4, Barbeau Files, BCA. According to Semedeek, Bini entered a "trance."

and songs. Paul Dzius, for example, reported "Bini did a lot of dancing, he would dance all the time … When Bini would dance the whole village was supposed to dance with him, they danced together."[35] Isaac Tends described a scene where, "All the people started to cry and moan in the house. And then they got up and danced, they danced with Bini."[36]

There is also reason to think that Bini and others picked up on ecstatic elements of Christianity that were present in the social field. Martha McCarthy suggests that Catholic missiology of the nineteenth century borrowed from revivalist methods developed during the seventeenth-century Counter-Reformation.[37] The Oblate reunions and passion plays were highly sensory and pageantic. While the Oblates did not begin their activity in the upper Fraser and Skeena headwaters until the1860s, they were working in the vicinity of the Rockies as early as the 1840s. If the fur traders introduced the locals to the Judeo-Christian prophets, ecstasy is germane to those texts. We know, as discussed in chapter 6, that at least one (probably more) HBC or NWC employee taught something of an ecstatic Christianity.[38] Lastly, the Methodists on the plains and on the Columbia Plateau used revivals in their missionary program, and from what we know about Indigenous networks there is no reason to think they were not informed of events at their borders.[39]

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[35] Paul Dzius, B-F-322.7, Barbeau Files, BCA.

[36] Isaac Tens, B-F-322.3. Barbeau Files, BCA.

[37] Martha McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth: Oblate Missions to the Dene, 1847-1921* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1995), 3.

[38] According to Jenness, for example, Misambombin (McBean?) "dressed in white clothes and white shoes, strung a rosary around his neck, hung a cross at his side, and sang and danced among them [the Dakelh]."Jenness, "The Carrier Indians," 548.

[39] It is possible that Methodists influenced the "Columbia Religion" to some degree but I have not pursued that line in this dissertation.

An interesting and appealing thing about ecstatic religiosity is that it can so easily cut across denominational lines and social boundaries. It is not the prerogative of any one group or tradition. I.M. Lewis suggests that ecstasy is present in most religious systems and that the forms are easily recognizable. On facing pages in his book *Ecstatic Religion* he insightfully juxtaposes the image of three different women in strikingly similar states of ecstasy: a Haitian woman at a Vodun ceremony, Bernini's ecstasy of St. Teresa, and an American woman at a Pentecostal service. The ecstatic experience is a profoundly powerful religious experience with widespread appeal. In the final lines of Lewis' text he puts the matter "[Ecstatic Religion] celebrates a confident and egalitarian view of man's [sic] relations with the divine, and perpetuates that original accord between God and man which those who have lost the ecstatic mystery can only nostalgically recall in myths of creations, or desperately seek in doctrines of personal salvation."[40]

The ecstatic experience cuts across boundaries and is radically equalizing, it is a human experience in the vein of Victor Turner's *communitas*. For those reasons ecstatic religion can cause consternation among the dominant factions of a society (Turner suggested that the counter culture of the 1960s was drawn together on the experience of *communitas*).[41] While ecstatic religion was centrally located in the inner orbits, as seen through the eyes of the dominant it was peripheral to the larger social field. For the Hudson Bay Company and later the Catholic and Anglican missionaries and colonists gunning for the economic, territorial, social and religious control of the field, (uncontrolled) ecstatic religion was peripheral and undesirable. Thus ecstatic religion

[40] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 205.

[41] Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (New York: Aldine deGruyter, 1969), 96-113.

occupied both the centre and periphery. Far from being contradictory, the "janusesque" feature of ecstatic religion is actually part of its appeal. Consider for example that among the Tungus, the *locus classicus* of shamanism, ecstatic religion served a focal point for Tungus nationalism and resistance against the Soviet regime in post revolutionary Russia.[42]

As a form of religiosity ecstatic religion was appealing for many reasons; it was a vehicle of resistance, an idiom of cross cultural relations and a means of physical catharsis. The latter point is particularly difficult to quantify and thus is easy to undervalue but that does not mean it is insignificant. If the ecstatic experience is intoxicating, if it feels good as it is so often said, then, ecstasy and intoxication will always have some demand.[43] I.M. Lewis also made the connection between ecstasy and intoxication, suggesting that psychiatry is a latent function of shamanism; both have an abreactive function contributing to psychic health and wellness.[44] While there is a lot being said and written these days about the relation between religion and violence, it remains that a lot of people take much comfort in it.

Christian Origins in the Inner Orbits

For Christianity to be more than a curiosity or something of passing interest, for Christianity to matter in a meaningful way it needs to be naturalized, localized or *indigenized*. Through indigenization Bini incorporated Christianity into the local

[42] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 157.

[43] No legal or public service campaign run against illegal drugs can ever extinguish the demand.

[44] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 192-199.

scheme of things and in doing so resolved tensions concerning its possible incongruence.[45] Thus, Bini's efforts were also mythic in the sense meant by Jonathan Z. Smith who suggests that one of the hallmarks of myth is its ability to convincingly account for novelty or to rectify the incongruous.[46] For some years prior to the emergence prophets, Christianity was hovering as it were a stranger in a strange land; always present in the background and never completely out of view.[47] The prophets had an informed audience before they began their work. That makes sense as the impulse to articulate Christianity can only come from previous experience with it. If the prophets' articulation was going to resonate with their countrymen and women, there needed to be some gaming of their audience, he or she needed to know that the forms and content will be understood. If they were completely foreign they would have had no traction.[48]

It is true that some residents of the upper Fraser and Skeena Rivers were receptive to Christian notions because they found them interesting, novel, and of practical use; in other words, for all those reasons discussed in the first part of this chapter. Once the prophets arrived on the scene, however, they offered their own versions of Christianity. The versions were radically local, and freed their audiences from their dependence on

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[45] While I am conflating Bini and the narrative accounts of his life, I know that the two are addressing different audiences. Yet, I do consider the participants in the Bini movement and the later narrators as participants in a similar process.

[46] See, Jonathan Z. Smith, "A Pearl of Great Price and a Cargo of Yams: A Study in Situational Incongruity," in *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

[47] I am also reminded of Liam Clancy's assertion about Dylan that he was always just hanging around, a nuisance for the most part, until he suddenly burst onto the scene. At that point he was able to articulate, according to Clancy, what many wanted to say but could not.

[48] Compare what Northrop Frye has to say about writing: "A writer's desire to write can only come from previous experience with literature [and the novice will] start by imitating whatever he's read, which usually means what the people around him are writing." Northrop Frye, *The Educated Imagination* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1964), 40.

trader and missionary versions. In local versions it was important that God and Jesus spoke in the local idiom. God needed to speak Witsuwit'en, Dakelh and Sekani. It was because Bini related to Jesus and to God on local terms that the Witsuwit'en and Gitksan understood. They were able to relate because, as Moses Sanaus and Constance Cox put it, Bini "got all his knowledge through his dreams and visions."[49] It was through "dreams and visions" that Christianity was brought home. A persistent feature in the Indigenous conversion experiences on this continent is that converts turn their hearts to Christianity only after they are certain that God speaks in their idiom.

Christianity was a tangle of lines until the prophets brought it into some shape and gave it meaning.[50] It was not that Christianity was brought by Bini or the prophets in any historical sense but that Bini gave it *meaning*. The operative distinction, as I have already covered in chapter 7, was that between myth and history. The Catholics had their spiritual specialists in priests and the Witsuwit'en and their neighbours had theirs prophets and shamans. Of the latter two genres, it was the prophets who were made out to most closely resemble the Catholic priests because, as Moses Sanaus put it, "Bini knew like them the heavens." In the process of making Christianity meaningful they appropriated it (or vice versa). It was made a product of visionary knowledge and instantiated in local practice. Bini had dances, sang songs, gave teachings, told prophecies and, consistent with his mandate, he involved everyone who would listen. Bini was a community oriented person and the entire movement a community affair.

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[49] Moses Sanaus, B-F-322.18, Barbeau Files, BCA.

[50] Evidence from *Tse Kya* from the early 1830s suggests that at that date there is already much passage and cross cultural communication. When Simon McGillivray passed through the region in 1833 he notes that the people there were in possession of European goods, one Indigenous person, perhaps a Gitksan, spoke English and he saw some elaborately carved house posts that depicted European vessels. Simon McGillivray, Fort Saint James Post Journals, "Voyage to Simpson's River by Land," 8 June 1833, B.188/a/18, HBCA.

Of all the prophets Bini was remembered because of all the novelties in the social field he was focused on Christianity. Bini's interest in Christianity is reflected not only in the oral narratives but can also be deduced from the historical record. D'Herbomez, LeJacq and Morice all experienced resistance from prophet-type figures who claimed not only an equal or greater authority to them but an equal or greater access to the same god and heaven, and they expressed that knowledge in an idiom that was uniquely their own. The resistance was strongest in Witsuwit'en and Babine lands where prophets, like priests, also claimed the power to work across cultural and political boundaries. Bini was accepted by neighbouring Gitskan, Sekani, and Dakelh peoples as well peoples far afield part because of the continuous relationships established with near neighbours over the years.[51] That Christianity and its symbols were used to draw people together is not at all out of synch with how peoples the world over have appropriated the symbols of others to advance their own interests. The slave Christianity in the Antebellum South described by Raboteau and analyzed by James C. Scott is one example of this. In the presence of their masters conducting a service, slaves were expected to control their gestures, expressions and comportment. Out of sight they danced, shouted, clapped and sung; a form that must bear some relation to the ecstatic Christianity described here. In contrast to New Testament themes of meekness and obedience emphasized to them by their masters, slave Christianity, "stressed the themes of deliverance and redemption, Moses and the

[51] The extent to which Christian missionaries influenced this kind of pan-Indigenous religiosity is an interesting question. Such religiosity does seem to have been a nineteenth century phenomenon. Smoak relates an interesting case where a Shaman from New Mexico came to Fort Hall, Idaho and was integrated into the community. When the local Indian Agent threatened to expel him for his conjuring, fifty locals demanded that he be allowed to stay on the reservation. They told the agent that, "he was the best medicine man that had ever been here." Gregory Smoak, *Ghost dances and identity: prophetic religion and American Indian ethnogenesis in the nineteenth century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 184.

Promised Land, the Egyptian captivity, and emancipation."[52] The Old Testament themes of redemption and deliverance were also picked up on by the Dakelh. Moses Sanaus compared Bini to Isaiah, he said that "He was just like the prophet Isai he seemed too good."[53] The prophet Isaiah like Bini was said to have prophesied a reversal of fortunes: the raising up of all those with good hearts regardless of their social standing along with the redemption of the marginal and disenfranchised.

Spatial Control and Shifting Orbits

Prior to the establishment of the fur trading posts west of the Rockies, the Dakelh, Sekani and Gitksan had long standing and tight ties with their western neighbours. Once the continental posts were established, traders attempted to undo the ties and to turn the locals toward the posts and away from the sea. We know, for example, that Kwah's role as fur trade chief in the very early days of the trade beyond the mountains was to direct furs and salmon toward the posts. After the two companies were amalgamated in 1821, the HBC expanded its operations in New Caledonia; it erected more posts, undertook new explorations of discovery and actively pursued a policy aimed at wresting the coastal trade from the Americans and Russians. Just prior to the sale in 1821, the NWC erected Fort Alexandria on the middle Fraser. The following year, the HBC erected Fort Kilmaurs on the north end of Babine Lake. In 1826, Fort Connolly was erected north of Babine Lake (still within the Skeena watershed) at what was a place of rendezvous for the Dakelh, Gitksan and Sekani. In 1829, Fort Chilcotin was erected west of Fort

[52] James C. Scott, *Domination and the arts of resistance: Hidden transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 115-118.

[53] Moses Sanaus, B-F-322.18, Barbeau Files, BCA.

Alexandria at the confluence of the Chilko and Chilcotin Rivers.[54] Fort Chilcotin was followed by the erection of two coastal forts, Fort Nass at the mouth of the Nass River in 1831and Fort McLoughlin in 1835.[55] The same year that Fort McLoughlin was opened the HBC steamship, the *Beaver*, was introduced to the coast. The *Beaver* was meant to penetrate the inlets, fjords and river mouths so as to reach Indigenous trading partners who could not be accessed with the usual sailing vessels. Once the *Beaver* was put to use and the coastal forts established, the HBC zealously pursued a policy of underselling their American competition on the coast such that by the mid 1830s the Northwest coast, at least the region north of Cape Flattery, no longer held out commercial appeal for American merchants. The HBC's position on the coast was further entrenched in 1840 with the erection of Forts Taku and Stikine north of the Nass and near the boundary with the territories claimed by the Russians.

In addition to the efforts undertaken to force the Americans out of the coastal trade, the HBC negotiated an agreement with the RAC in 1825 that established the southern limit of Russian territories at 54˚40′ and gave British rights to access their interior territories east of 139˚ from the coast.[56] The 1825 agreement established a clear border with the Russians and afforded the HBC a virtual monopoly on the interior trade south of Alaska and north of the Columbia River. Subsequently, the HBC moved to

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[54] See chapter 6 for a more thorough discussion of HBC activity and the process of fort construction.

[55] Fort Nass was renamed Fort Simpson the same year it was founded after Aemilius Simpson, coastal trader and mariner. In 1834 it was moved to the Ts'mysen peninsula located to the south of the Nass about equidistant between the mouth of the Nass and the mouth of the Skeena. Richard Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains: the British Fur Trade on the Pacific* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998), 129.

[56] Hector Chevigny, *Russian America: The Great Alaskan Venture: 1741-1867* (New York: Viking Press, 1965), 185.

consolidate the trade by exploring new fur territories and dispatching officers to report on the navigability of the northern interior waterways. Thus, William Brown, Simon McGillivray and Samuel Black were all sent north of Fort Kilmaurs (Babine) in the late 1820s and early 1830s. Much of the detail on HBC activity post-1821 was already covered in chapter 6.

By about 1835, in large part because of the new forts, the extension of the trade into northern territories and the elimination of competition, the HBC was the single largest trading partner for Indigenous peoples west of the Rockies and capable of underselling any competition it faced. The Company's commercial superiority in the region allowed it to more easily channel the interior trade toward its interior posts; no matter the direction the residents of the upper Skeena River faced, they had only the one company with which to do business. The Company's directional schematic was, on the one hand, a matter of practical management, which allowed some predictability in the trade and assisted with credit management by making it difficult for individuals to run debts at multiple posts. On the other hand, the movement of furs into the interior forts was encouraged by the officers because they were paid a percentage of the company's total profits in lieu of salary.[57] The arrangement was meant to encourage the individual initiative of the commissioned gentlemen by keeping it in their economic interests to ensure that as many furs as possible were sold to the company. Traders also competed with each other. While Samuel Black was at Thompson's River post in 1832, he accused Alexander Fisher at Fort Alexandria of pretending to be a priest with religious powers so as to frighten or otherwise influence as many as possible to trade their furs at

[57] Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains*, 244.

Alexandria.[58] The traders actively attempted to disengage their Indigenous trading partners from peripheral orbits and to draw them within the orbits of their own respective posts.

The removal of its economic competition also gave the HBC more confidence in its commercial relationships with local peoples. As covered in chapter 6, the Company came down severely when its control and authority was threatened. Without competition it could be as severe as it wished in its dealing with local peoples and face little economic consequences. It could risk negative public opinion. The beatings the HBC meted out to its labourers as discipline would have been seen or heard by the local peoples. Those scenes might have impressed upon the locals reason to be concerned about the Company's growing influence in the region; they would not want to find themselves in that kind of subordination to the company.

In chapter 6, I also discussed two murders committed by the company in the second quarter of the nineteenth century: the murder of the Babine Grand Visage in 1843 and the murder of the Dakelh by James Douglas in 1828. Both murders were committed when the victims assumed that they were in protected places. The Babine were advised that if they gave up Grand Visage he would not be killed and the Dakelh man, fearing the Company might be onto him, sought refuge and protection in the tent of Chief Kwah. While it is true that it was likely common knowledge throughout the social field the two men were also suspected by the company for murder, it was the deceptive ways in which

[58] Black's accusations are cited in Adrien Morice, *The History of the Northern Interior of British Columbia, formerly New Caledonia*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: William Briggs, 1904), 151-2. Fisher was evidently not liked by many. The trader Cuthbert Cumming wrote of him saying that "he is a man by no means scrupulous in what he says & cares not by what means he obtains the end – it is natural to suppose that a man of his vindictive disposition will blacken the character of every man in this District." R.M. Patterson, *Those Earlier Hills: Reminiscences 1928 to 1961* (Surrey, BC: Touchwood, 2008), 90.

they were apprehended and killed to which the people objected. The ordeals would have rubbed anyone the wrong way. Company employees murdered people and left families and friends to grieve. Their grief could be made even sharper when families were forced to continuously face the Company to do business. The violence to social and family spaces extended beyond the violence of the event of the murder. Perhaps those were exactly the kinds of untrusting behaviours that the Iroquois warned the Dakelh about in the 1820s, and that caused Connolly to complain that the Iroquois were telling stories prejudicial to the Company's interests.

It is always useful to keep in mind that local people were drawn to the fort orbits not only by the trade in furs but that social relations ran much deeper than raw trade. We have already seen that communities developed around the forts, whose members served as a permanent source of cheap labour for the Company and whose proximity also engendered social ties with fort-residents. In New Caledonia, local people were also integral to the subsistence economy of the forts. Part of Simpson's reorganization curtailed the importation of foodstuffs and encouraged a subsistence economy based on local victuals.[59] In New Caledonia salmon was the *nourriture de jour*, and of all the major rivers in the region the Babine system was the best producer of sockeye salmon and consistently yielded greater quantities than any other river to which the traders had access. The Indigenous people were of course aware of the fecundity of the Babine and the traders were not too slow to catch on, Daniel Harmon, as early as 1812, commenced yearly trading expeditions to the Babine. In 1822, William Brown erected Fort Kilmaurs at the north end of Babine Lake as a salmon station at least as much as a fur trade post. When the Babine were at first reticent to trade high volumes of salmon, Brown

[59] Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains*, 40.

threatened to leave and dismantle the fort.[60] The salmon trade was yet another means through which the HBC attempted to control the residential and economic patterns of the Dakelh and Gitksan.

The efforts of the HBC had the cumulative effect of attenuating local connections to the outer orbits, specifically the Pacific Coast, straining traditional relationships and forcing the interior fort to serve as the centre of a new interior orbit of the company's making. While there are few Indigenous voices from these early days that speak of how these changes were perceived, the dynamics impinged on the networks in place at the time of the arrival of the continental fur trade, most significantly, they disengaged the interior from surrounding orbits. By eliminating or curtailing Indigenous networks, the HBC monopoly fastened Indigenous people to posts throughout much of New Caledonia. Moreover, as the trade intensified, the greater exploitation of natural resources forced Indigenous people to balance their hunting, trading and fishing activities, which for some meant that individual subsistence pursuits had to come second to trading.[61]

Another development related to the altering of orbits that influenced religious activity in the upper Fraser and Skeena Rivers after the 1820s was the change made to the Company's western transportation lines after the 1821 merger. A few years after the amalgamation the Governor and Committee united the two departments west of the

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[60] Rod Palmer, "Feast and Famine: Salmon and the Fur Trade at Fort Babine," *British Columbia Historical News* 37, no.4 (Fall 2004), http://search.proquest.com/docview/205000254? accountid=14569 (accessed September 25, 2012).

[61] As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, the period that I am describing maps onto what J.C. Yerbury referred to as the "trading post dependency period" (1821-1890). Yerbury suggests that the period was characterized by a developed trading post band increasingly dependent upon the post and where trapping had become a primary subsistence pursuit for the Indian because "for the majority, only trapping could provide the furs necessary to obtain trade goods, and these goods, especially ammunition, had become indispensable for survival." Yerbury, *The Subarctic Indians*, 125.

Rockies, the Columbia and the New Caledonia, together as the Columbia and resolved that all posts would receive their outfits and despatch their furs by way of the mouth of the Columbia.[62] That change brought about an increased traffic along the north-south transportation corridor. For the Gitksan, Sekani and Dakelh, some of whom incidentally would have worked at least sections of that route, the increased traffic meant a wider track on which information about events in the south could flow north. The "Columbian Religion" noted by John McLean, reached Stuart Lake from the Columbia about 1834 and may well have been a product of the increased traffic. The religion may or may not have been influenced by Methodist missionaries, Catholic Iroquois, or lay missionaries trained at Red River as all of whom were active in the south before the arrival of the first Catholic Priests. In any case, the New Caledonian posts and the lines that led to them brought news of religious activity to the south, which in the 1830s was always more fervent in the south.

Bini and other prophets who were active at the close of the first quarter of the nineteenth century were responding to the changes brought on by the HBC. The prophetic activity can be appreciated as a two-fold response to those changes. First, the prophets called for the respect of the traders and missionaries, lay or otherwise, by establishing that they were their equals in religious matters and that no one group had the monopoly on religiosity. Second, the prophets called for the continuance of the involvement of the Dakelh, Gitksan and Sekani with their older orbits (remember also that Bini's message spread far to the west). The prophets must have known that the HBC was slowly

[62] At the 1825 meeting of the Northern Council, it was decided to merge the New Caledonia and Columbia Districts into a single Columbia Department. The change came into effect the following year. James R. Gibson, *The Lifeline of the Oregon Country: The Fraser-Columbia Brigade System, 1811-47* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 25.

surrounding them. The prophets resisted the exploitation of the HBC by establishing their equality with the company's officers and the missionaries who appeared attached to them (remember also that the first Catholic missionaries came in with the fur brigades). The prophets demonstrated that they commanded respect in the local idiom – that was not to be questioned – but they also announced that were on an equal footing with the newcomers. The newcomers were not special, they were not too different and they could not use religion as a means by which to denigrate them. The criticisms made by officers and missionaries of Indigenous feasts and superstitions had no standing once the prophets secured an equal footing with the newcomers.

The prophets had to make such a move to affirm their respect and dignity as it was clear that many of the traders, at least the officials in charge of the posts, had a very negative view of the local populations. The Dakelh and Babine were referred to as thieves and robbers.[63] They were depicted as indolent, lazy and addicted to gambling. Moreover, as a "fisher people" they were unfavourably compared to Indigenous peoples east of the Rockies who more closely conformed to the stereotype of the "real Indian": the Indigenous hunter on horseback who roved over the majestic plains on the hunt for Buffalo. In an early effort of comparative ethnology the traders concluded peoples west of the Rockies were degraded because they lacked all habits of industry. They had all means at their disposal to "improve" themselves, and they lived in an abundant environment but yet they remained idle. The only active pursuit that appeared to the

[63] Simon McGillivray wrote in a report in 1827 that the Dakelh have "the predilection of appropriating things which do not belong to them – the propensity is so deeply rooted – that nothing is sacred within their reach, and you require to be as much guarded as if in the presence of professed Robbers." George Simpson, *Part of Dispatch from George Simpson, Esqr., Governor of Ruperts Land, to the Governor & Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company, London, March 1, 1829: continued and completed March 24 and June 5, 1829*, ed. E.E. Rich (Toronto : Champlain Society, 1947), 209.

traders was an "addiction" to gambling.[64] And on those few occasions when they were not gambling, the traders moaned that they were feasting and it is difficult to tell from the records which "vice" was considered to be the worst. Feasting, the potlatch, the feast or the *balhats*, was associated with major lifecycle events and feasts tended to be concentrated in the winter season. A trader at Ft. Babine in 1852 conveyed his image of "indolent Indian" and the "confounded feast": "I would wish now sincerely that these feasts would come to a conclusion ere long and these lazy beggars do something in the shape of hunting furs xc. xc. they complain of cold for hunting but to attend feasts there is no cold to prevent them."[65]

The negativity and hostility of the traders were brought on perhaps by the same hollowness and futility that Orwell described in his colonial experience in Burma. As a colonial police officer he knew he was unwanted by the Burmese, and even though he was secretly for the locals in the face of cruel imperialism he also understood the antipathy of his fellow English against Burmese and felt that "the greatest joy in the world would be to drive a bayonet into a Buddhist priest's guts."[66] Although the fur traders were the advanced guard of colonialism and thus their needs were very different than the British in colonial Burma, the point holds true for both settings: the dominant faction in a social field detests the subordinate as much as they are in turn detested by them.

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[64] See Elizabeth Vibert, *Traders' Tales: Narratives of Cultural Encounters in the Columbia Plateau, 1807-1846* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997).

[65] Fort Kilmaurs Post Journal 1852, B.11/a/4, HBCA.

[66] George Orwell, *Shooting an Elephant and Other Essays* (Secker and Warburg: London, 1950), http://orwell.ru/library/articles/elephant/english/e_eleph.

To continue the analogy begun with Orwell's "Shooting an Elephant," there is also some resentment in the hidden transcript of the locals.[67] It is highly possible that the Indigenous people knew that their feasts, gambling and prophetic activity were vexing to the traders and missionaries and thus were never in any hurry to stop them. Ostensibly the prophets were Christian, but they were also subverting Christianity, using it to distance themselves from the traders to maintain their own integrity. Religion is a powerful means for concealing resistance on the part of the subordinate in the face of the dominant.

As part of the resistance Christianity was used to relate to the nineteenth-century newcomers (fur traders, missionaries and colonial agents). The Witsuwit'en, Dakelh, Gitskan and Sekani came up with their own angles on Christianity in the nineteenth century in order to converse with and to locate or situate fur traders and later missionaries, newcomers, as *social* and *cultural* others. By instantiating Christianity in discourse and practice the Witsuwit'en and their neighbours announced that they understood it loud and clear and that they could employ it themselves or in conversation with traders or missionaries.

The prophets also reversed the historical narrative from which the traders and missionaries drew their confidence. The prophets knew that the traders were going to come before they got there – it was because of the prophets that the newcomers caught no one by surprise. In the Bini narratives it is said that Bini prophesied about the coming of white people, new houses, new food stuffs, new material goods, agriculture, horses,

[67] I am aware that the British colonial state of India is a very different form of colonialism than that of the corporate state of the HBC; the differences are beyond my concern here.

carriages and the educational system. Given the long history of fur trade in the region before Bini's time, his prophecies were probably not all prophetic, at least in the sense that they told of an unknown future. What they may have been, however, as we had saw with Bini's Christian revelations, were announcements that Bini was a knowledgeable source about change. Bini naturalized the trade in the same way that he naturalized Christianity. Bini taught that strange people would come into the country and he knew what they would bring and he knew that they would try to make them "like white men."[68] The prophets anticipated the burgeoning change. In one of the narratives collected by Barbeau, his informant Lelt suggests that Bini told about the coming of cattle and all sorts of new tools and vessels and advised the people to mingle among the whites.[69] Johnny Patsey suggested to Barbeau that Bini wanted people to adopt the working schedule of the traders, to work six days and to rest on the seventh, the Monday.[70] Changes in time, new material goods and new social relationships were all mediated by Bini. Bini helped to render those things appropriate and familiar. This does not mean that Bini adopted airs of acceptance and deference in the face of the expanding fur trade rather that he helped naturalize participation in it; a course of action that most have seemed eminently reasonable and appropriate in what was already a diverse social field.

At the same time as the prophets acknowledged the truncated orbits they also did not want to sever the older relationships. They perceived strength in numbers and felt an

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[68] Paul Dzius, B-F-322.8, Barbeau Files, BCA.

[69] Lelt, B-F-322.14, Barbeau Files, BCA.

[70] Jonny Patsey, B-F-322.5, Barbeau Files, BCA.

affinity with their neighbours who like them stood apart from the newcomers. So the prophets, or at least Bini, travelled and taught outside of his own home, and preached a message of unification and solidarity. He recognized that he shared things with his neighbours, shared space, shared history, and shared collegiality. Those things were either not shared with the newcomers who were tied to the fur trade or the Indigenous residents did not wish to share them.

According to some of the narratives, Bini travelled south to Stewart and Fraser Lakes, east to Lake Babine, west to the Pacific coast and North to Alaska.[71] Both Barbeau and Spier also suggested that Bini and/or his songs and teachings travelled beyond the orbits of the upper Fraser and Skeena Rivers. Barbeau in a fashion typical of his enthusiastic but often vague style suggests that Bini's teachings spread far and wide, "So did these modern apostles of the new light [Bini's followers] peregrinate throughout the land, down the Fraser River, down the Columbia, down the Skeena and the Nass, as far as the west coast, as far as the plains."[72] Spier was more cautious when specifying the range of Bini's potential influence. He cites Swanton's work with the Haida and Tlingit to illustrate Bini's teachings reached Haida Gwaii and Alaska.[73] In his *Tlingit Myths and Texts* Swan relates the story told to him at Sitka of a man who went south and returned after two weeks with a set of teachings and dances received from God. Swan hypothesizes that the man was influenced either by Jesuits on the Skeena River or

[71] Charles Martin, B-F-322.1, Barbeau Files, BCA; Isaac Tens, B-F-322.3, Barbeau Files, BCA; Johnny Patsey, B-F-322.5, Barbeau Files, BCA; John Brown, B-F-322.9, Barbeau Files, BCA.

[72] Barbeau, Marius. *Indian Days in the Canadian Rockies* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1923), 42.

[73] Spier, *The Prophet Dance*, 38-9.

Protestants on the coast.[74] In *Haida Myths and Texts* Swanton relates a myth collected at Skidegate that mentions the Kitkatlas (Coastal Ts'mysen) bringing Bini's teachings, songs and dances.[75]

Given the available evidence Bini or his disciples doubtless travelled at least throughout the upper Fraser and Skeena Rivers, possibly to the coast, and that his teachings went at least as that far if not further, possibly to the Haida Gwaii. It was also possible that Bini was conflated with other local prophets. If that was indeed the case, it matters little to my general claim that Bini was part of a prophetic movement.[76]

The prophetic movement that crossed boundaries says something else about the interest of the prophets in Christianity in relation to their response to the truncated orbits. Christianity can cross socio-cultural boundaries and in that way is a powerful binding agent. Moreover, the Christianity of the fur trade, the lay and the various missionary versions, lends itself to ecumenism. Since the sixteenth-century wars of religion the role

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[74] The relevant text reads: "A man went south from Sitka and returned after two months. When he came ashore he called all the people to a dance and told them that God (Deki-anqa'wo, Distant Chief) had come down from heaven to help them. Then all the women made beadwork for their hair and ears. One evening, when they were through with that, they again began dancing. While the women danced they would fall flat on their backs. When this happened, in accordance with directions the man had received below, they brought up salt water, wet part of each women's blanket and flapped it against her breast to make her come to. This prevented the small pox from having any effect upon her. They kept on dancing a whole year." John R. Swanton, *Tlingit Myths and Texts*. Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 39, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1909), 79. The use of a cloth dipped in water in initiation rites and healing ceremonies (perhaps as something that helps to wipe way the stain of sin?) is reflected in some of the Barbeau narratives as well, see Semedeek and Alfred Sinclair, B-F-322.2; Isaac Tens, B-F-322.3; Lelt, B-F-322.14, Barbeau Files, BCA.

[75] The relevant section reads: "The Kitkatla people also brought over Bini's songs to Skedans. They sang his also very much as they danced." The specific content of the Bini songs are not revealed in the myth. John R. Swanton, *Haida Texts and Myths, Skidegate Dialect*, Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 29 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1905), 312.

[76] Among the Nuxalk, west of the Dakelh in the Bella Coola Valley, Barbeau citing a manuscript of McIlwraith (?), recorded the activity of three prophets, two women and one man. One female prophet was named Kusinot the other two were unnamed. The case of the male prophet is similar to that of Bini, while in a trance state he met with a "supreme god" who gave him a set of teachings and told him to spread them among the neighbouring peoples. MacIlwraith, "Bini, the Carrier Seer", B-F-198.12, Barbeau Files, BCA.

of religion in the state has been minimalized. One effect of those wars was the internalization of Christianity as a facet of one's personal identity thus making it possible for there to be a multiple of Christianities, either as single denomination states or a plurality within a state, as opposed to a single Christendom.[77] At the posts before missionaries came there were Iroquois Christians, Métis Christians, Scotch Christians, English Christians, American Christians, and Canadian Christians but they were all Christians in some way. And each of those Christians was in some way impressing his own Christianity on the locals. Once the missionaries arrived Christianity was only further diversified.

That Christianity was not fixed to any specific land or people must not have been unnoticed. Each group in the social field had its own variant of Christianity. Such Christian pluralism must have been apparent to everyone west of the Rockies by the close of the first quarter of the nineteenth century. If it was not picked up the from the continental fur traders, it was picked up from traders and colonists on the Pacific or from Indigenous catechists, lay missionaries and Methodists in the south. The coastal peoples were introduced to both Spanish Catholicism and Russian Orthodoxy. While the Spanish were gone by the turn of the end of the eighteenth century, the Russians remained. In 1831, Spokan Garry returned to the Columbia Plateau after receiving an Anglican education at the Red River school. In 1834, the Methodist Jason Lee met with some Interior Salish and Nez Perce at Green River. The following year the Presbyterians Samuel Parker and Marcus Whitman arrived at the same place, and in the remaining years of the decade Protestants continued to come to the Columbia Plateau. In 1838, the

[77] Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 62-67.

Catholics Demers and Blanchet arrived at Fort Vancouver and in 1840 De Smet met with Interior Salish, Pend d'Oreilles, Nez Perces and Shoshones. Moreover, if the different varieties of Christianity were not self evident in form and theology the missionaries themselves amplified the differences. Whitman refused to cooperate in any capacity with De Smet; the Catholics introduced their catechist aid, the Catholic ladder, on the Northwest Plateau which depicted Protestants deviating from the path to heaven. The Protestants responded with a ladder of their own which depicted the pope toppling head first into the flames of hell. If the various groups in the social field each had their own takes on Christianity, then, it stands to reason that local peoples anticipated their own versions.

The labour of articulating a local version of Christianity fell to the prophets. Yet, and this is the interesting feature of the prophetic message, the prophets were interested in Christianity not only as it was relevant to their own group, but to all those groups with whom they were traditionally attached prior to the arrival of the newcomers fur trade. There is what today is called a "pan-Indianism" in the prophetic teachings. That the prophets were carrying a message designed specifically for Indigenous peoples west of the Rockies is evident in the narratives. Semedeek and Alfred Sinclair claim that when Bini was taken up to heaven God showed him Ts'mysen and Haida villages.[78] According to Samadisk, the chief with whom Bini met while in a trance directed Bini to spread his teachings to all the surrounding villages.[79] When Bini and his disciples travelled and

[78] Semedeek and Alfred Sinclair, B-F-322.2, Barbeau Files, BCA.

[79] Samadisk, B-F-322.4, Barbeau Files, BCA.

taught they only travelled to Indigenous villages.[80] Lastly, in those places where Bini was unable to visit, according to Johnny Patsey, the inhabitants there sent out emissaries to meet him.[81] Preaching a consistent message among people with a shared ethnic identity is reminiscent of ethnogenesis evinced by Smoak in the setting the Ghost Dance.

The Discipline of Time: the Changes of Oblate Missionary Catholicism

In the preceding section I suggested that the prophets struggled to find common ground with the newcomers while at the same time insisting on their separation as a distinct group. The prophets attempted to do the same thing with respect to the specific group of Catholic missionaries (secular, Jesuit and Oblate). While the resistance is clearest with the Oblates, in so far as the Oblates were acting in a manner consistent with other missionaries, whether lay or Catholic, there is reason to think that the Dakelh would have responded similarly to other missionaries. On the other hand, when Nobili and Demers toured the region in the 1840s they stayed for so little time that they could not have been a source of too much resentment; if they were it was bound to deaden as the years passed after their departure. The situation was different when the Oblates arrived. Nobili and Demers retreated almost as soon as they came whereas the Oblate advance was sustained and continuous.

In 1867, Father James McGuckin while stationed at Williams Lake met a Dakelh man at Quesnel who begged him to return with him to Stuart Lake.[82] The following year

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[80] Isaac Tens lists the names of some principal villages visited by Bini. Isaac Tens, B-F-322.3, Barbeau Files, BCA.

[81] Johnny Patsey, B-F-322.5, Barbeau Files, BCA.

[82] Vincent J. McNally, *The Lord's Distant Vineyard: A History of the Oblates and the Catholic Community in British Columbia* (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 2000), 96.

both LeJacq and Bishop D'Herbomez visited the headwaters of the Fraser; LeJacq reported that the Dakelh were eager for baptism and for priests to settle among them. The positive reception convinced the Oblates to found Our Lady of Good Hope Mission, which they erected at Stuart Lake in 1873 right beside the trading post on land claimed by the HBC. With Stuart Lake as their base the Oblates established a series of mission stations at some of the major Dakelh villages located within their various socio-territories. By all accounts, the Dakelh were initially quite interested in the priests.[83] Christianity was doubtless attractive for all those reasons already covered. For all the claims the Oblates made about their fervent desire for religion the prestige and material advantages of close association with the mission must also have contributed to the attraction for some. The mission was erected on land beside the HBC and thus the spatial proximity of the buildings along with the social proximity of missionaries and traders must have been evident. Indeed, the Company and Mission served as two pivots connected by an invisible net that stretched out and encompassed local affairs. The Oblates worked with the company to encourage diligence, the prompt repayment of debts, and the abolition of the potlatch. LeJacq in particular refused to baptize anyone who was in debt to the HBC.[84]

The close ties perceived between the HBC and the Oblates, or missionaries in general, may also have worked against the Oblate agenda. As missionaries portrayed themselves as the sole purveyors of religious truth and as the locals became more and more familiar with their work, the local Indigenous people would have seen that there

[83] David Mulhall, *Will to Power: The Missionary Career of Father Morice* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986), 43.

[84] Ibid., 75.

was no necessary connection between Oblate Christianity and the material wealth of the Company. Simply being a good Christian reaped no material advantages. In fact, some saw that associating with the Oblates had negative effects. Morice had local Dakelh freight in supplies without payment. George Dawson observed that some Witsuwit'en mocked the Dakelh about Fort Fraser for following the priest.[85] Jenness recorded at least four instances where Dakelh were said to have died because they listened to priests.[86] Moreover, other missionaries must have appeared as perfectly inimical to their interests when they assisted traders, miners and settlers. Marcus Whitman, before he was killed by Cayuse, converted his mission to a truck farm to sell produce to white emigrants.[87]

Whatever the attractions (or traps) of the mission, if the Dakelh were not nominal Christians before the Oblates arrived they were nominal Catholics after the mission was founded. George Dawson, while passing through the North Central interior in 1876 remarked that the peoples of the upper Fraser were all "good Catholics" and that at the time they were "very devout from the stimulus of the Bishop's recent visit." While waiting for a pack train at Fort George, Dawson visited the local church and saw a large printed version of the Catholic Ladder hanging on one side of the altar and on the other side was "the whip (a pretty formidable looking one) which is used to punish

[85] Dawson puts it, "I am told that the Forks of Skeena or Rocher de Bouler Indians laugh at those of Fraser & Stewarts Lakes for their extreme devotion, & while professed Catholics themselves, contrast the state of "Mr. Duncans Indians" with theirs. The Priest they say has taught us prayers &c. & now we know them all but learn nothing else, while Mr. Duncans Indians learn to read, & have always plenty of money & plenty to eat!" George Mercer Dawson, *The Journals of George Mercer Dawson* 2 vols, ed. Douglas Cole and Bradley Lockner (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1989), 284.

[86] Jenness, "The Carrier Indians," 572.

[87] Cebula, *Plateau Indians*, 126.

delinquents."[88] Beside the altar were hanging representations of time and discipline; the very two things the Oblates wanted most to change. Those representations, standing out in clear relief beside the altar, give further reason to think that Dakelh were less committed than some observers claimed.

Indeed, it is clear that not everyone welcomed the Oblates. According to Morice's biographer, David Mulhall, the Dakelh respected Morice's authority but they did not like him. Resistance was strongest to Morice and the Oblates in general among the Dakelh around Fort Fraser as well as the Babine and Witsuwit'en. The latter two were particularly intractable. They gave D'Herbomez a headache when he visited them. The Babines basically evicted Morice and his Catholic spies. Among the Witsuwit'en, Morice attempted to break up the community by agreeing to see only those Witsuwit'en who would move upstream from their own settlements at Rocher Deboule and Kya Wiget to his newly founded "Moricetown." Among the Babine and Witsuwit'en the Oblates, like the traders, were particularly vexed that they remained attached to their seaward orbits, and that they refused to turn around and face the mission. When they were unwilling to dislocate and to re-centre themselves at the mission and trading post, Morice abandoned them. Morice was thus but another in a long line of missionaries and traders who came before him who attempted to turn them away from the sea and to focus them on the mission and fort. George Dawson, on the same trip previously cited, also commented on the resistance among the Witsuwit'en in particular, he wrote that "the Forks of Skeena or Rocher de Bouler Indians laugh at those of Fraser & Stewarts Lakes for their extreme devotion, & while professed Catholics themselves, contrast the state of "Mr. Duncans Indians" with theirs. The Priest they say has taught us prayers &c. & now we know them

[88] Dawson, *The Journals of George Mercer Dawson*, 282.

all but learn nothing else, while Mr. Duncans Indians learn to read, & have always plenty of money & plenty to eat!"[89]

The Catholics emphasized the preached mission, sermons, rote instruction, and catechizing. In addition to the word, the Catholics introduced and encouraged the ritual practices of baptism, confession, observance of the Sabbath, hymns and prayer. All of that labour was geared at bringing their behavior in line with the teaching of the church. At the same time as they encouraged the new they discouraged the old: potlatching, gambling, shamanic activity, residence shifting and polygamy were usually singled out for reformation. While early missionaries and traders railed against such practices, it was not until the advent of the mission station, the Durieu mission method and the permanent settlement of a priest that such policies could begin to be enforced.

The theology expounded by the priests must also have come under suspicion in some cases. Some people refused concepts of sin and hell (how could a god send any of his children to hell?).[90] Others thought that Christian prayer only detracted from other more productive and useful pursuits. Some Dakelh who choose to adhere to the teachings of the Oblates were mocked by others for wasting their time and for submitting to the authority of the priests.[91] Others were also perhaps mindful of the subtleties of prophecies such as those made by Shining Shirt, which spoke about Catholic missionaries bringing a new moral law while also warning that those same people would help bring the end of all the people who inhabited the land.[92]

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[89] Ibid., 284.

[90] Peterson, *Sacred Encounters*, 98.

[91] Dawson, *The Journals of George M. Dawson*, 284.

[92] Peterson, *Sacred Encounters*, 17.

Once the Oblates arrived they also imposed a regime of strict behavioural surveillance and control; an imposition that must have been particularly distasteful to the locals. The reduction-like system the Oblates used west of the Rockies was probably as much indebted to congregations of the laity as it was to the Jesuit reductions of Paraguay. In any event, the system came to be known as the Durieu system named after Father Paul Durieu who worked the hardest on its logistics and implementation. The system was designed to foster an Indigenous-Catholic society in the wilderness set aside from all influences that might be detrimental to its integrity.[93] At the heart of the program was an "Indian Court" where Indigenous members sat in judgment in violators of church law, family quarrels, and community disputes. At the head of the court was a chief elected by the village but approved by the missionary. The missionary appointed two watchmen and two "secret agents." The watchmen served in a capacity similar to both bylaw officers and local police and publicly enforced church law and morality and reported all infractions to the missionary. Transgressors were whipped publicly with the severity of the punishment depending on the infraction as judged by the priest. The secret agents were just that secret agents; they were the priests' covert operatives who informed on the "hidden transcript" of the community, or all that which was said out of ear shot. The priest also trained two catechists who stood as religious specialists the in absence of the priest. The catechists could, for example, baptize an individual near death if the priest was absent. The system had something of the panopticon about it as any individual at any given time was potentially being watched. The Oblates were aware that there was little real joy in the system – that it was in fact designed to expunge joy, the Jansenistic

[93] The system also strikes me as reminiscent of the Presbyterian Church polities of the Puritan New England Colonies in terms of its emphasis on creating a hyper-socialized space separated from the surrounding wildness.

Oblates saw a virtue in suffering – so they formed brass bands and enacted elaborate passion plays and had pageantic reunions a twice a summer and at Christmas. While I am presenting them as an aside here, revivalist methods have a strong history in Catholic Christianity going back to the Counter-Reformation and were doubtless seen by some Oblates as an important means of evangelizing those without any Christian tradition.[94]

The oppressive system was far from universally welcomed. The Babine steadfastly refused to cooperate with Oblate authorities until the late nineteenth century. Not all Witsuwit'en were eager to move to Moricetown and many never did. The Dakelh at Fraser and Stuart Lakes were never fond of Morice despite his proximity to them.[95] Yet, for all their resistance to the Oblates and for all the reasons to resist, they never gave up on Christianity or Catholicism. They still prayed, they still fasted and were at least still willing to listen to the priests if not to participate in the enforced system.[96] For the Dakelh, developing a particular constellation of Christianity that they could call their own within a field of religious pluralism seemed a perfectly reasonable course.

It was at those places where the people were most resistant to organized Catholicism (and also the continental fur posts) that the prophets emerged. The people welcomed Indigenous-Christian prophets who were not beholden to the church. The Indigenous prophets who alleged direct contact with Jesus where thus as close to God, if not closer, than the Oblate priests. They were certainly closer to God than the light-skinned Jesus made to look like a European who took centre stage during the yearly

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[94] The missionary methods of counter-reformation Catholicism would be a useful topic for further research and could be more developed here.

[95] Mulhall makes the point persuasively in *Will to Power*, he cites two former Dakelh servants as referring to him as crazy: "Mr. Hansen described Morice as being 'like [a] crazy man'"; and John Prince referred to him as "crazy." Mulhall, *Will to Power*, 170.

[96] Mulhall, *Will to Power*, 164-5.

passion plays. The Christianity that interested them was not the sole prerogative of the Oblates or of any other denomination; not one group could claim all rights to the gospel. Occasionally, those on the outskirts confessed as much to the priests. The Sekani, for example, told the Oblate Father J.M. LeJacq that they did not want any missionaries to come among them because they had their own priests "who did not beat them." LeJacq left the Sekani lamenting the fact there were four or five "visionaries" at work among them. The Sekani were justified equating their own priests with missionaries because they too were interested in an ecumenical Christianity that was more evangelical than silently obedient. Christian pluralism that neutralizes hierarchy and difference and equalizes relationships is reminiscent of Evangelical Protestantism and the kind of universal Christianity taught by some of the traders and the first Catholics who visited the region.[97] Another similarity between evangelical Protestantism, fur trader Christianity and Oblate missiology is an emphasis on ceremony, specifically an emotionally charged Christian atmosphere. The yearly revivals held by the Oblates were some of the best attended and remembered of Oblate practices. The Dakelh responded well to those angles on Christianity that placed them on an equal footing with all their neighbours while allowing them to preserve their own distinctiveness. If the kerygma and tenets of Catholicism can manifest across cultures, then, the Dakelh and their neighbours can be

[97] Martha McCarthy writes that the nineteenth century Oblate missionaries to the Dene came not change their culture, but to convert them to Catholicism. The missionaries operated on the premise that "Catholics all over the world held the same tenets, whatever their specific cultural practices" [McCarthy, *From the Great River*, 73-74]. Cf. the view of Christianity taken by the Ts'mysen Arthur Wellington Clah in the same period; Clah held the view that Christianity was not the exclusive right of any denomination or people and he urged his contemporaries to establish their own personal connection with God. Peggy Brock, *The Many Voyages of Arthur Wellington Clah: A Tsimshian Man on the Pacific Coast* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 136.

Dakelh and Christian, Witsuwit'en and Christian, Sekani and Christian, or Indigenous and Christian.

The indigenization of Christianity in the Northwest Plateau, when cast against the religious history of the continent, should not be terribly surprising as religion has been used to foster relations among neighbours in the Rocky Mountain west since before Europeans arrived. The appropriation of Christianity, the religion of recent newcomers, followed the same track. Thus, when Father Morice wrote that the Denes thought it "a mark of enlightenment to imitate the alien races with which they have intercourse" the imitation was not, as Morice said, a mark of cultural weakness but a mark of cultural resilience.[98] After all, why, if they were so prone to mimicking, were they such a bane to his missionary work? The easy answer and it is an easy answer now that I have done the work, is that they were not simply aping rather they were appropriating Christianity to their own use. That appropriation served an interest in social formation within a changing social field. More specifically, the social formation served the purpose of accounting for the newcomers and their religion, while ensuring its own stability, integrity and uniqueness.

I have tried to develop the line of thought that the work of Bini and other prophets Lexs, Bopa, Nalaxe and Uzkali, for example, helped the Dakelh and their neighbours to account for how it was that Christianity arrived.[99] The situation at the headwaters of the

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[98] Adrien Morice, *Notes Archaeological, Industrial and Sociological on the Western Dene* (Toronto: Transactions of the Canadian Institute, 1893), 19.

[99] James Hackler, while at Babine Lake in 1956 recorded a tradition that a Babine prophet (Bini or someone like him) was the first to teach the sign of the cross. Hackler, like Jenness, thought the claim a mistake stemming from psychological problems resulting from a feeling of being unable to control a rapidly changing environment. The claims were concerned with control, but that they were not inaccurate. See James Hackler, "The Carrier Indians of Babine Lake: the Effect of the Fur Trade and the Catholic Church on their Social Organization," MA thesis (San Jose: San Jose State College, 1958), 110.

Fraser and Skeena was not an anachronism, there were other prophets working in neighbouring regions and other times, there were prophets on the Plains, in the Arctic and Subarctic and in the Eastern Woodlands.

Prophetic Neighbours

Bini and his colleagues in the North Central Interior of what later would become the province of British Columbia were not the only prophets active in the Canadian west in the nineteenth century. Mooney, Spier and Irwin sketched a series of prophets that went back all the way to the eighteenth century and beyond in some cases. Contemporary with Bini and his colleagues there were a host of prophets labouring on the outer orbits of the Fraser and Skeena Rivers. Among the better documented near neighbours are the Dene prophets of the Mackenzie River. If the people of the upper Fraser and Skeena Rivers were as informed about their neighbours as I have suggested, it might be possible to speak of a regional prophetic movement. In any case, it is a short comparative sketch of the Dene prophets that interest me here.

The first written record of prophet activity among the Dene comes from 1813. In that year a millennial movement crystallized around a man who prophesied that white people would soon be exterminated unless they become subservient to the Dene.[100] The next report comes on the heels of the initial arrival of the Oblates at Île-à-la Crosse in 1844.[101] Three years later, Father Thibault wrote to Bishop Provencher that a Dene prophet was working at nearby Fort Carlton. And so the reports continued. Between 1847

[100] Abel, *Drum Songs*, 129.

[101] The Methodist Robert Rundle preceded the Oblates by a couple of years. He visited a Chippeywan camp on the Athabasca River in 1842. Kerry Abel, *Drum Songs: Glimpses of Dene History* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 115.

and 1880, historian Martha McCarthy identified thirty nine prophet movements among the Dene of the Mackenzie River.[102] The Oblate Emile Petitot reported that prophets manifested at nearly every post in the Mackenzie District.[103] While some of these movements had a pronounced millennial tenor and were strongly nativistic (anti-European, not necessarily anti-Christian), which distinguished them from the movements of the northern interior, many (even the nativistic) shared with the Bini traditions a concern with appropriating Christianity and of establishing its indigeneity. Some prophets claimed to have visited heaven and to have spoken directly with God and/or his angels and that by virtue of such visits were nearer to god than the priests. One prophet claimed to have the power to resurrect himself after dying. Another alleged that he visited heaven while he lay dead in a four day trance. When prophets returned from such trips they brought back new songs, dances, prayer and rituals of confession and baptism. One prophet returned from heaven with an elaborate set of teachings painted on a deer skin.[104]

In 1861, the prophet *Bekdettiné* at Nativity claimed to have received direct messages from angels that made him wiser than the priests.[105] Indeed, it was because he received his messages directly from angels, from an otherworldly source that was not mediated by the church, that he alleged his knowledge with respect to God was superior to that of the priests. One of the things that he learned from the angels was that polygamy, contrary to the claims of the priests, was not sinful. After *Bekdettiné* died the movement continued around Nativity and was led by *Urbain Tutsiye*. *Tutsiye*, like

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[102] McCarthy, *From the Great River*, 195-201.

[103] Abel, *Drum Songs*, 129.

[104] For the miraculous feats attribute the prophets, see McCarthy, *From the Great* River, 131-154.

[105] McCarthy, *From the Great River*, 134.

Bekdettiné, claimed to have received his teaching and inspiration directly from angels. *Tutsiye* was particularly adept at entering a trance state, during which he claimed to have entered heaven and to have received new teachings and the power of prophecy. On one of those visits *Tutsiye* was instructed in the rite of confession. The performance of that practice made him an enemy of the resident Oblate at Nativity, Isidore Clut, who denounced him. Undeterred *Tutsiye* challenged Clut to a public theological debate but the latter would not indulge him.[106]

The Dene prophets have been described in some detail by the historians Martha McCarthy and Kerry Abel. McCarthy interpreted the Dene prophets through the lens of relative deprivation (e.g. as resulting from epidemics, priest's teachings and excommunications) and labeled the movements syncretic, arguing that their leaders self consciously practiced Christian concepts alongside traditional religions so as to increase their explanatory repertoire (i.e. their capacity to account for change). [107] Kerry Abel also viewed the movements as syncretic but maintained that at their core they were fundamentally traditional; the Dene took from Christianity only those things consistent with their own religiosity that they might use to augment their own powers. Their traditionality, Abel suggests, is reflected in the fact that many of religious leaders opposed the priests, and viewed them as shamans of another religion with whom they were in a struggle for power and influence. [108] Prophets competed with priests, for example, in times of epidemics and game shortages.

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[106] McCarthy, *From the Great River*, 134-137.

[107] She cites relative deprivation as defined by Lanternari "the conviction that one's condition had worsened in relation to others or to one's past well-being." McCarthy, *From the Great River,* 149.

[108] Abel, *Drum Songs*, 130.

Although McCarthy sees the movements as syncretic responses to the problem of epidemics and Abel mutes the Christianity in order to amplify the competitive element of traditional Dene shamanism, I think there is also evidence of the appropriation of Christianity. Once Christianity is appropriated it no longer exists as a system alongside an Indigenous religious system; it is never a case of the success of failure of Christianity. While it is true, as Abel announces, that not all Dene were interested in Christianity some were and those who were did appropriate its symbols, practices and discourses.[109] As we saw with Bini, there is some reason to think that the prophets appropriated Christianity to demonstrate to others and to the priests that the religion was local, that missionaries were not needed, that there was a difference between European and Dene, and if that difference was hierarchically ordered it was the Dene who were superior because of their privileged means of experiencing God. The claim of difference was dramatically demonstrated and made in conscious tension in the presence, within the social field, of all those who did not belong with the group.

Chapter Epilogue: Bringing it all Back Home: Methodism at Fort Simpson 1874 – 1885

If Christianity is going to matter it has to be appropriated and indigenized. The point as I have made it among the Dakelh, Witsuwit'en and Sekani can also be made for the indigenization of Christianity elsewhere in the Americas. A similar dynamic unfolded on the Pacific coast just west of the North Central Interior at Fort Simpson on the Coast, between the mouth of the Nass and Skeen Rivers, and just after the Oblates started their mission at Stuart Lake.

[109] Abel's argument seems to be that the shamanic elements of Dene religious survived the Christian invasion and persisted throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

It was a grey and wet October day like any other on the North Pacific in dark autumn, when Captain William Henry McNeill welcomed the Anglican Missionary William Duncan to Fort Simpson on the Nass River. [110] Duncan was handpicked by the Church Missionary Society's director Henry Venn the previous year, in 1856, to start one of Venn's novel Indigenous churches, his first venture on the west coast of North America. Duncan wasted little time; he needed to learn the local idiom and so immediately engaged the assistance of a Ts'mysen interpreter, Arthur Wellington Clah, noted diarist and grandfather of the famous ethnographer William Beynon.[111]

Unbeknownst to Duncan he arrived at the fort at a time when labour-management relations were at a low. The trade in alcohol that was flowing up and down the well worn trading channels that led from Victoria to Alaska was at least one reason for the tensions.[112] Captain McNeill moaned in the post journal in the weeks leading up to Duncan's arrival that "rum feasts were all the rage." Two employees in particular were causing him no end of trouble: a French Canadian Felix Dudoward ("Dudouaire" in the post journals) and an Iroquois from the Great Lakes Pierre Turcot. The week before

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[110] McNeill was in charge at Fort Simpson between 1851 and 1859; from 1851 to 1856 he was Chief Trader and from 1856 to 1859 he was Chief Factor. McNeill, "Hudson's Bay Company Archives Biographical Sheets," HBCA.

[111] When Captain James Prevost of the Royal Navy returned to England after a tour of the North Pacific in 1856 he called on the secretary of the Anglican Church Missionary Society, Henry Venn, and offered free passage to any missionary who wanted to work among the Ts'mysen at Fort Simpson. It was the place to be on the west coast: little exposed to Euro-American capitalist influence (Prevost was mistaken on that), one of the most populous villages on the coast, a fine place for Venn to start one of his "Indigenous churches." Moreover, he figured the Ts'mysen would be easy charges because they had a notion of a supreme deity and were a fine industrious people. Venn accepted Prevost's invitation and recommended for the job a young William Duncan (then student at the society's school for missionaries at Highbury College in London). Usher, *William Duncan*, 29-40.

[112] Alcohol was already readily available by the time that the HBC had set up their first fort on the Nass in 1834. William Fraser Tolmie, *The Journals of William Fraser Tolmie* (Vancouver: Mitchell Press, 1963), 290. Problems with alcohol continued throughout the century as Ts'mysen and other traders bartered alcohol to coastal peoples that they had procured in the south. See, Fort Simpson Post Journal, 1855-58, HBCA.

Duncan arrived McNeill referred to them as "two most infamous rascals" who are "constantly drunk."[113] That Pierre and Felix were singled out as troublemakers would come as no surprise to any reader of the post journal.[114] A few years back, during the Christmas season of 1852, Turcot attempted to desert by jumping over the fort palisades; they were no little walls and Turcot broke his legs. The next day a search party led by Chief Factor John Work found him under the bed of Ts'mysen woman – labourers were not permitted to leave the fort – and so Work dragged him back at gun point.[115]

Felix was also involved with a Ts'mysen woman – but that relationship attracted little written complaint. He was married to Diex (or Diiks, later Elizabeth Lawson) from the prestigious Ligeek House, a high ranking Ts'mysen family. By the time that Duncan arrived in 1857 the two had at least one son: Alfred, whom the Dudowards enrolled in Duncan's school about the time it opened (Alfred was about eight then). Duncan took a liking to the boy, but he was less enamoured with his parents: his father Felix was a French Canadian (Catholic), no abolitionist, and not the most industrious (as far as management were concerned). Diex fared little better in his eyes: she displayed little interest in the brand of Christianity Duncan had foisted on the Ts'mysen and left the fort for Victoria shortly after her husband's.[116]

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[113] Fort Simpson Post Journal, Sept. 22, Oct. 23, 1857, HBCA.

[114] Of Pierre I know only that he was an Iroquois from the Great Lakes Region; Felix was born the son of a butcher in Lower Canadian parish of St. Denis. He signed on with the Company for service west of the Rockies in 1840 where he remained, employed most frequently as a middleman (labourer), until his death or retirement in either 1859 or 1861. In the HBC account books Dudoward is listed as having outstanding balances in 1859 and in 1861. After 1861 he no longer appears in the records. Dudouaire, "Hudson's Bay Company Archives Biographical Sheets," HBCA.

[115] Fort Simpson Post Journal, Dec. 26, 1852, HBCA.

[116] At Victoria Diex married Thomas Lawson.

Meanwhile, as Duncan was finding his bearings at Fort Simpson, the very first contingent of Methodist missionaries arrived on the west coast and landed at Victoria in 1859. The group was led by Ephraim Evans, brother of James Evans, famous missionary of the plains.[117] Three years later Thomas Crosby – soon to be Methodist missionary to the Ts'mysen at Fort Simpson arrived – fresh from Woodstock, Ontario arrived to work at the newly established Methodist school in the coal town of Nanaimo. After serving five years at Nanaimo Crosby left for the lower mainland and in 1868 he organized what would turn out to be the first of a series of annual summer revivals at Chilliwack. Crosby stayed on the lower mainland until 1873. In that year he took a one year furlough in Ontario during which time he met and married Emma Douse of Hamilton. While Crosby was in Ontario a new chain of events was unfolding west of the Rockies; events that would soon lead Crosby to Fort Simpson.

The same year Diex – recently converted to Methodism and living in Victoria – was gearing up for the Methodist summer revival at Chilliwack.[118] But before she could leave the city she was surprised by her son Alfred and his new wife Kate who had just come down for a visit from Fort Simpson.[119] Not wanting to wait, and having only good things to say about the revivals, she invited the pair to accompany her and so all three went to the mainland together. At Chilliwack that summer something about the revival

[117] Another, Reverend Arthur Browning, went to operate a school the Methodists had founded in the village of Nanaimo that grew up around the HBC's coal mining operation there. The remaining two (Reverends White and Robson) were sent to the mainland to work the mining camps that were still active in the wake of the 1858 Fraser gold Rush and also to mission in the lower mainland's burgeoning lumber fields. In the years that followed more Methodist clergy continued to arrive at Victoria, and were subsequently dispatched to the three loci of Methodist activity: the lower mainland, Victoria and the Nanaimo coal camp.

[118] Thomas Crosby, *Among the An-ko-me-nums* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1907), 19-20.

[119] Kate, like Alfred, was born at Fort Simpson, her mother was Ts'mysen and her father was an English HBC employee, and she received an Anglican schooling at Victoria.

moved the newlyweds. The revival, an emotionally charged group meeting, a space of radical egalitarianism and a situation for the experience of an intense personal relationship with god was efficacious: the two converted to Methodism.[120] They were so moved by their conversion that on their home bound journey they stopped at Methodist headquarters on Pandora Street in Victoria and requested a Methodist missionary be sent to Fort Simpson. The request was granted and Thomas Crosby was recommended for the job.

Thomas and Emma arrived in 1874 and the two remained at Fort Simpson for the next twenty three years. The Ts'mysen had their missionary, or did they? They were not impressed. Crosby turned out to be neither the missionary nor the Christian they expected. First, his career was characterized by itinerancy. He was always on the road and neglected his Fort Simpson mission and his wife and family. Second, he brought with him little of that egalitarianism that the Dudowards had expected of Methodism. In any case, Crosby's mission was not without success as Methodist work continued at Fort Simpson long after Crosby left.

The two turns in the foregoing narrative that interest me are Kate and Alfred's conversion to Methodism and the subsequent Ts'mysen reception of the Crosbys. First: the Dudoward's conversion. Political reasons are usually cited for their conversion.[121] Peggy Brock in her recent biography of Arthur Wellington Clah states: "[Alfred]

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[120] Brock, *The Many Voyages of Arthur Wellington Clah*, 24.

[121] According to Hare and Barman, the conversion and subsequent request for Methodist missionaries allowed for "a denominational alternative at Fort Simpson [that] would open up possibilities for Tsimshian and others who, like the Dudowards, opted to remain there." Jean Barman and Jan Hare, *Good Intentions Gone Awry: Emma Crosby and the Methodist Mission on the Northwest Coast* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 43.

Dudoward's championing of the Methodists helped his own leadership ambitions."[122] There is probably something to that explanation. Dudoward was of chiefly lineage and jockeyed for a favourable position within the political scene at Fort Simpson. So how might the Methodists have helped those ambitions? There had been no resident missionary at Fort Simpson since 1862. In that year, the man that touched off this narrative, William Duncan, left the fort and moved operations to nearby Metlakatla, the site of an old Ts'mysen village refashioned on the model of a contemporary English Industrial town. When Duncan left he took only those Ts'mysen who were willing to play by his rules.[123] Duncan's departure created a multi-layered rift at Fort Simpson: families were torn apart and the town was left without a missionary and advocate through which to relate to the colonial government. Having a missionary on his side for at least that latter end would not have been a bad thing. Maybe, but why was the missionary a Methodist?

When Duncan left Fort Simpson, it was true that he rejected some Ts'mysen but it was also true that some Ts'mysen rejected him. Duncan was an autocrat, a segregationist and required the complete submission to his program of all his charges. He left for Metlakatla to establish what he envisioned as a model Christian village consistent with his own upbringing in Beverly, England: sober, industrious and working class. There were neat, white washed, one room houses, local industries, jobs for everyone who would work them (canning, lumbering and brick making) and an austere, prosaic, Christianity (services everyday and every night). Because Metlakatla was meant as an idealized vision

[122] Brock, *The Many Voyages*, 28.

[123] Twenty years later, in 1882, Duncan broke from the CMS, left Metlakatla and founded a New Metlakatla in Alaska.

of working class English industrial sobriety it was a veritable town apart from west coast society, from the trading post and from everything associated with it (chief among which was indulgence in contraband alcohol). There was no room for the Ts'mysen in Duncan's Metlakatla. While some Ts'mysen followed Duncan out to Metlakatla not all did; Alfred did not. While Duncan once welcomed Alfred into his school he had suspicions of his pedigree from the start and future events bore them out. At some point after the death of Alfred's father and the relocation of his mother to Victoria, Alfred stopped playing by Duncan's rules; Duncan accused him of "backsliding", of performing heathenish practices and leading a "cannibal party."[124] His polemic became only more vitriolic after Alfred affiliated himself with the Methodists; he accused Alfred of "living two years ago as a heathen & a savage," with "neither the education nor training to fit him for a school teacher".[125] And this from his former teacher!

Duncan's prejudices, his segregationist attitude and his hubris, offer a clue as to why Methodist Christianity (as opposed to a political wing of colonialism) appealed to the Dudowards and to others.[126] There was something about the revival, the egalitarianism of Methodism that swayed them and there was also a curiosity, an interest, an intellectual and experiential desire to participate in the religiosity. In revivalist Methodism the Dudowards saw a form of Christianity – contrary to the version

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[124] Hare and Barman, *Good Intentions*, 41.

[125] Ibid, 76.

[126] Historian of Methodism David Hempton states that Methodism's communal and participatory feel offered something that "Anglicanism, with its singular emphasis on church, parson, and parish could not emulate." Hempton, *Methodism*, 22.

instantiated by Duncan – that was not segregationist and within which everyone was equal before god.[127]

Alfred, his mother, his father, were all marginalized by the Christianity taught by Duncan. Revivalist Methodism, on the other hand, had open and unlocked doors; everyone regardless of race, class, language and ethnicity, so long as they opened up their hearts to god, stood to be saved.[128] In that setting, neither Duncan nor anyone could castigate a convert as heathen, savage, or backward. With Methodism – at least the sort to which Alfred was introduced, revivalist and radically equalizing across race and ethnic lines – one could be Ts'mysen and Christian, it was not necessary to pick the one or the other as Duncan required.[129] The Dudowards responded to revivalist Methodism and the Methodists dispatched Thomas Crosby.[130]

This brings me to the second turn in the narrative: Crosby's reception by the Ts'mysen. Crosby was the first Methodist sanctioned by the Methodist organization in Victoria; but from a local point of view he was not the first Methodist to arrive and he

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[127] David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 22. Hempton writes: "Methodism, through cottage meetings and lay preaching, offered a communal and participatory form of popular religion" (22).

[128] Such an angle on Methodism could, of course, be even more politically expedient. A convert did not have to change anything about him or herself to be considered Christian.

[129] It was precisely that feature of Christianity, that no denomination had exclusive right to the relationship between God and believer, that Peggy Brock suggests rejuvenated Clah's Christianity. There may well be a political angle in there as well, but I am suggesting here that Methodism was appealing not only as a denominational alternative – as a religious or political structure – to Duncan's Christianity but because in its revivalist form Methodism can be radically equalizing across race and ethnic lines.

[130] Hempton describes the pageantic and emotionally charged Methodist camp meeting: "Camp meetings, described variously as Christian versions of the old Jewish feast of the Tabernacles, as modern equivalents of medieval pilgrimages, and as religious embodiments of community fairs, were highly ritualized gatherings, which often resulted in large numbers of conversions or of commitments renewed. It is remarkable how often they show up in the reminiscences of the Methodist faithful as emotionally charged memories of life saving encounters. Outdoor festivals organized around common collective purposes, and enriched by affecting music and ritualized behavior, are literally sensory and sensible experiences for those in search of sociability, entertainment, and community." Hempton, *Methodism*, 80.

was surely not the first Christian. Methodism was a Ts'mysen initiative; Crosby was not much of a Methodist or even a missionary by their estimation. I had already mentioned that his itinerancy kept him away from his mission duties at Fort Simpson[131] Crosby also turned out to be less accepting of Ts'mysen customs than his own background in revivalist Methodism might have led Alfred and others to think. There was something of Duncan in him. Crosby criticized Ts'mysen residency patterns and had zero tolerance for their customs. Potlatches and winter ceremonials, for example, were vetoed by him.[132] While the Ts'mysen may have gotten along just fine as Methodists in Crosby's absence, his antagonism against their mode of life could not have been but a problem for their acceptance of him. As strange as it may sound to the Ts'mysen given the experience of the revival, Crosby was intolerant of Ts'mysen Christianity.

Lastly, it was the revival that moved the Dudowards and it was the revival that moved the Ts'mysen too. This is clear. Once Thomas and Emma settled in Fort Simpson they instituted the full range of Methodist religious functions: Sunday services (five times on Sunday), nightly services and prayer meetings, Sunday Schools for children and adults, and the fostering of revivals. Of all those functions the Ts'mysen were most

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[131] Crosby himself remarks that "it is impossible to do justice to this mission and be most of the time away from it" (if it were not for the effort and ingenuity of his wife Emma there may have been no mission at all to speak of). The Ts'mysen had similar things to say, Albert Nelson reflected, "Mr. Crosby does not stay at home; he goes to visit other places, and when he is gone there is no one to direct us." Clarence R. Bolt, *Thomas Crosby and the Tsimshian: Small Shoes for Feet to Large* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992), 49.

[132] Bolt, *Thomas Crosby*, 49-50. In *Among-the An-ko-me-nums* Crosby writes: "Of the many evils of heathenism, with the exception of witchcraft, the potlatch is the worst and one of the most difficult to root out." Crosby, *Among the An-ko-me-nums*, 103. The irony here is that Crosby lived an itinerant lifestyle. Pace the work of the Methodist Robert Rundle on the plains who adapted to the residency patterns of the Cree.

interested in the revivals, Crosby's biographer, Clarence Bolt, remarked that Ts'mysen interest in Methodism seemed only to extend to participation in revivals.[133]

Crosby's antagonism toward Ts'mysen culture cut against the grain of evangelical Methodism where the emphasis is on the individual's relationship with god, and that every person, every soul, is equal under god. But Crosby does not seem to have been a programmatic evangelical (a program at this point in time that may have been receding in Canadian Methodism). For Crosby, like Duncan, there was a connection between salvation – ones relationship to God – and English-Canadian Victorian culture. We already know that he was a bit of a cultural elitist thus it should come as little surprise that one of Crosby's aims, as it turned out, was "to recreate the Tsimshian into model Christian, Canadian citizens."[134] This was not the Christianity Alfred expected; in 1895 he left the Methodist Church and joined the Salvation Army.

Within ten years of Crosby's arrival among the Ts'mysen he was already a ghost among them. He had no place in their Christian history. In 1885, Alexander Sutherland, the General Secretary of the Methodist Missionary Society made a visit to Fort Simpson and interviewed a number of Ts'mysen about their understanding of Christianity. What the Ts'mysen had to say reveals much about their disillusionment with Crosby and their own notion of how it was that Christianity was really brought home to them. Thomas

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[133] Church records indicate a clear decline in church when revivals were not on. Bolt, *Thomas Crosby*, 48. Outside of revivals, the thing that most interested the Ts'mysen, according to Crosby, was learning how to read the Bible. Emma Crosby remarks on the enthusiasm and participation in a revival that was kindled in Crosby's absence, "While Mr. Crosby was away a wonderful revival began among the people. The whole village became in deepest earnest about salvation. Meetings were held every night in the church besides frequent ones in the houses. These still are going on and scarce one in the village remains un-moved. This is such work as we have not seen before since we came. While everyone was ready to come to church and prayer-meeting and a few were really in the enjoyment of religion." Hare and Barman, *Good Intentions*, 141.

[134] Bolt, *Thomas Crosby*, 109.

Wright told Sutherland that, "Alfred Dudoward went to Victoria, and he and his wife came back bringing the Word of God in their hands; so we see the necessity of having some [one] taught to preach. The Tsimpseans opened the way to Kitimaat, to the Bella-Bellas, and to the Nass people; also to the Wakennos, and they are opening the Word to the Bella Coolas. They have been trying to follow God from the first, I tell you this because the white men say they were the first; but it was the Ts'mysen. They are a strong people."[135] In a similar vein, Albert Nelson, from Port Simpson, reported to Sutherland that "the Tsimseans were the first to start in the new way, and we asked the Methodist missionaries to come, and although all things do not go as we like them, we have not repented of sending for the Methodist missionaries. We would like to have a missionary who could teach our children all things [trades, etc.]. Mr. Crosby does not stay at home; he goes to visit other places."[136] Nelson's remark suggests that what interested The Ts'mysen about the missionary were not necessarily the same things that interested them about Christianity. The missionary might teach practical skills and offer practical advice, but Christianity is something the Ts'mysen set out to retrieve on their own and Methodism – specifically in its revivalist form – came closest to what the Ts'mysen had in mind.[137]

The indigenization of Christianity, the effort to make it local, is ubiquitous in the historical record of the colonial Americas. If we approach prophet movements as efforts

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[135] Hare and Barman, *Good Intentions*, 209.

[136] Ibid, 211.

[137] In her short *Afterword* to Hare's text, Caroline Dudoward remarks: "without people like Alfred and Kate Dudoward and others like them, the missionaries would not have made it anywhere on the Northwest Coast. Without First Nations assistance, non-Native people would be non-existent. My great-grandparents were the interpreters/translators for the missionaries who first came to this bountiful coastline." Ibid, 265.

of indigenization, the prophets of the Fraser-Skeena plateau are exemplary cases of a general pattern of indigenization and resistance: the articulation of a local version of Christianity and the simultaneous resistance of other versions and outside incursions. The Dudowards, for example, were not prophets but they shared similar concerns: ownership of Christianity, an in interest in ecstatic form, and a desire to take control of relations with relative newcomers who have taken it upon themselves to act in a dominant role. Those some concerns are salient in other cases of Indigenous Christianity. When the Ojibwa Peter Jacobs first learned Christianity he was taught to pray in English, but he was never comfortable with the idiom. He was not ignorant of the language rather he said that praying in English made him "sick in [his] heart", for, he said, "I was very sorry that God could not understand my Ojibwa."[138] His heart was only turned after he heard his friend Peter Jones, a fellow Ojibwa and Methodist, say grace in Ojibwa. After seeing Jones pray Jacobs wrote, "I now saw that God could understand me in my Ojibwa, and therefore went far into the woods and prayed, in the Ojibwa tongue, to God […]"[139] The awareness that God could speak Ojibwa was a turning point in Jacobs' Christian life. It was at that moment, when Jacobs realized that God spoke Ojibwa that he knew that he too could speak to God. Only then was Christianity brought home as thoroughly Ojibwa could Jacobs respond to it.[140] Bini was like Jacobs in the sense that both struggled to make Christianity translatable in the local idiom. While Jacobs had the assistance of Jones and other Methodists, Bini was doing similar things in conversation with fur

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[138] Peter Jacobs, *Journal of the Reverend Peter Jacobs, Indian Wesleyan Missionary, from Rice Lake to the Hudson's Bay Territory; and Returning*. Toronto: Anson Green, 1853, iii.

[139] Jacobs, *Journal of the Reverend Peter Jacobs*, iii.

[140] I would venture the hypothesis that Jacobs viewed the adoption of Christianity as a way from he and his fellow Ojibway to take assert control over their social space. I would need to do more research on this.

traders, early missionaries, and in consultation with other prophets. Both took upon themselves the task of writing the origins of Christianity for their own people, their own communities.

The examples could be multiplied. Take the case of the Cree prophets of the 1840s. The prophet Abishabis claimed to have the "track to heaven" a Christianity that was made for the Cree. Abishabis, like Bini, responded to the HBC aggression into their social spaces, to HBC practices that were depleting local sources of game, and to HBC efforts to tie the locals tightly to the trading posts. Abishabis resisted those aggressive moves by adopting a version of Christianity that he mobilized as a form of social resistance and it was for those efforts that he was murdered.[141] Years after his execution, the Cree still remembered their own prophets and not the Methodists as the progenitors of Christianity. The historian John Long recorded two Cree oral traditions in which the Cree prophets, namely, Abishabis, William Apistapesh, and Wasiteck are described as getting "religion started."[142] Similarly, in the upper Fraser and Skeena Rivers, the narrative is that Bini got religion started. He was the first to speak to God in the local idiom. In the words of Moses Sanaus and Constance Cox, it was "through his dreams and visions," that he brought Christianity to the interior.[143]

Bini, the neighbouring prophets, the Dakelh mythmakers considered in the previous chapter, and the Dudowards all shared in the task of bringing Christianity home. Although each did it in his or her or own way they are all engaged in the effort of

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[141] Norman Williamson suggests Abishabis was murdered by Company's orders. See Norman J.W. Williamson, "Abishabis the Cree," *Studies in Religion* 9, no. 2 (1980): 216-45.

[142] John S. Long, "The Cree Prophets: Oral and Documentary Accounts," *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society* 31, no. 1(April 1989): 6-7.

[143] Moses Sanaus, B-F-322.18, Barbeau's Northwest Coast File, BCA.

explaining Christianity and making it their own. The effort is mythic. It attempts to contrive the first story upon which all others concerning the origins of Christianity can be grounded. Claims that Bini brought Christianity or that the Dudowards brought Christianity, for example, are not meant as historical truths rather they are meant to indicate a special kind of truth about Ts'mysen or Witsuwit'en identity: that their identity is unique, stable, and resistant to assimilation in part because it is rooted in their own authoritative version of Christianity.

Bini must have known that he was not the first person, chronologically speaking, to talk of Christianity; he was not prophetic in that sense. He simply cannot be. There is too much evidence to the contrary. Nevertheless, he was making a claim to a logical priority. He was the first to bring home Christianity to make it Witsuwit'en and to make it Gitksan. He made it so that those interested in Christianity could also relate to it, and so that the Witsuwit'en and Gitksan could relate not only to each other as Christians but reach across nineteenth century lines of race, ethnicity, class and culture and relate to all others as Christian. Thus, when the Bini narrators look to the past, for example, they are making a point about who they are and the nature of their relationships to world and to others. For example, the claim is made that they are Christian like British Columbians of European descent and that in some sense they had always been that way. Knowledge of Jesus was revealed in ways that only the Witsuwit'en specialized in. They recognized cultural differences, for example, between themselves and others, but also that they were ultimately equal as everyone is animated by the same source. Cultural practices, thus, should not be the basis for discrimination because, as the Sekani said to LeJacq, "We have our own priests."

Chapter 9

Conclusion: Summary and Contributions to Research

With much of the analytical work now complete, in this ninth and final chapter it might be helpful to survey the ground travelled, highlight the useful work accomplished along the way and suggest some new directions for future research. Early in the dissertation I introduced the notion of the orbit to help articulate the fact that the people of upper Fraser-Skeena headwaters were not disconnected from events on the periphery of their territories. The point is very subtle, perhaps too subtle to warrant the two chapters devoted to it (chapters 4 and 5). Yet, the data is significant for my analytical work and for scholarship on the religious history of the North American West. Christianity, whether lay or missionary, was wrapped up in colonial and commercial activities west of the Rockies and on the Pacific littoral as early as the eighteenth century. The peoples of the upper Fraser and Skeena watersheds were no strangers to that activity. The well worn roads that led them to their coastal neighbours also suggest that, from the perspective of the upper watersheds, the Pacific orbit was a focal point of heightened interest. Thus, the peoples of the upper watersheds were looking west at least as much east. That they were looking toward the Pacific is another subtle but significant point. In the literature on the religious history of the North American West interior peoples west of the Rockies are often portrayed with their backs to the coast, looking east and anticipating the approach of the eastern edge of empire. Within the culture area motif, for example, the people of the interior are grouped with easterners. Interior peoples are slotted within the subarctic culture area, which stretches from the Rocky Mountain cordillera to the Atlantic, and thus their religiosity is typified as subarctic or Athabaskan. Viewed from another angle the

interior is also tangential to the literature on the Northwest Coast; in Richard Mackie's detailed work on the political economy beyond the Rocky Mountains between 1793 and 1843 the bulk of his coverage is devoted to events on the coast.[1] I have argued that the inner orbits were closely connected socially and economically to the Pacific coast and to the peoples who lived there.[2]

Because Christianity was endemic to commercial and colonial activity its appearance in the inner orbits does not need to be traced back to a missionary or catechist. In this dissertation, I have shown how various scholars have traced prophet religions as Indigenous Christianities to Catholic Iroquois from the Montreal missions, to Indigenous catechists trained at Red River and to the early visits of Catholic or Orthodox priests. While it is true that Christianity was learned from those sources, they were not the only sources in the social field. Christianity was present long before the traders entered the inner orbit. As I had shown in chapter 6, Christianity was a perspicuous feature of relations between newcomers connected to the fur trade and Indigenous peoples. Since John Webster Grant's seminal survey of Christian missions in the Canadian context, *Moon of Wintertime*, published in 1984, alerted a wide readership to the breadth and degree of influence that Christianity has had on Indigenous religions

[1] I am not criticizing Mackie for not paying more attention than he does to the interior as he states that he is mostly interested in the activity of the coast. What I am calling attention to is the fact that the interior is seldom itself taken as an analytical frame.

[2] It may not be advisable to introduce new data in a conclusion, but I cannot hold back the observation that the effort to wrench the interior peoples from the ocean was an effort continued by the Canadian colonial state. It is reflected clearly in the early twentieth century attempt to force interior peoples to give up salmon fishing and to adopt agriculture, see Douglas C. Harris, *Fish, Law and Colonialism: The Legal Capture of Salmon in British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).

much has been done on Indigenous Christianities and Indigenous missionaries.[3] My suggestion that lay Christianity of the fur trade was a valuable, rich and consistent source for Indigenous Christianities both contributes to and extends that body of literature.

My claim that prophet religions, or experimental Christianities, were the product of a long history of thought about Christianity serves as a counterpoint to claims that such religions were narrowly reactive, and confused or garbled versions of Christianity. The assertion of an intellectual depth to prophet movements also serves as a lever to expose the logical underpinnings of the positions of the various scholars involved in the conversation on prophet religions that I surveyed and analyzed in chapter 2. Such thought is underpinned by the notion that prophet movements emerged as a result of "ethnological deprivations": worsening material conditions, epidemic diseases or socio-religious stresses. At the core of such treatments is the notion that religion is crisis behavior and/or that there is something irrational about it. While I never meant to say that prophet religions never address crisis, my work calls attention to the notion as being deep-seated in discourse about religion. The notion that religion can be explained as crisis behaviour is rarely placed under critical scrutiny and is often used as the *de facto* explanation for the emergence of new religious movements. However, the prophet religions treated in this dissertation do not address ethnological deprivations.

In chapters 7 and 8, I read the oral narratives collected by Barbeau and Jenness as depicting prophetic efforts to indigenize Christianity. While it is always possible that the prophetic work was done as a simple curiosity, for pure entertainment, or as a charade,

[3] Many of the scholars cited throughout the dissertation can be classed as following in the tracks of Grant: Susan Neylan, John Long, E.P. Patterson, et al. More recently, Tolly Bradford's work is an interesting example of scholarship in that vein see, Tolly Bradford, *Prophetic Identities: Indigenous Missionaries on British Colonial Frontiers, 1850-75* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012).

those do not strike me as plausible explanations. The religions do not strike me as eccentric or psychopathological. I treat them as veritable social movements and as cases of motivated, interested and intentional behavior.

Participants in the prophet movements were interested in Christian form and content. The ecstatic expression of Christianity was appealing to some. Christian prayer and baptism as a means of anticipating the course of future events or securing some material benefits were also attractive. Participants were also interested in Christian content. That interest was hard to quantify because so much of the conversations among participants in the field happened "off stage" and has gone unrecorded. Yet, there are hints. We know that the locals questioned traders about Christianity. Daniel Harmon, Julia Rivet and Peter Warren Dease among others indulged local interests in Christianity. When the traders failed to capture local interest, the Indigenous peoples engaged fur trade labour in conversation. Labourers had friends and wives among the locals and they shared with them stories of Christianity. Some sneaked over the fort walls in the evenings to be with their friends and partners, others socialized at work and others deserted the service completely to live with their neighbours. In such social settings, Métis and Canadians shared with their friends welcome new stories about Christianity.

Those people interested in the prophet religions of the mid-nineteenth century also perceived in Christianity a means of securing the dignity, honour and respect of their colleagues in the social field. By making Christianity a local product they demonstrated to themselves and to the newcomers that no one group had special access to religion. Christian origins were as firmly rooted in the upper Fraser and Skeena watersheds as they were in the Middle East or Rome. By the close of the first quarter of the nineteenth

century Christianity was no secret to anybody, the prophetic audience was tuned in. Every group encountered in the fur trade and colonial period had their own Christianity. In a sense, then, Bini and the mythmakers were fulfilling a socially expected role accounting for change. While they were the ones who happened to indigenize Christianity, indigenization was bound to happen someway or somehow.

The prophets also mobilized Christianity as a religion of resistance. The prophets seized on an equalizing motif within Christianity capable of transcending group boundaries and mobilized it accordingly. The Dakelh myth makers, for example, reminded their audience that everyone was equally humble under God. When the HBC began a campaign of drawing the peoples of the upper Fraser and Skeena watersheds to their various trading posts at the close of the first quarter of the nineteenth century, there was local resistance to those efforts. The Witsuwit'en, Babine and Gitksan in particular continued to face west and privilege their relationships with coastal neighbours. However, the HBC eventually took control of the coastal trade as well, leaving the inner orbit completely encircled by the Company. The prophets, by attempting to unite the peoples of both orbits, stood against that work. It was not that the prophets were against all employees of the fur trade; as demonstrated in chapter 6 relations were sometimes highly amicable. However, they were against the loss of control and the violence of the Company's intrusion into their social and personal spaces. Douglas' murder of the Dakelh man who sought refuge in Kwah's home in 1828 was a double violence of intrusion and death and stood as a reminder of just how violent and broadly penetrating the intrusion could be. The Dakelh had their own system law, but the HBC contravened it assuming it had all rights to do so. Douglas was not punished. There were reasons to

oppose the HBC and the company had many opponents. The Iroquois were also aware of how socially violent, invasive and controlling the company could be and in response formulated had their own Christian religion of resistance. When the locals were employed as Company labour, they could not but have failed to see how Christianity was employed as an idiom of resistance by the subordinate. Prior to the 1821 amalgamation, the NWC had not expanded operations in New Caledonia since they first crossed the mountains in 1805. In contrast, when the HBC took over as chief commercial operator they started a program of exploration and fort construction and spatial management. The changes of the HBC were felt by the peoples of the inner orbit and some resisted that incursion through participation in the prophet movements.

Prophecy was also an appealing idiom for indigenization and for calling attention to the burgeoning changes. As I mentioned in chapter 2, most religions have some means of anticipating the future. I do think there is something, as Burkert suggested, optimistic about all religion. Prophecy as a means of interpreting the future had close affinities with the vision quest and the shamanic experience. As a means of acquiring useful information Bini's visionary aptitudes would have been perfectly familiar to his audiences.

One of the requirements of the dissertation is that the work makes a distinct contribution to the major field of study and for me that means a contribution to the field of Christianity, Culture and Society. It follows from what I have just written that the work contributes to the history of nineteenth century North American Christianity by calling attention to the currently under investigated place of lay Christianity in the fur trade and its relation to Indigenous religions. It is also a contribution to the regional history of the North Central Interior of British Columbia. Outside of Morice's early work

in the area, Elliott's popular history of Fort St. James and Kobrinsky's PhD Dissertation on Dakelh social organization are the only works of which I am aware to take the upper Fraser and Skeena watershed as an analytical field. My appraisal of the anthropological and ethnohistorical conversations on North American prophet religions is also a useful contribution to ethnology and ethnohistory. The appraisal casts light on extant analytical presuppositions, while also offering a different, more thoroughly sociological approach to the study of such religions. My analysis of the prophet religions of the upper Fraser and Skeena watersheds as religions of resistance also makes a contribution to the currently fast growing body of literature on religion and resistance and religion and violence. Lastly, the analysis as a whole is also exemplary of how the constructs "social field" and "social formation" might be usefully employed within the academic study of religion. Thus, the work responds to Burton Mack's call for more scholarship in the vein of a social theory of religion. The insights here may also be of interest to scholars working on American Indian or Indigenous Canadian ethnogenesis. And there is more work yet to be done.

While I have titled this chapter "conclusion," I am simply following convention; it is not meant to be conclusive. There is room to improve on the analysis and to amplify its contributions to the field. I invite critical engagement with the work to both enrich the data and critical record of the field and so that my own learning, and the learning of others, might continue to benefit.

Appendix

Brief Biographical Notes on Barbeau's Informants on Bini

Charles Martin

Charles Martin (1866-1938). Martin was a Gitksan. He relocated from Aiyansh to Metlakatla about 1887. He then met the Anglican missionary J.B. McCullagh who encouraged him to marry a local Nisga'a woman. In 1927 Martin signed a document on the Skeena River Indian Land Question. He was listed as a prominent member of a committee that endorsed Gitksan boundaries vis-à-vis the Nisga'a.

Source: Neil J. Sterritt, Susan Marsden, Robert Galois, Peter R. Grant and Richard Overstall, *Tribal Boundaries in the Nass Watershed*. UBC Press: Vancouver, 1998.

Alfred Sinclair (Arhkawt)

Alfred Sinclair was from Kitwanga. Sinclair was an interpreter for Barbeau; for example, he interpreted Chief Arhteeh's dirge songs that he sang for Barbeau in 1924. Sinclair was also a local historian and informed Barbeau on such matters as the history of Kitwanga fort and subsequent settlement at that place.

Sources: Marius Barbeau, "Bear Mother", *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 59, No. 231 (Jan. - Mar., 1946), pp. 1-12; Paul Prince, Settlement, Trade and Social Ranking at Kitwanga, B.C." Ph.D. Diss. (Hamilton, ON: McMaster University, 1998).

Isaac Tens

Isaac Tens was a Gitksan. Tens was the medicine person featured predominately in Barbeau's *Medicine-Men on the North Pacific Coast*. The text is easily accessible and contains some biographical detail on Tens' life and career.

Source: Marius Barbeau, *Medicine Men of the Pacific Coast* (Ottawa: National Museum of Canada, 1958).

Johnny Patsey

Johnny Patsey is identified by Barbeau in the Bini narratives as a chief at Hazelton.

Source: B-F-322.5, Barbeau Files.

Moses Sanaus

Moses Sanaus is identified by Barbeau in the Bini narratives as a Gitksan from Hazelton.

Source: B-F-322.18, Barbeau Files.

John Brown

John Brown was a Gitksan, his Gitksan name was Sm'oogyet [Chief] Kwiiyeehl and he was a member of the Gisgaast (Fireweed) phratry. When Barbeau met him he was from Kispayaks.

Source: "Kisgagax," in *Living Landscapes* (Victoria: BC Royal Museum) http://www.livinglandscapes.bc.ca/northwest/bridges/kisgegas_suskwa_luand.html (accessed, October 1, 2012).

Constance Cox

Constance Cox began working for Barbeau as interpreter and informant in the 1920s and was very valuable to Barbeau's research. He met her when she was police interpreter at Hazelton. Cox was the daughter of Tom and Margret Hankin. Her mother was a Tlingit from the Alaskan coast and her father was an HBC fur trader. Cox's mother later married R.E. Loring. She was baptized by the Anglican Bishop of New Caledonia.

Source: Donovan Pedelty, "Constance Cox" in *Pioneer Legacy: Chronicles of the Lower Skeena Volume 1* (Terrace BC: Dr. R.E.M. Lee Hospital Foundation, 1997).

Jack Wimenazek

Wimenazek is introduced in the narratives as being from Kuldo and Kisgagas.

Source: B-F-322.11, Barbeau Files.

Lelt

Lelt was a Gitksan chief. Barbeau took a photo of him in 1923 holding a staff and wearing a headdress. Lelt is also the name of a house in Gitskan social structure. According to Paul Prince, Lelt is a house in the Frog-Raven clan of Gtiksan.

Sources: Paul Prince, "Settlement, Trade and Social Ranking at Kitwanga, B.C." Ph.D. Diss. (Hamilton, ON: McMaster University, 1998); and "Alaska Native Collections,"

Arctic Resource Centre (Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian) http://alaska.si.edu/ media.asp?id=474&objectid=501 (accessed, October 1, 2012).

Mark Wiget

Mark Wiget was a Gitksan. In addition to a Bini narrative, Wiget also provided Barbeau and oral narrative on the burning of Kitsegukla. According to R.M. Galois, Mark Wiget was born either in 1835 or 1860.

Source: R.M. Galois, "The Burning of Kitsegukla," 1872, *BC STUDIES*, no. 94, (Summer 1992): 59-81.

Semedik or Semedeek

Semedik was a Gitksan Chief.

Source: Barbeau Files, *B-F-322.4*.

Mr. and Mrs. Donald Grey

Donald Grey was a Witsuwit'en informant of Jenness and Barbeau. Barbeau collected information on the Carrier Language at Hagwilgate from Donald Grey. Kurt Seligman identified him as a "Carrier Chief at Hagwilgate."

Sources: Kurt Seligmann, "Le mât-totem de Gédem Skaníshh (Gyaedem Skanees)," *Journal de la Société des Américanistes* 31, no. 31 (1939): 121-128; Antonia Mills, *Eagle Down is Our Law: Witsuwit'en Law, Feasts and Land Claims* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1994), 98.

Lagaxnitz

Barbeau took a photo of Johnny Lagaxnitz holding a rattle and staff in 1924 A Jim Lagaxnitz is referred to as a Gitksan Chief by Sterritt.

Sources: "Alaska Native Collections," Arctic Resource Centre (Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian) http://alaska.si.edu/media.asp?id=468&object_id=386 (accessed, October 1, 2012); Neil J. Sterritt, "The Nisga'a Treaty: *Competing Claims Ignored!*,"*BC Studies* 120 (Winter 1998/99): 73-98.

Lagaxmuts

I could find no biographical information on Lagaxmuts. Could he be the same person as Lagaznitz?

C.F. Morison

Charles Frederick Morison was an Englishman, a lay Anglican missionary at Metlakatla and Fort Simpson, HBC clerk, and businessman at Fort Simpson and Victoria. In 1872, when Morison was 28, he married Odille Quintal Morison. Odille was born in 1855, and was the daughter of Francois Quintal, a French-Canadian employee of the HBC, and Mary Quintal, a Ts'mysen and professional midwife. In 1879 the couple moved from Metlakatla to Victoria. The two returned to Metlakatla in 1883, where both did lay missionary and translation work for the Anglican Church. Odille was also one of Franz Boas' consultants. Morison was also one of Barbeau's informants and was featured prominently in the "Barbeau Files."

Sources: Maureen Atkinson, "The 'Accomplished' Odille Quintal Morison: Tsimshian Cultural Intermediary of Metlakatla, British Columbia," in *Recollecting: Lives of Aboriginal Women of the Canadian Northwest and Borderlands*, Charles R. Menzies and Caroline F. Butler, eds. (Edmonton: Athapasca University Press, 2011); and "Working in the Woods: Tsimshian Resource Workers and the Forest Industry of British Columbia," *American Indian Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (Summer, 2001): 409-430.

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